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From a Gothic Text to a Neobaroque Cinema: Wojciech Jerzy Has's Adaptation of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*

ABSTRACT

The article discusses the journey of the gothic novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) by James Hogg (1770-1835) from the repertoire of Scottish Romanticism to the neobaroque film adaptation *Osobisty pamiętnik grzesznika przez niego samego spisany* (1985) by the Polish filmmaker Wojciech Jerzy Has (1925-2000). The film demonstrates Has's anamorphic position and emphasizes the crucial role of the gothic text's neobaroque aesthetics in illuminating Polish cultural and political conflicts in 1986 when the film was released. Has rearticulates contradictions structuring the puritan-provincial mind depicted by Hogg and launches a critique of factional fanaticism. Keywords: Wojciech Jerzy Has, James Hogg, provincial gothic, puritan-provincial mind, Neobaroque, anamorphic position

This article explores an intriguing journey of a Gothic text – James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (first published in 1824) – from the repertoire of Scottish Romanticism to the neobaroque oeuvre of the outstanding Polish filmmaker Wojciech Jerzy Has (1925-2000), who adapted Hogg's text to the screen in 1985 (released in 1986) as *Osobisty pamiętnik grzesznika przez niego samego spisany* (Memoirs of a Sinner).

Trained originally as a painter, Has made self-reflexive poetic films luxuriating in baroque visual overabundance from the late 1950s to the late 1980s. However, only recently the director's films have witnessed a surge of popularity, and at present are gaining wider acclaim at home and abroad.¹ Yet to the cinema cognoscenti all over the world Wojciech Jerzy Has has been familiar since the 1960s

¹ The three twenty-first-century monographs on Has and his cinema published in Poland and abroad testify to this surge of interest; see Grodz, 2008; Maron, 2010 and Insdorf, 2017.

as the director of the esoteric black and white *Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie* (Saragossa Manuscript, 1964) and the melancholy color film *Sanatorium pod klepsydrą* (The Hour-Glass Sanatorium, 1973).

Less exalted by cinema lovers than *Saragossa Manuscript* or *The Hour-Glass Sanatorium*, the adaptation of Hogg's novel was a color movie and Has's last but one film. The film's release in 1986 coincided with Poland's descent into an ever deepening provinciality due to the ravages brought about by the utter legitimization crisis of the communist regime. Although as a filmmaker the director would shun a direct political engagement, his decision to release the film precisely at that moment may be interpreted as his oblique proposition that the adaptation can help illuminate Polish cultural and political conflicts. It can also be argued that like the rest of Has's oeuvre, the film *Memoirs of a Sinner* serves as a vehicle of the director's oblique response – conveyed by the neobaroque cinematic form and launched from a position later on discussed as anamorphic – to the expression given by the mainstream Polish cinema (whose most recognized representative was the director Andrzej Wajda) to the Romantic martyrological myth of Polish history (Toeplitz, 1964, p. 2).

This martyrological vision emerged in the wake of the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its disappearance from the map of Europe for 123 years, until 1918. The country's former territories were relegated to the status of peripheries of three empires: Russia, Austria and Prussia. After a brief period of independence from 1918 to 1939, the peripheral status of Poland as a Soviet satellite determined at Yalta Conference continued to 1989. A compelling affinity between the peripherality and relative provincialism of Poland in relationship to western Europe in 1986, and the provincialism of Romantic Scotland so ingeniously reflected in Hogg's gothic novel, as well as the writer's insight into the consequences of a factional conflict, make justifiable a conjecture that these circumstances might have prompted the director's choice of a text for adaptation.

The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner by Hogg consists of three parts. The first and the last part are narrated by an unnamed Editor, who in the first part retells the events that led to the tragic demise of the main protagonist, the religious fanatic Robert Wringhim. The second part presents the story of his life and fall, told by Robert himself in his partially printed and partially handwritten confessions, while the third part, which describes the discovery of Robert's confessions in his grave, is again narrated by the Editor. Robert Wringhim's tale is a story of his gradual decline into madness and despair caused by his Calvinist fanaticism and a seeming friendship with one Gil-Martin, a shape-shifting demon who turns out to be the fanatic's double. At Gil-Martin's instigation, Robert, at this point an insane wretch, commits numerous vile crimes and eventually murders his own brother. Later he also kills his mother. Finally he hangs himself on a straw rope.

Unlike Hogg's novel, Has's film begins with the apocalyptic narrative frame of the Revelation where against the backdrop of the scene presenting the dead rising from their graves, a gang of grave robbers dig out a rotting corpse of Robert Wringhim, still clutching an unfinished manuscript of what later turns out to be his memoirs. Awaken from the grave, the corpse tells the story of his life and death as a religious fanatic – a strict Calvinist – who, encouraged by Gil Martin, his evil double, seems to commit numerous foul crimes, including killings and rapes, the insidious stabbing of his own half-brother, and the murder of his mother. Initially a stranger encountered by Robert when the fanatic comes to believe that he belongs to the elect who deserve eternal salvation, Gil Martin, dominates Robert's life and persuades the religious wretch that murder can be a correct course of action undertaken to punish sinners – all those, according to Robert, who find pleasure and fulfilment in the profane material world. The evil acquaintance turns out to be capable of appearance metamorphoses and often assumes Robert's mien while committing the evil deeds which are therefore attributed to the fanatic. Driven by guilt, Robert eventually descends into madness and despair and, on returning to the ruin of the mill owned once by his stepfather, stabs Gil Martin to death. Yet, wanderers passing the ruined mill find Robert's corpse with a knife in his chest. Pursuing his evil *doppelgänger*, the devil, Robert has been on the search for himself.

By employing neobaroque aesthetic strategies in the film, Has rearticulates contradictions structuring this Scottish Gothic text, and cogently focuses on a representation of fierce factionalism which derives from what in the analysis of Hogg's novel Susan Manning (2009, p. 70) refers to as "the paradox of the puritan-provincial mind". Lawrence Buell (1987) also observes that the notion of provinciality is crucial for interpreting the novel, which he classifies as belonging to "provincial gothic." The term refers to "the use of gothic conventions to anatomize the pathology of regional culture" (p. 351). The genre originated among Anglo-Scottish and Anglo-Irish writers "whose sensitivity to provincial difference from English norms led them to invest the former with an atmosphere of romantic otherness and grotesquerie" (p. 351). Thus, the otherness of the local is both desired and pathologized. Buell considers provincial gothic at its most powerful when operating between the poles of romance and realism, and emphasizes the *doppelgänger* quality of its distorted world (p. 367). Indeed, Susan Manning demonstrates that in Hogg's novel both the Editor and Robert Wringhim are facets of the same puritan-provincial mind even as they represent diametrically opposed viewpoints. "Both search for unassailable truth beyond inscrutable appearances; both 'interpret' these appearances through a series of polarities, doublings and oppositions" (Manning, 2009, p. 70).

The puritan-provincial mind is predicated on contradictions. It desires the hidden truth of the center even as it knows it cannot have it, and yet it is compelled

to strive for knowledge. In the case of the puritan mind it is the certainty of one's election which is the knowledge accessible only to God, while the provincial mind desires the confidence of wielded political or cultural power. Consequently, desiring to possess knowledge without losing innocence, the puritan-provincial personality undergoes a split as a result of aggressive confrontational proclivity. Part of the self capitulates to the experience of the center "with its connotations of degeneracy and decadence" (Manning, 2009, p. 70), while the other half maintains its radical innocence. Division within the self is reflected in the external doubling: The "confrontation becomes self-confrontation, pursuit becomes soul-searching" (Manning, 2009, p.71).

It must be noted that the conflict between the center and peripheries, between the hegemonic power and the subalterns is also inherent in the structure of political aesthetics of the neobaroque paradigm. Rather than designating a return to the historical baroque, the paradigm, which embraces the concepts of the Neobaroque, New World Baroque, and New Baroque, is global and transhistorical. Yet, indeed, this paradigm comprises political sensibility, aesthetics, and artistic strategies, as well as practices first introduced by the historical baroque (Egginton, 2007, p. 108).² Discussing relationships between the terms Baroque, New World Baroque and Neobaroque, Monika Kaup and Lois Parkinson Zamora invoke the image of an irregular pearl whose Portuguese name, *barroco*, is considered one possible source of the designation of the historical period called baroque: "In fact, we might think of the Baroque, New World Baroque, and Neobaroque as a single, rather large, eccentric pearl with excrescences and involutions corresponding to their overlapping histories and forms in Europe and the Americas" (Parkinson Zamora & Kaup, 2010, p. 3).

In this article I employ the term neobaroque. It facilitates a discussion of the return of baroque aesthetics globally and transhistorically, in reference to the tensions between politically and culturally defined centers and peripheries. Both Hogg's novel and its adaptation by Has dramatize this tension as well as interrogating factional conflicts between moderate and extreme religious attitudes; truth and appearances; simplicity and hypocrisy; as well as autonomy and seduction. Uncertainty about what actually resides at the center is presented in the novel and in the film as the source of simultaneous attraction and abhorrence. This contradiction leads to the emergence of a series of doubles.

Yet, the *doppelgänger* quality of Hogg's novel is conveyed in Has's film by means of the strategy of distributing epistemological contradictions into different possible worlds. Whereas in Hogg's novel the tension between the center and peripheries that leads to the rise of the doubles plays out, as it were, internally, in

² For the genealogy of the neobaroque paradigm see Egginton, 2007, p. 108 and Kaup, 2005, p. 107).

the mind of the protagonist, in Has's film this tension is dramatized, so to speak, externally, in the form of multiple worlds. In this way Has offers what Monika Kaup (2005, p. 105) refers to elegantly as "an ontological solution to an epistemological impasse". The director's strategic formal choice places his film precisely in the very heart of the neobaroque paradigm. By representing conflicting standpoints as belonging to different possible worlds Has offers a solution to factional struggles. He shows a multiverse in which conflicting worldviews can appear side by side, while the costs of internecine struggles are viewed from a global, apocalyptic perspective.

The hybridity of neobaroque forms and a tension between politically invested neobaroque artistic strategies arise from the multiple complex social, ethnic, cross-cultural, and religious confrontations as well as from colonial resentments arising at the peripheries of empires; in other words, circumstances constitutive of modernity. Consequently, the neobaroque strategy for facing the multiplicity of perspectives and impossibility to adhere to one single and universal truth is to sort out inconsistencies into parallel universes (Kaup, 2005, p. 135). The epistemological question turns into an ontological quandary. The creation of new worlds to manage epistemological crises is also a way to respond to the tension between the neobaroque major and minor strategies.

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's discussions of minor literature in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986), Egginton and Kaup identify two strategies operating in the neobaroque aesthetics: major and minor³. The neobaroque minor strategy takes "the major strategy at face value," pushing the material medium of its figurative assumptions" to their "absurd extremes" (Egginton, 2007, p. 115). Egginton (2007) emphasizes the political potential of the minor strategy by pointing out that "the minor strategy is a way of residing in the major strategy without accepting its fundamental assumptions" (p. 113). While the major strategy considers the coherence of representation to be vouchsafed by its relationship to an unknown thing, an absolute, present at the center, beyond the veil of an arbitrary system of signs, the minor strategy links the image's function to the dissolution of these binds – whether this dissolution is due to the absence of an absolute or to an uncertainty whether there is any absolute at all beyond the veil. Inasmuch as the search for the limits of representation is treated as an end in itself, the relation constitutive of representation is cut off thus liberating a copy from the original (p. 113). Means of representation become an end in itself (p. 117).

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the concept of theatricality underlies the neobaroque experience, where the subject is analogous to a spectator in a theatre who synthesizes "raw data" and organizes available knowledge through

³ Egginton (2007, p. 113) prefers the expression "minor strategy", while Kaup (2005, p. 112) employs the term "the strategy of becoming-minor".

the medium of the stage and its characters (Egginton, 2007, p. 110). Buci-Glucksmann connects the theatricality inherent in the neobaroque experience with its fundamental exaltation of otherness: “baroque reason, with its theatricization of existence and its logic of ambivalence, is not merely another reason within modernity. Above all it is the *Reason of the Other*, of its overbrimming excess” (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, p. 39) – the excess of the feminine (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, pp. 125-173). This reveals the neobaroque’s conciliatory capacity by bringing out the flow of cultural influences from the marginalized Other and their assimilation by the discourse of the center (Salgado, 1999, p. 323, 325).

Has was never interested in providing immediate, direct or realistic response to contemporary social and political issues, nor did he feel compelled to give in to reigning artistic fashions, styles, or passing fads. Rather, he would choose “the anamorphic position” (Sarduy, 1975, p. 50), a concept introduced by Severo Sarduy when discussing baroque gaze. Anamorphosis, the term invented by Gaspar Schott in 1657, refers to the projection of a monstrously distorted and deformed image onto a surface that renders a picture which only from a certain point of view appears to have proportions consistent with regularly constructed perspective (Grootenboer, 2005, p. 101). As a geometrically based rhetorical figure that plays with concealment and reveals dark sides of representation, anamorphosis proves an excellent strategy for capturing otherness (Castillo, 2001, pp. 2-4). Indeed, “[a]namorphic images teach us that it is possible to look at the margins of our own visual field, insofar as we are willing to marginalize our point of view” (Grootenboer, 2005, p. 100). Appositely, by assuming the anamorphic perspective, Has employs a neobaroque minor strategy in his cinema of folding and unfolding labyrinth-junkyard.

Some disgruntled viewers have complained on internet fora that Has’s films actually constitute one and the same movie. Indeed, this negative and shallow remark paradoxically captures the neobaroque morphogenesis of Has’s cinema. Not unlike “Baroque temporality [that] overarches discontinuities, and Baroque space [that] is labyrinthine, an ambit in which forking paths diverge, cross and conjoin” (Parkinson Zamora & Kaup, 2010, p. 10), Has’s films form a continuum of a folding and unfolding neobaroque labyrinthine junkyard of looping paths, an arch-fold which runs from linguistic expression through visual complexity of the cinematic montage to the rich materiality of reality. This arch-fold begins with the title of Has’s first feature film: *Pętla* (Loop & Noose, 1957), runs through a mural presenting a woman that haunts *Pętla*’s protagonist to reach another figuration of the feminine – the images of gigantic sea-shells at the end of *Niezwykła podróż Baltazara Kobera* (The Tribulations of Balthasar Kober, 1988), the director’s last film.⁴

⁴ Reality is represented in Has’s films as either consisting of multiple parallel worlds introduced often as dreams or visions or as a spatio-temporal continuity folding in on itself. The

The will to persist on the border of the unknown, and a desire for the exploration of a terra incognita is a central theme in neobaroque thought (Egginton, 2007, pp. 111-112), a thought that is realized aesthetically in such primary images as: “the ruin, the labyrinth, and the library,” phenomena that “are based on deception, complexity, and artificiality” (Turner, 1994, p. 23), while sensuality, a taste for folds, and skulls evinced by neobaroque aesthetics clearly valorize feeling (Egginton, 2007, p. 113). It thus comes as no surprise that Has’s characters set out on looping external journeys which mirror their internal quests. The image of ruin is realized in Has’s films as junkyards as well as buildings and apartments in the state of decay. Indeed, in Polish film criticism the filmmaker’s oeuvre is referred to as “rupieciarnia” (junkyard) (Eberhardt, 1967, p. 5) or “rupieciarnia marzeń” (the junkyard of dreams) (Słodowski & Wijata, 1994). Mismatched objects in a junkyard, often in disrepair, testify to a decline or violent demise of a homogenous cultural formation. They have been divested of their symbolic meaning and acquire the status of signs whose interpretation facilitates a new, transformative – and as yet uncertain – reading of reality (Salgado, 1999, p.317).

In adapting Hogg’s novel Has divests the Gothic text from the features pointing to its Scottishness and retains only very general characteristics of loosely treated Puritan/Protestant mundane life—diction, reading of the Scripture at home, costumes (especially in the case of the minister, Robert Wringhim’s father), and provides a new narrative frame—that of the Book of Revelation. Moreover, along with providing an apocalyptic frame Has does away with the typical gothic fragmentation of Hogg’s text. The director not only removes the process of editing a book about the sinner’s life from the hands of a local, provincial editor, but places the judgment in the hands of the author of the “Book of Life” (Revelation 20: 14). Thus, instead of telling the life of Wringhim as a text poised between subjective introspection (because the confessions are in part still in handwriting) and the public judgment (because the book is in part already printed), Has provides an apocalyptic frame that establishes the center of meaning and the source of knowledge of good and evil.

In this way, Has erases the provincial doubt or hesitation by substituting a centrifugal rebellion against the Father with a theatrical enactment of the centripetal convergence of all meaning and knowledge. Of course, performing central knowledge is not necessarily different from the knowledge that is located at the center – although neither the puritan-provincial mind nor the neobaroque

dispersal of reality into parallel worlds among which contradictory characteristics of identity are distributed is exquisitely demonstrated by the formal solutions employed by Has in *Niezwykła podróż Baltazara Kobera*. The spatio-temporal continuum can appear in the form of a single Möbius strip, as in *Pełta*, or multiplied into numerous loops which constitute baroque pleats and folds. The most memorable examples of looping spatio-temporal continuum come from *Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie* and *Sanatorium pod klepsydrą*.

sensibility can ascertain this – but such staging can certainly be considered a neobaroque minor strategy, which is focused solely on the folly of representation. The apocalyptic frame with its play of light, darkness, chiaroscuro and flames invokes spectacles of baroque fireworks, or opera performances. Interestingly, images of fire as emblematic of the infinite are those on which both Puritan theological imagination and baroque sensibility converge: “the flame, this black and glowing red flame, would be the continual metaphor of boundless baroque forms, infinitely multiplying forms, deformed and anamorphic as if consumed by the infinite” (Buci-Glucksmann, 2013, p. 121). The apocalyptic scene is therefore simultaneously an operatic stage where the complaint of the wretched is enacted. Here the violence generated by jealousy, cruelty, separation, abandonment, loss and death is transformed into a “sweet supplication Monteverdi and other composers deem the essence of opera: *le lamento*” (Buci-Glucksmann, 2013, p. 20). However, the lamentation song is rendered in Has’s film as confessions made in a grating, raspy voice complaining not of the torment caused by the loss of a lover, but by the despair of the sinner on account of potential damnation.

The internal reality of a distraught mind degenerating into madness, and producing doubles, is represented in the film by means of a vortex of metamorphosing images, where nature and artifice are shown as theatrically mirroring each other. The interior of Wringhim’s house emulates the landscape outside, yet, simultaneously being a projection of the protagonist’s state of mind, distorts the view. The transformed image of the exterior depicted inside the house is an artifice presenting a melancholy late autumn landscape of dead nature, which functions as a backdrop for demented frolics and dances of guests invited by Wringhim – or, perhaps, by his double. Among the guests are decaying corpses and half-rotten mummies which seem to metaleptically cross over from the apocalyptic frame, where the rising of the dead from their graves at the end of the world is staged in an excessive, theatrical way. These interior scenes seem to have an affinity with horror fantasies of the late seventeenth-century painter Salvator Rosa (Davenport-Hines, 1998, pp. 17-23). Conversely, nearly pastoral quality of the landscape outside the house is presented as a pastiche in the manner of the seventeenth-century Dutch masters.

The image of a windmill, an important element of the external landscape mirrored in the paintings decorating the interior of the house, plays a crucial symbolic role within the narrative of Wringhim’s life in the film. The windmill may figure a heavenly millstone. The metaphor can be traced to the ancient Roman belief that: “The heavens turn endlessly like a mill wheel, and the result is always some misfortune” (Satyricon, quoted in Gibson & Majewski, 2010, p. 34). Christianity changed the narrative of inexorable dependence on the fate by proclaiming that Christ’s death put an end to the effects of the original sin and thus moved emphasis from “the inflexible laws of cause” to “suffering and death” (Gibson & Majewski, 2010, p. 37), in this way announcing “the definitive decline of the mindless power

embodied in the mill” (Gibson & Majewski, 2010, p. 37). Calvin qualified this independence from natural causality by introducing the division between the elect and the reprobate. The arbitrariness of the God’s decree as to who is elected abrogated man’s right to know the causes, to provide “reasons” or explanations for what can never be understood (Manning, 2009, p. 2).

The image of the mill in Has’s film is thus emblematic of God’s judgment’s inexorability and the inscrutability of the knowing center. The mill constitutes a counterpart to the Book of Life that plays the role of the center of knowledge in the apocalyptic narrative frame. Yet, as a shattered, split image multiplied in proliferating representations because it appears both inside and outside the house, the picture of the mill cannot provide genuine access to the center of truth and the source of knowledge.

The neobaroque proliferation of images, evinced in the film by repetition with difference of crucial motifs and scenes, reflects uncertainty and confusion on the part of the protagonist when facing a doctrine which amounts to an arbitrary system with no clear referent. Indeed, the multiplication of depictions of the symbol of confusion and anxiety (the mill) drives the confusion and anxiety to their extremes. However, this confusing multiplicity of images also signals that the division of a community into those worthy and those unworthy of salvation is a function of cultural representation, rather than the absolute truth proclaimed by the inscrutable center, because “the ostensibly unrepresented is revealed as still being a function of representation” (Egginton, 2007, p. 122).

The baroque motif of the library is in turn realized by invoking poems and The Book of Revelation in the narrative frame of the film. The characters recite passages from such poetical works as: *The Book of Thel* and “Mad Song” by William Blake, “Why So Pale And Wan, Fond Lover?” by John Suckling, and “To Anthea, Who May Command Him Anything” by Robert Herrick. From the point of view of peripheral Scotland these poets belong to the culture of the center—England. By supplementing Hogg’s Gothic text with these poems Has restores balance to the puritan-provincial mind’s swings of confidence and alleviates its anxiety. Appositely, the poems themselves bespeak moderation in life and encourage interaction with the world. Herrick and Suckling were associated with the royal court and their religious and political views were remote from puritan radicalism; in the poems recited in the film they extoll joys of life. William Blake’s poems chosen by Has express the potential of growth and becoming inherent in an encounter between the world and the self, and imply the necessity of immersing in experience as well as accepting the loss of innocence.

In adapting James Hogg’s Gothic text, which he strips of its Scottish characteristics and of a Calvinist, puritan inflection, Has assumes a position which can be construed as anamorphic towards the puritan-provincial perspective. He employs this position in order to play with the terms of the puritan-provincial

mind and to decline to endorse its ideological stance, thus proposing his own aesthetics of neobaroque minor strategy. The director has made an aesthetical choice that is obliquely political in order to carry out a critique of the provincial anxiety caused by: simultaneous desire and contempt for the center; emulation of its ways and struggle for independence from its influence. The film is also a critique of factional fanaticism and a praise of a middle way. Has demonstrates how the uncertainty, confusion, jealousy, cruelty, separation, abandonment and loss resulting from the oscillations of provincial and factional desires lead to violence and death.

As has already been noted, the characteristics of the puritan-provincial mind can be generalized so that we can talk about factional-provincial mind. The aesthetics of the neobaroque minor strategy employed by Has restores balance between the extremes that determine oscillations of the factional-provincial mind by establishing a moderate perspective. Focusing on the transformations, growth, disruptions, decay and rebirth of the material reality as the sensible vehicle of representation, the minor strategy neither desires ultimate knowledge and certainty about whether or not there is an absolute beyond appearances, which the sectarian and provincial minds so obsess about, nor fears the lack, vacuum, nothingness beneath representation. Therefore, the neobaroque aesthetics assumes the role of the ethical and puts an end to the relentless pursuit of the Other which turns into a frantic pursuit of oneself. In its ethical function the neobaroque aesthetics encourages acceptance of one's experience as a fall from radical innocence, which may lead to compassion rather than internecine struggle between those proclaiming themselves pure and justified and those labeled corrupt and reprobate.

Consequently, it can be observed that Has's film is as much a non-factional treatment of factionalism as a non-provincial treatment of provinciality. The director made the film in 1986 when the uniting fervor of the Solidarity movement had abated and Poland was facing a potentially destructive conflict – which, after all, it then wisely avoided – of radically polarized political factions. Yet, the director was never an overtly politically engaged artist. His obliquely manifested stance was always a function of his aesthetic choices. Has's neobaroque minor strategy in *Memoirs of a Sinner* both critiques and evokes Hogg's gothic interrogation of binary patterns of oppression and rebellion, dominance and submission in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. After all, as Monika Kaup (2012) emphasizes, “the [neo-]baroque refuses to regard culture as a fixed, ‘self-contained system,’ the property of discrete, segregated social groups. Rather, the [neo-]baroque is ‘anti-proprietary’ expression” (p. 3). Therefore, it may be concluded that a twentieth-century neobaroque director from one peripheral culture adapts a nineteenth-century gothic novel written by a writer from another peripheral region in order to make, in a “doubly localized” manner, an “anti-proprietary” aesthetical comment on the global dangers of provincial factionalism.

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