

The Vampire Figure
as the Social and
Economic Symbol
of Contemporary
Western White
Masculinity

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By

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INTRODUCTION

The vampire has always allured great fascination upon civilizations since ancient times. The image of the dark side of both human beings and nature, the revenant still captures the mind of the public through the powers of darkness, to the point in which almost every civilization throughout history developed a vampiric visage, with which the unknown may linger and lie in wait so that the forces uncanny may have a proper explanation as part of the human construct of their existence. Spanning from rather complex impressions of natural forces and their destructiveness, in combination with their role when shaping the personality and social and moral frameworks of identity, to the more significant developments of the vampire as the image of contemporary society, with its complexity of form, meaning, and characterization; it most certainly retains the same vigor it always possessed.

As the commonly accepted form of culturally modern and productive, Western society has come to depict vampires with greater strength in literature and audiovisual industry. In recent years, there has been an offspring of new vampire forms that invade the public's minds.

This book developed under the premise of understanding the vampire as the embodiment of the Western white man's masculinity of capitalist nature. Marxist studies have long comprehended the vampire as the oppressive force of capital in the context of social class battles. Traditionally seen as the parasitic aspect of capital, this book attempts to widen this perspective through the analysis of vampirism as the masculine element of the capital, based upon the idea that as capital is an economic development of society, the vampire, in addition, responds to the need to see this evolution through the eyes of man. Furthermore, the vampire responds to the urge of man to continue identifying himself with the notion of production in society, which requires the perception of woman as the dominant passive socialization of the economy, as an extension of man's psychological construction of his identity through the need to oppress his feminine mind. Due to this polarization of man and woman, the primitive vampire images, which made little or no distinction between both sexes, were transformed into masculine depictions of social conventions that rendered man the dominant.

In contrast, the woman had a subdued role. That is how Western culture depicted Lilith, the first vampire-like woman, who was given form as the image of feminine rebellion and an attempt to destroy the masculine rule. In

addition, other vampire forms throughout Europe, such as the *strigoi*, the *moroi*, or other Slavic forms of vampire portrayals, helped to slowly shape the image of the contemporary revenant, which underwent the same increasing complexity that cultural, social, political, or gender discourse elaborated as Western society developed.

Thus, the vampire evolved from an image to explain nature to a more sophisticated form of social construct related to the patriarchal heteronormativity that was built around the idea of man as the supreme dominant force of society in its various spheres, which started from the self and the family unit, and abstracted to macro social projections of politics, race, and above all, economy. By doing so, the Classical world's conceptions of man as the citizen of temperance, vigor, physical and spiritual strength, and a sense of justice came to identify a masculine order of society, which was to evolve into medieval male centrism, with the king as the most valid meaning of male power.

This brought about the aristocratic order to become the main image of the classical vampire, as contemporary Western society public knows it, especially after the name Dracula, as the foremost symbol of vampirism. The public does indeed identify the name and the vampire through the same identity, especially with Bela Lugosi's and Christopher Lee's characterization of the vampire as a Victorian aristocrat.

Before that, however, during the eighteenth century, gothic aesthetics was born as a form of art and philosophy that embarked on aesthetic research into the human soul by exploring the artistic value of whatever is dark and ancient. Heir to former medieval gothic, this new art gathered the notion of the Germanic Goth tribes as barbaric, savage, and cruel and intertwining conceptions of nature as equally savage, gloomy, and obscure. Especially after Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), the new foundations for Gothic were established upon nature's dark forces as significant forms of beauty. A taste for the uncanny, ancient, and whatever Eastern as the lost dark past and images of graveyards, churches, castles, monasteries, or ruins developed. They were to become the framework within which associated night, ghosts, prophecies, and, of course, vampires were to construct narratives to be vastly consumed by readers.

Thus, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* gave birth to the English gothic novel in 1764, which divided followers and detractors alike. Gothic was to be ideologically constructed and used in the circle of imperial construction and revolutionary wars. It came to challenge religious, social, political, and economic ideas, and narratives tackled this. Nevertheless, some of the most well-known narratives of English and American literary

canons were born under the shadows of this new art. Walpole's novel was to later give birth to Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), Maturin's *Melmoth, the Wanderer* (1820), Rymer's *Varney, the Vampire or the Feast of Blood* (1845-1847), or Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Poe's stories, among many more others, and contemporary American gothic redefinitions of the vampire with Ann Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), or Stephenie Meyer's successful *Twilight* saga (2005-2008), among others as well.

This book attempts to analyze, describe, and explain the gothic recreations of the economic masculinity of Western man through the figure of the vampire. Nevertheless, the gothic narratives do not offer traditional vampire characters as the public conceives. Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis, and Maturin's novels analyzed include the traditional gothic aesthetic, although the characters are not strictly vampires. Nevertheless, they do impersonate vampire-like features that later vampire characters display, such as irrational cruelty, destructive desire, bloodlust, and general cursing of evil-demonic nature. Due to this, they were included as a paramount foreground for vampires. Their construction included notions of social class and aristocratic noble origins, such as Manfred or Montoni, archetypal villains of gothic horror. In addition, Lewis's monk embodies the human pulse to repress passions and masculinity within religious constraints, which becomes somewhat similar to Maturin's Melmoth, the errant Wandering Jew, suffering from an antisemitic discourse of race, later recursive in Stoker's Count Dracula.

Polidori's Lord Ruthven, Rymer's Sir Varney, and Le Fanu's Carmilla were to give birth to the most famous vampire character, Stoker's Count Dracula. These four set the pattern of the contemporary vampire image of the aristocrat figure, which is how this book tries to establish that the vampire—and vampire-like—characters become class images of capitalism, which is undoubtedly formed through masculine conventions of sociological nature applied to economic reorganization, the ultimate products of which are the modern depictions of Rice and Meyer, as redefinitions of former capitalist whiteness discourses of masculinity.

The book establishes a six-chapter division: Chapter one displays a narrative context of Gothic as the framework that contextualizes these novels. It explains Gothic's origins as a form of aesthetics, with the philosophical and ideological conventions that set literary gothic topics, characters, themes, and values. Doing so provides the general reference for these novels so the reader may know how these narratives were conceived, structured, and published.

Chapter two deals with the vampire from an anthropological point of view so that the reader may understand what lies beneath the image of (vampiric discourse of) masculine capitalism. The articulation of the vampire as an image of the white male economy is not random. Still, it fulfills the premises of specific prescriptions that help the myth acquire the symbolism it has in its literary form. Within this context, the rite of vampirism is described, and its literary articulation is addressed; blood as the central motif is analyzed, and the science behind it is. Lastly, the contemporary approaches are tackled, which divert from traditional depictions due to the role of science, which provides less superstitious explanations of the myth and its symbolism. However, it does not alter its meaning. As part of this, accurate accounts of vampirism are described, some of which helped shape the vampires analyzed.

Chapter three accounts for capitalism as the tangible symbol of the vampire as the economic tendency to empower production as a form of vampiric predation. The notion of power as the construction of the self is analyzed, and its vampire-relatedness is observed as the vampire characters' capacity to become images of the economic possession of the public spheres of economy in a racial discourse of whiteness and antisemitism. It is addressed through the analysis of proper economic literature and other sociological studies that relate vampires to have mostly Marxist, colonial, and postcolonial readings, as well as deeply psychoanalytical.

Chapter four relates to vampire psychology, which ultimately responds to the construction of a particular type of vampire personality, most commonly depicted as the embodiment of fear, attraction, and pathology. The perspective of social psychology is the most valid way to analyze how vampires acquire their personality and victims, who are not always innocent but willing.

Chapter five analyzes the construction of a racial discourse of whiteness as the prevailing superior image of the vampire and, thus, how racial imbalances that lead to whiteness as the superior force build society. The chapter also provides the historical background of dialectics and its evolution from a monoracial framework to the contemporary evolution into whiteness versus multiracialism. The change in traditional Gothic experiments when morphing into their modern form is such. However, the concept of vampire whiteness, as well as the capitalist whiteness of Western society, is intrinsically the same. Marxist and racial studies analyze this, which were estimated to be the most valid when regarding its analysis.

The last chapter analyzes the idea of masculinity and its social construction throughout the main stages of history as the necessary condition for social, political, and economic construction of the (vampire)

self as a form of patriarchal heteronormativity, from strict homosocial impersonations to contemporary depictions of diluted masculinities and homoerotic approaches of homosexuality. The origins of such masculine identity are analyzed through the perspective of masculinity studies mainly, although it considers psychoanalytical, colonial, and postcolonial perspectives, among others.

The book explains future research fields once these six chapters analyze the vampire image construction and conclusions. Finally, it displays the bibliography used. The bibliography is divided into three basic divisions. The first part is ascertaining the editions used for the primarily critical novels. Except for Anne Rice and Stephenie Meyer's publications, the others are critical editions, necessary due to their academic acceptance and value.

On the other hand, the election of the editions of the other two authors is motivated by the personal picking of the principal editions most widely spread in the market, as they are the editions recommended by the guild of publishers and most commonly accepted as valid. The second part of the bibliography relates to the critical literature used for the analysis. It includes general and specific literature regarding the various fields analyzed. Ultimately, the third and last sections of the bibliography provide access to the web pages used to develop this book. In addition, appendixes offer a more significant expansion of the references provided in the analysis so that the reader may have access to the whole format of the items. It also acknowledges various literary associations related to vampires.

As mentioned, the book's main objective is to comprehend the vampire—embracing commonly known forms of vampire and vampire-like characters as a sort of unit construction—in English and American gothic literature as the image of the Western white man's social and economic identity within the capitalist framework. That is the role the vampire characters develop as social constructions of man's identity.

THE CANVAS OF GOTHIC

Gothic origins. Approaching the Gothic traditions

Historically, the Goths were among the various tribes who proved instrumental in the downfall of the Roman Empire. As Punter and Byron (2004) point out, due to the absence of early written records, not much can be said with great certainty regarding this tribe. However, archeologists have confirmed their early settlement in the Baltic and steady migration towards the Black Sea. Goths entered the Roman Empire in the third century, and in AD 410, Alaric took Rome. Later on, they would establish their kingdoms in France and Italy. As Punter and Byron (2004) continue, the first history of the Goths is Jordanes' *Getica* (551), which sets the beginning for an etymological confusion since Jordanes aimed to glorify the Thracian tribe, the Getes, with whom he identified the Goths. Moreover, he gave credit to the idea of their Northern identity, which sprang to the global identification of the later called "Germanic" or "Teutonic" tribes under the general name of "Goths" to brand them collectively.

Far more important are the myths which may be reconstructed and developed around them. "Gothic" was to become a term that established various polarities, mainly revolving around the concepts of the primitive and the civilized. Initially, since the Goths left no literature of their own, they were remembered primarily due to their conquests and their invasions along the trail of destruction they left behind, the Roman Empire being the paramount and most significant above all. In addition, the idea and term "Dark Ages" that followed the fall of the Roman Empire would soon cast a shadow upon all medieval, and because of the scarce knowledge the world had regarding the Middle Ages until the middle of the seventeenth century, especially during the Renaissance; the medieval period was addressed to as *gothic*. When Italian art historians of the Renaissance used the term "gothic" in an aesthetic sense, they erroneously attributed a style of architecture to those Germanic tribes that sacked Rome and identified such art as barbaric, disordered, and irrational, in opposition to the classical canon. By the eighteenth century, a Goth had come to be identified, in terms of Dr.

Johnson's *Dictionary* of 1775¹, as "one not civilized, one deficient in general knowledge, a barbarian." Consequently, the Gothic was an age of cultural wasteland, deeply primitive and superstitious. Hence, the term itself helped define through differences the superiority of the more classical tradition of Greece and Rome and confirm the virtues of the equally civilized, ordered, and rational present.

During the eighteenth century, however, Gothic also began to possess a particular political significance, once rooted in the reclamation of a native English past that played a role in the eighteenth-century development of literary and political nationalism. Since the term had expanded to include all Germanic tribes globally, even those who had invaded Britain in the fifth century, it was possible to generate an alternative, if not mythical, construction of the gothic past as the site of a true national heritage. Consequently, the past was not a milestone for difference but continuity.

In establishing this alternative myth of gothic origins, commentators were drawn upon sources such as Tacitus and his *Germania* (AD 98), who stated that the Germanic tribes generally came to be particularly associated with the Goths and portrayed them as brave and cultivated, as demonstrated by their system of government, their invention of the jury system, and sense of justice. The belief that the English constitution originated with the Anglo-Saxons was common. Far beyond, it was given authority by Montesquieu in his *Spirit of the Laws* (1748). When citing Tacitus as a source, he said that the English idea of political government derived from the Germans². Punter and Byron (2004) go beyond when stating that according to the Whig history, such moments as the signing of the Magna Carta and the Revolution of 1688 were ones when a tradition of freedom had been displaced by the French invasion of 1066. Thus, no new order was established; they recovered an original social order displaced by foreign rule. Hence, the Goths represented the *source* of these cultural, government, and heritage values, which founded the new rational Britain with the Gothic as the site of uniqueness.

Therefore, the term "Gothic" remains relatively mobile while remaining unchanged. The "Goth" —or the "Gothic"— comes to identify the rather primitive outline with the more profound political reading of an endowment that serves the purpose of constructing an ideology of the self. It expresses the need to address the past, however, lost, and its true virtue as a tool to engulf the power and vigor of the present and the truly civilized values. On the other side of the spectrum, though, that is, the Tory Party's ideology, Stevens (2000) points out this respect that the term "Gothic" —or "Gothick"— claims the tradition, hierarchy, and aristocracy as against dangerous modern ideas. As Punter and Byron (2004) conclude, what remains constant

throughout the various processes of redefining the self through politics, culture, nationalism, or history, and indeed literature as the common element for all mentioned, is that Gothic always remains the symbolic site of a discursive struggle to claim possession of the civilized, and to abject whatever seen as otherness.

As Blakemont (2014) points out after the political Gothic came the poetic Gothic. Bearing such a twist of vision, one must not neglect to draw attention to the fact that toward the end of the eighteenth century, European society—not only the British—experienced a reversal of artistic tastes, which may be dramatic and lasting. Blakemont (2014, 13) points out three main factors:

1. Reflection on the past and the transitory nature of human life.
2. Revival of Gothic architecture and interest in all medieval things, including tales and ballads.
3. Opposition to the Classical aesthetic standards and the emergence of Burkian aesthetics³.

However, Great Britain was not solely but mainly at the forefront of such a cultural revolution. Paradoxically enough, the same vision that led to the destruction of medieval buildings throughout the sixteenth century led to the gothic revival of the eighteenth-century phenomenon branded as the Age of Enlightenment. As mentioned earlier, through the seventeenth century, a threading movement searched for a quest for a national identity. Once satisfied, the political and ideological framework set the path towards poetics.

Such new inspiration is genuine to The Graveyard Poets⁴ (or Churchyard Poets), the group of pre-Romantic poets of the eighteenth century so called due to their melancholic reflections on mortality within the settings of cemeteries, featured images of graveyards, ruins, old churches, and those alike. Robert Blair wrote in his poem *The Grave* (1743), "The task be mine to paint the gloomy horrors of the tomb"⁵ and set the overall mood for those who followed him: James Thompson and his *The Seasons* (1726), *Night Thoughts* (1742) by Edward Young, and most famously, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751) by Thomas Gray, among others. Although those poems were meditative and philosophical in conception, they developed imagery for Gothic literature, including references to the supernatural.

The Gothic revival in architecture gained momentum toward the middle of the eighteenth century. As previously stated, the gothic style possessed ideological motives of belonging to a gender, to a Britishness. In other

words, it served the purpose of identifying with a sense of genuineness. In his letter to H. S. Conway (Chief Secretary for Ireland), Walpole declared:

However rebellious this may sound at your court, my Gothic spirit is hurt; I do not love such loyal expressions from a Parliament. I do not so much consider myself writing to a Dublin Castle, as from Strawberry castle, where you know how I love to enjoy my liberty.⁶

Nevertheless, the tone denoted by Walpole may suggest his love for this architectural style was primarily due to artistic and aesthetic reasons rather than some political affiliation. In addition, such passion for old buildings leads to a more general interest in medieval culture and folklore. Consequently, in the second half of the eighteenth century, ballads and tales were rediscovered, published, and widely read by a growing public readership. *The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), a collection compiled by Thomas Percy, became very popular and shared status of classic with works such as *The Canterbury Tales* (fourteenth century) by Geoffrey Chaucer and *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1470) by Thomas Malory.

It must be borne in mind, however, that this Gothic taste for medievalism does not tantamount to Gothicism. Gothic authors were not trying to retell medieval tales or fictionalize historical events. As Blakemont depicts, Gothicism is "an artistic technique that distorts the perception of reality to reveal the hidden truth that lies in the unconscious" (2014, 15).

Although he died before the French Revolution, Rousseau was one of the seminal influences, instrumental in helping to create the philosophical climate for revolutionary ideas to thrive (Stevens 2000, 17). He presented a detailed critique of the relations between society and the individual that echoed in Gothic and, subsequently, Romantic literature and art.

Thomas Paine developed many of Rousseau's ideas in life and writing since he was deeply and actively involved in the American and French Revolutions. His work, *The Rights of Man* (1791-92), became a rallying call to revolutionary action. Quite predictably, his effigy and works were burnt in England at the time with utter regularity. Another key philosopher was William Godwin, whose novel *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) has a classic outsider theme echoed in many gothic texts. Like Thomas Paine, Godwin was savagely criticized by the press, especially after he married Mary Wollstonecraft, who herself dared to vindicate women's position in society in her *A Vindication for the Rights of Women* (1792). Their daughter Mary stands out in Gothic due to her *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818).

Especially throughout the confusion surrounding the French Revolution, the term "Gothic" signaled propaganda and insults from both sides of the

political agenda. Both of them were labeled as "Gothic," whatever they estimated to be savage, monstrous, and grotesque ideologically and aesthetically. Hence, Horace Walpole called Mary Wollstonecraft a "hyena in petticoats" (qt. Stevens 2000, 18) for defending the sexual equality of women and men. Edmund Burke was also a key figure, with his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and his significant contribution: the idea of the sublime, which shall be further analyzed later.

In the realms of spirituality, great debate circumnavigated religion. Political writers, such as Paine or Godwin, were castigated due to their criticism of Christianity. Far from addressing it as a matter of private domain, Christianity and the Church of England represented avid fight against each other. Above all, reason and its power to explain the inexplicable beyond religious language and mystique compensated the loss of faith in the divine. Nonetheless, this would become stronger during the Romantic era. Despite this, gothic mysticism and its beliefs in the supernatural brought about new spiritual dimensions for its superstitions. Magic realm and death escaped the area's religion, or at least Christianity, and the Church of England, which had officially banished from its authoritarian orthodoxy.

As changes in the ideology of the time occurred, gothic works came to harbor the ambivalences that the Enlightenment failed to explain through rationality. As Botting (1996) explains, fear and anxiety tried to account for the disturbance created by whatever mystery reason dismantled. Thus, romances, the tales of magical happenings and exotic adventures assimilated by the Medieval Ages, met with vile disapproval. Consequently, reflections on mortality brought to the surface imagery of ruins, graveyards, tombs, and the supernatural. However, as Botting states:

The taste for the sublime that dominated eighteenth-century aesthetic enquiries also offered intimations of an infinity beyond the limits of any rational framework. Natural and artistic objects were seen to evoke emotional effects like terror and wonder which marked an indistinct sense of an immensity that exceeded human comprehension and elevated human sensibility.

(1996, 25).

The aesthetic response became an exploration of the supernatural and rationally inexplicable through the literary past of familiar spaces but following a trail of "darkness." The effusive and imaginative descriptions of objects—natural and supernatural—were recovered by scholars in the form of ballads and tales met with sublime romantic language and imagery.

Medieval cathedrals, ruins, or castles became worthy models for whatever evocation of the sublime, especially as embodiments of horror.

Despite the prevailing indiscriminate dismissal of romance and novels, mainly due to the conception of such expressions contributing to moral degeneration, attempts were made to set some parameters of acceptability. James Beattie's "On Fable and Romance" (1783)⁷ draws clear distinctions between romance and the merging form called "novel":

Fiction henceforth divested herself of her gigantic size, tremendous aspect, and frantic demeanor; and, descending to the level of common life, conversed with man as his equal, and as a polite and cheerful companion.

Novels are seen as dangerous recreations challenging the rules of rationality. They will likely withdraw attention from nature and truth in favor of "extravagant" thoughts, eventually leading to and featuring the gothic novel. In addition, novels were conceived as drifting away from morality and virtue, truth, or knowledge, which needed a taste to be kept above fiction, or in other words, passion, ignorance, depravity, and vice.

Representations of vice as a monster conformed to an important strategy in defining the limits of what is natural and ordered. The monster was the shape and embodiment of deformed and unnatural, deviating from the symmetry and proportion valued in any representation (Botting 1996, 27). Its depiction and effect on readers were a significant concern. Calling upon credulity and realism, it challenged the moral and rational values and structures ordering everyday life, which led to the conviction that novels served the purpose of social education.

The diversity of events, characters, styles, and settings of these fables and tales reproduced imitations of nature and life through the eyes of thin lines between fact and fiction. However, these romances are the forerunners of this strange mixture of forms that appeared as gothic fiction (*ibid.*).

The word "romance" came to mean medieval narratives and novels. Despite the diverse attempts to separate each, both upset the conventions of reading and codes of behavior. The former represented heroic fables of fabulous persons and things expressed in elevated language, while the latter attempted to represent real life through a familiar language. This attempt was feared, for such familiarity was thought to seek deceit. In addition, such yearning for rendering reality had a hidden purpose of casting ideology, morals, and perceptions because while romance had its natural fictional nature, of course, perfectly perceived by readers, novels used subtle representation or mirroring of reality, which readers failed to see.

The overscaled proportion of cathedrals, graveyards, and ruins featuring Gothic fiction followed the same trend. Critics fiercely expressed their

disapproval of architecture in the eighteenth century. In his *Complete Builder's Guide*, Neve⁸ branded them as "deformities exhibited by the absence of taste of a barbaric age (...) massive, cumbersome and unwieldy". Indeed, such criticism aimed at claiming the superiority of classical conceptions on the grounds of Gothic architecture's, and indeed fiction's, wasteful over-ornamentation and cumbersomeness expressed by Neve. Neoclassical conceptions of architecture rested upon the conception that architecture explained the evolution of time and art. Thus, Gothic, as an architectural and aesthetic deformity, lay far from the validity of time and the classical canon. It represented the triumph of barbarity over taste and cultivation. However, Gothic architecture, in its monstrosity, offered a valid lesson within the mere idea of validity through time: ruins were the testament to the ascendancy of knowledge and reason, and since they were old Catholic institutions destroyed during the Reformation, also Protestantism.

Gothic forms. An insight into the features of a genre

The late eighteenth century beheld the awakening of the Gothic, the forefather of modern horror and crime literature, as Pujals (1984) describes it. With an unmistakable, pre-romantic touch, it featured the birth of new tastes and a new canvas on which writers could paint their writings. However, this new taste, Gothic, has undergone a tendency to be treated "as an unfortunate aberration, a diversion from the main thrust of development" (Phelps⁹ 1982, 110). This conception of Gothic as "inferior" literature may be understood if literary ideas of eighteenth-century pioneers such as Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, among others, are borne in mind along new methods of composition, publication, and circulation designed to offer readers what they valued most that is, novelty and sensationalism; as Phelps continues to explain. As previously stated, Gothic implied anything barbaric and wild, and by all means, all related to the death of classical molds. In such a context, Gothic represented the reaction against Classicism through its motives, ruins, graveyards, or deadly atmospheres, physical, spiritual, or psychological, if preferred.

Within any medieval building lay the supernatural, mysterious, and uncanny dwelling inside the labyrinthine mazes and passages. These supernatural manifestations included crimes of illicit and sometimes incestuous nature (Phelps, 1982), a villain who may pledge himself to evil powers, doomed fatal maidens, tombs, and graveyards, or, most significantly, nature itself, conspiring to produce sheer horror. Science men fell into the pits of the secret hidden knowledge; vampires, or vampire-like creatures,

roamed freely to haunt the good living; or spirits filled the pages of later writers or Romanticism, such as Emily Brontë and her *Wuthering Heights*, or Victorian Bram Stoker's immortal *Dracula*, among many others.

Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez¹⁰ (2012) summarizes what the forefather of Gothic novel, Horace Walpole, conceived when writing and publishing his *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), as Elizabeth MacAndrew¹¹ stated in her *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*.¹² As accepted by criticism, *The Castle of Otranto* was about to give birth to a new genre:

Thus personal reasons account for Walpole's having been the one to produce the tale that began the whole tradition, while the age he lived in accounts for the genre's having appeared when it did. No such work, after all, appeared from the pens of authors under similar pressures in earlier times. The late Eighteenth Century was an era of interested inquiry in the nature of the human mind and in the inner self that was also manifested in other new genres appearing at the time which probe and reveal the psyche. Walpole was able to present his age's concept of human evil —pride, hatred, violence, cruelty, incest— as part of man's psychology. The one kind of romance enabled him to delve into his own subconscious, the other helped him to relate what he found there to the human condition in general. The characters are not very convincingly real, of course, but they are recognizably Eighteenth-Century figures embodying current ideas about the human mind.

(1979, 18-19)¹³.

Thus, after MacAndrew read Walpole's motivations, it may be assessed that Walpole created *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) intending to explore and reveal themes that had always been in the collective subconscious mind of the eighteenth-century readers and the public in general. However, as Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez continues, these ideas were not addressed until the gothic novel appeared.

One ought not to neglect to bear in mind the concept of beauty expressed by lawyer, and M. P. Edmund Burke in his essay called *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), where he assessed that whatever idea or aspect which were to fit into ideas of pain or horror was a specific account and origin of the sublime. Burke identified beauty with harmony and sublime with immensity and capacity to awaken horror in what might be the first textbook on Aesthetics in English (Guyer, 2015). This is the key element that bridged pain with the sublime. As Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez (2012) explains, Burke defined his conception of the sublime based upon beautiful objects featured by small size, delicacy, tenderness, and prone to evoke love. In contrast, enormity

and out-of-proportion size featured the sublime, ultimately leading to horror.

On the other hand, ideas of pain as an integral part of desire were somewhat new. Sánchez-Vermejo Pérez (2012) addresses German Baron Georg Philip Friedrich Leopold von Hardenberg —aka Novalis— and his work *Psychologische Fragmente* (1798), which was published a year later than the complete and edited versions of *Justine* and *Juliette* by Sade. The former had been first published in 1791 and the latter in 1796. *Justine* depicted scenes of bloodshed in orgies at the hands of Monsieur Rodin, who reached ecstasy as he beheld such sight. Other scenes pictured cruel deeds by the monster Roland. *Juliette* portrayed equal sights and featured a giant and an ogre, whose favorite meal was human flesh and whose castle possessed tables and chairs made of human bones, or Cordelli, the necrophile. Sade meant to explore the relationship between blood and sexuality by adding blood to his list of arousing ingredients.

Inevitably, the sublime and the Gothic created a scenario featuring ruins and memorabilia mentioned earlier to evoke meditation, as Martin Price (1973) states. He continues:

Yet there was a deeper force at work. To relate man's emotions and unconscious powers to the forms of nature deepened the response to both. Nature became an object of reverence rather than exploitation, a place that both revealed man to himself and imposed limits on his will. On the other hand, the beauty as well as the terror of man's elemental feelings became clear. There were dangers in such a movement toward primitivism; as man's taste opened, it was fed by synthetic products designed to meet it more completely than the natural. (...) Another way in which the particular was given new dignity was through the idea of the picturesque. This began as the effort to find (later to create) in natural landscapes and designs of the painters of the seventeenth century —Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, Salvador Rosa—. What it came to in time was the rejection of a landscape, however 'natural', that was too simple or featureless; the picturesque sought complex relationships of form and color. (...) There seemed, as often with the sublime, an inverse proportion between the picturesque and the moral
(1973, 13).

Therefore, the sublime and the picturesque went hand in hand to deliberately mirror the darkest human aspects of man's psyche out on the same scenario of Burkian beauty and sublime. Vampires and vampire-like characters served the same purpose as literary creations; they mirrored the dark side of man and reflected on the political, social, and economic changes that were undergone by the eighteenth century —up to our days, most certainly— population of England.

Blakemont (2014) suggests that Burke conceived the beautiful and the sublime as key elements that had no intrinsic value by themselves or their qualities. On the contrary, their value and meaningfulness are derived from their capacity to play action in the reader's mind. In other words, "it is the *emotion* produced in us that makes it—an object—¹⁴ beautiful" (2014, 15).

Furthermore, beauty evoking positive aspects and the sublime arousing pain, horror, or pleasure must not be formal antonyms. On the contrary, as Burke¹⁵ expresses, suffering is most certainly an optimistic element: "For my part, I am rather inclined to imagine that pain and pleasure, in their positive nature, and by no means necessarily dependent on each other for their existence" (2014, 16). Burke conceives that:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.

(33-34).

Blakemont (2014) declares that, according to Burke, objects of terror can be of aesthetic value, making Burke's essay so revolutionary. Burke developed a series of artistic conceptions centered not only on the search for beauty and virtue but also on emotions and their capacity to evoke states of mind in the readers of the time. Among all emotions, Burke's focus on terror leads Blakemont to define such conception as "Aesthetics of the dark." Referring to this, Burke himself states:

To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes. Everyone will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notion of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings.

(48).

Such "Aesthetics of the Dark," as Blakemont calls it, serves as an exemplary scenario for vampire characters. They certainly strike harsh terror among the living, for their deadly and deathly nature shows whatever knowledge is hidden from the living. In other words, the knowledge of the realms of death vampires do partake of makes a living be preyed upon. Vampires, like any creature belonging to the darkest sides of the inner human soul or its correspondent *doppelgängerish* role of nature, reveal their

power to strike fear as they represent whatever power and capacity to master and command the living, as well as to cast a shadow upon their dominion of the inextricability of the ultimate and most feared of all realities, death. This is how vampires, without further analysis in greater depth—since that shall be in another chapter dealt with—do find meaningfulness within this framework of literary creation.

Death, hence, is no longer a dark and utterly feared element nor character but a warning or step along the "gloomy path" (l, 687), as Robert Blair describes it in his poem "The Grave" (1743). Death impersonates the way that leads from earthly existence to heaven:

Thrice welcome Death!
That after many a painful bleeding Step
Conduct us to our Home, and lands us safe
On the long-wis'd for shore.

(l, 706-09)¹⁶.

According to Sánchez-Verdejo (2012), this poem mentioned just earlier, i.e., "The Grave" (1743), did become very popular among the *graveyard* aesthetics during the eighteenth century. Furthermore, various other compositions such as "Night Thoughts" (1749-51) by Edward Young mainly, and others like "Night-Piece on Death" (1722) by Thomas Parnell, "Ode to Fear" (1746) by William Collins, "Night Piece" (1751) by Nathaniel Cotton, or "The Contemplatist" (1762) by John Cunningham, among others; were particularly of paramount interest to the Graveyard Poets, who helped to embrace death as a fear to be banished and by doing so, to glorify the idea of the grave and whatever element describing one's mortality as objects of aesthetic appreciation.

The contexts of Gothic

Martin Price explains in *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature. The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century* (1973) that literature turned into a movement of rationalistic internalization regarding sentiment throughout the eighteenth-century Augustan spirit of distrust for systems. Augustans pursued feeling as a truthful insight sentiment explainable through rational concepts. There was neither extreme sentiment nor rational reality, but a mid-point where both realities were carefully and inextricably intertwined through morals and intellect.

A century earlier, Price continues to explain that Sir Christopher Wren had distinguished between natural or geometric beauty and customary beauty and favored the former. In contrast, the gothic aesthetic came to

depict reality and emotion as what man's mind created (1973, 12). In such a scenario, Gothic could attain a form of acting around which its aesthetics of ruins, death, and castles in the dark related to man's emotions and nature. Even further, man was to be able to further his will and push beyond any imposition nature may have.

However, this new conception of horror aesthetic clashed against the previous Jacobean or metaphysical writers, whose taste and craft followed the pattern of paradox and conceit. Besides, as Phelps¹⁷ (1982, 113) states, the previous Jacobean authors operated in the framework of a powerful religion, which explained the supernatural as an enhancing vision of man through God, which ultimately explained any earthly fear, guilt, or craving through a series of religious rites and symbols, God is the most important and man's salvation through His sacrifice being the consolation offered to society.

On the other hand, the success of gothic writers resulted from establishing a new framework of the supernatural and its mystique without neglecting the religious environment. Nevertheless, Gothic meant to provide a new output for such impulses, which were to be assimilated by later Romantic poets. Consequently, in yet a natural process, new feelings of former repression broke through, and the Gothic came to provide a conduit, as Phelps calls it, for them. In contrast to the novelty of realistic fiction, gothic aesthetics explored new boundaries with speaking statues and portraits that bled and showed signs of human animation amidst local castles, ruins, or geographical places such as Italy, Bavaria, or Scotland, among others, which helped build the illusion of life and death featured by undecidability (Carson 1996, 259)¹⁸.

Gothic reacted against the political and religious constraints that swept Europe and America. As previously mentioned, both Whig and Tory political parties depicted British society in somewhat opposed manners, and Gothic embraced their limitations to embody a new literature portraying them. Feeding off them, the French Revolution made a tremendous impact: 1789 provoked an upheaval around 18th century Europe. Previous society had fallen, and new spirits of hope were born, as well as revolutionary politicization and reactionary nostalgia (Stevens 2000, 16). However, profound despair also found a passageway in such turmoil. No matter, change was the paramount key to the new aesthetics, that is, a change from previous rationalism and religious boundaries to go beyond. In such a looming atmosphere, political reform was often caricatured and despised amidst the mirror of ambivalence towards aristocracy and impoverished countryside at the hands of businessmen and tradesmen in chaotically growing cities. In political terms, the aristocracy feared the new laboring

classes, usually unskilled workers, who ultimately created wealth. The laboring force mass, the support of whom was necessary for the new order, was precisely feared by the property-owning aristocracy, who saw themselves as likely to be overthrown.

Rousseau, although he died prior to the French Revolution, was paramount for its ideology. He presented a detailed critique of the relations between society and the individual, which Gothic and Romanticism echoed (Stevens 2000, 17). Thomas Paine developed Rousseau's ideas and was active in the French and American revolutions. His work entitled *The Rights of Man* (1791-92) became a call for revolutionary action. William Godwin and his novel *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) echoed such motives. The press deeply criticized him then, especially when he married Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), and her placement of women as an active actor in a man-centered society.

Reasonably diverting was the spiritual context, as Stevens dubs the sphere of a religious framework. Radical thinkers such as Paine or Godwin underwent savage criticism for their challenge to Christianity as for their political beliefs. However, they depicted nothing more than a challenge to the State's status quo and the Church of England's official character of the Christian religion. Within this state, gothic novels reacted against the rationalism, empiricism, and classicism that reigned at the time. Thus, the ideas of human experience of a religious nature were deep insights into a non-religiously explained new spheres of human nature, which the aesthetics of graves, ruins, and decadence of an external world belonging to the past beyond the powers of time mirrored.

Stevens (2000) argues that most educated people of the eighteenth century believed broadly in the Christian creed but did not experience God in any immediate spiritual sense. Gothic would then put man back in the supernatural state of empiric reality.

Philosophy and the Gothic novel

The world was to me a secret which I desired to divine. Curiosity, earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, gladness akin to rapture, as they were unfolded to me, are among the earliest sensations I can remember.

(...) It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things, or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my inquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or, in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world.

(*Frankenstein*, 35-36).

Victor Frankenstein's words illustrate the Gothic spirit of desire for the uttermost and darkest secrets of nature and man. Frankenstein states his wish to cast light upon what is hidden away from him, that is, whatever knowledge he cannot access. Be that as it may be due to religious constraints that defined the earthly and the divine, or divisions and discussions in terms of defining God's resemblance to man as his creation and the truth lying underneath it, which science and empiricism had attempted to explain, which helped separate religion and myth from science; science here touches the unknown, as Marshall Brown¹⁹ (2003) explains. Science bypasses the wisdom hidden from man and depicts the gothic impulse. Penetrating nature through philosophy lets Frankenstein discover the secret of life and create his monster. His doom was to befall upon him, however:

Be calm! I entreat you to hear me before you give vent to your hatred on my devoted head. Have I not suffered enough that you seek to increase my misery? Life, although it may only be an accumulation of anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it. Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine, my joints more supple. But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee. I am thy creature (...). I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel (...), and yet you would, with a satisfied conscience, destroy your own creature.

(Frankenstein, 95-96).

Frankenstein is faced with his creation after he neglected and tried to destroy it once he became aware of his sin. However, turning against the divine sets his doom, as the monster shall kill everybody dear to his creator. Nevertheless, when confronting him, the creator is reminded that nature spared him a dark fate since the monster, as his creation, is more potent than that who created him. Furthermore, the monster dubs himself the fallen angel, turning away from whatever divinity he may have had.

Gothic penetrates the occult and dark forces of nature to cast a shadow upon man himself. The science of natural philosophy is the mad scientist's resource when accessing the dark forces of nature. In such a spate of taste, vampires serve a similar purpose since they genuinely go beyond nature and its power. Indeed, vampires do possess such knowledge forbidden to the living since they are dead and able to spring life as undead among the living. In other words, being creatures of the night and beyond life and death, "undead" as usually defined; they are abnormally alive while dead with a need to drink the blood of the living in order to gain their own life.

As a consequence, they give life in death to their victims, parasitizing them. However, such hidden knowledge in death provides vampires with the ultimate force and power to prey upon the living. Stoker reminds the reader of Gottfried August Bürger's famous "Lenore":

"Denn die Todten reiten schnell"
 "For the dead travel fast"

(*Dracula*, 17).

"Lenore" tells the story of a soldier returning from the dead to claim his wife, and it has earned the author fame among gothic writers and readers. Indeed, Stoker would intertextually pay tribute to him through such quotation in the episode where Harker is taken to Borgo Pass earlier than due as secretly trying to persuade him from going to Castle Dracula. By arriving an hour earlier, Harker is asked to continue traveling, but the carriage does not meet them all at once. Once again, dark powers are not to let the living escape. Harker first, but other characters later on in the novel are to penetrate whatever is hidden from them, that is, the real character of Count Dracula. He is a vampire, but Harker and others do call that "superstition" (*Dracula*, 14), and ironically, Harker himself wishes to ask the Count about them. At the same time, little does he know that he is trying to unconsciously access the exact dark nature, which may cost him his life.

A century later, the modern mass media and literary phenomenon born after The Twilight Saga denotes similar tastes and yet makes the dark rules of nature that Frankenstein yearned to unveil before Bella when Edward is to tell her of his true nature. While suspicious after being told of the stories and legends of the Quileute and reading about them, Edward describes himself by exemplifying why Bella is more a prey than an equal: "I don't scare you? (...) I'm the world's best predator, aren't I?" (*Twilight*, 229). Bella is slowly shown what kind of creature Edward and his keen are, but instead of being taken aback, she wishes to penetrate more into their secret, and Edward's words welcome Bella into the unknown:

"Everything about me invites you in —my voice, my face, even my *smell*²⁰. As if I need any of that!" Unexpectedly, he was on his feet, bounding away, instantly out of sight, only to appear beneath the same tree as before, having circled the meadow in half a second.

"As if you could outrun me," he laughed bitterly.

He reached up with one hand and, with a deafening crack, effortlessly ripped a two-foot-thick branch from the trunk of the spruce. He balanced it in that hand for a moment and then threw it with blinding speed, shattering it against another huge tree, which shook and trembled at the blow.

And he was in front of me again, standing two feet away, still as a stone.

"As if you could fight me off," he said gently.

(*Twilight*, 231).

Bella is not told of Edward's nature but is shown. Bella penetrates Frankenstein's "inner spirit of nature" step by step as Edward gives proof of what he is of which Bella is suspicious. Edward's speed and strength are defining categories that are tantamount to those of Frankenstein's monster because they are superior to those confronting them. Neither Victor Frankenstein, as a man of science with access to the dark secrets of creation, nor Bella can beat their opponent. On the contrary, they would be preyed upon, if necessary, as Edward shows Bella.

Gothic aesthetics and philosophy of cause in Kantian terminology lie beneath the surface of the vampire. As Brown (2003) explains, causality,²¹ the core of Kant's epistemology,²² is a concern based upon equal powers of natural and supernatural creatures. Bella is utterly infatuated by her will to discover Edward's real nature to give a sense to her obsessions regarding Edward's condition. In a parallel manner, Anne Rice opens her novel *Interview with the Vampire* with a similar scenario, in which a vampire is to be interviewed by a journalist to unfold his story as a catharsis. The reader encounters a journalist approaching his task as an everyday story of poor interest from a person to whom he gives little credit. However, his desire to know of the man before him and his story increasingly grows once the vampire incidentally casts his pale face and prominent white teeth after a street light hits his body:

At once, the room was flooded with a harsh yellow light. And the boy, staring up at the vampire, could not repress a gasp. His fingers danced backward on the table to grasp the edge. "Dear God!" he whispered, and then he gazed, speechless, at the vampire.

The vampire was utterly white and smooth, as if he were sculpted from bleached bone, and his face was as seemingly inanimate as a statue, except for two brilliant green eyes that looked down at the boy intently like flames in a skull. But then the vampire smiled almost wistfully, and the smooth white substance of his face moved with the infinitely flexible but minimal lines of a cartoon. "Do you see?" he asked softly.

(Interview with the Vampire, 8).

The same force that drives Victor Frankenstein or Bella to penetrate what they fear most, embodied by immortal creatures, is what philosophy and science pursue while battling permanently, i.e., to understand the forces that rule nature. Bella and Anne Rice's journalists belong to the Age of Reason of modern science, yet they fear the mythological creatures before them. However, they neglect their reasoning, and while aware of their perils, they step forward into the void. On the other hand, Harker belongs to the Victorian conventionalisms of educated society in the once capital of the civilized world, London. As an educated man who travels to Transylvania