

# **From the Gothic Novel to Horror Fiction: An Analysis of *The Castle of Otranto* and *Dracula*.**

## **I. Introduction**

The differences between the Gothic novel and Horror fiction have been analysed by numerous literary critics and authors but there is no complete agreement on this subject.

The Gothic novel is a literary subgenre of the Romantic trend that appeared in the eighteenth century as a reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment. The Gothic novel embodies the extreme emotions of the Romanticism but in a suspense atmosphere. The plots are related to families, identity, inheritance and love. This novel is associated to medieval settings, castles and malign aristocrats. Its principal features are suspense, supernatural events, darkness and mystery. Howard Phillips Lovecraft enumerates the elements of this kind of novel in his work *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1927):

(...) the Gothic castle, with its awesome antiquity, vast distances and fabled, deserted or ruined wings, damp corridors, unwholesome hidden catacombs, and galaxy of ghosts and appalling legends, as a nucleus of suspense and dæmoniac fright. (8)

Regarding the protagonists, there are some types of characters that are often repeated in the Gothic novels: the tyrannical villain, the religious figure, the heroine or woman in distress and the brave hero, and almost always these gothic novels are starred by an isolated protagonist.

The idea of the Gothic novel is a universal concept on which all authors and critics agree. But then, we also have the concept of horror fiction. Nineteenth-century Horror fiction arises of the development of the Gothic fiction of the eighteenth century. At every turn, we can find critics that consider Horror fiction novels as Gothic novels. For instance, Andrew Smith (2007) considers every novel of this literary trend as Gothic from 1760 until the twentieth century but despite this, he recognizes an evolution of this current. On the other hand, there are authors who clearly distinguish

between these two concepts as Gina Wisker (2005). To her, both are connected but Gothic literature and Horror fiction cannot be considered as equal. There is not a precise year, moment or a work to mark the passage from the Gothic to Horror. It is impossible to trace a precise moment of rupture in literature or in society, these changes need a slow development. Despite this, a differentiation between these two trends has been perceived.

As I have said before, there is no unanimity about the definition of nineteenth-century Horror fiction and, as we will see in the critical part of the essay, the opinions are quite opposed. Nevertheless, I want to include two definitions of this concept that I find very appropriate to my purpose in this research:

The structures of horror narratives are said to set out from a situation of order, move through a period of disorder caused by the eruption of horrifying or monstrous forces and finally reach a point of closure and completion in which disruptive, monstrous elements are contained or destroyed and the original order is re-established. (Jancovich 8)

Linda Holland Toll also defines Horror fiction in a clear and distinct way:

Horror fiction will be handily defined as any text which has extreme or supernatural elements, induces (as its primary invention and/or effect) strong feelings of terror, horror or revulsion in the reader, and generates a significant degree of unresolved disease within society. (6)

It is true that both definitions are quite general but they explain in a perfect way what constitutes Horror fiction. As I have said above, Gothic literature is the antecedent of the Horror fiction of the nineteenth century and because of that they are so closely interconnected that some authors consider them both the same genre. I want to prove with my analysis that there exist differences between the Gothic novel and Horror fiction. The Gothic novel possesses a dark and suspense atmosphere and creates an ambience that could scare the reader, but it is not the central purpose of this kind of novel. Supernatural facts appear in some novels but this is not strictly required. The change between both concepts according to Andrew Smith in *Gothic Literature* (2007) is characterized by the progressive internalisation of “evil”.

I shall analyse both concepts by exemplifying each of them respectively with a masterpiece. The Gothic novel I have chosen is *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole. It was written in 1764 and this work is considered the first and the most pure Gothic novel. It has seemed to me the best example because it is the first and has all the primary and constituent elements of the Gothic novel.

As to Horror fiction, my election is *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, written in 1897. There is a gap of more than one hundred years between both works and thus we should appreciate widely differences regarding the style, the plot and the general development between both subgenres. There is a connection but a clear distance as well.

To analyse both novels, I am going to follow the approach created by Edward Morgan Forster. He illustrates this approach in his essay *Aspects of the Novel*, first published in 1927. Forster highlights seven aspects that, according to him, appear in any novel: story, people, plot, fantasy, prophecy, pattern and rhythm. I think that an explanation of each aspect is necessary but there are three of them that are really going to be instrumental to clarify the differences between these two trends. People, fantasy and prophecy are the aspects that I am going to deal with. In my opinion, Forster's approach is clear and open and as Forster himself asserts in his essay:

I have chosen the title "Aspects" because it is unscientific and vague, because it leaves us the maximum of freedom, because it means both the different ways we can look at a novel and the different ways a novelist can look at his work. (Forster 24)

## **II. Critical reception**

As I have said, there is no consensus among the critics regarding these two concepts. Some writers consider all novels as Gothic from the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole until some publications of this trend in the twentieth century. In this part, I have collected and summarised relevant criticism regarding this issue.

To begin with, Andrew Smith is one of the authors who does not consider *Dracula* or other works with similar characteristics and date of publication as Horror fiction. Smith distinguishes between different phases of Gothic literature. The first phase is “The Gothic Heyday 1760-1820”. It is to this phase that *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) belongs to (18). But when we address the period of Stoker’s novel, we find the heading “Gothic Proximities 1865-1900” in Smith’s work (87). It is true that Smith refers to *Dracula* as a Gothic novel but he asserts that in this phase there is an internalization of evil and that a new version of monstrosity begins to appear (87), i.e., there is an obvious change:

Monsters are not, as they were with Walpole’s animated giants, or Lewis’s demons, externally manifested sources of danger. Instead, by the mid-nineteenth century such horrors had largely been internalised. Typically in the ghost story the ‘monster’ lives with you, invading your domestic spaces, so that ‘evil’ acquires a proximity to the self which it did not necessarily have in the earlier Gothic. (Smith 87)

On the other hand, Gina Wisker asserts that these two concepts are clearly different. Wisker states that Horror has its roots in the Gothic novels and therefore horror fiction is a branch of the Gothic (44). Both trends make use of disturbing settings and supernatural features but the Gothic restores the order and shuts down these disturbances at the end, unlike Horror, that is both more psychological and violent (8).

Jerrold E. Hogle is another critic who has deeply investigated the Gothic genre. He considers Walpole’s novel *The Castle of Otranto* as gothic but when he alludes to the age when *Dracula* was written, Hogle refers to it as Gothic Horror: “... Stoker’s novel both exaggerates and intensifies the English Gothic literary conventions laid down by Horace Walpole” (385).

Robert Miles considers all works until 1788 as pure Gothic but after that year, he divides Terror Fiction<sup>1</sup> into two broad phases: from 1788 to 1793 and the second phase

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Miles uses the term “Terror” instead of “Horror”. What matters in any case is that he establishes a difference with the Gothic.

from 1794 to 1807, where the Gothic begins to decline (42). Miles supports the idea of the total transformation of the Gothic into Terror after 1820 (60).

To finish this critical summary, I will mention Kelly Hurley's essay "British Gothic Fiction 1885-1930" included in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, who supports that this phase of modernist Gothic should be classified as Horror. She cites another writer in her essay: Judith Halberstam, whose novel *Skin Shows* (1995) is an investigation about these two concepts. According to Hurley, Halberstam's message with this novel is that the Gothic is identified with form and Horror with content (193).

### **III. E. M. Forster's approach**

As I have mentioned above, to analyse this novel, I am going to follow E. M. Forster's approach to the novel in his famous work *Aspects of the Novel* (1927). Forster distinguishes seven aspects in the novel: story, people, plot, fantasy, prophecy, pattern and rhythm.

I will briefly explain each aspect, but my point is to define in detail the three ones that are going to be used for the analysis: people, fantasy and prophecy.

#### *A. The Story*

E. M. Forster makes in his work a clear distinction between story and plot. To Forster, the fundamental aspect of the novel is the story-telling one because, obviously, the novel tells a story with achronological order, but this story-telling should go accompanied by other aspects because it could not constitute a novel on its own (42). The novel has an elaborate structure and we cannot consider it plainly as a story. It is much more than a sequence of scenes. To him, the plot "is an organism of a higher type" because it is directly related to characters with their own wills and thoughts (86).

#### *B. The Plot*

According to Forster, a plot requires memory and intelligence (87) and a story just curiosity, people who want to know what happens next (42). The elements of

surprise and mystery are very important for the plot as well (88). The characters are essential to this element and are connected to the plot thanks to the cause and effect relationship (93).

### *C. Pattern and Rhythm*

Pattern and rhythm are the last two aspects that we find in Forster's work. Both concepts are rather vague and difficult to define in literature. The pattern aspect, to Forster, is what makes us see the novel as a whole, it is related to our aesthetic sense (136). The rhythm is what gives beauty to the novel, it motivates the reader to read the text (146). This element appears and disappears to surprise the reader (148).

I have mentioned these elements because they are a part of E. M. Forster's approach, but the three following are the important ones for my analysis.

### *D. People*

E. M. Forster makes a differentiation in his novel between people in real life and people who appear in novels, the characters. The difference is that characters have no privacy in their lives because all is exposed to the reader. The novelist can remember and understand everything of the life of a character but real people possess a hidden life. Everything or almost everything in a character's life is revealed to the readers (57).

Afterwards, Forster carries out a more academic distinction. He divides characters into flat and round. Flat characters are constructed upon a single idea and they are easily remembered by the readers because they do not change or evolve, they remain the same all throughout. We can reduce them to a single sentence (74).

On the other hand, there are round characters. Round characters have a deeper personality and further dimensions than the flat ones. A round character may surprise with unsuspected aspects but in a convincing way (81).

The second device related to the characters is the point of view from which the story is told (81). But to Forster this changing viewpoint is less important than having a proper mixture of characters in the novel (82).

#### *E. Fantasy*

This element is defined as something that does not occur in real life. As a rule, when this fantasy is introduced, it causes a special effect on the reader (103).

This fantasy implies supernatural facts but they can be introduced in many ways. It can be embodied in a literal way or maybe in a subtle one. But when this fantasy is expressed in a literal way, there are devices that writers use to achieve it. Forster asserts about fantasy: “It is treated with a mixture of realism, wittiness, charm and mythology, and the mythology is most important” (116). According to Forster, not all writers are able to handle this aspect, to him, the ability to create this fantasy in a novel in a convincing way is natural to certain writers of a particular temperament (106).

#### *F. Prophecy*

Prophecy is the last of E. M. Forster’s aspects that is going to be essential for this essay. Prophecy is one of the most difficult aspects to analyse and find in a novel. The theme of this aspect is the universe, or something with a universal scope, even if the word “universe” is not mentioned. This universal aspect is, in a way, the sense of their lives to human beings. This prophecy is a universal concept, it is something that guides human beings, it could be a powerful love, religion or something that simply leads us to our future. Religion is the idea that best illustrates prophecy. Along history, religion has been the protagonist of wars and rebellions, it has been the sense of life to many people Forster says:

Prophecy in our sense- is a tone of voice. It may imply any of the faiths that have haunted humanity -Christianity, Buddhism, dualism, Satanism, or the mere raising of human love and hatred to such a power their normal receptacles no longer contain them ... (116)

Moreover, the prophetic aspect needs two qualities: humility and the suspension of the sense of humour. The prophecy is what the writer wants to express. Prophecy is

something implicit about mysterious and imprecise meanings. Forster gives the example of *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë. To most readers or authors, this novel is just a story about relationships between human beings. To Forster, the feelings of Catherine and Heathcliff transcend them, their hate and love last across time and death. This is the abstract sense of the universal. (131)

#### **IV. Analysis**

##### *A. Gothic novel: The Castle of Otranto*

*The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is considered as the first pure Gothic novel, but there are writers such as Ann B. Tracy who defend that there exist earlier novels which are precursors of this trend, as *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753) by Tobias Smollett and *Longsword* (1762) by Thomas Leland. These two novels possess characteristics that show the development of the Gothic novel. *The Castle of Otranto* has raised curiosity and interest since the time of its appearance and we can find much criticism about what the reason for its emergence may have been, like *The Romantic Novel in England* by Robert Kiely (1972). But according to all studies and analysis of this subgenre, the Gothic novel appears as a reaction against the Enlightenment because of the excessive rationalism of the age. Walpole supports this reaction with his novel and marks the beginnings of a genre that has evolved but which still prevails.

The first of Forster's aspects I am going to analyse is the people, i. e., the characters.

##### **1. The people**

There exist several types of characters who appear in Gothic novels. They do not appear all in each novel but all the gothic novelists follow a similar pattern.

In these novels we can find a hero who usually is a descendent of the nobility but he does not even know it, a dramatic heroine, the antagonist, who usually is not evil but has an unromantic interest in the heroine, the saint, the good and innocent servants and the evil ones, and the characters related to the heroine who just want to destroy her destiny and take advantage of it.



According to Tracy, the protagonist of this kind of novels is often isolated. Sometimes this isolation is voluntary because the protagonist goes on a mission or a trip, but in most occasions this isolation is involuntary. Protagonists are usually orphans or adopted children and the origin of their families is mysterious. Sometimes they are locked in castles or monasteries and very often they arouse the hostility of the Church. Their dominant feelings are guilt and fear because they are crucial for the gothic world and its atmosphere. The inhabitants of the gothic world are plagued by fear and ignorance.

I am going to analyse the characters of *The Castle of Otranto*. All the characters in this novel are not very deeply evolved, we know just a few details about them and their feelings.

#### *a. Manfred*

Manfred is the protagonist of the novel, he is the lord of Otranto. I consider him as a flat character according to Forster's approach because it is possible to reduce him to one single sentence: After the death of his son, his only goal is to get divorced from Hippolita, to get married to Isabella and keep his castle. Although Manfred is to me a flat character, I agree with David Punter when he says: "The villain was always the most complex and interesting character in Gothic fiction, even when drawn with a clumsy hand" (11). Obviously, he is the antagonist in the story who will do everything possible to achieve his aims. Despite his role in the story, there are several moments where Manfred is not depicted as that evil character. To me, he is more a selfish and obstinate man:

He even felt a disposition towards pardoning one who had been guilty of no crime. Manfred was not one of those savage tyrants who wanton in cruelty unprovoked. The circumstances of his fortune had given an asperity to his temper, which was naturally humane, and his virtues were always ready to operate, when his passions did not obscure his reason. (Walpole 31)

(...)

Ashamed, too, of his inhuman treatment of a Princess who returned every injury with new marks of tenderness and duty, he felt returning love forcing itself into his eyes; but not less ashamed of feeling remorse towards one against whom he was inwardly meditating a yet more bitter outrage ... (Walpole 35)

*b. Conrad*

The son of Manfred and Hippolita and the young brother of Matilda. At the beginning of the novel he is murdered by a giant helmet immediately before his wedding with Isabella. He is a secondary and flat character of course. Conrad does not even say a word. He is just remembered as an event and as the beginning of the supernatural facts in the story.

*c. Hippolita*

The virtuous and kind wife of Manfred and mother of Matilda and Conrad. She is a very religious woman and her only aim in life is to serve and obey her husband. Here we have another flat character defined in one sentence. The true love and the submission of Hippolita towards Manfred are maintained all along the novel as can be seen in the following instances:

Hippolita who questioned her in the most anxious terms on the health of Manfred, and how he bore his loss. (Walpole 22)

(...)

Hippolita, who knew his step, rose with anxious fondness to meet her Lord, whom she had not seen since the death of their son. She would have flown in a transport mixed of joy and grief to his bosom, but he pushed her rudely off and said ... (Walpole 34)

*d. Matilda*

She is the daughter of Manfred and Hippolita. Conrad was the favourite of her parents so she has been always the forgotten one. According to Carol Margaret Davison (75), Matilda plays the role of a female moral revolutionary in *The Castle of Otranto*. Matilda assumes the role of the heroine. She is in love with Theodore but she is convinced of Theodore's love for Isabella. She is determined to refuse to her love in favour of Isabella. She is also a flat character. Her personality is not developed and she does not surprise the reader at all.

*e. Isabella*

She is Conrad's fiancée and, after his death, she becomes the principal objective of Manfred. She is very close to Matilda and has feelings for Theodore as well. Like all the above mentioned principal characters, she is a flat character. The reader does not know very much apart from that she did not love Conrad and that she is absolutely terrified by Manfred.

*f. Theodore*

Undoubtedly he is the hero of this Gothic novel. His description is the classic one of a gothic hero: an orphan, and a brave and handsome man. At the beginning, he is presented as a secondary character but, along the story, he gains prominence. He protects Isabella from Manfred a couple of times, but he is absolutely in love with Matilda. At the beginning of the story he is not very important but, at the end, he finds out that Friar Jerome is his father and he becomes the Lord of Otranto. Despite the "evolution" of his role in the story, to me, Theodore should not be considered as a round character. He is just a hero saving damsels in distress.

*g. Jerome*

He is a good man and a friar in a monastery. The friar tries to convince Manfred to forget his passions and to persuade him from his idea of the divorce. Jerome discovers later that he is Theodore's father, his only aim is to protect his son from Manfred. Jerome is a secondary character and again flat.

*h. Frederic*

Frederic is the unknown father of Isabella. Manfred tries to calm him and keep him by his side with the promise of a marriage with Isabella. One more time, a flat character. We scarcely have any clues or information about him and his personality.

*i. Bianca, Diego and Jazquez*

They are the servants of the castle who play almost insignificant roles.

As we can see, all the characters in the novel both the main and the secondary ones are flat. We only have some little information about them all to understand their

motivations and their aims. The depictions are subtle but poor and, as Forster defends in *Aspects of the Novel*, they do not surprise the reader along the story. They play their set roles and do not evolve in a way that we can consider surprising or unexpected. If we compare the characters at the beginning and at the end of the novel, they are the same people but after several events. It is these events that control the story rather than the characters.

## 2. Fantasy

The next determinant of Forster's aspects in my analysis is fantasy. As I have explained above, fantasy is something that creates a special effect on the reader because it is unexpected. This fantasy aspect implies supernatural facts as Tracy asserts: "In the Gothic World, on the other hand, the supernatural is likely to thrust itself into the foreground and demand immediate attention." (3) This supernatural element creates an atmosphere in which any surprise can occur and the anxieties caused by the unknown are produced. The way to present this fantasy is manifold: "... in some works there are any number of genuinely supernatural occurrences, in others only events which prove after all to have reasonable and natural explanation" (Punter 11). For instance, in Ann Radcliffe's novels, this kind of events is sometimes ultimately given a rational explanation, but in others they are truly supernatural.

Of course, these supernatural events appear in Walpole's novel. Fantasy is very much present along the whole novel and these supernatural events proliferate. According to Markman Ellis, "Walpole's supernatural is peculiarly enigmatic: it is not easy for the reader to imagine or literalise the events described" (32). Despite all these events, they do not provoke fear or frighten the reader: the events are more surprising than terrifying. Some examples can illustrate this idea:

Manfred, distracted between the flight of Isabella, who had now reached the stairs, and his inability to keep his eyes from the picture, which began to move, had however advanced some steps after her, still looking backwards on the portrait, when he saw it quit its pannel, and descend on the floor with a grave and melancholy air. (Walpole 25)

(...)

It was Diego saw it, my lord, it was not I, replied Jaquez, I only heard the noise. Diego had no sooner opened the door, than he cried out and ran back –I ran back too, and said, Is it the ghost? The ghost! No, no, said Diego, and his hear stood on end –it is a giant, I believe; he is all clad in

armour, for I saw his foot and part of his leg, and they are as large as the helmet below in the court. (Walpole 33)

(...)

Manfred's heart misgave him when he beheld the plumage on the miraculous casque shaken in concert with the sounding of the brazen trumpet. (Walpole 56)

(...)

It is done, replied Manfred: Frederic accepts Matilda's hand, and is content to waive his claim, unless I have no male issue — As he spoke those words three drops of blood fell from the nose of Alfonso's statue. (Walpole 89)

(...)

Hippolita! replied a hollow voice: camest thou to this castle to seek Hippolita? —And then the figure, turning slowly round, discovered to Frederic the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl. (Walpole 98)

All these supernatural events happen in Walpole's novel and create an atmosphere characteristic of gothic novels, but, as I have mentioned above, they are not the principal purpose of the novel, they are not the centre of the plot. The novelist uses them to surround his story with mystery but there exist several topics that normally are the protagonists. As other authors, Davison enumerates the principal themes of the Gothic novel:

... the Gothic villain and the persecuted maiden are masterfully incorporated with the novella's three principal elements of power politics, identity and inheritance. This trinity of themes, like the trinity of aforementioned elements, remains strikingly intact over centuries in the Gothic tradition (56)

### **3. Prophecy**

Prophecy is a universal concept, it is something that guides human beings, it could be a powerful love, religion or something that simply leads us towards our future. Religion is the idea that best illustrates prophecy since prophecy is a tone of voice very often related to a faith, which in the case of *The Castle of Otranto* is Christianity. The whole novel is impregnated of this religious idea. Every character is devout and lives life according to God. We can find many instances of this along the novel. For instance:

My Lord, said the holy man, I am no intruder into the secrets of families. My office is to promote peace, to heal divisions, to preach repentance, and teach mankind to curb their headstrong passions. I forgive your Highness's uncharitable apostrophe; I know my duty, and am the minister of a mightier prince than Manfred. Harken to him who speaks through my organs. (46)

Hippolita plays the role of a perfect Christian wife, she is even ready to allow the divorce if it is the wish of her husband. But she changes her mind when Friar Jerome convinces her not to do it. At the beginning of the novel, Isabella took refuge in the church to escape from Manfred.

These are just a few moments in the novel where Christianity is explicitly present, but it is very important all along the story. *The Castle of Otranto* is centrally concerned with Catholic oppression. One more time, Davison explains the real meaning of a Gothic novel, in this case *Otranto*: "This tragedy relating to Christian spiritual inheritance, 'the sins of the fathers,' constitutes the story's purported message" (69). Christianity is juxtaposed to supernatural facts and pagan magic. According to the preface of the first edition, the events are set between the era of the first crusade (1095) and the last one (1423), these were very dark ages of Christianity, in Walpole's words.

In addition to all the religious elements, there is a literal prophecy in *The Castle of Otranto*. This prophecy tells the story of the lordship of Otranto, its future and who the heir of all that Manfred owns will eventually be, this prophecy appears literally in the novel, we can see here the first sentence of it:

They attributed this hasty wedding to the Prince's dread of seeing accomplished an ancient prophecy, which was said to have pronounced, *That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it.* (17)

At first, the inhabitants of Otranto do not grasp the meaning of the prophecy, but as the story progresses, the prophecy makes sense. Manfred and Hippolita are intended to abdicate and leave the kingdom to the new family.

We can find other quotes of the prophecy in the novel, this one is repeated by Theodore in front of Hippolita and her daughter, he tries to understand what is happening and why:

Where'er a casque that suits this sword is found,  
With perils is thy daughter compass'd round:  
*Alfonso's* blood alone can save the maid,  
And quiet a long restless Prince's shade. (76)

This illustrates perfectly the aspect of the prophecy defined by Forster. It is something universal that escapes from the control of men and that is connected to the history of humankind. The protagonists are not able to control what is going to happen, what the prophecy is predicting, but it finally happens. This is that “something universal” Forster refers to.

In this novel, the Catholic religion governs the way of life of the characters. Religious morality is very important to them and all the supernatural events disturb them because, in a way, they mean something against religion and God. As Forster asserts, religion has haunted humanity along history and the setting of this novel is the Middle Ages, the time when religion was central in people's lives.

#### *B. Horror fiction: Dracula*

*Dracula* is a novel written by the Irish author Bram Stoker in 1897. The novel is very well known because of its principal character, Count Dracula. Stoker based his tale on the story of Vlad Dracul (Vlad the Impaler), a Romanian Count who killed thousands of people. The novel represents perfectly the vampire myth but we must take into account that it was not the first vampire story. The sources for Bram Stoker, in addition to the real story and folk legends, was *The Vampyre* by John William Polidori (1816). It is a Horror fiction novel, but sometimes it is also called Gothic horror because, as I have already said, the Horror fiction subgenre is the result of the development of the Gothic novel. Gina Wisker expresses it perfectly in her book *Horror Fiction: An Introduction*:

Horror has its roots in the Gothic, historically both an entertaining form -Gothic romances- and a culturally and psychologically disturbing form -socially engaged; a location for exploring undersides, alternatives, and contradictions; and an outlet for paradoxical forces and disturbances of the safety of the routine, the normal. (7)

Thus, according to Wisker, Horror fiction novels, in this case *Dracula*, are concerned with the problem of degeneration, the essence of the human and the emergence of monstrosity.

I will now try to see if significant differences between the Gothic novel and Horror fiction can be seen through the analysis of *Dracula* by Bram Stoker following Forster's approach as I have done above with *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole.

### **1. The people / characters**

In *Dracula* all the characters, except the very secondary ones, are round. The types of Gothic characters which I have mentioned above appear in the majority of Gothic novels and they have some correspondance in this horror novel. I say "some" because in *Dracula* all the characters are much more developed and they also evolve throughout the story. They are round because, as Forster says about round characters, it is impossible to sum up each principal character in one single sentence.

We also notice another difference regarding Horror Fiction characters; they reflect social changes and problems, such as the change of women's role in society among others. Hurley refers to this change of the conception of people in this age represented in Horror fiction, or, as she names it, modernist Gothic:

Clearly abhumanness *spreads* in the modernist Gothic. It is not just socially problematic or marginalized individuals – feminists, "natives," homosexuals – who are liable to degeneration, devolution, and other bizarre transfigurations. All human subjects, it would seem, are potentially liminal, potentially abhuman.

The modernist Gothic negotiated a cultural moment within which traditional constructs of human identity were breaking down on all fronts. The new models that would replace them were not reassuring ones. (203)



### *a. Count Dracula*

Count Dracula is the villain of this novel, the antagonist. He possesses the melancholy and loneliness of a gothic character but unlike Manfred in *The Castle of Otranto*, he is really malign, he is the reincarnation of evil: a vampire who feeds on human blood. Dracula is a Transilvanian nobleman who lives in the Carpathian Mountains and has supernatural powers such as the control of the weather and superhuman strength among others. Count Dracula is cruel and satanic but at the same time vulnerable. He is intelligent, polite and educated. Stoker describes him as an aristocratic man of a very important family. We know the qualities of the vampire thanks to Jonathan Harker's diary. In it, Jonathan expresses that the Count speaks perfect English just thanks to all the books he has read. Dracula is an intelligent, clever and cultivated man. At the beginning of the book, Dracula is absolutely charming and kind to Jonathan when he comes into his castle: "The light and warmth and the Count's courteous welcome seemed to have dissipated all my doubts and fears" (Stoker 23).

Count Dracula seems a good person although his good manners are just a subterfuge to cheat Jonathan and gain his trust. This is one of the details that prove the development of the character. In the novel, we find also a physical description of the Count that allows us to imagine him in a very detailed way:

His face was a strong aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils. ... His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth ... was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp teeth; these, protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. ... The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor. (24)

Dracula is fully and deeply described in the novel. In this passage we get each detail of his physical appearance given by Jonathan in his diary, but we also know about the behaviour and personality of the Count.

### *b. Jonathan Harker*

Jonathan Harker represents the character of the hero. Harker is a lawyer sent to Transylvania to act as counsellor of Dracula's legal business. At the beginning of the novel, he feels safe and he does not understand why everybody is so much scared of Dracula. Then, he finds out that he is a prisoner in a vampire's castle. Jonathan Harker is a round character too, we can observe parts of the book in which he is absolutely terrified and parts in which he is very brave because he wants to escape from the castle or has to fight to save his fiancée's life. Here we have a couple of quotes that illustrate two opposite moods of Jonathan Harker's that show his complexity:

I am all in a sea of wonders. I doubt. I fear. I think strange things, which I dare not confess to my own soul. God keep me, if only for the sake of those dear to me! (25)

(...)

I must make further examination, or all my efforts would be in vain. It was open, and led through a stone passage to a circular stairway, which went steeply down. I descended, minding carefully where I went for the stairs were dark, being only lit by loopholes in the heavy masonry. (55)

At first, Jonathan is pleased with the Count and his kindness but, when he discovers the truth, he is completely terrified. Sometimes Jonathan is not able to move because of his panic, and, in other scenes, he takes the determination to escape and save his life. Jonathan is absolutely a round character. The reader knows about his feelings and terrors but it is impossible guessing his next step in the novel.

### *c. Mina Murray*

She is the heroine of the novel. She is the loving, passive, helpless fiancée of Jonathan Harker and Lucy Westenra's best friend. She and her friend Lucy are one of the extremes in the representation of women in the novel. She is the true housewife and always supports her husband no matter what. She is the true martyr and her innocence is pointed out all along the novel. Her worries about Jonathan, especially at the beginning, are very recurrent:

August.—Another three days, and no news. This suspense is getting dreadful. If I only knew where to write to or where to go to, I should feel easier. But no one has heard a word of Jonathan since that last letter. I must only pray to God for patience. (82)

Mina is a very kind friend and a faithful wife but is also very clever, intelligent and rational. She has qualities proper of men at that time. Even Dr. Van Helsing says that she has a man's brain and a woman's heart. Despite her intelligence and that she wants to be a part of the team to fight against the Count, she accepts male authority and does not agree with the New Woman's style of life. Mina is of course a round character because of all the information about her personality that we get in the novel.

*d. Lucy Westerna*

Lucy is Mina's beautiful and young best friend. She reminds me of Isabella's character in *The Castle of Otranto*, a pretty and nice damsel in distress. Together with Mina, she represents the pure and virginal part of woman in the novel. She is the first victim of Count Dracula's. But her chastity and purity are compromised when she becomes a vampire. Lucy changes from being the perfect virgin into a femme fatale with a ravenous sexual appetite. These drastic changes are something characteristic in Horror Fiction novels, the appearance of evil and degeneration. A perfect Christian woman is corrupted and drastically turned into a monster. It would never happen in a Gothic novel. Damsels in distress remain always just damsels to be rescued.

*e. Van Helsing*

Doctor Van Helsing is the great enemy of Count Dracula. He is a doctor in medicine, philosophy and metaphysics. He is as old and educated as his enemy; Van Helsing is the counterpart of the Count. He appears in the novel when Seward needs him for help. After several weeks helping Lucy, Van Helsing finds out that something strange and supernatural is happening. Unlike Seward, he knows about forces that can not be destructed by the mere use of medicine and reason

Van Helsing controls both modern and respectable medicine on the one hand and superstitions and folk remedies on the other. He tries to open Seward's eyes to a hidden and dark world needed to save Lucy and to fight against Dracula because of this, Van Helsing shows that he acts as a minister of God destroying the Count. He represents goodness and saves the world from Dracula, i.e., evil. But at the same time, Van

Helsing admires Dracula because he is clever and resourceful and achieves what he wants.

Van Helsing is a round character too, although he does not undergo a great development along the novel. He is the same person at the beginning and at the end, with very strong moral and religious values. Van Helsing's purpose is to vanquish Dracula because he is a killer and a monster. We can not consider him as a flat character because his development is not excessive or surprising. Van Helsing is a scientist of Amsterdam but absolutely faithful in God. He accomplishes his mission thanks to his knowledge about the supernatural world. He plays the role of Seward's friend and master, as well as the leader of the mission as a catholic scientist. Van Helsing is a character who pities Lucy but knows that they have to kill her to save her soul. He shows different faces along the whole novel.

*f. John Seward*

He is a young doctor and the pupil of Doctor Van Helsing. Seward is the administrator of an insane asylum and, throughout the novel, he explains the evolution of a mentally ill person, Reinfield. Later, we discover that his illness is related to Dracula. He proposes Lucy but she is in love with another man. Despite this, he takes care of her all along her "illness" and, after her death, he fights against the Count with the aid of his friends. Thanks to his diary, we know about his feelings, about his broken heart because of Lucy and about his worries because of the disease of the young woman. Seward's change has to do with the evolution from scepticism into belief. He is a pure scientist and finally he must accept that his impossible love has been turned into a vampire. Here we have his reflexion about it: "I had myself been apprenticed by my former visits to this watching horror, and yet I, who had up to an hour ago repudiated the proofs, felt my heart sink within me" (224). He passes from one state to another, from reason to belief in a moment. Thanks to examples like this, we can find in the novel each detail of his evolution, we know all his feelings and terrors.

*g. Arthur Holmwood*

Arthur is Lucy Westenra's fiancé, a friend of Seward and Morris, and Lord Godalming's son. He helps her girlfriend with the blood transfusions and afterwards in the haunt of Count Dracula. Holmwood is a flat character; although he appears very often in the novel, he has not a very developed personality and could be summarised in one sentence: He is the fiancé of Lucy and suffers because of her death but finally helps to vanquish Count Dracula.

#### *h. Reinfield*

He is the insane man custodied by Dr Seward. Reinfield adores Count Dracula. He is a secondary and a flat character too because we have barely any details about him. We cannot consider him as a round character with the information provided in the novel.

#### *i. Quincey Morris*

Quincey Morris is the third suitor of Lucy Westenra. Finally he sacrifices himself to save the world from Dracula. Morris is also a flat character because of the same reason as Reinfield. Stoker provides little information about this character.

#### *j. The brides of Dracula*

They embody evil; they are witches and seductresses at the same time. The brides of Dracula are on the far end of Lucy and Mina. They stand for everything sexual and dangerous and are the other representation of women in Bram Stoker's novel. They are flat characters too. They represent the sin but they do not have a personality, we only know about their desire of blood.

#### *k. Ms Westerna*

She is Lucy's mother. She dies of a shock. She is a secondary and flat character, the only information that Stoker gives about her is her relationship with Lucy and her worries about her daughter's disease.

As Forsters says, all complex novels need flat and round characters to be well constructed. The round characters in *Dracula* are very well developed and we know

their feelings, their motivations and their evolution. Flat characters are necessary to complete the story.

## 2. Fantasy

It is easily noticeable that in most Horror novels the fantasy aspect mentioned by Forster occurs. In *Dracula*, as in many Horror novels, supernatural facts become a part of reality. Gina Wisker asserts this union of fantasy and reality:

Horror fiction tends to gain its effects from its imaginative strategies - pace, characterization, narrative, settings, perspectives, and so on, and both its tone and appeal lie along an axis from the very realistic to the supernatural, fantastic and weird. (5)

This mixture between the real and the supernatural worlds is present in Stoker's novel. The next quote shows how the story of Transylvania is told by a vampire:

In the old days there were stirring times, when the Austrian and the Hungarian came up in hordes, and the patriots went out to meet them, men and women, the aged and the children too, and waited their coming on the rocks above the passes, that they might sweep destruction on them with their artificial avalanches (28)

The writers of Horror fiction create these stories in a very convincing way. In these novels there is an atmosphere in which almost anything may happen and suddenly surprise or frighten the reader.

The authors of early Horror fiction tend to create a link between nineteenth-century science and supernatural facts and superstition, as Van Helsing illustrates in the novel. Van Helsing is a renowned scientist from Holland who wants to vanquish Count Dracula thanks to all his knowledge about both science and the supernatural world. The fight against a vampire and all the events related to it are the fantasy, the main part of the plot in *Dracula* since the main character is a vampire who feeds on human blood. Count Dracula can crawl down the castle's wall, control the wolves, and the mirrors cannot reflect his image. Dracula is an immortal creature who wants to take control of the universe thanks to his power over human minds, he can control Lucy and make her

walk at night to meet him. We can see these supernatural facts along the whole novel. The supernatural world is more than present in *Dracula*, I could say that it is the main point of the novel. And to frighten the reader through these events is its main purpose.

### **3. Prophecy**

The transcendent meaning of this aspect, as Forster explains it, is also very much present in the novel. The same as *The Castle of Otranto*, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker is impregnated with a religious sense, but it is more in the way of a dichotomy between good and evil, God and the devil.

In this novel, Christian elements and symbolism are very much present. This symbolism is very powerful and somehow represents the Christian promise of salvation. In different parts of the story, Jonathan and Van Helsing use crucifixes to protect themselves and fight against the Count. Van Helsing has the religious mission to save the world from Dracula and refers to the five men as “ministers of God’s own wish” (340). It also represents the inversion of Christianity: “the resurrection of the body, but disunited from soul” (Punter 261).

Dracula is a satanic figure who represents sin, even his physical description reminds us of the devil: “He is the monstrous translation of God, whose desire is to make all the characters his children of the night” (Killeen 86). Dracula comes from Transylvania, the border between the Christian and the pagan worlds; he has the features of a pagan God, of a devil who wants to conquer the world. Everything that concerns him is synonymous with damnation and sin. The three brides of Dracula are depicted as sexual predators, they are the example of what a woman of that age should never become. Because of this, they must be destroyed.

Thus, Forster’s element of prophecy can be instrumental for an understanding of the meaning of the novel and its symbolism.

## V. A comparison

After these two analyses, we can appreciate the obvious differences regarding these three aspects: the characters, fantasy and prophecy.

Regarding the characters, both novels are quite different. In *The Castle of Otranto*, the characters are flat and barely developed; we have just a few details about them, necessary to understand the novel, whereas in *Dracula* most of them are round, well developed and have elaborate personalities. They have changing feelings and thoughts and they surprise the reader along the whole novel.

In the Gothic novel, we can distinguish recurrent stereotypes, whereas in the Horror novel, we perceive the breaking of these stereotypes. The vision of the hero is changed in *Dracula*. The hero in the Gothic novel is a young and brave man determined to save the damsel in distress who, of course, needs the help of a man. In Stoker's novel, Jonathan Harker is absolutely scared of Count Dracula and he is attacked by the latter's three brides. The role of women is also changed in Horror fiction novels. In *The Castle of Otranto*, women are the representation of weakness, purity and chastity. In *Dracula* we have both sides of the coin, Mina and Lucy, who are pure and follow the Christian moral codes, and the vampire women, who represent sin and forbidden sexuality. Stoker uses these vampire women as a symbol of the change of the role of women at that time, and to show how this change threatens the established order. In the Gothic novel, women are always represented as pure creatures but in the Horror fiction novel, they begin to be related to sex and sin.

In Gothic novels sometimes there are no supernatural events but this is not the case of *The Castle of Otranto*. These supernatural events create the atmosphere of the novel, they are just signs of the existence of a supernatural world. As I have said before, the central plot of the novel does not deal with this fantasy aspect, the plot is the destiny of the lordship of Otranto and who will be the real heir. In *Dracula* this supernatural world is perfectly developed and controlled by a monster, an immortal vampire who wants to take control of the world. The central plot is the story of this supernatural



creature and how the characters try to fight against supernatural forces and vanquish him.

The next and last analysed aspect is prophecy. It is related to religion in both works, in particular, to Christianity. In the Gothic one, Christianity is showed as the only true way of life, the only way to achieve happiness and salvation. This appears also in the Horror novel, but there is another way to live, the way of sin and desire, the way of eternal life represented by Count Dracula. Even women are tempted by sin in this novel and they succumb to it. Morality and religion are still the correct choice but it is not so clear and obvious as in *The Castle of Otranto*. This is how Stoker represents that Christianity and its way of life could be in serious danger.

## **VI. Conclusions**

The novel has undergone an evolution since its emergence until nowadays. The changes in literature are subtle and slow and need a long time to gradually evolve. I have stated at the beginning of this paper that both trends are closely related but, after the analysis and the comparison, I think it is clear that there are more differences than similarities between *The Castle of Otranto* and *Dracula*.

The Gothic novel is the base where the Horror novel rests, it is the starting point. The Gothic has been used as a means for Horror fiction to explore hidden people's hidden fears and desires. Undoubtedly the Gothic was the antecedent of Horror and it helped to create the Horror literature of the nineteenth century. Horror literature uses Gothic settings and elements in order to create the atmosphere but, unlike Gothic fiction, the main aim of Horror is to scare the reader. Horror is a more violent and elaborate version of Gothic.

In this paper, I have referred to the Horror fiction of the nineteenth century, but this is a trend that is still in a developing process.

After the analysis and the comparison, I am able to conclude that the Gothic novel and Horror fiction as shown in these two works have great differences but they can not be completely separated. Their explicit differences and their similarities have been exposed in order to allow us to connect both trends in a proper way.

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