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**'COUNTERFEIT HERO':
THE GOTHIC SUBVERSION OF FAIRYTALE
STRUCTURE IN LEWIS' *THE MONK***

Raquel García Iglesias

THE TRELLIS PAPERS

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THE TRELLIS PAPERS

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This is a series of working papers initially derived from a project designed to introduce Second Cycle students to research. TRELLIS is an acronym for "Teaching Research in English-Language Literatures, Intermediate Stage". The project sought to build links between research carried out at postgraduate and professional level and the kind of research-oriented work that is offered to First Cycle students. It included a series of seven sessions -the TRELLIS Seminars- which ran in the Department of English at the UAM between 2002 and 2006.

The overall goal of these sessions was twofold. On the one hand they aimed at laying down a practical base for research. Eight critical texts from different research areas (history of science, linguistics, postmodernist fiction, fairytale, medieval epic, medieval narrative construction, anthropology, thematics) were studied and commented in depth for their special contribution to literature studies; these all touched broad, mostly interdisciplinary, mostly historical concerns. Attention was paid to argument construction, use of data, and layout. There was also some coaching in library and web searches and use of source materials.

On the other hand, the seminars concentrated on issues at the intersection between canonical literature, popular culture, and folklore. Because this intersection appears to view only when researchers take up a global perspective, when they engage a field theory of text, the three domains under scrutiny have occasionally been referred to as 'the Field triangle', and the term may continue in use so long as we remember that it is not meant to be exhaustive and that other areas of interaction will be found to exist in the textual Field.

Among other tasks, and as part of their training, each participant in the TRELLIS Seminars was asked to prepare and deliver a 20-minute paper. Papers dealt with problems of narrative structure, evolution, thematics, and so on in such areas as cartography, videogames, myth, epic, fairytale, ballad, popular music, medieval romance, children's

literature, film, comix, advertising, and thers. It was the result of these talks that the present series was initially designed to publish.

Meanwhile, however, the project goes on and the 'trellis' concept has outgrown its original intention and now has the full function suggested by the word: an interlace of efforts which, in bringing together various types of research at different levels of complexity, seeks to reinforce and disseminate results, thus hoping to create a feedback loop throughout the three Cycles. One practical aim is to provide a flexible, reasonably speedy method of publication by editing each paper independently—though the possibility that some of these materials may eventually be collected in book form on thematic or other criteria is not to be ruled out.

The TRELLIS Papers accordingly edits a variety of materials that include not only the results of the TRELLIS Seminar but also work presented by contributors to the Liminality Seminars, as well as other relevant work.

Three points need to be made here. First, the primary objective is to make available to the Department various types of work carried out in it. Second, quality is a must in any paper submitted for inclusion in the series. Third, submissions to *The TRELLIS Papers* will be expected to conform to the editorial policy outlined in the second number of the series. This is not a matter 'for the editors to sort out'; on the contrary, it is an intrinsic responsibility of researchers to ensure that their work complies with some widely accepted set of conventions. The instructions provided in *TTP 2* are in agreement with international practice.

THE EDITORS

'COUNTERFEIT HERO:' THE GOTHIC SUBVERSION OF FAIRYTALE STRUCTURE IN *THE MONK*

Raquel García Iglesias

Despite its incipient popularity at the turn of the nineteenth century and its literary legacy onto the Gothic School of Fiction, Matthew Gregory Lewis' *The Monk* has been seldom reprinted in its original version since it first appeared in 1796, 'except in the form of abridged, or more or less surreptitious editions' (Baker, vii; and Ward et al., 303) and more than a century later it was still said to possess the traits of 'six-shilling novels and cheap illustrated magazines' so in vogue at the time (Baker, xvi). Widely read and imitated by a host of followers—among them Charlotte Dacre and Percy Bysshe Shelley—Lewis' masterpiece has harvested, in its bicentenary existence, few scholarly studies and criticism devoted to its literary composition and far more critical reviews and readings which tend to underscore its immoral judgements, blasphemous expressions and general depravity. It is precisely that reiterated accentuation on the debauchery and lewdness distilled in its pages—usually made extensive to the novel as a whole—which appears to have prevented most critics and reviewers from appraising *The Monk* as a literary piece of writing. Instead, it is primarily viewed as a concoction of the gruesomest and most macabre scenes of pornography and sadism, clumsily interspersed with supernatural elements and wantonly interrupted with peripheral narrations—'not indispensably connected with it' (*Analytical Review*, 403)—which divert the reader's attention from the central story and 'weaken the main interest' (ibid. 403).

It's on account of that extended reading of *The Monk* as a formless and chaotic accumulation of licentious episodes that, taking as a basis the critical apparatus produced in the last century concerning the lack of narrative framework in Lewis' text, I intend to provide evidences of the novel containing a uniform plot structure which in many ways reproduces—and at the same time, inverts—the well-known composition of tales and heroic narratives as they were analysed by Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928). Likewise, I will try to stress the manner in which that reversal of the traditional fairytale is reinforced by the recurrence of certain imagery and scenarios displayed in the novel, as well as by the insertion of subplots, both so harshly pilloried as symptoms of unmistakeable inexperience and excess on the part of the author, according to traditional criticism.

Greeted by the controversy unleashed at its premiere, the novel was chiefly introduced to the readership by early reviews which tended to lampoon its literary value and to stress *The Monk*'s moral debasement, with the result that a line of criticism appeared which promptly made of Lewis' work the subject of debates around the inclinations of its author and his own ability to write fiction. Among them, the poet and Lewis' contemporary Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who scorned *The Monk* as a 'mormo for children, a poison for youth and a provocative for the debauchee' (*Critical Review* 19;1797: 195) marched at the head of the novel's detractors, as he went on writing that:

Tales of enchantments and witchcraft can never be useful: our author has contrived to make them pernicious, by blending, with an irreverent negligence, all that is most awfully true in religion with all that is most ridiculously absurd in superstition (ibid. 195).

By thus classifying the novel's composition as a capricious brew of religion and superstition devoid of any artistic or moral judgement, Coleridge pointed at Lewis' carelessness in constructing the novel as one of the main flaws in a text in which, as he put it, 'all events are levelled into one common mass and become almost equally probable, where the order of nature may be changed wherever the author's purposes demand it' (ibid. 194). What Lewis' main detractor envisioned as inconsistency and 'negligence' in the observance of the correct delimitation between religion and superstition was to translate, in the aftermath of *The Monk's* success, as Lewis' inability to arrange the narrative episodes in a uniform sequence. In the brief lines devoted to M.G. Lewis and his work in *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, at the opening of this century (1907-21), the following can be read:

It was one result of the defects which prevented his cleverness from reaching genius that he went to the other extreme and made *The Monk* (1796), as a whole, a mere mess and blotch of murder, outrage, diablerie and indecency....It is 'messy' enough, even in its author's revised version, being badly constructed and extravagant in every sense (Ward et al., 303)

So *The Cambridge History* sketches the main lines of criticism on *The Monk* to be found hereafter, amounting to the utter disavowal of the novel, on the fallacious assumption that the impropriety of its content should inescapably work to the detriment of the composition and value of Lewis' novel as a whole. It is little wonder that Edith Birkhead, writing at the time in which this revision on *The Monk* was produced, should claim in her book, *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance*, when comparing the work of Lewis to that of Anne Radcliffe:

Lewis, in reckless abandonment, throws to the winds all restraint, both moral and artistic, that had bound his predecessor.... The incidents, which follow one another in kaleidoscopic variety, are like disjointed phases of a delirium or nightmare, from which there is no escape (Birkhead, 63)

Birkhead's approach to the novel—as that in the *Cambridge History*—reveal a tendency to read both the thematic and the structural components of *The Monk* under the same light, perhaps as a result of the time when both reviews were made. Hence Birkhead adds a little bit later:

The Monk, despite its cleverness, is essentially immature, yet it is not a childish work....The inflamed imagination, the violent exaggeration of emotion and of character, the jeering cynicism and lack of tolerance, the incoherent formlessness, are all indications of adolescence (Birkhead 66)

More astounding, however, appears to be the prevalence of this reading of *The Monk* as lacking any structural cohesion which permeates in some later works, such as S.L. Varnado's *Haunted Presence* (1987), where borrowing Birkhead's idea of *The Monk's* 'formlessness,' and actually quoting Birkhead's *Tale of Terror* as a main source, Varnado deplored the novel on the ground of its excesses and the author's amateurish writing:

Like many numerous other Gothic novels of the period, *The Monk* is an uneven book. Its formlessness, moral ambivalence, and occasional lapses of taste arise perhaps from the inexperience of the author, who was only twenty-one when he wrote it (Varnado 1987:35)

Amid this wave of critical assessments on Lewis' work, some attempts at favouring a better approach to the novel have been made all the same, such as John Berryman's appraising comments on the novel in his 'Introduction' to *The Monk* (1952), or the effusive defence of Lewis' masterpiece by Antonin Artaud who, working on an adaptation of the late eighteenth-century text, wrote in 1931 in the 'Preface' to the Sixth Volume of his *Oeuvres Complètes*:

Je continuerai à tenir pour une oeuvre essentielle Le Moine, qui bouscule cette réalité à pleins bras, qui traîne devant moi des sorciers des apparitions et des larves avec le naturel le plus parfait, et qui fait enfin du surnaturel une réalité comme les autres (Artaud 1931:17)

However, even when revalorisations of the novel have been made, the current of criticism pointing at the muddled construction of *The Monk* has persevered until very recently. Just in the past decade, Alok Bhalla callously derided the novel in his book *The Cartographers of Hell: Essays on the Gothic Novel and the Social History of England* (1991), as he wrote that:

The Monk, like any other Gothic novel, is neither mimetic in its actions, nor ordered in its structure; its excessive, maniacal movement from one orgiastic episode to another can be mistaken to teach nothing, to have no ethical or spiritual density (Bhalla, 13).

And the same boundless brew of the real and imaginary realms which appeared to have enthralled Artaud is precisely what a more recent critic, Glen Cavaliero, brandishes as Lewis' blemish in his writing *The Monk*. Less poignant on the bawdiness of its pages and more on the arbitrariness with which he regards Lewis' blurring of the edge between the probable and the improbable, Cavaliero objects to the interaction of supernatural elements and episodes of crude, unabashed realism. In *The Supernatural and English Fiction* (1995) he syncretises the content and structure of *The Monk* in the following way:

By a confident stroke of imaginative plundering the 19-year-old Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818), already steeped in the excesses of German literary Romanticism, here seized on most of the accepted ingredients of the tale of terror and pushed them to the point where his bombarded readers had either to suspend their disbelief or to bounce back into scepticism. Lecherous monks, sadistic nuns, rape, murder, incest, black magic, banditry, lynching, blasphemy, and torture—into such a brew the author also stirs a couple of ghosts, a seductive demon, and the Devil himself, with the result that in this mêlée the preternatural elements are deprived of their power to terrify. The one ingredient lacking in *The Monk* is genuine mystery (Cavaliero, 28).

Read as a sample of Gothic extravagance and an icon of Romantic excessiveness, *The Monk* is even today hardly studied according to literary patterns which might emphasise its narrative construction or which might try to discern in the interaction of natural and supernatural elements and the intrusion of secondary stories within the main narrative a deliberate attempt on the part of the British writer at suggesting a progression or a plot structure at the heart of that apparent turmoil of blatant iniquity.

Nonetheless, the same 'saturation of Teuton lore' (Lovecraft, 30) which H.P. Lovecraft had already observed in the novel in 1927 and which Cavaliero censures in more recent times, may give us a point of departure for the detection of a narrative structure in the text. In the mention of Lewis' debt to German Romanticism, Cavaliero makes of the British writer a tributary to the 'storm and stress' movement and a vehicle of German Gothicism into the English letters, but he fails to notice the repercussion such a labour accomplished by Lewis might have had in the formal and thematic construction of the author's own texts. Like him, various source studies—too engrossed in the task of reproving the writer's unrestrained imagery—have surveyed Lewis' liaison to German Gothicism, just to point at the extent to which *The Monk* owes much of his gallery of Gothic conventions to the author's acquaintance with the 'Schauerroman' cultivated by Schiller or Veit Weber in Germany.

However, it can be argued that the portion of German legacy bestowed on Lewis transcends his filiations to the 'tale of terror,' since there are evidences that Lewis was not alien to other German influences. Thus, much of his work takes roots in German folklore in an age in which the revival of interest in proverbial forms was to reach its summit in the aftermath of the publication of *The Monk*—as a sample, it would be worth mentioning the labour undertaken by the Brothers Grimm in compiling and writing their *Fairytales*, which they were to get published some years later between 1812 and 1822.

Likewise, Lewis' aptitude as a balladeer proves remarkable. It is noticeable how the British writer adopted and adapted the ballad form and reproduced it even in the construction of most of the poems scattered in *The Monk*—such as 'Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogene' or 'The Water-King.' The *Tales of Wonder* (around 1800), a compilation and adaptation of songs and ballads attributed to him—and which reckoned with the collaboration of other writers such as Sir Walter Scott—equally attests Lewis' endeavours to enliven the pattern and his notorious contribution to balladry. Other studies, such as Archer Taylor's 'The Three Sins of the Hermit,' have even moved beyond the Germanic frontiers in an attempt to find vestiges from other popular sources in Lewis' compositions. So, Taylor has speculated on *The Monk's* tribute to the Koran, Hebrew and Turkish texts, as well as Celtic and Slavic mythology.

Such alignment with traditional forms favours the postulation of a model rooted in folklore as the basis for Lewis' most popular work: *The Monk*. The world of the fairytale and the heroic narrative may thus provide the best frame for the study of a novel which not only displays an intertextual¹ tapestry of adaptations of traditional narratives—from the 'Bleeding Nun' to the 'Wandering Jew'—but also condenses in its central line of narration many elements of the fairytale utterly recognisable.

Hence, much of a Gothicism version of the heroic journey and the entrance into a perilous realm so common in tales may be detected in the downfall of Ambrosio, the title character. His trespassing into a region of deceit and his search for knowledge and freedom from a stage of ignorance and religious anchorism may find a similitude to the track designed by Joseph Campbell in his study of the hero's adventure. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), Campbell comprises the process in the following lines:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (Campbell 1949: 30)

Similarly, the diagram Campbell employs to describe the Hero's quest provides a visual illustration of the plunge into that 'region of supernatural wonders' and the return to the everyday world attained by the Hero; a quest with which, at least at the outset, Ambrosio's plunge into a world of chaos and dissipation may be identified:

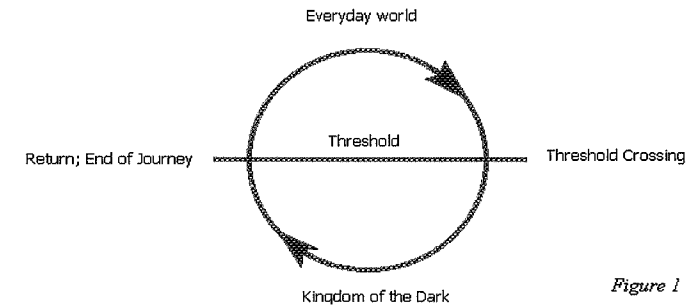


Figure 1

(adapted from J. Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p. 30)

The central story of *The Monk* allows us to trace a process of conversion of the fairytale theme into a Gothic novel or rather, a Gothic text working on the scaffold of the fairytale patterning. Its structure contemplates traits which underlie the tale and the expedition into an *Other* realm contained in traditional narratives. One of the secondary characters of the novel, Lorenzo Moncada, forebodes Ambrosio's progress as a 'contest' or a 'trial,' thus paving the way for the identification of the friar with the figure of the Hero:

The trial is dangerous; he is just at that period of life when the passions are vigorous, unbridled, and despotic; his established reputation will mark him out to the allurements of pleasure; and even the talents with which nature has endowed him will contribute to his ruin, by facilitating the means of obtaining his object. Very few would return victoriously from a contest so severe (Lewis, 23)

The identification is further substantiated as Lewis endows Ambrosio with the quintessential attributes of the Hero in customary tales. Thus, the friar is described as a person naturally gifted for noble actions:

Had his youth passed in the world, he would have shown himself possessed of many brilliant and manly qualities. He was naturally enterprising, firm, and fearless: he had a warrior's heart, and he might have shone with splendour at the head of an army. There was no want of generosity in his nature: the wretched never failed to find in him a compassionate auditor: his abilities were quick and shining, and his judgement vast, solid and decisive (Lewis, 203-4).

In keeping the analogy, *The Monk* as a whole may be measured in consonance with the basic composition of fairytales. In this respect, Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* facilitates the application of a formal approach to the novel's structure. Placing the 31 functions Propp recognises as constituent of most tales against the foremost episodes occurring in Lewis' novel, a similar sequencing of events results from the equation. And even the variants arising from the parity prove meaningful for further considerations on *The Monk's* structure. The following diagram charts the correspondence between the main scenes in the novel and the functions contained in the Proppian catalogue, providing a schematic comparison of the model structure of tales as devised by Propp, and the actual composition of *The Monk*. The remaining pages aim at developing the analogy enclosed in the table, in an attempt to espouse the speculation on *The Monk* having a deliberate composition.

FUNCTIONS OF DRAMATIS PERSONAE IN THE FAIRYTALE	FUNCTIONS OF DRAMATIS PERSONAE IN THE MONK
0. Initial situation (α) I. Absentation (β) II. Interdiction (γ) III. Violation (δ) IV. Reconnaissance (ε) V. Delivery (ξ) VI. Trickery (η) VII. Complicity (θ) VIII. Villainy (A) VIIIa. A member of a family lacks something (a) IX. Mediation (B) X. Beginning counteraction (C). XI. Departure (†) XII. First function of the Donor (D) XIII. The hero's reaction (E) XIV. Receipt of a magical agent (F). XV. Transference (G). XVI. Struggle (H). XVII. Branding (I) XVIII. Victory (J)	0. Ambrosio enjoys a happy infancy (α) I. Ambrosio's parents are exiled and abandon him (β) II. He enters the cloister and takes vows of chastity and seclusion (γ) III. Ambrosio crosses the walls of the convent to preach (δ) IV. Ambrosio questions Rosario to unmask him (ε) V. Rosario reveals himself to be a woman (ξ) VI. Matilda persuades Ambrosio to cloak her identity (η) VII. Ambrosio harbours her and thus becomes her accomplice (θ) VIII. Ambrosio breaks his vow of chastity with Matilda (A) VIIIa. Matilda entices Ambrosio (A') VIIa. Elvira falls ill (a). IX. Ambrosio's intercession is required (B) X. Ambrosio deigns to intercede (C). XI. Ambrosio crosses the walls of the convent (†) ⇒ Villainy (A) XII. Matilda subjects Ambrosio to a test of courage (D). XIII. He passes the test and inadvertently fosters her designs (E) XIV. Matilda provides him with the myrtle branch (F). XV. Ambrosio is magically transferred to Antonia's chamber (G). XVI. Ambrosio and Elvira struggle (H). XVIII. Ambrosio kills Elvira (J) ⇒ Villainy (A)
VIIIbis. The lack is not liquidated. IXbis. New mediation of the hero is required. Xbis. Beginning counteraction. XIbis. New departure. XIIbis. New function of the donor. XIIIbis. The hero reacts to the test again. XIVbis. Receipt of a new magical agent. XVbis. Once again, spatial transference.	VIIIbis. Ambrosio leaves Antonia behind and flies back to the convent. IXbis. Jacintha asks Ambrosio to exorcise her house and to heal Antonia. Xbis. Ambrosio accepts to help Jacintha. XIbis. Ambrosio once more visits Antonia. XIIbis. Matilda challenges Ambrosio to steal an elixir from the nunnery. XIIIbis. Ambrosio leaves the convent to gain the potion ⇒ Villainy (A) XIVbis. Ambrosio receives the potion/ elixir. XVbis. Ambrosio gains access to Antonia's house.
XIX. Liquidation of Lack (K) XX. Return (?) XXI. Pursuit, chase (Pr). XXII. Rescue (Rs). XXIII. Unrecognised arrival (o) XXIV. Unfounded claim (L) XXV. Difficult task (M). XXVI. Solution (N) XXVII. Recognition (Q) XXVIII. Exposure (Ex) XXIX. Transfiguration (T) XXX. Punishment (U) XXXI. Reward (W)	XIX-XX. Ambrosio carries out the false burial of Antonia and obtains the object of his desires by descending into the vaults where Antonia's corpse is lying (K) (↓) VIIIbis. Ambrosio rapes and murders Antonia ⇒ Villainy (A) XXI. Ambrosio is persecuted and chased by Lorenzo (Pr). XXV. Ambrosio is imprisoned, tortured and sentenced to death (M). XVI. Matilda offers him a means of escaping punishment (N) VIIIbis. Ambrosio signs a compact with Lucifer ⇒ Villainy (A) XXVIII. He is exposed by Satan and given an account of his sins (Ex) XXX. Ambrosio is finally punished and killed by Lucifer (U).

0-. 'Initial situation' (?). Propp states, 'a tale usually begins with some sort of initial situation' (Propp, 25). An appearance of initial prosperity opens *The Monk* and introduces the character of Ambrosio, the admired abbot of the Capuchins, as a 'Man of Holiness' and an observer of chastity 'never known to transgress a single rule of his order' (Lewis, 19). This preliminary situation, though brief, familiarly revisits the conventional state of order with which most tales open: the point of departure in the Hero's transit. This is not, of course, the chronologically initial stage, but only the beginning of *The Monk*, since the book—as many novels tend to do—manipulates temporal structures and opens 'in medias res' with the introduction of Ambrosio as a grown man of already established renown. Even if the friar's untarnished reputation is found to be a façade hiding a proud and vicious nature, there are hints throughout the book at a primitive state of harmony in the protagonist's early childhood, when he stood a paragon of perfection and sprouting sanctity:

With such qualifications he would have been an ornament to his country: that he possessed them he had given proofs in his earliest infancy, and his parents had beheld his dawning virtues with the fondest delight and admiration. (Lewis, 204)

Propp underscored the importance of this primary stage since it provides 'a description of particular, sometimes emphasised, prosperity' (Propp, 27) which preludes and contrasts with the misfortune awaiting the hero. Adversity, therefore, hovers over the main protagonist.

I-. 'Absentation' (β) of either a hero's relative or of the hero himself (Propp, 26). In a reversal of fortune, the friar's blissful childhood is suddenly truncated as he is separated from his parents and destined for the convent.

Unfortunately, while yet a child, he was deprived of those parents. He fell into the power of a relative, whose only wish about him was never to hear of him more: for that purpose he gave him in charge to his friend, the former superior of the Capuchins (Lewis, 204)

Far from the guidance of his elders, Ambrosio's admittance into the convent shapes his character as a proud and cruel personage. The austere monastic education instilled—which 'allowed every vice which had fallen to his share to arrive at full perfection' by 'rooting out his virtues and narrowing his sentiments' (Lewis, 204)—appears as fatal for the Hero's transference into a region of falsity and ignominy, parallel to Campbell's 'kingdom of the dark.'

II-. 'Interdiction' (γ) (Propp, 26). It's from this adverse situation that the interdictions of celibacy and seclusion imposed on the Hero stem. The ascetic retirement inside the walls of the convent impresses a religious command on the protagonist and furthers the calamity, creating an opportune moment for his fall.

III-. 'Violation of the Interdiction' (δ). The moment for that fall finally arrives as Ambrosio violates the interdiction. Aware of his established reputation as a pious man, he abandons a life in purdah within the cloister and enters the public domain as a renowned preacher. Propp points at this step as decisive for the appearance of the second main character in the troupe of fairytales: the Villain.

Once the Hero infringes the interdiction, the Villain 'enters the scene...and begins to act' (Propp, 27). His role, according to Propp, is 'to disturb the peace of the family, to cause some form of misfortune, damage or harm' (ibid. 27). That appears to be, indeed, the part of Rosario, a young novice and Ambrosio's dearest friend. His mysterious attitude, threatens the abbot's fortified virtue, since from his very entrance into the scene he works at confusing Ambrosio's mind and at weakening his resolution.

IV.- '*Reconnaissance*' (ε): At this point, Propp records the Villain's attempts at gathering information about the Hero common to most tales. Lewis—furnishing another form of this function which Propp codes as the variant of (ε), or (ε²)—presents the Hero, Ambrosio, questioning Rosario, the Villain.

V.- '*Delivery*' (ζ²) (Propp, 28): The friar's endeavours at unmasking the novice reveal Rosario to be Matilda, a woman cross-dressed as a boy. Consequently, the novel reverberates the variant of function V by which the Hero is delivered information concerning the Villain.

VI.- '*Trickery*' (η) (Propp, 29): Once Matilda's identity is made known to the abbot, she displays a whole machinery of tricks aimed at deceiving him by assuming disguises and affecting different attitudes. She proceeds to use persuasion first and then magical means to gain Ambrosio's consent to her remaining in the convent.

VII.- '*Complicity*' [θ] (Propp, 30): Ambrosio, beguiled by Matilda, yields to her desires and cloaks her real identity to the rest of the monks. By so doing, he becomes her accomplice and inadvertently abets Matilda in her evil designs. Propp regards this function as the inflection point the former functions tend to. With it, the introductory section prior to the Hero's crossing of the threshold into a 'numinous realm' of deception and chaos comes to an end.

Simultaneously, as Ambrosio's virtue withers away under Matilda's wooing, his concubine reveals herself as a succubus-like temptress and a 'syren' (Lewis, 194), and eventually as a voluptuous sorcerer and a 'subordinate but crafty spirit' (Lewis, 375) sent by Lucifer himself to ensnare the saint into lust and incontinence. *The Monk* appears, in this way, to revisit the theme of demoniacal temptation so extensively cultivated in English Fiction in general and especially in folk literature. The novel was significantly enough subtitled, in a later chapbook edition (1820), '*A Romance: In Which Is Depicted the Wonderful Adventures of Ambrosio, Friar of the Order of Capuchins, Who Was Diverted from the Track of Virtue by the Artifices of a Female Demon*', bringing resonances of the motif of the 'Demon Lover' so recurrent in balladry of most particular interest, as used in Bürger's '*Kunstballade*' 'Lenore' (1773). Again, *The Monk* aligns itself with traditional trends and exhibits the subpattern of the demon lover—also present in the content of some of the inserted texts and poems in the novel, such as the actual abduction by a demon lover in 'Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogene' and 'The Water-King' or the subtler allusion to demoniac enticement suggested in 'The Midnight Hymn' or 'The Gypsy's Song.'

Furthermore, in the pairing Matilda/Ambrosio the traits with which main characters are endowed in 'Demon Lover' ballads can be recognised. Toni Reed, working on the seventeenth-century Scottish model of the ballad, has surveyed the attributes which usually characterise the protagonist pair:

In the ballad complex known as 'The Demon Lover,' an aggressive male—the demon lover—is presented as powerful, mysterious, supernatural, cruel and obsessed, while the victim—always a woman in the ballad—is presented as vulnerable, malleable, and easily seduced (Reed, 21).

Perhaps one of the most outstanding elements in the novel is the unease created by Matilda's sexual identity. Though physically revealed to be a woman, she assumes, according to Ambrosio's own judgement, 'a sort of courage and manliness in her manners and discourse' (Lewis, 200). While Ambrosio finds himself 'unable to cope with her in argument and unwillingly obliged to confess the superiority of her judgement,' Matilda is said to 'no longer insinuate, but command' and she is faulted to be 'cruel and unfeminine' (Lewis, 200). Ambrosio's gullibility, on the contrary, affords

him the female part in demon lover' balladry; thus, he is opposed to Matilda's commanding presence, here suggested to incarnate the masculine part. Hence, the beguilement of the former into the realm of the latter recalls much from the basic motion from the real world into the numinous found in ballads. Once again the alliance of the novel with traditional forms validates the attempted application of the Proppian formula to account for Ambrosio's downfall.

Nonetheless, even when it works on the basis of the fairytale, *The Monk* is far from being a mimetic replica of the model. Rather, it departs from the norm and destabilises the genre by inverting the traditional ontology of the tale, challenging one of its most basic elements: while still performing the function of the Hero-victim of deceit escorted to ignominy by a tempting Villain, Ambrosio, defying any possible combination of 'dramatis personae' as envisaged by Vladimir Propp, seizes two functions by acting out the Villain as well. Ambrosio, sidetracked from his path of sanctity, is at the same time the cruel inquisitor who pitilessly judges Agnes's misdemeanour and sends her to a live-burial; or the fiend Antonia dreams of in her nightmare, or finally, the degenerate who commits sibling rape and matricide. Just as Matilda incarnated that 'demon lover' and exerted her alluring handiwork over Ambrosio, the friar assumes a similar function as he becomes Antonia's 'demon-like' abductor and ravisher.

But even when Lewis introduces a perversion of the canon not accounted for in folk narratives, the inversion of the familiar pattern is far from doing away with the applicability of the Proppian system to our novel. Rather, it adds complexity to the text, which still appears to progress according to the tale sequencing.

Such a progression is particularly traceable as long as the text is approached from two different levels: that of the authentic self, which reveals Ambrosio as an impious man, and a level of assumed identities, which strives to screen the actual persona from the 'prying eye' (Lewis, 44) and re-enacts a 'new comedy' (ibid, 18), a 'play' (ibid, 11) of unblemished reputation and 'feigned penitence' (ibid, 376) in which Ambrosio is thought to 'perform a(n) hypocrite's part' (361,376). He thus keeps himself unsullied to the world:

But what he wanted in purity of heart, he supplied with exterior sanctity. The better to cloak his transgression, he redoubled his pretensions to the semblance of virtue, and never appeared more devoted to heaven than since he had broken through his engagement. Thus did he unconsciously add hypocrisy to perjury and incontinence: he had fallen into the latter errors from yielding to seduction almost irresistible; but now he was guilty of a voluntary fault, by endeavouring to conceal those into which another had betrayed him (Lewis, 196).

In what resembles a theatrical performance—evinced by Ambrosio's deliberate use of a feigned personality—the friar keeps up the counterfeit of a heroic passage while working a parallel villainous career of atrocious deeds. His journey, allegedly moving on the track of the heroic action, turns out to be, instead, a farcical replica of the heroic narrative, a course of episodes travelling over rails of forgery and deceit. It's precisely this appearance of traditional narrative at the outside—proved to be a tint covering a blatant satire—which has moved Robert Miles to identify the novel as a whole as a 'pattern of false beads' (Miles, 160). Henceforth, it's from this perspective over the book as a simulacrum of heroic narrative, that the rest of the functions must be tackled.

VIII.- '*Villainy*' (A) (Propp, 30): Propp defines this function as 'exceptionally important, since by means of it the actual movement of the tale is created.' It can be

equated to the villainy performed by Matilda, who beguiles Ambrosio into breaking his vows and having sexual intercourse with her. Her action would be identified as (A'), a form of (A) in which 'the villain entices his victim,' as a result of a 'deceitful agreement' (Propp, 32-3). And conversely, seen under this new light of pretence and fallacy abovementioned, their sexual commerce could also be interpreted as the execution of villainy by the Hero himself: that of breaking his vow of chastity, since his sexual commerce with Matilda signals a major transgression in the novel. As he exclaims 'Dangerous woman!...Into what an abyss of misery have you plunged me' (Lewis, 193), the friar becomes aware of his fault entailing the entrance into a perilous realm of sin and deceit.

VIIIa.- '**Lack**' (a) (Propp, 35): However significant this transgression is, though, it does not prove enough to precipitate the Hero into the action. Propp claims that a tale 'very often begins directly with a lack' (Propp, 35). In keeping with this principle, it is the sudden infirmity of Elvira' what grants Ambrosio the possibility to know Antonia and to desire her, even when that lustful desire had been originally enkindled by his relationship with Matilda. In the chart, this minor function, or '*lack*', is coded (a) to distinguish it from '*Villainy*' (A), or violation of chastity'.

Outwardly conceived of as the archetypical restorer of order by his devotees, Ambrosio arises, in his turn, as the perpetrator of the harm. Still, when the friar performs the main action attributed to the Villain—that of abducting the sought-for-object—his actions stay even with those of the Hero.

IX.- '**Mediation**' (B) (Propp, 36): the saint is approached by Antonia to request his spiritual intercession for Elvira's soul. Elvira, in her turn, asks for the friar's intervening in the custody of her daughter, once she dies.

X.- '**Counteraction**' (C) (Propp, 38): Ambrosio deigns to visit Antonia's dying mother. By means of this function, the Hero is expected to decide upon counteraction to liquidate the lack or the misfortune.

XI.- '**Departure**' (↑) in search of the boon (Propp, 39): The friar's secret excursion out of the cloister—which violates a vow of ascetic retirement—transfers him to the outer world, in fairytales usually epitomised by another kingdom or realm.

XII.- '**First action of the Donor**' (D) (Propp, 39): The quest is not straightforwardly performed, though, but rather provides the hero with the possibility to be tested and display his attributes. Propp points at this stage as the instant in which a new dramatis persona, the Donor, is usually introduced. As came to happen with Ambrosio, the vile/virtuous pairing can also be detected in the case of his 'paramour' (Lewis, 203). Firstly in the guise of a Helper—giving advice and assuaging the friar's troubled mind—and later as a Donor, Matilda subjects Ambrosio to a test of courage: she challenges him into accepting demoniacal aid to gain Antonia:

You dare not? How have you deceived me! That mind which I esteemed so great and valiant, proves to be so feeble, puerile, and grovelling, a slave to vulgar errors, and weaker than a woman's (Lewis, 230).

XIII.- '**The Hero's reaction**' (E) (Propp, 42): Seeing his manliness so tested, Ambrosio agrees to being aided by sorcery and presumably passes the test of courage, though essentially he fails to resist temptation by acquiescing to his concubine's tricks. Once again, the heroic expedition is visualised as through the distorting lens of satire: in another perversion of the canon, it is the monk's yielding to pleasure and flattery, as opposed to the heroic fortitude expected from him, that affords Ambrosio the access to the magic object offered by Matilda: 'I yield!' he cried, dashing the mirror upon the ground: 'Matilda, I follow you! Do with me what you will!' (Lewis, 233).

XIII.- '**Provision or receipt of the magical agent**' (F) (Propp, 43): Having reached this point, his companion provides him with a talisman-like object, a myrtle branch; by means of this action, they reproduce a most visited function in folk stories—the reception of magical aid.

XIV.- '**Spatial transference**' (G) (Propp, 50): Equipped with the magical agent, Ambrosio gains access to Antonia's chamber and attempts to possess her. The scene as a whole sketches a picture of the Hero aiming at abducting the boon, which appears as extremely ironical, since the friar's mission is no other than the infliction of a harm usually perpetrated by the Villain in traditional tales.

The door was fastened, and resisted his efforts. But no sooner was it touched by the talisman, that the bolt flew back....His first attention was to perform the magic ceremony, as Matilda had charged him: he breathed thrice upon the silver myrtle, pronounced over it Antonia's name, and laid it upon her pillow (Lewis, 259-60).

XV.- '**Struggle**' (H) (Propp, 51): The abrupt entrance of Elvira—suspicious of the monk's evil scheme—unleashes what becomes the awkward reversal of the combat between Villain and Hero. In Lewis' work, this scene assumes a further tint of satire, as the Hero is here confronted as he is in the act of committing a new villainy: the rape of Antonia.

XVIII.- '**Victory**' (I) (Propp, 53): once again the text lays bare the ironic vision of Lewis on his character. Elvira's murder at the hands of Ambrosio displays a paradoxical inversion of the strife, since it is the villain who survives and seizes the boon, whereas the person who watches over Antonia is defeated. Moreover, the death of Elvira adds a new grievance to the ones caused by Ambrosio; in performing what might seem a heroic enterprise, he executes a new villainy.

XIX.- '**Liquidation**' (K) (Propp, 53): horrified at the crime perpetrated, the friar returns to the convent, but he leaves behind the object of his enterprise. The unfulfillment of Antonia's abduction forces the hero/abductor to repeat his excursion in an attempt to carry it out successfully and satiate his lust. The novel thus opens a parenthesis in which Ambrosio aims, in consecutive attempts, at completing his task. His roundabout route to gain the boon—which Propp deemed a legitimate formal complication of some tales—carries the friar back to function VIII, from where he is forced to rerun all the steps leading him to Antonia.

A new villainy—that of Elvira's death—and a new lack—that of Antonia's infirmity, require his intervention as the restorer of order. On this occasion, Jacintha, the housekeeper, is the person who appeals for the friar's intercession to heal Antonia and exorcise her house from the ghost of Elvira. Hence function IX is rehashed in what could be coded as XIbis. And in the same way, Ambrosio's consent to help the old woman appears as a repetition of function X—termed in *Figure 2* as Xbis.

XIIbis.- '**The New Function of the Donor**': But before he recommences the search of Antonia—in a replay of function XI—Ambrosio is again tested by Matilda. In this second attempt, he is expected to steal an elixir from the cellar of the convent of Saint Clare, with which he will feign the death of Antonia.

XIIIbis.- '**The Hero passes a new test**': The test, although successfully carried out, demands the monk's perpetration of a new villainy: that of showing himself beyond the walls of the convent before the nuns.

XIVbis and XVbis.- '**The Hero receives a new magic agent**' and '**Once again, the Hero departs**': Ambrosio receives the magic elixir and with it in his power heads for Antonia's dwelling. Once he gets there, he arranges everything to simulate the girl's death. As in the former attempt to gain entrance, Ambrosio is confronted by another 'foe'—Flora, Antonia's vigilant duenna—meaningfully described as the 'shadow

presence that guards the passage'(285). His is the task of mocking her zealous custody over the object of his desires in order to reach Antonia unsuspected.

XIX—'Liquidation of Lack' (K)—and XX—'Return' (J): The lack moving the hero into action is finally liquidated with the execution of Antonia's 'burial,' kidnap and transport to the catacombs. These actions signal the accomplishment of those functions which had been protracted after the first failed attempt at kidnapping Antonia, as well as the closing of the parenthesis in the course of the narrative sequencing.

Back into the darkness of the vaults, we discover another ironic re-enactment of the idyllic image of the bride's rescue by the Hero. The friar's uncivilised treatment of Antonia, ironically nicknamed 'sleeping mistress' and 'sleeping beauty,' furnishes a sharp contrast with the traditional tale, while it entails the execution of a series of consecutive outrages or villainies brought to a close with the brutal murder of Antonia:

The grate was slightly fastened on the outside: he raised it, and placing the lamp upon its ridge, bent silently over the tomb. By the side of three half-corrupted bodies lay the sleeping beauty. He clasped her to his bosom almost lifeless with terror, and faint with struggling. He stifled her cries with kisses, treated her with the rudeness of an unprincipled barbarian, proceeded from freedom to freedom, and, in the violence of his lustful delirium, wounded and bruised her tender limbs (Lewis, 328).

The repetition of the hero's attempts at performing his task and the final liquidation of the lack appear to offer, in a crescendo of brutality and anti-heroism, a very illustrative sample of the way in which Ambrosio walks progressively towards the destruction of his soul instead of the final victory and return to the world expected in traditional tales.

XXI.- 'Persecution' (Pr) (Propp, 56): the persecution of Ambrosio in the vaults and his imprisonment after Antonia's murder is made known, still appear to conform to the system proposed in *The Morphology of the Folktale*, since in function XXI Propp records the persecution of the Hero by his enemies.

XXV.- 'Difficult task' (M): At this point, Propp reports the proposal of a difficult task to the Hero, which he must overcome in order to make public his hidden identity. It coincides with the imprisonment of Ambrosio and his torture at the hands of the Inquisition, according to the progression defended in this essay.

XXVI.- 'Solution' (N): As a consequence of the former function, Matilda, once more, provides Ambrosio with the solution for the difficulty encountered: he must sign a compact with Lucifer in exchange for his release. However, as Ambrosio agrees to his release by resorting to magical means, he falls into a new villainy: that of selling his soul to the Devil. Again function VIII or 'Villainy' is re-enacted as the hero attempts to carry out his purposes.

XXVIII.- 'Exposure' (Ex): But even when he is freed from prison by Lucifer, his double condition of Hero/Villain leaves no room for the final reward of the Hero which Propp indicates as being the most common ending in tales. In turn, Ambrosio is unmasked by the Devil, who proceeds to report the complete list of his crimes, which follow one another in increasing cruelty as he moved step by step into his condemnation. His life is unravelled before his eyes and he becomes conscious that all 'the scenes in which he had been an actor' (373-4) had been contrived by demoniacal machinery:

Your pride was gratified by her flattery; your lust only needed an opportunity to break forth; you ran into the snare blindly, and scrupled not to commit a crime, which you blamed in another with feeling severity. It was I who threw Matilda in your way; it was I who gave you entrance to Antonia's chamber; it was I who caused the dagger to be

given you which pierce your sister's bosom; and it was I who warned Elvira in dreams of your designs upon her daughter, and thus, by preventing your profiting by her sleep, compelled you to add rape as well as incest to the catalogue of your crimes (Lewis, 375)

Hence, Ambrosio learns the reality of a transit he has been deceived into fancying as his gradual release, when in fact it has progressively tended towards his final downfall. Likewise, Ambrosio is misled into believing he can be saved by acquiescing to the demoniac contract presented to him by Matilda, just to learn too late that his liberation proves to be a simulation of freedom slyly fabricated by the Devil.

XXX.- 'Punishment' (U). Consequently, Ambrosio is punished for his crimes. At the end of the novel-function in which Ambrosio plays a two-part role, he learns his ordeal has been a theatrical performance arranged by the Devil himself to force his condemnation.

Therefore, the form of the heroic expedition assumes a different aspect from the one produced by Campbell, since the protagonist does not only remain in the 'Kingdom of the Dark', but also in one of Deceit: Ambrosio lives betrayed in the fallacy that he has been gaining knowledge and the illusion of unbounded freedom. To his eyes, he appears to be moving in what might resemble Campbell's passage. Instead, he gets buried deeper in darkness, endlessly spiralling downwards and inwards, as he is bereft of will and judgement by means of demoniacal artifices; and as he adds new transgressions to his list of crimes, his motion heads towards a never-to-be attained release and condemnation without redemption. The outward show of sanctity the friar displays in front of others around him finds a replica in the countenance of freedom fostered by Lucifer to deceive him.

The diagram proposed in *Figure 3* below illustrates Ambrosio's journey and provides a variant to the one designed in *Figure 1*. In this latter, each turning represents another villainy bringing the friar closer and closer to the heart of darkness:

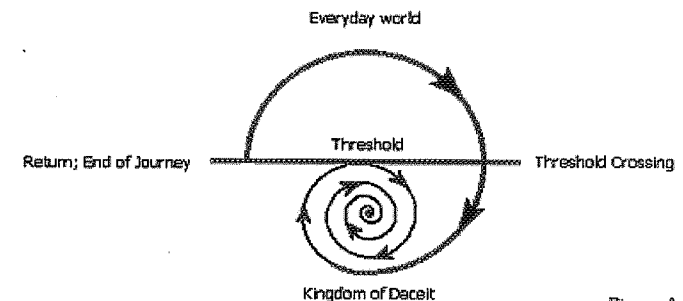


Figure 3

The intricate appearance of the route he follows, however, is only half-suspected by the friar. It's only as he walks the winding passages of the vaults where most of the action occurs, that he has a momentary suspicion of his being misled by Matilda:

He knew not how the delusions of magic might operate upon his mind; they possibly might force him to some deed, whose commission would make the breach between himself and heaven irreparable....Gladly would he have returned to the abbey; but as he

passed through innumerable caverns and winding passages, the attempt of regaining the stairs was hopeless. His fate was determined; no possibility of escape presented itself (Lewis, 234).

The visual representation of Ambrosio's progression in *Figure 3* appears to find a mirror image in the way Lewis constructs the actual setting of the narration. That is, the increase in the predominance of certain claustrophobic spaces and underground locations seems to occur in direct relation to Ambrosio's evolution. In this way, the subterranean imagery and gradual displacement of the action down to the labyrinthine passages and sinuous burial grounds appear to function in accord with the plot structure claimed in this paper, colouring the headway of the main character into the depths of iniquity. Lewis, therefore, displays a landscape of misleading tracks and maze-like spaces parallel to the textual composition of the text. As Robert Miles has stated, in *The Monk* there's 'no simple thematic route through the text, only turnings, textual ambushes and sudden shifts' (Miles, 161).

Likewise, Lewis unfolds in *The Monk* an Enlightenment tropology of light and darkness, veiling and unveiling, concealment and release which, in the choice of certain metaphors, heightens the progression towards obscurity and deceit conveyed in the text.

The writer thus features the conventual seclusion from which Ambrosio departs, as an initial state of ignorance and long benumbed passions in which he has been prematurely buried. His transgression, however, assumes the aspect of knowledge and experience of unbridled emotions, in which the friar is, at least in appearance, 'instructed' by Matilda:

He opened the door cautiously, as if fearing to be overheard; he entered and closed it again after him. Guided by his lamp, he threaded the long passages, in whose windings Matilda had instructed him, and reached the private vault which contained the sleeping mistress. ...He approached the humble tomb in which Antonia reposed. By the side of three putrid half-corrupted bodies lay the sleeping beauty. (Lewis, 324)

The above-quoted scene in which Ambrosio is led by Matilda into the darkness of the vaults ironically points at the fakery of 'being instructed' and brought out into the light of experience which permeates the whole novel: it places Ambrosio walking in obscurity towards his destruction, against the dazzling future of enjoyment and bliss he fancies instead. His illusion that freedom and light are to replace ignorance and moral constriction is thus visually counterpointed by the spatial downfall suggested by the setting.

Directly linked to this gallery of images, there's the relevance of the veiling/unveiling tropology. Veils and disguises recur in the novel and function both as the way by which Ambrosio deceives the general opinion into looking onto him as a saint—thus masking his real nature—And as the process by which the friar himself is deceived and blindly led into sin.

Therefore, the setting of the action is far from being a mere condensation of Gothic conventions hoarded and exploited to the extreme by the amateurish hand of an imitator of the German 'Schauerroman.' Rather, the actual descent into the subterranean spaces where most of the action tends to occur accentuates the very idea conveyed in the content and configuration of the novel and points at the moral downfall of the friar.

Finally, Ambrosio's last plunge from the mountain where he is delivered by Lucifer turns out to be the culmination of that gradual submersion into darkness. His death brings to an end a fairytale which leaves no room for the introduction of a happy ending which would make the novel run all throughout the 31 steps worked out by Propp.

However, a happy ending does take place in *The Monk* as a more authentic version of the heroic journey is related in one of the subplots of the novel: Agnes' ordeal furnishes a closer sample of the fairytale than Ambrosio's, as she brings to an end the abbot's unaccomplished quest.

Like the friar, Agnes departs from a similar situation of bliss and harmony, which recalls Propp's 'initial situation.' And similarly, she suffers much of the misfortune which shakes Ambrosio in his infancy, since she is forcibly destined for the convent and separated from her parents, paving the way for the calamity reported in *function I*:

In this situation, Donna Inesilla vowed, that if she recovered from her malady, the child then living in her bosom, if a girl, should be dedicated to St. Clare; if a boy, to St. Benedict. Her prayers were heard; she got rid of the complaint; Agnes entered the world alive, and was immediately destined to the service of St. Clare (Lewis, 116).

Likewise, Agnes breaks her religious vows of celibacy, as she attempts to elope with Don Raymond dressed in the guise of the Bleeding Nun. She thus fulfils Propp's second function, or '*Violation of the Interdiction*.' Unlike Ambrosio however, Agnes' transgression is publicly uncovered and she is accordingly punished, exiled and forced to take the veil.

Betrayed by passion, Agnes performs Propp's function VII, or '*Complicity*,' as she yields to passion and keeps a secret affair with Don Raymond, just as Ambrosio's foremost transgression stemmed from his sexual intercourse with Matilda. Bearing the parallelism between both situations in mind, it is little wonder that the young novice exclaims, in what may appeal to the Reader as a reverberation of Ambrosio's words: 'into what an abyss of misery have you plunged me' (Lewis, 163), once she awakens to the magnitude of her sin. Her violation of celibacy constitutes, once more, the action leading her into calamity and the 'kingdom of the dark,' since once she is discovered to be expecting a baby she is confined to the vaults of the convent. Again, the spatial setting of the action belies the heroic transit depicted in the text.

However, unlike the friar, she is unable to conceal her disgust. The ability to build a world of forgery and deceit which allows the double-function 'Hero/Villain' to work is practically absent in the case of the subplot containing Agnes' story.

But a secret instinct made the young recluse sensible that she was not born for solitude: in all the freedom of youth and gaiety, she scrupled not to treat as ridiculous many ceremonies which the nuns regarded with awe; and she was never more happy than when her lively imagination inspired her with some scheme to plague the stiff lady abbess, or the ugly ill-tempered old portress. She looked with disgust upon the prospect before her: however, no alternative was offered to her, and she submitted to the decree of her parents, though not without secret repining. That repugnance she had no art to conceal long: Don Gaston was informed of it (Lewis, 117)

Even when she attempts to emulate the Bleeding Nun or to hide her transgressions, her artless nature prevents her from keeping pretence for long.

At the same time, her naïve, unsullied nature allows the reader to witness a parallel story which in this case, does fulfil all the proverbial steps recorded in Propp's analysis which Ambrosio's fakery distorts. In this way, Agnes' parallel ordeal, at some points converging with Ambrosio's, brings out the antagonism between the theatrical heroic passage carried out by the lecherous monk and the innocent, straightforward one performed by Agnes. Lewis appears to muse on secrecy and deception as liable to head towards destruction. The sharp contrast between both characters' transits is made apparent in the ironic words Matilda addresses to Ambrosio with respect to Agnes' inability to veil her sins:

Your sudden change of sentiment may naturally create surprise, and may give birth to suspicions which it is most our interest to avoid. Rather redouble your outward austerity, and thunder out menaces against the errors of others, the better to conceal your own. Abandon the nun to her fate. Your interfering might be dangerous, and her imprudence merits to be punished: she is unworthy to enjoy love's pleasures, who has not wit enough to conceal them (Lewis, 199)

Playing the role of a 'victimised Heroine'—which Propp describes as a variant of the 'seeker Hero' with which Ambrosio could be identified—Agnes' captivity entails, in its turn, a quest ascribed to her lover and brother, which in many ways reproduces the heroic enterprise as recorded in the traditional fairytale.

Finally freed from her live-burial in the vaults of Saint Clare, Agnes eventually accomplishes function XX, or 'Return' from the region of darkness, and once she is restored to the everyday world, she completes her redemptive quest, furnishing a counterpart to Ambrosio's ultimately unredeemed ordeal. Her own story does conform to the canonical heroic passage and function XXXI, or 'Reward' (W), with which most tales conclude, is finally reached as Agnes and Raymond are rewarded with marriage.

Hence, her case, more in the line of traditional ideals, does not interfere with the main plot structure, as some scholars have criticised. Nor must the peripheral narrations inserted in the novel be regarded as functioning in juxtaposition to the main narration but as subplots which intersect and provide a contrast to the inversion of the familiar narration displayed in the story of Ambrosio.

Therefore, the general appearance of chaos and confusion apparently conveyed in the novel reveals instead a well-fixed pattern. More than chaotic, Lewis' novel appears as confusing and deceitful, misleading readers into expecting a construction which moves according to the conventional pattern of the fairytale, and then providing a twisted vision of it. In this way, *The Monk* proves to be groundbreaking in its way of working with an inherited form, but in no possible way formless and muddled.

Unfortunately, on most occasions, Lewis' text keeps being looked at as the 'puerile effusions' (Moss, 109) of a prurient and sensationalist mind, in the mouth of detractors of the novel who assert *The Monk's* faulty structure on account of its immorality and interpolation of subplots within the main narration.

Perhaps the outward show of chaos and formlessness arises from the text's uncomfortable intrusion into the familiar territory readers walk over in traditional stories. Lewis, twisting the customary structure of the tale, furnishes a variant of the Hero/Villain pairing by blending both dramatis personae into a single one endowed both with Evil and Good traits. For this reason—though not especially profound at exploring the private hinterland of the human mind—*The Monk* has been studied as a forerunner in the introduction of the psychological novel in British fiction. As David Punter has stated, *The Monk* is 'a godsend to psychoanalytically-minded critics' (Punter, 27). Punter, as others, thus places the novel in the rise of the psychological trend of other novels to come, which make of Good and Evil coexisting under the same roof a main target, in the line of Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Stevenson's *Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* or the later *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde.

However it may be, *The Monk* has been acclaimed as the "most notorious exemplar of the 'Gothic' school of romance' and 'the novel that summarized most concisely the idiosyncrasies of its kind and gave so forcible a stimulus to the manufacture of tales of terror' (Baker, vii). By so placing *The Monk* in the keyhole of other Gothic writings, there appears—in the light of the analysis carried out in this essay—a leeway for the reading of Gothic literature as a whole as a perversion of the customary narrative structure found in fairytales. Thus, in a more ambitious vision and given the repercussion of this work in later authors, the analysis of an isolated work

could be extended to other Gothic writings; Gothicism, therefore, would escape the widely spread assumption of chaos and disorder in which it is usually viewed to become, on the contrary, a distorted—though by no means unstructured—version of the fairytale narrative.

Whether or not the premise on *The Monk's* composition endorsed in this essay can be taken so far as to encompass an entire literary trend, there seems to be a structural thread underlying the novel, which once laid bare and systematised, reveals the episodes of the novel to work within the frame provided by a construction foreign to the Gothic novel: that of the fairytale. This essay, then, appears as a revisionary project aiming both at upholding the existence of a uniform narrative structure in *The Monk*, and at contesting the long-assumed hermeneutics which have unjustly relegated Lewis' masterpiece to the shelf of 'low literature' for two hundred years on account of its immorality and 'inchoate' intertexture of secondary narratives.

NOTES

¹ The term 'intertextual' acquires a twofold meaning in this essay when it is used in reference to the structure and composition of *The Monk*: firstly, it is employed in a literal sense alluding to the interlace of texts and subtexts interpolated within the main narrative. Besides, 'intertextuality' can refer back to the original meaning attached to the word, which, according to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* 'designates the various relationships that a given text may have with other texts'. Among these relationships the *Oxford Dictionary* includes 'anagram, allusion, adaptation, translation, parody, pastiche, imitation and other kinds of transformation' (*Oxford Dictionary*, 112). It is well known by both scholars and readers to what extent Lewis' work makes use of these kinds of transformation to adapt other literary sources to his work; in fact, the employment of some of those devices, such as translation and imitation, has been overtly acknowledged by the author himself in the Preface to the book. Therefore, the use of the word 'intertextuality' in relation to the construction of *The Monk* appears to be doubly justified.

² The symbol $\Rightarrow$ is here employed to represent the assimilation of a function into another, just as, Propp points out, happens in some tales. In this way, a single action is thought to fulfil two different functions.

³ Elvira's illness could also be read as part of Lucifer's handiwork to secure Ambrosio's ruin, since at the very end of the novel we learn the part he has played in most episodes to procure the downfall of Ambrosio by resorting to any cunning means. Thus, although Lucifer's intervention in the case of Elvira's infirmity is not explicitly stated, for the formal analysis of the novel it may be regarded as a Villainy (A') performed by demoniacal agents, or 'the villain causes bodily injury' (Propp, 32).

⁴ According to Propp, functions (A) and (a) stand in mutual exclusivity; that is, either one variant or the other can occur in fairytales to account for the implication of the main character into action. However, *The Monk* being a novel—and therefore, more complex in structure and extension than a tale—it may dispense with certain restrictions and consequently afford the occurrence of both variants at a time.

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Main text	Font: Times New Roman 11 Spacing: 1.2
End notes	Font: Times New Roman 10 Spacing: 1.0 No footnotes to be used, only end-notes denoted by superscript numbers. Notes should not be inserted automatically (this can hamper the work of editors considerably)
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Double inverted commas preferred over the single. The latter to be used within quotations already enclosed with double inverted commas.

Underlining and bold type are not to be used

Position of stops: comma, full stop, colon and semi-colon are not to be enclosed within parentheses or inverted commas. But superscript numbers will be placed outside stops.

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