



The believable convergence of the Realistic and the Fantastic in three late Victorian Gothic novels

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ABSTRACT

Modernity, Narrative absorption, Literary Devices, *Fin de siècle*, Gothic, Contextualisation

At the end of the 19th century, a subset of novels appeared that caught the attention of the public, critics, and other authors and, surprisingly, they continue to do so. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde*, *Dracula*, and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, are the three representative texts chosen for this study. What make these stories so interesting is not only the fact that they depart from their social context to include the fantastic or supernatural, but how successfully these novels managed to combine the realistic and the fantastic – to the point of blurring the lines between fact and fiction.

Using a taxonomy and definitions based on Hakemulder, Kuijpers, Tan, Bálint, & Doicaru's *Narrative Absorption* (2017), a set of 'pre-requisites' for reader absorption can be identified and their presence in the texts analysed through close reading cross referenced with both contemporary and modern reader reactions. These authors' use of the situation model, flow, attention, mental imagery and emotional engagement was found to be not only very well executed, but carefully woven together with curiosity, suspense and surprise to craft stories that grab and hold the reader's attention.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 19th century, a subset of novels appeared that caught the attention of the public, critics, other authors and, surprisingly, many continue to do so. Stories such as: *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* (1886), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), *The Time Machine* (1895), *Dracula* (1897) and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). These became such an integral part of the public mind that their characters became stereotypical parts of the vernacular, and their plots modern folk tales, known to all even if they have no recollection of ever reading or hearing the story in its entirety. Other tales, such as *She* (1887), *The Great God Pan* (1894), *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), *Lilith* (1895), *The Beetle* (1897) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), also became familiar and source material for further fictional creation, even if their titles are somewhat less immediately recognizable.

What makes the group of stories referred to so unique and compelling is not only the fact that they depart from their social context, the hyper-rationality and modernity of the industrial age, to include the fantastic, but how successfully these novels managed to combine the realistic and the fantastic – to the point of blurring the lines between fact and fiction. The question then becomes how did their authors succeed in the counterintuitive endeavour of believably merging the fantastic and the realistic? And maybe even more interesting, why do these texts continue to remain relevant?

As an early critic wrote of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde*:

For the life of us, we cannot make out how such an incident can possibly be explained on grounds that are intelligible or in any way plausible. Yet all the time the seriousness of the tone assures us that explanations are forthcoming...Never for a moment, in the most startling situations, has he lost his grasp of the grand ground-facts of a wonderful and supernatural problem. (Anon, 1886a)

Most 19th century novels tend towards the idea of realism – showing life as it really is (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:333), the various classes striving to live decent, productive lives, individuals cultivating themselves into the best versions of themselves possible. This of course is also a reflection of the mind-set of the people of the time, the Victorians prided themselves on being 'modern' and rational, as being scientific minds free of the superstitious, unreasoning belief of the pre-industrial age.

The distinct group of novels referred to however are not entirely realistic, they can rather be classed as Gothic in nature, but of a new type, neither classically Gothic (Karschay, 2015:23) or rather not associated with the initial, traditional phase (10) of the Gothic, but rather realistic novels

that have been infused with Gothic motifs (Hogle, 2002:12). This new form of Gothic challenged literary realism, but at the same time depended on it for its form and expression (Dryden, 2003:2). This amalgamation requires an exploration of this subset of novels and their genre, what Stephan Karschay (2015:2) calls Gothic fiction of the *fin de siècle*, but that is also known as the second wave Gothic (Luckhurst, 2005:ix) or the late Victorian Gothic Revival (xvi), along with how these texts relate to their literary and cultural context in order to understand how the supernatural or the fantastic then was viewed, how these authors created 'believable' texts and how their audience experienced and interpreted these texts.

This dissertation will investigate the use of various immersive literary techniques and methods by the authors of this group of texts, thereby improving the level of absorption of their readers. This drawing in of the reader has been evident from the time of publication as evidenced by this humorous advertisement for the novel quoted by *The Academy and Literature*:

Why does the Heathen rage?

It is not a Heathen. It is a Christian Gentleman.

Why does the Christian Gentleman rage?

He has just Heard the Guard Chant his Lay.

Which Lay?

"Hundernumptysinxt! Allout! "

Does not the Christian Gentleman Wish to get Out?

He Does, Indeed! He Wished to get Out at 42d Street.

What prevented?

He was Dead to the World.

What a Curse is Inebriety!

Certainly. But That is not his Trouble.

What is it, then?

He was reading The Hound of the Baskervilles.

And Forgot his Station "?

Even so. And All the World, besides.

What will the Christian Gentleman do now?

Buy Another Ticket.

And go Back to 42d Street?

More likely to South Ferry.

Why so?

Because That is the Other End of the Line.

And will the Christian Gentleman Never get Home?

Oh, yes. When he has Finished the Book (Anon, 1902a:546).

My hypothesis is that the increased levels of absorption and the way in which the authors combined the real and the fantastic resulted in the realising of the fantastical or then in giving credibility to the impossible. I further believe that these authors used the expectations and assumptions of their readers, along with the dualistic realities of their social context, to fuse modernity with the fears of the readers in order to further enhance the believability of their stories. I will also explore how the use of all these techniques and methods influences the modern reader and their belief in the text as an extension of the efficacy of the authors' methodology.

To understand both the creation and success of this group of novels, you need to clarify their social context, Victorian England, particularly city life in London, and more broadly a Europe wrung by social, political, scientific, and industrial change. These novels were also shaped by their literary context, the Gothic, realism, the scientific texts that created the intellectual stage that they came to inhabit and, as such, these will need to be clarified and contextualised.

Before any analysis can take place, certain terms or concepts need to be defined for their use in this study. Within a literary context what is meant by the terms: believability, fantastical, realistic and realness?

CHAPTER 2 DISCUSSION OF TERMS, CONTEXTUALISATION, AND RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Definition of terms

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) when used to refer to an aspect of a work of fiction, the term believability relates to how convincing or realistic the work or some component of the work is (OED, 2021). Here the adjective 'realistic' is used to denote a representation of things in a fictional work in a way that is "accurate and true to life". The function and acceptability of fiction, particularly with regards to its ability to reflect the truth has been a point of contention since Plato debated the morality of using literature in education in the Republic (Sheppard, 2009:53). Within the context of this study the idea of what is true or believable can be limited to the concept of possible worlds. Kripke's idea (as explained by Pavel, 2009:45) is that a fictional being who does not exist in the real world, but who under different circumstances might have existed, can be accepted as 'real' within that literary world. This acceptance of things in novels that are somehow "compatible with real life" is based on a general aesthetic instinct that most readers have (2009:46).

Pavel (2009:46) explains and illustrates this acceptance of events in literature by the reader very well:

It is worth noting that this is not merely philosophical speculation related to the transfer of possible-world semantics to the worlds of fiction. There are many real historical and social settings in which writers and their public accept the assumption that a literary work speaks of something that is genuinely possible relative to the real world. This attitude corresponds to realist literature, in the broad sense of the term. Seen from this angle, realism is not merely a set of stylistic and narrative conventions, but a fundamental attitude toward the relationship between the actual world and the truth of literary texts. In a realist perspective, the criterion of the truth and falsity of a literary text and of its details is based upon the notion of possibility (and not only logical possibility) with respect to the actual world. Different kinds of realism vary... The actual world as well as the relation of accessibility are different for the authors of medieval miracle plays compared to the author of a modern mystery novel. A world in which the statue of the Virgin Mary speaks to a layman belongs to the range of possibility for a medieval writer and his public, just as a world in which an FBI narcotics squad dismantles a network of drug dealers and arrests everybody is a possible world for the writer of a contemporary mystery novel and its readers. In spite of the variations, these two cases share the same logical attitude toward the information conveyed by literary discourse and its relationships to the actual world.

In other words, the reader can accept unbelievable or unrealistic events and characters in a text, as long as those events and characters remain congruent with the world created by the author. It can therefore be inferred that readers will believe events or characters to be 'real' within the

context of the novel, if the context created by the author allows for it, and that really well constructed texts will blur the line between the fictional world and the reader's real world, even if those events or characters are fantastical – not of this world or supernatural (OED, 2021).

As an example, *Dracula's* initial reviewers tended to reduce it to horrible entertainment (Stoker, explained by Auerbach & Skal, 1997:363) but many of the readers did experience a 'blurring' effect, whether superficially as the reviewer for *The Daily Mail* who was so gripped by the encroaching terror they expected to suffer nightmares and upon waking checking for bite marks (Stoker, 1997:364) explained, or more comprehensively as the reviewer for *Bookman* described:

It is something of a triumph for the writer that neither the improbability, nor the unnecessary number of hideous incidents recounted of the man-vampire, are long foremost on the reader's mind, but that the interest of the danger, of the complications, of the pursuit of the villain, of human skill and courage pitted against inhuman wrong and superhuman strength, rises always to the top (Stoker, 1997:366).

In order to evaluate the extent to which the novels referred to are able to convincingly blur the lines between the fantastical and the believable, the reactions of readers of the text will need to be evaluated. In order to study the methods used by the authors to establish reality, one would first need to explore the social, cultural, and literary contexts that are the backdrop of their readers' reality. A second aspect believed to play a role in the credibility of the texts is how invested the reader becomes in the text and one would need to explore how this absorption is facilitated.

2.2 Contextualising the *Fin de siècle*

In order to evaluate how the novels' acceptance was influenced by their context, we need to briefly provide an overview of their historical, social, and literary context. The contextualisation of the texts will also inform the understanding of the texts' congruence with their context as a contributing factor for creating modernity or reality in the text. For this, we need a basic understanding of the technologies and conventions popular and prevalent at the turn of the 19th century.

2.2.1 Historical Context

With Queen Victoria's ascension to the British throne in 1837, we find the beginnings of the social and literary eras that came to be known as: The Victorian. This period is broadly viewed as a homogenous era of stability and prestige when superficially characterised. Duncan Bell evaluates this view in his introduction to the book *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, starting from the generalisation that:

For much of the nineteenth-century Britain, standing at the heart of a vast and intricate network of power and patronage, dominated global politics. The Victorian empire was

the largest that the world had ever known, spanning all the continents and oceans of the planet, and shaping the lives of hundreds of millions of people (2007:3).

This is however not a homogenous period and can be subdivided into three 'sub-eras' as characterised by Bell (2007:6):

In very general terms, the early years of Victoria's reign, up until the 1850s, were marked by pessimism and apprehension. Emerging victorious from over a decade of war against Napoleonic France, the country was soon riven by internal discord and unrest. Indeed the first half of the century was characterised ... by 'a constant sensation of fear – fear of revolution, of the masses, of crime, famine, and poverty, of disorder and instability, and for many people even fear of pleasure'.

It is in this fear that we find the embryonic origins of the Victorian custom of morality. The result of evangelical doctrine this fashionable distancing from the Byronic "cynicism, hedonism, irreligion, romantic pessimism" (Chesney 1970:15) echoed the modernity of the age. Which eventually lead to the 'central' more 'quintessentially' Victorian period:

The mid-century years saw the flowering of a more optimistic mood; the 1851 Great Exhibition, a paean to British confidence, economic dynamism, and political power, symbolically inaugurated a new era. The period stretching from the early 1850s to the late 1870s is often seen, indeed, as an 'age of equipoise' characterised by 'stability, optimism, social solidarity, relative affluence, and liberality'. 'Old corruption' was defeated; a popular monarch sat on the throne. The previous social discord receded into the background, partly through exhaustion and partly through clever government intervention, whilst the economy flourished. Despite occasional invasion 'scares', there was no serious threat to the territorial integrity of the United Kingdom (Bell, 2007:6).

This highpoint also reflects how the Victorians viewed themselves: they were sober, righteous, upstanding, and successful, but above all, they were modern – well read, rational and keeping up with the times. As mentioned by Bell, no image represents Victorian modernity as much as the 'Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations' of 1851. This tribute to the industrial wonders of the world, and the Crystal Palace built to house it, was a celebration of Britain's industrial supremacy. The multilevel, steel, and plate-glass structure housed around 100 000 items, half of which were sourced from all over the Empire, covering an extraordinary range of objects, from collapsible pianos to giant, bridge-moving hydraulic presses (Hopkins, 2015:40; Klingopulos, 1973:13; Picard, 2013:401).

Brittain at this time was a colonial and industrial power whose superior position was based on, and maintained by, the creation and implementation of a wide range of technologies. At the heart of the trade system was the railway, stretching 11 000 km across England and Scotland by 1852 and its engineers and technology being exported to the rest of the world (Picard, 2009c). These

railways also connected to the enormous, British built, iron steamships that sailed to all corners of the empire.

Along with goods moved information: messages, newspapers, and letters travelled the rails and eventually along the wires of the telegraph, which accompanied the railway and eventually left it behind to cross the oceans (Picard, 2013:88). The effective organisation of this massive network of trains, people, goods, and information relied on the use of highly organised and strictly adhered to timetables. The international adoption of Greenwich Mean Time in 1883 reflects the world-famous dependability and accuracy of the British rail system (Picard, 2009c) and echoes the global standing of the nation.

Victorian England was, however, an intricate collection of dichotomies. The urbane, retiring, and tranquil picture painted of modern England by the Crystal Palace and its surrounding gardens was only one small aspect of this complex timeframe and as time went on the outlook changed:

This optimism was soon to falter; during the closing years of Victoria's reign, and especially from the 1880s onwards, the horizon once again darkened, although not to the degree seen earlier in the century. Global competition, both economic and geopolitical, seemed more intense and threatening. The swift rise of a unified Germany flaunting its imperial ambitions, the post-Civil War dynamism of the United States, the perception of a menacing Russian threat in the East: all generated dread (Bell, 2007:6).

Not all the threats to the Victorian self-image were however external, as British supremacy was built, not only on industry and innovation, but also on the backs of their local poor (Chesney, 1970:18). The plight of the lower classes, or rather the improvement of their situation, became an integral part of the Victorian demeanour, as reflected in the novel – the premier form of literature during the 19th century.

In stark contrast to the appearance of Victorian 'civilisation' lies its 'underworld'. Dark narrow alleys of rough-hewn brick populated by prostitutes, thieves, murderers, the desperate and the depraved formed a shadowy antithesis to the civilised facade the Victorians presented to the world. Throughout the century, crime, violence and the macabre became an obsession. Dr Una McLivenna (2018) describes it beautifully:

There is a common misconception that the nineteenth century ushered in a time of restraint and manners, when polite society shuddered at the thought of unbridled passions and moral decline. But the reality was that popular interest in sensationalist stories of violent crimes, dramatic natural disasters, and bloody accidents reached an all-time high in the Victorian era.

The speed with which information could travel (Picard, 2009c), the legislation that ensured that most Victorians could read (Flanders, 2014; Flint, 2014; Lloyd, 2007:5) and the driving need for self-improvement and projecting the 'correct' image had two quite different consequences. Everybody had access to the newest scientific discoveries and the most current philosophical and theological discussions and everybody's opinions thereof (Flint, 2014; McMenemy, 2018:2), this fed into the idea of modernity being separated from the uneducated superstitious. With many a writer looking to science as the fountain of clarity and verity in the place of belief in the sacred (Dryden, 2003:12). And, towards the end of the century, these various stances and divergences reached fever pitch.

A second dichotomous obsession springs from the public's interest in the scientific: the Victorian obsession with the supernatural. The combination of the belief in the supernatural and the thinking man's effort to refute it with the scientist's effort to explain the origins of superstition was an obsession of the Victorian era (Luckhurst, 2005:xviii). Whether as an exercise to find the 'scientific' explanation for the unexplainable or using science to debunk the charlatan, everybody had an opinion. On the other hand, the public's fascination with the esoteric, supernatural phenomena, dreams, madness (Herman *et al.*, 2005:160), crime and horrible murder, created the context for the popularity of the penny dreadfuls and eventually the allegedly 'based on true event' sensation novels (Flanders, 2014). Newspapers carried gruesome details and sensational headlines to feed this obsession (McIlvenna, 2018).

This progress and the concomitant fears are not limited to Britain, as is clear from Bell's (2007:6) writings. In most of Europe at that time, similar tendencies were reflected in the writings from various countries.

Within England, the ending of the 19th century resulted in an exceptional mixture of British confidence and the rumblings of change and discontent. There is ever-increasing political instability in Europe (Bell, 2007:6), a seemingly unlimited range of social and economic difficulties locally, and apparently never-ending social and legislative alterations to address these issues. The ever-changing social structure throughout the century is another source of disruption. Central to the social changes is the decay of Christianity (Dryden, 2003:1), the simultaneous ascension of science, and the various attempts at synthesising these disparate views (Klingopulos, 1973:54). Scientific publications contributed to the chaos by questioning, disbelieving, and undermining universally held knowledge and truths. Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) put a scalpel to the Victorian intellectual's paradox: where or how do you stop analysis of the world before you start treading on holy ground?

It is this loss of clear delineation between the religious and the scientific, man and animal, faith and logic, good and bad from which arises the mind-set, the concerns, and the novels of the *fin de siècle*. The term *fin de siècle* refers, in the first place, to the end of the century from its original French root (Hughes, 2013:101) and more generally, to the literature and art associated with the close of a century, which in the 19th century is frequently associated with being ahead of its time or being decadent and jaded (OED, 2020). More specifically the term is used to refer to “a distinctive and diverse cultural moment” (Pykett, 1996:3), stretching from about 1880 to sometime between the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and the start of the First World War in 1914 (1). Some novelists reacted to the zeitgeist of the era by shifting their focus from the murkiness of the urban sprawl and its inhabitants that preoccupied the social protest novel in a more introspective direction.

2.2.2 Literary Context

2.2.2.1 Realism

As the 19th century progressed, the novel, for the first time, became the most popular literary genre, moving from a romantic slant to a more realistic character, owing to the readers' interest in reading novels about the world they lived and their experiences (Atkinson, 2016:156). The realistic novel is described by Abrams and Harpham (2015:254) as “the fictional attempt to give the effect of realism” using definitive conventions. And by Herman *et al.* (2005:401) as “novels professing to capture the mood and detail of life as it really is modulating romanticism's emotional hyperbole and excess as well as traditional rhetoric”.

Authors such as Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Anthony Trollope (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:254) exemplified this format of the novel in Victorian England, but the trend originated in continental Europe with France providing not only realist theory, but also authors such as Gustave Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant and Emile Zola providing content (Arata, 2007:172). This movement was, however, global with Leo Tolstoi and Feodor Dostoevsky in Russia, authors from various Scandinavian countries as well as Henry James and Herman Melville from North America (Herman *et al.*, 2005:401).

The realist novel makes use of “a set of literary conventions” to produce a literary work that is a lifelike illusion (Herman *et al.*, 2005:491), the content the “very stuff of ordinary experience” (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:333). These stories tended to be focused on a central character or group of characters based within a specific social class (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:254; Shires, 2001:65), normally the middle- and/or lower-classes and gives an unsentimental description of the minutia of their domestic lives (Herman *et al.*, 2005:491). The events discussed largely

remained normal, credible, in accordance with expected behaviour and natural laws (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:254; Herman *et al.*, 2005:491), and generally saw the story ending in the marriage or death of the characters (Shires, 2001:65).

The literary conventions and techniques associated with the realist novel had of course also tended to become characteristic of the genre, and I would argue, their use became synonymous with idea of reality and by further extension – truth. The approximation of a journalistic style (Herman *et al.*, 2005:401), the use of the reality effect (492), speech representation (558), and the effective use of parts of speech (562) all contribute to the reader interpreting the writing as a replica of something real – making the writing more real.

As discussed earlier, it became clear by the 1880s that progress did not ensure the enhancement of the "general good" (Dryden, 2003:12). As the optimism of the middle of the century took a turn for the worse, the depressing living conditions, or rather conditions of existence, of the poor became the reality that some writers felt they had to confront (4). This extension of realism into a more socio-political activism function is defined as the sociological novel (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:256) or the thesis novel (Herman *et al.*, 2005:426). This subset of realistic novels in the 19th century started playing a role as a form of social protest or change, such as the later works of Charles Dickens or those of Benjamin Disraeli (Herman *et al.*, 2005:426).

Another offshoot of Realism, Naturalism, tended to be strongly opinionated, based on what they claimed as a scientific basis informed by the works of Darwin and Marx (Herman *et al.*, 2005:401). They believed that humans are merely the result of evolution and biology and as such they are the result of a combination of inborn and taught characteristics (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:334). These authors made use of objectivity and supporting documentation in an almost scientific way and their content was often of a graphic and base variety, such as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (Herman *et al.*, 2005:401).

The writings of the *fin de siècle* reflected this spirit through literary experimentation and conflict and particularly by introducing adapted Gothic effects such as moving to modern cityscapes as their settings to echo this new mood (Dryden, 2003:4).

2.2.2.2 The Gothic

The word 'Gothic' is a polysemic term in that it has a collection of meanings, some related, others not. Its use and meaning have expanded and permutated over time to become the broad description, which is generally hard to define, but gives a 'feeling' of meaning. It has its origin in the Germanic tribe, the Goths (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:152), who settled through most of

Europe between the third and fifth centuries (Smith, 2007:2). Eventually the term expanded to refer to the literary genre of the Gothic novel, also called the Gothic romance (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:152), that became as broad and difficult to define as its parent appellation.

Rather than defining the Gothic, we can make use of five universal characteristics to identify a traditional Gothic tale. The first is that the setting is usually an antiquated, or seemingly antiquated place or a space that is a recreation of an older one (Hogle, 2002:2; Luckhurst, 2005:xiii), in which, secondly, can be found a hidden secret from the past that haunts the characters in some way (Hogle, 2002:2). It is normally in the experience of this “haunting” or “horrifying return” (Luckhurst, 2005:xiii) that we find the third characteristic, a tension created by the fluctuation between the natural laws of orthodox reality and the potential held by the supernatural (Hogle, 2002:2).

This fluctuation creates an atmosphere, normally full of supernatural entities and mysterious events (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:152), that works to suspend reader’s expectations which are normally based on everyday experience (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:254). This suspension of reality creates room for fear, a fear that can be capitalised on by the author in two ways: obliquely or explicitly. The continuum thus created, has at its opposite ends the two major subtypes of traditional Gothic, the "terror Gothic" and the "horror Gothic".

Terror is “the state of being terrified or extremely frightened [or experiencing] intense fear or dread” (OUP, 2023b). Terror Gothic creates this apprehensive state of suspense in the characters and reader, largely based on partially hidden, or suggested (Smith, 2007:26; Woodward, 2015), threats to life, safety, and sanity that stem from a secret past, or a secret from the past (Hogle, 2002:3). In summary terror is cerebral, it is based on expectations constructed out of sensory observations, previous experiences, and rational or irrational fears – it is the child terrified of the dark.

Horror is defined as “a painful emotion compounded of loathing and fear; a shuddering with terror and repugnance; strong aversion mingled with dread; the feeling excited by something shocking or frightful” (OUP, 2023c). Horror Gothic, in contrast to terror, makes use of exaggerated physical violence or psychological debauchery which openly shatters daily life's assumed norms and repressions to confront the main characters, and which has scandalous or abhorrent consequences (Hogle, 2002:3; Smith, 2007:26). Horror is the child frozen in fear at witnessing devastatingly real events echoing their worst fears.

The traditional Gothic characteristically was concerned with “the fantastic and the grotesque, the savage and the mysterious; above all they [it] appealed to the emotions rather than the rational” (Dryden, 2003:25). The Victorian Gothic on the other hand has its foundations in “urban anxiety”

where even after getting rid of the Gothic subject, the city remains under the nebulous threat by unknown and uncontrollable forces – as the city itself becomes part of the threat (Dryden, 2003:20).

The fourth characteristic of the Gothic, creating borders and policing them (Luckhurst, 2005:xii) or then it “invokes the law by breaking it” (Luckhurst, 2005:xi) normally reveals itself as the consequences of transgression of these “laws” by the characters.

Lastly, as part of this “policing” action the Gothic often makes use of the creation and consequent demeaning, objectifying, and demonising of the “Other” (Luckhurst, 2005:xiv). This Other can be represented either directly, such as members of the clergy representing the Catholic threat, or in metaphor such as Hyde representing the working-class mob (Luckhurst, 2005:xiv).

The term Gothic has also become associated with texts that include only elements that are frightening or macabre rather than classifying the entire novel such as Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:153).

The literary Gothic period originates with the publication of Walpole's' *The Castle of Otranto* in 1765 (Herman *et al.*, 2005:159). Various other novels, notably Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, (1794), *The Monk* (1796) by Lewis and Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1826), followed to create the traditional Gothic (Herman *et al.*, 2005:159). Smith (2007:52) refers to this original group of Gothic novels as comprising the Gothic Heyday, which existed between 1770 and 1820 and was at its most popular in the 1790s (Herman *et al.*, 2005:208). The popularity of the Gothic seems to rise and fall at the end of each century, and the traditional Gothic at the end of the 18th century was followed by the Victorian Gothic at the end of the 19th century. At the end of the 20th century the Gothic again made an appearance, focused on a decadent – consumerist culture and the breakdown of sexual boundaries in for example the books of Stephen King and Margaret Atwood's 1976 *Lady Oracle* (Hughes, 2013:101).

Gothic novels are often associated with times of change (Hughes, 2013:14; Karschay, 2015:21; Luckhurst, 2005:x), which is related to what Jerrold E. Hogle (2002:4) views as the reason for the endurance and impact of Gothic fiction:

it helps us address and disguise some of the most important desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and mental to the widely social and cultural, throughout the history of western culture since the 18th century.

It is important to remember that while the genre can be arbitrarily subdivided, the Gothic, as a mode of writing, is found in many countries and cultures at different times (Herman *et al.*, 2005:208; Smith, 2007:4). Also, worth keeping in mind is that the Victorian Gothic novels are not

traditionally Gothic (Karschay, 2015:23), or rather associated with the initial, traditional phase (10) of the Gothic. Rather they are realistic novels that have been infused with Gothic motifs (Hogle, 2002:1). This new form of Gothic challenged literary realism, but at the same time depended on it for its form and expression (Dryden, 2003:2). As such, this study will focus on what Stephan Karschay (2015:2) calls Gothic fiction of the *fin de siècle*, also called the second wave Gothic (2005:ix) or the late Victorian Revival (2005:xvi) by Luckhurst. This subsection of the Gothic is also referred to as the urban Gothic (Hughes, 2013:246) in reference to the change in setting to be more city based. These novels incorporate elements that are ahead of their time, while at the same time being the unique result of the concerns, fears, and uncertainties of their time.

2.2.2.3 The Victorian *Fin de Siècle* Gothic

The Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic's narratives became more than just Gothic tales set within the city (Karschay, 2015:25). They focused on the urban present, refracting contemporary concerns through the lens of a literature of terror reflecting the terrors unique to the 'urban experience' (Karschay, 2015:25) which resonated closely with contemporary horrific representation, anticipating the 20th century and some of its darker moments (Dryden, 2003:19).

The term "Gothic" was originally used derogatively to emphasise the genre's links to the Middle Ages' association with superstition, barbarism, and illogicality (Herman *et al.*, 2005:208). Baldick and Mighall (explained by Karschay, 2015:21) go as far as to place the objective of these Gothic novels in stark contrast to the science of the time. They state that science attempts to de-emotionalise its subject with the goal of developing knowledge for a like-minded audience, while the Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic tries to use fictional, irrational representation to create an emotional response in the reader. I think that their use of the term "irrational" is incorrect or at least overstated. While the concepts inherent to the text may appear irrational when detailed outside of their context, the novels succeeded in making the fantastic rational within their fictional world and their content therefore acceptable to their readers, and maybe even extending that acceptance out into the real world, whether literally or metaphorically.

When looking at the novels that constitute this Gothic of the Victorian *fin de siècle*, most sources agree that *Jekyll and Hyde* was the first text of importance in this group (Armitt, 2011:xii; Riquelme, 2000:590). What is not always clear is how to limit the inclusions of texts as they take on a variety of forms and in many cases create or start to formalise some of the other genres we are familiar with today, such as the detective story, ghost story and science fiction.

If we review the five, universal characteristics of the traditional Gothic, can consistent changes to them be identified? First there is the setting, the antiquated or seemingly antiquated space has

subtly shifted to be not necessarily the primary setting but rather the source or origin of the monstrous other such as the far off superstitious, backwards Transylvania in *Dracula*, or the swamps of Africa in *She*. Others included the seemingly antiquated in the form of the old dissection hall in *Jekyll and Hyde*, or *The Turn of the Screw's* "big ugly antique but convenient house, embodying a few features of a building still older, half-displaced and half-utilised" (James, 1999:9). The difference lies in the dissonance between this foreign or archaic space and the modernity of its surroundings or the people who occupy it. Many of the texts makes use of this movement between the old and the new to create tension, metaphor, or to suspend reality.

As for the hidden secret from the past it may be kept such as the collection of ancient writings in *She* (Haggard,1995:15) or be quite contemporary such as the secrets kept in *The Turn of the Screw*. But there is always a secret, normally one that is very *unheimlich*, as Freud termed representations of the transgressive (Hogle, 2002: 6), whether to societal norms or the laws of nature. Transgression then is still the source of the tension between orthodox reality and the potential of the supernatural, so this characteristic remains congruent as this potential is used by the authors to create an external representation of internal fears or desires. The consequence of transgression still focuses largely on creating and policing borders of propriety or legality, largely by continuing to demean, objectify or demonise the Other.

The othering of characters allows the author, and the reader, the distance to reevaluate what is acceptable and what is to be feared. And the Gothic reflects the concerns of its contemporary society, we see a lot of questions regarding the effect of colonial politics, degeneration of society, the threats inherent to scientific and technological advancement, changing views on gender and gender roles, immigration, and loss of religion.

While the traditional Gothic depended on characters who were either entirely good or entirely bad the Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic takes a more balanced approach by blending the good and the bad, not just in characters, but in their environments and circumstances (Herman *et al.*, 2005:208). As such we can include in the Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic any tale which makes use of this duality of nature in its characters, has a setting and/or characters which are largely modern, and depends on some variation of the universal characteristics of the traditional Gothic to drive the plot.

I believe that the resonance of the dualistic features of Victorian society with the characteristics of the Gothic genre – physical and moral darkness, displacement, the supernatural – was used in the *fin de siècle* Gothic to create a unique blend of the factual and the fantastic. They made the supernatural real and spoke to the primal fears still underlying Victorian modernity. Rather than focussing on the societal Other, they turn their explorations to the I, the we, the us, relocating

the terrible and the terrifying from external, real places to the metaphorical space within the human body (Karshay, 2015:25) and modern society. Rather than cautioning against the dangers of the unknown, they show the terror of the unknown coming to us, from us, or from our own reckless actions. Instead of harkening back to the days of old, they embrace the new and the modern.

2.3 Theoretical Model

I propose that the authors of the Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic used various immersive literary techniques and methods, to improve the level of absorption of their readers by combining the real and the fantastic in a way that allowed the author to realise or give credibility to the impossible. They used the expectations and assumptions of their readers to fuse modernity with primal fears and their readers' acceptance of dualistic realities to further enhance the believability of their stories.

In order to analyse the creation of a text that promotes the immersion of the reader into the text through the use of literary techniques and methods that this study hypothesises is one of the ways in which the authors bridge the gap between the believable and the fantastical, we need to not only define the phenomenon, but also have a basic understanding of how literary theorists believe authors achieve this state.

According to Kuijpers *et al.* (2017:31) the terms absorption, immersion, transportation, and engagement can all be used, in largely similar ways, to describe the experience of “getting lost or absorbed in a book” (2017:30). Fitzgerald and Green (2017:49) consolidate all these terms into that of narrative transportation, which refers to the fact that readers can “travel” or be “mentally drawn” into the world described in a narrative, and due to this immersion, the reader becomes deeply engaged in the narrative which can consequently influence the reader's beliefs and attitudes. In other words, the ability of a text to become “real” to the reader can affect the reader physically, emotionally, or cognitively. Narrative absorption in turn refers to the wide variety of components that contribute to the person becoming immersed in any activity (Kuijpers *et al.*, 2017:32).

These components have been grouped and arranged (Kuijpers *et al.*, 2017:32) in a four-level taxonomy of absorption (Figure 2-1) which can be used to analyse aspects that contribute to the reader becoming absorbed in a narrative.

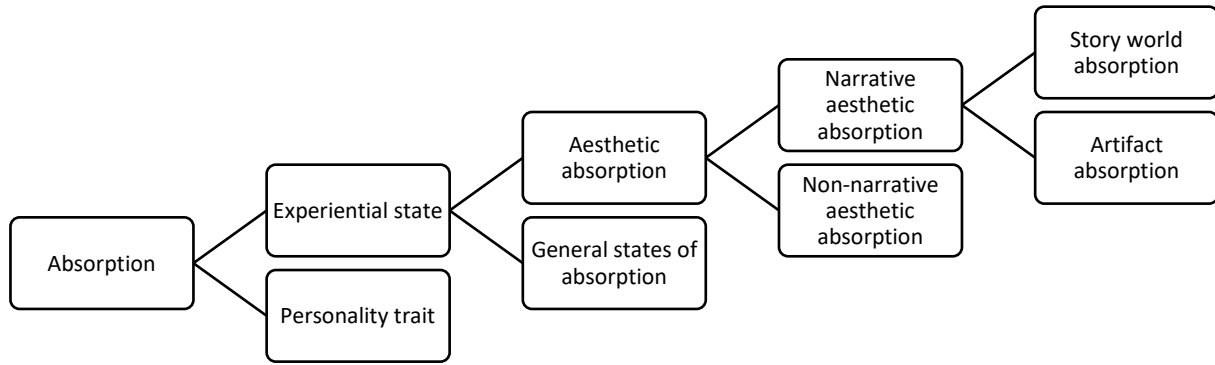


Figure 2-1: Absorption research taxonomy adapted from Hakemulder *et al.*, 2017:32.

One of the primary characteristics that allows a person to become immersed in any activity, such as a novel, is the result of the individual's various personality traits interacting in such a way that they become predisposed to absorption; at the same time certain experiences may create a state of absorption in the individual participating in the activity (Kuipers *et al.*, 2017:33). This comprises the first level of the absorption taxonomy distinguishing between a person naturally leaning towards absorption versus an activity facilitating a state of absorption. In simple terms this level distinguishes between a personality's likelihood to becoming absorbed versus the quality of the experience in facilitating absorption. Many a non-reader became totally absorbed in books such as the *Harry Potter* or *Twilight* series, irrespective of their previous like or dislike towards reading – indicating that these texts were particularly good at facilitating absorption. All further levels of the taxonomy focus on the ability of an activity to become absorbing.

The second level of the taxonomy distinguishes between activities that have "no clear predetermined object: e.g., fishing, climbing, cooking" as activities where merely participating in the activity is absorbing, and those activities where the aesthetic aspects of the activity, or its appealing nature, creates a state of absorption. Here I like to think of the activities that generate general states of absorption as those that keep your hands busy, and your brain is just along for the ride. Obviously, you can think of other things while busy with these activities, but you will probably be less successful and the activities less enjoyable if you do not become absorbed in them.

Activities that are aesthetically absorbing can then be divided into those that are absorbing due to their narrative aesthetic and those which have non-narrative aesthetic aspects, which forms the third level of the taxonomy. Here narrative aesthetic absorption involves "mental states that emerge during a process of receiving [of a narrative]" (Wolf cited by Kuijpers *et al.*, 2017:33) which are influenced by the story world absorption and artefact absorption, level four of the taxonomy.

These are the actual components of the novel that draw in the reader – either the world that is created or the way in which the world is created.

To illustrate this group of terms and their interactions different texts can be used to construct an example. A text in general chemistry will fail to hold the attention of the average reader, never mind becoming absorbing, but for some readers, those interested or orientated towards the topic a text written with a good flow may become generally absorbing, but not necessarily aesthetically absorbing. Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything* (2003) is, however, able to hold the attention of the average reader, as evidenced not only by various awards and accolades (Random House, 2016) but also popular consensus. This absorption is not necessarily created by the topic, but by means of the way it is presented, a form of narrative aesthetic absorption. Non-narrative aesthetic absorption is not relevant to this study as it refers largely to other forms of communication, think of a film with beautiful cinematography, or concrete poetry. Maybe it is easier to prove the negative – the difficulty in becoming absorbed in a text that is poorly aligned or printed in an objectionable font. It is once we start to analyse narrative aesthetic absorption that we reach the area of greatest interest.

Before examining the aspects of a narrative that contribute to the absorption of the reader, the term aesthetic should be discussed. The most basic definition given by the OED is "the (attractive) appearance or sound of something", but it can also refer to "the distinctive underlying principles of a work of art or a genre, the works of an artist, the arts of a culture, etc." (OUP, 2023a). Here I believe the second definition to carry greater weight, but with the caveat the underlying principles should be attractive, or at least striking.

When evaluating the artifact absorption of a text the emphasis falls on the artistry of the author (Kuijpers *et al.*, 2017:33); it is important to recognise that this concept is a new one and in need of further study (43). However, some characteristics of a text allow for greater understanding by the reader, and these then will contribute to not only the understanding of the world created by the author but facilitate the absorption of the reader. One of these characteristics is the reader's ability to construct a situation model, "a mental structure that captures the chronology of events, event causality, space and time using the content of the text" (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2017:15). Another is flow, which is when the way a text is constructed allows the reader to understand it effortlessly and automatically. The first is not dependent on the second, but flow, which leads to engagement is impossible without the creation of a mental model (16).

Story world absorption, the creation of a believable, fictional reality, can be viewed as a process in which attention, mental imagery, and emotional engagement combine in such a way that the mind becomes focused on the events in the text (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2017:14). While this is a

complicated process dependent on various aspects of the narrative, I have chosen to focus on just some of the contributing factors, grouped together for easier understanding and analysis (Figure 2-2).

Tan *et al.* (2017:105) identify the following topics as contributing factors to attracting attention: interesting events and anticipation created through suspense, curiosity, and surprise. Suspense is created when an event happens in the text, and then the reader is waiting for the consequences of this event to be revealed (Jacobs & Lüdtke, 2017:75). A reader becomes curious when they see the chance to learn something interesting, or when they feel "uncomfortably deprived of information"; this situation can easily be created if the causation is only shared after the result (77). Surprise is a feeling that is created by different types of sudden or startling events in the narrative. Tan *et al.* (2017:105) further argue that surprise is the process a reader goes through to acclimate to an inconsistency between "cognitive schemas and newly acquired information".

Mental imagery can be facilitated by including detailed description (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2017:19), or by producing a feeling of perceived realism which refers to a reader experiencing a narrative as being congruent with the real world, believable within a specific reality, or being consistent within itself (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2017:20). Emotional engagement refers to situations where readers react strongly to events in, and the mental images created by the text (Kuijpers *et al.*, 2017:34), because of events and characters in the story (Fitzgerald & Green, 2017:54). Emotional engagement has been found to be the biggest cause of story world absorption when suspense techniques are being used (Kuijpers *et al.*, 2017:34). This means that characterisation is one of the main contributors to emotional engagement and consequently to story world absorption. The impact of an author's skill at creating characters that can be visualised by the reader to the point where their personalities and experiences evoke emotional reactions within the reader cannot be underestimated.

The analysis of contributing components of absorption combines well with Pavel's (1986:2) exploration of the change in literary analysis to include the relationship between narrative and possibility. How authors use various literary techniques therefore contributes to the level of absorption of the reader. The level of absorption is also related to the level to which the reader may change their attitudes, beliefs, self-concept, and behaviour whether temporarily or permanently (Fitzgerald & Green, 2017:52). Fitzgerald and Green go on to identify five mechanisms that may support these changes in readers: Reduced counter arguing, connections with characters, heightened perceptions of realism, mental imagery, and emotional engagement. Some of these mechanisms have already been discussed as narrative elements or techniques, but it is worth discussing them from the view of their impact on belief change. It is at the

intersection of their use as narrative techniques, and function as mechanisms for belief change that the fictional becomes real.

Reduced counter arguing is a result of absorption, where an absorbed reader is less likely to notice mistakes or falsehoods in that text than somebody who is less absorbed (Fitzgerald & Green, 2017:52). The reason for this effect may relate to the enjoyment of the text; if the reader is enjoying the text, they are not looking for discrepancies or topics to “argue” about and, in some cases, may even subconsciously “ignore” problems with the text to some extent to ensure their continued enjoyment of the text. Another reason for the reader to subconsciously reduce their counter arguing is that they are mentally so occupied with imagining the story that they do not have the remaining attention for evaluating the accuracy of the text (Fitzgerald & Green, 2017:53). As illustration of the efficacy of this technique, think of a book or movie that you loved, maybe even revisited multiple times at some point of your life, and then later when you return to it, you are horrified when you notice all the problems in the plot or writing and fail to adequately enjoy or be absorbed into the text.

It is no secret that reading expands people’s imaginations and understanding. As such the idea that people may alter their beliefs and attitudes to match those of a character (Fitzgerald & Green, 2017:53) is not a far-fetched idea. Of course, the opposite is also true, if a reader completely despises a character they may choose to adhere to beliefs and attitudes opposite to those championed by that character. New research has proven that the empathy readers experience with a character impacts the structure of the brain:

Reading a book or watching a movie are non-innate and highly artificial brain activities, which may occupy a very significant part in the daily life of many people, presumably because of their considerable adaptive value... [During such activities it is often like a window is opened] into characters’ thoughts and feeling, so that people respond in thought and feeling to fictive situations, as if they actually occur. Ultimately, these activities help subjects to optimize decisions and actions, learn about existing or fictive worlds, and stimulate motivation and imagination, functioning thus as a sort of “emotional gym”. In watching a movie or reading a book subjects may be so emotionally moved to get lost in the fictive happenings of the stories as if these were real, and imaginatively perceive themselves as transposed into character’s thoughts and feelings, experiencing the character’s happenings from the character’s perspective, and merging with or being that character. The cognitive empathy required for such processes is measured by the IRI subscale Fantasy (Picerni et al. 2021).

This means that the more absorbed the reader is, the more they connect to a character, or the experiences of a character, the more likely it is that the reader will be affected by those experiences, the more absorbed they become, the more they identify with the character.

The quality of the characterisation is, of course, of cardinal importance in this process. As noted earlier good characterisation contributes to the reader's ability to visualise the story world, which contributes perceived realism. Heightened perceptions of realism refer to the "individual's subjective evaluation of the story's plausibility" (Fitzgerald & Green, 2017:54). This links back to Pavel's belief regarding what the reader will accept as true in a text. The more absorbed the reader is, or the more the text is geared towards believability, the more likely the reader is to accept events in the text as real. Many of the techniques discussed in this dissertation will refer to techniques that readers were familiar with as being used to reflect truth, or components of their context that they perceived as true and as such adding not only to the absorption of the reader, but their acceptance of events in the text. These include the techniques already discussed as part of the discussion around Realism.

Mental imagery has already been mentioned in this study, but it is worth repeating that the "transportation experience links the vivid images with beliefs implied by the story" (Fitzgerald & Green, 2017:54), for example, that killing the vampire frees the soul of the person taken over by it (Stoker, 1997:192). The clearer the picture formed by the reader the more effective and convincing the text becomes. Images are also known to facilitate long-term recall particularly when combined with emotion driven connections (Fitzgerald & Green, 2017:54). The impact of the mental images a reader creates is enormous, not only on the immediate experience of the text, but also on their beliefs and views, and some authors actively makes use of this knowledge to manipulate the reader's experience of and reaction to the text as shown by Nanay (2021):

Other writers also actively manipulate the reader's mental imagery. George Orwell points out the importance of mental imagery in understanding metaphors when he says in Poetics and the English Language that "The sole aim of metaphor is to call up a visual image". We might add to this that this imagery is often not visual, it can be auditory, olfactory, etc. And here is a final example from the third part of Roberto Bolano's novel 2666 ('The Part about Fate'). This part of the book introduces a New York-based journalist, Oscar Fate. After about 80 pages of description of Fate's life in New York City, it is revealed that he is in fact African-American. This comes after very explicit nudges to form mental imagery of him as Caucasian, confronting the readers with their implicit racial bias.

The effect of emotional engagement with a fictional world, character or event is more pronounced the stronger the emotions are (Fitzgerald & Green, 2017:54). Green, Chatham and Sestir (2012) have found that whether the text is factual or fictional has no effect on the emotions experienced, so the emotional reaction to what is read is real. It may be possible that when readers experience real emotions from the text, they conversely identify reality in the text eliciting that emotion – blurring the lines between fact and fiction.

In the end it is in the overlap of the techniques that adds realism to the text, improves absorption and motivate change that I identify various techniques that can convince readers of the believability of a text.

2.4 Method

My theory then is that the use of various narrative elements and techniques creates a sense of realism in a text as well as supports the absorption of the reader despite, or maybe even because of, the unbelievable components of the narrative. I further postulate that this process is supported by the use of Gothic elements in combination with the reader's assumptions to contextualise these unreal components in terms and formats which make it easier for the reader to incorporate them easily within their rational mind – making the unbelievable, believable. I believe that the fact that the Victorian reader was already accustomed to dichotomous realities, as discussed in 2.2.1, further facilitates this process. The fact that a quick online search for “the real Jekyll and Hyde”, “the real Dracula”, and “the real Sherlock Holmes” returns numerous, largely current, results is a testament to the continued believability of that particular text or at least some aspects of it.

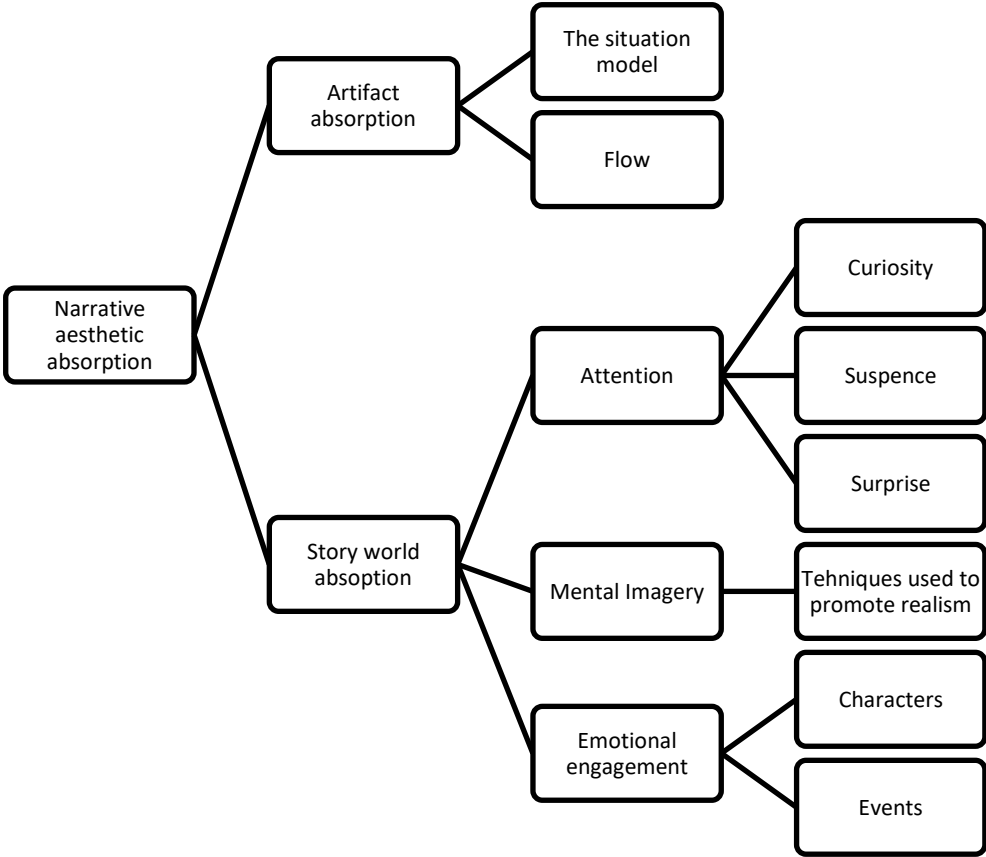


Figure 2-2: Narrative elements and techniques that simulate reality, facilitate absorption and narrative persuasion.

Based on the identified trinity of absorption: attention, mental imagery, and emotional engagement, I can refer to any use of the identified narrative elements and techniques and, based on their association with absorption and belief change, use them when analysing how absorbing a text is (Figure 2-2).

Artifact absorption is difficult to evaluate in a text, but by studying the responses of readers one can identify whether the text was constructed in such a way that it supported absorption, either through establishing flow or constructing a suitable situation model. Although, any text which has succeeded in being termed a “Classic” normally is an example of successful artifact absorption – books that grab and hold your attention. As quoted above, and as quotations to follow will illustrate, all the chosen texts were well written, and, depending on the reader, succeeded in taking hold of their imagination – to the point where that age old reader’s mantra starts to sound: “just one more page...” Consequently, I will not formally evaluate the artifact absorption of the texts specifically but will continue to review both reader responses from the contemporary to the modern as part of the rest of the study.

With regards to story world absorption there are various elements and techniques that can be identified and evaluated through a close reading of the text and further substantiated by reviewing reader responses to the text in the form of contemporary reviews, personal letters, and other publications. These reader responses will normally indicate the presence of suspense, curiosity, and surprise techniques, as well as their success. While each of these interdependent and interactive “notions” (Jacobs & Lüdtke, 2017:75) are present in all the texts, I will focus mainly on one of them in each novel, the one I deem most relevant or characteristic to that novel.

By doing a close reading of the text itself the use of various techniques can be identified and evaluated, particularly when combined with the content of the reader responses. Therefore techniques that support realism, such as representing ordinary and routine events and circumstances in minute detail (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:333), the reality effect, where unnecessary objects are reproduced in the text (Herman *et al.*, 2005:492), speech representation (Herman *et al.*, 2005:558), naturalism (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:334), and the use of parts of speech (Herman *et al.*, 2005:562) can be studied using this method.

I believe that the use of techniques characteristic of the realist novel in combination with the characteristics of the traditional Gothic contributes to the success of the *fin de siècle* novels. Realist techniques used include representing characters as complex with diverse motives, rooted in a social class, where they interact with many other characters in a developed social structure while experiencing plausible, everyday events (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:254). While traditional Gothic techniques include having clearly discriminated antagonist and an often socially isolated

and solitary protagonist (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:254), the objectifying and demonising of the Other, invoking the law by breaking it (Luckhurst, 2005:xiv), and how the setting is often at a temporal or physical distance (Hogle, 2002:2) as a way of relating to the past and its consequences particularly the horrific return of some monster or consequence (Luckhurst, 2005:xiii). Possibly the most important technique of the Gothic used is the creation of an atmosphere that allows for the expectations based on the ordinary to be suspended (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:254) and for the narrative to move between the laws of reality and the possibilities created by the supernatural (Hogle, 2002:2).

Observing and evaluating the interactions between these various narrative elements and techniques, their impact on the reader, and contrasting their use and effect to standard realist texts such as George Elliot's *Middlemarch* and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* will allow me to draw conclusions regarding the efficacy of the techniques used by the chosen authors. Another point of comparison will be the lesser-known Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic text Vernon Lee's *Dionea* (1890), with the view to identify how the use of various elements and techniques used by the successful and enduring texts compare with a less successful text.

I would like to take the opportunity here to discuss the choice of *Dionea*. Choosing the fourth text, particularly one that stands without the expectations and assumptions of the three main texts, was difficult. To guide the choice the following guidelines were used: it should be a text with a similar setting; written by a female author of at least moderate success, preferably some level of enduring recognition; the text should have a similar focus of character; both realist and Gothic elements should be present. In the end the choice was also influenced by the availability of the source text. In the end I decided to use one of Vernon Lee's texts. Vernon Lee was the masculine *nom de plume* of Violet Page an author who defies categorisation (Colby, 2003:xii) it is a nebulous name well described as:

To many of those now living she is a shadowy figure, at the most perhaps only a vaguely remembered name; a name, however, which recalls to an older generation a literary craftsman and polemicist of undoubted importance in her day — but it is the more precise nature of this importance which now eludes our memory (Gunn, 1964:ix).

Today she has largely disappeared from the broader academic landscape as well as the popular one as only some of her “exotic supernatural stories” (Colby, 2003:335) continue to be published and studied, largely from the queer studies point of view focusing on the intersection of Lee's writing with her homosexuality. It is in this small section of her works that we find *Hauntings*, a collection of four short stories. The little collection received mixed reviews, and these were few

and far between, nowhere near the response garnered by the other stories chosen, from the extremely positive:

Her essays have given her the right to claim kinship with Lamb and Hazlitt: these "Hauntings"?... have the romance of the "Florentine Nights" about them, a savour of the Heine who captured dreams and put them into words, the Heine who was neither lyrical poet nor satirist, but a happier master of pure fantasy. Indeed, the link with him has been noted by the writer, for she refers to the "Gods in Exile" in her second story (Anon., 1906c:490)

To the much more dismissive:

In her works of fiction, and especially in such tales as these, bordering on the domain of superstition, a powerful fancy broods over situations conceived with originality of invention, and forcibly narrated, but leaving the impression of a sinister fatalism, instead of letting in the open daylight. One is disagreeably "haunted," in each instance, by apparitions of bad and mad women, demons of female beauty, who compass the destruction of men; and Love is exhibited, as the ascetic insanity of some fanatical monks formerly represented it, chiefly in the guise of a diabolical sorcery, worse than the pernicious abuse of this sentiment by the world and the flesh. This unwholesome and ungrateful perversion of the essential topic of romantic stories is inexorably carried through the short tales (Anon., 1890:498).

As Lee took great pains to explain in the introduction to the collection these stories are a result of a discussion regarding what horror is, and her take on it is rather different than that of other writers:

Hence, my four little tales are of no genuine ghosts in the scientific sense; they tell of no hauntings such as could be contributed by the Society for Psychical Research, of no specters that can be caught in definite places and made to dictate judicial evidence. My ghosts are what you call spurious ghosts (according to me the only genuine ones), of whom I can affirm only one thing, that they haunted certain brains (Lee, 1980:3).

And this has been interpreted to mean that:

They are not tales of the sensational ghost of ordinary fiction, or even of the phenomena collected by the Psychical Research Society. They are documents of the hauntings of the imagination by those, long dead, whose fascination and beauty are potent beyond the grave (Anon., 1906b:592).

Of the four stories *Dionea* is considered to be the best and is described as "most imaginatively conceived; it is an allegory, very convincing in its detailed narrative of events, of the baneful appearance of Aphrodite in the world" (Gunn, 1964:129) and:

[Dionea] offers us... a genuine and enchanting femme fatale and a setting as enchanting as she. Although its conclusion is even more violent and terrible than the fate of the Okes, the story is told with such disingenuous directness that it reads like a myth. And well it should, for "Dionea" is one of many stories about dispossessed

pagan gods returning to the modern world with dire consequences, sometimes for themselves, more often for the mortals who encounter them. These “gods in exile,” as Heinrich Heine called them, caught the imaginations of the romantics and the Victorians (Colby, 2003:236).

And so, it was chosen as a story written in the right era, adhering to the chosen definition of a Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic tale, written by a woman for additional variety, but which, while well received, did not have the same critical and popular success as other stories in the genre to serve as contrast for evaluation.

Dionea tells the tale of an orphan girl who washes up on an Italian beach after a terrible storm. Not speaking the language, being a “poor little brown mite” and probably a heathen none of the locals will take her in. Dr Alessandro de Rosis intercedes and requests the Lady Evelyn Savelli to become the little girl’s patron and have her placed with some nuns.

Dionea grows into a beautiful but disconcerting young woman who fails utterly to become part of the community. Viewed as possessing an evil eye she remains separate from the people but seems to influence their behaviour greatly as the local sorceress. And so things carry on with various small, personal disasters until Lady Evelyn requests the doctor to arrange accommodations for some of her friends, the great sculptor Waldemar and his Madonna of a wife Gertrude. Gertrude appoints Dionea to sit for Waldemar for a sculpture of a female figure.

The tale ends in disaster with Gertrude killed before the sculpture and the whole building set alight and Waldemar having plunged to his death at the bottom of a cliff. What became of Dionea is unclear, but she is rumoured to sail the Mediterranean on a foreign looking ship, and the memory of her still haunts the people left behind.

2.5 Selection of Texts and Plot overviews

While various novels within the *fin de siècle* suit the description “any tale which makes use of this duality of nature in its characters and depends on some variation of the universal characteristics of the traditional Gothic to drive the plot,” I intend to focus on three of the most famous, popular, and enduring texts: Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. All three contain elements of the supernatural, while many of the techniques and structural elements are Realist in nature. All three also have identifiable Gothic elements, but approach or use them in very different ways.

In the *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde*, we have the othering of Hyde as well as his representation as a wholly evil villain in contrast to his much more admirable counterpart Jekyll,

who is a much more balanced protagonist than found in the traditional Gothic. The old dissecting room creates the antiquated space, which is the cradle of the supernatural monster, created through the transgressive experiments of Jekyll, that serves as representative for the fears of the middle-classes. And all of this is set in an atmosphere that is increasingly Gothic: ominous and suspenseful (Hogle, 2002:191).

Dracula creates duality in setting by contrasting the archaic, eastern part of the continent, with the modernity of modern Europe and particularly that of Britain. Again, the decidedly evil monster originates from the archaic space and represents the fear of the foreign, the degenerate, the exploitative, and the stagnant. In a truly Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic approach however there is not the traditional harkening back, but a rather more moderate keep the good of the old and combine it with the best of the new approach. A moderate balancing between good and evil is also present in the protagonists, all inherently good people but saddled with the follies and failings of humanity, with particularly Mina Harker departing from the more traditional “damsel in distress” mould (Hogle, 2002:191). The style of this text is reminiscent of the traditional Gothic, “densely packed and sensationalist” (Hogle, 2002:191) but with extreme effort being made to situate this plot in a realistic space.

Sherlock Holmes faces a supernatural monster straight out of English folktales in a distant, foggy, empty moor in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Even if the real monster in the end is revealed to be but a man, that man has very few redeeming qualities, representing again the fear of the degeneration of society. Holmes’ wholly rational explanation of how the villain succeeded in deceiving the characters, and the reader, is a replica of Radcliff’s use of the device “supernatural explained” (Hogle, 2002:26). Its use serves the same function – to reconcile the readers’ reality with what they enjoy, just swapping Protestant beliefs (27) for scientific, modern thinking, making the reader feel better about their momentary loss of rationality for the sake of enjoying the story. It is, however, the atmosphere, brooding and full of secrets that carry the reader into questioning reality during their reading of the text.

All three texts are also seminal texts, not only at the time of publication, but they continue to be recognized as important texts, not just broadly, but specifically in the Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic. The importance of these texts are often mentioned directly; for example “the form of fantastic fiction was burgeoning, with the creation of such notable texts as *The Time Machine*, *Dracula* and *The Turn of the Screw*, all pre-eminent in their field” (Marshall, 2007:10); “*Dracula* is a *fin de siècle* masterpiece, which toys with genre by imitating other literary forms” (Fall, 2018:212); “This attitude to the distant past slowly hardened into one of fear, famously memorialised in Arthur Conan Doyle’s Gothic romance *The Hound of the Baskervilles*” (Bloom, 2010:16); and

Its [Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde] famous treatment of the doppelgänger... epitomizes the Gothic obsession with the dual nature of man's existence; its emphatic allegory of good versus evil reformulates, even crystallizes, the primary moral concern of Gothic fiction... Its very title is arguably the most famous of all Gothic titles (Thomson, 2001:413).

A foundation that allowed for the discovery of an intrapsychic life had been laid one brick at a time over many centuries by thinkers and writers who preceded Freud. Robert Louis Stevenson (1978) was one such architect, (unconsciously) using dream material to portray the existence of a human unconscious in "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" (D'Amato, 2005:93).

In other instances, they are used to exemplify some aspect of the genre as a whole:

Careless or irresponsible science, in the tradition of Frankenstein, results in "monsters manufactured" (Wells, Moreau, p. 71) like the beast-people, Mr. Hyde, and Helen Vaughan. But science also describes the unpredictable strangeness of the natural world and the bizarre, shifting nature of the human subject itself. Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897), whose characters include two doctor/psychologists, describes its vampire in terms explicitly borrowed from criminal anthropology, degeneration theory, and alienism, late-Victorian sociomedical disciplines that worked to classify and comprehend the abnormal human subject (Hurley, 2002:192).

In the Gothic tradition 'evil' is often defined by the threat it poses to 'civilisation'. Jekyll and Hyde, like Carmilla, problematises this by raising questions about the origins of 'evil' within civilisation. The novella can easily be caricatured as merely being about warring factions within Dr Jekyll, but a closer examination reveals that Stevenson emphasises that any notion of conflict needs to be seen within the context of what constitutes civilisation (Smith, 2007:100).

...the first wave of the Gothic was the product of an emergent democratic and capitalist nation state sensitive to its own fragility and fearful of political reversion. Violence to the moral and physical fabric of things came from dissolute aristocrats and their perverted priests. One hundred years later, there were still accursed aristocratic houses, as in Sherlock Holmes's investigation in The Hound of the Baskervilles (1902), for example (Luckhurst, 2005:xiii).

They also serve as prototypes for, or as informative texts in various then-developing genres, that would become more formalised and standardised over time. The *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is seen as the successor of *Frankenstein* in science fiction:

Similarly, our visions of the future evoke disaster as often as triumph, the monstrous as much as the miraculous. As embodied in British science fiction, this distinctive national trait has gripped and inspired the imagination of the whole world for nearly two centuries. From...Frankenstein onwards — through Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde... — British science fiction poses the age-old question 'What if?' and answers with the stuff of nightmares... Robert Louis Stevenson's Henry Jekyll succeeds in isolating the savage, bestial side of human nature, only to discover that it cannot be controlled (O'Brien, 2000:8).

Sprinkled among the complete stories herein you will find a handful of excerpts from novels...too long to include in toto, but their characters and themes have proven so

memorable that they demand inclusion. And they earned their fame...As the selection from his Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde will demonstrate, Robert Louis Stevenson was another writer who paid considerable attention to the ever-changing science around him (Sims, 2017:8)

Both *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Dracula* made use of the “horror” approach:

The use of science, for good or evil, and mankind’s evolutionary process and primal fears became the central themes that the horror genre was to take up in the twentieth century. The forerunner novel that explored these ideas was Frankenstein (1818), giving us the first mad scientist who attempted to replace the natural order of evolution by stripping away God’s divine visage and replacing it with his own. The results were disastrous for Dr. Frankenstein, but we were left with a lasting warning of the consequences of playing God. The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) by Robert Louis Stevenson delved into the mental health of man, the structure of personality, and the fear that we can unknowingly become our own worst nightmare. The possibility of transforming ourselves only to discover that our alter ego is a monster is truly terrifying. In The Island of Doctor Moreau, the grandfather of science fiction, H. G. Wells, warned what the world could expect if it failed to find wisdom to control progress. On the surface, Moreau is a mad scientist, as was the case with Dr. Frankenstein. He heartlessly contorts the shapes of his innocent animal subjects in a blind search for forbidden knowledge. But what he is really doing is far worse. Moreau has set himself up as the divine creator of vivisected creatures who in turn view him as their god. Lastly, Bram Stoker gave us Dracula (1897), which became synonymous with the vampire motif (Spratford & Clausen, 2004:4).

Dracula did importantly popularise and standardise the vampire as monster, particularly as a horror monster which is firmly embedded in Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic characteristics as is explained in Corstorphine’s introduction to Wendy Fall’s contribution to *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*:

...horror monsters have shifted to adapt to different times and places, and, in the case of vampires, this adaptability is built in through the quality of immortality (albeit have risen from the grave). Vampires appear throughout this volume, but Wendy Fall places them at the forefront in “Vampires: Reflections in a Dark Mirror.” The most famous of these creatures is of course Stoker’s Dracula, but Fall traces their origins back through earlier literary examples to the folkloric traditions where they first appear. Vampires, Fall contends, are the most human of horror monsters, dramatizing our anxieties through a supernatural lens (Corstorphine, 2018:12).

The detective story genre was the one most influenced by of all the Sherlock Holmes texts, of which *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was the most successful (Doyle, explained by O’Gorman, 2006:13), whether for good or ill seems to be open for discussion: “The radical change, through which the detective story was regarded as a “frankly non-serious” form of literature came with Sherlock Holmes” (Symons, 1962:13), but definitely definitive as illustrated by Van Dover’s explanation of “Holmes casting a long shadow” (2005:9) on the development of the genre.

As already discussed, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is commonly regarded as the first novel of the Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic. It is interesting to note the disconcerting nature of this title, created by the absence of the definite article "the". This is however an accurate reflection of Stevenson's original title and the first printing in 1886, and Linehan (Stevenson, explained by Linehan, 2003:3) theorises that the abruptness of the title may serve to further heighten the sense of unease around this particular strange case. In subsequent editions however, as well as in regular conversation, the definite article has been added. For the sake of brevity and ease of reading, this text will be referred to as *Jekyll and Hyde* from now on.

Born Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson in 1850 (Strong, 1911:4), Stevenson was a sickly child who spent his time in bed imagining the world and all it could contain (Strong, 1911:5), and was described as never to have grown out of that childhood by both critics and enthusiasts (Reid, 2010:41). He was however a highly intelligent individual, studying first engineering and law at the behest of his father (Fielding, 2010:viii), with great success (Strong, 1911:24), but his true love was literature and he trained himself in the use of words from a very young age (Strong, 1911:22), and can be viewed as practising the craft of writing (Duncan, 2010:15; Strong, 1911:26), choosing words, and structuring sentences with the same care a doctor would use to cut and suture a patient. Wildly popular during his lifetime (Strong, 1911:28), he has, in modern critical view, failed to feature as one of the greats, his omission from various charts and anthologies (Duncan, 2010:161) is probably driven by two facts: he never wrote a novel in the strict definition of the term (Duncan, 2010:11) and after his death he was largely relegated to and defined as an author of children's stories (Reid, 2010:41).

The duality of *Jekyll and Hyde* is almost a reflection of the duality of Stevenson the man and author. Described by Fielding as such:

Robert Louis Stevenson remains one of the most famous, yet, paradoxically, one of the least well-known writers of the second half of the nineteenth century. Author of two 'classic' works of popular fiction, Treasure Island and Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Stevenson the writer has become oddly separated from his works. These two texts have become as if disembodied from their author, constantly regenerating themselves in narrative retellings and in theatre and film adaptations, while the author himself lives on in an almost industrial proliferation of biographies and travelogues that promise to trace 'the footsteps of Stevenson'. Meanwhile, a great deal of Stevenson's work remains to be studied, and the connections between what he wrote and the literary, cultural and historical contexts in which he wrote it remain to be explored (2010:1).

This "disembodiment" is also characteristic of many of the Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic tales, as they continue to be adapted, translated, transposed, reimagined, and used as inspiration for new or derivative works. This tendency is particularly apparent in the three chosen texts, with

especially *Dracula* being discounted by academic readers (Roth, 1977:411), as will be discussed later.

Abraham Stoker was another extremely intelligent, but sickly child (Welch, 2010:38). His identity as author became disassociated from his greatest creation until the 1992 film: *Bram Stoker's Dracula* directed by Francis Ford Coppola named him the author (Welch, 2010:40). But, in life and in death he was eclipsed by the character he created. Unlike Stevenson's plethora of biographies and critiques, Stoker's "obituary in *The Times* described him as "the master of a particularly lurid and creepy kind of fiction" (Senf, 2010:1) and so he, as an individual and an author, largely disappeared from the literary world until the 1970's when:

...the Dracula exegetes squeezed out every Freudian, religious, political, and occult meaning from the novel, leaving behind innuendo and misinformation about the life of this most elusive of authors. There were no Stokerian scholars to rise up and protest, to challenge undocumented facts. It appeared that horror devotees warmed to Dracula's author having a perverse nature. There had to be some unsavoury explanation of why, out of an oeuvre of eighteen books, only Dracula succeeds as literature – in fact, is a masterpiece (Belford, 1996:x).

Belford provides an interpretation much more personal to Stoker in opposition to most other analyses:

Any understanding of Bram Stoker's life and the reason he wrote Dracula begins with this first meeting [with Henry Irving]. Stoker did not know it then, but he had been chosen; later he would be tested. Loyal, clever, but incapable of intrigue, Stoker was perfectly cast to serve Irving's extravagant ambitions... Even more prophetic than the camaraderie forged that wet and chilly December evening was something Stoker would never admit: on that night he met Count Dracula. Irving as Dracula would grow into the evil paternal role, the most felicitous ever written for him... Stoker projected himself into all of Dracula's major characters. It was his most autobiographical novel (1996:5)

The fact that this novel lends it to a multitude of readings and interpretations is of course just another marker of its quality, and the skill of the author. Roth summarises some of these readings as the suppression of female sexuality with "The facile and stereotypical dichotomy between the dark woman and the fair, the fallen and the idealised" (1977:411) evidenced; the reading of vampirism being representative of sexuality, particularly as a more debased form (412); as the contest between "the value of friendship and agape" and male rivalry (414); and as an exploration of the results of the abuse of women (417). Other, more recent interpretations, include Moretti's (1988:431) reading of *Dracula* as "a saver, an ascetic, an upholder of the Protestant ethic", or a more recent reading, which has moved on from the sexual to Arata's (1990:462) exploration of the text as an exploration of the Victorian fear of "reverse colonisation".

Stoker wrote consistently and had a respectable publishing record, however his 1895 novel *The Shoulder of Shasta* was slammed by reviewers as “haphazardly executed”. In response Stoker researched extensively for more than six years in preparation for *Dracula* (Welsch, 2010:39). Many of the rules governing vampires in the modern iteration “from garlic to bats, neck bites, and crypts” (38) were the brainchild of Stoker.

The modern fame of *Dracula* however owes a lot to early cinema which favoured this monster above all others (Spratford & Clausen, 2004:4); of course this “plebeian” form of entertainment did nothing to elevate the reputation of the author (Belford, 1996:xii). The first *Dracula* on screen was in fact vastly different from Stoker’s monster, and so too was the story removed from the original text. Due to the financial limitations set by the Great Depression, Universal Studios’ *Dracula* was based on an adaptation, a play by Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston that largely limited the setting to a house and Hampstead, and turned Dracula in to the suave, aristocratic monster we have come to know and love (BBC, 2010).

The only character to appear in more films than Dracula is of course Sherlock Holmes (Belford, 1996:x), another reflection of his popularity. Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle only added the Sir to his name after being convinced by his mother, an authentic title awarded in recognition of “his services and writings during the Boer Wars” (Dirda, 2011:9). Through the careful management of savings by his mother as the family, while old and well connected (Nordon, 1967:3), was poor, he was trained as a doctor and was moderately successful (Dirda, 2011:11). Much more successful was his eventual forays into literature, originally as a historical novelist, but he wrote both fiction and non-fiction consistently (12). While Doyle was not disassociated from, nor eclipsed by his literary creation as happened with Stevenson and Stoker, he felt inhibited by him (Pascal, 2000:75). From a very early point he wanted to escape his creation, but he never did and, in the end, seemed to reach a compromise with his relentless creation (Pascal, 2000:108). Doyle wrote sixty stories using Holmes, of which *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is one of the four full-length novels (Nordon, 1967:203). The characteristic formula of a Holmes story was created with the intention of using it for serialisation, a formula that contributed greatly to its success:

Often they begin with a brief scene unrelated to the main story, in which Holmes’s powers are demonstrated, or they may start with references to other cases Holmes has solved, which are given tantalizing names (“the giant rat of Sumatra,” “the arrest of Wilson, the notorious canary-trainer”) but not described. The mystery is then introduced by the entrance of a distressed client with a story to tell, or one of the several Scotland Yard detectives who sneer at Holmes but still turn to him when they are stumped. The problem is laid out in detail, with Holmes seizing on what seems to the others in the room to be trivial or even foolish details (Pascal, 2000:72).

For ease of use this text will from here on be referred to only as *The Hound*.

2.5.1 Overview of *Jekyll and Hyde*

The text opens during Mr. Utterson's weekly walk with his friend Mr. Enfield through London. As they pass a door in a quiet street Mr. Enfield relates an event where he observed a man, later introduced as Hyde, trampling a child. The entire description creates a feeling of disquiet and curiosity around the indescribable man. In Part 2 it is revealed that Mr. Enfield had additional reasons for being concerned regarding the malevolent nature of Hyde. He holds a will for an eminent client, Dr Jekyll, who very suspiciously leaves all his worldly goods to the mysterious Mr. Hyde. For greater insight Utterson visits another client and mutual friend, Dr Lanyon. Lanyon views Jekyll as brilliant but too fanciful for real science, but can add no knowledge regarding the interloping Hyde. Mr. Utterson after ruminating on the problem takes it upon himself to search out Hyde and form his own opinion of the man. Their meeting leaves him with greater concerns than he started with, leading him on towards the house of the man he fears for – Dr Jekyll. Unfortunately, the doctor is not at home, but Utterson makes good use of the opportunity to question Poole the butler regarding Hyde and his relationship with Jekyll. He finds little to ease his concerns.

Part 3 introduces Jekyll, a man with none of the concerns held by Utterson, and he takes great care to reassure Utterson of the absence of foul play and the importance of adhering to his wishes. Part 4 brings a major change – murder. Hyde is observed killing Sir Danvers Carew, a man of importance, and another client of Utterson. Utterson assisted the police in their inquiries, identifying Hyde and his abode. In part 5 Utterson meets with a badly shaken Jekyll who renounces Hyde and vows to never contact or harbour him again. Utterson remains concerned and in consultation with his head clerk comes to suspect that Jekyll is still protecting Hyde from prosecution.

In part 6 the consequences of the murder, known and unknown to the reader, begin to unfold. At first the two doctors and their friend, the lawyer, resume their youthful friendship but then two things happen: both Jekyll and Lanyon take ill. Only Lanyon admits Utterson, greatly diminished and affected, and dies shortly afterwards, leaving Utterson with a document to be opened at the disappearance or death of Dr Jekyll – who remains self-confined. Jekyll is observed during another walk by Utterson and Enfield in part 7, looking poorly and taking a further, disturbing turn during a brief conversation. In part 8 Poole, the butler, collects Utterson under great strain and concern for Jekyll whose behaviour has become even more erratic and suspicious. He has also gone into complete seclusion, only giving strange instructions to Poole through a door. After some discussion and sharing of information the two men decide to break down the door under the suspicion that Hyde may have taken Jekyll hostage or killed him. They indeed find Hyde

behind the door, in death throes, after taking his own life, but no sign of Jekyll or his body. Investigation reveals that Hyde had been locked in, and consequently so would Jekyll have been, and a letter, written that day by Jekyll instructing Utterson to read the missive from Lanyon. Utterson undertakes to complete his own investigations before reporting anything to the police.

Part 9 consists of Lanyon's letter given to Utterson for safe keeping, relaying the event that led to both doctors retiring from public life. Lanyon receives a missive from Jekyll begging for his assistance in the collection of a mysterious drug from his study by breaking down the door to enter. The powder once retrieved would be collected from Lanyon the next night by an unnamed messenger. Both the message and the contents of Jekyll's study convince Lanyon that Jekyll must have taken leave of his senses, and the appearance of the messenger, the ever-disturbing Hyde, did little to abate this conclusion. It later becomes clear that Hyde did try to protect Lanyon, but at his insistence Hyde is forced to reveal his secret – the secret. He takes the drug and violently is transformed into Jekyll, revealing that they are one man who is two men.

The conclusion, part 10, is the second letter, left to Utterson by Jekyll, describing the whole secret. He came to believe in the "thorough and primitive duality of man" (Stevenson, 2003:49) and undertook to separate these two composite parts, and eventually succeeded. The drug completely transformed him to reveal his "evil" side, and he let it out to roam. Eventually however the tide turned, and he found himself transformed into Hyde without the assistance of the drug and turning back became harder and harder to do. He undertook to take leave of Edward Hyde but found that it had been left too late – the murder had already taken place. And from here the descent began. Slowly Jekyll's control became less and less, and the need for the drug greater and greater, but tragically, he could not replicate the transformative powder, and without it eventually Jekyll became trapped by the unplanned transformations into Hyde. Eventually he concluded that the only way to save himself, and others, from Hyde would be to end his life.

And so abruptly ends the tale of the man who was two men, no epilogue or consolation, just the reader's own thoughts on what their own inner "evil" would be capable of.

2.5.2 Overview of *Dracula*

Before an overview of *Dracula* is possible one must first meet the protagonists. At the centre of this group stand two women, Mina Harker née Murray and her best friend Lucy Westenra. Mina is the down to earth, Angel of the House, first engaged and then married to Johnathan Harker who recently became a lawyer. Lucy seems to be of a higher social standing and flightier than her female companion. The rest of the protagonists, bar one, were at some point suitors of the

lovely Lucy. Dr John Seward who oversees a large lunatic asylum, Mr Quincey P. Morris, a young American and Arthur Holmwood, who was Lucy's chosen and who later became Lord Godalming.

The novel opens with Johnathan Harker travelling to Transylvania to complete the acquisition of land in England by a Count Dracula. The journey becomes increasingly strange, a strangeness that turns horrific during Harker's stay at castle Dracula. For not only is his host a monster, he is a monster intent on invading Harker's home country. Harker makes a harrowing, narrow escape but fails to prevent Dracula's move. Back in England Mina waits and worries but the monster reaches them before news of Harker does. He arrives dramatically on a ship with a dead crew, riding one of the worst storms in recent memory, in the shape of a large dog – leaving no trace of his vampiric presence on board.

Shortly after the storm Lucy falls ill, a strange and disconcerting illness that rallies around her not only the men who love her but also Professor van Helsing, Seward's Dutch mentor. It is Van Helsing who suspects the presence of a vampire, but he chooses to keep his suspicions quiet, greatly confusing and frustrating his assistants. He treats her with blood transfusions and arms her protectors with garlic, but to no avail – Lucy passes away. Before her death, however, Mina leaves them to collect and care for Harker on the mainland leaving her largely unaware not only of the events, but of the threat.

Another character worth mentioning here is Dr Sewell's very strange zoophagous patient Renfield. This strange and delusional man acts as a kind of barometer or foreshadowing agent. His reactions reveal Dracula's proximity, intent and nature at various points in the novel.

After Lucy's death various children in the area get attacked and between this and the information shared by Harker upon his return the truth of Dracula's existence is revealed – along with the terrible truth of Lucy's undead state.

Van Helsing leads his troops in an effort to save Lucy's soul, arming them with communion wafers, crosses and silver, and more mundanely with knives and wooden stakes. Lucy is freed from her vampiric possession, but Dracula has turned his attention to Mina, and the group of men rallies together to save her and exterminate the vampiric threat. This crusade takes them from England all the way back to Transylvania where Quincy Morris kills the monster at the cost of his own life.

2.5.3 Overview of *The Hound*

A typical opening sees Holmes and Watson debating a client who had visited in their absence, who is revealed to be a young, scientifically minded, country doctor, Dr James Mortimer. Dr Mortimer came to seek their assistance with a rather illogical problem. Recently his friend Sir

Charles Baskerville passed away from an apparent heart attack. The lesser-known mystery behind his death relates to an old family tale regarding an ancestor, Sir Hugo Baskerville, whose abominable behaviour towards a young woman cursed the line with being pursued by a great, black hound upon the moors of Dartmoor. Mortimer's great concern is for the heir, Sir Henry Baskerville, who will be arriving shortly and whom he fears will also fall victim to his family's curse.

The arrival of Sir Henry is marked by three strange events: he was being followed, he received a warning note, and he lost one of his boots. Holmes' response to all of this is to send Watson off with Sir Henry to Devonshire with strict instructions to report back daily. They find the moor as desolate, haunting, and awesome as expected, but with the added bonus of an escaped convicted murderer, a great old hall and two servants – the Barrymores, a wife and husband, butler housekeeper pair. The strange behaviour of these two makes them suspicious from the very first night.

In the morning moods improve and Watson sets off to do some investigating. He meets the neighbour, a Mr Stapleton, an example of the Victorian amateur academic, lepidopterist, historian etc. and his sister, the beautiful Beryl. Believing him to be Sir Henry, she warns him to flee the area. Much intrigue ensues with strangers walking the moors at night and the dubious intentions of both the Barrymores and the Stapletons.

Holmes returns after being revealed to be one of the moorland wanderers and he has come up with a theory – which he proposes to test using the unwitting Sir Henry. In a dramatic confrontation it is revealed that a real Hound with a supernaturally glowing muzzle exists and chases down his target before being shot by Holmes.

In his final summary Holmes reveals that Stapleton was in fact a Baskerville and a criminal. Beryl was not his sister but wife and an unwilling accomplice in his many schemes. Intent on claiming Baskerville Hall and Sir Charles' fortune he creates the circumstances leading to the death of the older Baskerville and the near death of the younger. Good however triumphs, and Stapleton is lost to the Grimpenmire he used as his murderer's den.

CHAPTER 3 INTERNALISING THE “OTHER” – THE MONSTER WITHIN

3.1 Introduction

The reserve and inhibitions of the Victorians, as discussed in Chapter 2, served as a rich field for Stevenson to mine, like other authors of the era, exposing and delineating society's anxieties and debating the possible future of their society. General consensus, however, holds that Stevenson formulated a technique, later used by other authors, that allowed him to articulate some of the greatest fears of the *fin de siècle* by encoding his story in a fantastic mode (Ruddick, 2007:191), that was manufactured by transplanting Gothic themes into an unrealistic, late 19th century scenario (Armitt, 2011:xii; Dryden, 2003:2).

Booksellers' lack of interest delayed the original release of the little, paperbound book until after New Year's 1886, with interest remaining low until literary reviews started appearing praising the work (Balfour, 2003:79). The literary value of the modest publication was recognised at once with a glowing review appearing in *The Saturday Review* on January 9, publishing the judgement of an anonymous writer, later identified as likely to be Andrew Lang (Stevenson, explained by Linehan, 2003:93). Lang's review is glowing; and he delights in the apparent simplicity of the tale that belies its emotional, psychological, and literary complexity. *The Times of London* on January 25 declared “And if his style is good, his motive is better, and shows a higher order of genius” (Anon., 1886a). So started a rage, leading to more than 40 000 copies sold in Britain alone within the next six months (Balfour, 1915:230).

It seems that it is the combination or separation of this “style” and “motive” and the reader's understanding thereof that separates the admirers and detractors. For example, a review published in the *Birmingham Daily Post* reduces *Jekyll and Hyde* to “a mere bit of catch-penny sensationalism”, as Stevenson's “monster” is a construct that does not invoke belief in the reader (Stevenson, 2003:94). Similarly, the January 23 edition of *The Athenaeum* describes *Jekyll and Hyde* as “not merely strange, but impossible, and even absurd” (Stevenson, 2003:96).

In 1927 G.K. Chesterton defended Stevenson's reputation against what he terms “post-Victorian mudslingers” by giving a concise explanation of this intersection between artistic design and symbolic meaning and the importance of understanding their interaction as a means of understanding the author's intent:

Though the fable may seem mad, the moral is very sane; indeed, the moral is strictly orthodox. The trouble is that most of those who mention it do not know the moral, possibly because they have never read the fable. From time to time those anonymous authorities in the newspapers, who dismiss Stevenson with such languid grace, will say that there is something quite cheap and obvious about the idea that one man is really two men and can be divided into the evil and the good. Unfortunately for them, that does not happen to be the idea. The real stab of the story is not in the discovery that the one man is two men; but in the discovery that the two men are one man. After all the diverse wandering and warring of those two incompatible beings, there was still one man born and only one man buried. Jekyll and Hyde have become a proverb and a joke; only it is a proverb read backwards and a joke that nobody really sees. But it might have occurred to the languid critics, as a part of the joke, that the tale is a tragedy; and that this is only another way of saying that the experiment was a failure. The point of the story is not that a man can cut himself off from his conscience, but that he cannot. The surgical operation is fatal in the story. It is an amputation of which both the parts die. Jekyll, even in dying, declares the conclusion of the matter; that the load of man's moral struggle is bound upon him and cannot be thus escaped. The reason is that there can never be equality between the evil and the good. Jekyll and Hyde are not twin brothers. They are rather, as one of them truly remarks, like father and son (Chesterton, 1927).

An important fact gleaned from the evaluation of original criticism of this text is that it was not seen as real, but a representation of a truth, an exploration of the idea of a man being two men or two men being one man. This duality and the oscillation between opposites is a primary characteristic of the Gothic (Hogle, 2002:7) and often results in the separation of the opposites into the wretched, which must be rejected, and the agreeable, which should be strived for. D'Amato (2005:94) explains Stevenson's investigation into the coexistence of opposing forces within the individual very well. With the collapse of the religious guidelines that previously defined and separated good and evil the question of good and evil and their presence in a person becomes the province of science and philosophy. How do we as good people ensure that the "better" parts of ourselves are manifested or that the unwanted aspects are repressed or denied? It is against this backdrop that Stevenson is exploring the consequences of a complete repression of the unwanted aspects of the psyche – and it results in "a pathological split" that results in the destruction of the whole.

This "truth" however would not have been recognised as readily if the picture of the man who was in fact two men was presented in a too theatrical, sordid, or simplistic fashion. The success of Stevenson's work is dependent on his ability to draw in the reader to the point where his monster's existence becomes credible.

3.2 Getting the reader's attention: Surprise

He put the glass to his lips and drank at one gulp. A cry followed; he reeled, staggered, clutched at the table and held on, staring with injected eyes, gasping with open mouth; and as I looked there came, I thought, a change—he seemed to swell—

his face became suddenly black and the features seemed to melt and alter—and the next moment, I had sprung to my feet and leaped back against the wall, my arm raised to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror.

“O God!” I screamed, and “O God!” again and again; for there before my eyes—pale and shaken, and half fainting, and groping before him with his hands, like a man restored from death—there stood Henry Jekyll! (Stevenson, 2003:47).

Stevenson’s greatest success was the shock of Hyde’s true origins, as described in this, the climactic scene of the novel contained right at the end in one of the closing letters. Of course, the surprise is not of a mere jump-scare type, it is a transformation hinted at, that the reader was carefully prepared for, a revelation that made all the pieces fall together. It is also sensational and grotesque.

The word choices paint an evolving picture, starting with a description echoing a fit or a seizure, some medical event that is graphic enough, with bulging eyes and gasping mouth, but then comes that loss of cohesion, of human form, blackened like a frostbitten limb, to again form or reform into somebody known, as weak as one reborn. Lanyon’s reaction is also described as visceral, a fact amplified by the background knowledge that he never recovered from this shock and passed away shortly after observing this transformation (Stevenson, 2003:30).

It is almost impossible for a modern reader to experience the text in the same way a contemporary reader would have – our entire reading of the text is skewed by the “spoiling” of the big reveal. The contemporary reader had to concede that the story held the attention, regardless of their final view on the text:

...every connoisseur who reads this story once must certainly read it twice. He will read it the first time passing from surprise to surprise, in a curiosity that keeps growing because it is never satisfied... (Anon., 1886a).

And:

The book, however, is written with much power and dramatic force, and holds the attention of the reader breathlessly to the end, leaving an impression on the mind not easily thrown off, and thereby calculated to do good work in causing a sense of watchfulness over the Mr. Hyde who at times obtrudes himself disagreeably within the life of each one of us. To those who do not look too closely between the lines, the book will prove its mission in many ways, and to all classes it will present itself as a parable of dramatic and absorbing interest (Anon., 1886a:476).

Walter Besant in *The Art of Fiction* expresses his opinion on the importance of surprise in a story as such:

After all these preliminary studies there comes the most important point of all – the story. There is a school which pretends that there is no need for a story: all the stories,

they say, have been told already; there is no more room for invention: nobody wants any longer to listen to a story...I cannot conceive of a world going on at all without stories, and those strong ones, with incident in them, and merriment and pathos, laughter and tears, and the excitement of wondering what will happen next...Fiction without adventure – a drama without a plot – a novel without surprises – the thing is as impossible as life without uncertainty (1885:33).

Abrams and Harpham summarise the difference between surprise and suspense very well:

As a plot evolves it arouses expectations in the audience or reader about the future course of events and actions and how characters will respond to them. A lack of certainty on the part of a concerned reader about what is going to happen, especially to characters with whom the reader has established a bond of sympathy, is known as suspense. If what in fact happens violates the expectations we have formed, it is known as surprise. The interplay of suspense and surprise is a prime source of vitality in a traditional plot (2009:294).

For the contemporary reader the suspense would centre around who is Mr. Hyde? Since the modern reader is, however, already aware of the main surprise of the text the enduring popularity of the text may be explained in a different way. Perhaps the expectation of the reveal of Jekyll as Hyde creates its own sense of suspense: how and when will the big reveal happen? Consequently, the surprise becomes transmuted into satisfaction of the suspense. Stevenson's writing was very carefully crafted supporting both approaches to the story for, as mentioned above, the revelation of Hyde's origin is not a single event – Stevenson carefully builds the reader's curiosity and the feeling of suspense from the moment Hyde is first mentioned at the start of the story:

“Did you ever remark that door?” he asked; and when his companion had replied in the affirmative, “It is connected in my mind,” added he, “with a very odd story.” (Stevenson, 2003:8)

The “very odd story” that Enfield relates to Utterson has just enough detail to tantalise, just enough melodrama to be dismissed as over-imagination, but results in that pun of a name: Hyde. The melodrama continues through the night in Mr. Utterson's dreams (14) and even into his meeting with Hyde (16) for surely Utterson's description is not merely factual or impassive:

Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice; all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing, and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him. ‘There must be something else,’ said the perplexed gentleman. ‘There is something more if I could find a name for it. God bless me, the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say? or can it be the old story of Dr. Fell?’ (Stevenson, 2003:17).

The vocabulary chosen for this description of Hyde is interesting on many levels. Firstly, it is lacking in any of the “normal” characteristics used to describe a person, no eye colour, hair colour, facial hair, or age. Secondly, they resonate with scientific terminology, particularly those related to degeneration: deformity; malformation; troglodytic. Thirdly, they tend towards opposition: timidity versus boldness, as a foreshadowing of the dualistic nature of the character. The clear picture that is being drawn by the description is that of repulsive abnormality – so different from Utterson’s staid normality.

This opening is followed step-by-step by breadcrumbs; after Carew’s murder Jekyll declares “I am quite sure of him, I have grounds for certainty that I cannot share with anyone”, which begs the question how can Jekyll be so sure that Hyde will never return? And the letter Jekyll offers as evidence is quickly undermined by proof that Jekyll has lied to his lawyer (Stevenson, 2003:26). Then there is the foreshadowing of Utterson and Enfield’s return to the door, revealing that it is the back entrance to the house of Jekyll (31) where they observe Jekyll undergoing a “turn”: “the smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below”, followed by the prophetic “God forgive us, God forgive us” (32).

This careful balance between curiosity and suspense is what keeps the reader’s attention; it is the surprise in the denouement that granted this tale its popularity and infamy, or as Saposnik describes:

No work of Stevenson’s has been so popular or so harmed by its popularity as (to give it its full name) The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde... as colloquial metaphor for the good-evil antithesis that lurks in all men, it has become the victim of its own success, allowing subsequent generations to take the translation for the original, to see Jekyll or Hyde where one should see Jekyll-Hyde (1971:715).

What seems clear from the reader responses quoted is that this tale’s success stands or falls in the author’s ability to convince the reader, not necessarily of the truth of Hyde’s existence, but of the truth of the nature of man. And the preeminent determiner of this acceptance I believe lies in the believability of Stevenson’s characters.

3.3 Setting the scene: Perceived Realism

While Stevenson was well known for choosing his words carefully, he relies on techniques of perceived realism, methods of ensuring a reader is experiencing the narrative as being congruent with the real world, believable within the reality created in the text to create the mental imagery needed for facilitating absorption. In some cases, he relied on using tiny details to add fuller meaning to the text. For example, the reference to the “old story of Dr. Fell” (Stevenson, 2003:17)

quoted above refers to a verse regarding a strict dean by an Oxford student relating how much he dislikes his dean – for no specific reason (Stevenson, explained by Linehan, 2003:17). Other examples include the brief mention of Coutts, the bank of highest standing in Great Britain which served only the most elite of clients (Stevenson, explained by Linehan, 2003:10), or the description of a policeman “advancing with his bull’s eye open”, referring to the light emitted from the front of his lantern (Stevenson, explained by Linehan, 2003:44). These, however, are not nearly on a level with the amount of detail that will be employed by Stoker, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Another way of promoting perceived realism is the use of techniques that rely heavily on characterisation. The stage for this is set right from the beginning of the novella, by making use of a third person, omniscient point of view (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:301; Herman *et al.* 2005:602), another staple of realism (Herman *et al.*, 2005:492). There is, however, a focus of character, or how a specific character perceives events in the text (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:302), in this case Mr. Utterson, a lawyer. In fact, the story opens with a detailed description of his personality, character, and behaviour, of which I only reproduce a short section:

He was austere with himself; drank gin when he was alone, to mortify a taste for vintages; and though he enjoyed the theatre, had not crossed the doors of one for twenty years. But he had an approved tolerance for others... "I incline to Cain's heresy," he used to say quaintly: "I let my brother go to the devil in his own way." (Stevenson, 2003:7)

Utterson is introduced as a staid, trustworthy, and contemplative man and much is made of his occupation, to the point of referring to him on several occasions as “the lawyer” (Stevenson, 2003:13). This designation further crystalizes the character as a keeper of secrets, finder of truths and giver of guidance. This careful framing allows the reader to follow along, accepting the choices the character makes to resolve the situation in which he finds himself. For example, in searching out Hyde to judge for himself what kind of person Hyde is (Stevenson, 2003:15), or in visiting Jekyll after the murder to enquire about Hyde, rather than reporting their relationship to the police (Stevenson, 2003:25).

Saposnik describes Utterson’s role in the text as follows:

Clearly the moral norm of the story, he is introduced first not only because he is Jekyll's confidant (the only one remaining), but because by person and profession he represents the best and worst of Victoria's social beings. Pledged to a code harsh in its application, he has not allowed its pressures to mar his sense of human need. For himself he has chosen and he must make his life on that choice, yet he judges others with the understanding necessary to human weakness. (1971:719)

Clearly then the choice and execution of Utterson as the focaliser of the text is meaningful on various levels, not only does his personality inspire confidence and trust, but his beliefs also creates an accepting space, a space that recognises human weakness and failings.

Vladimir Nabokov (1980:184) theorises that Stevenson uses Utterson, and to some extent also Enfield, as conduits for the strange, allowing their everyday rationality to “filter” the reader’s experience of the fantastical. Nabokov further theorises that Stevenson does this to solve a creative problem – how to convey the horror of Hyde, without ever actually describing him. In other words, how to describe the monster in a way that makes the monster plausible to the reader – whatever that may mean to the specific reader.

Hyde is described by Enfield right at the outset of the tale as:

He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it: I can't describe him. And it's not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment (Stevenson, 2003:11).

Enfield’s description is no clearer than Utterson’s later one, in fact it reads as softer or more forgiving due, at least in part, to Stevenson’s careful building of suspense. The terminology used is vague and indicative of a more subjective explanation, with none of the pseudoscience vocabulary used by Utterson. Lanyon, in his letter at the end of the story gives a slightly more detailed description, but it is still largely based on his reaction to Hyde’s proximity:

He was small, as I have said; I was struck besides with the shocking expression of his face, with his remarkable combination of great muscular activity and great apparent debility of constitution, and – last but not least – with the odd, subjective disturbance caused by his neighbourhood. This bore some resemblance to incipient rigor, and was accompanied by a marked sinking of the pulse (Stevenson, 2003:44).

All characters, apart from Hyde, are well described, as for example Dr Jekyll: “a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty, with something of a slyish cast perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness” (Stevenson, 2003:19), and this contrast between the detailed description of most characters’ physical appearance and personality and the vague description of Hyde’s appearance, coloured by how he makes others feel, creates a feeling of unease in the reader. Not only does this allow the reader to create their own image of Hyde, but it also creates an absence of real existence, a foreshadowing of the truth.

Our introduction to the first titular character in contrast is much more formal, almost academic. In the description of the first epistolary document included into the text, Henry Jekyll’s titles are listed

as "M.D., D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S., &c.," (Stevenson, 2003:13). What all this translates to is that he was trained as a Doctor of Medicine and a Doctor of Civil Law and honoured for his accomplishments by the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. As a Fellow of the Royal Society, he has joined a distinguished membership of an invitation-only club for the eminent scientists of the day (Stevenson, explained by Linehan, 2003:13). The use of the titles enhances a sense of contemporaneity – the use of real places or people to impart realness to the fiction. In this case, real titles not only create an image of the character, but also imbed him into the fabric of London's professional society. Their presence also allows for the easier acceptance of Jekyll's outlandish claims regarding his invention – great men were making great discoveries all the time – maybe even this? While it remains a stretch, the accomplished nature of the character forms a stepping-stone that makes the leap to the acceptance of his grotesque creation smaller, and so, easier to believe.

This introduction forms part of Jekyll's will as read by Utterson in part 2 of the text – a disturbing thing that leaves practically all this august person's personal wealth and belongings to the "troglodytic" Hyde (Stevenson, 2003:17).

The will was holograph, for Mr. Utterson, though he took charge of it now that it was made, had refused to lend the least assistance in the making of it; it provided not only that, in case of the decease of Henry Jekyll, etc., all his possessions were to pass into the hands of his "friend and benefactor Edward Hyde," but that in case of Dr. Jekyll's "disappearance or unexplained absence for any period exceeding three calendar months," the said Edward Hyde should step into the said Henry Jekyll's shoes without further delay and free from any burthen or obligation, beyond the payment of a few small sums to the members of the doctor's household (Stevenson, 2003:13).

The inclusion of the will and the titles further contributes to the realistic appearance of the text. First, the inclusion of documentation has been an established technique since the time of the Greeks and Romans, and epistolary novels became popular from the late 17th century (Herman *et al.*, 2005:140) and were also a staple of Realism. By the late 19th century, the social, legal, and informational function served by the letter lends an unequivocal truth to the novel it is used in (Herman *et al.*, 2005:141), which links with the second fact – that it is a will, a formal binding document, which had special significance within the Victorian context – papers mattered. Whether letters to friends or formalised agreements between nations, writing was important and an everyday part of literate society, its presence normalised the situation. This same technique is also used by Elliot in *Middlemarch* (1994:43; 45; 370; 375) and Hardy in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (2010: 438; 439).

The fact that the document is a will of course has the second advantage of being read as a foreshadowing of murder – as in many detective stories where the will is of extreme importance.

By playing to the expectations of the reader in this way, Stevenson is setting his audience up for a far greater surprise later; unexpectedly, the will belongs to the murderer, or at least some part of him.

In contrast to *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Dionea* is a true epistolary tale – composed entirely of extracts of letters sent by Doctor Alessandro De Rosis to Lady Evelyn Savelli, Princess of Sabina. The characterisation in the text is also clear, but of a seemingly more organic nature, the picture of the author and his audience unfolds slowly, revealing bits and pieces of information, some related to the events in the plot, others seemingly incidental right from the start of the tale:

I take immediate advantage of the generous offer of your Excellency (allow an old Republican who has held you on his knees to address you by that title sometimes, 'tis so appropriate) to help our poor people. I never expected to come a-begging so soon. For the olive crop has been unusually plenteous. We semi-Genoese don't pick the olives unripe, like our Tuscan neighbors, but let them grow big and black, when the young fellows go into the trees with long reeds and shake them down on the grass for the women to collect — a pretty sight which your Excellency must see someday: the grey trees with the brown, barefoot lads craning, balanced in the branches, and the turquoise sea as background just beneath... That sea of ours — it is all along of it that I wish to ask for money. Looking up from my desk, I see the sea through the window, deep below and beyond the olive woods, bluish-green in the sunshine and veined with violet under the cloud-bars, like one of your Ravenna mosaics spread out as pavement for the world: a wicked sea, wicked in its loveliness, wickeder than your grey northern ones, and from which must have arisen in times gone by (when Phoenicians or Greeks built the temples at Lerici and Porto Venere) a baleful goddess of beauty, a Venus Verticordia, but in the bad sense of the word, overwhelming men's lives in sudden darkness like that squall of last week (Lee, 1890:29).

By and large the text reads like a series of paintings within which events take place, never does the doctor or the princess take shape in the reader's mind's eye – they remain nebulous images to the side of the painting, mere observers, framing the painting and the main character. This is in stark contrast to the clear and detailed characterisation of Utterson, whose character portrayal adds meaning and insight into the events and people he describes.

Some small comments allow the reader to form some opinion of the characters in *Dionea*. For example, the social status and the relationship between the author of the letters and their addressee is hinted at, at the inception of the text “I take immediate advantage of the generous offer of your Excellency (allow an old Republican who has held you on his knees to address you by that title sometimes, 'tis so appropriate) to help our poor people” (Lee, 1890:29).

The information contained in this little paragraph is not quite clear. The author of the letters refers to himself as “an old Republican” which may indicate his participation in, or support of the reunification of Italy that took place during the early 19th century (The White House, 1999). The fact that the addressee is indicated to be the Princess of Sabina (Lee, 1890:29) married to the

prince (Lee, 1890:46) does not help to clear up their relationship, aside from the indication that Doctor de Rosis watched the Lady grow up, and that she now serves as a patron of sorts to him. In trying to “realise” the focaliser of this text Lee attempts to give the doctor not only some standing but also authority which will allow the reader to give more credence to his observations and opinions, similarly to how the princess react within their relationship.

This relationship and their standing are expanded on several letters later to also reveal how the characters interact within that social context:

Do not tempt me, dearest Excellency, with your invitations to Rome. I should not be happy there, and do but little honor to your friendship. My many years of exile, of wanderings in northern countries, have made me a little bit into a northern man: I cannot quite get on with my own fellow-countrymen, except with the good peasants and fishermen all round. Besides — forgive the vanity of an old man, who has learned to make triple acrostic sonnets to cheat the days and months at Theresienstadt and Spielberg — I have suffered too much for Italy to endure patiently the sight of little parliamentary cabals and municipal wranglings, although they also are necessary in this day as conspiracies and battles were in mine (Lee, 1890:32).

Theresienstadt at that time would have been a small military base for the Bohemian Habsburg monarchy (USHMM, 2024) and Spielberg possibly refers to Špilberk castle, an ancient fortress which from the 1820's held, amongst others, Italian revolutionary prisoners and from 1858 was again used as an army barracks (Brno City Museum, 2024). These references indicate that the author of the letters is probably too young to have served time as a political prisoner, and was likely some sort of official functionary, probably a medical doctor. References to real events and places has been used successfully by many authors to create a sense of contemporaneity, and Lee probably had the same aim.

After a few more letters we find this remark, too vague to convey anything but some small sense of the personality of the princess:

Perhaps, however, your Excellency, who is, I fear but a Pagan woman (for all the Savelli Popes and St. Andrew Savelli's miracles), and insufficiently appreciative of embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs, will be quite as satisfied to hear that Dionea, instead of skill, has got the prettiest face of any little girl in Montemirto (Lee, 1890:31).

These letters, rather than having the reader experiencing the events with the characters, merely serve as the vehicle for describing the events to the reader, a quite different approach from Stevenson. This lack of characterisation is probably one of the reasons why Lee's offering was less successful than the author authors discussed. If the reader clearly requires the characterisation in order to experience successful absorption into the text.

Returning to *Jekyll and Hyde*, another large marker of contemporaneity is the London of the late 19th century, which in this text serves as more than the mere backdrop for the tale. References to various areas and institutions within the metropolis guide the contemporary reader to deeper insights and understanding, such as the location of Dr Lanyon's house amongst various once-aristocratic homes in Cavendish Square, at the end of Harley Street in west central London, which in the later Victorian era was largely occupied by fashionable physicians, surgeons, and dentists (Stevenson, explained by Linehan, 2003:13). Knowledge of the area means that with the mere mention of Cavendish Square readers would know that this doctor is popular and successful, which is in stark contrast to Jekyll's home, visited by Utterson directly after meeting Hyde for the first time, which for all that it is not given a specific location, is very well described:

Round the corner from the by-street, there was a square of ancient, handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate and let in flats and chambers to all sorts and conditions of men: map-engravers, architects, shady lawyers and the agents of obscure enterprises. One house, however, second from the corner, was still occupied entire; and at the door of this, which wore a great air of wealth and comfort, though it was now plunged in darkness except for the fanlight, Mr. Utterson stopped and knocked (Stevenson, 2003:17).

By referring to real places and spaces characteristic to the London of the time, Stevenson succeeds in evoking images that are not only familiar to his contemporary readers, but also reminiscent of the quandaries and irritants of the time (Walkowitz, 1992:141). This method also has a secondary effect on the contemporary reader; it allows them to move with the characters from one area to the next and having the settings of those areas echoing the feelings, assumptions, and expectations of the scenes they are framing. This is a vastly different approach from that taken by most Victorian realist writers, in that they were very careful to set their novels in vague, stereotypical areas rather than in specific places and specific times.

Lee also made use of a vague setting for *Dionea*, but firmly dates the events to start 17 years before the publication of the text, with the tale ending three years before the date of publication. The setting here is also much more rural and recalls the settings of the more traditional Gothic, with a Madonna-like maiden ensconced in a fort with ancient roots (Lee, 1890:41) above a cliff (47) where she will meet her terrible end. Acting as backdrop, foreshadowing and emotional barometer however is the ocean, as seen in the passage quoted on page 38 of this dissertation, for not only was the ocean subject to the goddess Venus – she was born from its foam (ESO, 2007) this is the first hint of Dionea as Venus, she comes from the ocean, an ocean the doctor describes as a forewarning of the role she will play: “overwhelming men’s lives in sudden darkness like that squall of last week” (Lee, 1980:29).

Lee's use of setting is just as effective as that of Stevenson, but the effect on the reader is markedly different. Lee creates a vague, romanticised setting for her pagan goddess, far removed from modern life, and that makes it easier for the reader to not necessarily believe the story but makes the events to follow more probable within this perceived reality. Stevenson uses the contemporary reader's knowledge of modern London to not only strengthen his characterisation, but also to construct Gothic duality and atmosphere as evidenced by the description of the "Hyde" parts of London, increasing his reader's acceptance of events in the tale. This acceptance then facilitates absorption and consequently increases the "believability" of the text itself.

For example, the impact on the reader is vastly different between Lee's pastoral setting and when Stevenson describes Hyde's abode, to which Utterson leads the police after the murder; it is located somewhere in Soho, a rather infamous area at the time:

It was by this time about nine in the morning, and the first fog of the season. A great chocolate-coloured pall lowered over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapours; so that as the cab crawled from street to street, Mr. Utterson beheld a marvellous number of degrees and hues of twilight; for here it would be dark like the back-end of evening; and there would be a glow of a rich, lurid brown, like the light of some strange conflagration; and here, for a moment, the fog would be quite broken up, and a haggard shaft of daylight would glance in between the swirling wreaths. The dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways, and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness, seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare (Stevenson, 2003:23).

After a great influx of immigrants, including French Huguenots, the area became overpopulated and poor, characterised by gin palaces, cheap eateries, and penny number stores (Stevenson, explained by Linehan, 2003:23). By playing on the link believed by contemporary scientists to exist between poverty and the degeneration of humanity into a criminal mind-set and the representation of this link in physical deformity and mental illness (Dryden 2003:8), Stevenson creates a squalid environment perfect for housing the degenerate Hyde. At the same time, Stevenson introduces a Gothic atmosphere, with buildings shrouded in smog, dark and threatening. This "urbanisation" and corruption of the natural fog and mists often used in Gothic tales is the first use of a Gothic motif in the text, and Hyde's disappearance into this murky shroud signals the supernatural nature of this monster.

Interestingly it is not Jekyll's home which is set up in contrast to Hyde's, but that of Dr Lanyon. Lanyon's house in a reputable area, surrounded by his peers, visited by "his crowding patients" (Stevenson, 2003:13) versus Hyde's rooms in the slum, surrounded by a crowd of the destitute and the forgotten representing what Jekyll could have become and what he ended up achieving.

Jekyll's home is never actually located beyond the description of the back of the building with the door as set in an average street of traders in a "busy quarter of London" (Stevenson, 2003:8). This lack of firm location echoes Jekyll's situation as well with his home also presenting two faces to the world:

a square of ancient, handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate and let in flats and chambers to all sorts and conditions of men: map-engravers, architects, shady lawyers and the agents of obscure enterprises. One house, however, second from the corner, was still occupied entire; and at the door of this, which wore a great air of wealth and comfort, though it was now plunged in darkness except for the fanlight (Stevenson, 2003:17).

This house, just like Jekyll is not part of the established medical community which can be found in Cavendish square, in fact they are not clearly part of any section of society with the neighbours being from various backgrounds, the final image being one of a man much reduced but still open to the public. The other face is hidden and carrying every mark of degeneration:

A certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained (Stevenson: 2003:8).

This side of the house echo's Hyde's lack of describable characteristics, his hidden and unreachable nature and that same repulsive abnormality – it does not look like a house, never mind a home. The diametric difference between the different areas of London and the buildings occupied by the characters reflects the duality of personality which lies at the very heart of the novella. The deterioration of once great houses resonates with discussions around evolution, or more importantly the devolution of man and the investigation of the concept of double consciousness in early psychology.

Science, which used to be the guiding light in the darkness of ignorance and superstition, has become a source of facts that create unease and horror. After the publication of Charles Darwin's, *The Descent of Man*, and *Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), and later in the formalisation of psychology as a growing area of interest (Taylor, 2007:28), the idea of "degeneration" had become the catchphrase in popular as well as professional debate regarding the "state" of modern society during the late 19th century (Karschay, 2015:6). Of particular interest is Cesare Lombroso's *L'uomo delinquente* (Criminal Man) published in 1876, which investigated the idea that criminality, as a form of degeneracy, is an inborn characteristic of some devolved individuals, and can be diagnosed based on physical appearance (Karschay, 2015:27; Taylor, 2007:14). The familiarity of this idea allows the contemporary reader to see in Hyde's description as "pale and

dwarflike... (giving) an impression of deformity...hardly human...troglodytic" (Stevenson, 2003:17) the presence of the atavistic criminal (Dryden, 2003:78; Taylor, 2007:14).

These discussions, particularly the French inquiry into double consciousness, fascinated Stevenson (Taylor, 2007:28). He was clearly well read on the topic, and his writings reflect his scientific interest and understanding – the interest, at least, was echoed by his readers. The broader interest into not only double consciousness, but the “unconscious life” of the individual is evidenced by D’Amato’s (2005:104) analysis of Freud’s work against the writings of Stevenson. She concludes that:

Freud did not work in a vacuum. Quite the contrary, he absorbed and synthesized ideas that were present within the culture and expressed by the intuitive sensitivities of an array of writers and thinkers whom he voraciously studied. Robert Louis Stevenson is simply an example of one literary author whose work displays an uncanny resonance with Freud's ultimate findings.

This means that Stevenson is just one of the voices representing the zeitgeist interest in the human condition and consciousness. What makes Stevenson so impactful in exploring this topic, is that he does it so well that *Jekyll and Hyde* and Freud’s works echo each other. He created an image or metaphor that spoke clearly to the questions and beliefs about mankind, not only contextually, but enduringly.

As such, the story becomes a mirror that Stevenson holds up in front of his audience – just like Utterson, the reader becomes a witness to the duality of individuals, society, and the self. Stevenson reveals the hidden truth to his readers, by reflecting the “modern” discussions and theories. Stevenson also succeeded in creating an additional level of realism in his text through this social commentary, a technique used by many other authors as well. Many of these “realist” writings, however, strayed too far from oblique references and descriptions of degeneracy, particularly writings from the continent, and many Victorians scorned them as being degenerate (Dryden, 2003:4) rather than exploring the degenerate. Stevenson, however, avoided much of this criticism as *Jekyll and Hyde* was not intended to be “real” but rather a parable of moral dissolution’s evil (Dryden 2003:4).

The debate surrounding what is degenerate in society and what not, echoes the dissonance created by the visible dualities between rich and poor, male and female, and more abstractly between the greatness of empire and the subjugation of colonialism, and the conscious and subconscious in Victorian society. The Victorians often reacted to this ever-clearer dichotomy, not by attempting to balance out negative aspects, but in a manner consistent with all their problem solving, by separating, subjugating, and discounting both the problem and its source.

Using the duality of the character as a representation of the greater dualities as a central focus allows Stevenson to contextualise the text further. It places the anxieties and preoccupations of the contemporary readers within a recognisable, generalised personification, but positions it within a removed, supernatural setting that allows the author, and reader, to explore those anxieties and preoccupations safely.

So how does Stevenson balance these oppositional ideas of “not real” and believable in a tale that became not only an enduring homily of human nature, but another piece of scaffolding in the enduring vision of the nature of the Victorian world? Take for instance Jekyll's theory regarding the appearance of Hyde, as given in his final letter at the end of the novella:

I must here speak by theory alone, saying not that which I know, but that which I suppose to be most probable. The evil side of my nature, to which I had now transferred the stamping efficacy, was less robust and less developed than the good which I had just deposed. Again, in the course of my life, which had been, after all, nine tenths a life of effort, virtue and control, it had been much less exercised and much less exhausted. And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter and younger than Henry Jekyll. Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides (which I must still believe to be the lethal side of man) had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay. And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human. In my eyes it bore a livelier image of the spirit, it seemed more express and single, than the imperfect and divided countenance I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine. And in so far I was doubtless right. I have observed that when I wore the semblance of Edward Hyde, none could come near to me at first without a visible misgiving of the flesh. This, as I take it, was because all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil: and Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil (Stevenson, 2003:51).

This excerpt is a mixture of a scientific-seeming explanation of the stark difference between the appearance of Jekyll and that of Hyde, and philosophical exploration of the duality of human nature. The wording is couched carefully to be neither too academic, nor too commonplace, while maintaining an aura of frank description, an echo of scientific objectivity. The discrepancy in Hyde being seen as both the distilled evil of Jekyll's personhood, as well as more alive than Jekyll's normal version, allows the reader to recognise two different readings of the text. One, that the mere existence of Hyde transforms the text into allegory for the primary failing of the Victorians – their hypocrisy in denying their own base humanity (Houghton 2003:146). And two, that the very emptiness of the Victorian middle-class' existence is a form of degeneration which harks back to the scene at the beginning of the novella of Utterson's Sunday walks.

Smith (2007:100) argues that in the opening paragraphs introducing Utterson, and particularly in the dreary, bloodless description of Utterson's Sunday walks with his friend as described in the opening pages, one can find the seeds of the Gothic.

It was reported by those who encountered them in their Sunday walks, that they said nothing, looked singularly dull, and would hail with obvious relief the appearance of a friend. For all that, the two men put the greatest store by these excursions, counted them the chief jewel of each week. (Stevenson, 2003:8)

Smith's argument is based on the fact that the Gothic questions the source of evil in civilization, and while earlier iterations of the Gothic had an external locus of such evil, in the fin de siècle that locus becomes internalised. The "evil" identified by Smith is the empty, two-dimensional nature of civilisation visible not only in this description of behaviour but also in the entirety of Utterson's personality. By constructing a society based completely on a fabricated, false representation of the members of that society the society is two-dimensional and empty of life and contains the seeds of its own destruction.

In accordance with the first reading, the story ends pessimistically prophetic that as a result of their hypocrisy the "good" in the form of the middle-class professionals, Drs Langdon and Jekyll as well as the moral security of Utterson, will be destroyed along with the bad. The latter characterised by the atavistic, degenerative, criminal aspects of Jekyll personified by Hyde who is marked as the primitive Other, threatening to overwhelm the civilised by his appearance (Dryden, 2003:9). As John Addington Symonds (1886:98) writes in a letter to Stevenson, March 3, 1886, what makes the story disturbing is that it reminds the reader of a truth, the fact that all people at some point in their lives "have been upon the verge of developing a Mr Hyde". The reader is able to recognise the truth of their own nature in Jekyll's division, and this forces them to recognise, at least on some level, their own, and societies, hypocrisy in denying their basic makeup.

Jekyll and Hyde also echoes some of the aspects in fairy tales that resonate with or make use of the reader's embedded knowledge and assumptions to further their understanding of the tale, or to create dissonance for the reader when the storyline breaks with the results expected based on assumptions created by the familiarity of those fairy tales. In fairy tales such as Grimm's collected *Six Swans* and *The White Bride and the Black One*, Charles Perrault's *Donkeyskin* and the well-known *Beauty and the Beast*, the duality of the person is sourced or enforced by an external power rather than an inherent characteristic and is consequently generally successfully resolved by the end of the tale. The successful resolution often depends on the innocence, purity, and basic goodness of the transformed character, but this whole idea is completely undermined in *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Jekyll, like most real people, is no innocent; at the outset Utterson believes that Hyde's power over Jekyll comes in the form of knowledge suitable for blackmail. Utterson ruminates: "He [Jekyll] was wild when he was young...in the law of God, there is no statute of limitations...the ghost of

some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace” (Stevenson, 2003: 18). The transformation in the end is shown to be self-instigated and perpetuated. Dramatically in the end, it is the inherent wickedness, baseness and self-absorption of the character that leads to its destruction. This use of the fairy tale to emphasise “fundamental binary opposition” is based on the rising esteem for fairy tales by the end of the 19th century and became a hallmark strategy in the *fin de siècle*.

While Stevenson makes use of all these methods to increase the credibility of his text, he does so to a much lesser degree than both Stoker and Doyle will be proven to have done. Realism is not Stevenson's goal; in fact, he is a devoted anti-realist (Arata, 2007:184), but he does use aspects of realism to create the contrast and metaphor needed to illustrate the societal problems he is questioning. As Stevenson explained in his *A Note on Realism* (1883), even the most incongruent of methods, of which realism is but one, can be used to create the likeness of real life, that much sought-after illusion (as explained in Arata, 2007:185).

Stevenson's story, while he makes use of various techniques to create contemporaneity, is largely carried by the mental imagery created through perceived realism as discussed on page 40, achieved through the creation of complex characters with mixed motives

3.4 The Modern View

Jekyll and Hyde is a somewhat difficult read for the modern reader, particularly so on the first attempt. The lack of female characters and a sympathetic central character along with the fact that the main plot twist is already part of the social consciousness, may prevent the reader from appreciating the revolutionary nature of the text.

London's function as backdrop to the tale is an aspect that is largely lost on the modern reader, as the modern view of Victorian London is very distorted, and this is probably best described by Ridenhour:

It is a dark, foggy night. You are alone in a narrow, cobblestoned alleyway, walking home through an unfamiliar part of the city. The gaslight streetlamps do little to cut through the fog, a London particular that burns your throat and stings your eyes. You had thought you were alone, but now you hear the echoing tap of footsteps. Who else would be out so late? You walk faster, but the footsteps seem to speed up to match your pace. Beginning to panic, you look over your shoulder and see a dark shape dimly outlined in the mist, coming closer. You stop, suddenly mesmerized. The shape behind you comes forward, stepping out of the fog. In terror, you recognize the night-time stalker. You've seen that maniacal face, had nightmares about what he would say to you, what he would do. The thing in the fog is...

Well, it could be any number of things. Images of the gaslit, fog enshrouded streets of Victorian London, and the killers and demons which haunt them, have become iconic, if not clichéd (2012:vii)

The same transmutation of view holds true for the use of aspects of contemporaneity and modernity. In fact, much of the “ambience” that served to signal to contemporary readers that this was not a book intended to be read as a truth rather than true is what makes it "Gothic" to the modern reader. This transmutation means that the experience of the modern reader is far removed from that of the contemporary reader, further transforming the way in which the modern reader experiences the suspense created by Stevenson.

Various modern critics have evaluated *Jekyll and Hyde* within the context of the science, psychology, politics, and social change of the *fin de siècle*. And it continues to be accommodating of a variety of readings and interpretations due to Stevenson’s careful choosing of words and the crafting of intricate metaphor and secondary meanings he created an eminently analysable text. However, it also manages to remain relatable to the average reader, those not necessarily knowledgeable or interested in the text’s academic worth:

As we follow Mr. Utterson and through the clever use of letters written by Jekyll and Hyde, we discover the terrible secret that connects them!

This is a very well written book, with descriptive and powerful language. The characters and their feelings are described beautifully, for example, Mr. Utterson "spent his words as rarely as gold" and Hyde, who stares at people "with a sneering coolness – like the devil himself" making people feel uncomfortable just by looking at him (ExtraEpic, 2014).

It is this characterisation as well as the “truth” it represents that allows Jekyll and Hyde to leap out of the pages and leave their home text behind and become so well known. But it is only when observed within their natural habitat that the true story can be read, a story that has become overshadowed by the celebrity of its monster.

CHAPTER 4 THE FANTASTIC INVADING THE MODERN CITY

4.1 Introduction

Fascinatingly, *Dracula* was largely ignored by literary scholars for the first 100 years of its existence, despite its public popularity (Lynch, 2010:vii). Bolton (2010:55) argues that compared to the genius and skill of other enduring writers of the Victorian era, Stoker offers only "serviceable prose and wooden characterization". How then did this novel become so enduring and a substrate for belief in the supernatural and its monsters? According to Bolton (2010:55) it has held the popular imagination through a type of lasting resonance which has allowed for the constant retelling of the story, retaining some constant features, while changing various other elements (Hogle, 2002:6). However, as Smith (2007:112) goes on to question: how was it possible that *Dracula* could convince a reader of the novel in the 1890s that its terrors were plausible, or, even more remarkably, how does it continue to do so?

Dracula is much more complex than *Jekyll and Hyde*, and not only because, as a full-length novel, it is much longer. It has more detailed characters, greater character development, much wider setting, and a more complex plot. While *Jekyll and Hyde* focused largely on internalised evil as discussed in Chapter 3, I believe that *Dracula* is concerned with the internalisation of external evil on various levels. Whether the cause of the degeneration is due to breeding with the degenerate, or as a consequence of contact with the degenerate in a form of Brownian movement or because of the loss of meaning caused by the loss of faith, all are possible. As such, degeneration in this novel can, and has been, read, viewed, and interpreted in various ways over time (Smith, 2007:109), assisted by *Dracula's* "primal narrative power" and "extraordinary psychosexual, socio-political subtexts", which captivate the modern reader and reviewer (Auerbach & Skal, 1997:363). Despite all of this, initial reviewers tended to reduce the title to "titillating, supernatural tale but were unwilling to consider it literature in the canonical sense" (Welch, 2010:39). For the sake of this investigation, I will only focus on the general decline in the health, faith, and goodness of the characters due to external influences.

While Stoker established many aspects and beliefs today considered "standard" of the Western vampire, he did not invent the vampire myth or even create western literature's vampire. As part of the contest among Shelley and Byron's circle that gave the world *Frankenstein*, Dr John Polidori created *The Vampyre: A Tale*, the first of its kind in English literature (Stoker explained by Auerbach and Skal, 1997:331). Various other iterations followed: plays, operas, penny dreadfuls and novellas. One of the widely held beliefs regarding the "origins" of *Dracula* stems from the existence of the warlord Vlad "The Impaler" Tepes who shared the name *Dracula*; there is no

evidence that Stoker had access to any information but a vague reference to this historical figure. This means that many of the complex deductions, theories and pop culture references based on parallels drawn between these two characters were in fact created after the fact (Stoker explained by Auerbach and Skal, 1997:331). But it is in this search for the origin that we see the believability of the text.

4.2 The edge of the seat: Suspense

Already explained as when “an event happens in the text, and then the reader is waiting for the consequences of this event to be revealed” suspense in truth is what the reader experiences, both mentally and emotionally during that period (Alwitt, quoted by Jacobs & Lüdtke, 2002:35). Suspense can also be described as the “state of imbalance or tension that precedes closure” (Abbot, 2009:57). Abbot goes on to explain:

All successful narratives of any length are chains of suspense and surprise that keep us in a fluctuating state of impatience, wonderment, and partial gratification. We are held this way until the final moment of closure, though there are also instances, and not infrequently when a narrative will fail to close altogether. And this, too, can have its satisfactions (2009:57).

One facilitator of suspense is the hope or possibility that events may have different results (Abbot, 2009:59), another is related to curiosity – the anticipation of having answers to our questions, and then there is the interlock with surprise, when the answers to our questions are not what we expected them to be (61). In this respect suspense is the building of a puzzle – the slow steady connection of events and questions in order to pull the reader along in search of the overarching “dramatic question” of the tale (MasterClass, 2021).

The novel opens in the middle of Harker’s recount of his travels which leaves the opening of the novel full of questions: where is Harker going, who is he, and who is he going to? Here again the modern reader is at an advantage, or rather disadvantage, to the contemporary reader; we know he is headed to Transylvania, and there will find the titular Dracula, whom we know to be a monster. In the text, however, we have lots of seemingly irrelevant, though interesting information about his journey, and then the following paragraph:

Having some time at my disposal when in London, I had visited the British Museum, and made a search among the books and maps of the library regarding Transylvania; it had struck me that some foreknowledge of the country could hardly fail to have some importance in dealing with a noble of that country. I find that the district he named is in the extreme east of the country, just on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia, and Bukovina, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe (Stoker, 1997:9).

This indicates that Harker is a man who plans and prepares, not somebody given to flights of fancy, an important characteristic if the reader will believe what he later shares with them. We learn that he will be travelling to Transylvania, and that he is dealing with an unnamed noble of the area. A few lines later comes “the Castle Dracula”, a reference to the title, which again is followed, after another small interval, by “the post town named by Count Dracula”. Now we have a name, and a place, but still no idea why Harker is going there. Again, this little titbit is followed by a lot of descriptions and details, and we start to encounter the first Gothic references or foreshadowing – even if they are not clearly such:

I read that every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool; if so my stay may be very interesting...I did not sleep well, though my bed was comfortable enough, for I had all sorts of queer dreams. There was a dog howling all night under my window (Stoker, 1997:10).

Aside from a vague “there was business to be done...my duty was imperative”, no indication of the goal of the trip is given until much later, when Harker writes:

What sort of grim adventure was it on which I had embarked? Was this a customary incident in the life of a solicitor's clerk sent out to explain the purchase of a London estate to a foreigner? Solicitor's clerk! Mina would not like that. Solicitor—for just before leaving London I got word that my examination was successful; and I am now a full-blown solicitor! (Stoker, 1997:21).

This paragraph does raise the question – how would the story have progressed if the individual sent on this errand was not inexperienced and eager to prove themselves? What would the reaction of an experienced attorney have been to the strange instructions, and the even stranger surroundings and event? Would such a person have given up the cause and left the papers at some convenient point along the route? Harker's pride and uncertainty is clear from this passage and that very uncertainty further contributes to creating an atmosphere of suspense.

The suspense created by this piece-by-piece revelation of information is also strengthened by the interweaving of various questions and their answers. For, while we are waiting to find out where Harker is going, and why, we are also confronted by the questions: who is Count Dracula? Why is everything so strange? Who is Mina? And so forth and so on, pushing, pulling, and teasing the reader to continue their reading. An early critic wrote, “The pursuit of the Count has all the excitement of a detective story, with tenfold its difficulties” (Payn, 1897:6), also identifying this careful structuring in the text. There is no golden rule for successfully eliciting this feeling of suspense and curiosity in the reader beyond this basic description, and what works at one time will fail to do so at another, what is successful with one reader will utterly fail with another.

Lee inversely has only one central question: Who is Dionea really? The reader goes from letter to letter looking for clues to Dionea's "true" identity and almost like the adherents of a daily television drama the reader waits for each new salacious detail of the malignant effect the mysterious orphan has on the simple community she creates havoc in, a state explained by a contemporary reviewer:

Vernon Lee's Hauntings are quite genuinely ghostly in effect; her "sprites of the distempered mind," indeed, charm the attention much more than if they clanked their chains at midnight, or groaned, or dropped blood, or extended clammy hands, or wailed a banshee wail, or, in a word, were conventional spectres (Sharp, 1890:352).

The fact that the expected final reveal of her identity never happens is frustrating and anticlimactic – and probably much more effective in the long term at making the reader think and re-evaluate their interpretations and expectations based on how evident her identity is from the text.

The use of documents in *Dracula* will be discussed in detail in the next section; however, briefly, by using documents written by different witnesses the story is being told from various viewpoints, which creates an opportunity for the reader to be in possession of more information and insight than any particular character in the novel at any given time. For example, the moment the Russian ship is observed by the coastguard the combination of the ship's strange behaviour – "she's knocking about in the queerest way. She doesn't know her mind" (Stoker, 1997:74) – is observed directly by Mina, and that is all she knows. But the reader already has the knowledge that Dracula has left for England, and knows Dr Seward's account, from his own writings, of Renfield's vampire-like delusion, which he describes as "a zoophagous (life-eating) mania; what he desires is to absorb as many lives as he can" (71). All this knowledge combines with the ominous weather described by the newspaper extract which constitutes Chapter 7:

One of the greatest and suddenest storms on record has just been experienced here, with results both strange and unique... The approach of sunset was so very beautiful, so grand in its masses of splendidly-coloured clouds... A little after midnight came a strange sound from over the sea, and high overhead the air began to carry a strange, faint hollow booming. Then without warning the tempest broke. With a rapidity which, at the time, seemed incredible, and even afterwards is impossible to realize, the whole aspect of nature at once became convulsed. The waves rose in growing fury, each over-topping its fellow, till in a very few minutes the lately glassy sea was like a roaring and devouring monster. White-crested waves beat madly on the level sands and rushed up the shelving cliffs; others broke over the piers, and with their spume swept the lanterns of the lighthouses which rise from the end of either pier of Whitby Harbour... To add to the difficulties and dangers of the time, masses of sea-fog came drifting inland—white, wet clouds, which swept by in ghostly fashion, so dank and damp and cold that it needed but little effort of imagination to think that the spirits of those lost at sea were touching their living brethren with the clammy hands of death (Stoker, 1997:75).

Not only does the report seem to capture the reaction of nature to the unnatural entity approaching the coast, the very Gothic atmosphere created by the fog leads the reader into an ever-escalating feeling of foreboding. This detailed description by a reporter heightens the reader's investment in the text by creating a type of foreshadowing. The reader knows that Dracula, the monster, is coming and the ignorance of the characters creates a feeling of fear that is the cornerstone of the terror Gothic.

This suspenseful feeling of fear was largely overlooked by contemporary critics, even positive ones, in favour of the more macabre details:

The portrait he gives us of the mysterious and terrible Count Dracula, who commands the secrets of the charnel-house, and woos men and women to their eternal undoing, may cause some readers the unpleasant sensations of a nightmare. But those who are not afraid of the strong meat of this description will find "Dracula" to be a story of very real power, told with remarkable skill and with unflagging spirit. The supernatural element is managed with great dexterity and an appearance of realism that is extremely ingenious (Anon. 1897:662).

Macabre details are almost completely absent from *Dionea*, events that would have been drawn out, described in morbid detail in Gothic texts are merely alluded to or described briefly at various points during the tale, as halfway through, when the death of a priest is described:

A terrible, terrible thing has happened! I write to your Excellency with hands all a-tremble; and yet I must write, I must speak, or else I shall cry out... Last night I was suddenly sent for to Father Domenico's monastery above Montemirto: they told me he was ill... "The Lord has been pleased to call our poor brother to Him," said the Superior. "A case of apoplexy, my dear Doctor — a case of apoplexy. You will make out the certificate for the authorities." ... "So," she said, "he has killed himself with charcoal, poor Padre Domenico!" (Lee, 1890:36).

And at the close when describing the deaths of the princess' friends:

We found her lying across the altar, her pale hair among the ashes of the incense, her blood — she had but little to give, poor white ghost! — trickling among the carved garlands and rams' heads, blackening the heaped-up roses. The body of Waldemar was found at the foot of the castle cliff (Lee, 1890:47).

The feelings evoked in the reader are not strong enough to be linked to terror or horror. Rather the reader has followed through a mild curiosity. Contrast this with Stoker's consecutive descriptions of Dracula, creating not only suspense but also slowly increasing the terror experienced by the reader as for example in Harker's descriptions of the Count:

I looked out over the beautiful expanse, bathed in soft yellow moonlight till it was almost as light as day. In the soft light the distant hills became melted, and the shadows in the valleys and gorges of velvety blackness. The mere beauty seemed to cheer me; there was peace and comfort in every breath I drew...

What I saw was the Count's head coming out from the window. I did not see the face, but I knew the man by the neck and the movement of his back and arms. In any case, I could not mistake the hands which I had had so many opportunities of studying. I was at first interested and somewhat amused, for it is wonderful how small a matter will interest and amuse a man when he is a prisoner. But my very feelings changed to repulsion and terror when I saw the whole man slowly emerge from the window and begin to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss, face down, with his cloak spreading out around him like great wings. At first I could not believe my eyes. I thought it was some trick of the moonlight, some weird effect of shadow; but I kept looking, and it could be no delusion. I saw the fingers and toes grasp the corners of the stones, worn clear of the mortar by the stress of years, and by thus using every projection and inequality move downwards with considerable speed, just as a lizard moves along a wall.

What manner of man is this, or what manner of creature is it in the semblance of man? I feel the dread of this horrible place overpowering me; I am in fear—in awful fear—and there is no escape for me; I am encompassed about with terrors that I dare not think of... (Stoker, 1997:39).

Stoker carefully lull's the reader into an almost Romantic sense of security by describing the scenery playing not only with the reader's emotions, but also their expectations to ensure not only the feeling of suspense, but also to draw the reader further into the reality he has created.

This absence of emotional investment possibly explains why *Dionea* failed to become as absorbing and consequently as successful as the other texts studied. When we return to a story we already know, the ending of it should not create suspense, and yet in some cases we do experience it, if at a lower level. That feeling is termed "anomalous suspense" by Richard Gerrig (quoted by Abbot: 2009:62), a feeling possibly created when a text remains so absorbing on a repeated read that the feeling of suspense is still experienced. All three of the other texts, with their characters, are eminently re-readable, and this probably not only contributes to their success, but signals how absorbing the text is.

4.3 The devil is in the details, or the description of details

How these papers have been placed in sequence will be made manifest in the reading of them. All needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of latter-day belief may stand forth as simple fact. There is throughout no statement of past things wherein memory may err, for all the records chosen are exactly contemporary, given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them (Stoker, 1997:5).

In the preface to the novel, Stoker presents his text as a true representation of events, based on first person accounts made at the time of the events, and later collected and organised chronologically and not edited beyond focussing it. With this, he depends on the knowledge of contemporary readers to create a kind of expectation – an unbelievable tale, told in a believable

way that is using methods familiar to the reader. In fact, this preface echoes the setup of the opening of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift, another tale that inspired belief in its authenticity.

The claim of being a current document is a device widely used at the time in various other texts. It also calls on the Victorian belief in the scientific method, another popular technique (Stoker, explained by Auerbach & Skal, 1997:5). The use of a variety of documents is reminiscent of an epistolary novel, but at the same time better substantiated and to some extent more trustworthy due to the use of documents other than letters. It also echoes the use of documentation in *Jekyll and Hyde*, however, where in *Jekyll and Hyde*, written documents serve as plot devices and corroborating evidence of the third person omniscient narrator's telling of the story, here the documentation becomes the story.

Making use of the written or transcribed records of several first-person narrations as well as "impartial" documentation such as newspapers creates an added level of veracity. The mimicking of a "true" document's structure can lead to the copy also being perceived as true – as for instance in *Gulliver's Travels*. Court cases, newspapers, true crime – all these make use of evidentiary documentation, and Stoker uses the reader's familiarity with this process to extend the illusion of truth.

Another important aspect of the documents in the text is their nature. While limited to letters, notes and legal documentation in *Jekyll and Hyde*, in *Dracula* the selection is far wider and a vehicle for contemporaneity. Reference is made to telegrams (Stoker, 1997:62; 110) used for communication between characters, particularly the vampire hunters. This use of the technology echoes its use by the police for apprehending fugitives (Picard, 2013:89). Dr Seward's journal was created using a phonograph (Stoker, 1997:61), a very advanced bit of technology created by Thomas Edison in 1877, which functions as a sound recorder (Stoker, explained by Auerbach & Skal, 1997:61). The contemporaneity of these documents is further extended when many of them are transcribed by Mina Harker who uses her typewriter, another technological advancement created in 1867 (Stoker explained by Auerbach and Skal, 1997:55) to type out transcriptions of unwritten, or incomprehensible, accounts (Stoker, 1997:161).

The novel opens with one of her transcriptions, Jonathan Harker's shorthand journal, written in a very journalistic style, another nod to contemporaneity:

Jonathan Harker's Journal

3 May. Bistritz – Left Munich at 8.35 p.m. on 1st May arriving at Vienna early next morning; should have arrived at 6.46, but the train was an hour late. Buda-Pesth

seems a wonderful place, from the glimpse which I got of it from the train and the little I could walk through the streets. I feared to go very far from the station, as we had arrived late and would start as near the correct time as possible. The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East; the most Western of the splendid bridges over the Danube, which is here of noble width and depth, took us among the traditions of Turkish rule (Stoker, 1997:9).

If narrative absorption relies on the trinity of good craftsmanship, the presence of rich detail and the judicious use of stylistic techniques as described by Green *et al.* (2004:320), then surely it must reach its pinnacle in this opening paragraph of *Dracula*. Rich with descriptions of real places, frustrations shared with the reader, and tiny, familiar details, this short paragraph imbeds itself firmly in the Victorian era by echoing its obsession with written records, efficiency, and accuracy. At the same time, it flirts with the romantic, making clear the disparity between the known and the unknown – setting the stage for the strangeness that is part and parcel of the “foreign” in this novel.

Bolton (2010:64) explains that Count Dracula comes to represent and encode various Victorian fears, the fear of the otherness of other, lesser, peoples and cultures and the inherent danger they pose to the superior English one; the fear of the collapse of religion due to the impact of modern science's undermining of its foundations (Bolton, 2010:55) and of the unrestrained sexuality, which stands in opposition to their preoccupation with propriety, which is in effect a kind of sexual hyperawareness (Bolton, 2010:57).

Returning to Smith's question of how Stoker convinced his audience of the credibility of his horrors, Smith's (2007:112) answer is that Stoker makes repeated reference to the theory of degeneration, starting with the initial description of Dracula:

His face was a strong—a very strong—aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

Hitherto I had noticed the backs of his hands as they lay on his knees in the firelight, and they had seemed rather white and fine; but seeing them now close to me, I could not but notice that they were rather coarse—broad, with squat fingers. Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point. (Stoker, 1997:23)

This careful description is in all ways the opposite from Stevenson's lack of description of Hyde. Much detail is given, but each aspect's description is extended or twisted to create the image of something Other, both more and less than human. The description of degeneration culminates in a direct analysis of Dracula's personality based on the theories of Nordau and Lombroso by Mina Harker (Stoker, 1997:296). These are the same writings that influenced Stevenson, but he never directly referenced them in the text. When we compare the oblique references to degeneration in *Jekyll and Hyde* with the direct statements in *Dracula*, I believe we find one of the main reasons for the different receptions of these two texts by the contemporary reader. In effect, Stevenson relies on the knowledge, investment, and concerns of his contemporary readers to not only be able to recognise Hyde as an example of degeneration, and to extend their understanding into turning him into a case study of the theory. Stoker on the other hand is much more direct: he does not allow his readers to "read into the text", he is less subtle, and subtlety was a trait admired by the Victorian middle- and upper-classes. Of course, Stoker's direct references here are in keeping with his approach throughout the text – the use of copious, modern references to create not only a sense of modernity and familiarity, but believability.

Other examples of Stoker using details to familiarise or modernise the circumstances are numerous. Whether by legitimising the authority of Van Helsing by using an obviously shortened list of his academic achievements (Stoker, 1997:106) in a similar fashion to Stevenson's introduction of Dr Jekyll, or giving events legitimacy by substantiating them through the quoting of articles from newspapers (1997:75). Stoker also makes extensive use of literary techniques, such as the reality effect, the overly detailed reproduction of real things in the texts that is not necessary for the plot but is used to stimulate the reader's imagination (Herman *et al.*, 2005:492), as found for example in Jonathan Harker's description of the dish "paprika hendl" that constitutes his dinner, as "a chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was very good but thirsty" (Stoker, 1997:9).

Present throughout *Dionea* are little notes or references, which in the three Victorian Gothic texts would have imbued the texts with contemporaneity, such as this paragraph in a letter after the artist and his family, friends of the princess, have arrived in Doctor de Rosis' hamlet:

Has it ever struck your Excellency in one of your La Rochefoucauld fits (in Lent say, after too many balls) that not merely maternal but conjugal unselfishness may be a very selfish thing? There! you toss your little head at my words; yet I wager I have heard you say that other women may think it right to humor their husbands, but as to you, the Prince must learn that a wife's duty is as much to chasten her husband's whims as to satisfy them (Lee, 1890:42).

Rather than contemporary, though, they are focused on the past. Aside from the direct mentions of the Pagan Gods (Lee, 1890:33; 42) or old artists (Lee, 1890:34) there are small references

such as the one above to “La Rochefoucauld” a French author who penned his *Maximes*, a collection of sayings that aims to tersely relay a contradictory or difficult truth (Moore, 2023), published in 1665. In using these, Lee again places the reader in a different mindset than the other authors in the study – making them think of the past and all its secrets rather than those of the present.

Another literary technique used by Stoker, related to realism, is that of speech representation (Herman *et al.*, 2005:558), which creates the illusion that the reader is overhearing actual speech by means of mimesis, imbedding and framing an utterance in a way that illustrates its uniqueness and so creates realism (Herman *et al.*, 2005:559). As used for example in Mina Harker's quotes of the talk of the old sailor, Mr Swales, for example: "I wouldn't fash masel about them, miss. Them things be all wore out" (Stoker, 1997:64). There is an interesting contradiction in the tales of Mr Swales, for one would expect that an old Victorian sailor would be representative of the superstitious, the supernatural and old wives-tales. Instead, Mr Swales seems to view all these as nonsense, right along with the hypocrisy of the gravestones that surround them (Stoker, 1997:67). Even later when he indicates to Mina that he makes light of death as it comes closer to him, he seems clear headed, right up until he becomes the herald of Dracula's arrival:

For life be, after all, only a waitin' for somethin' else than what we're doin'; and death be all that we can rightly depend on. But I'm content, for it's comin' to me, my deary, and comin' quick. It may be comin' while we be lookin' and wonderin'. Maybe it's in that wind out over the sea that's bringin' with it loss and wreck, and sore distress, and sad hearts. Look! look!' he cried suddenly. 'There's something in that wind and in the hoast beyont that sounds, and looks, and tastes, and smells like death. It's in the air; I feel it comin'. Lord, make me answer cheerful when my call comes!' He held up his arms devoutly, and raised his hat. His mouth moved as though he were praying. After a few minutes' silence, he got up, shook hands with me, and blessed me, and said good-bye, and hobbled off. It all touched me, and upset me very much (Stoker, 1997:74).

Auerbach and Skal also explain that Stoker made use of some of the folklore that held that vampires are the result of suicide, by making the grave of George Canon, who died by suicide, an opportune resting place upon Dracula's arrival in England (Stoker, 1997:68). The dissonance of this incorporation of the supernatural with the rational is minimised by the context of the discussion, for if the presence of the ship carrying Dracula was not announced directly after Mr Swales' declaration, he may well have been assumed to be talking about death in general, rather than, ironically, the supernatural cause of his own death coming closer.

In *Dionea* the locals are described very differently, for while devout, they are also very superstitious, as is revealed in the letter written once Dionea has grown up:

None of our boys, peasants or fishermen, seem to hang on her steps; and if they turn round to stare and whisper as she goes by straight and dainty in her wooden clogs, with the pitcher of water or the basket of linen on her beautiful crisp dark head, it is, I remark, with an expression rather of fear than of love. The women, on their side, make horns with their fingers as she passes, and as they sit by her side in the convent chapel; but that seems natural. My housekeeper tells me that down in the village she is regarded as possessing the evil eye and bringing love misery. "You mean," I said, "that a glance from her is too much for our lads' peace of mind." Veneranda shook her head, and explained, with the deference and contempt with which she always mentions any of her country-folk's superstitions to me, that the matter is different: it's not with her they are in love (they would be afraid of her eye), but where-ever she goes the young people must needs fall in love with each other, and usually where it is far from desirable (Lee, 1890:34).

Again, Lee succeeds in returning the reader to older, darker times, rather than keeping her setting current and rational. I believe this is why the reception and perception of her stories is so different from the others; she uses the anachronistic space she creates to realise an old belief, while Stoker's use of the anachronistic impacts differently.

Dracula is divided into three parts, based on its changing setting: the continent, primarily Transylvania, then England and then the return to the continent. Similar to Stevenson's use of London as a backdrop and character, Stoker turns most of "civilised" Europe, but England in particular, into the familiar and trustworthy with the "foreign" lands becoming backwards and threatening. This tendency or juxtaposition is made clear on many levels. Jonathan Harker muses, "It seems to me that the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains" (Stoker, 1997:11); then there is the increasing difficulty he has in communicating, symbolised by his eventual use of his "polyglot dictionary" (Stoker, 1997:13) and the strange and suspicious nature of his food (Stoker, 1997:10).

'It is the eve of St George's Day. Do you not know that tonight, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway? Do you know where you are going, and what you are going to?' She was in such evident distress that I tried to comfort her, but without effect. Finally she went down on her knees and implored me not to go; at least to wait a day or two before starting. It was all very ridiculous, but I did not feel comfortable. However, there was business to be done, and I could allow nothing to interfere with it. I therefore tried to raise her up, and said, as gravely as I could, that I thanked her, but my duty was imperative, and that I must go. She then rose and dried her eyes, and taking a crucifix from her neck offered it to me. I did not know what to do, for, as an English Churchman, I have been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous, and yet it seemed so ungracious to refuse an old lady meaning so well and in such a state of mind. She saw, I suppose, the doubt in my face, for she put the rosary round my neck, and said, 'For your mother's sake,' and went out of the room. I am writing up this part of the diary whilst I am waiting for the coach, which is, of course, late; and the crucifix is still round my neck. Whether it is the old lady's fear, I do not know, but I am not feeling nearly as easy in my mind as usual. If this book should ever reach Mina before I do, let it bring my good-bye. Here comes the coach! (Stoker, 1997:13)

His reluctant reaction to the crucifix presented to him by the hotel owner in Bistritz as he is to leave for Castle Dracula itself, signals his belief that it is a representation of the superstitions and customs of the “uncivilised” inhabitants, and his expected derision of such ideas. Yet the closing lines clearly indicate that he does not in reality stand unaffected by all the events. For the contemporary reader this would also have served as foreshadowing of dangerous, diabolical events to follow. This reaction stands in stark contrast to his calm acceptance of various Catholic religious objects, including a crucifix, given to him by Van Helsing as protection against Dracula:

'My friends, we are going into a terrible danger, and we need arms of many kinds. Our enemy is not merely spiritual. Remember that he has the strength of twenty men, and that, though our necks or our windpipes are of the common kind—and therefore breakable or crushable—his is not amenable to mere strength. A stronger man, or a body of men more strong in all than him, can at certain times hold him; but yet they cannot hurt him as we can be hurt by him. We must, therefore, guard ourselves from his touch. Keep this near your heart'—as he spoke he lifted a little silver crucifix and held it out to me, I being nearest to him—'put these flowers round your neck'—here he handed to me a wreath of withered garlic blossoms—'for other enemies more mundane, this revolver and this knife; and for aid in all, these so small electric lamps, which you can fasten to your breast; and for all, and above all at the last, this, which we must not desecrate needless.' This was a portion of sacred wafer, which he put in an envelope and handed to me. Each of the others was similarly equipped. 'Now,' he said, 'friend John, where are the skeleton keys? If so that we can open the door, we need not break house by the window, as before at Miss Lucy's.' (Stoker, 1997:219)

This creation of an anachronistic space is a hallmark of the Gothic. While Stevenson's space is limited to the old dissection hall, Stoker created an entirely anachronistic world within Eastern Europe. These spaces are then contrasted with the super modern context created within urban London. To create a space for his monster within the city Stoker makes use of abandoned spaces linked to nobility and the Catholic Church (Stoker, 1997:239). This resonates strongly with the settings of the early Gothic Romances, being in either the Middle Ages or Catholic countries (Abrams & Harpham, 2015:152). The Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic then proceeds to draw the reader into what Abrams and Harpham call "a brooding atmosphere of gloom and terror" by extending and incorporating the “modern” London environment. Stevenson does so much more extensively through the linking of urban decay with the uncanny and macabre; Stoker, however, limits the spread of the atmosphere – eventually forcing his monster to return to his anachronistic place of origin.

In this I believe we find Stoker's moral – evil, or rather the degenerate, foreign Other, needs to be confronted, limited, and purged. This deduction is supported by Johnson's explanation for the hypermodernity used in the text to not only further separate the ancient Dracula from his modern opponents, but also that it is this very modernity that serves to overcome him:

What purpose, then, does this clear interest in the mass culture serve in the novel? Most crucially, it serves to set the very old Dracula apart from his modern pursuers: Jonathan's shorthand journal and letter to Mina are indecipherable to the Count, and although Dracula hoards train tables at his castle, it is ultimately shown to Mina who is so accustomed to this necessity of modern life that she has a habit of memorizing train times. Much emphasis is placed on Dracula's status as a foreign invader – one who is, despite his years of study of English culture, still ultimately a stranger in a strange land once he arrives in England (2010:76).

It reads as if the poison is also the cure. While the Victorian intelligentsia feared the consequences of degeneration which appears to be the result of modern advances, they were only able to recognise the threat through scientific advancement and the problem could only be rectified through progressive intervention.

4.4 The Modern Reader

The novel has, over the past few decades, become a focus for literary study, not necessarily for its literary merit, but rather as a reflection of the anxieties of the Victorian mind which gives the modern reader greater insight into the era (Bolton, 2010:55). The reviews of modern readers often echo some of the points made by contemporary readers:

The word novel is not used lightly, as one could also write that this is a collaboration of journals, letters and papers. For that is how Bram Stoker chose to fashion his famous novel (in epistolary form). While the different viewpoints through each journal serve to create suspense which suits the gothic tone of the novel perfectly.

In all, it is a macabre novel that serves to make the reader reflect upon good and evil. The vampire, to me, is nothing more than an indication of man's cursed nature. Who, unless he is delivered, must suck the life from others around him. Ultimately only the righteous can destroy the darkness that serves to drain life. That is the lesson which Bram Stoker's timeless classic unswervingly conveys (Terrington, 2020).

For better and for worse:

And then there's the fact that Stoker seems to be an early proponent of the Robert Jordan School of Writing, meaning he takes an awful lot of time setting the scene, only to end the book on a whimper. The ending to Dracula is so anticlimactic it's rather baffling. Did Stoker run out of paper and ink? Did he want to finish the story before Dracula's brides came and got him? I guess we'll never know.

Still, despite its many flaws Dracula is an exciting read (well, the first half is, anyway), and Stoker undeniably left a legacy that will last for centuries to come. In that respect, Dracula deserves all the praise that has been heaped on it. I still think it could have been better, though. Much better (Martine, 2013).

Stoker's greatest creation is in the malleability of his monster. All the aspects that are considered as weak points by the literary critic is what allows for other authors to remove aspects of the monster, to change them, and to reimagine them into a new context.

While the original context can detract from the contemporary enjoyability of the tale, Stoker's writing can overcome this difficulty, by intention or accident; take for example a modern woman's view on Mina:

The character I liked the most was Mina Harker. She had some qualities that I really admired especially her love towards her best friend Lucy. Mina seems to do anything to save her dear friend. Mina also plays an important part in overcoming Count Dracula. Unfortunately her role and her narration of the novel become less and less as the novel progress[es]... Mina Harker is probably not the strongest example of this "new woman" but she [has] some of the qualities. Her best [friend] Lucy however is nothing but a damsel in distress (Nicolene, 2019).

And these responses:

I'm a huge fan of this novel but I can totally see where your points were coming from 'against' it, they're valid. I have to crack up because I don't think Stoker was the best at writing about women but Mina was definitely a favorite character of mine as well! (Haley, 2019).

My favourite character was Mina too, I love she was stronger than some of the male characters at points in the novel (Elena, 2019)

This equivocation between viewing Mina as a strong female character and lacking as such seems to reflect Stoker's own views:

*Stoker himself makes mention and offers both criticism and praise of the New Woman model in *Dracula*. Mina Harker makes contradictory remarks in the pages of her letters and journal, and the men in the story also make glancing references to changing gender relations. In his personal life, Stoker appeared to be of a mixed mind regarding the New Woman. His mother firmly believed in women's rights and he was very close to her. Leatherdale notes, though, that Stoker firmly believed in chivalry and that a woman who was without fear was not feminine (Welsch, 2010:42).*

The strong female lead that could have been obviously does speak to the modern female reader, particularly when read within its socio-cultural context, despite the fact that the females in the text are largely portrayals of "The facile and stereotypical dichotomy between the dark woman and the fair, the fallen and the idealised" (Roth, 1977:411).

The greatest challenge faced by *Dracula* in the modern era is the fact that the original is judged on the basis of the derivatives. Many a reader, critic, and academic judge the text based on what they "believe" to be the story. I only read the novel in its entirety for the first time while researching the novels of the Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic. Another aspect that colours our understanding is the biased readings and interpretations of the text in the 1970s and 80s which aired theories that became "common knowledge" without being assessed by opposing, tempering readings.

CHAPTER 5 UNDERMINING THE READER'S FAITH IN THE RATIONAL

5.1 Introduction

If ever there was a character that blurred the lines between fact and fiction it was Arthur Conan Doyle's detective, Sherlock Holmes. From the first, he seized the hearts and minds of the readers of *The Strand*, and experts speculate that the reason for Holmes' temporary death was that the "life" he took on overwhelmed his creator. It is during this temporary absence that we also find the proof of Holmes' life; readers not only wrote dismayed letters to both Doyle and *The Strand*, but they also cancelled subscriptions. Others took to wearing a black armband to mourn the death of the great detective. Today tourists still flock to 221B Baker Street, an address that did not exist at the time of publication and researchers analyse the texts to find, maybe not the real person behind Holmes, but at least the people who served as the inspiration for his existence.

At first glance a Holmes tale may seem a strange choice for this study, after all the famous detective was famously dismissive of the unexplainable. However, the detective and his faithful assistant occupied a London darkened and haunted by the presence of Jack the Ripper and a legion of other greater and lesser evils. As such, they are, in the public mind, intimately connected to the London Gothic. At the same time, many of Holmes' cases have as their source not London, but the edges of the empire (Bolton, 2010:64), echoing Stoker's concerns regarding the influence of the foreign.

5.2 Curiosity killed the cat, but it brought the reader back

While the author is making use of all three methods of gaining and keeping attention, Doyle, at least in part, is making use of the expectations of his reader. This is the third of the four Sherlock Holmes novels and as such the expectation of the reader is that there will be an unexpected twist with a proper denouement at the end of the novel. The reader is also trying, right from the start, to predict what the surprise at the end of the novel will be. Take for example the disappearance of Sir Henry Baskerville's shoes right after he arrives in London:

"Well, it depends upon what you think worth reporting."

"I think anything out of the ordinary routine of life well worth reporting."

Sir Henry smiled. "I don't know much of British life yet, for I have spent nearly all my time in the States and in Canada. But I hope that to lose one of your boots is not part of the ordinary routine of life over here."

“You have lost one of your boots?” (Doyle, 2015:57)

The surprising disappearance of a second, single shoe signals that the event is one of importance – what possible explanation can there be for this conundrum, the reader’s curiosity is stirred, and the level of suspense is cleverly increased:

As we came round the top of the stairs we had run up against Sir Henry Baskerville himself. His face was flushed with anger, and he held an old and dusty boot in one of his hands. So furious was he that he was hardly articulate... “By thunder, if that chap can’t find my missing boot there will be trouble. I can take a joke with the best, Mr. Holmes, but they’ve got a bit over the mark this time.”

“Still looking for your boot?”

“Yes, sir, and mean to find it.”

“But, surely, you said that it was a new brown boot?”

“So it was, sir. And now it’s an old black one.”

“What! you don’t mean to say?” (Doyle, 2015:57)

The reader starts to try and predict how these shoes will become significant to the story and Holmes’ “solution”. So, the author elicits curiosity by only explaining the reason for the disappearance of the shoes later, but he also creates suspense, as the reader wonders what the consequences of the missing shoes will be. This mixture of suspense and curiosity continues throughout the text with careful decreases and increases of tension in the reader.

While there are several lines of intrigue in the text, let us follow the boot. Doyle escalates the tension when Holmes and Watson go to join Sir Henry at his hotel. When the missing brown boot is recovered from under a cabinet the tension is lowered. Is the other boot also just mislaid? Or are the strange circumstances surrounding the return of the boot a greater indication of the events to come?

We had risen to depart when Baskerville gave a cry, of triumph, and diving into one of the corners of the room he drew a brown boot from under a cabinet.

“My missing boot!” he cried.

“May all our difficulties vanish as easily!” said Sherlock Holmes.

“But it is a very, singular thing,” Dr. Mortimer remarked. “I searched this room carefully before lunch.”

“And so did I,” said Baskerville. “Every inch of it.”

“There was certainly no boot in it then.” (Doyle, 2015:63)

The mystery of the missing boot is finally resolved when they come across Selden's body towards the end of the story:

Then in an instant it was all clear to me. I remembered how the baronet had told me that he had handed his old wardrobe to Barrymore. Barrymore had passed it on in order to help Selden in his escape. Boots, shirt, cap—it was all Sir Henry's. The tragedy was still black enough, but this man had at least deserved death by the laws of his country. I told Holmes how the matter stood, my heart bubbling over with thankfulness and joy. "Then the clothes have been the poor devil's death," said he. "It is clear enough that the hound has been laid on from some article of Sir Henry's—the boot which was abstracted in the hotel, in all probability—and so ran this man down. There is one very singular thing, however: How came Selden, in the darkness, to know that the hound was on his trail?"

"He heard him."

"To hear a hound upon the moor would not work a hard man like this convict into such a paroxysm of terror that he would risk recapture by screaming wildly for help. By his cries he must have run a long way after he knew the animal was on his track. How did he know?" (Doyle, 2003:155).

And as one puzzle is solved the next is hinted at – how did Selden know the hound was after him?

This guessing game by the reader, and their enjoyment thereof, is evidenced in contemporary writings:

I have read this Sherlock Holmes story with great interest, and had also the club-footed theory. However, I carried the theory a little farther, trying to account for the other characters. Assuming that the escaped criminal, Selden, is in reality Roger Baskerville, and that this Roger had met Sir Charles at the trysting-place at the yew hedge on the night of the latter's death, it is probable that Sir Charles, expecting to meet Laura Lyons, had died of fright at beholding Roger, against whom he had probably committed some great wrong (Anon., 1902b:217).

Also given is a great explanation for why and how Doyle managed to elicit such curiosity:

*It was only a few months ago that we were discussing in these columns the subject of the serial, contrasting the average illogically chopped-up narrative of to-day with some of the real serials of forty or sixty years ago. A book which is in many ways a notable exception to what we said is the widely exploited *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which, while not so very extraordinary as a complete story, was in a minor way a really great serial... After reading the tale as a whole in book form, one can look back and realise how cleverly devised each instalment was, and how, with one or two exceptions, the closing paragraphs of each month's part were worked up so as to stimulate to the highest degree the reader's excitement and curiosity. The opening instalment appeared in September, and the closing lines were a positive triumph in that they instantly won and held the attention of every reader, and left him unsatisfied to the very end (Anon., 1902:216).*

It is this clever use of technique that allows the reader to become invested in the story again and again. This allows for absorption to a level that supports the anomalous suspense discussed in the last chapter, and supports the emotional engagement needed to make the story and its characters feel real.

5.3 Becoming emotionally invested through engagement

Just like the previously discussed authors Doyle makes extensive use of detailed descriptions. Here, for example, the paragraph from the Medical Directory that identifies Holmes' visitor in the opening pages:

"Mortimer, James, M.R.C.S., 1882, Grimpen, Dartmoor, Devon. House-surgeon, from 1882 to 1884, at Charing Cross Hospital. Winner of the Jackson prize for Comparative Pathology, with essay entitled 'Is Disease a Reversion?' Corresponding member of the Swedish Pathological Society. Author of 'Some Freaks of Atavism' (Lancet 1882). 'Do We Progress?' (Journal of Psychology, March, 1883). Medical Officer for the parishes of Grimpen, Thorsley, and High Barrow." (Doyle, 2015:16)

As with the introduction of Dr Jekyll, there are references to specific places and positions that anchor the character in an understood reality – a house-surgeon is a junior doctor in a hospital (O'Gorman, 53), and the *Lancet* was the leading medical publications journal of the time. By comparing two passages, one in London and one in Devonshire we see not only the expected change of spaces aligning with modernity and anachronism, but also many of the techniques already discussed.

In Holmes' house in London during the first meeting with the client the focus is in on facts, science, and details, all of which are couched in modern terms:

"And now, Dr. James Mortimer—"

"Mister, sir, Mister—a humble M.R.C.S."

"And a man of precise mind, evidently."

"A dabbler in science, Mr. Holmes, a picker up of shells on the shores of the great unknown ocean. I presume that it is Mr. Sherlock Holmes whom I am addressing and not—"

"No, this is my friend Dr. Watson."

"Glad to meet you, sir. I have heard your name mentioned in connection with that of your friend. You interest me very much, Mr. Holmes. I had hardly expected so dolichocephalic a skull or such well-marked supra-orbital development. Would you have any objection to my running my finger along your parietal fissure? A cast of your skull, sir, until the original is available, would be an ornament to any anthropological

museum. It is not my intention to be fulsome, but I confess that I covet your skull.”
(Doyle, 2015:19)

Conversely the first description of Baskerville house after the arrival of Watson and Sir Henry focuses on describing not just the facts and details, but also on the feelings and emotions elicited by the circumstances, as well as recalling times gone by, creating a feeling of anachronism:

But the dining-room which opened out of the hall was a place of shadow and gloom. It was a long chamber with a step separating the dais where the family sat from the lower portion reserved for their dependents. At one end a minstrel’s gallery overlooked it. Black beams shot across above our heads, with a smoke-darkened ceiling beyond them. With rows of flaring torches to light it up, and the colour and rude hilarity of an old-time banquet, it might have softened; but now, when two black-clothed gentlemen sat in the little circle of light thrown by a shaded lamp, one’s voice became hushed and one’s spirit subdued. A dim line of ancestors, in every variety of dress, from the Elizabethan knight to the buck of the Regency, stared down upon us and daunted us by their silent company. We talked little, and I for one was glad when the meal was over and we were able to retire into the modern billiard-room and smoke a cigarette.

“My word, it isn’t a very cheerful place,” said Sir Henry. “I suppose one can tone down to it, but I feel a bit out of the picture at present. I don’t wonder that my uncle got a little jumpy if he lived all alone in such a house as this. However, if it suits you, we will retire early to-night, and perhaps things may seem more cheerful in the morning.”
(Doyle, 2015:77).

The references to scientific study, titles, and intertextual references are familiar devices to signify modernity. The ambience created through the aged, declining surroundings combines with the suggestion of the “possibly” supernatural events that have taken place to create an aura of expectation. The difference between this novel and the others is that here we keep expecting a logical, scientific explanation of the events, hampered only by the absence of Holmes himself. Doyle relies on the expectations of the reader for this logical explanation to lead them down the rabbit hole until they start to wonder if they will find that the supernatural becomes the answer in this story. This becomes an even bigger possibility when we take the author's interest and belief in spiritualism into consideration (Doyle, explained by O’Gorman, 2006:289).

We also see the return of substantiating documents (Doyle, 2015:21), particularly the use of an archaic document validated, to some extent, by Holmes into the modern sphere to establish the supernatural tale. Doyle also makes extensive use of newspapers and telegrams similarly to Stoker to establish modernity.

Another example of the inclusion of minute details not necessary for the promotion of the story would be the short paragraph added by Watson as an introduction to the copies of his letters to Holmes which describes events within two days after their arrival at Baskerville Hall:

From this point onward I will follow the course of events by transcribing my own letters to Mr. Sherlock Holmes which lie before me on the table. One page is missing, but otherwise they are exactly as written and show my feelings and suspicions of the moment more accurately than my memory, clear as it is upon these tragic events, can possibly do (Doyle, 2015:94).

While the inclusion of written documents is something that has been discussed before this little paragraph adds a completely new twist to the technique: “One page is missing” creates a sense of reality through the existence of imperfection. As O’Gorman (Stevenson, 2006:124) remarks, it is not evident from the text that any information is missing, but the idea of a mislaid page is much more believable than the exhaustive, detailed records kept and transcribed in *Dracula*.

Lee’s introduction to *Hauntings: Fantastic Stories* had exactly the opposite effect on contemporary readers, setting the stage for disbelief that carried forward into the text as explained by this reviewer:

Vernon Lee is so accomplished a writer that one wonders at finding her prefacing her collection of four bogey stories with a manifesto in which she declares her absolute scepticism in the matter of bogeys. This is as though a spiritualist were to invite you to a séance, and just as you were getting your nerves ready to thrill he were to dissipate all mysterious expectations by the announcement that apparitions, and raps, and all the rest of it were mere clap-trap (Sharp, 1890:352).

Doyle’s greatest secret to success, I believe, is also hinted at in the paragraph above where Watson addresses the reader directly, and its implications – the importance of Dr John Hamish Watson. Loren Estleman (2003:vii) explores the importance of Watson to the success of the Holmes stories in great detail, but it can be summarised as: Watson is much more fully characterised than Holmes, as “a swashbuckler”, a ladies’ man, an officer and above all a great doctor, evidenced by the army taking him up on his offer of service to the country when he was approaching his seventies. It is Watson’s skills, so different from those of Holmes, along with his faults that allows him to intercede with the reader on behalf of Holmes. Watson’s presence in a Holmes story is vital for he is not merely the narrator, but acts as a “buffer between the cold, blinding light of Homes’ intellect and the reader. The other benefit Watson had was that he changed, he grew as a person without becoming somebody else making him again more “real” than the unchanging Holmes. Doyle’s skill, and Watson’s importance is evidenced further by his interpretation of a Watson separate from Holmes in *The Hound*, as Estleman explains:

Watson gets his chance to play the bully hero in Chapters 6 through 11 of Hound. He has the endearing ability to appear less astute than the reader, rendering himself more approachable than the aloof and awesome Homes, without sacrificing respect for his native intelligence. The thinness of this particular highwire is best appreciated when someone falls off. A frequent occurrence among those who have attempted to duplicate the stunt (2003:vii).

Watson by his very nature allows the reader to become more invested in the events in the text. His descriptions and opinions shape those of the reader, drawing them in, framing their understanding and opinions, and ensuring the emotional engagement of the reader. Nordon describes this function very well:

Sometimes he reveals what Holmes knows and plans to do, by asking him the same questions the reader is asking himself. In Holmes's absence Watson still asks himself questions in the reader's name, so as to make the subsequent elucidation of the problem as coherent and convincing as possible: 'What then? Was he the agent of others, or had he some sinister design of his own? What interest could he have in persecuting the Baskerville family? ... Thus he calls the tune, and either provokes a clear statement of the different elements in the plot by his questions, or makes certain that the final explanation throws all possible light on Holmes's actions. Conan Doyle emphasises Watson's naivete... "Wonderful!" I [Watson] ejaculated. "Commonplace," said Holmes.' This trait of Watson's helps the reader participate more intensely in the plot. In fact, when Watson seems excessively admiring we get the flattering illusion of coming closer to Holmes ourselves, since we understand his point of view better than Watson does. Whenever Watson seems almost rudely incredulous, we remember that Holmes does nothing without good reason, and instinctively take sides against his sceptical companion (1967:269).

Watson also serves as our gateway to Holmes, he "gradually humanises this great thinking machine" (Dirda, 2011:190). This method is sometimes somewhat overdrawn, and has led to both Watson and Holmes being interpreted very negatively, as in the parody *The Stolen Cigar-Case*:

I found Hemlock Jones in the old Brook Street lodgings, musing before the fire... With the freedom of an old friend I at once threw myself in my old familiar attitude at his feet, and gently caressed his boot. I was induced to do this for two reasons: one that it enables me to get a good look at his bent, concentrated face, and the other that it seemed to indicate my reverence for his superhuman insight. So absorbed was he, even then, in tracking some mysterious clue, that he did not seem to notice me. But therein I was wrong – as I always was in my attempt to understand that powerful intellect.

'It is raining,' he said, without lifting his head.

'You have been out then?' I said quickly.

'No. But I see that your umbrella is wet, and that your overcoat, which you threw off on entering, has drops of water on it.'

I sat aghast at his penetration. After a pause he said carelessly, as if dismissing the subject, 'Besides, I hear the rain on the window. Listen.'

I listened. I could scarcely credit my ears, but there was the soft pattering of drops on the pane. It was evident, there was no deceiving this man! (Harte, 1998:43)

The most harmful interpretation of Watson however was the result of the adaptations to stage and film as "directors simply don't know what to do with Watson" (Estleman, 2003:vii) as his role as

narrator disappears in these formats. In particular the Universal films in the 1940s left him a bumbling fool (Weller & Roden, 1992:16), a “corpulent and ineffectual bumbler” who served as a comic foil (Estleman, 2003:vii). However, in textual format the reader’s emotional engagement with Watson is cardinal to the successful absorption of the reader and the believability of the events described in the text, even when, or particularly when events get a bit supernatural.

The setting of Dartmoor is the origin of the Gothic in this tale. From the first it is described in terms that create an eerie anachronistic world full of strange possibilities:

Over the green squares of the fields and the low curve of a wood there rose in the distance a gray, melancholy hill, with a strange jagged summit, dim and vague in the distance, like some fantastic landscape in a dream (Doyle, 2015:71).

Our wagonette had topped a rise and in front of us rose the huge expanse of the moor, mottled with gnarled and craggy cairns and tors. A cold wind swept down from it and set us shivering. Somewhere there, on that desolate plain, was lurking this fiendish man, hiding in a burrow like a wild beast, his heart full of malignancy against the whole race which had cast him out. It needed but this to complete the grim suggestiveness of the barren waste, the chilling wind, and the darkling sky (73).

Away from civilisation and the logic of Holmes – and with all the Romantic ambience of a classical Gothic tale, including an escaped convict cum exiled madman – the reader is steered gently into a frame of mind open to the appearance of something supernatural, hinted at by “an ancient document”. The beliefs of the commoners of the area are also drawn into the tale:

“It is extraordinary how credulous the peasants are about here! Any number of them are ready to swear that they have seen such a creature upon the moor.” He [Stapleton] spoke with a smile, but I seemed to read in his eyes that he took the matter more seriously (Doyle, 2015:83).

And their observations are used as evidence by the educated doctor to reinforce his concerns that there is something supernatural about the events at Baskerville Hall:

“Since the tragedy, Mr. Holmes, there have come to my ears several incidents which are hard to reconcile with the settled order of Nature.”

“For example?”

“I find that before the terrible event occurred several people had seen a creature upon the moor which corresponds with this Baskerville demon, and which could not possibly be any animal known to science. They all agreed that it was a huge creature, luminous, ghastly, and spectral. I have cross-examined these men, one of them a hard-headed countryman, one a farrier, and one a moorland farmer, who all tell the same story of this dreadful apparition, exactly corresponding to the hellhound of the legend. I assure you that there is a reign of terror in the district, and that it is a hardy man who will cross the moor at night.”

“And you, a trained man of science, believe it to be supernatural?”

"I do not know what to believe." Holmes shrugged his shoulders.

"I have hitherto confined my investigations to this world," said he. "In a modest way I have combated evil, but to take on the Father of Evil himself would, perhaps, be too ambitious a task. Yet you must admit that the footmark is material." (Doyle, 2015:36)

Very interestingly Holmes' answer creates space for doubt regarding the existence of the supernatural; absent is a much more characteristic reaction along the lines of logic and fact that there is always an explanation. And so, in the apparent absence of Holmes' reassurance, or presence, we drift along with Watson from disbelief to doubt during his travels to the moor. It is the unique connection created between Watson and the reader that allows Doyle to set up a situation where the reader questions their own belief in what is real. When compared to Doctor Alessandro de Rosis from *Dionea*, there is however a clear distance between the reader and the narrator, as in this passage, already quoted in a different context:

Do not tempt me, dearest Excellency, with your invitations to Rome. I should not be happy there, and do but little honor to your friendship. My many years of exile, of wanderings in northern countries, have made me a little bit into a northern man: I cannot quite get on with my own fellow-countrymen, except with the good peasants and fishermen all round. Besides — forgive the vanity of an old man, who has learned to make triple acrostic sonnets to cheat the days and months at Theresienstadt and Spielberg — I have suffered too much for Italy to endure patiently the sight of little parliamentary cabals and municipal wranglings, although they also are necessary in this day as conspiracies and battles were in mine. I am not fit for your roomful of ministers and learned men and pretty women: the former would think me an ignoramus, and the latter — what would afflict me much more — a pedant (Lee, 1890:32)

This doctor is identifying in himself the very thing that makes him unrelatable, that estranges the reader, as expressed by a contemporary reader:

Here Vernon Lee labours hard to thrill us with the haunting idea that Dionea is Venus—the Venus that destroys men's souls and bodies through excess of love—returned in mortal shape to earth, but we cannot be persuaded, even when we half shut our eyes, because we see so clearly through the papery figure of the narrator the old doctor, and because Waldemar is preposterously stagey (Anon., 1906a:604).

This distance, or lack of empathy, between the narrator and the reader reduces the emotional engagement of the reader with the story, and consequently also reduces absorption and therefore also the believability of the story. Another disruption to the reader's emotional engagement is the complete lack of a revealing moment. The entire climax of the story is largely absent, as rather than describing the actual event, Doctor de Rosis simply relates circumstances and suppositions surrounding it at the end of the text:

It happened last night... Gertrude had gone to bed, leaving her husband in the studio... About eleven the maids heard him come out and call to Dionea to get up

and come and sit to him... Gertrude, the servants say, was heard creeping downstairs a little later.... He had placed Dionea on the big marble block behind the altar, a great curtain of dull red brocade... behind her... Before Dionea was the altar — the altar of Venus which he had borrowed from me. He must have collected all the roses about it, and thrown the incense upon the embers when Gertrude suddenly entered. And then, and then...

We found her lying across the altar, her pale hair among the ashes of the incense, her blood — she had but little to give, poor white ghost! — trickling among the carved garlands and rams' heads, blackening the heaped-up roses. The body of Waldemar was found at the foot of the castle cliff. Had he hoped, by setting the place on fire, to bury himself among its ruins, or had he not rather wished to complete in this way the sacrifice, to make the whole temple an immense votive pyre? It looked like one, as we hurried down the hills to San Massimo: the whole hillside, dry grass, myrtle, and heather, all burning, the pale short flames waving against the blue moonlit sky, and the old fortress outlined black against the blaze (Lee, 1890:47).

Clearly something momentous happened, but the actual details are only suggested by de Rosis, “And then, and then” indicating that they are indescribable. Lee seems more intent on creating another artwork with an ancient, anachronistic setting, leaving the reader without the catharsis of having their curiosity satisfied and the suspense resolved.

Doyle depended utterly on the doubt that he had created in the mind of the reader regarding the existence of the supernatural to ensure the maximum impact from the final meeting between the heroes and the hound on the reader:

But suddenly they started forward in a rigid, fixed stare, and his [Holmes] lips parted in amazement. At the same instant Lestrade gave a yell of terror and threw himself face downward upon the ground. I sprang to my feet, my inert hand grasping my pistol, my mind paralyzed by the dreadful shape which had sprung out upon us from the shadows of the fog. A hound it was, an enormous coal-black hound, but not such a hound as mortal eyes have ever seen. Fire burst from its open mouth, its eyes glowed with a smouldering glare, its muzzle and hackles and dewlap were outlined in flickering flame. Never in the delirious dream of a disordered brain could anything more savage, more appalling, more hellish be conceived than that dark form and savage face which broke upon us out of the wall of fog (Doyle, 2015:177).

Holmes does of course in the end reduce the monster to mere science and fact, satisfying the reader's curiosity and resolving the suspense. It is this cathartic release that also allows the reader to return time and again for the “anomalous suspense” already discussed. Another effect of course is that Doyle impresses upon the reader his true greatness for having created such a monster in the first place.

Holmes' role as protector is not limited to imaginary monsters, but also includes real fears:

It is the vital center of the city that Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes seems to address. Holmes's world is set against the backdrop of the rise and the impending fall of the British Empire. London is not only the center of these novels; it is also the

center of the world. And as Gibbon clearly showed, every empire weakens its center by giving its energies to the extremities. When the imperial city tries to control colonies all over the world, very seldom can the center hold. In a novel like The Sign of Four (1890), the evil comes into London from India—that is, from the far reaches of the empire. In A Study in Scarlet (1887), the evil comes from America, not literally part of the empire, but Doyle believed that the American Revolution was a historical accident and that the destinies of England and America were intertwined. Behind this, of course, was his belief in Anglo-Saxon and white supremacy and in Manifest Destiny. It is thus the function of the detective to protect the imperial center.

Sherlock Holmes embodies the system that he comes to protect. He is the man of reason, of science, of technology; he is from the upper class and was educated at Oxford; he eventually becomes rich; and he frequents the best city clubs and other haunts of the gentleman. A Study in Scarlet establishes a strange affinity between Jefferson Hope and Sherlock Holmes—the one, as his name suggests, the embodiment of the frontier dream; the other an urban sophisticate. The relationship between the two becomes symbiotic; Hope and Holmes, spawned by a historical moment, become cultural twins, preserving the spirit of the empire at both its extremity and its center, becoming the means by which the white man's destiny will be fulfilled. There is no better example of how narrative subforms are culturally encoded, the text itself inseparable from the historical meaning that informs it (Lehan, 2005:84).

In *The Hound* we also find these derogative, othering views of non-white peoples. At the end of the text, it is revealed that the villain of the story has at least some of his roots in the far-off backwaters of South America.

My inquiries show beyond all question that the family portrait did not lie, and that this fellow was indeed a Baskerville. He was a son of that Rodger Baskerville, the younger brother of Sir Charles, who fled with a sinister reputation to South America, where he was said to have died unmarried. He did, as a matter of fact, marry, and had one child, this fellow, whose real name is the same as his father's. He married Beryl Garcia, one of the beauties of Costa Rica, and, having purloined a considerable sum of public money, he changed his name to Vandeleur and fled to England, where he established a school in the east of Yorkshire.

This Other, corrupted by the foreign returns to Britain to sow destruction, and while Doyle's outdated views are largely ignored today, their impact on his writing cannot be ignored. It can be assumed that his views would have resonated with those of his readers and in doing so have echoed their fears.

5.4 The Modern Reader

It is much more difficult to evaluate the modern view of Holmes than that of the first two texts for it has changed little. While the two other texts in their original form have been eclipsed by their ever-expanding permutations, Holmes remains, as his fans have always seen him – real. It is this independent existence of Holmes that has carried the text forward:

The book's [The Hound] appearance on best-seller lists in America was credited to the lack of a sane line between truth and fiction, the myth that Sherlock Holmes was an actual person: corporeal, not fictional. How insane is that? Well, there was an actual Baskerville family (and Sir Arthur was their frequent houseguest). You might say the hound existed, too, if only in folklore. Show me a moor anywhere in England, and I'll show you a giant, ghostly dog with glowing red eyes. And twenty-seven years later, T.S. Eliot chimed in on the madness with this quote on Holmes: 'The plain fact is, he is more real than his progenitor.' (O'Connell, 2012:49)

It is this aptitude for realness that continues to inspire almost fanatical responses from readers – much as he has always done. Dirda describes his own meeting with Holmes:

Their informant Dr. Mortimer pauses, then adds, hesitantly, that near the body he had spotted footprints on the damp ground. A man's or a woman's? eagerly enquires the great detective, to which question he receives the most thrilling answer in all of twentieth-century literature: "Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!" I shivered with fearful pleasure, scrunched further down under my thick blanket, and took another bite of my Baby Ruth candy bar, as happy as I will ever be.

To my surprise, I would later discover that my first meeting with Mr. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John H. Watson was hardly distinctive, let alone unique. Conan Doyle's own daughter Jean used to read her father's stories by flashlight in bed (2011:6).

This continued interest is not based just on the characters but largely on Doyle's skill in drawing in the reader:

The Hound of the Baskervilles is a real success, and this less for the puzzle, which is not difficult to solve, than for the skill with which Doyle makes us feel the terror and loneliness of the Devon moors, implied in the disturbed feelings of the sane and sober doctor who discovered footprints beside the dead body (Symons, 1962:18).

Mark Gatiss (Storyline, 2012:2:44) gives perhaps the most accurate and succinct answer to why Holmes remains popular and relevant: "It must speak of a kind of need we have to be saved I think or to believe there is something slightly higher than us which is going to come and get us out of this terrible mess we're all in". Logic and great intelligence become a touchstone in a mad world where there is much we do not understand, but it would make sense to Holmes.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Even before the start of this inquiry, it was already clear that the chosen texts, along with many others in the genre, succeeded in blurring the lines between fiction and reality, the question was how did the authors achieve an enduring believable merging of the fantastic and the realistic? This question has, however, two points of focus, the original, contemporary view, and the evolved or evolving modern view. Starting with the contemporary view several supporting topics were investigated to answer this question. The first is the role of their context, the second is the methods used by the authors to construct a believable text, and thirdly how these texts were experienced by their reader.

The contextual analysis focused on two broad areas of interest, the socio-cultural and the literary contexts. When studying the socio-cultural context, it was found that the end of the 19th century was an era of uncertainty, fear and dualism and this reality shaped and formed the content of the stories told, as the context often does. The direct effect on the group of texts was found to be not just in promoting settings that were modern though filled with fear and darkness, but in the separating out of different parts of the true Victorian landscape into the modern and good, and transposing the bad into the “foreign”, “anachronistic”, “devolving”, and “derelict”. Using this method authors were able to not only identify and analyse problematic components in their society but to hold them up to the light for all to see, some with greater success than others.

Some of these concerns were addressed obliquely, such as the fears around the massive and ever-growing population of the poor and destitute in *Jekyll and Hyde*. Or the fear of the detrimental impact of foreign influence in *Dracula*, and the fears of the criminal mind in *The Hound*. These fears would result in various actions and reactions, from massive public and private efforts to improve living and working conditions of the poor, to legal and social discrimination to foreign dissidents and asylum seekers. Others were hidden in metaphor and analogy (or were only read into the text by later readers); some of the concerns have been identified as the dangers of modernisation, science, and technology, disease and degeneration in society, poverty and the loss of norms and values, the changing views on women, the family, social class, foreign political and economic threats etc. This polarised society provided not only the content for these novels, but also fostered the mindset that would allow readers to introduce believability into text that would otherwise not be sustainable.

On the literary front the influence of both the Gothic and realism genres were explored and substantiated. Starting with Stevenson these authors used the characteristics and tropes of the Gothic to achieve the juxtapositioning or intensification of those features of their society they

wanted to question and examine. The synergy between the dualistic nature of the readers' socio-cultural environment and the dualities constructed in the texts further strengthened the readers' understanding of the metaphorical truth represented by the texts. This cleverly elevated a "scary" or "fantastical" story into an enduring commentary on the world around them, and when readers 'missed' the cues intended to indicate that this was the intent of the author, the story often became perceived mere sensationalism. The failure of the contemporary reader to recognise the variety of moral questions explored in *Dracula*, for example, is a result of their focus on the horror, and consequently completely missing the terror hinted at – the truth hidden in the fantasy.

The second aspect that was emphasised by this study is the role of immersive literary methods in techniques in facilitating the absorption of readers into the text, and the role that absorption plays in readers being convinced of the truth or believability of the text. It was no surprise that the literary elements and techniques of realism create believability, but what I believe has been shown is that used correctly these techniques can be stretched far beyond just mere truth. By drawing the reader in, gripping them, absorbing them, these techniques assist in suspending reality to accommodate the supernatural. The trinity of absorption attention, mental imagery and emotional engagement was found to not only exist in all the studied texts, but their role in subtly affecting the reader has also been made clear. One of the main contributors to this process was found to be characterisation. All three of the chosen texts are extremely character driven, to the point where the characters have gained an existence independent of the text. The "existence" of these characters further supports the "truth" of the events in the text – for if the person is real, what happened to them must also be real.

The narrative techniques and methods of realism were also carefully integrated and augmented by those of the Gothic. Take for example the Gothic's tendency towards excess. When applied to references to modernity and the details of everyday life the reader becomes almost overwhelmed by the immediacy of the text; if the author then carefully and almost secretly adds in the dissonant traces of the supernatural they disappear into the bigger picture, as for example Dr Seward's diary entry for 19 August in Chapter 8 (Stoker, 1997:97), regarding the behaviour of Renfield shortly after Dracula's arrival.

The paragraph starts off as a concise report of events, which then moves into a discussion of psychological symptoms and treatments. The tone then becomes more personal when Seward considers his own religious views or interpretations of religious delusion, even referring to scripture as evidence. However, there are two errors in his analysis, one his assumption that Renfield is referring to himself when talking about "the Master", the second is that he forgets that Renfield views the value of a life as the aggregate of lives it consumes, and so a cat is of greater

value than a sparrow. What then would be greater than a man? There is of course the gap in Seward's knowledge that there is something "superhuman" that has arrived on the shores of England, for this we cannot judge him, but that knowledge does cast events in a different light for the reader.

Doyle, as discussed, took things a step further – he made use of the same "signals" for the Gothic that the readers were already familiar with, and used that familiarity to create doubt in the mind of the reader, so Doyle made use of the expectations of his readers that in the mists of the moors there must be some Gothic monster to show that the real monster is always a man. In a way this is exactly the same technique used by any author who reimagined, transposed, imitated or made derivatives of any of these tales or characters. They rely on the reader to come to the story with certain expectations, assumptions, and knowledge, that can then be used to create understanding with much less effort on the side of the author – they can spend their time and effort on some other aspect of the tale. Or the expectations can be used to mislead or surprise the reader, an extreme example of this would be the "sparkly in sunlight" aspect of the vampires in the *Twilight* series, or the expectations associated with Dr Banner's monstrous alter ego, "The Hulk", in the Marvel graphic novels.

All the interlocking plot pieces, narrative techniques and careful crafting of the stories and characters indicate that these authors have succeeded in constructing texts that are great. This woolly term is explored by Averill (2001:5), and he makes a point that, while debatable, has merit:

What makes great literature great? I do not pretend to have an answer to this question – even to ask the question strikes me as a bit pretentious. In fact, I assume there is no single answer... But whatever else is involved, many writers agree that great literature appeals to the emotions. By great literature, I mean literature that has universal appeal – across time and culture... by appealing to emotions that are basic to human nature... great literature affords the catharsis of emotion.

I would argue that that is another role or contribution of the Gothic in these texts, to engage the reader's emotions, and make them think, for the longer the emotional reaction to the text lasts the more the reader ponders the problems and points made. The fact that many of the public concerns addressed by the Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic, (post)colonial politics, degeneration of society, the threats inherent to scientific and technological advancement changing views on gender and gender roles, immigration, and loss of religion are still, or again, so relevant to the fears of modern society allows readers to continue to explore their fears in the relative safety of the othering of a good quality Gothic tale. The catharsis of emotion is also part of the Gothic; there is satisfaction in facing the monster and overcoming it. I would further argue that it is the absence of emotional engagement, registered also in the fact that a climax is "missing", which has hampered the reception of *Dionea*, particularly by the modern reader.

This late Victorian setting is of course also one of the contributing factors to the enduring Gothicism of these tales, for to the modern reader this is what London was really like: dark, dirty, filled with monsters such as Jack the Ripper, Amelia Dyer the baby strangler, and the unidentified Thames Torso Murderer; the addition of a vampire and a man who is two men is not that big of a reach. Today we still struggle with many of the same problems, situations and fears that affected the contemporary readers – and as this is the case, we can also find value in the texts. Of course, for many a permutation of these monsters, the terror they were supposed to represent has become overshadowed by the horror, the thrills and entertainments – no need for deep philosophical discussions.

I believe that Mark Gatiss (*Storyline*, 2012:2:44) identified the greatest truth, however – we need them. We need heroes and monsters, we need the good guy to sometimes win, but also to sometimes lose, we need the emotional release and mental escapism that is fantasy. And while a new story that keeps you turning the page with bated breath is great, often returning to an old friend with known surprises and tensions is just as wonderful for a mind and heart that is tired of the “real world”.

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