

# Gothic Revival and Horace Walpole

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Zadar, 2020.



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## 1. Introduction

The topic of Gothic Revival, on its own, is very interesting but quite explored territory. Every scholar who is familiar with the circumstances of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century's cultural climate knows that one of the characteristics of this period was "a lack of imagination" in terms of architectural production. Namely, there were two dominant styles in which edifices were built – neoclassical and neo-gothic; the first was a style which imitated the great style of Ancient Greek and Roman architecture while the latter referred to a style reminiscent of monumental 13<sup>th</sup> century Gothic cathedrals. Although it is interesting to explore the context behind these anachronistic tendencies in building construction, it is even more interesting is to try to connect this trend with other artistic forms which were prominent at that time. Instead of just focusing on one art form this paper will offer a unique look at two seemingly very different disciplines – architecture and literature, in order to see if one influenced the other.

The attempt behind this cross-disciplinary thesis is to research different kinds of meanings Gothic architecture carried and how it was interpreted by different theoreticians and architects of 19<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, there will be a detailed overview of their reasons as to why they preferred Gothic architecture. This insight will later shine a light on some other conflicts of that time which go beyond architecture and aesthetics. However, architecture is not the only "Gothic" medium. During the other half of 18<sup>th</sup> century this term started to be used in literature in order to signify a new genre that emerged. Once the first Gothic novel was published the word "Gothic" subsumed even more meanings than it did before. Thanks to Horace Walpole and *The Castle of Otranto* "Gothic" was now associated with supernatural elements, transgression and fear.

While referring to architecture the term was associated with Christianity and Christian values, since Gothic cathedrals are one of the most impressive sacral edifices ever created, and Gothic Revival as movement helped emphasize all admirable qualities about them. However, in literature this term carried the opposite meaning. Gothic novel was the first literary genre in which traditional (Christian) values as well as narrative were questioned. Because of that the genre was criticized, underestimated and considered controversial. Therefore, this master's thesis will deal with the complexities behind these two different disciplines which are somehow connected with the same adjective.

In order to better understand this subject matter there are several important authors whose works had to be included in the concept of this paper. Firstly, the authors which left a great mark in the field of architecture and architectural theory regarding Gothic Revival: Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, John Ruskin and Violet-le-Duc. Their compelling works brought valuable perspective on this topic. Similarly, David Spurr's book *Architecture and Modern Literature* was very helpful because it served as a transitional literature which connected the two fields at the center of this research. Another important part of the concept was the novel *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* written by Horace Walpole due to the fact that the second half of the paper is focused on the beginnings of Gothic novel, Walpole's background and analysis of his novel. Lastly, probably the most influential author in terms of providing direction and theoretical framework was Matthew M. Reeve with his three comprehensive articles on Horace Walpole's life, work, controversies, style preferences, and the meaning behind all that.

## 2. Gothic Revival

During the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and until the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a change in taste when it comes to the style in architecture. For decades style reminiscent of the classical period was dominant, not only in paintings and sculpture but architecture as well. The affinity towards antiquity can be seen in Early Medieval art, Romanesque art, Renaissance, Baroque and, of course, Neoclassicism. However, one must bear in mind that those styles were inspired by antiquity and that each style had its own language which was derived from the language used by Greeks and Romans almost thousand years ago. Nevertheless, looking at the history of art it is evident that most of the time artist drew their inspiration from the classical style, whether it was in order to achieve the same level of aesthetic appeal and ingenuity or to surpass it. The one style that did not rely on the classical period was Gothic style of 13<sup>th</sup> century which is mainly recognized by pointed arch, lancet windows and flying buttresses in architecture<sup>1</sup> and elongated figures with very expressive faces in sculpture and paintings. These architectural and art elements were not used until that time and they were something completely different from anything the world has ever seen before. Therefore, it is not surprising that after quite long period of relying on antiquity the *Zeitgeist* changed. Suddenly, people in 19<sup>th</sup> century started looking back on medieval art and reevaluating the Gothic architecture. What was once forgotten or neglected now started to gain momentum.

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<sup>1</sup> Illustrative examples: Strasbourg cathedral, Cathedral of Reims, Cathedral of Naumburg ... These are just some of the many artworks which are the epitome of Gothic style, not only in architecture but sculpture as well.



## 2.1. The Meaning of “Gothic”

Before discussing the context behind Gothic Revival it would be best to first explain the term “Gothic” and what kind of meaning it conveyed from the beginning. The first attempt in defining this unique style came from Giorgio Vasari when he referred to it as *maniera tedesca* in his well-known work *Lives of the Artists* (published in 1550). Even though his intention was to distinguish one style from the other, and not provide the most correct terminology in art history, it served as a starting point for the other scholars’ theories and definitions about Gothic art. “Following Vasari’s lead, the Gothic was understood as the product of the Goths – the northern barbarians that had apparently been responsible for the destruction of much classical architecture and its replacement with a sub- or anticlassical mode of building” (Reeve “Iconography” 237). What is interesting is the fact that the term was coined in Renaissance during which time it usually had a pejorative connotation which continued to exist even to this day in some way.

Another notable person of 16<sup>th</sup> century who shared his opinions on Gothic art was Raphael Sanzio. He considered Gothic architecture to be inspired by the forms found in forests where “branches bent and tied together to create vaults” (Reeve “Iconography” 237). That is why, for him, the Gothic was diametrically opposite to the classical period. One was constructed on the foundations of geometrical symmetry while the other was derived from the wild, untamed architecture of the forest without real theoretical knowledge. This kind of attitude towards the Gothic architecture influenced how it was later perceived and why for some it had negative connotations. It should be noted that negative comments about the Gothic style usually came from those who preferred the tradition of the classical period i. e. neoclassicists.

Even though the Gothic style did not have the most positive reputation in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century by the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century the perspective about the Gothic began to change. More and more influential people started thinking and writing about this style in a different way. Most of them found Gothic style to be very inspirational, evoking various feelings from admiration to veneration. One of the first writers that wrote positively about Gothic architecture was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Hegel credits Goethe for encouraging a fresh interest in Gothic architecture with his essay *Von deutscher Baukunst*, published in 1772. The essay is based on writer's impressions of Strasbourg Cathedral. It is very subjective in tone and is in correspondence with the Sturm and Drang movement of that time which is why it was well-received by the public and continually reprinted for years. However, looking at Goethe's career the essay is unusual because the author will later in life be known as an advocate of classicism.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, his essay is important because it shows how Strasbourg Cathedral is now seen from a different perspective than it was once seen in the Middle Ages. According to Spurr, the cathedral is no longer a house of God but a monument to romantic ideals (104). "Goethe's move, like that of Kant and Hegel, is in effect to remove from the work of art the theological and religious scaffolding from which it has traditionally derived its transcendent meaning, while still insisting on that meaning as derived from the material of the work itself" (Spurr, 104). In other words, the medieval connotations about the Gothic were abandoned and new ideas about art, aesthetics and meaning of art were coming to life.

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<sup>2</sup> He will later, in 1812, write about Strasbourg cathedral again, but this time he will emphasize the verticality and orderliness of the building.

## 2.2. Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin

When it comes to the Gothic Revival there are several figures one cannot avoid, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin being one of them. He was a very important figure in 19<sup>th</sup> century England not only as an architect, but also as theoretician and art critic. Pugin is most known for a number of architectural commissions in England and for writing a rather controversial book called *Contrasts* published in 1836 where he expressed his fascination with Gothic architecture and argued for return to the medieval ways of life.<sup>3</sup> The book is interesting because he compared several medieval buildings with modern buildings of his time and made bold commentary about how these “new” buildings are representation of corrupted society and how people should turn to past times and their ways of construction in order to redeem themselves. The following quote from *Contrasts* can illustrate Pugin’s strong inclination towards Gothic architecture and complete abhorrence of (neo)classical monuments such as European palaces.

In new Buckingham Palace, whose marble gate cost an amount which would have erected a splendid church, there is not even a regular chapel provided for the divine office; so that both in appearance and arrangement is utterly unsuited for a Christian residence, and forms a most lamentable and degenerate contrast with the ancient Palace of Westminster, of which the present unrivalled Hall was the hospitable refectory, and exquisitely-beautiful St Stephen's the domestic chapel (10).

Furthermore, another one of Pugin’s accomplishments was a commission on the Houses of Parliament for which he designed now very recognizable neo-gothic façade. According to Carver

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<sup>3</sup> The full title is *Contrasts: or a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and Similar Buildings of the Present Day: Showing the Present Decay of Taste* which summarizes the content and the tone of the book.

“(…) he converted to Catholicism in 1834, perhaps due more to architectural than theological reasons, his other passion being ‘Christian’ (that is Roman Catholic) architecture, the opulent ‘Second Pointed’ style of the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth-centuries.” (1) This sentence shows his passion for architecture, especially Gothic architecture, and this passion is very obvious from the texts he wrote about it. In these texts he is very critical of eclecticism in architecture, or as he calls it “*the carnival of architecture*”, where architects are no longer the ones who generate styles but only adopt them. (Pugin *Apology* 2)

What sets Pugin aside from all the other Gothic revivalists is that he explicitly promoted Gothic architecture as “Christian” architecture and associated the style with religion. For Pugin, the architectural revival had to be a part of a general religious, and truly Catholic, revival. This was not just another style in architecture, but rather the personification of true Christian values (Williams, 131). Besides his architectural manifesto, *Contrasts*, there is also a book titled *Apology for the Present Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (1843) in which he explains the importance of “Christian” architecture in terms of shaping and confirming the Christian faith as well as steering society of that time in the right direction. As Pugin states:

The change which took place in sixteenth century was not a matter of mere taste, but a change of soul; it was a great contention between Christian and pagan ideas in which the latter triumphed, and for the first time *inconsistency* in architectural design was developed. Previous of that period, architecture had always been a correct type of various systems, in which it was employed; but, from the moment the Christians had adopted this fatal mistake, of reviving classic design, the principles of architecture have been plunged into miserable confusion. (7)

Even though Pugin seems to be going to extreme when it comes to his ideas about style and religion, his contribution is important because he is one of the first critics who started viewing the society and its morals from the perspective of art and production of art. In other words, he judged the quality of the society by the quality of its art which is something John Ruskin will be influenced by<sup>4</sup>. One can see on Pugin's example how architecture can perpetuate ideas about society and vice versa. The two are not isolated disciplines, but subtly connected and covertly intertwined; only the shame is that we view them as separate, even today. This is why it is important to recognize the work of A. W. N. Pugin, not because of his conservative radicalism, but because he was the first person who tried to begin a conversation about how architecture is a reflection of society and therefore open a door for other critics and their ideas about the topic.

Putting aside his judgmental point of view about anything that is not Gothic architecture one must admire his level of passion and accomplishment. What he did in his 40 years of life is something that only a few can achieve in their lifetime. He wrote *Contrasts* when he was only 24 and continued to write several works where he expanded and elaborated on ideas presented in that first publication. What is more, he worked on a great number of architectural projects, from churches and institutions to houses. Interestingly, his very last commission was the one he is most known for – the Houses of Parliament, including Westminster Palace and Big Ben, which had to be rebuilt after the big fire in 1834. Undoubtedly, Pugin left a great legacy for future generations and raised plenty of questions; not only about art and architecture but about society and morality. Whether or not one will agree about his approach to these subjects there is one quote that I think most can agree with:

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<sup>4</sup> However, he will approach the Gothic architecture from a different, almost oppositional, perspective.

The history of architecture is the history of the world (...) The beliefs and manners of all people are embodied in the edifices they raised; it was impossible for any of them to have built consistently otherwise than they did; each was the inventor and perfecter of their peculiar style; each style was the type of their Religion, customs, and climate. (Pugin *Apology* 4)

### 2.3. John Ruskin

Another important figure of 19<sup>th</sup> century is John Ruskin, a well-known art critic and author of three rather significant works about architecture – *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) and *The Bible of Amiens* (1880-85). *Seven Lamps of Architecture* is an extended essay which deals with the notion of aesthetics and “good” or “true” architecture where Ruskin writes about his principles (i. e. lamps) regarding the Gothic style. This essay was inspired by his travels in France and northern Italy and it was later elaborated in his book *The Stones of Venice*. As the title says, the book is centered around one city and its medieval past, which in itself is not that groundbreaking, however, what is really unique about this book is the fact that Ruskin attributed moral values to the architecture. In order to better describe and explain Gothic architecture Ruskin proposed several rather unusual categories which were meant to serve as a tool for clearer and deeper understanding of these awe-inspiring buildings.

These characters are here expressed as belonging to the building; as belonging to the builder, they would be expressed thus:—1. Savageness, or Rudeness. 2. Love of Change. 3. Love of Nature. 4. Disturbed Imagination. 5. Obstinacy. 6. Generosity. And I repeat, that the withdrawal of any one, or any two, will not at once destroy the Gothic character of a building, but the removal of a majority of them will. I shall proceed to examine them in their order (Ruskin, 155).

These moral elements of the style indicate to the reader that Ruskin considered every Gothic building to be individual, just like every human being is. Finally, when it comes to the second book on architecture, *The Bible of Amiens*, it was written much later in his life and, as Spurr describes it, it is “(...) both intimately personal and highly methodical, while the practice of reading is understood as bringing the subject into the presence of revealed truth, a process by which the subject himself is transformed” (121). In other words, Ruskin wrote this book as a travel guide of some kind, where the reader is taken on a walk around and inside the cathedral in order to discover the beauty, history and importance of this edifice.

Apart from this, John Ruskin wrote a number of other works which are mainly concerned with art, culture or society. His contribution to art history and art theory is very well recognized and appreciated, as it should be. However, as a result of his recognition there are many relevant and irrelevant sources one must go through in order to get a clear picture about this man. Therefore, the main focus of this chapter will be Ruskin's views about Gothic art and his thoughts on ruins as well as restoration.

Even though there were many notable scholars who defended Gothic Revival movement against Neoclassicism in 19<sup>th</sup> century, they all had slightly different ideas about the style. Thus, John Ruskin's point of view differs from others because he unapologetically emphasized the aesthetic and ethic value of Gothic architecture. His love and admiration towards Gothic are expressed in his writings in a very interesting way. In comparison to Pugin, for instance, one can observe that Ruskin is less judgmental and extreme when it comes to emphasizing the importance of Gothic style in architecture. Not only that, but Ruskin's Protestant beliefs are quite present in his work and it is safe to say that they had an influence in his approach to the subject.

This approach made from Protestant stance is in opposition to Pugin's view of "Christian" architecture. Therefore, it is interesting to note that both Pugin and Ruskin's religious background affected how they interpreted Gothic architecture. One does not have to read their complete biographies in order to find out what their political and religious inclinations were. This can be seen just from the excerpts of their work. How they wrote about architecture can already give the reader an idea about what their political preferences or religious beliefs were. While Pugin connects the meaning of Gothic architecture with medieval customs and beliefs where society had more veneration and appreciation for Christian faith, Ruskin does not elevate Gothic architecture in such a way. In fact, he views Gothic as style representing as well as celebrating human flaws which is closer to Protestant ideology. "And it is, perhaps, the principal admirableness of the Gothic schools of architecture, that they thus receive the results of the labor of inferior minds; and out of fragments full of imperfection, and betraying that imperfection in every touch, indulgently raise up a stately and unaccusable whole" (Ruskin, 160). This ethical reading of Gothic architecture where the focus is more on the spiritual and less on religious truth is probably the reason why Ruskin was more influential and louder critic of his time.

In addition to this, it is important to emphasize is that Ruskin is also known as one of the loudest proponents of "the return to the nature" philosophy where he urged readers to recognize the faults of industrialization and start to appreciate the nature surrounding them. He promoted the idea of communities where people could work together, grow food and make clothes by their own hands, discarding every aspect of manufacture. Going back to the pre-industrial way of life was his ultimate dream, in a sense, and the following quote taken from his book *The Stones of Venice* illustrates this anti-industrial stance quite well:



We have much studied and much perfected, of late, the great civilized invention of the division of labor; only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labor that is divided; but the men: Divided into mere segments of men –broken into small fragments and crumbs of life (...) And the great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this, that we manufacture everything there except men; we blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages. And all the evil to which that cry is urging our myriads can be met only in one way: (...) It can be met only by a right understanding, on the part of all classes, of what kinds of labor are good for men (...) and by equally determined demand for the products and results of healthy and ennobling labor (165).

This quote, although rather long, captures the essence of Ruskin's *modus operandi* when it comes to his unique way of writing. As it can be seen from the example above, he manages to achieve very powerful and convincing tone with careful use of words which, without fail, evoke real feelings in the reader.

Undoubtedly, Ruskin was a romantic at heart and, besides his love of nature, Gothic architecture, and J. M. W. Turner, his love of ruins can attest to that. Just like Gothic buildings, the ruins were of special interest to John Ruskin and played a significant role in his career from conservation standpoint. He viewed them important not only because they reminded people of the past times but because they had a sublime-like quality. In other words, they had almost sacred aura around them which could inspire writers to write poems and novels about – Tintern Abby and Kenilworth Castle being some of the examples.<sup>5</sup> As David Spurr explained: “His (Ruskin's) sense of the ruin's sublimity would have come from

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<sup>5</sup> *Tintern Abby* is a poem written by William Wordsworth while *Kenilworth* is a novel by Walter Scott.

the visible effects of time's ravages in the margins and interstices of the weakening stone” (157). Moreover, he had deep and profound respect for ruins because he considered them to still be the residences of the dead and that we have no right to touch them. One can say that he had the same veneration towards ruins as people of medieval times had for relics. With this in mind one can understand his strong disagreement with restoration when it comes to architecture. For Ruskin restoration was the most disrespectful way one can behave towards architecture. It was worse than destruction because it erased the sublime imprints of time. “Ruskin declares the impossibility of summoning back to life the spirit of dead artisan and commanding him to direct other hands and other thoughts. The very concept of restoration is a lie from beginning to end” (Spurr, 157).

His firm beliefs about restoration inspired one of the two directions regarding the conservation of monuments, today called the Vienna School, where restoration is usually avoided or allowed only when necessary. However, there were architects and art critics who did not support this attitude towards architectural heritage but rather had completely opposite opinion. The other direction when it comes to the conservation of monuments was actually in favor of restoration and, as many know, Eugene-Emmanuel Violet-le-Duc was the most significant name in that context.

## 2.4. Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc

The name one often associates with the word *restoration* or *purism* is that of Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, a notable restorer and promoter of Gothic Revival in France. His work is nowadays seen as probably one of the most criticized one because, when it comes to cultural heritage, purist approach is now heavily avoided or at least discussed before any kind of restoration or conservation process. However, in cultural climate of 19<sup>th</sup> century that was not the case. In regards to the conservation practice, there were many architects and theorists who preferred one style and despised all others, especially if those other styles appeared to be a part of one historical monument. Therefore, they would “clean” certain architectural structures in order to achieve their goal in having one building shine in only one style; the one which was the most “appropriate” for that building. In other words, they would destroy the evidence and fragments made in other aesthetic forms in other decades and preserve just “the original” ones. Having mentioned that, it is still important to recognize that without those, now viewed as wrong approaches, today’s society would be deprived of some of the most beautiful and significant architecture in human history. Therefore, one must keep in mind that even though it is easy to criticize from 21<sup>st</sup> century’s perspective it is also important to be conscious of the achievements executed in 19<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, without E. E. Viollet-le-Duc’s contribution in restoration, people of 21<sup>st</sup> century would not be able to admire or visit some of the most interesting architectural works in France which date back to 12<sup>th</sup> century.

E. E. Viollet-le-Duc started his career as an architect in 1840 by working on 12<sup>th</sup> century Basilica of Vézelay, that same year he was commissioned on Sainte-Chapelle in Paris and in 1844 he got the opportunity to work on restoring Notre-Dame de Paris. His other significant

projects include the basilicas of Saint-Denis and of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse as well as secular architecture such as the citadel of Carcassonne and Mount Saint-Michele (Spurr, 146). It is widely known that his approach to restoring the citadel of Carcassonne was heavily criticized by modern conservators because he stripped all architectural additions created in “newer” decades and left only Romanesque layer of the citadel. Conservators today avoid this kind of approach, although similar situations can still happen. On one hand, some consider that it is visually more appealing to have monuments and buildings preserved in only one style – the one which is the most dominant. On the other hand, the emphasis should also be put on the fact that by ignoring other styles we are simultaneously stripping the monument of its past and thus creating an inauthentic representation of the edifice. Viollet-le-Duc was not very mindful of the latter, but still his work is not less important because of that.

Looking from 19<sup>th</sup> century’s point of view, architectural restoration was a new science and Viollet-le-Duc’s goal was not to maintain the previous condition of the building but “to reestablish it in a complete state that might never have existed before” (Spurr, 148). In other words, he neglected the history of the building, or what was there before, and how it can be brought back to the initial state it was once in. Instead, he focused on creating something that was not actually there. It is as if he wanted to upgrade buildings he worked on or create the most ideal version of what that building could have been. This is why he had no problem in “purifying” the monument and leaving only one style as the dominant one or even add some architectural elements that were never historically there. Needless to say, commissioners were not always in agreement with his methods. The example of such disagreement is the Chapelle des Macchabées in Geneva where Viollet-le-Duc proposed the restored version of the chapel where there were a few noticeable changes which were not part of the original building’s plan.

For instance, he wanted to erect a spire because this was common for independently built chapels and he also wanted to create a rose window on the upper part of the façade because otherwise the architecture would look too heavy. After seeing his plan, the city of Geneva declined to go forward with his innovations, but they did use the rest of the design to restore the building in its original form (Spurr, 150).

Undoubtedly, Viollet-le-Duc had an interesting methodology when it comes to the restoration of Gothic architecture. For him it was more important to create an ideal version of what Gothic building is rather than to follow prescribed guidelines and produce an exact replica of what was there before. This was a quite progressive and imaginative way of thinking which anticipated the new style and attitude towards the architecture – modernism. Also, Viollet-le-Duc was in favor of the use of new materials in construction because he saw various advantages iron can offer. He even created several drawings where the iron is not only used but dramatically exposed which is something that will be very common in architectural practice of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pevsner, 34).

Furthermore, it is no secret that he preferred the Gothic style in architecture from any other style, however, it is obvious that he had his own interpretation of what Gothic meant and represented – just like Pugin and Ruskin. And, just like them, his point of view was somewhat different from theirs. According to Nikolaus Pevsner, one of the differences between Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc was that “(...) for Ruskin the creator of these great Gothic cathedrals was a rough craftsman, while for Viollet he was highly intelligent designer” (30). Not only that, but Viollet-le-Duc, being an agnostic, considered elaborate and complex Gothic architecture to be the evidence of rationality and ingenuity of people in the Middle Ages. Thus, he simultaneously neglected all religious aspects of such architecture. For him Gothic cathedral was the perfect

example of how monumental and awe-inspiring edifice can be constructed when combining reason and science. “This very rationalism was one of Viollet-le-Duc's arguments in recommending Gothic for new buildings. The other – always in defence against the Classicism and Italianism of the Academy – was that Gothic was the national style of France” (Pevsner, 30).

With all of this in mind, one can easily see that Viollet-le-Duc's approach to Gothic architecture and conservation was very different from Ruskin's who had literally the opposite stance when it comes to the preservation of monuments. Even though both had very different approaches it would be incorrect to think that one is better than the other because they both offer valuable information and compelling criticism of each other's point of view. This is important for the next generations of conservators and art critics who can learn from both of them and apply that knowledge in contemporary practice. Maybe finding a compromise between the two methodologies or developing a third one. Nevertheless, their contribution to architectural theory is immeasurable as well are their thoughts about Gothic architecture which is probably the only topic they agreed on.

It is interesting to observe how different architects and writers had different ideas about the Gothic style and how each interpreted this style in their own way. Those various interpretations stem from their sometimes similar, but mostly different, views on society, culture and religion. Namely, it is very compelling to see how beliefs about politics and social dynamics reflect in their writings about architecture. For Augustus Pugin, Gothic architecture was the most powerful and significant way of expressing Christian faith. No other style in architecture could capture the essence of Christianity better than this one which is why he insisted on constructing buildings in

purely neo-Gothic style. He left a considerable architectural legacy due to a number of neo-Gothic buildings he designed and by doing so, changed the landscape of England till this day.

Equally, John Ruskin contributed to this era with his extensive written works which deal with reevaluation of Gothic form, as well as with his strong opinions about industrialization. His view about Gothic architecture is unique because he was the first one to attribute moral elements to buildings. In that way he created a closer link between Gothic architecture and man which is a very clever and subtle tactic to influence the reader. In contrast to Ruskin, Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc was not equally talented writer, but he was Gothic enthusiast in the same right. His strong inclination towards the Gothic style is evident in his career. He admired it for purely aesthetic reasons and saw something entirely different in it. As opposed to Pugin and Ruskin, who were more focused on the medieval history and moral values characteristic of this period in time, Viollet-le-Duc saw how incredibly inventive the Gothic style was – not only for the 13<sup>th</sup> century but 19<sup>th</sup> as well. This is why he was more concerned with creating the “ideal form” in his work and less concerned with the historical part. Nevertheless, they all had significant impact in terms of Gothic Revival movement and that impact is responsible for the way we perceive this style even today.

### 3. The Early Beginnings of Gothic Fiction

The rebirth of Gothic aesthetics in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century can be seen not only in architecture, as it was shown and elaborated in previous text, but in another artistic medium – literature. Thus, the question that presents itself is: How is it that one significant genre in literature shares the name with one of the most significant styles in the history of art? Not only that, but the said literary genre emerged right when Gothic style started to be used again as one of the dominant style in architecture. That surely cannot be a coincidence.

This complex question is bound to have complex answer(s) which is why this topic is very interesting to a number of scholars who wrote about it, as well as to me. At first, the romantic art historian in me thought that the Gothic architecture was the only source of inspiration behind this literary genre and while to some extent that may be the truth, it is not the whole truth.<sup>6</sup> The origins of Gothic Fiction are more connected with the socio-political circumstances and literary tendencies of that time. Therefore, in order to explain the context behind this literary period it is best to start at the beginning – with the first Gothic novel. *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1764/65) by Horace Walpole is considered to be the first Gothic novel. Indeed, this is the first Gothic novel in history of literature which contains this specific adjective in its title. Before, the term Gothic was used to describe a very specific style in architecture – style which was very visibly different in its form than all the other styles. For this reason, it makes sense that Horace Walpole used this word to describe and differentiate his novel from all the other written novels.

In the preface of the second edition Walpole wrote that he wanted to combine unnatural elements often found in romances with realistic dialogue of the novel (8). In other words, he

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<sup>6</sup> Indirect influence of Gothic architecture on Gothic fiction will be mentioned later in the text.



wanted to create a hybrid form which contained elements of both genres; therefore, he needed to use a term which will signify to the reader that this story is unlike any other story. Not only is the adjective “Gothic” useful in that sense, but, as Walpole certainly knew, it had other meanings attached to it. Even when the term was used in architectural theory it subsumed various meanings. As already mentioned, each architect and art critic of that time had their own interpretation of what Gothic edifices represented. To some they represented the long lost glory of Catholic Church and to others they were a synonym for innovation. Thus, once Walpole transferred the term and used it in the literary context he broadened its meaning even more.

However, *The Castle of Otranto* is not considered to be the first Gothic novel just because the word Gothic is in its title, but because it has elements characteristic of that genre. One of the most significant and innovative elements is suspense which is present throughout the whole story and keeps readers engaged. Besides that, supernatural creatures and unexplained events play an important role because they are usually the main focus of the story or have a considerable impact on the storyline. Also, there are recurring themes presented in this genre such as: family, prophecy, identity, love, sexuality, need for control and so on. When it comes to the setting, which is another important element, it is predominantly linked to medieval architecture, castles, abbeys, monasteries and ruins; all of which create a sort of claustrophobic, anxious and intimidating atmosphere where anything can happen – and where *anything* indeed happens. Due to that, the setting has a very important role in building the suspense which is why it is an indispensable element of every Gothic story. As Lovecraft states: “This novel dramatic paraphernalia consisted first of all of the Gothic castle, with its awesome antiquity, vast distances and famblings, deserted or ruined wings, damp corridors, unwholesome hidden catacombs, and galaxy of ghosts and appalling legends, as a nucleus of suspense and dæmoniac fright” (8).

However, this new tendency of combining probable and improbable elements in one literary genre did not come out of nowhere. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the revisionist accounts of medieval culture were more and more popular, as well as the aesthetic of the sublime and the cult of Shakespearean tragedy (Clery 25). Therefore, this was not some new fashion reserved only for writers and literary circles. The majority of the society was interested in subjects related to history or archeology as well as fantasy. Not only that, but those themes were directly opposite to the Enlightenment ideas which emphasized the importance of science and reason, while subconscious and the need for expressing emotions were considered irrational and less important. Due to that, there was a need for something different, subversive and strange which is one of the main reasons why Gothic novel came about and why it was so popular (and still is).

Shortly after *The Castle of Otranto* was published there were other authors who tried to follow in Horace Walpole's footsteps and write in similar style, using similar elements. One of the most prominent writers in that regard were Ann Radcliffe, with her novels *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), as well as M. G. Lewis with his gothic novel *The Monk* (1796). Also, one cannot omit mentioning Mary Shelly and *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) which are the epitome of Gothic genre. Not only are these novels valuable examples in terms of literature, but they are seen as a response to standardized literary works rooted in ideas of Enlightenment period.

The Castle of Otranto was one of various attempts around this time to cut a new path in literature by looking back to the past; the poets William Collins, Edward Young, Walpole's friend Thomas Gray, and the fabricator of "Ossian," James Macpherson, were all important innovators of this kind. In every case there was impatience with the limitations of neoclassical taste and an investment in

alternative theories about art and its reception, human nature, and the workings of the mind (Clery 27).

Writers of Gothic novels were very important for that time because they represented antithesis to the traditional way of thinking. They were rebels and forerunners of the new style as well as provocative ideas. In a time period where reason, scientific and technological achievement seemed to be of the utmost importance the writers of Gothic fiction dared to provoke emotions in readers. They had the ability to show how irrational side of the mind is as equally important and powerful as the rational side.

### 3.1. Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill

Many scholars wrote about Horace Walpole not only because he was the first person to ever write *A Gothic Story*, but because he had a rather non-traditional lifestyle. It is safe to say that someone like Horace Walpole would be called an eccentric even today in 21<sup>st</sup> century, so it is not surprising that he had polarizing reputation during his lifetime as well. One of the main reasons he was considered eccentric was due to his unusual place of residence – Strawberry Hill – and the way it was decorated. Namely, he was one of the first who built and decorated his dwelling using Gothic style as an inspiration which was very unusual because that style was typically reserved for sacral architecture, while the more appropriate style for civic architecture was Palladian style or some kind of interpretation of the classical mode. Needless to say, Walpole abandoned this fashion and created his own.

There is an extensive paper written by Matthew M. Reeve in which he talks about the ways Strawberry Hill can be interpreted and how it reflects Walpole's character. Throughout the text the author tries to find connections between writer's personality and his house. He argues that Strawberry Hill is accurate representation of Horace Walpole's inner self and that he deliberately used Gothic style in his design for the villa because the style signified a break from the traditional principles and rules of conduct. In other words, it carried the opposite meaning from neoclassical and Palladian style in architecture because it was aesthetically very different. While neoclassical style was identified as a style reserved for aristocracy and was the prime example of order and symmetry in architecture, Gothic style served as an example of deviation from that norm. This kind of opinion was mostly dominant amongst those who were neoclassicists i.e. members of the society who appreciated this aesthetic the most and, by default, condemned everything that was different.

In the context of Strawberry Hill, this notion of "Gothic" signifying a break from tradition is important because it can explain why Walpole chose this style for his villa. In his paper, Reeve suggests that the reason behind Walpole's neo-gothic affinities lays not only in the fact that this style was considered deviant but also because it was connected with socially deviant behavior such as homosexuality, or what was at that time called – the third sex. The point this author tries to make is that Walpole chose this style because he wanted to express his personality which corresponded with the description of the third sex – someone who is neither male nor female but a mixture of both genders (i.e. males which were effeminate), also, the term was used to explain the desire by men for men (Reeve "Architecture and Sexuality" 412). Due to the fact that Walpole was described as effeminate and that there is a strong possibility of him being attracted to other men, many scholars see fit that he chose to decorate his villa in this, rather

(in)appropriate, style. Thus, what Reeve is trying to do is shine a light on a secret connection one has with his place of residence, which in this context is particularly interesting. Moreover, he raises a number of questions about queerness, the third sex and sexuality in relation to architecture and interior design. Because of that, we can see that there is another layer when it comes to the Gothic architecture and various meanings it conveys.

In returning to the complex relationship between architecture and sexuality at Strawberry Hill, I begin with the observation that the revival of the Gothic as a “new” mode of architectural design was paralleled and informed by new formulations of human sexuality that emerged in England around 1700. (...) The new codifications of sexuality were subjects within a broader debate about corporeality and the gender and propriety of form that significantly inflected critical writings on the human body and architecture and informed analogies between them (Reeve “Architecture and Sexuality” 412).

The author draws parallels between the new understanding of human sexuality and the “new” style in architecture. In the minds of 19<sup>th</sup> century critics, the connection between the two existed because both phenomena looked threatening to the traditional social order.

Furthermore, throughout the entire paper Reeve presents Walpole’s view of the Gothic and it is obvious that it was quite different from Pugin’s or Ruskin’s point of view. To him this style symbolized artistic, political and social freedom which was in fact inspired by Whig’s view of Gothic (i.e. Gothic liberty). Namely, one of the most illustrative examples of how Gothic architecture can be used to express political views is James Gibbs's Gothic Temple of Liberty at Stowe. The Temple was built in the middle of political debate between the two Whigs and the Tories in the mid-1730s when Cobham and the Whigs opposed Robert Walpole's position as

prime minister and his political interests. They “(...) employed the Gothic because of its current political connotations, which for Cobham embodied freedom and the maintenance of the ancient ‘Gothick’ constitution” (Reeve “Iconography” 239). It is interesting to see how they used architecture as a tool for promoting their beliefs and showing how serious they really are. They knew that neoclassical style was associated with monarchy so they chose Gothic style to distance themselves and emphasize their liberal point of view.

Horace Walpole was familiar with this and the idea about Gothic liberty as well as what it represented which inspired him to write *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762-71) where he extended this idea beyond politics.

It is difficult for the noblest Grecian temple to convey half so many impressions to the mind, as a cathedral does of the best Gothic taste. (...) the latter exhausted the knowledge of the passions in composing edifices whose pomp, mechanism, vaults, tombs, painted windows, gloom and perspectives infused such sensations of romantic devotion. (...) One must have taste to be sensible to the beauties of Grecian architecture; one only wants passions to feel Gothic (198-200).

Here we can see how Gothic buildings started to become more than just a tool for expressing political views and more than aesthetically pleasing style in architecture. For Walpole Gothic architecture carried a wide range of sensory, erotic and emotive impulses. Therefore, not only did he contribute immensely to creating a different kind of reputation for “Gothic”, but he expanded the meaning even more and managed to transform it into another medium.

### 3.2. Horace Walpole and *The Castle of Otranto*

As previously mentioned, Horace Walpole is the author of the first Gothic novel – *The Castle of Otranto* published first in 1764 and then a year later the second edition was published which contained author's confession about the true origin of the story. What sets apart this novel from all other novels written before is the emergence of new literary elements such as: suspense, setting, different breed of characters and unexplained fantastical events. Even though all of these elements are worthy of mentioning and discussing, the emphasis in this chapter will be put on one element, that is, on setting and on the importance of atmosphere in the novel.

The first clue Walpole gives to his readers about the importance of setting in the novel is in the title itself. The novel is not called *The Sins of Manfred* or *The Revenge of Alfonso*, but *The Castle of Otranto* for a reason. It is as if he wanted to let the readers know, even before the action began, who or what is the main character in this story. Therefore, one can sense even before reading the first chapter that Walpole was breaking unwritten rules of literary genres and he would not just stop there. By making the castle, an inanimate object, the main focus of the story, i.e. the real protagonist, he opened a door for a new generation of writers and inspired a new way of writing. Until then, the setting was only seen as a backdrop or as a two-dimensional fact; it was simply an indication of where the action is played out. In regards to this novel, not only is the castle used as a backdrop, but it has several meanings on several levels and all will be elaborated further in the paper.

Although Walpole does not offer a clear description of the castle, one can argue that it still plays a significant role in creating the atmosphere. The castle is never described as a “Gothic” castle and there is no single description of the castle's floor plan or even a single

concrete description of at least one room. All we, as readers, have are several inconsistent descriptions of various areas which are important for setting the scene (Lindfield 47). For instance, in the scene where Isabella is trying to escape from the castle and find refuge in the church of St. Nicholas the surroundings are described without much detail and not only that but, the description itself is ambiguous.

The lower part of the castle was hollowed into several intricate cloisters; and it was not easy for one under so much anxiety to find the door that opened into the cavern. An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which, grating on the rusty hinges, were re-echoed through that long labyrinth of darkness (Walpole *Otranto* 16).

Based on this, the reader can draw a conclusion that the place of action is very mysterious and even surreal because castles usually do not have cloisters and if they do they certainly do not have “several intricate cloisters”. Therefore, this depiction of space raises a lot of questions in reader’s mind. Questions such as: What kind of castle has several cloisters? What kinds of cloisters are built in subterranean part of the building? How did Isabella get from her room to here?

Despite the ambiguous portrayal, I would still argue that the castle has more important role in this story than any of the characters. I say this because I believe that the castle is the most enigmatic character in the story and without those inconsistent descriptions of the space the story would be much less compelling. The fact that there are no extensive descriptions of the space which can create “clear” mental images in reader’s imagination goes to show that having incomplete description of the space creates more suspenseful atmosphere in reader’s mind. As



we know from psychology – what we do not know is more terrifying than what we know and when we do not know something or when something is rather unclear, in this case the space, our mind will offer us a range of possibilities in order to explain those uncertainties. Still, by not knowing which of these possibilities is correct the reader is held in this constant state of tension throughout the whole story. In other words, the unknown is much more intimidating than the known which is why the whole setting of the castle and the surrounding space are more powerful when they are not defined. In that way the feelings of uneasiness are emphasized and the atmosphere seems much more threatening and frightening. Reeve described this as Walpole's deliberate attempt to make readers "subjectively 'fill in' the spaces left blank or unarticulated by the text" which I agree with ("Greece and Rome" 190-191). Undoubtedly, this kind of approach to narration is groundbreaking, even though it seems unnoticeable at first, and in that context Walpole deserves to be credited more.

Horace Walpole is known as the author of the first Gothic novel, but the fact that he was the first writer who changed the way setting was used in a novel is less known. His willingness to experiment with a different narrative technique was a first step in invigorating and developing Gothic genre in literature. After Walpole's novel came out, the setting started to play much bigger role in narration than ever before. The impression of suspenseful and gloomy atmosphere would be impossible to achieve without setting becoming a crucial part of the story and not just a backdrop. Subsequently, other writers recognized the appeal of the Gothic novel and even managed to elevate it to new levels of literary expression.

Another important emphasis in relation to the setting of *The Castle of Otranto* is its connection to a real piece of architecture – Strawberry Hill. What is interesting about this

relationship between the real and fictive architecture is that Strawberry Hill did not just serve as an inspiration for the castle in the novel. According to Reeve, the neo-gothic house was designed to generate associations with the literary castle and, reciprocally, *The Castle of Otranto* was seen as metaphorical extension of the house (“Greece and Rome” 191). Visitors who read the novel before coming to Walpole’s estate would get a better understanding of what Strawberry Hill is and what kind of feelings it was meant to evoke. Consequently, after visiting Strawberry Hill they would also get more information about the setting in the novel. “The viewer of Strawberry Hill with awareness of *Otranto* synthesized and compared two related, if conceptually unique, architectural spaces: the first, fixed in time and space and perceivable as an object of the phenomenological world, and the second a highly subjective and highly unstable mental architecture” (Reeve “Greece and Rome” 191). Both the house and the novel complemented each other (and still do) which is very entertaining and unique. It is as if Walpole wanted to combine two rather different artistic disciplines in order to capture and materialize the real Gothic atmosphere.

This surprising connection is one more proof of Walpole’s creativity and ingenuity. It is no wonder that such endeavor inspired a number of other writers, in particular, William Beckford who was also a neo-gothic enthusiast and the author of one interesting Gothic novel called *Vathek* (1786). There are few thought-provoking correlations between Walpole and Beckford. First, already mentioned, is their love for Gothic style in architecture – Beckford also erected a monumental neo-gothic building in which he lived in. His father<sup>7</sup> built a typical Palladian house for himself, just like Robert Walpole did, but when it came to William Beckford

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<sup>7</sup> William Beckford (senior) was a supporter of the Whig party – a political friction whose leader was Robert Walpole. Therefore, it is interesting to see how both Horace and William (junior) expressed their opposite political views and lifestyles by creating their dwellings in different (oppositional) architectural styles.

Jr., he did not want to follow tradition and create something similar, instead he decided to build his home, the Fonthill Abbey, in neo-gothic style. What is more, this piece of architecture also holds a rather significant connection with his Gothic tale *Vathek*. According to Lindfield and Townshend, there is a strong assumption that Fonthill Abbey was the material manifestation of Beckford's extraordinary architectural vision in *Vathek* and when Henry Venn Lansdown visited the ruins of the Abbey in October 1844, he could not help but see the potent reminders of Beckford's novel in those stony fragments (285). In other words, it seems that Beckford's imagined space in the novel served as an inspiration for his house, but with less Oriental elements. This example is interesting because it indicates one more relationship between architecture and literature of 18<sup>th</sup> century as well as affirms that there is indeed a plausible connection between these two disciplines.

Going back to the role of the castle in Horace Walpole's novel, there is another layer of meaning that can be identified in this fictional architecture. The castle, besides being an important factor in creating suspenseful atmosphere and connected to Strawberry Hill, is also a symbolic representation of aristocratic society and their corrupted values. Not only is the castle a symbol of aristocracy, but it functions as a subversion of it at the same time. This is due to the fact that the castle is not presented in the most positive light, but rather in a very threatening and dark context (which is something 18<sup>th</sup> century public never had a chance of reading before). In order to display fraudulence and hypocrisy of centuries old upper class institution, Walpole wrote a story in which Manfred, prince of Otranto, was not the rightful heir of the castle and despite all of his efforts to maintain his position the castle sabotaged and rejected him on several occasions. The first sign of castle's involvement with the plot is at the very beginning when Conrad is killed by a giant helmet which unexplainably falls from the sky. Likewise, there are

several more signs throughout the story which make it obvious that Manfred and his family are not safe or welcome in their own home. For instance, the scene where Manfred kills his own daughter due to misunderstanding and poorly lit location, is one of the most shocking scenes in the story and alludes to some kind of karmic punishment for Manfred. Not only has he lost his son and an heir to the throne, but now a daughter too.

Provoked by this conjecture, and enraged at her father, he hastened secretly to the great church. Gliding softly between the aisles, and guided by an imperfect gleam of moonshine that shone faintly through the illuminated windows, he stole towards the tomb of Alfonso, to which he was directed by indistinct whispers of the persons he sought. The first sounds he could distinguish were – “Does it, alas! depend on me? Manfred will never permit our union.” “No, this shall prevent it!” cried the tyrant, drawing his dagger, and plunging it over her shoulder into the bosom of the person that spoke. “Ah, me, I am slain!” cried Matilda, sinking. “Good heaven, receive my soul!” (Walpole *Otranto* 71).

The origin story about Manfred and his heritage is Walpole’s obvious attempt to undermine credibility of the upper classes and critique those old-fashioned values about gaining power and status, which are built on lies and deceit. This storyline makes us question not only Manfred’s integrity, but what is more, it makes us question the society’s integrity of that time. What we can gather from this is that Walpole made it clear that he does not support those corrupted ideals because the whole novel is based on subversion of traditional societal norms. This literary move was very rebellious and provocative on Walpole’s side, certainly not something any classicist would do. By questioning the authority and morality of aristocracy he showed that he is questioning the 18<sup>th</sup> century society as a whole. According to Reeve, Walpole claimed that his novel is an antidote to the constraints of contemporary culture, which also

includes attitude about sexuality, and after a deeper analysis one can see that that truly is perfectly appropriate metaphor (“Architecture and Sexuality” 419). Furthermore, the importance of this novel can be seen in the fact that it withstood the test of time because the story is also rather universal and can be applied to any period, including 21<sup>st</sup> century. *The Castle of Otranto* is not just a cautionary tale about the medieval battle for power and its consequences; it is a story that makes us question Machiavellianism<sup>8</sup> and its ethical use as an instrument for achieving success.

All in all, the way setting is presented in this novel is groundbreaking because it functions on three levels, i.e. it conveys three levels of meaning. Firstly, the castle and its ambiguous description are used as an element for arousing suspense and creating mysterious atmosphere. Walpole does this in a unique and subtle way which other generations of gothic genre writers will apply in their writings as well. The notion of setting was never used in such capacity before; after *The Castle of Otranto* this became very impactful literary tool which influenced the reader’s overall impression of the story. Therefore, it is very interesting to see and discover how one element and clever use of words can have this considerable effect as well as create vivid imagery in reader’s mind. The second level of meaning when it comes to the setting of the novel is its interconnectedness with a real piece of architecture which, in this case, is the author’s home. This correlation is rather unexpected; however, it can be seen as Walpole’s invisible signature and skillful way of linking his two true passions in life – gothic architecture and literature. He often referred to Strawberry Hill as “my own little Otranto” (Reeve “Architecture and Sexuality” 419) which illustrates the correlation between fictional and real architecture. In other words, it shows how one inspired the other. The third level of meaning refers to the castle which functions

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<sup>8</sup> The term refers to political realism (realpolitik) which holds pejorative meaning.

as a symbol of corrupted society. The story revolves around a fake ruler and his downfall and the castle plays a crucial role not only as a location where immoral endeavors happen, but as an active participator who seeks justice and contributes to usurper's undoing. Hence, the castle is no longer used as just a backdrop in the story; it carries subversive message and is presented as a special entity with its own will and even some supernatural powers.

### 3.3. (Neo-)Gothic Architecture and Gothic Novel

To summarize and unite all the main arguments about the correlation between (neo-)Gothic architecture and Gothic novel, which is the central focus of this thesis, this following chapter will contain some already mentioned information as well as some new thoughts which will affirm this connection even more. The most obvious connection in regard to this two different fields and mediums of artistic expression is, of course, the link between the real and fictional architecture. What is interesting about this is the fact that Walpole's residency inspired the architectural setting for his story. Not only did Strawberry Hill inspire his seminal work from aesthetical point of view, but also from conceptual. Namely, when Walpole approached to writing his novel it was from a different standpoint than what it was usual. He did not just wanted to include a description of some gothic building in his story, he wanted to invent and capture the atmosphere which was radiating from his own dwelling. Obviously, Strawberry Hill was not just a random construction used for living; it meant much more to him. It was an extension of him – a place where he could truly be free and comfortable in his own skin which is why it is not surprising that the house proved to be a great source of inspiration for his novel. It was one place where he felt safe and able to express himself fully without other people's judgment. Therefore, this house

was a perfect environment for developing all of his controversial ideas from home décor to writing. What is more, when it comes to this intriguing notion about building being an extension of one's identity, it is something that Reeve talks about in his article quite extensively.

A group of representations across paintings and graphic works playfully juxtapose Walpole's body with Strawberry Hill, not simply as the setting for his literary and artistic pursuits but as a personification of its patron. The relationship between patron and building can now be usefully understood as a doubling of Walpole's self: a projection of Walpole's ego that was a subject of his narcissistic desire while also ensuring immortality after his death ("Architecture and Sexuality" 411).

Due to this, one can better understand where this idea about architecture as extension of oneself came and how it carried over into Walpole's writing. Just like Strawberry Hill is an extension of Horace Walpole so is the castle of Otranto of his rightful owner.

Another bond between neo-gothic architecture and Gothic genre in literature lies in the fact that they were similarly received from the public. Namely, both Gothic mediums represented similar values and were seen as a deviation from the standard norm. Neo-gothic architecture in the eyes of many, including Horace Walpole, carried the opposite meaning than neoclassical architecture. The latter was related to the upper class society which was problematic in its own way, but mostly because it was very restrictive and judgmental. The neoclassical style corresponded seemingly perfectly with the moral values of the people living in such edifices. The main characteristics of this style were: symmetry, order, realism and focus on pure forms with emphasis on emulating the ancient Roman and Greek artworks. Since classical art left its mark in many countries around Europe (and wider) and was commissioned by many powerful world leaders and rulers of that time, it is no wonder that it was also associated with socio-

political power. Therefore, erecting a new building in this style could be seen as continuing this grand legacy in some way, as well as sending a clear message to others – that important and powerful people live here.

While neoclassical architecture emitted the signals of perfection, orderliness and prestige to others in society, neo-gothic architecture represented antithesis to this. If we take Strawberry Hill as an example of neo-gothic architecture, we can clearly see that it was designed as an alternative to classicism, not only in aesthetic terms but also relating to moral values and approach to human sexuality. In the same way that neoclassical architecture was a reflection of aristocratic society, neo-gothic architecture was a reflection of rebels against aristocracy and absolute monarchy. Intentional construction of neo-gothic building also communicated a clear message to others in society – “(...) Strawberry Hill’s planning suggests a conscious dismantling of the narrative structures of the neoclassical villa and the perceived formalized human relationships that took place within them” (Reeve “Greece and Rome” 188). As opposed to Classical style buildings, Gothic buildings were never meant to be perfect and symmetrical; they were meant to evoke strong feelings of worship and fear. The emphasis was more on storytelling<sup>9</sup> and creating a sense of drama which is something this architectural style has in common with the Gothic novel. Namely, Gothic novel emerged as a new, hybrid form which synthesized two kinds of traditional romances – the ancient one and modern, resulting in a unique narrative structure which is characterized by fragmentation and disorientation (Reeve “Greece and Rome” 192). In other words, Gothic literature is far from perfect and far from shiny, feel-good literature. It provokes a sense of uneasiness and fear in reader’s mind while at the same time causes a “dissonance” in the

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<sup>9</sup> Creating compelling and elaborate narration through sculptural decoration which was significant progress in art at that time.



traditional flow or development of literature throughout history. Not only is Gothic literature different in its narrative structure from the literature of Enlightenment period as well as other periods, it is also different in the selection of subject matter. Therefore, Gothic novel breaks away from tradition on at least two levels and, as it was previously mentioned, it carries hidden messages related to social criticism. Interestingly, a part of this social criticism refers to taboo topics such as sexuality and gender roles.

One cannot talk about Gothic genre without mentioning one of its most significant and distinguishable elements – transgression. The idea of focusing a plot line around transgressive behavior is something that can be seen as game changing in terms of narration and subject matter. By creating a suspenseful story in which the main trigger of action is immoral pursuit or, to put it more bluntly, anticipation of rape, Walpole covertly raised a lot of questions about morality, sexuality and male-female (predator-victim) dynamics.

Words cannot paint the horror of the Princess's situation. Alone in so dismal a place, her mind imprinted with all the terrible events of the day, hopeless of escaping, expecting every moment the arrival of Manfred, and far from tranquil on knowing she was within reach of somebody, she knew not whom, who for some cause seemed concealed thereabouts; all these thoughts crowded on her distracted mind, and she was ready to sink under her apprehensions. She addressed herself to every saint in heaven, and inwardly implored their assistance. For a considerable time she remained in an agony of despair (*Otranto* 18).

Throughout the story of *The Castle of Otranto* Manfred as a character presents a threat to Isabella, not in regards to her life, but in regards to her freedom. Manfred is obsessed with maintaining his rule at Otranto that he does not question means which he is willing to take in

order to achieve his goal. He wants to continue his bloodline by imposing himself on Isabella who is completely helpless against him. She refuses his advances, but that does not stop him; in this regard she does not have a voice or any power over him which is why the only option for her is to flee from the castle. This power dynamic is interesting because it is one of the central themes in the novel; therefore, brought to light in a different way than what it would be if it was written as a passing episode. Also, this kind of dynamic contributes to creating the atmosphere of terror; we never know if the tyrant will succeed in his endeavor.

Seeing the theme of sexual violence and social transgression as one of the central themes in *The Castle of Otranto* leads us to questioning of traditional heteronormative roles, patriarchal world and religion. It is safe to assume that Walpole wanted to show how heteronormative world is (also) full of deviation and excess, to say the least, and that some attitudes toward it should be brought into questioning. Furthermore, it is interesting to relate Walpole's novel in this context to his inclination towards neo-gothic architecture and his place of residence which was criticized for being queer, grotesque and defiant of normal conventions (Reeve "Architecture and Sexuality" 413). The reasons as to why Strawberry Hill was seen as such were already elaborated in previous chapter; therefore, I do not see the need in repeating. Both the novel and the style of Walpole's dwelling hold subversive undertones which are mostly oriented on traditional social norms. On the whole, it seems that both artistic mediums in Walpole household were in correspondence to one another and the message he tried to declare to the world was rather clear.

The last element which will be mentioned in the context of relating Gothic architecture with Gothic novel is similarity in sensibility between both fields. What the word "sensibility" refers to is this notion of emotive response to aesthetic or intellectual stimulus. In that regard, there are

evident connections between emotions evoked by Gothic architecture as well as Gothic novel. When it comes to Gothic architecture, i.e. medieval Gothic cathedrals, the feelings that are aroused in the observer after entering one of those monumental and elongated edifices (or when standing in front of portals overflowing with intriguing figures) are to some extent similar to feelings which are evoked when reading Gothic fiction. Due to the fact that they are so grandiose and theatrical, Gothic churches have awe-inspiring effect on the observer. However, there is also something threatening about them. Yes, they are places of worship and admiration and they are masterful works of art, still, a part of the effect that they have is that they arouse feelings of fear (of God) and veneration. What is more, the sculptural decoration contributes to this overall feeling of sublime because it looks very expressive, almost to the point of exaggeration in some cases, and it serves as a constant reminder of death. The sculpture on portals above the entrance usually tells the story of Christ's torment and death or Judgment day<sup>10</sup>. In each case, there is more than one *memento mori* which only adds to the mysterious atmosphere of Gothic architecture.

Similarly, mysterious atmosphere is very significant element of Gothic novel as well. As mentioned in previous chapters, the feelings that Gothic novel awakes in reader are akin to feelings Gothic architecture instigates. One can go through various emotions while reading a Gothic story, from experiencing the feelings of excitement to experiencing the feelings of fear and uneasiness. However, it is important to state that the feelings of terror or horror provoked by well-written Gothic novel cannot relate to Gothic architecture so literally. It is more about bringing the awareness to the mystical and threatening side of Gothic style in architecture which is one more unique element characteristic of that style. Also, when reading Gothic literature there

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<sup>10</sup> Cathedral of Amiens and cathedral of Strasbourg are perfect illustrative examples in this regard.

are particular themes that are brought up such as: death, resurrection, violence, love, power, and so on, which are the same themes omnipresent in the Bible. Nevertheless, here they are used in a contrast way. Gothic genre is known for using and playing off of biblical themes, but the outcome is completely different because the lessons at the end of the stories are ambiguous and very different than what a typical reader is used to. This is why the impact of this genre is so strong and is the reason behind different reactions among readers (good or bad); it makes us question and deconstruct everything from human dynamics, morality, sexuality, freedom, belief system... Due to all of that, the genre is considered quite controversial and subversive.

If we were ever to connect two different disciplines such as architecture and literature we should start from the examples mentioned in this thesis. I state this because both represent a shift in artistic taste and a break from the traditional classicistic point of view. What is more, both are responsible for forming of a new path in literary as well as artistic circles. The inventiveness, contribution, and legacy left for other generations of writers and builders are something that makes Gothic novel and Gothic architecture the first avant-garde movements in history. They were the first ray of avant-garde light before the “actual” avant-garde movements of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Going back to the first half of this thesis, it is worth reiterating that Viollet-le-Duc was the first one who recognized the progressiveness of Gothic architecture. However, Ruskin saw the sublime like quality, imperfections, and, savageness, while Pugin saw magnificent aesthetic as well as religious beauty. And, as Carver points out, he probably converted to Christianity more due to his love for Gothic architecture than actual theological reasons (1). Whether this is true or not, it is still interesting because it alludes to the power of architecture as an artistic medium and that is something worth mentioning. What is also worth emphasizing is that as much pioneering

Gothic style was in architecture, it was equivalent to what Gothic novel was in 18<sup>th</sup> century and credit for that particular literary achievement belongs to Horace Walpole.

To say that Horace Walpole was just an avid architecture lover and a writer would be an understatement. He was, and remains to be, one of the most interesting and peculiar arbiter of taste. He once stated that his castle is of paper and that soon he and Strawberry Hill would be forgotten, leaving nothing to posterity (Reeve “Architecture and Sexuality” 411). Meanwhile, his paper castle is still standing<sup>11</sup> and he left something very significant to posterity – his novel. From the moment of its publication, *The Castle of Otranto* made a big impression on the public whether it was in a form of positive or negative criticism. The concept of blending two types of romances, the ancient and the modern, was something very experimental for that time. So experimental that he did not convey his authorship in the first edition. What is more, there are completely new elements in regards to the plot line, characters, and importance of the setting which are present in the novel. One of the most significant contributions Walpole made in this context is creating suspenseful atmosphere through the setting. He successfully created the feelings of terror or uneasiness, which are consistent throughout the novel, with his innovative narrative techniques. In other words, he did not bluntly describe the setting or the atmosphere; instead, he developed a clever way of writing which almost plays with reader’s mind, making the overall impression more powerful.

Another important innovation by Walpole was the fact that the castle of Otranto was the first concept for a haunted house – something which will be used, imitated, and reinterpreted for years and centuries to come. The indication about the castle being haunted comes from two

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<sup>11</sup> This neo-gothic villa was reconstructed around 2007 and is now open to visitors.

subtle elements. One refers to the intelligent use of onomatopoeic sounds (sudden gusts of wind, creaking of rusty door handles and hinges, creepy sounds) and the other refers to the attribution of human characteristics to inanimate object i.e. personification of the castle. There are certain moments in the novel which allude to reader that this medieval edifice has supernatural abilities and participates in the action in some way.

All of the examples of Walpole's contribution mentioned throughout this paper are a true testament to the significance of his work and influence. *The Castle of Otranto* marks the pivotal moment in literature after which nothing was the same. Not only was Gothic genre inaugurated in 1765 but, as a consequence of that, several other genres were generated later as well – crime fiction, horror genre and fantasy (SF) genre. Over time other talented writers explored the tropes of Gothic literature and combined them with various other literary elements, creating more than one hybrid form which exist and continues to evolve to this day. With that being said, Walpole's sentence in the preface for the second edition holds more weight and indicates foreshadowing:

As the public have applauded the attempt, the author must not say he was entirely unequal to the task he had undertaken: yet, if the new route he has struck out shall have paved a road for men of brighter talents, he shall own, with pleasure and modesty, that he was sensible the plan was capable of receiving greater embellishments than his imagination, or conduct of the passions, could bestow on it.

(Walpole *Otranto* 8)

#### 4. Conclusion

The main aim of this master's thesis was, firstly, to show how Gothic architecture conveyed various meanings in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the example of two notable architects and one important art critic one can see that the perspective on Gothic architecture was different in the minds and writings of each individual. For Augustus W. N. Pugin Gothic architecture was a true symbol of Christian values, while John Ruskin admired it mostly for aesthetic reasons and due to associations it had with pre-industrial world. However, French architect and restorer E. E. Viollet-le-Duc considered Gothic architecture to be very inspirational in terms of technological achievement and stylistic innovation. Based on this, it is interesting to see how the main figures of Gothic Revival, who held Gothic style in high regard, had rather dissimilar views about what this style represented. Nevertheless, they all attributed only admirable qualities to it, unlike neoclassical critics who discarded Gothic architecture and viewed it as less valuable.

Equally, another aim of this paper was to examine the connection between Gothic style in architecture and Gothic genre in literature. In other words, to point out whether or not Gothic Revival had influence on the emergence of Gothic fiction. The key figure which can be seen as a link between the two is the author of the first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole. When thinking of the beginnings of the Gothic genre it is inevitable to think of Horace Walpole. His novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, marked the turning point and new direction in literature where new elements were included in the narrative and traditional values were undermined. Due to that, "Gothic" in literature today means something rather different than what it means in architecture.

While Gothic architecture holds twofold meaning, it can be seen as the perfect example of Christian architecture as well as subversive act of defying the traditional norms, Gothic

novel is seen as the latter in the context of literature. One of quite significant contributions to this kind of shift in meaning came from non-other than Horace Walpole, whose experimental lifestyle lead to interesting breakthroughs in 18<sup>th</sup> century's artistic climate. After thoroughly researching this topic, one can conclude that there are several instances in which "Gothic" architecture and literature correlate to one another. Besides the obvious reciprocal connection between *The Castle of Otranto* and Strawberry Hill, the main takeaway in terms of this thought-provoking relationship lies in the fact that both artistic mediums were used at the same point in time as a clever and subtle device for promoting oppositional political views as well as sending a message of social criticism.

Finally, there is one more remark I must point out in regards to inspiration and approach to this topic. The inspiration came from inexplicable intuition that Gothic architecture and Gothic novel are somehow connected. This may be the consequence of studying English language and literature and Art history simultaneously because comparing and finding connections between the two fields was inevitable in my case. What is more, it propelled me to look for clues in order to confirm my suspicion and that lead me to some interesting parallels and conclusions. The intention behind this thesis was not to provide unwavering answers, but to present a different perspective in regards to 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century's architectural and literary production as well as steer discussion about it in a new direction. Potentially, this will serve as a catalyst for raising more questions and furthering cross-disciplinary research about this and similar topics. Although there is a lot of talk about interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary studies in today's academic circles this approach is seldom taken, so hopefully this will encourage others to partake in similar endeavors.



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## 6. GOTHIC REVIVAL AND HORACE WALPOLE

### Summary

This cross-disciplinary paper deals with two seemingly unrelated disciplines – architecture and literature, which are rarely seen in correlation to one another. Usually, architectural theory is reserved for scholars of specific fields such as art history, architecture or design while literary theory is reserved for scholars who study literature of specific cultures and language communities. However, scientific methodologies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenge us to broaden our horizons and look at already known facts and phenomena through different lenses in order to discover new meanings about the world's past (or present). Thus, the main objective behind this master's thesis was to investigate “Gothic” tendencies characteristic of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century which are expressed in two rather different artistic mediums. The particular interest was put on discovering underlying messages both neo-gothic architecture and Gothic novel conveyed at that time. While the differences between these two mediums are obvious, the similarities are less evident and in some instances even surprising which is why, once they are brought to light, they raise interest for this topic even more.

Key words: Gothic Revival, Horace Walpole, Strawberry Hill, Gothic novel, The Castle of Otranto

## 7. NEOGOTIKA I HORACE WALPOLE

### Sažetak

Ovaj multidisciplinarni rad obuhvaća dva naizgled nepovezana područja koja su rijetko kad viđena u međusobnoj korelaciji – arhitekturu i književnost. Obično, teorija arhitekture je područje rezervirano za znanstvenike koji se bave proučavanjem povijesti umjetnosti, arhitekture ili dizajna dok se teorijom književnosti bave akademici čije je područje interesa literarna produkcija određenih kultura i jezičnih zajednica. Međutim, znanstvene metodologije 21. stoljeća stavljaju pred nas izazov da proširimo svoje horizonte i gledamo na već poznate činjenice i fenomene iz drugih kuteva kako bi došli do novih spoznaja o svijetu i njegovoj prošlosti (ili sadašnjosti). Stoga, glavna namjera ovog diplomskog rada je istražiti „gotičke“ tendencije karakteristične za 18. i 19. stoljeće koje su izražene u dva poprilično različita umjetnička medija. Poseban naglasak je stavljen na otkrivanje suptilnih poruka koje su neogotička arhitektura, ali i gotički roman nosili u sebi u tom vremenskom periodu. Iako su razlike između ova dva medija očite, sličnosti su manje bjelodane, zapravo u nekim slučajevima čak i iznenađujuće, što je razlog zašto ova tema još više pobuđuje interes.

Ključne riječi: neogotika, Horace Walpole, Strawberry Hill, gotički roman, Dvorac Otranto