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Liminalita v románu Brama Stokera *Drákula* a dekadentní  
prvky díla

Liminality in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Its Decadent  
Elements

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## **Anotace**

Práce nejprve charakterizuje dekadentní prvky románu Brama Stokera *Dracula* v kontextu pozdně viktoriánské literatury a obecně se pokusí definovat pojem liminalita podle přístupu Arnolda Van Gennepa (*Rites of Passage*) a Victora Turnera (*The Ritual Process*). Jádrem práce bude interpretace kategorie liminality na základě literárněvědné analýzy Stokerova románu, zahrnující vytyčení motivů a témat, které s pojmem liminalita souvisejí, a dále pojetí nadpřirozena a kategorie jinakosti (Otherness, the uncanny), jak je definuje S. Freud v eseji *Das Unheimliche*. Práce se zaměří na téma překračování hranice mezi lidskou sférou a světem nadpřirozena a pokusí se o interpretaci pojmu liminalita v kontextu díla pozdně viktoriánského období.

Klíčová slova: Bram Stoker, liminalita, dekadence, Viktoriánská literatura, nadpřirozeno, Dracula, upír

## **Abstract**

This thesis first characterizes the decadent elements of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* in the context of late Victorian literature and generally tries to define the concept of liminality according to the approach of Arnold van Gennep (*Rites of Passage*) and Victor Turner (*The Ritual Process*). The core of the work is the interpretation of the category of liminality based on a literary analysis of Stoker's novel, including the identification of motifs and themes related to the term liminality, and the concept of the supernatural and the category of otherness (the uncanny) as defined by S. Freud in *Das Unheimliche*. The thesis focuses on the topic of crossing the border between the human sphere and the supernatural world and tries to interpret the concept of liminality in the context of the work of the late Victorian period.

Key words: Bram Stoker, liminality, decadence, the Gothic Victorian literature, the supernatural, Dracula, the vampire

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# 1 Introduction

This thesis is based on my literary analysis of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*. The goal is to recognize the liminal, Gothic, and decadent features of this novel in the context of the late Victorian literary era. The analysis is based on theoretical approaches of liminality by Arnold van Gennep (*The Rites of Passage*) and Victor Turner (*The Ritual Process*) and Sigmund Freud's study of *the Uncanny*.

The first part of this thesis focuses on a summary of Stoker's life, to get an idea about his inspirations and life experience. There is an outline of the author's childhood and school years. Also, his adulthood and career are described as well as his family life. Other literary works are mentioned.

Subsequently, I try to define the general theory of Victorian literature, its historical background, and its main features. This chapter is divided into five parts, each focuses on a different element typical for the Victorian novel. Those parts are listed: *Serialization, Class and Money, Industrialization, Gender and the Woman Question*, and last but not least *Science vs. Religion*.

The next part focuses on a detailed description and general definition of Victorian Gothic as a subgenre of the novel. The main focus is, yet again, on the characteristic features of this genre, which are more precisely classified in the individual parts: *The Narrative, Landscape, Hero and Antihero* (with a focus on the vampire), *The Effects Imposed on the Reader* and finally *The Uncanny* (based on Sigmund Freud's study).

The final part of the theoretical part centres around the general description of liminality. This part is based on the study of liminality provided by the anthropologists Arnold van Gennep (*The Rites of Passage*) and Victor Turner (*The Ritual Process*) and their two publications on this element.

The practical part of this thesis contains the representation of the liminal elements, gothic and decadent features demonstrated on the particular situations and events of Stoker's novel.

## 2 Bram Stoker – Life and Work

Stoker's origin reaches deep into the Irish past and he has quite a rich family history. Stoker used many of his ancestors and his own life experience as an inspiration for his later literary work. Abraham "Bram" Stoker was born on November 8, 1847, in Clontarf, Dublin, as the third of seven children. Thanks to his mother, Charlotte Mathilda Blake Thornley, and her interests and involvement in the social and educational system (concentrated on women), Bram Stoker was able to meet Dr William Wilde (father of Oscar Wilde) later in his life. Charlotte wrote many essays and articles considering the social and educational problems of women at that time. Her opinions and efforts were influential for her son's later works and his view of life. As far as the knowledge of his father's side of the family goes, Abraham Stoker sr. worked for the Irish government. According to the information available, Bram Stoker grew up in a functional middle class and deeply religious family (alongside religion, myths, and legends as inspiration for later work, mainly *Dracula*).

During his early years, Bram Stoker was bound to bedrest caused by a long illness. He was not able to function properly before he turned seven years old. The author himself referred to that time of his life as a great opportunity to be thoughtful and these thoughts influenced his life. Later on, Stoker studied at Trinity College in Dublin where he started at the end of the year 1864. During his college years, the biggest influence from that time must have been Stoker's tutor, Dr George Ferdinand Shaw. Alongside university, Stoker worked full-time in the Civil Service, which resulted in his prolonged studies. For his last couple of years of college education, Stoker moved to London to Lyceum Theatre connected to the Trinity College. In 1870 Bram Stoker graduated as a Bachelor of Arts and five years later he decided to buy himself a Master's degree.

A year later Stoker became a drama critic after his encounter with a newspaper owner Dr. Henry Maunsell. He worked for free in Dublin and wrote many reviews for the paper. He managed to develop a new way of posting those reviews, where his article was always published right after the respective play was performed. After that Stoker maintained his position in another newspaper and personally tried for his own creative literary work to be published. Around that time, he was very close to the Wilde family (William Wilde's death quite affected him) and Walt Whitman.

Thanks to his ongoing connections to societies surrounding Trinity College Stoker got the opportunity of a lifetime in 1876, when he met Henry Irving, an actor and a theatre owner. These two artists met many times after that again and in 1878 Stoker became an Acting Manager of Irving's Lyceum Theatre, this spot he administered for 27 years. Before he accepted the position, Stoker married Florence Balcome, an Oscar Wilde's former partner. Their marriage was hurried due to Stoker's new job. They both moved to London, where a year later their only son was born on 31<sup>st</sup> December. During his years at the Lyceum, aside from Irving, Stoker met many interesting and inspiring personalities, such as James Abbott McNeill Whistler or Sir Author Conan Doyle.

When it comes to Stoker's literary work, some of his short stories were published in newspapers and magazines, while he still lived in Dublin. Later *Under the Sunset* (1881), a collection of short stories, was published in London and also Stoker's better known works like *The Snake's Pass* (1890), *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911) and mainly *Dracula* (1897) the most famous and celebrated novel. Bram Stoker died at his home in London on April 20, 1912, at the age of sixty-four.

Asking about Stoker's inspiration behind *Dracula*, as mentioned before, the main influence came from the author's hard childhood, his long illness, his religious upbringing, and overall the myths and legends connected to the place he grew up in (the seaside). Some of the features came from his later life, as in his reportedly non-sexual relationship with his wife Florence Balcome and her health issues. The model for the character of Count Dracula himself was Stoker's friend Henry Irving. Although Stoker started his writing of the novel much sooner the main time investment into the novel happened to be during his holiday in Cruden Bay, a small village in Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MURRAY, Paul. *From the Shadow of Dracula: A Life of Bram Stoker*. Pimlico, 2005.



### 3 The Victorian Novel

The Victorian era opens with the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837 and closes with the Queen's death at the turn of the century in 1901. The Victorian literature is a part of literary history that does not come with much of a change, apart from a highly distinctive increase of popularity of a new genre, the novel. There were some conflicts regarding the direction novels should follow, whether they should remain faithful to romance, show moral principles, inform about society and its problems, or head in the direction of providing a connection between aesthetics and realism.<sup>2</sup>

In the early times, fictional works were feared. Novels were considered to be very influential and potentially dangerous for their readers as the stories offered unusual ideas of unrealistic opportunities. Literary works, the so-called novels of fiction, were marked as "*a kind of Devil's Bible*"<sup>3</sup> at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in some regions were even prohibited. Later on, novels became the most important and powerful of all literary genres. That occurred mainly as a consequence of the major economic growth of the country. As a result of the increasing prosperity, cities were getting bigger, the market was more concentrated and more easily accessible paper making and printing processes lowered the cost of books. Apart from the economic aspects, literacy was growing among the population due to the 1870 Education Act.<sup>4</sup> Another reason for the growing popularity of novels of fiction, and reading in general, was the vanishing need to buy popular and rather expensive books due to the accessible possibility of borrowing desired book in a local library for a reasonable price.<sup>5</sup>

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century gender roles were strongly distinct. The society of prevalent middle-class families significantly defined the role of a man as the breadwinner, and a woman as the housewife. This strictly ruled social environment provided one, quite suitable, getaway, novels of fiction, stories that offered insight on amusement and interest. The average reader was mainly noncritical, there was no need for "high literature", no desire for "art for art's sake". This created a huge gap between intellectual, aesthetically, and psychologically

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<sup>2</sup> DAVID, Deidre. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> DAVID, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> DAVID, p. 17-19.

<sup>5</sup> BRATLINGER, P. & THESING, W. B. *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, p. 16.

pleasing works and stories that served as a means of relaxation and dreaming.<sup>6</sup> However, there were some unwritten rules that authors, publishers, and editors subconsciously followed, such as avoiding anything sexual and enforcing specific ideas about class, gender, and the classical British character. *“Nothing should appear in a novel that a middle-class British father would be ashamed to read aloud to his family or that might make his young daughter blush.”*<sup>7</sup>

The ability to converse about popular and most recent works of literature very much shown a person’s “cultural capital” and therefore showed proof of one’s social status and their level of education and cultural awareness. Even though higher levels of literacy became quite standard in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, sharing reading experiences was still rather a part of the upper- and middle-class everyday life. Overall, regardless social class, level of education or intellect, reading works of fiction provided a kind of reassurance on one’s beliefs and helped people identify themselves with a specific part of society. Novels not only offered an opportunity to ensure one’s way of living but also provided new ideas, thoughts, and feelings for one to face in their own comfort of privacy and certainty of danger-free experience.<sup>8</sup>

The Victorian era was a time of great changes, not only in the economic and education department but also in the social and equality-concerned area of people’s lives. It was a time of newly forming movements fighting for better conditions for working-class people and equality between men and women.<sup>9</sup> All these factors affected the direction in which literature was developing.

### **3.1 Main Features of the Victorian Novel**

Like every other era in the history of literature, the period of the Victorian novel has its own relevant features, other than just a specific time of creation and release, that link the majority of works from this historical period together. The Victorian novel is represented by many sub-genres, such as a historical novel or a science novel and everything in between.

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<sup>6</sup> DAVID, Deidre. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, p. 19-20.

<sup>7</sup> BRATLINGER, P. & THESING, W. B. *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> DAVID, p. 31-34.

<sup>9</sup> LEDGER, S. & MCCRACKEN. *Cultural Politics of the Fin de Siècle*, p. 5-7.

### 3.1.1 Serialization

In the eighteenth century, there was a big diversity of the physical form of all the novels, the number of volumes varied between one and countless. The Victorian era brought a fairly stable number of three to four volumes of per first edition of a novel. The prices remained rather high for an average work-classer.<sup>10</sup> To lower the price and widen the audience of readers, publishers and authors began to search for new options. One of the first ones was "*partial-publication*", which in a nutshell consisted of monthly publishing of short texts (parts of a soon-to-be novel) alongside etchings or other forms of illustrations. This was the case of a majority of novels written by Charles Dickens. The second means of making fiction more accessible to readers was "*serialization in magazines*". The magazines usually brought two illustrated series by the most popular authors alongside other materials suitable for families. In the beginning, these magazines were usually published monthly. Last but not least, appeared two kinds of "*reprint series*", "*collected editions of popular novelists' previously published works*" and "*libraries*", which "*reprinted the works of several different authors*".<sup>11</sup>

This brings us back to the three-volume series which were replaced by these methods of gradual publishing. Usually, the already published pieces of a novel were collected and reprinted in one volume as a single novel. This resulted in the omnipresence of the most favourite novelists. Serialization also enabled a closer author-reader contact and opened the possibility to influence the plot of a novel. This process required the authors to think in the scope of both small parts and one complex piece.<sup>12</sup>

All the previous processes of bringing the novel closer to its reader were possible because of the technical development happening during the Victorian era such as mechanization of papermaking and printing processes. Novels used to be transported and distributed by the extensive railway system in order to reach the desired audience and to offer easier access for the readers.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> DAVID, Deidre. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> BRATLINGER, P. & THESING, W. B. *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> BRATLINGER, P. & THESING, p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> BRATLINGER, P. & THESING, p. 18-19.

### 3.1.2 Class and Money

During the Victorian period, the people of the United Kingdom identified with a social and economic class, this did not occur in every country in the world, but the Victorians were super status focused. This class self-identification as well as other social differences and partitions such as gender, race or ethnicity were a direct result of division of labour and the importance of money. Regarding the existing differences in the society authors frequently used these social issues as the themes of their works. *"The great novelists saw the world in terms of social groups or classes in contact and often in conflict, in which no private life was not determined by a wider public life."*<sup>14</sup> This public life was highly determined by the class one was born into. All these relations are frequently shown in the works of literature. The focus of literary works was directed on the struggles of different class members and their opportunities to get out of their assigned positions in the society.<sup>15</sup>

The upper class consisted primarily of the aristocracy and gentry whose income was dependent on the land ownership. Later, the circle of the highest part of the society was extended by families who accumulated fortunes thanks to commerce and industry. The newly expanding middle class contained those engaged in professions or trade (banking, manufacturing, retail), e.g. the people who owned capital or stock. The base of the population as well as the most populous was the working class, there were people whose property depended mainly on their labour. Despite this quite strict social hierarchy, new forms of social mobility appeared in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Britain but the prevalent warranty of one's social status stayed in the force of ancestry. This cast shadows on the lives of those who achieved the desired higher status but were still looked down at.<sup>16</sup>

With the rising of the middle class, new focus came in view. In this sense, many authors tried to document the everyday life of working-class members in a very realistic way. These authors were focused on the ignorance of the upper classes towards the issues that the labourers had to deal with (poor hygiene and accommodation, long working-hours, child-labour, etc.). With the society's focus

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<sup>14</sup> BRATLINGER, P. & THESING, W. B. *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> BRATLINGER, P. & THESING, p. 53-57.

<sup>16</sup> O'GOARMAN, Francis. *A Concise Companion to the Victorian Novel*. p. 47-50.

on the class authors often tried to show the newly occurring possibilities of moving up through the social hierarchy.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.1.3 Industrialization

Industrialization gave people not only new materials, factories, railroads, and steam engines but also new ways of thinking and perceiving the world. Everything became faster and change was omnipresent. The rise of literacy shows *“the mutual dependence of the cultures of information and industrialism”*<sup>18</sup>, the novel served as an example of this relationship. Authors were focused on politics and morality, which is shown in the perfect description of their characters and situations frequently occurring in people’s lives.<sup>19</sup>

Hand in hand with industrialization goes urbanization. People started to move from the countryside to big industrial cities to find a better life. Many authors, such as Charles Dickens or Frances Trollope, picked up the poor conditions of the working-class people and through detailed descriptions in their novels tried to draw attention of the upper classes towards these crucial issues. *“In fiction as well as in non-fiction it was the poor, the criminal, and the diseased who elicited the most interest.”*<sup>20</sup> The main focus of these so-called social-problem novels was on the people who were pushed out of sight of the upper and middle class.<sup>21</sup>

The beginning of this literary era was ruled by technology, capitalism, and rapid change. Later, people started to focus more on nation, empire, and identity with the industrial culture in the background.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.1.4 Gender and the Woman Question

As a result of the non-existence of severe natural disasters that would threaten the country during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the population was growing younger and people were getting married at an early age. Men and women were assigned strict rules and norms, that were highly supported by the society. Men were considered the head of the society, the household and the source of wellbeing. On the other hand,

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<sup>17</sup> DAVID, Deidre. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, p. 77-81.

<sup>18</sup> DAVID, p. 77.

<sup>19</sup> DAVID, p. 77-78.

<sup>20</sup> DAVID, p. 78.

<sup>21</sup> DAVID, p. 78-93.

<sup>22</sup> DAVID, p. 93-95.

women were bound to their husbands and represented possible reasons behind their men's failure. The concept of gender was dependent on the economic aspect of one's position within the society. As for the middle-class, or the ruling class, gender was considered the means of securing the reproduction, in contrast stood the working-class where gender figured as a means of regulating sexual reproduction. The novel brings up these roles as something that is necessary and quite natural, but at the same time criticises the strictness and seriousness given to these positions ("*moral norms, family structure, household organization and marriage rules*"<sup>23</sup>) by the society.<sup>24</sup>

Some authors, such as the Brontë sisters or Charles Dickens, viewed gender roles from a different perspective. The Brontë sisters showed the independence and strength a woman desired and possibly achieved as well as the shift of the roles men and women were assigned. Dickens demonstrated the means of a female character to succeed in the world due to their likeability and emotional foundation. In this sense, the relationship between a man and a woman was similar to one of an owner and an object. In the end, the novel showed that these roles and relationships could be reversed and both sides were dependent on one another and each was at the same time the owner and the object. Overall, the novel never established "a suitable middle-class men" but put the femininity into a new position and redefined it as something active and passionate. The Victorian novel showed a woman as someone whose identity and family integrity were dependent on choosing "*a man she could both marry and desire*".<sup>25</sup>

Industrialization gave women new opportunities outside their homes. Women became financially independent by entering the services and achieving university education. This led to discussions around voting rights and moral standards. It gave the world of literature a whole new genre 'New Woman fiction'.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> DAVID, Deidre. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, p. 100-101.

<sup>24</sup> DAVID, p. 97-101.

<sup>25</sup> DAVID, p. 101-113.

<sup>26</sup> DAVID, p. 94.

### 3.1.5 Science vs. Religion

Serving ideas or intellectual propositions was not the predominant and obvious intent of the Victorian novel. The whole intellectual debate, the study was hidden in the social relations and domestic manners described in the majority of literary works. The most prominent subjects of the intellectual debate seemed to be the battle between science and religion. Science offered a new outlook on reality and partially caused “religious doubt” among the population. People began to feel the disconnection of religious and social institutions from moral sensibility. The public was fascinated with the optimism of undergoing social reform which went against their religious beliefs of the Christian God. The biggest influence of the science came with a series of discoveries that put into question doctrinal divine creation and separation of man and animal.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the “religious doubt” people were attending church and services. Religion was still an indispensable part of Victorian everyday life and the uncertainty mainly occurred in literary fiction in a form of doubting the value of religion in life or considering possible changes, which were needed in the institutions as well as their lack of belonging. Authors often tried to transfer religious values into social and moral rules. In further examination, we can see, that science tried to do the same, it tried to imply moral values within its subjects.<sup>28</sup>

Novelists were very often familiar with the works and publications of scientific discoveries (the most important and influential works were Charles Darwin’s *On the Origins of Species* and the work of Sigmund Freud). This knowledge provided them with an effective ability to incorporate scientific methods and procedures into their works of literature. Darwin’s theory gave a new viewpoint on human will as a means of change and progress (but not necessarily) and positivism, the new philosophical movement, connected science and fiction by emphasising the importance of clear scientific observation and description. Under the influence of science came to life the literary genres of science fiction and novels of naturalism.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> DAVID, Deidre. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, p. 212-214.

<sup>28</sup> DAVID, p. 214-217.

<sup>29</sup> DAVID, p. 217-223.

The most prominent phenomena of ‘something’ between religion and science was Spiritualism. Spiritualism believed in the existence of spirits of the dead present in our world. This concept stood in between science and religion, but neither of these established institutions wanted to accept this discipline. Spiritualism came into Victorian England from the US and found its place within the society regardless of the scientific and industrial progress. People often hold séances with mediums and tried to reach the spirits of their loved ones.<sup>30</sup>

The biggest problem with accepting spiritualism occurred in the ways of manifestations of the spirit, which usually happened through a medium and in a circle of believers, there was no way to create a pure scientific environment to recreate this “experiment”. These spiritual appearances had no rational scientific explanation. Comparing science, with its clear results and repeatable methods, and Spiritualism, with its specific and very non-scientific conditions and no natural law connection and explanation, was nearly impossible let alone joining these two disciplines.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> NOAKES, Richard. *Spirituality, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain*, p. 23-27.

<sup>31</sup> NOAKES, p. 27-39.



## 4 The Victorian Gothic

The genre of Gothic fiction came to existence the late 18<sup>th</sup> century but its development started way before that and proceeded to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The classical period was significant by the society's effort to dissociate itself from the troubled Middle Ages, derogatorily called 'Gothic'. This historical period wanted to distance itself from the time full of barbarism, superstition, wildness, and ignorance (Middle Ages) by emphasizing rationality, cultivation, maturity, realism, simplicity, and propriety. Gothic fiction went against the strict rules in reaction to the sudden change of the world. Industrialization, urbanization, science, and revolutions started to trigger people's integrity and sense of belonging. The Gothic represented the inner feeling of uncertainty (of the character of power, law, sexuality, society, family), anxiety present in the society also led the Gothic forward to "*an aesthetics based on feeling and emotion*". Gothic fiction focused on all kinds of imaginative objects and fears in or beyond nature filled with "*the supernatural and the ridiculous, the magical and the nightmarish, the fantastic and the absurd*".<sup>32</sup>

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, fiction was more aptly called 'Gothic romance' due to its connection to medieval romantic narratives full of love, adventure, and knights. As was told in the previous chapter about the Victorian era novels were reserved for morally enriching and serious works. That is why any kind of Gothic writing was considered inappropriate and morally corrupting. Despite the critiques, the number of readers increased as these tales were offering blurred boundaries between reality and imagination as well as all the circumstances, that would not appear in real life.<sup>33</sup> "*Gothic style became the shadow that haunted neoclassical values, running parallel and counter to its ideas of symmetrical form, reason, knowledge and propriety.*"<sup>34</sup>

One of the direct precursors of the Gothic novel was so-called graveyard poetry whose main focus was on grave and churchyards, night, death, ruins, ghosts, and anything despised by the rational culture. The authors of graveyard poetry used

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<sup>32</sup> BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*, p. 2-16.

<sup>33</sup> BOTTING, p. 16-20.

<sup>34</sup> BOTTING, p. 21.

darkness, gloom, and night to show the possibility of disruption of the enlightened neoclassical perception. The early works represented warnings for the godless and demonstrated the importance of faith as well as overcoming materialism and fear of mortality. Apart from the Graveyard school, the Gothic novel was vastly inspired by Shakespeare, bards, and minstrels, which erased the importance of the moral message.<sup>35</sup>

To get closer to prose we have to look at the literature of sentimentalism. The sentimental novel was a genre popular in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, starting with Jane Austen and Samuel Richardson. These works were based on the finest emotions and self-consciousness of its characters. "*The strength of sentimentalism, (...), was the minute and detailed observation of emotions...*"<sup>36</sup>. The popularity of sentimental literature revealed the passion and emotional desire people were lacking in the restrictions of the strict neoclassical focus on reason.<sup>37</sup>

The 'real' Gothic novel started with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, this book mixed realism with romance and by embodying the supernatural officially started the Gothic fiction. The author used the supernatural to show absurdity and irony, not to terrify.<sup>38</sup> Walpole also started the 'fashion' of anonymity of the author with his preface, which was a work of fiction on its own. *The House of Otranto* established the features of all later-appearing Gothic novels.<sup>39</sup>

Stories of the Victorian Gothic fiction were influenced by "*anxiety about social degradation, religion, and scientific advancement*"<sup>40</sup>. Authors were fascinated by degenerated characters of madmen and sexual deviants.<sup>41</sup> Ideas shifted from the supernatural towards family values and history, home life and sentimentalism, urban and industrial context all close to the predominant middle-class audience. Even though authors worked with the past and history and let reaper things long gone and forgotten, they never escaped the concerns of their own times.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*, p. 21-25.

<sup>36</sup> PUNTER, David. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fiction from 1865 to the present*, p. 26.

<sup>37</sup> PUNTER, p. 25-27.

<sup>38</sup> PUNTER, p. 43-46.

<sup>39</sup> BOTTING, p. 31-33.

<sup>40</sup> BACKHOUSE, Sarah. *Narrative Temporality in 'Dracula'*, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> BACKHOUSE, p. 4-5.

<sup>42</sup> BOTTING, p. 1-4, 80.

## 4.1 The Narrative

Many authors used the first-person narrative to exclude themselves as the omniscient narrator. This technique enabled the creation of strictly subjective storytelling, which helped to engage the audience and keep them uncertain.<sup>43</sup>

As a work of fiction, every Gothic novel has its own fantasy world. The reader gets an opportunity to engage in the visualization of a completely different space than that of everyday life experience. *“A novel’s reader simultaneously assembles its fictional world and learns the norms implicit in its inclusions and omissions.”*<sup>44</sup> The Gothic is known to combine and contrast the real world with its own fantastic one creating parallels and new places. Fragmentation of the narrative provides flexibility and helps to carry the illusion and mystery.<sup>45</sup>

The authors of the Gothic highly supported superstitious beliefs and often used myths, legends, and folklore as the base of their narratives. To create a fearful atmosphere, scenes full of terror, such as murders, betrayal, and usurpation were used. Gothic fiction seems to celebrate the felonious behaviour, violence, and selfish fulfilment of a desire. This emotional stimulation blurred the boundaries between right and wrong, reason and imagination, and created a whole new world, where everything was possible.<sup>46</sup>

There is a certain importance of ambivalence, *“good depends on evil, light on dark, reason on irrationality in order to define limits”*<sup>47</sup>. Gothic fiction combined and compared opposite values and entities to create the *“dynamic of limit and transgression”*<sup>48</sup>. The shift of themes towards social misfits and struggles cast light on the dangers of the modern world. The Victorian Gothic authors endeavoured to substitute the supernatural with scientific machines, experiments, and mishaps to create the uncertainty and ambivalence of happenings.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*, p. 111-112.

<sup>44</sup> KEEN, Suzanne. *Victorian Renovations of the Novel: Narrative Annexes and the Boundaries of Representation*, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> KEEN, p. 11-35.

<sup>46</sup> BOTTING, p. 4-5.

<sup>47</sup> BOTTING, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> BOTTING, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> BOTTING, p. 80-83.

## 4.2 The Landscape

The earlier forms of Gothic fiction from the late 1790s were full of wildness and nature. Creating a gloomy and mysterious atmosphere was the key to the Gothic. Authors usually used dark forests and mountains as a means of building a fearful and uneasy environment. Other places like old castles with long enigmatic corridors or graveyards and abbeys were used to create the feeling of something familiar but at the same time strange and haunted.<sup>50</sup>

Later with industrialization and urbanizations, medieval castles and forests were replaced by old houses and dark mazes of streets of big cities. Regardless of the period, the landscape was supposed to suggest the doubtless presence of violence and danger and blend the boundaries between society and wildness, culture, and nature.<sup>51</sup>

## 4.3 The Hero and Antihero

The heroes of the Gothic fiction were inspired by the romance and often marched with the villain. On the other hand, a new type of hero, the detective, appeared in the Gothic time with the popularization of criminal fiction. The hero was often searching for something, whether it was love, independence, or self-knowledge. Like every other aspect of the Gothic, even the hero is ambivalent.<sup>52</sup>

Before the Victorian era, the Gothic villains were exemplified by the aristocrats as threats of power and terror from the past to gain the interest of the growing middle-class audience. Other villainized characters in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Gothic fiction were represented by "*spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, monks and nuns*" all representing "*figures of imagined and realistic threats.*"<sup>53</sup> The list was extended later in the Victorian era, thanks to the progress in science and industry and growing social awareness, by "*scientists, fathers, husbands, madmen, criminal*

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<sup>50</sup> BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*, p. 1-4.

<sup>51</sup> BOTTING, p. 1-4, 84-85.

<sup>52</sup> BOTTING, p. 38-39, 80-83, 113.

<sup>53</sup> BOTTING, p. 2.

and monstrous double”<sup>54</sup>. The villains were represented by characters threatening the home and society, often selfish full of wrong desires and flaws.<sup>55</sup>

### 4.3.1 The Vampire

“The origins of the vampire were explained as fears of the Plague, thought, since the Middle Ages, to have emanated from the East.”<sup>56</sup> The vampire embodies the degradation of the imperial race, gender, and disease. Stories featuring vampires are very gender distinct and at the same time fluent. Female body/gender is prevalently considered to be the dangerous and disrupting one. Human contact with the vampire is also gender distinct, as women are the victims, men tend to get ill, feminine (weak, pale, thin) after encountering a male vampire.<sup>57</sup>

The vampire is the mixture of mythology and modernism, mysterious and scientific images of horror, sexuality, and violence. The vampire represents human vanity and scientific tricks resulting in barbarities. Symptoms occurring within the attacked/infected are explained and handled by scientific approach and reason, which usually do not work. This shows the scepticism surrounding science. In this sense, vampires embody new sexual threats (STDs) and taboos.<sup>58</sup> Victims are presented as the responsible ones for their suffering as if they were “asking for it”.<sup>59</sup>

Vampires mainly represent sexuality as an ambivalent feature of human nature. Female vampires show the desire and dangers of independent femininity. In *Dracula* “the principal vampire is male”, which distorts the natural law of reproduction and unveils the sexual mobility of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from sexuality, vampires also resemble family history, bound by blood and hour, through their immortality and uncertain descent.<sup>60</sup>

The vampire is a foreigner. Representing “the other race” they serve as an instrument showing the threats of mixing of the blood. This mirrors the present anxiety of losing national integrity and the leading role of the empire, as well as

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<sup>54</sup> BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> BOTTING, p. 1-4, 80.

<sup>56</sup> BOTTING, p. 95.

<sup>57</sup> LEDGER, S. & MCCRACKEN, S. *Cultural Politics of the Fin de Siècle*, p. 202-204.

<sup>58</sup> BOTTING, p. 93-97.

<sup>59</sup> LEDGER, S. & MCCRACKEN, p. 207.

<sup>60</sup> BOTTING, p. 94-95.

racism. The wealth of a vampire comes from the suffering and blood of others, has a foreign and barbaric origin. The vampire is something strange, that brings destruction to the modern world.<sup>61</sup>

Vampires in fiction also enable permeability of science, occultism, and religious values. To destroy a vampire, a sacred object and knowledge of mythology are needed. To terminate a vampire's life a kind of a "barbaric" ritual is vital, to restore humanity, subjectivity, and moral values. Vampires and their victims are degraded to something inhuman, in fact, to "a thing".<sup>62</sup>

#### **4.4 The Effects Imposed on the Reader**

The main goal of the Gothic was to spike strong emotions and feelings of uneasiness and fear in the reader. The occurrence of all the horror-like situations inspired by everyday lives was supposed to reinforce the values and to underline the necessity of compliance with the (violated) rules in real life. In this way, the Gothic fiction served as a warning to the reader and society and showed the fatal results of neglecting social regulations. There was this sense of the importance of the reader's self-identification with the heroes which let them both<sup>63</sup> "*manage to return with an elevated sense of identity to the solid realities of justice, morality and social order*"<sup>64</sup>.

It was often hard for the reader to see the real from the imaginative and later by focusing the narrative on the social misfits it was difficult to distinguish between a description of psychological disturbance and deeper disruptions of normality. By showing states of alienation and situating the heroes at the bounds of normalcy, Gothic fiction aimed to induce the feeling of national liability and social integrity as well as anchor spiritual beliefs, in a way. The usage of horror-like conditions was supposed to oppose the machinery of oppressive industrial capitalism.

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<sup>61</sup> LEDGER, S. & MCCRACKEN, p. 211-217.

<sup>62</sup> BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*, p. 97-98.

<sup>63</sup> BOTTING, p. 1-6.

<sup>64</sup> BOTTING, p. 5.

## 4.5 The Uncanny

The uncanny (in German *unheimlich*), is a term used by psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud. It labels anything “*that arouses dread and creeping horror; it is equally certain, too, that the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with whatever excites dread. (...) The uncanny is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar.*”<sup>65</sup> This term on its own is ambiguous, it describes something familiar, pleasant, and at the same time, something kept out of view, hidden. Everything that is supposed to stay hidden and suddenly comes to light can be marked as uncanny.<sup>66</sup>

In connection to the Gothic narrative feeling of uncanny can be best developed by letting the reader debate whether a certain being is alive, if it is a human or machine. Another means of creating an uncanny atmosphere is a reappearance of something different in a critical situation. As well as a reader’s uncertainty whether the world of the story is real or purely fictional. This keeps the illusion, as long as the settings is treated as realistic.<sup>67</sup>

The theme of the double is very effective in creating the uncanny feeling. The first double of a human was the immortal soul. It declines the finality of death. The double and involuntary reappearance of situations is accompanied by feelings of uneasiness and combined with strange coincidences provoke the dread which results in the uncanny. Another instigator of the uncanny is related to death and the return of the spirits. This is a result of our emotional reactions and the uncertainty of scientific knowledge. “*Biology has not yet been able to decide whether death is the inevitable fate of every living being or whether it is only a regular but yet perhaps avoidable event in life.*”<sup>68</sup> The fear of death is supported by people’s beliefs in the reappearance of evil spirits.<sup>69</sup>

“*The uncanny is nothing else than a hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and then emerged from it.*”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> FREUD, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> FREUD, p. 1-4.

<sup>67</sup> FREUD, p. 4-7.

<sup>68</sup> FREUD, p. 13.

<sup>69</sup> FREUD, p. 9-14.

<sup>70</sup> FREUD, p. 15.

## 5 Liminality

The term liminality comes from a Latin word *limen*, meaning threshold. Liminality is used in anthropological theory to describe “*the transitional period or phase of a rite of passage, during which the participant lacks social status or rank, reminds anonymous, shows obedience and humility, and follows prescribed forms of conduct, dress, etc.*”<sup>71</sup> Any process of passage or has three phases: “*rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation*”<sup>72</sup>.

The first phase of transition involves “*symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions, or from both*”<sup>73</sup>. The second phase is the liminal one, which means that the passenger is ambiguous. The one passing through is in a stage ‘in-between’, the characteristics of this ‘in-between’ do not correspond with those of the past neither of the future state. In the third stage of regression the passage is completed. The passenger leaves his past state and the state ‘in between’ and is yet again in a stable one, where is expected to follow rules and behave in a certain way.<sup>74</sup>

The rites of passage can be very distinct and of different types. The main ones (at least for this thesis) are the territorial passage and the passage of individuals and groups.

The territorial passage is concerned with natural boundaries (stones, branches, thresholds, gates, walls, etc.) and the neutral zone separating two different borders. By crossing the boundary and stepping into the neutral zone, one finds themselves, for a limited period of time, in between two worlds, one leaves behind and enters the other one. There are several rituals connected to the territorial passage e.g. “*threshold sprinkled with blood or with purifying water; (...) sacred objects are hung or nailed into them as on the architrave*”. The threshold is a boundary between two worlds and by crossing it one unites oneself with a whole new world.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Dictionary. com. R: July 2, 2020, From: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/liminality>.

<sup>72</sup> GENNEP, van Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup> TURNER, Victor. *The Ritual process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, p. 94.

<sup>74</sup> TURNER, p. 94-95.

<sup>75</sup> GENNEP, p. 15-20.



The passage of an individuals and groups is circled around social boundaries and hierarchies. *“An individual or group that does not have an immediate right, by birth or through specially acquired attributes, to enter a particular house and to become established in one of its sections is in a state of isolation.”*<sup>76</sup> For a great amount of people a stranger is something to fear, to avoid or on the contrary to help them out of their isolation. The liminal phase occurs during the first encounters, where the stranger gets an opportunity to be incorporated.<sup>77</sup>

The qualities of *“liminality of liminal personae (“threshold people”) are necessarily ambiguous”*<sup>78</sup>, which means that these people and conditions escape the structures that anchor positions in cultural space. Liminal objects (neophytes) slip the positions appointed by *“law, custom, convention, and ceremonial”*.<sup>79</sup> Their indeterminable attributes are communicated by a variety of symbols which frequently links liminality *“death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun and moon”*<sup>80</sup>. Liminal entities can be recognized through some characteristics: they have no status, possess nothing are passive and humble, must obey and accept any punishment, and wear no distinctive clothing. All this to enable the process of adopting their new and final role in life. Neophytes are usually very close, friendly, and egalitarian among themselves creating co-called ‘communitas’, a community of equals. These ‘communitas’ submits to the ruling *“authority of the ritual elders”*.<sup>81</sup> This relationship suggest the importance of the bond between people in a society.<sup>82</sup> *“Liminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low.”*<sup>83</sup>

Another feature of liminality is the ‘sexlessness’ of the passengers, the initiated. They are dressed the same and referred to by the same name. Which corresponds to the togetherness and egalitarianism of their ‘communitas’ and their status-less position. Hand in hand with this attribute goes sexual continence, which is the result

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<sup>76</sup> GENNEP, van Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*, p. 26.

<sup>77</sup> GENNEP, p. 26-40.

<sup>78</sup> TURNER, Victor. *The Ritual process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, p. 95.

<sup>79</sup> TURNER, p. 95.

<sup>80</sup> TURNER, p. 95.

<sup>81</sup> TURNER, p. 96.

<sup>82</sup> TURNER, p. 95-97.

<sup>83</sup> TURNER, p. 97.

of the transitioning, it marks the new position defined by sexual polarity and ends gender fluency. Silence and blankness are also important to understand the process of transition. The liminal entities' minds and personalities are supposed to be wholly recreated and rewritten in order to be prepared for their new positions and responsibilities and to prevent any kind of abuse of their newly acquired privileges.<sup>84</sup> *"The powers that shape the neophytes in liminality for the incumbency of new status are felt (...) to be more than human powers, though they are invoked and channelled by the representatives of the community."*<sup>85</sup>

The importance of motherhood and fatherhood in one's life is significant. While patrilineality is the source of a person's social status, property, and power, matrilineality represents the worm heart of an accepting community. Masculinity is associated with water, semen, and other bodily fluids which represent fertility. On the other hand, femininity is *"linked with blood ant through blood"*<sup>86</sup>. These values and positions get to a person who undertakes the process of transition and define them in their newly acquired status.<sup>87</sup> *"Structure is universally associated with patriliney and masculinity, and communitas with materilaterality and femininity"*<sup>88</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> TURNER, Victor. *The Ritual process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, p. 102-104.

<sup>85</sup> TURNER, p. 106.

<sup>86</sup> TURNER, p. 23.

<sup>87</sup> TURNER, p. 113-123.

<sup>88</sup> TURNER, p. 120.

## 6 *Dracula* as a work of Victorian Gothic

According to the date of publishing (1897), Stoker's novel *Dracula* belongs among the works of Victorian Gothic. This chapter is going to demonstrate as many Gothic features as possible through the authentic text as the story goes. It is not always achievable to separate the decadent and Gothic features from liminality, thus some examples are going to be a combination of these two structures.

### 6.1 Jonathan's Stay at Castle Dracula

Jonathan Harker, one of the main protagonists of the book tells his story through diary entries. As he arrives in the East, he describes the population as the most superstitious of all. During his several encounters with the Carpathians, this assumption is proven to be true. As an enlightened modern man, Jonathan finds these fears interesting but ridiculous and notes<sup>89</sup>: "*Mem., I must ask the count (...)*"<sup>90</sup>

The first feelings of the uncanny creep to Jonathan as soon as he meets the Golden Krone Hotel owners and asks them about the Count. Both of them look very worried and try to keep their communication with him on a minimum. The day Jonathan is supposed to leave the woman comes to try and warn him giving him her crucifix pendant, which more than surely scares him.<sup>91</sup> "*Whether it is the old lady's fear, I do not know, but I am not feeling nearly as easy in my mind as usual. If this book should ever reach Mina before I do, let it bring my goodbye. Here comes the coach!*"<sup>92</sup>

The real dark and spooky atmosphere emerges as Jonathan gets closer to the Count's home. The coach goes through the mountains and the day nears the night. The hills and trees cast weird shadows and change from a beautiful view to a scary place to be in. All the passengers seem to be uneasy and do "*the sign of the cross and the guard against the evil eye*"<sup>93</sup> as explained to Jonathan. As Mr. Harker rides in the Count's calèche, the feelings of fear and uneasiness increase: "*It seemed to me that we were simply going over and over the same ground again.*"<sup>94</sup> The carter stops

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<sup>89</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 8-14.

<sup>90</sup> STOKER, p. 8, 14.

<sup>91</sup> STOKER, p. 10-13.

<sup>92</sup> STOKER, p. 13.

<sup>93</sup> STOKER, p. 18.

<sup>94</sup> STOKER, p. 20.

the vehicle regularly, receding, coming back after a while, and starting the ride again. This repetition of strange moments and actions creates the prototypical uncanny feeling.<sup>95</sup> *“This was all so strange and uncanny that dreadful fear came upon me, and I was afraid to speak or move.”*<sup>96</sup>

As Mr. Harker arrives at the Count’s home, he describes the place as *“a vast ruined castle, from whose tall black windows came no ray of light and whose broken battlements showed a jagged line against the moonlight”*<sup>97</sup>. Dark places, like this old castle, were popular scenes of the Gothic. BY adding Jonathan’s description of Dracula, we have a perfect example of the Victorian view of foreigners. *“His face was a strong (...) aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; (...) hair growing scantily round the temples. (...) His eyebrows were massive. (...) The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiar sharp teeth. (...) His ears were pale and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong. (...) The backs of his hands (...) were rather coarse (...) There were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were point and fine, and cut to a sharp point.”*<sup>98</sup> By this portrayal, the Count resembles *“stereotypical anti-Semitic nineteenth-century representations of the Jew”*.<sup>99</sup>

One evening during a conversation with Dracula, Jonathan finds out, that the Count desires to know everything regarding not only his new residence but also London and England in general. There is a library full of English books and magazines concerned with a variety of issues as in *“history, geography, political economy, botany, geology, law”*<sup>100</sup>. Dracula explains his wishes to fit perfectly among the English people. He even asks Jonathan to correct his speech so he cannot be recognized as a stranger in the new country. Jonathan notes the fact, that the Count knows more details about his new estate than he himself. As the conversation flows, Dracula mentions his need for an old place to live in, as an aristocrat he needs his silence and peace.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 14-24.

<sup>96</sup> STOKER, p. 24.

<sup>97</sup> STOKER, p. 24.

<sup>98</sup> STOKER, p. 29-30

<sup>99</sup> LEDGER, S. & MCCRACKEN, S. *Cultural Politics of the Fin de Siècle*, p. 248

<sup>100</sup> STOKER, p. 32

<sup>101</sup> STOKER, p. 32-38

After three days of staying in the castle, Jonathan starts to doubt his position as a guest. There is this well-known scene, where Jonathan shaves in front of his mirror and the Count suddenly appears behind him with no reflection in the looking glass and Jonathan happens to cut himself. Dracula's demeanour changes completely, "*his eyes blazed with a sort of demonic fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat*"<sup>102</sup>. Before the Count gets to touch him, he spots the crucifix pendant, and swiftly his 'normal' facial expression is back. After that Dracula takes the mirror, throws it away, and disappears. Jonathan has his breakfast and starts exploring the castle, discovering that most of the doors are locked. "*The castle is a veritable prison, and I am a prisoner!*"<sup>103</sup> Jonathan has always felt uneasy in the Count's presence, but this showed him, that Dracula is a very uncanny creature. He has no servants, despite being an aristocrat, which means he can control the wolves as the carter could. He cannot be seen in the mirror and fears a holy symbol.<sup>104</sup>

The moment Jonathan fully realises that the Count is something non-human, is when he sees him crawl head down, like a lizard, the outside wall of the castle. He is overcome by fear and terror and even doubts his own sanity.<sup>105</sup>

Meeting the three female vampires represents a proof of their impurity. They resist all the features a good Victorian woman should have. They are voluptuous, aggressive, strong, irresistible, and disobedient. Them eating on a human baby goes against all motherly instincts. The scariest part is when the Count promises Jonathan to them but not sooner than after he is done with the solicitor.<sup>106</sup> "*Nothing can be more dreadful than those awful women who were – whoa are – ready to suck my blood.*"<sup>107</sup> "*They are devils of the Pit!*"<sup>108</sup>

In the last chapter Mr. Harker finds out, that his days are counted, Dracula let him write three letters in advance. Jonathan tries to find a way to escape. He lowers himself into the lizard-like state and mimics the Count by crawling down the wall. From Dracula's empty room Jonathan gets to an old perished chapel, where he finds

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<sup>102</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 40

<sup>103</sup> STOKER, p. 41

<sup>104</sup> STOKER, p. 39-43

<sup>105</sup> STOKER, p. 51-52

<sup>106</sup> STOKER, p. 53-59

<sup>107</sup> STOKER, p. 60

<sup>108</sup> STOKER, p. 77

the Count lying in a box full of freshly dug soil. Jonathan needs to leave, but the Count does not give him a chance. The last we read about his experiences is through a rushed and frantic diary entry and the author seems to be at the edge of madness.<sup>109</sup>

## 6.2 Count Dracula in England

Just before Dracula's arrival to Whitby, an old man spoke to Mina, "*There is something in that wind and in the hoast beyond that sounds, and looks, and tastes, and smells like death.*"<sup>110</sup> Upon Dracula's arrival to the English coast, a sudden storm occurs. The sailors awaited a storm but not the roaring tempest. A thick fog came from the sea, flashes of lightning were striking and bolts of thunder roaring. Just after midnight a strange Russian ship, called *Demeter*, came into the harbour and a huge dog jumped out. And as suddenly as the storm came it was over. On the board of the ship, a dead man was found, tied to the rudder with a crucifix in his hand. A logbook was discovered, which read peculiar events happening during the sail. The crewmen had been disappearing one by one. *Something*, looking like a tall thin man, was on board. There was no mention of the huge dog, only of a cargo of silver sand and wooden boxes full of soil. The deaths remained a mystery. The beast disappeared.<sup>111</sup>

After the ship's arrival, strange things started happening. The old man Mina was talking to is found with a broken neck, as if frightened to death. A man, who is known for his great relationship with his dog, is acting strange, violent towards the now barking dog. "*They are both quiet persons, and I never saw the man angry, nor heard the dog bark.*"<sup>112</sup> As if something possessed them.<sup>113</sup>

Lucy is an occasional sleepwalker, but this habit of hers starts to occur more frequently just a few weeks before the storm. The night after the seaman's funeral, Mina wakes up abruptly with a feeling of emptiness and fear. Lucy in her sleepwalking state left the house in the middle of the night. It is a full moon, the clouds are driving over it, creating moments of absolute darkness. Mina manages to find Lucy at their usual spot in the churchyard, but a shadow is standing and stooping over her.

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<sup>109</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 68-78

<sup>110</sup> STOKER, p. 106

<sup>111</sup> STOKER, p. 108-122

<sup>112</sup> STOKER, p. 124

<sup>113</sup> STOKER, p. 123-125

*“There was undoubtedly something, long and black, bending over the half-reclining white figure. (...) and something raised a head and from where I was I could see a white face and red, gleaming eyes.”*<sup>114</sup> Mina successfully gets a freezing Lucy home, locks the door, and both sleep through the night. The next morning Lucy seems better, apart from two tiny red dots on her neck, which Mina blames on her own clumsiness with a safety-pin as she secured a shawl around Lucy during the night adventure. Even though Lucy seems peaceful during the day, at night she is more restless than ever, Mina found her pointing to the window in the middle of the night, noticing a huge bat flying outside and leaving. One night, Mina finds Lucy leaning out their window with a huge bird sitting next to her. She looks more and more sick every day, the two wounds on her neck are not healing, even getting bigger.<sup>115</sup>

After Mina left to retrieve her husband, Lucy gets better. While back in London, her state starts worsening again. She is weak, pale, sleeps badly, has vivid dreams, and difficulty breathing. Her health gets better and worse again and again. The uncanny sound of wings fluttering against her window appears nearly every night making her feel uneasy and scared. She fears sleep, what should make her stronger weakens her even more.<sup>116</sup>

Mina and Jonathan, now married, come back to London right after Lucy and her mother are buried. Jonathan still has his spells of weakness and Mina is quite worried about his health especially after a strange episode in Hyde Park. *“(...) he gazed at a tall, thin man, with a beaky nose and black moustache and pointed beard, who was observing the pretty girl. (...) I believe it is the count, but he has grown young. My God, if this be so! Oh, my God! My God! If I only knew’ if I only knew!”*<sup>117</sup> Neither of them knows if Jonathan’s experience in Transylvania was real. Mina consults professor Van Helsing on this matter after he reaches out to her on dead Lucy’s behalf. Mina gives him copies of her own diary and Jonathan’s as well, and he confirms its verity, even though strange, the events were true. This affirmation makes a great change for Jonathan.<sup>118</sup> *“It was the doubt as to the reality of the whole*

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<sup>114</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula* p. 129

<sup>115</sup> STOKER, p. 126-136

<sup>116</sup> STOKER, p. 141-200

<sup>117</sup> STOKER, p. 236, 237

<sup>118</sup> STOKER, p. 235-257

*thing that knocked me over. I felt impotent, and in the dark, and distrustful. But, now that I know, I am not afraid, even of the count.*"<sup>119</sup>

The group of friends strives to find every possible detail about the Count. They are looking for the missing boxes full of soil. Jonathan finds out, that the boxes were carefully placed around London. The Count has been extending his scope of influence. *"He was now fixed on the far east of the northern shore, on the east of the southern shore, and on the south."*<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 257

<sup>120</sup> STOKER, p. 357



## 7 Liminality in *Dracula*

As is explained in chapter 5, liminality is a quality of passage between two different worlds. This chapter is going to demonstrate this feature on the authentic text of Stoker's novel *Dracula*, mainly focusing on crossing boundaries between the world of humanity and the supernatural. It is not always achievable to separate the decadent and Gothic features from liminality, thus some examples are going to be a combination of these two structures.

### 7.1 Jonathan's stay at Castle Dracula

The first liminal passage occurs on the very first page, where Jonathan Harker describes his journey from West to East. The boundary between these two worlds is represented by the "*splendid bridges over the Danube*"<sup>121</sup> as the very last signs of modernity.<sup>122</sup>

The mountains Jonathan goes through in a carriage finally represent the transition between the human and the supernatural worlds. During his journey, the beautiful view transforms into a gloomy and dark atmosphere and the passengers start to be very uneasy, which results in them acting according to superstitions and making 'magical' protective signs. The very liminal feeling of uncertainty and loneliness recognized by Mr. Harker during his ride with Dracula's carter is significant and metaphorically linked to the passage through the Borgo Pass.<sup>123</sup>

The most important moment of crossing the threshold comes as Jonathan enters Castle Dracula. The Count invites him in saying: "*Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!*"<sup>124</sup>, the invitation is essential further in the story. "*He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand (...) as cold as ice – more like the hand of a dead than a living man.*"<sup>125</sup> This draft shows the importance of worded invitation from the host and willing entrance

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<sup>121</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 7.

<sup>122</sup> STOKER, p. 7.

<sup>123</sup> STOKER, p. 15-20.

<sup>124</sup> STOKER, p. 27.

<sup>125</sup> STOKER, p. 27.

of the passing person as well as the undead state of the Count, which is hidden at that moment. This is undoubtedly the moment where Jonathan leaves the world of humanity and enters the supernatural one.

As Jonathan passes the heavy rusted door, he gets himself out of the safe part of the castle and into the dangerous world of the other vampires. In a dream-like state, Jonathan encounters the three women vampires. They are described as voluptuous and irresistible. Jonathan is caught in their spell, somewhere between consciousness and dreaming. He was drawn to them unlike to the Count, who disgusts him and makes him feel uneasy. Dracula finally drives them away and soothed them with a child to feed on. With this, Jonathan fainted.<sup>126</sup>

Jonathan's days are counted. In order to escape, he searches the Count's room and after passing through several doors, narrow corridors, and staircases, he gets to an old chapel full of dug earth and on top of it, he sees Count Dracula lying in a box, a coffin.<sup>127</sup> *"He was either dead or asleep. (...) There was no sign of movement, no pulse, no breath, no beating of the heart."*<sup>128</sup> This shows properly the status of Dracula in between the living and the dead.

The last time we hear about Jonathan is at the end of the fourth chapter, where he wishes to get back to his own world. The world where everything has order and reason. *"I may find a way from this dreadful place. And then away for home! (...) away from this cruised spot, from this cruised land, where the devil and his children still walk with earthly feet!"*<sup>129</sup>

## 7.2 Count Dracula in England

Dracula arrives at Whitby just after midnight in the form of an enormous black dog that jumps out of a strange ship as the mist is at its thickest. The arrival is accompanied by a huge storm, thunders, bolts of lightning, and fog coming from the sea to the coast. There is only a body of a dead captain on the ship. It seems like death came to the land in the middle of the night from the far East.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 53-59

<sup>127</sup> STOKER, p. 68-71

<sup>128</sup> STOKER, p. 71

<sup>129</sup> STOKER, p. 78

<sup>130</sup> STOKER, p. 108-122

The story of Lucy's weakened health is also a representation of the struggle between life and death. As Dracula feeds on her and affects not only her dreams, he compromises her connection with the human world or the world of life. She is not quite dead, but the Count's influence on her is life-threatening. The only thing keeping her alive are the garlic flowers hung around her room and blood transfusions from her lover, Arthur Holmwood, her former suitors, Dr Seward and the American adventurer Quincy Morris, and Professor Van Helsing himself. For Lucy, sleep is the process that brings weakness and horror, during the night under the moonlight the restless fear appears.<sup>131</sup>

After the eventful night of Lucy's near death and her mother's last breath, Lucy seems to be on the verge of life. Her body is weak and pale. During the day she does not move and as the night comes, she sleeps peacefully and looks stronger. While awake she clings to the garlic flowers and in her sleep, she rips them from around her neck. This shows her position 'in-between', while asleep she is close to death. This is the crucial time of her change into a vampire. *"She is dying. It will not be long now. It will be much difference, mark me, whether she dies conscious or in her sleep."*<sup>132</sup> *"In a sort of sleep-waking, vague, unconscious way she opened her eyes, which were now dull and hard at once, and said in a soft voluptuous voice, such as I had never heard from her lips"*<sup>133</sup> To be noted here is Stoker's favourite word, voluptuous, in the description of a female vampire. After this, Lucy becomes her human sweet self again and finally dies, or at least that is what Dr Seward and Arthur think. *"Death had given back part of her beauty (...) We thought he dying whilst she slept And sleeping whilst she died"*<sup>134</sup> Van Helsing is still very unsettled. He keeps a crucifix pendant on her neck and the garlic flowers around her seemingly dead body and wants to operate on her. *"I want to cut off her head and take out her heart."*<sup>135</sup> Dr Seward is not convinced that this is right, but he believes the Professor, as he is the only one who knows the truth and the consequences of Lucy's death. Both Lucy and her mother are buried together.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 141-187

<sup>132</sup> STOKER, p. 220

<sup>133</sup> STOKER, p. 222

<sup>134</sup> STOKER, p. 223

<sup>135</sup> STOKER, p. 226

<sup>136</sup> STOKER, p. 202-228

A liminal moment of sorts comes for Dr Seward as Professor Van Helsing attempts to explain the circumstances of Lucy's death and the reasons behind recent night walking children, who are found with two little wounds on their throats. I mark this adventure as liminal because Seward leaves his safe world of reason and admits the possible existence of the supernatural, something he cannot understand through science. Van Helsing takes him to the cemetery in the middle of the night and opens Lucy's coffin, which is empty. At this point, Seward still tries to find a logical reason behind this. Later, they find a child sleeping in the graveyard, fortunately, unharmed. Then, during the day, as Seward still does not believe, the two men go back to the tomb and yet again open Lucy's coffin which is now occupied by her body. She looks beautiful, not like a week-old corpse, her lips are red, her teeth are long and pointy. *"(...) here is some dual life that is not as the common, She was bitten by the vampire when she was in a trance, sleepwalking (...) In trance she died, and in trance she is un-dead. (...) she differ from the other. (...) when she not un-dead she go back to the nothings of the common death. There is no malign there, see, and so it make hard that I must kill her in her sleep."*<sup>137</sup> After this Seward went through a major change. *"I was, in fact, beginning to shudder at the presence of this being, this un-dead, as Van Helsing called it, and to loathe it."*<sup>138</sup> The Professor repeated the same journey with Arthur and Quincy. They even saw the creature Lucy became. *"(...) I call the thing that was before us Lucy because it bore her shape. (...) without her soul."*<sup>139</sup> And they believed.<sup>140</sup>

The final transition Lucy undertakes is the release and cleansing of her soul through the ritual Arthur performs under Van Helsing's supervision. By penetrating her heart with a wooden stake and cutting her head off, she can finally leave the world 'in-between' and go to the world of the dead for good.<sup>141</sup>

Throughout these events, Renfield goes through a major change, he acts as if his madness was cured and all he seeks is freedom. After meeting Mina, he frantically tries to persuade Dr Seward to release him. He claims his own sanity and begs to be let

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<sup>137</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 274

<sup>138</sup> STOKER, p. 275

<sup>139</sup> STOKER, p. 287, 291

<sup>140</sup> STOKER, p. 243-287

<sup>141</sup> STOKER, p. 293-296

out of the asylum. *"You don't know what you do by keeping me here. (...) take me out of this and save my soul from guilt."*<sup>142</sup> Seward declines his request, Renfield does not seem very pleased and his final words are puzzling. *"You will, I trust, Dr Seward, do me the justice to bear I mind, later on, that I did what I could to convince you tonight."* He knows, he is the one, who invited Dracula in the sanatorium, therefore his presence puts all the residents in danger.<sup>143</sup>

As the group of men, the American, the Dutch, and the three Englishmen, enter the Count's residence in England, by passing the threshold they get themselves into the heart of the supernatural world situated/represented in their own Western land. The place is old and dusty, the chapel smells of death and corruption. Upon examining the place and counting the boxes of earth, the feeling of uneasiness starts to creep its way to the men. *"The whole place was becoming alive with rats."*<sup>144</sup> They open the side door of the chapel and as if this action has cleared the air from the evil and the rats retreat, the fear disappears, and they feel at ease. As Jonathan comes back into Mina's and his room, she seems to be pale but sleeping soundly.<sup>145</sup>

The night of the adventure Mina's room was filled with mist and a pale face with red eyes appeared in there. She feels weak and tired, fears sleep as strange dreams come to her. Mina herself is experiencing the transition into the world of the un-dead. The Count forces her to drink his blood as if nursing a child.<sup>146</sup> *"Unclean, unclean! I must touch him or kiss him no more."*<sup>147</sup>

### 7.3 The Expulsion of Dracula

The last chapters describe the group's actions aimed to get rid of the Count for good. The men put pieces of a sacred wafer into the boxes in an attempt to clear the soil, which Dracula took with to London. They repeated this action in every house the Count purchased, in Carfax, Piccadilly, and Mile End, Bermondsey and the houses in the South and East London, where just Arthur and Quincey went.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 336

<sup>143</sup> STOKER, p. 337, 382

<sup>144</sup> STOKER, p. 343

<sup>145</sup> STOKER, p. 338-347

<sup>146</sup> STOKER, p. 350-388

<sup>147</sup> STOKER, p. 388

<sup>148</sup> STOKER, p. 407-411

While fighting Dracula, the group used the sacred wafer and crucifixes to scare him off. Vampires cannot touch what is holy. During the night, close to dawn, Van Helsing hypnotises Mina which gets her into Dracula's mind. She crosses the path between her and the Count's mind. They find out that Dracula left the land on a ship. Van Helsing decides that it is necessary to pursue the Count.<sup>149</sup> *"Yes, it is necessary – necessary – necessary! For your sake (Mina) in the first, and then for the sake of humanity."*<sup>150</sup>

Dracula is out of the country, but Mina is still in the process of changing into a vampire. The group of four the men, Quincey, Arthur, Seward, and Van Helsing, are planning a journey to be in Varna before the Count's ship and to stop him for good. Mina invites herself on the trip, claiming she is most safe with the men and if the Count calls her any time, she must come to him.<sup>151</sup>

Just before the dusk or dawn is the only time Mina is herself. The sunrise and sunset mark the boundaries between her lethargic state and the freedom of her soul. Only by this time she is liberated from Dracula's influence and can speak without fear. She implies her desire to die if things go wrong. *"You must promise me, one and all – even you, my beloved husband – that, should the dime come, you kill me."*<sup>152</sup> Each of the five men swears to do as she wills.<sup>153</sup>

The group gets to the East. They pass to the country of superstition and supernatural with one goal, to destroy the Count. The group divides and each pair follow a different way. Van Helsing is with Mina, he can see her change, she is more energetic and while asleep, she looks better and better. He fears her change. They 'camp' outside the castle and encounter the three women vampires, who try to lure Mina to go with them. She is scared but protected and imprisoned by a circle made out of crumbs of the sacred wafer. During the day, the Professor enters the chapel of Castle Dracula, destroys the three vampire sisters, and seals the castle against Dracula's presence. The rest of the group comes just in time to stop the cart with Dracula's box. They fight the gipsies, Quincy is deadly

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<sup>149</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 417-436

<sup>150</sup> STOKER, p. 436

<sup>151</sup> STOKER, p. 439-450

<sup>152</sup> STOKER, p. 452

<sup>153</sup> STOKER, p. 450-454

wounded, but they succeed and destroy Count Dracula. This action frees Mina from his spell, she came back to the world of living as the world of un-dead is destroyed for good.<sup>154</sup>

The whole story is closed by the birth of little Quincey Harker. The little boy was born on the same day Quincy Morris died as if the story is closed by finishing the circle of life and death.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 455-515

<sup>155</sup> STOKER, p. 516-517

## 8 The effect Dracula has on people

The first one to be affected by Dracula's presence is Jonathan. In the middle of August, Mina gets a letter with the information on Jonathan's whereabouts and health. She sets to go see him in a hospital in Budapest, where he was admitted with brain fever and severe shock. "*I found my dear once, oh so thin and pale and weak-looking.*"<sup>156</sup> This description resembles female features, as if Jonathan manhood has been compromised by the Count's presence. He claims to remember nothing of the horrible events, that happened in Transylvania.<sup>157</sup>

As we can see from the health issues of Lucy and Renfield, Dracula's presence has a degrading effect on his victims. As soon as he occupies one of them the other gets quite better and vice versa. This can be best seen on Lucy as she stays in Whitby while the Count moves to London. Lucy gets the colour back in her face, is happier and energetic. On the other hand, we have Renfield, the madman, whose behaviour is observed and described by Dr Seward. Seward's sanatorium neighbours Dracula's new estate, Carfax. Renfield is a zoophagus, i.e. he eats live animals (flies, spiders, birds). "*It was life, strong life, and it gave life to him.*"<sup>158</sup> He can be dangerous but is always polite. One night, his behaviour turns, he escapes and is found on the Carfax land near the ancient chapel. All Seward can see is a huge bat that as if hypnotizes Renfield. The patient gets aggressive and has to be tied and escorted back to the sanatorium. He has repetitive states of aggression during the day and as the sun goes down, he gets calm. Once again Renfield escapes his room and is found at Carfax. This time he lets the asylum staff calmly take him back, as Dracula moved his focus back to Lucy.<sup>159</sup>

In a sense, Renfield being zoophagus very much resembles Dracula's need for blood. Both feed on live 'objects' to stay alive. The patient also cuts Dr Seward's wrist at one point and licks his blood from the floor screaming: "*The blood is the life! The blood is the life!*"<sup>160</sup> His zoophagy is not the only resemblance with the Count, Renfield himself is someone uncanny in his world, he is a madman, whom nobody

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<sup>156</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula*, p. 146

<sup>157</sup> STOKER, p. 139-141

<sup>158</sup> STOKER, p. 99

<sup>159</sup> STOKER, 141-165

<sup>160</sup> STOKER, p. 196



understands. Renfield changes his mood and demeanour throughout the whole story. Once he acts all crazy with homicidal fits, only to later lecture the other characters on philosophical ideas. He even attempts to persuade the doctor to be released but relapses again to his usual zoophagus antics. Nobody really understands these changes, the only thing they know is, that he is somehow influenced by the Counts presence and proximity. As Renfield gives his last testimony, the reader learns, that Dracula not only controls animals (rats, wolves, flies, moths, bats, etc.) he can control humans as well or at least weaken them. *"(...) till I saw His eyes. They burned into me, and my strength became like water."*<sup>161</sup>

Mina, now Harker, experiences the same symptoms as Lucy. She is weak and tired, sleeping does not bring her nor peace nor strength. She dreams of strange things and in the end remembers nothing. Her mind is clouded, and she starts to fear sleep. *"(...) that I may have been foolish in thus depriving myself of the power of waking."*<sup>162</sup> Later in the story Mina describes her state of trans as the Count comes to her room and makes her drink his blood. She feels unclean and humiliated. He makes her weak and desire him, his presence and touch while in the dream-like state. Mina's change into something unclean becomes very prominent from the situation where Van Helsing put a piece of sacred wafer to protect her and it burns her skin instead.<sup>163</sup>

The six representatives of the Victorian society fight against the supernatural with the help of religious instruments (crucifix, wafer) as well as their scientific knowledge, reason, and sense of reality (van Helsing, Seward, Jonathan...). Yet, there is still the question: Who or what is Mina's child, if there are remains of the infection (vampirism) in her blood?

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<sup>161</sup> STOKER, Bram. *Dracula* p, 385

<sup>162</sup> STOKER, p. 355

<sup>163</sup> STOKER, p. 350-394, 405

## 9 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was the literary analysis of Bram Stoker's Gothic novel *Dracula*. The main goal was a close examination of the book and subsequent demonstration of liminality, the Gothic, and decadence. These three features very often merged, and their separate description was not always possible.

The features of the Victorian novel, even though they were not the main aim, are embodied in the characters. The middle-class men and women, with an exception of Lord Godalming, are independent and self-sufficient. Mina Murray, later Harker, is a perfect example of the New Woman. She works outside the home, is intelligent, and fights alongside the men. Another significantly Victorian feature is the superiority of science over religion and usage of the latest inventions (telegraph, typewriter, phonograph). The element of industrialization and modernity of the western world is clear from the use of railways and comparison with the undeveloped countries of the East.

From the analysis, it is obvious, that Stoker combined the features of the gothic romance (developed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century) and the Victorian Gothic (19<sup>th</sup> century). The elements of the Gothic romance are represented by the landscape of the first part of the novel, i.e. the Transylvanian mountains and Castle Dracula. The Victorian Gothic can be seen later in the events happening in England, which are the character's boundless faith in science and reason, which is later shaken and reconsidered as well as the locations of a big city and the figure of a madman.

The main liminal creature is Count Dracula himself. He is the un-dead, living in between the worlds of the living and dead and belongs nowhere. His only means of living is to feed on other lives. He is something strange, uncanny, and old which is aiming to invade the modern world. He is a fallen aristocrat from the outmoded East, whose only mission is to spread evil and 'infection'. He fears anything sacred but can rest only in the holy land, which is spoiled by his presence. As something unclean, he cannot cross running water, which is a symbol of purity. His company corrupts people, weakens them and his victims become vicious, he damns their souls. He is beyond reason and the knowledge of science, his existence questions the rational beliefs and principles of the Victorian era. Dracula also represents sexual and gender ambiguity, he is the 'mother' of his kind.

The boundaries of the worlds of the supernatural and humanity are fading during particular times of the day. The un-dead has the most power during the night. On the verge of dusk and dawn, the connection between the Count and his victim can be heightened but also can fade the most.

Dr John Seward, Quincy Morris, Arthur Holmwood (Lord Godalming), and the Harkers under the lead of Professor Abraham Van Helsing are the 'communitas' of neophytes (to use Turner's terms), i.e. they are a group of friends fighting in between the worlds to protect the sphere of humanity from the supernatural, the un-dead. The westerners are leaving the world of logic and entering the world of superstition and magic to expel the evil, the uncanny that came from the East to conquer and destroy their world.

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