A Gothic Ecocritical Analysis of Bram Stoker's *Dracula**

Bram Stoker'ın *Drakula* Adlı Eserinin Gotik Ekoeleştirel Bir İncelemesi

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Abstract

This article extends the term "gothic ecocriticism" to encompass the study of literary texts as part of the task of bridging the great divide between the theoretical and practical dimensions of environmental thought. It illustrates an ecocritical reading of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), by especially focusing on its ecophobic configuration of nature and animals, as oppositional forces to the human domain. After setting a theoretical and contextual framework by explaining the origins of gothic ecocriticism and drawing a line of thought following the gothic literary tradition, the article then delves into *Dracula* as a site of discussion that revolves around ecophobia. Arguing that the novel is based on ecophobic feelings, such as fear of the unknown in nature, the fearsome depictions of the animals as ill-omens, and the heavy employment of other scary conventions like dark clouds, black sky, and huge mountains, the article discusses whether or not *Dracula* can be viewed as an illustration of queer nature. It concludes that gothic ecocriticism may familiarise the unfamiliar, and by doing so may help contribute to the development of a union between the theory and praxis of environmental thought and action. It also underlines the importance of drawing upon posthumanist endeavours for the fulfilment of a better development in the field.

Keywords: Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897), gothic ecocriticism, posthumanism, ecophobia

Öz

Bu makale "gotik ekoeleştiri" teriminin içeriğini genişleterek, edebi çalışmaları da konuya dahil etmektedir. Amacı, çevresel düşüncenin, aralarında kopukluk olan kuramsal ve uygulamalı olan bağlamlarını birbirine yaklaştırmaktır. Başlangıç noktasını gotik ekoeleştiriden alarak, Bram Stoker'ın *Drakula* (1897) adlı eserini ekoeleştirel biçimde incelemektedir. Bu incelemede, özellikle de doğa ve hayvanların ekofobik betimlemelerine odaklanmakta, bunların insana ait alana yabancı ve karşıt olarak tasvir edilmelerine dikkat çekmektedir. Gotik ekoeleştirinin kökleri konusunda teorik ve bağlamsal bir çerçeve çizerek başlayan ve gotiğin edebi geleneğinden yola çıkan bu makale, daha sonra ekofobinin bir alanı olarak *Drakula* metnine giriş yapmakta, daha sonra ise metnin ve ana karakter olan kontun insan-ötesi bir örneklem olup olmadığını tartışmaktadır. Doğada bilinmeyene duyulan korku, hayvanların kötü işaretler olarak korkunç tasvirleri ve diğer korku öğeleri olarak kara bulutların, karanlık gökyüzünün ve benzeri şekilde yüksek dağların kullanılmasından yola çıkarak, romanın ekofobik duygulara dayalı olduğunu savunan makale, *Drakula*'nın aslında queer doğanın bir örneğini yansıtıp yansıtmadığını tartışmaktadır. Makale, sonuç bölümünde çevresel düşünce ve eylemin arasındaki bağı güçlendirmede gotik ekoeleştirinin, gotiğin bir olarak yaptığını tersine çevirerek, yani aşina olmayanı tanıdık hale getirerek, oynayacağı rolün altını çizmekte ve alanın gelişmesi için insan-ötesi girişimlerin önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Bram Stoker, *Drakula* (1897), gotik ekoeleştiri, insan-ötesi çalışmalar, ekofobi

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Theoretical and Contextual Framework

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), one of the most fruitful texts in English literature, has lent itself to a multitude of readings from diverse aspects, including the critique of typical Victorian gender roles and critical discussions of heteronormativity, the hierarchical but ambivalent dichotomies between the coloniser and the colonised in terms of race and ethnicity, and as an umbrella term to encompass all these, power relations. It even gave way to thought-provoking Marxist or Freudian analyses. More recently, the novel has found place in Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird's *Queering the Non/Human* (2008), with Robert Azarello's inspirational chapter entitled "Unnatural Predators: Queer Theory Meets Environmental Studies in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," in which the animalistic and erotic desires of the vampire and those of the human are juxtaposed within a queer context to "deconstruct the binary oppositions between the natural and the unnatural" (p. 150). It is evident from the body of work produced on or pertaining to *Dracula* that the novel's multiple layers, endowed with various overt and implicit meanings, have allowed not only many literary, gothic, and cultural studies scholars as well as ecocritics and historians to contribute to different academic spheres, but also several artists and directors to develop an incredible number of popular culture products. Thus, bearing the text's lenience towards both academic and non-academic endeavours in mind, and by deriving energy from all these diverse forms of analysis, this article aims to extend the term "gothic ecocriticism" into the study of literary texts and examine *Dracula* from a gothic ecocritical perspective. Being a very well-known example of Victorian Gothic tradition which has been adapted into several types of popular media, *Dracula* may prove successful in bridging the great divide between the theory and praxis of environmental undertakings, especially through its gothic ecocritical analysis. In this, the text's familiarity to the audience can play a great role, while at the same time, the human-nonhuman relations that are inherently contextualised within the novel can be underlined to draw attention to our basic assumptions about the so-called nature of the human. However, before elaborating on *Dracula* as a text that approximates the human and the nonhuman realms, which have long been thought to be ontologically separated from each other as part of the Western thought, it is necessary to clarify what gothic ecocriticism is and how it functions as a mediatory tool between environmentalism and the study of popular culture.

Advancing Simon C. Estok's idea that "if ecocriticism is to have any effect outside of the narrow confines of academia, then it must not only define itself but also address the issue of values in ways that connect meaningfully with the non-academic world" (2005, p. 197), gothic ecocriticism has been offered as a means to close the gap between academic and non-academic aspects of environmental thought and action. Taking a step further from the "dark-side" of ecocritical studies, such as Timothy Morton's dark ecology and Levi R. Bryant's black ecology, gothic ecocriticism originally focused on an ecocritical perspective in Heavy Metal music. When conceptualising gothic ecocriticism, the gothic aspect was not intended to mark a certain literary tradition, but rather, it indicated a more generic pattern that was often engaged with sublime elements, like fear and darkness, which are always already part of the Heavy Metal genre. The argument could be also extended to posthuman ethics, as gothic ecocriticism shares a common element with posthumanist attempts that struggle "against the strategic deployment of humanist discourse *against other human beings* for the purposes of oppression" (Wolfe, 1998, p. 42; emphasis in the original). Thus, ecologically critiquing the consequences of a human-centred worldview, the only article on gothic ecocriticism concluded:

> It is clear that social and ecological forms of resistance are inseparable and a study of culturally produced artifacts that are left on the margins will strengthen the impact of such resistance. Gothic ecocriticism, in this regard, can help ecocriticism effectively reach larger audiences. (Ağın Dönmez, 2014, p. 81)

If the aim here is to spread ecocriticism in both academic and non-academic ways, then, the study of popular texts, be they music products or literary works, will definitely prove helpful. In this regard, *Dracula*, being a gothic text by tradition, does not even require an extension of the gothic aspect from its original roots. The marginality of this novel, however, unlike the analysis of Heavy Metal and other social resistance music genres, is not related to its being neglected as a field of study. On the contrary, the gothic formulae that lie within the novel make it marginalised as part of the tradition it trails. Indeed, the gothic, being a signifier of "writing of excess," as Fred Botting claims (1996, p.1), is a form of marginalisation on its own. Initialised by Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764), the gothic literary tradition involved such characteristically marginalised works as Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1778), Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), Matthew G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Belonging to the same line as its supernatural and dark predecessors, Stoker's *Dracula*, likewise, intentionally stimulated ecophobic states of mind in the audience through an invocation of the marginalised other. This figure of the eerie and bizarre other, not unexpectedly, signified the natural, the monstrous, and the animal other, which brings us to the combination of the gothic and the ecocritical in a literary context. It is also important to acknowledge that the gothic as a genre is intrinsically encoded with ecocritical frameworks, but as William Hughes notes, it "has not yet been established as a central preoccupation of ecocriticism in the institutionalized deployments of the theory represented by dedicated scholarly journals and academic associations" (2013, p. 93). The reason why the gothic as a broad field of inquiry has been left out of scope in the ecocritical studies in general may be attributed to the fact that it "may well be perceived as being too distant from contemporary environmental crises, too much associated with human politics—as opposed to human-environmental politics—for some purist exponents of ecocritical theory" (Hughes, 2013, p. 93). But still, as Hughes also points out, "Gothic criticism [. . .] is itself poised to claim ecocriticism as a preoccupation, given the latter theoretical body's neglect of a genre so often associated with crisis, change, and disastrous human intervention" (2013, p. 93; capitalisation in the original). Taking such preoccupation as a starting point in this venture, what follows is thus framed by an analysis of the conventionally gothic elements in *Dracula* from an ecocritical perspective.

Ecophobia in the Gothic: **Dracula**

Pursuing the origins of the gothic in a blend of the romance and the novel genres, Fred Botting notes that the diversity of the gothic setting composes a "strange assemblage," which blurs the boundaries of "fact and fiction" and "reproduce[s] imitations of nature and life" (1996, p. 19). This strange assemblage not only indicates a literary combination of the unusually brought together devices such as the characters, the setting, or the historical background. It also echoes an interaction between the human and nonhuman agentic forces. The idea of nonlinear causality as the unpredictable assemb-

lages of causes and effects, as emphasised by Manuel De Landa and Jane Bennett, formulates the core of the new materialist and interactionist ontologies, which seek to restore the human into a set of complex relations with the nonhuman agents, including animals, plants, and "impersonal agents, ranging from electricity to hurricanes, from metals to bacteria, from nuclear plants to information networks" (Iovino and Oppermann, 2014, pp. 3-4). Within the assemblages, De Landa writes, "the mutual accommodation of its heterogeneous components" play a defining role (2002, p. 144). To explicate this further, Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann underline that "things (or matter) draw their agentic power from their relation to discourses that in turn structure human relations to materiality" (2014, p. 4). As such, drawing upon the idea of interactive ontologies, many posthumanist scholars and ecocritics strongly contend that the human and the nonhuman are inseparably bound, and that it is of utmost importance that we "contextualize the human being within the material environment of the biosphere" (Sullivan, 2014, p. 83). This is because the ontological divide between the human and the nonhuman "feeds the human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption" (Bennett, 2010, p. 120). By looking deeper into Botting's argument on the nature of the gothic, then, it can be argued that the genre itself allows interactionist and posthumanist interpretations. Still, despite its formulation as a complicated set of relations in which each component plays a crucial role, the gothic paradoxically reiterates the human/nonhuman dichotomy through its un-familiarisation of the familiar, making it difficult to trace a posthuman ethics. In *Dracula*, for instance, the greatest divide is between the living and the undead, the so-called pure human as a cultural being, as in the case of literate gentlemen exemplified by Harker, Dr. Seward, Holmwood, and Dr. Van Helsing, and the hybrid human-animal as a "natural" being, who, despite his well-educated appearance, carries an insatiable beast inside. This divide between nature and culture, not being unique to *Dracula*'s case, but illustrated by almost all landmarks in the gothic tradition, such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, characterises the gothic itself. Although the nature/culture dichotomy represents itself in diverse forms in each gothic work, which would ignite lively discussions in both ecocritical and cultural arenas, it would not be too compelling to argue that, by tradition, the nature-culture divide is virtually unbridgeable in the gothic.

What is also essential in Botting's statement, therefore, is that it implies the fact that such reproduction of nature and life as oppositional forces evokes the sense of horror in the reader. For the average reader, the object of fear is those natural elements like darkness or storm, sounds of animals, like howling wolves, or the fact that the arch-villain is more animal than human. These elements are all treated as ill-omens, or as cautionary signs for Harker, warning him about the possible dangers he is to encounter. As such, *Dracula*, as the epitome of both the gothic and the ecophobic, appeals to our basic fear that some form of nonhuman – living or non-living – will invade our privacy. Put differently, the idea of the nonhuman as stronger than we often tend to imagine challenges our primary agency, and thus, creates a threatening impact. This threat is fundamentally based on our prime assumption that we humans inhabit a different ontological plain, which is often superior than that which belongs to the nonhuman. Such divide between the human and the nonhuman realms, which also underlies the Ancient Greeks' separation of *bios* and *zoë*, and thus, the public and the private, and in relation to these, the male and the female, is the core element in the gothic that triggers ecophobic, xenophobic, and misogynistic feelings. This, however, does not denote an accusation of the gothic writer as an enemy of nature and its queer formation. Rather, it means that we humans all have that ingrained notion of nature as a counterforce to our way of living as cultural beings, and *Dracula*, as a gothic text, inherently implicates this notion. This recalls Estok's manifesto for ecophobia, in which he perceptively writes:

> Reading ecophobia means looking at the unacknowledged and often unwitting biases that appear as punctuated outcroppings in literary and other cultural products but that are, in fact, the bedrock on which is based so much of our thinking. Reading ecophobia means identifying the affective ethics a text produces, means having the willingness to listen to, to think about, and to see the values that are written into and that work through the representations of nature we imagine, theorize, and produce. (2010, p. 76)

It is clear that *Dracula* was written in a way that bears resemblance to what Estok underlines. The imagination of nature and the animal figures as binary oppositions to the human lies at the heart of *Dracula* as a gothic text. As an outcome, without doubt, *Dracula* as a text continues to produce and reproduce the representations of nature as alien, monster, and other. The fear of the unknown, combined with the fear of nature, boosts this gap between the familiar and the unfamiliar, thus, the human and the nonhuman. In the early pages of the novel, for instance, Harker writes, as he approaches the castle of the count:

> It was evident that something very exciting was either happening or expected, but though I asked each passenger, no one would give me the slightest explanation. [. . .] There were dark, rolling clouds overhead, and in the air the heavy, oppressive sense of thunder. It seemed as though the mountain range had separated two atmospheres, and that now we had got into the thunderous one. (Stoker, 1897/1986, p.18)

The word choice here is significant. The mountain range that delineates the borders between the secure and the insecure actually widens the gap between the human, associated with the cultural and the Western sphere and the nonhuman, linked to the natural and the Eastern one. The power relations that apply to the case of the coloniser and the colonised may well be applied to the case of the human and the nonhuman. Recognising the nonhuman as a threat, thus, the reader is set to perceive the vampiric realm as the diabolical. Moreover, a second divide between the natural "animal" and the "unnatural" hybrid is further reinforced through Harker's depiction of the vampire as a threat to the natural order:

> Whilst he was speaking the horses began to neigh and snort and plunge wildly, so that the driver had to hold them up. Then, amongst a chorus of screams from the peasants and a universal crossing of themselves, a calèche, with four horses, drove up behind us, overtook us, and drew up beside the coach. I could see from the flash of our lamps, as the rays fell on them, that the horses were coal-black and splendid animals. (Stoker, 1897/1986, p.19)

The description of the horses with extremely positive adjectives as opposed to the vampire's scary and intimidating existence creates a sharp conflict between the equine companionship to the

human and the hostility of the unknown. Thus, nature is seen as friendly to humans only if it obeys the human norms and standards of companionship. If not, it is marginalised as the enemy other. This distinction continues throughout the novel with similar depictions of a two-fold nature, one amenable, and the other with enmity. However, the ambivalent structuralisation of the approachable and the hostile is worth discussing. Certain animals, such as wolves, are juxtaposed in their proximity and distance to humans and horses. In other words, they are considered ill-omened and threatening on the one hand, and on the other, they are also affected seriously by the vampire's fearsome attraction. In his diary entry on May 4, Harker first explains:

> At last there came a time when the driver went further afield than he had yet done, and during his absence the horses began to tremble worse than ever and to snort and scream with fright. I could not see any cause for it, for the howling of the wolves had ceased altogether; but just then the moon, sailing through the black clouds, appeared behind the jagged crest of a beetling, pineclad rock, and by its light I saw around us a ring of wolves with white teeth and lolling red tongues, with long, sinewy limbs and shaggy hair. They were a hundred times more terrible in the grim silence which held them than even when they howled. For myself, I felt a sort of paralysis of fear. (Stoker, 1897/1986, p. 23)

Interestingly, on the same page, he continues to write about how terribly the horses were affected by the same sense of fear he experienced, but at the same time, he also notes that the wolves were also affected in a strangely similar way:

> All at once the wolves began to howl as though the moonlight had had some peculiar effect on them. The horses jumped about and reared, and looked helplessly with round eyes that rolled in a way painful to see; but the living ring of terror encompassed them on every side, and they had perforce to remain within it. (Stoker, 1897/1986, p. 23)

From these diary entries by Harker, it is clear that Stoker actually hierarchises the human-non-human relations in a way that fits into our conventional way of thinking that has long been the core of Western philosophy. And when considered in this way, although Robert Azarello argues that, in *Dracula*, "Stoker constructs a kind of queer nature that refuses the binary opposition between the natural and the unnatural, especially in terms of the sexual" (2008, p.139), Stoker's text still remains loyal to a tradition that has centralised and universalised the human as white, male, and of European descent. It must be acknowledged that Azarello, especially when he draws his instances from the study of Renfield and his relations with his "preys," is actually creating an unconventional and indeed very creative reading of *Dracula*. He also has a point when he refers to the complete work as a creation of queer nature, because having a multiplicity of "othered" elements, this novel might well exemplify "queer" as the binary opposition to the heteronormative centre. Aside from this, it is also significant that Azarello himself, too, acknowledges the conventional criticism directed at "the homosociality of the male protagonists, the proper gender performances of Mina and Lucy and the threat of a foreign, social disease presented by Dracula" (2008, pp. 139-140). Such construction of the count as the epi-

tome of that foreign, social disease is referential to a certain form of othering towards the unknown. The foreign, the alien, and the monstrous are all seen as synonymous with the natural and the darkly ecological. As the count can convert into many animals like bat, wolf, or reptile, the qualities that make the count the other are actually equated with the otherness of nature and the animal.

The obvious opposition between the white, male, and European figures in the novel, such as Harker, Dr. Seward, Holmwood, Morris, and Dr. Van Helsing, and Dracula further clarifies the nature-culture dichotomy. Despite his being a nobleman and a well-read person, Dracula's contextualisation in which the all-educated team of gentlemen seek to destroy him shows that the count is the very disease that they wish to get rid of. Thus, the count himself is the epitome, not only of a foreign threat or social disease in the cultural context, but also of physical and/or bodily disease, which spreads through blood infection, through bodily desire, and through the dark-side of nature itself. This, apparently, indicates no more than a segregation of the cultural as the pure and the natural as the infectious and disease-spreading. Put in other words, taking Dracula as an affirmative symbol that dignifies the queer rather than one that is hierarchising sexualities, would be simply refusing and/or ignoring the historical and the social context in which the text was written. Azarello also contends that "Dracula oscillates wildly between human and animal" (2008, p. 147), and this oscillation can be read in a different way than queer nature, which indeed reveals a hybridity as opposed to purity. In this sense, *Dracula* remains to be an ecophobic example of the gothic genre. As Simon Estok notes, understanding ecophobia is going beyond the circles. But this does not mean that the ecophobia in such texts as *Dracula* can be overlooked in a way to re-calibrate our current understanding of nature as queer and the perspectives in the historical backgrounds of literary texts. Truly creative it may well be, reading *Dracula* as the embodiment of queer nature as Azarello imagines seems too forceful. As reading ecophobia means "recognizing, for example, that ecophobia, racism, misogyny, homophobia, and speciesism are thoroughly interwoven with each other and must eventually be looked at together" (2010, p. 75), then, it would not be too difficult to observe that *Dracula* is androcentric, and thus, intrinsically "carnophallogocentric" to use Jacques Derrida's term. After all, this is a world ruled by white, male, carnivorous, speaking subjects, who hunt down the enemy that threatens to "eat" them. With the death of the count, the marginalised other is silenced forever, and the reign of *logos*, the order of the privileged male citizens, or *bios* in Ancient Greek terms, continues to exist. In fighting with all binary *–isms* that are substantially employed under the blanket term of a humanist, "species-specific" discourse to "oppress both human and nonhuman others" (Wolfe, 1998, p. 42), *Dracula* can also be read through a posthumanist lens that both breaks the boundaries in an incredibly creative way, while at the same time reworking the very same boundaries it deconstructs.

Reading Dracula *through a Posthumanist Lens*

In "Universal Donors in a Vampire Culture," Donna Haraway emphasises how inspirational the vampire figure has become for her in configuring a breakdown of boundaries. She notes that the vampire is transgressing the line that delineates the pure from the infected, and adds that it is

> … the one who pollutes lineages on the wedding night; the one
> that effects category transformations by illegitimate passages of
> substance; the one who drinks and infuses blood in a paradigmatic
> act of infecting whatever poses as pure; the one that eschews sun
> worship and does its work at night; the one who is undead, unnatural,
> an perversely incorruptible. (1995, p. 322)

The vampire figure here emerges as a posthuman model that brings together the natural and the cultural, and thus, the human and the nonhuman. Still, this does not necessarily follow an argument on a posthumanist vision, which can be enhanced and strongly supported by the vampire as an affirmative equivalent of the cyborg, nor is it possible to include the vampire as one of those companion species, as coined by Haraway. Intended as a feminist and political metaphor, the cyborg has played its role in deconstructing many of the boundaries between the male and the female, and the technologically made and the naturally born. Despite its figurative use as a transposition between the human and the nonhuman, the vampire figure, especially in the context of *Dracula,* is far too Victorian to blur such boundaries, when compared to the cyborg as a metaphor. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the count is shaped in the body of a male tyrant whose sexual atrocities seem only to threaten the heterosexually passivised females, like Lucy and Mina. On the other hand, the cyborg does not claim a gendered body, it is independent from any origin, or any sex. As Haraway writes, "[c]yborg 'sex' restores some of the lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates (such nice organic prophylactics against heterosexism). Cyborg replication is uncoupled from organic reproduction" (1991, p. 150). As such, the vampire, especially in case of *Dracula*, falls short of some of the very fundamental characteristics of a posthuman figure as queer and technologically bourgeoned. Still, this may be open to discussion, as Azarello wishes to view Mina's encounter with Count Dracula as a posthumanist example of "queer desire," but again, he seems to have meddled with the meaning of the word "queer" to refer to a form of simple strangeness, rather than a set of complex relations within a posthumanist sense. Of nature's queerness and the Mina-Dracula encounter, he writes:

> In using the term 'queer desire' here I wish to suggest both the 'strangeness' of Mina's desire and the unanticipated and diverse ways in which 'queer' has the ability to deconstruct the binary opposition between the natural and the unnatural. The desire to become prey undermines conventional notions of the natural, but the language of predator/prey cannot signify anything but the natural. Mina constructs a syntactically indirect statement – 'I did not want to hinder him' – in order to illustrate her characteristically-female passivity, but the problematic utterance reveals too much. Her seemingly passive obedience exposes her active, even enthusiastic, acquiescence; however, responding to her competing desire to be normal and natural she attempts to disavow her very clear, queer desire for Dracula. (2008, p. 150)

Here the queer desire as a symbol of transforming boundaries into a posthumanist sense needs to be clarified. Mina's attraction to the count, in fact, can better be explained by a sense of the abject, to borrow Julia Kristeva's term of fear and attraction, rather than revealing an active and agentic state. Mina's sexuality is simply reduced to a prey, a feminine passivity, and it is clear throughout the novel that her intelligence and education are simply there for the service of a dominant male figure. This is reified in several cases in *Dracula*. On the very first page of the novel, for instance, Jonathan writes in his diary: "I had for dinner, or rather supper, a chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was very good but thirsty. (*Mem*., get recipe for Mina.)" (Stoker, 1897/1986, p. 9). His getting the recipe "for Mina," not for himself, or not for a male counterpart of his, reveals this typical and heteronormative gender role attributed to a Victorian wife-to-be. Likewise, from Mina's letter to Lucy, dated May 9, it is clearly understood that Mina is obeying typical social norms she is brought up in, as she writes:

> I have been working very hard lately, because I want to keep up with Jonathan's studies, and I have been practising shorthand very assiduously. When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan, and if I can stenograph well enough I can take down what he wants to say in this way and write it out for him on the typewriter, at which I am also practising very hard. (Stoker, 1897/1986, p. 70)

As Mina's hard work is simply being useful to Jonathan as an auxiliary person, rather than being the characteristic of an independent and active personality, it is hard to concur with Azarello that her sexual appeal to Dracula reveals an actively made choice. Similarly, in the case of Lucy, who is overwhelmed in receiving three marriage proposals, and also in that of the three female vampires, whose bodily desires are expected to be unstoppable like Dracula's, but stopped and controlled by the orders of the count, it is hardly possible to draw posthumanist conclusions in a queer context. The attribution of heteronormatively male qualities such as a moustache and a beard make Dracula even more traditional, so he is, as a vampire figure, too normative to be fluid.

In addition to these normative qualities, however, what might have triggered Azarello's argument on the queerness of the text is that *Dracula* also reiterates some of the characteristics of the vampire, which have been widely employed to characterise the diabolical and erotic desire of the homosexual. In HIV/AIDS campaigns, for instance, the vampire figure has been used as a transgressive body that permeates the domain of the healthy, feeding on the blood of those to be infected. Although these configurations may be essentialist, their impact continues to serve as a banquet for ecophobic appraisals of nature and homosexuality. Dracula, the count, is also configured as "sexually exotic, alien, unnatural, oral, anal, compulsive, violent, protean, polymorphic, polyvocal, polysemous, invisible, soulless, transient, superhumanly mobile, infectious, murderous, suicidal, and a threat to wife, children, home, and phallus" (Hanson, 1991, p. 325), all of which are qualities that are attributed to gay men in such campaigns. In this regard, Dracula's otherness as the vampire may stand for implicit queerness in defying heteronormativity, and yet, as a text that reifies the heterosexual/homosexual binary by attributing deadly and frightening characteristics to the vampire, it is difficult to presume that Stoker has imagined nature and the animal realm as queer.

The only element that could help us draw Count Dracula's portrait as a posthuman figure, thus, can be his not falling into the category of a single, definable species. As Azarello writes:

> [A]lthough Jonathan knows Dracula exists with empirical certainty, he is still unable to solve another type of epistemological problem: is Dracula *Homo sapiens*? *Canis lupus*? *Desmodus rotundus*? *Podarcis muralis*? Dracula does indeed exist as a being capable of crawling down a wall, but, and perhaps more horrifying for Jonathan, he does not signal a single, recognisable species. In other words, as he descends the castle wall like a lizard to begin a night of hunting, the nomenclature of his existence is far from clear. He is both human and other-than-human. (2008, p. 147)

However, simply because he shows plasmatic qualities that make him polymorphous does not make him definable as posthuman, nor queer. After all, as already discussed above, the recent tenden-

cies towards interactionist ontologies in the posthumanist endeavours have revealed that the material and the discursive aspects of the posthuman play a crucial role. On the other hand, only by being undefinable as a species in the eyes of the humans, Dracula cannot overcome the discursive norms of his era. Following the rhetorical devices of the Victorian period, the count is still a deadly figure. Thus, reading the text via the arguments of "queer nature" is not possible as it is formulated on a heteronormative discourse which displays strict categorisations.

Conclusion: Towards a Gothic Ecocritical Posthumanism

As can be inferred from what has been discussed and illustrated above, reading *Dracula* can help us realise our fundamental mistakes in taking ecophobic steps. No matter how hard one tries to read this Victorian Gothic text from queer and posthumanist contexts, it is difficult to go beyond the historical and social boundaries that delineate the borders of "normal" within the context of *Dracula*. However, in re-framing our relations with the rest of nature, we humans must realise that we are "*a part of that nature that we seek to understand*" (Barad, 2007, p. 26; emphasis in the original). Gothic ecocriticism can pave the way for bridging the gap between academic and non-academic worlds, but a posthumanist entanglement, which will allow to build more bridges between the human and the nonhuman domains is vital to its development as a supplementary tool for ecocritical studies. Familiarising the unfamiliar, thus reversing what the gothic creates as an impact, in this regard, is of utmost importance.

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