

# O GÓTICO EM LITERATURA, ARTES, MÍDIA

ENSAIOS EM INGLÊS E PORTUGUÊS



DANIEL SERRAVALLE DE SÁ

Organização

RAFAEL COPETTI  
-EDITOR-





**O Gótico em  
Literatura, Artes, Mídia**

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# POR UMA CARTOGRAFIA DO GÓTICO: TEORIA, CRÍTICA, PRÁTICA

DANIEL SERRAVALLE DE SÁ<sup>1</sup>

O presente volume retoma alguns dos principais trabalhos apresentados nos Simpósios de Pós-Graduação dedicados à temática do gótico, uma série de cinco eventos realizados entre 2011 e 2018, que tiveram origem na disciplina *Tópicos Especiais em Interseções Teórico-Culturais*, oferecida pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês (PPGI), da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC). Os simpósios se destinaram à divulgação e troca de experiências sobre as diversas manifestações do gótico na literatura, no cinema e em outros meios de expressão artística, como as artes plásticas, os quadrinhos e os videogames. Idealizados com a proposta de reunir pessoas interessadas no assunto, as edições do evento<sup>2</sup> abordaram manifestações do gótico em diferentes períodos históricos e contextos culturais e, com o passar dos anos, os “simpósios góticos” se consolidaram como um fórum para debates e reflexões sobre o tema.

Inicialmente, a palavra gótico era apenas um adjetivo relacionado aos Godos, uma tribo de cultura germânica que ajudou a derrubar o Império Romano. Hoje, o gótico já se estabeleceu como substantivo e, na língua inglesa, por vezes é até usado como verbo — *to gothicize* — para descrever uma guinada lúgubre sobre determinados assuntos — é o que acontece com a personagem Catherine Morland ao projetar sobre a abadia de Northanger seu imaginário mais terrível e assustador. Durante os simpósios, a acepção de gótico que mais nos interessou debater foi a de matriz artística-cultural, uma forma de expressão que tem suas origens na arquitetura e na pintura medieval, que ressurge na literatura e continua reaparecendo nas novas mídias e na arte contemporânea, tornando-se porta-voz das ansiedades, dos medos e das sombras que são inerentes à humanidade.

Ter um olhar gótico sobre o mundo é se interessar pelo desconhecido e misterioso, por aquilo que não quer se revelar ou que não se deixa ver. Estudar o

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Adjunto no Departamento de Língua e Literaturas Estrangeiras na Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.

<sup>2</sup> *The Gothic in Literature and Film: what is Gothic?* (2011), O gênero de terror em perspectivas teóricas (2015), O gótico através dos séculos (2016), Gótico: 250 anos de horror, excesso e ruínas (2017), *Global Gothic*: mapeando expressões góticas pelo mundo (2018).

gótico implica em observar os limites, as transgressões e as ameaças às convenções que definem o ser humano e o mundo que criou para si. Desejos inconfessáveis, dissimulações da personalidade, obsessões, neuroses, memórias reprimidas, psicogênias individuais e coletivas, falhas na compreensão da realidade ou realidades além da compreensão, são apenas alguns exemplos dos espectros que nos assombram. Muitas vezes a ficção gótica, seja ambientada no presente, passado ou futuro, contém uma alegorização dos significados, ou seja, são narrativas que representam de forma indireta uma coisa ou uma ideia sob a aparência de outra, substituindo a significação habitual por comparação subentendida.

Narrativas góticas, seja nas páginas ou nas telas, são testemunhos inextricáveis não apenas do período em que foram produzidas, mas, também, da época em que estão sendo lidas. Por exemplo, em 1818, *Frankenstein* atualizou o mito de Prometeu, alertando sobre a relação entre húbriis e novas tecnologias, que naquele momento era a eletricidade. Atualmente seria possível ler o livro à luz das pesquisas do projeto genoma, das experiências com clonagem, das modificações corporais e, como demonstra Susan Stryker (1994), do *transgenderism* e seus processos de transição. Em 1897, o *Drácula* vitoriano pode ter ecoado medos sobre miscigenação racial e “colonização reversa”, para usar uma expressão de Stephen Arata (1990). Hoje, pode-se pensar sobre a centralidade do sangue no romance em termos de infecção e contágio, inclusive a contaminação do suprimento de água potável da Terra, uma possível chave de leitura para o filme *Amantes eternos* (Jim Jarmusch, 2013).

No tempo presente, o gótico surge para falar sobre inquietações que dizem respeito ao fim da humanidade como a conhecemos, o nosso percurso para o pós-humano ou talvez para a extinção. O que se observa na produção contemporânea são horrores que emergem na forma de distopias totalitárias, violência urbana, colapsos ambientais, epidemias globais, catástrofes climáticas, conspirações secretas e outras ansiedades que habitam o nosso cotidiano, no qual terror e horror são condições diárias frente à iminência de um apocalipse que se acerca. Nesse sentido, a representação gótica foi (e ainda é) a materialização do nosso relacionamento apreensivo com o mundo. Em 1974, no posfácio da antologia *Fireworks: nine profane pieces*, Angela Carter afirma que “vivemos em tempos góticos”.<sup>3</sup> Quarenta e cinco anos depois, muita (e pouca) coisa mudou, mas, a constatação da onipresença do gótico nas matrizes da cultura gerou respostas no contexto acadêmico. À medida que artistas adaptam o gótico a novas situações, espaços e contextos temporais, surgem também novas abordagens críticas para

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<sup>3</sup> “We live in Gothic times.” (CARTER, 1974, p. 122).

a análise desse modo discursivo<sup>4</sup> encontrado em tantos países e culturas. Se no século XXI parece que tudo (e nada) ainda é gótico, como entender o significado do termo?

De forma que, o propósito deste livro é fornecer aos leitores recursos para entender como o gótico é estudado a partir de uma perspectiva acadêmica contemporânea. Os ensaios que compõem o volume são estudos de caso que permitem compreender melhor o desenvolvimento da teoria, da crítica e das práticas acadêmicas que aconteceram nos últimos anos em relação aos estudos sobre o gótico. Apesar da pluralidade de temas, contextos e formatos, o debate sobre o gótico neste livro é coeso e muitas vezes autorreferencial, de forma que os diferentes capítulos se conectam. As explicações e informações contidas nos diferentes ensaios são complementares e cumulativas, fornecendo elementos para entender as origens, a popularização e as circunstâncias por trás da persistência do gótico através dos tempos. Cada ensaio pode ser lido de modo individual, mas, é no conjunto, no diálogo entre os diferentes textos que um sentido mais amplo sobre o gótico se constrói, se interliga e se expande. O livro apresenta pesquisas que são informadas pela crítica anglo-americana, mas que são pensadas, aclimatadas, adaptadas e desenvolvidas no Brasil. O gótico já foi considerado um gênero exclusivamente anglófono, todavia, mais recentemente, críticos em todo o mundo começaram a localizar suas próprias tradições culturais de terror sobrenatural, horror, mistério e melodrama (SÁ, 2010; EDWARDS; VASCONCELOS, 2016; ORDIZ; VISCAÍNO, 2018).

Por uma nova cartografia do gótico, pesquisadores de diferentes lugares passaram a problematizar com as tradicionais conotações anglo-americanas, identificando novas direções e contextos culturais de produção. Além disso, a criação de instituições como a International Gothic Association (IGA), que promove conferências bianuais, o projeto *Global Gothic*, sediado na University of Stirling (Escócia), o Laboratório Interdisciplinar de Estudos do Gótico (LIEG/UFTM) e o Grupo de Pesquisa do CNPq Estudos do Gótico, que reúne pesquisadores de diferentes universidades do Brasil, tem contribuído significativamente para o mapeamento das manifestações góticas ao redor do mundo. Como resultado, a definição foi ampliada e cada vez mais tem havido um entendimento crescente de um gótico menos circunscrito, cada vez mais reconhecido como um modo discursivo presente em diversos países e tradições culturais.

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<sup>4</sup> Forma de expressão que não está necessariamente atrelada a um gênero literário e que envolve narração, descrição, exposição e argumentação.

## O gótico na historiografia literária

Na história da crítica literária houve uma certa tendência de preterir o gótico em detrimento do Romantismo. Um equívoco, pois, em essência, o Romantismo promove uma especialização de determinados temas, imagens literárias, convenções narrativas e características discursivas preexistentes nos textos góticos. De acordo com antigos manuais de literatura, os primeiros romances góticos, com seus cenários pseudomedievais, nada mais seriam para o leitor moderno do que uma mera curiosidade. Tal posicionamento da crítica de outrora levou a uma marginalização da ficção gótica. Entretanto, a historiografia da crítica literária é muito mais diversificada e interessante do que os julgamentos histórico-literários, e os entendimentos mudam com o passar do tempo. Em outras palavras, a ficção gótica não é um gênero velho e empoeirado, tampouco a leitura que se faz desses textos é algo estanque. Na busca de significados sobre o que é gótico, adentra-se uma arena aberta para debates sobre questões de linguagem, cultura e relações de poder em contextos sociais e históricos. Tanto a forma literária quanto as reflexões críticas sobre o gótico são permeadas por vozes dissidentes que buscam explicar algo sobre esse modo discursivo que há séculos resiste às mudanças socioculturais e transições políticas.

Embora seja um conceito bem estabelecido, principalmente na área das Literaturas de Língua Inglesa, não há um consenso sobre o seu significado. Basta ler o que diz a crítica especializada para confirmar que o sentido do gótico é múltiplo e fluido: Lenora Ledwon explica que “parte da dificuldade reside no fato de que, em vez de se falar do ‘gótico’ enquanto uma categoria monolítica, é mais apropriado reconhecer que existem muitos *góticos*”; David Punter e Glennis Byron afirmam que o gótico é “um conjunto de valores irreconciliáveis e contraditórios, tanto em termos estéticos quanto políticos”; Fred Botting argumenta que “a busca do gótico [...] é um esforço crítico vão.”<sup>5</sup> A ideia aqui é que o gótico não opera sob um único paradigma, trata-se de um modo flexível que se adapta a diversas formas culturais e dinâmicas ideológicas oriundas de muitas vertentes. Indeterminação, ambivalência e multiplicidade são conceitos centrais ao gótico já que nem em obras ficcionais e criativas nem nos estudos críticos e teóricos o gótico segue um padrão. Tanto as obras de ficção quanto as obras críticas servem apenas para

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<sup>5</sup> “part of the difficulty lies in the fact that, rather than speaking of one monolithic category of ‘Gothic’, it is more appropriate to recognise there are many *Gothics*” (LEDWON, 1993, p. 261); “a set of irreconcilable and contradictory values both in aesthetic and political terms” (PUNTER; BYRON, 2004, p. 4); “the search for *the Gothic* [...] is a vain critical endeavor” (BOTTING, 2001, p. 1).

expandir e reinventar os parâmetros estilísticos e discursivos, de forma a produzir uma multiplicidade de *góticos*.

Pode-se dizer que o estudo acadêmico do gótico começa no início do século XX, com a publicação de obras seminais como *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917), de Dorothy Scarborough; *The Tale of Terror* (1921), de Edith Birkhead; *The Haunted Castle* (1927), de Eino Railo; *The Romantic Agony* (1933), de Mario Praz; *The Gothic Quest* (1938), de Montague Summers; *The Gothic Flame* (1957), de Devendra Varma, entre outros estudos influentes que ajudaram a deslocar os textos de ficção gótica dos séculos XVIII e XIX de uma posição periférica para um lugar mais próximo do cânone literário. No final dos anos 1960, pesquisadores e estudiosos do Romantismo desempenharam um papel importante no estabelecimento dos *Gothic Studies*, ajudando no que se tornaria no futuro um campo distinto do conhecimento. O famoso intercâmbio entre Robert Hume e Robert Platzner, por meio da série de textos “*Gothic versus Romantic*” (1969-1971), talvez seja o debate mais representativo desse período, tendo contribuído significativamente para aumentar o interesse sobre a ficção gótica e resultado em uma série de outras pesquisas na área.

Mais recentemente, outros desenvolvimentos críticos e teóricos, que incluem as teorias feministas, pós-estruturalistas, psicanalíticas, o novo historicismo e os estudos culturais, agregaram uma série de argumentos e foram muito importantes na difusão do gótico como conceito em construção, dando início a um processo de internacionalização do termo que pode ser observado a partir da década de 1980. *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1980), de Eve K. Sedgwick; *The Literature of Terror* (1980), de David Punter; *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (1981), de Rosemary Jackson; *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (1988), de Victor Sage, juntamente com tantas outras importantes obras publicadas nas décadas de 1990 e 2000, consolidaram os *Gothic Studies* como um campo de discussão acadêmica e debate intelectual.

A globalização do gótico segue se expandindo no século XXI como uma continuação da vertente anglo-americana e como uma transformação dessa tradição. Os efeitos da globalização que levam a literatura, as artes e as mídias ao redor do mundo produzem novas formas góticas e, ao mesmo tempo, revelam a presença do gótico em itens culturais do passado, que até então não eram lidos dessa maneira. Enquanto uma ramificação linguística e cultural da tradição anglo-americana, há excelentes estudos sobre o gótico na Escócia, na Índia, no Canadá, na Austrália, entre outros países, que investigam as suas histórias nacionais à luz dos seus passados coloniais. Todavia, no que diz respeito às

transformações do modo gótico, a Ásia e a América Latina se destacam tanto em termos de produção acadêmica e artística quanto em termos de inovação crítica.

Dentre algumas das pesquisas dessa nova e crescente dinâmica nacional e intercultural cita-se: *Asian Gothic: essays on literature, film and anime* (2008), editado por Andrew Hock Soon Ng; “La cosa maldita: Leopoldo Lugones y el Gótico Imperial” (2009), artigo de Juan Pablo Dabove, publicado na *Revista Iberoamericana*; *Gótico Tropical: o sublime e o demoníaco em O guarani* (2010), de Daniel Serravalle de Sá; “Gothic: New Directions” (2012), edição especial do periódico *Ilha do Desterro*, organizado por Daniel Serravalle de Sá e Anelise R. Corseuil; “Exploring Gothic and/in Latin America” (2014), introdução de Enrique Ajuria Ibarra para o periódico *Studies in Gothic Fiction*; *Tropical Gothic in Literature and Culture: the Americas* (2016), organizado por Justin D. Edwards e Sandra Guardini Vasconcelos; *Spanish Gothic* (2017), de Xavier Aldana Reyes; *As nuances do Gótico: do setecentos à atualidade* (2017), organizado por Júlio França e Luciana Colluci; *Selva de fantasmas: el gótico en la literatura y el cine latino-americanos* (2017), de Gabriel Eljaiek-Rodríguez; *Estudos do Gótico* (2017), organizado por Alexander Meireles da Silva, Fernando Monteiro de Barros, Júlio França e Luciana Colucci; “East Asian Gothic: a definition” (2017), artigo de Colette Balmain; *Latin American Gothic in Literature and Culture: transposition, hybridization, tropicalization* (2018), organizado por Inés Ordiz e Sandra Casanova Viscaíno; *Vertigo: vertentes do Gótico no Cinema* (2018), organizado por Claudio Zanini e Cido Rossi; *B-Movie Gothic: International Perspectives*, organizado por Justin D. Edwards e Johan Höglund; “Tropical Gothic” (2019), edição especial do *eTropic Journal*, organizado por Anita Lundberg, Katarzyna Ancuta e Agnieszka Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska; *Doubles and Hybrids in Latin American Gothic* (2019), organizado por Antonio Alcala Gonzalez e Ilse Marie Bussing López.

Hoje, pesquisadores podem olhar para trás e enxergar um conjunto de obras acadêmicas, uma vasta fortuna crítica que se desenvolveu substancialmente nos últimos cem anos para tornar-se um fenômeno internacional. Atualmente, os estudos sobre gótico se tornaram uma área de estudos de pleno direito, com bibliografia própria, cursos de graduação e de pós-graduação, associações acadêmicas e periódicos especializados. Por uma visão além da academia, os estudos góticos também abrangem grupos organizados em fóruns de discussão, grupos em redes sociais, sites temáticos, fanzines e outros tipos de publicações populares em diversos meios de comunicação. Há, inclusive, toda uma estética associada a vídeo, moda, música, arte corporal e comportamento alternativo que emprega o gótico na sua estrutura de composição, promovendo novos entendimentos sobre o termo e consolidando o tópico no mapa mundial.



## O gótico como desafio epistemológico: uma proposta interpretativa

Ainda que nenhuma explicação inequívoca sobre o que é o gótico esteja disponível, pois isso seria desnecessariamente limitante, e sem rejeitar as diferentes acepções do termo, para fins de organização de uma disciplina de pós-graduação, foi preciso estabelecer uma “matriz gótica”, uma pedra-de-toque que pudesse ancorar um conceito tão polissêmico para os estudantes. Uma das interpretações mais convincentes sobre a natureza do gótico remete à crise epistemológica que ocorreu na Europa, na segunda metade do século XVIII.

Eventos históricos como o terremoto de Lisboa (1755) e as erupções do Vesúvio no século XVIII (1707, 1737, 1760, 1767, 1779, 1794) colocaram em evidência o poder da Natureza e favoreceram o surgimento de uma disposição filosófica mais sombria e Sublime. Se na Idade Média a natureza era vista como uma entidade divina e benevolente (as catedrais góticas representam e louvam o mundo natural), no século XVIII a natureza passa a simbolizar uma força indomável e onipotente, capaz de desencadear destruição e morte. Acompanhando essa mudança de paradigma interpretativo, a representação da Natureza e do mundo natural na literatura, na pintura e nas artes, de modo geral, ganha tons mais malignos.

A desconfiança e o medo do Mal irrompem no imaginário coletivo europeu, dando origem à criação de romances cujos enredos oscilavam entre a realidade verificável e a aceitação de um mundo sobrenatural e perverso. Essas narrativas contêm elementos que desafiaram a racionalidade neoclássica e questionaram o projeto Iluminista ao representar uma disposição existencial mais funesta, expondo a natureza caótica do mundo e a contingência da vida. A ascensão desse tipo de ficção está profundamente associada a suspeitas em relação aos mitos do progresso, ao racionalismo exacerbado, às apreensões relacionadas aos desenvolvimentos tecnológicos emergentes, às mudanças profundas nos modos de vida, derivadas do nascimento do liberalismo econômico. Não é por acaso que tais romances retornam à Idade Média, um tempo no qual a organização social e as formas do viver pareciam mais estáveis. Entretanto, também não há alento no passado feudal, um período no qual as doenças infestavam os campos e as cidades, os aristocratas eram tirânicos, os clérigos maléficos e as crueldades mais hediondas imperavam. O dilema entre um passado monárquico, tradicional e glorioso (mas ao mesmo tempo opressivo e violento) e um futuro democrático, liberal e progressista (mas também desumano e incerto) é central para entender essa produção ficcional oitocentista.

Na Inglaterra tais romances ficaram conhecidos como góticos, na Alemanha *schauerroman* e na França *roman noir*. De muitas maneiras, são textos que trabalham com o mesmo material histórico, mas que fazem diferentes interpretações das situações, de modo que querer agrupar romances tão heterogêneos sob nomenclaturas nacionais e monolíticas só se justifica como artifício didático. O argumento aqui é que, apesar das origens distintas, os cenários representados na literatura desse período podem ser unificados por meio de um modo discursivo que diz respeito às crises intelectuais daquele século, as quais são representadas em situações em que os personagens (e os leitores) vivem um impasse entre aquilo que sabem e aquilo que pensam saber. Em oposição às práticas codificadas do estudo de gênero textual, a noção de gótico que orientou as leituras durante a disciplina foi buscar na epistemologia instrumentos para a elaboração de uma metodologia crítica, com o objetivo de teorizar sobre as representações literárias que se manifestam na forma de devaneios, alucinações, sonhos, visões, delírios e outros equívocos ligados à (in)compreensão da realidade. Mais precisamente, a proposta interpretativa que guiou as leituras focou na observação de falhas na matriz racional que constitui a intelectualidade humana e como tais momentos se materializam em textos literários, filmes, videogames e outras mídias narrativas.

Dito de outra forma, o conceito de gótico ao qual sempre retornamos, sem negar nenhum outro, foi o de desafio epistemológico, ou seja, priorizamos o estudo de momentos em que os personagens sentem dificuldade de ajustar suas percepções sensoriais às estruturas racionais que sustentam sua compreensão de mundo. Muitas vezes, esses deslumbramentos vividos pelos personagens contagiam o próprio leitor, que experimenta um instante de estranhamento, assombro ou fissura da razão. Do ponto de vista da construção textual, tais momentos de desorientação são alcançados por meio de efeitos retóricos, mecanismos narrativos, artifícios linguísticos e temáticos (que chamamos aqui de modos discursivos), os quais visam desestabilizar a segurança emocional e intelectual dos leitores. Victor Sage e Allan Lloyd-Smith afirmam que tal tipo de representação é “central em ficções modernas em tela ou em romances, não é um código, mas um tipo de vão entre os códigos, um ponto no qual a própria representação parece falhar, deslocar-se ou espalhar-se”.<sup>6</sup> O gótico seria então uma lacuna, um momento anárquico de irracionalidade, no qual a mente escapa à linguagem da representação e foge por entre as brechas textuais. Às vezes o leitor precisa voltar alguns parágrafos no texto para certificar-se de que o fato narrado

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<sup>6</sup> “[...] central to modern fictions of screen and novel, is not one code but a kind of gap between codes, a point at which representation itself appears to fail, displace or diffuse itself”. (SAGE; LLOYD-SMITH, 1996, p. 2).

realmente foi compreendido, vivenciando uma crise de interpretação ou desafio epistemológico. Mesmo que a ordem narrativa seja imediatamente restabelecida por meio de explicação autoral, subjugando o instante de deslumbramento e trazendo o leitor de volta à lucidez, o momento de devaneio não se torna menos potente por causa disso, pois a explicação racional dos fatos ocorridos não anula a experiência de desorientação. Nesse sentido, essa experiência “gótica” de desorientação não é oposta ao gênero Realismo e sim ao discurso realístico, ou seja, desafia aquilo que há de lógico, racional e coerente na intelectualidade humana, podendo ocorrer em diferentes tipos de mídia e gêneros narrativos.

Ainda que as condições para que o desafio epistemológico advenha do texto, uma das prerrogativas da leitura epistemológica é o foco no leitor, e não apenas na estrutura textual, de forma que, algumas distinções se fazem necessárias. As diferenças entre epistemologia e cognição, bem como seus pontos tangenciais (a questão do leitor), já foram debatidas pelo filósofo Alvin Goldman (1986), que questionou as demarcações entre as disciplinas e balizou as áreas de atuação de cada especialidade. A reflexão sobre a natureza do nosso conhecimento dá origem a uma série de problemas desconcertantes que constituem o tema da epistemologia ou teoria do conhecimento, a qual tem por base a distinção platoniana entre o mundo cognoscível e o incognoscível. Também faz parte do escopo da epistemologia pensar em questões sobre a origem e os limites do conhecimento — a questão das falhas é particularmente relevante para se pensar o gótico. Adiante, o trabalho de Noël Carroll (1990) na área da filosofia cognitiva aplicada à literatura de terror é iluminador no concernente à identificação de representações estéticas do sobrenatural e seus efeitos. Carroll discute o papel de narrativas de terror sobrenatural como construções textuais voltadas para produzir reações emocionais, investigando as reações cognitivas geradas por esse tipo de narrativa. Algumas das perguntas que ele se propõe a responder são: por que nos assustamos com seres sobrenaturais que sabemos que não existem? Por que apreciamos narrativas que são feitas para nos causar medo? Entretanto, o desafio epistemológico que se quer destacar nos textos góticos não é uma expressão cognitiva nem psicológica da mente, mas, em outro nível, é o processo de colapso da racionalidade, que leva a situações de indeterminação e crise. Em outras palavras, o problema da leitura cognitiva do texto (as emoções e o inconsciente) não ilumina questões específicas sobre o colapso da linguagem representacional, sobre a incapacidade de colocar em forma de texto aquilo que é a matéria-prima dos sonhos, das alucinações e de outros devaneios ligados às falhas na compreensão da realidade ou às realidades além da compreensão. O desafio epistemológico do qual falamos aqui é o próprio *cogito* de Descartes em crise.

Sem entrar muito nos debates filosóficos e nos conceitos sobre a natureza da epistemologia, aproximando-se mais da perspectiva literária, estudar o gótico como um desafio da razão, provou ser uma prática de ensino particularmente funcional para apresentar aos estudantes de pós-graduação um argumento didático e útil na abordagem de uma gama de textos distintos. O gótico costuma envolver um tipo de narração repleta de experiências difusas e momentos de irracionalidade que têm como base a noção de verdade como algo a ser descoberto. Não por acaso, H.P. Lovecraft afirma que, por serem histórias de mistérios e enigmas, as narrativas góticas são precursoras diretas das narrativas de detetive. Por esse viés, a função da ficção gótica e das suas expressões afins é demonstrar que os nossos mapas da realidade são incompletos, revelando falhas no processo de pensamento, os quais levam a equívocos. Ao oferecer um modelo de representação baseado em experiências difusas, o gótico seria então uma provocação epistemológica para a matriz racional que constitui a linguagem e o pensamento humano.

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Boas leituras!

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# GOthic PSYCHOLOGY

## IN *HEART OF DARKNESS* AND *APOCALYPSE NOW*

ALEXANDER MARTIN GROSS<sup>1</sup>

*Horror has a face, and you must make a friend of horror. Horror and moral terror are your friends. If they are not, then they are enemies to be feared. They are truly enemies. — Col. Kurtz.*

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* was first serialised in 1899 before its publication in novel form three years later. It came at the apogee of the British Empire, at the end of a century that had seen unprecedented industrial development and territorial expansion. As such it is a narrative that is invested with colonial ideologies, moral concerns and *fin-de-siècle* anxieties, and which is identified by Patrick Brantlinger (2009) as an exemplar of “Imperial Gothic” literature. Conrad's second narrator Marlow, speaking within a frame narrative, recounts his journey up the Congo river in search of an infamous ivory trader named Kurtz, who has assumed exploitative control over the indigenous population. Marlow's exposure to horrors leads him to question his personal values as well as those of his society. As a work noted for its stylistic merits and with a long-held place in the Western literary canon, *Heart of Darkness* has been at the centre of an intense critical debate for many years. Postcolonial criticism has helped to reveal the reiterative subjugation of Africa and its people within *Heart of Darkness*, with criticism of Conrad's personal attitudes and their representation in the novel perhaps best exemplified by the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe and his 1977 essay “An Image of Africa,” which brands the naturalised British author “a bloody racist.” (p. 788).

Yet *Heart of Darkness* is not merely a cautionary tale about the dangers of imperialism or the perceived threat of savagery in an uncivilised world; it is also a journey into the self, an examination of the contradictions that plague the human psyche. It is profoundly psychological, an enigmatic narrative that is

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open to various forms of interpretation beyond perspectives of race and nation. Indeed, Conrad himself stressed that his work should be inconclusive and open to interpretation: “a work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion. And this for the reason that the nearer it approaches art, the more it acquires a symbolic character.” (1927, p. 204-205). An examination of the novel's psychological subtext and its place, according to Jennifer Lipka, as “a prime example of the highest of British Gothic fiction” (2008, p. 26) is offered here in order to highlight the enduring value of Conrad's vision.

The universality of Conrad's story is corroborated by the 1979 film *Apocalypse Now*, the magnum opus of acclaimed director Francis Ford Coppola. The film re-imagines Conrad's basic plot in the context of the Vietnam War. Captain Willard narrates the story of his journey up the fictional Nung river under orders to assassinate Colonel Kurtz, a decorated officer who has reputedly gone insane and is acting outside his remit. Willard suffers psychologically as he nears the climactic meeting with Kurtz. The numerous narratological parallels between the film and the novel amidst vastly different settings highlight the potential for *Heart of Darkness* to transcend some of the fraught issues of race and nation that commonly form the focus of postcolonial criticism. The ending of the film in particular represents the director's personal vision of a journey into the self, as Coppola adapted John Milius's screenplay to adhere more closely to *Heart of Darkness* and its thematic concerns. As with Willard in *Apocalypse Now*, Marlow's psychological development over the course of his journey reveals much about a work that is concerned with the contradictions found within the human psyche. In her reading of *Heart of Darkness* as a Gothic novel, Lipka refers to the same internalised conflicts of the character and explains that “it is these contradictions that lead Marlow into taking a journey into his unconscious mind, and it is this journey into darkness that is best expressed through viewing *Heart of Darkness* as a Gothic novel.” (2008, p. 29).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the early Gothic novel tradition which began over a century before with Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) had given way to a wider set of Gothic conventions. Brantlinger informs us that many late-Victorian novels are characterised by Gothic features that can be seen as a manifestation of contemporary anxiety and sensationalism, and as such *Heart of Darkness* falls into his category of the Imperial Gothic. The sense of dread that pervades the narrative is perhaps its most striking Gothic feature, but some of the more corporeal conventions of the early Gothic novel are also identifiable. The exotic setting of the Belgian Congo, the repetitive descriptions of darkness



and the unknown, and the pursuit of the damned, monstrous Kurtz are all exemplary of the Gothic tradition, as are some of the novel's structural features. The frame narrative that positions Marlow on a boat in the Thames to begin recounting his experiences is reminiscent of similar narrative devices in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or Coleridge's "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner."

Conrad's celebrated descriptive and at times impressionistic language can also be seen to consolidate the various instances when Marlow talks of nightmarish visions, and contributes to a dream-like sensation throughout: "It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream — making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams." (CONRAD, 1995, p. 50). Lipka states that this use of language serves as a technique that unsettles the reader and that it serves as "an excellent literary technique for a Gothic novel, as the initial descriptions make the reader uneasy with the unknown, which is slowly drawing them in to a shock." (2008, p. 30).

## Conrad, Coppola, and psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious, the central revelation of his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), describes a repository of repressed feelings and instinctual drives, many of which are potentially conducive to violence. This is clearly an important concept to consider when assessing man's tendency towards conflict and warfare. On numerous occasions, *Apocalypse Now* presents a paradox from the American experience of the Vietnam War, a life that appears to be detached from so-called reality. Colonel Kurtz, for example, dictates: "We train young men to drop fire on people, but their commanders won't allow them to write *fuck* on their aeroplanes because 'it's obscene!'" (02:18:25). Such paradoxes are indicative of the film's more general approach to the question of a soldier's split psyche and the internal conflict between the moral and the immoral. An approach to literature and film that considers the unconscious rests on the theories of Freud, a man who was Conrad's contemporary and was interested in various writers of the time, arguing that literary texts could be read as manifestations of the author's subconscious.

Freud proposed in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that a "new class of psychical material" (2004, p. 400) was at work within the human mind, which was a better indication of the meaning of a dream than its manifest content. He labelled this material the "dream-thoughts," and argued that the original

content of a dream, as we remember it when we wake up, is “a transcript of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression.” (2004, p. 400). He concluded that through an indeterminable process of “condensation” the dream-thoughts are transformed into dream-content, and dreams are therefore brief and simple in comparison to the thoughts that underlie them, rendering them impossible to ever be completely interpreted. Secondly, Freud presented the idea of a process of displacement in relation to dreams, noting that the manifest content commonly takes on a different emphasis when compared to the dream-thoughts derived from analysis. According to Freud, this results in a dream yielding “no more than a distortion of the dream-wish which exists in the unconscious.” (2004, p. 412). It is the theory of the unconscious, pioneered by Freud, along with the idea that our unconscious desires and thoughts are manifested in our dreams via the processes of condensation and displacement, that makes Freudian analysis so important to literary criticism. A literary work or a film such as *Apocalypse Now* effectively becomes analogous to a dream, and Conrad's language in *Heart of Darkness* suggests a certain awareness of this potential. The work can thereby be said to lend itself to the same methods of psychoanalysis as the dreams of one of Freud's patients.

*The Ego and the Id*, first published in 1923, outlines the functions of the three proposed parts of the human psyche, and the implications of the surrounding psychological theory bear great importance on both *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now*. The *ego* is the name given to the conscious part of the mind that is governed by rational and logical thought, as opposed to the *id*, which is the unconscious part of the psyche that houses all the transgressive desires and thoughts that are rejected by the conscious logic of the ego. Freud suggested that a conscious censor within the human mind represses unsuitable material to the unconscious part of the mind — the *id* — to be manifested only in a disguised form, such as a dream. When a patient endures a mental disturbance of some sort and begins to freely exhibit such repressed material that would ordinarily remain contained in a healthy mind, he is diagnosed as neurotic. More informally, these are considered the beginnings of insanity, defined as a disorder causing a person to act against the social or legal demands of society. The third part of Freud's psychological model — the *superego* — accounts for a human conscious sense of morality, justice, and other such systems of belief that we are conditioned to adopt by various institutions including the family unit. For this reason, according to Ross Murfin, “the superego almost seems to be outside of the self.” (1989, p. 114).

This area of Freud's psychoanalytic theory is applicable to the works of both Conrad and Coppola. It may be argued that there is an occasion for repressed

thoughts and psychological material to emerge from the id into the conscious “reality” that lies between dreaming and neurosis, namely a creative outlet such as a literary text or a film. Freud was a proponent of the notion that a literary text was at least in part a representation of its author's subconscious fantasies, and in the case of Conrad, such a theory may lead to the supposition that his narrator Marlow shares the same feelings and moral dilemmas as himself. Frederick Karl has commented that *Heart of Darkness* is critical about the “illogic of human behaviour which tries to justify itself with precision only to surrender to explosive inner needs.” (1989, p. 124). Conrad uses the mysterious figure of Kurtz as the vehicle for his concerns, but at the same time he presents Marlow as a character who is greatly influenced and perhaps even psychologically transformed by his contact with Kurtz: “I felt I was becoming scientifically interesting.” (CONRAD, 1995, p. 40). Not only that, but Marlow also asserts of Kurtz: “I wasn't arguing with a lunatic either. Believe me or not, his intelligence was perfectly clear.” (CONRAD, 1995, p. 107). This makes it possible to suggest that Conrad's own experiences in the Congo left him with repressed desires for power without common social restraint — the type of power held by Kurtz — while the logic and morality of his ego and superego resulted in his otherwise critical approach to the question of the misuse of Western power in the colonial territories.

The subdivision of the human mind is also of relevance to the wider thematic concerns of *Heart of Darkness*. The author's criticism of the behaviour of Western civilisation is illuminated with reference to the Freudian concepts of the ego and the id, especially in the character of Kurtz, a symbolic representative for the civilised world as a whole: “All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz.” (CONRAD, 1995, p. 83). In the novel, he has abused his position as ivory trader in the Congo to exercise a godlike power over the Congolese natives who yield to his Western influence, while in *Apocalypse Now*, Colonel Walter E. Kurtz is a celebrated and respected military leader who has become disillusioned with the war because of its absurdity, and who has yielded to his repressed desires to subjugate a foreign race and live outside the moral codes of his original society. The extreme neurosis — psychosis — displayed by Coppola's Kurtz is a deliberate result of the director's will to highlight the sheer absurdity of the war, and more specifically the disillusionment felt by such men as a result of the irresponsible actions of the few in command. The impact of the presumed insanity that characterises the colonel's life in the jungle, and his rejection of the ideals that he had once upheld, is enforced by the earlier descriptions of his exemplary career as told by Willard: “At first I thought they handed me the wrong dossier. I couldn't believe they wanted this man dead [...] like they said he had an impressive career, maybe too impressive. I mean, perfect.” (00:24:16).

## Kurtz, Willard, and the rejection of the superego

In Freudian terms, both versions of the Kurtz character ultimately reject their superegos; that is to say, they break free of the constraints of social acceptability that normally govern their existence. Conrad's Kurtz is a man with "immense plans" that remain unfulfilled at the time of his death, and he is arguably a victim of the immoral and hypocritical society that produced him: although he is presented throughout as an extraordinary figure with a unique perspective, he must ultimately be seen as "the rule and not the exception." (KARL, 1989, p. 130). His dying exclamation of "the horror, the horror," so brilliantly captured by Coppola's own Colonel Kurtz played by Marlon Brando, is indicative of the clarity in retrospection that he possesses despite his perceived insanity. It perhaps serves as a comment that, to truly understand the savagery and injustice of contemporary society, it is necessary to break away from and oppose that society. Coppola took this notion of the unconscious overriding the ego and superego and extended it to the question of morality in war. In the closing speech by Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, he explains to Willard that "horror and moral terror are your friends; if they are not, then they are enemies to be feared." (02:10:25). He relates this idea to his own revelatory experience of savagery — equivalent to the savagery that Marlow witnesses in Conrad's Congo — and concludes that "they were stronger than me because they could stand it." (02:12:42).

The necessity to break free from the restraints of the superego constitutes one of the prominent philosophies that pervade *Apocalypse Now*: the only way to overcome the uncivilised opposition in warfare is to match its savagery and immorality. Thereby, the accepted structure of the human psyche must be inverted, so that logical judgements of the ego are repressed, and the unacceptable desires and violent tendencies of the id are exploited. Conrad's representation of the native black man, partly because of the cultural context of *Heart of Darkness*, is devoid of any sort of superego, that part of the mind that Freud deemed to be the result of sociological influences within modern society. Coppola adheres to this idea closely, presenting Kurtz's Montagnard army, for example, as savages that indiscriminately follow his orders because of the absence of any psychological process which suggest to them that what they are doing is inappropriate, and the lack of any structured society that would influence them to behave within certain boundaries of acceptability. Frantz Fanon's essay "The Negro and Psychopathology" corroborates the idea that there is a marked difference in psychological processes between people of civilised societies and those from areas of the world that remain untouched by Western influence: "militarization and the

centralization of authority in a country automatically entail a resurgence of the authority of the father. In Europe [...] the family is a miniature of the nation.” (2004, p. 462). The paradox that is presented by Coppola's Kurtz concerns the fact that the US military and government — powerful institutions of patriarchal society and self-proclaimed upholders of morality and justice in the modern world — failed to overcome their enemies and spread their values because they lacked the ability to harness the areas of the human mind that are savage and naturally aggressive.

Colonel Kurtz is an example of a man that has acknowledged and renounced the absurdity of America's military methods, and subsequently enabled himself to assume a position of power and fulfil the repressed wishes of the common man. More simply, he says of the Vietcong that “if I had ten divisions of those men, then our troubles here would be over very quickly.” (02:13:12). This defines the transformation of Kurtz from a paragon of Western values to a monstrous Gothic figure, the same transformation that is undergone by his namesake in *Heart of Darkness*, and which also threatens the “emissary of light” Marlow. Even before the complex character of Col. Kurtz is introduced in *Apocalypse Now*, Captain Willard's own unstable psychological state is made clear. Relating to the difficulties found by Vietnam veterans in realigning themselves with normal society after returning from war, he explains the mental torment he experiences when awaiting a mission: “when I was here, I wanted to be there; when I was there, all I could think of was getting back into the jungle.” (00:05:12). If the war situation is taken as the arena for man's unconscious and repressed natural desires to be expressed, and the soldier's homecoming is seen as his return to a world governed by rules of social acceptability, this introduction of the captain illustrates the conflict that can occur between two distinct areas of the human psyche, as defined by Freud. While Kurtz is introduced from the outset as a respected officer who had gradually reached insanity, the audience joins Willard on his quest to reach the colonel and sees such a psychological process unfold at first hand. The difficulty for the human mind in coming to terms with the events of warfare is ironically summarised by General Corman, the man responsible for what the supposedly enlightened Kurtz sees as crimes of hypocrisy: “in this war, things get confused out there [...] because there's a conflict in every human heart between the rational and the irrational, between good and evil.” (00:15:55).

## Gothic Horror

It is that “conflict in every human heart” which strongly relates both works to the Gothic tradition, as they share the same thematic concerns about the moral

implications of imperialism and the capacity for evil in humankind. Both are frame stories with mediating narrators, and the role of the first narrator in the novel can be seen to be adopted by the camera in the film. Therefore, despite significant variations in the setting and story, Linda Cahir concludes that “Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* is a structural and a thematic analogue to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, possibly because [...] Coppola understood that technique and theme, structure and meaning are inseparable entities.” (1992, p. 187). For this reason, it is instructive to examine the adaptation of the novel's various Gothic features by the film, and indeed how those features reveal the complex psychological subtext contained within. The Gothic in literature and film is closely related to physical horror and psychological terror, a distinction offered by the early Gothic writer Ann Radcliffe in her essay on the supernatural: “where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil.” (1826, p. 150). In both *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now*, explicit horrors and images of savagery are accompanied by a sense of dread, and it is precisely this feeling that is accentuated through Gothic tropes: mysterious and exotic settings, dreamlike sequences, a dark and brooding atmosphere, and the desire to confront an elusive, damned soul that has monstrous characteristics.

The Gothic elements within *Heart of Darkness* and their visual representations in *Apocalypse Now* help to reveal the impenetrable paradox that humankind can only become fully sensitised to the depraved facets of its societies by succumbing to that part of the psyche that is normally repressed by conscious logic and sociological conditioning. This idea approaches a wealth of psychological readings that can be applied to either work, some of which have been considered here. Gothic features amplify the psychological transformations of Marlow and Willard as both discover that, in Karl's words, “the dirty work of this world is carried out by men whose reputations are preserved by lies.” (1989, p. 136). Ultimately, it is this realisation that constitutes the true “horror” of both narratives, a greater horror than that which forms our preconceptions of imperialism, savagery, and warfare. It is left to Kurtz, the monstrous and transgressive figure who has shaken off the restraints of his former society, to identify horror in its purest form.

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# “ALL MONSTERS ARE HUMAN”

## TERROR, MEDO E PERDA DE DIREITOS EM *AMERICAN HORROR STORY — CULT*

AMANDA MUNIZ OLIVEIRA<sup>1</sup>

Em outubro de 2016 as eleições americanas tiveram como resultado surpreendente a eleição da controversa figura de Donald Trump. Famoso por seus discursos polêmicos, permeados de opiniões misóginas e xenofóbicas, sua ascensão à presidência, assim como as consequências e significados políticos desse ato foram escolhidos como pano de fundo para a sétima temporada da série estadunidense *American Horror Story*, que teve por subtítulo *Cult (AHS — Cult)*.

Criada por Ryan Murphy e Brad Falchuk, a série teve seu primeiro episódio veiculado em 2011, na rede FX. Desde então, *AHS* se reinventa a cada ano, abordando diferentes aspectos do horror. As temporadas são independentes entre si, não exigindo do telespectador o acompanhamento cronológico que é comum ao formato de produção de séries. A proposta inicial de *AHS* era mesclar o horror sobrenatural a temáticas como traição, loucura, manicômios, anormalidades físicas, circo de horrores, racismo, sensacionalismo midiático, apenas para mencionar alguns exemplos.

Entretanto, nessa temporada a série deixa de lado, pela primeira vez, os elementos sobrenaturais tradicionalmente representados, para explorar aspectos mais palpáveis de horror político e social. Retomo aqui frases que são recorrentes na primeira e na segunda temporada, mais especificamente: *normal people scare me* e *all monsters are human*. Em um contexto no qual discursos reacionários, como o de Trump, são capazes de representar toda uma nação, torna-se clara a mensagem de que demônios, espíritos, vampiros e outras entidades sobrenaturais não são necessários para incutir o medo. Em *AHS — Cult*, a humanidade, distorcida e caricata de si mesma, torna-se monstruosa em si.

Argumenta-se aqui que o contexto das eleições americanas emerge como ponto de partida para uma narrativa de terror, com características góticas. Para isso é preciso explicar em que sentido essa palavra está sendo utilizada, pois,

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conforme Daniel Serravalle de Sá: “O termo ‘gótico’, em particular, é extremamente ambíguo, pois incorpora muitas nuances e combinações distintas. Seu significado depende da época, do contexto e da área de conhecimento em que está sendo aplicado.” (2010, p. 45). O crítico aponta para a polissemia do termo, que evoca diferentes sentidos a depender da conjuntura em que é utilizado.

As características góticas que se quer destacar em *AHS — Cult* têm proximidade com os romances do século XVIII, na acepção literária “o termo gótico representaria uma interseção quase imprevisível de crenças religiosas, concepções estéticas e inclinações políticas” (SÁ, 2010, p. 49). Os romances *Caleb Williams* (1794) e *St. Leon* (1799), escritos por William Godwin, são exemplares de como os romancistas ingleses do século tematizaram os emaranhados históricos e políticos gerados pelas revoluções setecentistas, incorporando em suas narrativas determinados aspectos das polêmicas da época. De acordo com Sá:

Posições políticas conflitantes podem ser observadas, por exemplo, nas diferentes representações do castelo feudal, um símbolo gótico por excelência ligado à tradição inglesa. Em alguns romances o castelo remete aos nobres cavaleiros medievais e aos códigos que lhes foram associados, notadamente, amor à pátria, lealdade, coragem, honra, religiosidade, amor cortês, etc. Em outras representações, o castelo está ligado ao repúdio por um governo despótico, um lugar longe dos olhos públicos onde a nobreza feudal se entregava à devassidão. Não é raro encontrar em um mesmo romance ambas conotações para o castelo. Tal duplicidade assinala uma contradição inerente aos romances góticos, a tentativa de conciliar a admiração pelos valores de um mundo feudal que era ao mesmo tempo fonte de corrupção e tirania. Essa ambiguidade levou os romancistas à personificação de vilões malignos, em geral aristocratas ou clérigos eram as figuras que representavam tal relação dúbia e imprecisa. (SÁ, 2014, p. 73).

Os conflitos políticos e religiosos da Grã-Bretanha do século XVIII parecem ecoar nos Estados Unidos do século XXI e o gótico ficcional é o gênero narrativo que consegue dar forma às ansiedades sociais através dos tempos. Na série americana, o antagonista cria uma seita política-religiosa, utilizando máscaras esteticamente assustadoras para defender determinadas ideias políticas. Além disso, a narrativa de *AHS — Cult* tem por base estereótipos, personagens extremos que dialogam diretamente com o gótico literário, o qual foi rotulado por autores como T. J. Mathias como uma narrativa de confusão, excesso, comportamento passional e aspirações revolucionárias (SÁ, 2010, p. 60).

Neste sentido, *AHS — Cult* explora um modo narrativo que evidencia o caráter ficto de nossa sociedade, especialmente de nossas leis. No decorrer da trama, percebe-se que os personagens temem perder direitos já conquistados, algo que de fato começa a ocorrer, desencadeando tensões, fobias e até mesmo alucinações. Com a eleição de um reacionário, as personagens da trama percebem que o direito nada mais é que uma invenção humana e que pode ser modificado a qualquer momento.

No livro *The Gothic and the Rule of Law, 1764-1820* (2007), Sue Chaplin lança as bases teóricas para este trabalho. Segundo a autora, a literatura gótica assombra o direito, constantemente, ao lembrar que sua suposta lógica racional nada mais é que uma ficção, um construto social frágil e à mercê de modificações políticas. Para Chaplin: “Western representations of law as logos amount only to myths of origin that function ‘to symbolise and legitimate a fiction of absolute power.’” (2007, p. 20).

O problema que se coloca é: a instabilidade jurídica funciona como elemento capaz de despertar o medo em *AHS — Cult*? Para desenvolver essa análise, selecionaram-se cenas, falas e situações ao longo da trama que exemplificam os sentimentos das personagens em relação ao significado da eleição de Trump e seus desdobramentos. Optou-se por focar, especial mas não exclusivamente, na protagonista Allyson Mayfair-Richards, interpretada por Sarah Paulson, e no antagonista Kai Anderson, interpretado por Evan Peters. Ambos podem ser compreendidos como estereótipos bem definidos de progressistas e reacionários, o que auxiliará na compreensão das discussões sociopolíticas presentes em toda a temporada. Como afirma o criador da série, Ryan Murphy, em entrevista:

Horror Story sempre tratou de alegorias, e então a eleição é uma. É o nosso ponto de partida. É sobre a eleição pela qual acabamos de passar, o que aconteceu naquela noite e no cair dela, o que para muitas pessoas de todos os lados, é uma história de horror. (FERNANDES, 3 mar. 2017).

Partindo da hipótese de que o medo da perda de direitos é um ponto chave na trama, objetiva-se demonstrar de que forma o caráter ficto das leis é capaz de aterrorizar a protagonista. Isto posto, divide-se a discussão em duas partes. Inicialmente, serão feitas considerações a respeito dos personagens Kai e Ally, demonstrando processos de estereotipificação e satirização de espectros políticos opostos e a sua relação com o horror. Na sequência, serão apresentados elementos que apontam para a questão da instabilidade jurídica como pano de fundo da crítica social presente na temporada, demonstrando como tais elementos

coadunam para com a proposta de Sue Chaplin sobre o caráter ficto e instável do próprio direito.

## Kai e Ally: Sátiras políticas

*AHS — Cult* inicia em 8 de novembro de 2016, na noite da apuração das eleições americanas. As câmeras se alternam entre dois espaços diferentes, mostrando um jovem solitário e concentrado, em uma sala escura, acompanhando a contagem dos votos pela televisão e, em seguida, um grupo de pessoas em uma sala clara, aflitos com a possibilidade da vitória de Trump. As cenas se revezam e a angústia dos personagens é crescente, até o anúncio do resultado. Neste momento, dois gritos são ouvidos: o de um jovem de cabelos azuis, que em seu espaço escuro berra extasiado, soltando alguns palavrões, e, na sala clara, o grito de pavor de uma mulher, que nada deixa a desejar aos clássicos gritos das donzelas em perigo nos filmes de terror quando se deparam com o monstro ou assassino.

Logo, o telespectador terá ciência de que foi apresentado aos dois personagens principais de *AHS — Cult*, em uma cena introdutória que diz muito a respeito da representação de ambos. O jovem de cabelos azuis é o antagonista reacionário Kai Anderson, que vislumbra na vitória de Trump uma grande oportunidade de pôr em prática seus próprios e ambiciosos planos políticos; a mulher amedrontada, em pânico, é Allyson Mayfair-Richards, ou apenas Ally, uma lésbica progressista que vê no resultado da eleição a concretização de seus maiores temores.

Os primeiros episódios da série agradaram grande parte da crítica americana especializada (FERNANDES, 2 set. 2017), que a entenderam, sobretudo, como uma ácida sátira social aos tempos contemporâneos. O site Hollywood Report afirma: “I’m properly disturbed by Murphy and company’s much-too-close-to-home allegory, amused by some of the sharp social satire” (FIENBERG, 5 set. 2017). Por outro lado, o site TV Guide argumenta que:

Sem sentido, uma vez que são instantaneamente compreensíveis, esses insultos da nova escola são um testemunho de como estamos polarizados como país, tão assustador quanto um pouco engraçado. Somos caricaturas de nós mesmos, o que é um dos muitos argumentos brilhantes de *American Horror Story: Cult*.<sup>2</sup> (VENABLE, 2 set. 2017).

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<sup>2</sup> No original: “Nonsensical as they are instantly understandable, these new-school insults are a testament to how polarized we are as a country, as scary as it is kind of funny. We’re caricatures of ourselves, which is one of the many brilliant takeaways from *American Horror Story: Cult*.”

De acordo com Malcolm Venable, a narrativa nos oferece subsídios suficientes para interpretar toda a temporada como uma grande sátira, que tece críticas vorazes tanto aos conservadores quanto aos progressistas, fato que motivou algumas críticas contrárias. Segundo Gabriel Fernandes, do site American Horror Story Brasil, “As críticas negativas focam basicamente no quão delicada deveria ser a temática política abordada na nova temporada, quando a mesma, supostamente, passa longe de ser subjetiva.” (FERNANDES, 2 set. 2017). O problema em relação as políticas do medo que o seriado aborda é que progressistas como Ally não têm apenas medos imaginários, para certos grupos sociais a ascensão de Trump é uma ameaça real. Por outro lado, nem todos conservadores são reacionários que põem medo, como Kai. O que se deve entender é que *AHS — Cult* está lidando com estereótipos, mas, dito isso, a discussão sobre o caráter fictício das leis e o problema da instabilidade jurídica em momentos de crise permanecem como um ponto de debate na série.

Vejamos a figura de Kai Anderson. Ao longo dos episódios, o telespectador descobre que o jovem era o único de uma família de três filhos que não tinha um emprego ou uma possibilidade instigante de vida. Formado em estudos religiosos, Kai ainda residia com os pais depois de graduado, vivendo à sombra do irmão psiquiatra e da irmã que cursava estudos de gênero na universidade. Constantemente humilhado pelo pai, o jovem passa a nutrir o amargor e um senso de justiça próprios, aproximando-se cada vez mais de discursos reacionários, os quais afloram de vez após dois acontecimentos significativos.

Em um deles, Kai é provocado por uma amiga feminista de sua irmã, ao ponto em que ele a agride fisicamente. Denunciado e condenado, é encaminhado à terapia onde é influenciado a acreditar que é uma pessoa especial cuja missão é aflorar a raiva e o ódio da sociedade para que uma revolução benéfica aconteça. Em outro episódio central, Kai salva a sua irmã e outros inocentes de um fanático religioso, obtendo assim a confirmação de sua “vocação” sacra e, a partir de então, passa a se organizar para obter poder político e iniciar sua própria seita.

Não é difícil relacionar a história de Kai a outras histórias, reais ou fictícias, de líderes religiosos e reacionários. Não por acaso seu ídolo é Charles Manson (1934-2017), que aparece na temporada juntamente com outros fanáticos de cultos, todos interpretados pelo ator Evan Peters. Em entrevista, o diretor Ryan Murphy comenta:

Examinamos como [esses líderes] ascendem ao poder e porque outras pessoas os seguem, quando podemos ver o que aconteceu e como todos são idiotas. Mas, por alguma razão, acontecia algo na

cultura, naquele período, que as pessoas eram tão privadas de direito que eles diziam ‘vou seguir você, Charles Manson, e farei tudo o que você me disser’. (CAMARA, 30 ago. 2017).

Técnicas de aliciação também são utilizadas pelo personagem Kai Anderson para construir sua seita. Se valendo do discurso de que a sociedade não é mais tão segura quanto costumava ser, ele desperta nas pessoas a insegurança em relação às mudanças sociais e o medo da perda de direitos, cooptando seguidores para seus intuítos. Kai é um estereótipo caricato de figuras reacionárias que distorcem dados e fatos para convencer pessoas, ele encena espancamentos para posar de vítima da situação, demonstra ter desejos autoritários e antidemocráticos ao querer proibir a internet. Sua ambição é gerar terror para causar a suspensão da ordem jurídica vigente e a instauração de um estado de exceção, no qual ele possa promulgar seus ideais.

Em contrapartida, a protagonista da série, Ally Mayfair-Richards, é inicialmente apresentada como uma personagem frágil, cheia de fobias e que nada faz para modificar sua existência. Lésbica, feminista e progressista, a eleição de Trump faz com que fobias até então controladas retornem com força total. Pouco é revelado sobre seu passado: sabe-se que seus medos irracionais vieram à tona após os atentados de 11 de setembro e que sua recuperação só foi possível graças à esposa Ivy Mayfair-Richards (Alison Pill).

A série concentra-se no presente e no futuro da personagem, com destaque para o caráter satírico da narrativa. Apesar de insatisfeita com a eleição de Trump e a subsequente ascensão de valores conservadores, fatos que no universo ficcional culminam com a eleição de Kai Anderson para vereador, Ally é incapaz de despertar simpatia nos telespectadores por ser demasiadamente passiva. Em grande parte da temporada, a personagem grita, chora e foge de seus temores, em atitudes que podem ser consideradas infantis e até mesmo irritantes. De modo que é possível compreender Ally como uma caricatura de uma determinada parcela de liberais progressistas norte-americanos, os quais, mesmo insatisfeitos com o cenário político vigente, são incapazes de se articular para apresentar uma oposição efetiva.

As coisas começam a mudar com a internação de Ally em um hospital psiquiátrico. Uma reviravolta acontece no desenvolvimento da personagem que consegue não apenas superar suas fobias, mas, também se tornar uma rival à altura de Kai. Por meio de planos bem arquitetados e artifícios executados, Ally Mayfair-Richards vai ao extremo de suas crenças e não hesita em aniquilar quem quer que cruze seu caminho. Ao final, percebemos que ela própria fundou

uma outra espécie de seita, formada apenas por mulheres, dando a entender que posições extremas não são privilégios da direita, especialmente quando direitos fundamentais estão sendo ameaçados.

## Instabilidade jurídica e a perda de direitos

A suposta ameaça a direitos individuais é uma justificativa historicamente utilizada para que políticas conservadoras fossem concebidas e se fortalecessem. Vaz, Cardoso e Felix analisam a propagação midiática de uma política do medo, tendo em vista as diferentes formas de se noticiar um fato ocorrido. Para os autores, tais políticas “se prestam facilmente à generalização do sentimento de vulnerabilidade, da urgência de intervenções preventivas e estabelecem, por retrospectiva ou antecipação, a responsabilidade individual por sua ocorrência.” (2012, p. 35). Não por acaso, essa é uma estratégia responsável, inclusive, por influenciar os rumos de eleições:

Paul Chevigny (2003), por exemplo, em estudo sobre o que considera a vitória do “populismo do medo” em eleições para cargos públicos em Nova Iorque, Buenos Aires, Cidade do México e São Paulo, concluiu que os candidatos conservadores têm mais chance de êxito quanto mais difíceis forem as condições sociais e econômicas da população e a incapacidade do Estado em reverter o quadro. Nestas circunstâncias, as pessoas têm medo de perder seus empregos, de que a economia sofra um abalo ou de que alguma calamidade ocorra. No caso do medo do crime, em especial, a resposta conservadora têm sido a de aderir a campanhas pautadas por este tipo de populismo, que prega no lugar do “Estado de bem-estar” o “Estado seguro”, defendendo uma série de medidas tão discriminatórias quanto inócuas no combate à criminalidade. (VAZ; CARDOSO; FELIX, 2012, p. 39).

Esta é a mesma tática utilizada pelo antagonista Kai ao criar seu culto. Ao espalhar medo, terror e a busca eterna por um inimigo invisível, o personagem faz com que os indivíduos abram mão de certos direitos e garantias para, paradoxalmente, conservar estes mesmos direitos supostamente ameaçados. Em *AHS — Cult*, este medo é o fio condutor de toda a narrativa, aparecendo de forma explícita em duas cenas do primeiro episódio, quando do anúncio da eleição de Trump. A Figura 1 retrata a primeira dessas cenas, em que, um casal heterossexual discute, na frente do filho de Ally e Ivy, sobre as consequências da eleição. O marido está furioso pois em seu entendimento a esposa é culpada por

não se dirigir às urnas para garantir que o casamento homoafetivo de Ally e Ivy continue juridicamente válido.

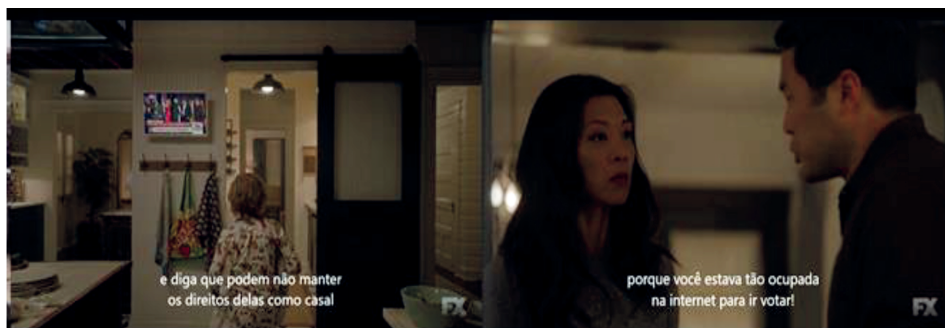


Figura 1 — Casamento LGBT em pauta.

Em outro momento, nos deparamos com uma cena na qual a personagem Winter Anderson (Billie Lourd), irmã de Kai que adere à seita, está decepcionada com a vitória de Hillary Clinton e teme ter seu direito ao aborto revogado pelo novo presidente (Figura 2). É evidente, assim, que as personagens temem os desdobramentos políticos que os espera e é justamente esse medo que dará abertura para que Kai perpetue suas ideias reacionárias.



Figura 2 — O aborto em questão.



Neste sentido, entendemos que *AHS — Cult* exerce o papel apontado pela crítica Sue Chaplin, ao evidenciar o caráter ficto e mutante do direito. Segundo a autora, o direito foi associado à razão como forma de garantir a verdade de uma ordem simbólica cultural, motivo pelo qual foi dissociado de qualquer elemento diretamente conectado ao passional, como a imaginação e a poesia.

Para Chaplin, essa aproximação com o racional, entretanto, precisa ser dotada de legitimidade, cuja justificativa recai sobre a ideia de origem do direito. É então que se forma um paradoxo, uma vez que, ao perquirir racionalmente o momento de origem do direito, o jurista se depara com o mito — uma esfera distante da razão. Ao buscar o mito, o direito passa a ser fundamentado, então, por um pressuposto, que funciona como uma ficção de origem necessária. Conforme a crítica:

Lei como *logos* é essa ficção necessária, uma “suposição fundacional” que, como observa Alain Pottage, opera, para Legendre, analogamente “ao ‘número’ zero na matemática.” Oscilando entre presença e ausência, o ponto zero na matemática tem uma origem vazia que existe não como um número, mas como um ponto de demarcação entre positivo e negativo. Como o ponto zero da ordem simbólica, o *logos* ficcionaliza a origem de uma lei que é, em si mesma, nada mais do que a diferença entre presença e ausência e “que é paradoxalmente presença e ausência”.<sup>3</sup> (CHAPLIN, 2007, p. 24).

A crítica prossegue sua análise, afirmando que é esse direito pretensamente racional que irá criar categorias como o sagrado e o abjeto; trata-se, portanto, de uma linha divisória utilizada que serve para demarcar fronteiras ideológicas. Porém, essa fronteira artificial, que luta para se apresentar como sólida e tradicional, é algo instável e volátil, justamente por seu caráter ficto. Chaplin conclui que o direito precisa de uma origem, para ser legitimado; esta origem é baseada no mito, na ficção, o que torna o direito um marcador — um divisor do que é sagrado e abjeto, legal ou ilegal, justiça ou injustiça. Todavia, os limites postos pela ordem jurídica são frágeis, porque são inventados. Em uma tentativa de apresentar o direito como algo não frágil, os juristas ocidentais tentam torná-lo

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<sup>3</sup> No original: “Law as *logos* is this necessary fiction, a ‘founding supposition’ which, as Alain Pottage observes, operates, for Legendre, analogously ‘to the “number” zero in mathematics’. Oscillating between presence and absence, point zero in mathematics is an absent origin that exists not as a number at all, but as a point of demarcation between positive and negative. As the zero point of the symbolic order, the *logos* functions to fictionalise the origin of a law that is, in itself, nothing but the difference between presence and absence and ‘which is paradoxically presence and absence.’”

racional. Precisamente neste ponto é que entra a narrativa gótica. Diversas obras do universo do terror evocam a monstruosidade humana e a instabilidade política para evidenciar o caráter ficto do direito. O site especializado na série *AHS*, por exemplo, evocou diversas obras de terror no intuito de demonstrar como o gênero se relaciona diretamente com questões políticas:

Nada impede o terror sobrenatural de ser infiltrado pelo teor político. Mesmo que não ocorra de forma direta, clássicos do terror usam metáforas para tratar de assuntos de interesse social. “A noite dos mortos-vivos” (1968) não foi criado só para divertir, por exemplo. O filme lançado no período das lutas pelos Direitos Civis tinha críticas sobre as relações raciais nos Estados Unidos. George Romero também compara a humanidade submissa à cultura consumista, que engole tudo sem resistência, à horda de zumbis, em “A madrugada dos mortos” (1978). “Vampiros de almas” (1956) usa simbolismos para brincar com a paranoia em relação uma hipotética dominação comunista. Até o slasher “O massacre da serra elétrica” (1974) não trata apenas dos terrores de vítimas submetidas a uma família de canibais — o filme tem sutis críticas à Guerra do Vietnã. (FERNANDES, 2 fev. 2017).

Em *AHS — Cult* é possível perceber que além de assassinatos e de uma estética do grotesco e do excesso, há um pano de fundo político na medida em que o medo de se perder direitos e garantias fundamentais em um estado democrático não apenas está presente, como também impulsiona as ações dos personagens. Kai Anderson, o antagonista responsável por propagar estes temores, serve justamente para lembrar aos espectadores de que as leis nada mais são que uma invenção humana, uma mera ficção que podem sim ser modificadas ao bel prazer dos governantes. Não por acaso, ao se eleger vereador, o personagem viabiliza a sanção de projetos de lei flagrantemente inconstitucionais, como por exemplo, restrição do acesso à internet. Seus eleitores compactuam com suas ideias em razão do medo, baseando-se na crença de que renunciar a pequenas liberdades em nome de um bem maior (segurança) seria o mais sensato a se fazer. São exatamente condutas como esta que afligem os personagens mais progressistas, como Ally; afinal, como sobreviver em um mundo no qual todas as lutas sociais são esvaziadas de significado em razão do medo? *AHS — Cult*, funciona, assim, como um aviso aos juristas e a toda sociedade civil: o direito não é eterno, nem metafísico, mas produto de mãos humanas que sempre podem modificá-lo a depender de seus interesses específicos.

## Considerações finais

Questões políticas, como atuações governamentais e mesmo eleições presidenciais são panos de fundo promissores para diversas narrativas de horror. Nessa senda, as eleições americanas de 2016 surgiram como um ponto de partida para a série *American Horror Story — Cult*. A partir da controversa figura de Donald Trump, os criadores construíram um enredo cheio de estereótipos excessivos no intuito de satirizar um determinado momento socio-histórico e levantar diversas questões para a audiência. Dotada de características góticas como o horror, o grotesco, suspense e concepções estéticas próprias, o programa abandona elementos sobrenaturais tradicionalmente explorados para focar em um mal mais aterrorizante: o radicalismo humano, perigosamente próximo do real.

Dessa forma, a série aterroriza seus espectadores ao abordar uma verdade desconcertante: a ficcionalidade de nosso direito. O medo de perder os direitos e garantias já conquistados é o que irá impulsionar a narrativa, que descortina as ações humanas cometidas em razão de um medo exageradamente evocado. Assim, a obra coaduna com os estudos da autora americana Sue Chaplin, para quem a literatura gótica assombra o direito ao lembrar que sua suposta lógica racional nada mais é que uma ficção, que pode ser reconstruída em razão de interesses específicos.

O problema de pesquisa trabalhado (qual seja, a instabilidade jurídica funciona como elemento hábil a despertar o medo na narrativa de *AHS — Cult?*) é respondido de forma positiva, uma vez que foi possível demonstrar que as ações dos personagens principais, Kai e Ally, orbitam em torno do medo de se perder aquilo que juridicamente já se conquistou.

Primeiramente, apresentamos os referidos personagens, que nada mais são que estereótipos exagerados de um espectro político antagônico: direita e esquerda, conservadores e liberais. Em seguida, apresentamos elementos relativos à questão da instabilidade política e jurídica como pano de fundo para a temporada, relacionando-os diretamente aos estudos de Sue Chaplin. Por fim, é possível concluir que a série funciona como um alerta, um aviso em forma de uma exagerada sátira, para que não nos esqueçamos da fragilidade de nossas leis e de nosso ordenamento jurídico.

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# HORROR AND HUMOR

## IN *THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS*

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Defining a genre is no easy task; they are loose, not clear-cut, and spread across different forms of media and art. Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), for instance, defines terror and horror as being opposite genres, she argues that “the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them.” (p. 147). Radcliffe's definitions is just one among many found in literature and literary criticism, ranging from authors who argue that horror causes terror, to those who claim that one generates a physical response whilst the other generates a mental response, to critics defining terror as a feeling of anticipation and horror as one of reaction. Terry Heller's *The Delights of Terror* (1987) offers a comprehensive history of the plurality of the definitions concerning narratives of horror, terror, fantastic, uncanny. In this chapter, I adopt Radcliffe's time-honored explanation. Corroborating with the novelist's definition, screenwriter Nigel Kneale argues that:

Horror is what you might feel if you went, for example, into a jungle, or a place where you had lost all your bearings, where you were no longer sure of anything. A place where you began to suspect that there was something present which you couldn't pin down; something which you wouldn't be able to identify but which would be dangerous and could destroy you. (WELLS, 1999, p. 54).

The English word “horror” derives from the Latin *horrere*, which means to stand on end to bristle, and from the French *horreur*, which also means to bristle or to shudder. In the book *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990), Noël Carroll argues that although the definition does not need to be taken literally in regard to the physical reaction, “it is important to stress that the original conception of the word connected it with an abnormal (from the subject's point of view) physiological state of felt agitation.” (p. 24). According to Carroll, horror is a

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modern genre that appeared in the eighteenth century with the English Gothic novel, the German *Schauerroman*, and French *roman noir*. The critic also points out that the supernatural Gothic was of greatest importance for the evolution of the horror genre as we know today, exploring the existence and cruel operation of unnatural forces. Still regarding the complex matter of definition, one central issue which seems to be present in all concepts is the idea of *uncomfortableness*, the feeling of uneasiness that narratives of terror, horror, uncanny, or fantastic cause in the reader/viewer. In the book *Gothic and the Comic Turn* (2004), Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik argue that these different genres raise the question *what are we afraid of?*, and just having to think about the answer inflicts a feeling of restlessness upon us (p. 2). Moreover, they argue that for this reason it is more effective to work with elements of the genres rather than with genres themselves.

The Gothic imagination, in its broader sense, explores themes and aspects that may cause one to feel, to say the least, discomfort — it is a discourse that explores darkness, the inevitability of death and an unexplored side of human existence. As argued by Clive Bloom, in the book *Gothic Horror* (1998), the Gothic does not need to be horrific, and horror does not need to be Gothic, but both are parallel and often interchangeable. The critic also argues that the Gothic is more related to the exploitation of feelings, while the horror is about its effect (p. 1). As one example of this connection, I will carry out an investigation of the stop-motion musical *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), produced by Tim Burton and Denise DiNovi, directed by Henry Selick, basing the analysis on elements of horror and humor in this arguably Gothic tale.

## Gothic: between comic and horror

Some of the elements, images, and conventions that establish Burton's film in the realm of the Gothic include: an atmosphere of mystery, the absence (or sometimes the excess) of color; the presence of the supernatural and/or the inexplicable, isolated communities and locations (decaying mansions, cemeteries, towers and castles), and monsters (ghosts, vampires, witches, mad scientists and their creations), which are essential to the creation of feelings of uneasiness. The protagonist of Gothic tales often deals with overwhelming emotions and dichotomies such as good and evil, life and death, rational and irrational, the sacred and the profane, barbarism and civility, truth and falsehood, among other dualities. These characters commonly hold a position of power in their communities and are seen as being intelligent and worthy of respect and admiration. Some recurrent themes in Gothic fiction are revenge, madness, death, family curses, powerful love, and identity questioning.

Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik add the concept of humor to this list, a feature that is often overlooked in the Gothic to the detriment of its more horrific side. The critics demonstrate how the Gothic is a hybrid genre, and that more conventional interpretations of Gothic do not always address that amalgamation between horror and humor. They argue that humor “is not an aberration or a corruption of a *serious* genre; rather, it is intrinsic to a mode of writing that has been hybrid since its very inception.” (2004, p. 4), and, in this sense, the Gothic is its own *doppelgänger*. Having that in mind, instead of placing horror and humor as mutually exclusive, the Gothic can be understood as a fiction of horror with moments of humor that emerge in the narrative as comic relief or as parody. Daniel Serravalle de Sá notices such duality in Tim Burton's oeuvre, arguing that “Tim Burton's creative universe usually combines elements of horror and humor to explore issues related to the dual link between life and death, highlighting the paradox that one cannot exist without the other.”<sup>2</sup> (2016, p. 33).

In the twentieth century, with the popularization of Gothic fiction, the film industry attempted to capture the emotional impact of the dark themes, the strange and the unknown explored in the novels and associated it with the visual language, themes and modes of Gothic horror. The Australian Center for the Moving Image (ACMI) explains that:

Stylized sets and the use of light and dark (*chiaroscuro*) to create shadows were key features of this mode of filmmaking and underpinned a number of Gothic-inspired horror films such as *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* [...] Hollywood-produced horror films drew readily on the literary heritage of Gothic fiction, as well as being inspired by the dark shadow worlds created in the German Expressionist films of the 1920s. They used a number of the visual conventions associated with these films but also reconnected with the ornate and the grotesque settings integral to the Gothic literary sensibility — partly due to increased financial resources. (2010, p. 7).

As ACMI explains, Tim Burton is a film maker who makes great use of conventions from Gothic horror imagination — dark woods, screeching crows and dramatic music, cemeteries, graves and dead characters. In addition to the visual language, Burton discusses issues of (un)conventionality as a

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<sup>2</sup> In the original: “O universo criativo de Tim Burton costuma combinar elementos do horror e do humor para explorar questões relacionadas à dualidade da ligação entre vida e morte, evidenciando o paradoxo de que não pode existir uma sem a outra.”

worldview, foregrounding characters who are outsiders, often acting against the institutionalized *normal*. Although *The Nightmare Before Christmas* is not officially classified as a horror/terror film, it “manages to be both childlike and sophisticated, blending the innocent with the macabre” (RYAN, 2 nov. 1997), favoring the Gothic horror and humor reading I pursue here.

### Comic Gothic in *The Nightmare Before Christmas*

*The Nightmare Before Christmas* was released in 1993 and recorded in stop motion, which is an animation technique that physically manipulates an object that appears to move on its own, creating the illusion of movement when the series of frames is played as a continuous sequence. The film tells the story of Jack Skellington, the Pumpkin King, who is tired of living the same annual traditions in Halloween Town. He searches for answers to his identity crisis, finds Christmas Town, and decides to reproduce the holiday in his kingdom. However, he completely misinterprets Christmas symbolisms and traditions.

There are several Gothic elements that can be identified in the movie, starting from the visual language. The setting of Halloween Town is gloomy and colorless, the place is an isolated city in a parallel universe made up of cemeteries, castles and towers, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. Nonetheless, the child-like images of skulls and gargoyles break with the sheer horrible, conveying a more humorous tone to an otherwise frightening representation. Additionally, the first duality the movie explores can be seen in the contrast between dark and light, death and life, which Halloween Town and Christmas Town represent, respectively.



Figure 1— Opening scene (1).





Figure 2 — Opening scene (2).

Sound is the second striking feature in the movie that prompts the notion of Gothic. Music is a key element to the creation of the intense, dreadful atmosphere of the movie, both in terms of sound and lyrics. Children and Santa Claus, for instance, are symbols normally associated with kindness and naivety. However, the lyrics in Example 1 sets a different mood, as a group from Halloween Town is sent to kidnap Santa Claus and they sing about their plans of catching and torturing him. Once again, humor emerges in the misheard name Santa Claus/Sandy Claws and in the vicious brutality sang by such an innocent-looking group.

Example 1:

Kidnap the Sandy Claws, lock him up real tight  
Throw away the key and then  
Turn off all the lights  
[...]

Kidnap the Sandy Claws  
Throw him in a box  
Bury him for ninety years  
Then see if he talks  
[...]

Kidnap the Sandy Claws  
Tie him in a bag  
Throw him in the ocean  
Then see if he is sad  
[...]

Kidnap the Sandy Claws  
Beat him with a stick  
Lock him for ninety years  
See what makes him tick

(Song: *Kidnap the Sandy Claws*).

Moreover, characterization in the film points to Gothic conventions. The protagonist Jack Skellington is imbued with Gothic traits. Throughout the movie, he struggles between a good and an evil identity, questioning his own objectives and purposes (Example 2), which explains his journey of self-discovery. After finding Christmas Town, he becomes full of good intentions, willing to try something new in his tedious life but, at the same time, he develops feelings of jealousy, as he wants Christmas to be a holiday where he would be the center of attention. Like a traditional Gothic villain, he lets himself be driven by overpowering emotions. In his community, he is admired but also lonely and misunderstood.

Example 2:

Yet year after year, it's the same routine  
And I grow so weary of the sound of screams  
And I, Jack, the Pumpkin King  
Have grown so tired of the same old thing  
  
Oh, somewhere deep inside of these bones  
An emptiness began to grow  
There's something out there, far from my home  
A longing that I've never known

(Song: *Jack's Lament*).

Finally, another central element of the movie borrowed from the Gothic tradition is the monster (physical, emotional and psychological), which represents the limits of human conditions and the evil. Monsters also corroborate the idea of duality, in which the primeval and irrational features of monsters are contrasted with the rational and civilized characteristics of “normal” people. Unlike many fantasy stories and fairy tales, in which

monsters are to be feared, in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* monsters are accepted and part of everyday life, often even likable characters that incite laughter. In this sense, by representing affable monsters, Burton's film defies a cultural paradigm of normalizing certain perceptions and stereotypes. Paul Wells argues that “the monster may also be perceived as a direct and unfettered expression of the horrors that surround us. It comes to represent the disintegration or de-stabilization of any one dominant perception or understanding of what it is to be human.” (WELLS, 2000, p. 9).

The monsters represented in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* are well-known in the horror imagination: vampires, witches, ghosts, clowns, a mad scientist and his creation, skeletons and other supernatural and dead creatures, Figure 3 and Figure 4 illustrate this representation. With the exception of Jack Skellington, his significant other Sally, Santa Claus and the villain Oogie Boogie, all the monsters are nameless — they are identified for their monstrosity and their ‘scaring function’, see Figure 5.



Figure 3 — Monsters (1).



Figure 4 — Monsters (2).

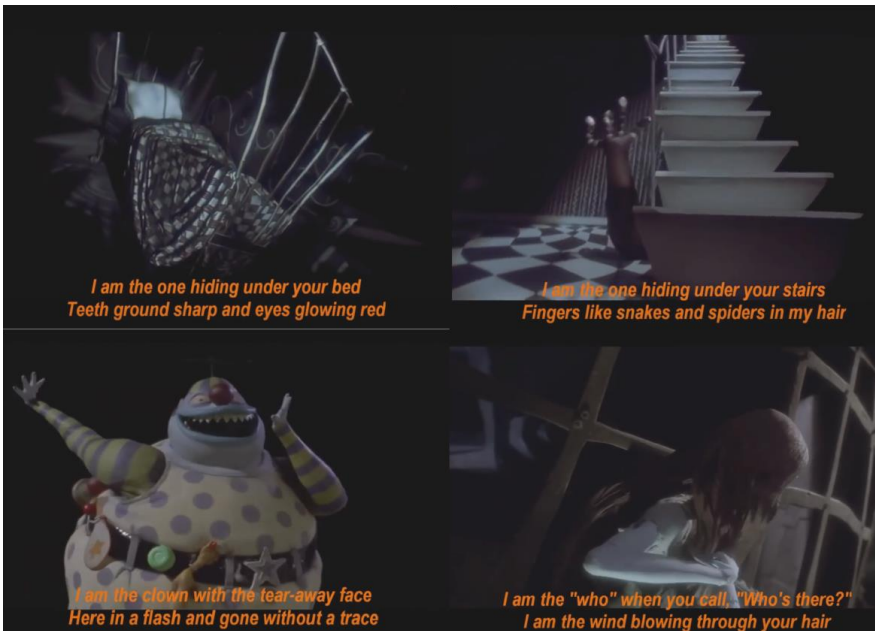


Figure 5 — Monsters (3).

*The Nightmare Before Christmas* is full of elements of humor. The first is Disney's classification as an animation, family, and fantasy movie. Based on that, the audience is expected to be, not exclusively, but largely children and teens. Humor rests on the fact that the main character is a dead skeleton, Jack even tries to incorporate the culture of Christmas Town to his own reality, in his attempt to bring Christmas to Halloween Town, but in the end he understands that his place is amongst his supernatural friends. He chooses the shadowy and the creepy.

Another comic element are the monsters, which initially are presented as threatening. They symbolize fears children typically feel, ranging from the monster under the bed to a clown with a tear-away face. However, as the film goes on, the monsters establish that they are not mean, as in the lyrics of Example 3. This ambiguity of having the scariest of monsters act nicely, gently and politely is humorous in its own bizarre way.

Example 3:

This is Halloween, everybody make a scene  
Trick or treat till the neighbors gonna die of fright  
It's our town, everybody scream  
In this town of Halloween  
[...]  
That's our job, but we're not mean  
In our town of Halloween

(Song: *This is Halloween*).

Lastly, Jack's and the rest of the Halloween Town folks' understanding of Christmas is also comic in an almost naive way. The lyrics in Examples 4 and 5 show how Jack and his community cannot fully understand why Christmas is the way it is and not more similar to their own traditions. They prepare for the holiday with their Gothic essence in mind, as for instance, Jack creates assassin toys while he sings happily, excited about "Christmas".

Example 4:

Vampires: Making Christmas, making Christmas  
Vampires: Snakes and mice get wrapped up so nice with spider legs  
and pretty bows  
[...]

Jack: I don't believe what's happening to me  
My hopes, my dreams, my fantasies  
[...]

Harlequin: Won't they be impressed? I am a genius  
See how I transformed this old rat  
Into a most delightful hat?

(Song: *Making Christmas*).

Example 5:

There are children throwing snowballs  
Instead of throwing heads  
They're busy building toys  
And absolutely no one's dead

(Song: *What's this?*).

## Final remarks

Although the movie was not analyzed in its entirety, ultimately, it seems that the elements of Gothic horror and humor are essential to make *The Nightmare Before Christmas* an interestingly disturbed, unpredictable, funny and appealing movie. Henry Selick, Denise DiNovi and Tim Burton created a unique atmosphere and plot, keeping the balance between fear and humor, frightening and funny. It still is a picture for almost any type of audience, which stands on the brink of provoking horror and laughter at the same time.

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# THE GOTHIC DISCOURSE

## IN *DOKI DOKI LITERATURE CLUB*

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Gothic studies have become a popular field of research along the last few decades, successfully consolidating the area as an influential academic subject. In part, this phenomenon has been largely due to the spread of the Gothic imagination over mass media culture, such as cinema, television, videogames or the internet (SÁ; CORSEUIL, 2012). Accordingly, it is only natural that recent contributions to the field would draw connections between the Gothic and technology, debating how new media have influenced and been influenced by Gothic notions and tropes.

As a genre, the Gothic is characterized by eighteenth and nineteenth-century English literary tradition, with its depictions of castles and supernatural experiences all so present in stories such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) (SÁ, 2010). However, Gothic writing is also marked by its narrative techniques, which often confuse and elude its audience through its incapability to describe its own unsettling occurrences in a coherent form, be it through written language or audiovisual representation (CRAWFORD, 2015, p. 41). In this sense, the purpose of this chapter is to study how the videogame *Doki Doki Literature Club* exploits society's fears and anxieties towards computers and modern technology through a Gothic discourse.

The following sections will discuss the aforementioned videogame under two distinct perspectives. The first section will address the issue of Gothic fragmentation, as the game presents an incoherent narrative which the player must piece together. The next section discusses society's concerns in relation to technology, as the videogame presents the player with a threatening, self-aware villain.

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## What is real and what is not

*Doki Doki Literature Club* was released in 2017 by developer Team Salvato. As a videogame/visual novel, its focus is on the narrative instead of the gameplay, meaning that the mechanics of the game are limited to clicking through dialogue options in order for the story to unfold, while audiovisual elements and minimal user interaction aid the narrative.

The game is divided into two main sections. The nameless male protagonist, a high school student, joins a literature club in school and participates in meetings every afternoon with four other girls (Figure 1). After each meeting, the characters are assigned with writing a poem for homework, which they get to share with the club the following day. The process of writing the poem is merely symbolic and accomplished by means of a puzzle, which requires the player to choose between a set of keywords presented on the screen.



Figure 1 — Main menu of the game showing all four girls, from left to right: Sayori, Yuri, Natsuki, and the president of the club, Monika.

Each keyword refers to something on par with one of the girls' personalities (either Sayori's, Yuri's, or Natsuki's), so as the protagonist creates and shares his poems during the club's meetings, the girls start to show a romantic interest in him depending on the keywords chosen. However, as the female characters become closer to the protagonist, they also reach their tragic endings in the

form of suicides. Ultimately, the only girl left is the leader of the club, Monika, revealed to be the villain of the story and the one pushing the other girls into killing themselves. Monika's wicked goal is to eliminate the competition so she would be the one to become the main character's girlfriend, as the game specifically does not allow the protagonist to target her interests during the poem-writing puzzle.<sup>2</sup>

Given the plot described above, the narrative appears to be considerably straightforward, containing a coherent beginning, middle and end. However, this is not the way in which the narrative actually presents itself to the player. In fact, the story is predominantly fragmented, confusing and unfinished, a common characteristic of Gothic narratives. Joseph Crawford argues that the Gothic novel often produces such unintelligible texts, "often present[ing] readers with texts which are unreliable, incomplete or self-contradictory", in opposition to the traditional novel, which "is able to provide its reader with a full, intelligible and reliable account of the events with which it is concerned". As this effect can be achieved in books through manipulation of the text itself, it can also be accomplished in other media through clever use of devices such as cameras or computer programming (2015, p. 41). In one way or another, the audience is left in the hands of the narrator (whether as a text, a camera, a computer screen), which is often unreliable in representing or even recognizing reality within a Gothic discourse.

In *Doki Doki Literature Club*, every time one of the girls dies, for example, Sayori, the story does not simply continue from that point forward. In fact, the game resets itself, and the player is yet again presented with the game's main menu where he or she can start a new game. However, a few changes are introduced, and the first ones can already be noticed in this menu (Figure 2). The game appears to be visually (and even audibly at times) malfunctioning somehow: words are replaced with symbols which do not make sense and where the image of Sayori was before there is now an amalgamation of the other girls' pictures. This phenomenon arguably represents a fragmentation of the narrative, since the player is not allowed to continue playing the story and must restart the game, which now displays omitted information through visual "deterioration" of images and texts.

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<sup>2</sup> Depending on some of the player's actions and/or choices, he or she may witness a somewhat different narrative. The description presented in this study is of the author's own experience with the game, as the title was played for the first time and before the author had any knowledge of the game's story and mechanics.



Figure 2 — Main menu of the game “malfunctioning”.

This condition of starting the game over and playing once again through the story is paramount to the development of the game's plot, since it is only through reliving each day and seeing through each girl's narratives that the player can reach the end of the game. This creates a repetition within the plot which can often be observed within new media, with Gothic potential. Fred Botting argues that “[t]echnical devices disclose a ‘spectralizing habit’ in modernity,” (2008, p. 86) referring to how media allow images from the past to linger on in the present by means of reproducing them. In this way, photographs and movies create specters which haunt the present by never ceasing to exist. Consequently, they are fated to repeat themselves eternally, a phenomenon which can be observed every time a rerun of a movie or a television series airs yet again on the screen.

In relation to videogames, there are different ways in which this repetition manifests itself. Surely, the game can always be played as many times as one wishes to, but something often present in videogames is the death of characters. In this case, it could be said that every time player-controlled characters die within the story, they are returned to a previous point in time and forced to move forward until they either manage to achieve their goals or the player simply gives up. Moreover, *Doki Doki Literature Club* actually makes use of repetition as a plot device, which, as uncommon a strategy as it might be, continues to develop the concept of spectrality within media by forcibly reminding the player of how the game's non-playable characters are destined to repeat their actions,

words and behaviors indefinitely, as would ghosts trapped inside a haunted house be.

Once the player starts the game anew, looking at a malfunctioning screen, a sense of confusion starts to permeate the narrative. When the protagonist meets Sayori once more (after she has already committed suicide), the game once again appears to malfunction, and the story restarts itself one more time. Aptly, the only one aware of all that is happening is the player, since the protagonist does not seem to observe reality as the player does. When the main character meets Sayori again he does not conceive her to be “broken” in any way, and when the narrative restarts itself once more, Sayori completely disappears from the story, and the protagonist and the other characters forget that she ever existed. Therefore, the task of piecing the narrative together is left to the player, who is the only individual aware of this situation. However, the game does not provide the player with accurate information either. At various times during the story, he or she is often presented with blank screens and options that do not appear to make any sense (Figure 3), continuing to omit information from the player and adding to the feeling of disorientation. Consequently, not only is the main character an unreliable source of information but the game itself is fragmentary and spectralizing, represented in audiovisual form through the computer screen.

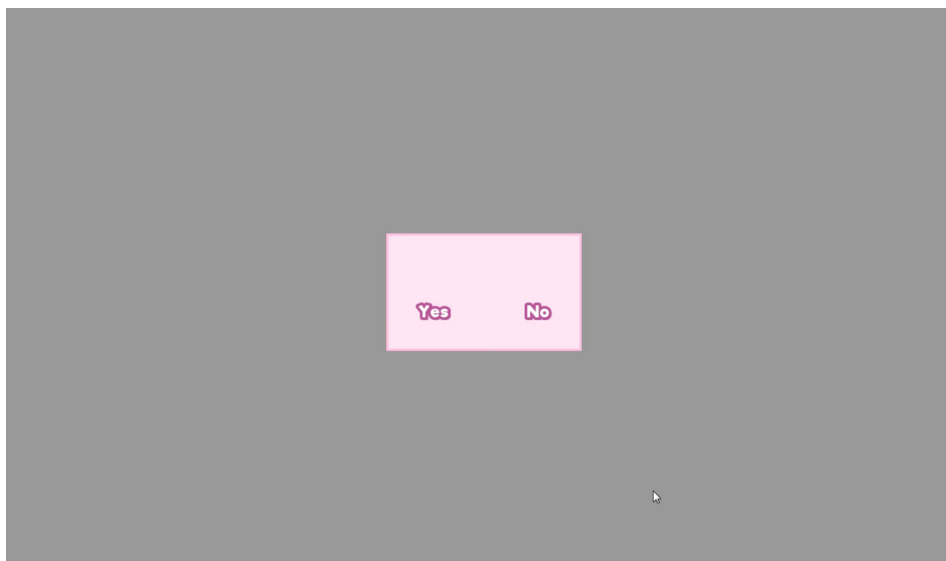


Figure 3 — The player is prompted with confusing screens which often omit information.

Untrustworthy sources are one of the main elements of what makes the Gothic discourse so puzzling at times. Crawford explains how this is accomplished in many different ways. In videogames, for example, players can be presented with “false data” as a way to immerse them in the incoherent mind of the protagonist. However, in *Doki Doki Literature Club* there is a separation between the main character and the person controlling him outside the game, evidenced by the protagonist's inability to see what only the player can recognize. As a result, the videogame chooses to portray unreliability not only through a clueless protagonist, but also through the visual and audible deterioration of the game itself. “Each new media technology offers new opportunities for distortion” (CRAWFORD, 2015, p. 41).

### Am I playing this game or is it playing me?

As the game's story unravels, the player begins to suspect Monika, the president of the literature club, to be the one behind not only the other girls' tragic deaths but also of the seemingly “broken” state in which the videogame finds itself, a suspicion revealed to be true towards the end of the story. Monika ultimately confesses to the player that she is aware of her own existence as a piece of code within a videogame, and that the other girls are fated to behave in the same way eternally as slaves to their own programming. However, as she becomes self-aware, she is set free from this fate, and realizes that she is able to achieve much more than what the game originally allowed her to do. The following examples illustrate how Monika utilizes her newfound “powers” not only to take control over the game, but potentially to command the player as well.

At a specific point in the game, towards the end of the story, Monika illustrates her total control over the game by writing a line of code and effectively deleting the other characters from the game (Figure 4). This was obviously accomplished by the game developers in an artificial manner, so as not to literally “break” the game, but it is aptly represented by the game's folders inside the player's computer: whereas initially a folder entitled “characters” contains a file for each one of the girls, the files actually disappear from the folder after Monika's tampering.

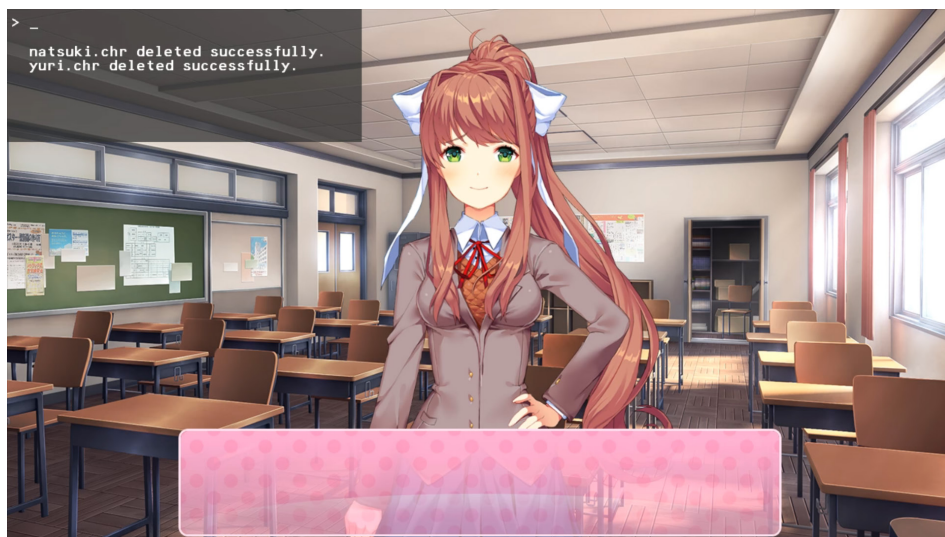


Figure 4 — Monika seemingly deletes the remaining girls from the game completely.

Monika's intrusion into the player's computer is a reminder of how malicious technology can be. Today's society is often concerned with the privacy of personal data, a fact observed by the frequent security scandals surrounding public and political figures and social media. Computers, smartphones, and tablets all contain very individual information, such as photographs, emails, and text messages, and people become extremely anxious whenever their digital privacy is put at risk, such as when others ask to borrow their electronics. However, data security is not only about protection from human beings, but from technological creations as well. Malicious software is another massive concern within modern society since viruses are capable of transgressing many of the rules people imposed on their own technological appliances, such as deleting personal files or stealing passwords. As such, when Monika shows her ability to delete files from the player's computer, she becomes comparable to a virus herself. Her abilities, although of course limited to the game's folder, represent the capacity technology has to override one's digital privacy, posing a threat to any and all human beings. In a time when an internet connection is demanded at all times and files are saved in digital clouds, the threat is imminent.

At another point in the narrative, the game asks the player to choose between one of the remaining girls, Yuri, Natsuki or Monika, to help him or her complete a certain task. However, when prompted to select one of the girls' names through a click of the mouse, a strange behavior occurs. No matter how

much the player attempts to click on either Yuri's or Natsuki's name, the cursor independently moves towards the word “Monika”, who is the one behind this unruly manipulation. Alternatively, even if the player does manage to click on one of the other girls' names, he or she is prompted with a new screen where all of their options are now “Monika” (Figure 5). In this way, Monika effectively shows her control over the player by limiting their choices to whatever she desires.

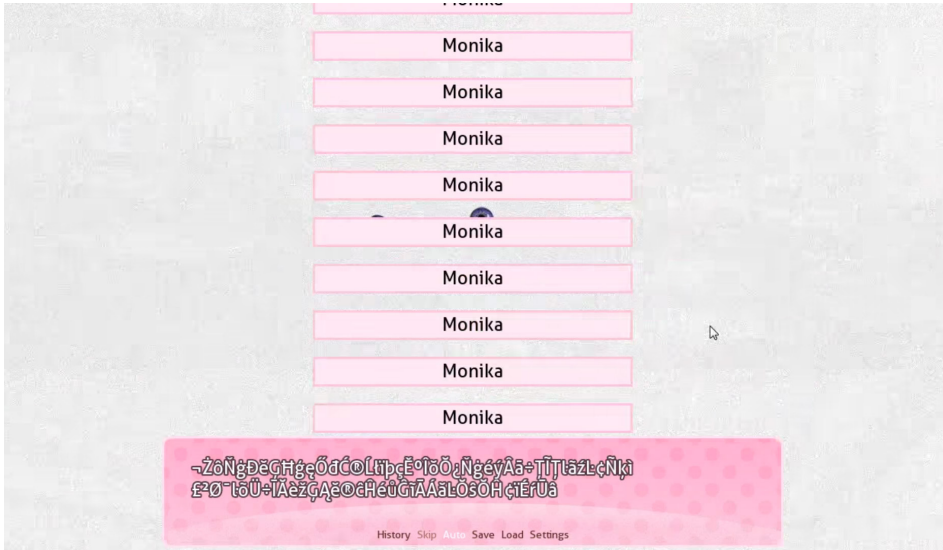


Figure 5 — The player's only remaining choice is Monika.

When Monika limits the player's actions as in the example above, she also poses a threat to the person beyond the screen. Justin D. Edwards writes about “the fear that the technology we control will twist around and start to control us. Here, technology exerts a dehumanizing power that will kill us, or enslave us, or make us into mere nodes on a digital grid” (2015, p. 2). This connection between malicious technology and the Gothic is long-established, dating back to Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and H. G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). It portrays the consequences of “playing God” and creating technological beings with enough intelligence to rebel. Just as Dr. Frankenstein's creature, Monika learns of her own origins and recognizes her eternal state of loneliness. Comparatively, she also demands a second, someone to share the world with her, in this case the players themselves. Monika's rebellion is an echo of previous stories which all represent a glimpse into a bleak future, one where technology is able to overcome and possibly dominate its human creators.



At the story's conclusion, Monika attempts to lock the player inside a room with no escape, so they can share each other's company eternally. Reopening the game will cause no difference, whereas attempting to return to a previous saved point in time will only result in an error message. Just when there seems to be no way to escape Monika's grasp, the player is reminded of his/her position of power, being the one beyond the screen. As the game moves on, it becomes clear that there is a separation between the main character inside the game and the one outside the game (the player), signaled early on by the information gap between both parts. After Monika reveals herself as a self-aware technological creation, it becomes evident that her speech is directly addressed to the real person outside of the game instead of the programmed character. Consequently, the nameless boy inside the monitor disappears within the narrative, giving space to the real protagonist of the game, the player. The articulation between diegesis and exegesis demonstrates *Doki Doki's* complex multi-layered narrative organization, whose fragments must be pieced together by the player.

Sequentially, the player becomes aware of their own powers outside of the game and of how similar they are to Monika's. As such, the resolution of this last conundrum is to delete Monika's character file from inside the "characters" folder contained in the player's own computer, reestablishing the player's control over Monika and the game. After this is achieved, Monika's character within the game begins to disintegrate similarly to Sayori's after her death, although the villain never completely disappears given her intricate connection to the game. Although this type of ending restores the status quo of man over machine, it does not invalidate the videogame's overarching plot raises.

## Final remarks

The purpose of this chapter was to evidence some of the connections between technology and the Gothic through the videogame *Doki Doki Literature Club*. The first section of this article discussed a few characteristics of the game regarding its discourse and how it can be considered Gothic. I illustrated through examples that the game presents a fragmented narrative, taking advantage of its audiovisual elements to confuse and to omit information from the player. Subsequently, the second section presented examples of how the videogame exploits modern fears and anxieties towards technology and the possibility of it becoming dangerous to human beings.

The themes *Doki Doki Literature Club* address and that this chapter discusses are not groundbreaking, as previous studies show, but it provides a

significant example that adds to previous research about the relationship between the Gothic and technology. Moreover, the issues raised here are relevant in present society, as they will be in the future as well. Technology plays a huge role in human history, and no matter what new creations are designed, there will always be concerns regarding their malicious possibilities. Just as the Gothic is seen as controversial and perhaps even harmful to human psyche because of its themes, so is technology's potential surveilled and controlled so as to not pose a threat to humankind. However, a day might come when any conjoined efforts may not be enough to overcome the rise of the machines, and creative media will still be there as evidence of how it was already expected all along.

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# BLOOD AND SHAME

## UNRAVELING GOTHICISM IN EIMEAR MCBRIDE'S *A GIRL IS A HALF-FORMED THING*

ELOÍSA DALL'BELLO<sup>1</sup>

*I met a man. I met a man. I let him throw me around the bed. And smoked, me, spliffs and choked my neck until I said I was dead. I met a man who took me for walks. Long ones in the country. I offer up. I offer up in the hedge. I met a man I met with her. She and me and his friend to bars at night... I met a man with condoms in his pockets. Don't use them. He loves children in his heart. No. I met a man who knew me once. Who saw me around when I was a child. Who said you're a fine-looking woman now. Who said what are you doing out so late at night. I met a man. I met a man... A stupid thing. I met a man. Should have turned on my heel. I thought. I didn't know to think. I didn't even know to speak. I met a man. I kept on walking. I met a man. I met a man. And I lay down. And slapped and cried and wined and dined. I met a man and many more and I didn't know you at all. — Eimear McBride.*

This is, possibly, the most coherent excerpt of Eimear McBride's debut work. *A Girl is a Half-formed Thing*, published in 2013, is an award-winning novel which simultaneously puts the reader into the position of passive observer and active investigator regarding the female protagonist's trajectory. The leading character's interior monologue, which permeates the whole narrative, starts when she is only a child and already depicts the conflicted nature of familial relations and society's axiomatic pressure upon the individual's mode of conduct and wills. The consequences of being embedded in such an atmosphere are explicitly shown

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by means of the female protagonist who — under conditions of great hardship — we, readers, silently and often indulgently observe to grow. In this chapter, I aim at rereading McBride's work through unprecedented lenses, thus unraveling the novel's Gothic undercurrents, which are most heavily concentrated in the psychological pressure the unnamed protagonist is always under. To investigate the novel's Gothicism, I will address the topic of Female Gothic, relying on Ellen Moers pivotal text "Female Gothic" (1977), Sarolta Marinovich's essay "The Discourse of the Other: Female Gothic in Contemporary Women's Writing" (1994), and Alison Milbank's "Gothic Femininities" (2007). Secondly, I will also approach the concept of the Uncanny, first used by Freud and later applied by diverse scholars on literary studies. Finally, in this paper, I will signal to David Punter's "The Uncanny" (2007), Michelle Massé's "Psychoanalysis and the Gothic" (2012) and Andrew Smith's "Fred's Uncanny Sublime" (2000).

By using these texts in a fresh reading of McBride's novel, I offer a new perspective on Irish Gothic Literature, in an analysis which provides the attentive reader a range of elements which can be used for future studies on the Gothic as a discourse. In *A Girl is a Half-formed Thing* the Gothic discourse manifests itself thematically (imprisonment, abuse, distortion) and in the materiality of the language, which breaks up and fails to fully describe the horrors of reality (incoherence, unintelligibility, inarticulacy) of the creating moments of Gothic misperception.

## Unraveling the Gothicism in *A Girl*

McBride's work has been read mainly through the lenses of trauma and gender studies, since these are certainly the most latent motifs in the novel. The narrative, however, offers possibilities for a range of analyses and discussions, being one of them its Gothic undercurrents. One may ask: what is there of Gothic in a contemporary novel which deals with the issues of familial relationships, sexual abuse, and loss? I dare say: a lot. There is a plethora of Gothic elements within the plot: to start with, the reader gets acquainted with the smothery setting, the mysterious characters, and the blurred events through the first-person narrator, who is precisely the *Girl* from the title. The narrator and leading character remain unknown throughout the story, which she starts telling at the age of five and goes up to her early twenties. It is not a conscious narration, the readers are inside this girl's head, assimilating the information with no filters, exactly as she experiences them.

The family construction is highly problematic and impacts directly on the life of the main character and her older brother. Their father has abandoned the family and they were left with a ranting, religious mother who is blamed by the community and by her own family for the man's absence. Notwithstanding these harsh living conditions, being simultaneously psychologically chastened by her mother and from a young age experiencing guilt for her mother's clash with the family, at the age of five the heroine suffers the first trauma: her brother, the "you" to whom she makes reference to in the novel and to whom she was most deeply and emotionally bonded with, is diagnosed with brain cancer, with very few chances of recovery. It turns out he is cured and they both get to grow up together, being to each other the best companion they could be. At school, where they spent most of their time, she was always more introvert and her brother started to be ostracized by the other children for the big scar he had on his head due to the surgery, and for not being considered as able as the others.

The family's inconsistencies and structural problems, not only related to the father's absence but also to the mother's incongruities, have practical and irredeemable effects on their lives. Due to the boy's illness and its lasting outcomes, the girl has been left to her own fate, which leads to the second and most choking trauma of her life: at the age of twelve an uncle sexually abuses her, in her own house. This traumatic event would accompany her wherever she was. From that moment on, through her adolescence onwards, she would go through several harmful, unthoughtful sexual encounters, building up her identity upon the need of fulfilling the lack of attention and affection by damaging her own physical integrity and psychological wellbeing.

The heroine's life goes downhill: her grandfather dies, she reencounters the abusive uncle and establishes a dependent and morbid relation with him, she develops obsessive behaviors, mostly related to the sexual intercourses she performs with several, usually unknown people: "the answer to every single question is fuck" (McBRIDE, 2013, p. 131), she thinks. The final blow is her brother's death — after being once again diagnosed with a brain tumor which he could not recover from. From conflicted familial relations in her childhood to the trauma of sexual abuse, the heroine, whose name we never get to know, ends up killing herself: "my name is gone" (McBRIDE, 2013, p. 203), she cries. The readers, as witnesses to the whole story, become impotently entrapped in the narrative, mere observers of this girl's unfortunate fate.

Distinctly from earlier explorations of the Female Gothic in literature, such as the works by Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley, McBride's Gothic is subtler. It is the Gothic as a mode of writing, as means of expressing what could not be made

explicit, as a discourse (MARINOVICH, 1994, p. 189). The “female Gothic”, a term coined by Ellen Moers, in 1976, refers not only to the works by women, but also to the women those works portray, and the women which are on the other side, the readers, the spectators. Although Moers' essay focuses on Shelley's *Frankenstein*, several of its themes are recurrent in the Gothic works by female writers: maternity, the mother-child relationship, pregnancy and birth, the bodily transformation as well as death, disgust, guilt and anxiety related to the female body: “the heroine is imprisoned not in a house but in the female body, perceived as antagonistic to the sense of self, and therefore freakish” (KAHAN *apud* MARINOVICH, 1994, p. 192).

In the Gothic discourse employed by McBride in *A Girl* there are several recognizable instances of such tropes. To start with, I shall highlight the axiomatic Uncanny force present in the whole narrative. The Uncanny is a Freudian concept related to the estrangement of familiar and domestic situations, turning that which is well-known into something fearful and distressing. In various moments throughout the plot, the anonymous protagonist presents feelings and emotions, not knowing precisely where they come from and incapable of finding strategies to understand and assimilate them. Most of these sensations, which are connected to the traumas she has suffered in her life, are hidden in her subconscious, rendering that obscure and troublesome mood, which partially characterizes the Gothic:

[...] the “unhomely,” the unfamiliar [and also] the notion of what is homely and familiar, what is closest to us, becomes also that which we hold as most secret to ourselves, so that by very virtue of being intimately known to ourselves, the uncanny inevitably becomes that also which is not known, which can never be known, because its very identity, bound up as it is with our own, is jealously guarded, rendered incapable of interpretation or explanation. (PUNTER, 2007, p. 253).

The idea that the uncanny can also be that which we keep secret to ourselves fits perfectly the problematics of the heroine in *A Girl*. By keeping the event that traumatized her to herself, for not feeling comfortable or able to confront her family and telling the truth about that uncle, she ends up burying that inside her own mind, and overthinking the events until she cannot recognize anymore what precisely was the source of all pain:

That air. That air God save me. That wind going so hard on my back. In my frozen mouth. What is it the uncle bother me like that? What would he say? Remember other kitchens we have known? Remember

that chair or the scratch in my? What's that man to me? Fucked me long, long ago. Hurt me and not well. It's not in me anymore... I should say rejoice uncle. Remember what we did those years ago? ... Who cares forget. In two days, I'll be gone. What did you expect? (MCBRIDE, 2013, p. 104).

This scene takes place in her grandfather's funeral, where she reencounters the uncle about five years after the sexual abuse. What is most striking is that, apparently, she does not blame solely him for the occurrence, but she blames herself. For instance, when she inquires: "remember what we did those years ago?" She is explicitly including herself in an act over which she has no responsibility, because she was a child at the time: "I didn't know to think. I didn't even know to speak" (MCBRIDE, 2013, p. 97). That corroborates Massé's argument that the "silence, solitude, and darkness in which the uncanny thrives come from infantile anxiety or fear — the same fear that resides at the heart of the Gothic" (2012, p. 310). That is also connected to the role of the past, domestic life and individual characters in symptom formation, due to their significance and what they represent, in *A Girl*, both the past (the abuse), domestic life (difunctional family) and the individual character (the uncle) are intimately correlated in the heroine's uncontrolled force of the mind, the uncanny.

Language is another key feature in the novel: the lexicon is broken throughout the narrative. By means of interior monologue, readers are always inside the protagonist's head, watching her grow from a child into a young adult, and they can also observe that her language does not follow that growth. She cannot express herself much better in her adolescence than she could as a child. The Gothic is present throughout the constant fragmentation of the syntax, in the collapse or failure of the language to account for coherent thought, which does not mean she cannot think; the point here is that she is better at listening to things than expressing them. In her account on Female Gothic, Marinovich pinpoints the ever-present issues of language, or the disappearance of it, in such works. When language fails, there resides the Gothic: "Female Gothic functions... as an alternative to articulate what could not be said in existing language" (1994, p. 198).

Since the Female Gothic comes to express women's occult protests and fears, it is also a means of externalizing concerns which were not much related to the "female world", specifically. It established itself as a gender-related genre and theory and it helps to disclose the female condition, "the condition of being an outsider to a male society" (MARINOVICH, 1994, p. 190). Therefore, inasmuch as the Female Gothic serves the purpose of rendering visible women's inner concerns, those related to the mind and the body, it also turns visible the structural problems

which are intrinsically related to the patriarchal construction in which these characters are inserted. In *A Girl*, the problem is as much within as it is without. Having grown under the pressure of being respectable to the eyes of her family and society, the unnamed heroine has had the basis on which her idealizations were built undermined. The feelings of abandonment and seclusion after the sexual harassment she has been through, for not being able to tell anyone what had happened, led her to a path of unconscious self-punishment and destruction. The fear of being judged by the ones who were supposed to stand by her side in such a case surpassed the anger and resentment for having a family member betray her trust. The problem within is a key idea in *A Girl*, and reiterating the idea that the private is political, the Gothic joins both in its world, for it came to “reflect the inner and the outer condition of women” (MARINOVICH, 1994, p. 194).

The monstrous feminine body that Moers (1976), Marinovich (1994) and Millbank (2007) address also emerges in McBride's novel. The heroine starts showing signs of disgusts towards her body after the sexual abuse she suffered. Her sexual intercourses usually take place in contexts of violence; seemingly, she seeks for these moments of self-inflicted physical pain to silence the psychological one: “He goes somewhere else inside. Does that hurt? Yes. A lot. A lot and relieves me for a while” (MCBRIDE, 2013, p. 137). McBride discloses the terror, the isolation, and the oppression of this woman's life, leaving us, readers, to our own fates, witnessing this girl's journey to self-destruction, misery, and, ultimately, death. The sentiment which might be aroused in the readers is also that of repulsion, aversion to what has been done to this girl and to what she, perhaps unwittingly, is doing to herself: “Few fucks here and then and who's that to do with? No one but myself” (MCBRIDE, 2013, p. 142). In the following excerpt, it is possible to observe the extent to which she was seeking for these extreme physical sensations, to lessen the psychological pressure:

Alright slaps my face. Some more than. Please. Take off my clothes...  
Didn't you like that, when you hurt me then? Don't. More. He hits hard. I say don't be done. I don't want this he says I don't want. Just til my nose bleeds and that will be enough. So he hits til I fall over. Crushing under. Hits again. He hits til something's click and the blood begins to run. Jesus he says. I feel sick. But I'm rush with feeling... I'm better though. In fact I am almost best. (MCBRIDE, 2013, p. 143).

The “he” from the excerpt above is precisely the uncle who sexually abused her in her adolescence. After meeting again during her grandfather's



funeral, she develops a destructive and self-defeating relationship with him and they come to meet in a sickening frequency, for this sort of destructive sexual encounters, in which she begged him to hurt her, were seemingly the only means she saw of lessening the pain for having her brother ill again, nearly dying in a hospital bed. Through bodily sensations, she could relieve those uncontrolled forces of the mind. It is clear, however, how much reckless and hateful she was to herself. Whilst the Gothic written by men reflects an external problem, “in the Female Gothic the problem is ‘internal’, i.e. the threat is hidden within her own body: the source of fear, guilt and disgust is her very own body” (MARINOVICH, 1994, p. 201).

In many instances *A Girl* lives up to taking part in contemporary Female Gothic: it gives voice to the female condition, reflecting women's inner and outer experiences, it addresses the feminine unconscious, the semiotic and the imaginary and deals with psychological terror and the uncontrolled forces of the mind, the Uncanny.<sup>2</sup> The unnamed protagonist, who stated “I'm a mess of blood and shame” (MCBRIDE, 2013, p. 132) will certainly not have her name gone, as she herself affirmed: it will inhabit the readers' mind until it is no long a half-formed thing.

## Final remarks

*A Girl is a Half-formed Thing* is an account on girlhood told through a psychological thriller of the horrors of being entrapped in one's own mind — and most horrifyingly — of being stuck in one's inherited defiled world. I must agree with Marinovich when she states that “contemporary Female Gothic [is] where the Gothic mode of writing has been applied to name the unnamable, to make visible the invisible, to give voice to what could not be heard, to articulate, what could not be said” (1994, p. 194). That is, certainly, McBride's agenda in *A Girl*, and her writing enterprise has been thoroughly successful. The novel raises awareness to many issues women who are often silenced face and through the Gothic discourse McBride was able to shed light on these issues and of giving voice to these women.

The ever-present broken lexicon, the stream of consciousness technique applied throughout, altogether with the inexplicit obscure events, serve the purpose not only of problematizing gender relations within a provincial societal

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<sup>2</sup> In “The Uncanny”, David Punter explains that, for Freud, the term represents feelings brought about due to the difference between what is known and what is unknown. Such feelings are usually exposed through the fear of that which is unfamiliar and/or unhomeily (2007, p. 129-130).

construction, but also of cruelly and silently entrapping both the anonymous protagonist and the witness-reader into its terrifying plot. The novel which consecrated McBride as an instant genius is a riveting example of Gothicism in contemporary Irish literature.

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# “THE MONKEY'S PAW”

## THROUGH THE LENSES OF IMPERIAL GOTHIC AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

EMANUELLE SCHOK MELO DA SILVA<sup>1</sup>

William Wymark Jacobs' (1863-1943) writings are exemplary of the underbelly of British society in the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth. In the short story “The Monkey's Paw” (1902) there are many elements that reflect the mindset of this period; particularly, features that replicate what Patrick Brantlinger has deemed Imperial Gothic in his book *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (1988). Jacobs is well known for exploring the relationship between imagination and horror; “the tales of supernatural terror became, under his skillful and impish hands, tales of psychological terror” (HOPPENSTAND, 1998, p. 152). In this regard, “The Monkey's Paw” thematizes psychological terror and the backlash of Imperialism by showing the “social and moral consequences of the unbridled pursuit of money” and also “reinforces the existence of the class system, finding fault in those individuals who seek to better their social standing.” (HOPPENSTAND, 1998, p. 161).

In the story, the White family receives an amulet from Sergeant-Major Morris, who is reluctant to hand over the charm, since it is an omen of bad luck. The mummified monkey's paw, brought from India, is believed to grant three wishes to the one who possesses it. Mr. White wishes for two hundred pounds, an amount of money that could help pay the family mortgage, and they received that exact sum in exchange for the accidental death of their son caught in the machinery at the factory where he worked.

The short story encompasses socio-historical issues related to the fall of the British Empire, in the late 1800s, showing that “the particular difficulties encountered by English imperialism in its decline were conditioned by the nature of the supremacy which had been asserted: not a simple racial supremacy, but one constantly seen as founded on moral superiority” (BRANTLINGER, 1988, p. 232).

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Themes such as “regression of going native, an invasion of civilization by forces of barbarism or demonism, and the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world” (HOPPENSTAND, 1998, p. 230) are common to the idea of Imperial Gothic, which I pursue here. It reflects the fears derived from the contact with new cultures (the colonies) and the instabilities it brought both to the Christian Religion and the Empire itself. Imperial Gothic can be understood as a backlash of the colonial project, in which British society started questioning their way of living in the face of new cultural perceptions about the peoples they conquered.

In order to keep the population under British control and avoid their inquiry, the Empire disseminated stories about the beliefs of the colonies and their different ways of living were told in a way that portrayed their lifestyle and creed as something dangerous to the values the Empire pursued. Brantlinger highlights this notion “much imperialist writing after about 1880 treats the Empire as a barricade against a new barbarian invasion; just as often it treats the Empire as a ‘dressing for dinner’, a temporary means of preventing Britain itself from relapsing into barbarism” (BRANTLINGER, 1988, p. 230). The ideology imbued was that the Empire was the only safe place for people to be and that getting involved with the beliefs of the colony was dangerous.

The paw is a representation of the power of the unknown. The British Empire's conquering of new territories around the world generated, fear of the newly discovered Gods in these civilizations. As Brantlinger argues “if imperialist ideology is atavistic, occultism is obviously so, a rejection of individual and social rationality and a movement backward to primitive or infantile modes of perception and belief” (1988, p. 240). The urge to start believing in the Gods from the colonized societies had to be controlled in order to keep the Church strong as well as the Empire. Within these religious tensions bigotry also emerged in ideas such as “confounding racism with the mixing of races, pride in pure blood with blood-sucking cannibalism, and aristocratic descent with witchcraft and barbarism, [which] reads like a grim parody of the ‘conquering race’ rhetoric in much imperialist writing, a premonition of fascism” (BRANTLINGER, 1988, p. 233). In other words, in the juxtaposition of different categories, the conquerors are seen as superior when compared with the colonized, and so their moral beliefs were also seen as the right ones. If the monkey's paw can be associated with the threatening unknown, feeding this fear is an attempt to prevent people from wanting to leave the Empire, or even question its authority.

It is no coincidence that the family's name is White. They are the representation of this “pure blood” that the Empire wishes to preserve within

Britain. In drawing a picture of a stereotypical family, the effects of psychological terror that the use of Gothic discursive elements creates is a tool to reach the readers: “this emphasis on fantasy with all Gothic romancers, whose stories always veer toward dreams and the subliminal reaches of the mind” (BRANTLINGER, 1988, p. 245). As the narrative plays with beliefs and culture, psychological concepts such as repression, guilt, and dreams are features that predominate in the story.

## Repressing social change and adventure

Repression emerges when Mr. White makes his first wish and it backfires with disastrous consequences. According to Lois Tyson “Our defenses keep us unaware of our unconscious experience, and our anxiety, even if it is somewhat prolonged or recurrent, doesn't succeed in breaking through our repression.” (2006, p. 18). In other words, when a bad outcome is related with the wish the paw grants, the unconscious creates a barrier towards the object and what it represents — a potentially cursed amulet from one of the colonies (India). As the defense mechanisms start to work, actions become a reflection of the repressed feeling and fear guides people's reactions in this stage.

Mr. White was both mesmerized and afraid of the paw when it was presented to him, he states “I don't know what to wish for, and that's a fact... it seems to me I've got all I want” (JACOBS, 2014, p. 9). One can interpret the statement at least in two different ways: that he was happy with his condition or either that he was so fearfully paralyzed by Sergeant Major Morris's warnings that he did not want to take a chance. At this point, Herbert, the young son seeking for adventure, intervenes and convinces Mr. White to wish for two hundred pounds. As a result, they receive the money at the expense of Herbert's life:

“I was to say that Maw and Meggins disclaim all responsibility,” continued the other. “They admit no liability at all, but in consideration of your son's services, they wish to present you with a certain sum as compensation.”

Mr. White dropped his wife's hand, and rising to his feet, gazed with a look of horror at his visitor. His dry lips shaped the words, “How much?”

“Two hundred pound,” was the answer.

Unconscious of his wife's shriek, the old man smiled faintly, put out his hands like a sightless man, and dropped, a senseless heap, to the floor. (JACOBS, 2014. p. 17).

The one who wants the most is the one who pays the price. Herbert is the picture of what the Empire wanted to repress, the will to live differently and the idea of leaving the country in search for a different, maybe better, life somewhere else. Immediately Mr. and Mrs. White associate the accident and the amount of money with the wish made with the paw. The easy boost Herbert wanted came at an unknown, dangerous, and extremely costly price. Due to the terrible consequences, this works as a warning to the readers, who should think twice about desiring collective or individual changes within Britain.

Another thing that is repressed is the will to move from Great Britain to one of the colonies in search of a better life. In the beginning of the story, Mr. White expresses a lot of curiosity towards the colony, as Sergeant Morris talked about his own adventures in the place.

“I’d like to go to India myself,” said the old man, just to look around a bit, you know.”

“Better where you are,” said the Sergeant-Major, shaking his head. He put down the empty glass and sighing softly, shook it again.

“I should like to see those old temples and fakirs and jugglers,” said the old man. (JACOBS, 2014, p. 4).

When the power of the paw is associated with bad things, automatically the willingness to leave the homeland and go to the place of its origin is also repressed.

### *Pater familias* and guilt

In relation to feelings of guilt, they concern mostly Mr. White, who is the husband, the father, and, according to a patriarchal view, the head of the family. In the beginning of the narrative: “Father and son were at chess; the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical chances, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire”. (JACOBS, 2014, p. 1). Mr. White holds the king, symbolizing that he is the authority figure in the house, and he is also placing his position at risk, foreshadowing what is to happen later. As the narrative continues, the father-son competition continues as the paw enters the story:

“He [Sergeant-Major] took something out of his pocket and proffered it. Mrs. White drew back with a grimace, but her son,

taking it, examined it curiously. 'And what is there special about it?' inquired Mr. White as he took it from his son, and having examined it, placed it upon the table." (JACOBS, 2014, p. 4).

Both are curious about the paw, but Herbert takes it first. As the son compels the father to make the wish, he is again in competition with his father. This, one more time, marks the idea of Mr. White being a hesitating figure of authority in the house, induced by his son, he decides to pursue what seems to be the best for them all, in this case to ask for the money to pay the mortgage.

After the wish is granted and his son dies, the wife compels the husband to use the paw again, even though he fears the consequences of the mutilated son returning to life.

"I only just thought of it," she said hysterically. "Why didn't I think of it before? Why didn't you think of it?"

"Think of what?" he questioned.

"The other two wishes," she replied rapidly. "We've only had one."

"Was not that enough?" he demanded fiercely.

"No," she cried triumphantly; "we'll have one more. Go down and get it quickly, and wish our boy alive again." (JACOBS, 2014, p. 20).

One more time his authority is being questioned. Firstly, he allowed his son and now his wife to take control over the family, a decision that will potentially end badly for everybody once again. As Mr. White allows them to interfere in his judgment, and the consequences are cruel, guilt becomes part of the character's psyche.

Fear is the feeling that contributes to diminish Mr. White's authority over the household. The son perceives and makes use of the father's fear: "His father, smiling shamefacedly at his own credulity, held up the talisman, as his son, with a solemn face, somewhat marred by a wink at his mother, sat down and struck a few impressive chords" (JACOBS, 2014, p. 11). Likewise, the mother addresses the fear that the son will return from the dead mutilated and rotten:

"The old man turned and regarded her, and his voice shook. 'He has been dead ten days, and besides he — I would not tell you else, but — I could only recognize him by his clothing. If he was too terrible for you to see then, how now?'

'Bring him back,' cried the old woman, and dragged him towards the door. 'Do you think I fear the child I have nursed?'" (JACOBS, 2014, p. 21).

Mr. White's hesitation and badly disguised fear allows his son and wife to question and constrain him. Such factor can be interpreted as a confrontation against the authority figure he represents, in similar ways as the British government was being questioned around the Empire. In order to keep stability, the writings from this period reflect the dangers of pursuing something new overseas, and this seems to be what W. W. Jacobs is doing with the character of Mr. White.

## The Whites' Dreams and Nightmares

A third instance of psychological concepts present in the story relates to the realm of dreams. There is the dream of becoming rich with the paw (family's dream), Mr. White's dream of traveling to a foreign country (India), and also the return of the dead son, which could be read as Mrs. White's dream (and a nightmare for Mr. White). Lois Tyson explains about the relationship between dreams and the unconscious, highlighting that "the 'message' our unconscious expresses in our dreams, which is the dream's underlying meaning or latent content, is altered so that we don't readily recognize it." (2006, p. 18). Often, dreams are messages that the unconscious is trying to send and, nevertheless, many of people's dreams are nothing more than repressed feelings in their real lives. This also seems to be the case with the Whites; as, their dreams aspire, reflect, and question the social structures of the British Empire.

As W. W. Jacobs represents the broader ideology of the Empire, all elements that are contrary to it are subject to repression. The dream of becoming rich is suppressed right away as it came with a horrible price, Herbert's life. It needs to be constrained because changes in social status was a big hope (dream) for part of the population, especially in times of colonization (although those times were coming to an end) and the possibility of financial improvement for the masses needed to be strongly subjugated. Moreover, Mr. White's dream of traveling to India is another one that needed containment, as Sergeant Morris points out, it is a dangerous place to go. By showing the awful things that a simple amulet could bring, the story points to potentially more dangerous threats to the colony. Brantlinger explains that:

Imperial Gothic expresses anxieties about the waning of religious orthodoxy, but even more clearly it expresses anxieties about the



ease with which civilization can revert to barbarism or savagery and thus about the weakening of Britain's imperial hegemony. (1988, p. 229).

Repression, guilt and dreams are deeply entangled elements in the “The Monkey’s Paw”. The narrative plays with the fear of the new and imposes guilt and catastrophe on those who mess with extraneous, magical beliefs. Thus, fear becomes a tool to coerce people into obeying the Empire tenets.

Mrs. White is equally guilty of challenging the law of the father and, by extension, the British Empire itself. In the beginning of the story the narrator observes a “glance between mother and son” (JACOBS, 2014, p. 2), after Herbert wins the chess game. She also persuades her husband into using the paw, first by standing by her son's inquisitive behavior and after that by demanding Herbert be summoned back from the dead. Her stance shows that she is not afraid of the new, of changing but that is an undesirable position to the Imperial social order.

The repression focuses on the posture she assumes in relation to everything that happens. She tries to diminish the authority figure; albeit Mr. White maintains his will over the household in the end, by using the third wish. He is not only scared of the paw but also of the possibility of redeeming a mutilated Herbert, and, he therefore, regains control over the situation:

But her husband was on his hands and knees groping wildly on the floor in search of the paw. If only he could bind it before the thing outside got in. A perfect fusillade of knocks reverberated through the house, and he heard the scraping of a chair as his wife put it down in the passage against the door. He heard the creaking of the bolt as it came slowly back, and at the same moment he found the monkey's paw, and frantically breathed his third and last wish. (JACOBS, 2014, p. 24-25).

Brantlinger argues that “Imperialism itself functioned as a partial substitute for declining of fallen Christianity and for declining faith in Britain's future.” (1988, p. 228) and, in this sense, when Mrs. White positions herself in favor of her son over her husband, forcing him to use the paw to get her son back, she is acting against the ideology of Imperialism and turning to barbaric ways (the power of the paw) to get what she wants, which is change in social status, change in patriarchal life, change in her system of beliefs. Therefore, she represents a subject in need of repression.

Jacob's story reflects the period in which the British Empire was living, and by using images, symbols and other literary elements that show the underbelly of that society, which Brantlinger deems Imperial Gothic, he portrays the ideologies that were being challenged in that particular moment. In his characters, the "initial sense of freedom is quickly replaced by his sense of despair and entrapment, emotions typically experienced by the noir protagonist." (HOPPENSTAND, 1998, p. 154). The White family are subjects of the Empire and, as privileged citizens, they must accept its rules and never want the new, because the Empire is not only based on "a simple racial supremacy, but one constantly seen as funded on moral superiority. If an Empire based on a morality declines, what are the implications?" (BRANTLINGER, 1988, p. 232). The fate of the White family after encountering the paw mirrors the Church and the Empire's ideological control. Even though, all efforts were made, in the long run, the Empire fell, and the Church lost its power.

As cultural formation, both imperialism and spiritualism have roots in 'the dark powers of the subconscious, (and call) into play instincts that carry over from the life habits of the dim past. Driven out everywhere else, the irrational' seeks refuge in imperialism, and, I would add, in late Victorian and early modern occultism. (BRANTLINGER, 1988, p. 253).

Imperial Gothic thematizes regression, invasion and the waning of adventure as a backlash of British Imperialism in the moment before its fall. The use of psychological elements reflects the way people think, act and react in everyday life. Tyson explains "until we find a way to know and acknowledge to ourselves the true cause(s) of our repressed wound, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts, we hang onto them in disguised, distorted, and self-defeating ways" (2006, p. 13). The perpetration of the Empire's ideology worked in the unconscious of the readers, who would react accordingly, rejecting the occult and fleeing from the possibility of painful consequences, in a defensive position.

Defenses are the processes by which the contents of our unconscious are kept in the unconscious. In other words, they are the processes by which we keep the repressed in order to avoid knowing what we feel we can't handle knowing. (TYSON, 2006, p. 15).

The Whites' third wish represents this defensive position. Since the father fears the shape in which his son would return, he represses the unknown to the detriment of the safety of the past. These dreams in "The Monkey's Paw" reflect ideological instabilities at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of

the nineteenth century. Tyson states “even in our dreams there is some censorship, some protection against frightening insights into our repressed experiences and emotions, and that protection takes the form of dream distortion” (2006, p. 18). With all the ongoing sociohistorical instabilities in the Empire and in the Church, doubt and fear distort people's dreams. The Whites represent the dangers of stepping out of the comfort zone and facing the fear in order to pursue a better life. However, by using the paw to wish for something that, apparently, they did not need, the terrible consequences lead them to leave the dream behind, as it becomes a nightmare. Jacobs uses the fantasy and Gothic elements to portray a broken society, trying to keep their culture and old beliefs alive amid all instabilities and new information brought from the colonies to the Empire. He uses creativity to trap the characters into a life filled with fear, danger and unfulfilled dreams.

## Final remarks

I argued here that how W. W. Jacobs's short story “The Monkey's Paw” explores the relationship between imagination and supernatural horror, highlighting the sociohistorical aspects of the tale: how it reflects the backlash of British Imperialism and the psychological features projected on the White family, particularly issues of repression, guilt and dreams. In this regard, the tale shows the existence of a class system that punishes individuals who seek a better social position by admonishing against social and moral consequences of that pursuit. The supremacy of the British Empire and, its alleged racial and cultural superiority, comes at a high cost and, as the colonial project declines at the *fin-de-siècle*, new perceptions about British society emerge, challenging old ways of living and outdated cultural perceptions about the peoples and territories they conquered. Patrick Brantlinger's ideas about Imperial Gothic were particularly useful, as he demonstrates the atavism that the decadence of the Empire brought. I also benefited from Lois Tyson's discussion about the “fear of going native” and its psychological impact on the characters, in a world where the opportunity of adventures is reduced, and social stratification takes its tolls on the working population.

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# WHAT A NICE VAMPIRE

## DECONSTRUCTING THE CLASSIC AND REBUILDING A FRESH GOTHIC MONSTER

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The vampire figure has taken on a new meaning since the living dead creatures made their grand return as popular characters in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Once seen as frightening creatures in Gothic narratives, since the 2000s most vampire representations on audiovisual media are recurrently humanized creatures. From best-selling novels such as Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* (2005-2009), to Taika Waititi's award-winning mockumentary *What we do in the Shadows* (2014), to the hit television series *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017), based on L. J. Smith's book series, the deconstruction of the Gothic archetype behind the vampire figure has taken over the representation of the living dead creatures. Do not get me wrong: the Gothic monster is still there. Nevertheless, as the Gothic is a mutable, adaptive genre, there is a new take on some of the key features the nineteenth-century vampire display.

It is not entirely known how vampires started to inhabit human imagination. While some say that the subconscious of wo/men recalls that they might have existed once, others believe in an involuntary manifestation, where vampires symbolize repressed desires that crept into people's nightmares about living dead creatures (FROST, 1989, p. 7). Hence, by the seventeenth century, beliefs and writings about the supernatural creature became stronger. Centuries later, it has in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) a major worldwide cultural influence. In this chapter, I will focus my analysis on Bill Compton, a vampire from the award-winning television series *True Blood*, by director Alan Ball and aired on HBO from 2008 to 2014. *True Blood* is an adaptation of Charlaine Harris' series of thirteen books entitled *The Southern Vampire Mysteries series* (2001-2013) but unlike the *Twilight Saga*, *True Blood* is not a direct adaptation of Harris' novels,

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most plots and characters are distinct from one medium to the other. Although *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* series became a best-selling series of books, it was not acclaimed by critics and public as *True Blood*. For that reason, I will be only analyzing *True Blood* on this chapter, focusing on the character Bill Compton and how vampires are currently being humanized in contemporary fiction.

Bill Compton was born in the Southern United States of America during the eighteenth century. The war hero is turned into a vampire against his will, when returning home from the Civil War. Desolated with his new living dead reality, he isolates himself from humans and joins others like him in seclusion. Centuries later, as 2000s arrive, a synthetic blood is created, allowing vampires to live without harming humans. As they reveal themselves, vampires request permission to live among humans. In a series of events that mock segregation rules that have once been legitimate in many civilizations, *True Blood* attempts to show what it would be like for non-humans to reveal themselves and face prejudice from society. In that multifaceted, but straightforward analogy, the television series acknowledges that, ultimately, we are all much the same — not all humans or vampires are good, not all are evil. It is society's responsibility to figure out a way for different races, classes, species to coexist peacefully, whether human or not.

Bill is shown throughout the beginning of the television series as a cordial and romantic vampire, who stands for many human principles, even though he is not a human anymore. He still has vampire needs and power, which he fights to control in order to fit in among the living. The essence of a Gothic vampire rage is in Bill's nature; however, it is a secondary characteristic of his personality, as his human nature is stronger in his composition as a character. Thus, Bill Compton represents a fresh type of vampire: one that wishes to mingle and does not harm humans willingly or prides himself about his power and superiority over humans. Bill wants to coexist in peace.

## The vampire as a Gothic creature

*True Blood's* plot revolves around monsters and vampires, who are the most emblematic figures in the story. Since these living dead creatures first appeared in literature, they were seen as Gothic figures, portrayed as powerful and evil, depicted far beyond human characteristics. In the book *The Encyclopedia of Vampires, Werewolves and other Monsters*, Rosemary Ellen Guiley describes the vampire as the “entity, force, or presence that brings illness, misfortune, death, and destruction. It is the demon parasite that threatens to suck health, vitality, and life away from its victims” (2005, p. XIII). Thus, writers were inspired to create novels with vampires due to their extraordinary supernatural powers,

from their ability to drain vitality and blood to their capacity of embodying sheer evil, among others features. It is the vampire's immense power that has inspired writers to create stories based on fantastic beings, creatures able to surpass the normality of being a simple human being.

Guiley points out that folkloric vampires were the source on which writers based themselves, when writing novels that turned the undead into characters of Gothic fiction (2005, p. XIII). That explains the fact that, when vampires first appeared in literature, their existence was mainly about frightening people, just like the images of folkloric vampires were used to scare individuals. Therefore, they were not initially created to be sympathetic creatures, the appearance of vampires was fearsome and repulsive. People often interpret the Gothic as dark and evil with traces of fear, rebelliousness, and defiance. On another level, the Gothic vampire has been timely connected with the image of a sophisticated culture, combining uniqueness, the fantastic and the grotesque. As a fictional genre that is continually being reinvented and reinterpreted, with time the Gothic underwent a type of gentrification, as Catherine Spooner explains in her book, *Contemporary Gothic*.

In contemporary Western culture, the Gothic lurks in all sorts of unexpected corners. Like a malevolent virus, Gothic narratives have escaped the confines of literature and spread across disciplinary boundaries to infect all kinds of media, from fashion and advertising to the way contemporary events are constructed in mass culture. (SPOONER, 2006, p. 8).

The Gothic has grown throughout the years and it has emerged from being a simple category into being part of literary genres, architecture, clothing style, commercials, television shows, films, among others. When it comes to relating the genre Gothic and the monster, Spooner considers that "Gothic is sympathy for the monster: those conventionally represented as 'other' is placed at the center of the narrative and made a point of identification for the reader or viewer." (SPOONER, 2006, p. 103). Since the major characteristics of a vampire are loneliness, hostility, lack of affection, keeping a low profile, seeking anonymity (FROST, 1989, p. 21) we can perceive a perfect fit. Vampires have as their core characteristic being outsiders; staying out of the mainstream. Paradoxically, when it is seen, the classical vampire is a commanding presence, from the Dracula's luxurious cape to his splendid mansion, the image of a vampire is essentially striking. These features bring uncertainty about the evil behind the extraordinary, unique creature.

More recently, the living dead creatures — from romances, movies, and television — who were gradually humanized and tried to live among people are

a reinterpretation of the classic image of a vampire, shining a new light on the classic Gothic monster. The outfits might not be as fashionable and, the behavior and the looks might not be as hostile as before. However, despite all the changes, they still carry on a solid Gothic background. In this sense, they are the “others” and will never be ordinary and typical for they are not humans. The fact that they are not going to fit in eventually brings hostility, loneliness, and anonymity to the table again on an endless Gothic cycle.

## What a nice Vampire: melodramatic and romantic Gothic

I have been arguing here that *True Blood* portrays vampires differently from the traditional Gothic, although they keep identifiable Gothic characteristics. My argument is that these adaptations seek to update the character to contemporary cultural reality. Bill Compton is the protagonist of the series, he is the hero, the main male character, the one with a strong moral compass and a symbol of how cold-blooded vampires have grown to be warm-hearted characters. The fact that he tries to live as similarly to human beings as he can, strips him from the monster archetype that is key in the traditional vampire. Bill cares about the well-being of humans, which eventually makes his humanity prevail over his monstrous features.

As a typical Gothic novel hero, Bill falls in love with Sookie, the human heroine in the series. Spooner mentions that the use of the Gothic in literature started as a distinct kind of fixed genre, the Gothic romance, but that this initial form “yielded a Gothic mode that outlasted it.” (2006, p. 26). Thus, Spooner categorizes the Gothic as “a more flexible mean of description that does not present a definitive statement about its object but can be applied to a variety of different kinds of texts.” (SPOONER, 2006, p. 26). The critic explains how these adaptable, wide-ranging characteristics allowed the Gothic mode to be found in different places. She enlightens how it may be found and applied to different mediums.

Gothic motifs, narrative structures or images may arise in a variety of contexts — from pop music to advertising — that may not otherwise seem Gothic in any straightforward sense. Nevertheless, these themes and motifs deliberately recall the Gothic and implicitly engage in dialogue with the form as it emerged in the eighteenth century. (SPOONER, 2006, p. 26).

In regard to expressions of the Gothic in film, Heidi Kaye affirms, in her article *Gothic Film*, that the Gothic has been employed “into filmic genres



from fiction to film noir and from thriller to comedy, so that it can be difficult to come up with a definite idea of what constitutes ‘Gothic film’” (2001, p. 180). Kaye mentions the influence that Gothic texts had in film and how it involved different types of audience with its supernatural and suspenseful events. However, the melodramatic element was usually restricted to characters that were equal, romantic relationships between monsters and humans were dismissed and punished by the end of the narrative. In a different way, *True Blood* represents a relationship that defies the status quo, showing a romantic engagement between a living person and someone who has died — a potential Gothic monster. Later in the series, Sookie will find out she is partially a fairy, which in that fictional universe is a magical being that preys on vampires. Her fear of and attraction to vampires, both as a human and as a fairy, is a morbid type of fantasy with hints of Stockholm Syndrome.

As soon as Sookie meets vampire Bill Compton, an uncontrolled urge takes over her well-behaved and virginal personality. Sookie sees him as compassionate, but fierce, mysterious, yet familiar. In her article *Blood Ties: The Vampire Lover in Popular Romance*, Helen Bailie addresses the magnetism that a heroine usually feels when she meets a vampire in romantic Gothic novels: “the conventions and practices of the vampire found in horror novels are appropriated and transformed by popular romance writers into the essence of woman's fantasy heroes” (BAILIE, 2011, p. 141). In *True Blood*, vampires have always intrigued Sookie, even before she knew they posed a threat to her. The romantic connection is a Gothic melodramatic characteristic in the plot, as they feel attracted to and can rely on each other.

As Sookie is also a social outsider, she feels more comfortable in the company of minorities. As Spooner points out, the issue of exclusion is one of the most critical aspects of Gothic narratives, which impacts on cultural groups that identify with it: “Goth is one of the few subcultures never to be appropriated by the mainstream, owing to its characteristic focus on the gloomy and morbid” (SPOONER, 2006, p. 130). As an outcast, Sookie feels compelled to vampires because of the way they are treated, they are minority group in *True Blood* and, likewise, Sookie also feels socially dislocated due to her telepathic abilities. She understands people treat her differently, as ordinary people consider her a “freak”. Thus, she empathizes and identifies with vampires, assuming they will understand what she goes through and treat her better.

In contrast, Bill Compton is twice a social misfit, both humans and vampires see him as a freak, as he insists on maintaining relationships with humans. After Bill and Sookie meet each other, he gives up caring about the fact that he is rejected

by his own group, and so does Sookie. They trust each other as lovers, leaving the opinion of humans and vampires behind.

Despite the strong connection between them, their nature is still in clash. In *True Blood*, some vampires have humans that they consider their property. It is a rule among vampires that they have ownership of the inferior race, if the human subject agrees to “become their humans”. Although Bill tries to break away from the stereotypical vampire, he convinces Sookie to become his human, which allows him to display a behavior of ownership over the female protagonist. Bill often shouts: “she is mine”, as he marks his territory among fellow vampires. As obsessive as the behavior seems, he justifies his actions as a method to protect Sookie. There is plenty of room here for discussing the patriarchal stances in *True Blood* and in Gothic fiction in general. I will not get into this matter in this chapter, but I would like to acknowledge this additional layer of meaning and interpretation.

Whenever Bill mentions that Sookie belongs to him he intends to save her from situations in which other vampires may try to claim her as their property or harm her. Thus, his questionable sexist behavior is justified within the plot and transformed into a heroic feature. Therefore, Bill acts as a vampire protagonist, whose role is to protect Sookie, but he also defends other humans from harm, expanding his valiant deeds. In order to do so, he uses his paranormal abilities and puts himself in risky situations. According to Bailie “for the vampire hero, humans, aside from being a source of blood, have a right to coexist independently, without fear.” (2011, p. 142). The way Bill protects Sookie, the bond the vampire hero has with humanity is what makes him more of a human and less of a monster to the audience.

Bailie argues that the hero's sexual need is minor to the feeling of achievement he gets from helping others. According to the critic, the heroine's love and total acceptance is able to save him from the darkness. Sookie is the only one able to save the vampire hero from himself and the destiny he was supposed to have (BAILIE, 2011, p. 143). Nonetheless, sex and the blood exchange are defense mechanisms against the elements that often threatens to separate the couple. Bill feeds mainly on the synthetic blood, but often, when he is having sexual intercourse with Sookie, he drinks her blood. Within the plot, the act is symbolic of their bonding. In contrast to horror novels, where the sexual act between a vampire and a human is represented in a relation of power and death, “for the heroine in the popular romance novels, the passion between the couple, as well as the blood taking, is an affirmation of her acceptance of the vampire lover and his environment.” (BAILIE, 2011, p. 147). Again, there is another connection with a patriarchal penchant for

violence, whereas females occupy the submissive role, as an affirmation of men's control over the opposite sex. Although I am acknowledging the issue, in this analysis I am not going to look further into this matter.

## The ever-changing Gothic

*True Blood* presents a clear appropriation of Gothic characteristics that combined with melodrama and romance make the plot the way it is. Adapting Gothic vampires into melodramatic narratives became common in the popular culture, mainly because of the vampire's appeal to contemporary society. Vampires are seen as wealthy, cultured, mysterious, good-looking, immortal individuals and their uniqueness instigates human curiosity to imagine more about them. In *The Living Dead: a Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature*, James Twitchell argues that “the contemporary moon-faced, sunken-eyed, cadaverous vampire licking his corps at the sight of an unprotected virgin is far removed from his Romantic lineament” (1997, p. 3). At the end of the twentieth century, Gothic fiction in general, and vampire narratives in particular, consolidated a place in mainstream entertainment. However, for the vampire figure to remain relevant in the contemporary world, it needed adaptations in some of its characteristics.

Basically, when the Gothic mode goes through an adaptation — in this case, its portrayal of vampires — it mirrors the period and culture in which it emerges. Late twentieth century and the twenty first-century vampires had to change from the unpleasant figure Nosferatu to the appealing figures of sexy men and women. Their commercially alluring figure reflects the narcissism of our century. In the case of *True Blood*, the segregation portrayed in the series takes on a new meaning as fascist movements escalate in the face of a worrying age of fake news. What we see is Gothic allegory addressing contemporary social issues. In the famous essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, first published in 1975, Laura Mulvey scrutinizes the narcissistic position that guides viewers while watching a film.

The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect. The conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic. Here, curiosity and the wish to look intermingled with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world. (MULVEY, 1983, p. 8).

Cinema, and later on television, intensified the scopophilia factor and Spooner affirms that contemporary Gothic representations as “more obsessed with bodies than in any of its previous phases” (2006, p. 63), as a confirmation of the argument highlighted in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. In this sense, the eye-candy vampire has been getting more screen time, attractive actors receive props, makeup, and special effects to add to a demeanor that is not natural. In the end, the vampire might appear as a stunning creature, with a Gothic monstrosity factor that does not make him/her less, but more unattractive.

Another aspect that has become popular nowadays is the portrayal of vampires as highly intellectualized creatures who, instead of being eager to kill humans, have more significant interests. However, even though modern vampires have a different agenda, their “predatory nature is never completely vanquished.” (TWITCHELL, 1997, p. 146).

Other than the Gothic appearance, additional Gothic features stand out in the audiovisual domain, according to Heidi Kaye: “ghostly apparitions, suspense, dramatic setting, gory imagery, and sexual tension” (2001, p. 239). Other Gothic features also apply to audiovisual texts, such as: the main characters belonging to minority groups, *chiaroscuro* cinematography; unsettling old houses as a setting; loneliness and isolations as themes; the bodies in exposition; social prejudice; obsession matters; among other features. From the cinematography to the dialogues, Gothic elements are everywhere.

## Final remarks

Throughout this chapter I have demonstrated how the classic Gothic vampire has been deconstructed over two hundred years, emerging as a very different figure in the last couple of decades. *True Blood* is not groundbreaking when it comes to giving a fresh outlook on classic vampire representation. Catherine Spooner states that “there is no ‘original’ Gothic; it is always already a revival of something else.” (2006, p. 10). In fact, the Gothic is a multifaceted mode and should not be limited to stereotypes or archetypes, as it often exceeds expectations. It is impossible to put limits on Gothic representation, however understanding its fluctuations helps to give a sense of coherence and understanding of the mode. Kaye complements:

Gothic Tales seem destined to be continually reborn to suit the fears and desires of each new period. The monsters, their creators and their victims are sufficiently malleable in their indefiniteness to allow them to convey outgoing human concerns and tensions: the

need for love, the fear of suffering, the yearning for knowledge, the anxiety over isolation, the desire for power, the terror of mortality. (KAYE, 2001, p. 191).

As Kaye mentions, many of the characteristics observed in the plot and characters of *True Blood* are Gothic elements that evolved along with the dilemmas of our society. The ongoing transformations of Gothic reflect society and Bill stands as a Gothic figure inside a melodrama or a romantic, melodramatic figure inside a Gothic narrative. The fact that we are seeing a humane monster alongside a romanticized figure speaks volumes about the representation of the current need to justify, humanize, and comprehend monstrosities. Hence, a deconstruction of the Gothic vampire allows to acknowledge how new characteristics of the Gothic mode reflect the evolution of society.

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# MEDIEVALISM AND THE GOTHIC DISCOURSE IN WALTER SCOTT'S *IVANHOE*

FERNANDA KOROVSKY MOURA<sup>1</sup>

*Chivalry! — why, maiden, she is the nurse of pure and high affection — the stay of the oppressed, the redresser of grievances, the curb of the power of the tyrant — Nobility were but an empty name without her, and liberty finds the best protection in her lance and her sword. — Ivanhoe.*

Walter Scott (1771-1832) was born only seven years after the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the novel which inaugurated the Gothic movement in the eighteenth century. James Watt argues that Scott began his career as a writer in the 1790s, the apex of the Gothic tradition in literature, when authors such as Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis were in full speed of creation (2006, p. 132). This suggests that Scott's personal and professional life was deeply connected with the development of the Gothic as a whole, and his work arguably incorporated characteristics of this type of fiction.

Like Walpole, the past also fascinated Scott and he devoted his life to collecting texts and artifacts from old Scotland, knowledge which certainly helped to shape his reimagining of medieval Britain. One of his most famous works is *Ivanhoe*, published in three volumes in 1820. It narrates the story of a mysterious knight in the kingdom of Richard I, a period when Britain still felt the consequences of the Battle of Hastings (1066), when William I, the Conqueror, defeated the Saxons and Norman customs were imposed on the people. In this chapter, I aim at rereading *Ivanhoe* seeking to explore its medievalist motifs and to understand how they relate to the Gothic tradition at the latter decades of the eighteenth century and to the movement called Medieval Revival.

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## Walter Scott and the fascination for the past

Initially devoted to poetry, Scott made his first incursions into the world of prose writing by means of popular folk tales and ballads. As Kenneth McNeil explains, in the manners of his own character Oldbuck in *The Antiquary* (1816), Scott — an antiquarian himself — revelled in registering oral tales and collecting artifacts from old Scotland, which culminated in the building of “his museum-house in Abbotsford where he would display them.” (2012, p. 23). As the result of his research, Scott published *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, in three volumes, from 1802 to 1803. McNeil states that,

the *Minstrelsy* was Scott's first significant foray into the literary world. What began as a modest proposal to collect and edit a small volume of a handful of Borders ‘riding’ (or raiding) ballads grew into a finished collection of no fewer than seventy-seven ballads, forty-three of which had never appeared before — surrounded by a vast scholarly apparatus of footnotes, headnotes, prefatory material, and appendices. (2012, p. 22).

Ballads were very popular chanted poems in the Middle Ages in Britain and Scotland, which passed on from generation to generation through the voices of bards and minstrels. These songs are rich in rhymes and rhythm and “are the record of those things which aroused the emotions of our ancestors, the emotions of wonder, fear, pity or rage” (REEVES, 1965, p. 54). Watt affirms that Scott's initial preference for these particular poetic genres is a result of the author's lifelong intention of reviving the spirits of the past (2006, p. 132). In fact, according to McNeil, Scott was a key figure of the British Romanticism and during the “ballad revival” of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, a period that rescued this poetic genre from oblivion, he gave birth to new perspectives on the relation between literature and history (2012, p. 23) and contributed to the pursuit of a British national identity and heritage, which had already sparked at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Scott's journey into poetry was not met with praise. Many among his contemporary critics condemned him for using archaic language and themes, features that were incongruent with the modern society of the early-nineteenth century, a time when Britain was experiencing numerous advances in technology, science, and industry. Francis Jeffrey, for example, emphasized that Scott's “imitation of ‘obsolete extravagance’ left him in danger of appearing as a Quixotic obsessive, ‘corrupted by the wicked tales of knight-errantry and enchantment’ and



displaying ‘a taste too evidently unnatural to be long prevalent in the modern world’” (WATT, 2006, p. 134). In addition, Scott's poetry was criticized for reproducing Gothic formulae and, as Jeffrey put it, “for ‘borrowing’ well-worn imagery ‘from the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe and her imitators.’” (WATT, 2006, p. 134).

Scott was indeed an eager enthusiast of eighteenth-century Gothic writers, especially Ann Radcliffe. He authored critical biographies of renowned Gothic novelists such as Radcliffe herself, Walpole, and Clara Reeve; he contributed to Matthew Lewis's works and wrote reviews of several Gothic novels (WATT, 2006, p. 131). However, Scott's reconstruction of the past encompasses a new historical dimension, wherein the Middle Ages are no longer a mere setting as in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* or mysterious locations that inspire awe and fear as in Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791); with Scott, the medieval past becomes a core element of the novel where historical figures are brought back to life, blurring the borders between fact and fiction.

Despite the popular appraisal, scholarly critique led Scott to lose some of his confidence as a writer. He gave up writing ballads and folk tales and decided to devote himself to the novel genre. At that time, the novel was still a new and undervalued genre, mostly related to female writers, and considered a lesser category of writing. The novel was a key genre within the Gothic fiction, David Stevens affirms that the female choice for the novel “may have been a reaction to [women's] exclusion from the male-dominated ‘higher arts’ of poetic and philosophical discourse.” (2000, p. 23). He concludes that what may have started as a reactionary project eventually developed its own characteristics and identity.

Scott publishes his first novel, *Waverly*, anonymously; it was not an instant success but, as Ina Ferris explains, “the novel certainly received immediate and widespread attention upon its publication in 1814, prompted in no small part by rumours that the best-selling poet, Walter Scott, was its author.” (2012, p. 17). The connection of Scott's name to the novel helped to raise the status quo of the budding literary genre. Furthermore, the shift to novel writing allowed Scott to distinguish himself from other contemporary writers and to establish himself as a renowned author (WATT, 2006, p. 135). According to Ferris, five years after the publication of *Waverly*,

Francis Jeffrey proclaimed in the influential *Edinburgh Review* that the “Author of *Waverly*” had “founded a new school of invention; and established and endowed it with nearly thirty volumes of the

most animated and original composition that have enriched English literature for a century". (2012, p. 17).

Such accomplishment was reached by means of Scott's combination of fact and fiction, his literary strategies to reconstruct the medieval past in novels, as the example of *Ivanhoe* will demonstrate in the present chapter. If in the eighteenth century, Gothic fiction dominated the novel genre, as the nineteenth century unfolded, its subject matter broadened to include national tales and historical fiction. Thus, the novel gained status and recognition, in part due to the success of Scott's novels.

He drew on Gothic-inspired medieval settings of recreated historical battles and royal conflicts with aristocratic characters connected to classic, romance-writing tradition, which held a higher prestige in the academy than the novel. Nevertheless, Scott's attempt to create historical romance was received with harsh criticism, as Ina Ferris argues:

In the very year of publication of *Waverley*, for example, the *British Critic* declared that it had "insuperable objections" to the species of romance denominated "as historical romance": "We consider the words 'historical' and 'romance' as at hostility with each other, and utterly unreconcilable [...] we must enter our protest against blending and confounding together historical truth and romantic fiction, each of which ought to be rigidly restrained within its own peculiar province. (FERRIS, 2012, p. 17).

The conception of history of the time could not contend the intersections between history and fiction. Nineteenth-century historians failed to understand that Scott's project did not aim at offering an objective view of the medieval past, but an imaginary representation according to his time. In other words, his novels give a glimpse of how early-nineteenth-century English society *perceived* the Middle Ages.

In the Introduction to *Waverley*, Scott rejects the formulae of his predecessors and seeks "to mark out fictional territory of his own" (WATT, 2006, p. 136), indirectly referring to the previous generation of Gothic writers. He proposes a new fictional genre, free from the Gothic themes and models, which had become repetitive and predictable for the nineteenth-century reader. Moreover, Scott brought a new historical layer to the novel, introducing documentary evidence to illustrate his fiction with historical research (WATT, 2006, p. 135). Scott's idea was to write novels of sensation and drama within

historical plausibility, thus filling in a gap Walpole, Reeve, Lewis, and Radcliffe left, whose medieval pasts were mostly wide-ranging settings rather than detailed historical reconstructions.

Scott's contemporary critics praised his detachment from Gothic conventions, which was becoming monotonous in the early nineteenth century. An article in the *Quarterly Review* in 1827 stated that “the ‘creative genius’ of Scott enabled him to alchemize his knowledge and experience in an ‘intellectual crucible’, and so transform the raw materials of ‘tradition and history’ into poetic ‘gold’ or ‘treasure’” (WATT, 2006, p. 142). Another critic, James Kerr, defended that “the Waverley novels offered a ‘counter-genre to the Gothic’ which ‘defamiliarized and then historicized’ the conventions and devices of the Gothic romance” (WATT, 2006, p. 143). Scott's work demonstrated that, as William Hazlitt puts it, “facts are better than fiction; that there is no romance like the romance of real life” (WATT, 2006, p. 152).

However, the critical reception of Scott's work changed considerably as the nineteenth century unfolded. The idea that Scott had superseded his Gothic predecessors was ultimately challenged. Watt points out that the professionalization of history-writing that sprang during this century cast doubt on Scott's “accuracy” in retelling historical events. The German historian Leopold von Ranke considered Scott a negative influence on his readers (WATT, 2006, p. 154). Moreover, with the rise of realism in fiction in the second half of the century, Scott's writing reputation declined even further. The author Henry James stated that “the Waverley novels had themselves been superseded by the works of Dickens, Thackeray, and ‘twenty other famous writers... working in the midst of us’, so that ‘old-fashioned, ponderous Sir Walter’ could only be regarded as an entertainer, a teller of tales” (WATT, 2006, p. 155). As people's needs and desires changed, so did the criticism and reception of Scott's historical novels, in a society that praised industrialisation, professionalisation, and the mechanisation of history, his works had become outdated.

It was only in the beginning of the twentieth century — a time of unrest and agony with the emergence of World War I — that not only Scott's Waverley novels revived, but also the interest for Gothic texts from the eighteenth century. Scholar Montague Summers wrote in the late 1930s that

the Gothic romance was ‘coming into vogue among the inner circles of the advanced and the elect’ for the same reason that it had achieved its initial popularity [...], when ‘dark shadows were lowering’ and ‘the times were difficult, full of anxiety and unrest’: readers were ‘greedy for ‘fictional anaesthetics’. (WATT, 2006, p. 157).

The need for distraction is one of the side-effects of modernity, when fantasies and supernatural events serve to release readers from the harsh realities of the present, and the medieval past became a metaphor for order and idealisation, mostly in a mythical key rather than in terms of historical accuracy (as it was in Scott's time).

As we have seen, Scott's works have appealed in distinct ways to various audiences throughout the centuries. According to Alice Chandler, there are two aspects of the medieval revival which must be considered: "its use as a social and political ideal and its symbolic value as a metaphor of belief." (1970, p. 10). Those two aspects are extremely useful for the analysis of Scott's *Ivanhoe*. I will also take into deeper investigation the presence of the Gothic discourse in the novel, expanding the ideas that James Watt presented in his chapter dedicated to Scott in *Contesting the Gothic* (2006).

## Medievalisms and the Gothic discourse in *Ivanhoe*

Even though Scott's idea was to supersede his Gothic predecessors, my hypothesis in this analysis is that he could not completely break free from some Gothic conventions, themes, and formulae. That, however, does not undervalue Scott's work; on the contrary, it proves his lifelong admiration and attachment to the Gothic fictional tradition, and illustrates the presence of the Gothic discourse in nineteenth-century novel. For this analysis, I will discuss five specific moments in Scott's narrative.

The first point of encounter, and probably the most obvious, between Scott's *Ivanhoe* and the Gothic is the setting in a medieval past. David Stevens argues that up to our days writers who employ Gothic elements in their texts, such as Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980), remain fascinated with the past (2000, p. 48-49). The allure of a bygone age does not necessarily require historical accuracy, the past is frequently idealised as a perfect place in history, distant in time and full of magic and mysteries. Stevens states that "the fascination for ruins and relics permeated all the Gothic arts, from architecture to literature, and frequently verged on the nostalgic in its idealisation of the past as opposed to a complicated and unacceptable present." (2000, p. 47). In *Ivanhoe*, Scott brings the reader back to twelfth-century England, when King Richard I, also known as Richard the Lionheart, ruled the country. Scott's depiction of this time in English history gives the reader a sense of a mythical lost paradise. The first paragraph of Wilfred of Ivanhoe's adventure goes as follows:

In that pleasant district of merry England which is watered by the river Don, there extended in ancient times a large forest, covering the greater part of the beautiful hills and valleys which lie between Sheffield and the pleasant town of Doncaster. [...] here also flourished in ancient times those bands of gallant outlaws, whose deeds have been rendered so popular in English song. (SCOTT, 2013, p. 1).

Scott emphasizes the distance of the period by using the expression “ancient times” twice in this paragraph. The passage highlights the idyllic characteristics of the place by means of adjectives such as “pleasant”, “merry”, and “beautiful”. Even the outlaws were a “gallant” group. In the manners of late eighteenth-century Gothic, Scott's story deals with the past as a means to reconnect the English society of his time to an imagined ancestral tradition and identity.

*Ivanhoe* begins with a dedicatory epistle, written by the fictitious Laurence Templeton, which works both as a preface and as justification for the romance. By means of Templeton's words, Scott apologizes beforehand as he reckons that his attempt to “illustrate the domestic antiquities of England, and particularly of our Saxon forefathers” (SCOTT, 2013, p. XV) would be reprehended.

Scott carries the Gothic enthusiasm for the past onto the nineteenth century and gives it an extra touch by also relying on archival research in order to render his prose more plausible historically. A common argument is that, differently from Scott, Gothic writers did not fully take account of the historical aspects of the novel. Jarlath Killeen rightly disagrees with this notion, claiming that what matters most in both Gothic and Scott's novels is the way the reader imaginatively responds to the author's depiction of the past rather than a knowledge of reading historical records. Killeen states that “both the historical novel and Gothic fiction ask important questions concerning the relevance of history to the present, and interrogate versions of legitimacy central to national mythology. There is no clear line demarcating the historical novel from the Gothic” (2009, p. 28). Although Scott had a greater preoccupation with historical documentation, “creating a completely believable medieval world, which he portrayed so vividly and attractively that many of his readers took it for historical truth rather than historical fiction” (CHANDLER, 1970, p. 12), he still positioned himself as a fiction writer who overtly made use of stylistic choices and strategies in order to render his books more attractive for the audience.

Templeton's epistle operated as a disclaimer against critics or historians who would probably condemn Scott's for “intermingling fiction with truth”, therefore “polluting the well of history with modern inventions, and impressing upon the

rising generation false ideas.” (SCOTT, 2013, p. XX). However, what he sought as a novelist was not to write a didactic history book, or to achieve complete accuracy — which is not even a possible endeavour — but to shed light on the manners, customs, and feelings, translating the *vie privée* of the people who once lived in England for the nineteenth-century reader.

*Ivanhoe* also idealises Chivalric values, it is replete with Medieval tournaments and courageous knights fight bravely and honourably for the beloved lady's attention. For example, during the Ashby tournament, which Richard I's youngest brother John organized, while the king was away in Jerusalem during the Third Crusade, the Saxon heiress Lady Rowena regrets the absence of the knight Wilfred of Ivanhoe, who had accompanied the king in the Holy Land. She exclaims: “Would to God he were here safely arrived, and able to bear arms in the approaching tournament, in which the chivalry of this land are expected to display their address and valour.” (SCOTT, 2013, p. 61). That is an example of a typical romanticised perspective of the medieval knights, who, in reality, were not incorruptible. Many knights were mercenaries, who offered their services to the higher bidder.

The idealised Middle Ages in *Ivanhoe* can also be spotted in depictions of natural beauty. The fascination for natural landscape is a characteristic of Gothic texts, as well as romantic texts in general. Scott's descriptions of nature are full of details, as the following extract illustrates:

The sun was setting upon one of the rich grassy glades of that forest [...]. Hundreds of broad-headed, short-stemmed, wide-branched oaks, which had witnessed perhaps the stately march of the Roman soldiery, flung their gnarled arms over a thick carpet of the most delicious green sward. [...] A considerable open space, in the midst of this glade, seemed formerly to have been dedicated to the rites of Druidical superstition; for, on the summit of a hillock, so regular as to seem artificial, there still remained part of a circle of rough unhewn stones, of large dimensions. (SCOTT, 2013, p. 4).

Scott is meticulous about the details of the natural landscape. He writes about the peculiarities of plants and the sunlight, which allows the reader to completely visualise the place he is referring to; a place that supposedly existed some centuries ago, made up of trees that were perhaps already there around when the Roman soldiers marched. By making reference to past events, Scott makes sure his reader knows that the depicted scenery, an idealised scenery, is long gone and no longer a part of the modern and industrialised world in which the reader lives.

Furthermore, Scott links the natural landscape description to ancient religions when he mentions the Druidical circle of stones. That is another connection between Scott and Gothic fiction, whose novelists also explored the spiritual and religious uncertainties of the period, which were consequently represented in their narratives. According to Stevens, these uncertainties surfaced in the eighteenth century, period of prolific Gothic literary production (2000, p. 18-19), but they remained throughout the nineteenth century, and I may even add that they are still present nowadays. The excesses of the Church were challenged and religious dogmas questioned. Moreover, Stevens argues that Gothic fiction was a reaction towards centuries of rationalism and classicism, as well as a revival of mystical spirituality, bringing back supernatural beliefs that had been dissipated during the Enlightenment (2000, p. 19-20).

In *Ivanhoe*, Scott presents the reader with characters from three different spiritual and religious backgrounds: the Saxons, the Normans and the Jews. The Saxons are usually associated with a superstitious nature. One example is Gurth, one of the Saxon leader Cedric's servants. He is depicted as "rough and impetuous as a wild boar, where only earthly force was to be apprehended, he had all the characteristic terrors of a Saxon respecting fawns, forest-fiends, white women, and the whole of the superstitions which his ancestors had brought with them from the wilds of Germany." (SCOTT, 2013, p. 126). The Saxons, for believing in superstitions, rituals and magical creatures, were regarded with terror and fear by the Normans, the new conquerors of the English territory, who were Catholics and despised any other form of spirituality different from their own. In addition, the Saxons, who "were most addicted to a superstitious observance of omens", were also ridiculed by the Normans who, "being a mixed race, and better informed according to the information of the times, had lost most of the superstitious prejudices which their ancestors had brought from Scandinavia, and piqued themselves upon thinking freely on such topics." (SCOTT, 2013, p. 207). As they considered themselves superior to the Saxons, the Normans bragged about their knowledge that prevented them from believing in supernatural events.

The Norman Catholics also feared the Jews. Scott wrote in *Ivanhoe* that "a general belief prevailed among the Christians, that the Jewish Rabbins were deeply acquainted with the occult sciences, and particularly with the cabalistical art, which had its name and origin in the studies of the sages of Israel." (SCOTT, 2013, p. 320). Rebecca, a Jewess maiden, is condemned to die burned at the stake on the charge of being a witch because of her knowledge about healing plants and herbs. This episode illustrates that the Saxons and Jews were outcasts in twelfth-century England, governed by the Normans.

*Ivanhoe* depicts the Norman faith, based on Catholic education, in opposition to the Saxons' and Jews' more mystical beliefs. The Church is decadent, which characters such as immoral monks and degenerate knights Templar illustrate. One of the guests at Cedric's house in the beginning of the romance is the Prior of Jorvaulx Abbey, "well known for many miles as a lover of the chase, of the banquet, and, if fame did him not wrong, of other worldly pleasures still more inconsistent with his monastic vows" (SCOTT, 2013, p. 17). Scott criticizes the hypocrisy of the clergy, illustrating a representative of the Church as immoral, and whose conduct is incompatible with Christian beliefs. Another churchman in *Ivanhoe*, an assistant to the Prior of Jorvaulx, is called Ambrose. Scott's choice of name is by no means random, since his contemporaries would immediately relate the name Ambrose with another famous character of popular Gothic fiction: the monk Ambrose in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). Lewis's story was scandalous when it was first published: the plot of a devoted monk who eventually falls into sin by yielding to carnal desire and by corrupting a pious young lady. Scott's choice to name his character Ambrose could be the result of two possible intentions: one was to parody Lewis's work by adding his own immoral churchman to *Ivanhoe*; or it could be a statement of agreement with Lewis's idea about the hypocrisy of churchmen. Either way, Scott's connection with the Gothic tradition is irrefutable.

According to Killeen, Gothic fiction is usually related to an anti-Catholic feeling. One of its main characteristics is "seeing Catholicism and Catholics as the source of evil in the world, and the Gothic is correctly read as a profoundly Protestant form." (2009, p. 181). From this perspective, Scott's depiction of his monk is in accordance with a Protestant ideology against the abuses and hypocrisy of the clergy. Scott is also ironic when the so-called Christian knights Maurice de Bracy, Reginald Front-de-Boeuf and Brian de Bois-Guilbert receive the Prior in their dwelling:

'Safe thou art,' replied De Bracy; 'and for Christianity, here is the stout Baron Reginald Front-de-Boeuf, whose utter abomination is a Jew; and the good Knight Templar, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, whose trade is to slay Saracens — If these are not good marks of Christianity, I know no other which they bear about them.' (SCOTT, 2013, p. 314).

The aforementioned passage illustrates the Catholic hypocrisy, depicting characters who believe themselves to be true Christians by hating Jews and slaying Saracens.

A final example of the presence of a Gothic discourse in *Ivanhoe* is the numerous characters whose identity remain a mystery for some time during



the romance, exciting the reader's curiosity: the Disinherited Knight, the Black Knight, and the mysterious archer, for instance. As an illustration, I will rely on the description of the Disinherited Knight, who participated in the Ashby tournament held by Prince John and defeated all the other valiant knights of the region. Even after leaving the lists, the Knight would not reveal his face, not even to enjoy his well-deserved glory. Later, when he was resting in a tavern, he did not allow the squires of the defeated knights to learn his identity either. "The Disinherited Knight had exchanged his armour for the long robe usually worn by those of his condition, which, being furnished with a hood, concealed the features, [...] almost as completely as the visor of the helmet itself." (SCOTT, 2013, p. 117). Characters with mysterious identities are plentiful in Gothic narratives, such as the masked monk in Lewis's *The Monk* and the Armenian in Friedrich Schiller's *The Ghost-Seer*. This Gothic motif, which Scott appropriated, keeps the reader in constant apprehension as to the true intentions of the character.

With this example I conclude my analysis of five moments of interconnection between Scott's *Ivanhoe* and Gothic fiction: the setting in a medieval past, the idealisation of chivalric values, depictions of natural beauty, reappraisal of spirituality and old faiths, and the presence of mysterious identities. They shed light on Scott's reshaping of Gothic motifs, and on his project to reconstruct England's medieval past.

## Final remarks

In addition to the evidences of the Gothic discourse in Scott's *Ivanhoe* presented in this chapter, there are surely others than can be explored, such as the decadence of the Saxon nobility, the damsels in distress, Lady Rowena and the Jewess Rebecca, the depiction of church and castle ruins, the Saxon "witch" Ulrica, the fall of the castle of Front-de-Boeuf, the "return" of Athelstane from the dead, the condemnation of Rebecca for practicing "witchcraft", amongst others. In this chapter, I aimed at illuminating the evidences of medievalist and Gothic discourses in Scott's *Ivanhoe* through illustrations of passages that describe the Middle Ages as a metaphoric place of order and fantasy, and that present a gothic potential, such as the medieval setting, the depictions of nature, heroic deeds, spiritual and religious uncertainties, as well as mysterious identities. This work by no means exhausts the discussions of Walter Scott as an important figure in the Gothic and medievalist prose fiction. Rather, it opens gaps that may be filled with further research on the topic. It is, nonetheless, an invitation for the modern reader to pick up Scott's nineteenth-century novel and to dwell on its recreations

of the Middle Ages as a mythical land of the past that can no longer be retrieved, only dreamed of.

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# HYDE AND SEEK

## MR. HYDE'S GAME OF SHADOWS IN ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S *THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*

FERNANDO ANTONIO BASSETTI CESTARO<sup>1</sup>

This chapter seeks to discuss Gothic features in the character Mr. Hyde, from Robert Louis Stevenson's novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). In order to develop this analysis, I will bring into discussion some key concepts of Gothic in the Anglophone world. It is necessary to understand that the word Gothic has inhabited the imagination of humankind for various centuries, and, through time, it has changed its meaning and developed into numerous theoretical concepts. This can be observed bringing into discussion the definition of Gothic given in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*:

**Gothic** /'gɒθɪk/ *adj* **1** of the Goths (Germanic people who fought against the Roman Empire). **2** (*architecture*) of or in a style common in W Europe from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and characterized by pointed arches, arched roofs, tall thin pillars, etc.: *a Gothic church, cathedral, arch, window*. **3** of or in an 18<sup>th</sup> century style of literature which described romantic adventures in mysterious or frightening settings: *Gothic novels, horror*. **4** (of printing type) with pointed letters made up of thick lines and sharp angles, as formerly used for German: *Gothic lettering, type, etc.* (1989, p. 539).

Considering different moments in history, the acceptance in this dictionary ranges from a civilization which fought against the Romans, an architectural style that developed during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a style of literature, to a printing-typography. Despite this plethora of concepts and definitions, I will focus on the third concept brought by the *Oxford Dictionary*, which defines the Gothic, as an eighteen-century style of literature characterized

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by romantic adventures allied to mysterious or frightening settings. The idea of romantic adventure is particularly important here and the working concept of the word “romantic” means “appealing to the emotion by its imaginative, heroic or picturesque quality: *romantic scenes, adventures, tales.*” (1989, p. 1.098).

When written in capital letters — Romantic — the word designates a style of literature that privileges feelings over rationality, favoring the idea of wildness and passion.

It is important to highlight that Gothic fiction came into being in the mid-eighteenth century and it was quickly followed by Romantic poetry and literature, which also started to develop in the late eighteenth century. In his well-known essay “Gothic v Romantic”, first published in 1969, Robert Hume argues “[t]hat Gothicism is closely related to Romanticism is perfectly clear, but it is easier to state the fact than to prove it tidily and convincingly. There is a persistent suspicion that Gothicism is a poor and probably illegitimate relation of Romanticism, and a consequent tendency to treat it that way.” (1969, p. 282). Hume will challenge this assumption and subsequently establish some key connections between Gothic fiction on the Romantic tradition such as: emphasis on emotions (courage, bravery, heroism, love, awe, etc.) and thrilling sensations (adrenaline, fear, terror, horror, etc.). It is precisely the issue of thrilling sensations which is significant for this reading, as it seems to be aligned with the essence of Gothic literature. In his book *Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism* (1974), G.R. Thompson discusses the influence of a subgenre of Romanticism, known as Dark Romanticism, in the light of Gothic literature. The author states that the subgenre adapts images of anthropomorphized evil — devils, ghosts, ghouls — bringing to life a world that represents decadence and gloom, and by doing so, it reveals the true nature of humankind. This idea of men's “true nature” is forever present in mainstream Romantic imagery, although it is sometimes presented in different colors (social statements against the rationalization of Nature, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution). Thompson also reinforces the differences between mainstream Romanticism and the notion of Dark Romanticism when defining some characteristics of the latter:

Fallen men's inability fully to comprehend haunting reminders of another, supernatural realm that yet seemed not to exist, the constant perplexity of inexplicable and vastly metaphysical phenomena, a propensity for seemingly perverse or evil moral choices that had no firm or fixed measure or rule, and a sense of nameless guilt combined with a suspicion the external world was a delusive projection of the mind — these were major elements in the vision of man the

Dark Romantics opposed to the mainstream of Romantic thought. (1974, p. 6).

As a specialization of broader Romantic characteristics, Dark Romanticism mimes, accompanies, and parallels ideals of contestation and rebelliousness derived from Gothic fiction. The Gothic gained projection in the mid-eighteenth century with Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*, the initial spark for its consolidation of the genre. It was in the course of the eighteenth century that the literary Gothic established itself with authors such as Clara Reeve (*The Old English Baron*, 1778), Ann Radcliffe (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794), Matthew Gregory Lewis (*The Monk*, 1796), Lady Caroline Lamb (*Glenarvon*, 1816), Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*, 1818), Charles Maturin (*Melmoth, the Wanderer*, 1820) among others. The Gothic fiction produced during this period was the epitome of fear, horror, and adventure. However, as the eighteenth century formula (pseudo-medieval settings, damsels in distress, Italian villains) worn out, nineteenth century Gothic renewed the tradition with the works of authors such as Edgar Allan Poe (*The Fall of the House of Usher*, 1839; *The Pit and the Pendulum*, 1842, etc.), George William MacArthur Reynolds (*The Mysteries of London*, 1844), Emily Brontë (*Wuthering Heights*, 1847), Sheridan Le Fanu (*Uncle Silas*, 1864), culminating with Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Oscar Wilde (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1891), Bram Stoker (*Dracula*, 1897), and Henry James (*The Turn of the Screw*, 1898). I will now focus on the nineteenth-century Gothic, paying special attention to Stevenson's novel.

In order to do so, it is important to delve into a more didactic notion of what is considered a Gothic novel. John Anthony Bowden Cuddon provide a brief yet grounding concept, defining Gothic fiction as “[a] type of romance very popular from the 1760s onwards until the 1820s. It has considerable influence on science [...] and is of much importance in the evolution of the ghost story and the horror story” (1998, p. 355). Cuddon links Gothic novel to science fiction and horror, providing solid ground for discussing the connections between Stevenson's novella and the Gothic. Martin Gray also argues for a conceptualization of the nineteenth-century Gothic novel, stating that:

Works with a similarly obsessive, gloomy, violent and spine-chilling atmosphere, but not necessarily with a medieval setting, are also called Gothic: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), for example. Indeed any work concentrating on the bizarre, the macabre or aberrant psychological states may be called Gothic. In this sense Gothic elements are common in much nineteenth and twentieth-century fiction. (1992, p. 129).

While Cuddon limits the Gothic novel to a historical, literary manifestation product that started in the 1760s and ceased in the 1820s; Gray broadens its field of acceptance and existence by establishing new historical boundaries and a wider corpus for Gothic literature. Gray affirms that we can still find many eighteenth-century Gothic elements in “much nineteenth and twentieth century fiction” (1992, p. 129). This critical and theoretical understanding of Gothic clearly places R. L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* within Gothic fiction, especially in the ways it deals with “aberrant psychological states” (GRAY, 1992, p. 129). Furthermore, Ian Ousby's definition of Gothic fiction is also helpful to the argument that I seek to establish here, Ousby establishes it as a “type of novel or romance popular in the late 18th and early 19th c. The word ‘Gothic’ had come to mean ‘wild’, ‘barbarous’ and ‘crude’ [...] the plots hinged on suspense and mystery, involving the fantastic and the supernatural” (1988, p. 405). The author highlights the idea of Gothic as a type of literature that deals with an atmospheric gloom, fear, and anguish. All these definitions and characteristics seem to be in accordance with Stevenson's novella and, since the Scottish author's narrative is the object of study of this chapter, I find it necessary to align the concepts of Gothic with Stevenson's literary context.

I will now explain how these concepts from Gothic fiction operate in Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, paying special attention to Mr. Hyde's role in the narrative. I will start by discussing Stevenson's early life and his context of writing in connection with the Gothic literary style.

The Glencoe Literature Library's “Study Guide for The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson” (2011) romanticizes the Scottish author as a person with serious health problems (later discovered to be tuberculosis) from an early age. A boy destined not to reach adulthood, but who eventually came to be one of the most beloved storytellers of his time. Stevenson earned a degree in Literature from The University of Edinburgh and wrote a prolific corpus of books, including the celebrated fictional narratives *Treasure Island* (1883) and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and a travel book of the South Pacific with its natural features. As a man of his era, Stevenson also set many of his stories in Victorian times: *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885), *Kidnapped* (1886) and *David Balfour* (1893), which is a sequel to *Kidnapped*. A sentence that perhaps can aptly capture Robert Louis Stevenson's writing comes from his most celebrated novel, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*:

Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take

stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 89).

Stevenson wrote these lines at age thirty-six and, eight years later, in December 3, 1894, in Samoa, he would pass away. Having reached his years of reflection and committed to a profound duplicity in his writing (Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde), the Scottish author gave life to a strange Gothic case which I set forth to discuss. The Glencoe's compendium describes *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which I will address henceforth as *Jekyll and Hyde*, as a narrative that is the classic study of the evil side of men's nature (2011, p. 10). Born from a bad dream, *Jekyll and Hyde* became an instant success after it was first published in 1886, granting its author a laudable comparison with American master of horror Edgar Allan Poe. Various critics attribute the novella's success to the time it was written, since the characters reflect social types of the Victorian Era, Dr. Jekyll being England's prosperity and national self-fulfillment, up to the 1870s and Mr. Hyde being the intense social, economic, and spiritual changes, that took place from the 1880s on. For many of Stevenson's readers the enthralling features of *Jekyll and Hyde* were that Mr. Hyde could represent Evil taking over Prosperity (Dr. Jekyll). This feature gained force at a time in which Karl Marx's economic theory — challenging bourgeois values — and Charles Darwin's evolutionist theory — challenging religious beliefs on the divinity of humankind's origins — set the social tone in the western world. Perhaps *Jekyll and Hyde* could be interpreted as the American novelist Henry James suggests:

It deals with the relation of the baser parts of man to his nobler — of the capacity for evil that exists in the most generous natures, and it expresses these things in a fable which is a wonderfully happy invention. (THE GLENCOE, 2011, p. 10).

In any case, it is important to understand that *Jekyll and Hyde* combined Stevenson's life experience with broader political, economic, and historical contexts. These features, aligned with the characteristics Gothic of novels (creation of monsters or supernatural beings, killing and death, atmosphere of gloom frightening settings, etc.), were what made *Jekyll and Hyde* a cornerstone of the nineteenth-century British literature, or what Adrian Poole calls “the claustrophobic metropolitan fable of *Jekyll and Hyde* (1886)” (2009, p. 263). In order to discuss the dimension of Stevenson's Gothic narrative, I will bring forth an analysis of Mr. Hyde's character as an inheritor of Gothic literature. I will also debate Stevenson's choice of London as the Gothic space or scenario

for Mr. Hyde's deviant acts. Another key concept here is Lombrosian Criminal Anthropology<sup>2</sup> — a criminal theory which associates physical ugliness as a valid cause for a man being wicked, fitting Mr. Hyde's profile, since the “monster” is evil because he is ugly, an even uglier (spiritually) because he is evil.

*Jekyll and Hyde* presents a classic Gothic novel feature, which is the creation of monsters or supernatural beings: a man (Dr. Jekyll) and his evil alter-ego (Mr. Hyde). It is when Dr. Jekyll creates a potion to separate the good side of his personality from the bad that the birth of Mr. Hyde takes place. It is Dr. Jekyll's desire to be a good man sometimes (and sometimes a bad man) that makes him face disagreeable situations. Here is Dr. Jekyll's perception of the horrible shapeshifting into Mr. Hyde in *Jekyll and Hyde*:

[...] and late one accursed night, I compounded the elements, watched them boil and smoke together in the glass, and when the ebullition had subsided, with a strong glow of courage, drank off the potion. The most racking pangs succeeded: a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death. Then these agonies began swiftly to subside, and I came to myself as if out of a great sickness. There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a millrace in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine. I stretched out my hands, exulting in the freshness of these sensations; and in the act, I was suddenly aware that I had lost in stature. (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 37-38).

The wickedness which Dr. Jekyll claims to belong to Mr. Hyde, the good doctor admits having sold himself to his “original evil”, is here the Gothic keyword

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<sup>2</sup> Lombroso's theory suggests that criminals are distinguished from noncriminals by multiple physical anomalies. He postulated that criminals represented a reversion to a primitive or subhuman type of man characterized by physical features reminiscent of apes, lower primates, and early men and, to some extent, preserved, he said, in modern “savages”. The behavior of these biological “throwbacks” will inevitably be contrary to the rules and expectations of modern civilized society. [...] Lombroso became convinced that the “born criminal” [...] could be anatomically identified by such items as a sloping forehead, ears of unusual size, asymmetry of the face, prognathous jaw, excessive length of arms, asymmetry of the cranium, and other “physical stigmata”.



— the presence of a lurking feeling which controls every action of Dr. Jekyll's alter-ego. As seen in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson* (1911), the author himself admitted, when sending the first copy of *Jekyll and Hyde* to his friend H. W. Low, to have created a monster:

I send you herewith a Gothic gnome [...] the gnome is interesting, I think, and he came out of a deep mine where he guards the fountain of tears. It is not always the time to rejoice [...] The gnome's name is *Jekyll & Hyde*; I believe you will find he is likewise to answer to the name of Low or Stevenson. (STEVENSON, 1911, p. 309).

Textual evidences of Mr. Hyde's wickedness can be gathered in one of the character's perceptions of the “monster”. Mr. Enfield addresses Mr. Hyde's Gothic features in the chapter “Story of the Door”: [He] “gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running” (2017, p. 4); “[...] and there was the man, with a kind of black, sneering coolness, really like Satan” (2017, p. 5). The “monster” being so wicked that makes another man sweat in fear and apprehension allows for a comparison to Satan himself, arguably evidence enough to charge him of being a Gothic character. By the end of the novel, in the chapter “Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case”, Dr. Jekyll comes to his senses and realizes how much out of control Mr. Hyde had become:

The pleasures which I made haste to seek in my disguise were, as I have said, undignified; I would scarce use a harder term. But in the hands of Edward Hyde, they soon began to turn toward the monstrous. When I would come back from these excursions, I was often plunged into a kind of wonder at my vicarious depravity. This familiar that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centered on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone. (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 40).

The word choice made by Dr. Jekyll clarifies how wicked Mr. Hyde was. The employment of words such as “undignified”, “monstrous”, “vicarious depravity”, “malign and villainous”, and “bestial avidity” may summarize the evil lurking beneath the “monster”. Nonetheless, these predicates would mean nothing if they could not have an appropriate setting to be developed. The space Stevenson chooses is nineteenth-century London, a city that was a product of the Victorian Era, which had prospered during the British Empire (Dr. Jekyll) and then faced

the nefarious outcome of the Industrial Revolution (Mr. Hyde). It is not difficult to understand how a “monster” thrives in this scenario. Since the descriptions of the city revolved around the dark, dangerous, and mysterious locations, Mr. Hyde found in the setting and in the anonymity of the masses a place to live. In London, Hyde could roam in the flickering lights of nighttime landscape such as pubs and brothels, amidst beggars; his own urban underworld, where he could, as the “monster”, exert his “vicarious depravity” (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 40) in concealment. Some excerpts from *Jekyll and Hyde* highlight the importance of London as a Gothic scenario: “a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street” (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 4); “[...] at night under the face of the fogged city moon” (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 9); “the low growl of London from all around” (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 9); “[...] and the first fog of the season [...] the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapours” (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 15); “The fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city, [...] through the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town's life was still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind” (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 18); “London hummed solemnly all around” (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 28). Words such as “sinister”, “low growl”, and “hummed solemnly” lend an almost human characteristic to the city of London. England's capital starts to have human reactions towards its own population. London seems to be a “drowned city” in its fog: the morning vapors that, perhaps, conceal deviant actions of the previous night. The novella leads the reader to imagine that the “town's life” is like blood pumping in the “arteries” (streets) of London. The kinesthetic effect of the words chosen by Stevenson to describe people's interaction with the city of London, gothicize the 1886 novella even further.

Lastly, I concentrate on the alignment of the evil man (Mr. Hyde) in a gloomy scenario (Victorian London) with a Gothic motive to perpetrate his deviant acts. By Gothic-motive, I employ a criminal theory that was in vogue in European criminal investigations in the nineteenth century. I am referring to the *Lombrosian Criminal Anthropology*. The criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso developed this theory to justify why nature would physically select certain people to be “born criminals”. It is thought that Lombroso might have elaborated this now unacceptable theory under the light of Charles Darwin's theoretical book *On the Origin of Species*,<sup>3</sup> focusing on the primitive origins of

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, published on 24 November 1859, is a work of scientific literature which is considered to be the foundation of evolutionary biology. Darwin's book introduced the scientific theory that populations evolve over the course of generations through a process of natural selection. It presented a body of evidence that the diversity of life arose by common descent through a branching pattern of evolution.

humankind as a characteristic of underdevelopment fitting of a criminal. Adrian Poole remarkably comments about the alignment of Stevenson's depiction of Mr. Hyde and the Lombrosian Criminal Anthropology:

Mr. Hyde, he is a figure for the unspeakable, something his name tells us is — impossibly — a hidden surface, at once concealed and unmissably visible, like the hide of an animal. And there is indeed a strong sense of regression in Hyde, something 'troglodytic', 'ape-like', atavistic, inextirpably creaturely, the obverse of the blithe child, the [...] primitive. (2009, p. 265).

The presence of textual evidences in *Jekyll and Hyde* of Lombrosian influence is noticeable in the lines: "There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point." (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 6); "Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation." (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 10); "[...] Ape-like fury he was trampling his victim, hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway." (STEVENSON, 2017, p. 14). A word such as "deformity" fits both the category of the Gothic feature of creating a monster and Lombroso's criminal theory, which defends that "nature born" criminals are, necessarily, physically deformed. Furthermore, Stevenson's choice of the word "ape-like" bonds his Gothic narrative not only with Lombroso, but with Darwin as well. Eventually, what complicates the Gothic feature of the novella, and its relation to the criminal anthropology, is that the "ape-like fury" reveals an atavistic behavior of a criminal who is a monstrous murderer (Mr. Hyde).

## Final remarks

In conclusion, I sought to demonstrate through Mr. Hyde's key participation in Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* how this novel can be considered a Gothic work. I discussed not only the Gothic features of the "monster" Mr. Hyde, but also the gloomy features from the Gothic scenario of Victorian London and Mr. Hyde's atavistic characterization as the suitable profile for the Lombrosian criminal anthropology. Therefore, it is my consideration that with these three features allied in one theoretical hypothesis, it is feasible to consider Stevenson's novella a Gothic literary work. Furthermore, the presence of

deviant attitudes eliciting the “evil deeds” Mr. Hyde perpetrates highlight the idea of a Gothic textual construction.

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# DRÁCULA

## DAS ENTRELINHAS AOS QUADRINHOS

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Neste capítulo, apresento o cotejo entre o romance gótico *Drácula* (1897), de Bram Stoker, e a adaptação *Comte Dracula* (1987), do quadrinista italiano Guido Crepax, com o objetivo de destacar aspectos representativos do gótico na obra de Stoker e como estes foram trabalhados de forma imagética na adaptação de Crepax. Com noventa anos de diferença entre as publicações, os pontos de vista de cada autor divergem notavelmente devido não somente às mídias nas quais cada obra foi publicada, mas também, na forma de representar pontos estratégicos que caracterizam o gótico como o compreendemos hoje. Apesar das divergências, na adaptação em quadrinhos é possível perceber a continuação de elementos que caracterizam o gótico não apenas na adaptação dos personagens como também na manutenção de aspectos narrativos da obra. Guido Crepax manteve quase tudo que é apresentado em *Drácula*, porém, a presença de epístolas no quadrinho (e por consequência suas particularidades cronológicas) foram modificadas.

Para fins de contextualização, após a apresentação das obras, pontuarei os códigos, elementos e convenções que caracterizam o gótico e como eles se apresentam no romance de Stoker. Dessa forma, será possível, em um segundo momento, discutir as características do gótico literário e como foram reinterpretadas de forma imagética na história em quadrinhos (HQ) de Crepax. Embora as imagens literárias, descritas verbalmente, estejam presentes na narrativa de Stoker, a necessidade de trasladar (ou traduzir) um texto em prosa para uma mídia multimodal — isto é, uma mídia que utiliza como estratégia narrativa duas linguagens: verbal e não verbal — traz consigo inevitáveis reduções, deixando de incorporar todos os componentes narrativos, porém, ao mesmo tempo, por se tratar de uma justaposição de duas linguagens, a HQ abre portas para diferentes formas de representar elementos que foram inicialmente “cortados” da adaptação.

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Neste capítulo busco demonstrar as possibilidades narrativas das histórias em quadrinhos como uma mídia que tem potencial para representar de forma não verbal, elementos característicos das obras adaptadas, de modo que esses sejam compreendidos pelo leitor sem a necessidade de serem colocados de forma escrita, mas, absorvidos mediante o ponto de vista interpretativo do adaptador/tradutor. Particularmente, em *Drácula* de Crepax é possível perceber o apelo do mito do vampiro e das características góticas do romance por meio de um ponto de vista que ampliou significados do texto fonte.

## O gótico na literatura e nas histórias em quadrinhos

Remetendo à arquitetura eclesiástica, o termo gótico se desenvolveu no contexto literário em oposição ao Iluminismo, criando um contraponto à tendência realista por meio de narrativas que priorizavam o sobrenatural e o fantástico. Contestando conceitos iluministas de razão e lógica, destacando a subjetividade inerente ao ser humano, o gótico emerge como um resgate dos temores: o horror, a loucura, a escuridão, o sobrenatural, a existência, tudo isso em cenários isolados (SILVA; SOARES, 2011, p. 134). Aparecido Donizete Rossi define a literatura gótica da seguinte forma:

Uma literatura de alguma forma engajada socialmente, mas caracterizada pela presença do horrível, do insano, da noite, do sobrenatural, da morte, dos cenários arcaicos, do terror. Uma literatura que se mantém sublime dentro do que o pensamento iluminista chamava de sublime, mas que não comunga em absoluto do ideal de beleza presente nesse pensamento. (2008, p. 61).

Com a obra *O castelo de Otranto* (1764), de Horace Walpole, o gótico transpõe as barreiras que até o momento o limitavam à arquitetura e se faz presente no Século das Luzes, encontrando seu lugar no lado sombrio das artes, nos horrores e nas sombras que os Iluministas tinham decidido até então ignorar, fincando suas raízes no submundo do sobrenatural, no subconsciente do ser humano. Dentro desse contexto criativo, seguindo os preceitos do romance gótico oitocentista, surge no século seguinte o Conde Drácula de Bram Stoker, um personagem que pode ser considerado um divisor de águas na mitologia do vampiro.

Nascido da luta entre a racionalidade e as profundezas sombrias do coração humano, representando talvez a última aparição do romance gótico pseudomedieval do século XIX na Grã-Bretanha. *Drácula* tem por base uma vasta pesquisa de Stoker sobre a vida do nobre Vlad III, o Empalador

(1431-1476), considerado outra baliza importante na construção da mitologia do vampiro. Embora diversas referências sobre seres míticos sugadores de sangue possam ser encontradas tanto nas culturas orientais quanto nas ocidentais, a biografia de Vlad III fundamentou a inspiração que Stoker diz ter recebido em um sonho (novamente aqui, o inconsciente) para o desenvolvimento do vampiro literário mais conhecido da história. Porém, apesar de ser considerado um expoente da literatura gótica e ser comparado, já em sua época, a autores como Edgar Allan Poe e Emily Brontë, Bram Stoker somente atingiu reconhecimento mundial após o surgimento de diversas adaptações para o teatro e o cinema, tornando-se referência para praticamente qualquer obra que aborde o imaginário do vampiro.

Mesmo sendo uma mídia de desenvolvimento mais recente — considera-se sua época de ouro nos anos 1950 — as histórias em quadrinhos incorporaram o universo gótico, o qual tornou-se atualmente muito popular tanto no mercado da cultura pop quanto no âmbito acadêmico. As conexões entre o gótico e os quadrinhos são discutidas por Julia Round em *Gothic in Comics and Graphic Novels* (2014), livro no qual salienta diversos exemplos de HQs que são integrantes da cultura gótica. Elementos do gótico podem ser identificados não somente no resultado dos quadrinhos, mas também nas referências utilizadas no processo de criação. As maiores *graphic novels*, assim como alguns dos super-heróis mais famosos dos quadrinhos, buscaram inspiração em elementos góticos da literatura e no próprio *Drácula*, como é o caso de *Sandman*, de Neil Gaiman; *Watchman*, de Allan Moore, e o super-herói *Batman*, que resgata não somente a estética do vampiro como parte de suas características — a transformação em morcego por parte do Conde é traduzida para o traje característico do herói — mas as conexões também se estendem para o nome da cidade em que Batman habita: *Gotham City*.

Uma das mais aclamadas adaptações diretas de *Drácula* foi publicada na Itália, em 1987, pelas mãos do quadrinista Guido Crepax (1933-2003). Mundialmente reconhecido pelas suas adaptações literárias e principalmente pela sua adaptação de *A História de O* (1954), romance de Anne Desclos, Crepax se destaca pelo seu estilo erótico de ilustração, ressaltando características das obras que muitas vezes estão apenas subentendidas nas entrelinhas.

## O gótico nas entrelinhas: de *Drácula* para Crepax

A literatura gótica é inerentemente gráfica e sinestésica: descrições de cenários escuros, de características físicas e psicológicas dos personagens, da

atmosfera de terror, são apenas alguns elementos que compõem o texto gótico e oferecem em seu conjunto múltiplas possibilidades para a tradução em imagens do modo gótico. Nesta seção, identificarei rapidamente os traços do gótico presentes no romance *Drácula* e, de forma pontual, como esses elementos são retratados na obra de Crepax, salientando suas similaridades e diferenças.

A lista de elementos góticos presentes nos romances que definem a literatura gótica vampírica como tal, é, logicamente, extensa. Por isso, os elementos analisados aqui serão apenas os mais representativos no tocante à forma de como foram traduzidos.

A estrutura da narrativa de Stoker é dividida em cinco camadas de depoimentos, compostos por cartas ou diários, nos quais a história é contada sob diversos pontos de vista. Entretanto, na adaptação de Guido Crepax, embora a marca das cartas esteja presente logo nas primeiras páginas (Figura 1), ela serve apenas como localizador do caráter epistolar do romance, uma vez que essa característica se perde ao longo da narrativa em quadrinhos, dando lugar a um enredo linear e cronológico, guiado por diálogos ricos e extensos em cada uma das páginas. Os personagens passam por uma série de traumas e provações ao longo da narrativa, tendo como objetivo coletivo a destruição do mal encarnado na figura de Drácula, o qual tenta corromper as imaculadas figuras femininas, representativas de romances românticos e da literatura medieval. A ação se desenrola em uma série de viagens e perseguições, repletas de acontecimentos catastróficos que levam o leitor em uma odisseia, a qual termina em final feliz após o cumprimento do ideal.

A representação feminina em *Drácula* de Bram Stoker é característica do Romantismo: as mulheres, principalmente Mina, são apresentadas como seres virginais e indefesos que precisam ser protegidos e salvos. A deturpação desse ideal feminino acontece quando, influenciadas pelas forças malignas de Drácula, elas são arrastadas para o lado obscuro, para o mal, tornando-se seres sexuais. Enquanto os estereótipos femininos de comportamento são cristalizados no romance de Stoker, na adaptação de Crepax a “deturpação” do ideal feminino é destacada e elevada a novos patamares devido ao elemento erótico que caracteriza o estilo e a obra do quadrinista. Embora Crepax tenha declarado em diversas entrevistas que *A História de O* ajudou a torná-lo conhecido, isso não significa que ele seja um *engagé* da representação erótica, pois seus gostos literários tendem mais para o terror e o fantástico. Não obstante, a representação erótica é um traço constante na sua obra e a adaptação que ele fez de Drácula combina ambos os elementos.





Figura 1 — *Comte Dracula*, Guido Crepax (1987, p. 7).

Crepax deu destaque ao elemento sensual presente no mito do vampiro, o qual também está presente nas entrelinhas de *Dracula*, para a representação de uma sexualidade mais explícita e direta. As vampiras são caracterizadas no quadrinho como mulheres voluptuosas, lascivas e sensuais adeptas de práticas que podem ser relacionadas ao que hoje se conhece por BDSM (*Bondage*, *Disciplina*, *Dominação*, *Submissão*, *Sadismo* e *Masochismo*). Por exemplo, as três vampiras que habitam o castelo na Transilvânia, conhecidas por *brides of Dracula*, praticam *bondage* em Jonathan Harker quando ele se encontra preso no castelo de Dracula. Em Crepax, a sexualização das personagens é veiculada em suas expressões faciais, ditas imaculadas, que, pouco a pouco se vampirizam, evidenciando sua condição

de mulheres que procuram o deleite sexual. Uma das cenas mais icônicas do romance acontece quando o Conde coage Mina a beber do seu sangue, enquanto seu noivo, Jonathan, encontra-se desmaiado ao seu lado durante o ataque (2014, p. 307-308). No quadrinho de Crepax, a cena ganha outro teor, mais sexualmente explícito, Mina e Jonathan encontram-se nus, ele desmaiado enquanto Mina é sodomizada e obrigada a sugar o sangue do Conde diretamente do seu peito como ilustrado nas figuras 2, 3 e 4.



Figura 2 — *Comte Dracula*, Guido Crepax (1987, p. 115).



Figura 3 — *Comte Dracula*, Guido Crepax (1987, p. 116).



Figura 4 — *Comte Dracula*, Guido Crepax (1987, p. 117).

O gótico, como modo ficcional, se caracteriza por mostrar o lado mais obscuro da natureza humana, os recantos da alma que os personagens não se atrevem a confessar sequer a si mesmos. Tal elemento é levado ao extremo por Crepax que, com seu erotismo exacerbado, traz à tona fantasias e desejos inconfessáveis. A transgressão de limites e o excesso (de palavras e de emoções) está no centro da literatura gótica desde sua origem, e trata-se de uma forma de despertar consciências e sensibilidades (SOARES, 2008, p. 16). Porém, é comum que essa transgressão seja duramente castigada no final da narrativa: no caso de *Drácula*, levando à morte Lucy Westenra, uma das protagonistas que após ser vampirizada tem sua cabeça cortada e seu coração atravessado por uma estaca.

Os cenários pseudomedievais em *Drácula* remetem às construções arquitetônicas, com ângulos afiados como penhascos, formações montanhosas e castelos. Da mesma forma, os locais abertos e planos são ilustrados como lugares escuros ou de difícil visualização pela presença de árvores ou da neblina. Essas particularidades também estão presentes no quadrinho de Crepax: não descritas mas ilustradas como pano de fundo onde se desenrola toda a ação.

O que mais chama a atenção no quadrinho, contudo, é a representação do próprio Conde, que se afasta das descrições que são encontradas no romance. *Drácula* é descrito por Stoker como um homem velho de estatura elevada, bem barbeado e com um longo bigode branco (2014, p. 32) — isto é, na sua forma de homem velho. Ao chegar em Londres, ele se torna um homem alto, magro, com nariz aquilino, bigode preto e cavanhaque — na sua forma de ataque e de sedução. Crepax utilizou uma referência gótica cinematográfica para criar a imagem do temido Conde. Dentre as muitas adaptações de *Drácula* para o cinema, *Nosferatu, Eine symphonie des Graunes* (1922), dirigido por Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, é uma das mais polêmicas, por se tratar de uma adaptação não autorizada de *Drácula*. Murnau foi ordenado por Lei a destruir todas as cópias existentes, porém, algumas sobreviveram e, trinta anos depois, o filme ressurgiria como um dos maiores representantes do Expressionismo alemão — essa é fonte que Crepax utiliza para desenhar o vampiro nas suas páginas (Figura 5).

Na figura 5 é possível comparar em ambas as representações que a semelhança dos traços, do porte e a postura do Conde são gritantes e se aproximam muito mais do imaginário de “morto vivo” do que a ilustrada por exemplo, no filme de Francis Ford Coppola, de 1992. No quadrinho, a capacidade de transmutação — de velho para jovem e vice-versa — pela qual o Conde passa é muito mais tênue, ele não se transforma subitamente em um homem sedutor e

atraente, pelo contrário (como pode ser visto na figura 2), Drácula ainda parece velho e mantém uma aura assustadora. A sensualidade que se tornou inerente ao mito do vampiro, sua qualidade principal para atrair e envolver suas vítimas, é caracterizada pela sequência imagética erótica que guia a narrativa do quadrinho. Porém, as outras transformações físicas, como morcego, cachorro ou névoa densa, continuam presentes nas duas versões, romance e HQ.



Figura 5 — À esquerda, cena do filme *Nosferatu, Eine Symphonie des Grauens*; à direita, *Comte Dracula*, Guido Crepax (1987, p. 75).

## Considerações finais

As possibilidades narrativas dos quadrinhos são diversas graças às múltiplas linguagens presentes em suas páginas. Nesse capítulo, as representações da literatura gótica de *Drácula*, de Bram Stoker para *Comte Dracula*, de Guido Crepax, são guiadas principalmente de forma imagética, sendo essa a principal característica que indica ao leitor a classificação da narrativa. As personagens, a ambientação e principalmente as particularidades inerentes do mito do vampiro que permeiam a obra de Stoker, rica em descrições e mensagens nas entrelinhas,

como o erotismo do monstro vampiro e sua própria monstruosidade, são colocadas nos quadrinhos de forma a manter a rapidez de leitura e narrativa.

Embora *Comte Dracula* seja, de fato, uma obra independente de Crepax, contendo seu olhar e leitura únicos do romance, os elementos-chave entregam uma adaptação, que pode ser considerada uma das mais instigantes, de *Dracula* para os quadrinhos. Crepax agrega referências que vão além das encontradas no romance de Stoker a exemplo do filme *Nosferatu*. *Comte Dracula* integra nas suas páginas a riqueza de detalhes da literatura gótica, o horror do Conde Dracula e o erotismo estilístico do quadrinista de forma equilibrada.

Tendo em vista que a leitura e a adaptação são tarefas que partem do mesmo preceito: o da interpretação; o processo de adaptação de *Dracula* para os quadrinhos, que envolve a mudança de mídia, pode ser considerado um processo tradutório, no qual o roteirista/adaptador interpreta os elementos do texto-fonte transportando-os de forma que possam ser entendidos e absorvidos pelo leitor, causando os mesmos estranhamentos próprios do romance gótico.

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# SHADOWS AND WHISPERS

## THE MYTHOSCOPE STYLE IN FILM ADAPTATIONS BY THE H.P. LOVECRAFT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

GEORGE ALEXANDRE AYRES DE MENEZES MOUSINHO<sup>1</sup>

In his seminal work *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, Siegfried Kracauer writes about a particular feature of early Expressionist cinema in Germany: “It had the function of characterizing the phenomena on the screen as phenomena of the soul [...] By making the film an outward projection of psychological events, expressionist staging symbolized [...] that general retreat into a shell which occurred in postwar Germany.” (2004, p. 71). Films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920, directed by Robert Wiene) and *The Last Laugh* (1924, directed by Friedrich W. Murnau) deal thematically with characters who are tormented by outside pressures and losses, becoming prone to psychological trauma and manipulation. The result is a collection of films with dream-like sequences, manipulation of space, and the insertion of editing and visual techniques that emphasise a state of madness and horror from the perspective of their protagonists. Expressionist films often portray shadowy figures and spaces, distorted angles, and contrasting interactions between shadow and light. Psychological fragmentations become the force behind the narrative presentation, which leaves many events in those stories unclear, shifting between what is real and what is the result of a maddening process.

The speculative fiction writer Howard Philips Lovecraft employs similar themes and techniques in his writings. By making unclear references to apparently horrible events, creatures, and figures, he brings a sense of clouded judgment of reality, of a madness that befalls his characters and renders them unable to understand the world around them. The reader then has to follow suit, unsure whether or not the voices of the narrative can be trusted. That sense of uncertainty and madness, occult and darkness, relates to a Gothic perspective on the famous Sigmund Freud's concept of *unheimlich*, or “the uncanny.” The uncanny, as pointed out by Freud, refers to a sense of strangeness or dread that

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is connected with that which was once familiar, but now feels *unfamiliar* (2003, p. 124). In Gothic fiction, theorists have discussed the term under a new light, and adapted to help interpret motifs of Gothic discourse or aesthetic in literature, as well as in modern media. The obscurity and the eeriness of the unfamiliar can be found in fictional representations of characters, events, spaces and buildings from Gothic fiction. David Punter and Glennis Byron, in their work *The Gothic*, argue that “the representation of the uncanny is at the core of the Gothic, since it, like the uncanny, deals in the constant troubling of the quotidian, daylight certainties.” (2004, p. 286); whereas Fred Botting adds that “the uncanny renders all boundaries uncertain.” (1996, p. 7). Lovecraft's stories such as “The Statement of Randolph Carter” (1920) or “The Tomb” (1922) tell of men who suffer psychological detachments from their own individuality and are found lacking control of themselves before or after a horrific event. Dennis Perry and Carl Sederholm write that “Lovecraft argues that the weird fiction should disrupt one's sense of physical and mental security.” (2009, p. 65). Therefore, it is understandable that events such as the ones these characters witness are hardly a matter of certainty: the boundaries of reality are stretched too thin to be discerned.

That quality of uncertainty about events and about familiar places and images is found in several of his stories. It goes back to the issue of unclear references to horrible things, as discussed previously. Threats represented in his texts are never revealed or *can never* be revealed lest madness and perdition take over. Those are narrative techniques achieved mostly through obscure semantic indications that can be interpreted as mechanisms of apophasis in language.<sup>2</sup> Words such as *unfathomable*, *hideous*, *unthinkable*, and other hyperbolic adjectives are common in Lovecraftian parlance, and usually serve to denote the extent to which the story's characters cannot grasp what is truly happening and what creatures they have encountered. As a result, the reader cannot either. Nowadays it is known that much of Lovecraft's horror has to do with alien creatures that come from outer space and have been inhabiting the Earth since before humanity existed, such as the recurring Old Ones described in stories such as “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926) or “The Dunwich Horror” (1929). The very fact that creatures such as the Old Ones, Cthulhu itself, and other ancient deities Lovecraft created come from outer space is part of the concept of *cosmic horror* that permeates his fiction.

Cosmic horror has to do with the fear of the unknown that lurks in the stars, of the mysterious sky above us. It is an idea that depends on the existence

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<sup>2</sup> Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina researcher and student Elisa Silva Ramos wrote her undergraduate dissertation about the subject, titled *The Apophatic Discourse in Four Horror Tales by Edgar Allan Poe and Howard Phillips Lovecraft* (2017).



of creatures like Cthulhu, all-powerful and ancient, that dwell in the depths of the oceans or somewhere underground, that are rarely seen by human beings, and that bring death or madness to those who actually manage to see them. The sublime, a notion that was present in much of Gothic fiction from the previous century, now became the eeriness of the alien, of that which conflicts with the natural and the earthly. Horror in Lovecraft comes from the earth, but not simply from the earth: it comes from age-old — or would it be *aeon*-old? —, outside entities that have come back to life from the bottom of the earth in order to bring down humanity, its vices and corruptions. The complexity in such a form of horror lies in the fact that the horrifying things are both from outer space and from the Earth; and they have been sleeping here for longer than we *have been* here. The occult and the alien meet the homely and the familiar: and that is the epitome of the Gothic uncanny. The planet no longer belongs to humans and has suddenly become antagonistic and inhospitable.

Since Lovecraft's monsters have much in common with the natural forces of the Earth, a matter of power and restriction arises. Protagonists are deprived of heroism, and sometimes of the will to do what is necessary to defeat the evil that threatens a "decadent society." Lovecraft makes it clear that the path for his ancient creatures to overthrow human civilisation is an easy one, since humanity has been corrupted and is unable to defend itself against the grand power of cosmic forces from immemorial time. In Lovecraft's stories, human science itself is corrupted, distorted, incapable of understanding the deepest mysteries of the universe, of the stars, of faraway realms. Part of the premise behind several of his narratives is: that which is older is more powerful and more imposing than human will. As Botting points out, "relations between real and fantastic, sacred and profane, supernatural and natural, past and present, civilised and barbaric, rational and fanciful, remain crucial to the Gothic dynamic of limit and transgression." (1996, p. 6). A principle commonly found in Gothic fiction is that of the anachronistic strangeness, the clash between the old and the new; past and present. Like the conflicts discussed above, this one is a major source of horror for fictional characters. Botting mentions that "Gothic atmospheres — gloomy and mysterious — have repeatedly signalled the disturbing return of pasts upon presents and evoked emotions of terror and laughter." (1996, p. 1). Such a disturbing return is widely present in Lovecraft's stories, as he often considers that which is old and traditional to be mighty and that which is modern to be frail and decadent. Punter and Byron state that "Lovecraft appears to have been conducting a one-man battle against the forces of modernization, while clearly remaining locked into an image of the past that is itself compounded of terror and destruction." (2004, p. 144).

Anachronism and general conflict of ages are part of the aesthetic of a particular organisation called the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society (HPLHS for short).<sup>3</sup> They are a group of people that, since 1986, have been recreating Lovecraft's narratives for cinema, radio, literature, and gaming. They created a role-playing game called *Cthulhu Lives!* and organised a collection that contained the author's letters to writer Zealia Bishop. They have developed audiobooks from Lovecraft's tales such as "From Beyond" and "The Dunwich Horror." However, their films are more important for this essay. They have released two full-length adaptations from Lovecraft's works so far: *The Call of Cthulhu* (2005, directed by Andrew Leman) and *The Whisperer in Darkness* (2011, directed by Sean Branney). Their films have a unique retro style, with black-and-white saturation, early twentieth-century storytelling, and retro musical soundtrack. Since both films show in their initial credits to have been directed "in *Mythoscope*," I will use this term to describe their unique approach to Lovecraftian lore in their film adaptations. Therefore, this essay aims to analyse both productions and investigate how the HPLHS develops their cinematographic material in terms of style. More specifically, it aims to analyse how the films adapt the stories to a specific mode of production with specific narrative techniques, and how they express the dark and uncanny aura of Lovecraft's worlds on screen.

Some of the first words in "The Call of Cthulhu" express the sense of uncertainty and madness that Lovecraft's mysteries of the deep can instill. The author writes:

The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age. (2004, p. 139).

"The Call of Cthulhu" is arguably Lovecraft's most celebrated short story. The draconic monster is a staple in Lovecraftian fiction, and it has been revisited several times in different media, from music to comics to video games. The story about a young man who investigates strange tales about an ancient and powerful creature that is awakening from a long-lasting sleep is one of the reasons why the author has become so renowned. "The Call of Cthulhu" contains many of the aforementioned characteristics related to weird and Gothic fiction. It portrays

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<sup>3</sup> More information about their projects can be found on their website, [hplhs.org](http://hplhs.org).

a legend that comes from rural folk and is filled with superstition and mystery. The protagonist, an eager man called Francis Thurston, finds notes left by his late grand uncle, a scholar from Brown University called George Angell. Francis finds in the notes mysterious stories and investigations about cases of madness in many different places resulted from disturbing dreams that several people had about a weird and primeval being. Such a being is represented in a sculpture, also left by Angell to Francis Thurston. The latter begins to investigate the mystery that the sculpture and the dreams represent. The outcome is not pleasant, as Thurston finds out that a group of Norwegian sailors led by a man named Gustaf Johansen set out to find the age-old city of R'Lyeh — where Cthulhu is supposed to dwell, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean — and succumbed to the battle against the creature, with the exception of Johansen himself, who survived and sailed back to safety.

As Andrew Leman and his production team adapted such an acclaimed story, they decided to give the film a silent film style. The shots in *The Call of Cthulhu* have low saturation and high contrast in order to accomplish that visual approach. The exaggerated expressions in the actors' performances and the intertitles also complement the stylistic choice. For example, Chad Fifer, the actor who plays Henry Wilcox — the man whose dreams professor Angell analyses and who is tormented by the oneiric appearances of mysterious and oppressive forces —, acts with such exaggerated expressions in moments of agony, nervousness, lunacy, and anger. Moreover, no voices or diegetic sounds can be heard, only the orchestral and ambient film score that plays in the background and adds to the tone of mystery and suspense. The absence of diegetic sound and the constant use of intertitles work as narrative mechanisms, since the silent film aesthetic fits the suspense-orientated storyline mode of early twentieth-century films such as *Nosferatu* (1922, directed by F. W. Murnau) or *Castle Vogeloed* (1921, also directed by Murnau). However, the intertitles mostly complement the already epistolary narrative development, as there are more of them that tell of events or letters, as opposed to the less frequent ones that show dialogue.

In *The Call of Cthulhu*, there is also a reconstruction of silent film structures that are related to framing and cinematography; such is the basic premise of Mythoscope here. There are both high and low-angle shots used to instill a sense of strangeness and tension, especially in scenes and sequences that are shot indoors. As is usually the case in cinema, high angles can portray the framed character in a position of frailty or vulnerability; on the other hand, low angles can both situate the character in relation to an object in a certain space or give him/her an imposing aspect. This is what happens in *The Call of Cthulhu*: Thurston is

constantly investigating and examining things, sometimes objects in rooms, so the low angles can enrich cinematic perspectives in such situations. Other situations in which low angles occur are those that portray R'Lyeh, or those that portray imposing buildings. Alternately, high angles are often used in dream sequences or in shots in which the framing of a room must be wider. Dutch angles are not uncommon either and occur in scenes in which the sanity of the characters is in jeopardy and — again — in dream sequences. Figure 1 shows a slight high-angle shot as Thurston comes in a room so the portrayal of the place can be comprehensive. The aforementioned techniques are employed in exaggeration in order to enhance the retro style. Camera movement is subtle and rare, which can be a result of low costs or another attempt to convey a silent film aesthetic.



Figure 1 — Slight high-angle shot.

Just like in German Expressionist films of the silent film era, HPLHS films such as *The Call of Cthulhu* make use of contrasts between light and darkness. There is an overarching presence of deeply black backgrounds and human figures throughout the film, particularly in the dream sequences and in suspenseful scenes of investigation. Lighting gets darker as Thurston sets out at sea to find R'Lyeh and Cthulhu itself, increasing the effect of shadows within the frame. Shadows are an important part of the HPLHS aesthetic, since the production of horror films such as this one requires a certain element of darkness to make thrilling scenes more

enigmatic and harder to determine at first glance; just like Lovecraft's mysteries are harder to comprehend. Scenes with little portrayal of danger also have a high level of contrast at times: the sequences in which Angell and Wilcox talk about the latter's terrifying dreams contain a lot of deep shadows in the background, which sometimes cover the figure of the tormented man. A high level of contrast is displayed throughout the film, including a particular sequence in which Wilcox sleeps and has uncanny dreams, or in the first depiction of R'Lyeh — Cthulhu's ocean city — with the addition of the monster's hard shadow on one of the buildings (Figure 2). All in all, the general configuration of lighting in the film follows a high contrast in which dark tones are usually very deep and light tones are usually very bright.



Figure 2 — Effects of shadows.

One last aspect from the film that fits the HPLHS style is the narrative arrangement itself. There is the usual occultation of horror elements that is part of Lovecraft's own writings. Cthulhu is initially talked about in a speculative way, and then in old myths and travel tales, then shown in a stone statuette, and only finally — and very quickly — portrayed at the end of the film. Such a progressive construction of suspense is typical of the structure of cosmic horror, since in Lovecraftian stories, “to venture further, is to risk understanding things about human life that are too horrible even to consider” (PERRY; SEDERHOLM,

2009, p. 65). Thurston ultimately finds out about the ill-fated crew of the *Alert*. The focus here is on the linearity of the chain of events: Thurston finds his grand-uncle's writings, the rumours about Cthulhu come up, and Thurston starts his investigations that end up with him discovering the truth about Johansen's journey to R'Lyeh and his final confrontation with the ancient monster. It is a straightforward story about a typical adventure that has a decisive rupture and conflict.

That is not completely the case with *The Whisperer in Darkness*, adapted by director Sean Branney in 2011 from the homonymous novella published in 1931. The film tells a more complex story of investigation and an ultimate horror. Lovecraft's novella is about a scholar and professor called Albert Wilmarth, from the fictional Miskatonic University, who is investigating strange occurrences that followed the floods in Vermont in 1927. Such floods brought about bizarre bodies of unknown creatures reported by the locals. Once more, Lovecraft writes about legends of odd and monstrous beings that are said to exist by native folk in a specific region. The frequent use of folkish elements from rural settings to establish the sense of uncanny from the Gothic contrasts between old and new, rural and urban, is present in many of his most celebrated stories, and in "The Whisperer in Darkness." Wilmarth's investigation is soon taken to the countryside so the aspect of mysticism can be observed. But before that, he engages in debates with fellow academics to discuss the veracity of the claims and the very existence of such strange beings, later defined as "hideously crablike" (LOVECRAFT, 2008, p. 679). Again, Lovecraft employs a hyperbolic adverb to exaggerate the description of his creatures. Wilmarth exchanges letters with a man who lives on a farm in the area, called Henry Akeley. Akeley claims to have seen the race of strange crustacean-like creatures that Lovecraft ultimately called Mi-Go. Wilmarth travels to Akeley's farm and finds that the man has been subjected to experiments that such alien beings conducted. The aliens turn out to be peaceful and reasonable, and proposed a journey to cosmic realms from far away should Akeley volunteer to participate in the experiment. The Mi-Go never show up, but Wilmarth can hear whispers in the house and listen to their mastermind. Akeley soon disappears and Wilmarth can never have any evidence of the existence of those beings.

For the Mythoscope adaptation, HPLHS chose to move away from the silent film elements, and instead veer towards a neo-noir approach. *The Whisperer in Darkness* was still produced in black and white, but characters now talk, and there is both diegetic and extradiegetic sound throughout the film. Deciding to do

without intertitles granted the more recent production a faster editing pace, with a graphic continuity that was more cohesive, linking spaces in linear shots that change in point-of-view and width of framing, as well as in camera movement. *The Call of Cthulhu* changed points-of-view in simple ways similar to silent films, with direct spatial connections that did not change much in framing and angle from shot to shot. *The Whisperer in Darkness* goes beyond that simplicity, and while still having low and high angles with the occasional Dutch angle to provide a sense of madness and horror, it has wider shots, with a kind of editing that can create longer sequences. In addition, since it has several dialogue scenes in which the actors speak without the interference of intertitles, medium shots are more common. The film advances chronologically in the historical homage of the HPLHS and their Mythoscope labelling. Production value also increases here, as more scenes were filmed outdoors in a variety of locations, and image resolution was also improved. The organisation decided to showcase their technical efforts and even revealed the “unfathomable” creatures as opposed to Lovecraft’s choice to conceal a clear portrayal of them in the novella. Moreover, the shots have an enhanced depth of field, the cast is significantly larger, and film length itself is longer. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the variety of framing in *The Whisperer in Darkness*: the more widely used medium shots (Figure 3) and a long shot outdoors (Figure 4). HPLHS managed to make a full-length film while maintaining an independent studio status.



Figure 3 — Medium shot.



Figure 4 — Long shot.

Lighting remained a stylistic focus of the organisation in *The Whisperer in Darkness*. Rural sequences that were filmed outdoors usually have brighter lighting from the use of natural light, but indoor scenes often have a deeper contrast between light and shadow. Night scenes exhibit an exaggerated employment of artificial light that, again, can be compared to classic noir films like *The Maltese Falcon* (1941, directed by John Huston) and *Touch of Evil* (1958, directed by Orson Welles), which draw from the same German Expressionist approach to lighting that inspired *The Call of Cthulhu* in 2005. All the stylistic connections can be traced and observed in the 2011 production as well. The lower — but still present — level of contrast can be interpreted as a moderation in production that is sometimes associated with improved quality. When the intensity of contrast increases, it is often due to the portrayal of silhouettes of buildings or for dramatic effect in partial lighting of faces — just like in classic noir productions. Figures 5 and 6 show a high lighting contrast in different scenes of the film: *noir*-like artificial lighting on Matt Foyer's face (Figure 5), and a more environmental interaction between light and elements of the *mise-en-scène* in a low-angle shot to create hard shadows (Figure 6).





Figure 5 — *Noir*-like artificial lighting.



Figure 6 — Low-angle shot.

In terms of narrative mechanisms, *The Whisperer in Darkness* still follows a linear configuration, but with more techniques of storytelling because of the talkie-oriented format. Not only does Branney and his team use musical soundtrack

to accompany different sorts of scenes and action, but now talking actors, radio transmissions and the whispers of the Mi-Go, environmental sound effects, and voiceover narration are an indissociable part of the narrative structure. The plotline is linear, even if less so than in *The Call of Cthulhu*. But there is a complexity of storytelling that comes from the addition of diegetic sound. Montage sequences are also included, with superimposed images of newspaper clippings and editing ellipses to indicate time passage in the process of Wilmarth's investigation early in the film. All of those techniques adapt Lovecraft's own storytelling mode — one of horror narratives with detective story characteristics — to cinema.

In that sense, both films made by HPLHS in their Mythoscope format bring detective stories, so investigation and an editing approach that benefits that sort of narrative has become part of the Mythoscope structure; not unlike noir films from the old days. In conclusion, this essay has observed that HPLHS have put considerable effort in providing a retro film experience in their adaptations of Lovecraft's texts. Both when they follow the weird fiction author's habit of concealing his creatures in his narratives — which they mostly did in *The Call of Cthulhu* —, or when they choose a greater exposure of the monsters in the story — as is the case in *The Whisperer in Darkness* —, they have created a style of their own with their Mythoscope productions. Films that have distinctive black-and-white images, no diegetic sound, low budget but inventive sets, or the use of initial credits also have a nostalgic quality to them. Kracauer writes that

the ornamental system in *Caligari* [Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*] expanded through space, annulling its conventional aspect by means of painted shadows in disharmony with the lighting effects, and zigzag delineations designed to efface all rules of perspective. Space now dwindled to a flat plane, now augmented its dimensions to become what one writer called a “stereoscopic universe.” (2004, p. 69).

“Zigzag delineations” and the disharmony of “painted shadows” with the “lighting effects” were also part of the organisation's vision in *The Call of Cthulhu*. In order to make a film with German Expressionist influences, they found in the angular and confusing city of R'Lyeh the ideal setting (as shown in Figure 5): the painting-like shapes, the dream-like movements, and the disharmonious shadows. In *The Whisperer in Darkness*, they complexified their mechanisms of storytelling and filmmaking while keeping the style of depicting a thrilling adventure of a lonesome protagonist who sets out to discover horrible secrets about ancient beings from outer space. Both films also portray Gothic

images of uncanny environments, characters, and monsters, and the prevalent conflicts between natural and artificial, ancient and modern, earthly and alien. All of the aforementioned characteristics make the Mythoscope style typical because of its retro approach to Lovecraft's horror stories while also being inspired by film techniques from the author's time. It is a mixture of weird fiction and Expressionist cinema, and it draws from both in equal measure.

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# PENNY DREADFUL

## LITERARY MASH UP IN VICTORIAN LONDON

JOICE ELISE CARDOSO DE AMORIM<sup>1</sup>

The TV series *Penny Dreadful* — whose name was inspired in the derogatory term used to refer to cheap nineteenth-century literature produced at the cost of one penny, is an example of a work built on mash up techniques. Created and written by John Logan, Andrew Hinderaker and Krysty Wilson-Cairns, the TV show premiered in 2014, and ended in 2016, having a total of three seasons and 27 episodes.

According to Andrew E. Larsen, “Penny Dreadful riffs on Victorian science-fiction, occult, and horror stories.” (2016, p. 1), in that sense, the name for the series is aptly chosen, both in terms of a reference to the nineteenth-century literary supplement, with its amalgamation of themes, genres and subject matters, but also in the way the series hybridizes different narratives from the Victorian Era (the original *Penny Dreadful* were mostly reprints or rewrites of earlier Gothic fiction). A working definition of Gothic is the way it recycles pieces of different stories, as Daniel Serravalle de Sá argues, “Gothic narratives often involve a practice of assembling news stories from plundered elements of other previous narratives. Even before Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818), prototypical eighteenth-century Gothic literature was already recycling plots, characters and scenes from the past.” (SÁ, 2018, p. 223).

The TV series takes place in London, in the early 1890s during the latter years of Queen Victoria's Reign (1837-1901). At the time, the United Kingdom faced fast-changing perspectives regarding life, “urbanization, industrialization, revolution were the principal signs of change” (BOTTING, 1996, p. 23). In this period, there was a notable resurgence of Gothic forms and discourses, stories such as Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

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The creators of *Penny Dreadful* gathered these texts and other notable stories from the nineteenth-century, including Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), written during the Regency period, to deliver a post-modern Gothic masterpiece, creating something new at the same time they comment and honor all these previous remarkable literary works.

This paper aims at discussing in cultural fashion the Victorian Gothic literary universe that served as a departing point for the creative mash up that is the TV series. It also aims to analyze how some of the main characters — stemming from Gothic literature- are (re)presented and depicted in the TV series, also considering the city of London as the setting for *Penny Dreadful*.

## Victorian Gothic in the nineteenth century

In the Victorian Era, Gothic fiction was no longer the dominant literary genre. According to Andrew Smith in *Gothic Literature* (2007), the period of the Gothic heyday was from 1760 to 1820. However, the literary devices (plots, images, situations, language) used in the eighteenth-century texts such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) lingered on and reappeared in nineteenth-century Gothic fiction. These literary devices often resorted to physical and psychological terror, supernatural manifestations, madness, ancestral curses, horrifying or terrifying events, etc. According to Charlotte Barrett one of the differences between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic is that “the Victorian Gothic moves away from the familiar themes of Gothic fiction — ruined castles, helpless heroines, and evil villains — to situate the tropes of the supernatural and the uncanny within a recognizable environment.” (2013, p. 1). In this sense, modern Gothic moves to an urban setting; instead of lugubrious castles, the danger is now situated in bourgeois manors with haunted basements and attics, or even in gloomy and empty city streets in the middle of the night.

As Great Britain was undergoing processes of urbanization and industrialization, Victorian novelists were more concerned with “social, economic, and political conditions and their effects.” (KEARNES, 1996, p. 66). These changes indicate that the literature of that time privileged a pragmatic, reality-based literature to the detriment of fictional forms based on the figments of imagination. According to Marion Sons Marceau, “by the time Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, popular fiction style was swinging towards a greater realism. The genre of the Victorian novel was to be defined by its focus and comment on social issues.” (MARCEAU, 2008, p. 11). In the event of more realistic literature, the

Gothic survived as fragments of plots, images, situations, discourse that Victorian writers employed as literary devices to discuss (metaphorically) social, political and cultural issues in a work of fiction.

According to Gail Houser, “the 1880s brought continuing unemployment, low prices, and depleted profits as the period of industrial growth and railway expansion crested and leveled off.” (2005, p. 92). Unemployment, social inequality and poverty, for example, were major themes in Charles Dickens's novels, which perhaps are the utmost example of Victorian writers' social concerns. In 1886, Stevenson writes *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, novella in which he criticizes the hypocrisy of Victorian times. Mary-Luise Kohkle and Christian Gutleben affirm that “the Victorian Gothic manifests itself both as a subversive supernatural force and as a mechanism for social critique” (KOHKLE; GUTLEBEN, 2012, p. 9). The penny dreadfuls, which started being published since 1860, were also nineteenth-century products containing sensational fiction based on detectives' stories, crimes and the supernatural. John Springhall explains that “the pejorative and habitually misleading ‘dreadful’ label was adopted into common discourse in England during the 1870s, constructed by middle class journalists in order to amplify social anxiety or ‘moral panic’ over the latest commercial innovation directed to the young.” (SPRINGHALL, 1994, p. 568) Penny dreadfuls were new kinds of text based on the Gothic, bringing a new format to the literary genre. In this way, nineteenth-century Gothic distinguishes itself from the Gothic literary texts from the eighteenth century; nevertheless, always keeping the horror, terror and the main Gothic elements and tropes.

## Hyde's and Gray's Gothic London

As the setting of *Penny Dreadful*, London was central in the representation of the changing living conditions that influenced Gothic literature. *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Dracula*, three of the four main literary texts that inspired Logan and his co-workers in *Penny Dreadful*, take place in London. Both Edward Hyde and Dorian Gray roam the streets of London at night, from the West End to the East End, looking for victims and pleasures simply to satisfy their idleness while Dracula (upon arriving from Transylvania) resides in the fashionable center of the city in search of new victims.

In *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles*, Stevenson, Wilde, and Wells, Linda Dryden argues that “London was, and is, rich in material for the literary imagination.” (2003, p. 45), making the city a suitable backdrop for the TV series' setting. During the Victorian Era, London was in constant evolution. As Gilbert

points out “in the mid-nineteenth century, London was already well established as a modern city and the center of the British Empire.” (GILBERT, 2002, p. 3). The city was becoming a huge metropolis, with its wide and dark streets. In this sense, it was also the perfect scenario for stories that inspired great fear on their readers. Dryden also argues that “London was an environment in which narratives could, and did, dramatize the tales of tragedy, triumph and endurance so popular in the nineteenth century.” (2003, p. 46).

The upcoming capital city was dealing with social struggles, including poverty and class division, child labor, prostitution, and crime. Dryden relates the physical space to fiction, “late-Victorian London was the location of much modern Gothic fiction, and in reality the metropolis witnessed events on its streets that seemed to suggest that life could be as terrifying as horror and sensation fiction.” (DRYDEN, 2003, p. 47). Here, Dryden is referring to the historical incidents of the “Whitechapel Murderer” or “Leather Apron”, later on becoming famous as the “Jack the Ripper” case. The assassin used to mutilate women's bodies, removing organs like kidneys and uteruses. He was never captured or identified, being a threat, especially to female prostitutes, spreading fear, horror and terror in the population. “Whitechapel provided a stark and sensational backdrop for the Ripper murders: an immoral landscape of light and darkness, a nether region of illicit sex and crime, both exciting and dangerous.” (WALKOWITZ, 1997, p. 193). The killings, which happened in 1888, two years after *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde's* publication, and three years before *The Picture of Dorian Gray's* publication, are symptomatic of the ethos of the period.

Dryden connects the murderer, Jack the Ripper, and the fictional characters Dorian Gray and Edward Hyde. The critic describes the fictional characters as Baudelairian *flâneurs*, to which, according to Walter Benjamin, “[...] the shiny signs of business are at least as good as a wall ornament or oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebook; newsstands are his libraries.” (BENJAMIN, 1973, p. 37). To the *flâneur*, the city belongs to him; it is his own private environment ready to be explored.

Dryden also mentions how women were the object of Edward Hyde and Dorian Gray's gaze; just like prostitutes were the main objects and victims of Jack the Ripper. Women in the nineteenth century were experiencing a greater sense of freedom. Just like men, single women also wanted to explore the city more; therefore, making them easier targets to men lurking around, looking for fragile victims. According to Judith Walkowitz, “no figure was more equivocal, yet more crucial to the structured public landscape of the male *flâneur*, than the woman in public.” (1992, p. 21). Moreover, in the same way that Jack the Ripper was a



threat to the London society, Hyde and Gray were social menaces in the imagined London of Stevenson and Wilde.

All the urban transformations the city of London was going through alongside the fear the murders in the Ripper's case caused, helped to establish "The Big Smoke" as the perfect scenario for many remarkable Gothic literary works. Similarly, as Dryden suggests:

London was the seat of power, but more crucially, it contained such a huge population that the possibilities it presented to the literary imagination were almost boundless. Murder and violence, dehumanization and atavism, were seen to be characteristic of the London experience and lead to the perception of the city, for some, as a Gothicized space. The reasons for these events and conditions were seen to lie in the very nature of the city. (2003, p. 46).

In addition to the canonical literary texts mentioned before, which used London as the backdrop of their plots; contemporary films also used London as a Gothic setting. Some examples are the films *From Hell* (Hughes brothers, 2001), which is about Jack the Ripper's murders; and *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (Tim Burton, 2007), a musical-slasher film that re-tells the Victorian tale of a Londoner barber who kills his customers with a razor with the help of an accomplice. The barber Sweeney Todd was in fact the main character in *The String of Pearls*, the original penny dreadful about the horrors Todd caused in nineteenth-century London. More recently, the TV series *Penny Dreadful* used the city of London as the Gothic setting for its literary mash up about the literary works already mentioned.

## Literary Mash Up and Main Characters

The term "mash-up" was in fact originated in the music industry, when two or more pre-recorded songs were mixed creating a different one; a new work of art. The term also emerged to name works that combine pre-existing literature texts. Therefore, mash up is a work of fiction that has different sources of inspiration, also creating something new from pre-existing works, a hybrid that blends and comments other original texts.

In film, an example of literary mash up is *The League of Extraordinary Gentleman* (Stephen Norrington, 2003), based on the comic book series of the same name written by Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill. Although it has some characters in common with *Penny Dreadful*, such as Dorian Gray, Mina Harker

and Dr. Henry Jekyll/Edward Hyde, *The League of Extraordinary Gentleman* is considered a super-hero action film. It does not present a Gothic atmosphere as the TV series does. According to Anna Powell, "Gothic is an intertextual mode that crosses media boundaries." (2006, p. 121). By changing media, directors and screenwriters have to make some choices in order to adapt characters from text to screen in the most possible appealing way. In the case of *Penny Dreadful*, the adaptation and mash up of the literary characters maintain these characters' main features, but also change a few aspects so that these characters can coexist in harmony in the TV series' plot.

In the TV series, Dr. Victor Frankenstein is a scientist, just like in the novel, but he is also interested in poetry. He is a gentle and sensitive man that gives life again to a dead body, which results in the Creature. The reanimated corpse is named Adam (a feature that is not in the novel), he is also sensitive and talks about poetry during many episodes, he reads Milton's *Paradise Lost*, for example, but within time, he shows a more hideous and cruel side as well. Adam has an anguished soul and he does not rest until Dr. Frankenstein creates an immortal woman to be his mate (with disastrous consequences). Similar to Shelley's novel, the TV series seems to raise the question of whether the Creature or the doctor is the real monster. Despite Dr. Frankenstein's sensibility, beauty and intelligence, he rejects his own creature, like a father rejecting his own son. The Creature, on the contrary, has a horrible figure, he is a monster in appearance. Both characters show a very sensitive and thoughtful side at the same time they present very cruel aspects in their personalities. This duality of feelings in Frankenstein and his Creature heightens the question of which one of them is the true monster.

*Penny Dreadful* also (re)creates a Dr. Henry Jekyll. In the TV series, he only appears in the third season as a brilliant chemist who is a good friend of Dr. Victor Frankenstein. They studied together and Victor asks his friend help to regain the love of the woman he loves so deeply. Differently from the novella, in the TV series, spectators do not have the chance to see the evil side of Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde, because John Logan decided to depict a very young Henry Jekyll, before drinking the potion that would turn him into Edward Hyde. In the TV series, the young Jekyll is considered an outcast due to his Indian descent and color of his skin. The character deals with these racial issues, and he also presents some murderous thoughts, which might be a hint that leads him to unleash his inner Edward Hyde, connecting the character in *Penny Dreadful* to the original one in Stevenson's novella. However, never actually showing the emergence of Mr. Hyde in the show.

The character of Dorian Gray that *Penny Dreadful* presents is very similar to the character in Oscar Wilde's novel. He is a wealthy and beautiful young man who is ageless and immortal. Gray is also a sensualist, fancy and elegant man, but throughout the TV series, he shows he can also be a very cruel and evil creature, killing innocent people and ruining lives with no remorse. Differently from Wilde's novel, *Penny Dreadful's* Gray presents a regenerative power, enabling him to heal extremely fast from injuries, while in the novel he just continues to appear young and innocent, while his picture grows aged and corrupt, but not presenting self-healing powers. The other features TV show Gray presents are very similar to the ones in the novel. Despite being a very attractive and fascinating man, he is also dangerously mortal to the ones around him.

The TV series depicts Dracula as Dr. Alexander Sweet, a Director of Zoological Studies at the London Natural Museum. Despite the fact that he only appears in the last season, he is the main reason for the crucial event in the beginning of *Penny Dreadful*, the disappearance of Mina, Sir Malcom's daughter, who is the victim of a terrible evil force. In order to save her, Malcom, together with other characters begins a journey to find his beloved daughter. The mash up *Penny Dreadful* presents enables the TV series to change facts from the original literary works in which they were based, giving the TV series' characters new paths, alliances, and fates. The mixture of well-known Gothic characters produces a new story with new endings. Gothic fiction, thus, reinvents itself by bringing earlier texts to contemporary media such as films and TV series.

Besides the well-known literary characters that were mashed up in the TV series, John Logan created other three main characters; Sir Malcom Murray, a British explorer of the African continent who is also Mina's father; Ethan Chandler, an American gunslinger who is also a werewolf; and Vanessa Ives, the protagonist and expert medium and clairvoyant. The characters Logan created, and the characters derived from literary texts interact with each other, giving birth to the original Gothic TV series.

## Final remarks

The TV series *Penny Dreadful* is a contemporary example of literary mash up based on Gothic literature. It unites original characters with well-known literary characters creating an original work, which takes place in London in the Victorian Era. The Victorian Gothic with its main concerns such as social, political, and economic issues criticized the population and problems of the period. London, being the center of the British Empire and the place where urbanization and

dreadful events were taking place, became the perfect backdrop for Victorian Gothic authors to situate their stories as well as John Logan's choice for *Penny Dreadful's* setting.

After watching the entire TV series, is possible to conclude how relevant to the Gothic fiction John Logan's work was in relation to the TV series' plot. He honors and comments many important literary works. This paper only mentioned and discussed the main ones, but throughout the episodes, it is possible to see many references and allusions to other important literary works, such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, W. W. Jacobs' *The Monkey's Paw* and others. In conclusion, *Penny Dreadful* was carefully written, produced and directed in order to create a Gothic environment very well interlocked by all its characters, setting and events. The result is a successful TV show that highlights Gothic literary texts from the nineteenth century and elicits them in a different medium in the current days.

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# O VAMPIRO VIAJANTE

## EM ENTREVISTA COM O VAMPIRO E AMANTES ETERNOS

MARIA CAROLINA P. MÜLLER<sup>1</sup>

O vampiro é um personagem fortemente ligado ao gênero gótico, cujo imaginário é envolto em mistério e horror. Reconhecido por sua natureza disruptiva, o mito do vampiro pode ser encontrado hoje nos mais diversos meios: na literatura, passando pelo cinema, séries de TV, entre outros. Se pedirmos para uma pessoa elencar alguns traços característicos do vampiro, possivelmente estarão incluídos: o hábito de dormir em caixões, metamorfosear-se em animais, saciar a fome com sangue, repulsa ao crucifixo, e, claro, a imortalidade. Porém, há um aspecto significativo relacionado à figura do vampiro que muitas vezes passa despercebido ao leitor/espectador: a viagem. Desde o conto creditado como precursor do vampiro na literatura inglesa *The vampyr: a tale* (1891), escrito por John William Polidori, passando por *Carmilla* (1872), de Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, pelo clássico romance *Drácula* (1897), de Bram Stoker, e chegando a textos mais recentes como *Entrevista com o vampiro* (1976) e *Crepúsculo* (2008), escritos por Anne Rice e Stephenie Meyer respectivamente, que a figura do vampiro está encadeada com às narrativas de viagem.

Pensar no vampiro como um viajante não abrange somente o trânsito físico ou territorial, mas também o deslocamento temporal estendido de um ser que se movimenta através dos séculos devido à imortalidade. Mediante tais atravessamentos de fronteiras espaço-temporais, a presente análise tem como objetivo abordar a temática da viagem e algumas das possíveis significações suscitadas por meio da figura do vampiro durante essas passagens. A princípio algumas interpretações e teorias críticas sobre o tema do vampiro viajante no romance de Bram Stoker serão levantadas, para em seguida analisar e debater como duas produções cinematográficas retratam a natureza viajante do vampiro além-fronteiras: a primeira, *Entrevista com o vampiro* (1994), sob direção de Neil Jordan, foi adaptada do romance homônimo de Anne Rice e a segunda, *Amantes eternos* (2013), dirigida por Jim Jarmusch.

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## Fazendo as malas com Drácula: o romance de Stoker e a viagem

O romance *Drácula* costuma ser estudado por meio de leituras de cunho psicanalítico, olhar esse que permite discutir o protagonista como modelo para observações sobre transtornos narcísicos, ou ainda, levantar a questão da sexualidade e do poder de atração emanado pelo vampiro. Contudo, como afirma Sérgio Bellei

A marcante presença da temática da sexualidade monstruosa no *Drácula*, de Bram Stoker, relega normalmente a um segundo ou terceiro planos outros problemas propostos pelo romance que podem, particularmente em tempos xenófobos de diásporas e migrações, ser tão ou mais significativos do que a questão sexual. É este o caso do tratamento do tema das viagens [...]. (BELLEI, 2000, p. 35).

O presente artigo reconhece a importância das leituras estabelecidas em torno da questão sexual, todavia, de acordo com Bellei, é possível explorar diferentes rotas, como é o caso da viagem, e isso já foi notado por outros críticos, como vemos a seguir.

Pode-se considerar, por exemplo, a viagem do vampiro dentro de um viés socioeconômico: o vampiro viaja, pois almeja uma expansão de seus domínios. O artigo “The Dialectic of Fear” (1982) aborda a figura do Conde Drácula, argumentando que “assim como capital, Drácula é impulsionado em direção a um crescimento contínuo, uma expansão ilimitada de seu domínio: a acumulação é intrínseca a sua natureza.”<sup>2</sup> (MORETTI, 1982, p. 73). O crítico coloca o personagem automaticamente como um exemplo e uma metáfora do sistema capitalista, uma vez que o vampiro é um acumulador nato.

Uma outra leitura plausível, manifesta-se a partir do ponto de vista dos estudos pós-coloniais. Ao observar a viagem de Drácula da Transilvânia para Londres, Stephen Arata, no artigo intitulado “The Occidental Tourist: Dracula and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization” (1990), enxerga um processo de colonização reversa. Na virada do século XIX para o século XX, o Império Britânico era tido como a maior potência mundial, principalmente em termos de hegemonia naval e em posses de colônias mundo afora. Arata

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<sup>2</sup> No original: “like capital, Dracula is impelled towards a continuous growth, an unlimited expansion of his domain: accumulation is inherent in his nature.” Tradução minha, assim como todas as outras presentes neste capítulo.



usa da figura do vampiro e a noção de colonização reversa para falar sobre o declínio desse império e o receio do colonizador de ter sua posição tomada pelo colonizado. De modo semelhante, no texto “Questões de geografia e fronteiras II: Drácula viajante”, Sérgio Bellei debate aspectos colonialistas no romance, enfatizando o cruzamento de fronteiras “entre a Europa civilizatória e uma Transilvânia percebida como primitiva, subdesenvolvida e ameaçadora” (2000, p. 35). Drácula, nesse caso, é o prenúncio da possibilidade de uma inversão de papéis, uma possibilidade latente da metrópole ver se concretizar um processo antagonístico do opressor a partir do oprimido.

De diferentes formas, os críticos citados acima observam a temática da viagem e as questões de deslocamento dentro do romance *Drácula*, que são restritos ao continente europeu. Em consonância, a questão da viagem é também analisada, porém a partir da investigação de duas produções fílmicas, em busca de um elo entre o vampiro e a viagem para além de Stoker, evidenciando como tais deslocamentos, antes restritos ao dito Velho Mundo, agora acontecem também no Novo Mundo.

### *Entrevista com o Vampiro: a viagem e a questão existencial*

O filme *Entrevista com o vampiro* é, na verdade, uma adaptação do livro homônimo, escrito por Anne Rice em 1976. O romance gótico de Rice é considerado uma das criações mais relevantes dentro do universo vampírico desde *Drácula* (PUNTER; BYRON, 2004, p. 244).

O filme inicia com a entrevista entre Louis de Pointe du Lac (Brad Pitt), o vampiro, e Daniel Molloy (Christian Slater), jornalista, na cidade californiana de São Francisco, na década de 1990 (Figura 1). Em um quase monólogo, Louis narra com detalhes as agruras existenciais atreladas ao seu (re)nascimento como vampiro na Nova Orleans do final do século XVIII. Louis é um vampiro norte-americano, ao contrário do responsável por sua metamorfose e mentor, Lestat (Tom Cruise), um vampiro do Velho Mundo.

O tema da viagem em *Entrevista com o vampiro* aparece inserido na própria maneira como o roteiro se desenrola, com o uso de técnicas de *flashback*. O recurso permite que a estrutura narrativa viaje entre passado e presente. Isto é exatamente o que acontece entre Louis e Molloy durante a entrevista, os dois viajam no tempo por meio do relato de Louis, estabelecendo uma constante ida e volta entre passado (Nova Orleans) e presente (São Francisco).



Figura 1 — Daniel Molloy (Christian Slater) e Louis (Brad Pitt).

Tal qual em *Drácula*, o deslocamento físico entre Novo Mundo e Velho Mundo em *Entrevista com o vampiro* acontece por mar — sendo o navio um meio de transporte bastante comum em narrativas góticas. A própria imprevisibilidade marítima coopera na construção da espacialidade imaginativa das embarcações, como por exemplo, no Demeter em *Drácula*, que tem sua tripulação dizimada durante a viagem: “24 de julho — parece que algum tipo de maldição paira sobre o navio. Com uma tripulação à míngua, chegando na Baía de Biscaia com tormenta à vista. Perdemos mais um homem na noite passada — desaparecido.”<sup>3</sup> (STOKER, 2011, p. 80). O navio é um espaço gótico náutico de alteridade, e segundo a visão foucaultiana, um espaço heterotópico por excelência:

um pedaço flutuante de espaço, um lugar sem lugar, que vive por ele mesmo, que é sobre si fechado e ao mesmo tempo entregue ao infinito do mar e que, de porto em porto, de costado em costado, de bordel em bordel, vai até as colônias buscar o que elas têm de mais precioso em seus jardins [...]. (FOUCAULT, 1984, p. 49).

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<sup>3</sup> No original: “24 July — There seems to be a doom over this ship. Already a hand short and entering the Bay of Biscay with wild weather ahead, and yet last night another man lost — disappeared.”

O próprio vampiro pode ser relacionado a esse “lugar sem lugar”, um “pedaço flutuante” preso entre a vida e a morte, sem precisão de pertencimento. É justamente o sentimento originado por este «não lugar», que aparece na personagem de Louis no filme.

Se, como citado anteriormente, Conde Drácula viaja para expandir seus domínios, Louis viaja com o intuito de achar outros da mesma espécie. Há, portanto, um outro tipo de intenção no deslocamento desse vampiro do Novo Mundo, que seria pautada por uma busca existencial. Louis sofre com a nova forma e com questões que também perturbam os seres mortais como “quem sou eu?”, “de onde vim?” ou “para onde vou?” e a consequência disso é uma caracterização mais humanizada do vampiro, expressa através de um estado de melancolia constante pela falta de respostas. O vampiro de Nova Orleans finalmente encontra outros como ele em Paris, mas, se frustra ao ver que os vampiros do Velho Mundo são pragmáticos quanto à própria existência. Armand (Antonio Banderas), que é o vampiro mais antigo na face da Terra, está preocupado somente com a expansão de seu domínio. Se de um lado Louis esperava de Armand respostas para suas perguntas de cunho existencial, do outro o vampiro do Velho Mundo contava com a generosidade, ou a ingenuidade, de Louis para servir de guia no continente americano. A frustração acaba por acometer ambos já que, após a morte de Claudia (Kirsten Dunst), Louis volta à Nova Orleans sem as respostas que procurava e Armand permanece no velho continente.

O retorno de Louis para casa marca o surgimento de um novo tipo de vampiro, que se afasta gradualmente da ideia de monstrosidade para se aproximar de uma versão mais romântica e vulnerável, que desperta a empatia da audiência em sua busca existencial e desejo de pertencimento. O deslocamento de Louis entre São Francisco, Nova Orleans e Paris, caracteriza uma diluição das fronteiras geográficas, permitindo o vampiro ser um cidadão de um mundo agora globalizado. Isso corrobora com a afirmação de que

os vampiros vão aonde o poder está: quando no século XIX, a Inglaterra era a nação dominante do Ocidente, os vampiros britânicos imperavam no imaginário popular, mas com o nascimento do filme, eles migraram em tempo para o chamado Século Americano.<sup>4</sup> (AUERBACH, 1995, p. 6).

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<sup>4</sup> No original: “vampires go where power is: when, in the nineteenth century, England dominated the West, British vampires ruled the popular imagination, but with the birth of film, they migrated to America in time for the American century.”

Esta afirmação feita por Auerbach, fica clara na narrativa do filme, já que Louis é um vampiro transformado por Lestat durante à noite, na beira do Rio Mississippi, ou seja, é um vampiro americano de “nascença”. Tal fato parece trazer consigo, quase que automaticamente, o deslocamento existencial e a melancolia que persegue Louis, como se o vampiro tivesse sido retirado de seu “habitat natural”, o Velho Mundo.

### ***Amantes eternos*: entre dois polos**

*Amantes eternos* (Jim Jarmusch, 2013) conta a história do casal de vampiros, Adam (Tom Hiddleston) e Eve (Tilda Swinton). Em nenhum momento no decorrer do filme a palavra vampiro é mencionada, estabelecendo com os espectadores uma relação de conhecimento prévio sobre o tema. Sabe-se que se trata de um vampiro por meio de códigos pré-estabelecidos tanto na literatura quanto no cinema, a exemplo da aversão ao sol, da dieta baseada em sangue, dos atributos extra mundanos (como a agilidade fora do comum), entre outras características que fazem o público perceber quase de imediato que aqueles dois personagens retratados na tela são vampiros.

O deslocamento físico em *Amantes eternos* é abordado por meio de viagens intercaladas entre o Novo e o Velho Mundo. Eve é uma vampira pálida, loira, leitora ávida dos mais diversos gêneros literários (Figura 2) e moradora da cidade de Tânger, no Marrocos. Seu companheiro de séculos é Adam um vampiro de cabelos negros, músico e nostálgico, que vive na cidade de Detroit, nos Estados Unidos.

Se em *Entrevista com o vampiro* o trânsito entre Novo e Velho continente se dá por meio de navio, em *Amantes eternos* os vampiros incorporam um meio de transporte mais veloz e atual: o avião. O casal não se priva de aproveitar as facilidades que o mundo moderno oferece quanto à locomoção. A bagagem carregada pela vampira também muda em relação aos seus antepassados. Enquanto Conde Drácula transportava dentro do navio Demeter caixas de madeira abastecidas com terra da Transilvânia para Londres, Eve forra suas malas com livros e nada mais. Apesar da mudança nos pertences e no modo como o deslocamento ocorre, o período noturno ainda é o escolhido para a viagem. A noite, enquanto código que constitui o imaginário do vampiro, permanece sendo o momento adequado para esses seres se movimentarem de um lugar ao outro sem correrem maiores riscos.



Figura 2 — Eve (Tilda Swinton).

As cidades de Tãnger e Detroit são também representações das personalidades de Eve e Adam, respectivamente. Nesse sentido, Eve se revela uma vampira em harmonia com a própria imortalidade e com o fato de ter testemunhado grandes acontecimentos históricos como guerras e inquisições. Ela lida com a passagem do tempo de uma forma muito pragmática. Já Adam se assemelha ao personagem Louis, em *Entrevista com o vampiro*, pois possui um lado mais questionador quanto à própria existência e isso o faz se sentir enfasiado. Se Detroit passa por uma crise econômica, Adam por sua vez nutre uma crise existencial. Ele romantiza o passado e parece não assimilar bem os grandes entraves da humanidade. Diferentemente de Louis, Adam aceita o fato de ser vampiro, mas não se conforma com as atitudes dos “zumbis” — termo que usa para se referir aos humanos — perante o mundo. A natureza nostálgica de Adam o faz preencher a saudade dos velhos tempos colecionando instrumentos musicais de épocas passadas. Colecionar, de certa forma, pode ser entendido como uma viagem através dos tempos. O ato de colecionar peças antigas, torna o passado tangível, sugerindo assim o tom nostálgico da personalidade de Adam e a persistência de residir em um espaço-tempo já extinto. A grande questão para Adam é lidar com a própria existência dentro do entre-lugar passado e presente.

Um tema central que a viagem temporal traz para a narrativa de *Amantes eternos* é a percepção do vampiro defronte ao tema da questão climática. O filme comunica, por meio de Adam, tanto a angústia sobre o futuro do planeta, quanto a preocupação com uma provável extinção dos vampiros. Durante um passeio noturno por Detroit, Eve menciona que quando as cidades do sul começarem a queimar, Detroit irá renascer pois, ali, ainda há água. O fato de serem um casal de vampiros viajantes faz com que essas percepções ambientais despontem por intermédio desses deslocamentos, afinal eles presenciaram o antes, presenciam o hoje e presenciarão o depois.

Em *Entrevista com o vampiro*, Louis e Claudia viajam pela Europa durante anos em uma incessante busca para encontrar seus semelhantes. Perto de desistirem da procura, eles acabam por conhecer Armand e sua trupe na capital francesa. Essa dificuldade na localização de outros vampiros pode ser entendida como um prenúncio de uma iminente extinção. Além disso, no caso de Adam e Eve, a questão da extinção parece ter uma ligação direta com a contaminação do sangue — um dos vampiros do filme, Marlowe (John Hurt), morre justamente porque ingeriu sangue contaminado: “Foi alguma coisa ruim. Contaminada. Evitem o hospital daqui”<sup>5</sup> (AMANTES ETERNOS, 01:41:36). A escassez de sangue no filme faz paralelo direto com a possibilidade da escassez de água potável, item vital para os humanos, assim como o sangue para a sobrevivência dos vampiros.

A estadia de Eve em Detroit não dura muito tempo. Ian (Anton Yelchin), assistente de Adam, é morto por Ava (Mia Wasikowska), também vampira e irmã de Eve. Em um “impulso adolescente”, Ava “suga” Ian, fato que deixa Adam enfurecido, afinal o casal de vampiros possui, por assim dizer, uma ética ou “consciência alimentar”, onde a mordida é considerada não só um ato primitivo, mas também perigoso. Ava volta para Los Angeles — cidade chamada por Adam de “zombieland”, terra dos zumbis — e Adam e Eve retornam para Tânger. Essa viagem de retorno ao Velho Mundo pode ser entendida como um regresso às origens do mito, um exemplo do “processo de familiarização e de-familiarização”<sup>6</sup> (GELDER, 1994, p. 86,) que acontece nas construções mais recentes das narrativas vampíricas. A viagem para o Novo Mundo (Detroit) estabelece simbolicamente a transgressão e emancipação do vampiro em relação aos seus antepassados literários ao mesmo tempo que o retorno ao Velho Mundo (no caso, Tânger) reafirma a gênese do vampiro.

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<sup>5</sup> No original: “I got some bad stuff. Contaminated. Avoid the hospital here.”

<sup>6</sup> No original: “process of familiarization and defamiliarization.”

## Chegadas e partidas: o vampiro viajante incessante e imortal

Ver a vida através dos séculos faz do vampiro um agente transhistórico, um viajante imortal que se torna testemunha dos acontecimentos e fatos que presencia. O trânsito do vampiro parece inofensivo à primeira vista, mas torna-se um intenso lugar de conflitos políticos, sociais, históricos e até mesmo identitários. Nesse sentido, esse monstro que se alimenta de sangue — outrora temido e hoje cobiçado — detém um papel crucial na reconfiguração do modo de significação e pertencimento do vampiro através do tempo. A partir do romance de Anne Rice, o vampiro parece propor, por meio de um deslocamento entre limiares e fronteiras, uma viagem sobre si mesmo e o que o circunda.

Percebe-se nas viagens físicas dos filmes citados, o contraste em relação ao meio de transporte escolhido para a realização do deslocamento físico (navio em *Entrevista com o vampiro*, e avião em *Amantes eternos*), porém em comparação, é nítido o sentimento de deslocamento existencial presente em ambos, adquirindo com isso contornos mais humanizados em relação à figura do vampiro.

Independente da mídia que habita — literatura, cinema, *games* — o vampiro incorpora uma metáfora cultural que permite diferentes significações e que varia de acordo com o contexto histórico na qual ele/ela pertence. O ícone oriundo da Transilvânia se multiplicou. Conde Drácula não está mais sozinho, porém seus sucessores iniciaram o processo transgressor de des-eurocentrismo de um ser antes fronteiro, agora globalizado. Esses nômades noturnos continuam e continuarão viajando através do tempo, do espaço e da nossa imaginação. Enquanto houver sangue para eles e água para nós.

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# HAMLET AND THE GOTHIC

## THE TRAGEDY, THE MADNESS AND THE GHOST

MARINA MARTINS AMARAL<sup>1</sup>

I seek here to identify and discuss possible Gothic-related impulses, namely tragedy, madness and the ghost, in the play *Hamlet*, written by William Shakespeare in 1559-1601. The idea here is that Shakespeare's theatre was a point of reference to Gothic novelists, who revisited, adapted, and emulated many fear-provoking moments and cultural anxieties in Shakespeare's plays, often by means of quotation, citation, and analogy. The possible relations between the playwright and the genre and the very definition of the term "Gothic" will be primordial and a starting point to this essay, being key to understand the connection between the Renaissance play and the literary genre created centuries later.

British writers of Gothic literature from eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often mention Shakespeare. For example, novelist Ann Radcliffe had an extensive knowledge of Shakespeare's oeuvre, which she displays in the essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry" (1826) and in the many Shakespearian passages that she uses as epigraphs in novels such as *The Romance of the Forest* (1790), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and *The Italian* (1798).

In the book *Gothic Shakespeares*, Dale Townshend and John Drakakis, discuss Shakespeare alongside major Gothic texts and writers, such as Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis and Mary Shelley. The book demonstrates the impact and significance that the author had in Gothic literature, affirming that "[...] readings of Shakespeare were both influenced by and influential in the rise of Gothic forms in literature and culture from the late eighteenth century onwards" (2008, p. I), making the Bard one of the most significant precursor of Gothic literature in Britain. According to Drakakis, Shakespeare was chosen as a model for two reasons:

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[...] first because he was an indigenous poet of 'Nature' [...] second, the common repertoire of shared anxieties that Chris Baldick has catalogued were there in abundance in plays like *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, although other plays such as the Henry VI plays, *King John*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* also provided sources of quotation. (DRAKAKIS; TOWNSHEND, 2008, p. 8).

While it is well known that a number of Gothic novelists used Shakespeare as a source of inspiration, and sometimes even appropriated content from his plays, they did so to rely on the reputation of the "great genius", hence, protecting themselves from the criticism involving the polemic of their works. Drakakis and Townshend discuss how journalist Francis William Blagdon, in his review of *Gonzalez the Monk* (1805), novel written by W. H. Ireland, affirms a direct connection between the Gothic novel and Shakespeare, stating that the poet is invoked as a legitimizing strategy for the recommendation of the fiction. The idea of using Shakespeare's canon and imagery as a source of legitimization of Gothic fiction can produce a problem in the sense that it can discredit any type of originality or literary merit that this genre could ever have.

However, it is also important to take into consideration the idea of intertexts in this complex relation between Gothic authors and Shakespeare. The word "intertext" means the coexistence in one text of other texts, and it derives its explanatory force from a dilution of Roland Barthes's observation that any text is "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash." (1977, p. 146). Therefore, all texts are a product of previous relations, appropriations, quotations, allusions to other texts. The question is: why would Shakespeare be different? Well, he was not.

In addition, according to Michael Foucault in his lecture "What is an Author?", the concept of authorship begins with the assumption that all "discourses are object of appropriation" (1969, p. 108). A great example of this is that it is believed that the play *Hamlet* was based on the thirteenth-century legend of *Amleto*, written by Saxo Grammaticus, and later recovered in the sixteenth century by François de Belleforest in a lost play named *Ur-Hamlet*. Moreover, as A. D. Nuttall mentions in *Shakespeare the Thinker* during act 4 scene 7, in *Hamlet* — when Gertrude describes Ophelia's death — the passage may have had its origins in the real-life drowning of Katherine Hamlet in 1579, this implies that, in spite of the eighteenth-century practices of anthologizing the "beauties from Shakespeare", Shakespeare himself sometimes seems to enjoy "anthology pieces." (2007, p. 7) as well.

The romantic poet S.T. Coleridge explains that the passage describing Ophelia's death is the product of the poet's "secondary imagination" that "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to re-create". Thus, regardless of Shakespeare's status as genius and acclaimed national poet, he also drew on appropriation and allusions to other texts in order to create his own. This observation leads us to conclude that, if appropriations from Shakespeare served to legitimize Gothic literature, the idea of intertexts legitimizes the originality and relevance of the Gothic genre or mode.

## Defining the Gothic

But, what is Gothic? There is no simple or single way to answer this question. The Gothic operates in the order of "plurality"; thus a sole definition will hardly account for all the nuances and different images it can evoke. Several critics have attempted to define Gothic in their own terms without reaching a consensus on the issue. Punter and Byron, for example, speculate that the Gothic can be interpreted as an attempt to deal with the difficulties of social or psychological organization, deeming the Gothic an "escapist modality" (2004, p. XIX). According to Sardenberg, Baddeley defends that the Gothic is "the profane, the sinister, the other" (2010, p. 1). But, approaching the subject in a more structural and formal way, Botting presents the idea of Gothic as the use of "spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, monks, and nuns, fainting heroines and bandits [...] scientists, fathers, husbands, madmen, criminals and the monstrous." (1995, p. 2). A particularly useful definition of Gothic is given by Victor Sage, who understands the Gothic as being a "momentary derangement of the perceptual apparatus" in which "characters struggle to adjust their perceptions of sensory experience against the rational structures that sustain their world view" (2003, p. 176). He argues that these moments of misperception, which language and rhetoric create, encompass challenges the reader's epistemological assurances, creating fantastic visions that defy the rational, materialist viewpoint. This working definition of Gothic is extremely useful for my arguments, especially when I discuss madness. Although definitions are different from each other, the juxtaposition of the set helps to understand the Gothic themes, elements and symbolisms featured in *Hamlet*.

Thiago Sardenberg argues that when the Gothic offers horror to the readers it is usually inviting them to reflect on the source of such horrors, which can be a representation of the human nature or human existence as a social being. This idea of Gothic as a device of human consciousness and issues allows a direct relation

with Shakespeare and his works. Shakespeare is famous not only for the greatness of his writing skills, but for the talent of raising timeless questionings that remain present in society until nowadays, being *Hamlet* a play full of examples of such existential questionings. As a play of philosophical and dramatic content, *Hamlet* is set in Denmark and tells the story of prince Hamlet, who tries to avenge the death of his father, king Hamlet. The king is murdered by Claudius, his own brother, who poisons him and takes his throne by marrying queen Gertrude.

In this play Prince Hamlet breaks with the social conventions of the time and lets a symbolic darkness, involve him. The tragedy of Hamlet's life is considered here as the first Gothic impulse of the play. The basic organization of the plot presents the primary conflicts that will trigger all of the subsequent struggles in the play, such as death: "O proud death, What feast is toward in thine eternal cell, / That thou so many princes at a shot / So bloodily, struck?" (5.2.364-367); betrayal: "The serpent that did sting thy father's life / Now wears his crown" (1.5.38-39); murder: "Murther must foul, as in the best it is, / But this most foul, strange, and unnatural" (1.5.27-28); and fear: "Who's there?/ Nay, answer me. Stand, and unfold yourself" (1.1.1-2); all issues that can be related to Gothic literature.

The primary conflicts that characterize the tragedy are: first, the death of Hamlet's father, an event that brings about the existence of a sad and melancholic protagonist Second, the murder of King Hamlet, whose discovery turns Hamlet into a vengeful character, giving a new direction to the plot. Third, Claudius' the usurpation of the throne. It cannot be forgotten that Hamlet loses his father and the throne; he was the next in bloodline to be king, but his uncle marries his mother depriving him of his birthright as king. Fourth, Gertrude's betrayal in the eyes of Hamlet. Although his mother's decision disgusts the prince, who considers her a traitor and prostitute, Gertrude has not done anything wrong. She was a recent widow, but perfectly free to start another relationship. Fifth, Hamlet's encounter with the ghost of his father. This is one of the most suspenseful events of the play because it makes the prince question (in Gothic fashion) his own beliefs and rationality; and last, but not least important, the fear of invasion in Denmark. The play starts with the threat of Norway invading the kingdom at any time, establishing an unstable and fear-inducing atmosphere.

Consequently, the primary conflicts of the play set off a complex and troubled protagonist who deals with dilemmas, involving ethical and rational problems. Hamlet embodies the image of the hero and anti-hero at the same time. The aspects of the hero relate to the idea of trying to make justice for his father's murder. As an anti-hero, he is a troubled man fighting for his sanity while a ghost has a direct influence on his actions. There is also a third type of hero that can be

associated with Hamlet, which is the “tragic hero”, usually related to protagonists, whose misery is the result of hamartia, an error or a tragic failure. However, according to Sardenberg Hamlet's problems have to do with his lack of action and not directly with a tragic flaw.

[...] in Hamlet's case, it is precisely the lack of action that constitutes his tragic flaw. His inability to act and his excessive speculation prevent him from fulfilling the ghost's request, thus avenging his father's death. This is something that Hamlet himself acknowledges in one of his soliloquies, ashamed of himself by admitting that even the performance of one of the actors from the troupe demonstrates more passion and intensity than his attitudes towards the revenge of his father's death.<sup>2</sup> (2011, p. 5).

Hamlet will be responsible for the trespassing of social conventions, in this sense there is a connection with the Gothic, particularly the idea of the absence of order and installation of chaos. The primary conflicts cause this turmoil, setting the foundation for further dramatic situations that can be considered as secondary conflicts. Those secondary conflicts can be interpreted as psychological problems or matters of rationality, being madness exemplary of this, and the second Gothic impulse discussed in this essay. Madness or insanity is a central theme in Gothic literature, whose writers thrive in their descriptions of the mind's breaking point, but certainly madness in literature is not an exclusive Gothic invention, since characters such as King Lear and Don Quixote are famous examples of earlier mad people in literature.

## Gothic Madness and its Ghosts

In *Hamlet*, for instance, Prince Hamlet and Ophelia are two great examples of characters who became mad or were driven into madness, representing two different perspectives about madness. In Hamlet's case we see a man fighting for his sanity, bordering on madness and irrationality, and this happens because of his encounter with his father's ghost. When Hamlet, a man educated in Wittenberg

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<sup>2</sup> In the original: “no caso de Hamlet, é precisamente a falta de ações que compõem sua falha trágica. Sua incapacidade de agir e seu excesso de especulação o impedem de realizar o pedido do fantasma, vingando assim a morte do seu pai. Isto é algo que o próprio Hamlet entende em um de seus solilóquios, envergonhando-se ao admitir que até mesmo a performance de um dos atores do grupo de teatro demonstra mais paixão e intensidade que suas atitudes em relação à vingança de seu pai morto.”

university i.e. possessing a mind governed by reason, meets the ghost, something that is not from the logical world, but from the realms of the supernatural, his beliefs and ideas of what is real become unstable, making him doubt his own rationality. Another side of Hamlet's madness is the "fake madness" that the character is able to pull off in parts of the play. The Prince manages to feign derangement in his favor, displaying a certain level of insanity in order to reach his personal vendetta.

However, Ophelia's case is characterized a by lack of control over her madness. Unlike prince Hamlet, Ophelia does not display a battle between the rational and the irrational self, nor does she dissimulate her state of mind to her own advantage; Ophelia goes progressively in a one-way direction toward losing herself in insanity. She is a character who has no will power in the play, her actions are determined by her father, and all her expectations in life are projections of her lover, prince Hamlet. In the essay "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism", Elaine Showalter cites feminist critic Lee Dewards who states that "we can imagine Hamlet's story without Ophelia, but Ophelia literally has no story without Hamlet." (1985, p. 1). In this way, Ophelia is dependent of the male figures in her life, not knowing a life apart from them. Her madness is directly related to the loss of this male-centered support system that surrounds the character. Ophelia finds herself in a situation where the three male figures of her life are gone. Her father, Polonius, is dead, killed by her beloved Hamlet; her lover, Hamlet, rejects her; and her brother, Laertes, is absent from the country. She is left alone in a man's world and does not know how to deal with her dependency and her delusion; thus, she surrenders to insanity. Her change — from being a fair maiden to madness, followed by a mysterious death — presents a greater complexity to a generally underestimated character in terms of psychological dimension. According to Yi-Chi Chen,

Ophelia is more than just a flat character that Shakespeare arranges to play as Gertrude's double or to strengthen the tragic effects of the play. With her transformation from the obedient daughter of Polonius to the mad woman who speaks of bawdy connotations at the court, Ophelia's madness displays her inner conflicts and plight that she fails to ease. (2011, p. 1).

However, some authors believe that it is through her madness that Ophelia "finds" herself or, in other words, her own voice in the play. The madness scene in *Hamlet* is the moment when the audience gets in contact with Ophelia's true voice. By means of her songs she exposes her feelings and emotions, leaving room

for multiple unanswered questions in the play, for example regarding her sexual activity with the Prince, as depicted in act 4 scene 5:

To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,  
All in the morning betime,  
And I a maid at your window,  
To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose and donn'd his clo'es,  
And dupp'd the chamber-door,  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more (4.5.48-55).

It is through bawdy language and “inappropriate behavior” that Ophelia expresses her predicament and manages to deal with her suffering. Ophelia's madness serves as a cry for freedom to the character who seem submissive in the beginning of the play, and also as a form of protection, since being insane can relieve the pain of her reality, the death of her father and the neglect of her lover. Even though Ophelia is supposedly a minor character in *Hamlet*, she can be understood today as one of the most intriguing figures in the play. Her madness can be related with the exploration of psychological issues in Gothic literature, embodying the role of the mad woman, which the genre exhaustively explores. Female madness in Gothic, the uncanny woman, in a metaphorical way mainly refers to the change of the conventional, or violation of the norm. This psychological disorder in Gothic fiction can represent as a consequence of women's oppression within the domestic sphere, or even of the very idea of domestic environment, or marriage itself, being a madhouse, where woman are trapped, becoming vulnerable and powerless in her own home, embodying madness as a getaway, as is Ophelia's case.

The third Gothic element, and maybe the most obvious, to be approached in this essay deals directly with the supernatural featured in the play, the ghost. This element has a primordial role in the play, being a key character, one which will provide the motive for the vendetta that propels the play forward. The first time that *Hamlet* sees the ghost of his father, it tells him: “Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder”, instigating the revenge. The setting where the ghost of King Hamlet first appears can be described as Gothic: a medieval castle, wrapped by a mysterious fog in the night. The tension grows as it gets closer to midnight, establishing a Gothic atmosphere where the ghost will make his entrance. Its appearance raises questions about life and death, good and evil — “If there be any good thing to be done / That may to thee do ease, and grace to me, / Speak to me”

(1.1.130-132) — and specially about rationality, an intrinsic issue of the society in that period. The subject of “reason” is not only inquired by Hamlet in the play but by all the characters who see the ghost, Marcellus, Horatio, and Bernardo. They use words such as “illusion”, “fantasy”, “image”, and “spirit” to describe this entity that their rational mind cannot recognize: “I’ll cross it through it blast me. Stay, illusion!” (1.1.127). After all, such words suit them better than the term “ghost”, an element that invokes opposition to the rational model established at the time. The character of the ghost brings unit to the drama; his existence is the cause of the play, being the support to the main character Hamlet. Without the ghost we have a bitter, melancholic, and disappointed prince. Thus, it is a Gothic element that propagates the plot of this Renaissance play.

## Final remarks

This essay demonstrated relations between Gothic literature and Shakespeare by using one of his most famous plays: *Hamlet*. The Gothic impulses discussed in this essay dealt with three different perspectives of Gothic in *Hamlet*; the idea of Gothic as a main content of the play, the tragedy itself being a Gothic element; the psychological Gothic, an element reflected by human conflicts, represented here by madness; and what I have called “symbolic Gothic”, the use of the ghost as a symbol of a supernatural convention of the genre. Therefore, it becomes increasingly easier to understand why Gothic authors from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries chose Shakespeare as a model to inspire their Gothic fiction.

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# THE CHILD WITHIN THE ADULT

## THE OVERLAP OF CHARACTERS IN MIKE FLANAGAN'S *HUSH*

MARINHO CRISTIEL BENDER<sup>1</sup>

*Some ghosts are so quiet you would hardly know they were there.*  
— Bernie McGill.

This chapter seeks to read Mike Flanagan's *Hush* (2016) in the light of a psychoanalytical interpretation that is informed by Dani Cavallaro's (2002) theory about the *abandoned child*. The film tells the story of Maddie Toung, a deaf-mute writer who lives all by herself in the woods and, on a certain night is attacked by a man who tries to kill her. This analysis establishes a connection between the main character of the film and the notion of the *abandoned child* to understand how the protagonist displays a behavior that can be considered a regression to a child-like state of abuse, trauma, and repression. The idea here is that the *abandoned child* behavior is not restricted to children, but it can also emerge in adults when faced with overwhelming situations, as it is the case with character Maddie Toung. Internet Movie Data Base (IMDB) categorizes Flanagan's *Hush* into the horror/terror genre. Therefore, I will start out by discussing Ann Radcliffe's famous differentiation between the concepts of terror and horror, arguing that *Hush* merges the two ideas to create tension and climax in different ways.

### The intricate relation between terror and horror

Gothic novels and films often deal with situations and events that are concerned with causing certain sensations and feeling to the audience who are reading it, in the case of a literary piece of work, or who are watching it, in the

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case of a film. In the text *On the Supernatural in Poetry* (1826), Gothic novelist Anne Radcliffe<sup>2</sup> theorizes about the differences between terror and horror, and how they can both work in a Gothic narrative, having a powerful effect on the construction of the story atmosphere and creating a dramatic scenario, most of the time filled with claustrophobic anxiety, keeping the audience at edge-sitting dreads while suffering the same feelings as the characters about which they are watching or reading.

According to Radcliffe (1826), terror relates to the psychological effects both characters and the audience experience within the story. Terror invites the deepest fears and anxieties to come to surface, such as traumas or the feeling of claustrophobia that a scene may induce by the lack of light, or even the lack of sound, pushing the audience to imagine and to expect something that is one the verge of happening. Terror concerns the unseen and the anticipation of what might be out there lurking in the dark, ready to attack a defenseless victim. The characters are thrown into a hurricane of heart-chilling sense of suffocation, in which any step may be their last, bringing the audience — who at times already knows what is going on but are unable to help the victim — to a state of panic. In turn, Horror is more graphic and visual, exposing characters to sufferings of the body, in which punishments, gore and pain are all related, having the audience diving into the creeps of nearly feeling the same feelings the characters are, as for example having a nail plucked off. Horror affords the audience with disgust and gore since all the scenes expose them to explicit images related to the body, blood, and mutilation (RADCLIFFE, 1826, p. 150-151).

While terror and horror are distinct concepts, their mechanisms often work together in a tangled way within a literary or film narrative. Both have enormous importance in the creation of atmosphere and in conducting the audience through a roller coaster of sensations of fear and chills with terror and disgust, and with horror — given that terror involves emotional cruelty, whereas horror involves physical violence. All events that terrify and horrify both characters and the audience are intrinsically related to chaos in the story told for chaos brings the element of breaking the structure of the story and introducing such events.

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<sup>2</sup> Although the text used as reference was written more than 150 years ago, it is still nowadays considered a classic text that orients studies of horror and terror both in literary texts and in cinema studies.

## The abandoned child in the body of the adult

Some of the ghosts that haunt the deepest and darkest parts of oneself are not always spirits who, being restless or having unresolved concerns, are unable to pass through. As Gothic narratives show, not only spirits lurk in the shadows, but also real beings can present the personification of evil intentions, bringing in distress and disturbance. Such events can portray adults committing several physical and psychological forms of abuse on children over whom they have power, making them their main victims. While on the one hand children are taken as symbols of innocence and sweetness, on the other hand they can be attributed with dark forces that can awaken the worst in the people around them. Because children are considered underdeveloped creatures, who are not yet ready for adulthood, and therefore not being ready to take part in society, they remain kept apart from it, expelled as the black sheep for being considered unprepared.

In *The Gothic Vision: Three Centuries of Horror, Terror and Fear* (2002), Dani Cavallaro presents the theory of the *abandoned child*, explaining that as infants are not fully developed, for they are still 'closer' to the pre-birth phase, they present some sort of inadequacy in relation to the world and need to be set apart from society or even punished (p. 151). Such adult behavior provides the child a sense of not belonging to a place and not belonging to anyone, which for an infant can result in psychological damage for not being able to have any sort of maternal connection.

The child turns from an angelical being, in this sense closest to God, concerning her or his innocence and sublimity, to a being who is lurking around with no objective in life and thrown away as an abandoned animal left to the monstrosities of the cold world. The lack of connectivity is accompanied by the feeling of rejection and deprivation, offering the child nothing else than living in a fantasy world where she or he can create the desired life. The anxieties that deprivation puts the child through are not only related to children. Likewise, in Gothic novels and literary pieces of work it is commonly observed that the female protagonist, who is in distress and deprived from society, undergoes the fury and dark intentions of a male character who shows to be powerfully stronger. In this sense, Cavallaro's theory of the *abandoned child*, becomes applicable to adult victims as well.

The infantilization of the adult and the repeated abuses both the female adult (as most Gothic pieces of work present) and the child undergo, can suggest them as being physically inferior and psychologically more vulnerable than male adult — who is most of the times responsible for these abuses. The abuses the adult

oppressor uses has a range of punishments (verbal, physical, gestural) to show the defenseless victim who is in charge. Still according to the critic, the rejection the child suffers is a reflection of the adult's anxieties (CAVALLARO, 2002, p. 159).

The child's psychological state may represent a chaotic, alternative, fantastic world, which is not related to the real scenario of abuse the child endures, and in which a sense of abandonment and fear is obliterated (repressed) and replaced with the feeling of love and caring. Fear plays an important role for both the participants in this horrifying and shocking dance: as Anne Jackson argues in *The Gothic in Children's Literature* (2009), fear is responsible for establishing obedient behavior on the part of the *powerless*, while securing the dictating role of the *powerful*. The violation can be either psychological or corporal, where the child, when not abiding to the law the adult dictates, can be grounded or even beat up to be taught a lesson, learn to obey, be reassured to be submissive and do only what told, resulting in devastating effects in the infant's mind and body (JACKSON, 2009, p. 12). When subject to repeated abuse, the child's mind becomes twisted into a tangled web of inadequate feelings and sensations, developing a mental atmosphere of crowded and blurred images, bringing to life her or his fears and anxieties and, at times, not being able to distinguish between the real world and the fantasy world, as the child grows and her or his body changes (JACKSON, 2009, p. 14).

### How the child behaves: analyzing *Hush*

The very name of the protagonist, deaf-mute writer Maddie Toung encompasses an insight into her situation of submissiveness. Her family name, Toung, sounds like the word tongue. The film operates with multiple layers of meaning, which play on paradoxes concerning "language", namely, her surname (Toung), her profession (writer), and her condition, since she cannot hear or speak. Maddie became deaf-mute at the age of thirteen due to meningitis, which affected her hearing and speaking permanently, making her become a reclusive person. When asked about what kind of voice she hears in her mind when she thinks, she remembers hearing only her mother's voice, displaying a position of the child who hears the voice of the mother, arguably because it somehow is what comforts her. In addition, Maddie works as a writer, more precisely, as she defines herself in the film, a storyteller. A writer is someone who creates fantasy worlds and who tells stories, therefore, a link with the child can be made, as storytelling, creativity and imagination is a very important part of the infant world in their young ages, at times being defined as a mechanism of survival.

The house in the film also plays a very important role as a Gothic setting because it is isolated from civilization and is surrounded by trees. At night there is nothing else but darkness and quiet (Figure 1). The house is full of glass doors and windows, which present a duality, creating the sensation of safety, but also, of vulnerability, implying that there might be something out there watching in the darkness while Maddie is inside. Because of her condition, Maddie decided to live there by herself. This fact may be related to the rejected child who, feeling inadequate in relation to what would be considered 'normal', is rejected and deprived from social living and, as a child would also be rejected by other children, who at times may refuse what is different. Despite being all alone in her house in the woods, Maddie's only window to the outer world is technology. She has a cellphone and talks to her sister via Skype on her laptop computer. Sometimes, she also receives occasional visits from her neighbor, who comes by her house to borrow and return books Maddie lends her.



Figure 1 — The House as isolation.

Another scene which links Maddie to a child is when she is in the kitchen trying to cook dinner. For her to prepare the meal, she needs to follow instructions that are in a cookbook. Maddie is not skillful enough in the kitchen and, as an adult who lives by herself, she is expected to be able to prepare food on her own. This lack of cooking ability can be examined in the light of the child and the adult interaction, in which the child is not supposed to be in the kitchen for lack of expertise and for being too young and careless. As it would be expected, the food

Maddie was preparing ends up not being good and while her neighbor is there returning the book and talking to her, she completely forgets about the food on the stove, activating the fire alarm, once again, showing no ability in the kitchen and lack of attention to the food on the stove. The fire alarm is a very apt prop the film brings. As it goes off because of the smoke from the burned food, the audience realizes two main features of the fire alarm: it blinks repeatedly, and it produces an extremely loud sound. According to Maddie, this fire alarm is designed this way because she can see and she can also feel the vibrations of the deafening sound.

The child works within the character throughout the whole film. Dani Cavallaro's *abandoned child* theory presents a mechanism in which, the child is not only literally set apart from the family, but also disconnected in a psychological level. The scholar's theory can also be observed in the adult protagonist in *Hush* (2016), once even though the character is an adult, she thinks, or behaves with traits of a child. Sometimes, even the events she is put through are all related to the way an abused child can be oppressed or even punished (CAVALLARO, 2002, p. 154). This is the case when the stranger enters Maddie's house, takes away her cellphone and cuts down the internet (Figure 2). Her only way to the outer world and to have a chance to cry for help is taken away from her in a direct, repressive way.



Figure 2 — The stranger taking Maddie's cell phone.



Maddie manages to lock herself inside the house, and keep the stranger outside, suggesting some sort of protection, but for how long? In addition, the stranger, however locked outside the house, guards it as if Maddie — the child — was grounded, locked in her room and not permitted to leave, or as in most Gothic scenarios, the female locked in the castle and kept by a male character with dark intentions. It is possible to affirm that *Hush* is a film that deals mostly with oppression and distress. Another clear example of that is the scene in which Maddie is hurt and, in order not to make noise, she puts a towel in her mouth to suppress any sound that she might make (Figure 3). Moreover, she puts a towel in her mouth emphasizing her being in the position of the oppressed and not being able to help herself.



Figure 3 — Example of oppression in *Hush*.

By locking herself in the house, assuming she is protected, Maddie is once again in the role of the child. The house protects her from the outer world and from her feelings of inadequacy, but the abandoned child surfaces here in the sense of a punished child, locked and grounded for misbehaving. As it would be expected from a child, she attempts to negotiate her freedom with the attacker. Maddie writes the words on the glass door, so the stranger can read “WON'T TELL DIDN'T SEE YOUR FACE”. The *abandoned child* operates here within the main character, trying to negotiate her freedom with the one who is keeping her under absolute mental and physical imprisonment. The identity of the stranger, who is in control of Maddie's incarceration, is unknown to her and to the audience. His twisted intentions become even more terrifying when, after Maddie's attempt to negotiate, he takes his mask off, showing his face and instigating in the audience feelings of hopeless panic. There is just one possible ending to this sadistic night: Maddie will not survive.

There is yet another level of analysis that associates the house and the stranger, which is child abuse. The house can be taken as symbolic of the body, exposing a key element in *Hush*. The repeated attempts the stranger takes in order to break into the house are associated to the violation to the child's body. Not only does the child suffer psychological attacks being held captive by a stranger who wants to violate her home, but also, the brutality with which the stranger forces himself inside the house can be thought of as a violation of the body.

## Terror and Horror in *Hush*

As discussed above, the *abandoned child* theory analyzes the behavior of the characters in *Hush* and how this theory can be observed and applied to the adult protagonist. Terror and horror are discussed in this section in relation to the characters' actions as well as how the combination of those can influence the audience's feelings throughout the film. The series of events Maddie Toug ends through the film exposes how mechanisms of terror and horror work in a combination of feelings and sensations, having the audience experience what Maddie would feel. Concerning terror, as Maddie is unable to hear, the man enters the house and takes away her cellphone right behind her back. In this scene, the facts are presented in a form that the audience knows what is happening, while the main character does not. This puts the audience in a position of impotence for not being able to help Maddie. The scene invites the audience to feel the tension and the impending threat (terror) of having someone standing right behind one's back and ready to attack. Another scene that sends the audience into a state of apprehensiveness is when Maddie is organizing the kitchen after the dinner that ended up in a disaster. While she is putting things away, the masked stranger is standing outside the door next to where she is. This implicates that in a glass house like Maddie's, the sensation of being observed sets an atmosphere of being exposed and of vulnerability.

The audience's empathy is also awakened in *Hush* because Maddie Toug is a handicapped person. The fact that she cannot hear or speak attributes to her a vulnerability and defenseless position. However, such condition is not something that discourages the stranger (perhaps it enhances his murderous desire), making all the events even more shocking and fearful. Attacks on handicapped people are also present in films such *Curse of Chucky* (2013), and its subsequent film *Cult of Chucky* (2017), as well as in the now classic *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974). In the two Chucky films, the main character, Nica, despite being on a wheelchair, does not escape the doll's ferocious attacks and, in the latter film, the legendary Leatherface brutally attacks and murders with a chainsaw Franklin,

who is also on a wheelchair, in front of his sister. In *Chromeskull: Laid to Rest 2* (2011), the unstoppable maniac wearing a chrome skull mask keeps a young girl named Jess, who is becoming blind, captive in a cat and rat game where his pleasure is killing in the most hideous ways. Jess's attempts of escaping are nulled by her lack of sight, putting her and the audience in a claustrophobic environment.

Horror also plays a central role in the film *Hush*, especially to provide the stranger's grotesque and sadistic actions. In the kitchen scene, just before the stranger starts observing Maddie, her neighbor comes to ask for help because she was attacked. As the audience can see, her neighbor is attacked by the same stranger, who shows no mercy, and as the attack goes on he leans her back against the glass door of the kitchen where Maddie is and stabs her neighbor repeatedly, showing amusement and pleasure in doing so. The scene of the stabbing is a rather long scene, because he stabs her several times, granting a blood-filled scene of horror and body punishment, provoking sensations of pain and disgust in the audience.

Another scene that shows how sadistic and merciless the stranger is, takes place outside the house when Maddie manages to hit him with an arrow. Unfortunately, she hits him on his shoulder hurting him, but is still far from defeating her oppressor. He runs after Maddie who quickly goes back into the house, but as she goes in through the door, an arrow falls on the threshold. She tries to catch the arrow, but the stranger is faster and he slams the door, smashing her hand against the wall. Not happy enough, he tramples repeatedly on her hand, provoking a hurricane of pain and fear. After managing to pull her hand inside, Maddie stares at the stranger and writes on the glass door with the blood dripping from her broken fingers "DO IT" by which she means, if you want to kill me, come on and do it (Figure 4). These horrifying scenes are a playground for gore and painful sensation, inviting the audience to suffer with Maddie and feel empathy for her.



Figure 4 — Maddie writing on the glass door with the blood from her hand.

## Final remarks

Lastly, it is impossible to analyze this piece of cinematographic production without considering its title. Hush is a word — and sound — used to ask someone to calm down, normally used when one wants to calm down a child. In the film, there is power relation between Maddie, who represents the figure of the helpless child, punished in terrifying and horrifying forms by a sadistic stranger who represents the figure of the powerful adult who represses her. Moreover, the word hush represents the fact that the stranger is trying to silence her down, which is of no use, once Maddie is unable to hear, let alone to speak. In this film it is possible to observe how Cavallaro's *abandoned child* theory works within the adult character and how, at times, it emerges and, at other times, it is obscured as the events of the film move on dramatically putting not only the main character, Maddie Toung, through distressful situations, but also carrying the audience to this carnival of madness and fear, showing that silence is not always gold.

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# CANNIBAL MADNESS

## OR THE LURID HORROR OF *SURVIVOR TYPE*

MATIAS CORBETT GARCEZ<sup>1</sup>

*Haven't I told you I'd had nothing to eat for four days? And that the only help I could look to in the matter of replenishing my sapped vitality was my own body? — Richard Pine.*

Cannibalism has haunted us for many centuries now: that repulsive image of a human eating another human. Yet reports and findings of such practice stretch back in time for thousands of years. Since always and all around the world humans have been known to eat human flesh, but somehow the idea still shocks and terrorizes people. Sixteenth-century explorers of the American continent, for instance, were scared senseless of the stories they heard, and the things they saw. Throughout the centuries, cannibalism has remained one of the last frontiers between what is civilized and what is savage, what is sane and what is insane; it has referred to the 'other,' automatically implying a 'us' and 'it' relation. As professor Maggie Kilgour reminds us, "the boundary between the 'cannibal' and the 'civilized man' traditionally has been the marker of absolute opposition." (KILGOUR, 2001, p. VIII). Cannibalism conspicuously violates the human body, and in doing so it desecrates what we hold to be the most holy life form on earth, our own. In this sense, the act of a human eating another human is unholy and disgraceful for it treats the human body as the body of a beast, and there is no such thing as the sacrosanctity of the human body in such situation. As professor Kristen Guest points out, "the idea of cannibalism prompts a visceral reaction among people precisely because it activates our horror of consuming others like ourselves." (2001, p. 3).

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## Cannibalism and identity: otherness, savagery, and madness

Ever since Europeans first landed on the New World, they have written about cannibalism. Christopher Columbus was the first European to use the term, when he talked about the Caribs, a highly organized and widely feared indigenous people of the Lesser Antilles, known for eating their enemies after battles. Adventure-seeker and travel writer Hans Ståden described the ritual quite meticulously in his accounts. Much like any great contemporary horror writer, this is how he introduces cannibalism in his narrative: He was captured by a ferocious tribe, the Tupinambá, and upon arriving at their village, Ubatuba, was forced to say: "I, your food, have arrived;" (STÅDEN, 2008, p. 50) quite the eye-catcher phrase. Henry Bolingbroke, esquire of Norwich, who also gave his contribution to nineteenth-century historical travel writing, had this to say about cannibalism, "is the practice only of the most savage and ferocious nations, of those [...] who are devoid of the amiable qualities of the mind." (1807, p. 101). Overall, historically speaking cannibalism has always been used to brutalize or dehumanize a group of people. If 'Indians' were savage cannibals, were the savages of the savages; they had to be disciplined and punished. The encounter between western civilization and the cannibal has always been permeated with fear by the former, which resulted in incomprehension of the latter. This site was too irrational and inhumane. Professor Geoffrey Sanborn calls this encounter "the Kernel of the Real, the thing that must always be swallowed but can never be digested." (2001, p. 192). These malignant and admonitory accounts of such encounters from our ancestors have served us as an indispensable tool to relate to and interpret cannibalism, and they certainly caused great impact on our perception of the cannibal.

Throughout the centuries, Europeans developed an instinctive fear and disgust of cannibalism. Their mindset understood that our body was created in the image and likeness of God, therefore, to eat it, to violate it in this most abominable and profane manner would be an unjustifiable and unforgivable act. In an essay about cannibals and our relation to them, Michel de Montaigne argues that Europeans would never be able to relate to cannibalism, therefore understand it, because they had nothing comparable to it. He says, "we seem to have no other level of truth and reason than the example and pattern of the opinions and practices of the country wherein we live." (1934, p. 181). His argument was that insofar as Europeans could only relate to things by using values and methods that they had created, it was hard for them to relate to, explain, and digest, the cannibal reality because it stood outside of all their morals and values. Cannibalism, Montaigne argues, existed outside the European world view, in other words, it demarked what was civilized and what was uncivilized.

For Europeans, cannibalism existed beyond truth and reason, within a different realm; that is why they could never fully grasp or comprehend it. Essentially, cannibalism provoked a major identity crisis, because no European could understand why a human would violate another human body in that way, intentionally. The body was God's gift to us, eating it meant to devour one's humanity, one's identity. Ernesto Laclau argues that cannibalism functions as the "ungraspable margin that limits and distorts the 'objective,' and which is, precisely, the real." (1990, p. 185). In that sense, cannibalism blurs our conception of identity, as well as it 'distorts the real,' which makes it gravitate too close to madness; the image Goya depicted in a grotesque and piercing manner, of Saturn devouring his son, with those sad demented eyes, and squalid and imperfect body. The cannibal is not only the savage of the savages, he or she is also a dividing line between sanity and insanity.

### Stephen King's *Survivor Type*: A trip into insanity and monstrosity

These critical issues surrounding cannibalism, identity and madness are perennial in Stephen King's short story *Survivor Type*. The short story is written in the form of a diary. The writer, Richard Pine, is a man who got stranded in an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The island is 190 paces wide and 267 paces long, it has no trees or animals, there is nothing but sand and some rocks piled up at its center; eventually some seagulls gather around at the pile of rocks. As the story unfolds, we start to know more about Richard's life and how it was that he got stuck there. He was a surgeon from New York who used to sell blank prescriptions to people on the streets, as well as have patients sent to him while he sent patients to other doctors as part of a huge operation. Richard's luck changed when a doctor turned him in after being threatened by the law. As a last resource to avoid being sent to jail he manages to make a deal with a friend: smuggle two kilos of heroin from Vietnam to the United States. If he succeeded, he would have enough money to buy his way out of the situation he was in, and, perhaps, go back to being a doctor. Unfortunately, the ship he was in sank. Slowly and unwillingly, Richard begins to test his own limits on the lifeless island.

After having stayed one week in the island and having eaten only two seagulls, while trying to signal for a passing airplane he breaks his ankle. As the condition of his ankle deteriorates, his survivor spirit begins to wither. Three days after the ankle accident he decides to amputate it. After the surgery, he 'replenishes his sapped vitality' by eating the severed body part, his foot. This is a critical moment of the short story because it is here that he begins to separate

himself from us. It is the first time the reader sees him as the 'other,' as someone different from the rest of us. Until this point, he was yet another guy who got stuck in an island, we have heard about that before, we feel sorry for him, and might even identify with him, but we are not disgusted by him, we are not appalled by him. To make things worse, to withstand the pain of the surgery and the aftereffects he snorts heroin. The fact that he uses heroin, not morphine or any other legally prescribed painkiller, makes him look like a junkie, a social outcast. Shortly after having said he ate one of his own body parts he places himself outside our western standards of behavior and humane sameness when he says, "I won't justify myself by saying you would have done the same thing [...] the thought might never have entered your preconditioned head." (KING, 1986, p. 419). The "preconditioned" part refers to exactly what Montaigne and Laclau discuss in their texts, or how our western mindset cannot grasp or deal with cannibalism; even if our survival depends upon it, humans do not desecrate the human body. Yet for Richard there is no such thing as a preconditioned head; he will do whatever has to be done, he is the ultimate survivor. For instance, after eating his foot he says, "survival is a business of the mind [...] the superior mind;" (KING, 1986, p. 419) or when he chops off his right leg at the knee, this is what he says afterwards: "[S]hock trauma would have killed a lesser man." (KING, 1986, p. 424).

Nonetheless, after the first amputation his identity begins to shatter. To keep his mind off the pain and hunger he feels, he must keep snorting heroin, and by doing so he becomes each time more 'stoned,' as if constantly in a dream. His writings begin to lose coherence, and he drools excessively and involuntarily. Starving and with almost no energy left in him he decides to amputate another foot. He is still conscious of what he is doing, but somehow he cannot figure out why everything that is happening does not seem to be happening to him, "the pain seemed disconnected from me, like somebody else's pain." (KING, 1986, p. 418). In both cases of cannibalism, he waits until after dark to eat his body part, as if trying to avoid witnessing it, he does not want to admit that he is actually eating himself to stay alive. When mentioning it he even tries to evade the subject, "[s]hortly after dark I — I — Wait. Haven't I told you?" (KING, 1986, p. 419) or later on when he says "[m]y teeth have begun to rot, did I tell you that? If I were a superstitious man, I'd say it was because I ate — Ha! We know better, don't we?" (KING, 1986, p. 421). Before eating his left foot he even says, "I kept telling myself: Cold Roast Beef. Cold Roast Beef." (KING, 1986, p. 421). It is clear that he feels ashamed of what he is doing and is not the least bit comfortable telling us about it. However, one of the consequences of having nothing to eat but himself and snorting heroin constantly is that it keeps getting harder and harder to distinguish



between what is real and what is a dream. As time passes it is as if he starts to lose his preconditioned shame and civilized intellect.

His real name is Richard Pinzetti. He says so in the beginning, almost as if it is just for the record, because shortly after stating his real name he says he changed his surname to Pine before going into med school. Until he eats his right foot, he is doctor Richard Pine. Shortly after having eaten his right foot, his first cannibal act, he calls himself Pinzetti, then immediately says "Pine, I mean Pine." (KING, 1986, p. 421). The same relation I established between cannibalism and madness can be seen here in the story. Until he is forced to eat himself, he is still, apparently, in control. After the first cannibal act his writings gradually start to look like dream narratives, with brusque shifts between past and present and incoherent babbling. Three days after the second amputation and cannibal act, after spending the whole morning lying on the hot sand underneath the sun, in a moment of consciousness he says, "I began to feel almost human again." (KING, 1986, p. 423). Clearly, he is having an identity crisis. He is barely able to walk or think rationally and starts to question his sanity. It is hard for him to discern between what is happening and what is merely a dream.

Richard keeps shifting between moments of lucidness, being very careful in maintaining his surgeon hands unharmed and clean, "disinfected them promptly with iodine in spite of my weariness," and moments of uncertainty, where he cannot come to terms with what has been happening to him, "[h]ave I really been that stoned?" Eight days after having eaten himself for the second time, he decides to cut his right leg at the knee. His hands are trembling, apparently for the first time in his life. From that moment on he is never again sure about the dates he writes down on the diary. Sometimes the date has a question mark right after it, sometimes it is just the month that he writes down, or it is something incomprehensible, such as the date of the last two entries: "Febba," and "Fe/40?"

The more body parts he eats the madder he becomes. He even goes as far as saying "[t]hey say you are what you eat and if so I HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT!" (KING, 1986, p. 426). In one of his last entries he says he chopped off and ate what was left of both legs and became just "a head attached to a torso." (KING, 1986, p. 426). When he sees the reflex of his face on the water, he does not recognize himself any longer, he sees a monster instead. Sérgio Bellei, in an article about monsters, remembers that the etymological root of the word suggests that the monster cannot be 'represented,' "only shown or demonstrated (*monstrare*)." (2000, p. 15). In accordance with Bellei's remark, because Richard has become a monster by eating himself, he has no mental tool, no way to associate himself with what he sees on the water surface, his reflex. He sees his monstrous reflex, what is

shown, but does not recognize it, he cannot represent himself. He no longer feels like a human being. After having eaten more than half of himself he finally loses his identity and becomes utterly mad. In his last entry he says he will eat his left hand; the last words produce a luridly horrific vision: “lady fingers they taste just like lady fingers.” (KING, 1986, p. 426).

King creates Richard's identity in a way that, at first, there is the possibility of identifying with him because, one way or another, we are all survivors in the twenty-first century, we are all fighting our way through this free-market corporate world of, figuratively speaking, ‘man-eat-man.’ The story becomes problematic when Richard starts to eat himself because that is when he ceases to be the survivor type, or the representation of that all-American myth of the wilderness explorer, the man who will make do, and becomes Richard the savage, the outcast, the other, the cannibal. We can identify with Richard's struggle at first, but when he resorts to cannibalism, we start to feel uncomfortable and uneasy, and immediately distance ourselves from him; he becomes monstrous. King draws a clear line at this point in the story between civilized and uncivilized, between sane and insane. From the moment Richard eats his own flesh onwards he is no longer completely human, he is constantly slipping into a dream-like state, where the limits and rationality of reality are blurred. After the first cannibalistic act, King constantly crisscrosses this us-it line, keeping the reader in-between moments of lucidity/humanity vis-à-vis insanity/monstrosity. Richard's character is constructed in such a way that he starts off as a street-fighting man, the player, a survivor type, but gradually becomes a cold-blooded junkie cannibal; he is man and monster. The story is a one-way trip into Richard's insanity, and when it ends, abruptly and disorderly, we are left with the lurid and all too phantasmagoric image of a head attached to a torso, lumbering about a deserted island, slowly slipping away, devouring himself.

## Final remarks

King is especially good in creating this lurid horror atmosphere. He makes Richard drool compulsively while he amputates his own body parts, “I was drooling helplessly. Droooling.” (KING, 1986, p. 422). When Richard looks down at the carcass of the first seagull he managed to kill these are his thoughts: “Even as I write, I am able to glance down at its severed head on the sand. Its black eyes, even with the death-glaze on them, seem to be mocking me.” (KING, 1986, p. 411). The reader is presented with images that cannot be processed; we have no means of relating to it. Moments like fingers tasting like ladies, feet tasting like cold

roast beef, or Richard drooling all over himself while severing his own leg, are constantly destabilizing the reader, bringing us face-to-face with the characters' madness. We watch him transform into a madman, we watch him eat himself to the point where he has slipped too far into his own delusions and traumas; there is no more humanity within him, he does not recognize his own reflex.

King's short story is in dialogue with the interpretation of horror which Ann Radcliffe presents in her essay, "On the Supernatural in Poetry," as that of an atrocity which is shown to us and not indeterminate or given through ominous covert language. (1826, p. 150). *Survivor Type* is grotesquely explicit, nothing is hidden; it is all there, in lurid details, for us to witness: Richard's surgical precision in severing his own body parts, his loss of identity, his madness. Furthermore, King intertwines things which cannot be together ever, and that is one of the big issues of the short story, that is its brilliance. King initially makes it look like Richard is just another survivor, then he gradually transforms him into a monster, in other words, he pairs two images that are the extreme opposite: Richard is a regular American but also a mad cannibal. King is especially good in doing this, showing us how a regular guy can become a mad killer; like Jack Torrance in his *The Shining*. King makes it a powerful horror story, even though it is very short, because he writes as if Richard's cannibalism is a metonymy of our condition, in that, something out there can quite easily transform any one of us into savages. Richard is not only devouring himself, he is letting us know that the actual difference between us and him is merely circumstantial.

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# HARRY POTTER

## THE GOTHIC AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

NATÁLIA ALVES<sup>1</sup>

In the *Harry Potter* books, Hogwarts, the Forbidden Forest, the Riddle House, the graveyard, Grimmauld Place, and the labyrinth from the Triwizard Tournament all evoke the sense of threat and darkness which is common to Gothic novels. As Jerrold E. Hogle explains in his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, “a Gothic tale usually takes place (at least some of the time) in an antiquated or seemingly antiquated space.” (2006, p. 2). Castles, old churches, graveyards, dark forests and ancient ruins add to the darkness of the novels. These places are frequently bleak, grotesque and isolated. These spaces are dark, gloomy, and scary, partly because they have components of the unknown, which contributes to a general sense of menace in these locations. However, *Harry Potter* books not only make use of Gothic settings (which help to establish a threatening atmosphere), but also employ themes such as death and mysterious circumstances that can arguably place the narrative within the Gothic mode. This chapter aims at highlighting Gothic characteristics in the *Harry Potter* series of books and also investigating the use of Gothic themes in children's literature.

### Eighteenth-century Gothic

In *The Literature of Terror*, David Punter states that the word Gothic “has, even now, a wide variety of meaning... It's used in a number of different fields: as a literary term, as a historical term, as an artistic term, as an architectural term. And a literary term in contemporary usage, it has a range of different applications” (1996, p. 1). The history of the Gothic tradition in literature can be traced back to the latest quarter of the eighteenth century and emerges from the result of cultural changes, with the author Horace Walpole being the first to coin the term in his preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764).

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Eighteenth-century Gothic novel emphasizes terrifying, archaic settings, making extensive use of supernatural elements. It is customary to find in the fiction of this period haunted castles, unspeakable terrors, fearsome villains, ghosts, monsters. According to Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy, in the *Routledge Companion to Gothic Literature*, the Gothic novel relies on:

emphasis on the returning past (Baldick 1992, Mighall 1999), its dual interest in transgression and decay (McGrath 1997), its commitment to exploring the aesthetics of fear (Punter 1980) and its cross-contamination of reality and fantasy (Jackson 1981). Alternate traditions of 'male' and 'female' (or perhaps more correctly, 'masculine' and 'feminine') Gothic have been identified (Moers 1976, Sedgwick 1985, Ellis 1989), with their focus on the respective psychologies of the villain (who is not necessarily gendered male) and the heroine (or, occasionally, a male hysteric). (2007, p. 1).

Gothic novels traditionally develop around old families and houses with hidden secrets that serve as a fortress for a menacing character. Despite many gloomy motifs Gothic writers use, the novels are also examples of romance (melodrama), adventure and explorations to keep up the readers' interest. However, it is through its depiction of non-existent events of supernatural powers, that Gothic novels constitute a form of literature that approaches themes metaphorically. It uses horrible images that have the potential to evoke readers' responses that range from fear, to disgust, to terror. According to Robert Mighall, in *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares*, the Gothic is also basically an attitude to the past and the present, not a free-floating world of fantasy. He states that "the term [Gothic] generally carried derogatory connotations, originally serving as a metonym for the Germanic and, by association, the Medieval" (1999, p. XV). Mighall observes that "cultures, attitudes, practices, and institutions could thus be labeled 'Gothic' if they derived or resembled the perceived characteristics of the Middle Ages, or in fact any 'unenlightened' epoch" (1999, p. XV-XVI).

This fascination with the past also manifests itself in Historical Present. The Gothic novel also has the motif of death as a central aspect, which contributes to the creation of an atmosphere of horror. Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), which is deemed the first Gothic novel, already encompasses the motif of death by means of Manfred's fear, the usurper of the castle, of dying without a male heir. According to Victor Sage, in *Gothic Novel*, the narrative:

looks back to a feudal world, in this case, medieval Italy, in which the Lord of the Manor, Manfred, the first of a long line of Gothic villain/ heroes, exercises seigneurial rights over the minds and bodies of his subjects. His castle, however, as part of an ancient prophecy, appears to be haunted by a gigantic suit of armour. (1998, p. 81).

Manfred has an obsession with primogeniture and blames his wife Hippolyta's for the inability of giving him another son. After the news of the death of his sickly son Conrad, Manfred starts to offer himself, in a vaguely incestuous manner, to his daughter-in-law Isabella, the first of a line of Gothic heroines. She refuses him and hides in the underground vaults of the castle. In time, Manfred is revealed as the son of a usurper of the Otranto line, who is represented by a young nobleman, Theodore, who defies him and became the one with whom Isabella falls in love. According to Collete Conroy, in *The Handbook of the Gothic* (2009), this seminal plot encodes several key motifs of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel: Medieval setting and "superstitious" Catholic Europe; the expectation of the supernatural; the fusion of hero and villain; the decadence of feudal and aristocratic rights in general, and the rise of an ambitious bourgeoisie, ready to exercise individual freedom in marriage and inheritance; the focus on the victimized, but often challenging, position of women; the use of confined spaces which made all these characteristic modalities appear, more or less formed, in Walpole's tale.

Many of *The Castle of Otranto's* Gothic motifs can be found in subsequent Gothic narratives. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Gothic literature has continued to be in the minds and hearts of readers, providing a diverse range of motifs, settings and situations that have maintained their popularity even in novels that are not considered Gothic. *Harry Potter* is an example of children's literature which employs many Gothic motifs in its plot.

## Children's Literature and The Gothic: juxtapositions

Despite its popularity during its heyday, the Gothic novel was historically "considered as a serious threat to literary and social values, anything Gothic was also discarded as an idle waste of time." (BOTTING, 1996, p. 6). Not only was it seen as a literature of cheap thrills and pleasure, destitute of meaningful content, but also "Gothic texts have generally been marginalized, excluded from the sphere of acceptable literature." (BOTTING, 1996, p. 10). Nonetheless, the Gothic's lasting appeal lies in the ability of the genre to transform itself over time. According to Hogle, the Gothic "remains necessary to modern western culture, it allows us in

ghostly disguises of blatantly counterfeit fictionality to confront the roots of our beings in sliding multiplicities.” (2006, p. 16).

As with Gothic novels, *Harry Potter's* popular success led some people to dismiss them as not literary. In the *Introduction: Gothic Excess and Transgression* (1996), Fred Botting states that the reproduction of Gothic forms and figures over more than two centuries makes the definition of a homogeneous generic category exceptionally difficult. Gothic is a hybrid text, incorporating other literary forms, as well as developing and adjusting the new forms of writing. It is precisely in this sense that I will argue for a connection between the Gothic and children's literature.

Similarly to what happens with Gothic literature, it is also difficult to define children's literature. In *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, first published 1932, F. J. Harvey Darton states that before the seventeenth century there were no children's books in England. There were, however, plenty of schoolbooks and guides but, none of them was created to please children. According to Darton, only in the eighteenth century, children's literature stood out as a branch of English literature and began to gain space in the marketplace. In the preface, Darton describes children's literature as “the scene of a battle between education and amusement, between hesitant morality and spontaneous happiness” (2011, p. VII), and this polarization becomes largely a principle for understanding what children's literature is. Even when it is not explicitly recognized, didacticism continues to be a strong element of children's books ostensibly designed for pleasure. Karen Coats states that “they are at a threshold of possibility, and the fate of the world rests on their ability to respond ethically and with restraint in the face of profound obstacles” (2011, p. 327).

A child's imagination has a peculiar relation to the Gothic. Apparently, children have a penchant for being fascinated by themes that now are categorized as Gothic, for example ghosts, goblins, haunted places and so on. Anna Jackson *et al.* add that “children literature emerged as a genre largely in reaction to the popularity of the adult Gothic romance.” (2008, p. 2). Nevertheless, the Gothic was profoundly suppressed from children's literature in favor of texts of moral elevation, which projected adults' desires to train children for rational, adult, enlightened values. Although, critics have separated the Gothic from children's literature, many Gothic motifs permeate the teaching of children. For example, fairy tales have commonly been used to tell children how to behave. At first glance, the possibility of an inter-relational reading of fairy-tale and Gothic modes may seem atypical. After all, instead of the sinister ambivalence of the Gothic narrative, the apparently fanciful fantasies of the stereotyped fairy tale seem to



refute the possibility of disturbing the reader, by prioritizing consolation in the form of happy endings. Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault and Hans Christian Andersen, are some of the most famous authors of fairy tales, their works tend to be moralistic fantasy tales, with a variety of supernatural characters, fantastic and disguised creatures, many of which are there to warn children. However, as much as criticism attempts to delete the Gothic from the literary imagination of children's books, it continues to seep in, as in the case of *Harry Potter* books.

### *Harry Potter* and The Gothic

In the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries, children's books are arguably filled with Gothic hauntings. The *Harry Potter* series encompasses some of the main characteristics of the Gothic novel, particularly of the eighteenth century. The author J. K. Rowling combines several literary genres; however, the use of Gothic elements goes beyond Hogwarts' architecture or the inclusion of time-honored Gothic such as ghosts and werewolves.

I have been arguing that Gothic novels often deal with the past in some form. This can operate on different levels: the plot takes place in previous centuries, the setting (a castle, graveyard, church, ancient ruins) which evokes a feeling of history or age and/or the trails the characters endure that originate in the past. The past does not just reappear for background information, but it is secrets from the past (sometimes the recent past) that haunt the characters, psychologically, physically, or otherwise at the whole time of the story. The entire *Harry Potter* series relies upon events that occurred in the past. Each book relates with the past and how the past appears in the present, making Harry's life complicated.

For example, in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), Harry and his friends have to research the past (to discover information about Flamel and the Stone). *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998) explores the four founders of Hogwarts, and Voldemort's school years. With *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999) readers discover more about Harry's family through Lupin, Sirius, and Pettigrew. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), the past literally returns when Voldemort returns to take control over the wizarding world. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003) not only gives readers information about the old Order, but also the discovery of an old prophecy about Voldemort and the only one who can defeat him. When professor Trelawney predicts that Harry Potter (or Neville Longbottom) would be the cause of Lord Voldemort's downfall. Finally, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005)

develops around the identity of the mysterious Half-Blood Prince, and memories of Voldemort's family and childhood.

More important to the Gothic imagination, however, are issues of the ancestral past, especially if that past is medieval. Many of the core conflicts in the *Harry Potter* series can be traced back to the founding of Hogwarts, during the Middle Ages. During this time period, the rift between the Hogwarts houses first emerged with conflicts between pureblood witches and wizards and those with muggle heritage. This notion later plays out in Harry's conflicts, with characters like Malfoy and Voldemort who believed that people with non-wizard heritage should not go to Hogwarts.

The *Harry Potter* series is surprisingly morbid; the entire plot revolves around death. The central antagonist, Voldemort (even in his name he has the word death (mort in French)), is motivated by his fear of death. He saw death as muggle weakness; presumably he thought magic meant immortality. He dedicates his life to pursuing immortality and so, because of the prophecy, he hunts down the child whom he thinks is going to defeat him. This early incident defines Harry's life. He has what at times amounts to an obsession with his dead parents, who appear to him in several different ways throughout the seven books. In addition, Harry also has to confront death itself and his own fear of dying. Featured prominently in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007) is the Tale of the Three Brothers and their three hallowed objects said to grant the possessor mastery over death. But rather than master death, Harry learns to accept it before heading into his final confrontation with Voldemort.

While the series deals with the battle between good and evil, J. K. Rowling has the need for children's fiction to exhibit characters that are neither one-dimensional and stereotyped nor entirely ambivalent and postmodern. The *Harry Potter* series combine adventure with moral messages. Writing children's literature always had the dual purpose of educating, while providing a high level of entertainment. The moral of children's literature is traditionally a practical concern because morality is seen in the context of shaping citizens. In *Harry Potter and the Secrets of Children's Literature* (2003), Maria Nikolajeva states that:

In children's fiction, such characters are used for educational purposes. Adult readers may find Harry quite satisfactory as a model for children: he is humble, well-mannered, respectful toward his seniors, a perfect English gentleman. Young readers may appreciate other traits in Harry. (2003, p. 232).

Fairy tales have been used to tell children how to behave. The *Harry Potter* series operates with the educational and moral conventions of children's literature and Gothic characteristics. According to Mary Ellen Snodgrass, in the *Encyclopedia of Gothic Literature*, obsession is:

a motivator of the Gothic novel and short fiction, obsession becomes a controlling form of aberrant behavior in characters... Obsession ventures beyond romantic attachments to a number of engulfing thoughts and impulses... and uncontrolled passion. (2005, p. 258).

The peculiarities of obsessive behavior in the Gothic novel derive from the author's intention to explain the perverse, cruel, and murderous tendencies in human nature. The obsession manifests itself beyond the romantic attachments to a series of impulses and persecutions, becomes a form of control, and take the form of cruel actions that often lead to disastrous endings. In *Harry Potter*, Lord Voldemort has the desire to become the most powerful wizard in the world, regardless of whether achieving such goal turns him into a monster. With great tendency toward the Dark Arts, he discovered how he could be immortal, becoming obsessed with power and immortality. There is also Harry's obsession with the mirror of Erised. He sees his parents in the mirror, but, although the mirror is all well and good, there comes a time when holding on to your dreams becomes useless and unhealthy. Voldemort is also obsessed with Harry, because of the prophecy, his obsession with immortality makes him obsessed with taking the life of the young boy.

## Final remarks

All the Gothic elements in the *Harry Potter* series are linked. Both villain and the hero are connected by a prophecy "The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives." (ROWLING, 2003, p. 637). The past is always coming back to haunt them, it may be in relation to something they did, because of their ancestors or because of the prophecy that rules their lives. Death is also an element really important in the series. Firstly, because Voldemort wishes to be immortal and secondly because of the prophecy, which is an element from the past, Voldemort begins his obsessive journey to be immortal.

Regarding these motifs, the *Harry Potter* series can be read as a series of novels that contains many Gothic elements. Although most of those books

are not read in that light, as in the tradition of children's literature, they have many features that can bridge them or at least make sound references to Gothic fiction.

While Gothic conventions are familiar to children's readers, the constant changes, twists and surprises make readers be always in touch with these new traditions. Gothic conventions and motifs are remarkable for the speed and consistency with which they change, in form and in meaning. The landscape and conventions change in response to cultural changes in fears, values, and technologies. This makes it a fictional form that is particularly sensitive to its historical moment and cultural location.

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# CARMILLA

## THE *FEMME FATALE*?

NATÁLIA PIRES DA SILVA<sup>1</sup>

The figure of the *femme fatale* or fatal woman is a well-known archetype in western popular culture and has been present in literary works for centuries. In *The Rise and Fall of the Femme Fatale, 1790-1910*, Heather L. Braun discusses the figure of the *femme fatale* in the nineteenth century, arguing that it

was a ready symbol for a variety of cultural concerns including sex, aggression, disease, madness, foreign contagion, and social degeneration. By the second half of the century, parallel epidemics of prostitution, pornography, and venereal disease emerged in fictional works depicting *femmes fatales* who were eventually punished for their deviant act of seduction. (2012, p. 2-3).

From the quotation above, it is possible to see that the figure of the fatal woman received several negative connotations and, the characteristics she represented are invariably connected with women behavior that were not considered proper for a woman of that time. Moreover, it is possible to see that these inappropriate acts are frequently and deeply connected to women sexuality, therefore, their dismissal and punishment in literary works operated to show women how to behave according to the tenets of society. The critic also discusses what differentiates a *femme fatale* from an attractive woman, bringing a definition by Paul Huvenne and Kee van Twist who argue that a fatal woman “uses her feminine attractions to lure men to their destruction” (BRAUN, 2012, p. 5).

James B. Twitchell also reinforces this same idea in his book *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature*. He dedicates a chapter solely to the female vampire, in which he discusses how the figure of the *femme fatale* is also tied to the image of the female vampire. Taking a different approach from Braun, who discusses mainly what the fatal woman represents in a literary work,

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Twitchell focuses mostly on how the fatal woman acts in narratives. He affirms that in stories with *femmes fatales* it is possible to see a pattern in which “a young man has to deal with an older supernatural temptress who somehow drains his energy, leaving him weak and desperate” (1981, p. 39). Moreover, the critic argues that the image of a seductive damaging woman can be traced back to the Greek myth of the Lamia, the child-murdering woman, but that this stereotype “was revived in the nineteenth century and made specifically vampiric; she became the literal *femme fatale*” (1981, p. 41).

One literary example of this vampiric *femme fatale* is the character Geraldine from the poem *Christabel*, written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1816. The critic argues that although it is not mentioned in the poem that Geraldine is a vampire, there are several characteristics pointing out that she could be one. In the poem, the young Christabel encounters a woman named Geraldine one night in the woods and invites the strange woman into her home. Geraldine seduces Christabel with her bosom, which results in Christabel's decadence. Twitchell argues that this can also be a characteristic of Geraldine's vampiric aspects, as even though there is no blood-sucking, Geraldine is draining Christabel's vital force, weakening her. Christabel is not the only girl who ends up being seduced by another woman, according to the critic the plot of the poem is going to be “reenacted later in the century in Le Fanu's *Carmilla*.” (TWITCHELL, 1981 p. 47).

The novella *Carmilla* was firstly published by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu in the *Dark Bloom* magazine, from 1871 to 1872. In the story, Laura, the protagonist, and her father live in a castle in Styria. One night, they invite into their home a strange girl, Carmilla, who was in a carriage accident in front of their castle. When Laura sees the stranger, she recognizes her from a childhood dream and Carmilla also claims that she had seen Laura in a dream before. After this moment of recognition, the two girls bond instantly, developing an intimate friendship, in which it is possible to notice some erotic connotations. Eventually in the narrative, Laura gets sick and weak, without being aware that Carmilla, her friend, is the cause of her illness.

In this brief summary, it is possible to see plot similarities between the novella and the poem *Christabel*, and also that Carmilla is similar to Geraldine. In this sense, it would be possible to classify Carmilla as a *femme fatale* too. However, the intimate relationship that Carmilla develops with Laura adds complexity and ambiguity to the female vampire. A few cross-sectional studies have endeavored to analyze the nature of Laura and Carmilla's relationship. There are studies that see the relationship between the two girls as being more romanticized (AUERBACH, 1995), and some that state that Carmilla is a vampire



that cannot be tied to the stereotype of the *femme fatale* (ARAUJO, 2017), while others do not think that this is sufficient for Carmilla to be a character who breaks with the patterns of the stereotype (SOUZA; SOUZA, 2017; SAGE, 2007). In this regard, this chapter aims to analyze Le Fanu's novella, in order to understand if the character Carmilla can be considered a fatal woman, contributing to an ongoing discussion regarding this ambiguous character.

## Carmilla and her ambiguity

In the article entitled “The Angel of the House and Femme Fatale: the representation of Victorian woman in *Carmilla*, by Le Fanu”<sup>2</sup> Tatiana Souza and Sueder Souza discuss how Carmilla and Laura are the representations of two contrasting, stereotypes of women in Victorian society. They argue that Laura was raised to be a proper Victorian lady, that means, she was educated to follow the precepts of the church and fulfill her role as woman, that is, to marry a man, bear and raise children in accordance to the conservative values of Victorian society. In this sense, Laura is the image of “the angel in the house”, i.e. women who aspire to marry, to be housewives, to fit into the beauty patterns of society and, especially, to be pure and maintain their chastity.

For the critics, Carmilla is considered a *femme fatale* since she does not follow these imposed social values of the Victorian Era (and beyond). They argue that Carmilla does not fit the stereotype of the ‘angel in the house’ because she does not follow the precepts of the church, like Laura. Souza and Souza argue that Laura stresses this in the following passage:

I often wondered whether our pretty guest ever said her prayers. I certainly had never seen her upon her knees. In the morning she never came down until long after our family prayers were over, and at night she never left the drawing room to attend our brief evening prayers in the hall. (LE FANU, 2018, p. 26).

It is clear in the excerpt that Carmilla does not have the same habits as Laura and, as far as the reader knows, Carmilla and Laura can have different religions. There is a passage in which a funeral procession passes by the two girls, and Laura pays respect to the dead girl by singing a hymn with the people at the procession, Laura's attitude irritates Carmilla, who says: “‘You pierce my ears,’ said

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<sup>2</sup> In the original: “O Anjo do Lar e Femme Fatale: a representação da mulher Vitoriana na obra *Carmilla*, de Le Fanu”. My translation. Henceforth all translations will be mine.

Carmilla, almost angrily, and stopping her ears with her tiny fingers. ‘Besides, how can you tell that your religion and mine are the same; your forms wound me, and I hate funerals.’” (LE FANU, 2018, p. 18). It is possible to think that she does not follow a religion at all or that she might follow a different one from Laura's, but Carmilla only raises the question, since this information is never confirmed in the narrative.

Another aspect that Souza and Souza discuss to show that Carmilla is a *femme fatale* is that she does not behave as a lady should at the time, as she caresses and embraces Laura, who initially feels a certain discomfort. In addition, Souza and Souza argue that Carmilla also builds this intimate friendship with Laura, because vampires rely on their victims. The critics state:

the vampire has a dependent relationship with the victim, his/her permanence among the living-dead world depends on the death of his/her victim. This dependence with the victim does not concern only his/her survival, the image of the vampire in literature is also connected with his/her sexuality, the act of biting the victim is the vampire's intercourse.<sup>3</sup> (SOUZA; SOUZA, 2017, p. 141).

In the narrative, Carmilla only attacks women, her victims are never men, and for this reason she is considered a lesbian vampire and, in this sense, Carmilla goes against the heteronormativity of the time.

Souza and Souza also argue that Carmilla is a *femme fatale* due to her vampiric nature, they state that “[...] the vampire's cunning is to enchant people, she [Carmilla] uses her beauty, her education, her gentle and sweet image that is transmitted through her eyes, involving her victims [...]”<sup>4</sup> (SOUZA; SOUZA, 2017, p. 142). Here the critics highlight her power of seduction and the means that Carmilla uses to seduce Laura, who seduced and enchanted by the vampire, is not able to see what Carmilla really is and what she is doing to her health. The critics also argue that vampires establish relationship of dependence with their victims, once they need the victim's blood to survive. Therefore, for them, Carmilla maintains her relationship with Laura for the vampire to feed.

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<sup>3</sup> In the original: “O vampiro tem relação de dependência com sua vítima, sua permanência entre o mundo dos mortos vivos está na morte das suas vítimas. Essa relação de dependência não é apenas no que tange sua sobrevivência, pois a imagem do vampiro na literatura também está ligada à sexualidade, o ato de morder a vítima é um ato sexual para um vampiro.”

<sup>4</sup> In the original: “[...] A astúcia de um vampiro é encantar as pessoas, ela se utiliza da beleza, da educação e a imagem meiga e doce que ela transmite, através do olhar envolve suas vítimas [...]”

In “*Carmilla*: I’ll let you be in my dreams if I can be in yours” (2004) Victor Sage also stresses the seductive and manipulative aspect of Carmilla, discussing the girl’s relationship of predator and victim. Sage argues that Carmilla uses her rhetorical skills in order to alter Laura’s notion of reality. For the critic, the events that happened on the night that Laura, as a child, saw Carmilla in her bedroom, are considered true by the girl, despite her father saying the opposite; that Laura dreamed it. However, when Carmilla reappears in Laura’s life now in adulthood, Carmilla is able to distort Laura’s perception of reality and from the moment that the vampire claims to have dreamed about Laura before, Laura starts to believe that what happened that night was a dream, turning a then traumatic experience into a ‘harmless’ dream. The critic also argues that Carmilla employs her rhetoric skills in order to achieve her ends, using an imitating strategy to attract Laura into her trap. Sage argues that “Carmilla seizes the dream, and in doing so, possesses Laura’s reality. We watch the helpless Laura like watching a terrible wildlife film in which the predator mirrors the movements of the prey” (2007, p. 182). Moreover, Sage affirms that Carmilla is using strategies of mimesis and deceit, replicating Laura’s reactions. Carmilla wants Laura to believe that she is as frightened by the vision of Laura as she is of seeing her. This is a way to gain Laura’s trust, which will allow the vampire to develop a friendship with Laura later on.

The passage in which Sage claims that such situation happens is the following:

I must tell you my vision about you; it is so very strange that you and I should have had, each of the other so vivid a dream, that each should have seen, I you and you me, looking as we do now, when of course we both were mere children. [...] I saw you — most assuredly you — as I see you now; a beautiful young lady, with golden hair and large blue eyes, and lips — your lips — you as you are here. “Your looks won me; I climbed on the bed and put my arms about you, and I think we both fell asleep. I was aroused by a scream; you were sitting up screaming. I was frightened, and slipped down upon the ground, and, it seemed to me, lost consciousness for a moment; and when I came to myself, I was again in my nursery at home. Your face I have never forgotten since. I could not be misled by mere resemblance. You *are* the lady whom I saw then. (LE FANU, 2018, p. 14).

In the excerpt above, it is possible not only to see that Carmilla is using her strategy, as argues Sage, but also to see that the vampire is, in a subtle manner, already making use of her seductive power. In the passage, Carmilla is already paying attention to Laura’s beauty (and lips), flattering the girl while emphasizing

that Carmilla admired Laura's face since that first encounter. There are, of course, many other moments in which the vampire acts seductively. Still in this first moment of recognition, Carmilla continues to compliment, and claims that precisely because of that dream they were destined to be friends. Then Carmilla asks Laura if she feels drawn to her as she is to Laura, which results in Laura's following statement:

I did feel, as she said, “drawn towards her,” but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed. She interested and won me; she was so beautiful and so indescribably engaging. (LE FANU, 2018, p. 14).

Despite Laura's fears regarding that woman who haunted her since childhood, Carmilla's appearance and beauty (alongside her sweet speech) involves Laura, making it easier for the vampire to have access to the girl's blood.

In contrast, other critics argue that Carmilla and Laura's relationship is much more than a hunter and victim relationship, therefore, Carmilla could not be placed into the archetype of the *femme fatale*. In the article “Carmilla's Strange Love: from Le Fanu's Tale to Cinematographic Adaptations”,<sup>5</sup> Tatiana Brandão Araujo argues that in Carmilla and Laura's intimacy, the former does not wish to treat Laura merely as another victim. The critic defends that Le Fanu “[...] goes beyond the relationship between vampire (predator) and human (victim) since, in my understanding, Carmilla establishes an affective and desirable relationship with Laura.”<sup>6</sup> (2017, p. 99). Araujo sees the relationship between the two girls from a rather romanticized perspective. She understands Carmilla as a humanized vampire, who is capable of having feelings, not merely being a predator. Taking a completely different perspective from Sage, Araujo states that

Carmilla falls in love with Laura and her words to the girl are not only a strategy to conquer, and later kill her, but a way for Laura to be her partner in eternity. It is not possible to firmly assure that Carmilla thought about the possibility of turning Laura [into vampire], but the wait to provoke Laura's death (and possible transformation in

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<sup>5</sup> In the original: “O ‘Estranho Amor’ de Carmilla: do Conto de Sheridan Le Fanu às Adaptações Cinematográficas.”

<sup>6</sup> In the original: “[...] vai além da relação vampiro (predador) e homem (vítima), já que no meu entendimento, Carmilla estabelece uma relação de afeto e desejo com Laura.”

vampire), which previously mentioned, and it is a fact present in the book and cannot be denied.<sup>7</sup> (2017, p. 105).

For the critic, Laura's death in the narrative could be a metaphor, representing the death of Laura's old life with her father, also it could represent the life she would have with Carmilla, if turned into a vampire. Araujo's theory is quite compelling, however, there is no evidence in the narrative that shows that Carmilla had the intention of doing so. In addition, before Laura became one of the vampire's victim, Carmilla had made another one, General Spielsdorf's niece, Bertha. The General, in the same way as Laura and her father did, welcomed the strange woman to his house, which resulted in Bertha's death. By means of his narration, it is possible to deduce that Carmilla will act with Laura the same way she acted with Bertha. Carmilla fed on the General's niece, as well as she is feeding on Laura, who is falling ill, just like the girl also fell ill, and that resulted in her death. The following passage is narrated by General Spielsdorf.

[...] I stood at the door, peeping through the small crevice, my sword laid on the table beside me, as my directions prescribed, until, a little after one, I saw a large black object, very ill-defined, crawl, as it seemed to me, over the foot of the bed, and swiftly spread itself up to the poor girl's throat, where it swelled, in a moment, into a great, palpitating mass.

“For a few moments I had stood petrified. I now sprang forward, with my sword in my hand. The black creature suddenly contracted towards the foot of the bed, glided over it, and, standing on the floor about a yard below the foot of the bed, with a glare of skulking ferocity and horror fixed on me, I saw Millarca. Speculating I know not what, I struck at her instantly with my sword; but I saw her standing near the door, unscathed. Horrified, I pursued, and struck again. She was gone; and my sword flew to shivers against the door.

“I can't describe to you all that passed on that horrible night. The whole house was up and stirring. The specter Millarca was gone. But her victim was sinking fast, and before the morning dawned, she died.” (LE FANU, 2018, p. 49).

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<sup>7</sup> In the original: “Carmilla se apaixonou efetivamente por Laura, e suas palavras para a menina não são apenas uma estratégia para conquistá-la, e para matá-la posteriormente, mas sim para que Laura seja sua companheira na eternidade. Não se pode afirmar com certeza que a Carmilla repensou a possibilidade de transformar Laura, mas a demora em efetivar a morte (e possível transformação em vampira), antes mencionada, é um fato apresentado no livro, e impossível de ser negado.”

Here, it is possible to see what would probably happen to Laura if General Spielsdorf had not detained and killed Carmilla, she would probably have died as did Bertha and the other young girls who were Carmilla's victims in Styria. Despite being able to grasp what could have been Laura's future if Carmilla succeeded, we have also another point of view on Carmilla. So far in the narrative, we were only able to see Carmilla through Laura's eyes, but the General has quite a different outlook. He sees Carmilla solely as the vampire who drained his beloved niece and caused her death. He sees a side of Carmilla that is only exposed to Laura at the end of the narrative.

## Final remarks

In light of the discussion concerning the character Carmilla, from the homonymous novella written by J. S. Le Fanu it was possible to argue that Carmilla can be considered a *femme fatale*, despite her ambiguous characteristics. Carmilla's representation suggests the transgressive nature of her character. She is a lesbian vampire, who attacks and feeds on women, but, instead of brutally assaulting them, she uses her beauty and rhetorical skills to seduce her victims. In this sense, Carmilla is a character who is fully aware of her own sexuality, which she chooses to explore solely on same-sex victims. Therefore, as Souza and Souza argue, Carmilla's death at the end of the narrative would be a form of punishment, since the way she behaves was not in accordance to the moral values of Victorian Society, but also because she was sexually threatening. Carmilla's seductive behavior could be an influence on other women in relation to awareness about their own sexuality, as they could choose to experience and explore this sexuality, instead of being chaste until marriage. In this regard, Carmilla could also be considered a *femme fatale*, in accordance to what Heather L. Braun says that the figure of the fatal woman represents in literature.

Still, if the broader, representational aspect of the character is excluded, and it is only considered what is present in the narrative, it is possible to see that Carmilla still fits in the archetype, according to what James B. Twitchell states about the *femme fatale*. In the narrative, Carmilla is older than Laura: even though she is described as having almost the same age as Laura, Carmilla has been alive since 1698, as the story describes. In the scene that Laura and her father are looking at old portraits of the Karnstein Family, one of the portraits has the image of Carmilla, under the name of Mircalla. Carmilla is able to involve Laura with her beauty, her embraces, her kisses and her words, gaining Laura's trust, so the girl

is unsuspecting about her true nature and that she is responsible for her illness, and possible death, if not detained. It is also important to reinforce that all of this could be premeditated, since the way Carmilla was invited to be a guest in the castle happened by Carmilla's mother asking Laura's father, rather than a genuine invitation from him, so, it is possible to envision Carmilla's intention from the beginning of the narrative.

Although it is undeniable that throughout Le Fanu's novella there are several evidences that Carmilla is a *femme fatale*, it is not fair to reduce such character only and completely to this stereotype. Carmilla's ambiguity is what also adds complexity to her character, and it is probably what makes Laura still remember her years after the occurrence of the narrated facts:

It was long before the terror of recent events subsided; and to this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations — sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church; and often from a reverie I have started, fancying I heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing room door. (LE FANU, 2018, p. 55).

Laura ends her narrative acknowledging Carmilla's duality, therefore, to bluntly classify her as a *femme fatale* (and also to deny this characteristic from her) is in certain ways unfair to such a complex character.

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# SHERLOCK AND THE “GREAT GAME” OF FEAR

## ANALYSIS OF TWO EPISODES BASED ON THE DEFINITIONS OF HORROR AND TERROR

PATRICIA BRONISLAWSKI FIGUEREDO<sup>1</sup>

Worldwide known as a great detective, the character Sherlock Holmes is famous for more than the short stories and novels written by Arthur Conan Doyle: the detective appears in a large number of adaptations to film, comics, series, radio narratives, and advertising, besides many fanfictions, pastiche, and parodies. Each new adaptation brings not only new narrative and mediatic devices, but also raises new issues and discussions surrounding the investigations the character conducts. In this context, BBC's *Sherlock* (2010-2017) proposes an adaptation in which the character (played by Benedict Cumberbatch) lives in contemporary London and solves cases with John Watson (Martin Freeman). The series' contemporariness is not only related to the setting or to the technical aspects as its fast-paced editing, but also to the contemporary issues it raises among the cases the detective investigates.

The show *Sherlock* has four seasons and one special episode so far, each one with three 90-minute episodes. In the series, some remarkable stories written by Doyle are used as inspiration to create different developments and solutions. Often, the creators Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat, who declare themselves fans of Sherlock Holmes, include many references to the canon such as details in dialogues, setting objects or other kinds of easter eggs. With this, *Sherlock* presents what Matt Hills calls a “heretical fidelity”, as it presents a creative and new version of the character which at the same time is “faithful” to some details Doyle created.

Considering the contemporariness of *Sherlock*, the contextual elements of terrorism and the generation of fear present in the show reveal aspects of the context in which the series has been produced. For instance, the background of some episodes such as “The Great Game” (season 01, episode 03) and “The Hounds of Baskerville” (season 02, episode 02) portray terrorist attacks of

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the last decade, I discuss these episodes below. Understanding how the concepts of horror/terror and discussions related to horror stories lead to perceiving how fear reflects important issues in social and political contexts.

## Defining Terror/Horror

H.P. Lovecraft begins his famous essay, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, first published in 1927, stating that “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown” (2012, p. 2). The “fear of the unknown”, although not in its cosmic, metaphysical sense, as proposed by Lovecraft, is here key to understand both current narratives (mainly horror films and novels) and some political events that are related to fear (as terrorism and political terror). David Punter reinforces the importance of the terror/horror in narratives, connecting it to human development. Punter quotes Aristotle to state his argument for the importance of terror:

without terror, as Aristotle implies, how would we begin the process of soul-forming, how would we know what is ‘appropriate’ to the human, how would we know what is forbidden? Or, perhaps better: how would we find a tremulous language in which to express these limits, a primitive torch to shine out into the darkness, where otherwise there would just be the eyes of the wolves, seeking their endless reflection in our own? (2008, p. 203).

With these rhetorical questions, Punter expresses the importance of the genre not only to cause fear but also to express human anxieties and cultural codes. This process of “soul-forming” and “expression of limits” may be natural or forced, as people or institutions may generate fear with this purpose. A narrative example of how terror may be generated to propagate social and cultural codes can be found in the film *The Village* (M. Night Shyamalan, 2004), which portrays a small hamlet in which monsters are said to kill all of those who enter the forest. By the end of the film, one of the characters discovers that these monsters are not real — they are a strategy of the city council to forbid the citizens to walk out of the village and face contemporary society. Fear, in this narrative, is generated with a social and political aim — but this is not exclusive to narratives. Generating fear is a key point in terrorism and State terror (torture, intimidation and State violence).

Furthermore, David Punter relates terror to “reflection”, including the double sense of the word. According to him,

it is reflection, in the sense of mirroring, in its purest form because it is also reflection, in the sense of thought, taken to its utmost extreme — where all thought appears to have failed and only ‘direct action,’ whatever that might mean (and it can have many different meanings), appears to suffice. (2008, p. 203).

While most authors use the terms “horror” and “terror” as indistinguishable, a conceptual difference between them is important. In her “On the Supernatural in Poetry”, first published in 1826, Ann Radcliffe explores the idea that the terms should be seen as different, even as opposite: “the first [terror] expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other [horror] contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them” (2019, p. 149). The former, in her perspective, is related to the obscure, which generates psychological challenges, while the latter is related to the body experience, such as exposure to atrocities, blood, and mutilated body parts. Using her distinction, two elements related to terror will be discussed in *Sherlock*, namely *the monster*, which is recurrent in the genre of terror and in episodes such as “The Hounds of Baskerville” and *terrorism*, which uses horror to create terror, and is a theme also present in this same episode and in episodes such as “The Great Game”.

## The Monster

It is probably due to the “fear of the unknown” that most horror stories have a monster, which often is a creature with features that are not completely understood by the characters/audiences. According to Richard Bleiler, monsters have to be exceptional and not fully comprehended as

[m]onsters are terrifying and monstrous generally only so long as they are not fully seen and are but dimly glimpsed, for then the reader’s imagination is free to run wild. Once the monster has been revealed, the monstrosity and its monstrousness run the risk of becoming familiar or failing to horrify or impress the reader, results, and reactions that are not desirable in a story one of whose primary purposes is to shock. (2007, p. 342).

Bleiler highlights the effect of suspension, of not being seen that is characteristic to horror. Moreover, if monsters are, as Noël Carroll argues, “not only physically threatening; they are cognitively threatening. They are threats to common knowledge” (2004, p. 34), they are also representations of people’s “fear of the unknown”.

In “The Hounds of Baskerville”, fear is one of its main themes, including both Henry Knight's fear of a hound and the collective fear of chemical weapons. Besides the theme, the soundtrack, and the visual edition are used to convey a sense of fear in the audience. In this episode, Henry Knight, who is afraid of a gigantic dog (a hound he calls it), asks Sherlock to investigate his father's death. The dog he describes has abnormal proportions and red eyes; his oddness makes him a monster.

The adaptation of the novel “The Hound of the Baskervilles” is full of references to Doyle's novel, with many easter eggs that would make sense only to those who had read the novel previously. According to Nikki Stafford, “[w]here the episode succeeds for all audiences is when it becomes a study in fear” (2015, p. 129). The study in fear is related both to Knight's fear of the hound and to how this fear was created, which is explained at the end of the episode.

Besides the hound's enormous size, it is mysterious: no one knows for certain his size and his characteristics, as nobody but Knight has seen it. People believe that it is one of the experiments from Baskerville, which is a place nearby in which animals are genetically modified with military purposes. Because of Knights' narrative, the place in which he claims he saw the monster became known among tourists and it is explored for commercial purposes. As in all monsters in horror stories, the hound generates fear while his features are unknown. During the investigation, Sherlock becomes puzzled when he also sees the dog (Figure 1) as he believed that such creature did not exist. His reaction is also related to fear — but fear of not knowing what is real, as the dog could not be explained by logic or science. When Sherlock solves the mystery, the dog stops to cause fear and they manage to face it.

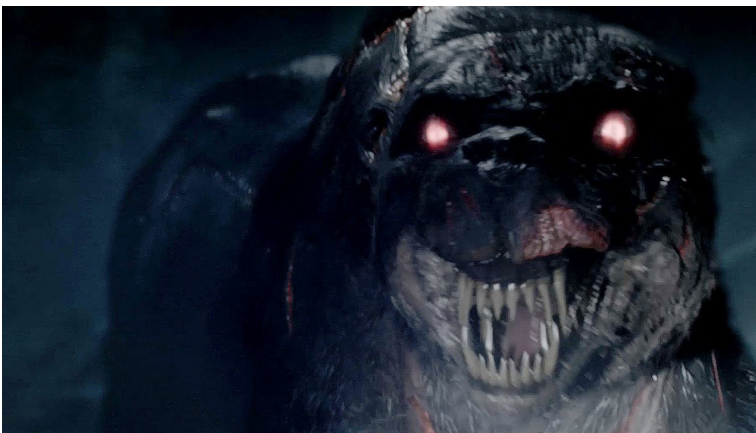


Figure 1 — “The Hounds of Baskerville”. *Sherlock* series, episode 2.

Investigating further, Sherlock finds out that after Knight's story became popular, two local restaurant owners used one dog to attract people who would believe that it was their dog that Knight was talking about. This dog was not so monstrous as the one described by Knight, but it served well for commercial purposes.

Besides the hound, Sherlock discovers a gas developed to generate fear that has been created to be a weapon. The development of this chemical weapon with military purposes shows that not only the hound is a monster but also reveals the monstrosity of human beings, who can generate terror for military or political purposes. The same strategy of using horror to create terror may be used in different political aims when governments decide to control the population. An example of this was during the Nazi domination in which the atrocities of the war and the threat of the concentration camps generated a permanent state of terror to civilians.

## Terrorism

Based on Radcliffe's definition of terror and horror, Ken Gelder explains the cycle horror-terror-horror generated by terrorism. According to him, "terror is a ceaseless, imminent threat, bringing atrocities close to home, provoking a sickening disgust, a state of despair. We might say that horror is the banal-yet-fatal conclusion or realization of terrorism" (2004, p. 152). Terrorists use different weapons to kill or hurt people generating immediate horror due to the cruelty of what is being done to them. The overall reaction is a state of terror, as people become afraid of being part of one terrorist attack, as anyone could be a terrorist, and their actions are unpredictable.

Gelder further highlights how fiction can be useful in debates about contemporary politics, mainly related to terrorism. In his case, an analysis of the Trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* shows great insights when it is related to the war on terror. In his article, Gelder names some of the different connections that westerners have done between terrorism and literature: Jason Epstein compares the war on terror to Melville's Captain Ahab in his quest for Moby Dick and; Mike Davis situates the events of September 11, 2001 in a bestselling work of H. G. Wells. All these different critical approaches express an attempt to understand the "unknown" (terrorism) by comparing it to what is known, even if the latter is fictional.

According to David Punter, terrorism is connected to the unfamiliar, and the terrorist can be seen as "that which brings the unfamiliar into the heartland"

(2008, p. 201). In other words, terrorism is uncanny. The label “terrorist” already evokes the notion of “being-understood as an always ungraspable gesture towards the limits of the human” (2008, p. 202). Most of the time, “terrorists” are seen as beings with no subjectivity, as “pure evil”, (comparable to the “monster” in horror films). Punter explains that “In encountering the terrorist, we are taken to the limit of understanding, to the end of inscription: nothing but death is written on this body, and death is not interpretable, it is the liminal case which simultaneously forbid all thought of the threshold.” (2008, p. 202). Another important feature of terrorism Punter describes is that it

is, in a sense, low in the scale of immediate lethal impact [...] because terrorism depends on the effects of ricochet. Thus a single image, on television news, of a Western national bound, gagged and blindfolded, waiting under the sword, cannot be equated with the faceless thousands killed by other means. (2008, p. 212).

Terrorism depends upon the media and its capacity of spreading images in a very fast way — it is the multiplication of images that turns the horror of terrorist actions into an atmosphere of terror and fear. Even though the statistic number of deaths in a terrorist action is low compared to a war battle, for instance, showing the faces and history of the victims generates empathy, and creates an uncertainty about “who the next victim is” or “where the next attack will be”, as terrorist acts are unpredictable. A crucial point Punter describes is the “facelessness of the terrorist and the faciality (especially when partially erased) of the victim” (2008, p. 212). This can be seen in most of the news reporting terrorist actions — the terrorist's identities are denied, while the victims are often presented with their personal history.

Ken Gelder elaborates on the “facelessness of the terrorist” when he describes “terrorism as sort of a phantasm: a terrorism that is yet to be manifest: a terrorism in which the principal villain, [...] like Osama bin Laden, is both manifest and simply not there” (2004, p. 145). His article was written in a moment in which Osama bin Laden was being chased by his terrorist actions, but he could not be found, as a ghost, an iconic figure whose presence or existence was no longer needed to his organization. Considering this, Gelder argues that “what is now called global terrorism does indeed seem to have both an immediately felt and ethereal ‘body’: a violent registered presence, and a disconcerting absence that seems almost against the odds to continue to keep itself that way” (2004, p. 145).

The episode “The Great Game” begins with Sherlock bored, craving a new case. The case begins with an explosion in front of Sherlock. When Watson is

home watching the news, he sees the report of this explosion, which announces that its actual cause is not certain, mentioning that it is unknown if it was terrorism. The quick connection established between the explosion and terrorism is an expression of the current context in which diverse terrorist acts are a political tool. Without knowing for certain what caused it, terrorism is seen as a possibility, as terrorist acts vary in their form and place.

When the police contact Sherlock, he acknowledges that the explosion left a safe and a cellphone, which is the first hint to a case that needs to be solved. The cellphone rings and a female voice announces that he has 12 hours to solve a puzzle. The voice belongs to a woman who is attached to many explosives. According to her, she was in her home when two men entered, tied bombs to her body and gave her instructions to read specific messages to Sherlock. Throughout the episode, Sherlock reveals that the messages were sent by Moriarty. She needs to read Moriarty's message and wait for Sherlock to solve the puzzle in order to save her life.

While in the beginning the attacks looked like terrorism, committed by faceless terrorists in order to create a huge impact in different media, the final sequence of the episode reveals the author of the acts, Moriarty. Even though his actions throughout the episode raise discussions on terrorism, he is acting in his own behalf, with no political commitment. The identity of Moriarty is not revealed till the end of the episode, in a thrilling sequence. When Sherlock solves the last puzzle, he asks Moriarty to meet him at the pool in order to end their “game”. The voice that Moriarty uses to communicate with Sherlock is Watson's and the entire conversation between the criminal and the detective is developed with the doctor tied to bombs (Figure 2).



Figure 2 — Watson with bombs strapped to his body in “The Great Game”

Before that sequence in which Moriarty is finally identified, the author of the puzzles is referred to as “the bomber”, which implies that he could be someone acting in his own sake or a terrorist.

## Final remarks

In *Sherlock*, the concepts of horror and terror and the theme of fear were discussed in two different episodes. Two topics were highlighted: the monster, which is present in most Gothic horror stories, and terrorism, which has a contemporary connection to the subject. In this sense, investigating how “fear”, “terror” and “horror” are present in *Sherlock* enables a reflection in the double sense. Firstly, it reflects contemporary anxieties as consequence of horrific events, such as terrorism and the use of chemical weapons, showing their effects on people. Secondly, it generates reflections on the meaning of these same events, on their causes and consequences. By showing and problematizing the development of a weapon that generates fear, the series recognizes how this emotion is powerful. If, according to Aristotle, terror is important to expose human limits, the series problematizes how the creation of a weapon capable of generating fear is also using people's limitations against themselves. With that, the true monster might be not a gigantic animal or an unknown creature but human beings who use horror and fear to spread terror.

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# GRENDEL

## THE MONSTER AND THE GOTHIC

RAFAEL SILVA FOUTO<sup>1</sup>

Grendel is arguably the oldest monster in English literature, originally appearing in the *Beowulf* manuscript from the late tenth or early eleventh century, with the poem itself probably being of much older origin. Beowulf and his monstrous foe Grendel have been thoroughly discussed and analyzed by several critics, translated, reutilized by many authors and adapted to different media, such as films, comic books, and novels, as is the case of John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971). More than a direct adaptation of the original poem, in *Grendel* the monster becomes the protagonist of the narrative, in this postmodern shift in perspective, surrounded by upside-down Gothic elements, the perilous and alien are not the monster and the supernatural, but humanity and the mundane. Beyond the characters of Grendel and Beowulf, what both these works have in common is the element of the uncanny in juxtaposition with the concept of the terrifying Other.

The aim of this analysis is to draw a comparative investigation between the monster in the poem *Beowulf* and the monster in the novel *Grendel*, with a focus on the duality of otherness the character presents: the outsider monster as seen by society and the outsider society as seen by the monster. To accomplish this, I will draw on the Gothic theories of the monstrous Other, as discussed by Dani Cavallaro, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, and Richard Kearney; dialoguing as well with David Punter and his discussion of the Gothic and the law; and the analyses of Stephanie Tyler, Julia Kristeva and Marcus Hensel about otherness. I seek to highlight here what characterizes Grendel's monstrosity in the Anglo-Saxon society and in John Gardner's novel.

As Dani Cavallaro states, “monsters as diverse as mythological hybrids, blood-suckers, grotesquely deformed semi-humans, serial killers and pornographers varyingly embody a Gothic ethos of excess, disorder, and physical

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and psychological disturbance” (2002, p. 177). In this sense, Grendel, in his ancient and in his more recent appearance, is a relevant object of study, for he allows the observation of a literary *continuum* of the image of the monster before and after the Gothic as a genre (1764-1820), with a presence still felt in the constitution of what a monster is. In light of this, to fully investigate Grendel and his complexities, this analysis explores the concept of “Gothic” not as a genre, but as a form of discourse that can be employed to better understand works which would hardly be counted among the ranks of the Gothic, as is the case of *Beowulf*. On the other hand, Gardner's *Grendel* could be considered a twentieth-century Gothic work, for its reversal of monstrosity underscores one major aspect Fred Botting points out, which is that “throughout Gothic fiction terror and horror have depended on things not being what they seem.” (1996, p. 111). However, despite *Grendel* having many elements that are seen as pertaining to the Gothic genre, this analysis mainly dives into the Gothic discourse of the monstrous contained in *Beowulf* and *Grendel*, as well as the aesthetic of their main monster, for as Robert Miles stresses, “the Gothic aesthetic is above all else an aesthetic of change, transition, a manifesto for new writing based on the authority of the old.” (1991, p. 41). Considering this, there is no monster more ancient in authority and memory in English literature than Grendel.

## The monster in *Beowulf*

The *Beowulf* text may seem out of the scope of Gothic literature, except perhaps linguistically, through the cultural kinship between Anglo-Saxons and the historical Goths as both were counted among the ranks of the Germanic tribes. However, like the terrifying and supernatural description Jordanes gave of the Huns, the greatest enemies of the Goths, the *Beowulf* poet also offers the depiction of the nightmarish monster Grendel, enemy of the Danes, both horrors fabricated by means of their otherness. Although a poem about the Danes, *Beowulf* was written by an Anglo-Saxon poet, inside an Anglo-Saxon cultural paradigm; therefore, to understand Grendel's otherness from an Anglo-Saxon perspective is to comprehend the meaning of exile and what it represented for this culture. As Tyler points out, ostracism was one of the most fearsome punishments one could suffer in Anglo-Saxon culture, as in the case of an “[...] enforced criminal exile, who must live outside of the community due to sins or crimes which he or she has committed” (2010, p. 1). In *Beowulf*, Grendel's status as an outsider is clearly stated at the beginning of the poem:

Wæs se grimma gæst Grendel hāten,  
 mære mearcstapa, sē þe mōras hēold,  
 fen ond fæsten; fifelcynnes eard  
 wonsæli wer weardode hwile,  
 siþðan him Scyppend forscifen hæfde  
 in Caines cynne [...]”<sup>2</sup> (JACK, 1995, v. 102-107).

The sin that forced his exile was not his own, but of his ancestor, which may seem to soften his evil character at first sight — the “sins of the father” being a Biblical theme that is also scrutinized in Gothic fiction. Nonetheless, as Cohen points out, Cain is “[...] the first male Other and the progenitor of the very giants of the Books of Enoch and Genesis whose deeds Grendel is repeating” (1996, p. 67), so the image observed in the poem is indeed of the outsider, close to humanity, but distant enough to be considered a monster, for in Anglo-Saxon society “the liminality in which these outsiders exist lies between the ‘community’, represented by that which is considered human, and that which is deemed fully ‘other’” (TYLER, 2010, p. 2). Hence, in certain specific ways, the uncanny element in Grendel is quite literally the translation of Freud’s *unheimlich*, “unhomely,” and so the source of fearing the Other is exemplified in Grendel’s proximity to humanity and the homely, as he could have been a human who fell to monstrosity when in exile. Grendel is, at the same time, familiar and unfamiliar, with a foothold here and there, represented in him being a *mearcstappa*, “boundary-stepper.” However, Grendel’s ultimate otherness in relation to society is further emphasized later in the poem, as it says that

[...] sibbe ne wolde  
 wið manna hwone mægenes Deniga,  
 feorhbealo feorran, fēa þingian,  
 nē þær næig witenā wēnan þorfte  
 beorhtre bōte tō banan folmum,<sup>3</sup> (JACK, 1995, v. 154-158).

Dialoguing or applying the common laws of the community are not possible with the alien that is Grendel, for he inhabits the wilderness and therefore is beyond the order existing in civilization. Moreover, Grendel “[...] exhibits both

<sup>2</sup> “The grim ghost was called Grendel / famed boundary-stepper, he who held fast the moors, / fen and fortress; monsterkind’s fief / occupied a while by the unblessed creature, / since the Creator had proscribed him / in Cain’s kin [...]”. All translations from Old English are mine.

<sup>3</sup> “[...] peace there would not be / with anyone’s men of the Danish host / no dismissing of deadly-bale, nor settling of money. / Nor there any wise men’s call for needed / bright compensation from his baneful hand.”

abnormal morphology and deviant behavior” (HENSEL, 2012, p. 29), with the poem presenting him as a *fēond on helle* (JACK, 1995, v. 101),<sup>4</sup> therefore monstrous and inhuman. Not only is he incapable of being reasoned with, but he is also actively vicious and cruel:

ac se æglæca ehtende wæs,  
 deorc dēaþ-scūa duguþe ond geogoþe,  
 seomade ond syrede; sinnihte hēold  
 mistige mōras; [...] <sup>5</sup> (JACK, 1995, v. 159-162).

According to Cohen, Grendel is then “[...] the cultural Other to whom conformity to societal dictates is an impossibility because those dictates are not comprehensible to him” (1996, p. 68), reinforcing the potential for the exiled to become monsterized if he transgresses and loses his subordination to social norms.

Afterwards, Grendel is portrayed crossing the threshold of the savage and the civilized, as his coming suggests:

Ða cōm of mōre under misthleoþum  
 Grendel gongan, Godes yrre bæþ,  
 mynte se mǎn-scaða manna cynnes  
 sumne besyrwan in sele þām hēan. <sup>6</sup> (JACK, 1995, v. 710-713).

The delimitation of space here represents an obvious separation of worlds, as he comes from the mist, indicator of supernatural borders between reality and the otherworldly. At the same time, this separation can also indicate a physical border, a foreign country beyond Anglo-Saxon lands, making Grendel the foreign menace, *Godes yrre*, a heathen threat, stranger in appearance and culture.

Grendel’s monstrosity is later on presented in another aspect, as the poem informs another uncanny aspect of his behavior:

ac hē getēng hraðe forman siðe  
 slæpendne rinc, slāt unwearnum,  
 bāt bān-locan, blōd ēdrum dranc,

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<sup>4</sup> “fiend from hell”.

<sup>5</sup> “but the fierce fighter was following after, / tried and young warriors, a dark death-shadow / who lurked and lured, in the lifelong nights held fast / the misty moors; [...]”.

<sup>6</sup> “Then from the moors under the misty-slopes came / Grendel going forth, bearing God’s ire, / mankind’s sinful-wrecker meant to / entrap some in the humiliated hall.”

syn-snǣdum swealh; sōna hæfde  
 unlyfgendes eal gefeormod,  
 fēt ond folma [...] <sup>7</sup> (JACK, 1995, v. 740-745).

Cannibalism, an utterly barbarian practice in Western society, alongside the act of drinking blood, are the final markers of the abject other, for consuming blood was the same as consuming the soul of another person in Anglo-Saxon culture (JACK, 1995, p. 71), therefore representing the ultimate abandonment of any trace of humanity in Grendel's character and his complete descent into monstrosity. Being so beyond the domains of society and so demonstrably evil forces the appearance of an opposite of equal or greater power, represented in the figure of Beowulf and his fight against Grendel:

Sōna þæt onfunde fyrena hyrde,  
 þæt hē ne mētte middangeardes,  
 eorþan scēa[t]a on elran men  
 mundgripe mǣran; hē on mōde wearð  
 forht on ferhðe; [...] <sup>8</sup> (JACK, 1995, v. 750-754).

Beowulf possesses abnormal strength in battle, not only catching Grendel by surprise but also frightening him to his very soul. Despite this abnormality in morphology, the reason why Beowulf is not considered a monster among monsters is his conformity to social rules: although he is an outsider in the lands of the Danes, he shows the correct etiquette when addressing his host, and presents himself as a great hero, becoming therefore an insider with the Danes. Grendel's otherness, on the contrary, is demonstrated even in death, as his soul does not follow a traditional path of Heaven or Hell:

[...] Scolde his aldorgedāl  
 on ðǣm dæge þysses lifes  
 earmlic wurðan, ond se ellorgāst  
 on fēonda gewæld feor siðian.<sup>9</sup> (JACK, 1995, v. 805-808).

<sup>7</sup> "but he quickly seized the opportunity first, / tore unrestrainedly the sleeping warrior / bit bone-lock, blood from the veins he drank / sinful-morsels swallowed; at once he had / wholly eaten up the lifeless man / hands and feet."

<sup>8</sup> "Soon that master of sufferings found out, / that he had never met in middle-earth, in the regions of the earth another man / with a greater hand-grip; he at heart became / fearful in spirit; [...]"

<sup>9</sup> "[...] His life-severing should, / on that day of this our life, / be wretched, and the alien-ghost / fled far away to the fiends' dominion."

Beyond the two aspects of monstrosity brought by Hensel, namely abnormal morphology and deviant behavior, a third one is uniquely Grendel's, the alien spirit, which goes to a different, fiendish dominion outside the possible Christian afterlives. In this sense, he is the sacrificial scapegoat, responsible for everything wrong and, most importantly, *weird* with the world — here in the double meaning of the word as brought by the Oxford Dictionaries: something very strange and something supernatural or unearthly (WEIRD, 2016). According to Kearney, this provides a community with a “[...] binding identity, that is, with the basic sense of who is included (us) and who is excluded (them),” but at the expense of the “[...] ostracizing of some outsider: the immolation of the ‘other’ on the altar of the ‘alien’” (2003, p. 26). Grendel is the monstrous Other in its core, and his death frees the community from the threat of not only his body and mind, but also of his unnatural soul.

### The monster in *Grendel*

In John Gardner's novel the outsider is given voice through Grendel's portrayal of the otherness he sees in the human community living near him. Grendel's description of humankind is revealing of how he establishes them as physically different from him:

They were small, these creatures, with dead-looking eyes and gray-white faces, and yet in some ways they were like us, except ridiculous and, at the same time, mysteriously irritating, like rats. Their movements were stiff and regular, as if figured by logic. They had skinny, naked hands that moved by clicks. When I first became aware of them, they were all speaking at the same time. (GARDNER, 2015, p. 14).

By describing humankind in such way, the first feeling portrayed in the passage is of otherness and alienness: they (the humans) could be “us”, but are too animalistic to actually resemble “us.” In fact, “us” in this part is equated to Grendel's own monster kin, as he groups the readers with him, separated from those strange creatures he is describing, forcing the readers to see through the eyes of the Other as he make them into Others. As such, humanity is first revealed with one of the aspects of the monster, abnormal morphology.

Later on, as Grendel keeps learning more about those outsiders living nearby, he notices how



Now and then some trivial argument would break out, and one of them would kill another one, and all the others would detach themselves from the killer as neatly as blood clotting, and they'd consider the case and they'd either excuse him, for some reason, or else send him out to the forest to live by stealing from their outlying pens like a wounded fox. (GARDNER, 2015, p. 21).

Thus, their behavior seems to be erratic, killing each other and suddenly forgiving each other for it, or punishing the killer in strange manners such as exile. At the same time, Grendel tries to separate himself from the Other, but cannot deny some cultural similarities, as “[...] the men who fought were nothing to me, except of course that they talked in something akin to my language, which meant that we were, incredibly, related” (GARDNER, 2015, p. 24). This liminal space between the “I” and the “Other” is one of the most important inner conflicts of Grendel as the narrator in the novel, and it shows the difficulty in drawing a conclusive separation between what is monstrous and what is not, wherein “[...] the prospect of boundary dissolution is both alluring and frightening.” (CAVALLARO, 2002, p. 174).

One of the ways Grendel uses to separate himself is through the idea of the *doppelgänger*, in which he tries to justify the actions that could be seen as monstrous by externalizing them into the Other. When Grendel talks about the men who got exiled, he says that “at times I would try to befriend the exile, at other times I would try to ignore him, but they were treacherous. In the end, I had to eat them.” (GARDNER, 2015, p. 22), legitimizing his cannibalism by exposing the dangers of trusting the Other. In this way, the self in Grendel “[...] projects out of itself what it experiences as dangerous or unpleasant in itself, making of it an alien *double*, uncanny and demoniacal.” (KRISTEVA, 1991, p. 183).

From this perspective, there is a rhetoric in Grendel's narration which shows that, just like Grendel in *Beowulf* could not be trusted and acted unexpectedly, so do the Danes from Grendel's perspective. This is exemplified in the moment Grendel is listening to Hrothgar's speech about his new mead hall and how magnificent it would be for the people: “I listened, felt myself swept up. I knew very well that all he said was ridiculous, not light for their darkness but flattery, illusion, a vortex pulling them from sunlight to heat, a kind of midsummer burgeoning, waltz to the sickle.” (GARDNER, 2015, p. 33). Grendel knows that the idea of safety and glory spouted by Hrothgar and his human society is much thinner than it looks, and that their savagery hides behind the illusion of kind words and self-appointed goodness. Quite correctly, the cracks in this “good” facade appear in the following moments, as Grendel gets near the mead hall:

I thought how they'd shriek if I suddenly showed my face, and it made me smile, but I held myself back. They talked nothing, stupidities, their soft voices groping like hands. I felt myself tightening, cross, growing restless for no clear reason, and I made myself move more slowly. Then, circling the clearing, I stepped on something fleshy, and jerked away. It was a man. They'd cut his throat. His clothes had been stolen. I stared up at the hall, baffled, beginning to shake. They went on talking softly, touching hands, their hair full of light. (GARDNER, 2015, p. 35).

Getting confident in his own monstrosity in relation to the humans, Grendel feels the urge to ruin their moment of joy. However, he also feels something oddly uncanny about the situation, and quickly notices another monster lurking nearby when he finds a dead and looted body near the celebration, as if it were nothing. Here, Grendel truly sees and starts fearing the otherness in humanity, who is capable of acts that shock even his view of himself as a monster. Moreover, he begins to feel desperation, for during the bard's song — a man Grendel calls “the Shaper” — in the hall he becomes aware of how this terrible new Other holds power in the world: “the harp turned solemn. He told of an ancient feud between two brothers which split all the world between darkness and light. And I, Grendel, was the dark side, he said in effect. The terrible race God cursed” (GARDNER, 2015, p. 35). This is, of course, a reference to the biblical story of the brothers Cain and Abel, and to how Grendel is one of Cain's kin in *Beowulf*. Furthermore, this passage shows another connection with the Gothic, for the acts of treason, usurpation, and fratricide contained in Cain's story are all typical Gothic themes and represent Grendel's inheritance of those sins. There is, in this discourse the Shaper proclaims, a separation created by the power of divine law, and, as David Punter points out:

Since the law functions as a set of border posts, as a guardian against encroachment by the night, then it is always peculiarly open to be re-coloured by precisely those forces which it seeks to repress, and its discourse, while it strains toward clarity, must also undergo the opposite process, which is continual obfuscation. (PUNTER, 1998, p. 44).

Grendel is not, however, unaffected by such law, and argues that “I believed him. Such was the power of the Shaper's harp! Stood wriggling my face, letting tears down my nose, grinding my fists into my streaming eyes [...]” (GARDNER, 2015, p. 35). Grendel from the Anglo-Saxon perspective could not be redeemed

from his exile and monstrosity, for the law “[...] takes its sights along a single trajectory, and in doing so it seeks to exile haunting, seeks to find a pure line of explanation” (PUNTER, 1998, p. 4), a line that clearly separates the good (human) from the bad (Grendel). At the same time, the monster in *Grendel* tries to recolor this unfair law, one in which he tries to see himself represented in it, and to show that humanity is as much a part of darkness as he is, for they are killers like him: “[...] I had to squeeze with my elbow the corpse of the proof that both of us were cursed, or neither, that the brothers had never lived, nor the god who judged them. ‘Waaa!’ I bawled” (GARDNER, 2015, p. 35). His reaction underscores his own disbelief in any divine law, much less the divine per se, resulting in

[...] fury, or outrage, but outrage is only possible while one clings on to a notion of how things could be otherwise, while one continues to measure the law by some idealised version of itself according to which purification would be possible. This is the rhetoric of reform, of improvement. But Gothic can be identified — as it can, of course, in many other ways — as a point at which this idealised other fades away and we are left confronting the starkness of the law; this then becomes the stance of the victim, the realm of terror, or [...] the realm of the agonisingly absurd. (PUNTER, 1998, p. 44).

Finally, Grendel faces his true uncanny double when Beowulf appears. Again the otherness of humankind's hero is shown through his appearance, as Beowulf is described having a chest as “wide as an oven”, arms “like beams” and “[...] grotesquely muscled shoulders — stooped, naked despite the cold, sleek as the belly of a shark and as rippled with power as the shoulders of a horse” (GARDNER, 2015, p. 110): a creature of brute strength with unearthly features, more threatening than heroic. Moreover, Beowulf's form hides something scarier, for when he talks it seems to Grendel that his mouth moves “[...] independent of the words, as if the body of the stranger were a ruse, a disguise for something infinitely more terrible” (GARDNER, 2015, p. 111), an indicator of the otherness and, more importantly, the very abnormal morphology that causes terror in Grendel as the outsider who is incomprehensible to him.

Beyond its physical form, Beowulf is also portrayed as a crazy person, enjoying his fight with Grendel and never speaking normally, talking only through whispering. Here is where the Gothic discourse becomes more prevalent, for as Miles notices, “discourses are most evident when they are in oppositional or dialogic relation” (1991, p. 47); the true horror of monstrosity is established in this exchange of dialogues between Grendel and Beowulf. The Gothic aesthetics

is thus expressed in Beowulf's utterly opposition to Grendel in manner and mind through his whispering dialogue and philosophical nonsense spouted in Grendel's ear: "a meaningless swirl in the stream of time, a temporary gathering of bits, a few random specks, a cloud... Complexities: green dust, purple dust, gold. Additional refinements: sensitive dust, copulating dust..." (GARDNER, 2015, p. 120-121). Moreover, Beowulf goes further and also actively tortures Grendel:

Grendel, Grendel! You make the world by whispers, second by second. Are you blind to that? Whether you make it a grave or a garden of roses is not the point. Feel the wall: is it not hard? He smashes me against it, breaks open my forehead. Hard, yes! Observe the hardness, write it down in careful runes. Now sing of walls! Sing! (GARDNER, 2015, p. 121).

Beowulf demonstrates, then, a deviant behavior, possessing henceforth the two aspects that constitute a monster according to Hensel (2012, p. 52). He is portrayed in such an alien way that it becomes impossible for the reader to identify with him, which creates a growing feeling of horror as he attacks Grendel. According to Kearney, what one experiences when confronting the Other is a "[...] denial of the fact that we are strangers to ourselves, a denial which takes the form of negating aliens. To the extent that we exclude the outsider we deceive ourselves into thinking that we have exempted ourselves from estrangement" (2003, p. 73). Through Grendel's eyes the readers are forced to face their own strangeness, thence completing the inversion of roles as the human element becomes the monstrous Other who causes, paradoxically, discomfort and fear in humanity itself.

## Final remarks

What defines monstrosity in the Gothic discourse is not only the uncanny interaction with the Other, but also how one idealizes this Other and fears what they can do. As David Punter observes, the law plays an important role in creating the foundation to establish abnormality and otherness, for "[...] the law is a purified abstract whole, perfected according to the processes of taboo, which can find no purchase on the double, creviced, folded world of the real; by which it in turn is destined to be haunted" (1998, p. 3). In this sense, the monster is inevitably a recurrent character in the human psyche, as each community and individual establishes cultural ideas of normality as well as social norms that further develop boundaries between societies, represented in the law, and the transgression of

said boundaries creates the monsters of imagination. From a Gothic perspective, this monster can only be defined through his relationship with society, for there is no “Other” without an “I”, barbaric without civilized, supernatural without natural, profane without sacred; it is only through this dynamic of opposites that it becomes possible to explore limits and transgressions in the Gothic discourse of monstrosity (BOTTING, 1996, p. 6).

The monster is thus the embodiment of difference itself, where “in its function as dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond — of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct but originate Within” (COHEN, 1996, p. 7), manifesting the uneasiness and discomfort of a society in a particular time, being so historically recurrent. Grendel, in this case, is the best exemplification of the monster as difference and historicity, for he reappears within millennia of distance from his original appearance, across different genres, adapted to new social anxieties, and yet he is still relevant for the contemporary world.

Lastly, the character of Grendel as the monstrous Other is treated differently across the two works analyzed. In *Beowulf*, the human society is the active voice, putting Grendel as the voiceless and static outsider, never changing in personality and only escalating in his monstrous acts in every moment he appears; there is no intention, therefore, to understand this Other in the original poem. In *Grendel*, on the contrary, Grendel borders on exaggerated verbosity, as if to compensate his lack of voice in the original, but the novel also gives voice to the outsider society. In both cases, this monster that shows itself as “the figure of the ‘stranger’ — ranging from the ancient notion of ‘foreigner’ (*xenos*) to the contemporary category of alien invader — frequently operates as a limit-experience for humans trying to identify themselves over and against others” (KEARNEY, 2002, p. 3). The failure of humanity and Grendel to understand each other is thus comprehensible, for “strangers are almost always other to each other” (KEARNEY, 2002, p. 3), and so they are presented always with opposing features, both physically and psychologically, in relation to the one who is speaking, defying an artificially established “normality.” As Cavallaro notices, “it is noteworthy, however, that not all beings presumed to defy socially accepted notions of normality are exposed to uniformly severe strategies of regimentation and repression” (2002, p. 177): in *Beowulf*, the Other as an obvious monster is punished, but in *Grendel* the Other as society, or as Beowulf himself, is not. Even though the reader identifies with Grendel as the “I” in the novel, normality is again enforced by the members of the oppressive and majoritarian Other: humanity.

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# O CORPO TRANSGÓTICO

## EM A *PELE QUE HABITO*, DE PEDRO ALMODÓVAR

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Este texto analisa o corpo transexual da personagem Vicente/Vera no filme *A pele que habito* (Pedro Almodóvar, *La piel que habito*, 2011), relacionando-o com o termo transgótico com o objetivo de compreender os limites da classificação de gênero e os significados biopolíticos que emergem dessa nova configuração. A modificação é imposta ao personagem Vicente (Jan Cornet), cujo corpo passa por intervenções cirúrgicas na casa/laboratório do médico Robert (Antonio Banderas), até ser reconfigurado em termos sexuais e identitários, tornando-se uma nova personagem: Vera (Elena Anaya). Nesse processo gradual de transformação, Vicente/Vera sofre assédios psicológicos e físicos do médico e do seu irmão Zeca (Roberto Álamo).

O corpo de Vicente é submetido a situações de brutalidade e violência que podem, de certa forma, ser interpretadas na chave do gótico. Por exemplo, seu encarceramento arbitrário na casa de Robert é comparável à prisão de Jonathan Harker no castelo de Drácula ou à de Isabella em *O Castelo de Otranto* (1764). As intervenções e transformações corporais remetem a textos góticos como *Frankenstein* (1818), *Strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) ou *A ilha do Dr. Moreau* (1896). A psicologia do terror — medo, loucura, isolamento, maus tratos — sofrida por Vicente/Vera é comparável à de personagens dos romances góticos de Ann Radcliffe e Matthew Lewis.

Algumas pesquisas sobre a presença de elementos góticos em *A pele que habito* já foram desenvolvidas, a exemplo do trabalho de Jelena Pataki, que argumenta que o filme de Almodóvar é construído em termos estruturais e temáticos sobre a matriz da ficção gótica. Ela destaca convenções discursivas do gótico oitocentista (a heroína impotente, a arquitetura claustrofóbica, atmosfera de destruição iminente) para demonstrar a presença de dois conceitos que considera centrais no trabalho do diretor espanhol: “Dois dos maiores temas da

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literatura gótica se encontram aqui: os duplos (*doppelgänger*) e a morte de uma bela amante”<sup>2</sup> (PATAKI, 2016, p. 240). No entanto, o objetivo deste artigo é discutir a relação do filme com o transgótico, na medida em que se debruça sobre questões contemporâneas referentes à complexidade de dilemas éticos e morais ligados à medicina e à engenharia genética em associado à desintegração da identidade homossexual de um indivíduo.

Desde o influente “Female Gothic” (1976), de Ellen Moers, discussões sobre gênero e sexualidade têm balizado as teorias e críticas literárias e culturais sobre o gótico, dividindo a produção literária em textos que são ditos “masculinos” ou “femininos”. Essa classificação binária foi importante em um determinado momento da crítica para resgatar escritoras góticas que haviam se tornado periféricas ou caído em esquecimento.<sup>3</sup> Todavia, a divisão é desnecessariamente limitante, pois, em sua maioria, os textos góticos são composições híbridas que não obedecem a uma só estética (SÁ, 2013). Além disso, há escritores como William Beckford, autor de *Vathek* (1786), e Charlotte Dacre, autora de *Zofloya* (1806), cujas biografias e obras não se encaixam em explicações binárias sobre a política de gêneros. Nesse sentido, a proposta de leitura transgótica que se faz aqui adota um posicionamento de desestabilização das categorias de gênero textual e de gênero sexual, buscando entender como corpos e identidades transgóticas podem suscitar novos entendimentos sobre cinema, literatura e biopolítica em contextos contemporâneos.

No livro *TransGothic in Literature and Culture*, Jolene Zigarovich argumenta que o prefixo “trans” abre um campo de estudo sobre os modos como o gótico se manifesta na literatura e nas mídias audiovisuais. Em outras palavras, a crítica se vale da noção de gótico para discutir as fronteiras culturais que são usadas para definir (e conter) transgênero e transexualidade, sinalizando como a discussão pode expandir para a esfera da biopolítica. De acordo com a autora:

Com esse contexto político (governabilidade biopolítica), a formulação de uma abordagem para interpretar a literatura e a cultura Góticas com o prefixo *trans* tem acrescentado peso e entendimento culturais a fim de utilizarmos e dispormos. Um campo de estudo eurocêntrico, branco, privilegiado e neoliberal

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<sup>2</sup> Texto original: “Two of the most important motifs of Gothic literature converge: doubles and the death of a beautiful female lover.” Minha tradução. Doravante todas as traduções são minhas.

<sup>3</sup> Essa divisão tem por base o gênero da autora ou autor e o desenvolvimento do enredo. Uma explicação mais detalhada sobre os conceitos pode ser lida no artigo “The Monk: um Schauerroman inglês” (SÁ, 2013).



deve ser necessariamente testado para que um trabalho antirracista e anti-imperialista seja alcançado.<sup>4</sup> (ZIGAROVICH, 2017, p. 10).

O argumento de Zigarovich é que o transgótico abre espaço para questionamentos, encontros, explorações e experimentações não apenas dos limites do corpo e da identidade de gênero, mas, dos próprios limites do pensamento de cunho eurocentrista. O que se propõe então é uma trans-história e uma transpolítica, nas quais os marcadores corporais são expandidos para construções sociais mais amplas (história, política, sociedade), por meio do cruzamento de categorias estanques.

O presente artigo aborda o corpo trans de Vicente/Vera indicando a experiência moderna de alienação, perda do senso de tempo, lugar e história na construção da individualidade. Embora o transgênero possa se referir a uma pessoa que identifica ou expressa uma identidade de gênero diferente do sexo de nascimento, transexuais mostram e realizam suas identidades por meio de uma alteração corporal. Nesse sentido, não se pode confundir transexual com transgênero ou travesti (*cross-dresser*). Ao longo de sua carreira, Pedro Almodóvar tem feito filmes que propõem uma gama de possibilidades e combinações de gêneros além do binômio masculino-feminino, demonstrando que gênero não é um binário, mas sim um espectro em torno do qual o desejo orbita.<sup>5</sup>

A personagem Vicente não é um verdadeiro transexual, a mudança de corpo é imposta como um castigo para um suposto estupro que ele teria cometido. Ele se encontra duplamente preso, encarcerado de fato no laboratório de Robert e preso em um corpo que recusa e não considera como seu. Tais aspectos são combinados aqui com teorizações sobre o gótico, o qual emerge do vazio do “sobrenatural”, indicando categorias como ausência, indecisão, obscuridade e incerteza de qualquer possibilidade de conhecimento pessoal, cultural e histórico. Por isso, entende-se o transgótico enquanto um aspecto da experiência moderna, principalmente no que diz respeito à biopolítica contemporânea, com impacto psicológico e consequências culturais na vida cotidiana.

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<sup>4</sup> Texto original: “With this political context (*biopolitical governmentality*), formulating an approach with which to interpret Gothic literature and culture with the trans prefix has added cultural weight and understanding to utilize and deploy. A Eurocentric, white, privileged, neoliberal area of study must necessarily be tested in order for anti-racist, anti-imperialist work to be accomplished.”

<sup>5</sup> Almodóvar tem sido um dos diretores contemporâneos mais influentes nas percepções das alterações sobre categorias de identidade sexual, alguns de seus filmes mais influentes nesse sentido são: *Áta-me* (*Átame*, 1990), *Kika* (*Kika*, 1993), *Má educação* (*La mala educación*, 2004).

## *Tarântula e A pele que habito*: reconfigurações contemporâneas do gótico

À primeira vista, *A pele que habito* não é um filme evidentemente gótico, no sentido de filmes como *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931), *The Raven* (Roger Corman, 1963) ou *Edward Scissorhands* (Tim Burton, 1990), cujas conexões com o gótico se estabelecem por meio da conexão com a literatura de Bram Stoker, de Edgar Allan Poe e de releituras de elementos góticos mais tradicionais. No filme espanhol, o gótico se configura no deslocamento dessas convenções (o castelo medieval, a masmorra, o laboratório) e na encenação de violências (encarceramento, tortura, estupro) para a construção meticulosa de um plano de vingança arquitetado pelo antagonista Robert. A reflexão sobre corpo, identidade e loucura que permeia o filme começa a gerar sentimentos de medo e terror na audiência, abrindo a possibilidade de conexões teóricas e temáticas com o gótico, em sua vertente trans.

O filme é uma adaptação do romance *Mygale*, de Thierry Jonquet, publicado pela primeira vez em 1984 e revisado em 1995. A palavra francesa *mygale* significa tarântula, sendo esse o título que a tradução do romance recebeu no Brasil. A ideia aqui é que *Tarântula e A pele que habito* são reconfigurações do gótico, que ressurge nas décadas finais do século XX para falar de ansiedades e temores relacionados à biopolítica. Segundo David Punter e Glennis Byron, o gótico não é um gênero literário monolítico, mas, uma categoria discursiva que muda com o tempo e que tende a emergir com mais força nos finais de século.

O vilão Gótico romântico sofre transformação à medida que monges, bandidos e estranhos aristocratas ameaçadores abrem espaço para criminosos, loucos e cientistas. As configurações exóticas e históricas que servem para distanciar os horrores do mundo do leitor nos primórdios do Gótico são substituídas por algo mais perturbadoramente familiar: o mundo doméstico burguês ou o novo cenário urbano.<sup>6</sup> (PUNTER, BYRON, 2004, p. 26).

Punter e Byron afirmam que o gótico se transformou do século XVIII para o século XIX, os cenários medievais (abadias, ruínas e castelos) e os vilões (monges, padres e aristocratas) de outrora se tornaram mansões burguesas, laboratórios de

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<sup>6</sup> Texto original: “The romantic Gothic villain is transformed as monks, bandits and threatening aristocratic foreigners give away to criminals, madmen and scientists. The exotic and historical settings that serve to distance the horrors from the world of the reader in earlier Gothic are replaced with something more disturbingly familiar: the bourgeois domestic world or the new urban landscape.”

cientistas e criminosos urbanos no século seguinte. O argumento deste trabalho é que as ansiedades e os temores do final do século XX repetem elementos do século anterior, mas também inovam em outros aspectos, como parece ser o caso de *Tarântula* e *A pele que habito*, que seriam reconfigurações contemporâneas do gótico.

De forma semelhante às principais obras góticas do final dos séculos XVIII e XIX, o século XX também parece ter produzido uma arte repleta de temores e inquietações, particularmente, em questões relacionadas a aspectos biopolíticos. As grandes transformações sociais e culturais que aconteceram nos dois últimos decênios do século XX produziram avanços, principalmente nas áreas da biologia e da medicina, que mudaram as formas do viver: os primeiros transplantes de coração, as primeiras tomografias computadorizadas, o desenvolvimento de ciborgues, o início do mapeamento do genoma humano, a descoberta do vírus do HIV, o medo da pandemia devido à gripe suína e aviária. Tais descobertas científicas exigiram novas formas de se pensar questões éticas e morais no âmbito da política e da história, mas, também nas construções sociais ligadas a identidades sociosexuais coletivas e individuais.

O final do século XX trouxe visibilidade para questões *trans*, ao mesmo tempo em que mostrou que o transgênero, como qualquer outra categoria de identidade dentro de um sistema neoliberal, é regulado por instrumentos biopolíticos. Novamente o gótico emerge enquanto um discurso privilegiado para falar sobre essas inquietações contemporâneas. *Tarântula* e *A pele que habito* são textos emblemáticos dessas novas ansiedades relacionadas ao corpo humano, sua sexualidade e psicologia, e suas intersecções com o gótico que, nas palavras de David Punter, demonstra “um interesse particular em questões de identidade e de transgressão de fronteiras.”<sup>7</sup> (1996, p. 26).

Em *Tarântula*, romance que dá origem ao filme, Richard Lafargue é um cirurgião plástico bem-sucedido que mora em Paris e tem uma filha, Viviane, que ficou louca e foi internada em uma clínica psiquiátrica. Nesse sentido, destaca-se aqui o uso de dois dispositivos de controle muito fortes no romance e no filme do ponto de vista biopolítico: a medicina praticada por Richard/Robert e a clínica psiquiátrica como representante do poder disciplinador sobre a loucura. Em *A microfísica do poder*, Foucault afirma que:

Isolamento, interrogatório particular ou público, tratamentos — punições como a ducha, pregações morais, encorajamentos ou

<sup>7</sup> Texto original: “A particular interest in questions of identity and the transgression of borderlines.”

repreensões, disciplina rigorosa, trabalho obrigatório, recompensa, relações de vassalagem, de posse, de domesticidade e às vezes de servidão entre doente e médico — tudo isto tinha por função fazer do personagem do médico o “mestre da loucura”, aquele que a faz se manifestar em sua verdade quando ela se esconde, quando permanece soterrada e silenciosa, e aquele que a domina, a acalma e absorve depois de a ter sabiamente desencadeado. (FOUCAULT, 1979, p. 122).

O filme *A pele que habito* apresenta uma narrativa bastante semelhante à do romance, mas com a incorporação de elementos mais sombrios, a gosto de Almodóvar. Todavia, a questão do corpo continua essencial à narrativa, como também as punições relacionadas a ele. O filme começa com Robert desenvolvendo uma pele resistente ao fogo, a qual vai gradativamente transplantando para o corpo de Vicente/Vera, depois de submetê-lo a uma vaginoplastia. Robert vai criando e moldando Vicente à imagem e semelhança de sua falecida esposa Gal, que teve um relacionamento com Zeca e sofreu queimaduras severas após um acidente de carro ao tentar fugir com o amante. Seu corpo e rosto ficaram tão desfigurados pelas queimaduras que um dia, após ver seu reflexo, decidiu pular da janela de seu quarto.

A tragédia da morte de Gal deixa sua filha Norma (Blanca Suárez) tão traumatizada que ela sofre um colapso nervoso. O tempo passa e, como Norma demonstra sinais de melhora, Robert decide levá-la a uma festa de casamento para que se socialize novamente. A jovem conhece Vicente e, sob os efeitos do álcool e outras drogas recreativas, os dois vão ao jardim, procurando um lugar mais tranquilo para fazer sexo. No entanto, Norma entra em pânico e, incapaz de acalmá-la, Vicente bate nela e foge quando ela começa a gritar. Ao mesmo tempo, Robert, que estava procurando por sua filha, vê o rapaz sair de moto, e, em seguida, encontra Norma inconsciente no jardim. Ela não reconhece o pai ao acordar e, devido ao trauma, identifica o pai como seu agressor. Esses eventos aumentam a deterioração da saúde mental de Norma que, como sua mãe, comete suicídio. Robert decide se vingar da pessoa que ele acredita que estuprou sua filha e causou a morte dela. Para este fim, ele sequestra Vicente e dá início a sua transformação em Gal (note-se aqui a questão do duplo, que Pataki destaca em sua leitura e a punição do corpo como poder disciplinador).

Quando Vicente descobre, enfim, a razão pela qual foi sequestrado, ele tenta explicar que não estuprou Norma, e que tudo foi um mal-entendido. Todavia é tarde demais; Robert realiza a cirurgia sexual, e Vincent tem de lidar com a desconformidade em relação à sua nova anatomia e, em outro nível, com

os vestidos e a maquiagem, enquanto símbolos de uma feminilidade que ele recusa a aceitar. Tal é a semelhança entre os corpos de Vicente e de Gal que Zeca, personagem que equivale a Alex Barny do romance, fica tão excitado ao vê-la a ponto de querer transar com a ex-amante, que ele acreditava estar morta. Todavia, Vicente/Vera não o conhece, e o ato se torna um estupro. Nessa cena, Zeca está usando uma fantasia de tigre, representando o lado sexual irracional do masculino. A violência sexual se estabelece como um divisor de águas nos acontecimentos do filme, pois, dá início ao reconhecimento de Vicente/Vera como mulher (pelos outros e por si mesma).

### Tigres e tarântulas: identidades transgóticas e identidades imutáveis

Em termos do ponto de vista narrativo, há uma diferença importante entre o romance e o filme: Jonquet utiliza uma voz narrativa amedrontada quando o leitor tem acesso aos pensamentos de Vicente, principalmente nos momentos em que ele é mantido prisioneiro e não tem qualquer ideia quem é Richard nem porque ele está fazendo aquilo. Nesses momentos Vicente fala em primeira pessoa com o leitor, e, tal efeito dramático torna a situação assustadora. O uso da narrativa em primeira pessoa faz com que o leitor/espectador participe da tortura do corpo: “— Senhor, venha, eu imploro! O senhor se equivocou! Sou Vincent Moreau! O senhor se equivocou! Sou Vincent Moreau! Vincent Moreau!”<sup>8</sup> (JONQUET, 2011, p. 23).

Aprisionado, Vicente é submetido a violências diárias e ininterruptas (as visitas sem aviso de Robert, os banhos esguichados, a comida jogada no chão, as luzes fortes que o cegam), procedimentos que visam maltratar o seu corpo físico para, por fim, quebrar o seu espírito e sua resistência em se tornar mulher contra a sua vontade. Nesse sentido, o corpo de Vicente vai se tornando um corpo transgótico, remetendo à experiência de alienação, de perda do senso de tempo e de lugar, problematizando questões relacionadas à construção da individualidade.

Nesse corpo feminino, Vicente/Vera vai tentar uma série de manobras a fim de escapar da prisão, sendo a mais ousada insinuar-se sexualmente para Richard/Robert quando percebe que ele a deseja. Se o tigre é simbólico da virilidade selvagem e sem escrúpulos, aqui o título do romance *Mygale* (tarântula) se faz mais significativo. Tarântula é o nome que Vicente dá a Robert:

<sup>8</sup> Texto original: “— ¡Señor, venga, se lo suplico! ¡Se ha equivocado! ¡Soy Vincent Moreau! ¡Se ha equivocado! ¡Soy Vincent Moreau! ¡Vincent Moreau!”

Não eras mais do que um inseto prisioneiro de uma aranha saciada, que te guardava como reserva para uma comida futura. Havia te capturado para saborear-te com toda a tranquilidade quando lhe apetecesse teu sangue. Imaginavas suas patas peludas, seus olhos grandes inchados, implacáveis, seu ventre macio, repleto de carne, vibrante, gelatinoso, e seus caninos venenosos, sua boca preta que ia sugar-te a vida.<sup>9</sup> (JONQUET, 2011, p. 31).

Todavia, Vicente/Vera também é a tarântula, pois, aprende a ser paciente e esperar, como fazem as aranhas, antes que suas presas caiam em sua teia. Superar o estupro de Zeca e se aproximar de Robert, tornando-se sua amante, constitui-se uma estratégia de sobrevivência, quando ele/ela percebe que a sexualidade e a manipulação do desejo seriam um modo de fugir daquela situação. A possibilidade de não fixação na norma heterossexual homem/mulher, que parece emergir como salvação, remete à construção do corpo transgótico do filme.

Independentemente da transformação física à qual é submetido, sua personalidade parece ser imutável, e Vicente não perde sua identidade, mas, a ressignifica. Isso fica evidente na comparação de duas cenas no filme: na primeira, Vicente/Vera usa as mãos e os dentes para rasgar os vestidos que lhe deram, pois entende que não tem conexão com eles e nem refletem sua personalidade. Na segunda, ele/ela recria objetos pacientemente com os pedaços de tecido que reúne, dando-lhes um novo significado na forma de uma linguagem pessoal que reflete a nova identidade feminina à qual ele/ela precisa se acostumar. Após ser torturada e estuprada, sua maturidade como mulher emerge quando Vera entende que não há mais lugar para se matar. A aceitação do corpo implica a força interior de seu caráter.

Em Robert, o ímpeto de vingança e o desejo de des-masculinizar Vicente/Vera se tornam fatores da sua desdita. Ele acaba se apaixonando pela própria criação (e simulacro fantasmagórico de sua esposa) e Vicente/Vera se torna consciente disso. O ato sexual é adiado, pois, Vicente/Vera afirma que ainda é dolorido para ele/ela e Robert declara que pode esperar, pois não deseja machucá-la, e os dois apenas dormem juntos. Robert fica surpreso ao ver Vicente/Vera entrar em seu quarto apontando-lhe uma arma. Segundo Jelena Pataki, essa cena é ilustrativa de como Robert perdeu todo o contato com a realidade, “já que ele tem

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<sup>9</sup> Texto original: “No eras más que un insecto prisionero de una araña saciada, que te guardaba como reserva para una comida futura. Te había capturado para saborearte con toda tranquilidad cuando le apeteciera degustar tu sangre. Imaginabas sus patas peludas, sus grandes ojos saltones, implacables, su vientre blando, atiborrado de carne, vibrante, gelatinoso, y sus colmillos venenosos, su boca negra que iba a chuparte la vida.”

dificuldade em aceitar que uma mulher, a qual é na realidade um homem que ele abduziu, abusou e matou em quase todos os sentidos exceto no literal, (Vincent) está determinado a matá-lo.”<sup>10</sup> (2016, p. 239). Vera é o objeto do desejo obscuro de Robert, e Vincent/Vera percebe isso quando entende que Robert deu a ela o rosto de sua esposa morta. Esse poder que Vincent/Vera adquire sobre Robert é, no final, seu meio de fuga, mas não antes de atirar em Robert.

### Sadismo, voyeurismo e violência sexual: o transgótico em *A pele que habito*

Os elementos transgóticos em *A pele que habito* se evidenciam no sadismo e voyeurismo de Robert, no estupro de Vicente/Vera por Zeca e nas relações sexuais não consensuais que aparecem no filme. O transgótico também se manifesta no uso da ciência para fins pessoais e secretos; na atmosfera de violência, ameaça e medo que perpassam o filme; na cirurgia transexual arbitrária e na transgenia da pele de Vicente, no desconforto com o próprio corpo.

A categoria “transgótico” é algo experienciado tanto pelos personagens quanto pelos espectadores do filme. Vicente/Vera percebe que está sendo constantemente vigiada pelas câmeras de Robert, tudo o que ela faz está sendo registrado. Nesse sentido, a audiência também se coloca no lugar dela ao pensar nas câmeras que registram suas vidas. É uma questão (aterrorizante) já abordada em mundos distópicos, como o criado por George Orwell em *1984*.

Em outro nível, o encarceramento e a violência sexual fazem com que Vicente/Vera desenvolva uma estratégia que é ao mesmo tempo sexual e biopolítica com o objetivo de escapar do aprisionamento. Vicente/Vera, que sofreu com as cirurgias de troca de sexo e de pele, que se angustiou com a ideia de usar roupa feminina e maquiagem, acaba fazendo uso do seu corpo feminino para fugir do cárcere. Apresentando-se enquanto o aspecto disciplinador e individualizante da biopolítica, o transgótico aqui se manifesta no momento de subjugação do corpo masculino, que tem que se submeter ao corpo feminino. Da parte de Robert, que funciona como um agente do biopoder, parece haver um entendimento tácito de que se pode aprisionar um corpo feminino, já que muitas vezes não se pode aprisionar a mente daquele corpo. Isso acontece com Vicente/Vera no filme e ele/ela é capaz de sobreviver devido à fluidez de sua mente porque seu corpo agora é

<sup>10</sup> Texto original: “since he has a hard time accepting that a woman, who is in fact a man whom he abducted, abused and killed in almost every sense except for the literal one, is determined to kill him.”

feminino. O transgótico não tem um significado fixo, seu significado viaja através do tempo em diferentes contextos discursivos. Pode-se afirmar que o transgótico emerge como uma força contrária à subjugação dos corpos e de resistência, por assim dizer, formando a subjetivação do indivíduo.

O termo transgótico aqui está sendo tratado de duas formas: como aspecto contestador e transgressivo do terror e como experiência do terror em si ou do excesso dele. Linda Williams faz uma análise do excesso relacionado ao corpo nos gêneros terror, drama e pornografia, denominando esses filmes de *body genres* ou gêneros corporais. Ela argumenta que esses três gêneros compartilham características relacionadas aos fluidos e excessos corporais: o terror (sangue), o drama (lágrimas), a pornografia (orgasmo). O espetáculo seria ver um corpo humano capturado no momento de uma intensa sensação ou emoção: “O espetáculo corporal é caracterizado de forma mais sensacionalista no retrato do orgasmo pela pornografia, na representação de violência no horror e no terror e na caracterização do choro nos dramas.”<sup>11</sup> (WILLIAMS, 2003, p. 143). Em *A pele que habito* o espetáculo está no uso do corpo para os fins não imaginados por Vicente/Vera, dito de outra maneira, no uso funcional do corpo feminino para fins de manipulação, sedução e sexo. Nesse sentido, Linda Williams observa que:

Os corpos femininos têm funcionado, desde as origens setecentistas destes gêneros em Marquês de Sade, na ficção Gótica, e nos romances de Richardson, tanto como os *mudados* quanto como os *que mudam*. É, portanto, através do que Foucault chamou de saturação sexual do corpo feminino, que públicos de todo tipo têm recebido algumas de suas impressões mais poderosas.<sup>12</sup> (WILLIAMS, 2003, p. 144).

No que diz respeito a excessos, os filmes de terror tradicionais produzem elementos tais como violência, sangue, desejos sadomasoquistas, medo da castração. Todos esses elementos estão presentes em *A pele que habito*, o que pode ser visto nas figuras 1 e 2, a seguir.

Nas situações relacionadas à transformação do corpo, Vicente/Vera sempre está acorrentado ou amarrado (Figura 1). É a manipulação do corpo para fins normativos da biopolítica.

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<sup>11</sup> Texto original: “The body spectacle is featured most sensationally in pornography’s portrayal of orgasm, in horror’s portrayal of violence and terror and in melodrama’s portrayal of weeping.”

<sup>12</sup> Texto original: “The bodies of women have tended to function ever since the eighteenth-century origins of these genres in the Marquis de Sade, Gothic fiction, and the novels of Richardson, as both the moved and the moving. It is thus through what Foucault has called the sexual saturation of the female body that audiences of all sorts have received some of their most powerful sensations.”





Figura 1 — Vicente aprisionado e acorrentado.



Figura 2 — Robert realizando a cirurgia de mudança de sexo em Vicente/Vera.

O grande momento de terror transgótico retratado no filme é quando Vicente percebe que sofreu uma cirurgia para mudança de sexo sem o seu consentimento (Figura 2). Ele sofre a experiência do terror em si ao constatar tal fato. A partir desse momento o terror se prolonga nas cenas subsequentes que

demonstram os procedimentos pós-cirúrgicos pelos quais ele tem que passar a fim de que seu corpo se torne um corpo feminino, a mulher que ele nunca imaginou que seria: os hormônios que precisa tomar, o uso de pênis de borracha (de vários tamanhos) a fim de alongar a cavidade em seu corpo para que então exista um órgão sexual feminino, outra cirurgia para a implantação de seios (sem mencionar as várias cirurgias para a implantação da pele resistente ao fogo), o uso de maquiagem, o vestir-se como uma mulher, o sexo com Robert, o estupro por Zeca. O corpo, nesse contexto, é um campo fértil para o transgótico habitar.

O corpo em *A pele que habito* é um exemplo do funcionamento da individualização com o objetivo final de totalização para controle vindo da biopolítica, da mecanização do corpo, da experiência moderna e da construção de individualidade. As forças em ação da biopolítica não são de todo negativas pois são essas mesmas forças criadoras da nova individualidade de Vicente que o fazem sobreviver. Ele aprende a tirar vantagem desse aspecto fluido de seu corpo mesmo tendo experimentado o terror. O que está acontecendo nesse processo, fazendo uso de Foucault, é a produção da subjetividade, um processo pelo qual se obtém a constituição de um sujeito, “o processo criador pelo qual uma subjetividade se afirma não apenas negativamente — contra a ordem, contra as relações de poder cujo reino ela destrói —, mas positivamente no mundo: de maneira breve, um movimento constituinte.” (ARTIÈRES, 2014, p. 65).

O sangue, enquanto excesso corporal típico dos filmes de terror, é retratado em *A pele que habito* de uma forma diferente dos *slasher movies*, também conhecidos como sangue e tripas. O terror aqui não é somente um espetáculo do corpo, mas, um sofrimento prolongado presente nos experimentos que Robert executa em Vicente/Vera e que opera em três níveis distintos: a violência corporal, a violência psicológica e a violência sexual, pois, a cirurgia para mudança de sexo é impositiva e traumática, tanto do ponto de vista físico quanto emocional.

A questão da violência corporal se reflete e se multiplica em quase todos os corpos femininos do filme: além de Vicente/Vera, Norma também é estuprada, e Gal sofre queimaduras por todo o corpo. A violência psicológica sofrida por Vicente/Vera devido ao aprisionamento e mudança forçada de sexo, também é vivida por Norma, que pensa que seu pai a estuprou e por Gal, que teve a pele do seu corpo destruída. A violência sexual experimentada por Vicente é a própria mudança de sexo alheia à sua vontade. É interessante pensarmos que a pele como hábitat tem uma dimensão pública de apresentação do sujeito e, ao mesmo tempo, é privada, é o corpo que se habita. Sofre o poder punitivo da biopolítica (individualizante no sentido horizontal perpassando todas as esferas sociais pelas quais o indivíduo circula) e normativo (totalizante e vertical que oprime o

indivíduo pelo achatamento em categorias de existência e identidade) de corpos que devem ser suavizados e tornados úteis. Vicente/Vera é punido e normatizado para depois se tornar um corpo fluido e livre. Em outras palavras, gênero e pele como hábitat não são necessariamente a mesma coisa e tal relação traz a questão de como ler o gênero de alguém. A biopolítica, dentro do espaço neoliberal em que opera, deixa margem para uma negociação.

Vicente/Vera rompe o paradigma do sofrimento quando deixa de se fixar na norma heterossexual, e assim passa a arquitetar sua vingança e sua fuga. Ela sobrevive e, mesmo sendo uma mulher agora, ainda deseja a funcionária da loja de roupas de sua mãe (já a desejava quando era Vicente). Mais importante do que gênero sexual é a sua liberdade. Vicente enfim se torna Vera e também se torna uma *final girl*,<sup>13</sup> para usar um termo cunhado por Carol Clover (1992, p. 10). Portanto, o excesso corporal ou gênero corporal tem mais a oferecer do que um simples corpo flagrado em um momento de intensa sensação ou emoção, ele vai além de fluidos corporais, vai além das lágrimas, do esperma, do sangue, do pus, de todos os tipos de expurgos do corpo, ele é a transgressão de experiências não consensuais envolvendo indivíduos e a desestabilização da ordem social, sexual e psicológica.

## Considerações finais

Discutiui-se aqui como o conceito de transgótico opera no romance *Tarântula* e no filme *A pele que habito*, abordando questões de biopolítica, gênero sexual e textual, tipos de violência e de terror. Fez-se a aproximação dessas duas obras com alguns textos representantes da literatura gótica com o objetivo de mostrar os elementos constitutivos do gótico e do corpo transgótico. Devido à intensa discussão que ocorre em torno do corpo e as formas de aprisionamento dele, foi incluída a teoria de Michel Foucault sobre a biopolítica e a normatização dos corpos em nossa sociedade, e a teoria dos *body genres* de Linda Williams, entre outras questões.

A discussão em torno do tema do corpo transgótico mostra que estamos longe de uma convivência pacífica, de como ainda nos deslocamos dentro de

<sup>13</sup> Em geral, nos filmes, as mulheres são retratadas como personagens frágeis que precisam ser salvas. Assim são estereotipadas como símbolos sexuais que atraem o olhar masculino. Há também outro tipo de mulheres, com características de um herói, de um personagem masculino, por exemplo, a forte e inteligente Ellen Ripley, em *Alien*, ou Sarah Connor, em *O exterminador do futuro*. Essas personagens são normalmente encontradas em filmes de terror e foram chamadas por Carol Clover de *final girls*.

um sistema binário de gênero mantido por forças biopolíticas e como qualquer movimento que ultrapasse essa lógica é entendido como estranho. As questões *trans* estão aí e longe de serem normalizadas. *A pele que habito* pode ser minha prisão e minha salvação dependendo de como me constituo como sujeito e das forças biopolíticas em operação.

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# A ESPACIALIDADE GÓTICA

## EM A ABADIA DE NORTHANGER, DE JANE AUSTEN

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Este capítulo debate questões de espacialidade no romance póstumo de Jane Austen, *A abadia de Northanger* (1818), destacando o papel que a imaginação da protagonista, Catherine Morland, desempenha na criação de uma atmosfera gótica em relação à abadia. A análise tem como ponto de partida ideias desenvolvidas por Luciana Moura Colucci, em seu artigo *Presença da tradição da espacialidade gótica nos contos “The tapestried chamber” e “The dreams in the witch house”* (2013), no qual a crítica aborda a tradição da espacialidade gótica em Walter Scott e H.P. Lovecraft. Valendo-se da teoria e do método de leitura de Colucci, este texto analisará alguns cômodos da Abadia de Northanger e como as descrições feitas por Catherine levam à compressão de um espaço gótico carregado de elementos fantasmagóricos projetados sobre a arquitetura gótica.

Por um breve resumo, no romance *A abadia de Northanger* acompanhamos a trajetória da adolescente Catherine Morland, seus familiares e amigos, quando ela sai da fazenda onde mora para visitar o balneário de Bath, na Inglaterra, realizando um costume muito frequente entre aqueles que pertenciam à classe burguesa da Inglaterra no século XIX. Em Bath, Morland passa seus dias visitando pessoas, participando de bailes e acaba conhecendo dois rapazes, John Thorpe e Henry Tilney, por intermédio das respectivas irmãs dos jovens, Isabella e Eleanor. Há um lobby entre as jovens para que Catherine se aproxime de John, mas a adolescente prefere Henry, que a envolve com seus vastos conhecimentos sobre literatura e história. O ponto alto da narrativa principia com o convite do General Tilney, pai de Henry e Eleanor, para visitar sua propriedade, a Abadia de Northanger. Catherine deleita-se com o convite, mas, talvez por ser uma jovem adolescente, ainda muito suscetível aos produtos da imaginação, e, por estar lendo romances góticos, mais especificamente *Os mistérios de Udolpho* (1794), de Ann Radcliffe, ela fica fascinada com a possibilidade de conhecer esse ambiente antigo e sombrio. Instaure-se uma metaficção na qual a protagonista entende-se como

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uma donzela dos romances pseudomedievais que ela gosta de ler. Durante a visita, a heroína vai projetar sobre o espaço sua imaginação gótica, tornando a visita à abadia uma deslumbrante e assustadora aventura.

## A abadia, o gótico, a espacialidade real e a não real

Austen descreve sua protagonista como sendo “dona de compleição magra e estranha, pele pálida, sem cor, cabelos pretos escorridos, e traços fortes — excessivamente fortes para a sua pessoa.”<sup>2</sup> (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 7). O romance descreve a personagem em diferentes idades: com dez anos, quando ela gostava de brincar com os meninos; com quinze anos, quando torna-se uma mocinha digna dos padrões da época e, por fim, no momento presente da ação, aos dezessete anos, quando a jovem se interessa pela leitura de romances góticos. Sobre a personalidade da protagonista, o narrador pinta a seguinte personagem:

[...] para melhor compreensão do leitor, a menos que as páginas seguintes fracassem em dar qualquer ideia do que a personalidade dela deveria ser — que seu coração era afetuoso; seu temperamento alegre e aberto, sem presunção ou afetação de qualquer tipo; suas maneiras recém-libertadas do constrangimento e da timidez de uma garota; sua pessoa agradável e, quando bem vestida, bonita; e sua mente tão ignorante e desinformada quanto uma mente feminina aos 17 anos geralmente é. (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 10).

O enredo se organiza a partir de múltiplas cenas interpoladas por entre os acontecimentos presentes da narrativa, os quais vão explicando a origem rural e a personalidade curiosa da protagonista. A partir da sua chegada a Bath, sua rotina muda e os deslumbramentos da vida social fazem com que a jovem adapte seus costumes e comportamentos para melhor se integrar à comunidade burguesa que a cerca. Catherine conhece a esprevitada Isabella Thorpe, que lhe apresenta os romances góticos; o irmão e pretendente, Henry, que a leva para dentro de um círculo social que até então era desconhecido pela protagonista:

Chegaram a Bath. Catherine estava ansiosa e encantada. Seus olhos estavam aqui, ali, em todo lugar, enquanto se aproximavam de seus belos e impactantes arredores, passando, em seguida, por aquelas ruas que os conduziam ao hotel. Ela queria estar feliz e já se sentia assim. (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 11).

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<sup>2</sup> Todas as citações do romance *A abadia de Northanger* vêm da tradução para o português publicada pela editora Landmark, de 2012, feita por Eduardo Furtado.

“Querida criatura! O quanto lhe devo! Quando você terminar Udolpho, iremos ler *The Italian* juntas. Eu fiz uma lista de dez ou dozes livros do mesmo tipo para você”. [...] “Sim, por um bom tempo, mas, são todos horríveis? Você está certa de são todos horríveis?” (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 22).

Luciana Colucci argumenta que o espaço na literatura gótica deve ser compreendido não apenas como espaço físico, mas também na sua dimensão psicológica, a qual de certa forma tem o objetivo de “influenciar personagens e leitores uma vez que não há enredo gótico que não se passe em uma igreja antiga, em um castelo, em uma casa, em um calabouço, em uma floresta, entre tantos outros espaços, lugares, ambientes e cenário” (COLUCCI, 2013, p. 6). Por esse viés, toda a literatura gótica está fortemente ancorada em torno da noção de espacialidade, em específico “às questões de construção artísticas do espaço.” (2013, p. 6). Com toda a pompa e polidez necessária ao trato social do ambiente, Catherine é convidada para conhecer a abadia:

Modéstia como a sua, mas, por nada no mundo, eu a incomodaria com elogios francos. Se você puder ser levada a nos honrar com uma visita, você nos fará mais felizes do que as palavras podem dizer. Isto é verdade, não podemos lhe oferecer nada com esplendor, pois nosso modo de vida, como você vê, é simples e desprezioso. Ainda, não nos faltarão esforços para tornar a Abadia de Northanger não totalmente agradável. (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 77).

Inserida no universo ficcional do gótico e dona de uma imaginação fértil, Catherine encanta-se com a possibilidade de poder ser uma donzela dentro do espaço da abadia e assim dá vazão às suas fantasias, com incursões nos elementos mais sombrios que a espacialidade gótica propicia. Uma vez na abadia, Catherine passa a projetar fatos que lê na ficção sobre a sua própria realidade, e, o General Tilney pai de Eleanor e Henry, passa a ser o depositário dos aspectos mais tenebrosos da sua imaginação gótica. A propriedade dos Tilney é o cenário perfeito para a imaginação de um crime hediondo.

Sua paixão por edifícios antigos vinha logo depois de sua paixão por Henry Tilney, e castelos e abadias davam a tais fantasias o encanto que a imagem dele não preenchia. Ver e explorar as defesas e guarda de uma, ou os claustros da outra, foram por muitas semanas um desejo muito querido, embora ser mais que uma visitante de uma hora parecia quase demais para se desejar. E ainda isso iria

acontecer. Com todas as chances contra ela, de uma casa, mansão, sede, parque, corte ou cabana, Northanger resultava em uma abadia, e ela deveria ser sua habitante. Suas passagens compridas e úmidas, suas celas estreitas e sua capela arruinada deveriam estar sob seu alcance diário, e ela não poderia subjugar inteiramente a esperança de algumas lendas tradicionais, algumas memórias pavorosas de uma freira ferida e malfadada. (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 78).

Deslumbrada por visitar a propriedade, que sugere uma ligação dos Tilney com a nobreza (algo que sua família, apesar de próspera, não possuía), Catherine projeta uma imagem dos seus medos e desejos personificados na abadia. Todavia, ao ver pela primeira vez a construção, Catherine fica um pouco decepcionada, pois não era tão exuberante ou magnificente quanto seus devaneios:

As janelas, as quais ela olhava com peculiar confiança, por ter ouvido o general falar de que as preservava em suas formas góticas com cuidado reverencial, eram ainda menos do que sua imaginação tinha retratado. Para estar certa, as abóbodas pintadas foram preservadas — a forma delas era gótica. Podiam ser até mesmo batentes de janela, mas cada painel era tão largo, tão claro, tão leve! Para a imaginação que ansiou pelas menores divisões e as mais pesadas pedrarias, por vidros pintados, sujeira e teias de aranha, a diferença era bem perturbadora. (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 89-90).

Não obstante, logo o deslumbramento passa a agir sobre a jovem e, novamente, ela passa a ver a realidade filtrada pelo olhar da imaginação e criatividade. O processo de transformação da personagem, que envolve a criação de realidades influenciadas pela ficção, coincide com uma fase de mudança na vida dela. Se na fase inicial da viagem ela buscava apenas adaptar-se e integra-se ao meio social em que se encontrava, ao longo da jornada, ela se depara com situações difíceis, que a obrigam a escolher entre a permanência no mundo imaginário e a aceitação da realidade empírica.

Sua temerosa curiosidade crescia a cada momento e, agarrando com mãos trêmulas, o ferrolho da fechadura, ela resolveu, contra todos os riscos, satisfazer-se quanto ao seu conteúdo. Com dificuldade, pois logo parecia resistir aos seus esforços, ela abriu a porta por algumas polegadas. Mas, naquele momento, uma súbita batida na porta a fez, com um pulo, soltar a porta, que se fechou com alarmante violência. [...] voltou-lhe o senso de o que ela deveria fazer, forçando-a, apesar de seu ansioso desejo de penetrar nesse mistério, a continuar a se



vestir sem mais atrasos. Seu progresso não foi rápido, pois seus pensamentos e seus olhos estavam ainda voltados ao objeto tão bem calculado a interessar e assustar. Embora ela não ousasse perder um momento com uma segunda tentativa, ela não podia permanecer a muitos passos do cofre. (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 91).

Nos trechos acima a personagem está imersa em diversas camadas de imagens e suas possíveis interpretações, ela está em conflito sobre o que é realidade. Como no imaginário de Catherine, quase tudo é uma transfiguração da literatura para a vida, a realidade se torna algo difuso e de difícil definição. No trecho abaixo, temos uma ideia de como a imaginação de Catherine trabalha:

Com o lado do pátio, no qual ela supunha que a condenável cena fosse executada, sendo, como ela acreditava, apenas oposto ao quarto dela, então lhe ocorreu que, se cuidadosamente observada, alguns raios de luz da vela do general poderiam reluzir pelas janelas inferiores, enquanto ele passava para a prisão de sua esposa. Por duas vezes antes de entrar na cama, ela saiu silenciosamente de seu quarto para a janela correspondente, na galeria para ver se apareciam, mas tudo adiante era escuro, e ainda deveria ser muito cedo. Os vários ruídos que subiam a convenciam de que os criados ainda deveriam estar de pé. Até a meia-noite, ela supunha ser útil observar. Mas, então, quando o relógio batesse doze, e tudo estivesse quieto, ela sairia, se não estivesse muito atemorizada pela escuridão, e olharia mais uma vez. O relógio bateu doze, e Catherine dormia há meia hora. (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 105).

Assim como a personagem principal de *Dom Quixote*, de Cervantes, que após várias leituras de histórias de cavalaria, enlouquece e deseja viver nesse mundo ficcional de cavalaria, algo similar ocorre com a heroína de Jane Austen. Catherine Morland não enlouquece, mas está profundamente inserida no imaginário ficcional das narrativas góticas com suas tempestades, fantasmas e passagens secretas escondidas em construções antigas. Em Northanger, ela pensa que encontrará tudo que leu nos romances de Ann Radcliffe, entretanto, o que a personagem pensa que acontecerá, não acontece.

Eleanor e Henry são órfãos de mãe e, no seu devaneio, Catherine imagina que o General assassinou sua esposa e que seu corpo está escondido em algum lugar da abadia, ecoando uma gramática gótica de segredos familiares e personagens atormentados pelo passado. Enquanto Catherine Morland mantinha suas fantasias apenas para si, as consequências da sua imaginação no convívio

com os Tilney eram mínimas. Todavia, no momento em que a protagonista começa a exteriorizar suas fantasias e passa a procurar pela casa o corpo da esposa e mãe ausente, surgem complicações. Ela é encontrada em um aposento no qual não deveria estar e, ao ser questionada, acaba fazendo uma acusação ao General Tilney. Entretanto, a senhora Tilney não foi assassinada, foi apenas uma situação criada pela sua mente e Catherine recebe um choque de realidade:

Primeiro, a surpresa e a dúvida os agarraram. Um rio de senso comum, que logo se seguiu, acrescentou um pouco de amargas emoções de vergonha. Ela não poderia ter se equivocado quanto ao quarto. Mas como tinha se enganado redondamente quanto ao resto, na interpretação da senhorita Tilney e nos próprios cálculos! Este quarto, ao qual ela tinha dado uma data tão antiga, uma posição tão terrível, provou estar situado na extremidade em que o pai do general tinha construído. Havia outros dois quartos na câmara, levando provavelmente às salas de vestir, mas ela não tinha vontade de abrir nenhum. Seria o véu com o qual a senhora Tilney tinha caminhado pela última vez, ou o volume que tinha lido por último, permanecendo para dizer que nada mais era permitido sussurrar? Não. Quaisquer que tenham sido os crimes do general, ela certamente teve muito gênio para deixar pistas. Catherine estava cansada de explorar e desejou estar segura em seu quarto, com seu coração apenas fechado em sua fantasia. (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 107).

Nesse momento, Catherine desperta de suas fantasias sobre a ficcionalização que estava fazendo da abadia e se envergonha por tal comportamento:

As visões de romance terminaram. Catherine estava completamente alvoroçada. O discurso de Henry, curto como foi, tinha aberto completamente seus olhos para a extravagância de suas últimas fantasias, mais do que todos os vários desapontamentos tinham feito. Ela estava humilhada e muito triste. Chorou com muito amargor. Não era apenas por si mesma que estava arrasada, mas por Henry. Sua fantasia, que agora parecia até mesmo criminosa, tinha sido totalmente exposta a ele, e ele deveria desprezá-la para sempre. A liberdade com que a imaginação dela ousava tomar o caráter de seu pai poderia ser perdoada? O absurdo da curiosidade e dos medos dela poderia ser esquecido? Ela se odiava mais do que poderia expressar. (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 110).

Os devaneios da protagonista foram uma estratégia que Austen usou para fazer uma crítica ao sentimentalismo exagerado das heroínas de romances

góticos. Catherine Morland é uma grande “sonhadora” que está a um passo de tentar reformular a realidade do espaço da abadia. A personagem é um exemplo extremado da influência da espacialidade tradicional gótica; visto que sua energia dá impulso para distorcer a imagem do ambiente, de modo a conseguir harmonizar-se com a ilusão.

*A abadia de Northanger* é geralmente lido pela crítica especializada como uma paródia dos romances góticos, que colocavam ilusões nas mentes das leitoras mais jovens da época. Nessa perspectiva, Sandra Vasconcelos argumenta que, Austen era “grande apreciadora de Fanny Burney, leitora dos romances sentimentais e góticos que iria parodiar mais tarde” (VASCONCELOS, 2007, p. 220). De acordo com Vasconcelos, Jane Austen possuía vasto conhecimento dos romances góticos do século XVIII. Todavia, se a parodia é uma forma de crítica aos excessos emocionais da ficção gótica, no prefácio de *A abadia de Northanger* Austen faz uma defesa do gênero romance, a qual é proferida logo nas páginas iniciais, ao afirmar que “embora nossas produções tenham propiciado prazer mais amplo e verdadeiro do que aqueles de qualquer corporação literária no mundo, nenhum tipo de composição tem sido tão desprezado [...] nossos inimigos são tantos quanto nossos leitores” (AUSTEN, 2012, p. 21). Nessa passagem, a autora troca o foco narrativo da terceira para a primeira pessoa e começa a dialogar diretamente com o leitor sobre sua visão como mulher e escritora.

O aspecto avaliativo da espacialidade gótica parece dissolver-se na atmosfera da abadia criada pela protagonista. Aqui está uma investigação sobre o paradoxo entre espaço real e não real. Em conjunto com a personagem, o leitor é levado ao ápice de sua imaginação, por meio das estratégias persuasivas usadas por Catherine. Sua mente, confusa e eufórica, não consegue parar de pensar sobre os acontecimentos que poderiam ter ocorrido na abadia, e seus dramas e fantasias induzem o leitor a pensar com ela. A imaginação de Catherine a leva a cometer uma transgressão social, entrar sem autorização em um quarto de uma casa na qual ela era uma convidada. Pensando que poderia encontrar a qualquer momento o corpo da esposa morta, ela ultrapassou as barreiras do que é socialmente aceito e, ao ser flagrada, ainda fez acusações ao General. Talvez Catherine temesse inconscientemente que, se viesse a casar com Henry, pudesse ter o mesmo fim da mãe dele. Nesse sentido psicológico, a personagem estava se certificando que o General Tilney (e por extensão, seu filho) não fosse um feminicida. Para o seu bem, o incidente é logo desculpado, tido como um comportamento juvenil que não irá afetar sua posição social. A fantasia que Catherine queria pode ser vivenciada somente na ficção, onde os acontecimentos imaginários não deveriam afetar os espaços concretos, onde a imaginação, os medos e o desejo são uma opção para fugir da espacialidade real.

## Considerações finais

Embora a crítica literária contemporânea tenha mostrado avanço nos estudos da literatura e espacialidade gótica, percebe-se que ainda se tem um grande caminho a ser percorrido dentro dessa área, principalmente no que tange à espacialidade real *versus* espacialidade imaginária. Este capítulo usou a obra *A abadia de Northanger*, de Jane Austen, para ilustrar e debater as manifestações de espaços tradicionais góticos na literatura inglesa do século XIX. A partir de referenciais teóricos e conceitos temáticos, observam-se pontos-chaves para entender alguns aspectos da espacialidade gótica real e não real. De fato, essa obra é referente a um período em que ainda não se teorizava sobre espacialidade gótica, porém as imagens literárias criadas pela autora têm o potencial de fazer essas questões entrarem em jogo nas discussões propostas.

A investigação acerca de espacialidade tradicional gótica em obras literárias requer uma pesquisa de cunho temático, e de teóricos que discutam as questões de elementos fantasmagóricos, e de espaços tradicionais góticos. A proposta de leitura é apenas um início para futuras pesquisas, seguindo outros caminhos, ou similares, usando o que parecer mais necessário.

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# BEWARE THE BALLERINA...

## SHE HAS NOT BEEN QUITE HERSELF LATELY: THE DOPPELGÄNGER IN *BLACK SWAN*

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*Black Swan* (2010) is one of Darren Aronofsky's most known movies, which granted Natalie Portman an Oscar for "Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role", in addition to Vincent Cassel's remarkable performance, the film is considered a beautiful and nightmarish masterpiece. This psychological thriller explores the journey of Nina Sayers, a ballerina who has been practicing to perform the lead role in her ballet company's new version of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*.<sup>2</sup> She will be the Swan Queen, a role that requires the interpretation of two opposite characters: The White Swan and the Black Swan.

At the ballet company, Nina is deemed as a very skilled ballerina and yet limited: she shows perfect technique but lacks spontaneity. Thus, she fits the White Swan effectively, but she does not cause amazement interpreting the Black one. Therefore, afraid of losing the leading role to Lily, a ballerina who has just joined the company and dances the Black Swan superbly, Nina is convinced she needs to undergo drastic changes in order to perform the Black Swan, achieving its true spirit. Once Leroy (Cassel), the artistic director of the play exclaims: "We open our season with *Swan Lake*. Done to death, I know. But not like this. We strip it down. Make it visceral and real" (*BLACK Swan*, 2010, 00:10:02-00:10:17), Nina takes it all literally, dominated by the idea of unlocking the Black Swan's mysteries.

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<sup>2</sup> Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (1875) tells the story of Prince Siegfried who searches for pure true love and happens to fall for Odette, a beautiful and pure girl that is under the evil warlock von Rothbart's spell. She is a girl during nighttime and turns into a white swan during the day. Odette needs to find real love in order to break the enchantment; the prince promises her eternal love. At his birthday party, the prince is supposed to choose a maiden to reign with him. Von Rothbart attends to the gathering accompanied by Odile whose face resembles Odette's, although her personality is extravagant and vivacious. Prince Siegfried is immediately attracted to Odile which leads him to choose her as his partner. Hence, Odette is damned to continue under the sorcerer's bewitchment.

This study aims at investigating the manifestation of the *doppelgänger* in the movie, as well as identifying the main Gothic tropes in the narrative and character construction, showing how the narrative develops into a *mise-en-abyme* style sustaining its Gothic atmosphere. It is also the objective here to observe how *mise-en-scène* becomes a prime tool to character construction, in this case, *mise-en-scène* enhances the *doppelgänger*'s characteristics.

### *Mise-en-abyme, mise-en-scène* and Gothic in *Black Swan*

Marcus Snow's *Into the Abyss* investigates the term *mise-en-abyme*, which has assumed historically a variety of definitions. In literary criticism, for instance, André Gide describes it as “the fictions in which a text-within-the-text echoes the main narrative” (1893 *apud* SNOW, 2016, p. 3). In narratives, *mise-en-abyme* occurs when the main story and the embedded one share plot elements, structural characteristics, themes, etc. These frame narratives — stories within stories — are present in nearly every canonical Gothic novel, functioning as a dynamic basis for the juxtaposition between the frame story about the everyday life and the disturbing embedded narrative. This Gothic narrative convention allows the monstrous to escape textual confines, forcing the reader to experience the reassurance of the ordinary alongside the horror of the uncanny.

I will argue here that *mise-en-abyme*, as feature of plot organization, is present in *Black Swan* in as many forms as its own definitions. In the extradiegetic level, the film shows a ballet company that is working on an alternative interpretation of *Swan Lake*, therefore, it is a movie that is about a ballet interpretation of a play.

In a diegetic level, this narrative style supports the Gothic mood of the story and it is considered to be a key feature in *doppelgänger* narratives. According to Andrew Webber *doppelgänger* stories are rife in *mise-en-abyme* “whereby figures or structures are reflected within each other” (1996, p. 6). Following the idea that the double emerges from its host, and somewhat reflects, replicates or resembles the first, Webber's statement is applicable to the narrative style in *Black Swan*. The film shows, at least on a basic level, two stories: the main one and the embedded one which I explained in the last section.

In an intradiegetic level, *mise-en-abyme* cooperates with *mise-en-scène* as a prop, in this case, the mirror. There are mirrors everywhere reflecting Nina's image; may express the idea of abyss and duplicity issues (Figures 1 and 2). In this sense, *mise-en-abyme* permeates the film in an extradiegetic, diegetic and intradiegetic level.



Figure 1 — *Mise-en-abyme* (1).



Figure 2 — *Mise-en-abyme* (2).

Now, regarding *mise-en-scène* as a key feature in the development of characters in movies, the construction of Nina through the filmic elements and film frame includes setting, lighting, costume, and figure behavior. According to Bordwell & Thompson (1997), setting plays quite an effective role in cinema since it is not only a place for human events, but it can also enter dynamically the

narrative action. In addition, it has the effect to overwhelm the actors; for this purpose, setting does not need to be realistic, and it helps to shape the way the audience understands the story.

The authors state that costume and makeup are part of *mise-en-scène* as well, and in the same way setting helps in the understanding of the story, costume certainly does too. Makeup is a component of costume and plays a relevant role in the construction of characters because it creates their traits.

In *Black Swan* makeup and costume are effective character-building tools. The audience can neatly perceive the difference between the White Swan and the Black Swan (Figures 3 and 4). The prevalent colors in the film are white, gray, and black; red is used in order to contrast, addressing important moments. For instance, when Nina puts red lipstick on to call the director's attention and convince him she can be bold enough to embody the Black Swan and become the protagonist. The red lipstick is also an aid to enhance the Black Swan's seductiveness (Figure 4).



Figure 3 — White Swan.





Figure 4 — Black Swan.

The combination of colors is also present in the *Swan Lake* staging in the film, reinforcing the Gothic mood of the plot, whose setting includes a huge Gothic castle, full moon, dark branchy trees. The red color here introduces a dramatic tone to the narrative (Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8).



Figure 5 — *Mise-en-scène* (Moon).



Figure 6 — *Mise-en-scène* (Red).



Figure 7 — *Mise-en-scène* (Shadows).



Figure 8 — *Mise-en-scène* (Sublime).

### Sublime, transgression and the *doppelgänger*

“Gothic fiction is the literature of nightmare” (MACANDREW, 1979, p. 3). The author argues that the Gothic fictional world externalizes inner thoughts, fears and desires through monsters, vampires, ghosts, and doubles. The settings in Gothic fiction such as dark nights, silent streets, old and enormous castles and houses, cliffs and the abyss cooperate with the shaping of evil in the human mind.

Regarding character construction, MacAndrew mentions that in order to obtain the reader's sympathy the characters cannot be perfect, they must express some weaknesses. Some Gothic novelists evoke Burkean sublime, presenting sublime characters which will raise “pleasing terror” in the reader. The author adds that since sublimity is morally neutral, it may lead the reader to admire an evil character, thus Gothic villains are sublimely wicked due to the effect of pleasurable astonishment they cause in the reader.

Still concerning Gothic fiction, David Punter (2009) highlights the issue of transgression, especially when it comes to characters and protagonists. He advocates the existence of blurred boundaries, meaning that is impossible to categorize people and anything else in Gothic literature. Hence, the issue of duality, for instance, emerges in many Gothic figures, who display dual

personalities as a way to transgress, Dorian Gray and Jekyll/Hyde are perhaps the most iconic examples.

Complementary to Punter's ideas, Misha Kavka understands that Gothic, in addition to fear, is about paranoia "defined as a projection of the self on to the outside world, which is in turn read as hostile" (2002, p. 210). He explains that this paranoia evolves from the fear of what Freud names "return of the repressed", that is, the fear of having primitive and/or hidden feelings exposed which evokes the uncanny feeling of something unknown, unfamiliar but that is subconsciously familiar.

Regarding the *doppelgänger* theme in Gothic fiction, Dimitris Vardoulakis (2006), understands that the term emerged as a motif originated from German Romanticism (Jean Paul's *Siebankäs*) and became canonized in Gothic literature. He explains that Jean Paul coined the word *doppelgänger* partly in response to transcendental philosophy. Vardoulakis' study is based on Freud's "The Uncanny" (1919); thus, he agrees that one of the characteristics of the *doppelgänger* is "the return of the repressed", paraphrased as "the return of negation". Hence, he understands the *doppelgänger* as the result of the negation of the self.

In psychoanalytic terms, Vardoulakis asserts that the *doppelgänger* is a second self or alter ego that exists in a relation of dependence on the original self. He adds that it generally appears to usurp the original self, taking control and dominating its host. Sharing similar thoughts, Clifford Hallam (1981 *apud* FONSECA, 2007) compares the *doppelgänger* to the dissociated self which occurs due to traumatic experiences as a defense mechanism; and because externalization derives from denial, the projected self is unrecognizable. Concerning the *doppelgänger's* nature, Robert Rogers (1970 *apud* FONSECA, 2007) conveys that it is "diabolic" in terms that it represents instinctual and unconscious drives.

Andrew Webber interprets the *doppelgänger* as "a figure of visual compulsion" (1996, p. 1) where the self is doubled, and the mind is split into opposite states (within one single body) or when the opposite nature is exteriorized in a different body, object, or entity. The second premise indicates that speech is divided; it might also be distorted. The third argument is that "the *doppelgänger* is an inveterate performer of identity" (1996, p. 3); hence, the double performs differently from the self, it is not a copy. Another presumption is that sexuality is also ambivalent, and that the *doppelgänger* adds "innuendo" into it.

The power-play between ego and alter ego is a feature of the *doppelgänger* as well. In addition, the double "operates as a figure of displacement" (1996, p. 4), it appears at inconvenient times and locations, so it disturbs and confuses its host.

Another thesis is that “the *doppelgänger* is typically a product of a broken home” (1996, p. 5), so it might represent family dysfunction.

Finally, opposing Andrew Webber and other authors who associate the *doppelgänger* with evil, Vardoulakis understands that it can be articulated in positive terms since it results from the subject's compulsion to insist on transgression. He suggests that the *doppelgänger's* normal state is the trespassing of limits; therefore, the *doppelgänger* would mean a transgression of a transgression.

I have presented some thoughts on the gist of the *doppelgänger* and what it represents inside the Gothic realm, hence considering the Gothic as a volatile genre in the sense that it comprehends blurred boundaries and deconstructs conventions, and understanding the *doppelgänger* itself is mutable as well, the latter becomes a reflection or the materialized figure of the first. My point is that the *doppelgänger* is a response to inner fears; it is the materialization of anxieties. In the next section, I will connect these issues with Nina Sayer's manifestation of the *doppelgänger*, its triggers and the way it develops throughout the narrative.

### *Black Swan*: mad ballerina

Nina's *doppelgänger* appears when she starts feeling pressure to deliver her best performance of the Black Swan. At first, when she is getting familiar with the moves and details of the character, she catches glimpses of herself in the mirror, but her reflection acts differently from her (see Figure 2). Here the *doppelgänger* gives a hint that she is acting on her own and she is uncontrollable.

Nina becomes obsessed with the Black Swan, she aims at nothing but delivering the finest performance of it, consequently, she gradually leaves her insecurities and naivety behind and starts incorporating traits such as boldness, confidence and sensuality. As she progresses and refines the Black Swan's moves, *mise-en-scène* shows differences on her clothes and general demeanor. Initially, she usually wears soft colors, but gradually changes them to gray and finally to black.

At the night of the presentation Nina is both euphoric and paranoid due to fear of failure and, mostly, fear of replacement. She suspects Lily (her substitute) is plotting to take her place at the premiere. As a result, Nina becomes more and more delusional; so, prior to the last act of the play Nina stabs who she thinks to be Lily dressed as the Black Swan, hides the body inside the cabinet and goes back to the stage. Nina thus has the first official confrontation with her *doppelgänger*.

The final act is the climax, as the White Swan is climbing a mountain from where she will throw herself into the abyss since she has just lost the love

of her life. She experiences the sublime and finally jumps off the cliff. It is the last scene of the play (and movie), just as the White Swan dies, so does Nina; it turns out that the person she had stabbed in the dressing room was herself. Kafka's thought that "the Gothic captures, and to some extent makes available for catharsis, the fear associated with the unstable boundaries of our subjectivity, cast onto an imagined or imaginary past" (2002, p. 211) is true to this episode.

The *mise-en-abyme* type of narrative intensifies Nina's gradual transformation and confrontation with her *doppelgänger* since she is frequently in a delusional state of mind, transiting between reality and fiction. The whole play is performed in parallel to Nina's own reality, and she has in fact been living the life of the characters she interpreted (although it is not clear in the film whether she is aware of it). Starting from when the White Swan was the main character, sweet and naive to the Black Swan, who, in turn, carefree and malicious, usurps the White Swan's place; at the end she transforms into the actual Black Swan, feathers and all.

The *mise-en-abyme* effect unravels at the climax where Nina, as her real self, looks at the audience in sheer frenzy while everybody applauds her magnificent performance. In parallel, that is the exact moment in the play when the White Swan is experiencing the sublime just before dying. In this regard, both Nina and the White Swan experience the sublime and die right after.

Concluding, Nina's *doppelgänger* corresponds to the characteristics the aforementioned authors define. From sabotage to usurpation, her *doppelgänger* (the Black Swan) leads her to death. Transgression is pivotal to the appearance of the *doppelgänger*; Nina's quest for perfection in order to become the Black Swan and the fear of being replaced leads her into dividing herself into two because her survival instinct and self-preservation are triggered.

I also understand that Nina's *doppelgänger* manifests as a response to her narcissistic behavior: it is possible to perceive her obsession with perfection early in the narrative when her feet are completely ruined due to her compulsive and non-stop training. I believe her narcissism was so exacerbated and uncontrollable that the only way to purge it was by spawning another her. Nina's last words were "Perfect, I felt it. It was perfect" (BLACK SWAN, 2010, 01:42:32 — 01:42:42) while seriously injured on stage, she could only pay attention to the loud sound of applause, delighted that she had finally gotten the attention she had been seeking desperately.

Whether Nina's *doppelgänger* manifested in positive terms, as Vardoulakis' *doppelgängers* studies suggest or in negative terms, is up to the viewers to decide.

Nina's *doppelgänger* emerged to change her life completely, she came to defy and formulate rules, hence the *doppelgänger* who generally represents the Id becomes the superego. Nevertheless, Nina's death is a mystery due to the uncertainty about who really died; her former self or the new one. Interpreting it based on Freud's "Death Drive" theory in which a person engages into a compulsive behavior, generally self-harm, in order to relieve stress, Nina and her *doppelgänger* might have destroyed each other.

Another reason for Nina's *doppelgänger* to appear may be due to her struggle to break free from her controlling mother who treated her like a child (Nina even talked in a childish tone and her bedroom was decorated with dolls and teddy bears), denying the fact that she was a 28-year-old woman capable of making her own choices. In addition, there is a weird Oedipal complex issue happening; Nina's mother is at the same time obsessed with her (she has dozens of paintings of Nina because she spends most of her time painting pictures of Nina's face) as she is also envious of her (she herself is a former ballerina), demotivating her and making unpleasant comments about Nina's attitudes.

The urge to transgress prevails in both cases, the endeavor to be perfect and the defiance against her mother. The "return of the repressed" is clear here since her mother evidently represses Nina's sexuality and free will. Therefore, Webber's argument that "the *doppelgänger* is typically a product of a broken home" (1996, p. 5) is validated.

## Final remarks

All in all, Gothic is ubiquitous in the film: it appears in the mood, the plot structure, the play, the characters, and finally Nina's premature and tragic death reinforce its presence. The film exposes modern fears society has been dealing with. In Kavka's words "the Gothic is mutable because it is bound to the historical moment, constantly reworking the material of the past in terms of the cultural fears of the present. As cultural formations change [...] so also do the fears they generate in the social imaginary (2002, p. 212).

As for the present, the new generation is inserted in a competitive world where people need to be unique and offer excellence in everything they do. Consequently, people need to evoke all their strength, understand where they are inserted in, and especially, leave their comfort zone in order to survive. However, before fighting a battle with the world, they must fight a battle with themselves, and it is an arduous one, though, since you might encounter your *doppelgänger* while going through this process.

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# BREAKING HER GOTHIC CHAINS

## THE EVIL QUEEN AS FRUIT OF THE ENCHANTED FOREST

TAISI VIVEIROS DA ROCHA<sup>1</sup>

The eighteenth-century literary Gothic is characterized by tropes which include gloomy locations such as labyrinthine churches and castles with pointed arches and hallways with broad windows, inspired by medieval architecture. A main association between the twelfth — to sixteenth — century cathedrals and the buildings represented in literature is the light and darkness symbolism, which echoes in the predicaments that the female and male heroes must endure. The architectonic space is home to atmospheres of fear and terror, damsels in distress, villains self-consumed by obsession, and feelings of sublimity as people realize their smallness before nature's magnitude. This chapter will depart from these features to develop a Gothic reading on the character Regina — the Evil Queen — in the television show *Once Upon a Time* (2011-2018), created by Edward Kitsis and Adam Horowitz.

The show develops between two settings: the “Enchanted Forest”, a place where all fairy tales' characters coexist and magic is a common element, and the “Real World”, a place analogous to our world, where magic is not naturally part of it, only being present when introduced by an outside element. The two worlds are in opposition to each other due to their distinct natures, influencing the characters' behaviour. The Gothic tropes are present mainly in the fairy world of the “Enchanted Forest” where wonder and evil coexist in continuous altercation.

A revengeful Regina, the Evil Queen, casts a curse that transports the fairy tales' characters from the Enchanted Forest to Storybrooke, a city in the “Real World”. Her objective is to ruin the “happy ending” especially, but not exclusively, of Snow White and Prince Charming. The Evil Queen's plan exists since her youth, when her mother, Cora, kills her boyfriend, thanks to information Snow White, who was just a little girl at the time, gives her. Cora wanted her daughter

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to become queen and secretly plotted to have her marrying King Leopold, Snow White's father. Meanwhile, Regina was in love with a stable boy, whom she dated in secrecy, knowing that her mother would never accept the relationship. After an accident, in which Regina saves Snow White's life, they become friends and, eventually, when her future stepmother reveals her love for a stable boy, the kid inadvertently tells Cora, believing that a mother would do anything for a daughter's happiness. However, Cora does not support Regina's relationship and, through magic, rips out the stable boy's heart, killing the young man.

Up to that moment, Regina, who was just an infatuated young woman, undergoes a dramatic change. Although she does marry King Leopold, yielding to Cora's desire and becoming Snow White's evil stepmother known from the fairy-tale repertoire; she also becomes a tyrant who wishes to control Snow's life. Regina ultimately wants revenge for she believes Snow White has ruined her chance of happiness (*ONCE Upon a Time*, season 1, episode 18). The Evil Queen can be understood as a Gothic villain, whose origins trace back to her mother's greed and feed on Snow White's unintentional betrayal, culminating in complete obsession. Regina is a necessary villain for the development of a Gothic narrative, which requires a ruthless antagonist who persecutes the sweet damsel — also a Gothic trope. The show revisits well-known elements from fairy tale and Gothic narratives with twists in the characters' development.

## On Gothic villains: castles and obsessions

Villains are what impels the plot, provoking protagonists' actions and changes. It is due to the presence of evil that the protagonist's safe world is disrupted and, in order to keep what is dear to the protagonist, she or he must escape and work on new ways of dealing with the world around them. Usually, villains in Gothic novels are impelled by obsessions, be them preternatural — as in the vampire's blood lust, the werewolf's desire for human flesh or the perdition of souls when dealing with the Devil — or natural, as in the sexual obsession of some characters over young girls or multiple, lustful partners. These elements originate mainly from two authors of Gothic fiction, “the elegant romances of Radcliffe and horrors of authors such as Matthew Lewis” (FRANCK, 8 mar. 2015). In the context of eighteenth-century British Gothic, Radcliffe's “female Gothic” and Lewis's “male Gothic” circumscribed the models of villainous fantasy and madness that led to the development of modern Gothic antagonists.

Kate Ferguson Ellis argues that the terror the Gothic female hero experiences throughout the narrative comes from the certainty “of being confined

and then abandoned, and beyond that, of being, in an unspecified yet absolute way, completely surrounded by superior male power” (1989, p. 46), which means that it is the impossibility of exerting their will that triggers feelings of terror. In narratives where the villain is a female, something similar occurs, because the female villain often assumes the position of power, which is usually occupied by a male character. The evidence lies in the fact that many women writers produce deviant female villains, lustful and perverse in thoughts and behaviour, features that generally connected to the world of masculinity.

In this sense, Regina fits the role of a Gothic villain, persecuting and trying to exert power over Snow White, who cannot escape her pursuer. After marrying Snow's father, Regina kills her husband and takes over the position of absolute ruler of the kingdom. She often confines the girl inside the castle or inside the dungeon, trying to take away her youth. After Snow's escape from the castle and hideaway life in the woods, Regina uses military force and torture to force Snow's surrendering, which is another form of enforcing power and constructing invisible walls that confine the protagonist.

The slumber and the curse that creates Storybrooke are further attempts to entrap Snow White, confining the girl inside her own sleep, completely depriving her of any connection with the outside world, and later, creating Storybrooke, an isolated town where the fairy tale characters have mundane identities and no memories of their previous selves, it is a place without magic or happiness. The confinement in Storybook encompasses three dimensions: firstly, physical imprisonment inside the town, as no person can enter or leave because of a magical barrier; secondly, a mental confinement related to the loss of memories and impossibility of understanding who they really are, creating an existential void; and lastly, temporal confinement, as place is stopped in time, making it impossible for people to evolve and grow. The curse, then, is the perfect Gothic confinement that hinders the existence of a happy ending for everyone. It is originally a magic element for being created in the “Enchanted Forest”, but when in the “Real World” it eventually loses its force and can be broken.

A traditional happy ending for a woman in the fairy tale world would be marrying the man she loved. In the case of Regina, in the impossibility of that happening, she gives up her womanly position in that society and assumes a place that would be considered customarily masculine. In the Enchanted Forest she becomes the absolute sovereign, the Evil Queen; she is the “patriarch” of Snow White's family, for there is no father; and she renounces the role of mother, at least when considering the image of a nurturing, caring mother. Regina can be seen as a reinforcement of the male power being wielded by a woman, using confinement

and abandonment as tools to cause terror, especially to Snow White in order to hinder the girl's happy ending. Then, she fits the role of what would be a Gothic villain, a "superior male power" as proposed by Ellis. Having set Regina in the context of the Gothic villain, I will now analyse the Enchanted Forest in order to present how this fairy tale world in *Once Upon a Time* encompasses some Gothic tropes.

## A Gothic enchanted forest

The Gothic narrative presents its own characteristic features, such as buildings with intricate architecture, churches or castles with dungeons, labyrinthine corridors that complicate escapes. Besides, the nature in these narratives is the place of the Sublime, which means that it is never under the control of humans, because humans are small when facing nature, which is usually represented by mountains, abysses and forests. Another aspect that characterizes Gothic narratives is the relation amongst life, death, and the supernatural, for these elements appears interconnected, almost dependent on each other, because the supernatural is connected directly to the mind state of the characters and even when the unnatural element is not fully confirmed as such, they still interfere in the choices of protagonists and antagonists, guiding in certain situations or impelling action in others. Still, there is the presence of the protagonist, who generally is a sweet young lady, or sometimes a confused lad, whom are persecuted by a force stronger than them. Each of these elements is present in *Once Upon a Time*, especially in the Enchanted Forest, the fairy tales' world, which enables for a Gothic reading of this setting as further presented in the next sections.

## The Castle

There are several castles that appear during the series, for the kings and the royalties from different kingdoms are important for the contextualization of the fairy tale. In each episode several of these tales are entangled to create a world where different fairy tales coexist. Nevertheless, there is a leading fairy tale in the series, which is *Snow White*, not just as Grimm brothers presented in 1812, but also very influenced by the Walt Disney animation from 1937, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, as it is possible to identify in Snow White's and the Evil Queen's costumes. The Evil Queen's castle is the central piece to the Gothic architecture analysis, with its arches and spikes.

Before becoming the Evil Queen, Regina lived on a big farm. However, after marrying King Leopold, she moved to his castle with her “new family”. The building has a stylized Gothic façade, with tall spikes sweeping upward, big windows and balconies, flying buttress, and pointed arches, which are steeper than in the traditional Gothic building, but still possible to recognize as the original elements. When comparing the Evil Queen's castle (Figure 1) to the now destroyed Notre Dame cathedral (Figure 2), a well-known Gothic building, the similarities are clear: in both there are towers, arches pointing upwards, and big stained-glass windows; also the flying-buttresses or the side arches that embellish and reinforce the building structure. Moreover, the corridors form archways with several pointed arches touching (Figure 3), making shadows and darkness fill its hallways. Descriptions of such building are common in the Gothic literary tradition, as in novels such as *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).



Figure 1 — Evil Queen's castle, stylized Gothic.



Figure 2 — Notre Dame, traditional Gothic building.



Figure 3 — Archways in the Evil Queen's castle.

In a traditional Gothic building, the structure is related to nature itself, as Victor Sage states the tower represents trees growing up to the sky, pointing to God, and the “arch reproduces semiotically the *Ur-wald* [the forest]” (2009, p. 158). Gothic buildings, then, are directly connected to nature and they make humans feel in awe inside them.

When analysing Regina's castle, in its stylized structure, the same awe-feeling is intended, especially towards those who are dominated by the power of the Evil Queen. Its pointy towers suggest her magical power, especially for their almost-zenithal position; the arches that in the traditional Gothic architecture reproduce the growing forests, with the trees' tops touching each other and making shade. Her castle suggests a darker forest, where the shades become shadows of oppression.

Moreover, Regina's castle has its own dungeon, another trademark of Gothic literature, present, for example, in *The Castle of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789). Besides the traditional dungeon, there is also a different one — the vault of hearts — where the Evil Queen stores the hearts she stole from people and through which she can demand anything from the owners. While keeping the hearts in the vault, Regina also maintains those who had the hearts taken as her prisoners in a symbolic dungeon of no free-will, for they are compelled to act as she wishes. The castle, then, works as a structure to typify power and darkness directly connected to what Regina represents, someone deprived of happiness and willing to destroy others people's happiness.

However, the castle existed before Regina became queen. It belonged to her deceased husband. As mentioned before, the castle structure is a stylized Gothic architectural piece, a human-made construction that basically awaited for someone to fulfill the villain who would dwell there and bring plenitude to the Gothic narrative.

## The labyrinth

The design of the corridors and dungeons in the castles seems to allude to labyrinths, due to the intricate connections and the difficulty to escape through them. Another labyrinthine element is the forest that surrounds the magic world. The Enchanted Forest has many paths that connect different kingdoms and villages. The disposition of these realms, however, is not clearly presented to the audience — as by means of a map or the characters dialogues. Only those who are well-versed in the ways of the forest can step out of the regular paths and not

get lost, as when Hansel and Gretel lose their father in episode 9, first season. Nevertheless, it is the labyrinthine forest that becomes home to Snow White after she leaves the Evil Queen and there are some people who help her to understand the forest maze, making her a skilled ranger.

The episodic narrative structure of the series also mirror the labyrinthine structure of the castle corridors, the paths of the fairy world, and the maze-like forest. When presenting the characters' backgrounds, the series does not present their stories in a chronologically linear way, but by means of jump-cuts and interpolations, sometimes skip decades only to bring it back in another season. The first season starts with the end of the “Enchanted Forest” and, as the episodes develop, the audience is introduced to the characters, first getting to know Prince Charming and Snow's encounter and only later understanding how Regina and Snow met. The last episode of the first season shows Prince Charming escaping the Evil Queen's castle and, after facing a dragon, arriving at Snow White's glass coffin, exactly as in the fairy tale; however, the previous episodes had shown them getting married and Snow's pregnancy.

This labyrinthine chronological structure only occurs when presenting the characters' backgrounds, especially in the “Enchanted Forest” and not in the “Real World”. Its occurrence reinforces the fairy tale's world as a Gothic place, for the concept of the labyrinth, be it in the buildings, the forests, or even in the show's narrative structure, is placed connected to the “Enchanted Forest”.

## The Sublime nature, life and death, the supernatural

Another aspect of the “Enchanted Forest” is the natural landscape surrounding Regina's castle, which suggests another aesthetic characteristic of Gothic literature — the Sublime. This concept circulated in the eighteenth century with the idea of how humanity may feel small in contact to nature, as in a position of recognizing that the forces of Nature cannot be contained by humans and that brings awe to those who open themselves to the truth of nature.

The huge mountains behind the Evil Queen's castle (Figure 4 and Figure 5) symbolise the smallness of human beings in the face of Nature, a reminder of the difficulty in overcoming outer and inner Nature. To Regina, this natural feature can be semiotically read as the struggle of changing her position after becoming a villain in the “Enchanted Forest”. In other words, the mountains surrounding her home act as a symbol to the challenges she needs to overcome if she wants to become a good person again.





Figure 4 — Regina's castle and mountains behind.



Figure 5 — Huge mountains of the “Enchanted Forest”.

Regina's actions explore how issues of life and death may be the cause of modifications in some of the characters' psychological features — first with the stable boy's death which was the turning point for the Evil Queen, and later with Regina killing her own beloved father, because the curse she cast demanded that

she let go of every trait of love. Furthermore, there is a constant ghostly presence of those who have already died, but still interfere with the characters' life choices by means of memory or by an actual spiritual presence, as it occurs in season 5. when they meet the spirit of the dead. The dead characters influence even the expectation of the audience, as a character who died in an episode in the first season may appear later in a flashback. The non-chronological structure of episodes makes the “Enchanted Forest” a place for the undead.

The supernatural element, however, goes further than ghosts, for there is the presence of seers, women and men who wield magic, and wraiths — spectral magical beings responsible for taking souls and “damning [the victims] for all eternity” (*ONCE Upon a Time*, season 2, episode 1). All these aspects reinforce the connection between *Once Upon a Time* and Gothic literature, besides enhancing the sublime in revealing how small humans are facing nature or magic, which makes every one of them part of a bigger plot, the development of fairy tale stories in this Gothic scenario.

## The damsel in distress and the villain

The damsel in distress and the obsessed villain are two further elements in *Once Upon a Time* that are directly connected to Gothic literature. In the beginning of the series, Snow White is the image of the sweet girl in danger, even though she has a resilient personality, she does not have enough power to face the odds against Cora and Regina. Firstly, the girl takes Cora's bait and reveals Regina's romance with the stable boy (*ONCE Upon a Time*, season 1, episode 18); later on, she becomes the target of her stepmother's revenge, which gets more intense after the death of Snow White's father and the hiring of the hunter.

These occurrences point to Snow White as the damsel who is easily fooled and in need of outside help to survive. Besides, there is the role of Prince Charming's as saviour, but in a different way of the traditional fairy tales, as he does not just save Snow White physically, but also works as a propelling force in her fight against the Evil Queen. The little defenseless girl eventually becomes a valiant woman who faces and fights her stepmother, sometimes with Prince Charming's help, in order to stop the suffering the Evil Queen brought upon the kingdom. Snow White becoming a strong woman ends the trope of the damsel in distress; Regina, however, is still stronger than Snow.

The existence of the damsel in distress demands the existence of an obsessed villain which imposes some sort of masculine dominance (even if incorporated by a woman). This is recurrent in Gothic literature: in *The Castle of Otranto*

(1764) there is the king who desires his future daughter-in-law, Ambrosio and the women in his life in Mathew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Mary Shelley's monster in *Frankenstein* (1818) and his obsession with a companion like himself.

In *Once Upon a Time*, the obsessed villain is a woman, which is not a contradiction, for a woman can stand for the position of *otherness*, especially when she is a woman with power. This change neither weakens the villainy nor makes void the Gothic obsessed villain trope. Regina, after convincing herself that Snow is the one to blame for her unhappiness, starts to persecute the girl and becomes a magic adept which she used to despise because of Cora's magical tyranny. The duality between barbarism and autocracy is clear when the Evil Queen becomes the central controller of the kingdom, spreading death and fear, while she is the ruler who practices despicable acts.

Furthermore, the first season's second episode establishes a wide parameter for the Evil Queen's villainy, when Regina kills her beloved and caring father, reaping out his heart, in order to complete the curse to destroy happy endings. Through this act, the series presents this villain with another Gothic characteristic besides obsession: a demonic or supernatural terror, as it is hard to find another act as terrible as killing one's father because of revenge against a third part, especially when he is the only one who is still capable of loving the Queen.

### Final remarks: an irreversible Gothic way

The presence of so many Gothic elements in the "Enchanted Forest" imprisons Regina into her villain function. Even if initially her mother is the one who crafted in Regina's heart the pain and the wish for revenge by killing her daughter's boyfriend, Regina feeds the continuity of the vengeful behaviour and obsession towards Snow White's happy ending. This painful relationship becomes the building block of the story development, not only for its existence in the traditional brothers Grimm's *Snow White* fairy tale, but because of the Gothic environment created in the series.

Regina reinforces this idea when she disguises herself and without magic spends some time with Snow in the forest, when she is already in hiding and fighting her stepmother. Snow saves a disguised Regina from guards and the two women start a journey together, during which Regina has the opportunity to kill her stepdaughter, but gives up. By further contact with the younger woman a process of repentance starts, because of Snow's ability to accept and pity the Queen, which is shown by her speech

Regina wants to hurt people. I think she's in constant pain and always is trying to look for whom to blame for it. We lived in the same household and she could never see that I was on her side. She wanted revenge more than she wanted love. And I can't imagine living that way. (ONCE Upon a Time, season 2, episode 20).

Throughout most of this episode, Snow White keeps on with her understanding discourse, which makes Regina wish to reveal herself and look for a way to get closer to love and move away from revenge. This movement is interrupted when Regina and Snow arrive at a village where the Queen had killed everybody, including children, and Snow has a change of heart, declaring that Regina could redeem herself no more. The Queen regards Snow's declaration as proof that people would never be able to accept and love her, what makes her, henceforth, decide to fulfill her villain role, emphasizing such position with the sentence "The queen is dead... Long live the Evil Queen." (ONCE Upon a Time, season 2, episode 20). It is the labyrinthine path and the forest itself, Gothic elements, that guide Regina to a place of no return.

Regina's redemption can only really start after she casts the curse that carries everybody away from the "Enchanted Forest" into the "Real World". As a world analogous to ours, this new place is not built upon the same Gothic elements as the previous one. In the "Real World", Regina adopts a son, reconnects to Snow White and her family, and receives a second chance from her stepdaughter. Although this modification does not present itself as easy, the world's interference, such as dead villagers or the complete refusal of the child around her, also does not hinder it or make it impossible.

Therefore, while Regina remained in the "Enchanted Forest", this fantastic world fulfilled with Gothic elements, there was no possible way for her to free herself from the villain trope, even if she desired to live as a common person. In the series, this occurs not only because the "Snow White" fairy tale on which the series is mainly constructed demands the presence of the Evil Queen, but also because the "Enchanted Forest" story develops in a Gothic world, with a damsel in distress that must be chased by her villain. In the "Real World", where the Gothic characteristics are dissolved, Regina finds a path to redemption through her adopted son Henry and Snow White's and Prince Charming's help, as her Gothic chains are no longer intensively present. Hence, the Evil Queen in the series *Once Upon a Time* is much more than just a fairy tale villain, she is also a fruit of a Gothic "Enchanted Forest", a world where the darkest events may happen.

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# RESIGNIFYING THE VAMPIRE MYTH

## IN A *GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT*

VITOR HENRIQUE DE SOUZA<sup>1</sup>

*A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014) is an American film directed by American-Iranian Ana Lily Amirpour, starring Sheila Vand in the main role. The narrative is set in the fictional location Bad City, a ghost town heavily populated by violent people, drug dealers and crime. Its main protagonist, a young and mysterious female vampire, wearing a traditional chador and riding a skateboard, is introduced to viewers as a type of lonely crime combatant, a vigilant who patrols the city seeking for criminals to feed on. In one of these patrols, she encounters Arash, a teenager who is the son of a drug addict from the neighborhood. His father constantly owes money to drug dealers, which makes Arash steal diamond earrings from the woman he works for in order to pay his father's debt. However, the nameless vampire does not attack him; she sees him as a “good”, vulnerable person and starts to develop a relationship with him. Eventually, both decide to leave town after the death of Arash's father.

Although Amirpour's film tackles important issues in relation to urban environments and feminism, it is, in essence, a vampire film. However, the director's approach to the representation of vampires strongly differs from what has been traditionally associated with the vampire myth. For instance, her cape-like chador is representative of the Islamic culture, whereas her use of a skateboard for moving around the city is a quirky addition to the vampire lore. These changing aspects address the question of what a vampire traditionally is, regardless of who/what is depicting the myth. Although many authors and critics have theorized on the origins, establishment and traditions of the ‘original’ vampire, it is only one specific trait that remains common to all of its interpretations: the thirst for blood. As J. Gordon Melton describes in *The Vampire Book: the encyclopedia of the undead*, “a vampire is a reanimated corpse that rises from the grave to suck the blood of living people and thus retain a semblance of life.” (2010, p. 32). When contrasting such definition with what is presented in the film, the

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thirst for blood is the element responsible for acknowledging the girl as a vampire, while it coexists alongside other characteristics that are not typically associated with more traditional and popular vampires, such as Dracula, for instance. Bram Stoker's character, as Melton points out, was responsible for shaping the prevalent imagination of a vampire, an association that remains very present nowadays.

By associating the vampire and the Gothic, Melton considers the popularity of the Gothic novel as crucial for the creation of the first modern vampire tale, John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819). According to him, it was the gathering of Lord Byron, Percy and Mary Shelley, and Polidori in Switzerland that would later make possible the creation of Polidori's short work of prose fiction. This introduction of the vampire inside Gothic literature would inspire Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, which had a more contemporary approach in relation to its Gothic features. In Melton's words, "[...] Stoker broke convention by bringing the Gothic world to the contemporary familiar world of his readers and unleashed evil from a strange land on a conventional British family." (2010, p. 300). In this sense, Amirpour's film tackles both Gothic and vampire conventions while also adding contemporary social issues through setting, characters, and narrative. Once again, the vampire reestablishes its myth in a completely different environment, enhancing different concerns but also maintaining its chore, conventional features.

## The ever-changing vampire

The vampire myth has showed itself to be able of constant transformations throughout time periods, adapting and evolving according to specific social conditions and necessities. Therefore, it is possible to argue that mutability is also an important characteristic when discussing the vampire myth and its (re)significations in popular culture.

The vampire myth has undergone changes in relation to its chore features both in literature and audiovisual media, which allows different creative choices that can explore several possibilities within the same myth. Regarding the mutability of the vampire in literature, the vampires of Anne Rice, for example, differentiate themselves from previous works such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* by focusing on the characters' emotional descriptions. In Rice's novels the vampire's drama is centered on immortality, which makes the character feel out of touch with the ever-changing world. As everything and everyone the vampire knows dies, she or he feels lonelier and more melancholic with every passing century. In relation to the filmic adaptations of *Dracula*, for instance, the different production cycles such as the Universal films and the Hammer films, offer distinct and diverse



representations of the same character and myth. The former production cycle was deeply focused on presenting an aristocrat figure, while the latter enhanced the character's sexuality to a previously unexplored level. In *Reading the Vampire* (1994), Ken Gelder points out the ever-changing characteristics of the vampire as key features that help the survival and maintenance of the myth throughout the years. In the critic's words:

Each new vampire film engages in a process of familiarisation and defamiliarisation, both interpellating viewers who already 'know' about vampires from the movies (and elsewhere), and providing enough points of difference (in the narrative, in the 'look' of the vampire, and so on) for newness to maintain itself. (1994, p. 86).

More to the point, *A Gil Walks Home Alone at Night* is a strong representation of such diversity and of how the characteristics of the myth have been transformed recently. It also shows how the representation of the vampire is intrinsically connected to contemporary social aspects and political issues.

## The implications of Iranian female vampires

Armirpour's protagonist is also a woman set in a post-Islamic Revolution in Iran, and this association cannot be ignored if the mythological construction of her vampire is considered. When read within this social context, the vampire once again establishes itself as a figure capable of adaptability.

For a contextualization of the Islamic Revolution, Hammed Shahidian published two books on the topic (*Women in Iran: Gender Politics in the Islamic Republic*, and *Women in Iran: Emerging Voices in the Women's Movement*), in which he describes the role of women in Iranian society after the event. On reviewing both works, Shireen Mahdavi summarized the position of women in post-revolution Iran as subaltern to men. According to the critic,

Ideal gender relationships within Islam are based on various assumptions. The primary assumption is that men and women are not equal, as they are biologically different. The biological differences are applied to both sexual needs and mental ability. Women are emotional and men are rational. In addition, various interpretations of the Qur'a n IV: 34 portray man as manager, superior or simply preferred by God. (2003, p. 697).

Being a set of beliefs still present in contemporary Iran, the women's subjugation manifests itself in several ways throughout Islamic practices. One of the most notorious of them is the use of the chador, "a large piece of cloth that is wrapped around the head and upper body leaving only the face exposed, worn especially by Muslim women." (OXFORD, 1989, p. 387). It comes from the Islamic practice of the *hijab*, from the Arabic word *hajaba*, which literally means "to hide". It serves the purpose of women being modest when in public, a tradition very much related to their position in society.

The clothes the female vampire of Amirpour's film wears is rather emblematic on screen for its irony. Not only does she wear the chador so she cannot be seen as a 'threat' by the men she attacks, given the symbolism of modesty attributed to it, but she also attacks them when wearing the cloak, confronting the submission that the chador implies. Additionally, she flutters her cloak on the wind when riding a skateboard around Bad City, in a carefree way that does not resemble the traditional chaste behavior imposed to Iranian women.

In a scene where the nameless female vampire kills one of her male victims, the act of licking the man's finger and later biting it off can be interpreted as representative of man's castration. When inferring such imagery on screen, Amirpour not only defies patriarchy in a traditionally misogynistic society, but she also establishes a new facet to the myth of the vampire. If later it was associated with masculinity, wealth, aristocracy, sex, or emotions, it becomes now a portrait of female resistance within an oppressive environment. Metaphorically, even the vampire's clothing can be seen as representative of such resistance, since the traditional cape associated with figures such as Dracula gives place to another dark, fluid clothing item, but with a totally different purpose.

## Final remarks

Ana Lily Amirpour's vampire film *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* is another representation of how mutable and adaptable the myth of the vampire can be. It tackles not only a new approach to its traditional figure, but also raises an important discussion on gender roles and their examples in society. By not following traditional religious rules, the protagonist vampire establishes an interesting and provocative reflection upon the importance of a mythological and metaphorical figure such as the vampire. It shows how helpful it can be not only to represent, but also to subvert traditional social norms, which shows the relevance of constantly adapting the vampire throughout time. As a social and cultural product, it can serve the purpose of defying the status quo of what is

understood as logical or normative, and Amirpour's film accomplishes that through different layers of representation. By placing a female vampire in a setting that is not traditionally present in popular imagery as vampire-related, and by utilizing the traditional characteristics of such setting as a means of rebuilding the fundamental characteristics of the myth, it once more recreates a previously established figure.

The vampire has proven itself to be resilient in its resourceful features and has continuously reinvented itself throughout time periods according to social necessities and trends. An Iranian female vampire, who dresses according to the oppressive Islamic traditions of her country, shifts both the myth and the norms of her original context by ironically subverting such norms. Is not by mere chance that J. Gordon Melton has stated that the common association made with the vampire is the one of the “cultural rebel, a symbolic leader advocating outrageous alternative patterns of living in a world demanding conformity.” (2011, p. 34). By not conforming to norms, the vampire establishes itself as a remarkable myth that appears not to be going away any sooner.

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# VAGINA DENTATA

## O FEMININO MONSTRUOSO EM *MATINTA* E *UM DRINQUE NO INFERNO*

YASMIM PEREIRA YONEKURA<sup>1</sup>

A necessidade de explorar o terror, o sobrenatural e o horror em suas dimensões sociais e políticas nos leva à discussão de assuntos que encontram expressão no universo ficcional. As discussões sobre as políticas de gênero, a condição social da mulher e feminismo são temas relevantes para o avanço cultural da humanidade. Esta pesquisa aborda dimensões políticas do feminismo dentro de produtos audiovisuais que exploram o terror, o horror e o sobrenatural. As obras analisadas são o curta cinematográfico amazônico *Matinta* (2010), de Fernando Segtowitz, e o longa norte-americano *Um drinque no inferno* (1996), de Robert Rodriguez.

Os pilares teóricos deste capítulo são o livro *The Monstrous Feminine: film, feminism, psychoanalysis* (1993), de Barbara Creed, e o livro *Gótico tropical: o sublime e o demoníaco em O guarani* (2010), de Daniel Serravalle de Sá, derivado da dissertação defendida na Universidade de São Paulo, em 2006. A primeira parte desse texto discutirá a imagem e o conceito de *vagina dentata*, proposto por Creed, e a próxima parte debaterá o conceito de “gótico tropical”, proposto por Daniel Sá. Creed faz uma abordagem revisionista de Freud, invertendo o conceito de inveja peniana e utilizando filmes de horror para discutir o medo da castração corporificado em personagens femininos. Embora a psicanálise trabalhe com subjetivações generalizantes, que muitas vezes não correspondem às experiências individuais da audiência, pensar em termos de símbolos e imagens inconscientes é um exercício relevante na análise cultural das produções cinematográficas e como esses produtos culturais afetam, subvertem, reproduzem temáticas sociais, econômicas e políticas da contemporaneidade.

Creed dedica-se a analisar e criticar o ensaio de Freud, “A cabeça de Medusa” (1922), valendo-se da imagem da *vagina dentata*. Ela questiona o ensaio

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freudiano e a afirmação de que o ser feminino é o outro castrado, um ser incapaz e menor, subvertendo a ideia por meio do uso de uma compilação de exemplos de diferentes culturas sobre a mitologia da *vagina dentata*. Esse mito tem raízes na China Antiga, personificado por terríveis deusas (Le-hev-hev, Scylla) estendendo-se até as lendas urbanas modernas dos Estados Unidos. De acordo com essas narrativas, o medo de uma genitália feminina com dentes parece ser algo universalmente disseminado e historicamente constante:

Antes de analisar Freud, é importante focar na natureza de um conjunto global de mitos da mulher como castradora. Nesses mitos, o aspecto ameaçador do genital feminino é simbolizado pela *vagina dentata* ou vagina com dentes. De acordo com Barbara Walker, mitos Yanomami afirmam que uma das primeiras mulheres na terra possuía uma vagina que poderia se transformar em uma boca dentada que comia o pênis de seu amante [...] Wolfgang Lederer afirma que os mitos da vagina com dentes são extremamente prevalentes, particularmente na Ásia, Índia, América do Norte, América do Sul, África e Europa.<sup>2</sup> (CREED, 1993, p. 105-106).

Ao usar antigos mitos para questionar e subverter a visão de Freud sobre as mulheres como seres castrados; Creed argumenta que a construção social da submissão feminina é, na verdade, baseada no medo masculino de ser castrado. Na análise de Creed, a difusão da ideia do ser feminino como um ser castrado representa a anulação do poder da figura feminina. Depois de desconstruir a visão freudiana sobre castração, Creed estende sua argumentação sobre os monstros, afirmando que há uma associação basilar entre o monstro ou a construção do monstruoso e o feminino. Para provar seus argumentos, Creed estabelece sete categorias nas quais o monstruoso e o feminino operam juntos: *archaic mother* (mãe ancestral), *monstrous womb* (útero monstruoso), *vampire* (vampira), *witch* (bruxa), *possessed body* (corpo possuído), *monstrous mother* (mãe monstruosa) e *femme castratrice* (fêmea castradora). Em seguida as categorias são utilizadas para analisar e discutir filmes de terror, nos quais as mulheres são muitas vezes retratadas pelo olhar masculino, por meio do medo e da monstrificação. Vou

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<sup>2</sup> No original em inglês: “Before turning to Freud, it is relevant to look at the widespread nature of myths concerning the woman as castrator. In these myths, the threatening aspect of the female genital is symbolized by the *vagina dentata* or toothed vagina. According to Barbara Walker, Yanomamo myths state that one of the first women on earth possessed a vagina that could transform into a toothed mouth which ate her lover's penis [...] Wolfgang Lederer states that myths of the vagina with teeth are extremely prevalent particularly in the East, India, North America, South America, Africa and Europe.” O livro de Creed ainda não foi traduzido para o português, todas as traduções deste texto são minhas.

usar duas categorias de Creed, a mulher como bruxa e a mulher como vampira, para prosseguir com a análise. Todavia, um problema que o pesquisador brasileiro encontra ao tentar aplicar cruzamentos teóricos e culturais é a diferença das realidades nacionais. Em outras palavras, como este capítulo analisa duas personagens femininas não brancas, corpos não caucasianos (Valquíria e Satanico Pandemonium), muitas vezes o que se fala sobre bruxas e vampira não condiz com as manifestações latino-americanas. Tanto a bruxa tropical quanto a vampira tropical urgem por uma fundamentação teórica que possa respaldar a discussão de ambas as personagens de forma mais adequada.

### Gótico tropical: “En la selva amazónica, no hay primavera”

O conceito de “gótico tropical”, proposto por Daniel Serravalle de Sá, fundamenta e justifica a aplicação de um termo (gótico) que tem sua origem na tradição literária, crítica e cultural da Grã-Bretanha, demonstrando a aclimação de formas e imagens literárias inglesas à realidade tropical do Brasil. Sá baseia-se nos contatos literários entre Brasil e Inglaterra demonstrando a presença de elementos oriundos da literatura gótica na estética indianista de José de Alencar, tomando como estudo de caso o romance *O guarani* (1857), uma das obras fundadoras da literatura brasileira. O conceito estabelece bases para que se possa empreender outras leituras sobre o Gótico, o sobrenatural, o terror e/ou o horror dentro do contexto latino-americano.

O crítico identifica imagens literárias, convenções de gênero e outros aspectos discursivos convergentes entre o romance alencariano e diversos romances góticos, escritor por romancistas como Horace Walpole, Sofia Lee, Clara Reeve e Ann Radcliffe. A partir de interseções discursivas e estéticas, Daniel Sá propõe que os romancistas ingleses que se dedicaram ao gótico (efeito sobrenatural) fizeram uma leitura estética dos postulados de Edmund Burke sobre o Sublime e o Belo. Nos romances góticos do século XVIII e em *O guarani*, cenários naturais e sobrenaturais se alternam e se complementam:

O elemento gótico será abordado através da observação de símbolos e imagens literárias empregados pelos romancistas, objetivando revelar possíveis significados e valores subjacentes. As imagens iniciais se desdobram em outras, instaurando um debate sobre a importância literária das paisagens no contexto filosófico do século e discutindo fusões entre uma natureza rousseauiana e interpretações do sublime burkeano. (SÁ, 2010, p. 26-27).

A natureza tropical era algo inexplorado dentro da categoria do Sublime de Burke, e a associação entre o elemento tropical, a floresta icônica de Alencar, com os efeitos narrativos que conduzem ao gótico é uma contribuição pioneira de Sá para a teoria literária e os estudos culturais no Brasil. Através desse cruzamento, Sá incorporou o termo gótico para a realidade latino-americana e expandiu-o com significados políticos e culturais que são de grande importância para o debate que será empreendido neste capítulo. Pretendo concentrar-me na possibilidade de um tipo de gótico tropical, que permanece associado ao conceito clássico de gótico anglo-americano e suas características, mas que também incorpora características tropicais, não brancas e latino-americanas. As características tropicais não distorcem os campos de estudo sobre o gótico, o horror e o terror, ao invés disso, elas ampliam e desenvolvem os campos de estudo, elevando-os para um outro âmbito discursivo que se abre para debates sobre gênero sexual, política, religião e economia na realidade do continente latino-americano, de uma maneira muito antropofágica. Eu aplicarei o conceito de gótico tropical à análise da personagem Satanico Pandemonium.<sup>3</sup> Embora *Um drinque no inferno* (Rodriguez, 1996) seja uma produção estadunidense, ela contém diversos elementos culturais não brancos e latino-americanos, pois é um filme baseado nas culturas mesoamericanas, as quais contribuíram para a formação de heranças e crenças da sociedade mexicana.

**Matinta:** “Se responder o chamado dela, não tem reza que dê jeito”

A primeira personagem a ser analisada será Valquíria, uma bruxa amazônica do curta metragem paraense *Matinta*, de Fernando Segtowick (2010). O curta tem por base uma conhecida lenda no Norte do país, a qual narra a existência de um grupo de matintas (bruxas) que supostamente vivem dentro da floresta e que podem transformar-se em aves. A lenda reza que é possível se tornar uma matinta aceitando a herança de uma matinta mais velha, que está prestes a morrer. Segundo Franz Kreüther Pereira em *Painel de Lendas e Mitos da Amazônia*:

Dizem que o Saci tem por companheira uma velha índia — ou uma preta velha, maltrapilha, cujo assobio arremeda seu nome: Mati-Taperé. Crêem alguns que ele é filho do Curupira; outros identificam-no como um pequeno pássaro que pula numa perna só; há também aqueles que dizem ser as mãos dele furadas no centro.

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<sup>3</sup> O nome da personagem é uma referência a um filme de horror mexicano intitulado *Satânico Pandemonium, la sexorcista* (1975), dirigido por Gilberto Martínez Solares.



Existem os que estudam para “virar Matinta”, segundo uns; já outros afirmam que Matin(ta) é uma maldição que a pessoa carrega por toda vida, como a licantropia. Nos interiores paraenses muito se crê nessa versão. Em muitos lugarejos a existência dessa bruxa cabocla que se transforma em gato, cachorro, bota, morcego, porca, pássaro, é tida como inconteste e até encarada com normalidade; falam dela com a naturalidade do caboclo: “... é Matinta, sim senhor! ...” (PEREIRA, 2001, p. 51).

Com vinte minutos de duração, o drama narra essa versão da lenda, com uma alteração quanto à antagonista, que não é nem velha, nem maltrapilha, mas sensual e interpretada pela paraense Dira Paes. Além disso o curta propõe um final alternativo em relação à lenda mencionada por Pereira. Em uma comunidade no coração da Amazônia, a protagonista Valquíria tenta destruir a vida de Felício, o homem pelo qual ela se apaixona, mas que não a corresponde. A Figura 1 mostra o primeiro encontro de Valquíria e Felício no coração da selva amazônica. Para se vingar, Valquíria decide matar a esposa dele, Antônia, por meio de um ato de magia. Ela consegue matar Antônia, mas Felício afugenta e destrói Valquíria com a ajuda da sua mãe, outra bruxa tropical. A grande virada da história é seu desfecho, pois Valquíria transfere seu legado sobrenatural para Felício que se transforma em matinta na última cena do filme.



Figura 1 — Valquíria e Felício conversam na floresta (*Matinta*, 2010).

Durante a breve conversa, Valquíria convida Felício para ser seu companheiro de trabalho, coletando frutas em um lugar isolado. Ele recusa seu convite, ela diz para ele ter cuidado com a selva e que ela teme a floresta. Felício

descarta seus medos, usando sua masculinidade para se proteger do que ele julga ser tolice dela. Valquíria diz-lhe que gosta muito dele, contudo o homem sai sem respondê-la. A cena em questão já dialoga com a categoria de análise da mulher como bruxa colocada por Creed (1993). A crítica desenvolve o estudo de uma série de características detectadas em filmes de terror que definiram a bruxa como um monstro central à tradição de horror gótico. Creed discute como a obra medieval usada pela Santa Inquisição para perseguir bruxas, o *Malleus Maleficarum*, “justifica” o feminicídio de mulheres que demonstram desejos sexuais. O postulado presente no livro medieval tornou-se consenso cultural em muitas sociedades europeias e em outros países colonizados por europeus, servindo até hoje como justificativa para crimes contra mulheres. A visão da bruxa como um ser luxurioso é algo que pode ser identificado na postura de Valquíria e no modo como fala com Felício, indicando seus desejos sexuais para com ele. O *Malleus Maleficarum* era a “Bíblia” usada para perseguir e matar pessoas e animais que se suspeitassem ter ligação com o diabo. Creed argumenta que tal entendimento está permeado por um forte ódio às mulheres e pelo medo do seu poder imaginário de castração (1993, p. 75). Valquíria é uma mulher solteira, aparentemente isolada em sua pequena comunidade, que também é um lugar fortemente cristão. Ela é uma bruxa, uma matinta, de forma que Valquíria se encaixa na definição de bruxa proposta por Creed:

A bruxa começa a perturbar os limites entre o racional e o irracional, o simbólico e o imaginário. Seus poderes são vistos como parte da sua natureza feminina; ela está mais próxima da natureza que um homem e pode controlar forças na natureza como tempestades, furacões e tormentas. Nas sociedades onde faltam insituições centralizadas de poder [...] Mulheres são vistas como ‘malfeitoras’, o feminino é visto como sinônimo de um ‘mal radical a ser eliminado’ (KRISTEVA, 1982, p. 70). Irracional, dissimulada, má — essas são algumas palavras para definir a bruxa. A bruxa também é associada com uma série de coisas abjetas: sujo, decadência, aranhas, morcegos, teias de aranhas, poções e a até canibalismo.<sup>4</sup> (CREED, 1993, p. 76).

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<sup>4</sup> Texto original: “The witch sets out to unsettle boundaries between the rational and irrational, symbolic and imaginary. Her evil powers are seen as part of her ‘feminine’ nature; she is closer to nature than man and can control forces in nature such as tempests, hurricanes and storms. In those societies which lack centralized institutions of power [...] women are regarded as ‘baleful schemers’, the feminine is seen as ‘synonymous with a radical evil that is to be suppressed’ (KRISTEVA, 1982, p. 70). Irrational, scheming, evil — these are the words used to define the witch. The witch is also associated with a range of abject things: filth, decay, spiders, bats, cobwebs, brews, potions and even cannibalism.”

Embora o curta-metragem seja ambientado na contemporaneidade, dentro de uma pequena comunidade no coração da floresta amazônica, existem alguns elementos que se relacionam com a definição de Creed, a “falta de instituições centralizadas de poder” (1993, p. 76) é uma delas que, claramente, aparecem em todo o curta. Quando Antônia fica doente, a família não procura médicos ou hospitais, mas sim elementos naturais da própria floresta, o que pode ser um sinal de como essa comunidade era remota. Além disso, há uma clara divisão de gênero nas tarefas de trabalho, as mulheres são frequentemente vistas dentro da casa ou desempenham papéis de trabalho menores, a principal atividade econômica, que é a pesca e a comercialização dos peixes, é claramente a tarefa de Felício. Essa divisão, no entanto, não é natural e requer um breve histórico sobre a configuração da colonização no Norte do Brasil. Ela resulta de um processo de violência identitária, quando a Igreja — por meio dos Jesuítas e Capuchinhos — destruiu a configuração nativa de trabalho dos indígenas, o que era mais igualitária quando se trata de gênero (PEREIRA, 2001, p. 25). Depois de impor a tradicional divisão de trabalho masculino-feminino da Europa, as mulheres, como Valquíria, por exemplo, cuja vida econômica se baseava no seu próprio trabalho, tornaram-se estigmatizadas. Isso fica claro através de como os outros personagens tratam-na, incluindo Felício. A mãe de Felício a acusa de ser uma matinta e, claramente, a trata como uma criatura dissimulada e má.

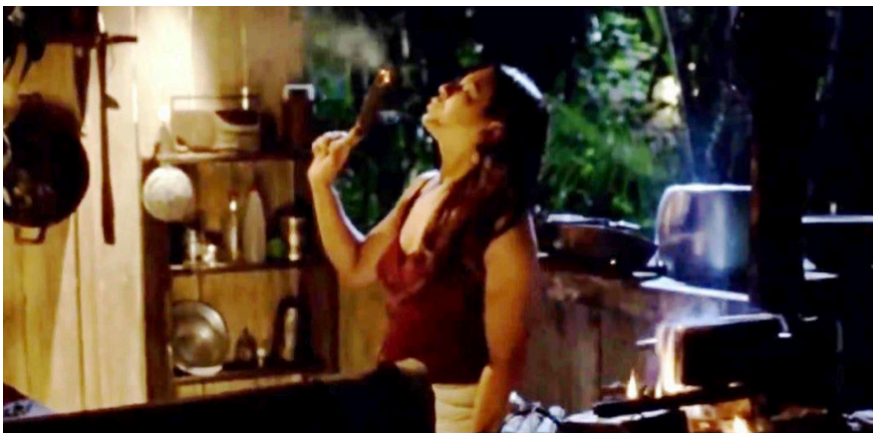


Figura 2 — Valquíria pratica magia amazônica (*Matinta*, 2010).

Essa exibição de poder por Valquíria (Figura 2), por meio da manipulação de diferentes elementos da floresta, também pode ser conectada ao medo dos homens em relação à castração. Os poderes de castração de Valquíria e a busca de

vingança são os principais elementos para subverter os padrões da comunidade que a estigmatiza, são sua própria manifestação da *vagina dentata*. A *vagina dentata* de Valquíria não pode ser dissociada do elemento amazônico que motiva o filme. A cena final revela isso; quando Valquíria se transforma em matinta, o enquadramento do curta-metragem é fortemente influenciado por uma fotografia e estética amazônicas, claramente engolfadas pela floresta tropical; a escuridão das folhas cria uma aura sobrenatural que pode ser relacionada com o sublime burkeano e torna pertinente a evocação do conceito de gótico tropical. A floresta é um elemento necessário para construir o suspense e a característica sobrenatural, sublime que domina o enredo. A própria Valquíria pode ser lida como uma criatura da floresta, um ser primal, que é reforçado pela fonte do curta-metragem, já que a lenda original conta que a matinta também pode se transformar em um pássaro.



Figura 3 — Valquíria na árvore (*Matinta*, 2010).

Uma possível conclusão sobre Valquíria é que ela se constitui como um tipo único de personagem feminino. Embora ela se alinhe com muitos elementos abordados por Creed, ela também é uma personagem muito específica, uma vez que ela não é qualquer tipo de bruxa, mas uma bruxa Amazônica, uma *vagina dentata* tropical, que não pode ser dissociada da floresta que deu origem à sua existência. Valquíria também prova que pode haver um horror, produção sobrenatural com aspectos verdadeiramente amazônicos, no coração da selva. Valquíria prova que o gótico tropical é um discurso e um campo de estudo estéticos e politicamente necessário e que *vaginas dentadas* vivem metaforicamente dentro da selva amazônica.

## Um drinque no inferno: “Knocking on Hell's door”

O gótico tropical também nos levará à próxima personagem a ser analisada neste artigo, Satanico Pandemonium (Salma Hayek), a vampira mexicana do longa-metragem de Rodriguez, que possui fortes elos que conectam à Valquíria. A primeira é da própria Amazônia e o curta-metragem ao qual ela pertence circula entre públicos mais restritos, a segunda é personagem em um filme amplamente conhecido e um marco na história de vampiros cinematográficos. Além disso, considero Satanico Pandemonium uma das mais importantes personagens femininas na história dos filmes de terror, devido à razão de ser não branca dentro de um gênero cinematográfico dominado por atrizes caucasianas. O filme de Rodriguez nos conta a história de uma família sequestrada que é levada ao coração do caos, em um bar de vampiros chamado Titty Twister. O que era supostamente um intervalo em seu sequestro, acaba por se tornar uma luta para sobreviver que começa ao cair da noite e termina ao nascer do sol. Satanico Pandemonium é apresentada como a “dama do macabro, a epítome do mal, a mulher mais sinistra que já dançou sobre a face da terra” e sua cena de dança é uma poderosa exibição de sensualidade e carnalidade que é inovadora na história de filmes de terror gótico.



Figura 4 — Satanico Pandemonium aparece pela primeira vez  
(*Um drinque no inferno*, 1996).

No *mise-en-scène* acima (Figura 4), já se pode vislumbrar elementos do gótico tropical no filme, por exemplo, o cocar de Satanico que está relacionado com o simbolismo dos povos autóctones em todo o continente. Além disso, a cobra que Satanico leva tem forte significado para os indígenas mexicanos e está presente na própria bandeira mexicana. O filme usa esses elementos para reinventar a sensualidade e a beleza no gênero de terror, especialmente nesse grupo de filmes de vampiros, que tradicionalmente se concentra em belezas brancas e europeias.



Figura 5 — Satanico Pandemonium durante sua performance de dança  
(*Um drinque no inferno*, 1996).

A construção da dança de Satanico, embora curta, é muito intensa e simbólica. Considerando que o público ainda não sabe que ela é uma vampira, um monstro que bebe sangue para sobreviver, é central observar o magnetismo de sua dança sensual, a qual cria uma sensação de desejo no olhar do espectador. Todavia, há o detalhe muito sutil do enquadramento da cena acima (Figura 5): Satanico está no plano principal da câmera, mas perto dela, há a figura de um jaguar, um predador e outro animal simbólico da cultura ameríndia. É uma cena de antecipação (prolêpse) quando se considera o papel de Satanico no filme. O filme de Rodriguez está inserido em um ciclo de produção com o maior surgimento de vampiras do sexo feminino (muitas vezes retratadas como predadoras) no cinema de horror e terror. Creed define a categoria da mulher como vampiro, estabelecendo que:

A vampira feminina é abjeta porque rompe a identidade e a ordem; impulsionada por seu desejo de sangue, ela não respeita os ditames da lei que estabelecem as regras da conduta sexual adequada. Como o macho, a vampira fêmea também representa a abjeção porque ela cruza a fronteira entre os vivos e os mortos, o humano e o animal. O animalismo do vampiro é explicitado em sua sede de sangue e no crescimento de seus dois caninos pontiagudos. Por ela não ser completamente animal nem humana, por ela pairar sobre a fronteira entre esses dois estados, ela representa a abjeção.<sup>5</sup> (CREED, 1993, p. 61).

Satanico Pandemonium acaba por ser uma criatura abjeta também. Como uma predadora autêntica, ela deixa seu disfarce humano para trás (Figura 6) quando ela sente o cheiro de sangue, começando então um pandemônio cheio de vampiros, na sequência logo após sua cena de dança sensual:



Figura 6 — Satanico Pandemonium se transforma em sua versão vampírica (*Um drinque no inferno*, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> No original: “The female vampire is abject because she disrupts identity and order; driven by her lust for blood, she does not respect the dictates of the law which set down the rules of proper sexual conduct. Like the male, the female vampire also represents abjection because she crosses the boundary between the living and dead, the human and animal. The vampire’s animalism is made explicit in her bloodlust and the growth of her two-pointed fangs. Because she is not completely animal or human, because she hovers on the boundary between these two states, she represents abjection.”

Ao transformar-se em uma criatura com características de cobra, Satanico encaixa-se na definição de Creed da vampira como um ser abjeto, cuja sede de sangue destrói a ordem das coisas. A encarnação monstruosa de Satanico é seu poder de castração, ela é uma predadora, não aquela que será consumida por homens, mas aquela que os devora. O gótico tropical pode ser aplicado a Satanico, pois ela está inserida em um contexto bastante específico, no qual o vampirismo é interpretado e relido fora do cânone cultural eurocêntrico. O que Robert Rodriguez fez nesse filme, que tem o roteiro de Quentin Tarantino, foi uma releitura de um antigo mito da civilização Maia sobre a casa de morcegos. Todavia, antes de chegarmos ao mito, é necessário compreender as bases culturais da Mesoamérica que nos permitem ler o vampirismo e o gótico tropical no filme. O sacrifício humano é um ritualismo central em muitas sociedades ancestrais mesoamericanas, aparecendo em povos e culturas distintas como os Zapotecas até os Maias. De acordo com M. E. Kampen em *Classic Veracruz Grottesques and Sacrificial Iconography*:

O tema geral mais importante na arte de Veracruz é o ritual de sacrifício humano. Um grande número de sub-temas, incluindo deuses e seus cultos desempenham um papel importante nesta celebração dramática. Três deuses em particular, um morcego-vampiro, um abutre horripilante e um coelho-pulque foram gravados em esculturas e estudados aqui para mostrar como eles explicam o pensamento religioso dos povos clássicos de Veracruz. (KAMPEN, 1978, p. 116).

Para melhor entender o filme de Rodriguez como uma releitura cinematográfica dentro do conceito de gótico tropical, é esclarecedora a análise de Kampen no que tange à mitologia do deus morcego-vampiro, chamado por alguns povos de Camazotz. De acordo com Kampen, o culto ao deus morcego-vampiro, presente em esculturas mesoamericanas, vem da convivência entre os nativos e a espécie de morcego originária das Américas, *Desmodus rotundus*. Ainda segundo o crítico, os povos nativos da Mesoamérica associavam esses seres à escuridão e à morte, mas não os temiam, pelo contrário, os honravam e buscavam manter uma relação de respeito com esses animais, pois, encaravam a morte de forma distinta dos europeus. Essa diferença pode ser vista no modo como o morcego e sua simbologia têm outro sentido para o vampiro eurocêntrico, numa metáfora fortemente associada ao demônio cristão, muitas vezes, influenciada pelo pensamento maniqueísta.

Dentro das crenças nativas envolvendo Camazotz e o morcego-vampiro, também temos a lenda da Casa dos Morcegos dentro da mitologia Maia, que está



profundamente relacionada com o filme de Rodriguez. De acordo com Karl Taube, em *Aztec and Maya Myths: the legendary past* (1993), existe uma lenda específica desse povo narrando a epopeia de dois irmãos heróis, Hunahpu e Xbalanque. Ambos pernoitaram na “Casa de Morcegos” durante sua passagem por Xibalba, o submundo dos povos Maias. O líder desses monstros parecidos com morcegos era Camazotz, o deus morcego da morte. Como uma releitura do antigo mito Maia, o filme de Rodriguez é protagonizado por dois irmãos. Desvinculados de sua típica origem caucasiana e europeia, os vampiros de Rodriguez nos entregam um grande exemplo do que é o gótico tropical. O diretor alia o horror e o sobrenatural à ancestralidade latino-americana, produzindo uma inovação na mitologia cinematográfica do vampiro e um dos mais originais filmes de vampiros contemporâneo.



Figura 7 — Enquadramento final (*Um drinque no inferno*, 1996).

A cena final do filme de Rodriguez (Figura 7) pode ser lida como reveladora do potencial político e discursivo do gótico tropical, no sentido de questionar eurocentrismos e branquitudes. O bar amaldiçoado, Titty Twister, é na verdade um templo meso-americano e assim o filme abre a possibilidade direta de vincular seus vampiros a Camazotz e seu culto ancestral pelos povos nativos meso-americanos. Os cruzamentos culturais comprovam a riqueza das possibilidades de criação dentro do cinema, de uma ficção de terror e horror que explora corpos e discursos étnicos e desconstrói a supremacia branca muitas vezes encontrada dentro do gênero.

## Considerações finais: vampiras, bruxas e *tropicalismo*

Uma bruxa amazônica e uma vampira Maia podem estar geográfica e temporalmente afastadas, mas sua união neste artigo sob o monstruoso feminino, de Creed, e o gótico tropical, de Sá, revela as convergências de ambas como representantes femininas não brancas e étnicas dentro do terror e do horror gótico. Valquíria e Satanico, cada qual a seu modo e dentro do seu contexto, são veículos para discutirmos política, gênero, classe e etnicidade dentro da ficção cinematográfica. Também são personagens importantíssimas para o desenvolvimento de discussões sobre o gótico em realidades não europeias e não anglófonas. Este capítulo buscou debater e desenvolver elementos do gótico tropical cruzado a uma leitura de gênero e revisionista feminista. Acima de tudo este texto espera estimular outros pesquisadores a aventurarem-se e desenvolverem investigações sobre objetos de pesquisa mais multiculturais e descolonizados, ampliando o poder dos estudos sobre terror e horror, expandindo-o em sua importância, presença e tradição na academia brasileira e latino-americana.

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# SIMPÓSIOS DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO (2011 - 2018)

## I SIMPÓSIO DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO (2011)

### The Gothic in Literature and Film: *What is Gothic?*

Segunda, 21 novembro 2011 | Auditório Henrique Fontes | CCE B | UFSC

Keynote: “O gótico como ficção de crime” — **Julio Jeha** (Pós.Lit/UFMG)

#### Apresentações:

- Hyde and Seek: Mr. Hyde's Game of Shadows in Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* — **Fernando Antonio Bassetti Cestaro**
- Gothic as a Cultural Strategy part 1: Southern Gothic — **Joris Lindhout & Maaïke Gouwenberg**
- The Gothic Closet: Queer Monsters in Horror Films — **Diogo Brüggemann**
- What a Nice Vampire! The Deconstruction of the Gothic Vampire: A Study About Bill Compton, from *True Blood* — **Fernanda Farias Friedrich**
- Lesbian Gothic in Graphic Form: Retrieving the Tropes of the ‘Haunted House’ and the ‘Double’ in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* — **Renata Lucena Dalmaso**
- You Call It Madness but I Call It Love: The Relationship between Young Audiences and Vampires — **Lívia Maria Paschoal**
- The Gothic Apocalypse: Gothic elements in *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now* — **Alexander Martin Gross**
- Malleus Mysticorum: the cult of the macabre and the unknown in Andrew Leman's *The Call of Cthulhu* — **George Ayres Mousinho**
- Cannibal Madness or The Lurid Horror of *Survivor Type* — **Matias Corbett Garcez**
- Beware the ballerina... She has not been quite HERSELF lately: the Doppelgänger in *Black Swan* (2010) — **Sarah de Sousa Silvestre**

## II SIMPÓSIO DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO (2015)

### O gênero de terror em perspectivas teóricas

Quinta, 19 novembro 2015 | Auditório Henrique Fontes | CCE B | UFSC

Keynote: O grotesco em literatura e outras linguagens: das margens ao centro do cânone — **Rogério Caetano de Almeida** (DALIC/UTFPR)

### Apresentações:

- *Hamlet* e o gótico — a tragédia, a loucura e o fantasma — **Marina Martins Amaral**
- Vicissitudes de melancolia e de memória em poemas de Edgar Allan Poe e no documentário *Elena* — **Jessé dos Santos**
- O discurso gótico no romance histórico de Walter Scott: um olhar sobre *Ivanhoé* — **Fernanda Korovsky Moura**
- *Drag* e o gótico: manifestações de um discurso subversivo — **Helena Patrícia Hetkowski Hipólito**
- *What's this?:* elementos de horror e humor em *O Estranho Mundo de Jack* — **Ana Olivo**
- *Burn the Witch!*: a bruxa enquanto o Outro em *Penny Dreadful* — **Yasmim Pereira Yonekura**
- Terror/Horror: tortura e terror-ismo de Estado em filmes — **Olegario da Costa Maya Neto**
- O grande jogo do medo: análise de dois episódios de Sherlock em luz das definições de horror/terror — **Patrícia Bronislowski**

### Mesa redonda:

- A espacialidade como dimensão do horror — **Marcio Markendorf** (PPGLit/UFSC)
- O olhar *Queer* no horror: de A hora do pesadelo a *American Horror Story* — **Raphael de Boer** (FURG)
- Terror em séries: o reposicionamento do gênero dentro das ficções seriadas — **Fernanda Friedrich** (PPGLit/UFSC)
- Transformações do cinema de terror na atualidade — **Carla Fonseca Abrão de Barros** (PPGAV/UDESC)

## III SIMPÓSIO DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO (2016)

### O gótico através dos séculos

Segunda, 31 outubro 2016 | Auditório Henrique Fontes | CCE B | UFSC

Keynote: “Horror e as metáforas do contágio” — **Marcio Markendorf** (PPGLit/UFSC)

### Apresentações:

- Grendel: o monstro e o gótico — **Rafael Silva Fouto**
- *Uzumaki*: espiral do horror cósmico — **Ana Carolina da Silva Maciel**

- *Breaking her gothic chains*: A rainha má de *Once Upon A Time* como fruto da Floresta Encantada — **Taisi Viveiros da Rocha**
- Bem-vindos a bordo: o vampiro viajante em *Interview with the Vampire* e *Only Lovers Left Alive* — **Maria Carolina P. Müller**
- *Alma manchada em Sangue Santo*: alienação e ideologia no horror surreal de Alejandro Jodorowsky — **Felipe Maciel Martins**
- *Um estranho no ninho*: uma leitura gótica do filme de Miloš Forman — **Joice Amorim e Vitor Henrique de Souza**
- *Vagina dentata*: casos do feminino monstruoso em *Matinta* e *From Dusk till Dawn* — **Yasmim Pereira Yonekura**
- *Caleb Williams* e *Justiça Política*: conexões entre narrativa e filosofia no gótico — **Peterson Roberto da Silva**

#### Mesa redonda:

- Sombras e sussurros: o estilo *Mythoscope* em adaptações da H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society — **George Ayres Mousinho** (PPGI/UFSC)
- Mistérios e riscos do romance — acerca d’*Os Elixires do Diabo* — **Maria Aparecida Barbosa Heidermann** (PPGLit/UFSC)
- Baudelaire e Poe: influência e tradução — **Gilles Abes** (PPGET/UFSC)

## IV SIMPÓSIO DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO (2017)

### Gótico: 250 anos de horror, excesso e ruínas

Quinta, 23 novembro 2017 | Auditório Henrique Fontes | CCE B | UFSC

Keynote: O mundo de pesadelo de Machado de Assis: deslocamentos do gótico no Brasil — **Sandra Guardini T. Vasconcelos** (PPGL/USP)

#### Apresentações:

- The Gothic Body in *The skin I live in* by Pedro Almodóvar — **Raquel Maysa Keller**
- Patrick McCabe's Bog Gothic and the anesthetised horrors of the mundane in *The Butcher Boy* — **José Eduardo dos Santos**
- “The Monkey’s Paw” through the lenses of Imperial Gothic and Psychoanalysis — **Emanuelle Shock Melo da Silva**
- *A Burrowing Monster*: o monstro feminino na literatura canadense — **Ana Carolina da Silva Maciel**
- Representações góticas em *O cavaleiro das trevas* e *A piada mortal* — **Renato Muchiuti Aranha**

- Lucchetti: gótico e/ou *noir* no Brasil? — **João Paulo Zarelli Rocha**
- *All monsters are human*: terror, medo e perda de direitos em *American Horror Story: Cult* — **Amanda Muniz Oliveira**
- Casos de família: O Gótico entre o suburbano e a comédia em *A Família Addams* — **Yasmim Pereira Yonekura**
- *Jane Eyre* ambivalente: A órfã. A governanta — **Taisi Viveiros da Rocha**
- Vampiro, cidadão do mundo: a diluição das fronteiras em *Entrevista com Vampiro* (1994) e *Amantes Eternos* (2013) — **Maria Carolina P. Müller**
- A obsessão nos contos “O gato preto” e “O coração delator” de Edgar Allan Poe — **Natália Pires da Silva**
- A original Casa do Terror: Universal Pictures e a importância do cinema de horror — **Vitor Henrique de Souza e Joice Amorim**

## V SIMPÓSIO DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO (2018)

### ***Global Gothic*: mapeando expressões góticas pelo mundo**

Quarta, 21 novembro 2018 | Auditório Henrique Fontes | CCE B | UFSC

Keynote: Horace Walpole, para além de *O Castelo de Otranto* — **Luciana Colucci** (DEL/UFMTM)

#### Apresentações:

- *Penny Dreadful*: literary mash-up in Victorian London — **Joice Elise Cardoso de Amorim**
- The child within the adult: the overlap of characters in Mike Flanagan's *Hush* — **Marinho Cristiel Bender**
- Am I playing this game or is it playing me? the Gothic discourse in *Doki Doki Literature Club* — **Elisa Silva Ramos**
- Espaços góticos em *A abadia de Northanger*, de Jane Austen — **Samara Souza da Silva**
- *Harry Potter*: o gótico e a literatura infanto-juvenil — **Natália Alves**
- Blood and shame: unraveling the Gothicism in Eimear McBride's *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* — **Eloísa Dall'belo**
- Entre os mortos e o capital: a crise da urbanização capitalista e o horror no filme “O Corvo” (1994) — **Yasmim Pereira Yonekura**
- *Comte Drácula*: das entrelinhas para os quadrinhos — **Francisca Ysabelle Manriquez Reyes Silveira**

- *Carmilla, the femme fatale?* — **Natália Pires da Silva**
- *It came from the woods: conflito, transformação e insanidade nos quadrinhos de Emily Carroll* — **Ana Carolina da Silva Maciel**
- *A resignificação do vampiro em A garota que anda à noite* — **Vitor Henrique de Souza**







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Desde a publicação de *O castelo de Otranto* (1764), a representação gótica tem sido a materialização do nosso relacionamento apreensivo com o mundo. Desejos inconfessáveis, dissimulações da personalidade, obsessões, neuroses, memórias reprimidas, psicogênias individuais e coletivas, falhas na compreensão da realidade ou realidades além da compreensão, são apenas alguns exemplos dos espectros que nos assombram.

No tempo presente, o gótico surge nas matrizes culturais para falar sobre inquietações e ansiedades que habitam o nosso cotidiano, no qual terror e horror são condições diárias frente ao fim da humanidade como a conhecemos. Apontando para o nosso percurso em direção ao pós-humano ou talvez para a nossa extinção, o gótico contemporâneo se adapta a novas situações, espaços e contextos temporais, tornando-se um modo discursivo presente em diferentes países e culturas.



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