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Traballo de Fin de Grao

Subversion and Convention in Gothic Literature

Autora: Iria Gómez Pardo

Titora: Laura María Lojo Rodríguez

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Resumo

This dissertation aims to examine major conventions and subversive strategies operating in Gothic literature. As such, the Gothic appeared in the eighteenth century and yet, it has consistently evolved and its conventions permeate a vast number of fictional works and other aesthetic products since then. The Gothic is often characterized by the creation of suspense and fear, horror and terror, which seems to either represent or warn against the main anxieties of a particular historical period, ranging from political conflicts in Europe, shifts in gender roles, and scientific discoveries during the Enlightenment and the Regency, to name just a few, a fact which defines the Gothic as a historically-situated narrative. To serve this purpose, this dissertation will be informed by several critical works on the Gothic, as is the case of Fred Botting's *Gothic* (1995), which addresses gothic conventions from the genre's inception with Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) as well as its most relevant transformations in later centuries, as is the case of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). First, this dissertation will provide an insight into the main features of the Gothic genre, as well as a brief chronology. Most importantly, this dissertation will also focus on some prominent Gothic works, paying special attention to Gothic strategies such as transgression, power relations, gender roles, the sublime and the thrill of awe-inspiring passions and threats, the irrational, and the fantastic.

1. Introduction

This dissertation aims to analyse the generic and narrative tropes of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), with a particular emphasis on the gender typology its characters respond to or differ from. The novel has typical traits of the traditional Gothic narratives; namely, mystery, an evil nobleman, a castle in a rather unchartered foreign land reminiscent of another age (Stoker 8), and women in distress. It also belongs to the later "horror" version of the Gothic: an urban context, repulsive abnormal creatures, and the presence of scientists. Stoker's text makes use of binary codes associated with gender and sexuality typical of earlier Gothic narratives, but there is also a *fin-de-siècle* adaptation in keeping with the changes and anxieties by questioning, among other issues, the prevailing patriarchal order at the turn of the nineteenth century.

The primary methodological method used is a close reading of Stoker's novel: a more thorough analysis of the Gothic tradition, horror novels and the early science fiction would require an impossible task beyond the reach of my study: reading and commenting on many texts written in between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I have relied on some prior reading of a few texts and on the knowledge acquired through different courses on English literature and literary theory, and I have complemented this with information taken from secondary sources on the genres and texts involved, most of which sources I cite at one time or other. The most used references are from essays by Fred Botting, Stephen Arata and David Punter, who provide a highly informative account of the conventions of the Gothic genre and its development, from its origins in the second half of the eighteenth century to the postmodern period. Their work deals with different artistic manifestations such as literature and cinematography, which are deeply interwoven. Other secondary sources have been very useful and illuminating, particularly the work of Julio Ángel Merino Olivares, Christopher Craft, Ellen Moers, and Elaine Showalter.

In the first section of this introduction I will provide an overview of the appearance of the Gothic as a subgenre of the eighteenth-century novel, its early literary manifestations during the Enlightenment: the fiction of Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, and Gregory S. Lewis. Some major concepts associated with Gothic fiction, such as horror and terror, transgression and subversion, or the novel/romance binary opposition, will be commented upon. As the Gothic blends in with Romanticism, we will also examine its evolution and the influence of Edmund Burke's theory of "the Sublime". Then, I will focus on the genre in Victorian times, particularly during the *fin-de-siècle*: horror and science fiction interact with the traditional Gothic typology. The mad scientist that wants to create life is already present in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), but scientific research on degeneration and evolution was still to develop.

Robert L. Stevenson, H. G. Wells, Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker belong to another age and share a similar approach, though their aims may vary. S. Arata's and E. Showalter's explanations of the degeneration theory deviated from criminology and cellular biology is useful. The patriarchal assumptions and anxieties are also part of the turn of the century, and in the third subsection I study the views of womanhood and sexuality in Gothic narratives, which is a major element of my analysis of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Initially, I will, through a diachronic approach, comment on different texts, specifically what Ellen Moers defines as "Female Gothic", particularly in what pertains to Anne Radcliffe's heroines.

In the second section I will focus on the figure of the vampire itself, on its origins from folklore, myth, and the reassessment of the medieval Romanian history and English legends. Stoker was not the first to do it, but he gave birth to the classic vampire, a new evil monster, the allegorical embodiment of Victorian fears and anxieties about evolution and change, a metaphor of the doubts and hopes of a dying empire and a questioned patriarchy. Furthermore, I will tackle the concept of "reverse colonization", in which Dracula functions as the "Other", whose "object of desire" are British women and British land.

In the last section of my essay I will analyse how Stoker's novel comes to terms with the potential disruption of traditional womanhood, focusing on the three vampiric brides of the Count and the female heroines/victims he is interested in. Both Mina and Lucy may represent the New Woman at the turn of the century: her intellectual aims and claims for sexual freedom respectively. When dealing with gender paradigms we must tackle the potential subversion of masculinity and femininity, or the reinforcement of tradition: Stoker's male characters are brave heroes and the epitome of rationality (lawyers, scientists), and they see their ladies, Lucy and Mina, as weak treasures they must protect, otherwise they will become vampiric seductresses instead of mothers. Their point of view dominates the text: truth be said, in *Dracula* letters and diaries are written by both men and women, but it seems the latter's testimony has less weight, and Mina, the survivor, has accepted many traditional assumptions.

1.1. The Gothic Tradition from Walpole to Stoker

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* belongs to the British *fin de siècle*, to late Victorian times, and there is hardly any consensus on whether the term Gothic should be applied to this and some other novels of the time. We may argue that science fiction is a better term for H. G. Wells' narratives, and that "horror" may be appropriate for Stoker's novel. And yet, "the abnormal human subject" (K. Hurley 192) created or studied by science links Jekyll, Van Helsing, and Moreau to Dr. Frankenstein, and

the emotions of terror and fear are typical of the Gothic. The other source of debate concerns the term “horror”, associated with revulsion rather than fear: “the gross corporeality of the body” may lead us to “classify the modernist Gothic as horror” (Hurley 192). If we consider the term Gothic a “transhistorical genre” (193) that evolves but is always characterized by excess and transgression, then we may use it for texts that are hybrids (Gothic horror or Gothic science fiction).

The Gothic was a movement which appeared in the eighteenth century and which still defines many literary or filmic texts of recent times. In its early manifestations, it was characterized as a rather transgressive approach to the more realistic novel of the time: there was sensationalism and excessive violence (as is the case of Mathew Gregory Lewis’ *The Monk*, published in 1796), and it focused on the supernatural, the obscure, the mysterious. Botting provides a good example: the relevance of labyrinthine vaults in *The Monk*, in which “Ambrosio begins his descent into infamy and a pact with the devil” (Botting 52).

The eighteenth century Gothic was often set in the past, more specifically in the medieval period, and abroad, in a Catholic environment defined by violence, abuse, religious bigotry, barbarianism, topics that led to the exploration of the supernatural, but also human immorality and delusions. The main traits of the genre relied on the setting and sensationalist events, and its popularity on the feelings provoked in the reader. However, the later nineteenth century Gothic adopts a less simplistic stance concerning evil and deals with more psychological and complex issues in the characters, such as the anxiety about the social and cultural limits imposed upon them, and there is more ambivalence in the meaning of its sinister stories.

The eighteenth century Gothic narrative provides fear and terror, many times achieved by the presence of Gothic types, such as ghosts, monsters, and fantastic events. The action often takes place in abbeys or castles, often isolated, such as in the novel that marked the beginning of Gothic fiction, Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), or in Ann Radcliffe’s later *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). The supernatural may actually exist in the world of the novels, or at least be part of the superstitions and imaginary reinterpretations of the characters. Walpole mixed the fantastic with a more standard presentation of his characters, but some readers found his novel absurd. Still, many Gothic texts are not mere absurd entertainment.

A certain ideological ambivalence present in Gothic narratives is derived from the typical features associated with this genre, namely the barbaric and tyrannical feudal times: the knights and the evil nobility represent the abuses and anxieties of the past, before the rise of the middle class and the gradual arrival of the “English gentleman”, the more responsible and less hedonistic leaders of the upper class. The Gothic heroines would fight against male violence and abusive control, but they would also find instances of freedom. So, we might say that the original Gothic fiction of the

eighteenth century tries to recreate a traditional society from the past, rather than attack the contemporary patriarchal order of Georgian times. The transgressive nature of Gothic fiction partly lies in its challenging reason through the fantastic, through images of the unknown, of a new reality that questions order and human nature. Furthermore, in the narrative plots there is a frequent presence of criminal behaviour, Freudian hidden desires, violence and unnatural or forbidden passions, which create expectation, suspense and awe in the reader. Transgression is achieved by producing a narrative of excessive emotions, fear of the unknown and of those uncontrollable forces which not only threaten human sanity, propriety and bourgeois values, but also social order. With transgression and the disintegration of the natural order comes terror, and catharsis is produced by means of the release and purification of hidden desires in the reader. Eventually, values like virtue and propriety, present in some characters (such as Van Helsing), try to restore that order that has been endangered.

Gothic fiction is an exploration of the ambivalence and limits present in society, such as “good from evil, reason from passion, virtue from vice and the self from the other” (Botting 5). It is a compilation of the antithesis between darkness and light, reason and morality, reality and superstitions, innocence and corruption, the past and the present, the sacred and the profane, the natural and the fantastic, the civilized and the barbaric. On the one hand, there is terror, horror and transgression; on the other, Gothic narratives are often characterised by the presence of heroes or heroines, who defeat the monstrous villains. The villain is punished and the hero/heroine gets married.

The Early Gothic of Horace Walpole, Anne Radcliffe and most of their contemporaries, seems to reflect a conflictive position between a certain longing for the medieval and Renaissance past, characterized by an order based on rank, the nobility’s power and Catholic hegemony, and the doubts about the troubling present context caused by the up-and-coming middle class of the City, the Protestant bourgeoisie: with its focus on industry and individual enterprise and its promotion of a society based on the equality provided by self-made wealth, the members of the gentry were often suspicious and felt the middle class wanted to displace them, to rob them of power. The evil ways of some noblemen contrast with the chivalric values of the heroes (much like Henry Fielding’s, Samuel Richardson’s, Oliver Goldsmith’s or Jane Austen’s portrayal of the gentry - there exist both gentlemen and predators), implying the problem was not in the system but in the individuals. Something else to dread is the Catholic past, which seems demonized in most texts. Between 1790 and 1810, also known as the *fin de siècle*, the middle-class values were questioned more than ever, since the bloodshed of the French Revolution promoted a conservative reaction. Gothic novels were too violent: “Intensified by fears of radicalism and revolution, the challenge to aesthetic values was

framed in terms of social transgression: virtue, propriety and domestic order were considered to be under threat” (Botting 14.) Gothic novels were highly stigmatized, since fiction was seen as a useless genre without any didactic purpose. In fact, novels and romances, the latter in particular, were often seen as corrupting forces, especially for young women. Realist novels with a moral purpose and the Classics such as Horace and Plutarch were preferred.

Whereas romances and novels which turn upon characters out of nature, monsters of perfection, feats of chivalry, fairy-enchantments, and the whole train of the marvellously absurd, transport the reader unprofitably into the clouds, where he is sure to find no solid footing, or into those wilds of fancy, which go for ever out of the way of all human paths. (Botting 17).

In the eighteenth century differences among novels and romances were established (for instance, by Henry Fielding in the Preface to *Joseph Andrews*). Romance and medieval novels had been replaced by the more “realist” modern novel. The birth of the English novel in the hands of Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Fanny Burney and so many others partakes of this spirit. Still, novels could be seen as corrupting forces whereas fiction about history, reason, or Christian morality was considered superior to mere imagination, as Jane Austen protests in *Northanger Abbey*, and the depravity and passion of Gothic characters was the worst bad influence possible. Samuel Johnson made a distinction between romances and novels, considering the latter more acceptable: romances were childish stories about fantasy, allegory and superstition, while novels were more realistic. Johnson highlighted the importance of realism, of accounts that focused on the enhancement of virtue and the criticism against vice, usually represented as a monster, a deformed unnatural creature, who deviates from nature, symmetry and harmony, the neoclassical values of the Enlightenment. In opposition to this, in romances, some monsters were sometimes too relevant, which might provoke the story to promote vice. Therefore, in fiction, a clear distinction between the novel and the romance, and good and bad writing was made. Fiction should always have a moral purpose. It could be a powerful ideological force to teach the right patterns and behaviour, rather than be a powerful manual for misconduct.

The Gothic style was a complete break up with the neoclassical style, characterized by symmetry and order. As the Gothic evolved through the Romantic period, it showed an approximation towards magnificence and grandiosity, towards the sublime, and the visionary powers of transcendence that the Romantic poets are associated with, but not world apart. Both Romantic and Gothic literature may go beyond the social order and manners and be defined by some transgressive attitude. Gothic fiction deals with the limits and uncertainties of the natural

order, society, power, the law, the family and sexuality. The Gothic represents the disintegration of the civic order of the English society.¹

The neoclassical aesthetic, characterised by a moral scope, harmony and symmetry, the ideals of the enlightenment, was challenged by the Gothic, which meant a regression to medieval times, to the barbaric and irrational, to superstitions and excess. Still, the trend, which was rejected at the beginning, started to be seen as a possible aesthetic movement that encoded the social changes of industrialization, revolution and urbanisation. As previously said, the Gothic genre dealt with the fears and anxieties that the Enlightenment tried to ignore, as well as with issues that went beyond rational thinking. The Gothic revival established a new perspective concerning medieval literature, which was a great influence in the creation of Gothic tales. Gothic fiction shows the ambivalence between the natural and the unnatural, two frontiers that are crossed psychologically and physically through terror and horror. However, the Gothic genre was often seen as a failed portrayal of human conduct and reality.

Gothic literature became a foil to neoclassical literature. Instead of being considered an example of bad writing in opposition to its contrary, it started to be seen as the antithesis of the neoclassical style, going beyond reason and the natural world. It became the shadow that haunted neoclassical literature, the darkness that challenged reason and humanity. This opposition was developed by the graveyard poets, interested in ruins, ghostly settings and supernatural creatures, everything that was rejected by reason. In fact, the Gothic was reinvented by Romanticism, especially in the use of the concept of the “sublime”, as theorised by Edmund Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). As Burke had it, the sublime refers to an aesthetic category focused on the achievement of greatness, the maximum level of artistic creation that goes beyond reason. This artistry may arise from the contact of the artist with nature. Watching the natural landscape, more specifically the mountains, evokes in the writer a sense of wonder, a frenzy of emotions of admiration, fear and joy, producing a divine experience in which the artist’s soul is lifted. According to Burke, hostile and landscapes are sublime, since they provoke feelings of both awe and terror, while the (pastoral) beauty in nature only produces joy and tenderness. The binary contraries, such as light and darkness, delight and horror, calm and turmoil, were not equal: while beauty was perceived by everyone, the sublime

¹ The first Gothic novel, Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, set in Italy in medieval times, presents a mixture of different genres, such as poetry, drama and romance, departing from neoclassical forms. Walpole was trying to offer a mixture of ancient and modern romance, producing a novel that would be use as a guide later on. Even though he tried to offer an exploration about human behaviour, vices and ways of thinking, he focused on the supernatural and marvellous events, distancing himself from a more transgressive potential.

could only be detected by the artist, by the visionary power to go beyond reason. The irregularity, ornamentation, immensity of Gothic buildings overwhelmed the gaze with a vastness that suggested divinity and infinity (Botting 26). The landscapes of the sublime became mirrors of the human mind and the human imagination, producing its transcendence and giving the individual a new sense of freedom. Mystery, ruins and superstitious beliefs create the sublime emotions. However, the so often repeated presence of the sublime became a cliché, a convention often seen as an object of ridicule.

The nineteenth century witnessed a resurgence of Gothic fiction, particularly in the novel and short stories, with various texts that may be called Gothic to some extent, such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1890), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) with its critique of men's medical ignorance, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), among many others. The sensationalist novel, an offspring of the Gothic, was also born at the time.

In the nineteenth century the Gothic witnessed a radical change in the images and landscapes: there is a mixture of the traditional gothic rural landscapes and the sinister and dark streets of cities, which create feelings and emotions similar to those produced by the obscure wilderness. This dual location is found in Stoker's *Dracula*, in which the plot is initially set in Transylvania, in a castle in the middle of the Carpathian Mountains, and then it moves to the readers' environment, a large town like London. In some texts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a decaying house becomes the main setting of the action, often associated with a fallen family line, as we can see in many examples of North American literature, such as Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" or William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily":

The development of the American novel owes much to the reception and transformation of European romantic literature. Significant differences appear in the use of Gothic images in writing that was predominantly realist. Hackneyed Gothic machinery was abandoned, but contrasts of light and dark, good and evil, were inflected in texts in which the mysteries of the mind or of family pasts were the central interest: the human and social world completely replaced the grand Gothic terrors of a super-natural kind. (Botting 74)

In the nineteenth century, the medieval setting of earlier Gothic narratives was replaced by the modern industrial world of the middle class, and the medieval ideals of chivalry found in romances were replaced by a modern gentlemanliness and the bourgeois values of propriety, individualism and virtue. The action is set in an urban setting in which the main characters are local English people and professional figures. The anxieties and worries associated with the abusive nobility are left out in favour of other kinds of anxiety. There exist contradictory fears in the new

urban world of the Victorians. The socio-political changes of the Industrial Revolution brought about many uncertainties and concerns. Monsters and supernatural creatures were considered too typical, so they had to be dropped out or rewritten. Instead of representing external dangers, either supernatural or existing ones in the less civilized societies abroad, these showcased internal conflict and psychoanalytical threats, madness and hallucinations, sexual desires, suppressed wishes and emotional turmoil. The terror and the sublime of the eighteenth century were replaced by horror and the Freudian uncanny, being the latter represented through doubles, mirrors, alter egos and the representation of the other side of human nature; that is, the self becomes fragmented and unstable. We shall examine how *Dracula* can be seen as a bridge between traditional Gothic and a modernist revision, in which terror often turns into horror.

During the *fin de siècle*, Radcliffe's distinction between the concepts of horror and terror continued to be relevant. Terror, as favoured by Radcliffe a century earlier, produces fear and suspense in the reader via the threatening of the characters' life, safety and sanity, and the origin is kept out of sight, in the shadows or in glances of the past. Horror, however, confronts the characters with the violence of physical and psychological dualities, which challenge the societal norms and the repression of normality with barbaric and shocking suggestions about human nature. Horror, associated with repulsion, redefines these concepts, and obscures the relationship between the human and the monstrous, the normal and the aberrant, sanity and madness, the conscious and the unconscious, the civilized and the primitive, a daydream and a nightmare. Nevertheless, nineteenth century Gothic fiction goes beyond categories. Sometimes it may be difficult to know whether the narrative is an exploration of the inner psychological conflicts or rather a fantasy beyond the readers' reality and English normality, which would be less disturbing. Still, the protagonist is no longer the traditional hero or heroine, but often a traumatised being that feels divided between reason and morality, on the one hand, and passion, obsession, and hedonist self-centredness on the other. "Gothic becomes a fiction of unconscious desire, a release of repressed energies and antisocial fantasies" (Botting 12).² *Dracula* and his victims showcase this new version of the struggle between body and soul: killing the already dead, the vampire body, liberates the soul of the human he or she once lived in it.

² The necessity of freedom that was taken away by the modern world, is brought back by the Gothic, which promotes the main idea of Jean Jacques Rousseau's primitivism, which means going back to a harmonious and innocent past in contact with nature, not yet affected by the modern and industrial world. The Gothic goes beyond primitivism, since it tries to establish a connection between the past and the present through the revival of the past and the criticism against the mechanical modern world.

Science, the epitome of reason and order, of a modern advanced society, may be paradoxically linked to darkness, the obscure and the monstrous. Scientific theories disclose the instability of the dualities that frame cultural identity (Botting 91). This is related to the degeneration theory that will be discussed in the next section. This later Gothic trend is associated with the fields of cellular biology, clinical psychiatry and criminology. The basis of this literature finds in May Shelley's *Frankenstein* an early example, in which dark creatures are associated with the excesses of scientific research, rather than with irrational superstitions. Modern dystopias are also an example, as well as science fiction, closer to the Gothic.

With the appearance of the cinema in the 1930s, many texts from Gothic fiction, such as *Dracula*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Frankenstein* were transported to the screen, the early films creating decades later an ambivalent image of unintended comicity (due to poor production) and darkness, though the former is hardly ever present in recent productions. Roman Polanski's *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967) is an interesting example of the blend of humour and fear-inspiring aesthetics. Anne Rice's novels of vampires (and the movies derived such as *Interview with the Vampire*) or *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* tend towards the terrifying darkness and gore.

1.2. Literature of the *fin de siècle* and the “degeneration theory”

The *fin de siècle* was partly characterized by the pessimistic anxieties as defined in Bénédict Morel's, Max Nordau's and Cesare Lombroso's degeneration theories, justified by the destruction of culture, the fear of the urban poor as a degenerate subrace produced by the Industrial Revolution, the weakening of nationalism, and the presumed decay of morality, spirituality and creativity. The decline of the British order (social decay is suggested in *Dracula*) coincides with an increase on criminal activity (such as that of the serial killer Jack the Ripper), necrophilia, urban slums, and the rise of new sexualities. This was reflected in Victorian fiction, which shifted from epic narratives to more apocalyptic stories, to dark fantasies. This can be traced through the analysis of texts by Oscar Wilde, Robert Louis Stevenson, H. G. Wells, and most importantly, Bram Stoker. The degeneration concept was “an enabling strategy by which the conventional and respectable classes could justify and articulate their hostility to the deviant, the diseased and the subversive” (Greenland, cited in Arata 2). The concept was related to biology, to the belief in hereditary decline (as evident in Dr. Seward's case in Stoker's *Dracula*), and to social criticism. According to Robert Nye, it “served to provide a continuum between biological and social thought [...] and was so culturally useful that it could explain persuasively all the pathologies from which the nation suffered” (Nye cited in Arata 15). The degenerate individual served as the epitome of social decay, with its causes (horrible living conditions,) and its effects (sterility, suicide, madness, revolution). Antonio Gramsci called the theory a type of “common sense”, meaning a type of “tradition” and

“folklore”, a view of the world taken and shared by a particular social and cultural group. Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, of culture as a weapon, can be brought up here (Gramsci in Arata 3). This “degeneration” was dealt with by Marx, Hegel, Darwin (who proposed evolution not devolution) and Freud, who despised Max Nordau. The latter, according to Arata, blended many specialized fields, such as clinical medicine, psychology, criminology, anthropology and literary criticism. It is obvious that any interpretation of either literature or reality must bear in mind the sentiment of decay and pessimism mentioned earlier.

This theory about crime and the link between moral and physical degeneracy is mentioned by Mina Harker in chapter 25, when she points out:

The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and qua criminal he is of an imperfectly formed mind. Thus, in a difficulty he has to seek resource in habit. His past is a clue, and [...] once before, [...] he went back to his own country from the land he had tried to invade, and thence, without losing purpose, prepared himself for a new effort. He came again better equipped for his work, and won. So he came to London to invade a new land. He was beaten, and [...] he fled back over the sea to his home. Just as formerly he had fled back over the Danube from Turkey Land. (Stoker 363)

Late nineteenth century novels mirror the social problems of the time and may often oppose dominant ideologies. Oscar Wilde’s, Arthur Conan Doyle’s, Robert Louis Stevenson’s and Bram Stoker’s narratives were characterized by the correlation of two connected terms as defined by the British socialist Holbrook Jackson: “decadence” and “jingoism.” It is said that the jingoism associated with imperialism emerged to compensate the feared excesses, the decadence and fall of both the collective and the individual, to recover normality. Jackson’s terms lead to the individual “body” and a collective “body”, the “nation” (Jackson cited in Arata 5). Arata focuses on the allegorical, the “history” behind late nineteenth-century novels, which is encoded through “symbolic action”. According to Burke, *fin de siècle* fictions are “answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose” (Burke, cited in Arata 6). Works focused on Victorian anxieties, such as the rising of what the criminologist Cesare Lombroso called “the criminal man”, (represented by Edward Hyde and the vampire in the short story “Olalla”), who is distinguishable from the normal human being, the revival of the savage past of humanity (atavism) and the debate concerning the decline of authorship into “professionalism”. As Van Helsing, an expert in “the philosophy of crime,” defines it:

The criminal always work at one crime, that is the true criminal who seems predestinate to crime, and who will of none other. This criminal has not full man brain. He is clever and cunning and resourceful, but he be not of man stature as to brain. He be of child brain in

much. Now this criminal of ours is predestinate to crime also. He, too, have child brain, and it is of the child to do what he have done. (Stoker 362-63).

If Count Dracula is “a criminal” character, he is not the only one. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* seems to have been inspired by Lombroso’s theory of criminal physiology: Edward Hyde illustrates the ferocious criminal man, connected to the barbaric and primitive past of human nature. Nevertheless, Hyde’s vices are of those of a hedonist gentleman, and he might be primitive in the physiognomy, but not in his lack of morals (“excessive idleness, love of orgies, the irresponsible craving of evil”), which make him similar to the aristocrat Jean Floressas des Esseintes, main agent in the corruption of Dorian Gray. Both Wilde and Stevenson showcase the degenerate aristocrats whose wealth and free time lead them to corruption and depravity. Stevenson’s character represents the bourgeoisie’s anxieties about both the violent lower class and the corrupted leisured upper class. Edward Hyde is not the typical degenerate criminal, since he is a paradoxical figure, a hybrid, being both a vicious creature and a gentleman. An interesting duality, since Stevenson preceded Freud. Dr. Jekyll turns into E. Hyde because of social and psychological pressures, there is reverse transformation, in which Jekyll comes closer to Hyde. As Arata puts it, “what makes Jekyll and Hyde compelling is the way it turns the class discourses of atavism and criminality back on the bourgeoisie itself. As Lang recognized, Stevenson’s novel is finally more concerned with its middle-class professional “heroes” than it is with the figure of Edward Hyde” (Arata 36). Jekyll and Dorian degenerate because of an immoral culture. There is duality in the self: like Edward Hyde, Dorian eventually internalizes the very ethos he claims to repudiate (see Arata 63).³

Victorian fiction dealt with topics such as migration and colonization, and many fictional individuals flee to the colonies or prosper in them (e.g., St. John Rivers in *Jane Eyre*). Misfits with a problematic status at home may succeed abroad in America. Need, ambition or freedom had tempted many people into migration. Daniel Defoe had shown it earlier (Moll Flanders). By the end of the nineteenth century, this narrative has changed: now figures of the periphery of the empire completely disrupt the natural order of a struggling metropolis. These are the so called narratives

³ Prejudice against Wilde would equate the writer with his character. Nordau considered Wilde a deviated individual due to his eccentricities and homosexuality (a criminal degeneracy at the time). In *Dorian Gray*, Dorian is a gentleman that makes an agreement with the Devil, as Faustus does in *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, by Christopher Marlowe. The painting is a symbol of the degradation of the protagonist. However, Wilde’s novel is really complex: the traditional common sense is questioned, since everyday language and lexicon are twisted to present an unfamiliar way of thinking. This is subversion from within, used to mock reasonable thinking and communication. That is why *Dorian Gray* was considered threatening, since it mimics the rhetoric of the middle class in order to deviate common language from its denotations, from the “right meaning”.

of reverse colonization. Now, the civilized world is threatened by the arrival of primitive figures. These dangerous forces can be created outside the civilized world or be born inside it, such as Kurtz, a white gentleman that embraces brutality in the Congo (in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*). In this reverse colonization, roles are changed or mingled. Narratives of this genre are obsessed with the primitive, savagery and the atavistic. It has been linked to the late Victorian Gothic tradition in blending the paranormal and the occult, which goes beyond the rational mind, and the unconscious, fears and emotions. Nevertheless, this is different in some fantastic narratives, where this reverse colonization serves as a mirror of anxieties of the society of the empire, which feels guilty about culture appropriation and the domination by consent they inflicted upon the colonized. The threatening, monstrous and dangerous Other serves as a reflection of British dominant actions. In fact, the uncanny Dracula may serve as a metaphor of the most savage colonizers.

Reverse colonization criticises imperial ideology, as H. G. Wells does in *The War of the Worlds* by alluding to the massacre of native Tasmanians by the English colonizers. "In the novel Wells's narrator never tires of equating Britain's fate with that of colonized peoples: we are to the pitiless and exploitative Martians, he says, as 'the poor brutes we dominate' once were to us. 'I was no longer a master,' he laments" (Arata 106). The human characters' fear of the alien invasion reproduces the trauma and anxieties the colonized feel.⁴

1.3. Models of womanhood in Gothic narratives

There is a frequent splitting of the Gothic into "Male" and "Female" versions, which are based on both the author's gender and the role of the women characters. In the Male category women tend to be seen as objects of male desire and they are often tempted into transgression or seduced by the predatory male. Lucy in *Dracula* is an example of this inner debate between good and evil and of the powers of seduction evil may have. Still, there may exist female predators too: Matilda in *The Monk* is an example of the monstrous witch that seduces the hero, an abbot, who struggles between good and evil, between celibacy and the tempting witch, which he has taken for a man (she is crossdressed) but then discovers her seductive female body. We may argue this is one more example of the typical binary codification of women as saints or sinners. Still, the Gothic

⁴ By doing so, Wells showcases the guilt the English society should feel before the decolonization. The aliens represent the Other, the "primitive savage", a dark cannibal human from the wilderness. The Other comes to the western society to haunt it and get revenge. Wells uses racial/colonial terms such as "master", to refer to the British' loss of "collective will" (Arata). All in all, the empire's vulnerability and anxiety led to "invasion-scare" novels such as this one. This type of fiction has been usually depicted as imperial Gothic, and it deals with atavism, primitivism and occultism, the main preoccupations of the British Empire. atavist descends into the primitive", and the novels "seem often to be allegories of the larger regressive movement of civilization" (Brantlinger cited in Arata 111).

may be rather transgressive. In *The Monk*, Antonia questions gendered simplification: the chaste and ignorant virginal girl cannot help feeling desire for the priest.

The Female-Gothic term was coined by Ellen Moers (1976) and the focus was on novels written by women. In these novels there is a certain questioning of patriarchy and the women characters may be torn between domestic duties as wives and mothers on the one hand and desire and self-fulfilment on the other. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* for example, characters like Justine and Elizabeth represent loyalty and endurance, but they are presented as victims of male ignorance or self-centeredness. As a contrast, Safie is a rebel who defies her father's orders and is happy, not punished with a tragic end. The point is that fatherhood is not enough or even bad for any child: the monster is not supported by a loving mother and is abandoned by his father.

It is here important to mention Ann Radcliffe, one of the most popular English novelists of the 1790s. The increase of female readership at the second half of the eighteenth century encouraged the evolution of the female presence in Gothic literature from the woman confined and abused to a more heroic one (gaining the power of choice, freedom and property in a patriarchal world was the feminist agenda). Radcliffe's heroines are often orphans constantly persecuted and incarcerated by evil aristocrats and monks. As an example, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the heroine tries to discover her family's secret, which may be a horrible crime. The pastoral background of the heroines' childhood is replaced by the sombre world in which they mature.

Orphans separated from protective domestic structures, these heroines journey through a mysteriously threatening world composed of an unholy mixture of social corruption, natural decay and imagined supernatural power. At the end virtue has, of course, been preserved and domestic harmony has been reaffirmed. The tales are all framed as lessons in virtue and faith in a guiding providential hand. (Botting 41)

The Radcliffean Gothic heroine is a particularly interesting model. Apparently there is a binary distinction, so the heroines, defined by the virtues of sentimental characters, are either "spritely", curious about the dangerous tunnels ahead, or "helpless" before danger (see C. Wolff 101). Actually, tunnels and secret rooms may be seen as metaphors for women's awareness of their own body. And yet, both types of womanhood are defined by the inability to do anything about it (Wolff 102). Fear and awe are essential emotions, and that is it. There is an awakening of desire, but marriage is their destiny, safer than dealing with any dilemma. According to M. Ellis,

“patriarchal structures are shown to be violent, corrupt and ruined, but also, oddly [...] the only secure place of refuge” (52). We may conclude that Ann Radcliffe denounces patriarchal repression but still believes there is a better version of it. It is similar to Jane Austen’s parodic take on the Gothic in *Northanger Abbey*: General Tilney is a bad example of it, but his son Henry is a true gentleman and may become a good husband. Maggie Kilgour writes that ‘radical’ writers disagree: William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft suggest that the private sphere idealised as a refuge is rather a “gothic prison” (Kilgour 76-77).

Ann Radcliffe’s novels were popular, especially for women readers, since Ann Radcliffe created a thrilling romance and a satisfactory ending, in which the villains end up being punched. There is faith in domestic happiness. And yet, though marriage is the destiny of the Radcliffean heroine, this was not convincing enough: moralists objected. Women were not encouraged to read novels, Gothic novels in particular (see Ellis 55-56). Women writing novels and women reading them was no good: a common prejudice Jane Austen criticizes in *Northanger Abbey*. Instead, conduct books were an antidote to fantasy, frivolity or even depravity, which novels encouraged.

The dilemma of female sexuality appears, however implicitly, in most Gothic stories. “In Gothic romances, the sexual inclinations that rightly belong to women are projected onto men”, writes Wolff (107). Therefore, how women see men is a major issue. Victorian society reinforced binary categorizations: virgins and whores, but also good men and libertines. The gentleman versus the rake (or the evil Gothic monster) constantly appears earlier, even in texts from the Restoration (e.g., Belville versus Willmore in Aphra Behn’s *The Rover*), though at the time both paradigms of masculinity were often endorsed. The sentimental tendency and the development of the concept of the gentlemanly aristocrat changes the balance in the eighteenth century, though some exemplary heroes are far from perfect gentlemen (as we see in texts by Henry Fielding, Richard Sheridan or even Jane Austen).

The tradition of male superiority does not change in Victorian times, though a new era was clearly developing. Science is now used to reinforce the binary oppositions, the prejudiced stereotypes: women are said to be passive, fragile, emotional, and potentially angelical guides in the domestic sphere. Men were destined for the public one, for leadership, and were educated as such. Domestic happiness was the agenda for the subordinate sex (see M. Springer 124-30). Though some intellectuals questioned this repression (John Stuart Mill in particular), most supported it. Besides, “the sheltered woman came to fear an alternative freedom” (Springer 126). As the Marxist Antonio Gramsci might put it, many women themselves accepted all this because

they were brain-washed in the hegemonic mechanisms of the patriarchy. Literature is one of them. When the Other accepts the supposedly superior perspective of the One, there is no questioning of the status quo, since it becomes reality, an essence, scientific data. The patriarchal and colonial agendas are similar: gender and race are defined by the inferiority of otherness. The power of the word belongs to the European male who treats both women and the Eastern or African Other as children that must be educated and protected or, in the worst scenarios, enslaved.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century there existed signs of change in Britain: women were allowed some more freedom through education, career opportunities and some economic independence. There was then a more modern alternative to the patriarchal order: the “New Woman” is a concept associated with the turn of the century. Some upper-class women provoked anxiety in the conservative society, since they were feminist, independent and educated women. Choosing a husband or a sexual partner was one of their signs of empowerment, though any kind of libertinism was subject to public scrutiny and rejection. It was one more sign of the changes to come, together with the suffragette movement.

2. Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897)

2.1. The Vampiric Myth and Stoker’s Reassessment

The term vampire was first used in English in a newspaper report in 1732, and was the origin of much discussion and controversy, mockery and satirical use of the concept, sensational narratives and folklore, and eventually John Polidori’s novella *The Vampyre* (1819) (Ellis 162-183). The earliest vampire narrative in English, which links the creatures to Hungary, is certainly not the first example. There are several legends of creatures similar to vampires across many different cultures, such as the *rakshasas* in India or the *Rappaganmekhab*. We can see vampires in legends previous to Christ, such as in Egypt, China or Japan. Like many other folk myths, those legends were used to justify events which escape rational explanation. Myths are a reflection of our limits in understanding reality, and also of the dark side of human nature: our bestial nature, a representation of our nightmares, of magic and Satan, a reminder that we are destined to eternal pain due to our vices and sinful desires.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the concerns about the geopolitical and cultural situation of the declining British Empire due to Europe’s schemes (seen in *Dracula*’s ‘invasive’ journey to Britain), were Gothicised. *Dracula* is a great representation of this modernization of the Gothic, by presenting the threatening darkness in a contemporary setting. Like Stevenson and Wilde, Stoker adapts the genre. As David Punter says, the “Gothic contains a very intense, if

displaced, engagement with political and social problems” (David Punter cited in Arata in 111). There is a “representation of fears that are more universal than a specific focus on the Victorian background would allow” (Dilke cited in Arata 111-112). Dracula’s incursion in Britain has been compared to that of the emissaries in Transylvania. The archaic and primitive forces freed by the count go to Britain to destroy the scientific and progressive world created by the Empire. In addition to this, *Dracula* is not only a Gothic novel, but a travel narrative, showcasing aspects of the imperial ideology, the One versus the Other, and reversal, the transgression of the Other.

“Not so,” he answered. “Well, I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble. I am a Boyar. The common people know me, and I am master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one. Men know him not, and to know not is to care not for. I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stops if he sees me, or pauses in his speaking if he hears my words, ‘Ha, ha! A stranger!’ I have been so long master that I would be master still, or at least that none other should be master of me”. (Stoker 27)

The physical, sexual and colonial boundaries (the colonizer and the colonized, the civilized and the primitive, the imperial victims and the vampiric victimizer) reveal hybridity and transnational/transcultural forms:

By problematizing those boundaries, Stoker probes the heart of the culture's sense of itself, its ways of defining and distinguishing itself from other peoples, other cultures, in its hour of perceived decline. (Arata 112)

Stoker’s *Dracula* breaks with the literary Gothic tradition of the vampire. Even though the count lives in a castle in Transylvania, the narrative deviates from the early vampire Gothic initiated by Sheridan Le Fanu’s “Carmilla”, a novella published in the collection of short stories *In a Glass Darkly* (1872). Even though Transylvania may recall Le Fanu’s Styria, it does not represent the typical setting for a Gothic romance: it is a place of political turbulence and racial strife, which is part of the “Eastern Question” about the British policy at the end of the nineteenth century. The count’s homeland is defined by the constant clashes of opposed cultures and most violent races of warriors in the area of the Carpathians. Transylvania may be an example of cultural upheaval and the historical succession of colonizing empires. According to Stephen Arata, Transylvania had been a victim of invasions from many different empires: “Greeks, Romans, Huns, Avars, Magyars, Turks, Slavs, French and Germans, all have come and seen and gone, seeking conquest one over the other” (Arata 113). Stoker’s vampires are connected to the military and the cycle of empires in their rise, fall and displacement, as well as with the contemporary political context, in which Oriental Europe was a major threat. According to Van Helsing – the character which in Stoker’s novel most epitomises reason, logic and progress, the fight against superstitions – the vampire is a consequence of invasions. A vampire represents everything Van Helsing opposes to: he is a hybrid

creature of the empire and the undead, his military status as a Szekely warrior and invader is fused with a vampiric nature. As opposed to Le Fanu's Carmilla and Polidori's Count Ruthven, who are drained vampires representing the decaying aristocracy defined by sexual vice and corruption, Dracula is the earlier nobleman warrior of medieval ascendancy, power and privilege. His power, like in any medieval narrative, is that of landed property, inherited wealth and a family name. Stoker transforms the vampiric myth by showcasing the contemporary fears about the empire's decline. Vampires indicate trouble: racial strife, political instability and decay. In this sense, by moving the vampires to England, Stoker indicates that this country is now the ideal setting for struggle (not Transylvania). The count's arrival acts as a foreshadowing of the country's destiny towards tragedy.

“This was the being I was helping to transfer to London,” Harker writes in anguish, “where, perhaps for centuries to come, he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless.” (Stoker 60)

Here the theory of reverse colonization mentioned earlier is applied. Jonathan Harker sees the vampires as semi-demons, as colonizers that want to conquer England with a new race that will spread chaos. The word “lust” defines Dracula as a monster, but also as a warrior. Both characteristics present him as a threat against the body, against British citizens, but also against the body politic, the nation. The imperial ideology is presented as a kind of monstrosity through Dracula. The count is presented as a colonizer of the body, not just of the individuals' personalities (like Carmilla or Count Ruthven): he also invades their racial, cultural and political identities, as well as their knowledge, in order to study “the native man”. He is a master of his victims. He takes the human bodies, destroys them, and performs a “baptism of blood” on them, transforming them into the Other, the vampire.

In *Dracula* the British characters see their own ideology reflected back as a form of bad faith, since the Count's Occidentalism mimics and reverses the more familiar Orientalism underwriting Western imperial practices. (Arata 120)

Blood unleashes Lucy's sexual appetite, and the only way to cut this process is to give her “proper” blood. That Dracula propagates his blood through women suggests a connection between vampiric sexuality and female sexuality, primitive and uncontrollable forces that threaten the patriarchal hegemony. This reinforces again the status of Dracula as a colonizer, the colonizer of women's bodies, reminding the colonization of indigenous people's bodies through exploitation and slavery, torture and rape. Dracula's virility and ability to propagate a new race of monsters make him a prominent character in the literature of horror.

What I saw was the Count's head coming out from the window. I did not see the face, but I knew the man by the neck and the movement of his back and arms. In any case I could not

mistake the hands which I had had some many opportunities of studying. I was at first interested and somewhat amused, for it is wonderful how small a matter will interest and amuse a man when he is a prisoner. But my very feelings changed to repulsion and terror when I saw the whole man slowly emerge from the window and begin to crawl down the castle wall over the dreadful abyss, face down with his cloak spreading out around him like great wings. At first I could not believe my eyes. I thought it was some trick of the moonlight, some weird effect of shadow, but I kept looking, and it could be no delusion. I saw the fingers and toes grasp the corners of the stones, worn clear of the mortar by the stress of years, and by thus using every projection and inequality move downwards with considerable speed, just as a lizard moves along a wall. (Stoker 41)

In this case, the Other is the victimizer, since “the vampire is the dissemination of bad blood” (Arata 117). In the novel, vampires are presented as strong, energetic, healthy, fertile and robust creatures, while humans are their antithesis. This binary opposition serves to highlight the gradual declining of the empire. This is very paradoxical, since the undead are far stronger than the living. For example, Lucy’s transformation into a vampire (the “Bloofer Lady”) gives her a vitality she never had before as a human. Another example is the switching of places. Dracula becomes Jonathan and the other way around. The former achieves a youthful look, due to his high virility, while the latter looks older. Dracula is a threat due to his fecundity, and he steals human wives. Men alone are unable to reproduce offspring. The recently married Harker is prohibited to have sex with an infected Mina, who cannot have children with human beings. She is a threatening figure, the fecundity of vampirism.

This postcolonial interpretation might be related to the author himself. Being Stoker an Irishman, it is likely that he was very sensitive about the issues regarding the British colonization of Ireland, which has many similarities with their exploitation and conquest of the colonies. The tension between Ireland and Britain, the rising of feminism and the debate about the Home Rule, may have triggered in Stoker’s readers an interpretation of Dracula’s invasion as a possible Irish uprising, which did eventually happen later (the Easter Rising of 1916).

2.2. The Vampire as a New Gothic Monster

The vampire’s association with blood acts as a symbol of survival and pleasure, fear and sexual satisfaction. Blood represents both the end and beginning of life, but also the malignant that has to be eliminated: menstruation, birth, human sacrifice, murder, blood transfusions and the letting of bad blood from the sick). This idea is clearly represented at the beginning of the novel, when Jonathan Harker becomes a masochist by hearing the seductive whispers of the female vampires. In *The Origins of Dracula*, Clive Leatherdale makes a profound analysis of blood, as a symbol of Dracula’s immortality, but also as a fearful fluid that represents eternal life. “It is the unique

combination of belief in an afterlife and in the rejuvenating powers of blood that gives rise to the vampire” (Leatherdale in Olivares Merino 14).

Van Helsing, turning to me, said, “He is so young and strong, and of blood so pure that we need not defibrinate it.” Then with swiftness, but with absolute method, Van Helsing performed the operation. As the transfusion went on, something like life seemed to come back to poor Lucy's cheeks, and through Arthur's growing pallor the joy of his face seemed absolutely to shine. After a bit I began to grow anxious, for the loss of blood was telling on Arthur, strong man as he was. It gave me an idea of what a terrible strain Lucy's system must have undergone that what weakened Arthur only partially restored her. (Stoker 133)

Dracula is the epitome of the horror genre, a new icon in popular culture. The monster of this novel is completely different from other creatures we have seen in the earlier Gothic novels, since unlike Frankenstein, he cannot be explained, in spite of Van Helsing's efforts. In most previous novels tackling this issue, events could be rationally explained, but *Dracula* leaves many questions unanswered. *Dracula* is not only an allegory of many Victorian taboos, but also a representation of the complete absence of reason, of the regret present in the libertine mind, of a fascination with the unknown and with what lurks in the shadows. Vampirism is diabolic:

Dracula, however, is less the culmination of a tradition than the destroyer of one. His indifference to the sort of intimacy Carmilla offered a lonely daughter is a curt denial of the chief vampire attribute up to this time.

Carmilla aspired to see herself in a friend. *Dracula*, in one of his few self-definitions, identifies only with a vanished conquering race whose token is not a mortal, but an animal: ‘We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship.’ (Nina Auerbach in Olivares Merino 146).

Nowadays the tradition of vampires described as handsome, voluptuous and seducing creatures, which deviates from the Stokerian tradition, was consolidated by the actor Béla Lugosi in Tod Browning's *Dracula*, and later on by the popular writer Anne Rice. Nevertheless, there are two typologies that shaped the vampire of the twentieth-century vampire: the first one is the folkloric vampire, which belongs to the literary tradition of folk tales and popular legends, such as those mentioned at the beginning of this section. The second typology concerns the literary vampire, the product of a more reasonable take on the legends, and the work of eighteenth and nineteenth-century authors, who materialized this literary vampire in poetry and prose. Instead of being represented as a repulsive and animalistic monster derived from legends, the vampire was a pseudo-human individual, such as Polidori's Lord Ruthven, originally created by Lord Byron.

All the literary vampires are fictional. But there are stories about real predators. One example is Gilles de Rais, the first serial killer in history, a marshal who murdered two hundred people. The other one is Elizabeth Báthory, a countess that killed more than six hundred young

women in order to bathe in their blood and retain her beauty. These killers provoke fears about the existence of blood sucking creatures, whose origins move back to the Christian worldview, which associated blood with life, death, redemption and resurrection.

In Transylvanian folklore, the vampire is considered a supernatural creature that made a pact with humanity to bring people towards goodness (a policeman of the past). Stoker's *Dracula* broke this pact with humanity, by killing everyone, by not having any kind of respect towards no one. It is the vampire that represents all of Victorian or modern society's fears: the sinister invasions, the feminist movements, communism, capitalism, uncontrolled scientific advancements, and diseases like syphilis and AIDS. *Dracula* became a symbol of the diabolical, a representation about our destructive nature, which should not be taken seriously.

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla" (1872) is often dismissed as a minor work in the Gothic tradition. It may be more sensational and a sort of entertaining best-seller compared with Stoker's classic, but it precedes *Dracula* and must have inspired Stoker to some extent. Actually, in the original first chapter of the novel there existed an allusion to Le Fanu's vampire (E. Signorotti 620). "Carmilla" is particularly interesting as far as its representation of gender and sexuality, its reflection of political anxieties, and its establishment of a binary distinction between science and superstition (see Costello-Sullivan). It does have many things in common with Stoker's novel, though Le Fanu's focus on lesbian desire and homoeroticism and in particular the Anglo-Irish themes are not present in Stoker's later text. For instance, in Le Fanu's novel the vampire Laura is ambivalent: she can be seen as a mother-like corrupting figure as well as a lesbian lover. Lesbian desire appears subtly in *Dracula*, though female vampirism is certainly important, as we shall see. Le Fanu's tale is the first example of "the shift toward the end of the century to predominantly female vampires" (Signorotti 610). Stoker keeps to the more traditional evil patriarch of the Gothic tradition and, as we shall see later, and in *Dracula* heteroeroticism is more obvious than homoeroticism. And yet, both novels present female vampires and are open to interpretation as far as their endorsement or critique of the empowerment of women (see Signorotti). Male anxiety over the sexual appetite of women goes along with the myths of feminine hysteria and emotionality. Lesbian desire is obviously disruptive: is it liberating? Signorotti argues that Le Fanu avoids moralizing about it (611). We shall see that in *Dracula* Lucy's vampiric instincts (predatory heterosexual seduction, feeding on children) are certainly not endorsed.

2.3. The Story behind the Novel

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* emerged from a nightmare, from his mind, from his dark fantasies. Significantly, nightmares affect most of the characters, such as Lucy and Jonathan Harker:

“I did not sleep well, though my bed was comfortable enough, for I had all sorts of queer dreams”. (Stoker 8)

She will be dreaming of this tonight, I am sure. The whole agglomeration of things, the ship steered into port by a dead man, his attitude, tied to the wheel with a crucifix and beads, the touching funeral, the dog, now furious and now in terror, will all afford material for her dreams. (Stoker 98)

As has been discussed before, the story of *Dracula* became universally known by the first cinematic adaptation by Béla Lugosi and Christopher Lee. Generally speaking, there is nothing surprising or outstanding in the plot, but there is no fictional work whose popularity has lasted as long as *Dracula*, deriving in the production of many film adaptations, books and various analysis and retellings. The main idea is the representation of Dracula as the king of the undead, who migrates to London to transform it into an orgy of blood, violence and sex, by seducing women and transforming them into bloodsucking creatures.

Lucy [...] looks better this morning than she has done for weeks [...] Indeed, it might have been serious, for the skin of her throat was pierced. I must have pinched up a piece of loose skin and have transfixated it, for there are two little red points like pin-pricks, and on the band of her nightdress was a drop of blood. When I apologised and was concerned about it, she laughed and petted me, and said she did not even feel it. (Stoker 103)

The novel was published in 1897, during the Victorian Era, characterized by the interest on the esoteric and the occult, which provoked the success of gothic short stories, such as Sheridan Le Fanu's “Carmilla” and Bram Stoker's early draft “Dracula's Guest”. In this context, *Dracula* was expected to be a best seller. But not only was the novel a mirror of the anxieties of the time, but also a reflection of Stoker's tortured soul.

During the first seven years of his life, Stoker could not walk due to a disease, and he spent most of his time reading horror stories. He was born during the Irish Potato Famine, which increased suicide. His mother told him many superstitions of that time, and these were included in the novel. For example, there was a belief that you must stab a stake into a suicide's heart to avoid his soul to wonder on the material world.

“Take this stake in your left hand, ready to place to the point over the heart, and the hammer in your right. Then when we begin our prayer for the dead, I shall read him, I have here the book, and the others shall follow, strike in God's name, that so all may be well with the dead that we love and that the UnDead pass away.” (Stoker 231)

Stoker met Oscar Wilde, who introduced him to Florence Balcombe, Bram Stoker's wife, who was obsessed with keeping her beauty and youth intact. His distant relationship with his wife inspired him to create the characters of Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra. Shortly after his marriage, he left Ireland and moved to London to work for Henry Irving in The Lyceum. He was a god for Bram Stoker, who dedicated twenty-seven years to serve him in the theatre. That is why it took him seven years to write the novel, pursued by obsessions and emotional turmoil.

His inspiration started when he went on holiday to Whitby, which is the perfect Gothic paradise, full of ruins.

Right over the town is the ruin of Whitby Abbey, which was sacked by the Danes, and which is the scene of part of "Marmion," where the girl was built up in the wall. It is a most noble ruin, of immense size, and full of beautiful and romantic bits. There is a legend that a white lady is seen in one of the windows. Between it and the town there is another church, the parish one, round which is a big graveyard, all full of tombstones. This is to my mind the nicest spot in Whitby, for it lies right over the town, and has a full view of the harbour and all up the bay to where the headland called Kettleness stretches out into the sea. It descends so steeply over the harbour that part of the bank has fallen away, and some of the graves have been destroyed. (Stoker 71).

Here, he got the inspiration to transform his notes into a coherent narrative. One sailor told him a story about a Russian sailor, Dimitri, that arrived to this coastal town in an empty and destroyed ship. From this account, he began the first part of the novel, in which Dracula arrives to England in a Russian ship called the *Demeter* (similar to Dimitri).

Before I could say a word, or move forward to seize him, he sprang on the bulwark and deliberately threw himself into the sea. I suppose I know the secret too, now. It was this madman who had got rid of the men one by one, and now he has followed them himself. God help me! How am I to account for all these horrors when I get to port? When I get to port! Will that ever be? (Stoker 95).

From the marine cemetery in Whitby arose the idea of Dracula attacking his first victim in England, Lucy Westenra, who marked the beginning of Dracula's malefic plan. In the local library of Whitby, Stoker found a book about the principalities of Whallacia, where he saw the name of Dracula for the first time.

Dracula's castle was taken from Bram Stoker's children book *Under the Sunset*, which contains an illustration about this castle of death at the beginning.

The view was magnificent, and from where I stood there was every opportunity of seeing it. The castle is on the very edge of a terrific precipice. A stone falling from the window would fall a thousand feet without touching anything! As far as the eye can reach is a sea of green tree tops, with occasionally a deep rift where there is a chasm. Here and there are silver threads where the rivers wind in deep gorges through the forests.

But I am not in heart to describe beauty, for when I had seen the view I explored further. Doors, doors, doors everywhere, and all locked and bolted. In no place save from the windows in the castle walls is there an available exit. The castle is a veritable prison, and I am a prisoner! (Stoker 33).

The character of Dracula took form when Bram Stoker started to work for Henry Irving in the Lyceum, where they held meetings with the social elite. The count was a mixture of different important figures, such as Henry Irving himself.

Within, stood a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere. He held in his hand an antique silver lamp, in which the flame burned without a chimney or globe of any kind, throwing long quivering shadows as it flickered in the draught of the open door. The old man motioned me in with his right hand with a courtly gesture, saying in excellent English, but with a strange intonation. (Stoker 22)

The Count smiled, and as his lips ran back over his gums, the long, sharp, canine teeth showed out strangely. (Stoker 29).

When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat. I drew away and his hand touched the string of beads which held the crucifix. It made an instant change in him, for the fury passed so quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there. "Take care," he said, "take care how you cut yourself. It is more dangerous that you think in this country." (Stoker 33).

In a library in London, he found the German pamphlet about the adventures of Vlad Tepes the Impaler, also known as Dracula, who came from Transylvania, a land inhabited by the demons and monsters that were expelled from the rest of Europe due to the scientific advancements. At the beginning of the novel, Jonathan Harker says "Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool; if so my stay might be very interesting" (Stoker 8). At the beginning of the novel Jonathan Harker is taken to the count's castle by a very strange figure, who he realises later on that is Dracula himself in disguise.

They were driven by a tall man, with a long brown beard and a great black hat, which seemed to hide his face from us. I could only see the gleam of a pair of very bright eyes, which seemed red in the lamplight, as he turned to us.

"That is why, I suppose, you wished him to go on to Bukovina. You cannot deceive me, my friend. I know too much, and my horses are swift." As he spoke he smiled, and the lamplight fell on a hard-looking mouth, with very red lips and sharp-looking teeth, as white as ivory. One of my companions whispered to another the line from Burger's "Lenore": "Denn die Todten reiten Schnell." ("For the dead travel fast.") (Stoker 16-17)

In 1460, Vlad Tepes of Wallachia governed Transylvania, a little country in war. There was a time in which Dracula was seen as the Christian hero for defending Europe from the pagan invaders, such as the Turks. Their main objective was Hungary, which included the kingdom of

Wallachia, which is nowadays located at the south of Rumania. Vlad Tepes was a violent King who murdered everyone that was a threat, such as the noblemen that avoided paying the taxes to finance the upcoming war. Vlad Dracul (Vlad Dragon), Vlad the Impaler's father, belonged to the Order of the Dragon, a group of Christian knights. Dracula, his son, was known as the son of the dragon.

Wallachia supported the Turks to fund the kingdom of Hungary. It was a time of crisis, the Christian church demanded a hero, a saviour, who was Dracula. He responded with violence and torture, earning the image of the merciless murderer of the Angles and Saxons that occupied the commercial routes, and blocked the access to the Turks. At the time, Transylvania belonged to Hungary, whose people desired allies like the Turks, since they wanted a kingdom of stability and peace, ideas that go against Vlad's reign.

“That treasure has been hidden,” he went on, “in the region through which you came last night, there can be but little doubt. For it was the ground fought over for centuries by the Wallachian, the Saxon, and the Turk. Why, there is hardly a foot of soil in all this region that has not been enriched by the blood of men, patriots or invaders”. (Stoker 28)

Vlad's major impalement was at Brazo, where he tortured hundreds of Saxons and Turks. That is why he became known as Vlad the Impaler or Tepes. He was arrested by the king of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus, and he spent ten years in prison, where he learnt many torture techniques, by practising with rats and mice. This event might be seen through the character of Renfield, “a sort of index to the coming and going of the Count” (Stoker 240), who ate and tortured different animals adapting Darwin's theory of evolution as well as the survival of the fittest.

As it is, I am darkly suspicious. All those out-breaks were in some way linked with the proximity of the Count. What then does this absolute content mean? Can it be that his instinct is satisfied as to the vampire's ultimate triumph? Stay. He is himself zoophagous, and in his wild ravings outside the chapel door of the deserted house he always spoke of 'master'. (Stoker 240).

This Rumanian aristocrat does not have anything in common with vampirism or Transylvania. Stoker created a story based on an outdated villain, with the addition of a phantasmagorical atmosphere. The origin of the image of Dracula as a sophisticated and elegant gentleman dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, characterized by the Napoleonic Wars, which popularized the macabre. In 1816, a group of scholars got together to create horror stories, sometimes by the help of opioids prescribed by Polidori. In this group there were members such as Percy and Mary Shelly, and Lord Byron, who only created a fragment of a story about an aristocratic vampire that resurrected from the dead, Augustus Darvell, which Polidori used as an inspiration to create anonymously a parody called “The Vampyre”, whose protagonist was the previously mentioned Scottish vampire, Lord Ruthven. According to David Punter, “The Vampyre”

is “another modification of pre-bourgeois fears of tyrannical violence imaged in terms of the primal fear of blood-sucking” (Punter 18). Augustus Darvell appeared to Stoker in his nightmare and served him as an inspiration to create the count. Dracula is a dynasty, a house, the descendent and bearer of the long aristocratic tradition. Dracula is the final aristocrat of the Székelys, descents of Attila. In order to survive, he needs the exchange-system of blood.

His spiders are now becoming as great a nuisance as his flies, and today I told him that he must get rid of them. [...] I scolded him for it, but he argued quietly that it was very good and very wholesome, that it was life, strong life, and gave life to him. This gave me an idea, or the rudiment of one. I must watch how he gets rid of his spiders [...] I looked around for his birds, and not seeing them, asked him where they were. He replied, without turning round, that they had all flown away. There were a few feathers about the room and on his pillow a drop of blood. (Stoker 78-79).

He kept staring. A man came out of the shop with a small parcel, and gave it to the lady, who then drove off. The dark man kept his eyes fixed on her, and when the carriage moved up Piccadilly he followed in the same direction, and hailed a hansom. Jonathan kept looking after him, and said, as if to himself, “I believe it is the Count, but he has grown young. My God, if this be so! Oh, my God! My God! If only I knew! If only I knew!” He was distressing himself so much that I feared to keep his mind on the subject by asking him any questions, so I remained silent. (Stoker 184)

His power is the necessity of mere survival: his relationship with the world depends on tyranny, on the survival of the house of the dead. “For the blood is the life”, a scriptural phrase told by Renfield when he has a conversation with Mina Harker about Dr Seward, in which he says “I used to fancy that life was positive and perpetual entity, and that by consuming a multitude of live things, no matter how long is the scale of creation, one might indefinitely prolong life [...] I tried to kill him for the purpose of strengthening my vital powers by the assimilation with my own body of his life through the medium of his blood” (Stoker 249).

This novel was so successful in the younger audiences because it tackled sex without blame, without responsibility, without pregnancy, an eternal sex. Stoker could not predict the aftermath of the novel, since he just saw the novel as an adventure story with a very simple plot. From a nightmare, he did not expect to create a trope, a modern myth. What makes *Dracula* distinctive is the set of symbols of the Victorian society.

Over against the 'house' which Dracula represents Stoker places the bourgeois family, seen around the moment of maximum bonding, on the eve of marriage. *Dracula* is a dramatised conflict of social forces and attitudes: opposite the strength of the vampire we are shown the strength of bourgeois marital relations and sentimental love, as in Mina's letter to Lucy after her marriage to Harker. (Punter 18)

3. Gendered Binary Codes

Stoker's *Dracula* presents the three models of womanhood we have seen earlier: the monstrous seductress, the good woman tempted, and the virtuous angel-in-the-house woman. Stoker's novel rewrites these categories because it is a late Victorian text after all, and both the patriarchal order and the colonial order are questioned to some extent. Both the New-Woman model and the Orientalist stereotypes of the period are reflected in the novel.

3.1. Female Vampires

The vampiric brides are the "Other" women. They may be considered one more instance of the harem motif associated with Orientalism. The "harem femininity" is linked not only to "sexual attraction" but also to "possession, control, and subordination", to "male fantasies of desire and domination" (J. de Groot 107, 110-11). Dracula's harem is associated with all this, but with monstrous seduction in particular, with the forbidden. Dracula owns his brides, but they are much more than passive sexual commodities: they represent the Other (feminine, voluptuous, oriental, medieval) threatening the modern civilized white Westerner, Jonathan Harker, who is aroused and tempted by the forbidden. It is interesting that what matters about these undead women is how men see them, how they feel about them. They are never fully developed and the point of view we have of them is a man's. The sight of the undead women provokes desire, guilt and fear: "I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (Stoker 45). They are "ladies by their dress and manner" (44), which may suggest they once were so, and their beauty is almost that of the Renaissance ideal: "All three had brilliant white teeth, that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips" (45). Aroused and feeling guilty (Mina would be hurt should she learn he feels desire), he also feels "uneasy"; there is "some dreamy fear" associated with the familiar looks of the blonde vampire, and "some deadly fear" about them. They laugh, but their "silvery, musical laugh" cannot "come through the softness of human lips" (45). There is "a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive", since the "fair girl" also licks her lips "like an animal".⁵ Passivity defines Jonathan's reaction as she approaches ("I lay quiet"), and the sweetness of her breath brings up "a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood". He does not react as her teeth penetrate his skin: "I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited – waited with a beating heart" (46). There is an inversion of roles, and the scene may titillate a male

⁵ Concerning the resemblance with dogs or wolves, see K. Chez. Women's "supposed innate susceptibility to rabidity represents both anxieties regarding intimacy and how such intimacy threatens gender and species hierarchy" (Chez 77).

reader as much as cause revulsion, which is actually what Jonathan feels. Gothic mystery and fear, and some suggestion of horror.

Two of the vampires have dark hair and “aquiline noses, like the Count” (44), which may suggest that they are kin or at least from the same area, but the third, the one who has “the right to begin” (45) and who must be the leader or Dracula’s favourite in the harem, since hers is “a great tomb as if made to one much beloved” (394), has sapphire eyes and golden hair. They are all unidentified creatures, but the blonde one may be countess Dolingen of Gratz whose tomb is discovered by an Englishman in Stoker’s “Dracula’s Guest” (“I seemed somehow to know her face”, writes Jonathan so he may be the very same Englishman). The point is she may well have been a Western woman when she was alive, which subtly suggests proleptic information: Dracula may not only buy land in England but also convert British women, steal new wives (Lucy will be the first). The three brides/wives are imprisoned, subject to the night and the coffins, tied to their dark creator and his dark home. They are powerful, they may infect others, but they are also chained. Though the three brides/wives are confined to Dracula’s home, and their domestic sphere may remind us of the standard Victorian woman’s sphere, the womanly duties of motherhood are not their realm; they actually feed on babies. The contrast with Mina is clearly underlined by her eventually becoming a wife and a mother. And yet, even Mina can be deceived, tempted, infected. The three brides might have become good mothers when they were human (Dracula claims he loved them in the past [46], though we may wonder when and how). The only way to keep temptation at bay is through a rather cold, scientific point of view: Van Helsing’s. Even an older man like him is tempted, fascinated by the otherness and female beauty, but the priest-like sacrifice/liberation of the vampire brides seems a heroic action he is determined to perform. Killing is liberating the soul. The scene is worthy of some careful analysis. Van Helsing feels that what he has to do is “a deed of horror”, a “terrible task”, a “horrid” one (394). The first of the two dark vampires is “so full of life and voluptuous beauty that I shudder as though I have come to do murder” (393). Though the tomb is dusty and there is a “horrid odour” he is still “moved” by her almost human nature, her beauty, which hypnotizes and paralyzes him, since “man is weak” (393). Apparently, it is not lust that defines such weakness, though, at least as far as the fair vampire is concerned: she is “so radiantly beautiful” that he cannot help feeling emotion, the instinct men have to “love and protect” women (394). So these dangerous creatures provoke in him the protective impulse Victorian patriarchy insists upon: women are fragile (or childish) and a gentleman must take care of them. Fortunately, he has heard Mina’s voice, which has interrupted the reverie: Van Helsing has no doubt that “in old time [...] many a man who set forth to do such a task as mine” was delayed too long and got killed (393). All this in spite of knowing these creatures have killed and will do it again.

The execution is “butcher work”, with “horrid screeching” and “bloody foam” involved, and Helsing writes that he might “not have gone further with the butchery” and execute the other two undead “had [he] not seen the repose in the first face, and the gladness that stole over it just ere the final dissolution came” (395). Saving their souls makes the horrid execution of stabbing and cutting heads off easier. Stoker may have made the brides’ encounter with Jonathan more erotic (after all, the vampires are awake), but the scene of the execution is a sort of sacrifice ritual in which evil blood must be spilt to save and purify the soul.

3.2. Gothic Heroines

Whereas the three female vampires are seen mostly for what effect they have on men, Lucy Westenra and Mina Murray (later Harker) do have their own voice through journals or letters. Still, they are often defined by how men see them, since the diaries and letters that conform the narrative are mostly penned by men. For instance, Van Helsing’s protective approach is constant, and his “heart with gladness leapt like flame” when “the terror in her sweet eyes” confirms that she has not turned into a vampire yet when the three brides invite her to join them (391).

The end of the nineteenth century was an era of economic and social changes, which brought the incorporation of women into the public sphere, as they began to claim a new social position after the first wave of Feminism. This is mentioned in chapter 8, in Mina Murray’s journal, when she playfully says “I believe we should have shocked the ‘New Woman’ with our appetites. Men are more tolerant, bless them! Then we walked home with some, or rather many, stoppages to rest, and with our hearts full of a constant dread of wild bulls” (Stoker 99). The term ‘New Woman’ was created in 1880 to refer to the progressive women, who asserted their individuality and independence by challenging the limits of a patriarchal society. These mentioned “appetites” Mina and Lucy have refer to the food they had at an inn, but might allude indirectly to sexual independence, to desires that might make even New Women blush.

Lucy herself is certainly not a New Woman since she belongs to the leisured society, does little more than visit picture galleries and walk in the park, is no professional, and she certainly wants to get married. But she has the jovial carelessness of youth (she is a nineteen-year-old). She is very pretty and candid and has three suitors, though she is already in love with Arthur. She is young, flirty and independent, and can choose any of the men, and fools around with the idea how nice it would be to have three husbands, a “heresy” (67). This is what makes her less traditional. She has powers of seduction and conquest. Her situation may be an inversion of Jonathan’s with Dracula’s three brides, since he cannot control them. In her letter to Mina she presents herself to us as apparently frivolous but also determined to become, like Mina, “old married women” (Stoker

64). She speaks about telling husbands “everything”, that men like beauty in a woman, that she does not enjoy breaking the heart of any suitor, and that perhaps she is “a horrid flirt”, and men are “so noble” (66-67). Eventually, she proves intelligent and lively, though some stern Victorian moralists might have thought her too empowered or sexually demanding. Stoker certainly makes Lucy rather traditional since, in spite of her wild talk, she has accepted the supposed inferiority of women: “I don’t know what I have done to deserve it. I must only try in the future to show that I am not ungrateful for all His goodness to me in sending to me such a lover, such a husband, and such a friend” (68). Though it is not easy for a man to find a girl alone (66), Dracula finds Lucy by herself. Her sleepwalking takes her out of her safe home and the fourth suitor is no gentleman (100-02). It is interesting that it should happen that way, like a warning for young girls: the private sphere is safe, whereas out there may be a predator waiting. She eventually becomes a victim, as she is then seduced/infected by Dracula, and as a vampire, her former restraint disappears. She is driven by appetite, becoming a man-hunter, and she will attack children. This reminds us of the long-lost humanity of Dracula’s brides: they too were victims and were turned into predators. The infection turns sweet would-be mothers into child-killers. This can express metaphorically the anxiety felt about women becoming too hedonist and assertive, too active and demanding. The question is whether the New-Woman trend is seen as some kind of infection that must be stopped before it propagates. Van Helsing reminds Arthur that Lucy had become the Other, a seductive monster:

“Friend Arthur, if you had met that kiss which you know of before poor Lucy die, or again, last night when you open your arms to her, you would in time, when you had died, have become *nosferatu*, as they call it in Eastern Europe, and would for all time make more of those Un-Deads that so have filled us with horror” (Stoker 229).

E. Signorotti argues that Lucy’s sleepwalking (as a child and later) suggests a propensity towards vampirism, and that there is a lesbian, however repressed, tendency in Lucy’s relationship with Mina (Signorotti 622). Undressing her body and revealing her secrets before a close female friend may covertly suggest a disruptive kind of intimacy, though it may be difficult for a modern reader to interpret their friendship and that particular letter as necessarily sexual and homoerotic, which is what Signorotti states. Lucy’s more obvious obsession with men might be more disruptive. Elaine Showalter argues that Lucy’s “New Woman’s sexual daring”, like Mina’s “New Woman’s intellectual ambitions” resemble them to the vampire women (180). We do not know what kind of women the three vampiric sisters were before Dracula infected them, and besides they are from another country and another time, but it seems no coincidence that these two British women are Dracula’s target. The novel seems to suggest that some people, women in particular, may degenerate, be infected, more easily. And yet, Jonathan and Arthur are weaker than Van Helsing, probably because the sexual drive of youth makes them more susceptible to the seduction of the flesh. Besides, Stoker makes both Lucy and Mina hardly decadent: they are heterosexual

and want to marry. For instance, Lucy's playful allusion to polygamy contrasts with her statements about Arthur, about how grateful she should be that she has been so lucky to be loved by such a good man; and later, when sick, her gratitude towards the men that protect her is typical of her (Stoker 137, 143).

Mina, a young schoolmistress, is in her own way an example of the educated, professional New Woman. She is well-read (for instance, she knows about the theories of degeneration) and is curious about Dr Seward's technological toys. She loves walking and she has a mind of her own. She also remarks that "the New Woman won't condescend to accept", but rather decide herself (100), a commentary on the limits Victorian society impose on courtship. She is just writing about men and women seeing each other asleep to judge whether they like what they see or not; that is, she is not defending premarital sex, at least not directly, but it is certainly a witty critique, however covert, of the limits Victorian society impose, limits that restrict the necessary acquaintance with the other before marriage. And yet, Mina is "always anxious about Jonathan", "uneasy" if she has no news of her fiancé (Stoker 81, 183), whom she nurses, protects and marries eventually, revealing her feminine virtues: Van Helsing defines her as "brave and gallant" and a sweet and loving mother (402). However clever and independent she may seem there is something very traditional about her. She allies with Van Helsing and has an active role in the novel, though her becoming infected turns her into a rather passive victim that depends on Van Helsing's protection; that is, the same old story of women needing men's protection.

According to Helsing, Mina "has man's brain – a brain that a man should have were he much gifted – and a woman's heart", but destroying Dracula is not a woman's "part", since they are weaker and must be protected from horrors (Stoker 250). She is "too precious", a "star", "hope", and must be protected. Mina sees it as "chivalrous care" (258), but it is the typical paternalistic view Victorian men had of women. Being idolized may imply being silenced.

3.3. The Disruption of Gender Roles: Masculinity and Femininity

There is male heroism in the novel. Quincey Morris, the Texan, dies happy after aiding humanity and saving Mina: "a gallant gentleman" (401). Both Quincey and Jonathan react fast to stab Dracula seconds before sunset (400), so together with Van Helsing and Arthur they represent the virtues of Victorian gentlemen. Arthur looks, writes Dr Seward, "like a figure of Thor" when he kills "the thing" that was Lucy once (230). It was an act of "high duty", a "terrible task" (230-1) with no pleasure in it. And there is a reward: Lucy recovers "unequaled sweetness and purity" (231) and there is a "holy calm" in the aftermath of the bloody execution. Arthur may now kiss her lips, says

Helsing, for she is no longer “a grinning devil” but “God’s true dead, whose soul is with Him” (231-32). There is no mad scientist in the novel, no weird researcher, since science and religion do not clash in *Dracula*. And yet, these heroic men of science and God that restore peace may all become easy prey to female vampires. We have already commented on Helsing’s doubts before killing the three undead brides and on Jonathan’s passivity when seduced by them, which points to an inversion of roles and to the abnormal and animalistic penetration and infection of his body. The anxieties of the Victorian society regarding gender and desire are present here. Harker is a victim of Stoker’s take on Shakespeare’s “weird sisters” that inhabit Dracula’s castle. The three brides are attractive, not masculine-looking like Shakespeare’s witches, and they cause in him an inner turmoil between “burning desire” and “deadly fear” (Stoker 45). Paralysed by all of these sensations, the sexual consummation comes “nearer and nearer”. This uncontrollable arousal deviates from the boundaries established by Victorian gender codes, which prohibited illegitimate sex and established traditional gender roles within the consummation act, following what George Chauncey called “the heterosexual paradigm”, in which active men had to be responsible, while women had to remain passive, quiet and still. As we can see in this moment, the sexual roles and patterns are inverted: Harker’s “feminine” passivity waits for the vampires to penetrate him. It is the phallic wooden stake that makes men eventually recover the active role of penetration: by stabbing the vampires they fulfill their masculine role of restoring order and metaphorically become sexually active again. Decapitation may be also read metaphorically: the dangerous women are silenced for good (see Showalter 182).

The vampiric condition erases gendered roles, since both male and female vampires penetrate and infect a human’s blood. Still, there is some heteroeroticism in the novel, since the Count feeds on men and women alike but seems to prefer the latter, and his three brides like young men like Jonathan. The Count is more powerful and claims the gentleman belongs to him: “when I am done with him you shall kiss him at your will” (46) and gives the brides “a half-smothered child” (47), which reminds both Jonathan and the reader that the encounter with the Count or these women will produce “horror”, not pleasure. Lucy the vampire also fancies her Arthur, who is saved by Van Helsing. The Count is like a supreme creator, a monstrous father of the infected, and the three brides can propagate the virus-like decay. Their powers of seduction facilitate the degeneration of any victim. The irrationality and horror of the vampiric shape displays a degeneration of the species and also a corrupted, deviant sexuality. The vampires’ dark nature, their appearance at night and their decadence suppose a sexual threat to the culture and taboos of Victorian society. The fact that two of the brides resemble the Count may suggest they were his daughters, adding incest to the offensive infection. These creatures are modern polymorphous representations of the past, of the epidemic

contagions of syphilis (or AIDS for a modern reader), as well as a metaphor for the upcoming changes within the public and private spheres.

In this context, we can comment that a wolf escaped from the Zoological Gardens due to Dracula's control. We may associate metamorphosis and polymorphism with ancient Western myths, namely the Greek Gods, and Zeus in particular. But Zeus seducing Leda or Alcmene may suggest deceit and hedonism, in a Gothic horror narrative transforming bodies provoke fear and repulsion. Zeus as a swan, an innocent-looking creature, has little to do with Dracula as a bat: rakes, either human or divine, use disguise and pretend things they are not, but the vampire rake is a monster, and the animal imagery corresponds with the repulsive, horrific presentation of the character.

When he saw me he became furious, and had not the attendants seized him in time, he would have tried to kill me. As we were holding him a strange thing happened. He suddenly redoubled his efforts, and then as suddenly grew calm. I looked round instinctively, but could see nothing. Then I caught the patient's eye and followed it, but could trace nothing as it looked into the moonlight sky, except a big bat, which was flapping its silent and ghostly way to the west. Bats usually wheel about, but this one seemed to go straight on, as if it knew where it was bound for or had some intention of its own. (Stoker 119).

The fog we associate the Count with may be similar to the deception we associate with libertines and it is also a source of fear and mystery, of the blurring of reality, but bats are something more repulsive. Coming back to the wolf at the zoo, its changing nature from docility to rebellion may stand for something else. It resembles Lucy's transformation: "the angelic beauty of her eyes" disappears as they turn "dull and hard", though her voice may sound "soft" and inviting, more "voluptuous" than Dr Seward can remember (Stoker 171-172). This rebelliousness is similar according to the keeper at the zoo. It may be even compared to the women's change in attitude in the fight for their rights, or at least to some men's anxiety about it. It may entail men's concern about women becoming more powerful and strong, women leaving their jail, as a wolf did.

"All right, gov'nor. This 'ere is about the 'ole story. That 'ere wolf what we called Bersicker was one of three gray ones that came from Norway to Jamrach's, which we bought off him four years ago. He was a nice wellbehaved wolf, that never gave no trouble to talk of. I'm more surprised at 'im for wantin' to get out nor any other animile in the place. But, there, you can't trust wolves no more nor women." (Stoker 148)

All of the male bourgeois characters represent the middle class' perspective, they are the portrayal of virtuous masculinity, in opposition to Count Dracula, who represents the violent and sexually promiscuous vampiric predator, with the capability to isolate the soul from the body of the undead: as Arthur sees it, his beloved has been replaced "the foul Thing which had taken Lucy's shape without her soul" (Stoker 228). Dracula's destruction into dust and the re-establishment of

the natural order reinforces the Victorian values. A new masculine image appears in opposition to the dark figure of evil.

“My friend, it was because I wished to be gentle in the breaking to you, for I know you have loved that so sweet lady. But even yet I do not expect you to believe. It is so hard to accept at once any abstract truth, that we may doubt such to be possible when we have always believed the 'no' of it. It is more hard still to accept so sad a concrete truth, and of such a one as Miss Lucy.” (Stoker 207).

As mentioned before, this was the period of Freud’s psychoanalysis, which focused on sexual desire, censured by Victorian society. Le Fanu pointed out in “Carmilla” “the vampire is prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence resembling the passion of love” and that the vampire seductive power is lifted by “the gradual approaches of an artful courtship”, establishing an analogy between monstrosity and sexual desire, which affected the readings about vampirism and the seductive female vampire. The voluptuous female vampires are the counterpart of the pure and submissive ‘Angel of the House’, whose ideal womanhood was based on the combination between sexual purity and the devotion towards men.

The vampiric women, regressive in human-otherness, are the representations of women’s sexual desire and the distinction of what a woman should and should not be. Like his master, the three brides are figures of the past that alter the present. The representation of desire through monstrosity showcases Franco Moretti’s point of view about the psychological ambivalence behind vampirism, the mixture of both fear and desire. This fusion of antithetic emotions might appear after the erotic consummation are the basis that characterises the three brides, whose beauty awakens both sensations of anxiety and arousal, and of repulsion and attraction in a male like Jonathan: “I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed to fasten on my throat” (Stoker 45).

Desire is one of the major themes in *Dracula*, motivating action and emotion. This is present in one of the major motifs repeated in the novel, the Vampire mouth: the full red lips, the red tongue and the sharp canine teeth, the red and white (symbolizing blood and semen). This inviting orifice, which brings softness through the lips and pain through the teeth, contrasts with the loving kisses with which Arthur and Lucy sealed their engagement (68). Van Helsing and the rest try to fight against the monstrous deviation from the gender-based categories of the penetrating and the receptive, the standard sexuality of those Van Helsing calls “the brave men” and the “brave women”. The vampiric mouth of the Original father, is then transferred to his descendants: the three sisters and

later on Lucy Westenra. The three brides' Other anatomy is that of a female form but with a masculine penetration.

Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed to fasten on my throat.... I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the supersensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of the two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited-waited with a beating heart. (Stoker 45)

Dracula interrupts the abnormal sexual act or penetration saying "This man belongs to me", which suggests the "other" sexual act is bisexual, though the potential homoeroticism of the scene is merely implicit. Furthermore, the Count stops the "weird sisters" from feeding from Jonathan by using violence, force upon his kin, race or wives, upon women of his species. Arthur or Van Helsing do not abuse or murder any human, and when they destroy vampires they do it to protect themselves and humanity. The ghastly aftermath of the three sisters feeding on the "half smothered child" inside is decorously implicit, but it is another instance of the disruption of traditional gender roles, since instead of feeding this baby with their milk, they feed from the baby's blood. The human witness, Jonathan, can only react to unnatural otherness with fear and disgust:

The women closed round, whilst I was aghast with horror. But as I looked, they disappeared, and with them the dreadful bag. There was no door near them, and they could not have passed me without my noticing. They simply seemed to fade into the rays of the moonlight and pass out through the window, for I could see outside the dim, shadowy forms for a moment before they entirely faded away. (Stoker 46)

This monstrous penetration happens later, after Dracula leaves to London, while Jonathan Harker stays imprisoned with the "weird sisters", who later appear at the end of the novel, when Van Helsing and Mina Harker are in the camp. Mina has been already infected of vampirism and the brides try to convince her to go with them and be a part of the trio. Van Helsing made a circle with sacred water around the campsite. This barrier keeps both Mina and the sisters separate. Even though the vampires cannot enter the camp, they stay there until sunrise, when they return to the castle.

"There were before me in actual flesh the same three women that Jonathan saw in the room, when they would have kissed his throat. I knew the swaying round forms, the bright hard eyes, the white teeth, the ruddy colour, the voluptuous lips. They smiled ever at poor dear Madam Mina. And as their laugh came through the silence of the night, they twined their arms and pointed to her, and said in those so sweet tingling tones that Jonathan said were of the intolerable sweetness of the water glasses, "Come, sister. Come to us. Come!" In fear I turned to my poor Madam Mina, and my heart with gladness leapt like flame. For oh! the terror in her sweet eyes, the repulsion, the horror, told a story to my heart that was all of hope. God be thanked she was not, yet, of them." (Stoker 391)

This sexuality based on the ambivalence between desire and fear is showcased in Dracula's polymorphousness and monstrosity as a bat, wolf or dust, yet his necessity to go against the traditional genre conceptions constrains that ambivalent desire through heterosexual displacements. Dracula's aim is to create feminine demons with masculine traits. This monstrous heterosexuality happens for two reasons: it acts as a mirror of the anxieties concerning eroticism, which is linked to the latter reason, the representation of an unimagining sexually aggressive woman as a monster, as a usurper of the other genre. In other words, it reflects the Victorian anxiety about the fluidity of gender roles. This mobile desire masks an heterosexual point of view, in which a sexually active woman is represented as a monster. The main objective of the two discourses, being the analogical sexual desire and vampirism, is the keeping traditional gender codes intact, which is fulfilled at the end through the restoration of the social order. Nevertheless, their main difference relies on the articulation of the heterosexual paradigm:

Sexual inversion, especially as argued by Symonds and Ellis, represents an urbane and civilized accommodation of the contrary impulses of liberation and constraint. Stoker's vampirism, altogether more hysterical and hyperbolic, imagines mobile desire as monstrosity and then devises a violent correction of that desire; in *Dracula* the vampiric abrogation of gender codes inspires a defensive reinscription of the stabilizing distinctions of gender. (Craft 11).

The plot in between Dracula's leave and return to Transylvania, from the Victorian perspective, is based on the binary opposition between the male characters, the forces of "good", and the female heroines, Lucy and Mina, who must be protected. Dracula corrupts and degenerates the female character's morality and spirituality, and the male characters, Van Helsing and his group, bring light and "save" and "clean" their souls and infected blood. Lucy was given good, human blood by four men, four gentlemen: Arthur Holmwood, Dr Seward, Van Helsing and Quincey Morris. This blood transfusion implies men "penetrating" her, in the same way the Count does, but the latter corrupts her blood, takes blood and humanity out of her. Later men become the executioners of her undead body by cutting her head and stabbing a stake into her heart, so that her soul may be saved in the Final Judgement. There is a priest-like component in Van Helsing's destroying vampires. Mina is lucky: she is saved from being transformed into a monster. Moreover, Van Helsing and the Count represent what is called the competition between antithetical fathers. As Maurice Richardson puts it, "The vampire Count, centuries old, is a father figure of huge potency who competes with Van Helsing, the godfather figure." (cited in Craft 11). This parental conflict brings one of the many dualities in the novel, such as rationality and irrationality, which focuses mostly in these characters.

Van Helsing, primary protector of the patriarchal institutions and traditional dualisms, represents science and reason, order, neatness and reserve. In other words, he is the embodiment of the perfect Victorian man. His main objective is destroying the chaos that threatens the social and psychological order. Dracula is the never ending passion, whose desires never cease, he is the unknown, which cannot be identified through either conscience or science. He is the one promising a union that goes beyond death. For the middle class, Dracula is the epitome of sexual perversion and sadism, but as we can see in the novel, when Lucy is transformed into a vampire, she is filled with an unrepressed sentiment of joy and sexual desire, which is unhealthy and vicious since these creatures are not self-controlling human beings.

I don't know why, for I was afraid of something -I don't know what. I remember, though I suppose I was asleep, passing through the streets and over the bridge. A fish leaped as I went by, and I leaned over to look at it, and I heard a lot of dogs howling the whole town seemed as if it must be full of dogs all howling at once - as I went up the steps. Then I had a vague memory of something [...] very sweet and very bitter all around me at once; and then I seemed sinking into deep green water, and there was a singing in my ears. My soul seemed to go out from my body and float about the air. I seem to remember that once the West Lighthouse was right under me, and then there was a sort of agonizing feeling, as if I were in an earthquake, and I came back and found you shaking my body. I saw you do it before I felt you.” (Stoker 108).

This fragment represents Lucy Westenra’s feeling and emotions when she was attacked by the monster, very similar sensations to what Jonathan Harker felt with the “weird sister”, such as the sweetness and the singing. In order to describe what happened, she provided a set of images from the unconscious, such as the leaping fish and the howling dogs, and the lighthouse, which is said to have phallic connotations. She begins a journey through the unconscious, that arises contradictory sensations, such as “sweet” and “bitter”, and her soul and body separate as she tries to remove her responsibility for the count’s actions, probably her sleepwalking. Dracula, is the devil, a figure similar to Blake’s Urizen, the creator of all the monstrosities, who is able to resurrect the body, just like God, but by separating it from the soul. Lucy experienced the consummation in a trance-like estate: “there was a singing in my ears”, “an agonising feeling” “and then I came back and found you shaken my body”.

As said before, Van Helsing is the antithesis of Dracula. He is a combination of a doctor, a scientist, a lawyer, a philosopher, a professor and a priest. He is even more than a scientist, he is a metaphysician, like Le Fanu’s Hesselius and Stevenson’s Jekyll. He is the one that realises that Lucy is a vampire, bitten by Count Dracula.

“I did not say she was alive, my child. I did not think it. I go no further than to say that she might be UnDead.” “UnDead! Not alive! What do you mean? Is this all a nightmare, or

what is it?" "There are mysteries which men can only guess at, which age by age they may solve only in part. Believe me, we are now on the verge of one. But I have not done. May I cut off the head of dead Miss Lucy?" (Stoker 219).

Conclusions

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* has a number of generic traits of both the traditional Gothic and of later reassessments of the genre, which push the genre towards horror and science fiction plus an urban British context. The novel contains elements of mystery and evil in a foreign "old" and "picturesque" land (Stoker 8-9), heroes and heroines, fearful villains, and also the disturbance and danger in the British civilized and modern world, repulsive creatures and violence, the seductive temptation of the dark, and a scientific approach to things that cannot be explained: "We want no proofs; we ask none to believe us!", says Van Helsing closing the narrative (401).

The evil father figure appears again, but Stoker decides to create a counterpart: there is the monstrous evil creator, a Count who fathers undead acolytes, and then we have Van Helsing, a middle-class gentlemanly father-like figure who does God's errand of saving souls. Even Dracula's face shows "a look of peace" before he dissolves (401), which suggests something human still remained within his evil vampiric identity. Van Helsing works as a godsend, as an example of the future (in spite of his old age), whereas Dracula represents a dark past that might have infected them all. If Gothic novels like those by Ann Radcliffe tend to stress the abuses of patriarchy, Stoker's novel transforms evil patriarchy into an anomaly, an abhuman deformity, not an example of inhuman corruption. The title might suggest Dracula is the number one character, but Van Helsing steals the show: he is the protector of the civilized world and of women.

Science cannot find solutions to defeat the infection: the only efficient method is the destruction of the evil patriarchal monster himself. It is like a plague, a new one, and there is no cure. But it is not a natural disease: Satan must have caused it (Stoker 256). To save Mina Dracula has to die. Lucy turned into a vampire and nothing could be done, but Mina is still human, however sick she is. Van Helsing has then to use violence, weapons, becoming more a soldier/priest than a true scientist. Both Dr Seward and Van Helsing try hard to understand vampirism but the readers are left with the enigma: how did the Count become a vampire himself? Who or what created it? In Stoker's novel the scientists do not create monsters by defying God (Frankenstein) or by artificially evolving animals into humans (as H. G. Wells' Dr Moreau, who tries to put Darwin's theory into practice). Stoker's men of science may not be geniuses but they do the "right" thing: they are protectors of humanity and of women in particular.

Van Helsing's ritualistic methods as an executioner/redeemer have little to do with a scientific approach to reality. At a time in which science was more powerful than religion, Stoker's novel brings attention to superstitions and the unknown, to how a plague may disrupt the natural world and our civilized society, and to how science may have little to do about it. Domesticated wolves may turn wild, nice women may become monstrous seducers and men may go mad and become slaves. What holds the community together, safe, is the nobility of men like Van Helsing. The message seems to be that there is some dark mysterious evil out there, and that traditional values and virtues, bravery and conscience, but not science, will be able to fight it back.

We may wonder to what extent Stoker uses female vampirism as a metaphor of the "New Woman" figure. We may see vampirism as a hyperbole, a distortion of the acceptable values promoted by the "new woman" at the turn of the century. Stoker's Lucy does not seem too subversive, and neither the political or cultural agenda bring the worst in her, but vampirism. If vampirism is the best example of decadence and degeneration, it takes a Machiavellian supernatural presence to push Lucy into the disruption and subversion of the traditional gender codes. Actually, she has no choice. She is unaware of what is happening to her after being bitten. Even Mina is not fully aware, largely because Van Helsing thinks it is better to keep things from her. In any case, marriage and motherhood are obviously endorsed as the right and fulfilling destiny for women, as we can see in the conservative and traditional ending, in which the order is finally restored.

My main objective here has been to provide a well-developed analysis of Stoker's novel, by focusing on vampirism as degeneration and the question of gender, an analysis accompanied by detailed explanation of the evolution of the Gothic genre. Nevertheless, there are many other different perspectives of analysis which have not been here tackled for lack of time and space, such as a postcolonial reading or a psychoanalytical approach to Stoker's novel. *Dracula* is one more product of the Gothic tradition, which would be very interesting to compare with other texts (both in context or in isolation), such as Le Fanu's "Carmilla", John Polydori's "The Vampyre" or later, more contemporary examples, such as *Interview with the Vampire* and the Lestat saga created by Anne Rice. The vampire myths and fiction have been studied to a great extent, but the genre is more alive than ever.

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