Trabajo de Fin de Grado

«Queer depravity: Lesbianism in Victorian England through Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897)»

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Abstract

This thesis explores the representation of lesbianism in the Victorian era through literature, specifically using Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897) as an object of analysis and interpretation. The novel offers a stylistic treatment of the Gothic that is completely newfangled to its contemporaries, and serves, equally, as an object for a modern queer analysis. In the same way that the novels of Bram Stoker and Sheridan Le Fanu have been analysed numerous times, this dissertation aims to look at those meanings of Marryat's novel in which a strong homoerotic presence can be read. The novel, which challenges Victorian social norms with the presentation of the transgressive character Harriet Brandt, lends itself to the identification of elements reappropriated and presented by Paulina Palmer in her articles on "Lesbian Gothic", a subgenre also discussed in this essay. This analysis allows us to reach a new level of interpretation.

Keywords: *Vampirism*, *lesbianism*, *Victorian England*, *Gothic literature*, *Florence Marryat*, *fin-de-siècle*

Resumen

Esta tesis explora la representación del lesbianismo en la época victoriana a través de la literatura, específicamente utilizando como objeto de análisis e interpretación la obra de Florence Marryat *La sangre del vampiro* (1897). La novela ofrece un tratamiento estilístico del gótico completamente novedoso con respecto a sus contemporáneos, y sirve, de igual manera, como objeto para un análisis moderno bajo una premisa queer. Al igual que las novelas de Bram Stoker y Sheridan Le Fanu han sido analizadas en numerosas ocasiones, esta tesis pretende identificar aquellos elementos presentes en la novela de Marryat en los que se puede leer una enorme presencia homoerótica. La novela, que desafía las normas victorianas con la introducción de un personaje tan transgresor como Harriet Brandt, se presta a la identificación de elementos reapropiados y presentados por Paulina Palmer en sus artículos sobre el «gótico lésbico», subgénero que también se analiza en este ensayo. Este análisis nos permite alcanzar un nuevo nivel de interpretación de la novela.

Palabras clave: *vampirismo*, *lesbianismo*, *Época victoriana*, *literatura gótica*, *Florence Marryat*, *fin-de-siècle*

1. Introduction

The Blood of the Vampire (1897) has made it into literary history as a second-rate work. Its author, roughly speaking forgotten, is a woman that, whether she wanted or not, competed with one of the most famous stories about vampires — *Dracula* (1897). How is it possible then, for a novel with these, let's call them, disadvantages (in terms of visibility), to serve as a perfectly valid representation of the Gothic and the Victorian view on homosexuality, besides functioning as a screen of the way in which narrative could be written to suggest *queer* behaviours? In order to answer this question and, also, to provide a general outlook on the final look of this dissertation, chapter two of the book will be adequate for a short sample.

Let's start this introduction by anticipating some of the author's narrative features. But before going any further, it shall be said that despite the fact that *Dracula* and *Carmilla* (1872) are more suitable examples to which contrast *Blood*, both Stoker's and Le Fanu's stories have their own section in this thesis; for that matter, when doing a comparison or description, some other books and texts will be used. A striking characteristic of the novel is that the setting in which the action takes place ranges further from the predictable scenery where most Gothic tales happen. Most of the time, Gothic stories occur within castles, manors, dark woods... If we have a look at *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) the narrative revolves around an isolated country mansion, Bly Manor; or take the example of *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) in which madhouses and monasteries are at the order of the day. Along with the set ups, places are decked by mystery, fear, and decadence. Many other examples illustrate this characteristic. See for instance "The Tell-tale Heart" (1843) by Edgar Allan Poe, in which the atmosphere feels very oppressive and tense; or even *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Leaving aside the fact that it is a romantic novel, the setting is as Gothic as the other examples — isolated country houses in which the weather is usually bad. The meteorological conditions add up to a sombre atmosphere. Furthermore, the supernatural presence contributes to the Gothic tone of the novel. After several examples in which one thing about the Gothic is clear —it requires places that are usually sparsely inhabited, dark and sinister— it is rather shocking that Marryat's novel is set in a hotel in Belgium. The narrative goes from inhospitable and rather exclusive places to a place of passage that anyone can access as the narrator themselves state at the very beginning of the chapter: "The Digue was crowded by that time. All Heyst had turned out to enjoy the evening air and to partake in the gaiety of the place." (Marryat 55). People from all over the world come together in the same place, centrally located and open to everyone.

Regardless of its rather atypical nature, the book, which seems to go unnoticed to today's critical eyes, can still be ascribed to the Gothic, with its own particularities, of course. Marryat borrows the genre and makes it her own by shaping the characteristics that identify it and proposing —involuntarily— a new approach. This audacity gained her much of the most fierce criticism, accusing her of being a prolific writer, but not a great one. Criticism was triggered even more when both Marryat and Stoker were discussed simultaneously. In 1898, a harsh review was published on Marryat's novel in *The Speaker*. The article starts by praising Stoker:

> Mr. Bram Stoker has much to answer for. Perhaps, however, when he published his remarkable vampire-story, "Dracula," he failed to foresee the inevitable consequences which its appearance would entail [...], in the shape of a swarm of ill-conceived and ill-executed imitations by inferior writers.

The article goes on and on with its cruel criticism towards Marryat.

> And now here is the indefatigable Miss Florence Marryat off upon the well-worn trail, and trying hard to be fashionably "creepy" [...] Is it necessary to add that she has not succeeded in that ambitious attempt? [...] but she never has shown, nor does she show, any trace of special qualities requisite to such a task as she has here undertaken.

However, despite having lived in Stoker's shadow for so long, modern scholars have reached out to Marryat who provides a remarkable story where a *reinvention* of the Gothic has been made. After analysing the story closely, elements belonging to the so-called Lesbian Gothic[1] have been observed. As a result, I have almost found it necessary to subject the novel to a queer reading. Let's move on to the section of the chapter in which Harriet, the protagonist, has only just met Mrs. Margaret Pullen, and yet both are in a certain state of disturbance and closeness — "She had crept closer and closer to Mrs. Pullen as she spoke, and now encircled her waist with her arm and leaned her head upon her shoulder." (Marryat 59) By that time, sex-affective relationships between women were mistaken (or pretended to be mistaken) for friendships in the purest and most innocent of forms. This thesis, therefore, aims to analyse *The Blood of the Vampire* with the same contemporary lens with which other works have been analysed. More specifically, to work through a contemporary queer perspective on a largely forgotten novel that reflects equally, if not better, a handling of Gothic and narrative

[1] The concept "Lesbian Gothic" became known only recently; the genre will be explored in more detail below.

with a, intentionally or unintentionally written in this way, double reading that allows the queer reading/interpretation that will precede this introduction.

Regardless of the modern reading of the text, it is understandable that some subtleties may be missed or confused considering the context in which it was written. The *fin-de-siècle* plunged Victorian England in a maelstrom of anxieties and fears, which tainted literature. With this end, change was both perceived and feared by a society reluctant to it that witnessed the arrival of new developments. On its part, literature responded to social needs and served as a tool to express those concerns. As a result, books that were —and are— very well received by the public and critics, and which have survived to the present day as great works, were written. Moreover, due to this favourable outcome, they became renowned authors and, therefore, tasted success. Novels such as *The Time Machine* (1895) by H. G. Wells; *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) by Oscar Wilde; or *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) by Robert Louis Stevenson, served as a means by which to express, in their own terms, the preoccupations that distressed people.

After this brief introduction, it should again be emphasised that this dissertation seeks to explore the revival of the Gothic that literature experienced, and how, according to modern readings, it was used to express in a veiled way certain behaviours of the time that were considered sinful and diseased. Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*, the object of my analysis, was written, oddly enough, in the same year as *Dracula*. A quick socio-cultural context will be provided in order to place readers in the starting point of Marryat's work, and therefore, this thesis. It will be followed by some data regarding the literary needs and reality of narrative at that time. For that reason, along with some general lines of the Gothic itself, Stoker's and Le Fanu's famous books will be discussed. Only for it to continue with the Lesbian Gothic that was mentioned above. Once these concepts are clear, this thesis will continue with a queer reading of *Blood* and its subsequent conclusion.

2. Gothic narrative and its role in Victorian England

In this particular period of history, it seems that the Gothic revived after leaving behind literary genres that do not seem to be very similar to it. The novels that preceded *Victorian* Gothic are diverse, and in general terms, they range far from Gothic features. See, for instance, *Waverley* (1814), *Enma* (1815), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), or *Ivanhoe* (1819). These examples are sentimental, historical, adventurous novels, so the question here

is why did the Gothic reach a new peak during the Victorian Era? Not for nothing, "in the popular imagination the Victorian is in many ways *the* Gothic period." (Warwick 29) The answer, actually, should be split in two since there are *two different strands* of the Gothic genre during the Victorian period. The first, in general terms, can be traced back to Brontës' domestic spaces in which, according to Warwick, "the language of Gothic, of sensation, terror, shock and its characters are translated into the bourgeois domestic arena." (31) In a moment of history in which scandalous stories were abundant[2], it is no wonder that authors used the genre as a means to write about them. The second, however, has to do with society's *emotions*. In the words of Milton C. Albrecht literature has been used "to reflect cultural norms and values, the ethos and the stresses of a society, the process of dialectical materialism, and the historical development of a society or culture." (722) Particularly, the fears and anxieties of a metropolitan society, following Sally Ledger's words:

> The avalanche of socio-political and cultural challenges to the norms of an earlier, more self-confident Victorian age led to a proliferation of motifs of degeneration and even apocalypse in textual productions of the period. (72)

This last aspect of its revival is ascribed to the *fin-de-siècle* as stated by Ledger "the twin spectres [...] haunted the final years of the nineteenth century" (71), a short period of the era that differs from the rest of the Victorian years in a way that today's scholars practically study it on its own. The Gothic revival is thus broadly understood, but the reasons that triggered these fears and concerns are not really explained. The Victorian period is an extremely rich time of history. Especially the last years of the century. It was full of changes, contradictions and innovations. Victorians had to face a lot of different things that contrasted greatly with their values. In this essay, I am mainly dealing with the topic of subversive sexuality. Therefore, it shall be previously explained how this concept landed within the period.

Deviant, subversive, degenerated… *Alternative* sexuality has received many names during the nineteenth century. But it is particularly important to point out the amount of changes regarding this topic that can be seen through these years. Homosexuality was a term that did not exist at the beginning of the century, the reason for this will be explained later on. For now, it shall be said that homosexuality, as such, was simply recognised as "sodomy". In the

[2] The appearance of these lurid and scandalous tales, coinciding with the rise of the Brontë sisters' stories, is due to a series of fortunate coincidences, such as cheaper newspaper printing and the approval of the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857.

court of King William III, the activities implied by this term were already a thing “sodomy was known as the “Italian” vice in England, with King William III lampooned in a nascent popular press of indulging in ‘Italian’ pursuits with his much younger, wilder protégé” (Weichel 19). However, do not get the wrong idea by that. The fact that it was something that happened did not exclude it from being condemned by society. The only reason why that piece of information is present in this essay is in order for you to see how far on time sexual encounters between men occurred in England, and how, in fact, people were well-aware of them. These acts (which in most cases involved men, as I explained in the introduction, women were exonerated somehow) were unacceptable, and if someone was accused of sodomy, they could end up in jail. During this time, there was a lot being discussed with regards to these subversive sexual practices. It was not until the end of the century, when terms such as “homosexuality” or “lesbianism” were coined — as read in Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s book *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886). By then, the German psychiatrist spoke of homosexuality in terms of pathology and illness rather than sinful acts. In his book, he mentions the term up to 49 times, so it was a concept already developed and *understood*. This, although very far from the current conception we have of the queer, is a great advance, because in the same decade, other doctors such as Dr. Julius Krueg described this concept in the following way "[it] is a sport of nature; his bodily structure is that of a man, but his sexual instincts are those of a woman.” (qtd. in Krueg 368). And the doctor goes on “Ulrichs sought to explain this anomaly by the supposition that a woman's soul dwells in a man's body” (368). Krafft-Ebing and Krueg’s explanations differ greatly even though they are just five years apart. This proves the amount of changes that the recognition of this *deviant* practice experienced over the years. What is clear is the fact that it was something that preoccupied this generation and for that matter many researches and investigations were carried on in order to better understand it. The epitome of the dangers of sodomy, which were a tremendous corruption of Victorian values, is reflected in the fact that at the end of the century those accused of this crime were still being imprisoned. The most famous example is Oscar Wilde's conviction on this charge in 1995. Without going into too much detail on this issue, it is interesting to note that, according to Rebecca Stott

> Many late Victorians, especially after the Wilde trial, felt that close attention had to be paid to identifying whatever was degenerate in society to ensure that degenerate characteristics were not acquired by the culture. Such investigations thus centred on what was considered alien or Other (not just alien races, but Woman, non-procreative sexuality, the insane or delinquent).

Deviant practices were something to be worried about. It brought anxiety to Victorian Englishmen and women, and since literature was a means to express certain emotions, the Gothic functioned perfectly fine to write about these creatures that were not part of what was considered normal. They constituted the Other, therefore it worked greatly to imbue the narrative about the supernatural with this perversion issue. The genre becomes the vehicle to discuss some irreverent topics that had little place in society in an acceptable or assertive way. When these concepts were openly discussed, it was in scientific journals, as a sinful or diseased. However, in literature, the subjects to which these, shall I say, alternative characteristics could be attributed could be perfectly framed within the Gothic as monstrous figures, alternative to the normal. Without getting too ahead of myself, it can be said that usually, the Gothic shows unpleasant creatures, figures that inspire fear. The genre aims to instigate terror. What better way than by presenting creatures that come out in the middle of the night, whose second home is the darkness, and who wait for us where we least expect them to pounce on us like predators hunting their prey? However, notwithstanding this is true, it cannot be denied the fact that some of the creatures typically Gothic are part of a plot that has an alternative reading according to modern critical thinking. Now, I have reached one of the points of this essay. Not only the role of the Gothic genre in Victorian England, but the second reading of vampire plots within the Gothic. The vampire trope, far from it, did not come up as a way of reflecting deviant behaviours in subtle terms. This reading is part of our modern culture; still it is suggested that this shift in its interpretation occurred "in the nineteenth century in the field of sexology, and that it is the outcome of a process that transformed the supernatural into the pathological, and monsters into perverts." (Mighall 63)

At this point, it would be of interest to bring together all the information that has been mentioned so far in order to start from a more solid base in the next section. Firstly, the Gothic was recovered during the Victorian period for several reasons. One of them is its utility regarding lurid and domestic topics, the other is its effectiveness in presenting prickly issues as a means of conveying the social preoccupations of the time to the public, and making the expression of these concerns more accessible. This leads directly to the fact that during this period *depraved* activities were socially condemned but they were also studied from a scientific point of view. It is the moment in history when same sex sexual desire was understood as a symptom of a troubled disease. And it is precisely this conclusion that transformed the logic behind the supernatural; it is the culmination of the process of

eroticising one of the Gothic figures par excellence: the vampire. Now that the role of the Gothic in Victorian England has been examined in depth, as well as the *circumstances* that surround it, it is time to move to its literary features and the analysis that ties together the two most famous vampire novels of all time with the subject novel of this thesis.

2.1. General characteristics of the literary genre

Before I move on to the analysis of the novels, it is important to understand the basis of the genre in which they are ascribed to hopefully provide a hugely accessible analysis for any type of reader, regardless of prior knowledge. The origin of the Gothic dates back to the second half of the XVIII century, when it functioned as a literary transition between Neoclassicism and Romanticism. The Gothic, characterised by its emphasis on the irrational and supernatural, emerged as a contraposition to the neoclassic rigidity and the romantic sensitivity. It seems that every turn of the century symbolises a maelstrom of changes; the century in which Gothic literature was born experienced these transformations as well. During the Enlightenment period, literary texts were focused on reason, logic, and science. For that motive, progressively, a trend that opposed these characteristics and that valued emotions and irrationality made its appearance. This set the bases for Romanticism. Gothic, on the other hand, emerged as a way to explore the deepest fears and darkest sides of the human psyche. For that matter,

> the Gothic novel seems to be an anachronistic and paradoxical cultural production of its era – anachronistic because it emerged during the Enlightenment when novels generally focused their lens on contemporary reality, and paradoxical because [...] it registers a collision between the past and the present, the 'ancient' and the 'modern', the conventional and the original. (Davison 25)

The genre rapidly spread throughout Europe, influencing authors and trends, such as the *Schauerroman* (horror novel)[3] in Germany. Authors like Add Radcliffe, Horace Walpole and Matthew Lewis took the Gothic novel to the next level by incorporating elements into this literature that would soon become established characteristics of the genre. Novels like *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) or *The Monk* (1796) were some of the ones that offered these new elements that would leave a mark on and stay as part of the

[3] Horror novel.

Gothic literature. For that reason one of these novels will be used as a starting point to list the characteristics of the literary genre.

The Castle of Otranto (1764) is considered among scholars the first Gothic novel, and for that reason, it is thought to have set the bases of the genre. As a consequence, Walpole's book has become the subject of many articles, such as the one carried out by Martin Arnold in which he explicitly states what has been said before, that the novel "is widely considered to be the first Gothic novel" (14). Despite its slightly above-the-others position (simply because of its publication date), and besides the features that it shares with the rest, one thing that does not differ from the other Gothic novels at all is the feeling people get from this literary genre. In the book *The Encyclopedia of The Novel* (2010) by Peter Melville Logan, Nancy Armstrong claims that "since the publication of [Walpole's book], the arguably first gothic novel, readers have considered gothic fiction hostile to the form and function of the novel proper" (Armstrong 294). This is only obtained through a meticulous task in the manipulation of Gothic literary devices. The creation of fear is no easy task, and it is not only through the setting or the characters, it is the whole ensemble that, when working in perfect harmony, achieves one of the purposes of the Gothic. The point is that terror is produced by looking at the dark, hidden side of the human psyche. All the misdeeds that the authors were capable of imagining and that were concentrated, for the first time, on paper. Let's dive in, then, in the characteristics that made, and make, this possible.

Walpole's novel takes place in Medieval Italy, within an old and mysterious castle. Considering this setting, Davison's quote in which she refers to the Gothic novel as paradoxical, —combining past and present—, rings a bell, and therefore, is properly understood. However, Gothic novels do not have to take place in a time contemporary to the author, nor do they have to take place in remote times. While this question is kept more flexible, what does end up being constant is the place —physical location— in which the action occurs. "Deteriorating castles, abbeys and manor houses in foreign, usually Roman Catholic, countries, abound alongside medieval and Reformation settings in the literature of the classic Gothic era." (Davison 93) This geographical movements usually

> figured as historical movement, a type of time travelling, because it involves the suggestion of travelling back into Britain's unenlightened, primitive, Catholic past, as displaced on to other national and historical contexts. (93)

Therefore, architecture becomes key for several reasons. Firstly, because authors choose particular spaces merely on account of the melancholy and mysterious atmosphere of the remote and the exotic, which means that physical spaces have an important part in the narrative. They are capable of affecting and shaping it. For that reason scholars often talk about the architecture of Gothic novels as a powerful tool that "contributes to the drama's dark atmospherics." (Davison 139) It is within these spaces that the "psychological 'mind' is mapped on to physical place. Gothic architecture becomes physically alive, hyper-organic." (32) As quoted in Davison's book "place becomes personality, as every corner and dark recess of the Gothic castle exudes a remorseless aliveness and often a vile intelligence." (32) The setting of Gothic novels not only contributes to the creation of a dark or gloomy atmosphere, but also serves as a meeting point for the characters, who are usually troubled or flawed. In their wanderings through Gothic spaces,

> Gothic characters are actually engaged in probing various issues related to the construction of self and the nature of self-identity. To this end, states of consciousness are magnified and externalized in Gothic fiction. (31)

This image of a tormented character, whose ambitions go beyond morality and who consciously exercises evil, resonates with one of *Otranto*'s characters, the villain Manfred. Another of Walpole's contributions to the genre. Through his novel, he displays archetypal characters such as the aforementioned Manfred that would transcend into the literature of the time, such as Ambrose in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) or even to the present day, with characters such as Lestat de Lioncourt in *Interview with the vampire* (1976). Villains, of course, must face a hero. But what is interesting in *Otranto* is the appearance of a heroine, Isabella. In later Gothic novels we would constantly —and especially, unsurprisingly— see that the main characters are women who deal with situations of all kinds. This is the example of Angela Carter or Shirley Jackson, who have brought into their Gothic narrative women who take on the role of heroines.

The physical spaces, whether castles, abbeys, abandoned or domestic places were filled with the supernatural. This element is crucial to the essence of the genre since it generates tension and imbues fear. Through ghosts, curses, non-human creatures and unexplained phenomena, authors create their narratives and characters which are indeed symbols that may represent internal fear, guilt and psychological conflicts. Nevertheless, as stated above, during the

Victorian period there was a shift in the meaning of this symbology. According to modern critical readings, the vampire, the creature on which to project all scrutiny, "symbolises dangerous subversive desires that disrupt Victorian moral and sexual codes." (Mighall 63) It is precisely this shift, this new interpretation, the main interest of this essay. The supernatural acquires a new level by serving as a tool to reflect the unsaid, the sinful, the unacceptable, the immoral. In this sense,

> The vampire is monstrous, not because it is a supernatural being which threatens to suck the protagonists' blood and damn their souls, but because at some 'deeper level' it symbolises an erotic threat. (63)

2.2. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872)

In the previous section the critical reading that predominates in this essay is introduced; the starting point of this section, therefore, is to understand that at an indefinite time in the Victorian era there is a shift in theory that emphasises the supernatural with regards to the subversive. And while this *alteration* is situated in the nineteenth century, in order to fully understand it, it is necessary to know that the same studies in sexology that have already been mentioned (such as those of *Psychopathia Sexualis*) were influential. I am not trying to point them out as "guilty", but as an example of the situation that existed at the time with regard to sexology. Citing once again Robert Mighall "The monsters of the past and the perverts of the present are thus brought within the same explanatory paradigm, and allowed to exchange certain of their attributes." (65) This conclusion is reached after exposing some cases from Krafft-Ebing's book. However, while monsters are no longer monsters but perverts, the common deviant —those individuals whose sexuality is contrary to the *Victorian sexual morality*[4]— "is often compared with the Gothic and the folkloristic." (66) All things considered, it is obvious that the modern readings on *Dracula* and *Carmilla* follow these lines. It is not for nothing that hundreds of articles have been written about both novels, in which the former "hovers between revealing and concealing homoerotic desire" (Howes 104) while in the latter it "could be argued that the moment Carmilla feels same-sex attraction is when she becomes a monster [a vampire]" (Ribeiro 19). It has even been considered and discussed the own sexuality of Dracula's *father* and how he relates to Oscar Wilde. That is

[4] According to Robert Mighall "'Victorian sexual morality' is generally represented as bourgeois, oppressively heterosexual and patriarchal, and terrified by any derivations from this standard." (62)

the impact that both novels have had on today's critics. Perhaps it is because of their formal or stylistic characteristics, which differ from those of Marryat, but the fact is that the novels of Stoker and Le Fanu have attracted the eye of modern criticism much more forcefully than *Blood*. In this section, therefore, I will offer a brief recapitulation of how the style of both authors is framed within the conventional Gothic in a much more apparent and precise way than Marryat's. Despite their many differences, all three novels respond to a queer analysis, but, of course, with an understanding of the complexities and particularity that Florence Marryat's novel offers the outcome of hers is slightly different. Therefore, for the sake of contrast, what follows this brief introduction is the observation of *Dracula* and *Carmilla* as mentioned at the beginning.

The first characteristic mentioned in section 2.1. is the atmosphere and the settings where most Gothic novels take place. *Dracula* seems to be one of the most representative texts in terms of this feature, as it takes place in a castle —a classic example of the gothic setting— which serves as an isolated and dark place. Already in the first chapter, the location to which the characters are heading is described as "a vast ruined castle, from whose tall black windows came no ray of light, and whose broken battlements showed a jagged line against the sky." (Stoker 14) The sense of isolation is emphasised by Jonathan when he writes in his notebook "[I have not yet] heard a sound near the castle except the howling of wolves." (18) Not only isolation, but danger too. In this case, with the quotation provided, the architecture plays a role as an insulating element for the characters. It helps to generate an unsettling and dangerous atmosphere, as it is a large, unexplored place. Its immensity appears to dismay the characters, whose state of mind seems to be reflected in their reflections on the castle, which "is on the very edge of a terrific precipice. A stone falling from the window would fall a thousand feet without touching anything!" (24) Repeating Catherine Wynne, *Dracula* is filled with "simple characters in adverse circumstances." (2) Indeed, characters, although simple (in terms of what we know about them, not their psychological complexity), are archetypical in a way that they show defined roles and motivations that serve to the development of the story and that fit into the traditional structures followed in the genre. The characters that appear in the novel do actually face complicated situations. This can be illustrated by the first archetype: the hero. The answer to "who gets the role of hero in Dracula?" is open to interpretation. However, Jonathan Harker seems the most appropriate, since he is the only character who acts out of ignorance of what he faces, like Van Helsing or who does not act out of curiosity like Dr. Seaward. Even his escape from the castle is most courageous, as he

manages it by climbing out of one of the windows and throwing himself into the void that awaits him. Throughout his stay in the Count's castle, Harker continually encounters harsh circumstances in his search for freedom. Among these several attempts of escape it is seen the moment in which he tries to find the key to the door that separated him from his runaway or when he tries to get help from a group near the castle. The point is that Harker constantly thought that "Something may occur which will give [him] a chance to escape" (37) which served as an incentive while experiencing these events. Of course, there is no hero without a villain, and on this occasion it is quite obvious who the villain is. From Harker's kidnapping, to the occasions when he attacks Lucy and Mina (who might well, at some point, be considered the damsels in distress) and even his plans to move to England. Dracula is the villain of the story. Whether he is a monster or a villain, it is undeniable that his only desire is to work evil and satisfy his own desires. Which often go hand in hand. To do evil because it is what he desires and to do evil because it will get him what he desires. In fact, the Count is sometimes described as practically a devil: "he is only stronger; and being stronger, have yet more power to work evil." (222) What is interesting about this villain who in Dr. Seward's words has an "evil smile" (286) is his inherent supernatural quality, the one that allows him to do evil. This element constitutes another characteristic of the Gothic to which Stoker's novel adheres. Through Dracula, not only vampirism is explored, but also mental powers and transformations into different animals, such as the bat or the wolf. The Count is a supernatural creature that feeds on living beings, the trope of the vampire is a sufficient supernatural element. But not being enough, the text also introduces us to a vampire capable of controlling the minds of his victims in order to manipulate and bend them to his will. Actually, Harker writes in his journal that he "would fain have rebelled, but felt that in the present state of things it would be madness to quarrel openly with the Count whilst I am so absolutely in his power." (37) The control is absolute and it seems that there is not much to do to fight it. In terms of transformations, although the wolf is a little more unusual, the bat is the most common allusion to the vampire. In the novel this meaning is implied "[the Count] left the house. I did not see him, but I saw a bat rise from Renfield's window." (268) But most interesting of all is its ability not only to become something physical, but literally anything — even fog. According to Van Helsing

> He can come in mist which he create. [...] "He come on moonlight rays as elemental dust [...] He become so small [...] He can, when once he find his way, come out from anything or into anything, no

> matter how close it be bound or even fused up with fire, solder you call it. He can see in the dark, no small power this, in a world which is one half shut from the light. (225)

This last element is also part of the narrative of *Carmilla*'s, as the protagonist is a vampire as well. However, not because of their absence in the novel, but for the sole purpose of enriching the following sample, two additional and different characteristics of the Gothic will be mentioned. Firstly, Carmilla's characterization as a *femme fatale*. This figure is not a creation of Gothic literature, but it is a recurrent way of portraying Gothic women characters since "fantasy allowed to construct the femme fatale as a powerful character" ("la fantasía permitió construir a la femme fatale como un personaje poderoso"; my trans.; Mateus 2). Undoubtedly, Carmilla is the representation of a powerful woman whose attributes as a vampire allow her to seduce and get her victims, in this case, Laura. In the following quote, Carmilla is confessing to Laura that she cannot help her nature and for that matter, her fate is to perish for her. "In the rapture of my enormous humiliation I live in your warm life, and you shall die— die, sweetly die—into mine." (Le Fanu 29) Even so, her words are kind enough. As opposed to the *femme fatale*, there is Laura, who could well be the *angel of the house*. But in her it is seen a character with contradictions and problems, who is torn between reason and passion. In that same moment from the previous quote, Laura states that

> From these foolish embraces, which were not of very frequent occurrence, I must allow, I used to wish to extricate myself; but my energies seemed to fail me. Her murmured words sounded like a lullaby in my ear, [...] In these mysterious moods I did not like her. I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust. I had no distinct thoughts about her while such scenes lasted, but I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence. (29)

This duality between Laura's feelings is quite evident and she makes it clear on several occasions; this, in fact, constitutes another characteristic of Gothic literature. The character is torn between what she should do and what she wants to do. Between what makes her feel bad, but also good. These moments take place in hostile environments and tense moments such as those found in *Dracula* are visible as well. At the beginning of the book Laura is describing the surroundings as a lonely place "Looking from the hall door towards the road, the forest in which our castle stands extends fifteen miles to the right, and twelve to the left." (5) The sense of isolation is reinforced by the fact that " The nearest inhabited village is about

seven of your English miles to the left." (5) In this example, the reader perceives a feeling of vastness and solitariness similar to what Jonathan Harker experiences at the Count's castle. Although the narrative differs, with more romantic motifs in *Carmilla* than in *Dracula*, both novels conform to the precepts of Gothic literature.

There are, of course, many elements that I could highlight as examples for a homoerotic reading. However, that is not the purpose of either this essay or this section. Therefore, now that it has been discussed at length the role of the Gothic, its characteristics and how these two novels illustrate such features, it is easier to focus on the analysis of *Blood*, for while the characteristics mentioned above appear in the novel, they do not do so in exactly the way exhibited above.

3. *Lesbian* Gothic: Marryat's *own* Gothic

Before this section jumps into the specific details of Florence Marryat's narrative style, it seems worthwhile to explore the circumstances that revolve around her. The author of *The Blood of the Vampire* is known for the numerous novels she wrote during her lifetime and for her great interest in spiritualism, which she reflected in several of her novels such as *There is No Death* (1891), *The Spirit World* (1894) and *The Dead Man's Message* (1894). Marryat was a prolific writer that published up to 68 novels during her lifetime. Nevertheless, her most popular one is —and was— *The Blood of the Vampire*. This acknowledgment did not grant her absolute success or popularity among her other contemporaries, as highlighted in one of the newspaper reviews included in previous sections. Perhaps it is because Victorian readers were used to female authors that wrote about ghosts instead of vampires; maybe because her writing style differs from the Gothic conventions — at least in *Blood*. Or, simply, as mentioned already, because she published in the same year as Bram Stoker. As a result, her intentions were frequently mistaken for attempting to imitate Stoker and his very famous *Dracula*. Not so often, some scholars from today have theorised that maybe she actually did want it to be written that way. Whatever the case may be, something that is clear is that Marryat does not adhere her narrative to the conventional Gothic features that have been included in this essay. For that matter those particularities will be reviewed in this section. However, it is not possible to make a statement and claim that her style is directly related to the Lesbian Gothic on purpose, *a subgenre* of which I will follow a few lines for my analysis.

Still, in light of modern readings and through a XXI century view there are many similarities between the novel and the concept[5] that are worthy of attention. Bearing this in mind, I will start by listing those features that Marryat makes her *own*, and, after, the motifs that are labelled as part of the Lesbian Gothic will be seen in further details as part of the queer reading and analysis of the novel.

In a nutshell, the novel follows the story of Harriet Brandt, an orphan that has spent a decade of her life in a Jamaican convent. After her arrival to Europe, she meets new acquaintances, such as Margaret Pullen or Baroness Gobelli. But her desire to *make new friends* is not an easy task, considering that she is mixed-race and there are some people, such as Miss Leyton, who refuse to accept her for such a reason. Harriet is a young lady full of energy and with particular manners that unsettle some of the guests of the Hôtel Lion d'Or — however, she manages to get on the good side of some of them. This, though she does not know it, allows her to *feed* —literally— on various hotel guests. One of her victims is Mrs. Pullen's baby daughter who grows sicker and sicker. Worried about her little girl's health, Mrs. Pullen sends for Dr. Phillips, who recognises Harriet's surname and therefore, her origins. Shortly after the baby's death, Harriet leaves the hotel and stays at the Gobelli's home, where she spends time with Bobby, the Baroness' son. He, as well, falls ill and for that matter his mother accuses Harriet of "black blood" and "vampire blood". As a consequence, Harriet returns to the Doctor looking for help, but he simply advises her to withdraw from society and never marry. Anthony Pennell, the man she met during her stay at the Gobelli's, tells her that the doctor is speaking nonsense, and that they should marry anyway. The newlyweds travel to Nice for their honeymoon only to find the groom dead the next morning. Harriet, devastated, leaves everything she owns to Margaret and then decides to kill herself.

The starting point of this section has already been introduced at the beginning of this dissertation. Some of the features have been presented, hence they will be extended or further exemplified as there is no need for additional clarification. As has been analysed and listed several times before, one of the keys to the Gothic is the spot where the action takes place. Many of the aforementioned novels take place in locations that are isolated and gloomy — or that, because of their size, can generate unease and despair in the characters. Marryat, however, places the characters and readers in a hotel. This, as noted above, is totally contrary to what we are used to with respect to the genre. What is interesting here is that the author

[5] The *Lesbian Gothic* is not a subgenre as such, nor entirely a concept. Still, I will refer to it in both ways as it is not as simple as a concept but not as complex as an entire literary genre.

brings danger into an apparently safe context, into a familiar environment that is part of the routine and mundane. The people that pass through the corridors of the building, moreover, are not —in appearance— tormented individuals. They are families, such as Margaret Pullen and her baby daughter, her cousin Miss Elinor Leyton, the Baroness Gobelli with her husband and son Mr. Bobby Bates… Even the atmosphere enjoyed by families seems to be free from the vagaries of the weather, as Harriet comments "Isn't it lovely here?—so soft and warm, something like the Island, but so much fresher!" (Marryat 51) This way, Marryat blends the Gothic

> with a more domestic, mildly sensational form of popular fiction [...] Rather than gothicising the normal, bringing the everyday into the Gothic realm, she takes the Gothic figure of the vampire and puts it into a setting that (for the most part) remains resolutely ungothicised. (Ilfill 89-90)

The lion's share of the work in terms of breaking with convention goes to Harriet, possibly the most interesting character of all. "Whilst in early Female Gothic, the heroine is usually forced into a position of lone vulnerability [...] here the novel begins with women[6] who are willingly, voluntarily, alone in a foreign country." (90) Sometimes victim, sometimes victimizer. Sometimes damsel in distress, as stated by Ralph who insists that she has "all the more need of the protection and loyalty of her friends." (Marryat 137) Sometimes villain, sometimes heroine. This makes her a formidably effective predator (Ilfill 80). The enormous complexity of the character stems mainly from the fact that she is a vampire, but not an ordinary one according to the genre's guidelines. Harriet, unlike her peers, does not feed on her victims by sucking their blood. She drains their life energy until they die. The fact that she is able to get close to everyone is because of her sweet personality, and as a consequence, many people who are around her may find themselves disturbed and even exhausted by her presence. As noted by Ayşe Naz Bulamur "The dichotomy between her charming appearance and her unpredictable power to kill makes her even more frightening than her predecessors." (61) There are, of course, those who resist her charms, as is the case with Elinor, who says that "there is something about her that oppresses me [...] Her company enervates me—I get neuralgia whenever we have been a short time together—and she leaves me in low spirits." (88) Another victim of Harriet's powers is Mrs. Pullen who "had become fainter and fainter as the girl leaned against her [...] She felt as if something or someone were drawing all her

[6] Although I am only referring to Harriet, it must be remembered that this character does not travel alone, hence the plural form of "women".

life away." (Marryat 61) Following Margaret, Harriet also feeds on the Baroness's son, who ends up as a fatal victim.

> Bobby was languid and indifferent to everything but hanging about the place where she might have located herself—sitting on the sofa beside her, with his heavy head on her shoulder and his weak arm wound about her waist. (174)

Another character that shares the same fate with Bobby is Anthony, Harriet's husband, who "felt weak and enervated ever since coming to Mentone." (267) He himself tells his wife "you draw my very life away." (269) They all justify ailments in different ways, be it weather, travel or simply delicate states of health. None of them know the truth of what is going on, not even Harriet, who "only realises towards the end of the novel that it is her "love that [has] killed" those she is physically and emotionally closest to." (Ilfill 80) This ignorance places her far from the villain archetype, as there is really no intention behind it to harm others, she just "has acquired a draining personality, rather than a giving one, which leads her to unknowingly deplete the health and strength of her intimates." (Hammack 887) Her ignorance, both in who she really is and in the way she acts in response to Dr. Phillips' advice, makes her a

> Gothic metaphor for British fin-de-siècle women who were experiencing greater independence than ever before, but without the education and upbringing to prepare them for the concomitant responsibility. (Ilfill 87)

This representation of the vampire responds to an even greater complexity, of course. Not only is the presence of the supernatural in this novel vastly different from other examples, but Harriet's case is actually considered a pathology. From the way Brandts's case is presented to us, it seems acceptable to doubt whether it should be regarded as something supernatural or not. Florence Marryat herself, at the end of her book *There is no death* points out that "the supernatural [...] is a wrong term [...] nothing that exists is *above* nature, but only a continuation of it." (203) Quoting Hammack "Marryat's portrait of a female vampire reads like a medical case study." (886) This treatment of Harriet's nature reveals a strong influence on the novel of some of the most popular terms of the Victorian era — "degeneration" and "eugenics".

> "Degeneration" was a blanket term that referred to the common belief that undesirable elements (physical, mental or moral) were hereditarily transmitted, with increasing virulence, from generation to generation, and was a threat not only to individual families, but to British society as a whole. (Ilfill 82)

Harriet's origin is actually explained. She is the granddaughter of a slave who got bitten by a vampire bat. Her vampiric nature is a genetic inheritance rather than a supernatural matter. In this way, her interbreeding is also her curse. The vampire is a threat, is a product of miscegenation, which "counted as one way of polluting the bloodline." (82) Whoever associates with her, or marries and has offspring, is making her a contributor to the pollution of English blood. Harriet is therefore a danger both because of her nature as a vampire and because of her kinship with slaves. "Regardless of the degenerate's innocence, precautions had to be taken to make sure that "wickedness" or whatever the degenerative threat was, did not spread." (83) An indirect consequence of this action is the isolation to which Harriet is intended to be subjected. The main person who dislikes her is Elinor, who constantly makes her disapproval of the young woman known — "it shews that she thinks her money will atone for all her other shortcomings!" (Marryat 51) The action of "labelling an individual or group as degenerate was usually a tactic and justification to distinguish, separate and control [...] those who were undesirable, sometimes due to ethnicity" (Ilfill 85) which is the first reason to do so with Harriet; "but also due to [...] socially unacceptable behaviour." (85) Harriet is not a conventional vampire, nor is she a villain. She is far from the monsters we are used to seeing as part of the Gothic. In appearance, she is an ordinary young woman, conventional like anyone else, and who does not fit the profile of a killer. Actually, there is a lack of manners that makes her undesirable. This is manifest at the beginning of the novel, when she is eating at the hotel — fast and immediately asking for more food, which was not seen as part of the refined manners of a lady. The point is that, according to one term or another, because of her relationship with a doctor, or because its origin has to do with blood and genetics, Harriet's vampirism is a matter of health rather than some kind of mysticism.

Everything seen above takes the novel away from the parameters of the genre as we know it, which might lead us to believe that *Blood* is not Gothic or terrifying enough. However,

> Her blending of different genres and expectations may not be blood curdling, but it does have the potential to make the reader feel unsettled and disturbed, which is in itself a fundamental characteristic of the Gothic. (Ilfill 94)

3.1 Queer reading and analysis on *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897)

This new label, the Gothic as *Lesbian*, was coined by Paulina Palmer in her book *Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions* (1999). The motivation, probably, is that the scholar realised that "Novels and stories of this kind [Gothic fantasy] [...] employ Gothic motifs and imagery as a vehicle to represent and explore lesbian sexuality and experience." (Palmer, *Transgressive Fictions* 1) One motif used for that matter is the vampire.[7] The reasons behind this association and the genre are not arbitrary. According to Palmer some of the earliest contributors to the Gothic are women that portrayed themes of female's interest. Some of which are "women's entrapment in the domestic sphere of the home, her problematic relationship with her body, and (especially relevant to lesbian writers and readers) female sexuality and relationships." ("Genre, Transformation, Transgression" 119) Additionally, "certain key gothic concepts and motifs, [...] are metaphorically applicable to lesbian existence." (*Transgressive Fictions* 2) In a period in which women have been denied so much knowledge and in which "lesbianism frequently lacks a name, much less an acknowledged or acceptable identity" ("Genre, Transformation, Transgression" 120) writers turn to Gothic literature, which "pushes [...] towards an area of non-signification … by attempting to articulate the unnameable and to visualise the unseen." (qtd. in Palmer, "Genre, Transformation, Transgression" 120) Before examining in more detail the concrete motifs related to the Lesbian Gothic that appear in the novel, it would be worthwhile to point out two aspects. First, that for many modern critics, such as Sue-Ellen Case, the vampire, with its associations of transgressive sex, its secret night-life and victimisation [is used] as an image for lesbian transgression and eroticism. In her words "The vampire is the queer in its lesbian mode." (9) Thus, my main reason to declare Marryat's novel as a good example for the analysis. Second, that this analysis does not intend to reflect the absolute truth, as there is none. Stated by Palmer "critics increasingly perceive, reference to same-sex female desire and erotic relations between women occurs in eighteenth and nineteenth-century gothic literature." (*Transgressive Fictions* 1) But one thing that is clear in this quote is that "critics perceive" — meaning that it is an interpretation and reading done using a modern lens and in light of current ideologies. Close examinations and interpretations from a text are a cultural and social phenomenon attached to the historical period in which they are done. For that matter, it must be understood, once again, that this is a mere analysis that has its premise in

[7] In fact, several different forms of spectrality are used too, such as the ghost, the spectral double and haunted house.

modern queer studies. Whereas it is true that "Queer theory has certainly enabled important developments in the theorisation of the Gothic, developments which have led the way towards new and exciting perspectives on the genre" (Rigby 46), it would be a mistake to claim any conclusion from this section as the universal truth or as the fixed intentions from the author, since the terminology to be used and the ideas observed did not even exist at the time, although some might say that, in fact, "the Gothic enables Queer Studies." (47) Whatever the case, it shall be said that after keeping this in mind and for the sake of fluency and convenience, terms such as "lesbian", "queer", etc. will be used. But it does not imply that those labels are contemporary to the author or the characters.

Having said that, to recapitulate on previous sections, it will be recalled that the Gothic is a genre to which the Victorian writers turned for a number of reasons. However, in this section where the focus is on the queer perspective, it is pointed out that one of the motifs present in Marryat's novel is the so-called "unrepresentable". This term refers to the utilisation of the Gothic by female Victorian writers who, "conscious of a kind of phallic preeminence, [...] are faced with the difficulty of representing perceptions unaccounted for in a phallic economy in terms of that economy." (Palmer, "Genre, Transformation, Transgression" 120) Therefore, in turn, "the contradictory project of attempting to depict lesbianism in a culture which fails to recognise its authenticity [...] returns us to the topic of Gothic." ("Genre, Transformation, Transgression" 120). This brings into question a new possibility with regards to the genre that is seen under the same light of the rest of the analysis. What remains unexplained is why this genre would be preferred over other options. To answer this it is needed to remember one of the keys of the Gothic that has been repeated all throughout this thesis over and over again. And that is that the genre might function as a means to express fears and anxieties. Just like Leona F. Sherman comments that there is a prevalence in Gothic fiction of "the symbolisation of sexuality, overtly feared but covertly wished." (289) These repressed emotions, fears and desires are extremely relevant to subjects such as lesbian women who "lacking a history and a language to articulate [their] sexual orientation, may feel haunted by emotions which [they] cannot or dare not articulate." (Palmer "Genre, Transformation, Transgression" 119) In a time in which some *situations* did not have a proper name, nor a space where to express them, the way to go was the supernatural. So, if I were to relate this idea with the ideology employed in this last part, one concept that could name this is Freud's "uncanny", as psychoanalytic readings state (Palmer "Genre, Transformation, Transgression" 119). In Freud's own words[8],

[8] The uncanny, or *unheimlich* is a term part of the psychoanalysis field.

the uncanny is "something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimisch*], which has undergone repression and then returned from it." (222) Lesbianism becomes the uncanny in Marryat's novel. The genre's engagement with hidden or forbidden desires parallels the concept's connection to the return of the repressed. As a matter of fact, this whole theory is closely attached to "the double" motif. This concept is identified by Freud as an unsettling figure that both attracts and repels. In *Blood*, it is particularly evident that the double is embodied by Harriet. The character represents an eerie sense of duality between the person she seems to be and the true nature that lies within. This is read, on one hand, as a regular human being on the outside versus the vampire she actually is. But, in reality, what is hidden is the fact that Harriet is a potential lesbian whose sexual desire is primarily directed at women. This shows that "uncanny imagery [is used] to represent facets of queer sexuality and experience" (Rubóczki 472) in a subtle way. These assertions could well be called mere speculation considering that no "proof" beyond the associations I have made has been shown so far. Therefore, it seems appropriate to indicate those fragments of the novel where a strong lesbian connotation is perceived. One of the examples with which I will begin has already been noted earlier in this dissertation. It is the first encounter between Mrs. Pullen and Harriet. While in the previous section the moment is read as Harriet exercising her powers — unintentionally; on this occasion it could be stated that this encounter has a strong lesbian connotation between the two women. Firstly, Harriet "crept closer and closer to Mrs. Pullen as she spoke, and [...] encircled her waist with her arm and leaned her head upon her shoulder." (Marryat 59) Harriet's advance makes this approach totally inappropriate, not only because of the historical time in which they meet, but also because of their status as women — who, moreover, have just met. However, in the same encounter, Harriet continues to approach her companion, whose discomfort relates only to the fact that they did not know each other previously. After Harriet "leaned against her with her head upon her breast" (61) Margaret felt "some sensation she could not define, nor account for—some feeling which she had never experienced before— had come over her and made her head reel." (61) If readers go back a little in this essay, they would re-read that Victorian women were denied much knowledge — this would explain the fact that in this situation Mrs. Pullen is feeling something she cannot put a name to, indeed, has never felt. Possibly it is because no other woman has crossed the boundaries that Harriet has, and therefore this attraction could not have occurred before. This attraction, which at first seems to throw Margaret off balance, appears to intensify over time, and it is, in fact, Mrs. Pullen who is least able to resist the

protagonist, who acknowledges “without wishing to give in to. She could not keep her eyes off her.” (76) Again, the woman’s ignorance corresponds to a sexual attraction that is like a “smouldering fire [that] would burst forth into flame and overwhelm her.” (76) Nevertheless, in spite of the intensity of their encounters, Mrs. Pullen is not the only woman with whom Harriet interacts in a more sexual way. This attraction is not an exception or an isolated run-in. Harriet’s travelling companion, Mademoiselle Brimont, tells the ladies that she shared a cabin with her, where she "did not feel as if [she] could breathe.” (67) This feeling, in fact, is transferred to a *greater evil* for which Harriet, according to Mademoiselle Brimont, “sat with me all night.” (67) This narrative of them both sitting all night in Olga’s room can be seen as a coded reference to lesbian activity. (Depledge 27) The thing is that Harriet crosses these boundaries, but just as when she uses her powers, these approaches occur innocently, with no double intentions behind them. This is exemplified by the longing reflected in Harriet's desires.

> Margaret Pullen, glancing up once was struck by the look with which Harriet Brandt was regarding her — it was so full of yearning affection - almost of longing to approach her nearer, to hear her speak, to touch her hand! (Marryat 67)

On the one hand, this fragment reveals that Harriet's lesbian vampirism is indeed not that of a self-conscious creature whose targets become victims. In fact, it can be seen that her innocence borders on immaturity and capriciousness, as she complains to Madame Gobelli on one occasion that “If ever I took a liking to a girl we were placed in separate rooms!” (82) When, in reality, what she has always longed for is “to come out into the world and find someone to be a friend and to love me, only me, and all for myself!” (82) On the other hand, Margaret, on her part, is not oblivious to what is going on, nor does she reject it, for “it amused her to observe” (67) those encounters defined by the vampire’s desire for her. This unfamiliarity that both women experience happens for some of the reasons already mentioned, but corresponds to another of the motifs that Lesbian Gothic makes its own — “the unspeakable”. This motif names Harriet's ignorance of her true condition. She is what would be known as a closeted lesbian. Deep down she feels attraction and desire towards women, as she makes clear in her words and actions. However, she does not show her sexuality openly to the world, but keeps it hidden, so it becomes an *unspeakable* aspect of her identity. The reasons behind this are several. It could be “because the individual lacks

knowledge of it, because the knowledge is repressed, or because, though having access to it, s/he dare not admit the fact." (Palmer, "Genre, Transformation, Transgression" 120) This motif corresponds to a genre that "has come to be generally acknowledged as a literature of the unsayable" (Beville 29), which in line with my analysis would signify that Harriet is a closeted lesbian because she is unaware of her sexuality, just like she is unaware of her condition as a vampire. Indeed, if I were to list the reasons as phases of a process, it could be said that Harriet goes through them all. Firstly, she is definitely ignorant of her true sexuality because if she knew, perhaps she would interact differently with the women around her. The fact that she does not know that her actions correspond to unidentified inner desires explains why she does not repress gestures and words that in Victorian society might be considered inappropriate. See, for instance, one encounter she has with Mrs. Pullen in which Harriet claims "But you are so different [...] I could see it when you smiled at me at dinner. I knew I should like you at once. And I want you to like me too—so much!" (Marryat 58) While she speaks she "crept still closer". This indicates that she is oblivious of the inappropriateness of approaching another woman in public in this way, as she does not relate it to something as scandalous and unacceptable as lesbianism. As a matter of fact, Harriet does not even understand the actions, considered dangerous, that can take place between two women. This is why she complains about the strange measures taken in the convent where she came from — "As for us girls, we were never left alone for a single minute! There was always a sister with us, even at night, walking up and down between the row of beds." (59) Despite this ignorance, characters such as Baroness Gobelli and Dr. Phillips eventually confront her and make her aware of her true identity. In this process, Harriet refuses to accept who she is, as she firmly believes that her actions stem from love and not evil.

> "She said that it was *I* who killed Mrs. Pullen's baby and that I had vampire blood in me, and should poison everyone I came in contact with. What does she mean? [...] Was it my love that killed them? Shall I always kill everybody I love?" (241)

The cards are now on the table and Harriet seems to accept the doctor's words. However, she appears to end up rejecting the truth, as she acts contrary to his advice — which causes the death of her beloved. On this occasion, Harriet's actions cannot be justified on the basis of ignorance, as her true nature has been amply verbalised and yet she has pretended not to know it. In a period when sexuality was undergoing so many changes, and when relationships

between women were still denied, it is easy to understand that it is difficult for Harriet to suspend these seemingly innocent gestures and acts. In Mrs. Pullen words "[Harriet] seems to have had so few people to love, or to love her during her lifetime, that she is glad to practise on anyone who will reciprocate her affection." (88-89) This can be translated as an attempt on Harriet's part to be reciprocated and to accept any form of affection from a woman, as such displays of affection are rare. The point is that while Harriet is initially oblivious to the true intentions of such gestures, there are other women who do identify the desire for intimacy behind such caresses. This, of course, is condemned by society, which identifies it as a threat, just as it identifies vampirism as a danger. This idea is read in three different levels that deepen as you go on. The vampire as a monster that feeds on its victims. The vampire as the 'Other' whose blood is contaminated by her genetic heritage. And the vampire as a queer subject who threatens the *natural* order between men and women by showing a transgressive woman, a monster, the Other, and her erotic and sexual desire for someone of the same sex.

Events end up separating Harriet from Margaret, the woman with whom she is most intimate throughout the novel. However, despite this, a fierce erotic and lesbian connotation is drawn from their encounters. On the one hand, because of the aggressiveness with which Harriet repeatedly lunges at her; on the other, because Mrs. Pullen does not reject her completely. Just as society fears vampires, it is fiercely afraid of the presence of a transgressive woman who represents various dangers that threaten the tranquillity and stability of the English.

4. Conclusion

Throughout this essay a Gothic novel as rich in elements and style as any of its contemporaries has been extensively analysed. Beginning with an understanding of the importance of the genre in a society where austerity and restraint were the main bases of its values — a society that at the turn of the century must face many changes. Literature, which is never oblivious to human needs and desires, once again responds to Victorian society through the Gothic. But, although the conventions of the Gothic are more than established by the time Marryat publishes her novel, in this thesis we have seen that the author departs significantly from these characteristics. It is precisely this differentiation between her style and the conventions of the Gothic that makes her a good candidate for the reading that has

been undertaken in the different sections of this essay. Starting with the stylistic aspect, which is more objective and less subject to modern interpretations. Proof of this are the criticisms Marryat faced, as her "attempt" at the Gothic was far from the horror novels of the time in terms of narrative elements. Despite the criticisms of the time, it is undeniable that the way Marryat wrote her novel is a breath of fresh air, bringing the horror into the everyday and much closer to the experiences of the *fin-de-siècle*. It was not necessary to write about terrifying creatures in dark places to inspire the reader with a sense of horror. The English were already in a period of instability and anxiety caused by fear of the unknown. This is everyday, part of mundanity. Marryat manages to do just that, to introduce distress into an environment to which it did not seem to belong. This psychological terror demonstrates the author's brilliance and ingenuity, as well as her boldness to move away from the literary conventions of the genre. This has helped me to make a more objective analysis of the novel, but not for a queer reading, of course. To speak in such terms in the Victorian era is quite impossible, for as noted at the beginning of this essay, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that various queer-related terms were coined — and not exactly in a natural way, but as a pathology or medical case. However, it is currently difficult to find queer readings of the novel under a queer lens, unlike many others, several of considerable renown, and which, in fact, have been included in this dissertation. For this reason, being unexplored terrain, submitting *The Blood of the Vampire* to analysis was promising and, indeed, the results have not disappointed. Along the same lines as other analyses with the same premise, Marryat's novel has been analysed and numerous interpretations of what could be read as lesbian desire — or deviant sexuality, according to Victorian ideas, have been found. What has been interesting in this analysis has been to identify the parallels between Harriet's vampire status and her hidden sexuality. Following the conventions of the Lesbian Gothic, proposed by Paulina Palmer, I have been able to apply such motifs to the novels' plot. Its role in the narrative changes according to this *subgenre*, hence it relates to the story in a different way. Have a look for example at the motif of the "double" or the "uncanny". These elements are neither theorised by the academic, nor are they new or unknown. They are innovative in the way they relate to the novel, which leads to a different reading and interpretation. Their presence allows me to reach new conclusions, such as the fact that Harriet's unawareness of being a vampire makes her a closeted lesbian, who ignores, represses —and later denies— her sexuality, which corresponds to the "unspeakable". While I have made you aware of the fact that this reading is based on modern terms, concepts and

ideologies, if I were to conclude that this is indeed the absolute truth of Marryat's intentions in writing *Blood*, it could be possible to confirm the connection between Harriet's being a lesbian and also a character presented as a vampire. She is not simply a human different from the rest. She is a supernatural creature. We see that queer, at that time, was something monstrous and completely contrary to Victorian values and morality. This threat to the natural order between men and women was far more dangerous than a creature that feeds on its victims until they kill them. The English could deal much more easily with monsters than with real people who were different from the ordinary. Therefore, it seems that the Gothic was, and is, the most suitable genre for authors who were looking for a way to convey meanings beyond the literariness of their words. Although it is practically impossible to know what the real intentions of the Victorian authors were in the *fin-de-siècle*, it is interesting to analyse their work under modern premises, as we can reach new conclusions, enriching the interpretation of these novels. What I can conclude on this occasion is that *The Blood of the Vampire* is a completely overlooked novel that should be given much more attention, for there is nothing simple about it, either in narrative terms or in a modern analysis. The character of Harriet is a very complex one because of the ignorance of which she herself is a victim, which makes her a threat who does not know the havoc she can wreak. This duality, present throughout the novel, echoes the contradictions of the time, making it a faithful reflection of the emotions of the English at the turn of the century.

Despite the oblivion to which it has almost been relegated, Florence Marryat wrote a brilliant novel in many respects, which I trust will, with the passage of time, gain the merit it deserves and continue to be the subject of analyses such as the one presented in this thesis. Of course, knowing how to differentiate the moment when it was written from the moment when it is analysed, but nevertheless recognising on both occasions how magnificent it is.

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