Gothicism in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*: From 'Old' to 'New' Gothic

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Abstract— *This paper presents the Gothic world from different contexts. While early Gothic novels are about aristocratic villains and medieval settings, the 'new' Gothic is used to represent the modern context associated with the urban and industrial world. This paper explores the use of the Gothic genre in Walpole's Castle of Otranto (1764), Charles Dickens's Great Expectations (1860-1861) and Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897); the novels which belong to two different centuries. Walpole's Gothic differs from the 'modern' Gothic' of Dickens and Stoker. Charles Dickens's (1812-1870) and Bram Stoker's(1847-1912) novels explore the interplay between the Gothic and the Victorian context. The contexts of these novels reveal the use of two types of Gothic genre: the 'old' and 'new' Gothic. The objective of this paper is to introduce the use of the 'old' and 'new' Gothic in the three novels and the various sources of threats produced by this mode of literature. The following parts will be devoted to analyzing the Gothic settings, supernatural elements, and Gothic themes.*

Keywords— *old Gothic, Gothic castle, modern Gothic, gender, race.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Victorian era was a period in history marked by the rise of industrial revolution. The emphasis on the necessity of the employment of imagination against a realistic depiction of the world was not only a characteristic feature of Dickens (Hollington 18-19) but also of many nineteenth-century writers including Bram Stoker who attempts to rely on the Gothic to represent the threat of the modern world. Like many Victorian authors and artists, Dickens and Stoker endeavored to revive the Gothic through various resources. They attempt to reestablish a sense of disorder by drawing on sources regarding medieval times. The Gothic city depicted by Victorian writers is created under the influence of the Victorian context. They attempt to draw their inspiration from the old Gothic to represent the horrific industrial world.

II. THE GOTHIC GENRE

The term Gothic refers to novels that produced the major conventions of the mode including the medieval setting, the castle, which was one of the main conventions of the genre. The Middle Ages and its architecture such as castles were looked back by early Gothic writers such Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe. Both choose the medieval castle to locate the Gothic (Botting 2). The title of their novels, *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* show their deep interest in medieval settings. Early Gothic novels couldn't be represented without medieval materials and resources that help Gothic writers represent the threat of male aristocrats.

In the nineteenth-century, the Gothic becomes tightly associated with the modern world, mainly cities and other urban locations. The Victorian Gothic attempts to represent "cities, towns, conurbations and the suburbs as full of threat, darkness and the degeneration of humanity"

(Krzywinska133).Early literary works highly inspired Victorian writers who depicted their portraits from early Gothic resources. Dickens among many other writers including Stoker inevitably depended on two contradictory genres, the Gothic and realism, in order to make his literary works appropriate to his readers and the contemporary issues of the Victorian era. As Mighall suggested, Victorian writers placed terrors in "the modern metropolis" (xxii).

III.   ANALYSIS OF THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO, GREAT EXPECTATIONS, AND DRACULA

3.1The Gothic Castle and Gothic Themes:

The Castle of Otranto is the first Gothic novel and the producer of the main traits that launched the basic materials of the genre. It belongs to the early Gothic. The events of this novel take place in the labyrinthine and 'subterraneous regions" of the castle (Walpole 17). The first definition of the Gothic genre comes from this novel which introduces "the familiar elements of a medieval setting in which sensational and supernatural events take place, as a sinister aristocratic hero tortured by a guilty secret tries to capture a beautiful heroine" (Walder 30). As *Otranto* was written and published decades after Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, it shows more reliance on traditional Gothic elements. The title of the novel itself suggests Walpole's reliance on conventional Gothic tropes to represent the horrific modern world. *Dracula* also shows many of the traits of the earlier Gothic**.** The castle is a typical example of the conventional Gothic setting. The building is represented as having no fixed point of direction. Its 'narrow ways' are gloomy spaces where women are imprisoned.

In *The Castle of Otranto*, the castle represents the victimization of women, and its labyrinthine passages represent their oppression and inability to go beyond male power. In this horrific place, Isabella is threatened by "an awful silence" and then "some blasts of wind that shock the doors" (Walpole 17). She is ghosted by "long labyrinth of darkness" (Walpole 17). As Manfred imprisons her in this castle, she cannot escape this horrific place where the villain dominates this heroine, forcing her to live forever in his gothic location. Through the female characters, the novel represents the oppression of women in a male-dominated society. He utilizes medieval resources to depict the place of women in society which is associated with the private sphere. Manfred's wife cannot escape the castle as she demonstrates her complete obedience to him. As Clemens says, "Manfred's tyrannical exercise of his sexual impulses and Hippolita's unquestioning

subservience to him suggest a critique of patriarchal power in *Otranto*" (37).

General similarities may exist between women's life in Otranto and the story of Miss Havisham's Satis House. *Great Expectations* has a special Gothic trope no doubt under the impact of *Otranto*. Dickens alludes to the Gothic castle that represents woman's entrapment in a male−dominated society. Both novels present an example of Gothic building where this is understood to signify the labyrinth that imprisons oppressed women. Dickens assumes that the places where women are imprisoned are "often as grotesque" as the women who inhabit it (x). The depiction of the Satis House, with its 'dark passages' calls to mind the Gothic castle. In *The Castle of Otranto*, women are victims, and Miss Havisham here is the victim. Hippolyta, Manfred's wife, and Isabella whom he wants to marry are oppressed figures who are imprisoned in the castle that entraps them.

Both novels represent two different female characters. *Otranto* and *Great Expectations* have two main categories of women that can be classified as either victims or victimizers. The Victorian era went through various transformations that influenced the literary representations of women who are no longer depicted as the 'Angel in the house'. However, they are transformed into ghosts or devils. Women who are transgressive become 'demons' by male writers (Kitson 169). In *Great Expectations* and *Dracula*, Dickens and Stoker depend much more on empowering women rather than victimizing them. In contrast to Walpole who depends on representations of oppressed women, the new Gothic shocks readers with new female villains. In *The Castle of Otranto*, the 'old' Gothic "privileges the "good girl": the virtuous, passive, and submissively suffering woman" (Kramer 18). The novel features "*only* "good girls" in the persecuted Isabella, the martyred and Matilda, and the suffering Hippolita" (Kramer 18). Accordingly, Walpole demonstrates a romanticized description of victimized women whose appearance and behavior go hand in hand with the patriarchal expectations of femininity. However, Dickens's and Stoker's Gothic is about villainous women who want to go beyond the private sphere, showing their deep interest in the public sphere.

Dracula suggests Stoker's reliance on conventional Gothic tropes to represent the horrific modern world. Dracula's castle is the Gothic castle "in the tradition of Otranto, Udolpho," and other castles in earlier Gothic novels (Baldick and Mighall 282). In England, Dracula's home possesses the medieval architectural style. It is represented by Harker as a big house that belongs to the past, 'the medieval times': the "dreadful abyss" (Stoker

29). The novel shows many of the traits of the earlier Gothic. Jonathan Harker's visit to his castle reminds readers of the conventional Gothic setting where its heroine wander in its 'dark corners'. The building is represented as having no fixed point of direction. In this place, Harker like the women who live in it, are imprisoned in its underground that is similar to that proposed by *Otranto* (Senf 80-81). Harker becomes like Isabella, Manfred's victim. He is imprisoned in this Gothic building owned by an aristocratic villain. Harker is the victim who calls to mind the female characters in conventional Gothic novels including Isabella in *The Castle of Otranto*, the victim who is persuaded by Manfred; Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the virgin who is followed by the Gothic villain.

3.2 The Domestication of the Gothic Setting:

The Castle of Otranto sets up the basic sources of the Gothic genre; however, Victorian novels show some departure from the early Gothic. While Walpole locates the events of *Otranto* in places like the medieval castles that symbolizes the patriarchal representation of male dominance, Dickens and Stoker attempt to domesticate the setting of the novel locating it within the nineteenth-century England. This domestication is the product of the transformations that the Victorian era went through, the transformations that makes the genre more flexible as it focuses on modern themes. Dickens, for instance, borrows many words and images from Walpole's novel and links them closely to the Victorian slums, characters, criminals, and villains. He alludes to the labyrinthine streets of the Gothic castle as the main Walpolian tradition. However, these 'labyrinthine passages' are mainly used to represent the Gothic streets of London (Mighall 70).

Dickens's and Stoker's Gothic is more modern than Walpole's as they place the events of the novel in familiar settings such as urban streets, houses, London's slums that replace the medieval castle of earlier Gothic. The Gothic in *Great Expectations* and *Dracula* is exemplified in the depiction of labyrinthine and dark streets of London, where Dickens and Stoker invite readers into horrific tours of London. The 'old' Gothic provides Dickens and Stoker with the materials needed to represent the chaos of the modern world. The 'castle' is substituted by the labyrinthine streets of London. Both Walpole's castle and the urban underworld share the same characteristics. For instance, Dickens uses the phrase "narrow streets" (100) that calls to mind the 'narrow' ways of the medieval castle. The mythical side of the labyrinth is tied with its use in the nineteenth-century literature to illustrate the impossibility of establishing with any clear trajectory. Urban places are open and unlimited. In contrast to the earliest Gothic

novels that "are set in a timeless world or are, like *Walpole's Castle of Otranto*, set in a deliberately medieval one, where the reader could believe that supernatural events might easily occur" (Senf 24), Dickens's Gothic, is closer to the modern context of Victorian England.

3.3 Supernatural: From Terror to Horror

In Gothic novels, there is a sort of supernatural, either explained or unexplained, real or unreal. In *The Castle of Otranto*, terror rises from 'unexplained,' invisible supernatural elements rather than visible things. The characters are haunted by the curse of the past, the unexpected paternal violence and crime. The supernatural is "closely linked to the "reawakening" of Manfred's buried family secrets, the usurpation of Alfonso. For Walpole, subscription to the supernatural carried its own iconoclastic thrill by breaking the standard narrative of Whig history: that the Glorious Revolution of 1688 delivered as from popish superstition" (Punter 97). The characters that live in the Gothic castle are haunted by unexplained supernatural events. Walpole says that they "heard the door of the great chamber clap behind [them]" (30). They are haunted by the mysterious 'giant' that is following them (30). In *Otranto*, terror arouses fear that comes from unexplained supernatural occurrences that belong to the Gothic genre in which we notice "a general air of unreality that detracts from the effects" (Scarborough 36). Here, "the supernaturalism lacks the naturalism which is necessary" to study the modern Gothic novels (Scarborough 36).

It is important to demonstrate the role of allusion in Walpole's novel to represent the supernatural elements. In *Otranto*, the link between the supernatural and biblical sources is noticed by various critics. Edelman points out that in this novel, Walpole represents the supernatural from a biblical perspective. He depicts monstrosity that is based on biblical imagery. Edelman quotes from a translator who claims that supernatural in Walpole's novel is 'Biblical in nature': "The sins of father" that haunt the different generations (60). The ghost that threatens the characters seems a special curse of the dead that haunts the generations of the castle in the form of the 'spirit' that comes from the graves (Walpole 15).

The psychological perspective is useful in the analysis of the West's relation to others. The racial other haunts the Victorian psychology. Through Magwitch, Dickens displays the Gothic side of the Victorian city, this modern setting that is also read through another psychoanalytic lens. He is represented as the 'ghost' that haunts the Victorian mind. There are noticeable similarities to be examined between both novels. As Walpole is influenced by Shakespeare, Dickens also alludes to Shakespeare to

represent his Gothic world. Both Manfred and Pip are haunted by ghosts. The villain in *Otranto* is haunted by this 'infernal spectre' which reminds readers of Shakespearean ghost that haunts Hamlet. Chaplin shows in detail the similarities between Walpole's use of 'revenge ghost' and the one found in Shakespeare: "Hamlet is *Otranto*'s precedent text in terms of Walpole's re-presentation of an abject juridical economy of spectral 'presences'" (Chaplin 108). This visitation of a ghost in *Otranto* reminds readers of another visitation in *Great Expectation*. Pip is haunted by Gothic women who are similar to the "Witches of Macbeth" (Dickens 195). In *Otranto*, the protagonist represents the ghost that haunts him as the 'devils' that "league against" him (Walpole 15). He also refers to it as 'infernal': "Speak, infernal spectre" (Walpole 40). Walpole shows readers the 'revenge ghost' of whom he is ghosted. Dickens uses the same strategy to represent the supernatural yet in realistic form.

Dickens's and Stoker's ghosts are more real than those of Walpole's and early-Gothic literature. This contrast is almost a contrast between terror and horror. The Gothic in their novels belongs to the modern supernaturalism "that is more psychological than terroristic" (Scarborough 49). The ghost in their novels does not come from graves to haunt characters. It is more 'earthly' than Walpole's. Walpole depends on supernatural elements that produce terror. He is known as "the father of the terror novel" (Scarborough 7). As mentioned earlier, his terror story affected Gothic writers in general and invent the basic materials that influence them. His novel belongs to early terror stories that "had their source in popular superstition, classical literature, medieval legends, or Elizabethan drama" (Scarborough 49). In *Great Expectations*, villainy is not embodied in the character of the aristocratic villains, but in the criminal man. In Dickens's and Stoker's novels, the supernatural can be easily explained. The ghost is not the one that is abstract and invisible, the ghost that comes from the graves, but it is the ghost that is embodied. Human beings themselves are ghosts or specters.

3.4 Villains: From Aristocratic Villains to Criminals, Foreigners, and Female Villains

Dickens's and Stoker's novels belong to the modern Gothic as they attempt to represent the change within the Gothic fiction that "transforms the threat of the aristocrat into the threat of the degenerate foreigner. […] The bad blood of family, in other words, is replaced by the bad blood of race and the scientific theory of degeneracy produces and explains this transition" (Halberstam 94-95). In contrast to Walpole's novel, Dickens's and Stoker's Gothicism offers an alternative form of monstrosity. They

demonstrate that the ghosts or witches of the era become modern.

Harker's journey to Dracula's castle "has embodied the chaos of the East as opposed to the order of the West" (Stoker 93-94). His 'journey' to this horrific place is identified by restlessness and ambiguity. It is the journey from order to disorder: from health to disease. The building is placed in Transylvania, in Eastern Europe which is considered as the ultimate Other to England. It is mentioned in the novel: "Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways" (Stoker 26). From this unfamiliar place, Dracula moves closer to the West to conquer its order, from the exotic and unfamiliar to familiar. The events of the novel happen in Victorian England. Dracula is the Gothic person who is represented through references to magic and the supernatural. His body exhibits deviations from human traits and displays characteristics marked by monstrosity and animal imagery. He has the magical ability to transfigure himself into creatures such as 'the dog' or 'the wolf', 'the rat', 'the bat', 'the moth', 'the fox', and 'the wolf' (Stoker 204). Stoker says that he owns the magical ability to "grow and become small; and can at times vanish and come unknown" (204).

Dracula is the vampire who represents the chaos of the East. His representation is inseparable from its folkloric Other, the vampire that transgresses the borders that ought not to be transgressed. The Gothic villain leads the female characters to 'sin' and life of vampirism. Stoker tells the story of Dracula's journey from Transylvania to London where he attempts to "colonize England with a race of vampires" (Tichellaar 232). Lucy is made a vampire by Dracula. His blood transforms her body, mind, and identity that become mysterious. He also removes Mina from the realm of the typical domestic woman and locates her within the frightening presentation of woman who consumes men through her sexuality. Dracula pushes Mina to drink his blood, rendering her inseparable from this vampiric Other.

Stoker clearly shows the threat of Dracula's 'otherness', which is classified as a threat to Western London. Dracula's journey to London can therefore be seen as a useful lens for exploring issues of foreign invasion. The journey establishes the confrontation between the British and Londoners, the self and the Other, located in the darkness of London's streets. Dracula depicts "a monstrous erstwhile ruler from Eastern Europe, planning to establish a new empire of his own in the decaying heart of the British capital" (Wasson 135). He haunts the urban underground as a creature or animal. He is a foreign wanderer who threatens Londoners. Stoker focuses on the racial Other that transforms natives into vampiric

creatures. He makes vampires human beings rather than unrealistic creatures, the creation that serves his need to criticize the industrial world. Stoker's monster is real. He embodies vampiric traits that represent the threat of transmitted diseases. In fact, Britain is threatened by "sexualized vampiric contagion. Among other things, the tale is influenced by the fear of the dwindling of the British nation, as well as by anxieties among sexual infection, particularly through syphilis" (Wasson 135). Their bodies spread infections and diseases. The vampire motif is used to represent threat of sexual and infectious diseases. Sexuality and race are the main themes of Dickens's and Dracula's Gothic that associate the British with purity and superiority, while linking the un-English with impurity and inferiority. What is horrific about Dracula is his attempt to exploit and corrupt the English blood, mainly women's blood transferred through sexuality. The threat of Dracula embodies the threat of the East as the space that can disrupt the safety of the civilized Western world. Dracula employs vampirism to explore the theme of racial otherness, the other that poisons the West.

Vampirism in Dickens's novel is less real and actual than Dracula's as it is not largely based on blood sucking; however, both use the same trope to represent the threat of modern world. Dickens's vampire lacks its magical role of sucking blood of victims. He relies only on its metaphorical role. In both novels, the vampire motif is used to represent the industrial world.

Gothic monsters in *Otranto*, which are part of the supernatural elements of the Gothic genre, are different from Dickens's and Stoker's. In *Otranto*, the supernatural parts are composed of "gigantic helmets crushing people to death, swaying black feathers, and ghost stepping down of pictures [which] are the elements of Gothic monstrosity" (Edelman 59). Gothic monstrosity in Dickens's and Stoker's novels, however, is part of the ordinary, familiar, and the human world. Dickens's and Dracula's villains are the Gothic Others that furnish his novels. They are represented through monstrous bodies.

Dickens and Stoker attempt to link the Gothic to science. In the early Gothic, "there is much interest in the study of the relation of science to the literature of supernaturalism in the various periods and the discoveries of modern times furnishing plot material" (Scarborough 13). In *Great Expectations*, the interplay between Gothic and science find expression in the representation of the criminal as a 'dog' (Dickens 301). Stoker's novel also stresses on the importance of scientific discourses in Gothic fiction. It is significant to read Victorian novels with the expectations of encountering the threat of racial otherness. Through animal imagery, Dickens and Stoker create Gothic villains

sharing much in common with scientific discourses. For instance, in *Dracula*, Lucy is transfigured into a beast whose "angry snarl" (211) and teeth that appear "longer and sharper than the rest" (159) threaten the one who looks at her. The transformation of villains into animals or beasts is affected by science that "has furnished themes for many modern stories of the supernatural," endowing it with new interpretations (Scarborough 49).

Dickens and Dracula treat the ghost as a human character. The evolution of the supernatural from the eighteenth century to the Victorian era suggests the realist taste of the 'new' Gothic. (Scarborough 36). The ghost is incorporated into the realistic novel. In both novels, the female villains are represented as 'witches,' or 'ghosts,' the vocabularies borrowed from earlier Gothic that associate them with the supernatural. The representations of the spinster as the 'Witch' of the Satis House (Dickens 80) and Mrs Joe who goes beyond the image of 'Angel in the House' as a 'devil' (Dickens 196) suggest gothic transgression. In *Dracula*, women are also turned into vampires, witches, or ghosts.

Both *Dracula* and *Great Expectations* depend on realistic characters and settings. They make the supernatural world closer to the human world rather than the inhuman. Vampirism during the nineteenth century focuses "on rational explanations of the phenomenon" (Senf 22). Unlike the female victims, the heroines of early Gothic novels, Dickens and Stoker stress on empowering women rather than victimizing them. In earlier Gothic novels, there is no use of the motif of vampire as it does not serve the needs of their own imagination (Senf 20-21). Dickens and Stoker, however, were conscious of the new context that led to the emergence of New Women, the period that witnessed the emancipation of women (Poole 139). Vampire-like women were present in the nineteenth century literature as a result of the social changes that affected Victorian society. Stoker refers to the female characters as the "New Women" (Stoker 77). The portrayal of these women in *Dracula* cannot be divorced from the social context, particularly the second half of the nineteenth century that is considered as a period of various transformations, including women's emancipation (Botting 95). As a result of this context, Stoker shocks his readers through Lucy's words that suggest her need to marry "three men" (Stoker 50). Lucy and other women are represented as vampires or demons, haunting men in the darkness of the night. Women in particular "proved susceptible to [this] ghastly influence, especially those women who rejected traditional patriarchal controls" (Poole 139).

The myth that inspires Stoker to represent the threat of women who fight for equality with men is the vampire. He

imports the image of the vampire that speaks to the anxieties and confusion related to the Victorian context: the threat of immigration, foreigners, and the threat of women who stood against the patriarchal order. The writer represents them as "ladies by their dress and manner," however; they display acts of transgression (Stoker 31). The female characters in the novel under study are represented as vampires. Mythology and folklore are used to investigate the source of Victorian anxieties such as sexual anxiety. The trope of vampire can be detected in the characterization of the female characters that are transfigured into vampires by Dracula. In fact, Stoker is "one of the first writers to place the vampire story in contemporary settings" (McGinley 80). The vampire in Dracula's novel belongs to the industrial world, the type in which "living-dead characters actually suck the blood of their victims and in which the human characters identify "real" vampires in their fictional world" (Senf 33). Harker is haunted by these women in his Gothic castle. He is frightened by his brides whose Gothic representations are meant to introduce the main concerns of the Victorian era. Women are represented as ambivalent. They are represented as "more animal than human" (Senf 67).

I.   CONCLUSION

In contrast to Walpole's Gothic novel that depends on conventional Gothic settings such as the Gothic castle and invisible supernatural elements, Dickens's and Stoker's Gothic is more modern. They use the Gothic genre to represent the threat of the modern world. The nineteenth-century urban literature consists of a combination of real and fantastic elements in order to voice the problems associated with the urban context. Domesticating the Gothic is directly associated with familiarizing the supernatural elements of earlier Gothic, producing new kinds of ghosts. The fusion of the Gothic and realist setting together within an urban text is one of the characteristic features of Dickens's and Stoker novels.

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