Ensayo

IT [THE CASTLE] IS OLD, AND HAS MANY MEMORIES. TRANSGRESIÓN E IDIOSINCRASIA CULTURAL Y LITERARIA DEL ESPACIO EN LA TRADICIÓN GÓTICA

IT [THE CASTLE] IS OLD, AND HAS MANY MEMORIES. TRANSGRESSION AND CULTURAL, LITERARY IDIOSYNCRASY OF SPACE IN GOTHIC TRADITION

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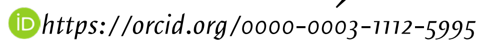

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Resumen

Desde sus comienzos la literatura gótica estuvo estrechamente relacionada con la arquitectura… incluso mucho antes que con la propia literatura. De hecho, el espacio es uno de los elementos más destacados –incluso es un personaje– de cualquier producción gótica, como pretendemos mostrar a lo largo de estas páginas. La idiosincrasia del gótico se funde tanto con la tradición literaria como con el trasfondo cultural, pero también lleva dentro de sí una innegable capa de transgresión. La presencia del espacio en las producciones góticas conforma, por tanto, casi un personaje, que necesita ser analizado y estudiado como tal. Sótanos, castillos, subterráneos, cuevas… todos remiten a un simbolismo común: los lugares originalmente destinados al cuidado y protección pueden convertirse en cárceles mortales.

PALABRAS CLAVE

gótico, transgresión, espacio, arquitectura

Abstract

From its beginning, Gothic literature was closely connected to architecture much earlier than to literature itself. In fact, space is one of the most outstanding elements –and even characters– of any Gothic production, as it is intended to show throughout these pages. The idiosyncrasy of Gothic is merged not only with the literary tradition and with the cultural background, but it also carries within an undeniable layer of transgression. The presence of space in Gothic productions conforms, thus, an almost character, needing to be analyzed and studied as such. Cellars, castles, basements, caves… all of them refer to a common symbolism: places originally intended for care and protection can become deadly prisons.

KEYS WORDS

Gothic, transgression, space, architecture

"It [the castle] is old, and has many memories, and there are bad dreams for those who sleep unwisely"

(*Drácula*)

Horace Walpole (1717-1797) was the first to establish a union between Gothic style and literature. His obsession with his beloved Strawberry Hill miniature castle was the inspiration for *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and the book's subtitle, *A Gothic Story*, marks the first time the term was used in a literary context. The adjective in the subtitle has a medieval connotation, indicating that the narration happened at a certain time. Walpole, Earl of Oxford, retired to an impressive villa at Twickenham in 1748, laden with Gothic elements, a sort of rococo version and ornamented with the characteristic severity of authentic Gothic.

Since the beginning of Gothic, the labyrinths and claustrophobic spaces have defined Gothic literature (DeLamotte, 1990). This space is normally represented by a castle, monasteries, convents, and prisons, often in ruins. Other Gothic works present this motif either as a physical element or as a claustrophobic sensation: in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), despite the fact that the word labyrinth does not appear explicitly, the reader feels its presence like a shadow; Faust openly expresses his condition as a living prisoner, wherever he goes and whatever he does; Hamlet already advanced this vision of the prison when referring to Denmark and the world; the first writers of the Gothic romance, who were mostly women, outlined the figure and character of the prisoner. In line with the feeling of helplessness and the impossibility of running away, one cannot forget Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of the Hill House*, a XX century work (1959) but written under Gothic patterns with great mastery and faithfulness to the canons. The house has and takes on a life of its own, governing the fate of its inhabitants. Without the house, the plot would be invalid. This wonderful novel markedly influenced *The Shining* (1977) by Stephen King, as he himself acknowledged. Innumerable stories in which a

building takes on a special role could be cited, but it would be unfair to ignore "The Fall of the House of Usher": the mansion gives its title to the narration, highlighting from the beginning the importance of this building, which becomes, as the story progresses, one more character, the most important. Here, the mansion = inner world equation is palpable. For José Monleón, the path that leads to Usher's internal world "acquires all the characteristics of an exploration of the subconscious: the narrator enters the house and descends through its labyrinthine hallways" (1990, 27).

The conflicting roles that terror and horror harboured became the predominant struggle that early Gothic writers, such as Walpole and Radcliffe, used to magnify. This motif was not new. Literature from the Elizabethan period, particularly Shakespeare (1564-1616), used this motif to enhance the atmosphere.

In its most basic nature, the Gothic castle represents the fear of premature burial, of being buried alive; it is claustrophobia expressed in its most sublime degree. It represents a well in which the victims exhibit frantic activity but where their efforts will never lead them to salvation (Wright & Townshend, 2016). The notion of certain forbidden houses is as old as the human mind; suffice it to remember the name that Homer gives to hell: *Haidou domus*, the house of Hades. In fact, mental illness residences, brothels and convents have been identified as highly equivalent structures representing the metaphorical realm of denial of reason and human desire.

Physical space is essential to the psychological machinations of Gothic fiction (Liu, 2010, 135-142; Beckaert, 2019) and is used to invoke the feelings of fear, of concern, of being trapped and unaided, by both the characters and the reader (DeLamotte, 1990; Punter, 2016; 2019); in *Dracula*, Jonathan confesses (Stoker, 1989, p. 27): "When I found that I was a prisoner a sort of wild feeling came over me. I rushed up and down the stairs, trying every door and peering out of every window I could find… I behaved much as a rat does in a trap." Not only does Jonathan feel alone, but he is also aware of his defenselessness. What is

more, it can be said that the architecture is alive, “It is old, and has many memories” (Stoker, 1989, p. 33), as if it had its own intelligence.

In any Gothic novel worth its salt, the heroine is locked up and confined with no apparent future prospects; in this case, both the architecture and the surrounding nature are responsible for performing the repressive functions of these works.

In the first half of the XVIII century the primary meaning of imprisonment that occurs over and over again in fiction is repression (Liu, 2010, 135-142; Beckaert, 2019). The socially destructive passions, a clear symptom of imbalance, are converted into submission by social institutions, madhouses, prisons, claustrophobic, and imprisoning spaces (castles, monasteries) that appear in Gothic (Punter, 2019).

At the end of the XVIII century the meaning of imprisonment became not repression, but burial, a meaning already present in the myth of Persephone. The dungeons house the deepest hiding places of the human mind, in which the unreasonable still clings to life. The images of incarceration and tyranny –images captured in ruins, a castle, a prison, a madhouse, or a monastery– had their correlation in the architectural monuments that housed and projected a real institutional power: Versailles, the Bastille, Charenton, the Conciergerie, Notre Dame, Rome’s Castle Sant’Angelo (see Cornwell, 2000, p. 28, for a more detailed enumeration).

The prototype of the castle began with the lady and room or residence formula. A psychoanalytic critique would discover an exact equation: the castle symbolizes the body (Punter, 2016). The Gothic novel combines the heroine’s fantasies about the castle with her fears of sex, of being raped.

Therefore, Gothic productions allow the body to be interpreted through the castle and the castle through the body. The castle admits a great variety of projections, mainly because it introduces dangers and because it adjusts to everything one can imagine inside it about darkness, fear and the unknown. The

castle defines a physical space that accepts many and different projections of the unconscious material (Punter, 2016). Thus, the Marquis de Sade expresses, in his work *Idée sur le romans* (1800 [1978)), this receptive function of the castle in a terribly explicit way: its main attribute is the isolation in which the heroine is completely controlled by someone, as well as separated from her loved ones. It is of interest to mention the words spoken by Laura (Le Fanu's "Carmilla") when all the inhabitants of the castle discover that Carmilla has disappeared; she lives in her own house, with her family and yet is isolated: "If my father's room has been at that side of the house, we would have called him up at once to our aid. But, alas! He was quite out of hearing, and to reach him involved an excursion for which none of us had courage." (Le Fanu, 1992, pp. 308-309).

Laura's words manifest that type of architecture used to be an essential part of the stories, another character. In this sense, one must take into account the vision that Richard Hurd provides in his work *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762): "When an architect examines a Gothic structure by Grecian rules, he finds nothing but deformity... Gothic architecture has its own rules" (Hurd, 1963, p. 61).

The architectural language of castles, cathedrals, Gothic buildings as a whole is based on a movement of energy striving to reach the sky. The result is the observer's impression that it is really nothing compared to the building and grandeur of the universe (Hogle & Miles, 2019). At the same time, it represents a dark grandiosity, capable of creating an atmosphere of terror, playing with perception, imagination, and superstitious fear. Edmund Burke's treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) goes deep into the connection between sublimity and terror. Terror, he states, "is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime" (1990, pp. 53-54).

Hugh Blair, in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), introduces Gothic architecture as a source of the sublime: "A Gothic cathedral raises ideas of grandeur in our minds, by its

size, its height, its awful obscurity, its strength, its antiquity, and its durability" (Blair, 1976, 59). These sinister characteristics inspired by the Gothic building became an ideal for the Gothic novel. As the French critic Jean Roudaut says, "Pas un roman noir… sans un château", that is to say, it is the architectural landscape… that forms one of the key defining features of the Gothic (Michelis, A., 2003, 716).

The *major locus* of the Gothic stories, the castle, was predominant in the initial fiction of this genre (Liu, 2010, 135-142; Beckaert, 2019). Decadent, desolate and full of dark passageways, the castle was linked to other medieval buildings –abbeys, churches and cemeteries–, which are often embodied architecturally (DeLamote, 1990, p. 17). These deteriorated structures referred to a feudal past associated with barbarism, superstition, and fear. The pleasures of horror and terror returned with the reappearance of long-lost architectural figures (Ronneburg, 2002; Smith & Hughes, 2012; Wright & Townshend, 2016; Punter, 2019). Chris Baldick (1992) observes: "The Gothic castle or house… is a house of degeneration, even of decomposition, its living-space darkening and contracting into the dying-space of the mortuary and the tomb".

Thus, within all this personification, the castle threatens sorrows, agony, annihilation, disappearance and wishes. For his part, Le Fanu was acclaimed for his ability to evoke the sinister atmosphere of a haunted house (Wolfreys, 2005, pp. 177-81); and so, did Stoker, when Jonathan Harker reckons "The castle is a veritable prison, and I am a prisoner!" (Stoker, 1989, 26)

It is convenient to make a brief review about the physical location of the Gothic stories (Ellis, 2000; Killeen, 2014, 34-78; Wright & Townshend, 2016; Bacon, 2018). Gothic stories usually take place within a *schloss*. It is highly interesting to look into the word *Schloss*, which is permeated with unease, strangeness. The question the reader asks at the end of "Carmilla" is why this German word is never translated into English. In its vernacular, this word means castle, but it is also related to the verb *schliessen*, which means to close; therefore, a *Schloss*

is a lock. Consequently, not only does the reader find in this story a castle with its typical secret passageways, the chapel, the cemetery, the crypt and all that paraphernalia, but there is also a word that encloses...the entire castle encloses those that they take refuge in.

By identifying with the heroines, the authors not only make us complicit in their stories and experiences, but also create, from the very beginning, the same feeling of loneliness and isolation and, therefore, of helplessness, that the heroine feels. The fact of repeating and insisting on their physical situation produces a double effect: on the one hand the reader is prepared to accept what is told, since everything that happens to them is possible and almost justifiable; on the other hand, the feeling of compassion for them will be inevitable. Can there be anything more maddening?

The authors' manifest obsession with creating the sensation of anguish and isolation leads them to set the stories in an isolated mansion, in a desolated forest, the classic setting for a ghost story. The location of the palatial residence is not much more encouraging than the Karnsteins once were: "A vista opened in the forest; we were on a sudden under the chimneys and gables of the ruined village, and the towers and battlements of the dismantled castle, round which gigantic trees are grouped, overhung us from a slight eminence" (Le Fanu, 1992, p. 327).

The tremendous solitude of the places embodied in these works (a situation that implicitly seems to terrify the protagonists) and, therefore, the impossibility, at least apparent, of fleeing, is joined by the castle's own vampirizing effect, normally located in middle of a forest (Michelis, A. 2003, p. 5-22).

In the above referred stories, the castle accentuates the strength, the power of the monster and the weakness of its victim, since it is impossible for the victim to escape at the same time that she cannot ask for help from outside. In light of all this presentation of the landscape, architectural environment and solitude, we agree with Botting (1996, p. 58) when he states

that "The outside world invades the private, domestic sphere, turning a refuge into a place of dark menace".

In this regard, it is worth recalling the close linguistic relationship between the Freudian word *Unheimliche* (the disturbing, the ominous, the uncanny, the strange[1]) and the notions of home and domesticity contained in the words *Heim* and *Heimisch*. Anthony Vidler considers that there is a "general drift of the uncanny movement from homely to unhomely, a movement in most ghost stories where an apparently homely house turns gradually into a site of horror" (1994, p. 32).

Considering the high importance of domestic space, the strength of the Gothic production is compressed in the environment, the moment, and the place where the monster, the villain, stalks his victims (Michelis, 2003, pp. 5-22). The medieval castle represents a fortress –in the style of that featured in Maturin's work, *Melmoth The Wanderer*– with a clear purpose: to maintain and intensify the power of evil. In a certain sense and as will happen to Jonathan Harker in *Dracula* where he is both guest and prisoner of the imposing castle, Laura ("Carmilla") is a prisoner in her own house, in her own castle. As DeLamotte claims, the Gothic plot almost invariably involves women who cannot get out of the house" (1990, p. 10).

A threatening being, making characters feel like being caged, a gloomy castle, surrounded by mist, is one more character in history. A castle that is nothing but the gateway to another world, the world that lives within it and whose inhabitant is a being surrounded by darkness, not only the physical darkness of the castle, but the darkness of its reality, its history, its essence; the castle of no return from the folk tales, of which Cirlot (1998) discusses. Thus, the castle expresses an undeniable and inescapable power within Gothic history (Wright & Townshend, 2016).

1. Sigmund Freud, in *The Uncanny* (1919), expresses the double meaning of the German word *Unheimliche*, namely, what is unfamiliar, and, on the other hand, what is secret, what is hidden and remains out of sight.

In another masterwork, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, full of imagination and terror, one observes the face of evil exemplified both in the wicked and in the castle: "Silent, lone and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene and to frown defiance on all, who dared to invade its solitary reign" (Radcliffe, 1980, p. 227). The castle appears as a powerful, tyrannical, and malevolent figure.

Cruelty occurs mostly in places where the dominance of the powerful is inescapable, indisputable (see Dyer, 1988, 56-7 for an analysis of the dormitory as a psychological space). The villain's constant and increasing attacks seem to be inevitable, the resistance and the inability to escape are important elements for cruelty. By increasing the strength of the powerful and showing the passive victim, the castle helps generate and maintain the difference in power that helps make cruelty possible.

The castle as a metaphor for the mind is a cardinal image in Gothic literature. It can be understood in two ways: as the physical representation of the power of the evil being and its influence on the environment or as an extension of the interior and psychological space. The closed doors evoke the dark recesses of the protagonist's mind (Punter, 2016; Wright & Townshend, 2016). As Eugene DeLamotte observes in her *Perils of the Night*, classic Gothic scenarios often involve a heroine trembling "at a door as footsteps approach. The door is locked, and she cannot open it" (1990, p. 29).

Emily Brontë would also show it in *Wuthering Heights* (1847), where there are many closed doors throughout the house: its inhabitants have many secrets, they want to hide. Therefore, the house moves from being a home to being a mere building, it is an eminently Gothic space, which leads to another landmark of the Gothic style: the dialogue between inner consciousness and outer space. The castle, the forest, the ruins are extensions of its inhabitants' minds. All these reflect, preserve the evil presence.

The above can be read as a dream journey towards what Stoker describes as the place where "every superstition of the world is

gathered… as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool" (Stoker, 1989, p. 8).

In addition to everything previously commented on the castle and its projection on the work as the all-seeing and controlling eye on the plot and the characters themselves, it must be borne in mind that it is a decadent building that directly influences the atmosphere of the work. Its singularity is so important that if this architectural structure were eliminated, the machinery of Gothic romance would be touched at its foundational bases and lose its predominant and characteristic atmosphere. The castle emerged as a central point, a unique feature of early Gothic writings (Liu, 2010, pp. 135-142; Beckaert, 2019). While its accessory features capture the imagination, its architectural associations –accentuated by an overwhelming atmosphere– became a fundamental source of terror. This development from secondary paraphernalia to taking centre stage is achieved by giving terror and horror the privilege of being the two principles that are primarily responsible for evoking that atmosphere (Wright & Townshend, 2016). Joyce M. S. Tompkins (1932, p. 267), referring to the castles of Gothic fiction, writes: "usually… they have at least one ruinous wing, for decay was Gothic and picturesque, and the romance writers wished… to combine in their architecture the attractions of tyrannous strength and of melancholy".

Simply put, the main purpose of the atmosphere is to spark the reader's imagination. The atmosphere of the Gothic writings is certainly overwhelming. This is accomplished with the use of conventional Gothic rigging. Basements and secret entrances, underground passageways, false doors, and the inevitable marks of decay are replete with dire possibilities. The setting provides the physical location on which the narration operates and functions primarily for the purpose of evoking the atmosphere. The use of terror and horror awakens the sense of anguish by expanding intrigue functions and by oppressing thanks to architectural structure (Killeen, J Jarlath 2014, 34-78; Gehlot, Mishra, Trivedi, 2018, 121–129).

The close relationship between setting and atmosphere has its first roots in *The Castle of Otranto*, which firmly solidified the importance of terror and horror as the ruling principles of the atmosphere. From the beginning, Otranto is a complex castle devoid of ornate descriptions and excessive details. About its physical appearance, details are sparse. The castle contains several rooms, chapels and corridors, whose walls are adorned with ancestral portraits, a hall and galleries shadowed by darkness that conceal love and dark secrets. Underground passageways that lead to the Church of Saint Nicholas and a cave in the woods beyond the walls reverberate in the silence of their great darkness and wait for a heroine to escape to them in search of refuge.

Otranto is a formidable building. The scarcity of the details darkens the walls and blurs the bright colours, narrowing the physical structure and depriving the reader of the power of discrimination. The dark details of the physical structure itself carry with it a vague sense of the remote past exposing the canons of eighteenth-century society and offer the reader an uncertainty, accentuated by associations with barbarism, superstition, and harassment.

In *The Castle of Otranto*, the terror lies not in Theodore's fate, or in Manfred's evil determination, or in Isabella's nightly pursuit, but in Otranto's oppressive atmosphere and the inability to escape from it. The effects of the architecture of Otranto lead to the threatening nature of the atmosphere, mainly with the use of darkness. In a way, while Walpole's use of the supernatural is fantastical, his use of architecture is governed by darkness. The function of light for the purpose of obscuring is used by Walpole to obfuscate reality and allow terror to operate actively without being exposed to eighteenth-century scepticism. Most of the actions at the castle of Otranto take place in half light, with the light of a torch, the moonbeams breaking darkness. Diffused light evokes terror by obscuring the physical structure. Inside the castle, terror is found within the structure that forces confinement and seclusion.

Together with Otranto, another type of use of an architectural structure can be seen in Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (first published in 1777 anonymously under the name of *The Champion of Virtue*), where the castle is an architectural element that evokes terror thanks to haunted rooms.

As so far seen, dark, feared, and full of terrible secrets, the castle was associated with several ruined medieval buildings, suggesting a feudal past closely related to superstition and fear. The triumph of terror and horror comes as a result of the emergence of the past, certainly vague and remote at the same time. Terror operates externally rather than internally, reducing space with architectural associations. The remote towers, the closed rooms, the dark corridors, and the underground regions not only physically imprison the main characters, but they compress the atmosphere.

Thus, the development of the castle motif clearly has its roots in Otranto. Walpole provided the primary lines, the underground passages, the chapel, the long and dark corridors, and the terror. Then many more authors would follow including Ann Radcliffe and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Davison, 2009). This work is set in Catholic Southern Europe, specifically in the Apennines with a plot and location certainly typical of the first Gothic romances. Ann Radcliffe transports the reader into a dark and sinister world. This supernatural world, from which heroin must escape is full of suspense and fear (Labourg, 2019). The author maintains the reader's interest by describing one surprising event after another.

Similarly, Dracula locks up Jonathan as if he were caught in a spider web, sucking his blood and life at the same time. Another example (not to mention more) will be the Hungarian countess Erzsbeth Bathory (1560–1614), the Bloody Countess. The triad relationship vampire, castle and spider can be easily seen.

It is notable that towards the end of most Gothic works, the main characters converge next to a grave, where all the truth of the story will be unmasked. The tomb thus becomes the re-

ference point for solving the riddle; not only does it represent the forbidden regions of the soul, the area of the mind where our deepest impulses reside, but at the height of the novel, when its apotheosis comes, all the characters are brought before this crypt with the intention of destroying their hex. Once again architecture becomes complicit in the story and setting: "Under a narrow, arched doorway, surmounted by one of those demoniacal grotesques in which the cynical and ghastly fancy of old Gothic carving delights, I saw very gladly the beautiful face and figure of Carmilla enter the shadowy chapel" (Le Fanu, 1992, p. 332).

In these words, from "Carmilla", the set seems to be taken from a film, where the heroine appears on scene as if illuminated by a spotlight. The erotic implications of the tomb, the grave, the coffin are clear. Desecrating graves, opening coffins in search of evidence of who knows what, evokes the action as voyeuristic and almost bordering on rape, which implies entering the privacy of a being who is already dead, who cannot defend himself and always under protection either from the church –"God grant that we may be guided aright" (Stoker, 1989, p. 362)– or the search for truth, or the desire to grant the dead eternal peace: "It seemed to be as much an affront to the dead as it would have been to have stripped off her clothing in her sleep whilst living" (Stoker, 1989, 197). So, eroticism comes from repression, or vice versa. Away from sunlight, from the world, from reality, cloistered and moldy, dark, smelly places, the human imagination has no limits and conscious repression is transformed into primitive but justifiable feelings. The words that Maud Ellmann exposes about Dracula can be extended to most of the Gothic works: "Every sacred space protected by barriers is broken open –bedrooms, tombs, asylums, and of course bodies themselves, which are repeatedly pierced, punctured, and penetrated" (Stoker, 1996. En: Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez, Francisco Javier, 2017, p. 531).

It is relatively easy to document that there was a veritable explosion of literature exploiting the motif of the grave in this period, especially in France. Thus, one can recall one of the

most famous melodramatic works on this subject, *Les Victimes Cloitrees* by Louis Maurice Boutet de Monvel –which would be later translated by Lewis–.[2] The discovery of the sepulchral depths, the fascination that can remain hidden in the deepest dungeons of institutions –it is enough to reread *The Monk* (1796), by Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818)– without forgetting mental repression, ostensibly and almost exclusively dedicated to discipline and chastity. What remains hidden there is the result of forbidden, perverted, and deviant erotic behaviour through denial and repression.

The terms basement, castle, labyrinth, cavern, and cave share the same use and meaning. These concepts are an archetype of the maternal womb and, as such, appear in the myths of origin, rebirth, and initiation of many peoples. This luminous meaning slides towards another sinister one, given by the characteristics of these dens: shadowy underground cavities, with invisible limits, fearsome chasms, inhabited by monsters, that connect with the unexpected and dangerous world of the human unconscious. From this aspect, they symbolize the exploration of the inner self and especially of the primitive self, banished to the depths of the unconscious.

These places, due to their layout, their underground penetration, and the entanglement of their corridors –which evoke that of human entrails– is a preferential location for witchcraft practices. Caverns, as well as basements, perform similar functions (Killeen, 2014, pp. 34-78). In prehistory, the cave, often assimilated to a labyrinth or ritually transformed into a labyrinth, was both the theatre of initiations and the place where the dead were buried. To enter a cave is to return to the origin and from there ascend to Heaven (Jesus was born in one cave or grotto and was buried in another, from where he rose again). These possibilities of birth and initiation may explain the appeal that

2. We recommend and refer the reader to the work of Joyce Tompkins (1932, 267-284), where the author makes a truly interesting and masterful study of this type of literature and its connections and implications with the Gothic genre.

basements had for the not always naive protagonists of Gothic productions. They were excited about the reunion of the mother's lap or expected a forbidden love.

The labyrinth metaphor is crucial in the articulation of Gothic literature and romances. Horror, fears, confusion, and desires that the labyrinth reveals, and projects resides in the separation of all the social rules, as well as in the transgression of all the conventional limits. Labyrinths, like novels, seduce, incite, confuse, get rid of… They lead readers through paths that lead to doom. Labyrinths have to be circumvented in order to escape them (Botting, 1996, 80 *et passim*).

Originally, the labyrinth describes the Cretan palace of Minos, where the Minotaur is locked up and from where Theseus cannot leave without the help of Ariadne's magic thread. The labyrinth also represents the path that leads to the interior of oneself, to that kind of inner and hidden sanctuary where the most mysterious core of the person resides: the soul or the unconscious. The protagonist, and the reader too, like Theseus without Ariadne, can get lost, finding only dark walls and false exits. In this regard, perhaps one of the most significant journeys is that of Dracula. In this novel, most characters travel. The story opens with a character, Jonathan, who enters a world where the superstition of its inhabitants makes him doubt everything: the words he hears, his ideas, his preparation. The transition Jonathan=England is evident. Stoker makes a veiled exhibition not without irony of society in general: "I feared to go very far from the station… The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East" (Stoker, 1989, p. 1). Jonathan's nervous tranquility will be corroborated in Murnau's film, where Jonathan crosses the bridge on foot, confirming to us: "And when he had crossed the bridge, the phantoms came to meet him". This seems like a description not only of the castle, but also of its inhabitants.

Speaking of Dracula, it seems like Jonathan is caught in a cobweb while Dracula is the huge spider drinking blood along with life. These words weave a plot with terms that are sym-

bolically related: vampire, castle and spiderweb. Basements, caves, labyrinths, castles, refer to a common symbolism, that of the long-awaited maternal womb. However, places originally intended for care and protection can become deadly prisons (Michelis, 2003, pp. 5-22).

The cellars, the castles, the intimacies, the voluptuousness, the penumbra, the sexual pleasure, the isolation under the ground, and the security are numerous (sects have given themselves up to their erotic practices in fiercely closed places and whose doors, once inside, one did not even know where they were). In Gothic literature, the symbol of the cloister, of the prison (either in a real or metaphorical sense), the hidden place that hides the most important secret, represents the taboos of human society. The darkness of the Gothic experience serves to hide and represent in equal parts the indescribable, the unspeakable. The imprisonment adds loneliness, fantasy, incest, sexual perversion and isolation, repression, passion, and death, all of which are obviously Gothic features (Wright & Townshend, 2016; Wester & Aldana Reyes, 2019). In any case, the theme of incest, an anthropological taboo that is repeated as a recurring theme in some of the works of the period, is not exclusive to this work.

CONCLUSION

All the inaccuracies and vagueness typical of Gothic descriptions and settings are appropriate for these confusions and misinterpretations of external and internal mysteries (Killeen, 2014, pp. 34-78). For example, the heroine is isolated in dark places that lurk with countless fears (her life, her future). Then, according to the Gothic formula, her deep ignorance and insecurity gives way to the trust placed in that person seemingly superior to her. Metaphorically, the spatial location implies that its most sinister enemy is its own emerging sexuality; the web of dangers she must unravel implies her nature as a sensual woman (Schoch, 2012; Nabi, 2017).

Once authors begin to exploit the paraphernalia that one associates with the Gothic novel regarding the castle as a safe place, a sexual fantasy appears, represented from the point of view of interior space. Therefore, the Gothic building (whatever it may be) makes it possible to identify this construction with the body of a woman (Punter, 2016; Wolfreys, 2005, pp. 177-181; Wallace & Smith, 2009). Thus, it is convenient to remember that Carmilla prefers to sleep with her door completely closed, in part to be able to commit her misdeeds more freely, but also as a symbolic representation of her fear of "midnight invaders, and prowling assassins" (Le Fanu, 1992, p. 303), fear that her privacy will be violated. Laura, at first, is surprised by this attitude, but later she will imitate this action, citing certainly implausible reasons, "These wise measures taken" (303), at least if one considers her words at the beginning of the story.

Thus, as seen so far, the leitmotif of the Gothic will be a rich palette of different permeating currents that help outline its –shamefully– underestimated concern.

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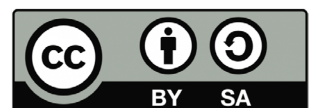

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