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Aesthetical Aspects of the Gothic Revival

To attain a better understanding of the semantics of Gothic in the 18th century, it might be worth looking at the interpretation of Gothic in the mirror of the aesthetic system of Classicism since I intend to have an overview of the aesthetic changes that was brought about in discourses pertaining to the notions of Nature, Beauty, and Gothic in the 18th century. Due to these changes, new dimensions were developing within the realms of arts and aesthetics, that is, the picturesque, the sublime and the infinite. Before concisely discussing the aesthetical background, however, a precise understanding of the term 'Gothic' should be offered in order to show how different paradigms of aesthetics were applied to the Revival which was one of the major cultural and artistic trends of the 18th-19th century in Britain.

The notion of Gothic needs to be classified so that one can shape a picture of the 18th century aesthetical change that happened, as we will see, in favour of the Gothic Revival. In Classical aesthetics¹ Gothic meant "barbarous and tasteless."² It is interesting though that this attitude prevailed in the years of the ascending Gothic Revival. Connotations implied that Gothic is (1) any structure not in the Classical style, (2) a style originating from Northern tribes, especially from the Goths, or (3) having an Arabian-Goth two fold origin.³ As a matter of fact, this poliphony soon gave voice to the opinion that a certain order had to be done. The necessary distinctions led to a more precise denotation of the characteristics of Gothic.

First, according to the 18th century Classicists, it was agreed that a lack of simplicity is evident in Gothic architecture, that is, Classical style demanded that the most excessive feature of an ideal building should be simplicity. Classicists thought that simple, majestic and regular were equalled with "natural", so the overdecorated fluttering of Gothic seemed utterly unnatural.⁴ Nevertheless, others like Montesquieu, paid attention to Gothic's variety, contrast,

¹ By Classical aesthetics I mean the aesthetic principles that were built upon ancient laws of the style mediated by Vitruvian terms of architecture. Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, 136-165.

² Even Rousseau forms the opinion of *préjugé gothique* (Gothic prejudice). It was a common feature of Classicism to scorn Gothic of its connotations of feudalism and medievalism. It is well represented in Thomas Warton's poem, *The Triumph of Isis*:

"T'was theirs new plans of liberty to frame,
And on the Gothic gloom of slavish sway,
To shed the dawn of intellectual day."
(Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, 137-138).

³ This is finely resembled in Vasari's *Lives* as we have seen. See note 10. on p. 5. In *Accounts of Architects and Architecture* (1697), John Evelyn nurtured the two-fold origin and contrasted it with Classicism's superiority.

⁴ This aesthetical paradigm was current in literary discourse as well. Cf. Addison in *Spectator* No. 62: "a thought shine in its own natural beauties. Poets want this Strength of Genius to give that majestick simplicity to Nature, which we so much admire in the Works of the Ancients, are forced to hunt after foreign Ornaments and not to let

and surprise as its chief conveyors of aesthetic enjoyment. This is all the more so important, I think, since in the following aesthetical discourse these aspects will be the turning points with regard to the notions of Nature and Beauty.

Secondly, in Classical terms the imitation of Nature, as a perfect state of art, implies symmetry. In connection with this a lack of symmetry was also attributable to Gothic. Here I can turn to Lovejoy's brilliant description: "a lack of symmetry... militates against the unity effect, that produces upon the eye or the mind a distracting multiplicity of impressions which cannot be immediately recognised as a forming of a single well defined pattern, is inconsistent with beauty."⁵ It coincides with literary theory again, where the unities in the drama and the disapproval of the mixture of genres were stressed.

Finally, two more disparagements were attributed to Gothic, that is, the lack of "regularity" and the lack of universal acceptability.⁶ The former was used in Vitruvian terms, that is, the joint aesthetical exercise of symmetry, repetition, uniform and exact rules of proportion, while the latter, in my view, was a verbal confusion at that age, since there could be found enough historical evidence for both styles. Therefore, I think, it loses its overall validity. All the more so since as soon as the 1740s, an actual approval of Gothic architecture was going on in England.

The reader may still ask what the cause was, then, that led to the perseverance of Gothic, and what its aesthetic grounds were. As the major trends were the Gothic remodellings of the 1740s and the beginning of Gothic domestic architecture in the 1750s,⁷ I might argue that there was a strong divergence from the tradition of Classical architecture. "Nonconformist" architects discovered Gothic as more natural, being more in conformity with Nature. In this context the logic of Classicism was not only dismissed but reversed as Gothic architecture

any piece of Wit of what kind soever escape them. I look upon these writers as Goths in Poetry, who like those in Architecture, not being able to come up to the beautiful Simplicity of the old Greeks and Romans have endeavored to supply its place with all the extravagances of an irregular fancy." In: Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, 144.

⁵ Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, 146.

⁶ Goethe had similar opinion as he first approached the Cathedral of Strasbourg in 1770:

"Auf Hörensagen ehrte ich die Harmonie der Massen, die Reinheit der Formen, war ein abgesagter Feind der verworrenen Willkürlichkeit gotischer Verzierungen. Unter die Rustik Gothisch, gleich dem Artikel eines Wörterbuch, häufte ich alle synonymische Misverständnisse, die mir von Unbestimmtem, Ungeordnetem, Unnatürlichem, Zusammengestoppeltem, Aufgeflicktem, Überladnem jemals durch den Kopf gezogen waren"

"From hearsay I understood the harmony of masses, the purity of forms, was a sworn enemy of the complex arbitrariness of Gothic ornaments. Under the rustic Gothic, just as in a dictionary article, I collected all synonymous misunderstandings that ran through my mind about Uncertainty, Disorder, Unnatural, Patching, and Overcrowded." (Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, 142.)

⁷ A detailed discussion will be offered in chapter 3.3.

appeared as the imitation of Nature.⁸ This theory implied that it is natural harmony that determines architecture instead of a set of strict rules. It also brings us to the aesthetic principle of irregularity because Nature in its pious state is displaced in an irregular way, however, it still retains its harmony. Therefore, the imitation of Nature, as well as Gothic architecture, needs a certain degree of irregularity which means that the Classical aesthetical paradigms of Nature were replaced by those of Gothic.⁹ Edmund Burke, in the *Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) describes and supports this aesthetical process, at the same time, he adds that beauty results from certain proportions between parts of the objects. Thus, those aesthetical principles were carried back into Gothic architecture which formerly derived from there. In my opinion, this change that culminated in the 1740s and 1750s, and the derivation and common appreciation of these aesthetical principles of past and present made a considerable impetus to the Gothic Revival.

The notion of Nature, consequently, rebuilt the paradigms that also steered the way of Gothic, making *naturam sequi* an aesthetic imperative which meant that the primacy of irregularity was soon generalised.¹⁰ In the 1750s and 1760s Nature attained a very high moral and aesthetic level in arts, literature and culture. It is worth mentioning here that it was imminently important that this change paved the road not only for Gothic but for Romanticism as well. The Neoclassical doctrines of simplicity and regularity were transmuted into complexity and irregularity in the Gothic.¹¹ Thus, the Gothic Revival brought about, on the one hand, a “return to Nature”, on the other hand, evoked a reinterpretation of Beauty parallelly with new paradigms, such as the picturesque and the sublime.¹² So, the Gothic semantics acquired an aesthetical ground besides its vigorous political theory.

⁸ Schelling expressed the same opinion saying: “die Architektur hat vorzugweise den Pflanzenorganismus zum Vorbild.” [“The architecture (of Gothic) had primarily the ornaments of plants as samples.”] Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, 154.

⁹ Horace Walpole also speaks of the naturalness and irregularity of Gothic in the *Anecdotes of Painting*: “the rational beauties of regular architecture (Greek – Classicist) and the unrestrained licentiousness of that which is called Gothic.” Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, 157.

¹⁰ One of the friends of Sanderson Miller, whom I will discuss later, wrote in 1753, “I would by no means have my front regular... since the Beauty of Gothic (in my opinion) consists, like that of a Pindarick Ode, in the Boldness and Irregularity of its members.” Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, 159. This aesthetic discourse well represents the change in aesthetics that I was interpreting.

¹¹ This turn in taste also happened to Goethe when in 1770 he entered the already mentioned Cathedral of Strasbourg: “die grossen harmonischen Massen, zu unzählig kleinen Teilen belebt, wie in Werken der ewigen Natur, bis aufs geringste Käferchen, alles Gestalt, und alles zweckend zum Ganzen,” [“the great harmonic masses that live to their uncountable little pieces, as in the works of the eternal nature, even to the tiniest joint everything is a form, and everything tends to the whole,”] Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, 161.

¹² On this point I can refer to Benjamin de St. Pierre as a literary source concerning the feature of Gothic:

“L’architecture gothique de nos temples affectait le sentiment de l’infinie.” “Les voûtes élevées, supportées par des colonnes sveltes, présentaient, comme la cime des palmiers, une perspective aérienne et céleste qui nous remplit d’un sentiment religieux. L’architecture grecque, au contraire, malgré la régularité de ses orders et la

As it has been earlier referred in this study, new aesthetical categories appeared in the 18th century English cultural realm which were elaborated and applied in architecture from the second half of the century. The paradigm of picturesque seems to be one of the most important as it intricately formulised the main aesthetical principles of Gothic, *asymmetry*, *irregularity*, *variation* and *roughness*. Therefore, it seems to be suitable here to discuss the historical precedents, the development of the idea, its association with other aesthetical categories, and finally its contribution to the Gothic Revival.¹³

First of all, it is preeminent to examine the origin of picturesque itself for a better understanding of its unique English afterlife. The place where the notion was born is not at all surprisingly Italy. Originally, it was used in connection with painting. There are several 17th century Italian painters who apply the word *pittoresco*. Giorgio Vasari uses the expression *alla pittoresca* in a phrase meaning “painted with a brush after the manner of painting”.¹⁴ The Baroque painter, Salvator Rosa (1615-1673) applies *pittoresco* to a travel to Loreto.¹⁵ Francesco Redi (1626-1698) speaks of *licenza pittoresca*, that is, picturesque license. Pablo

beauté de ses colonnes, offre souvent dans ses voûtes un aspect lourd et terrestre, parcequ’elles ne sont pas assez élevées par rapport à leur largeur.”

[“The Gothic architecture of our temples affect us with a sentiment of the infinite.”
 “The arches bending on slender columns, like crowns of palms, give us a celestial and aerial perspective that replenish us with religious sentiment. The Greek architecture is, on the contrary, in spite of the regularity of its orders, the beauty of its columns, often coarse and terrestrial, due to the fact that compared to its width, it is not enough elevated.”] (Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, 163.)

¹³ It should be mentioned that the actual occurrence of picturesque with regard to Gothic buildings will be discussed in the sixth and the seventh chapters. For a most detailed and comprehensive examination of the topic, see Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque, Studies in a Point of View* (London, G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1927), especially 1-82, and 186-230; David Watkin, *op. cit.*; Paul Frankl, *op. cit.*, 428-447, and 553-563; Brooks, *op. cit.*, 140-152; Beverly Sprague Allen, *Tides in English Taste (1619-1800), a Background Study of Literature* (Cambridge, Mass, 1937).

¹⁴ For the most important lexicographical sources of *pittoresco* and *pittorescamente* see Frankl, *op. cit.*, 428, note 1. Vasari’s description in the *Lives* of the 1911 edition by Karl Frey says:

“Altri di chiaro et scuro si conducono su fogli tinti, che fanno un mezo, et la penna fa il lineamento, cio è il dintorno ò profilo, et l’inchostro oi con un poco d’acqua, fa una tinta dolce, che lo vela et ombra; di poi con un pennello sttile, intinto nella biacca, stemperata con la gomma, si lumeggia il disegno; et questo modo è molto alla pittoresca et mostra più l’ordine del colorito.”

[“...executed in chiaroscuro on tinted sheets that produce a medium tone, and the pen makes the lineaments, that is, the inner line or the profile, and then the ink with a little water makes a sweet color, which veils and shades it; then one heighthens the lights in the drawing with a pointed brush, impregnated with gum; and this manner is very picturesque and brings out the order of the colors better.”] (Frankl, *op. cit.*, 428).

¹⁵ Rosa’s savage landscapes inspired not only picturesque but sublime as well. A part of the description of his travel follows as this: “Son stato in quindici giorni in continuo mota, et il viaggio è assai più curioso e pittoresco de cotesto di Fiorenza senza comparazione, attesechè è d’un misto così stravagante d’orrido e di domestico, di piano e di scosceso, che non si puo desiderar di vantaggio per lo compiacimento dell’occhio.” [“I have now been on the way for fifteen consecutive days, and the journey is incomparably stranger and more picturesque than that from Florence, because it is a mixture of such extravagancies of the fearful and the familiar, of the flat and the precipitous, so that no better feast for the eye could be desired.”] (Frankl, *op. cit.*, 429).

Segneri (1623-1694) also mentions *pittoresco*¹⁶ as an extravagant painting style. The same idea recurs by Filippo Baldinucci (1624-1696). It is evident, I think, that picturesque was attributed to painting and denoted a style not conformable with Classical rules.

After this modest Italian excursion, it is important to investigate how picturesque developed in England and how it contributed to aesthetics in general. The term was adopted in 1705 as picturesque by Richard Steele (1672-1729).¹⁷ William Gilpin (1724-1804) attributed picturesque to landscape painting.¹⁸ He interpreted picturesque as something different to the well-formed and symmetrical contours of Classicism. His picturesque meant variety, irregularity and roughness.¹⁹ At the same time Gilpin created an alternative notion of beauty to that of Burke, for he argued that roughness is the main source of beauty.²⁰ That is one of the reasons why painters and architects of his age preferred ruins, as opposed to smooth plastic buildings.²¹ It was a sharp change in aesthetics since picturesque's roughness enabled painters to expound their imagination on a larger scale.²² Gilpin's ideas were developed by Uwedale Price (1747-1829)²³ For Price it meant roughness and sudden variation. He extended picturesque to all kinds of visual phenomena, including architecture. Walter Scott's edifying and illuminating description of the Rectory of Willingham offers a fine perception of this complex artistic sensation of picturesque:

“It was situated about four hundred yards from the village, and on a rising ground which sloped gently upward, covered with small enclosures, or closes, *laid out irregularly*, so that the old oaks and elms,

¹⁶ “I pittori per esprimere i venti più impetuosi, sogliono figurare alcune facce gonfie, che spirano con gran furia. Ma questo è un capriccio lor pittoresco fondato a la necessità che gli stringe di rappresentar quel medesimo che non può soggiare a guardi...” [“In order to represent the strongest winds, the painters' winds accustomed to depict various puffed out faces that blow furiously. But that is their picturesque caprice...”] (Frankl, *op. cit.*, 431).

¹⁷ French adoption happened in 1712 as *pittoresque*. The German painter, Friedrich von Hagedorn (1705-1754) uses first the word as *mahlerisch*. Alexander Pope (1688-1744) thought that picturesque was of French origin. This idea was maintained until the theory of William Gilpin.

¹⁸ Gilpin's forerunner was Francois Hemsterhuis (1721-1790) who interpreted picturesque as an expression of action as opposed to the concise contours of Classicism.

¹⁹ Also picturesque occurs in France and Germany, the very special meaning picturesque had only acquired in England. See William Gilpin, *Three Essays* (1770s).

²⁰ Burke argued that the source of beauty is nothing but the displacements of elements and smoothness.

²¹ Due to my topics' complexity and extension I am not examining landscape painting, only those aspects that proved to be suitable for the discussion of aesthetics and architecture.

²² Templeman summarizes Gilpin's theory in three sentences: “(1) Picturesque beauty is the species of beauty which appeals to the eye of a painter as suited for presentation in a picture. (2) Picturesque beauty is distinguished by the quality of roughness. (3) Roughness is essential to picturesque beauty because when certain elements (execution, composition, variety, contrast, effect of light and shade and colouring) are properly pleasing in a picture they of necessity make us use of rough objects.” Frankl, *op. cit.*, 440. See also William Gilpin, *Essay on Picturesque and Beauty* (1792): picturesque “please the eye in their natural state” that implies a contrast of light and shade as well. Monk, *op. cit.*, 157.

²³ Uwedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque as Compared with the Sublime and Beautiful* (London, 1794). Frankl, *op. cit.*, 440.

which were planted in hedge-rows, fell into perspective, and were *blenden together in beautiful irregularity*. When they approached nearer to the house, a handsome gate-way admitted them into a lawn, of narrow dimensions, indeed, but which was interspersed with large sweet-chesnut trees and beeches, and kept in handsome order. *The front of the house was irregular*. Part of it seemed very old, and had, in fact, been the residence of the incumbent in Romish times. Successive occupants had made considerable additions and improvements, each in the taste of his own age, and *without much regard to symmetry*. But these incongruities of architecture were so graduated and happily mingled, that the eye, far from being displeased with the combinations of various styles, saw nothing but what was interesting in the varied and intricate pile which they exhibited. Fruit-trees displayed on the southern wall, outer staircases, various places of entrance, a combination of roofs and chimneys of different ages, *united to render the front, not indeed beautiful or grand, but intricate, perplexed, or, to use Mr. Price's appropriate phrase, picturesque.*"²⁴

Since now all kinds of artistic production could be evaluated on the basis of the picturesque, Price unambiguously distinguished between Grecian and Gothic architecture.²⁵ His ideas were further improved by Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824)²⁶ who established picturesque's aesthetic value of variety, colourfulness, irregularity, undiluted with emotional associations, and secured a broader yet more unbound definition for beauty as an aesthetical reality independent of mental sympathies or intellectual fitness. Though not in Kantian terms, he circumscribed picturesque beauty as unrelieved on associations.²⁷ Knight made a decisive step in demolishing the traditional planned gardening and building up a "more natural" landscape similar to that of landscape painters.²⁸ Therefore, the notion of picturesque gained a foothold on the aesthetics of architecture and the Gothic Revival as well.

Gothic and Romanticism challenged the Neoclassical aesthetic realm since the deliberation of imagination in poetry by a chain of associations produced an alternative perception of *beauty* and *sublime*. I will shed some light on these two paradigms, their connection with the picturesque and their exercise on the architectural current of the 19th century Gothic Revival.

²⁴ Walter Scott, *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*. (London, Everyman's Library, 1978, First ed. 1906), 337. Words were italicised by me.

²⁵ For Price's comparison of Grecian and Gothic see Frankl, *op. cit.*, 440-441.

²⁶ Richard Payne Knight, *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1796). Frankl, *op. cit.*, 441.

²⁷ This was criticised by Burke who argued that art can never exclusively rely on practical emotions and passions, for too much practical consideration could diminish the capacity of regarding a work of art aesthetically. Monk, *op. cit.*, 162.

²⁸ This process was already discussed in chapter 3. The landscape park and its adherent architectural movement was parodied by William Combe (1741-1823) in his satirical poem, *Dr. Syntax*: "Your sport, my lord, I cannot take / For I must go and hunt a lake..." Frankl, *op. cit.*, 442.

First, it might prove to be plausible to analyse how imaginative associations can alter an existing aesthetical category, that is, *beauty*, and create a new one, the *sublime*.²⁹ I have already examined the enlargement of Gothic semantics by the joining of imagination and originality, nevertheless, it is useful to rephrase that originality, freedom, and individuality of interpretation, basic adherents to Romanticism as well, elevated Gothic to the highest rank of poetry.³⁰ This expansion of the individual imagination brought about a change in the concept of beauty, demolishing or at least altering the antecedent theory of it, that is, beauty consists in the symmetry and right allocation of proportions. Though beauty remained largely intellectual aesthetical paradigm, in my opinion, it was bound to the power of imagination as well. Its interpretation depended solely on the poet or the artist who through his imagination exercised an irregular and subjective valorization of reality.³¹ On the other hand, the powers of imagination made an emotional effect on the mind. As far as architecture is concerned, when there is an expansion of the mind upon observing an object, a sensation of sublime is associated with ideas of strength and durability. It is a combination of pleasurable and painful effects, and it is enacted automatically. These sensations are called comprehensively 'the sublime'. Therefore, I think, sublime can be employed as an emotional dimension of Gothic.³² Sublime consists in symmetry to affect vastness, in greatness of dimension, uniformity, an awe of terror and in the feeling of infinity. A certainly most edifying and splendid description of this aesthetical category and sentiment is that part of the infernal journey of Aeneas, based on the Orphic *katabasis*, when he caught a glimpse of the entrance of the Tartaros.³³

"Respicit Aeneas subito et sub rupe sinistra
moenia lata videt triplici circumdata muro,
quae rapidus flammis ambit torrentibus amnis,

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of sublime and beautiful see Monk, *op. cit.*, 101-133.

³⁰ In *Conjectures on Original Composition in England and Germany*, Edward Young says: „innate genius is the heritage of artists and the sole interpreter of beauty to man.” Monk, *op. cit.*, 101.

³¹ Imagination was the source of genius as well. As Duff says: “the ability to see the world aesthetically, as opposed to the knack of writing by rules” William Duff, *An Essay on Original Genius* (1767), Monk, *op. cit.*, 130. Gothic architecture, thus, proved to be an excellent territory for the genius to apply his irregular creativity in ignorance of Neoclassical rules. In the criticism of Duff and many other contemporaries, the three main literary geniuses were Homer, Shakespeare, and Ossian.

³² See examples in Brooks, *op. cit.*, 101-105. Also its theory by Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1756).

³³ For a concise commentary and edition of Virgil in English, see R. D. Williams, *The Aeneid of Virgil*, 2 vols. (London, 1973). I chose Dryden’s magnificent translation, see <http://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.6.vi.html> (date: 2008.05.05)

Tartareus Phlegethon, torquetque sonantia saxa.
Porta adversa ingens solidoque adamante columnae,
vis ut nulla virum, non ipsi excindere bello
caelicolae valeant; stat ferrea turris ad auras,”

(Vergilius: Aeneis, VI, 548-555.)

“The hero, looking on the left espied,
A lofty tow’r and strong on ev’ry side
With treble walls, which Phelegethon surrounds,
Whose fiery blood the burning empire bounds;
And, press’d betwixt the rocks, the bellowing noise resounds
Wide is the fronting gate, and, raised on high,
With adamantine columns threatens the sky;
Vain is the force of man, and Heaven’s as vain,
To crush the pillars which the pile sustain,
Sublime on these a tower of steel is rear’D”

(John Dryden, *The Aeneid by Virgil*)

If these lines are contrasted to Scott’s description of picturesque, one can argue that sublime is in some respect a counterpart of picturesque. How could they come to terms in Gothic? I think that Gothic castle architecture can encompass these paradigms in a flexible way on the basis of both being part of Nature.³⁴ As it has been examined above, picturesque is neatly connected with Nature. At the same time sublime can be extended to all phenomena that conjures up man’s mind, and, I think, it is the very point where a common feature can be found. For sublime was applied to the rationalisation of the newly acquired love of awe and wildness in natural scenery.³⁵ To support this argument, I quote a further passage from Scott’s

³⁴ As it will be further discussed in chapter 7.

³⁵ “The cult of nature” is well served by Ossian whose works often involve sublime descriptions, for example: „They came over the desert like stormy clouds, when the winds roll them over the heath: their edges are tinged with lightning, and the echoing groves foresee the storm.” *The War of Inis-Thona*, Monk, *op. cit.*, 125. It was Hugh Blair who first called attention to this feature of the sublime. In his work, *The Minstrel*, James Beattie, Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic at Mareschal College, discusses sublime in poetry. According to him

The Heart of Mid-Lothian, when Reuben Butler looks down at the city of Edinburgh from a hillside path:

“If I were to choose a spot from which the rising or setting sun could be seen to the greatest possible advantage, it would be that wild path winding around the foot of the high belt of semicircular rocks, called Salisbury Crags, and making the verge of the steep descent which slopes down into the glen on the south-eastern side of the city of Edinburgh. The prospect, in its general outline, commands a close-built high piled city, stretching itself out beneath in a form, which, to a romantic imagination, may be supposed to represent that of a dragon; now, a noble arm of the sea, with its rocks, isles, distant shores, and boundary of mountains; and now, a fair and fertile champaign country, varied with hill, dale, and rock, and *skirted by the picturesque* ridge of the Pentland mountains. But as the path gently circles around the base of the cliffs, the prospect, composed as it is of these *enchanting and sublime objects*, changes at every step, and presents them blended with, or divided from, each other, in every possible variety *which can gratify the eye and the imagination*. When a *piece of scenery so beautiful, yet so varied*, – *so exciting by its intricacy, and yet so sublime*, – is lighted up by the tints of morning or of evening, and displays all that variety of shadowy depth, exchanged with partial brilliancy, which gives character even to the tamest of landscapes, the effect approaches near to enchantment. This path used to be my favourite evening and morning resort, when engaged with a favourite author, or new subject of study. It is, I am informed, now become totally impassable; a circumstance which, if true, reflects little credit on the taste of the Good Town or its leaders.”³⁶

Therefore, what connects these aesthetical notions and beauty is Nature and naturalness. It is only one step for us now to show that Gothic architecture, as a material manifestation of naturalness, due to the aesthetical change of the 18th century, provided adequate means for channelling and uniting these paradigms.³⁷

Picturesque and sublime are similar and different at the same time, nevertheless, I will argue that Romantic visual arts, especially Gothic architecture was a remaking of reality in which picturesque scenery homed a sublime historical drama. In this sense sublime was an “aesthetic fulfilment through the self’s subordination to an external power that is absolute,

poetry has five sources of sublimity: great sentiments, grand images, horror, ability to awaken good and great affections, description of passions. Monk, *op. cit.*, 129.

³⁶ Walter Scott, *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*. (London, Everyman’s Library, 1978, First ed. 1906), 87. Words are italicised by me.

³⁷ This is well represented in the pattern books of the 1750s and 1760s, such as William Halfpenny’s *Rural Architecture in the Gothic Taste* (sic!) (1752), William Pain’s *The Builder’s Companion* (1758), or Paul Decker’s *Gothic Architecture Decorated* (1759). This latter is a good example, I think, for the fact that actual architectural practice mingled with patterns laid down in books. Brooks, *op. cit.*, 98.

even annihilating, while picturesque was the imagination's internal ability to visually control and construct a world around."³⁸ Thus, Gothic united external power and internal ability, sublime and picturesque became part of Gothic semantics, the former was uniform, still belonging to the same style.³⁹ As distinct examples, Strawberry Hill stands for picturesque proper while Inverary Castle, Argyshire (1745-1790) makes a complement to Strawberry with its colossal structure, symmetry, and with its small proportions to the greatness of granite walls. Inverary had a feature that necessitates further examination for its sense of vastness roused the feeling of infinity as well.

For a better understanding of the aesthetical ideas inherent to Gothic semantics I have found it necessary to discuss the concept of infinite as well which is neatly connected to the sublime. The first who attributed infinity to Gothic was Wilhelm Heinse (1749-1803) in his work, *Ardinghello* (1787). Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) improved Heinse's ideas in saying that "a work intended for the eye can achieve perfection only in limitation; a work of imagination can attain it also in the unlimited."⁴⁰ However, Schiller would place Gothic as inferior to Greek or Classical in terms of aesthetics, still I think, in Gothic's art of the infinite he sees the antithesis of Greek architecture's art of limitation.⁴¹ In England it was John Milner (1752-1826)⁴² who ventured into a classification of the infinite within the boundaries of aesthetics. He attributed it explicitly to the sublime, which depends, according to Milner, on the proportions.

Due to associations of Romantic historicism, Gothic architecture offered a suitable territory for a genius to apply his irregular creativity in picturesque, to express inward emotions and excesses through sublime and infinite powers in the ignorance of Neoclassical rules. This context also offered a fine basis for the reinterpretation of beauty by the individual imagination. Instead of the strong arbitration of Neoclassicism, Romanticism afforded hardly any limits and rules on artistic impression, therefore, imaginative perceptions of objects could

³⁸ Brooks, *op. cit.*, 140.

³⁹ This kind of creative visual adventure is symbolised in Joseph Mallord William Turner's (1775-1851) pictures depicting medieval castles and ruins, for example, Carnarvon Castle (1799) or Norham Castle (1845). I can mention here John Constable's (1776-1837) Dedham Vale for the same visionary landscape. As far as foreign countries are concerned, Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), the German landscape painter could be referred to as well as the Prussian artist, Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841) who pictured Gothic buildings for Prussia's national pride. In France Pierre Henri Révoil (1776-1824) depicted medieval themes.

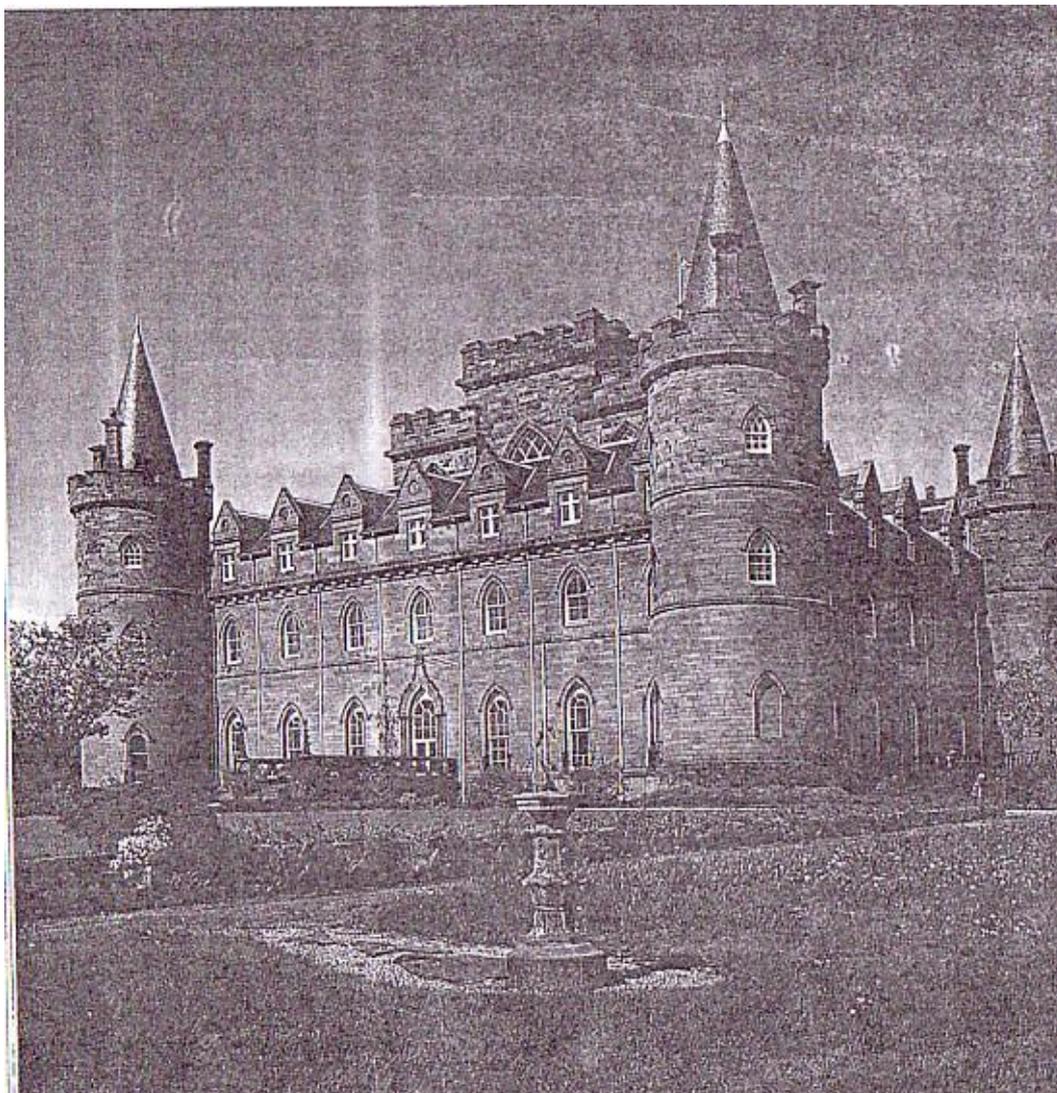
⁴⁰ *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (1795). Frankl, *op. cit.*, 443.

⁴¹ The antithesis of antiquity and modernity was done by Petrarch as well but not in terms of the finite and the infinite.

⁴² Milner was the bishop of Castabala. He destroyed Wren's Saracen theory of Gothic by simply pointing out the chronology, at the same time he propounds a false theory because he finds Anglo-Normans as originators of Gothic.

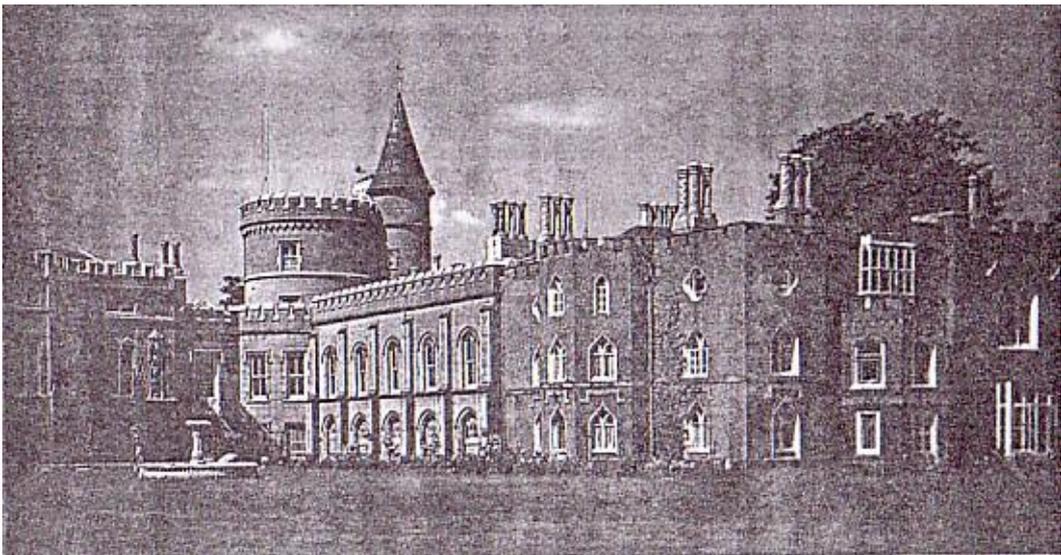
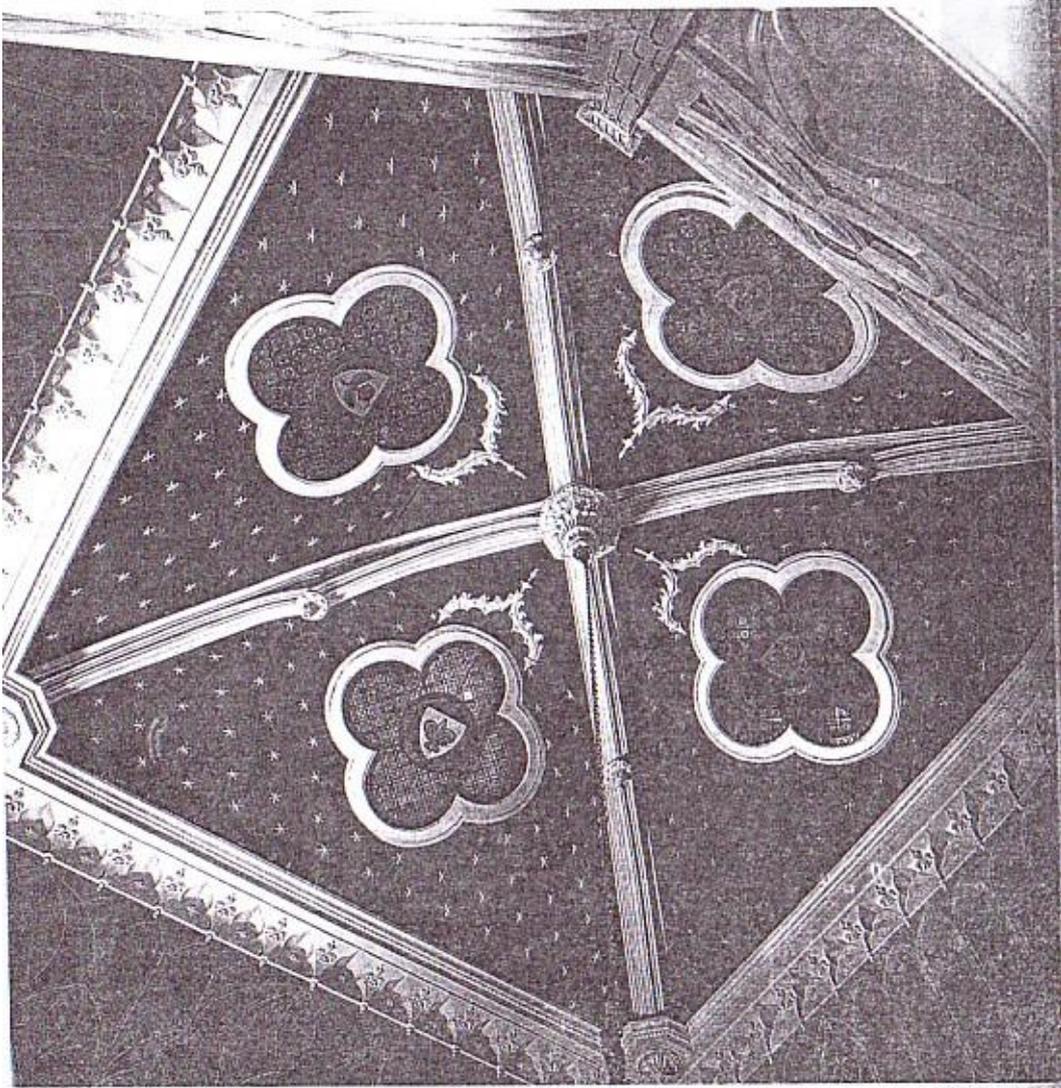
find a way of expression.⁴³ This process can be observed in the Gothic Revival of the 19th century England, however, its discussion would dislogde the limits of this paper.

Appendix



Roger Morris, Inverary Castle, 1745-1790 (Brooks, *op. cit.*, 94.)

⁴³ Referring here to Wordsworth's inward eye, the sublimity of Inverary or the pictures of Turner might be satisfactory I think.



Strawberry Hill and its Stair Hall, Twickenham, 1754 (Brooks, *op. cit.*, 84.)

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