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THE MONSTER IN BRITISH GOTHIC FICTION

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Abstract

The Gothic fiction of the 19th century features a number of characters with monstrous qualities as the genre focuses on the darker side of our reality. It populates its pages with supernatural, monstrous beings that bring terror and anxiety to their victims. These characters and their counterparts thus shed light onto the fears, anxieties and paradoxes of 19th century Britain. As they hunt, terrorise, unsettle and cross boundaries they reveal to us the tenets of human nature. Examination of seminal Gothic characters such as the vampire in *Dracula*, *Carmilla* and *Christabel*, the Creature and his creator in *Frankenstein* and the sinister doubles of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* thus helps us understand the mind-set of that era.

Keywords: 19th century literature – British literature – Gothic fiction – monster - horror

Anotace

V gotické literatuře devatenáctého století se často objevují různé netvorové, neboť se zaměřuje na temnější stránky lidské reality. Tato literatura je plná různých obludných a nadpřirozených bytostí, ze kterých pak jejich oběti mají strach a úzkost. Tyto postavy a jejich protějšky nám ale právě tímto ukazují, čeho se lidé v devatenáctém století báli, co jim nahánělo hrůzu a jaké byly hranice, které neměli překročit. Pronikají tak k samé podstatě lidského bytí a ukazují nám kulturu a její paradoxy v Británii té doby. Studiem takových zásadních postav jako jsou upíři v románu Drákula, Carmilla a básni Christabel, monstrum i jeho stvořitel v románu Frankenstein nebo zlověstní dvojníci v Obrazu Doriana Graye a Podivném případě Dr. Jekylla a pana Hyda nám tak umožňuje lépe pochopit myšlenkový svět tehdejších lidí.

Klíčová slova: literatura devatenáctého století – britská literatura – gotická literatura – netvor - horor

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Introduction

The topic of this thesis is the monster of 19th century British fiction. The first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* published in 1764, started what Frederick Frank called a "Gothomania", which was "an enthusiasm for decay and frenzied appreciation for the supernatural, the pseudo-medieval and the morbid" (qtd. In Davison). The Gothic genre was at that time frequently maligned, misunderstood and even vilified for its subject matter. The Gothic frenzy was so popular, that a third of all published novels between 1796 to 1806 were Gothic in character. What followed the most important novels was an explosion of imitations, fragments and shilling shockers. 19 century revived the Gothic tradition with books that were not merely sensational popular fiction that drew the readers with promises of the morbid and macabre. The beginning of the century saw the continuation of the Romantic Gothic traditions. During the middle of the century the genre virtually disappeared only to re-emerge as a significant literary form during the last decades of Victorian era. It has suffered from anti-gothic biases from the start, mostly by people who see the genre as a monolith and do not discriminate between the more serious works and works that have less literary merit. Fortunately, there have been people to take any genre seriously and see the literary merits of works that might seem to not have any at first glance.

A lot of the criticism is dominated by psychology, whether that is the application of psychoanalysis or merely the exclusive concern with a protagonist's psyche. In recent years, however, critics began to see the Gothic and its monsters as a method of reading the cultures they occupy and the times of their origin. Robert Mighall suggests, that when examining Gothic texts, it is essential to have an understanding of the cultural and social issues of the time: "The Gothic is a process,... an attitude to the past and the present, not a free-floating fantasy world" (XXV). Kelly Hurley stresses the efficiency of the Gothic to interpret and refigure unmanageable realities for its audience: "Gothic... has been theorised as an instrumental genre, re-emerging cyclically, at periods of cultural stress, to negotiate the anxieties that accompany social and epistemological transformations and crises" (5).

The genre, however, changed over time from historical Gothic romances of the Enlightenment period to works of more serious nature, even though they are not always taken as such to this day. 19th century Gothic texts brought supernatural characters

harkening back to ancient folklore, animalistic monsters like vampires and werewolves and the uncanny presence of the double. The attention moved to the horrors that lurk in our own psyche as a consequence of a shift that was, ironically, caused by the enlightenment. The world became disenchanted and the self was no longer “porous” but “buffered” to use terms proposed by Charles Taylor. In the disenchanted world the boundaries between self and other are seen as much more firm. Enlightenment also changed how people perceived differences between genders. It was no longer about religion or metaphysics but about science and biology. Even though Gothic is considered an antithesis of Enlightenment and its emphasis on reason, the changes it brought could not be ignored. 19th century Gothic explores these changes while growing out of literary reaction against it. New scientific discourses in biology, psychology and medical sciences throughout the century generated new anxieties that managed to dismantle accepted notions of what it is to be human. The end of the century brought new themes as the nature of human identity permeated the concerns of the public life. If there was a crisis in identity coming within, there were also threats from the outside world. Identity is always to a certain degree constructed against a different Other. Political questions of the day found their way into the Gothic as well.

The central threat in 19th century Gothic texts is the monster. The monster is a creature that brings destruction and threatens moral order. A creature that inspires fear. What we perceive as a threat, however, changes with time. Studying the monsters thus provides interesting information about the period of time and the mind-set of the society of their origin. The Gothic monsters of the 19th century are usually boundary crossers. People, and the people of that time especially, like patterns and order. Monsters do the opposite, they inhabit the places in-between. They cross the boundaries of what is considered normal, the boundaries between genders, between life and death, between attraction and repulsion. They are hard to define and hard to categorise. They pose a threat to order and bring chaos. They move outside of what is normal and what is right. They do not conform to order. But that is exactly what enables us to see what that order actually is. Their bodies tell us what the society of that time considered monstrous. And as I have mentioned, what people see as a threat changes with time and what people see as monstrous changes as well.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen proposes seven theses of how to “read cultures from the monsters they engender” (3). According to him, “the monster is born...as an

embodiment of a certain cultural moment – of a feeling, of a time, and of a place” (4). Another thesis is that the monster always escapes and always returns. It is a vampire one minute and a werewolf the next. You kill it in one story and it appears in the next. They always return in a slightly different form set against their contemporary social background. But sometimes they are eerily similar just as some of our fears that are universal. The monster is also “difference made flesh” (7). It is “an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond...[that] tends to be cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual” (7). The culture differences creating monsters can be seen throughout history. When you need to fight a war, you need your soldiers to be motivated to protect your home but also to not have any qualms about harming the enemy. Thus, the native inhabitants of Canaan were described as monstrous Giants in the Bible and the Jews themselves, by refusing assimilation, were being turned into monsters for centuries by Christian society culminating in the horrors of Nazi propaganda. Native Americans and Africans were seen as subhuman savages resulting in near genocide of the first and the brutality of enslavement of the second. People also ascribed monstrous features in order to humiliate their political or ideological adversaries. The ever-evolving gender identities are a prominent feature of monsters. Gender is a very visible category and any overstepping of their boundaries is frowned upon, it is seen as deviant and therefore easily demonised. Even though there are cases when a man is turned into a degenerate because he is seen as effeminate, this mostly applies to women. Jeffrey Cohen mentions crossing boundaries as one of the features as he calls monsters “the harbinger of crisis” (6). Monsters are “disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions” (6). He demonstrates his point on the creature from Ridley Scott’s *Alien* franchise, as the creature is an amalgam of different animal species. It violates natural laws. The monster questions simple binary thinking and demands more complex systems. It brings forward conflicting and contradicting cultural ideologies. It introduces new elements to the other characters’ lives. The other characters, usually considered “good” have to interact with the monster and come to terms with the instability it brings. Rarely do they come out of such an encounter unscathed. Monsters sometimes bring out the best in people, but sometimes the worst. And sometimes we have to ask who the true monster really is and why does a person believe he has the right to demonise others.

My goal in this thesis is to examine who the monster is in 19th century Gothic texts and how was it actually created and how it grew out of the fears and anxieties of the 19th century culture. While that question seems straightforward, it might prove not to be. Monsters are often created by doing something evil, something harmful to others, and for that you need other characters to perform these deeds on. That might in turn make other characters to do monstrous things and innocent characters then end up not so innocent after all. I have chosen 6 seminal Gothic texts that I will analyse, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, *Christabel* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Carmilla* by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. These works reflect a variety of principles from the most obvious one, otherness, to diseases, invasions, duality, conscience and gender in various ways and yet there are themes that seem to be more universal. Themes that rear their ugly, monstrous heads over and over each time in clothes of the specific cultural topics of the day.

Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde from Robert Louis Stevenson's novella is a well-known example of Gothic characters. The Scottish-born author, also famous for his adventure novels and travel-writing became intrigued with human personalities and how people incorporate good and evil. While he may or may not have been inspired by real-life criminals who appeared very respectable, the novella became an easily recognisable examination of dual personality and the nature and appearance of evil, to the point, that the phrase "Jekyll and Hyde" entered the vernacular language.

Dracula, published about a decade later, brings another classic Gothic villain, the vampire. The novel established many conventions that pop-culture vampires now possess. Yet Stoker's Count Dracula was a complex creature, glamorous and repulsive, that embodied much of the late Victorian fears from invasion and immigration, to disease, degeneration, promiscuity and proper femininity. Growing out of centuries-old folk beliefs concerning disease and death, the Count became a thoroughly modern being. Another important monster in the novel is Lucy Westenra, whose transformation into a vampire is one of the central aspects of the plot. However, some of the monstrous and vampiric characteristics she projects as a woman are different from her male counterpart. She possesses a diseased undead body, that also transgresses norms of the feminine and sexuality. The female monsters in general bear many similarities and reveal to us how women were perceived or how they perceived their own womanhood

at that time and how womanhood itself was turned into monstrosity as a representative of the Other. That is why I chose to analyse female monsters separately. Lucy Westenra and Mina Murray are thus discussed in a separate chapter and not in the one on *Dracula*.

Another two important monstrous females of the 19th century Gothic were Geraldine in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ballad *Christabel* and Carmilla in the novella by Sheridan Le Fanu written 70 years later. While Carmilla is truly a vampire like Lucy Westenra, Geraldine is not so easily defined. Both women, however, prey on their innocent young female counterparts and the works thus ask questions about both female monstrous transgressive nature and innocence within and without male structures and relationships. Because there are many similarities between the two stories I chose to put them into one chapter.

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* is one of the most famous monster stories. The story brought one of the most easily recognisable monster and the trope of the crazy scientist as it tells the story of a young man who creates a living, but hideous creature out of various body parts. However, his failure to provide for it leads only to and suffering for himself, his family and the creature, who turns evil out of despair. Just like *Dracula*, the story had a significant influence on literature and popular culture. While it is infused with the Romantic movement, it is also considered the first true science-fiction story as the central moment of the novel is a new scientific experiment. The novel proceeds to ask questions about responsibility, gender, society, the nature of science and indeed, how are monsters really created.

The last text I will discuss is the only novel written by Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. When the young and very handsome Dorian Gray sees his new full-length portrait, he follows the advice of his new acquaintance lord Henry Wotton and he offers his own soul to remain young while the painting grows old. His wish is granted and while his beauty is unblemished, the portrait begins to reflect the degradation of his soul as he surrenders to a life of pleasure without remorse. The novel thus explores many Gothic themes like doubles, the appearance of evil and the nature of evil itself.

1. The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

In 18th century Scotland was a torn country. It bore witness to political upheavals and wars with the Act of Union playing a significant part in the mood of many its inhabitants and the subsequent Jacobite risings brought serious armed conflicts to the mountainous corner of the British Isles. Particularly the final defeat on Culloden Moor, the highland clearances and the government's attempt to crush the clan system by the Act of Proscription of 1746 meant that Scottish culture was threatened and indeed many aspects of the Highland culture were destroyed. This meant that many artists and writers focused on a shared cultural identity. One of the ways to achieve that was the use of Scots by Allan Ramsay and most famously by Robert Burns. Others turned to the distant and largely mythical past. These included James Mcpherson who published the Ossian cycle between 1760 and 1765. The claim that it was a translation of earlier works written in Scottish Gaelic led to an upsurge in Gaelic writing very often related to the rising such as Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, credited as the first secular Gaelic author, Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir and Cairistiona NicFhearghais. However, the rising has been a popular topic among other writers too. The most famous is sir Walter Scott and his historical romances. His success also contributed to the change in perception of the Highlanders from wild and wicked to members of a noble warrior race that is not completely separate from other Scots. But what was it that made Scott's works so successful that it had such an impact? Part of his attraction seems to be his fusion of Scottish history and personal story of his characters. Through them people learned that the differences between culture were something to be acknowledged and even admired. The Jacobite past is depicted as something exotic and noble. At the same time, it is doomed to fail and give way to the Hanoverian, unionist forces. The Scots are presented in the novel as people who must accept progress or stay true to their passionate, heroic and romantic selves and find oblivion on the battlegrounds of history.

The 18th century was after all the age of Enlightenment and Edinburgh gained reputation as a centre of ideas in philosophy, economics and medicine which lead to the nickname Athens of the North. It also consolidated its position as a publishing centre after the market for literary and non-literary prose boomed towards the end of the 18th century. It was also Edinburgh when the first three volumes of Encyclopædia Britannica were published between 1768 and 1771. Just as there were many who championed the Enlightenment ideas of reason, there were also those who ran the other way. Many of

them became avid readers of Gothic romances. The readers in Edinburgh were well-provided for by the novels and magazines of the period. The two most famous literary magazines, *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine* were published there. They could boast such names as Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Thomas Carlyle, George Eliot, Joseph Conrad, S.T. Coleridge and James Hogg. *Blackwood's Magazine* became especially associated with ghost stories and Gothic fiction.

As Gothic fiction was very popular at that time, Scott refers directly to the Gothic tales of the time, particularly *Mysteries of Udolpho* by Anne Radcliffe, to distance himself from the excesses of the genre. By mentioning the genre in such a way, Scott also acknowledges its lasting popularity during the Age of Reason period and beyond. The Gothic became in a way the dark side of the Enlightenment. If the philosophers sought rational causes, Gothic writers stubbornly insisted on the supernatural. The popular reading of these tales is that it offers a fictional analysis of the psyche and how it deals with its internal demons. Modern readers often draw on the works of Sigmund Freud and his notions that an individual goes through a process of repressing a set of animal and instinctive desires in order to mature and become a proper member of society. What Freud also suggested was that these desires were sometimes so powerful that they returned in various forms such as dreams, hallucinations or visions. In fiction this would mean fantasy, demons, ghosts and the grotesque. Imagination is, after all, very powerful. Freud's version of the unconscious self also draws on the work of his colleague Otto Rank, who, among other themes, focused on the idea of the double. According to Freud, the process of internalising the norms of society and suppressing the more animalistic desires creates a discord in the psyche and it feeds into the notion of the uncanny, something known to us, familiar, but something that has turned into terror precisely because we have suppressed it.

For Scotland in particular, as per several scholars, the doubling of consciousness is typical. Indeed in 1919 the Scottish literary critic George Gregory Smith used the term "the Caledonian antisyzygy" (4) to describe this phenomenon. Smith sought to find something unique to Scottish psyche, identity and therefore in literature. He found it in its focus on merged oppositions:

"Does any other man [The Scot] combine so strangely the severe and tender in his character, or forgo the victory of the most relentless logic at the

sudden bidding of sentiment or superstition? Does literature anywhere, of this small compass, show such a mixture of contraries as his in outlook, subject, and method; real life and romance, everyday fact and the supernatural, things holy and profane, gentle and simple, convention and cantrip, thistles and thistledown?" (20)

More recently, the Aberdeen-born cultural historian Murray Pittock discussed the dualities of Scottish literature and, like Smith, found it in the conflicts of Scottish history:

If Identity, as Edward Said and others argue, is defined by opposition, the Scottish habit of opposing each other rather than the common foe can be seen as compromising the development of a consistent sense of nationality. In the Wars of Independence... Scottish magnates took the English side; in the later Middle Ages, the Lords of the Isles did the same thing; from the 1640s to the 1740s, Scotland was riven by religious and dynastic conflict, which cut across the issue of political independence and in the end secured its destruction... even the country's imaginative literature continued to provide image after image of the "divided" self as a source for the theme of the irreconcilability of personal and political dualities. (5-6)

The duality in Scotland and its literature the antiszygy, can thus be seen as the manifestation of Scotland's divided identity. In the contrasts between Englishness and Scottishness, the Highlands and the Lowlands, Protestantism and Catholicism, the contrasts between its three languages, English, Scots and Gaelic and the struggle for self-determination in the union with England. Indeed the preoccupation with contrasts, dualities and polarities can be traced easily in Scottish literature. In 20th century this heritage appears in the writing of Edinburgh-born Muriel Spark. It manifests in the character of Lord Lucan of *Aiding and Abetting* (2000), in Dougal Douglas of *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) and in her most famous work *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961). The protagonist of that novel even bears the name of a famous Edinburgh character, who is often mentioned as an inspiration for these various duality tales, Deacon William Brodie (1741 – 1788), a respectable local man, who lead a secret second life as a criminal. As we've seen, it runs much deeper. Another 20th century writer, who elaborated on the topic of Caledonian Antiszygy, was Christopher Murray

Grieve, known by his pen name Hugh McDiarmid. Not only did he write an essay called *The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea*, he also weaved it into his poetry. His 1926 book-length poem *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* was heavily influenced by Smith. Richard Barlow also mentions Alasdair Gray's novel *Lanark*, published in 1981, as one of the recent works featuring the splitting into two "selves".

The earliest prose work, however, is James Hogg's satire *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. The tensions of his work can perhaps be traced back to his background. His life was divided between the enchantment and superstition of the Borders and the Enlightenment of Edinburgh. If the supernatural of the Gothic tales was a fight against the Age of Reason, in the beginning of the 19th century Scotland, the centuries old struggle to bring together divergent elements, resulted into combining the two. The story recounts the lives of two brothers, George and Robert. When George is killed by him, it is revealed that Robert is being influenced by an enigmatic companion who persuaded him, that Robert is one of the elect predestined to eternal salvation. He is therefore justified to kill sinners who are already damned by God. Robert gradually falls into despair and madness. He commits more crimes but it is suggested that his companion overtook his body and it is he who committed them. It is also suggested that he is only a figment of Robert's imagination or aspect of his personality. Robert eventually hangs himself ending his own life. Indeed, similar theme can be found in the most famous duality tale, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. In this novel, however, it is science that manages the trick and separates Jekyll and Hyde.

The author, Robert Louis Stevenson, was obviously influenced by Hogg's earlier tale. Stevenson was born in 1850, 15 years after James Hogg's death to a family of lighthouse engineers. His parents were Presbyterians, but very strict unlike his nurse Alison Cunningham who mixed Calvinism with folk beliefs. Stevenson had a difficult relationship with his parent's religious beliefs that saw life as preordained. Stevenson was supposed to continue in his family's footsteps and take up engineering but he gave it up in 1871 to pursue writing career. Two years later he met Sidney Colvin, a critic with connections to Cornhill Magazine. Stevenson started writing essays on various topics with Colvin as his advisor. He also travelled to France and began to frequent artist's colonies. A few years later he met Fanny Osborne, an American who was married but separated from her husband because of his infidelities and had three children. The two married in California in 1880, once more against his parent's wishes.

They travelled around Europe and North America throughout their marriage to finally settle in Samoa. Stevenson continued to write essays but he also wrote travelogues and slowly gained recognition as a short story writer. Nearly all of his stories feature the multiplicity of man's soul and the battles that it is forced to fight, the division between sickness and health, atheism and devotion, hope and despair. Because if life was preordained as his parents believed then what did it matter what you did if you were damned regardless or saved in spite of it? And so Stevenson's horror is obsessed with the hypocrisy of the world and the division of men. Among his most famous Gothic stories are for instance *The Bottle Imp*, *Olalla*, *The Body Snatcher*, *The Waif Woman* and *Thrawn Janet*.

The latter particularly draws parallels with Hogg's *Justified Sinner*. The tale starts in standard English and introduces a Presbyterian minister who witnesses a reanimation of a dead woman, Thrawn Janet. The tale then continues as first-person narrative in Scots. But it not only a difference in language but also in style. The introduction, taking place in the 18th century, is elegantly phrased and represents enlightenment and rationalism. The actual story is set in 17th century and represents oral tradition and superstition. In this respect the two parts are similar to the two narratives of Hogg's tale, the Editor's narrative and the first-person narrative. A part of the unease of both tales comes this distinction between reason and superstition and the question, of who is right, the reliability of the narrator is therefore uncertain. If the narrator is reliable then there is a devil amongst us. If he is not, then is he a madman?

When Stevenson started writing novels he moved away from Gothic themes for a while. His first novel was the *Treasure Island*, a story of pirates and hidden treasures and adventure, written for a younger audience. This was followed by *Prince Otto*, and action romance set in an imaginary German state of Grünewald. A year later two novels were published. *Kidnapped* recounts the adventures of David Balfour following the Jacobite rising of 45. It is mostly written in English but it also includes dialogues written in Scots. The second novel published in 1886 was *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in which he returned to unreliable narrator and the theme of duality.

While it is similar in that respect to Hogg, its sources are manifold. Tradition says that he was inspired by Deacon William Brodie mentioned earlier. But Stevenson

also might have read articles in Cornhill magazine that discussed accounts of multiple personalities, that served as early attempts to understand this psychological condition. And finally, his wife Fanny later claimed that the inspiration came to him in a nightmare.

The story unfolds over ten chapters told by a series of narrators. There is a third-person narrator but also first-person accounts of the events. Furthermore, the narrative doesn't follow the order of events in time and so it is not until the final chapter that we learn about the full account of Jekyll's experiments, which is presented in a series of letters given to the lawyer, Mr. Utterson. The true nature of Hyde is thus revealed at the end of the novel and the reader is only fed bits of information about the character at a time. But from the very beginning he is seen as hideous and also something that inspires fear: "There was something queer about that gentleman — something that gave a man a turn...you felt it in your marrow kind of cold and thin...it went down my spine like ice" (39). He is also described by Jekyll as ape-like which inspires the thought of something animal and primitive. An instinctive Other, a return of repression that can actually have many forms. Some have ascribed to him sexual association as the other characters are single, respectable middle-aged men. So it might be possible to interpret the scene when Danvers Carew is killed as a sexual advance on Hyde. Something that he violently rejects. On the other hand, Hyde has also been read as a Celtic other, likened to the stereotypical descriptions of Irish and Highland criminals. Indeed, there are many interpretations of what Hyde truly represents - colonial and class fears, homosexuality etc.

Stevenson actually never really explained what Hyde has done or what he really is. He is seen as pure evil by readers, critics and by the other characters in the novel alike. He is there to be evil and nothing else and therefore he becomes dehumanised in his evilness. The other characters pick up on this trait immediately when they see him. Though we have come to expect evil to be within, something that isn't visible. Evil is in terrifying and hurtful things people do not in what they look like. Well, it is not that simple. It is popular in literature and film to make a proper villain look like one. Often through some visible disfigurement or some feature that looks scary to us like unusual colouring, scars etc. The sight itself of these characters is terrifying and so is the sight of Hyde. Deformity is therefore seen as something negative. A form of the flesh that is not right. Similar reasoning stood behind making distinctions between human races and

their characteristics and even between sexes. With enlightenment the one-sex model of gender turned into biological dimorphism. Gender was seen as biological and behaviour was therefore determined by the body. The flesh reflected the mind. Martha Stoddard Holmes in talks in her book *Fictions and Afflictions* about disability in Victorian Britain mentions that she draws a line between the mind and the body, something that is very “un-Victorian” as most of her sources “assume their meshing” (13). The physical body and the mind were mostly seen as one and therefore any disability or illness of the body projected itself on the mind. Physical deformity or impairment has traditionally seen as connected to a bad mental or spiritual state. Within disability studies it is called the moral model of disability, which means that disability is the result of bad actions, witchcraft and other immoral behaviour.

Indeed, in the book itself Jekyll comments that “evil...had left on [Hyde’s] body an imprint of deformity and decay” (61). Hyde, described also as “the evil side of [Jekyll’s] nature” (64), is brought to life by a mysterious drink that Jekyll created in his laboratory. Hyde is the embodiment of all the things Jekyll thought were shameful, things he tried to hide even from himself. Once he realised that “man was is not truly one, but truly two” (59), he endeavoured to separate them, so they would stop struggling continuously, and he would be able to lead his pure existence without having to constantly suppress that other part of him that is not acceptable to society. In the end he succeeded with his scientific studies, which according to him led toward the “mystic and the transcendental” (59). The success, however, wasn’t meant to last. Science here serves a very different purpose than Victorians hoped for and believed. It was progress on one hand, just as the society wanted, but it led to creating something sinister and monstrous. The progress leads to a creature that goes against all that society deems right and proper and science is no longer a power of good. It has created a being that is separate from Jekyll, and yet it is still connected to him.

This duality is particularly frightening. Not only was the pursuit of knowledge misused, it initially helped Jekyll disguise his own crimes. Even if he himself wanted to be and do good and wanted to get rid of the unacceptable side. It is a secret that is not meant to be revealed but it is also the character’s ultimate downfall because the two sides can never be truly separated neither controlled. The two sides are still struggling and once one entity takes over at an inopportune time both entities risk being revealed. The problem is, it is not only Hyde that will be revealed but also Jekyll because they are

one. Hyde is only half of Jekyll and society will know that evil has been amongst them all along. The disfigurement of Hyde was therefore seen as a disguise of the true person behind it. In the beginning of the novella Utterson ponders who Hyde is and what he has done: “This Master Hyde, if he were studied,...must have secrets of his own; black secrets, by the look of him; secrets compared to which poor Jekyll’s worst would be like sunshine” (19). Indeed, Utterson is quick to judge that Hyde has terrible secrets, partly based on his appearance. Yet it is Jekyll who has the darkest secret. One that he is afraid of and one that cannot be revealed for fear of the consequences.

The ultimate consequence is the disappearance of Jekyll. He himself refers to his prospective demise as “death or disappearance” or “disappearance or unexplained absence” (44). This means that Jekyll will apparently no longer exist. But just as Hyde hides within Jekyll so does Jekyll hide behind the mask of Hyde. Hyde is an identity that can potentially make Jekyll disappear but Jekyll also, at the beginning, has the power to silence and muffle Hyde, he is the reimposition of order. The society demands order and therefore Hyde actually needs to hide behind Jekyll to keep his existence. He needs secrecy and refuge for himself. Jekyll provided such a place. A place that he created by ripping himself in two. Because the two are divided, the place that existed flattens. At the end it is Jekyll or Hyde, not Jekyll and Hyde. The interiority, the depth, the sense of self was destroyed by losing a part of himself that is Hyde.

Judith Halberstam links the doubling of the subject that appears in gothic texts to Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault argues that with the disappearance of various manners of public punishments in the 18th century is the reason for modern subjectivity. Punishment suddenly becomes the “most hidden part of the penal process” (9) and as such it “leaves the domain of more or less everyday perception and enters that of abstract consciousness” (9). It is no longer the physical body that is being punished but rather the mind and the soul that “inhabits [a man] and brings him into existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercised over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body” (29). In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* it is the soul that becomes the warden and the prisoner. Jekyll’s body is disciplined and knows its limits but Jekyll produces another soul that must be controlled. The body houses the soul, but the soul eventually takes over the body. One soul, one identity tries to imprison another. Halberstam claims that Jekyll’s body resembles a “haunted house” (75). Hyde was after

all “houseless” when he committed murder and became a refugee of the law. That is when Jekyll turns into his only hiding place and Hyde threatens to consume him. In the beginning Hyde’s actual residence was “blistered and disdained” (3) while Jekyll’s was among “ancient, handsome houses” (3). But it is in the yard of this old handsome house that Jekyll’s laboratory is located. The structure induces in Utterson a “distasteful sense of strangeness” and is described as a dingy windowless building (?). The laboratory was also used as a surgical theatre, where science was used to dissect human bodies after death in pursuit of knowledge. It now served as a place to dissect a living body through its soul. It stayed hidden from view behind the fancy facade of Jekyll’s house just as Hyde stayed hidden the respectable façade of Jekyll himself.

This Gothic novel just like others thus thematises the relations between inside and out and the transitions between the two. Bodies and minds are turned inside out and monstrosities emerge. Gothic texts play a significant role in discussing discipline and punishment. The gothic monster is actually sign of discipline, “a warning of what may happen if the body is imprisoned by its desires or if the subject is unable to discipline him- or herself fully and successfully” (Halberstam 72).

2. Dracula

One of the most famous examples of Gothic is Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, published at the very end of the 19th century. And just like Stevenson did with Jekyll and Hyde, Stoker achieves his horror effect by bringing the Gothic "other" from the outside world to Britain, then the most powerful country in the world. The novel is now remembered as the quintessential vampire novel and provided the basis of the modern vampire legend. It is still popular in the 21st century spawning various books, films, television shows and computer games. Yet, the novel is very attached to its late Victorian background. That background also includes the fact that in reality, Britain as the leading power was already in decline. Germany and the United States on the rise, the increasing unrest in the colonies, uneasiness about colonialism itself and other factors undermined the Victorian confidence and belief in progress. *Dracula* feeds into this uneasiness and fear as it enacts a story of invasion and reverse colonization. Invasion literature was, after all, at its peak with authors such as H. Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling Robert Louis Stevenson and H. G. Wells and others. Each of these writers wrote tales in which the British Empire is threatened by outside forces, the colonizer is colonized and the exploiter exploited. The untrammelled immigration of the 19th century also fed into the pessimistic mood of the fin de siècle. Great Britain was a very popular destination throughout the century. Its population almost doubled over the course of the first half. The most numerous immigrants were the Irish and Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia. The Jewish immigration even led to the Aliens Act of 1905 that introduced immigration control for the first time.

Stephen Arata writes: "fantasies of reverse colonization are more than products of geopolitical fears. They are also responses to cultural guilt. In the marauding, invasive Other, British culture sees its own imperial practices mirrored back in monstrous forms" (623). Suddenly, the enemy is not created and turned monstrous by the neglect of others. Nor is it the darker, socially-unacceptable side of the human psyche. This is a point when the primitive forces that have been submitted by the country rebel against their master. The danger comes on a much larger scale.

The "primitive" thus inspires fear in the civilised world but it also inspires a sort of fascination. The savagery of the primitive is dangerous and yet it is strangely captivating. Patrick Brantlinger associates this fascination with the late-Victorian

obsession with the occult and paranormal. He calls this type of fiction, where the civilised world is threatened by the primitive Other, the “imperial Gothic”. It shows how the geopolitical concerns of the day became Gothicized

These concerns can be found in many of Stoker’s fictions. Either as invasion of the British such as the Norman invasion in *The Man*, the French invasion of Ireland in *The Snake’s Pass* or the stories tackle the problem of imperial decline and fall such as in his more overtly Gothic fictions like *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and *The Lady of the Shroud*. But none of them reach the power of *Dracula*. The political tone of the novel has been commented on before by critics like Brantlinger or Arata. Stephen Hughes, for instance, challenge the reading of the novel as story of colonization, because of his vision of Transylvania not as formerly colonised country but a generalised East. To him it is: “an abstracted conflict of Orient against Occident – a conflict which may unite the representatives of the West against any challenge to the latter’s cultural integrity or hegemony” (92). But all of that criticism sees the conflict between the civilised British world and the old forces unleashed by the Count.

The first section of the novel takes the form of a travel journal with Jonathan Harker setting out to visit Count Dracula in his castle in Transylvania. When he passes through the Carpathians, which he calls “the wildest and least known portions of Europe”, he comments upon the local inhabitants and their traditions (4). One of the first remarks he makes is 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“ (5). Superstition being seen as irrational and arising from ignorance would have been frowned upon by a world that relies heavily on science and facts. While Harker says it will make his trip interesting it is clearly seen as a negative trait. Superstition is also considered important for the population of the Szgany people, who have at one point come to Dracula’s castle and were encamped in the courtyard. Harker believes them to be “outside the law” and “without religion, save superstition” (52). They also speak only “their own varieties of the Romany tongue” (52). At the same time, he calls them “fearless” (52). The Slovaks are compared to “some old Oriental band of brigands” being even “more barbarian than the rest” (6). With all of these attributes and descriptions the Carpathians gain the status of a backwards region full of primitive and strange peoples. Almost as if it Harker was going back into the past. As if this part of Europe was untouched by the modernising process and was still at the medieval stage.

At the time of the writing of the novel, Transylvania was actually a place of political turbulence and upheaval. The Balkans were provinces and protectorates of different foreign powers from the Ottoman empire to the Habsburgs and the Russians. In case of some Greek islands even the French and the British. It is no wonder that nationalism became so popular in the region. There were wars and uprisings throughout the 19th century. An attempt was made to stabilise the Balkans during the Congress of Berlin in 1878. But the results of the congress only lead to the First Balkan War which set the stage for the Balkan crisis in 1914 culminating in the First World War. It seems worthy of mention that the Hamidian massacres by the Turks, that were being widely reported in British press, ended just before *Dracula* was published. But the cycle of falls and rises of different empires goes back for millennia and even Count Dracula comments upon his homeland's violent past: "for it was the ground fought over for centuries by the Wallachian, the Saxon, and the Turk. Why, there is hardly a foot of soil in all this region that has not been enriched by the blood of men, patriots or invaders" (20). At other point he calls Transylvania a "whirlpool of European races" and later asks if it was wonder that they were "conquering race; that we were proud; that when the Magyar, the Lombard, the Avar, the Bulgar, or the Turk poured his thousands on our frontiers, we drove them back?" (27) Dracula is thus depicted, and indeed sees himself, as a warrior. As belonging to a long tradition of warrior cultures of which the the Szekelys are only the latest. Similar rhetoric is actually used much later in the novel by Abraham Van Helsing when he talks about vampires in general: "He have followed the wake of the berserker Icelander, the devil-begotten Hun, the Slav, the Saxon, the Magyar"(222). Dracula was once member of a human „race“ shaped by a long series of wars. His status as a warrior is now interwoven with his status as a vampire, who follows in steps of conflicts.

By combining the two, it brings a new sense of identity to Dracula. His appearance means trouble not only as a supernatural murderer but from a political standpoint as well. His move to London means one thing. If all the turmoil allowed Dracula to thrive in Transylvania, it means London is now in turmoil too. And vulnerable to being colonized. With Dracula being a vampire, his presence poses a threat on two levels. Not only as an enemy to the country, but also an enemy to the bodies of its inhabitants. When Harker realises who Dracula is, he comments: "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 circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless“ (64). Dracula threatens the integrity of the nation because he threatens individuals. Not by death but by turning people into creatures like himself. It is an attack on personal identity, a subversion of the self into something lesser. Arata sees the threat and the horror in the fact that Dracula: “appropriates and transforms [bodies]. Having yielded to his assault, one literally "goes native" by becoming a vampire oneself” (630). Dracula’s victims thus become the Other. His vampirism becomes the symbol of conquering and invasion. The humanity of Britons itself is threatened because they wouldn’t be annihilated but assimilated into a new race of the undead.

Racial purity was important. The threat of contamination also brings to the fore a very important feature of vampire lore and that is the symbol of blood. Blood has always had a symbolic value. It has been associated with both life and death and it is one of Galen’s four humours. Bloodletting has also been one of the most common medical practices since antiquity all the way to the end of the 19th century. It has also been associated with family identity via bloodlines and by extension with the identity of the nation. The scientific discoveries of the modern era brought many changes. And new technologies made blood accessible, diagnosable and even transferrable between bodies. The changes included procedures such as the first successful transfusion by James Blundell in 1818, small-pox inoculation brought to England by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and vaccination invented by Edward Jenner in 1796. All these procedures require an introduction of a foreign substance into the body which caused protests as it was seen as contaminating the purity of the blood. The anti-vaccination movement became one of the largest medical resistance campaigns in European history. Nadja Durbach, a historian who specialises in the history of the body, argues, that “by scarifying the flesh and introducing disease into the system, vaccination threatened strongly held beliefs regarding bodily integrity and blood purity” (113). Durbach links these fears to the image of the “gothic body” that emerged in the late 19th century. The gothic body was “morphic and constantly in danger of becoming an other” (114). In such a situation, the threat of penetration of the boundaries and transformation of the body always hangs above it. The anti-vaccination propaganda of the day used these cultural anxieties for their own purposes. They maintained that vaccination caused pain and suffering but also that it terribly disfigured the body. The propagandists used

imagery of a deformed monster in much the same way as the body of Dr Jekyll turned into the deformed Hyde. It could turn the child into an “idiotic ape, a hideous foul-skinned cripple, a diseased burlesque of mankind” (qtd in Durbach 114). It didn’t help, that the vampire teeth were often likened to the lancet physicians or vaccinators used. On the other hand, the pro-vaccinators used a very similar rhetoric. For them it was the disease that caused disfigurement and vaccination was the only cure. They focused on the horrific nature of the disease and the horror and disgust small-pox patients often inspired. In short, bodily integrity featured heavily in public debates of the time and blood purity was at the centre of it. The contamination of blood by transfusion or vaccination seemed to establish a connection between bodies for an uncertain health benefit that many people didn’t believe in with the former risking “exposing the English body to potentially effeminizing, decadent Easternness, while the latter implied the potential cross-species infection” (Lau).

The implication of the pollution of blood is expressed very well by William Hughes in his essay, where he talks about the concept of the Sanguine Economy: “Blood is an item of multidiscursive significance, a cultural concept as much as a literal physiological substance. It is the icon of common identity, of alliance... The nation, the race, the family are all structured metaphorically and/or metonymically in terms of blood relations” (139). As such, Hughes connects the medical issues and the cultural ones together. Consequently, the purity of blood has an effect on the health of a nation. “Individual and racial health are dependent on pure and plentiful blood: depletion and contamination brings both personal illness and racial decline” (140). The plot of *Dracula* revolves around blood and its changes. If the bite and consequent transformation into a vampire can be linked to vaccination, the cure the “Crew of Light” comes up with is transfusion in order to stop Dracula’s efforts to turn the “teeming millions” of London into new vampires (67).

Dracula’s conquest and invasion among the principal characters begins with Lucy Westenra, Mina’s best friend. While she is holidaying in Whitby with Mina Murray, Harker’s fiancée. As described by Mina, she develops symptoms of sleepwalking and other strange behaviour. Her descent into vampirism is then described by the others in terms of illness. When Van Helsing and Dr Seward enter Lucy’s room, they are horrified by how has her conditioned worsened. Lucy is described as “ghastly” and “chalkily pale” as the blood seemed to have “gone even from her lips and gums”

(147). Van Helsing exclaims: “She will die of sheer want of blood to keep the heart’s action as it should be. There must be transfusion of blood at once” (147). The procedure itself is not described in detail; instead it focuses on the conversations about who the best donor should be. When Arthur enters, it is explained that he is the best option. Originally it was supposed to be John because he was the younger and stronger of the two. However, Van Helsing claims that their “nerves are not so calm and [their] blood not so bright” (149). Arthur acts like the proper hero and claims that he would “gladly die for her” giving her the last drop of his blood (149). Lucy’s condition requires them all to donate blood which ultimately leads to strengthening the bonds between the group. It functions as a form of social linkage as they all must be willing to donate their blood to save the women Dracula targets. Through this they also assert their heroic masculinity just like Arthur and define what it means to be a member of the Crew of Light.

The importance of the purity of blood is even more emphasised just before the procedure when Van Helsing appraised Arthur’s condition: “so young and strong of blood so pure that we need to defibrinate it” (149). There is no need to purify it, as it is already pure enough. That makes Arthur even more important and the blood transfers to Lucy’s body without any difficulty and we can immediately see the effects it has on her as “something like life seemed to return to Lucy’s cheeks” (150). Blood is a fluid and therefore quite prone to being spilled. Foucault argues, that blood “constituted one of the fundamental values” of humanity exactly because it was so vulnerable. It was, after all “easily spilled, subject to drying up, too readily mixed, capable of being quickly corrupted” (147). If you lose your blood, you lose your life as well. It is thus a guarantor of life but also of purity, strength and integrity. And so it is the pure English blood of the Crew of Light that can conquer the effects of Dracula’s polluted blood that threatens Lucy as the first victim of many and the ideal blood donors are the ones that can eliminate Dracula and his vampiric contagion. Some of the novel’s gothic element thus focuses on the precariousness of blood purity of an individual and of a nation.

Dracula thus brings together contemporary fears of threats from within and without and manages to blur them together. The blurring of lines and basic categories between the advanced rationalism of Victorian England and the (from their perspective) irrational East must have been an appalling prospect. If the categories could so easily be blurred and confused, the cherished beliefs in progress of the society suddenly seemed

very vulnerable. It is not only that he crosses the actual geographical borders of Britain or that he mingles human bodies with foreign substances, Dracula is terrifying because he himself cannot easily be classified. The most obvious aspect of his vampirism is the mixture of man and beast. Dracula is very easily identified visually. This particular image of a vampire has spread to other vampires as well. The most prominent feature and most easily identifiable are his canine teeth, described as “peculiarly sharp” and “protruding over the lips” (28). Indeed, if you want to make a very easy Halloween costume, all you really need is fake teeth. The most famous cinematic Draculas, such as Christopher Lee, were distinguished by their teeth. The appearance of Lee’s Dracula looks very much like that of the most famous one, played by Bela Lugosi. They were both pale-faced with dark hair brushed back and a long black coat starting a signature Dracula look.

In the novel however, the count looks quite different. Beside an aquiline face, he possesses massive bushy eyebrows almost meeting over the nose, profusely growing hair, pointy ears, heavy moustache and cruel-looking mouth. Along with the fangs, this rather suggests a were-wolf rather than a vampire as we usually imagine it. Indeed, the connected eyebrows, protruding teeth and hairy palms are features associated with were-wolves as described in *The Book of Were-Wolves* by Sabine Baring-Gould. Bram Stoker himself admitted that he had drawn inspiration from his descriptions. There are various concepts of werewolves in European folklore. Today especially, while they are frequently seen side by side, werewolves and vampires are different creatures. However, in certain regions, the two were considered the same. According to Baring-Gould, the Greek version of a werewolf was actually a vampire. The lycanthropes would fall in trance and his soul would leave his body and enter that of a wolf and raven for blood. In the Greek folklore, Baring-Gould claims, “after death lycanthropists become vampires” (ch. 8). Dracula not only bears a physical resemblance to werewolves, he controls actual wolves that appear in the novel. When Harker approaches the castle, wolves can be heard howling around as they slowly close in. Harker tries to call the coachmen, when he hears “his voice raised in an imperious command” (23) and the wolf pack disappears. Later on in the castle, Dracula admires their howling calling it “music” (29). Dracula’s kinship with animals doesn’t end there. Soon after Harker makes observations about his peculiar appearance, he watches Dracula crawl down a wall like a giant lizard. He is overcome with fear when face to

face with the absurd. He cannot understand what sort of a creature the count is. It is beyond the limits of acceptability. Later on, in the novel Van Helsing informs the others that he can actually transgress the boundary completely and transform himself into animals. He was already seen as a wolf and as a bat, an animal now very much associated with vampires. He can also command them, just like the wolves, and with them all the other “meaner things- the rat, and the owl, and the bat—the moth, and the fox, and the wolf“ (283). Most of them creatures of the night, and some of them associated with the devil, these animals enhance Dracula’s aura of evil. His association with these animals also make him more threatening. Thanks to his abilities to transform into animals and even other forms, at one point he turned into a mist, he is able to move around undetected. But by controlling animals, and especially wolves, he gains even more power. Wolves have a very bad reputation in folklore already. In the novel, they are fiendish and Dracula twice as dangerous.

Yet, for all his animality, he is still a nobleman, an educated aristocrat. His castle library is full of books of various sort and he presents himself in a very civilised manner. When he meets Harker in the library, he calls the books his companions that have been good friends to him as they have brought him knowledge about England. Only later do we discover for what purposes he needed such knowledge. At first we might think of the count as a Byronic hero type reminiscent of one of the first vampires in British fiction, Polidori’s lord Ruthven. However, his animal characteristics diverge from this. Indeed, it is the combination of noble and animal that creates such a disturbing image. The more Dracula projects his noble and educated poise, the more his animality stands out. He brings together two categories. The more civilised a person is, the further away from the animal world he is considered to be. Civilised people can control themselves and they do not give in to their more primitive impulses. And the British considered themselves the most civilised country in the world. One of the novel central themes is the difference between science and superstition. The more advanced people were, the more they relied on scientific facts. However, science itself betrayed them.

One of the most revolutionary scientific discoveries of the 19th century was Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection. The theory was hotly debated and reverberated throughout the scientific community and educated population. The theory contains one important element. It entails a dynamic universe as opposed to the static

one proposed by creationism. The theory states that species evolve over time and as such it proposes a radically different past and future. The theory was taken up by different thinkers of the day including writers like H.G. Wells, who used the pessimistic version of the theory. The anxieties that haunted the end of Victorian England were not confined to the outside world as has been mentioned above. The feelings that things were falling apart as the empire reached its peak and was slowly tilting to its inevitable collapse and the golden age of progress was fading manifested themselves not only in fiction but also in the scientific circles. One such work that challenged the notion of progress was *Degeneration* by social critic and Zionist leader Max Nordau, who commented on the effects of modernity on the human body and who believed that degeneration should be diagnosed as a mental illness. T. H. Huxley, a biologist known as “Darwin’s bulldog”, claimed that “retrogressive is as practicable as progressive metamorphosis” (qtd in Clasen 73). Darwin’s theory itself proposes that all animals are descended from common ancestors disrupted the commonly held beliefs of human superiority over the animal world. It also disrupted the belief in the separate spheres of animals and humans and the boundary became blurred. The theory stated that animals and humans had more in common than people would care to admit and it has been received with quite a shock. A few years after the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, the first skeleton of an Archaeopteryx was unearthed making the connection between dinosaurs and modern birds. Dracula is also such a hybrid, one between a human and an animal who is described to possess a “child-brain” (360). Animals were thought of as soulless, lesser being driven by uncontrollable impulses which separated them from humanity. Now this distinction was slowly fading and it gave rise to literary characters like Dracula or Hyde from Stevenson’s novella. According to Marcia Gonçalves “Dracula’s monstrous body does not bear much definition, being a palimpsest of men rewritten as undead rewritten as animal, but remains thoroughly evil... This chameleonic skill is perhaps the most threatening part of his monstrosity, especially in an age in which categorisation seemed so crucial to one’s understanding” (3).

The horror fiction shows us the fears of fin de siècle world but the popularity of such fiction suggests that people have not gotten over these fears yet. Dracula embodies several but the common characteristic is his ability to permeate carefully kept boundaries so important to Victorian society. It draws from the fact that these

boundaries were being questioned by science and politics alike throughout the Victorian era. And while different scientific theories proved or disproved human superiority, humanity was in fact faced with the reality of the world not being as divided into precise groups as they would like to think, the British and their empire would not last forever and the human body was not in fact separated from the outside world, from the animal world and from other bodies as much as the society believed.

3. Female Monsters

No account of monstrosity in *Dracula* would be complete without the examination of its female protagonists. Lucy Westenra becomes the monster after she is turned into one by Dracula himself. Once a vampire, she exhibits characteristics that are similar to other famous female monsters of the 19th century Gothic literature. Another female vampire is Carmilla featuring in the eponymous novella written by Sheridan Le Fanu. While the author is lesser-known now, he was the leading writer of ghost stories of his time and was central to the development of the genre in Victorian era. Even Sheridan le Fanu's story harkens back to an earlier work of female monstrosity. While this story is considered unfinished and the antagonist is never identified as a vampire, the romantic epic poem *Christabel* by Coleridge and *Carmilla* bear significant similarities. That is why I have chosen these three female monsters to examine in my work. To see what aspects of femininity are described as monstrous and in what way are they different from the monstrous male in Gothic fiction.

Similarly to *Dracula*, the female monster crosses boundaries. Her body is transgressive and transformative. Like other antagonists she doesn't really fit any strict category. She can be both dead and undead, human and animal at the same time. She attracts and she repulses all at once. But to the Victorian mind, she has an extra monstrous bonus. She is female. And so she can cross another boundary, the one between genders. The female monster usually does not comply with the role that society deems appropriate and subverts it in various ways.

Women in the 19th century were marginalised. Much more so, then in previous centuries. They faced tight restrictions and had to fit certain categories. The 19th century saw many changes in how women and their bodies were perceived and it also saw a rising wave of feminism raising issues that are still being discussed today. That is how we know that even though some aspects of female monsters of that era might seem ridiculous to us now, upon deeper consideration, they are still relevant. There were different attitudes towards the female and they changed over time. Some of them were also contradictory and therefore impossible to fulfil. Women were expected to be submissive, pleasant, modest and humble. During that time the domestic and public spheres were becoming more and more separated. But it was also a time after the French revolution when people tried to work towards social change and more

democracy. Women saw that without any political power they are unable to make any changes and in the end make any positive changes in their own domestic sphere. So they fought back to gain political power. A real one this time, as they were no longer satisfied with participating in general rebellions. During the latter part of the 19th century, the idealised version of femininity, an Angel in the House was created. Anything that deviated from that was seen as bad. If a woman could not control herself in one aspect of her life, how could she be trusted in others? That was a general argument how to keep women in their chosen boundaries. The view of the female body also underwent a significant change. It was no longer seen as inferior, as a sort of imperfect version of the male one. Now it was an opposite. This change in the perception of the female body led to the creation of characteristics that were perceived to be specifically female which only increased the binary opposition of gender and widened the gap between them. Any deviations beyond the confines of these prescribed roles were unnatural because femininity was thought to be biologically inherent. Women's bodies were thought to be connected to their mind and the mind is therefore controlled by the body. This led to the belief that women's mind is connected to her reproductive function which only increased the widening of the gap between the spheres. At the same time, bodily processes of the female body were seen as pathological and therefore a woman was practically considered ill her entire life. She was also predisposed to mental illness. The paradox of that era is that women were also thought to be asexual and to be proper they had to be chaste and virtuous. The French historian Jules Michelet, for instance, once wrote that it is the woman's capacity for self-sacrifice that "places her higher than man and makes her a religion" (qtd. In Dijkstra 13). Purity and sacrifice were attributes of the perfect virtuous woman.

All these notions and stereotypes were hard to fight as they were connected to the body and therefore considered inherent. These contradictory assumptions left a lot of room for error because it could be hard to meet all the society's expectations. To stay within the boundaries of respectability was the desired outcome but human nature didn't always agree. This duality was typical for Victorian era. The firmly set boundaries allowed Gothic literature to show, what it is when these boundaries are crossed. Kayla Marie Lindsey writes, that "The female monster is often the only woman in a text that is not connected to a man, not controlled by anyone but her own urges and destiny. They are not rigidly confined, and their bodies and behaviour resist this confinement into

prescribed roles. The female monsters resist confinement and definition, marking their existences as part of the Gothic literary experience” (6). Gothic literature thus provides females that serve as a mirror as they put opposite the proper virtuous woman. Female monsters blur and cross the boundaries of what is proper, and they are put into the position of on Other and thus revealing the boundaries themselves in the process. They show us what exactly the society deemed unacceptable, wrong or even outright evil in women. They also reveal any changes in the perception of the boundaries through time. By doing so, they challenge the contemporary perceptions and expectation put on females and push the boundaries a little further.

3.1. Christabel and Carmilla

Male vampires in fiction and folklore seem to be quite different from the female ones. If we study vampires in folklore we may find very different sources for each. The origin of the vampire myth has been connected to the misunderstandings of pre-scientific observers of corpses, as corpses do all sorts unexpected things, that might have frightened people, who did not understand the processes. They can move, groan when staked and even bleed from the mouth, which would support the “blood-sucking revenant” hypothesis. With female vampires it is slightly more complicated. Some scholars have attributed the origins of the female vampire to legends much older than the medieval and modern period vampire lore. Pam Keesey attributes the earliest female vampires to the worship of mother goddess and James Craig Holte argues, that the first mentions of vampirism can be found in ancient Babylonia and Assyria, ancient Hebrew legends and also Greek mythology. He alludes to the legends of such mythological demons and creatures like Lilith and Lamia, who walked the earth at night and sought young children. Lamia of Greek mythology is also said to have drank human blood. Both of these women were also connected to killing children out of jealousy and revenge. According to Holte, violence and sexuality are two most consistent and significant elements of vampire lore and he claims that “sexuality begets jealousy and violence, and male authority...is questioned by strong, intelligent, sexually active females” (164).

Some of the world’s most famous writers that wrote such characters included Johan Wolfgang Goethe with *The Bride of Corinth* and Edgar Allan Poe with works such as *Ligeia* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*. One of the earliest British examples was *Christabel* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Christabel* is an unfinished narrative ballad, that was originally supposed to be included in *Lyrical Ballads*, but it was ultimately left out and only published in 1816. The story concerns a young lady, Christabel, and her encounter with a stranger called Geraldine, whom she finds while praying in the woods in the middle of the night. At first glance the two elusive women portray the virgin stereotype and its evil, demonic double. On closer inspection, it is more complicated.

The exact nature of Geraldine has been disputed as her true nature is never truly described. However, this only makes the tale more elusive and haunting. She has been

called a vampire by some. This is only logical because there are several significant similarities with Carmilla. Both stories feature two female protagonists, who meet on a misty, but moonlit night. Although the circumstances are otherwise quite different, both women are left alone at the “mercy” of the other women and are invited into their father’s castle. That is when strange things start to happen. Geraldine faints on the threshold “belike through pain” (129) and Christabel has to carry her over into the house, where Geraldine rises again like nothing happened. Then the mastiff in the courtyard starts to moan angrily in her sleep as they are passing. Carmilla has to lean on the governess to enter the castle. Later on in the story, a wanderer enters the castle and his dog starts to howl dismally. Geraldine again sinks to the floor when Christabel lights a lamp in the shape of an angel. In Carmilla, the carriage, that she arrives in, turns over when it approaches a stone cross outside the castle. It is a frequent feature of vampire lore that they have to be invited to be able to pass through the door. The inability to step over a threshold unaided, the reaction of animals around and their reaction to Christian symbols are all indicative of the characters vampire nature.

Geraldine, like Dracula, is strongly associated with animals, specifically snakes. The most obvious connection is the tale told by Bracy the bard. In his dream he sees Christabel’s favourite dove having fallen victim to a “bright green” snake (551). The dream is blatantly prophetic as it is the moment when Geraldine is seducing and enthralling Christabel with her eyes and therefore it is clear that the snake is Geraldine and the dove is Christabel. But there are more obvious connections. Geraldine’s skin upon her bosom is shrivelled and cold like a snake’s skin to the touch. While she appears fair and beautiful, once she undresses Christabel is able to see more. Geraldine doesn’t transform into animals fully like Dracula or Carmilla does. But her appearance is actually mixed. She is both a beautiful young lady and an animal all in one. Towards the end, when she is taken to sir Leoline and he welcomes her with open arms, she looks at Christabel and her eyes “shrunk in her head, / Each shrunk up to a serpent’s eye” (586 – 587). The snake eye is significant. Not only does it suggest the snakelike quality of her appearance, but it also suggests the hypnotic power snake’s eyes were said to possess. The effect that glance has on Christabel is in fact very hypnotic. Christabel stumbles “in a dizzy trance” (591) and produces a “hissing sound” (593). Christabel is now under Geraldine’s spell, knowing the truth but unable to act on it. Furthermore, she is now herself exhibiting snakelike characteristics as if she herself was transforming.

This actually serves as further proof Geraldine's vampirism as she is able to transform her victims into her own kind. Geraldine's apparent "snakedom" has been connected by critics such as James Twitchell and Arthur Hobart Nethercot to the Greek myth of Lamia, who has been ascribed serpentine qualities. However, the most famous serpent in European myths is the one in the Garden of Eden. The serpent is portrayed as a deceptive creature or a trickster when he tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Geraldine tricks her way into sir Leoline's household and tricks Christabel into liking her. Christabel is unable to reveal Geraldine's true nature even though she knows the truth as she is under her spell.

Christabel herself is an interesting character. She has been read by some as a young lady, who falls prey to Geraldine because of her innocence. James Twitchell writes that "by her overbearing innocence" she has been "unable to deal with this demonic force" (46). This would make her the perfect mirror for the evil presence of Geraldine. Yet, Christabel might be more like Stoker's Lucy Westenra. She oscillates between a chaste maiden to one that is corrupted, especially in the beginning. She only meets Geraldine because she wakes from dreams about her absent lover and steals into the forest to pray. That would seem innocent enough, but the manner in which she wakes is curious: "she had dreams all yesternight/ of her own betrothed knight;/ dreams that made her moan and leap/ as on her bed she lay in sleep." (27 -28). The last two lines, deleted before publication, contradict her completely innocent, pure nature. By leaving her father's house she allows the meeting to happen. While she is frequently described as lovely and pious, calling upon the saints to help her on several occasions, she facilitates her encounters with Geraldine and therefore with sin. Geraldine would never have gotten into the castle without her help, she even needed to be carried over the threshold. And if Christabel did not look while she disrobed in lines 251 to 254, she and the reader would never have seen the snakelike skin. Christabel's innocence is therefore limited by her naiveté and her willingness to sin. She believes she is innocent. Her lack of self-awareness blinds her to the danger Geraldine presents. It is only in the morning she starts to realise that something might be wrong when she exclaims "Sure I have sinn'd" but doesn't fully understand until it is too late and she is under Geraldine's power (381). Edward Dramin proposed that Christabel's "faulty innocence conveys an orthodox Christian idea... that the will to sin and the attraction to the sinful are immanent in all, even the most seemingly virtuous" (223). Christabel's complicated

nature and the propensity to sin harkens back to the story of Adam and Eve and only strengthens the image of Geraldine as the serpent from the Garden of Eden. Eve allowed herself to be tricked by the serpent to eat the forbidden fruit and let evil into their lives just like Christabel allowed Geraldine to enter her home. While Eve is considered a saint by the Catholic church, she is also held responsible (to a varying degree) for their expulsion from Eden. It makes Christabel just as liminal as Geraldine herself.

Carmilla, the novella by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, was published half a century later. The story is also narrated by a young woman, Laura, who is preyed upon by a female vampire named Carmilla, later revealed to be Mircalla, Countess of Karnstein. Carmilla is, unlike Geraldine, actually identified as a vampire, or “oupire” as the peasants around the castle called her (47). Very much like Geraldine and Dracula, Carmilla is also associated with animals. Her animality is specifically feline. She is described as a “sooty-black animal, that resembled a monstrous cat” (42). Black cats are notorious harbingers of doom that have appeared in various European mythologies, though the exact folklore varies. They have usually been associated with witches as familiars or they were considered to be the witches themselves. On British Isles, particularly the Celtic people used to believe in a fairy, called the Cat Síth, that took the shape of a black cat the size of a dog. They were feared in most of the stories, even though they were also said to bring good fortune. Cats have appeared in art and pop culture throughout history and they were mostly coded female. Whether it was the black cat as an associate of witches or even Satan, the symbols of female sexuality or even just plain old companions of the crazy cat lady next door, it always comes to the connection of the “feline” and the “feminine”. Carmilla ticks both of the boxes. She is a vampire, a demon and therefore connected to the supernatural and witchcraft. She also manages to seduce Laura and elicit romantic desire in her. The connection of feminine sexuality and animals suggests that its demonization is associated with animality, with those parts of ourselves that people are supposed to control. It is that control that distinguishes us from animals. Unbridled sexuality is, after all, “something which we share with the lower animals” (Clasen 79). Bram Dijkstra goes even further. He doesn’t only see such a loss of control as the problem. In his analysis of *Carmilla*, he claims that “the evil in this narrative is the never ending evil of all women – their bloodlink with the animal past” (342).

This animal past is something that not only controls Carmilla, it is something that also controls Laura herself. She after all, just like Christabel, allows Carmilla to enter the Castle and allows her to wake a desire her. Laura feels both repulsion and attraction, “an excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust...I was conscious of a love growing into adoration and also of abhorrence.” (28). Just like Christabel, she is slowly falling under a spell, unable to call for help. Her inability stems from fear of being patronised by the men around her, particularly her father. Geraldine seduced Christabel’s father. In Carmilla, Laura’s father first invited Carmilla to his castle, not seeing anything suspicious. When Laura does become suspicious, she does not want to tell her father because he would laugh at her. He actually is patronising. When she asks, he only says: “you are not to trouble your head about it” and tells her irritably, that she must not “plague [him] with questions” (56). By dismissing her, he shows his power over her. He asserts that he knows more than she does. This attitude, the handling of women as if they were children, has always served as a way to control them. This time, however, it is the father who loses control. His lack of control allows the two women to create a closer bond. While Dijkstra states, that she is “not permitted any direct vampire power over men” as Carmilla only preys on Laura, it is the two women who ultimately hold more power because they hold more knowledge. Laura’s father not only dismisses his daughter, but he also dismisses the opinions of a doctor and likens them to talks of “hippogriffs and dragons” (34).

Carmilla also takes the place of any potential suitor that Laura might fall in love with, her heart is already taken. The reversal of roles is not lost on Laura. When she explains Carmilla’s strange behaviour towards her and describes it as an “ardour of a lover that embarrassed [her]” (28), she theorises that it is either insanity or the fact, that she is actually a “boyish lover” (29). And even though she dismisses it, she also claims it is “highly interesting to [her] vanity” (29). But Carmilla is truly a woman which makes their relationship a lesbian affair. This fact transgresses the boundaries of Victorian thinking because it exists at all. While male homosexuality was against the law, the female one was completely ignored in most states, except Austria, ironically. Intimate female friendships were considered normal, because it was not assumed that they would be sexual. When two women eloped at the end of the 18th century, their parents were relieved that it was with a woman and other people admired their devoted

friendship. Up to the start of the 19th century, very close and intimate female friendships were accepted as a counterweight to a lack of any romantic feelings in marriage. This attitude, however, changed at the very end of the 19th century with authorities like lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and sexologist Henry Havelock Ellis who brought medicine to what was originally a question of religion and morality. Carmilla and Laura's relationship foretells this turn and subsequent discussions a decade earlier. In the relationship, Carmilla thus usurps the role of a male and turns Laura into one too blurring the lines even more. Teaching Laura about romantic love, she also breaks the power of males over such affairs.

Carmilla, as Laura's suitor, would naturally have to be of noble blood and Carmilla fulfils that. The two of them are actually related, Carmilla is eventually revealed to be the countess of Karnstein and Laura is descended from them. To make the exclusion of males complete, she is related to them through her mother's side. And so was the wife of general Spielsdorf, whose niece Bertha also succumbed to Carmilla, then going by the name Millarca. It is the female, maternal bloodline that is important here then, and not the customary male one. Both ladies, Laura and Bertha, have lost their mothers, who could have functioned as a sort of buffer between them and the vampire. The Victorian mother was, after all, central in defending her daughter's innocence. In a true ghost-story fashion, the missing woman appears in a dream. Laura once hears a strange voice that is both tender and terrible. The voice says: "Your mother warns you to beware of the assassin" (47). Laura is warned and in that same dream she sees Carmilla in her white nightdress covered in blood. While her mother is dead, so is actually Carmilla and so she tries to assert her power through dreams from behind the veil that separates the two worlds. But Carmilla takes advantage of this absence. Laura actually first meets her when she is very young, as it is one of the earliest incidents she can remember. She was alone in her room, but not prone to any fanciful thinking. But she felt neglected and alone at that moment, as the nursery maid was not with her. She describes the encounter thus: "I saw a solemn, but very pretty face looking at me from the side of the bed. It was that of a young lady who was kneeling, with her hands under the coverlet. I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and ceased whimpering. She caressed me with her hands, and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling; I felt immediately delightfully soothed, and fell asleep again" (10). Here Carmilla acts a surrogate mother, comforting a child in distress. It allows her to get

closer to Laura physically, as Laura does not push her away or scream for help. This shift between lover and a mother figure is also present in *Christabel*. As Geraldine becomes a companion to Christabel's father, she also becomes Christabel's step-mother. The mother-daughter connection between Carmilla and Laura is, nevertheless, short-lived. As soon as Laura falls asleep, she is awakened by the sensation of two needles piercing her breast. Carmilla then does not return for 13 more years, when Laura is no longer a child and she thus has to employ different tactics to get closer to her physically. At this point, Carmilla herself relies on a person, introduced to us as her own mother, to leave her at the castle gates. The merging of the roles of mother and lover is exactly the type of boundary crossing that produces the feeling of horror. It implies incest and incest is one of the strongest taboos in many cultures.

At first glance, it would seem that while the men redeem themselves at the end as they exterminate Carmilla. Laura's father, general Spielsdorf and baron Vordenburg, whose knowledge proves indispensable, locate the long lost tomb of Carmilla, or rather Mircalla, countess Karnstein. The next day a commission comes and exhumes the body that is still breathing lying in a coffin full of blood. The body is staked through the heart, beheaded and burned with the ashes thrown into the river. Just as any good vampire lore will tell you to do. Elizabeth Signorotti, however, suggests that the ending might not be as clean as it appears at first glance. As the baron says, when a vampire visits the living in their slumbers, these people then die and become vampires themselves. Moreover, by the time the tale is told, Laura has already died. Signorotti sees this as a sign that, Laura, and therefore Bertha too, continue to live as resurrected vampires. It is not even truly clear if Carmilla is dead. While Laura is still alive, she can hear her footsteps outside of her bedroom and she very much remembers her still as Carmilla comes to her dreams, sometimes as a fiend, but sometimes as a languid, beautiful girl. Laura does not wish to return to her pre-Carmilla state. She has grown up without her father giving her away.

3.2. Lucy Westenra and Mina Murray in *Dracula*

The female monsters in *Dracula* are different from the two previous works. There are two women just like in *Christabel* and *Carmilla* and they are being similarly contrasted with one another. Yet in *Dracula* we see the transformation itself unfold in front of our very eyes. Lucy Westenra and Mina Murray are friends at the beginning of the novel. Lucy turns into a vampire because of Dracula attacks her whereas Mina is able to resist his power. Why that is has been a topic of vast scholarly exploration, but very contradictory. Most of these accounts invoke the emergence of the concept of the New Woman in the late 19th century. The problem is, some say that Stoker was against such women because of Lucy's ultimate fall. Some say he supported them because of Mina's ultimate victory and call Stoker an actual feminist. It is a testament to his novel, that it is possible to argue for both.

Before her transformation, Lucy is portrayed as both innocent and quite forward in her desires. When she discusses men with her friend Mina after having received three proposals of marriage, she calls herself a "horrid flirt" and exclaims: "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (76) This scene is often used to indicate the difference between Lucy and Mina and emphasise Lucy's physical desires that make her impure in the eyes of Victorian society. At the same time, Stoker repeatedly emphasises her purity in contrast to who she becomes after her transformation. She is called "honest-hearted" (76) by one of her suitors, "sweeter and lovelier than ever" (80) by Mina and also "sweetly pretty in her white lawn frock" (82) giving off an impression of the very picture of female innocence. But Mina also comments that "they all fell in love with her on the spot" (82). It is meant as a compliment at that time, but it can be read as foreboding. Dracula indeed chose her as his first victim. Perhaps because he realised that her innocence and sweetness and even her gullibility will make her an easy target. Stephanie Demetrakopoulos actually calls her "simple-minded" as she goes to picture-galleries and for walks and rides in the park and her sweetness "cloyingly saccharine" (109). Lucy attracts men with her innocence and sweetness, both good and bad. And just as she was unable to defend herself against the desire to accept all three proposals, she is also unable to defend herself against Dracula and her transformation can begin.

Dracula comes to her in her sleep and she remains unaware of what is happening. In her vampire self, she exhibits all the traits of a proper female monster. She suddenly becomes overtly sexual, aggressive and violent, the complete opposite of what she was before. In her vampire self, she crosses the boundaries and in many ways, acts in a way that was prescribed for the male part of the population. One of the first symptoms of her transformation is her sleepwalking, a characteristic that has appeared in earlier vampire stories, such as *Carmilla*. At that time, it was used as the only possible explanation for *Carmilla*'s sudden disappearance and reappearance in a different room, when she had no recollection of how she got there. Lucy also has disturbing dreams that are "dark and horrid" (134) but she remembers nothing. She feels weak and worn out when she wakes up and Arthur himself notices the changes when he visits. When Arthur realises Lucy is not well, he writes to Dr. Seward and tells him that "she has no special disease, but she looks awful" (134). Dr Seward, unable to account for Lucy's strange symptoms calls on the help of Abraham Van Helsing, who is supposed to be an expert in strange diseases, but he turns out to be an expert in vampires. However, even these two experts medicine ultimately fail to stop Dracula, only slow the transformation with blood transfusions. When Lucy dies, the men notice a change in her body. While she was "ghastly, chalkily pale" during her illness and "the red seemed to have gone even from her lips and gums, and the bones of her face stood out prominently" (147). Her dead body is described as if "Death had given back part of her beauty, for her brow and cheeks had recovered some of their flowing lines; even the lips had lost their deadly pallor" (195).

Van Helsing then knows for sure that Lucy is a vampire now. She has crossed the boundaries completely; she was now one of the Un-Dead. It is her body, and yet it is not her. The male characters use very different words to describe her now diseased but transformed body. Lying in her coffin, she seemed like a "nightmare of Lucy...the whole carnal, and unspiritual appearance" (256). We can see again the turn from the spiritual side and the soul to the body. What makes her human is missing from her body. She is only driven by her bodily impulses, only amplified by the fact that she is in a trance. She has lost all capacity for human (or should we say humane) emotions such as non-carnal love and compassion. She becomes a "thing" and is referred to as "it" rather than she. According to Dr Seward, her "sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty and the purity to voluptuous wantonness" (252 – 253). She then gave

an “angry snarl, such as a cat gives” and when she calls out to Arthur seductively, her voice is described as “diabolically sweet” (253). Her cruelty and animality, sexual aggressiveness and lust are thus implied to be the most defining traits of her monstrosity. The wording creates a direct bipolarity between her all too innocent sweetness and her seductive sweetness as a vampire making this characteristic more prominent than in the other female monster stories.

As I have established earlier, sexuality and violence are very consistent characteristics of vampire lore. One of the most defining characteristics for women to this day is motherhood. What better way to demonise a woman than through the rejection of motherhood as can be seen in many ancient legends. I have already mentioned Lilith and Lamia. In *Christabel* and *Carmilla*, the mothers are absent physically and only appear as a sort of presence trying to warn their daughters from beyond and are thus unable to truly help them. Mrs. Westenra, Lucy’s mother is present in the novel at the beginning and naturally worries about her daughter’s state. She, however, dies just a few days before Lucy. She is thus just as powerless as *Christabel*’s and *Laura*’s own mothers. Lucy, who is not yet married, remains childless. Yet the novel establishes a strong connection between women and mothers and Lucy’s role as a mother becomes completely inverted. Lucy as a vampire is a predator. Unlike her male counterparts, she preys only on small children, as do the three female vampires in *Dracula*’s castle. The scene in the book, when the men encounter Lucy in her vampire form, takes place after a series of attacks on small children in Hampstead, as reported by the *Westminster Gazette*. All the children had small holes in their throats, and they reported, because they were too young to give any serious account, that they had been with the “bloofer lady”. The children don’t seem to be truly afraid of her as they go with her willingly. Later on they even pretend to be her in their games insinuating that her company is desirable even though she hurts them. Van Helsing surmises that all these injuries were made by Lucy. Surrounded by graves, tombs and yew trees and moonlight of the Kingstead churchyard, Lucy eventually appears. She is wearing a white robe, described as cerements of the grave, and her dark hair contrasts with the fair-hair of the child she is carrying. Her lips are stained with fresh blood. It is the perfect reversal of the imagery of *Madonna with Jesus*, the very picture of purity and innocence. The Marian cult has indeed been crucial in Christianity and underwent a comeback in the 19th century, even though the image itself and the significance dates to even earlier time.

The Egyptian goddess Eset is frequently depicted holding or nursing her son Horus and some postulate that the image of Mary and Jesus is directly derived from the ancient Egyptian iconography. Yet, the adjectives used to describe Lucy are the exact opposite. Her eyes are “full of hell fire” and “blazed with unholy light” (253). She then proceeds to fling the child to the ground, “callous as the devil” (253). All these epithets of cruelty, hell and the devil, evoke the exact opposite of what a woman holding a child is supposed to represent. Her abandoning the child in the most cruel way possible in order to protect herself, Lucy only affirms one of the most problematic aspects of the image of the New Woman, that is ““the destructive abandonment of the nurturing role” (Lancaster 3). H  l  ne Collins goes even further and argues, that Lucy is not only described as breaching the concept of a woman as naturally a nurturing being and a good mother, but through her preying on children she becomes a child molester. She is, after all, described as voluptuous while clutching a child to her chest. The novel thus brings to the surface more taboos at once: “The metaphor of motherhood creates an ambivalent reference as it brings to mind female sexuality while screening from its non-procreative part. In Lucy’s case, naming female child molesting requires breaking not only the taboo of child abuse but also the taboo of female non-procreative sexuality” (35). Lucy becomes monstrous on many levels. Her breaking these taboos of non-procreative sexuality and violence and her too simple a sweetness in the beginning is what distinguishes her from her friend Mina.

The second part of the book focuses more on Mina, who is actually more experienced and knowledgeable of the world. She is a schoolteacher and has knowledge of stenography and therefore is able to aid her husband in more ways than just the domestic role. She also becomes an important figure in Dracula’s ultimate destruction. Van Helsing himself praises her intelligence when he says that she has a “man’s brain – a brain that a man should have were he much gifted” (281). But this does not make her freakishly mannish in any way, because according to Van Helsing she also possesses “a woman’s heart” (281) thus creating the perfect balance. Mina is also able to recollect what was happening with Dracula while in a hypnotic trance, proving useful by providing information. She herself offers to be hypnotised, to be able to connect to Dracula telepathically. She is also the one who assembles all the relevant information regarding the count and places it in chronological order. Despite all other masculine traits, she is a loving and devoted wife. She spends her honeymoon taking care of her

husband, Jonathan Harker, who has just returned from Transylvania and is very sick and is being taken care of in Budapest. Demetrakopoulos suggests that because she is married, she “has knowledge of sexuality which may contribute to her maturity” (109 – 110). Mina remains feminine, but uses her skills and intelligence to counter the evil forces and does not succumb to her femininity like Lucy did. Her combination of feminine and masculine is seen as positive by Stoker. Mina crosses the boundaries just like Lucy does. In her progressiveness she becomes a liminal being too. Unlike the monster women, her liminality is accepted within the changing society. Carol Senf concludes that “familiar with the feminist movement and apparently supportive of women’s struggles for professional equality, he creates female characters who are the intellectual equals of the men in his novels; however he seems to have drawn the line at sexual equality” (38).

While Mina’s intellectual autonomy is accepted, Mina nor Lucy’s bodily autonomy is not. Lucy is effectively killed by the group of men with a stake through the heart and her body is thus eliminated. Mina’s body now belongs to her husband and her sexuality is thus tamed, providing him with a son at the end, adding yet another male to the group. While the novel might just barely pass the Bechdel test, the ending would fail completely, because there are no more women for Mina to talk to. All the other female characters were either vampires or have died. While Mina is portrayed as intelligent and her skills outside of the domestic sphere are crucial, by the end of the novel she is surrounded and controlled by males, because she herself was instrumental in destroying all the other female characters. With the threat, male or female truly gone, Stoker has managed to provide a much more closed ending than the more open ones of *Christabel* and *Carmilla*.

Gothic literature works as a discourse that inherently breaks boundaries and taboos because of the use of supernatural. The supernatural to this day is a way to experience things that our not within the boundaries of our normal, everyday existence. If normal and natural doesn’t apply, gender stereotypes don’t either. By turning female characters into monsters, we can see what the society deems as monstrosity in a woman and what those norms actually are. By using monstrous women as doubles and mirrors of “normal” women, the difference can stand out. At the same time, the interaction of these characters and their behaviour can show us, how fragile the norms can sometimes be and how authority is, in fact, unstable. As the characters interact and affect one

another, we see the effects the perceived monstrosity has and to what degree does it last, after the threat has been eliminated. The characters show both strength and weakness. The seemingly good characters allow evil to enter their lives but the male characters are in many cases unable to realise the presence of evil and ultimately stop it. These works celebrate the multifacetedness of femininity and, indeed, of human nature in general showing the good, the bad, and all the in-between. Some works let the good win in the end, in some cases it is not so straightforward. Some works use these encounters for character growth, some not so much, but we can learn from all of these women.

4. Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus

Mary Shelley's "hideous progeny" famously originated in Villa Diodati by Lake Geneva, while she and her husband Percy were visiting Lord Byron. Because of the long volcanic winter of 1816, the group had to find alternative ways of entertainment. When they read German ghost stories, Byron proposed that they should all write one of their own. Two famous works emerged from that prompt, John Polidori's short story *The Vampyre*, considered the first modern vampire story. The second being Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The novel tells a story of an unorthodox scientific experiment and the creation of a sapient nameless creature, who turns on his maker. Upon publication, the novel was both disregarded and well received. Sir Walter Scott for instance praised the (then unknown) author's "original genius and happy power of expression" (Scott). Not all the reviews were positive though. An article in *The British Critic* particularly attacks the novel on the grounds of the fact, that the author is female. The reviewer comments that the novel is too bizarre, grotesque and immoral and that if "the authoress can forget the gentleness of her sex, it is no reason why we should; and we shall therefore dismiss the novel without further comment" (*The British Critic*). Mary Shelley has indeed had to defend herself, as she was asked many times about the novel. In the introduction to the novel from 1831 she tries to answer that very question: "How I, then a young girl, came to think of, and dilate upon, so very hideous an idea?" (131). Since the mid-20th century, critical reception has been mostly positive. The novel has been quite popular among psychoanalytic critics, but also among feminist critics such as Ellen Moers and Anne Mellor. The novel is now considered a landmark in Gothic and romantic literature and science fiction that challenges cultural and literary norms and questions topics that are discussed to this day. It transcended the boundaries of women's literature by being written in the first place, but transcending boundaries is one of its central themes. Mary Shelley broke the confines of her gender just as Victor Frankenstein broke the confines of science and religion and indeed, gender, in creating a life out of death.

As any good Gothic fiction, *Frankenstein* is a work about doubles and opposites. It is not a seemingly innocent young woman and its monstrous counterpart or dividing oneself into two people by scientific experimentation per se. Yet, we have a creator and his creation. A creator who abandons his responsibility which leads to a tragic end. The creative power of humanity and science is at the very heart of the novel. Victor is often seen as the prototype of the mad scientist. This trope has entered popular culture a long

time ago and it is a staple of Halloween imagery. But why that is, and why his creative scientific discoveries lead to death and not life is a question worth pondering. Some critics see it as a turn from religion and myth to materialism. If a man can create another human by reanimating dead flesh and without a female counterpart, than he no longer needs a God. It is, after all, called the modern Prometheus. The problem is, it did not work. Yes, the creation, that was never even given a name, lived and so Victor was successful. At the same time, he completely failed in his experiment. He fails because of his indifference and lack of responsibility. He rejects scientific facts but also morality. His “transgressive autonomy, grounded in scientific materialism, results in a reductionism that ultimately leads to existential despair, individual crisis, and communal disintegration” (Hogsette 533).

When he starts working on the creature he is completely consumed by it and cuts himself off of any meaningful human contact. His tunnel vision leads to a failure to see anything beyond his project and therefore he lacks perspective. He only works for his own gain with no regards for the consequences and the reality around him. He does not “consider the magnitude and complexity of [his] plan as any argument of its impracticability” (39) and because the “minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance”, he resolves to “make the being of a gigantic stature” (39). The monster’s hideousness is the result of Victor’s blind materialism and a selfish desire for creative autonomy. He needs to work fast to finish it before his own conscience catches up with him. And when it does on occasion, he is able to turn a blind eye: “The dissecting room and the slaughter house furnished many of my materials, and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased“ (40). He believes that „life and death appeared to [him] ideal bounds“ and that the new „species would bless [him] as its creator and source“ (39). Victor is selfish and self-centred. He knows that what he is doing is morally wrong, but for his own gain in knowledge and power that he knows he will have over the creature, he suppresses the truth of his actual depravity, and indeed, monstrosity.

In order to be successful he works very fast because he simply doesn’t have the patience but the only thing he achieves in the end is to make the creature so hideous, that it makes him abandon it just as it is animated and his experiment actually successful. The creature’s appearance is interesting. While the most popular and recognisable image is that of the monster from 1931 movie *Frankenstein*, where he was

played by Boris Karloff, the actual creature actually doesn't look much like that. He has yellow skin that "scarcely covered the work of the muscles and arteries beneath, his hair was of lustrous black, his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seems almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips" (41). This description reflects his way of working. He chose individual parts because of their beauty such as his lustrous black hair and white teeth, but he sutured them together in such a way that is not beautiful at all. It speaks to his tunnel vision, seeing only the parts but not the whole, seeing dead body parts reanimated, but not a living being. In an essay on ugliness, Denise Gigante comments: "As cracks and fissures emerge in the representation, the visceral reality of the Creature leaks through to destroy all fantasy" (570). She invokes Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who had a profound impact on Mary Shelley and who defined beauty as "'is that in which the many, still seen as many, becomes one'" (qtd. In Gigante 570). The Creature therefore has to "inspire his viewer with the imaginative power necessary to unite his various anatomical components into the totality of a human being" (Gigante 570). That is where Victor fails. He is not able to see beauty. He only sees a collection of body parts that were only individually selected as beautiful. When he finally looks into its eyes, which he later doubts are actually eyes, he does not see the "window to the soul". It seems as if the creature's eyes weren't even there. He describes them as "the same colour as the dun-white sockets" (41), suggesting they are colourless, and they blend with the colour of the skin. The eyes thus block the access to his soul, enabling Victor to abandon him without remorse. We can see the contrast when we look at the descriptions Shelley used for other characters. For instance, Elizabeth's eyes are cloudless and Safie's are animated. The monster's eyes are not, they are merely two blobs of jelly attached to the body.

Victor's reasoning for the creation is his study of the natural sciences but also alchemy. While one of his mentors rejects them, another, Mr Waldman says that modern philosophers are indebted to them. Indeed it is this meeting with Mr Waldman that, as per his own admission, informs Victor's future destiny. The important part of his lecture concerns chemistry. He says that these people have "indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places. They ascend into the heavens" (36). Unlocking the secrets of nature and

performing miracles is exactly what Victor wants to do. He is now lead to believe that with the natural sciences, he can unlock the mystery of the world and through that stand before the gates of Heaven, thus usurping the position of God.

Victor eventually turns to materialism and it is this belief that allows him to not see a human being, only a collection of parts, only a thing. His materialistic worldview thus allows him to reject the creature, even though his conscience cries against it. When “breathless horror and disgust” fills his heart, he runs away. The creature is not something for which he should feel responsible. He never really thought of giving, it was only ever about taking, the creature should call “him” his creator. Not father, but a creator. He is only by himself, usurping the divine creative power. Malaya Nordyke sees this as “man’s tendency to have the confidence to create, but not the knowledge and capacity to control”. When I was talking about the other monsters in Gothic fiction, one of the arguments about them was their animality, with animals being considered lesser being controlled by their impulses. Dracula himself is described as having a child’s brain and Lucy as having lost human emotions. Victor has lost control in the same manner.

It is also his materialism, that causes all the isolation in the novel. The monster, being spurned by its own creator becomes the Other in society. No matter what he does, he is treated with hatred because of his appearance. He is attacked by the villagers, then by the De Lacey family and he is even attacked after saving a child from drowning. He becomes “an abortion to be spurned and kicked and hated” (128). It is this isolation that eventually turns him into the true monster that he is, when he goes on a murderous rampage in order to destroy Victor. But his loneliness actually mirrors his maker. Victor is alone because he self-isolates. His loneliness is by choice. He neglects his family and his fiancé. In order to pursue his scientific project, he cuts himself from any human contact. Alone with his doomed passion and surrounded by corpses, he abandons the parts that make him human. It is true, however, that his isolation actually started before he pursued the experiment. His abandonment of the creature thus seems as an extension of all the tragedy of his previous life. He lost his mother just as he started studying making her yet another absent one as she dies of scarlet fever. She is therefore another mother who fails to protect her children, even if it is from themselves. In fact, the absence of one or both parents is a recurring theme in the novel. Justine Moritz, an orphan girl who was adopted into the family and who serves as a nanny to Victor’s

brother William, is hanged for his murder. Elizabeth Lavenza, his fiancé and also his cousin in the 1818 edition, is strangled by the creature himself on their wedding-night. She is an orphan too. In the 1931 edition, her mother dies and her Italian father disappears, while in the earlier edition, her father gives her up to spare her being raised by a stepmother. Victor's own mother, Caroline Beaufort is an orphan as well, having lost her father after he fell to ruin and oblivion.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point this out in their famous work *The Madwoman in the Attic*: "Family histories... especially those of orphans, appear to fascinate [Mary Shelley], and whenever she can include one in the narrative she does so with an obsessiveness suggesting that through the disastrous tale of a child who becomes an orphan and a beggar she is once more recounting the story of the fall, the expulsion from paradise, and the confrontation of hell. For Milton's Adam and Eve, after all, began as motherless orphans reared... by a stern, but kindly father-god, and ended as beggars rejected by God" (234). The motherlessness in *Frankenstein* and in *Paradise Lost* did not go unnoticed by other critics as well. Margaret Homans writes: "Milton appropriates the maternal by excluding any actual mother from the scene of creation. Eve is the form that Adam's desire takes once actual motherhood has been eliminated; and in much the same way, the demon is the form taken by *Frankenstein's* desire once his mother and Elizabeth as mother have been circumvented" (105). Elizabeth is killed on her wedding night, a time that marks her own entrance into the realm of matrimony and motherhood. She is never even given a chance. It is therefore not only real mothers that are erased but the potential ones too. The female creature Victor creates, is a potential mother as well. Once he realises that the new female is capable of having children of her own. This scares Victor so much that he destroys the unfinished female. He ponders the possibilities a female creature would bring and one of them is that "a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror" (151). What is more, he fears the female's own autonomy and the fact that she might choose her own life and her own partner. Victor's tragic life and the effect that has on him leads to the disruption of other families and relationships around him. By creating the creature, Victor takes on the role of a monstrous mother, which is actually something we can see in other Gothic works. *Geraldine* and *Carmilla* take on the role of the mother as well. Victor's own taking over the role of a mother, however, leads to the

death of all the other women in his life. His erasure of women in his thoughts leads to the erasure of real women around him. Justine is executed because of the creature, Elizabeth is killed by him and the female creature is destroyed by Victor himself.

The merging of genders, of the feminine and the masculine, and of the roles assigned to each gender into one happens on several levels in *Christabel* and *Carmilla*. They act as mothers but also of lovers, a role that should be male, because they seduce their female counterpart. Victor Frankenstein merges genders too, only on the opposite side of the gender spectrum. If they eliminated the need for a male, *Frankenstein* eliminates the need for female. This has been one of the important points of feminist criticism. Particularly Anne Mellor in her essay *Usurping the Female* claims, that “one of the deepest horrors of this novel is Frankenstein's implicit goal of creating a society for men only “. She sees Victor’s failure to feel any emotional attachment in the division of the public and domestic sphere. This division only deepened in the 19th century. Women were supposed to be at home tending to the children; they were the nurturers and caregivers. Lucy becomes a monster because she abandons this role. Victor becomes a monster in a way because he appropriates the feminine role. But he is not trained in it nor does it come naturally to him. His upbringing as a man would have been very different. As a young adult, he proceeds to study the sciences and gets enthralled by the power this understanding brings. But cutting himself off from his family and his fiancé, he neglects his emotional side, single-mindedly pursuing only his scientific research. And in the very middle of this strictly masculine, intellectual activity, he brings forth his creation, his artificial offspring, for which he feels no parental responsibility or love. The creature in turn starts taking Victor’s friends and family members. William, Henry Clerval, Elizabeth.

All the tragedy seems to indicate that human relationships, marital unions and community in general are a source of pain and tragedy rather than comfort and stability. They are mostly absent throughout the novel or they only end in pain. Victor’s own life is a series of devastation. However, as David Hogsette points out, “these tragic occurrences are not an indictment of the family as such but, instead, serve as cautionary tales about the neglect of the domestic impulse“ (555). Victor fails to understand the significance of interpersonal relationships when he focuses on the dead and neglects the living including the result of his experiment. If he realised that importance, and if he was able to merge the supposedly masculine intellectual activity with the supposedly

feminine emotional activity, than the tragedy would not have happened. He only saw the feminine nature as source for his experiment, only the material, physical side of thing that he feared and tried to control.

In the end, it falls on the creature to finish the story. In a way, the creature is Victor's direct opposite. Victor abandoned fellowship and love, the creature yearned for it above all else. When Victor dies, it is the creature who shows humility and remorse. Who sees the terrible crimes he has committed: "But now crime has degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No guilt, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine. When I run over the frightful catalogue of my sins, I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness" (196). Although captain Walton accuses him of not feeling true remorse, only rage that the victim of his malignity is withdrawn from his powers, the creature persists. He realises that he will find no sympathy or affection among the living, especially now that humanity actually has a good reason to hate him. He has, after all, killed the innocent and the helpless. And so he decides to leave on the ice raft and never be heard of again. With Victor also dead, the knowledge of how he came to be will also vanish and there will be no more like him. By doing so, by ridding world of his existence, he believes he will do a good thing and his "spirit will sleep in peace, or if it thinks, it will surely not think thus" (198). The creature in the end understood the necessity of fellowship in human life and the presence of close people around, and the nature of forgiveness. The realisation that vengeance ultimately means nothing, it only leads to more suffering and indeed, created the monster the others thought him to be. Walton himself, although asked and almost moved to Victor's vengeance against the creature, ultimately chooses not to continue. His responsibilities are to his men and he cannot lead them to ruin a pursuit that isn't theirs. He puts his crew first, the hunt for "utility and glory" second (192). After hearing the full story and encountering the creature at the very end, he realises the value of compassion, of family and fellowship. He sees that these are more important than simple hunt for personal glory. He also realises how easy it is to fall, even if the original intent is not bad at all. Victor himself on his deathbed tells him to "seek happiness in tranquillity and avoid ambition" (194).

The novel explores the ramifications of ideas and theories. There is no such thing as a harmless idea. It is always in the hands of a human being and that human

being has a responsibility because he is a part of society. He might have creative power, but as the saying goes, with great power comes great responsibility. Victor is a transgressor not because he created the being, people create other people all the time, but because he failed in the moral department. He thought of himself but did not feel for the creature. Through his studies he became a materialist and saw his creation as a hideous mass of body parts rather than a living being. But as we can see through the tragic events of the novel, his materialism only leads to more tragedy. He views the world around him as something to be studied but not lived, as something to be understood intellectually but not emotionally. That is how his experiment is transgressive, he does not see the whole picture, only parts. He sees himself as God, but he is only Adam. He accuses his own "Adam" of being monstrous, yet if he is a God to his Adam, it means that the monster was created in his image. The monstrous offspring was created by a monstrous parent. When they realise their own monstrosity, it is too late for both of them. The most jolting effect of the novel, one that many people who have not read the book and only superficially know the story, often miss, is the reversal of sympathy demanded by the monster's narrative. The problematic question of who is the true monster of the story is reinforced by the instability and shifting of the identities of its characters. "The roles of master and slave, pursuer and pursued [are] alternating and merging... [The characters] can no longer be sure whether they correspond to Adam, to God, or to Satan, or to some or all of these figures" (Baldick 143).

5. The Picture of Dorian Gray

Oscar Wilde, an Irish poet and playwright and journalist, is best remembered for his epigrams, plays and short stories but also for the circumstances of his imprisonment for “gross indecency”. He became associated with the aesthetic and decadent movements, led by two of his tutors, Walter Pater and John Ruskin. As a spokesperson for aestheticism, known for his flamboyant dress, wit and conversational skills, he soon became one of the leading personalities of the day. Wilde was also no stranger to the Gothic aesthetic even before writing his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Just a few years prior, *The Court and Society Review* published his short story *The Canterville Ghost*. This delightful little piece combines his Gothic sensibilities and his iconic sense of humour, producing a story that parodies common elements of a ghost story while also satirising the differences between the Americans and the British. Wilde creates the perfect Gothic setting with an old mansion with medieval décor and hidden passageways, stormy skies and blood stains and black-panelled walls of the library. It even has an old prophecy first heard from an old housekeeper, reminiscent of Dorothée from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. While the setting is spot on, the ghost himself is the exact opposite. A rather pitiful being, he provides much of the story’s comedy. After centuries of mischief, he thoroughly fails to scare any member of the very un-superstitious American family. The poor ghost of sir Simon actually spends much of the story tripping, falling and cowering in fear of the youngest members of the family and their pranks. The suspense ultimately returns when their sister Virginia disappears culminating in a surprisingly heartfelt ending with Virginia’s kindness finally putting the ghost’s tormented soul to rest.

The Picture of Dorian Gray, with its first published version heavily edited for violating public morality, is not so overtly Gothic in its setting nor does it feature a ghost or another supernatural being. Yet, monstrosity is at the heart of the novel. It is a story full of doubles, sins, monsters and monstrous creations. Untangling who is who is just not as straightforward. There are no two women, or a mad scientist and his creation in the literal sense, nor a dangerous Transylvanian Count. There are three men and one portrait. Dorian Gray, the eponymous protagonist of the novel, is an uncommonly handsome young man, who under the influence of his friends turns into an immoral and narcissistic individual. His lifestyle eventually leads to his death. Basil Hallward is a deeply moral man, infatuated with Dorian who stands as a model for his masterpiece.

Basil introduces Dorian to his friend sir Henry Wotton, an aristocrat and a dandy who espouses new hedonism, a belief that beauty and sensual fulfilment are the only things in the world worth living for. And then there is the portrait itself, a curious piece of art that starts as an ordinary oil painting but begins to mirror Dorian's amoral experiences and ages while Dorian stays the same. Dorian's two friends are oftentimes seen as opposite. One good and one amoral, ethics and aesthetics. One creator of the portrait and one creator of the person Dorian became. It, however, might not be that simple. The two people can be seen as representative of two different lifestyles that influenced Dorian, but Dorian himself points out, that his personality might also be determined of his ancestry and therefore he was always destined to be who he became.

Sir Henry Wotton becomes a creator of Dorian when he sees the picture for the first time and brings to his attention his own beauty. For Henry, that is the most important thing in the world to have and the most fleeting. As person gets older, the beauty fades away. When he sees how careless Dorian is in the beginning he breaks into a rant and starts explaining his stance to his friends. According to him beauty "is a form of genius" and "the wonder of wonders" (30). His advice to Dorian is to "be always searching for new sensations" and "be afraid of nothing" (30) so as not to be "haunted by the memory of the passions of which we were too much afraid, and the exquisite temptations that we had not the courage to yield to"(31). Henry can afford to think in these terms. His own philosophy seems to suggest that there is no moral order in the world as morality is arbitrary. Sheldon Liedman discusses Henry Wotton's attitude to life and states that his "moral position leads to a withdrawal from human engagement, the pursuit of pleasure (both sensual and intellectual) as a distraction from disillusionment, and the manipulation of others for one's own enjoyment and edification" (298). Henry is always looking for new sensations and discovery, and yet he says that he has "known everything" (94) with a tired look in his eyes. At one point he also talks about brute force that he can stand as opposite to brute reason which he cannot. At the same time, he is always "ready for a new emotion" even though he knows "there is no such thing" (94). Henry is, as many pointed out, a scientist. Much like Victor Frankenstein or Dr Jekyll. He believes in science, or so he says. He has "always been enthralled by the methods of natural science" (68) and claims that people should "appeal to science to put us straight" (50). However, the biggest importance of science to him is that it is "not emotional" (50). He is disillusioned. He has seen life and

seems to think it can only lead to pain and suffering. People have no real control over their lives anyway, as they are governed by their own bodies as emotions are really just products of biological processes. When talking about fidelity, he exclaims that “even in love it is a purely question of physiology. It has nothing to do with our own will” (38). That just means that the world at large is irrational because people are irrational, driven by emotions and other biological function beyond our control. Therefore real life can only mar as it had “marred” Sybil Vane when she fell in love with Dorian.

Henry’s experience of the world and his philosophy has made him quite detached. He can look around himself and observe people (and himself) without any professed emotion as if he was truly a scientist searching for facts. If the world is indifferent and chaotic, the only thing he can resort to is “philosophic contemplation” (50). At the beginning of the novel, when he is talking about his married life, he is accused by Basil of never saying a moral thing and never doing a wrong thing (11). This at first glance seems to contradict his personality, but it does not. As he has said, he resorts to philosophical contemplations and spending his time observing and pondering people. That is the only thing worth doing after all. Because he would never actually go so far as to do anything worth mentioning, he experiments on people around him to satisfy his intellectual curiosity. That way, he doesn’t really have to move a finger, and the others do all the work for him. He chooses Dorian Gray, because he seems so innocent in the beginning. A blank canvas, figuratively, just as Basil painted the canvas literally. Dorian becomes his Frankensteinian experiment. Victor secluded himself from human contact and emotion to satisfy his curiosity. Because of that, he became callous about the consequences of his actions and about the life his creature will lead, which turned them both into violent, immoral beings.

Because Dorian actually, under Henry’s guidance lives all his theories, he actually tests them. That is something Henry is never able to do. It is Dorian, who is put into positions where he causes real pain and real tragedies and has to bear the consequences. He is caught in the crossfire between Henry’s callousness and his conscience. When he falls in love with Sybil Vane, Henry only laughs. While Dorian believes, he is only pursuing what Henry taught him, that is to “know everything about life”, Henry only says Sybil is very commonplace and that Dorian will always be loved and in love anyway. This is only the first romance of his life because to only love once in one’s life is too shallow. Dorian believes at this point, that Sybil Vane is the one and

only, Henry sees as one of many. At the same time, both realise Henry's influence. Dorian admits he cannot help telling him things and admits to him, that if he ever committed a crime, he would come and tell Henry everything. Henry deflates that and says that "the wilful sunbeams of life – don't commit crimes" (63). Yet, he does. When Sybil Vane falls in love with him and her acting becomes very poor for the first time, he casts her away. That is the first time the portrait changes appearance. This scares Dorian and makes him "conscious how unjust, how cruel, he had been to Sybil Vane" (112). He realises that the portrait acts as his conscience. He breaks away from Henry's influence. He believes that he will marry her after all, and that his selfish love could be transformed into something nobler. Something, that Basil's portrait will help with and guide him towards. He begins to write a love letter to Sybil Vane, only to have his hopes completely dashed by Henry and his news that Sybil is dead.

Basil's portrait, aging and actually mirroring Dorian's behaviour, function's in the novel as Dorian's doppelgänger. Such a double is described as either an "alter ego or identical double of a protagonist who seems to be either a victim of identity theft perpetrated by a mimicking supernatural presence or subject to a paranoid hallucinations or the split personality or the dark half of the protagonist, an unleashed monster that acts as a physical manifestation of a disassociated part of the self" (Faurholt). Dorian's portrait is such a supernatural presence in the novel. Being Dorian's conscience the portrait is very reminiscent of the short story *William Wilson* by the master of American gothic fiction, Edgar Allan Poe. It also works as a reversal of Jekyll and Hyde where Hyde was both the evil and the hideous one. Dorian retains his youth and beauty while his soul is tarnished by all the pain he has caused around himself. While Dorian is not exactly a split personality in the same way as in Stevenson's version, the novel explores the theme of the physiognomy. However, it actually does the opposite and consistently subverts the practise. Dorian is able to hide behind his beautiful face and is able to deceive people, particularly Basil.

Basil Hallward is another part of the equation that is Dorian Gray. He is another important influence in his life. As per his own admission, he poured his own soul into the portrait. While it is a source of embarrassment for Basil, it also means that the portrait actually becomes his mirror and double as well. Basil Hallward works in the novel as the opposite of Henry. He is the William Wilson of Henry Wotton. While Henry believes, that "sin is the only real-colour element left in modern life" (37). Basil

leads Dorian to a prayer: "Lead us not into temptation. Forgive us our sins" (181). He believes in punishment: "The prayer of your repentance will be answered also. I worshipped you too much. I am punished for it. You worshipped yourself too much. We are both punished" (181). He also believes that "sin is a thing that writes itself across a man's face" (172). But Dorian's face remains the same. It does not reflect anything. And so he can get away with everything and that is why Basil doesn't believe the rumours about him. Unlike Henry, Basil believes in a universe where bad things are punished and good things rewarded and if you sin, you have to repent to be forgiven.

Basil is an artist. He is a bachelor, living a solitary lifestyle but enjoying a relative wealth seeing himself in his art. When he meets Dorian, he is consumed by his beauty and he believes that his art is transformed by him: "he is all my art to me now" (16). Basil believes, that he has discovered a new manner of art thanks to Dorian. He is to Basil "the harmony of body and soul" which people according to him have abandoned in favour of "realism that is vulgar, and ideality that is void" (17). But it is not only the Dorian's portrait that Basil deems the greatest of his works. It is merely his presence that transforms his paintings. When Basil painted a landscape while Dorian sat beside him, he believes that some subtle influence passed from him to Basil and so "for the first time in my life I saw in the plain Woodland the wonder I had always looked for and always missed" (18). Basil Hallward believes in Dorian and he believes in his inherent goodness. Where Henry scoffs, Basil encourages. Where Henry rejoices that he was able to escape a company at luncheon, where social issues would have been discussed and sees sympathy as negative, Basil sees beauty in sympathy. When they go to the theatre to see Sybil Vane and Dorian praises her power to inspire emotion in people, Basil, despite his initial misgivings, exclaims: "If this girl can give a soul to those who have lived without one, if she can create the sense of beauty in people whose lives have been sordid and ugly, if she can strip them of their selfishness and lend them tears for sorrows that are not their own, she is worthy of all your adoration, worthy of the adoration of the world. This marriage is quite right" (96). Liebman calls Basil an "idealist" and a "moralist" as he is able to feel for others. He at first doesn't see the things Dorian does. When Dorian goes out after learning that Sybil has died, he finally calls him on it and calls it Henry's influence. This culminates in Basil entreating Dorian to pray and repent for his sins. Dorian's own response is not a prayer, but a murder as "the mad passions of a hunted animal stirred within him" (182).

Dorian Gray himself oscillates between these two worldviews. Unlike Henry, Dorian lives the life Henry only thinks about. There are real consequences and real harm is done to the people around him. Even though Basil believes that he is not beyond salvation and that is never too late to ask for forgiveness, by the end of the novel, the stage is strewn with bodies Dorian has either killed or driven to suicide. Sybil and her brother James, Basil, Alan Campbell. And there are others who were harmed by Dorian's influence. The last body is Dorian himself. Dorian, who had to face the consequences of the Henry's theories. Dorian, who had to face his own soul leering at him from the life-sized portrait in his old schoolroom. Dorian's life changes under the influence of his two friends. He begins to live Henry's philosophy while slowly being haunted by the Basilean conscience of the portrait.

His own reactions to the portrait are interesting to note. He isn't really sure at first, that the portrait has really changed. His first instinct is to pray, but then he realises, that even though he at first believed the changes to be in answer of a prayer, it might not actually be the case. And so he wonders "might not there be some curious scientific reason for it all?" (123). Science of the day provides quite an interesting window into Dorian's situation. While the novel does not open up the discussion about science directly like *Frankenstein*, *Jekyll and Hyde* and in many ways even *Dracula*, it does bring through Dorian's own thoughts the questions of degeneration. Not least of them is the fact, that Dorian indirectly commits suicide, which was an important issue in the degeneration discussions. There is a situation in the novel, where Dorian walks along the family portraits of his family home, he wonders, whether he has not inherited his personality from his ancestors. If that were so, there really couldn't have been anything he could have done and he would always have ended up committing suicide. He believes, that "man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex multiform creature that bore within itself strange legacies of thought and passion, and whose very flesh was tainted with the monstrous maladies of the dead"(164). Another word that he uses to describe the situation is "some strange poisonous germ crept from body to body till it had reached his own" (164-165). The term germ in terms of heredity was used by a German evolutionary biologist August Weismann, whose main contribution to science included the germ-plasm theory. It stated that heritable information is only transmitted by germ cells as opposed to somatic cells that develop

afresh in each generation. This theory, published in 1892, anticipated the development of modern genetics.

Oscar Wilde mentions the laws of heredity in his essay, *The Critic as Artist*, where the character of Gilbert states: “the scientific principle of heredity...has shown us, that we are never less free than when we try to act... it has written upon the wall the prophecy of our doom” (25). Through this he questions and subverts the actual influence of Henry and Basil, because Dorian might just be like this by nature. Henry’s influence only stirred this side of Dorian when he met him but did not cause it, even though Henry believes that Dorian possesses “youth’s passionate purity” and that he has kept himself “unspotted from the world” (23). But Dorian feels, during their first meeting when Henry explains to him his philosophy and tells him that people should yield to their impulses and self-denial is the enemy, that there were new influences in him but they “seemed to have come really from himself” (26). Dorian thus ponders within the novel Wilde’s theory of heredity mentioned in *The Critic as Artist*, that heredity might be inescapable and even though outside influence can affect people, it just wakes up something already present like Henry did.

When Dorian hides the portrait in the school-room, he regrets not telling Basil why. He for a moment believes that Basil would protect him from “Henry’s influence, and the still more poisonous influences that came from his own temperament” (138). But what exactly is his temperament? One of the characteristics is that he does things in a fit of passion. Just before he kills Basil, after he shows him the painting, he feels “an uncontrollable feeling of hatred”, “mad passions of a hunted animal” and he looks around “wildly” (182). All these suggest loss of control, a sudden savagery as if he reverted back to animal state. This harkens back to all the other monsters in these stories, who give in to their desires and passions without any control. It is the basic characteristic of a monster. It is reminiscent of Hyde’s murder of Carew, of Dracula’s affiliations with animals, of the sexuality of the female vampires. Once such a thing is done, even in the fit of passion, there is no going back. Just like him, the portrait has gone “bestial” (142). Dorian also has quite a lot in common with the “born criminal” according to the theory of Cesare Lombroso, which stated, that criminality was inherited: “complete absence of moral and affective sensibility, laziness, absence of remorse and foresight, great vanity, and fleeting violent passions“ (222). Dorian’s vanity is also according to Henry Maudsley, a pioneering British psychiatrist and a

significant contributor to the degeneration theory, one of the pathological egoistic passions that would mark degeneration. And vain Dorian is. It is the very first lesson he learns from Henry. This trait is also suggested of effeminacy. Dorian is increasingly prone to paranoia and nervousness and trembling. He faints with a death-like swoon after seeing James Vane through a window and complains that his “nerves are dreadfully out of order” when the duchess of Monmouth comments he looks ill (235). All these symptoms would have been considered as cases of neurasthenia, which, while the diagnosis was balanced between sexes, these traits are usually associated with women. He is also described as “wonderfully handsome, with his finely curved scarlet lips” (23) and “delicate hands” (213) and he blushes when he is surprised by sir Henry’s entrance. He is described as effeminate blurring the gender boundaries yet again. Max Nordau describes Duke Jean des Esseintes, the protagonist of J.K. Huysmans novel *À Rebours*, as “anaemic and nervous man of weak constitution, an inheritor of all the vices and all degeneracies of an exhausted race” (302). Huysmans’ novel famously inspired Oscar Wilde. Dorian himself reads the book and it fascinates him. While it is not named, Wilde conceded at his trial that it indeed was Huysmans novel. Nordau of course, mentions Oscar Wilde as well. He says he must admire immorality, sin and crime and who has done more harm by his eccentricities than his art. He is the chief representative of the Aesthetes, whose “egomania of decadentism, its love of the artificial, its aversion to nature, and to all forms of activity and movement, its megalomaniac contempt for men and its exaggeration of the importance of art” (317). Nordau thus clearly states that such men were viewed at the end of the 19th century as weak-willed and unmanly. Wilde, being aware of these views, exaggerates these features in Dorian to make the novel verge on the parody again as he brings various Gothic tropes together.

Dorian in many ways embraces Henry’s opinions. One of the points of his philosophy is to observe the world as if one wasn’t a part of it. There are instances where Dorian does the same. After Sybil Vane dies, Dorian ponders the situation and analyses his own feelings on the matter. He is afraid that is heartless: “thing that has happened does not affect me as it should. It seems to me to be simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a Greek tragedy, a tragedy in which I took a great part, but by which I have not been wounded“ (117). He also wants to master his own emotions and not be their prisoner as that is only for shallow people.

He wants to “use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them“ (126). As we have seen, however, Dorian never truly masters his emotions. Quite the opposite. However much he tries, he succumbs to fits of emotions when he is confronted with his own true soul. While in some emotional moments he can become destructive, it also means he has not become as cynical as Henry. He cannot entirely repress the good side of his nature. He wants to apologise to Sybil just before he hears about her death. He knows Henry’s influence to be bad and his own nature too and believes if he listened to Basil more, he could still be saved. Because Basil loved him and that love was the great and pure love of history that “Michelangelo had known, and Montaigne, and Winckelmann, and Shakespeare himself“ (139). Dorian becomes progressively haunted by his conscience even though he knows there will be no forgiveness. He knows there can be no atonement for spilled blood. He therefore wants forgetfulness, to be apart from society just like Henry could be. But Dorian has already committed crimes and all the people in the opium dens where he sought forgetfulness were suffering, yes, but they were also being taught “the secret of some new joy“ while he was „prisoned in thought“ and „memory...was eating his soul away“ (216). He wanted to „escape himself“ (216) which is exactly the one thing he could not do. Not long after that he meets James Vane, Sybil Vane’s brother who wants to kill him, and he realises that he truly cannot escape. Even if he uses his youthful looks to get away from James temporarily, he is reminded of what he has done to Sybil.

In the last chapter, Dorian ponders his options. He wants to change. He both laughs at the thought of confession: “Confess? Did it mean that he was to confess? To give himself up and be put to death? He laughed. He felt that the idea was monstrous. Besides, even if he did confess, who would believe him?” (254). At the same time, he believes that “it was his duty to confess, to suffer public shame, and to make public atonement” (254). He also confirms Basil’s belief in a higher moral order: “There was a God who called upon men to tell their sins to earth as well as to heaven.“ (254). Yet he does not see Basil’s murder as a sin. He doesn’t think the mirror the portrait provided was a just mirror. It was only vanity and hypocrisy. He wants to escape the murder because it would dog him his whole life, not because he actually recognises, he has done something evil. He is afraid that others will see the portrait and realise who he actually is. Then he will have to confess and be brought to justice. This paragraph just before his death shows very clearly the two warring sides within him. There is remorse,

the Basil side of him. But there is also the Henry side of him, the detached one. Basil is dead but he doesn't see it as a sin. The belief that he can get away with all this and continue with his sinful existence, because he can make himself believe it is not evil. His hedonistic lifestyle thus becomes more and more about escaping his conscience and indeed escaping the suffering the way Henry talked about. But Dorian actually had his real past to escape from. And sometimes he would manage to "forget the hideous painted thing" (161). Other times he would sit before it "loathing it and himself" (162). Eventually he decides to kill the portrait and with his own conscience. In this last desperate attempt, he kills himself.

The Picture of Dorian Gray thus brings to the fore another interesting question that was discussed at the end of the Victorian era, and that is suicide. Danielle Benyon-Payne writes in her doctoral thesis about suicide in Gothic fiction. Humanity has always struggled with the concept of suicide. But 19th century changed how it was viewed. Before it was seen as a religious sin or a crime. Sociologists of the late 19th century like Henry Morselli or physicians like Maudsley claimed that it was not a choice and it actually no less natural than other forms of death. Benyon-Payne concludes that Dorian's eventual suicide "represents the consequences of the 'individual self' attempting to override the 'tribal self'. In another [reading], it demonstrates an irreversibility of a pre-determined nature. Wilde continuously and ambiguously destabilises these readings, evoking multiple readings of *Dorian Gray* by drawing in different aspects of contemporary theory" (74). It could be argued that Dorian did not commit suicide, at least not willingly. It was the painting that he stabbed at the end. But they did try to kill his conscience. His death comes from his attempt to kill his Other just like Jekyll died at the hands of Hyde ie. the degenerate one. An important physician and psychiatric researcher of the day Enrico Morselli writes: "Suicide is a hard but unavoidable consequence of a human evolution and unconscious natural selection...in those who are weak, degenerate...in whom only the basest passions are developed" (qtd. In Benyon-Payne 77). Within this context, Dorian is compelled to commit suicide because he is pre-determined to do so. It is a symptom of his degeneracy once Dorian let himself live the life of instinct that he lived with the guidance of Henry. His soul is just too tainted with sin and the crimes he has committed cannot be undone. By destroying the portrait he wishes to "kill the past" and his "monstrous soul-life" so that he could be at peace (255). But he can only be at peace in

death, you cannot kill conscience. He tried to forget, since “forgetfulness was possible still” when “forgiveness was impossible” (212-213). Then James Vane catches up to him and reminds him that it is not the case. One cannot cut off his conscience or his past completely. But his soul, his conscience and his portrait are just too damaged for him to remain alive. He wishes he could change; he could start over and redeem himself like Basil would suggest. The ruined man is just not able to survive.

As Benyon-Payne wrote, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* evokes multiple readings through exploring the prevalent fears and thoughts of the day. It destabilises the moral consciousness of the Victorian era by subverting many believed truths. Here cosmic justice is not served and personal responsibility is questioned. Unification of personality is not possible. Dorian is not really penitent and he ends up dead. But so do a lot of innocent people and Henry goes free. The central character does not learn to be better. He disintegrates and shows that self-unification in the sea of doubles might not be possible. His suicide confirms the contemporary fears of degeneration, effeminacy and animality as it ends in despair showing what excess can do. Dorian fails to compromise and is caught in disillusion and fear. The novel also both confirms and subverts the notion of pre-determined nature. Dorian is predisposed to certain behaviour but he is also surrounded by people who influence him.

Conclusion

19th century Gothic is a discourse that allows authors to subvert norms and ideologies. To show us what happens when norms and accepted categories no longer apply. It is a radical attack on what is normal, safe and comfortable. It destabilises. It asks difficult questions. Eternal questions about human nature and more specific questions about their own time. We can find many answers in these texts but we also see that some questions have multiple answers or no answers at all. The anxieties and fears of humanity are not eased by the ever-changing discourse of scientific research. What is true today may not be true tomorrow. And people don't always like the answers science brings.

The Gothic asks what is good and what is bad. And just like other answers, this one is changeable too. When a monster comes to town, chaos ensues and bad things happen. Yet the defeat of the monster is important, it brings back order. However, damage has already been done and the monster will return in a new shape and form, just like Jeffrey Cohen explains. If the monster is destroyed, the imminent threat is eliminated, but the important questions have been asked and can be asked again sparking a new discussion. Then, maybe, some categories will be recognised as obsolete so they can be transformed into more useful ones in the future. Some may be found to be very solid and important and their failure has been overcome.

Victor Frankenstein does not survive the consequences of his experiments. His own lack of understanding for humanity and cutting himself off from human contact resulted in innocent people getting hurt and him most of all. But his Dorian Gray, published almost a century later, does not survive either. While Dorian attempts to kill his conscience, he kills himself as he learns that his soul cannot be purged of all the crimes he has committed. Dorian, like Victor thought he could see the world as an intellectual exercise. Both their attempts fail horribly. Victor fails to see what humanity really is. He plays with life without truly understanding it. He overcomes boundaries of science and gender but fails to see that why these distinctions really exist. He uses parts of both not seeing the whole picture. They both espouse reason and intellectual curiosity but neglect emotional and moral aspects. Henry Jekyll does the same. He embodies both these sides and tries to separate them to hide his more harmful behaviour. In the end he learns the two sides, the good and the bad, the emotional and

the intellectual, the hideous and the beautiful are not so easily separated. They all also ask about the appearance of evil. Hyde is ugly because he does ugly things to other people. Frankenstein's monster begins hurting people once he has himself been hurt by others because of his appearance. Dorian Gray is allowed to do harmful and immoral things to others because his friends refuse to see behind his beautiful, gentle exterior.

Deceptive appearances like Dorian's are also important in Gothic fiction. It is how Carmilla and Geraldine manage to infiltrate the places they want. And just like Dorian's effeminate looks and Victor's foray into motherhood, Geraldine and Carmilla do not much respect gender boundaries often playing the role of the man in their respective encounters with other women. Laura and Christabel in turn present the question, how and if they are really the chaste, pure maidens. Christabel's innocence is questionable from the start and Laura has been taught about adult, romantic love by a vampire. After the encounter she dreams of the horrors but also about the beauty. Carmilla might (or might not) be dead, but Laura is no longer innocent. The female monster thus lives on. The women of Dracula tell a different story. Lucy Westenra's complete transformation shows us very clearly how a transgressive monstrous female body looks like. She reverses roles of motherhood and femininity in unacceptable acts of violence and therefore needs to be destroyed like Dracula himself. But Lucy may have also been too pure lacking the self-awareness much like Christabel, to resist evil. Her friend Mina shows resilience while she also has to come out of her comfort zone and help the group of men in defeating the monsters. Some of her traits that are seen as masculine are therefore very important to the success. In Mina, who is seen as a little less feminine than Lucy, the blending of genders is not seen as monstrous but as something productive. Dracula himself is defeated in the end. The empire is safe for the time being. The fear remains but strange-looking foreigners with strange customs still immigrate to the UK. The disease of vampirism was contained and purged but other diseases still endanger the population. Transfusion and vaccination are a staple of modern medicine, but bodily integrity is still an important question. What else do we have if not our own bodies?

And furthermore, who wouldn't really be afraid of terrifying blood-sucking vampire? 19th century Gothic texts are some of the most popular and the most enduring monster texts out there. And they are so popular because the monsters they feature might be in many ways embody fears and anxieties that were specific for their era, but

the fear of the unknown, of the Other, the fear of change and the fear of disease and death are universal and these monsters embody them perfectly.

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