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**ANN RADCLIFFE'S USE OF LANDSCAPES AND MAN-
MADE STRUCTURES FOR THE CREATION OF THE
ATMOSPHERE OF TERROR IN HER GOTHIC NOVEL
THE ITALIAN
BA thesis**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present thesis is to investigate Ann Radcliffe's use of landscapes and man-made structures for the creation of the atmosphere of terror in her Gothic novel *The Italian*. The main purpose is to explore, based on examples from the novel, how the use of various landscapes and man-made structures characteristic of the Gothic fiction genre attributes to the creation of the desired effect of terror.

The main body of the thesis is divided into an introduction, two main chapters and a conclusion. The introduction gives a general overview of Radcliffe's connection to and her role in the genre, of *The Italian* as well as a short description of the structure of the following thesis. First of the two main chapters focuses on providing a theoretical overview of the author as well as of the Gothic phenomena used by Radcliffe. The following chapter is divided into five subsections, giving each of the phenomena investigated their own section. This chapter will focus on finding examples from the novel and analysing them based on the theoretical background information presented in the first chapter. The main body of the thesis ends with a conclusion where the main ideas from the whole thesis are compiled into a summary.

The abstract in Estonian will be provided at the end of the thesis in the résumé.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- I Radcliffe, Ann. 2017. *The Italian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

INTRODUCTION

Ann Radcliffe is known as a pioneer of the Gothic fiction genre in the 18th century. Her work has influenced the future development of the genre, especially in the field of landscapes. Her landscape descriptions and the use of them in her novels have been emphasised by many as her main contribution to the development of the Gothic fiction genre. Her novel *The Italian* is an especially good example of that since one of the main characteristics of Gothic fiction, the atmosphere of terror, is mainly created through the use of landscapes as well as other structures. It is for that reason that I have chosen Radcliffe's novel *The Italian* as the basis of my analysis on how she uses landscapes and man-made structures in that particular Gothic novel to create the desired atmosphere of terror.

Written four years after Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* in 1796 and first published in 1797 (Groom 2017: xii), *The Italian* by Radcliffe is a classic Gothic novel. The main plot of the novel is the story of a young aristocratic man Vincentio di Vivaldi and a young bourgeois woman Ellena Rosalba who are being kept apart by Vivaldi's family due to the differences in their social standing.

In my thesis I will be firstly identifying the specific ways used by Radcliffe to create the atmosphere of terror. Secondly, I will be looking at various secondary sources that will be referred to in the first chapter of the thesis for a better understanding of the subject as well as for creating a theoretical background for the analysis. Next, I will proceed to finding examples of Radcliffe applying the aforementioned ways. Finally, I will be analysing what kind of an effect the examples from *The Italian* are meant to have on the characters as well as the reader and how as a result of those effects the desired atmosphere of terror is created.

1 GOTHIC FICTION AND RADCLIFFE'S *THE ITALIAN*

Take —An old castle, half of it ruinous.
 A long gallery, with a great many doors, some secret ones.
 Three murdered bodies, quite fresh.
 As many skeletons, in chests and presses...
 Mix them together, in the form of three volumes, to be taken at any
 of the watering-places before going to bed.
 (cited in Botting 1996: 29)

Since its establishment, the Gothic Fiction genre has developed a set of characteristic traits that make it recognisable despite the various changes the genre has gone through over time. As can be observed from the quote above by an unknown critic, the main recognisable traits include ruins, hidden passages and anything connected to murder and death. Consequently, the 'dark subterranean vaults, decaying abbeys, gloomy forests, jagged mountains and wild scenery inhabited by bandits, persecuted heroines, orphans, and malevolent aristocrats' are all used to achieve the desired effect of either terror or horror which we have come to see as a necessity for Gothic fiction (cited in Botting 1996: 29). However, the genre itself is not as old as one would assume based on its name. Jerrold E. Hogle (2002: 1) and Emma J. Clery (2002: 21) both state that people connecting the genre to the Middle Ages or even earlier times are mistaken since the previously mentioned authors as well as Robert Miles (2002: 41) all agree that the first novel labelling itself as a Gothic story was published in 1764 by Horace Walpole. Yet, the confusion is to be expected because, as Andrew Smith (2013: 18) and Clery (2002: 21) both point out, the novel was first published and advertised as a found manuscript from somewhere between the 11th and the 13th century. Both of the authors write that it was only after the second edition that Walpole admitted to having written the whole thing himself (ibid.). Furthermore, the association with the past is understandable because, according to Smith, the word Gothic itself is sometimes used to refer to the Goths who were a Germanic tribe living in the European regions between the third and fifth century (2013: 2).

As mentioned above, the genre was born in the 18th century, a time of changes such

as the French Revolution, urbanisation as well as industrialisation. Thus, it is not surprising that the fears and beliefs of the people are reflected in contemporary literature, in Gothic novels to be more precise. With France and England being separated only by the English Channel, a lot of what was going on at the time in France had an immediate effect on the English society. Therefore, when the French Revolution broke out across the channel, it became clear to the English that “the complete dissolution of the social order” was an actually possible reality and something one should fear and look out for (Botting 1996: 40). In such a tumultuous time, “Gothic signified a trend towards an aesthetics based on feeling and emotion and associated primarily with the sublime” (Botting 1996: 2). Hogle gives a possible explanation for the longevity of the genre by stating that Gothic fiction “helps us address and disguise some of the most important desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and mental to the widely social and cultural” (2002: 4). Therefore, it is understandable why writers of that changing period in time would use Gothic novels to express their anxieties and fears because “Gothic narratives never escaped the concerns of their own times” (Botting 1996: 2).

Ann Radcliffe was born in 1764 in London where she also died at the age of fifty-eight (Miles 1998: 181). According to Miles, Radcliffe only wrote for eight years (ibid.). Despite her short period of literary production, she wrote a number of novels, such as *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* in 1789, *A Sicilian Romance* in 1790, *The Romance of the Forest* in 1791, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794, *The Italian* in 1797 and her last novel (published after her death) *Gaston de Blondville* in 1826 (Groom 2017: i). In addition to creating numerous novels during those eight short years, she achieved great success with her work. Miles talks about the money that Radcliffe received for *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian* and how she became “one of the highest paid novelists of the decade” (1998: 182). Hogle also calls Radcliffe “the most popular English woman novelist

of the 1790s” (2002: 10). The same is said by Nick Groom in the introductory part of the Oxford World’s Classics edition of *The Italian*, where he also talks about Radcliffe’s aim which was to “exhilarate rather than shock readers” by “mixing sublime aesthetic effects with Enlightenment empiricism and ratiocination” (2017: ix), an aspect of her writing which received some criticism from her contemporaries. In addition to success with the general public, Radcliffe became a pioneer for the Gothic fiction genre despite the criticism she received. According to Miles, Radcliffe was mainly criticised by the Scottish author Sir Walter Scott for her use of the “explained supernatural” (1998: 182). Her explaining the supernatural elements was seen as a manifestation of the “conservative, eighteenth-century rationalism” which was interpreted as being in opposition to the dark Romanticism that Gothic fiction was categorised under (ibid.). Clery rather sees her method as an attempt to “reconcile Protestant incredulity and the taste for ghostly terror” (2002: 27). Moreover, the fact that she decided to use the explained supernatural and terror Gothic instead of horror Gothic, made her a backward-looking author for the critics of her time (Miles 1998: 183). Radcliffe was criticised for just reworking what had been done before, instead of helping the genre evolve (ibid.). On the other hand, the English essayist and literary critic William Hazlitt defended Radcliffe by acknowledging her as “the founder of her own school of fiction” as well as someone who took Walpole’s experimentations and developed them further (ibid.). Though Radcliffe’s first two novels are now seen more as preparatory work for her later novels, they helped her to find and fix the structure of her plots (Miles 1998: 184, 186). However, it is in her later romances, *The Italian* being one of them, that she developed her nuanced landscape descriptions and their use in connection to the sublime (ibid.: 186). Furthermore, Miles states that Radcliffe did not only “invent a Gothic formula” but she also took in all that was going on in the society at the time (1998: 186). She is known for her use of “almost intolerable suspense, for her

psychological character development, for her expansive picturesque landscapes, and for her narrative drive (Groom 2017: xii). Beside influencing writers in the Gothic genre, Radcliffe's work has influenced many other writers such as the Brontë sisters, John Keats as well as Fyodor Dostoevsky to name but a few (Miles 1998:184). I chose to analyse specifically *The Italian*, her fifth novel which was published in 1797, from all of Radcliffe's novels because by then she had developed and discovered all of her innovative techniques as well as because of the impact it has had on the Gothic fiction genre. Her earlier works allowed her to find the plot structure that she would use repeatedly (Miles 1998: 184). Miles emphasises the importance of those changes referring to them as "profound" (ibid.: 185). The changes he refers to are switching from the historical settings to the beginning of the Enlightenment period, allowing her to represent various sides to a topic; removing the woman from just a supporting role and making her into a heroine, a central figure in the novel; changing the roles of the parents by creating absent mother figures and persecuting father figures; developing the intricate landscape descriptions that would become characteristic of her later novels; making use of and helping to evoke terror and the sublime (ibid.: 185-186). It is in *The Italian* that all of her innovations are present which makes it an excellent example of Radcliffe as an author as well as the changes she would make to the genre and the impact she would have on future writers in general.

Hogle (2002: 1), Smith (2013: 19) and Cannon Schmitt (1994: 854) show that the second edition of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* is openly a mix of the ancient as well as the modern romance. Smith notes that Walpole's decision to present the first novel in its preface as a found manuscript signalled to the reader that they were dealing with 'fantastical improbability', whereas by naming himself as the author in the second edition he showed that there were realistic elements to it and that it could be read accordingly (2013: 19). A similar effect of distance in time as well as space would be created also later

by other authors. One explanation for such a preference was the need for some distance of time and space between the target of the commentary and England and its society so that the authors could comment on current and, therefore, also delicate topics in England without repercussions. For the establishment of distance in time, medieval architecture became one of the favourites, as it clearly indicated “the spatial and temporal separation of the past and its values from those of the present” (Botting 1996: 2). Continental Europe became one of the favourite locations among Gothic writers for creating that needed sense of distance in space. Radcliffe’s *The Italian* is no exception here since the events take place in Italy. Throughout the novel Radcliffe uses various techniques to emphasise the fact that the story does not take place in England.

In addition to the use of times and locations far distant from the present, another strong characteristic trait of the genre is the use of terror or horror to express the aforementioned fears and anxieties of the period. Botting states that the words “terror” and “horror” can both be used to describe the state of experiencing extreme fear (1998: 123). The modern reader would also see those two words as synonyms, expressing the same sensations. However, the 18th century Gothic writers, Radcliffe being one of them, would make a clear distinction between the two. According to Radcliffe’s essay “On the Supernatural in Poetry” which was first published in the *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* in 1826, terror “expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life”, whereas horror “contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them” (2017: 403). Hogle supports Radcliffe’s view by stating that the words “terror” and “horror” cannot be used as synonyms since they represent different concepts (2002: 3). Terror Gothic means that the sense of uneasiness and fear is created by keeping the danger out of direct sight or by just suggesting the presence of danger as opposed to horror Gothic where the desired sensations are created by blatantly breaking all social norms and using direct

violence (Hogle 2002: 3). As can be observed in *The Italian* and as is stated by Botting, Radcliffe sees terror as superior to horror and therefore decides to use terror instead of horror in her novels (1996: 48).

Andrew Smith in his book *Gothic Literature* discusses the role of religion and the use of religious elements in Gothic fiction to express Protestant Britain's views on the Catholic church (2013: 24). After the changes that England went through during the reign of Henry VIII - the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the establishment of the Church of England - the Catholic faith had lost its stronghold in England. The distrust for the Catholic church, as shown by Clery, was due "to the Reformation in the sixteenth century and the definitive break with the Catholic past" (2002: 21). According to Smith, the opinions of the British people on the topic of Catholicism were reflected in Gothic literature (2013: 24). Countries still practising Catholicism were seen as places filled with superstition and religious extremes (Smith 2013: 24). Therefore, it is safe to say that 18th century Gothic fiction in England was mainly addressed to a non-Catholic readership, thus displaying corresponding values. Smith suggests that Catholics were seen as missing the 'Protestant self-restraint' and that tended to 'generat[e] fantastical 'Gothic' terrors (ibid.). The works of Radcliffe are no exception. *The Italian* relies heavily on different aspects of the Catholic church to create the desired effect of terror. There are numerous examples of Radcliffe portraying a structure that the reader would immediately connect with the Catholic faith as a prison or an institution solely aimed at torturing the innocent.

Another recurring element used in Gothic fiction and, therefore, also in Radcliffe's novel under discussion to create the desired sense of terror is the labyrinth. Botting states that the symbol of the labyrinth was initially used to express "the complexity and variety of society which remained, none the less, unified" and was therefore an element which was perceived positively (1996: 52). However, the perception of the labyrinth changed later in

the eighteenth century due to the emergence of Gothic fiction. It acquired a more negative meaning, coming to symbolise “fear, confusion and alienation” and turning into “a site of darkness, horror and desire” (Botting 1996: 52). The above-mentioned attitude towards labyrinths is used by Horace Walpole in his novel *The Castle of Otranto*. According to Miles, Radcliffe takes inspiration from Walpole’s “heroine who retreats ever deeper into the castle’s labyrinth” (2002: 46). Having said that, Radcliffe makes some alterations to the use of the labyrinth by “also include[ing] a period of extended escape and flight” (ibid.). Miles states that these alterations, which include taking her heroines also out of the labyrinths, give Radcliffe the added opportunity to showcase the sublime landscapes of mainland Europe (ibid.). Consequently, Radcliffe uses a wider range of techniques to create the desired effects and does not solely rely on keeping her characters underground, confused and cut off from the rest of the humanity. In my thesis, I will be focusing on the use of the labyrinth in its different forms.

The concept of the sublime was very familiar to Gothic authors such as Walpole, Matthew Lewis and Radcliffe. Yet the concept in its original form is often less known or not known at all to the average reader today. Radcliffe’s understanding of the sublime is mainly based on Edmund Burke’s theory first introduced in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* which was published in 1757 (Groom 2017: xxi). According to Groom (ibid.) and Milbank (1998: 226), Burke’s theory is an updated version of *Peri hypsous* or *Peri Hupsous*, translated into English as *On the Sublime*, from the first century which was adapted for the contemporary audience. Milbank and Groom differ on the author of the Greek text. Groom names Longinus as the author (2017: xxi). In contrast, Milbank does not name an author but just states that naming Longinus as the author of the work is a regularly made error (1998: 226). Notwithstanding the identity of the original work’s author, the central idea of Burke’s theory is based on the

establishment of the sublime as a result of the mind coming into contact with the infinite (Groom 2017: xxi). Groom continues with saying that such a state can be experienced but will in its essence remain unknown (ibid.). The experience leading to the sublime is something that “engages and expands the imagination—especially when obscurity /.../ veils the experience” (ibid.). Botting states that, in its essence, “the sublime was associated with grandeur and magnificence” (1996: 2), both words that may be connected with the infinite. Generally speaking, this means that the extreme and therefore grand and majestic landscapes are used to “[stimulate] powerful emotions of terror and wonder in the viewer” (ibid.). According to Milbank, it is the aspect of power that plays a central role in the sublime (1998: 226). This means that Gothic writers loved to use mountainous terrains because the “immense scale [of the mountainous landscapes] offered a glimpse of infinity and awful power” (Botting 1996: 2). Furthermore, “[l]oudness and sudden contrasts /.../ contributed to the sense of extension and infinity associated with the sublime” (ibid.: 26). Milbank talks about Burke’s use of people’s fear of death to achieve the sublime (1998: 227). However, she emphasises that the immediate danger to one’s self would inhibit the subjects feeling any pleasure which is a crucial part of the sublime (ibid.).

Representing times gone by and serving as constant reminders of the impermanence of human life, ruins are an integral part of the formulaic earlier Gothic fiction. According to Botting, ruins serve as the “[m]anifestations of the Gothic past” (1996: 15). “Gothic” was used at the time as a negative word to generally describe the Middle Ages as a time of “of barbarous customs and practices, of superstition, ignorance, extravagant fancies and natural wildness” (ibid.). The idea of ruins representing a negative and barbaric past is also supported by Michael J. Lewis who states that a landscape filled with only nature and forests is something that is more likely to remind the person of pleasant and nostalgic emotions when compared to ruined structures which

are more likely to create the atmosphere of melancholy and remind the person of the violent medieval past (2002: 14). In the 18th century, landscape gardens became an integral part of the English culture and as the use of medieval ruins in the previously mentioned gardens was popular (ibid.: 14-15), people were consciously looking to be surrounded by ruins. Lewis talks about the popularity of fake-medieval follies and about how some made use of actual ruins whereas for others the construction of completely new structures was necessary to achieve the same look and feeling (ibid.: 16). Thus, the eighteenth-century people were intrigued by ruins and the medieval past, a fascination which naturally made its way into literature and was used by Gothic writers to their advantage.

On the basis of the above, it would appear that Gothic fiction has very distinct characteristics that are used to create the various versions of fear. The focus on either terror or horror varied amongst the Gothic writers with Radcliffe being one of the most famous representatives of terror Gothic and Matthew Lewis being a well-known example for a horror Gothic author. Despite the authors' varying views on fear, there are a number of characteristic traits present in all of them. For this thesis, I will be focusing more on the characteristic traits present in earlier Gothic fiction, as this is the period when Radcliffe was active. The characteristics demonstrated in *The Italian* are foreign landscapes and surroundings to create distance from England as well as to create a sense of alienation, structures with strong connections to Catholicism to immediately evoke distrust and other negative emotions in the Protestant readership, labyrinths to create a sense of loneliness and to make the characters more vulnerable and more easily influenced, extreme landscapes and the sublime to elicit a strong emotional experience which may then be swayed towards the negative or the positive and finally the ruins to exhibit the violence of the past.

2 PHENOMENA USED FOR THE CREATION OF THE ATMOSPHERE OF TERROR IN *THE ITALIAN*

Radcliffe uses various landscape descriptions and structures to create the desired atmosphere of terror. The devices Radcliffe uses in *The Italian* are foreign landscapes and surroundings, various structures with strong connections to Catholicism, labyrinths, extreme landscapes and the sublime as well as ruins. In the following chapter I will be analysing Radcliffe's *The Italian* in the light of her use of all of the aforementioned devices.

2.1 Foreign Landscapes and Surroundings

The first characteristic trait of Gothic fiction is introduced to the reader in the first sentence of the whole novel. Radcliffe establishes a distance between the present-day England and the novel by telling the reader about "some English travellers in Italy, during one of their excursions in the environs of Naples" (I 3). With that sentence, Radcliffe gives the reader something familiar to hold on to, the English travellers on a Grand Tour, but also brings them into a foreign space which will give her the freedom to address controversial topics as well as makes it easier to create the atmosphere of terror. What is more, she describes different landscapes and mentions various locations to emphasise the fact that the novel is taking place in Italy rather than in England. For instance, she describes "thickets of almond trees, figs, broad-leaved myrtle, and ever-green rose bushes, [being] intermingled with the strawberry tree, beautiful in fruit and blossoms, the yellow jasmine, the delightful acacia mimosa, and a variety of other fragrant plants" (I 62), many of which are plants not native to England. Moreover, she names specific locations and names. In the novel, Radcliffe has Ellena and Vivaldi admire the mountain "Velino" that lies "between the territories of Rome and Naples" (I 152). She also uses iconic Italian landmarks by having Vivaldi see "the dome of St. Peter, appearing faintly over the plains

that surrounded Rome” (I 184).

As mentioned before, the already existing beliefs and changes taking place in mainland Europe scared the English since they signalled those possible beliefs or changes also coming over to England. Gothic fiction writers knew how to use that to their advantage. Radcliffe, for example, brings the reader to Italy, a foreign country that still practices Catholicism. Playing on the insecurities and suspicions arising from the foreign surroundings, Radcliffe pushes the reader to a point of fear which creates the desired effect of terror. Radcliffe also approaches her characters with the same logic. She takes the main heroine, Ellena, and rips her from everything that she knows, from everything that is familiar to her. Ellena is taken by “three men, masked and muffled up in cloaks” from her home, the villa Altieri, after the death of her aunt Signora Bianchi (I 59). She is put into a completely dark carriage which inhibits her from keeping track of her location. This means that the moment she is finally allowed to see her surroundings, she finds herself “on a wild and solitary plain surrounded by mountains and woods” with no idea as to her exact location (I 60). The adjectives that Radcliffe chose to describe the plain enforce the idea of loneliness and helplessness. Surrounding the plain with mountains and woods creates the visual of a wall which in turn gives the impression that Ellena is imprisoned by nature as well as the strange men.

At the same time, she does tease the reader by insinuating that the landscape in the gardens is more like that of England rather than of Italy. An example for this can be seen during the celebration of Ellena and Vivaldi’s wedding at the Marchese’s villa:

The style of the gardens, where lawns and groves, and woods varied the undulating surface, was that of England, and of the present day rather than of Italy; except ‘Where a long alley peeping on the main,’ exhibited such gigantic loftiness of shade, and grandeur of perspective, as characterize the Italian taste. (I 391)

By making such a statement at the end of the novel, Radcliffe reminds to the readers after they have read the whole story that choosing a foreign setting for this novel mainly stems

from the need to distance the topics covered and the possible criticism coming from the English society. Furthermore, by mentioning that the setting resembles that ‘of the present day’, the readers are once more reminded that the choice of a setting and of the time is calculated. The mentioning of a possible real time puts the topics addressed into the context of the present. At the same time, Radcliffe herself had been to the Netherlands and Germany (Groom 2017: xii) but not to Italy which may play a part in her suggesting that everything so far should be seen as fiction. Reminding the reader of the fictional aspect of the whole novel gives her the security of not being held accountable for any inaccuracies that may exist due to her lack of personal experience.

As has been noted, the use of foreign landscape and surroundings has many functions in *The Italian*. It can be used by the author for the author’s own protection and deniability due to the delicate nature of the different topics addressed. Taking the characters or also the readers out of their comfort zone and placing them into a foreign setting makes them feel separated and alone. Both of those feelings make the person vulnerable and more susceptible to outside influences. This allows the author to direct the characters and the readers towards whichever emotion they wish.

2.2 Structures with Strong Connections to Catholicism

The Italian relies heavily on different aspects of the Catholic church to establish the desired effect of terror. There are numerous examples of Radcliffe portraying a structure that the reader would immediately connect with the Catholic faith as a prison or an institution solely aimed at torturing the innocent. For instance, one of the first situations where the reader comes into contact with a Catholic structure in the novel is when Ellena, the innocent and hardworking bourgeois woman, is kidnapped and taken by force to the monastery of San Stefano. The aim of the abduction is to separate her and Vincentio di Vivaldi, the aristocratic man from a respected family, to avoid any type of a

relationship as well as a future marriage between the two. The main organiser of the kidnapping is Vivaldi's mother, the Marchesa di Vivaldi, who orchestrates the whole abduction secretly. She receives help from her trusted spiritual advisor, Father Schedoni. The Marchesa finds the abduction necessary because she deems Ellena "to be so much [Vivaldi's] inferior" in her social standing and is therefore not a fitting wife for her son (I 107). In this situation the former place of spirituality has taken on the role of a well disguised prison. To strip the buildings of any sense of positivity and comfort, Radcliffe emphasises specific aspects to create an ominous or menacing feeling towards those structures. On her way to the monastery of San Stefano, we have a moment where Ellena sees

the tall west window of the cathedral with the spires that overtopped it; the narrow pointed roofs of the cloisters; angles of the insurmountable wall, which fenced the garden from the precipices below, and the dark portal leading into the chief court (I 63).

From that example we can see how her emphasising a specific part of a monastery, a wall, and describing it as "insurmountable" (ibid.) will make the reader immediately think of a place that cannot be escaped from. With just this small emphasis, Radcliffe has turned the walls that are meant to keep the spiritual monastery peaceful by keeping out any disturbing factors into a prison wall. Moreover, by describing the entrance to the main area of the monastery as a "dark portal" (ibid.), she has the reader picture entering a different world all together. The darkness aspect creates a sense of unease and works as a tool towards building up the feeling of terror since it hinders Ellena from seeing what is waiting ahead.

At the same time, Radcliffe's work does not portray Catholic structures solely as the homes of everything evil. Her way of using Catholic structures differs, for example, from Matthew Lewis and his novel *The Monk* where monasteries are only seen in a negative light and as places where torture can take place under the cover of spirituality. Cannon Schmitt states in his article on the topic that Radcliffe's "novels resist being read

monologically” (1994: 855) which means that she represents different sides of a topic in her novel. She does this in many different aspects of the novel, for example she “promote[s] aristocratic as well as bourgeois values” (Schmitt 1994: 855). In connection to landscapes and structures, she shows the possible positive side of those same religious institutions in addition to using Catholicism and people’s distrust towards it to create the Gothic setting of terror. It is this duality in her portrayal of any aspect in her work that makes her stand out from other Gothic fiction authors at the time. For example, in addition to seeing monasteries and convents as places to hide people in against their will to protect the outside world, Radcliffe portrays some convents and monasteries as safe havens. By doing this, she reverses the picture of a prison, where the world outside is safer by keeping wicked people inside, and creates a safe place inside the convents and monasteries where people are protected from the evil existing out in the world. In *The Italian* we have the lady Abbess of Santa Maria della Pietà advise Ellena, who just lost her aunt and with that her only protection in a male dominated world, to “make the convent her present asylum” (I 56). For Ellena, who had just lost the only family she had known, the convent offers her the security that she as a young single woman needs at a time like this. Another example from the novel is when Vivaldi, Ellena and Paulo find themselves without shelter for the night. They head to the Ursuline convent in hopes of finding a safe space where Ellena could stay for the night. On arriving at the convent, the Abbess is immediately informed of the three travellers and their request. The Abbess “quickly returned an invitation to Ellena” to stay the night (I 157). Moreover, when the Abbess hears about the rest of the group, she suggests that Vivaldi should go to the “neighbouring society of Benedictines” (I 157). This type of hospitality and kindness is what one would expect based on the Catholic rules of conduct as opposed to the how the Catholic communities have generally been portrayed in Gothic fiction novels. As can be

seen, in both of the portrayals shown by Radcliffe, the religious institutions have changed their function. The aforementioned locations are used less “to cultivate spirituality” and more to “escape a kind of worldliness” (Smith 2013: 24).

Overall, Radcliffe portrays the Catholic structures in her novels in two different ways. Radcliffe reminds the reader that some monasteries and convents do still serve their intended purpose by being a place of peace and spirituality. At the same time, she is a Gothic fiction writer which means that she uses people’s already existing fear and mistrust towards such institutions to create places of fear. The monasteries and convents adopt the role of a prison.

2.3 Labyrinths

The sense of alienation and horror that was connected to labyrinths allowed for the creation of a new space. Irrespective of the actual physical location of the labyrinth, the space made the characters feel completely separated from the rest of the society. The complete solitude felt by the characters became essential in creating the feeling of terror and fear. Radcliffe’s labyrinths can be divided roughly into two categories: labyrinths that are created outdoors by using the natural landscape, such as trees, or ruins; or indoors where the main desired effect is obtained by taking the current venture underground.

The reader comes across an outdoor labyrinth during Vivaldi’s journey to find the love of his life, Ellena. As Vivaldi and his servant Paulo hike through wild terrains, they manage to lose their way which results in “the path [being] lost in several tracts that branched out among the trees” (I 108). The loss of a certain way forward with the additional pressure from the approaching night “amidst wilds” results in the characters experiencing confusion and fear (I 108). Moreover, Radcliffe’s use of ruins to create another type of outdoor labyrinth can be observed when Ellena and Schedoni come across

the ruins of a villa that had belonged to the Baróne di Cambrusca and had been destroyed during an earthquake. After having been left alone by the others in the ruins, she decides to explore the ruins further instead of staying still despite being scared to do either one of the actions. She decides to follow a passage leading “to a distant part of the villa” and “with difficulty [makes her way] between the half-demolished walls” (I 252). As she continues, she “scarcely notice[s] whither she [is] going, till /.../ she perceive[s] herself among the ruins of the tower” (ibid.). On the basis of this scene, the reader gets the impression that Ellena is trapped within the walls of the ruins and that the feeling of fear stems from her seeming constraint. At the same time, Radcliffe paints a picture where it seems as if Ellena is being led by the destroyed walls more and more into the heart of the ruins or into what can also be interpreted as the centre of the labyrinth.

Radcliffe also brings the element of a labyrinth indoors by moving from ruins to buildings that are still standing and then taking them underground. Brother Jeronimo leads the young lovers, Ellena and Vivaldi, out of the convent where Ellena has been kept. However, to do so and to remain undetected, they cannot take the most direct route. Instead they need to go through the church and have trust in brother Jeronimo when he takes them “into the cave”, then leads them through “the wire-work” and into “the extremity of the vault” (I 132). Yet the journey does not end there. From that point on, brother Jeronimo wants to take the two young people through “a small door” and into “a narrow passage winding into the rock” (I 132). It is at this point that we can see how the paranoia, fear and unnerving feeling of being trapped blossom in the two main characters. The further into the labyrinth they feel that they are being taken, the more separated from the rest of the world and, therefore, alarmed Ellena and Vivaldi feel. They start distrusting people they were willing to follow just moments before. In this case, Ellena and Vivaldi do not trust brother Jeronimo to take them out of the convent. Instead they believe that

they are being led into an underground prison which would rob them of their freedom and alienate them from the world that they wish to be a part of.

A further example of the use of underground labyrinths is when Vivaldi is taken to the prison of the Inquisitors. He is led by two officials down “a flight of broad steps, at the foot of which another iron gate admit[s] them to a kind of hall” (I 187). However, he is taken further into the labyrinth when he enters one of the “several avenues, opening from the apartment [which] seemed to lead to distant quarters” (I 188). The act of leading Vivaldi through the different passages works as a catalyst for the different emotions that Vivaldi is about to feel whilst being kept a prisoner by the Inquisition. Radcliffe adds the slight detail of him realising that the vault he passes through is in fact “one of the burial vaults of the victims, who suffered in the Inquisition” and “his whole frame [is subsequently] thrilled with horror” (I 188). Moreover, the readers see how Vivaldi’s feelings of fear are well founded as he ends up being kept a prisoner. Being trapped underground within the labyrinth makes Vivaldi feel helpless and alone. He talks about how “it seemed as if death had already anticipated his work in these regions of horror” (I 293). Based on this, it is possible to deduce that Vivaldi is being overcome by a sense of hopelessness.

In summary, the role of labyrinths is to create confusion as well as the feeling of being alone and trapped. Similarly to taking the reader as well as the characters outside of their comfort zone and with that making them more susceptible to outside influences, Radcliffe places her characters into labyrinths and with that creates a similar feeling of uneasiness, confusion and fear that one might experience in a foreign location. By trapping her characters into labyrinths, she evokes feelings that are good segues for the feeling of terror that Radcliffe desires to effect on people.

2.4 Extreme Landscapes and the Sublime

According to Smith, one of Radcliffe's main characters in *The Italian*, Ellena, is placed into numerous life-threatening situations where it would be understandable if she decided to give in to the fear and terror (2013: 27). However, she decides to resist and fight those feelings by finding consolation from magnificent scenery that she is surrounded by (Smith 2013: 27). It is here that another characteristic of the Gothic fiction genre, extreme landscapes and the sublime to be precise, can be observed. An example of such a life-threatening situation can be seen during Ellena's journey to the convent of San Stefano where she is to be kept a prisoner. According to the extremely limited information Ellena manages to gather, she has been abducted by the banditti. Thus, she is ripped away by force from everything she has ever known and taken forcefully into the unknown. An action like this creates a sense of uneasiness and fear in the character since she has no knowledge of what the banditti have planned to do with her. She is kept unaware of her final destination. By removing the security that the familiar surroundings offer, Radcliffe has already taken the character as well as the reader out of the indifference that Burke names as one of the main problems that can be fixed with the use of the sublime (cited in Clery 2002: 28). Although fear is enough to remove people from their everyday comforts, it is not yet enough to achieve the sublime. As previously mentioned, the sublime is established by the mixing of two different elements: fear or pain and beauty or pleasure. Radcliffe uses the magnificent Italian landscape to add the beauty or pleasure aspect to the current situation. As she is first allowed a glimpse out of the dark carriage, Ellena notices "the lofty region of the mountains" (I 61). On further inspection she sees the

pinnacles and vast precipices of various-tinted marbles, intermingled with scanty vegetation, such as stunted pinasters, dwarf oak and holly, which [give] dark touches to the many-coloured cliffs, and sometimes [stretch] in shadowy masses to the deep vallies, that, winding into obscurity, [seem] to invite curiosity to explore the scenes beyond. (I 61)

Seeing that landscape after being deprived of anything remotely comforting gives her a “temporary, though feeble, relief” (ibid.). Her “spirits [are] gradually revived and elevated by the grandeur of the images around her” (ibid.). As the day progresses, Ellena and her captors arrive at a “rocky defile” (ibid.) through which Ellena sees the “distant plains, and mountains opening beyond, lighted up with all the purple splendor of the setting sun” (ibid.). The previous observation is also affirmed by Smith (2013: 27). Moreover, the road to the convent leads by a river that over time has eaten up more and more land until there was no space left for a road. Thus, the road is

carried high among the cliffs, that impended over the river, and seemed as if suspended in air; while the gloom and vastness of the precipices, which towered above and sunk below it, together with the amazing force and uproar of the falling waters, combined to render the pass more terrific than the pencil could describe, or language can express. (I 62)

The experience of driving along that road does cure Ellena of the indifference that Burke mentions. She is filled with “calmness” (I 62) thanks to the “somewhat of a dreadful pleasure” she feels when “looking down upon the irresistible flood” (ibid.). The phrase “dreadful pleasure” (ibid.) that Radcliffe uses, makes it evident that it is indeed the sublime that she uses. Radcliffe’s decision to use the combination of those two words is again influenced by Burke and his aforementioned theory from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. According to Groom, the phrase is a result of Radcliffe’s recognition of the sublime’s influence on the phenomenon of terror resulting in oxymorons (2017: xii). Groom draws a clear parallel between Radcliffe’s “dreadful pleasure” and Burke’s “delightful horror” (ibid.). In that scene, the character of Ellena experiences the fear of being held captive as well as the likely feeling of mortality that one feels when looking down from a high place upon the powerful and mesmerising water directly below. At the same time, there is the peculiar feeling of pleasure that comes from looking at something so powerful. In Ellena’s situation, the “irresistible flood” may also signify freedom and a way out for her (I 62). Radcliffe has used the word “irresistible”

which would signal something that one feels the need to either look at with amazement or to maybe feel the need to jump (ibid.).

Furthermore, Ellena is affected by the surrounding nature when she is moved from the chapel of San Sebastian to the decaying house by the sea where she is to be killed. On her way there she observes

[t]he forests spreading on all sides among hills and vallies, and descending towards the Adriatic, which bounded the distance in front. The coast, bending into a bay, was rocky and bold. Lofty pinnacles, wooded to their summits, rose over the shores, and cliffs of naked marble of such gigantic proportions, that they were awful even at a distance, obtruded themselves far into the waves, breasting their eternal fury. Beyond the margin of the coast, as far as the eye could reach, appeared pointed mountains, darkened with forests, rising ridge over ridge in many successions. (I 199)

The aforementioned landscape description expresses the raw power as well as the intimidating side of nature. Radcliffe talks about the “cliffs of naked marble [being] of such gigantic proportions, that they were awful even at a distance” (ibid.). The choice to describe the view of enormous marble cliffs as “awful” indicates that the main emphasis in this example is not as much on the sublime as just on terror and fear. Furthermore, the landscape is portrayed as something negative with the added use of verbs with negative connotations. One of them is used when talking about the same marble cliffs. In addition to the cliffs being “awful” even when looked at from far away, they “[obtrude] themselves far into the waves” (ibid.). The verb “obtrude” insinuates something being with force and it being intrusive and unpleasant. What is more, the colours described in this example are very dark and monotone as opposed to the colourful scenes of various Italian plants and flowers described on previous occasions. The only colours that are described or that the reader would imagine based on this description are the white from the marble, the greys and blues from the water and the almost black shades of the mountains one would imagine when they are described being “darkened with forests” (ibid.). Thus, as opposed to the other examples of extreme landscapes and the sublime where Ellena has found solace through the sublime and the majestic nature around her, this time no such comforts are to be found.

The descriptions do awake emotions in Ellena but this time they are overwhelmingly negative. Ellena “fe[els] as if she [is] going into eternal banishment from society” (ibid.). Thus, the extreme landscape is creating feelings of alienation and loneliness which are all emotions that help to build the eventual desired atmosphere of terror. However, Ellena is in that instance not as affected by her surroundings and is still calm due to exhaustion from the constant state of grief and fear for Vivaldi, not from having accepted her fate or from being consoled by the landscape around her (I 199).

In essence, the sublime itself does not create the atmosphere of terror but undoubtedly contributes to it. Radcliffe uses fear and the sublime in two distinct ways. There are occasions in *The Italian* where the sublime is used to decrease the level of alienation and the fear that usually accompanies the previous feeling from something that may resemble horror to something that could be recognised as terror. The added effect of something magnificent and seemingly infinite takes the fear down to a level in which, as mentioned above, the mind is not completely frozen and is still capable of analysing its surroundings. Having said that, Radcliffe also uses the landscapes and the emotions from the sublime to further the character’s feeling of hopelessness and solitude which, similarly to foreign landscapes and labyrinths, will make the character more susceptible to any outside influence.

2.5 Ruins

The final characteristic of Gothic fiction analysed in this thesis is the use of ruins. One of the first occasions where ruins are used to create the atmosphere of uneasiness and terror, is in the scene where Vivaldi and Vivaldi’s friend Bonarmo are trying to ambush the monk that told Vivaldi to stay away from Ellena. Just before Vivaldi and Bonarmo arrive at the arch where they intend to ambush the monk, Vivaldi speaks of “lurk[ing] in the shade of the ruin” (I 19). The choice of words, especially the use of the verb ‘lurk’

paints the reader a picture of the ruins being something to be suspicious of as well as something potentially dangerous. Ruins as places of terror are highlighted when Vivaldi and Bonarmo finally hear someone's steps and have the feeling of someone passing by even though it is not actually possible. Vivaldi makes the decision to follow the steps that he believes belong to the monk. However, Bonarmo advises Vivaldi to rethink his decision and to "not brave the utter darkness of these ruins; [t]o not pursue the assassin to his den" (I 21). Once again, Radcliffe established ruins as structures that should be connected to darkness. Due to Bonarmo talking about the ruins as the home of the assassin, the reader is slowly made to associate all future ruins in this novel with something evil, something that one should be wary of. After having dismissed Bonarmo's warnings, Vivaldi proceeds to follow the monk and the two men are separated due to the momentary hesitation of the latter. Bonarmo finds himself alone in the dark and amongst the "remains of massy walls" (I 22). After not finding his friend, he exits the ruins. Radcliffe's choice of words can again be interpreted here. On the one hand, describing ruins as the "remains" of a building is commonly used. Having said that, the word is also used to describe human remains or bodies. Moreover, it further supports the effect achieved by calling the ruins an assassin's den one page earlier by once again making connections between the surrounding ruins and death.

Another occasion where ruins have the role of a prison and a possible execution site is when Ellena is taken from the chapel of San Sebastian to an old decaying house where she is to be held prisoner and, according to the plans at that time, eventually killed by Schedoni. As is customary to Gothic fiction, the house itself is ancient which allows Radcliffe to create a space between the story she is telling and the present. It is described as a structure where

[t]he walls, of unhewn marble, were high, and strengthened by bastions; and the edifice had turreted corners, which, with the porch in front, and the sloping roof, were falling fast into numerous symptoms of decay. The whole building, with its dark windows and soundless avenues, had an air strikingly

forlorn and solitary. A high wall surrounded the small court in which it stood, and probably had once served as a defence to the dwelling; but the gates, which should have closed against intruders, could no longer perform their office; one of the folds had dropped from its fastenings, and lay on the ground almost concealed in a deep bed of weeds, and the other creaked on its hinges to every blast, at each swing seeming ready to follow the fate of its companion. (I 200)

The emphasis on the marble walls of the house being “high” (I 200) and “strengthened by bastions” (ibid.) as well as on the building itself having “turreted corners” (ibid.) and being surrounded by “[a] high wall” (ibid.), all contribute to the creation of the picture of a prison or a medieval castle which is often accompanied by the atmosphere of terror. The reader’s previous experiences with various prisons concealing themselves as something else or with any structure reminiscent of the barbaric past have made them suspicious of structures that have the potential of being used as a prison or as locations for violent acts. Furthermore, the structure has “an air strikingly forlorn and solitary” (I 200). When thinking back to the effects that labyrinths created, this solitary and decaying house and labyrinths are quite similar in the sense that both of them create the effect of feeling alone and separated from the rest of the world. As mentioned before, the complete feeling of solitude is extremely useful when creating the atmosphere of terror because it makes the characters more vulnerable and, therefore, more susceptible to outside influences.

All things considered, ruins are mainly used in *The Italian* to emphasise the passing of time through the example that even strong stone structures are not indestructible. Such examples remind the characters as well as the reader of the transient nature of the human life. Furthermore, the aforementioned examples both have a very strong connection to death, unnatural deaths to be more precise. What I mean by the previous statement is that both of the locations are connected to the action of killing a person before they would at some point in the far future themselves die of natural causes. Thus, the examples support Botting’s statement that ruins are associated with the brutal Gothic past (1996: 15).

As can be observed from the analysis in the chapter above, Ann Radcliffe uses various aspects of the surroundings to her advantage. She uses the Gothic phenomena and their specific effects on the human mind to create the atmosphere of terror. The effect that *The Italian* has on the reader makes it evident that she has successfully integrated the phenomena into the novel.

CONCLUSION

Gothic fiction as a genre has very characteristic and quite easily recognisable traits, some of which were developed by Ann Radcliffe. A big part of Radcliffe's contribution to the genre is her use of landscapes and surroundings to create the desired atmosphere of terror or horror. Radcliffe, seeing the benefits of having people be frightened but still hold on to their ability to think rationally, solely focuses in her novels on the use of terror. The Gothic phenomena she uses include foreign landscapes, Catholic structures, labyrinths, ruins as well as extreme landscapes and the sublime.

The final result of Radcliffe's use of the aforementioned phenomena remains the same; an atmosphere of terror is created. However, as a result of the research and analysis done as a part of this thesis, I have discovered that the way to achieving the desired atmosphere varies depending on the phenomena. In the case of labyrinths and foreign landscapes, the main emphasis is put on separating the character from their comforting and familiar surroundings and by such making them distressed and vulnerable, an emotional state perfect for cultivating terror. The use of ruins and Catholic structures relies heavily on the past and on people's fear and distrust of it. Radcliffe uses structures connected to the Catholic faith to establish distrust and other negative emotions in the mainly Protestant people of England. Furthermore, ruins serve as constant reminders of the violent past and of the fleeting nature of human life. The negative or melancholy feelings of the people towards both of the structures make it easy for Radcliffe to take advantage of the mind's vulnerable state and to direct it towards a desirable emotion. The final phenomenon used by Radcliffe is the sublime and with it extreme landscapes. The interesting nature of the sublime, occurring as a result of two seemingly conflicting opposite emotions, allows for the creation of terror because it balances the fear with a feeling of pleasure or delight and in doing so allows for the mind to experience fear but to still be capable of rational

thinking.

Radcliffe has executed the task of creating terror successfully by placing an emphasis on the surroundings and on the influence that they can have on the human mind and emotions.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Liisa Meriste

Ann Radcliffe's Use of Landscapes and Man-Made Structures for the Creation of the Atmosphere of Terror in Her Gothic Novel *The Italian*

Ann Radcliffe'i maastike ja ehitiste kasutus hirmu õhkkonna loomiseks tema gooti romaanis *Itaallane*

Bakalaureusetöö

2019

Lehekülgede arv: 33

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Käesoleva bakalaureusetöö eesmärk on uurida Ann Radcliffe'i maastike ja ehitiste kasutust hirmu õhkkonna loomiseks tema gooti romaanis *Itaallane*. Põhieesmärk on uurida tekstinäidete põhjal, kuidas erinevate gooti žanrile iseloomulike maastike ja ehitiste kasutus on panustanud soovitud hirmu õhkkonna tekkesse.

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