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Dracula – Hybridity and Metafiction

Anca ANDRIESCU GARCIA
University of South Florida (Tampa, USA)
Department of English
anca2@mail.usf.edu

Abstract. Due to his supernatural nature, but also to his place of origin, Bram Stoker's well-known character, Dracula, is the embodiment of Otherness. He is an image of an alterity that refuses a clear definition and a strict geographical or ontological placement and thus becomes terrifying. This refusal has determined critics from across the spectrum to place the novel in various categories from a psychoanalytical novel to a Gothic one, from a class novel to a postcolonial one, yet the discussion is far from being over. My article aims to examine this multitude of interpretations and investigate their possible convergence. It will also explore the ambivalence or even plurivalence of the character who is situated between the limit of life and death, myth and reality, historical character and demon, stereotype and fear of Otherness and attraction to the intriguing stranger, colonized and colonizer, sensationalism and palpable *fin-de-siècle* desperation, victim and victimizer, host and parasite, etc. In addition, it will investigate the mythical perspective that results from the confrontation between good and evil, which can be interpreted not only in the postcolonial terms mentioned above, but also in terms of the metatextual narrative technique, which converts into a meditation on how history and myth interact. Finally, it will demonstrate that, instead of being a representation of history, Bram Stoker's novel represents a masterpiece of intergeneric hybridity that combines, among others, elements of history, myth, folktale and historical novel.[1]

Keywords: metafiction, historical writing, hybridity, plurivalence.

The myth of Dracula has undoubtedly become one of the most prolific and interesting legends of the modern age. Since Bram Stoker published his famous novel in 1897, the theme of the vampire and of his Transylvanian castle has been over-circulated and recycled in various areas of pop culture – from movies to graphic novels, from music videos to anime, from Halloween costumes to toy

1 This article is part of a thesis entitled *Writing into Existence: Rethinking History through Literature in* Beowulf, Dracula *by Bram Stoker, and* The Enchantress of Florence *by Salman Rushdie* submitted at Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia, USA, in December 2017.

figurines. However, the myth's popularity has also translated into an array of critical readings whose often conflicting variation has led to controversy. As Jarlath Killeen observes, "*Dracula* has provoked a plethora of different critical readings from literary critics, who have seen him as everything from a Jew, to an Irish landlord, to an Irish rebel, to an incarnation of sexual perversity, to a primordial savage: [and] he is all these things and more" (2009, 87). Nevertheless, this variation risks deconstructing its own premise because, as Carolyn Hartford notes, quoting Maud Ellmann, the multiplicity of meanings associated with the character of Count Dracula might eventually make that character lose his significance. Moreover, Hartford continues,

> in a sort of Occam's Razor of literary criticism, for some critics it may seem preferable for a literary figure or work to have a single meaning, or a small, manageable set of meanings, with other interpretations readily identifiable as wrong. A wild proliferation of meanings, without obvious boundaries, may seem to make a mockery of the entire exercise of literary analysis. If something can be made to stand for anything, then ultimately, it stands for nothing. (2012, 49)

Indeed, if earlier critics have interpreted Stoker's novel in terms of psychoanalysis or have considered it an example of the clash between monopoly capitalism and the proletariat, among the multiplicity of the more recent interpretations, one important category is represented by those who talk about *Dracula* as a mythopoeic text exploiting mythical patterns that are, as Matthew Beresford notes, well-documented throughout the history of many European cultures, from the Greek, Balkan, Central European, and Norse mythologies to the Western Christian beliefs in which Judas becomes the embodiment of the first vampire (2008, 19). Hartford herself concludes that the novel "reinscribes an archetypal mythologem" also present in the abduction and rape of Persephone in the Greek mythology (2012, 50). The critic believes that Dracula is a modern image of Hades, and Lucy's violation is reminiscent of Persephone's rape eventually agreed upon by Demeter, because it is performed with Mrs. Westenra's unknowing consent. Iulius Hondrila, on the other hand, examines the very concept of "myth," following Mircea Eliade's 1959 definition of the myth as a "paradigmatic model that tells the sacred history of a primordial event which took place at the beginning of time" and argues that, even though, at a more general level, the myth of the un-dead vampire, a variant of the myth of immortality, "goes centuries back in Eastern European folklore," the Dracula myth in particular only came to life in the novel, and it was consecrated by the power of its polymorphism (2009, 89). Also quoting Mircea Eliade, this time his 1961 study *The Sacred and the Profane*, Beth E. McDonald believes that Transylvania and Dracula's

castle represent profane spaces, and "Dracula's invasion of England becomes a de-creation of the sacred, extending chaos to the religious institutions and habitations of the British population" (2010, 99). As she concludes, the legend of Dracula is a "numinous fiction, […] a story of salvation, of initiation into the sacred," in which humans "evaluate their own evil potential and their longing for reaffirmation of a spiritual future because the chaos of the unknown, the chaos of living death, is too frightening" (McDonald 2010, 136).

Other critics have pointed out the Gothic features of the novel. In *The Cambridge History of the English Novel* edited by Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes, Richard A. Kaye affirms that *Dracula* belongs to the category of the *fin-de-siècle* texts heavily influenced by Darwin's theories, and that the vampire is the embodiment of the bestiality that overshadows human nature representing an underworld of perversity (2012, 446), while Peter K. Garrett considers *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* expressions of extreme sensations, and regards Stoker's novel as the most lurid of the monster stories in the nineteenth century, one that proves how sensationalized Gothic fantasy can use realistic techniques such as the diary or journal to convey the preternatural (2012, 469). Catherine Wynne, in her turn, connects this sensational dimension to Stoker's passion for the theatre, more specifically, for the plays of the eighteenth century, which, like the Gothic novel that had a "rich machinery of spectacular potential," also placed their action in ruinous castles and depicted gloomy forests or stormy seashores (2013, 13). For Killeen, in his comprehensive study *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature 1825-1914*, *Dracula* is another example of what he calls "the horror of childhood," Victorian texts in which the characters are orphans "who have relapsed into versions of their own childhood, and who are desperately searching for substitute parents to comfort them in the face of a terrible new father" (2009, 84). Killeen continues by affirming that "Dracula is a monstrous translation of the God the Father Almighty, whose desire is to make all the characters his 'children of the night,' […] an ultramasculine threat to his hysterically effeminate enemies, […] [and] a child-abusing patriarch" (2009, 86). In addition, Killeen explains, Van Helsing becomes the Count's double in the plot, "a bereaved parent whose own son died," and who "goes on to convert all the Crew of Light into his children" (2009, 88). Finally, Ross G. Forman postulates that Stoker's novel contains the fear of malaria associated with racial fears, and that malaria offers the key explanation of "how the text functions as a body of writing to be acted on by agents that are ostensibly both internal and external to it – agents that actively blur the distinction between different narrative forms (the novel, the newspaper, the medical report, the diary, etc.) and in doing so actively performs vampirism on these genres so as to co-opt them" (2016, 927).

Nonetheless, the most substantial number of critical analyses of *Dracula* in recent years has been dedicated to the postcolonial implications of the novel. To a certain

extent, the references and metaphors of racial anxieties are present in many of the previous texts cited – for instance, Hondrila, Killeen, and Forman also allude to problems of race and otherness mainly because these problems are familiar themes of Victorian literature in general and Gothic novels in particular. As William Hughes and Andrew Smith observe in their introduction to the collection of *Gothic Studies*, the Gothic "has historically maintained an intimacy with colonial issues, and in consequence with the potential for disruption and redefinition vested in the relationships Self and Other, controlling and repressed, subaltern milieu and dominant outsider culture" (2003, 1). Moreover, the two critics assert:

> Gothic fiction in this respect proclaims the basic contesting powers – intellectual, physical, spiritual – that are all too easily lost behind the specificities of Empire writing, both fictional and theoretical. Empire, in Gothic writings, is frequently conducted at a personal level, where the invasive urge and its frequently negative consequences hold a synecdochal relationship to excesses committed under numerous names and in diverse theatres of culture. Gothic fiction arguably opens up to view the power relationships that the fictions of politics strive to conceal. (2003, 2)

In the case of *Dracula*, however, there are two types of postcolonial critical interpretations: one that interprets the novel in the wider postcoloniality of the world, and one that is more strictly interested in the Anglo-Irish postcolonial dimension. The two of them are, nevertheless, related as the issues of British postcolonialism transgress the borders of Ireland and become metaphors of universal racial struggles.

In probably one of the most important articles dedicated to the Irish postcolonial perspective, Joseph Valente speaks of what he calls the "metrocolonial Gothic." This type of Gothic, Valente asserts, emerged in Irish literature after the Act of Union in 1800, an act through which "the Irish people found themselves at once agent and object, participants-victims, of Britain's far-flung imperial mission – in short, a 'metrocolonial' people" (2008, 46). Being a racially mixed author, with a father of Anglo-Saxon descent and a Celtic mother, Stoker "was a member of a conquered and a vanquished race, a ruling and a subject people, an imperial and an occupied nation" (Valente 2008, 47). Therefore, he installs in his writing what Valente calls a 'double-born' device built on "a structurally determined ambivalence, even skepticism, toward the racial distinctions, social hierarchies and political assumptions that inform the Anglo-Protestant literary heritage" (2008, 48). Consequently, in Valente's terms, the novel becomes "a far less reflexive 'Victorian' elaboration of ethno-national anxiety and a far more vivisective, incipiently Modernist, engagement with the identitarian mindset" (2008, 48). Valente's observations are continued by Calvin W. Keogh, who in

his article "The Critic's Count: Revisions of *Dracula* and the Postcolonial Irish Gothic," includes them in the larger category of Irish postcolonial investigations together with the ideas of critics such as Luke Gibbon and Joe Cleary. Keogh in his turn contends, however, that "the novel also lends itself to revisionism in the direction of postmodernism. Systemically multilayered and thoroughly fragmented, it relentlessly recycles earlier fictions and proconnects with alternative versions in newer media and with the kindred and ever-proliferating 'semi-demons' of the twentieth century popular culture" (2014, 206).

Contrary to Keogh's progressive view, critics such as Robert A. Smart, Michael Hutcheson, or Raphaël Ingelbien consider Stoker's text a metaphor for a conflicting or painful Irish past. If Ingelbien compares it with Elizabeth Bowen's family memoir *Bowen's Court* and concludes that both of them contain the themes and descriptive strategies of the Anglo-Irish tradition, and that the Count resembles an Ascendancy landlord (2003, 1089), Smart and Hutcheson argue in their 2007 article that the historical stories in *Dracula* are a camouflage story for the "one tale they cannot or will not tell," a tale that is "hidden in cultural memory" – the tale of the Great Hunger or Famine in Ireland between 1845 and 1851 (2007, 2). In a similar fashion, Smart asserts a few years later in another article included in a 2013 volume edited by Tabish Khair and Johan Höglund that:

> In addition, these postcolonial elements of the Irish vampire tale have most to do with the fraught relationship between the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and the Catholic majority of the colony; this troubled divide between the two cultures of colonial Ireland produced a monstrous semiotics in which Protestant fears about the Catholic majority were refracted through a register of terror in which Catholics and Catholicism became monstrous, vampiric, as well as desirable, in another misalignment typical of this Gothic tradition. (2013, 13)

Critics that go beyond the discussion around Anglo-Irish postcolonialism place the novel in the more general light of cultural issues involving race. In his 1990 seminal article, "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reversed Colonization," Stephen D. Arata observes that through *Dracula*, Stoker brings the terror of reverse colonization, typical for a *fin-de-siècle* Britain whose world power was declining, very close to home (1990, 623). In Arata's terms, Jonathan Harker's journal expresses Orientalist stereotypes, while in reverse the Count's actions in London mirror the British imperial activities in the colonies. Moreover, the terror that the Transylvanian character inspires is generated by the fact that he can "pass" as a Westerner; this impersonation, this talent for mimicry, was always represented in Victorian texts as unidirectional – it was always Westerners who could pass as natives, and never the other way around.

Similarly to Arata, Mario Vrbančić also notes the fear of reversed colonization: the vampires are an expression of what the British at the time used to call the "Eastern Question," an example, Vrbančić explains, of the horrifying possibilities they envisioned after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire – after all, another empire similar to their own. Stoker's character, concludes Vrbančić, "is not just a Byronic, wandering aristocrat but an industrious, global menace" capable of conquering and colonizing "the territories, bodies, thoughts, [and] knowledges" of the Londoners (2007, 4). Andrew Smith believes that the novel also elicits a fear of Americans seen as a conquering race – hence the death of Quincey Morris who becomes an alter ego of the vampire in the novel (2003, 20), while Patrick Brantlinger in his article "Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians" accredits the idea that "*Dracula* incorporates a complex range of modern mass fetishes and phobias including occultism, anti-Semitism, anti-feminism, xenophobia, fears about sexual perversions, and anxieties about imperial and racial degenerations" (2011, 201). Finally, Eric Kwan-Wai Yu following Max Weber speaks of the novel as an expression of the Protestant ethic, and observes what he calls the Count's "incredible mimic power," which points to Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry (2006, 147). The critic concludes that "while the menace of colonial mimicry comes from the unexpected recognition of difference and otherness, Dracula's shock tinges on the imperial subject's surprise discovery of the King-vampire's modernity and Englishness" (Yu 2006, 164).

Of course, one may infer that all of these critical perspectives have little in common. However, there is always a tendency in Stoker's text for ambivalence or even plurivalence as the vampire himself is a character that refuses to remain one-sided; he is situated between the limit of life and death, myth and reality, historical character and demon, stereotype and fear of Otherness and attraction to the intriguing stranger, colonized and colonizer, sensationalism and palpable *fin-de-siècle* desperation, victim and victimizer, host and parasite, etc. Each of these elements and others appear concomitantly with their antithetical equivalents in the novel, which is built in essence at the confluence of their features, in the ambivalent or even plurivalent space where they manifest their *hybridity*, their multiple inflections. It is this very hybridity that brings them together and gives meaning to the discordant interpretations. It is partially a hybridity as Homi Bhabha defined it, one that rejects the abrupt delineations of West vs. East, but mostly a hybridity in the sense of rejection of one-sidedness, of creative contamination between narrative forms, types of characters, and plots normally belonging to different genres. It is the hybridity noted by John Paul Riquelme in the case of the characters in *Dracula* that provides a model for the ones "of the future and of modern experience," but it is more than that (2008, 8). It covers *everything*. As this article will demonstrate, the plurivalence and hybridity in Stoker's text is illustrated by tropes that establish a mythical world, one created by

the confrontation between good and evil, which can be interpreted to some extent in postcolonial terms, but also in terms of a metatextual narrative technique which converts the novel into a meditation on how history and myth interact. In other words, my study will only tangentially focus on the postcoloniality of the novel; instead, its aim is to discuss the intergeneric hybridity present in the text – history, novel, myth – and how this hybridity is built on a multitude of elements varying from postcolonial fears, folktale frames, Gothic inventory, historical events, etc.

Textual Analysis

A. A Hybrid Myth

Many critics have investigated the elements that help establish the powerful myth of Dracula. As Hondrila observes, following Mircea Eliade, the myth as a genre has to do with a sacred story and a primordial event which have taken place *in illo tempore*, in the time of the origins, "a re-enacted sacred time of the cosmogony" (2009, 89). Although Hondrila does not elaborate this idea, it is obvious from the very beginning of the novel that the text emphasizes, under the disguise of a travel narrative, precisely the problem of time, which progressively loses the contours of its reality as Jonathan Harker moves from the West to the East:

> *3 May. Bistritz.* – Left Munich at 8:35 P.M. on 1st May, arriving at Vienna *early next morning; should have arrived at 6:46, but train was an hour late.* Buda-Pesth seems a wonderful place, from the glimpse which I got of it from the train and the little I could walk through the streets. I feared to go very far from the station, as *we arrived late* and would start as *near* the correct time as possible. The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering East [...]. (Stoker 1978, 5; some emphasis mine)

In fact, the trope of time is combined here with spatial references, some of which have generated the postcolonial interpretations mentioned above. However, the distortion of what Mikhail Bakhtin called the *chronotope*, the combined trope of space and time, is completely unusual in a personal journal and a travel narrative. It suggests that the myth contaminates these two genres, transforming the text into a *hybrid* territory. The distortions continue throughout the entire first part of the novel, with Harker progressively recording time and space metaphors which might seem realistic, but which have in fact no real reference: they become signifiers devoid of their signified, allowing the preternatural to creep in: "it was *on the dark side of twilight* when we got to Bistritz," "hillsides *like the tongues of flame*," "an *endless perspective* of jagged rock and pointed crags, till they were

themselves *lost in the distance*," "*serpentine* way," "*shadow*s of the evening," "as the evening fell it began to get very cold, and *the growing twilight seemed to merge into one dark mistiness the gloom* of the trees," etc. (Stoker 1978, 7–13; emphasis mine). At some point, the difference between the two temporal registers that merge into each other is made even clearer:

> When I told her that I must go at once, and that I was engaged on important business, she asked again:
> "Do you know what day it is?" I answered that it was *the fourth of May*. She shook her head as she said again:
> "Oh, yes! I know that! *I know that*, but *do you know what day it is*?" On my saying that I did not understand, she went on:
> "It is *the eve of St. George's Day*. Do you know that to-night, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway? Do you know *where you are going, and what you are going to do*?" (Stoker 1978, 9; emphasis mine)

Such references abound not only throughout the journey to the Count's castle, but also after it; the chronological and the mythical time, the real space of Transylvania and the space of the myth (the underworld, the world of the undead, the territory of Hades, as it has been observed by critics), go together, hand in hand, in an ambivalent stance in which they no longer exclude each other. Even the Count's castle, which becomes the *axis mundi* of this underworld, is affected by chronology: "a vast ruined castle, from whose tall black windows came no ray of light, and whose broken battlements showed a jagged line against the moonlit sky" (Stoker 1978, 19).

Although many of these elements belong to the usual Gothic inventory, and they contribute to the complex feeling of fascination and repulsion the place elicits, the novel never truly abandons the realistic pretenses. In fact, there is a permanent sensation that the oddity of the place might represent only an English tourist's inadequacy in Transylvania. As the Count himself declares, "Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you strange things," which implies that he knows that Jonathan Harker might not be accustomed to some of his habits (Stoker 1978, 27). Moreover, Dracula himself can pass most of the time, even in Transylvania, as a plausible person, coming from a very old and historically recorded family, who is only trying to keep his guest safe. For instance, when Jonathan feels entrapped in the castle, the Count explains to him candidly that there are many dangers awaiting him outside. A proof of his honesty can be the fact that the wolves, very present in the text, force Jonathan at some point to prefer to remain indoors. At another time, he warns his guest not to enter other parts of the castle because "it is old, and has many

memories" (Stoker 1978, 40). This continuous oscillation between supernatural and a reasonable explanation of events, similar to the hesitation generated by the fantastic that Tzvetan Todorov once noted, creates a continuous ambivalence of the tropes in the story. In addition, Jonathan Harker himself is not Orpheus; he is by no means a heroic figure who travels to the underworld for initiation, and he typically does not understand or does not react properly to situations. In fact, even his exit from Transylvania takes place in a coma: a sign that he has learned very little throughout the journey. Killeen is right, from his arrival at the castle, Jonathan seems emasculated and weak, in other words, *hybrid*, in a clear contrast with the Count's vigor:

> When the calèche stopped, the driver jumped down and held out his hand to assist me to alight. Again I could not but notice his prodigious strength. His hand actually seemed like a steel vice that could have crushed mine if he had chosen. […] He insisted on carrying my traps along the passage, and then up a great winding stair, and along another great passage, on whose stone floor our steps rang heavily. (Stoker 1978, 20, 22)

Later, when in one of the most dramatic scenes of the novel, Harker accidentally cuts himself, and the Count aggressively takes away his mirror, the Englishman does not fight back, and exhibits instead an attitude of resignation. His dry comment suggests that he considers the Count's reaction banal: "it is very annoying, for I do not see how I am to shave, unless in my watchcase or the bottom of the shaving-pot, which is fortunately of metal" (Stoker 1978, 32).

Such scenes, together with the one in which the Count defends Harker against the attack of the three female vampires when he exclaims, "This man belongs to me!" (Stoker 1978, 47) configure a character who cannot defend himself; a character far from the vampire hunter he will become at some point back in Britain. However, one could wonder how such a character configuration supports the long-lasting power of the myth? How can an action that, although placed at the beginning in a quasi-legendary place like Transylvania, eventually moves to London, become a "sacred story" in Eliade's terms? John Bender believes that the answer does not reside in the novelistic theme, but rather in what he calls "lack of stylistic polish" (2012, 226). In an article in which he discusses three of the most important English novels which in his opinion have become myths – *Robinson Crusoe*, *Frankenstein*, and *Dracula* – Bender follows Claude Lévi-Strauss and Vladimir Propp and concludes that common style is very important in the transmission of a myth because, the critic believes, "the mythic or archetypal is somehow antithetic to literature" as it is more vivid and more immediate, while the focus of literature is the individuality and the creative style of the writer (2012, 229). Moreover, continues Bender, this "plainness of style enables

the illusory, even apparitional effects of realism," a procedure that enables the naturalization of myth as ideology and the blocking of our "critical faculty in the same way that our ordinary use of language requires us to pass over profound etymological or metaphorical resonances and contradictions" (2012, 231).

Undeniably, Stoker's novel uses the plain style Bender observes, and this style, combined with the verisimilitude of some of the time, space, and character references, makes it realistic and easily transmissible. However, it also contains a structure anticipated by Bender, who mentions it briefly in connection to the easiness that characterizes the translation of this mythogenetic plain style – the structure of the folktale. This structure maintains the unity of the novel after Jonathan Harker returns to Britain. Moreover, it also demonstrates the theme of Otherness and makes the transition towards postcolonialism in the novel because folktales always support stories that set heroes and villains in binary opposition, with the latter commonly depicted as foreigners.

According to Propp in his 1958 study *Morphology of the Folktale*, although a folktale classification based on plots is impossible, such texts can be categorized according to motifs or "functions," as Propp calls them, which are recurrent, constant, and stable elements of their structure. Propp, therefore, distinguishes thirty-one successive folktale functions which appear in folktales regardless of changes operated by characters – in Propp's terms "*dramatic personae*" – or plot (1958, 20). Stoker's text contains the majority of these functions; nevertheless, some of them migrate from one character to another due to the more pronounced complexity of the novelistic genre. Such an incorporation in the seemingly historical and travel novel of the folktale structure, which in its turn helps develop the myth, represents, nevertheless, another proof of its intergeneric flexibility._

Thus, a first function is the "absence:" in a folktale the initial situation usually implies that the parents are absent or dead (Propp 1958, 24). *Dracula* multiplies this function at the level of the majority of the characters, as Killeen rightfully notes, Jonathan, Mina, Lucy, Dr. Seward, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincey Morris are all orphans, partial orphans, or those about to be orphaned. In any case, by the end of the novel, they are all in search of a father figure. The second and third functions also present in the novel would be the "interdiction" and "the violation of it" – Jonathan Harker disrupts the order of things in Transylvania at least twice: first as he travels to the Count's castle in spite of all the warnings on the way, and second as he wanders through the castle ignoring Dracula's interdiction (Propp 1958, 26). The fourth and fifth functions identified by Propp are even more interesting than the previous ones; Propp calls them "reconnaissance," and "delivery" (1958, 26–27). In Propp's terms, they represent the moment when the villain asks questions and attempts to find more information about his victims or "reconnaissance," followed by the moment when he receives a usually spontaneous answer, "delivery" (1958, 27):

> "Come," he said at last, "tell me of London and of the house which you have procured for me." With an apology for my remissness, I went into my room to get the papers from my bag. […] He was interested in everything, and asked me myriad questions about the place and its surroundings. He clearly had studied beforehand all he could get on the subject of the neighborhood, for he evidently at the end knew very much more than I did. […] When I had told him the facts and got his signature to the necessary papers, and had written a letter with them ready to post to Mr. Hawkins, he began to ask me how I had come across so suitable a place. I read to him the notes which I had made at the time. (Stoker 1978, 28–29)

This function is followed closely by "fraud" and "complicity," or the villain's attempt to take into possession his victim and the victim submitting to his deception (Propp 1958, 28) – a function covered in the novel by the part in which Harker, a prisoner in the castle, only feebly tries to fight back or even willingly decides not to leave the castle for fear of the wolves during his last night there.

The functions become less clearly delineated once the novel moves the plot back to Britain, probably due to the impression of authenticity and modernity the text acquires after it leaves the exotic land of Transylvania, but their succession is indisputable. The moment the Count, the villain, moves to the city, he starts causing harm or injury to Lucy – the function of "villainy" in Propp's study – and this prompts the "mediation," the moment when the misfortune is made known and the hero is asked to intervene (1958, 32). This time the heroism is shared as Arthur Holmwood asks Dr. Seward to come to Lucy's rescue, but Dr. Seward also brings with him his friend, Professor Van Helsing, specialist in obscure diseases, "a philosopher and a metaphysician, and one of the most advanced scientists of his day" who becomes both a hero and a helper or a "donor," as Propp calls this type of character (1958, 126).

The subsequent functions in Propp's succession such as the "receipt of a magical agent," translated in Stoker's novel in the garlic or the Catholic paraphernalia, the "translocation" to Transylvania, and the "struggle" which takes place first in London against Lucy metamorphosed into a vampire, and then in Transylvania against the Count himself, cover a larger portion of the text than they would do in a folktale, as they have to abide to novelistic norms (1958, 36 and 46). These functions contain constant re-runs of the same actions and involve a larger number of heroes (the Crew of Light), but the skeleton of the folktale is still discernible. In a very interesting twist, however, the "branding" of the hero is done evenly (Propp 1958, 46); both Mina and the Count are branded, as they are the only legitimately strong personalities in the text, the main characters: the villain and the woman with a "man's brain" – a complement of her effeminate husband – who puts the entire text together (Stoker 1978, 261). The end of the

novel marks the "victory" over the villain, the "liquidation of the misfortune" and a "return" to Britain combined with what critics call the survival of the vampire – the baby born on the anniversary of the villain's death. This strange outcome could represent in fact a substitute for the function of the "wedding" which is usually, as Propp observes, the culmination of a tale (1958, 57). The novel only briefly mentions that two of the members of the Crew of Light are happily married, but does not actually end with their weddings:

> Seven years ago we all went through the flames; and the happiness of some of us since then is, we think, well worth the pain we endured. It is an added joy to Mina and to me that our boy's birthday is the same day as that on which Quincey Morris died. His mother holds, I know, the secret belief that some of our brave friend's spirit has passed into him. His bundle of names links all our little band of men together, but we call him Quincey.
> (…) When we got home we were talking of the old time – which we could all look back on without despair, for Godalming and Seward are both happily married. (Stoker 1978, 421)

Ultimately, the mythical construction is anchored in the verisimilitude of real spaces, even though one of them is less known, in the reality of a historical character transformed into an undead villain, and in the structure of a folktale written in a plain and realistic style, which makes it easier to transmit and translate into other forms of art; these elements explain the fascination it still elicits in pop culture.

B. Orientalism and Hybridity

In his 1978 *Orientalism*, Edward Said writes emphatically:

> The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. (qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1995, 88)

Many critics who have investigated Stoker's novel have pointed out that he never traveled to Transylvania, the land he attempts to depict so vividly. Some have tried to catalogue his sources: from the stories of his friend, Ármin Vámbéry, a Hungarian Turkologist and traveler, Emily Gerard's Transylvanian folklore collection *The Land Beyond the Forest* (1888), or Major Edmund Cecil

Johnson's observations in *On the Track of the Crescent*, the latter being, as Santiago Lucendo (2009) notes, profoundly racist, especially against Gypsies, whom Johnson perceives as dangerous and animalist. Others have pointed out that placing the plot in Transylvania represented a last-minute decision: Stoker initially intended to locate it in Styria, the scene of Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). Still others contend that the land Stoker actually had in mind all along for the action of the novel was Ireland, his home country. These observations confirm a metatextual hypothesis in the making of the novel, and possibly explain Jonathan Harker's striking Orientalism while in Transylvania. After all, it mirrors the Orientalism of his creator.

Indeed, from the very beginning of the text, the "imperial scout," as Robert A. Smart calls Jonathan Harker, keeps a diary in which the "East," which, as discussed above, becomes a land he only ponders upon meagerly (2007, 3). Although Harker carefully documents his observations and declares that he keeps his "diary for repose" as the habit of writing soothes him, he never scratches beyond the surface of things (Stoker 1978, 44). In fact, his entire journey resembles an expedition meant to confirm his assumptions about the Orient: for example, since he read that "every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool," he has no reaction when people talk about the possibility of evil; he never tries to find out more about the reasons why they fear the Count (Stoker 1978, 6). Most times, he allows everyone around to monologue because he refuses to take part in the conversation: he says nothing when someone in the coach taking him to the castle touches his hand and gives him interesting details about the place; he asks nothing when the Count, "warmed up to the subject wonderfully," speaks about the history of his people; and he does nothing to help the woman who is devoured by wolves even though he witnesses the whole event (Stoker 1978, 35). As Arata observes, his "textual knowledge gathered before the fact, the same knowledge that any casual reader of contemporary travel narrative would also possess – structures Harker's subsequent experiences" (1990, 636). In the terms of Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, when they speak of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the discourse of the diary here establishes its own category of truth and simultaneously encourages "the production of certain kinds of statements or texts" (1997, 99). We are situated in a truth both the novelist and his readers *expect*, and so they *produce*, of a *textualized* historical reality agreed upon by Stoker and his readers.

Harker's diary never abandons this perspective of the Transylvanian reality. The Count is depicted as a pale mask marked by cruelty, with strange hairs in the center of his palms, and a rank breath which makes Harker nauseous. For him, Dracula represents alterity, someone he can only classify from a point of view of difference because he feels they share nothing in common – and that is why in one of the monumental scenes of the novel, Harker looks in the mirror while the Count

is next to him, but he can only see himself. The Occidental can only acknowledge his own existence. The Count is for Harker, therefore, someone who looks human but is unquestionably not. He is only a parasite ready to destroy Britain:

> There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half renewed, for the white hair and his moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran over the chin and neck. […] He lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion. […] There was a mocking smile on the bloated face which seemed to drive me mad. This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening cycle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. (Stoker 1978, 60–61)

The same one-sided blindness characterizes the entire "Crew of Light," the crew of "Occidentals" in the novel, especially the men, who all represent the greatest colonizing powers of the West at the time: Britain, America, and the Netherlands. Dr. Seward is prejudiced against the occult for most of the novel, trying desperately to convey an easy, scientific explanation to the vampire phenomenon. Quincey Morris, who had seen vampire bats before, shows his incapacity to understand them when he fails repeatedly to shoot Dracula. Arthur Holmwood / Lord Godalming represents, as Killeen observes, an incompetent and mentally unbalanced "Lord God-alm(ighty)ing" who cries in Mina's arms like a child, while Van Helsing, in spite of his extensive knowledge of anti-vampire magic agents and rituals, cannot find a way to defeat the Count until Mina becomes the medium of communication with the demonic Other (2009, 86). As in the case of Jonathan Harker, all the male characters in the Crew of Light are hybrid only in the sense of their weakness and of an almost "feminine" behavior that they all evince during repeated episodes of hysteria. The women, on the other hand, are hybrid because they manifest such traditionally "male" features as Mina's "man brain" or Lucy's secret desire for polyandry, which makes her exclaim at some point: "Why can't a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (Stoker 1978, 69).

Dracula himself, however, is more than a bare image of the Orient. Arata notes that "Stoker's disruption of Harker's tourist perspective at castle Dracula also calls into question the entire Orientalist outlook. Stoker thus expresses a telling critique of the Orientalist enterprise through the very structure of his novel" (1990, 635). A *hybrid* creature, a beast with semi-human appearance, as he is described by Harker, Dracula resembles at first, as the critics rightfully pointed

out, a mimic man who shocks his guest with his impressive collection of English books in the middle of Transylvania:

> In the library I found, to my great delight, a vast number of English books, whole shelves full of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers. A table in the centre was littered with English magazines and newspapers, *though none of them were of very recent date*. The books were of the most varied kind – history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law – all related to the England and English life and customs and manners. (Stoker 1978, 25–26; emphasis mine)

In fact, Harker's inadequacy at the Count's castle might have to do precisely with the menace he feels when he realizes Dracula's progressive Englishness. The Count seems to have traveled to England before, although not recently, as the paragraph above suggests, and he knows well its language and its culture. However, the moment Harker becomes uneasy with Dracula is the one in which the Count appears ready to acquire more knowledge, knowledge that at some point, Harker admits, can eclipse the knowledge of the Englishman himself. It is also the moment when Dracula transgresses the mimicry condition which, Bhabha affirms, "conceals no presence or identity behind its mask" (1994, 88) and becomes a *hybrid* self with a clear English personality, yet still anchored in Transylvania as well, hence the sacred earth which he will take with him to London. Although his new identity manifests fully later in England, it develops in front of his guest's eyes back in Transylvania, and it forces a terrified Harker to face the possibility of reversed colonization. Moreover, Harker witnesses the fact that the Count can pass as an Englishman to his own people, as happens after the episode when Dracula wears his clothes and impersonates him, and a woman comes to the puzzled Englishman demanding the child Dracula has taken:

> When she saw my face at the window she threw herself forward, and shouted in a voice laden with menace:–
> "Monster, give me my child!"
> She threw herself on her knees, and raising up her hands, cried the same words in tones which wrung my heart. (Stoker, 1978, 54)

When Harker records his belief that the woman is "better dead" after Dracula throws her to the wolves, he unknowingly expresses his vengeance at someone who dared equate him to his mimic man. Dracula is a Grendel who can play by the rules of the society because he *knows* them. He has passed the limits of what Bhabha once called "almost the same, but not quite" (1994, 89). With him, "hybridity shifts power, questions discursive authority, and suggests, contrary

to the implications of Said's concept of Orientalism, that colonial discourse is never wholly in the control of the colonizer" (Childs and Williams 1997, 136). As Yu notes, "in *Dracula*, none of the Western characters expect the count to be like them, and the shocking effect relies more on the perception of sameness rather than difference" (2006, 164). It is specifically at this point that Arata's "reverse colonization" can take place – "the racial threat embodied by the Count is thus intensified: not only is he more vigorous, more fecund, more 'primitive' than his Western antagonists, he is also becoming more 'advanced.' As Van Helsing notes, Dracula's swift development will soon make him invincible" (1990, 639–640). It eventually does, because the end of the novel marks the birth of the Harker child on the anniversary of Quincey Morris's death, but not the day of the vampire's demise, an indicator of the fact that the Count is never defeated.

In a way, Stoker is obliged to surmount the limits of mimicry with Dracula because mimicry usually generates tragic outcomes, as is the case with Renfield, the only true mimic man in the novel. Caught in his human condition of a lunatic, he feels compelled to traverse the entire food chain in an attempt to try to transgress this state. However, he becomes trapped from the beginning in an intermediary condition, which makes Dr. Seward invent a new category for him – "zoöphagus (life-eating) maniac" (Stoker 1978, 81). In spite of his attempts to become more human, he cannot overcome his primitiveness in the presence of the doctor, who always perceives him as different: "Am I to take it that I have anything in common with him, so that we are, as it were, to stand together?" (Stoker 1978, 121). With the Count's presence approaching, Renfield appears increasingly sane, but his desire to achieve immortality through the ingestion of other lives and blood still places him in the category of mimic men, resembling the people around and the Count, but never truly assimilated by either side. He thus becomes in Dr. Seward's mind not an equal, but "a sort of index to the coming and going of the Count," at best a way to get to know the vampire better (Stoker 1978, 250). He remains, however, up till the end, a mimic man, trapped in an asylum, as Dr. Seward's journal records:

> You, gentlemen, who by nationality, by heredity, or by possession of natural gifts, are fitted to hold your respective places in the moving world, I take to witness that I am as sane as at least the majority of men who are in full possession of their liberties. […] Will you never learn? Don't you know that I am sane and earnest now; that I am no lunatic in a mad fit, but a sane man fighting for his soul? Oh, hear me! hear me! Let me go! let me go! let me go! I thought the longer this went on the wilder he would get, and so would bring on a fit; so I took him by the hand and raised him up.
> "Come," I said sternly, "no more of this; we have had quite enough already. Get to your bed and try to behave discreetly." (Stoker 1978, 274)

The mimic man dies, crushed by the vampire's colonizing appetite, with his spine broken – a metaphor of his malleability to Dracula's influence. In this point his death does not have anything to do with a refusal of salvation, as McDonald contends, because his salvation would be "only physical if he received the immortality the vampire is prepared to give," but rather with Renfield's willingness to give himself up and copy a creature whose power he cannot even approximate (2010, 117). Ultimately, the Count seems to have found other resources that ensure his legacy.

C. Hybridity and History

In spite of the structural implications that the intergeneric hybridity and the monstrous protagonist manifest in the larger context of the novel, the sense of realism that Bender observes above, of authenticity, still persists. All the elements analyzed contribute to this sensation – from the ambivalence of the *chronotope* and the construction of the tale-myth in the subtext of the novel, to the hybrid characters, the fear of reversed colonization, and a culturally amphibian Transylvanian Count who can pass as British. Almost everywhere in the novel, we have the sensation like Dr. Seward, that things might still have a rational explanation, and that the vampire is only the projection of our anxiety about strangers. This desire for a logical explanation marks the absence of historical authenticity because the novel denaturalizes the relationship between past and present. It would not be reasonable to go as far as to call *Dracula* a historiographic metafictional piece, or to declare it, as Brantlinger does, "the first postmodernist novel rather than the first modernist one" and a text in which vampires become post-human examples of simulacra (2011, 200). However, a certain distortion of reality definitely exists, and it starts with the sense that the past has contaminated the present and the other way around.

Of course, the main reason for this sensation has to do with the fact that Stoker used a real historical character to name his vampire and placed him in the same area where this character, Vlad Țepeş, had previously lived. In addition, Țepeş had already established himself an ambivalent image in history – a heroic but bloodthirsty ruler. This gives verisimilitude to the mix, exacerbating the threat that the novel's effect relies on, and so descriptions such as the following become possible:

> 'We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights for lordship. Here, in the whirlpool of European races, the Ugric tribe bore down from Iceland the fighting spirit which Thor and Wodin gave them, which their Berserkers displayed to such fell intent on the seaboards of Europe, ay, and of Asia and Africa too, till the peoples thought that the werewolves themselves had come. Here, too, when

> they came, they found the living flame, till the dying peoples held that in their veins ran the blood of those old witches, who, expelled from Scythia, had mated with the devils in the desert.' (Stoker 1978, 36)

The Count's list goes on and on, and suggests among other things that he participated in the events, but the essence is the same – anyone, from any part of Europe or elsewhere, could find something related to their own history or mythology in these phrases. History in Stoker's novel does not have to find its *signified*; it creates it in a movement that reflects the narrative back to itself. The myth built on the structure of the folktale contributes to the connection with a shared cultural memory, be it Irish, British, or otherwise, hence the pervasive references to the Transylvanian "memory" in the text. It inflicts its own structure on the historical account. After all, Maureen A. Ramsden notes, "any attempt to recapture and understand the past must always entail an imaginative leap to achieve a sense of identity with the past, and also a process of selection and construction" (2015, 54). In other words, we build the past in order to identify with it.

It is interesting to observe at the same time that the myth carries with it postcolonial implications, in part because, as Derek Walcott points out, postcolonial writers in general "reject the idea of history as time, for its original concept as myth, the partial recall of the race. For them, history is fiction, subject to a fitful muse, *memory*" (qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1995, 370; emphasis mine). After all, continues Walcott, "in time, every event becomes an exertion of memory and is subject to invention. The farther the facts, the more history petrifies into myth" (qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1995, 370–371). Although Bram Stoker probably did not have in mind a postcolonial novel *sensu stricto*, his hybrid main character and the allusions to memory certainly reinforce such an interpretation: the novel becomes an illusionary memory of history that builds and rebuilds itself as the Count attempts to colonize the Empire. In any case, the problem of memory did preoccupy Stoker, as is obvious from an apparently marginal episode in the text, the moment when Mr. Swales and Mina talk about how the tombstones in the cemetery would tell "lies" to a stranger:

> 'The whole thing be only lies. Now look here; you come here a stranger an' you see this kirkgarth. I nodded, for I thought it better to assent, though I did not quite understand his dialect. I knew it had to do with the church. He went on: "And you consate that these steans be aboon folk that be happened here, snod an' snog?' I assented again. 'Then that be just where the lies comes in. […] Look at that one, the aftest abaft the bier-bak: read it!' I went over and read:–
>
> 'Edward Spencelagh, master mariner, murdered by pirates off the coast of Andres, April, 1854, aet.30.' When I came back Mr. Swales went on:–

> 'Who brought him home, I wonder, to hap him here? Murdered off the coast of Andres! an' you consated his body lay under! Why, I could name you a dozen whose bones lie in Greenland seas above.' (Stoker 1978, 75–76)

Like the mariner's body who died elsewhere, the truth can lie anywhere in a historical account, and we deal here with the anxieties of the British *fin-de-siècle*. Stoker is aware of his possibilities, uses them deliberately, and avoids, subtly, the criticism usually surrounding such a partially made-up story. Ultimately, history itself has proved that Stoker was right: the majority of the people in the world today associate the image of Dracula, not with the medieval Romanian leader, but with the image of the vampire. The novel itself becomes one huge parasite on what constitutes "official history," in the sense attributed once by J. Hillis Miller, as a "fellow guest" to a host, that deconstructs it, but at the same expands its meanings (1979, 220).

However, as with any self-reflective narrative, this hybrid construction reinforced by myth demonstrates at the same time insecurity and playfulness. While Jonathan Harker has the impression that the Count's historical account reflected in his diary is consubstantial with the Arabian Nights, and that everything will disappear and "break off at cockcrow," Mina constantly works throughout the novel to put together the narratives in what she calls chronological order (Stoker 1978, 37). This opposition is obviously another metatextual device, but the result is quite ingenious: this represents another way to make the illusion of history – chronology – possible. In addition, the dialogue of the journals, diaries, newspaper clips, etc., that results in the process confers the necessary polyphonic novelistic structure, camouflaging the folktale frame and offering the text a depth that the singular travel narrative would not have been capable to render. Many of the events are thus seen through the eyes of multiple characters, making them more plausible, and more authentic.

Nonetheless, this attention for detail and plausibility in the deliberate construction of history explains what was considered surprising by critics – the so-called double-ending of the novel:

> *Dracula*, however, is finally *divided* against itself; it strives to contain the threat posed by the Count but cannot do so entirely. The novel in fact ends twice. The narrative properly closes with a fantasy of revitalized English supremacy: his invasion repulsed, the Count is driven back to Transylvania, and destroyed there. […] But the satisfaction of closure brought by Dracula's diminishment and death is immediately disrupted by Harker's "Note," which constitutes *Dracula's second ending*. (Arata 1990, 641; some emphasis mine)

Apart from the fact that this second ending was to a point unavoidable from the perspective of the folktale frame because, as I mentioned above, it contains the "wedding" function that usually represents its closure, it also contains a reference to a return of the Harkers to Transylvania after "seven years," a magical number. Moreover, the suggestion that the family commemorates Quincey Morris's death rather than the death of the vampire, also represents an oddity in the context. Such a return to the Oriental place of superstitions and this particular choice for the memory of events would make no sense from the perspective of the rational Westerner. However, the Harkers, and not the rest of the members of the Crew of Light, have once been marked by the Count and thus belong to him. They are, consequently, part of his history. Revisiting Transylvania implies not only a revisit of this history, but also a ritualistic practice that reinstates the myth: the two of them divided all along in the novel, but also complementing each other in a productive way. The note also indicates, in an interesting self-reflective passage, that there is "hardly one *authentic* document; nothing but a mass of typewriting" among the papers that compose it (Stoker 1978, 421; emphasis mine), meaning that the author was conscious all along of its artifice and ultimate hybridity.

Dracula thus demonstrates that a metatextual novel, supported by myth, can be a generator and not just an emulator of history. In the multivalent space that it thus creates, it can attract elements from many registers that no longer exclude each other. Thus, on the frame of the folktale that creates a myth, under the disguise of a travel and detective narrative, playing with postcolonial fears and using techniques that normally belong to the Gothic, Stoker introduces the modern vampire to the world, makes him real, and generates a multitude of interpretations which, if not for his hybridity, would seem contradictory, and almost meaningless.

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