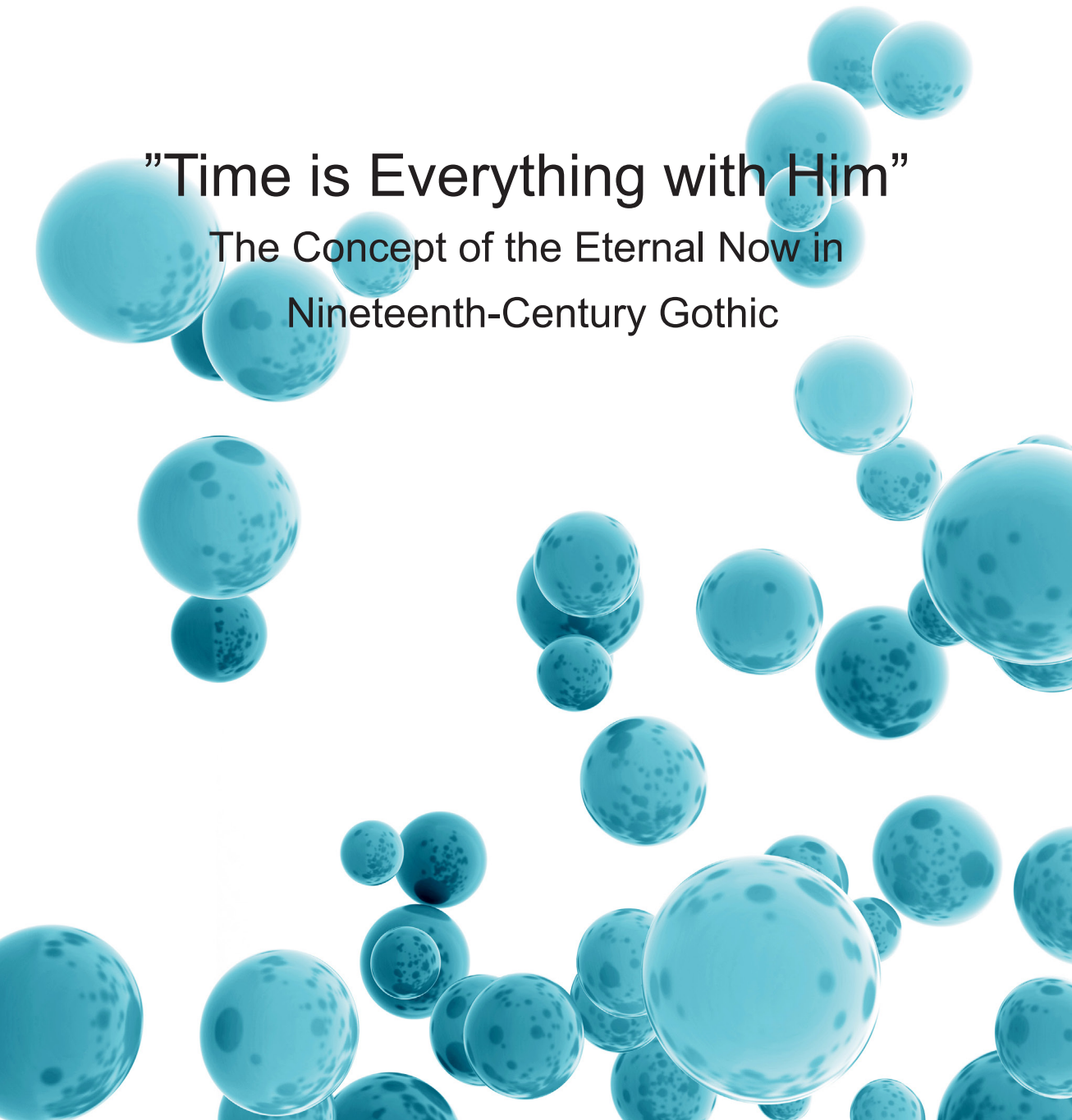


CHRISTOS ANGELIS

"Time is Everything with Him"

The Concept of the Eternal Now in
Nineteenth-Century Gothic





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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Communication Sciences
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CHRISTOS ANGELIS

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I dedicate this book to Titta, who helped me maintain my sanity during the past few years.

ABSTRACT

In my dissertation I analyze the concept of the eternal now – the “here-and-now” present the borders of which are ambiguous – in the context of nineteenth-century Gothic fiction. I present the argument that, as the Gothic is not preoccupied with offering strictly realistic depictions, in such narratives time deviates from what one would define as objective or normal: it can be perceived to flow faster or more slowly, or to even stop altogether. Similarly, concepts such as immortality, as well as dialectics concerning the past and the future, possess a central role in Gothic works. I argue that such temporal devices convey meanings related to social aspects such as gender, ethnicity, and class, and by examining these meanings, I analyze the nature of the concept of the eternal now in nineteenth-century Gothic.

My research material comprises Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* (1843), and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). Key theoretical foundations include Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of *chronotopoi*, the concept of the grotesque, through the work of Bakhtin as well as Wolfgang Kayser, Tzvetan Todorov’s formulation of the fantastic, as well as Hegelian concepts of synthesis, mostly through Francis Herbert Bradley’s Neo-Hegelian perspective.

My research methodology focuses on investigating the porosity of Gothic borders from a temporal perspective, establishing the areas where the Gothic most characteristically displays ambiguity. I then employ the concept of Hegelian synthesis to argue that the eternal now can be read as a mechanism of negotiation between these ambiguously divided Gothic borders. The dissertation displays how the eternal now contains transcendental and spiritual aspects through its connection with the sublime, in the context of the nineteenth century Gothic.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Väitöskirjassani analysoin ikuisen nyt-hetken käsitettä – eli ”tässä ja nyt”-nykyhetkeä, jonka rajat ovat epäselviä – 1800-luvun goottilaisen kirjallisuuden kontekstissa. Väitän, että koska goottilainen kirjallisuus ei tarjoa tiukasti realistisia kuvauksia, tällaisissa kertomuksissa aika poikkeaa objektiivisesta tai tavallisesta määritelmästä: se voi kulkea nopeammin tai hitaammin tai jopa pysähtyä kokonaan. Samoin käsitteet kuten kuolemattomuus sekä menneisyyden ja tulevaisuuden dialektiikka ovat keskeisessä asemassa goottilaisessa kirjallisuudessa. Väitän, että tällaiset aikaan liittyvät kirjalliset tehokeinot paljastavat merkityksiä, jotka liittyvät sosiaalisiin näkökohtiin kuten sukupuoli, etninen alkuperä tai luokka. Tarkastelemalla näitä merkityksiä analysoin ikuisen nyt-hetken luonnetta 1800-luvun goottilaisessa kirjallisuudessa.

Tutkimusaineistoani ovat Mary Shelley'n *Frankenstein* (1818), Charles Dickensin *A Christmas Carol* (1843) ja Bram Stokerin *Dracula* (1897). Keskeisiä teoreettisia perustoja ovat Mikhail Bakhtinin *kronotopoi* -käsite, groteskin käsite (sekä Bakhtinin että Wolfgang Kayserin analyysin kautta), Tzvetan Todorovin fantastisen määritelmä sekä hegeliläisen synteessin käsitteet lähinnä Francis Herbert Bradley'n uushegeliläisyyden näkökulmasta.

Tutkimukseni metodologia keskittyy tutkimaan goottilaisen kirjallisuuden rajojen huokoisuutta ajallisesta näkökulmasta määrittämällä alueet, joilla goottilaiset tekstit tyypillisesti osoittavat epäselvyyttä. Sitten käytän hegeliläisen synteessin käsitettä väittäen, että ikuinen nyt-hetki voidaan lukea neuvottelumekanismina näiden epäselvästi jakautuneiden goottisten rajojen välillä. Väitöskirjani osoittaa kuinka ikuinen nyt-hetki sisältää subliimiin liittyen transsendentaalisia ja hengellisiä näkökohtia 1800-luvun goottilaisen kirjallisuuden kontekstissa.

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1 INTRODUCTION

As ancient myths reveal, the role of time has always been central in human affairs. From Sisyphus's never-ending struggle to Prometheus's own eternal torment, and from Tithonus – who asked for eternal life but forgot to specify eternal youth – to Tantalus and his eternally unsatisfied desire, such myths underline the awe and fascination time and its facets inspire. Time can be considered one of the most mysterious yet ever-present elements of human life, arguably because of its abstractness and the difficulty encountered in grasping its real essence – assuming that there would be one. Indeed, time appears to be at the very core of every grand question ever posed, particularly in the field of metaphysics. Famously, when St. Augustine was asked what God did before making heaven and earth, he evaded the unanswerable question by saying that God was busy “[p]reparing hell for people who ask inquisitive questions” (Kenny 1998, 106). The questions posed in this dissertation are precisely related to time and, in particular, in its importance in the field of nineteenth-century Gothic literature.

1.1 Topic and Aims of the Research

The nineteenth century brought about a marked change in temporal studies, especially with regard to the elusiveness of time and its metaphysical status. The concept of the *eternal recurrence* (or *eternal return*), in particular, has attracted significant attention, arguably due to its direct connection with human mortality. Friedrich Nietzsche, in his 1882 work *The Gay Science*, underlines the dilemmas associated with the concept of the eternal recurrence:

What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: “This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again” ... Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: “You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.” (Nietzsche 2001, 194)

Arthur Schopenhauer, from whom Nietzsche drew significant inspiration, states in his 1818 *The World as Will and Representation* that the fear of death can be overcome once it becomes obvious that “[t]he present is the only real form of the phenomenon of the will. Therefore no endless past or future in which [man] will not exist can frighten him” (Schopenhauer 1969, 284). It is particularly on the idea of the present I will focus in this dissertation and, especially, on the ambiguity of the borders separating it from past or future. As Schopenhauer argues, “[the present], empirically apprehended, is the most fleeting of all ... [It] constantly becomes and passes away, in that it either has been already or is still to come” (Schopenhauer 1969, 279).

The metaphysical spectrality of this undefinably small present, this malleable here-and-now, seems to exist in a conflicting relationship with the sheer weight of reality it seems to carry. Human consciousness possesses epistemological access to the present that is uniquely more reliable than that of the past or the future, as these “contain mere concepts and phantasms ... The present alone is that which always exists” (Schopenhauer 1969, 279). I refer to this present, the borders of which are ambiguous, as the *eternal now* or the *eternal present* and will employ the terms interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

The concept of the eternal now is much older than the nineteenth century. It is in fact a concept found within Christianity itself, already mentioned in the times of St. Augustine, who argued that “in [God] today does not replace yesterday, nor give way to tomorrow; there is only an eternal present” (Kenny 1998, 106). For St. Augustine, such an argument was necessary in order to justify the theological essence of eternity, which effectively rejected the separation of past, present, and future, rendering time unreal. As Kenny puts it:

Augustine’s solution to these perplexities is to say that time is really only in the mind. The past is not, but I behold it in the present because it is, at this moment, in my memory. The future is not; all that there is, is our present foreseeing. Instead of saying that there are three times, past, present, and future, we should say that there is a present of things past (which is memory), a present of things present (which is sight), and a present of things future (which is expectation). (Kenny 1998, 106)

This simultaneity became a cornerstone of Christian thought and the present was thought as “something which has always been, and will be fulfilled in the future” (Auerbach E. 2003, 74).

More recent theorizations related to the eternal now can be sought in the works of Henri Bergson and Gaston Bachelard. The former referred to the concept of *duration*, arguing that “[p]ure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from

separating its present states from its former states” (Bergson 1910, 100). However, whereas for Bergson this separation seems to be a rather empty abstraction, for Bachelard it is time itself. Essentially rejecting the concept of duration presented by Bergson, Bachelard concentrated on *instant* instead, underlining the importance of the instant if duration is to have any meaning at all:

Duration is a complex of multiple ordering actions which support each other. If we say that we are living in a single, homogeneous domain we shall see that time can no longer move on. At the very most, it just hops about. In fact, duration always needs alterity for it to appear continuous. (Bachelard 2000, 65)

What Bachelard appears to be arguing for is the need for a dynamic equilibrium between continuity and discontinuity – indeed, a dialectical approach to temporality. Understanding time and its manifestations as dialectical appears as a fruitful, if not actually necessary prerequisite for an analysis of the ambiguous and often self-contradictory nature of the eternal now.¹

A dialectical approach to time also underlines the “point” of contact – and separation – of semantic pairs such as the one mentioned above, that is, continuity and discontinuity. The process possesses significant sublime characteristics, as “true sublimity occurs at ‘the point’ where the distinctions between categories, such as cause and effect, word and thing, object and idea, begin to break down” (Shaw 2006, 46). It is precisely in this “point” I will situate my analysis, arguing that it is the ghostly tangent bringing together the eternal now with the thematic element of my dissertation, (that is, the Gothic). Before proceeding to the detailed formulation of the research questions in this dissertation, it is fruitful to underline the role of time in attempting a definition of the Gothic.

Defining the Gothic appears almost as elusive as defining time. Gothic works are often expected to contain “a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the presence of highly stereotyped characters and the attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense” (Punter 1980, 1). For Chris Baldick, Gothic fiction involves an obsession “with old buildings as sites of human decay” (1992, xx). Jesse Molesworth argues that “[a]lmost nothing occurs in the gothic without some reference to the hour of its occurrence” (2014, 36). The importance of time, however, transcends mere settings. Fred Botting states that the beginnings of the Gothic mode coincide with the post-Enlightenment period that facilitated the emergence of oppositions, including those that are temporal in nature. As he argues, the Gothic narratives of

¹ For more on the concepts of the eternal recurrence, duration, and instant, see: Schopenhauer 1969; Nietzsche 2006; Eliade 2005; Bergson 1910; Bachelard 2000.

the time “were set in the Middle, or ‘Dark’, Ages. Darkness – an absence of the light associated with sense, security and knowledge – characterises the looks, moods, atmospheres and connotations of the genre” (2014, 2). David Punter is in concordance with Botting with regard to the placement of the Gothic in a somewhat loosely and ambiguously defined past, as well as to the fact that this facilitates the emergence of dichotomous associations:

[I]f ‘Gothic’ meant to do with post-Roman barbarism and to do with the medieval world, it followed that it was a term which could be used in opposition to ‘classical’. Where the classical was well ordered, the Gothic was chaotic; where simple and pure, Gothic was ornate and convoluted; where the classics offered a set of cultural models to be followed, Gothic represented excess and exaggeration, the product of the wild and the uncivilised. (1980, 5–6)

Botting crucially adds that the interplay between these dichotomies is ambiguous in nature. As he underlines, “[i]n seeing one time and its values cross into another, both periods are disturbed. The dispatching of unwanted ideas and attitudes into an imagined past does not guarantee they have been overcome” (2014, 3–4). Baldick describes the process as “homeopathic”, claiming that the resurrection of past fears happens in order for them to be dispelled (1992, xiii). The importance of time is evident in his attempt to formulate a definition of the Gothic, as he claims that “a tale should combine a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration” (1992, xix). The Gothic, then, can be seen as a mode the emergence of which coincides with – and is perhaps explained by – an increased awareness of a cultural present that is placed against a nightmarish past that may not have been entirely overcome.

Furthermore, as the Gothic is not preoccupied with offering strictly realistic depictions, time deviates from what one would define as objective or normal. In such works, time can be perceived to flow faster or more slowly, or to even stop altogether. Similarly, concepts such as immortality, as well as dialectics concerning the past and the future, possess a central role in Gothic works. In this dissertation, I refer to temporal deviations such as the aforementioned as *temporal distortions*. These are expressed in terms of narrative structure, as well as within the plot itself, and as I will argue they possess a significant amount of allusive power. I also employ the term *temporal dichotomies* to refer to dialectical pairs of temporal concepts such as, for instance, night versus day, cyclical versus linear time, immortality versus mortality, and others. I will also argue that temporal dichotomies can often be connected with dichotomies related to more general cultural expressions –

much in accordance with the examples offered by Punter (1980, 5–6), as mentioned earlier in this section.

It is important to note, however, that the key aspect of these dichotomies is the fact that their borders are hazy and their shape unclear, with an ambiguous, in-between area that can belong to both of the sides it seemingly separates. This leads to instances where Gothic temporality appears as an alloy of the very dichotomies it is divided into. As Molesworth emphasizes, “Gothic time is therefore not simply ... ‘out of joint’, as its frequent anachronisms and uses of supernaturalism might imply ... [G]othic time is curiously both out of joint and aggressively in joint – marked by exceptional precision and promptness” (2014, 32). Instances of temporal intermixing of this kind abound in the Gothic, as I will explicate, drawing further attention to the fact that such texts are best viewed in a non-realistic framework. Furthermore, it is precisely the presence of what appears to be incongruous intermixing that underlines the existence of the vague, undefinable, and abstract tangent that is the eternal now.

The research questions that this dissertation addresses are as follows. Firstly, if Gothic narratives indeed rely on temporal devices such as distortions and dichotomies, what kinds of meanings do they produce related not only to time but to more general aspects of culture and society? Secondly, and more importantly, what is the nature of the concept of the eternal now in nineteenth-century Gothic, and what does the analysis of the eternal now reveal about the aforementioned meanings?

The aim of this dissertation is to create a study of nineteenth-century Gothic temporality – using three texts of the period – and to show that time is an important component of meaning in these narratives, more intricate than mere motifs or conventions. More specifically, I will use the concept of the eternal now to study the ambiguity that characterizes the Gothic, arguing that such a reading can provide insight into mechanisms of reinterpretation and redefinition. In other words, I argue that the eternal now of the Gothic imagination attempts to negotiate the temporal dialectics between past and future; the conflict between a past that is still existing, and a future that is unknown. This process contains important spiritual components, not only due to its connection with the sublime (see sections 3.1 and 6.1), but also due to the pre-Enlightenment association between an eternal present and the Divine (see section 2.2).

The historical context for the dissertation is the nineteenth century, with particular focus on perceptions of time, history, progress, and memory. I will portray how time was of supreme importance to nineteenth-century British society

and how, consequently, it can be identified with many seemingly unrelated sociocultural expressions. For instance, time delineated not only the borders between the past and the future, but also between barbarism and progress, West and East, and even men and women. The two specific objectives of the dissertation are the following: a) to analyze forms of temporal distortion in nineteenth-century Gothic; b) to argue that such works can be approached through the examination of the concept of the eternal now. The dissertation then argues that alternative visions of the future (and, consequently, of reality in more general terms) are created in these texts through the eternal now. In more detail:

a) I analyze how temporal distortions are expressed in nineteenth-century Gothic. As mentioned earlier, the dissertation employs the term “temporal distortion” to refer to ways which Gothic texts use to underline the perception that time should not be considered as absolute and objective. As I affirm, such a process places significant strain on the foundations of objective reality.

b) I argue that an important temporal context of these Gothic texts is the eternal now, namely a form of timelessness that places emphasis on the indefinably small present time, blurring a clearly defined separation between past, present, and future. It is, however, important to underline that the eternal now does not imply the nullification of these existing temporalities. Rather, it creates new, hybrid forms, incorporating these often contradictory elements into it.

With my dissertation, which is a significantly extended continuation of my Master’s thesis titled *The Immor(t)al Monstrosities of the Victorian Gothic: Temporality and Otherness in Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (2010), I argue that reading ambiguity in the Gothic from a temporal perspective is a productive and revealing approach. Facilitated by the important changes in the way time was perceived and theorized in the nineteenth century, temporality has since been highly relevant in Gothic narratives, as well as in the Gothic-related science fiction.² My aim is to provide tools for the better understanding of these narratives and the ways temporal themes function in them. This could lead to a reevaluation of a large number of Gothic texts, and, consequently, of their sociohistorical context.

² Aldiss argues that science fiction “is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode” (1986, 25).

1.2 Theoretical Background and Primary Works

Although the Gothic can be described in terms of what generic conventions it includes, what audience reactions it inspires, or even what social purpose it might serve, the attempt to define a category of literary works that is clearly demarcated is a challenging task. While the Gothic can be associated with various texts, settings, styles, or characters, the process of definition becomes a much more complex issue when precise borders and exclusive classification are attempted. For the purposes of this dissertation, I choose to treat the Gothic mode as a broad area. Although its presence can be detected with a certain degree of confidence, its borders are ambiguous and fluid. Furthermore, the Gothic is ambiguous not only in regard to its generic status but, more importantly, in its plots and themes. Botting argues that “Gothic texts are, overtly but ambiguously, not rational”, adding that “gothic styles disturb the borders of knowing and conjure up obscure otherworldly phenomena” (2014, 2).

As stated in the previous section, the aim of the dissertation is to analyze the ways temporal distortions are expressed in nineteenth-century Gothic and to demonstrate that these culminate in the creation of a specific form of sublime timelessness, that of the eternal now. The latter alludes to an all-inclusive, hybrid, and ultimately redefined future.

For this analysis, I examine theoretical approaches to time – older articulations, such as Jerome Buckley’s 1967 *The Triumph of Time*, as well as recent reevaluations, such as Russell West-Pavlov’s 2013 *Temporalities*. I also study the connections between time and space, and especially how they participate in reality-rendering processes. For this, I employ Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of *chronotopoi* (1981). Furthermore, I evoke the concept of the grotesque, through the work of Bakhtin (1984) and Wolfgang Kayser (1981), with the aim of underlining its connections with the Gothic and, especially, of examining how the Gothic relates to an often subconscious expression of covert meaning by distorting or amplifying reality.

For the same purpose, that is, discovering the relation between reality and its portrayal in the Gothic, I make use of Tzvetan Todorov’s definition of the fantastic (1973), as well as David Punter’s analysis of the Gothic (1980) and of the concept of the “romantic unconscious” (1990) – particularly his epistemological approaches to reality in the Gothic. In my examination of opposing dialectical pairs (particularly in temporal terms), I will refer to Hegelian concepts of synthesis,

mostly through the perspectives and interpretations of Neo-Hegelianism and Francis Herbert Bradley.

Before proceeding, however, it is imperative to make a clarification regarding the theoretical approaches mentioned above. By making use of Bakhtinian explorations pertinent to the grotesque, I do not claim to subscribe to Bakhtin's theory of the carnival grotesque to the extent that it excludes the strange or uncanny grotesque. The differentiation between the two and their importance in connection with this dissertation will be investigated in chapter three. Furthermore, I am aware of a theoretical discrepancy between, on the one hand, Bakhtin whose work focuses on materialism, and, on the other, Punter's more idealist examinations – for instance, pertaining to the romantic unconscious. What I draw from the work of these scholars as a common element is the concept of ambiguity, and their description of literatures (particularly of the Gothic mode) functioning as in-between worlds. As my research methodology will focus precisely on investigating this porosity of Gothic borders from a temporal perspective, I will rely on the work of Bakhtin, Punter, and Todorov to establish the areas where the Gothic most characteristically displays ambiguity. I will then employ the concept of Hegelian synthesis to argue that the eternal now can be read as a mechanism of negotiation between these ambiguously divided Gothic borders.

In addition to the critics mentioned above, I will also attend to recent studies related to Gothic temporality, such as Patricia Murphy's *Time Is of the Essence* (2001), and Richard S. Albright's *Writing the Past, Writing the Future* (2009). Murphy's focus is on issues of temporality and gender in a non-exclusively Gothic context, and I only use some of her general findings on Victorian temporality – particularly those related to the end of the nineteenth century. Albright's work is more directly relevant to the topic of the present dissertation, as he explores conflicts between past and present/future in the nineteenth century, making connections between Gothic temporality and social anxieties. However, apart from some scattered, indirect remarks, Albright's scope does not include the issues addressed in the current dissertation, namely the eternal now as a synthesis of opposites.

As my primary texts I have chosen Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818; hereafter cited as *F*), Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843; hereafter cited as *CC*), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897; hereafter cited as *D*). In addition, I will briefly examine some other works by Shelley, as their plot is directly connected with temporal anxieties (see section 4.1). I will also occasionally refer to film adaptations of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, in cases meriting comparison. The justification for the selection of these three particular texts arises from the following three facts:

- a) These texts cover a wide period of the nineteenth century. As such, it becomes important to explore how they project the anxieties and thoughts *of* their respective time, as well as *about* their respective time. By this I mean that these texts do not only reflect contemporary sociocultural issues (for instance, the ethics of science and technology in *Frankenstein*, capitalism in *A Christmas Carol*, or the ‘New Woman’ question in *Dracula*) but also reveal concerns in relation to how time itself was understood in their respective periods.
- b) *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* – and, to some extent, *A Christmas Carol* as well – anticipate future times and look into the future, in both textual and metatextual terms.³ *Frankenstein* seems to break away from an existing literary tradition, becoming an early reflection of future ways of expression. Rather than a Romantic text, it should perhaps be seen as *post*-Romantic. As George Levine argues, “Frankenstein is one of the first in a long tradition of fictional overreachers, of characters who act out in various ways the myth of Faust, and transport it from the world of mystery and miracle to the commonplace” (1973, 17–18). The fact that the content of *Frankenstein* displays a more generalized anxiety in relation to the future of humankind, only amplifies the effect. The same is the case with *Dracula*, which also expresses the fear of the world – or its synecdochical center, that is London – being dominated by “a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons” (D 60). Much as *Frankenstein* should be seen as a post-Romantic text, *Dracula* should be approached as a post-Victorian one. As Ronald Thomas argues, Jonathan Harker, one of the main characters in *Dracula*, “is as lost in time as he is in space, stranded uncomfortably in some uncharted territory between what he calls the ‘powers’ of ‘the old centuries’ and those of ‘modernity’ ... [He is] squarely on the threshold of what might justifiably be called the post-Victorian” (2000, 288–289). As my dissertation is particularly concerned with the in-between and the ambiguous, these texts become prime opportunities to study this kind of cultural transition and transformation.
- c) All three primary texts are widely known, with *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* being two of the most characteristic and widely cited works of Gothic

³ I refer to *metatextuality* as the quality of a text to be: i) aware of and refer to other similar texts; ii) self-aware and self-referential, drawing attention to the fact that it is a textual product. In this approach, I do not limit myself within the strict confines of such connections as defined by Genette (1992), but I align myself with Patricia Waugh’s definition of metafiction, explained in more detail later in the present section.

fiction. *A Christmas Carol*, although perhaps not as characteristic a Gothic work as the other two, nevertheless remains a very popular ghost story, with strongly accentuated Gothic elements. In addition, much like Shelley's and Stoker's novels, it has seen a multitude of adaptations. However, despite their popularity and the considerable academic interest these works have received, comparatively little interest has been shown in temporal aspects of these texts – perhaps a surprising fact, considering the overwhelming importance of time in their plot. By selecting these particular, well-known texts, I aim to reach conclusions that can then also be applied to other Gothic works.

The variety of readings these texts offer can perhaps be partly attributed precisely to the ambiguity often found in the Gothic. There are numerous well-established critical approaches to these works, particularly *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, focusing on several key aspects. Among others, *Frankenstein* has been explored as a novel about identity, in terms of gender as well as “race” (see Veeder 1986; Dickerson 1993; Mellor 2001), about otherness, society, and the so-called nature-versus-nurture discourse (see Levine 1973; O'Rourke 1989), and about nature and the sublime (see Clubbe 1991). Critics of *Dracula* have focused, among other topics, on decadence and reverse colonialism (see Arata 1990; Boone 1993; Hughes 2003), on capital and economy (see Houston, 2005; Moretti, 2005), and on sexuality and gender (see Senf 1982; Schaffer 1994; Roth 2001). As for *A Christmas Carol*, although it has not attracted the same level of attention, it is often included in criticism of Dickens's works in general, particularly in the discussion of topics such as anti-Semitism (see Grossman 1996; Davison 2004), and the association between literary production and construction of reality (see Jaffe 1994).

The dissertation will be divided into the following parts. The second chapter will examine the historical context, namely the nineteenth century, and it will demonstrate how a significant part of British society during that period perceived aspects of time, history, progress, and memory. I will portray how a series of inventions and discoveries facilitated an increased interest in time and temporality. This can be seen both in practical, everyday terms – such as an emerging need for accuracy and universality in time-measurement – and in theoretical terms, with a reevaluation of humanity's past and future. I argue that this process not only produced a set of temporal oppositions and associations, but also created a certain sense of metaphysical anxiety which was unprecedented until then. This kind of anxiety was related, for instance, to the perception of the self and to teleological expectations as, to name one example, the discoveries in the fields of geology and

biology by James Hutton, Charles Lyell, and Charles Darwin, shook the long-established preconceptions about the earth's past and the origins of humanity. Furthermore, the discovery of the second law of thermodynamics, suggesting an inevitable future extinction due to the consumption of all usable energy, effectively isolated humanity from the future as well, resulting in an accentuated feeling of living in the "here and now".⁴ Consequently, time began to be perceived as something not merely incidental but actually pivotal in human affairs. As the character of Quincey Morris aptly puts it in *Dracula*, in reference to the eponymous Count, "[t]ime is everything with him" (D 258).

Having explored aspects of the importance of time, I will then place the main theoretical foundations of my dissertation. The third chapter will analyze the concept of the eternal now and argue that it possesses strong sublime characteristics as a largely undefinable, ambiguous temporal equilibrium between the dialectical pull of past and future. Consequently, aspects of the sublime will also be examined in the same chapter. The ambiguous, sublime nature of the eternal now means that experiences associated with it are characterized by the fall of traditional boundaries between reality and fantasy, or subjectivity and objectivity. For this reason, this chapter will additionally underline the role of the Gothic as a carrier of subconscious meaning. I will demonstrate that due to its uniquely ambiguous placement between reality and fantasy, the Gothic locates itself in those areas of societal discourse that have often been considered taboo. Some of those are more readily identifiable (and indeed, more deeply examined by academic criticism), such as views associated with family, creation and productivity, or the state and patriarchy in general. Others, however, are far less obvious. These include aspects related to time, reality, and the future. Essentially the Gothic becomes,

⁴ An important clarification must be made regarding the issues of anxiety and normativity in nineteenth-century British society. Baldick and Mighall refer to "the anxiety model" of recent Gothic criticism, which they define as an academic tradition that "employs a model of culture and history premised on fear, experienced by a surrealist caricature of a bourgeoisie trembling in their frock coats at each and every deviation from a rigid, but largely mythical, stable middle-class consensus" (2012, 283). It is one thing to exercise caution in regard to claims related to Victorian normative ideas; it is entirely another thing to deny their presence altogether. I do agree with Baldick and Mighall in that one should not assume that normative ideas were the only ideas in Victorian society. Similarly, one should not assume that deviation from the consensus was unequivocally accompanied by panic-like, explicit fear and anxiety. However, if these assumptions are, indeed, elements of overgeneralization, so is the claim that middle-class consensus is mythical. Homoerotic desire, to name one example, is often considered a deviation from a middle-class consensus even in our times, even in the Western world. Surely, I argue, it qualifies as such in the Victorian period too. These kinds of deviations, as I will demonstrate with several examples in the next chapter, did produce a feeling of anxiety, albeit latent, subconscious, and ambiguous, just like the Gothic itself.

often subconsciously, the rebel voice that opposes “the function of ideology to naturalise the presented world, to make its consumers think that the cardinal features of the world they inhabit are natural, eternal, unchangeable” (Punter 1980, 419). In this chapter I will also examine concepts related to philosophical idealism, with particular emphasis on the Hegelian concept of synthesis.

The main part of the dissertation will include the study of my primary texts. I plan to explicate how temporality is expressed, emphasizing the ways it reflects contemporary issues in regard to society and culture. These include issues that are concrete and more specific – such as those concerning normativity and gender, “race”, or class – but also issues that are more abstract, such as those related to experience, perception, and, ultimately, reality. In more detail, I will read my primary material by examining the inherent Gothic ambiguity from a temporal perspective, demonstrating how the eternal now can serve as a negotiator of the gap between past and future. In other words, as the eternal now is separated from yet also connected with past and future by virtue of its fuzzy borders, such a reading can facilitate the deeper understanding of cultural elements that are common between eras. This is particularly the case with elements considered taboo, marginal, and thus rejected on a conscious level. As Botting argues, “ghostly recurrences manifest an unease and instability in the imagined unity of self, home or society, hauntings that suggest loss or guilt or threat” (2014, 3). Victor Frankenstein’s initial depiction as the spearhead of modern scientific thought quickly degenerates into the near-archetypal portrayal of older (and perhaps timeless) myths regarding mortality as well as morality. Similarly Dracula’s hunters, though ostensibly the very embodiment of cutting-edge Victorian technology, ultimately resort to using methods such as hypnotism to achieve their aim – a practice met with skepticism in the *fin de siècle* period (Moss 1997, 128).

The study of the primary texts is thematically divided into three parts, each in its individual chapter, as follows. The fourth chapter will analyze ways in which temporal distortions appear in Gothic texts. The main focus is on aspects of immortality, and it is in this context that temporal dichotomies begin to emerge, with the most apparent being that between the living and the dead. However, even for such a seemingly non-negotiable dichotomy, there is deep ambiguity in the Gothic. The dividing line between life and death appears blurry, and at times it loses its meaning altogether. The inability to properly separate the two also means that they lose their individual distinct definition, and, consequently, it is the ambiguous area in-between that acquires particular importance. This becomes the

starting point of the Hegelian dialectical model: the formation of a thesis and its antithesis that, through their conflicting interplay, invite the synthesis.

The fifth chapter will then focus on dichotomies of identity, revealing their strong temporal components. Continuing from the concepts of the previous chapter, I intend to demonstrate the presence of a number of (temporal) dichotomies in ideas related to gender and sexuality, ethnicity, “race” and religion, as well as class and consuming habits. I will argue that through their temporal facets, these dichotomies can also be placed in the context of the temporal dialectics described so far, with the concept of the eternal now alluded to as a resolution of sorts. A typical example is, for instance, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, a story replete with references to ethnic othering. In the conclusion of the novel – in what Maurice Hindle calls “the strangest and most chilling ambiguity” (2003, xxxv) – Dracula’s bloodline possibly survives in Mina Harker’s child. Consequently, the conclusion seems to offer a way out of the dialectical pull between past and future (expressed in not unambiguous terms through Count Dracula and his English hunters, respectively) precisely incorporating them both into the synthetic, highly symbolic figure of the child.

The nature of this resolution, however, is amorphous. Its expression and acknowledgment somewhat defy direct depiction or perception, and the sublime becomes an apposite framework for the analysis of this process. As a result, traditional epistemological methodologies – including the separation of the Gothic into “explained” and “supernatural” (Todorov 1973, 41–42) – cannot properly describe the full impact of what the Gothic expresses.

The sixth chapter attempts to transcend the quandary described above. In that chapter I study aspects of reality and argue that Gothic temporality – and the eternal present, in particular – do not valorize objectivity but perception. As a result, Gothic experience is presented as neither fully objective nor entirely subjective (or, if one wished to approach the matter from its other dimension, as *both* objective *and* subjective). As I will demonstrate, the synthetic model of temporality, with a hybridization between past and future in the form of an eternal now, can be applied onto Gothic reality in general, with objectivity and subjectivity becoming synthesized into a new form which I will refer to as *omnijectivity*.⁵ This dissertation posits that the inability to fully represent a “hard reality” underlines the sublime qualities of the eternal now as a realm that remains beyond representation, and as the “point” where the distinction between dialectical pairs such as past and

⁵ The term was originally coined by the researcher and science fiction author Michael Talbot (1996, 279).

future or cause effect begin to dissipate (Shaw 2006, 46). At the same time, I will explore how this sublime eternal now refers to reinterpretation and redefinition by envisioning alternative futures. In the last section of the chapter I will also underline the significant metatextual power of the Gothic works examined in this dissertation, with direct implications for temporality, as well as experience and meaning in more general terms. As mentioned earlier in this section (see footnote 3), I refer to metatextuality by employing Patricia Waugh's definition of metafiction:

[It is] a celebration of the power of the creative imagination together with an uncertainty about the validity of its representations; an extreme self-consciousness about language, literary form and the act of writing fictions; a pervasive insecurity about the relationship of fiction to reality; a parodic, playful, excessive or deceptively naive style of writing ... [It is] fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality ... also [exploring] the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text. (Waugh 1984, 2)

The metatextual awareness of a text is also underlined by the way it understands and refers to other similar texts, as I will demonstrate in section 6.3.

The post-industrial West is arguably still influenced to a significant extent by ideas and discoveries that originated in the nineteenth century. The study of the temporal aspects of Gothic texts of that period becomes particularly important, as it reveals an additional, hidden domain beneath the Gothic mode, namely a complex system of connotations and associations in relation to ideas of perception, normativity, and reality.

2 TEMPORAL PERCEPTIONS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

The nineteenth century was a period of major changes, being an era of transition from an older experience of life to a new one. Such transformations can often be ascribed to a combination of reasons, often interconnected. The scientific discoveries and inventions of the era played a great part in that social metamorphosis. Nevertheless, in relation to this dissertation, it is also important to note the influence exerted on perceptions of time as a result of such discoveries and inventions. As Zemka argues, the process of industrialization in Britain influenced “social time-consciousness” in two significant ways: firstly, by facilitating the distribution of time that was precise and standardized; secondly, by underlining the importance of small intervals of this time (2012, 2).

This reevaluation of temporality can be seen in practical as well as theoretical terms, that is, both as an everyday necessity to modify one’s approach to time-measurement, with greater need for accuracy and universality, and as a more general transformation in the way time was theorized. Perhaps inevitably, reevaluations related to temporality also created a set of connotations and dichotomies between an old, imperfect, and abstract way of action or thought, and a new, ostensibly perfect, and practical alternative. This separation was, however, neither universal nor clear: it should be rather seen as part of a continuum, containing various shades of “temporal norms”, if one wished to employ such a term. Furthermore, as I plan to demonstrate, the qualitative differentiation between the older and the newer paradigm became far more problematic near the end of the nineteenth century.

In this and the following chapter, I will place the theoretical foundations of my dissertation, beginning with the temporal historical context. As the basic component of my thesis revolves around the concept of ambiguity, I will situate the second chapter in a similar framework. In more detail, I will present the argument that during the nineteenth century, a shift in the understanding, conceptualization, and theorization of temporality occurred that described a transition from a simpler and unidimensional sense of time to a more intricate and confusing one that was deeply ambiguous and self-contradicting in its fundamental

aspects. I will place particular emphasis on the *fin de siècle* period, since a significant increase in awareness of temporal ambiguity can be registered as the century was reaching its end. I will examine how nineteenth-century British society generally perceived concepts related to time, history, and progress. I will also examine the connection between time and contemporary social issues, and demonstrate how different forms of temporality facilitated the creation of dividing lines. Additionally, in this chapter I will gradually introduce more general temporal concepts, related to the ontology of time, a process I will continue in the next chapter.

The first section of the analysis will cover changes on a practical level: I will explicate how new inventions that were introduced or perfected during the nineteenth century altered the perception of time – for instance, creating the need for a centralized time measurement and greater accuracy in everyday schedules. This, as it will become evident, underlined the presence of more than one kind of time, with one major division being that between “public time” and “private time”. The second section of this chapter will focus on changes that occurred on a more theoretical level: I will explore how new approaches to temporality created a certain sense of metaphysical anxiety, introducing ambiguity in terms of humanity’s place in history, in regard to the past as well as to the future. I will also introduce concepts related to memory, subconscious perceptions, and alternative realities, particularly from the historical Victorian perspective. A more in-depth analysis of these ideas will continue in the third chapter.

The main aim of this second chapter is to underline the fact that, in nineteenth-century British society, time was not perceived as an immutable element that, in a typically linear fashion, merely served as a reference system. Rather, as an integral part of society and culture and possessing significant ambiguity, time held significant implications and allusive power from the individual to the societal level.

2.1 Split Time: Two Sides of Scientific Progress

A productive approach in understanding the dynamics of temporality in nineteenth-century Britain is to explore time through the ambiguity it produced. The level of ambiguity, self-contradiction, and confusion involved in nineteenth-century temporality meant that what was before stable and immutable, became malleable; what was absolute and divinely ordained, became relative and secular –

hence subject to change itself. More importantly still, the ambiguity of time and the flexibility with which it assumed its various forms facilitated the introduction of many contrasts and oppositions.

An important contrast was that between public time and private time, which Buckley defines as follows:

“Public time,” as I use the label, involves the attitudes of the society as a living changing whole ... the general preoccupation with the upward or downward movement of the “times,” and the commitment to the contemporary. “Private time,” on the other hand, relates to the subjective experience of the individual, his memories of a personal past, his will to accept or oppose the demands of the public present, and finally his effort to conquer time, to escape from the tyranny of the temporal, to find beyond the flux of things some token of stability. (Buckley 1967, viii)

Buckley suggests a contrast between the scientist’s “objective linear time to be measured quantitatively” and the poet’s “far more complex private time” (1967, 7). He adds, however, that due to inventions, discoveries and, overall, the staggering rate of change forced upon the nineteenth-century individual, the lines between personal and public time were often blurred, with the two becoming “to a high degree consonant”, at least on some occasions (1967, 9). The way science affected time in the nineteenth century indeed merits further attention.

The introduction of the Mail coach service in 1784 gradually led to significant improvements in the roads, which made travel faster and more reliable. Inventions such as Stephenson’s locomotive in 1829 or Morse’s telegraph in 1837 played a catalytic role in the process of industrialization and urbanization that rapidly unfolded in the nineteenth century. Time-measurement devices such as clocks and chronometers also underwent significant alterations themselves, as their decreasing size and increasing accuracy meant that time could – and indeed did – become more important. Thomas Carlyle, in a letter written on 19 February 1832 and addressed to his brother Alexander, characteristically underlines the importance of punctuality:

I have another advice to give you, my dear Brother; which I shall enforce with brotherly earnestness when we meet: It is to cultivate, in all things, the virtue of PUNCTUALITY. There is far more in this than you suspect. To the want of Punctuality, I trace most part of all the evil I have seen in you. (Kinser 2007)

It is worth noting not only the direct connection made between lack of punctuality and evil, but also the quasi-mystical implication that punctuality is more important than what one might think. To make matters more confusing, however, there were differences in opinion regarding the etiquette of punctuality. Although some believed that people should aim “not only to be punctual, but a little before-hand”

(*News of the World* 1851), it was by no means rare to be late by significantly more than a quarter. Charles Dickens, reporting on a dinner honoring Earl Grey, ironically states that although the occasion should have taken place at five o'clock, "Earl Grey, and the other principal visitors, as might have been expected, did not arrive until shortly after six" (Downes 2013, 16).

As a result of the greater capacity which was becoming available to organize and synchronize meetings or happenings with increased precision, productivity was enhanced. Furthermore, through the search for longitude – feasible only by using clocks that were accurate, yet small enough to be used on a ship – the way was paved for regular, reliable intercontinental trade flows. Because of this, as well as due to the need for the centralization of time, that is, a universally accepted time scheme, accurate mechanized time was "from the outset bound up with expanding imperial capitalism" (West-Pavlov 2013, 15). However, although clocks lent an impetus to temporal abstraction (West-Pavlov 2013, 16–17), it is important to emphasize that change rarely occurred simultaneously across space or social strata.

Hence, although watches were an affordable solution to many, the variations among these time-keeping machines – essentially the degree of temporal accuracy – signified difference in their users' backgrounds, as "the cheap pocket-watch and the delicate and specialized chronometer lay at either extremity of a new continuum ... that extended throughout Victorian society" (Harrington 2003, 5). In other words, already at the most basic level of registering – and conforming to – public time, there appears to be a rift, or "a split between a perfect, ideal, transcendental, cosmic time-in-itself, and the imperfect, inaccurate clocks of everyday reality" (West-Pavlov 2013, 18). Although the nineteenth-century clock was far more accurate and trustworthy than the time-measuring devices of previous centuries, the contrast still existed and was perhaps exaggerated by the increasing need for temporal universality and accuracy. In the past, time measurement was "a casual affair, with each village setting its own time without considering that a minute hand – if there was one – could vary substantially in the next hamlet, often by a half-hour or longer" (Murphy 2001, 13). Now, the factory hour or the railway minute not only signified an increasing need for accuracy, but also for universality and the need to conform to a central authority. As West-Pavlov argues, time is "riddled with issues of power and hegemony, and is at stake in much political struggle: calendars, for instance, were always the creations of political elites" (2013, 3).

As the strict schedules of factories and railways dramatically changed the way appointments were arranged and work time was assigned, people's "entire

consciousness of time [was] altered by the requirements and opportunities” (Landes 2000, 303). Time being an integral part of the human experience and the construction of reality, the technological advances in the field of time-keeping had radical consequences for the perception of reality. West-Pavlov refers to time-keepers becoming “prosthetic extensions of the body”, rendering time “part of the very structures of consciousness of modern European subjectivity” (2013, 17). The resistance to this rapid rate of change was occasionally stiff, with talks about “railway-time aggression”, while officials sometimes declined to offer schedule information, “fearing that punctuality would become compulsory” (Murphy 2001, 13). Furthermore, although the already popular notion that time was money was greatly enhanced by the railway system, not everyone agreed.

An anonymous pamphleteer in 1844 challenged the view that people “valued their time rather than their money, and should prefer the velocity of the railway, even at higher charges, than the slower speed of the stage-coach, at lower charges” (Harrington 2003, 4). Nonetheless, voices like these sounded increasingly more irrational, and thus the proponents of such ideas effectively marginalized themselves. As Samuel Smiles argued in 1862, “[i]n no country in the world is time worth more money than in England; and by saving time ... the railway proved a great benefactor to men of industry in all classes” (Harrington 2003, 3–4). Inescapably, dichotomies based on the appreciation of and approach to time began to emerge, creating a temporal sense of otherness. Ironically, it seemed that the money saved as a result of the increased velocity and accuracy of everyday life, was eventually funneled back to the system. The very idea that, as the anonymous pamphleteer argued, faster meant also more expensive, implied that a certain status was associated with differences in temporality. These splits expanded into other societal divisions, widening other existing chasms, such as the one between city dwellers and countrymen. Despite the new perception of time and distance offered by the railway to inhabitants of the city, even the poorer ones, those still living in rural areas remained unaffected by the change. Except for property owners and professionals, the concept of distance for the vast majority of villagers was largely similar to that of the previous generations (Bagwell 1981, 31). In consequence, while the countryman’s perception of the time it took to complete a certain trip remained unaltered, the city dweller now felt that that time was becoming shorter. An other, arguably more profoundly established temporal split was the one between men and women.

Dividing time into masculine and feminine is something far older than the nineteenth century, as the pattern of associating masculinity with cause and effect

and femininity with cyclicity reach back to antiquity. Furthermore, it is important to notice the contrast between the two, as “[t]he linearity of public action vanquishes the ‘non-linear’ (i.e. unpredictable) generativity of child-bearing” (West-Pavlov 2013, 101). Nonetheless, it is important to underline the way nineteenth-century temporality emphasized the tendency to divide time into masculine and feminine, with a clear hierarchy between them:

Victorian perceptions of the natural order of time inconspicuously but emphatically stemmed from intrinsic masculinist biases that served to bolster inflexible gender boundaries. In British culture ... it was the male who was perceived to determine the course of history and whose accomplishments furthered the cause of progress. In Christianity it was the male who served as prophet, priest, and typological precursor of Christ. In Darwinian theory it was the male, specifically the white European male, who represented the most advanced specimen in the human developmental chain. (Murphy 2001, 23)

There is an obvious pattern at play, one that functions in an ironically “masculine” cause-and-effect method. It is the molding of new discoveries and developments – which are after all products of a supposedly masculine process of progress – based on existing confirmation biases. If masculine time is considered to be superior and imperative for progress and survival, new theories such as those pertaining to the evolution of the species had to be shaped in a way that reflected this. Even beyond the social and the theoretical, focusing on the individual and practical, the nineteenth-century everyday life offers some striking examples of a gender-based sanctity of time. According to Lawrence Wright, the clocks that adorned nineteenth-century British households were under strict control of the “[p]aterfamilias [who] alone was authorised to touch the consecrated object” (Wright 1969, 151).

Ultimately, the pairing of technology and temporality began to overexpand and cover areas of life that were previously unregulated. The creative process itself had to be adapted to the new reality. Whereas Mary Shelley conceived *Frankenstein* – no pun intended – in the context of a friendly competition during a journey to Europe, Charles Dickens insisted on a tight, methodical writing schedule. At the peak of his writing career, Dickens always wrote for five hours in the morning, from nine until two, after which he walked alone until five (Tomalin 2011, 259). It is also known that Dickens explicitly complained about the demands of his writing schedule, going as far as calling himself a prisoner (Houston 2005, 78–79). This effect was caused by the demands of serialized, weekly publication practices, and there often was a direct conflict between authorial intent and temporal constraints. Elizabeth Gaskell is a notable example, as in the preface of her 1855 *North and*

South she effectively disowns the serialized version that had appeared in *Household Words*, the weekly literary magazine edited by Dickens, due to the latter's alterations:

On its appearance in 'Household Words,' this tale was obliged to conform to the conditions imposed by the requirements of a weekly publication, and likewise to confine itself within certain advertised limits, in order that faith might be kept with the public. Although these conditions were made as light as they well could be, the author found it impossible to develop the story in the manner originally intended, and, more especially, was compelled to *hurry* on events with an *improbable rapidity* towards the close. In some degree to remedy this obvious defect, various short passages have been inserted, and several new chapters added. (Gaskell 1855; my emphasis)

Although serialized publication was not a new discovery, it was during the mid-Victorian era that it metamorphosed from a largely low-quality, disjointed process involving reprints, short stories and unknown authors, to a professional, serious endeavor featuring famous authors and novel-length texts (Law 2000, 7). However, as Gaskell's quoted preface indicates, the necessities associated with the newly found appreciation for time, precision, and regularity, caused a transformation not only in terms of practicalities but also in terms of content. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, the altered perception of time and reality facilitated the creation of new theories of time and history, and underlined the inherent instability of both time and, consequently, reality.

2.2 New Ways of Theorizing Time

Human preoccupations with time have been as old as humanity itself, arguably due to their direct implications for human mortality. Nonetheless, the Victorian obsession with it differed in several important ways:

The notion of public time, or history, as the medium of organic growth and fundamental change, rather than simply additive succession, was essentially new. Objects hitherto apparently stable had begun to lose their old solidity ... The Victorians were entering a modern world, where, according to the angry Wyndham Lewis, "chairs and tables, mountains and stars, are animated into a magnetic restlessness, and exist on the same vital terms as man". (Buckley 1967, 5)

This realization that nothing was stable facilitated an anxiety related to the Victorians' perceived place in history. Two major polar ideas of the period were that of progress and that of decadence. The Victorians, realizing their time as one

that was transitional between something old and something new, felt fear and hope at the same time.

As mentioned at the beginning of the previous section, the way time was theorized radically changed due to a series of scientific breakthroughs. Even before the nineteenth century, Newton's physics suggested a world in which, theoretically, if enough information was available, the future could be accurately predicted – in the sense that there was no such thing as random events, a view that later became obsolete. Later on, it was Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, written in the early 1830s, as well as Charles Darwin's 1859 *On the Origin of Species*, which forced another reevaluation of history, this time suggesting that also the past had to be reconsidered.⁶

Up until Lyell's text, and partially into the following decade, the traditional theory regarding the past was more or less based on catastrophism, that is, the hypothesis that the world had acquired its present form due to a series of sudden, violent natural events such as cataclysms. This was in accordance with the Mosaic account and Bishop Ussher's suggestion that the beginning of the world could be set at 4004 BCE. *Principles of Geology* was conversely based on uniformitarianism, that is, a doctrine "of slow change wrought by such quiet agents as erosion and sedimentary deposit" (Buckley 1967, 27). Quite unsurprisingly, Lyell's text caused a major reaction not only due to its theological implications, but also because "the new vision was scarcely reassuring to those who had learned to think in terms of a more human, more manageable time-scheme" (ibid). Subsequent archaeological discoveries, placing the first humans not six thousand but six hundred thousand years ago, were soon followed by Darwin's research on evolutionary biology. In the years after those discoveries, "the natural scientist moved closer than ever before to the approach and concern of the historian" (Buckley 1967, 29), and in fact on a vastly more extended scale.⁷

In addition, the mid-century discovery of the second law of thermodynamics added further anxiety in relation to history and the future, as it was interpreted to imply the extinction of human life due to the exhaustion of usable energy – the so-called heat death of the universe. Suddenly, the existing definition, meaning, and destination of human existence seemed to be lacking. A dark, unfathomable past

⁶ It must be mentioned that both Lyell and Darwin were greatly influenced by the work of James Hutton, whose research on geological erosion and the rock cycle established that the age of the earth was vast. See Repcheck 2009.

⁷ It is important to note that Lyell's and Darwin's discoveries recall concepts related to the sublime and the grotesque, such as a vast temporal sizes and incongruent-looking fusion, respectively (see chapter three).

lay on the one side, while a rather ominous and equally uncertain future lay on the other. In the meanwhile, an explosive rate of change in the way life was experienced assured the creation of feelings of uncertainty and, occasionally, despair:

Far too much was now known by historians, anthropologists, classicists and other specialists to sustain the old view that past and present were similar, that history was exemplary ... [T]he past evidently *was* a foreign country ... [and its] intellectual bankruptcy as much as its suffocating weight spawned the turn-of-the-century modernist crusade. (Lowenthal 1985, 102; emphasis in the original)

Victorians realized that time could not be controlled but controlled them instead (Murphy 2001, 12). The inability to properly accommodate the conflicting uncertainties of time meant that the Victorians preferred to place their belief in linearity, with Murphy describing this preference as “a response to the unsettling changes witnessed during the century”, and characterizing it as a choice of “optimism rather than despair” (2001, 19). This choice, however, appeared increasingly more problematic, and although Gothic texts reflect the superficial preference for linearity, in fact they also register the subconscious knowledge that this was incomplete, as the analysis of my primary material will demonstrate.

An important exception in the insistence on temporal linearity and renunciation of cyclical models of time was the Victorian cycle of trade. Amidst the overwhelming evidence provided by other sciences for the linearity of history and the inevitable progress that should follow, the cycle of trade was perhaps a reminder of the illusion of temporal control, as much as the complexity of history. The cycle of trade was essentially the realization that the economic crises occurred not randomly but following a cyclical model. The panics of 1825, 1836, 1847, and 1857, clearly demonstrated that this cycle had a period of ten years, in which the economy would pass from a phase of prosperity and excitement to one of convulsion, stagnation, eventual improvement, and ultimately back to prosperity (Houston 2005, 16). It was surely an observation directly conflicting with the established idea of progress, that even if such a cycle was acknowledged, little could be done to counter it.

The fact that society in the nineteenth century experienced such conflicting sentiments, expressed as both desolation and optimism, arguably explains much of the societal conflict and self-contradiction in general and in literature in particular. Furthermore, as I will demonstrate in greater detail in the third chapter, the presence of these contradictory elements should be seen in the context of reevaluation and redefinition: the Victorian *fin de siècle* was a time characterized of great upheaval and a pre-modernist/post-Victorian sense of the end-of-days. In

that historical context, redefinition is (perhaps only subconsciously) sought through a Neo-Hegelian synthesis from non-mutually-exclusive opposites. In other words, in an era increasingly replete with dead-ends and contradictory elements, the inability to create an adequate depiction of the human experience led to alternative directions where such a depiction could be feasible. If time was seen as one major limiting factor, then timelessness in the form of an eternal now was doubtlessly an attractive, albeit abstract way-out. As West-Pavlov argues, time is one of the greatest self-contradictions known to man, as it is “both eminently common-sensical and highly abstract at once ... [a] paradoxical mixture of not-needing-to-be-discussed and not-being-able-to-be-discussed [that] constitutes a double subterfuge which is one of the most effective conspiracies of modernity” (2013, 4–5). These perceptual limitations, as described by West-Pavlov, approximate to a significant extent sublime temporal qualities related to the Gothic. Effectively, at the core of the Gothic sublime is negativity and epistemological inability (Mishra 1994, 36). In chapter three, I will analyze the sublime and the eternal now in more detail.

Ultimately, as the nineteenth century neared its end, the illusion of temporal control was all but shattered. The idea of devolution and decadence became not merely a notion of individual physical extinction but “a morbid condition of the social psyche, a disease sapping the vitality of civilization” (Buckley 1967, 70).⁸ As Murphy argues, this became increasingly more obvious in the structures of society during the *fin de siècle*:

The belief that England would continue its progress was countered by a gradual recognition that massive poverty, social upheaval, and unrest at home and across the empire equally signaled the possibility of decline. The “motif of doubt”, comments Eksteins, “if not dominant, was still strong” (8) in the *fin de siècle* ... These pessimistic views persistently gained supporters, becoming a significant aspect of cultural discourse as the century drew to a close. (2001, 22–23)

It is important to underline the historical context of the Empire, as, although the 1890s was Britain’s “Age of Empire”, anxieties and doubts had already begun to emerge. After General Gordon’s death in Khartoum in 1885, the last decade of the century was also filled with “a perceived threat to Britain’s interests abroad” (Ledger 1995, 31). In addition, a continuous sense of purposelessness began to

⁸ Nearing the end of the nineteenth century, theories related to degeneration and devolution began to gain ground. Max Nordau’s *Entartung* (1893) was translated and published as *Degeneration* in 1895 by William Heinemann, who was also Bram Stoker’s publisher (Hoeveler 2006). *Dracula* explicitly refers to Nordau and Cesare Lombroso, whose work inspired Nordau, as Mina claims that “[t]he Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him” (*D* 363).

surround the concept of continuous expansion, with Brantlinger arguing that “Britain was reluctantly sucked into acquiring new territory ... The politicians and taxpayers at home did not want more colonies to govern” (1988, 7).

Indeed, a considerable number of social anxieties that worried the British during the *fin de siècle* emerged as a result of the “heightened appreciation of the precariousness of their place in the world” (Kennedy 2002, 22). This realization had many temporal elements. Following the contact of the British with the so-called primitive peoples of the world – who were sometimes seen as relics, unfit for the newly discovered Darwinian battle of survival – the inevitable observation was that the fierce competition between Britain and other industrial nations, such as Germany, meant that Britain could have the same fate (Kennedy 2002, 23). Furthermore, developments such as the Venezuelan crisis of 1895–1896 forced the British to essentially acknowledge American hegemony in the Western hemisphere. This emphasized the fact that the Empire, although still covering a vast portion of the globe, was by no means invulnerable.

According to Mighall, the Gothic texts of the period followed patterns where focus was placed simultaneously on the imperial borders and “the domestic ‘savages’ which resided in the very heart of the civilized world, and even in the ancestral memory of the modern civilized subject” (1999, 136). As a result, the latent idea is that of historical confrontation, a clash between (temporal) worlds, as the overextension of the Empire implies that just as modern Britain can meet the archaic Other simply by expanding outwards, then a reversal of the process can occur and the “primitive” past can appear in the heart of the Empire itself (Mighall 1999, 137). H. Rider Haggard’s 1887 *She* is a typical such example. Haggard’s novel follows the journey of Horace Holly, a British professor traveling to a lost kingdom in the African mainland, where he meets the supernatural, immortal queen. His fear is eventually made explicit:

Evidently the terrible *She* had determined to go to England, and it made me shudder to think what would be the result of her arrival there. What her powers were I knew, and I could not doubt but that she would exercise them to the full ... In the end I had little doubt, she would assume absolute rule over the British dominions, and probably over the whole earth. (Haggard 1951, 192–193; emphasis in the original)

Patrick Brantlinger uses the term *Imperial Gothic* to refer to novels such as *She*, describing a mode that “combines the seemingly scientific, progressive, often Darwinian ideology of imperialism with an antithetical interest in the occult” (1988, 227). The Imperial Gothic is characterized by three major themes: regression, or devolution; invasion of the civilized modern world by barbaric or even demonic

forces; the decline of heroism and the lack of opportunities for exploration and adventure (Brantlinger 1988, 230).

However, although such fears were present in the *fin de siècle* mind, there was another space, equally unknown and awe-inspiring: that of the mind itself. The increased interest in science also facilitated an extended research in the field of psychology and what today would be called parapsychology. As memory was considered one of the key aspects of the mental sciences during the Victorian era, it partly explains the fascination with parapsychology and the occult, which were seen as a way to explore memory, dreams, and other non-conscious mental states (Taylor 1999, 60). Despite their popularity, however, the acceptance of occult practices as mainstream activities varied with the passage of time. For instance, by the end of the century mesmerism already carried a variety of connotations that were either negative or at the very least ambiguous:

[I]t was believed that the mesmerised subject could be led to immoral or criminal behavior ... and the personality types susceptible to hypnosis were “those whose morality required strengthening, or whose self-control needed bracing” ... [H]ypnosis was perceived as medical discourse, but it was also perceived as a “true witches’ Sabbath” which rendered victims helpless against the will of the hypnotist. (Moss 1997, 128)

It is also worth noting that mesmerism was considered to be an altered state of consciousness very similar to death. In his 1850 short story “Mesmeric Revelation”, Edgar Allan Poe mentions this, adding however that the hypnotized subject displays “intellectual faculties [that] are wonderfully exalted and invigorated” (Poe 2007, 45).

Processes related to memory – especially those related to subconscious kinds of reminiscence – also materialized in the keeping of diaries “as memorials to the immediate past” (Buckley 1967, 98). Still, autobiographical writing involved a certain amount of editing and omission of certain details, for various reasons. In many cases these details were personal, unpleasant, or traumatic, and as a result a new wave of theorizing memory emerged:

[Thomas] De Quincey was closer to the broad assumptions of the nineteenth century when he insisted: “Of this, at least, I feel assured, that there is no such thing as *forgetting* possible to the mind; a thousand accidents may and will interpose a veil between our present consciousness and the secret inscriptions of the mind; accidents of the same sort will also rend away this veil; but alike, whether veiled or unveiled, the inscription remains for ever”. (Buckley 1967, 102; emphasis in the original)

The existence of what appeared to be two different states of consciousness, one of the past and one of the present, led many mental scientists of the nineteenth

century to assume that an agreement between these two states was imperative for a sound and stable identity, with the physiologist William Carpenter claiming that without this agreement people would be living “in the present alone” (Taylor 1999, 61). Undoubtedly, Carpenter implies that the possibility of existing in a timeless eternal present is something puzzling and threatening, adding that “it is the subjective recognition of the past that gives us a ‘deep’ continuous identity” (Taylor 1999, 63). The issue of subjectivity is an important one, as it underlines the uncertainty concerning the self, identity, and the external world. The forming of this identity, stemmed from past recollections, “[migrates] from past to present and from mind to mind ... Thus, personality becomes ... dispersed over time and space” (Vrettos 2007, 206).

In this chapter I demarcated the historical context for my dissertation, that is, the nineteenth century. I focused on aspects of temporality, both in their practical, every-day consequences – such as the increased need for accuracy and centralized time measurement – as much as in their theoretical repercussions. As the analysis of temporality in the nineteenth century demonstrates, time should not be seen as a fixed, objective element simply functioning as a reference mechanism that is external to society and culture, but rather as an integral part of them. As such, time is connected with sociocultural aspects that do not at first appear related to temporal differentiation. The power time has to connote a variety of other sociocultural expressions can be established at all levels, from the individual to the national. Differences in determinants of identity construction such as gender, ethnicity, or class were often paired with temporal differences. Furthermore, scientific discoveries related to the origins of life on earth caused the reevaluation of history, not only in terms of content but also of method. In other words, not only did life extend to a vastly longer period of time in the past than had previously been believed, it was science and not religion that seemed to possess the better method for evaluating history. Moreover, these scientific discoveries, in connection with the newly reevaluated past of humankind, also altered preconceptions regarding its future as well. Confusion and ambiguity was produced as a result of the incongruence between the supposed inevitability of progress and the apparently uncertain future of humans. It is in this context of increased temporal sensitivity, ambiguity, and fear of the unknown that the Gothic can be situated and read as an attempt to negotiate the reality that lies beneath its ghostly surface.

3 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS: SUBLIME TEMPORALITY, AMBIGUITY, AND SYNTHESIS

The present chapter completes the outline survey establishing the main theoretical foundations of my dissertation. I will begin my analysis with the concept of the sublime which, as I argue, is central to understanding the essence of the eternal now. As the largely undefinable temporal equilibrium between past and future is ambiguous and beyond direct access, its examination from a sublime perspective is a productive, if not actually imperative approach. In this temporal scheme, traditional boundaries between reality and fantasy or subjectivity and objectivity become fuzzy. Therefore, due to its uniquely fluid placement between reality and fantasy, the Gothic mode can function as a tool that offers alternative interpretations of the past and new visions of the future.

More particularly, by reading Gothic ambiguity in a temporal framework (and especially focusing on the eternal now), Gothic texts such as those examined in this dissertation can instigate a discourse of doubt, introducing an epistemological as well as ontological game of “what ifs”, which offer, respectively, alternative ways of perceiving reality as well as reconsidering reality. In the second section of this chapter I will examine ways in which ambiguity emerges in the Gothic. Furthermore, I will argue that the Gothic is a prime medium for expressions that can be materialized indirectly or covertly, rather than explicitly. As stated in the introduction, the grouping of scholars such as, on the one hand, Bakhtin and, on the other, Punter, might initially appear puzzling. I justify this grouping by focusing on the common element in these theoretical perspectives. More particularly, section 3.2 studies aspects in the work of Todorov, Bakhtin, and Punter that deal with the concept of ambiguity and with literatures that function as in-between worlds.⁹ I will focus on Todorov’s definition of the fantastic as an ambiguous

⁹ In relation to this, it is worth mentioning the concept of *Magical Realism*, defined as “what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe” (Streicher 1999, 267). Wendy Faris adds that space-time and preconceptions of identity are typically undermined in such fictions, as magical realism entails “the closeness or near-merging of two realms, two worlds ... The magical realist vision exists at the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions” (Faris 1995, 173).

equilibrium between the supernatural and mere illusion. I will also focus on the concept of the grotesque, with two principal directions of argumentation: firstly, in regard to the presence of porous borders between apparent reality and fantasy or “an entirely different world” (Bakhtin 1984, 48); and secondly, in regard to using such distorted images to reflect deeper ideas that are often inexpressible with purely realistic forms.

At this point, it is important to underline that the concept of the grotesque is often examined from two main perspectives: the one is associated with Bakhtin, focusing on the carnivalistic/comical and the collective/societal, while the other is associated with Wolfgang Kayser’s *The Grottesque in Art and Literature* (1981; originally 1957), focusing on the strange and the uncanny grotesque of romanticism. Bakhtin himself did not acknowledge the romantic grotesque – more directly related with the Gothic – which “explored the mysterious and dark side of the human mind”, and was situated not in the “familiar, open, and public sphere of the ‘public square’ ... [but in] the inbound private ‘chamber’” (Perttula 2011, 24). As Perttula emphasizes, however, neither direction is exclusive. The carnivalistic grotesque is not devoid of terror, nor is the terrible grotesque without laughter (Perttula 2011, 24). If anything, I argue, it is the uncomfortable coexistence of the two that offers the grotesque its characteristic attributes, and it is precisely this ambiguity of its borders that renders the concept of the grotesque pertinent for this dissertation.

Punter’s work, although belonging to a different theoretical circle, shares tangents with the elements mentioned above. In particular, Punter also underlines the use of the Gothic as a “distorting lens” which allows the experiencing of a reality that, although real in a deeper sense, is ambiguously placed between the real and the fantastic, thus often precluding perception (Punter 1980, 111).

The third section of this chapter will focus on Hegelian dialectics. As the presence of oppositions and dichotomies is an important aspect of the Gothic, what emerges is an equilibrium of uncertainty between the opposing forces of illusion of the senses (while the world remains stable) and actual events (implying that the world is other than previously thought). In other words, “by the hesitation it engenders, the fantastic questions precisely the existence of an irreducible opposition between real and unreal. Still, in order to deny an opposition, we must first of all acknowledge its terms; in order to perform a sacrifice, we must know what to sacrifice” (Todorov 1973, 167–168). In this ambiguity, the Hegelian concept of synthesis becomes important, as it incorporates the oppositions into a

synthetic new paradigm, or, in temporal terms, into a hybridized future, as I will demonstrate.

3.1 The Eternal Now and the Sublime

As the nineteenth century was characterized by a temporally-based confusion, the dialectical pull between past and future intensified, with both appearing increasingly more vague and open to interpretation. The sense of security stemming from the seeming stability of past and future alike was in doubt, particularly during the end of the Victorian era. Murphy argues that the Victorians responded to this existential anxiety by elevating history to “a secularized religion” (2001, 15). At this point, I present a hypothesis: the way this secularization of spirituality occurred can be read in terms of the shift – indeed, the secularization – in the way the concept of the eternal now was approached. In other words, I argue that the concept of the eternal now itself underwent a shift away from the Divine and closer to a more abstract, perhaps directly humanistic sort of spirituality.¹⁰

As mentioned in the first chapter, the eternal now is a concept that can be detected in Christian teachings at least since the time of St. Augustine, who argued that “in [God] today does not replace yesterday, nor give way to tomorrow; there is only an eternal present” (Kenny 1998, 106). It is important to note, however, the contradiction with other Christian temporal teachings. As Christian theorizations of temporality and history needed to contrast those of pagan societies, they had to argue for a linear history rather than the eternal recurrence and cycles of repetition (Raju 2003, 45). Christian teleology valorized linearity, presenting human death as an “improving process” that brought the soul closer to God and perfect bliss (Ferguson 2006, 39), in contrast with pagan notions of cyclicity, where “the life of the archaic man (a life reduced ... to the unceasing rehearsal of the same primordial myths), although it takes place in time, does not ... record time’s irreversibility ... [T]he primitive lives in a continual present” (Eliade 2005, 86).

In the pre-Enlightenment period, the eternal now was mediated through a timeless Christian God who stood outside time and expressed a coexistence of past

¹⁰ Matthew Arnold, in his 1880 “The Study of Poetry”, put forward a similar hypothesis, offering the currently unfulfilled prediction that “[t]he future of poetry is immense”, and envisioning a future where poetry replaces religion, as the latter “has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it” (Arnold 1880).

and present (West-Pavlov 2013, 63; Anderson 2006, 23). Erich Auerbach argues that such a simultaneity was then inconceivable without the Divine:

the here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is simultaneously something which has always been, and will be fulfilled in the future ; and strictly, in the eyes of God, it is something eternal, something omni-temporal, something already consummated in the realm of fragmentary earthly event. (Auerbach E. 2003, 74)

In such a temporal model, the future is empty as it possesses no ontological weight and it does not differ from the past in any significant way. Anderson argues that such an approach is similar to Benjamin's Messianic time, or "a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present" (2006, 24).¹¹ As he adds, the emergence and perfection of clock and calendar also meant a shift away from a divinely mediated eternal now to a new one that is "a long time in the making" (Anderson 2006, 24). It is important to recall that the perfection of clock, calendar, and time-measurement in general closely follows the process of industrialization and modernization during the nineteenth century. Anderson calls this shift "deep-lying", adding that "every essential modern conception is based on a conception of 'meanwhile'" (2006, 25). Zemka refers to the moment as the "primary temporal unit and a central artistic conceit of industrial culture" (2012, 1). As already mentioned in chapter 2, Zemka agrees with Anderson in that Victorian England and the process of industrialization affected the way time and moments were perceived and theorized (2012, 2).

What, therefore, seems to occur in the theorization of the eternal now is a shift in spiritual focalization. What in the pre-Enlightenment period used to be a divinely mediated eternal now, when the coexistence of past and future was attributed to a timeless Christian God, gradually became an equally inaccessible eternal now, the existence of which was produced and was further accentuated by the increased temporal accuracy of mechanical time. The increased awareness of the importance of the minute, the second, and the moment, facilitated the realization that moments "[bring] insight, a concentration of meaning, ecstasy" (Zemka 2012, 1). As a result, the post-Enlightenment approach to the eternal now appears as strongly spiritual, arguably because of the inability to define it or experience it directly, but only indirectly through its effects. There are evident sublime elements in this approach, meriting further analysis.

¹¹ In Benjamin's own words, "[t]he present ... as a model of Messianic time, comprises the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgment" (1968, 263).

Philip Shaw argues that “the sublime marks the limits of reason and expression together with a sense of what might lie beyond these limits” (2006, 2). Shaw, referring to Frances Reynolds’s 1785 *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Taste*, also presents an argument with important implications:

[T]rue sublimity occurs at ‘the point’ where the distinctions between categories, such as cause and effect, word and thing, object and idea, begin to break down. The moment is religious because it also marks the limits of human conception, the point at which reason gives way to madness, certainty to uncertainty, and security to destruction. (Shaw 2006, 46)

For the purposes of this dissertation, I treat the above as a working definition of the sublime. It contains three important elements: firstly, a transcendental, spiritual essence; secondly, a connection with dialectical collapse occurring at the level of the sublime, as traditional separations begin to break down, thus placing limits on reason, expression, and direct perception; thirdly, the importance of the eternal now, or the indefinably small “point” where sublimity occurs.

As Shaw elaborates, “[w]hat attracts us to the sublime is not an abstract quality but the fact that the sense of the awe-inspiring or the overpowering is conveyed in *this* particular mountain, in *this* particular moment” (2006, 151; emphasis in the original). It is important to underline, however, that the sublime cannot be practically separated from manifestation, “from the appreciation of form” (Shaw 2006, 151). As a result, although the manifestation – in this example the given mountain in the given moment – serves as a mediator between the infinite and the finite, it cannot be considered a defined one. Shaw draws a parallel with neo-Hegelianism, suggesting that “[t]he Kantian and Hegelian legacy is the same: wanting what it cannot have; the subject of the sublime is locked in melancholia, divorced for ever from the object of its desire” (2006, 151). The sublime, then, refers to an indefinable moment, an eternal now, at which the ability to express and formulate an adequate depiction collapses. This experience is also accompanied by a heightened sense of metaphysical awareness and of a sense of transcending a certain threshold – despite the fact that limitations of reason and perception forbid direct knowledge of what might exist beyond this border. As a result, such experiences are invariably connected to a distorted sense of reality.

Furthermore, it is important to add that the sublime is a major disrupting force in regard to definitive boundaries, as it “refers to things which appear either formless ... or which have form but, for reasons of *size*, exceed our ability to perceive such form ... Our ability to discern boundaries or spatial or temporal limitations is brought into question by the sublime” (Shaw 2006, 78; my emphasis). In terms of size, the concept of infinity is more readily associated with the sublime,

both spatially, for example as a vast ocean or the starry night sky, as well as temporally, for example considering the unfathomable past of life on earth, or the posited heat death of the universe in the future. However, thinking of the eternal now in terms of size, as well as form, it becomes evident that it is precisely the *infinitely* small, undefinable – in other words, formless – nature of this basic temporal building block that connects it with the sublime.

Although the sublime as a concept is not beyond comprehension, its origins, ramifications, and applications are in numbers great enough to significantly increase the degree of complexity and abstraction. Edmund Burke connected the sublime and the strongest emotion someone can feel with the terrible:

[T]he ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. Without all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer are much greater in their effect on the body and mind, than any pleasure which the most learned voluptuary could suggest. (Burke 1757)

Romantic poets made extensive use of the concept, underlining the great magnitude of conflicting emotions nature could inspire, containing terror, awe, and exaltation. Furthermore, ontological theorizations of the sublime have varied through the ages, with the main question being whether the sublime is “the passive appreciation of something external” or, alternatively, if it assumes “an active role on the observer’s part” (Toikkanen 2013, 9). At the heart of this quandary lies the contradictory, all-inclusive essence of the sublime, as it is “precisely that which frustrates the distinction between cause and effect” (Shaw 2006, 47). Shaw concludes that the sublime cannot be approached merely as a quality of external objects, but the role of the observer must be taken into consideration (2006, 48), a view to which I subscribe as well. Taking Ann Radcliffe’s 1794 *The Mysteries of Udolpho* as an example, the text makes the point above quite explicit:

[P]overty cannot deprive us of intellectual delights ... It cannot deaden our taste for the grand, and the beautiful, or deny us the means of indulging it; for the scenes of nature – those sublime spectacles, so infinitely superior to all artificial luxuries! are open for the enjoyment of the poor, as well as of the rich ... We retain, then, the sublime luxuries of nature, and lose only the frivolous ones of art. (Radcliffe 2001, 59–60)

Through the character of Emily delivering these lines, the novel positions the observer squarely at the core of the sublime experience.

In the framework of this dissertation, the sublime and the eternal now are two concepts that I approach as homocentric; not synonymous, but certainly closely related, with each containing and affecting the other, as the eternal now becomes the “point” when the sublime is experienced. This experience is clearly spiritual in

nature, as the experiencer feels overwhelmed by the coexistence of contradictory elements that have usually been clearly presented as separate. As the experiencer becomes unable to form distinct separations, there is an immense pressure applied on the foundations of a continuous, coherent reality. As the past, the present, and the future fail to provide stable reference points in a properly linear and objective sequence, time loses its stable, objective status, and the only point in time that can be assigned to some, albeit weak sense of reality is the indefinably small “here and now” moment. Bakhtin mentions the idea of an everlasting present, with some important implications. In particular, he argues that timelessness, besides dissolving the lines separating past, present, and future, also implies that the present moment loses its allusive and associating aspects, because “[i]f taken outside its relationship to past and future, the present loses its integrity, breaks down into isolated phenomena and objects, making of them a mere abstract conglomeration” (Bakhtin 1981, 146).

In other words, as human consciousness uses references to both space and time to create memory, to form associations, and, ultimately to define the surroundings as well as one’s own self, the lack of temporal reference essentially inhibits the aforementioned processes. Schopenhauer refers to reflection as “the abstract, discursive concepts of reason” (1969, 35), adding a significant detail in regard to temporality:

[Reflection] endows man with that thoughtfulness which so completely distinguishes his consciousness from that of the animal, and through which his whole behaviour on earth turns out so differently from that of his irrational brothers. He far surpasses them in power and in suffering. They live in the present alone; he lives at the same time in the future and the past. They satisfy the need of the moment; he provides by the most ingenious preparations for his future, nay, even for times that he cannot live to see. They are given up entirely to the impression of the moment, to the effect of the motive of perception; he is determined by abstract concepts independent of the present moment. (1969, 36)¹²

Therefore, being in timelessness is akin to being in an altered state of consciousness or a dream-like condition in which cognitive, concentrated perception is absent, although self-awareness might not only be present but, crucially, heightened. One recalls Poe’s description of “wonderfully exalted and invigorated” intellectual faculties during hypnotism (2007, 45), mentioned in section 2.2. Schopenhauer uses an apt metaphor to make a comparison between

¹² Also compare with Carpenter’s pairing of the eternal present with identity-construction, as much as Vrettos’s argument on the connection between identity and spatial surroundings, both mentioned in section 2.2.

waking consciousness and dream consciousness, arguing that both are “leaves of one and the same book”, only the former is the systematic, concentrated study of it, whereas the latter is “the period of recreation, [when] we often continue idly to thumb over the leaves, and turn to a page here and there” (1969,18). It is precisely this loss of individuality-based, will-centered concentration that is the key to enlightenment, as Schopenhauer argues that when nature “presents itself to our gaze all at once” it releases us from “the thralldom of the will”, and we enter a new reality, where “liberation of knowledge lifts us as wholly and completely above all this as do sleep and dreams” (1969, 197). There are clear elements of the sublime in this view, particularly from the perspective of the eternal now. As such, living in the eternal now may in fact be a potentially enlightening experience, although one which cannot occur without the fall of traditional reality.

The term “enlightenment” in this context might remind one of meditation and Eastern philosophy. It is interesting to note that it was during the Victorian era that Buddhism became known in the West, with Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation* – published in 1818, the same year as *Frankenstein* – being central in the propagation of Eastern philosophies into the West. The coincidence between Schopenhauer’s major opus and Mary Shelley’s work is not merely chronological, as Mishra argues:

The issues raised by Mary Shelley's three key works (*Matilda*, *The Last Man*, *Frankenstein*) refigure questions crucial to the sublime: how, in fact, do we think the unthinkable or represent the unrepresentable? In *The Last Man* the apocalyptic sublime now returns us to the absolute formlessness (*das Unform*) in ways not considered by the great theorists of the sublime, with the exception of Schopenhauer, for whom the world was such an insufferable place that it were better if we ceased to exist altogether. In Mary Shelley's prototype of the end of the world she worked through that horrible Gothic metaphor that would image the end of the world itself. (1994, 157)

The next section will explore issues pertaining to reality in the Gothic, through the concepts of ambiguity and the grotesque.

3.2 A Discourse of Doubt: Ambiguity and the Grotesque

In a discourse related to the Gothic, as well as its placement between reality and fantasy, it is useful to consider Tzvetan Todorov’s definition of the fantastic, as it possesses important realizations for the Gothic as an “in-between” mode:

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of the same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination – and laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality – but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us ...

The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. (1973, 25)

As I mentioned at the end of chapter 1, there has been a tradition of dividing the Gothic into “explained” and “supernatural” – Todorov himself refers to the “two tendencies” within the Gothic, “that of the supernatural explained (the ‘uncanny’) ... and that of the supernatural accepted (the ‘marvelous’)” (Todorov 1973, 41–42). Ann Radcliffe is one of the authors most readily associated with the former type, and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* serves as an apt example.

Particularly telling in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is the famous “black veil” scene, where Emily, the protagonist, timidly approaches and finally lifts a veiled picture, only to instantly let it fall again, “perceiving that what it had concealed was no picture” (Radcliffe 2001, 236). She immediately loses consciousness, and her strong reaction inevitably leads the reader to believe that something horrible and perhaps supernatural is hidden behind the veil. Much later, near the end of the novel, the narrator almost tauntingly reveals that if Emily had taken a closer look, “her delusion and her fears would have vanished together, and she would have perceived, that the figure before her was not human, but formed of wax” (Radcliffe 2001, 622).

Unlike Radcliffe, authors such as M.G. Lewis leave no room for reasonable explanations. In his 1796 *The Monk*, the novel includes a number of appearances by Satan himself, culminating in his final appearance in his “true” form:

His blasted limbs still bore marks of the Almighty’s thunder: a swarthy darkness spread itself over his gigantic form: his hands and feet were armed with long Talons: fury glared in his eyes, which might have struck the bravest heart with terror: over his huge shoulders waved two enormous sable wings; and his hair was supplied by living snakes, which twined themselves round his brows with frightful hissings. (Lewis 2003, 356)

However, despite the presence of a number of texts that can be read as “explained” or “supernatural”, there is an equally significant number of narratives that evade epistemological categorization, perhaps deliberately. Consequently, this separation can be considered problematic, if not outright lacking.

The reason can be found within Todorov's argument, which produces a paradox of sorts: For Todorov, the Gothic/fantastic exists only for the duration of the uncertainty, and once it collapses (rather inevitably, Todorov implies) onto either of the two separate branches, that is, explained Gothic or supernatural Gothic, it should no longer be considered as Gothic. In other words, to divide the Gothic into the explained and the supernatural produces the paradoxical outcome of neither branch being Gothic, at least within the Todorovian framework.¹³ Mendlesohn, using *The Mysteries of Udolpho* as a typical example, refers to the explained Gothic as "the common ancestor between the crime novel and the intrusion fantasy ... a forebear of *Scooby Doo* and *The X-Files*" (2013, 127), while David Sandner notes that "[l]abelling the fantastic, or rather for Todorov the moment *after* the fantastic as 'marvelous' or 'uncanny' still leaves a second question – what is it? – crucially unresolved" (2013, 19; emphasis in the original). Todorov's rather problematic approach can be contrasted to Tolkien's somewhat more direct acknowledgment of the inability to define the fantastic:

The definition of a fairy-story – what it is, or what it should be – does not, then, depend on any definition or historical account of elf or fairy but upon the nature of *Faërie*: The Perilous Realm itself, and the air that blows in that country. I will not attempt to define that, nor to describe it directly. It cannot be done. *Faërie* cannot be caught in a net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible. It has many ingredients, but analysis will not necessarily discover the secret of the whole. (Tolkien 1983, 114; emphasis in the original)

Not only does Tolkien freely admit the impossibility of understanding the fantastic, but he goes a step further and underlines that the inability to understand does *not* mean that it cannot be experienced. This, quite clearly, assigns a certain sublime quality to the fantastic. In other words, Tolkien emphasizes the epistemologically inaccessible nature of the fantastic and refers to *Faërie* as "most nearly translated by Magic ... [but] at the furthest pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific, magician", adding that it must be taken seriously, without any attempt to ridicule or rationalize it (1983, 114). For Tolkien, it is *ambiguity* that is to be swept under the proverbial rug: unicorns exist and the reader must simply accept it and move on. This approach, however, does not seem to adequately explain what the Gothic is about.

¹³ It must be added that Todorov acknowledges the issue, as well as the presence of narratives that even refuse such a branching altogether (Todorov 1973, 42–43). He also offers an apt connection between the uncertainty of the fantastic and *temporal* uncertainty, arguing that "the hesitation which characterizes [the fantastic] cannot be situated, by and large, except in the present" (1973, 42).

I argue that the way out of this quandary is to focus precisely on ambiguity which, following Todorov's definition, is the purest form of the Gothic mode. A good example of such a case is Henry James's 1898 *The Turn of the Screw*, mentioned by Todorov himself (1973, 43). Not only does James's novella stubbornly refuse to reveal its stance vis-à-vis the acceptance of the supernatural, but it does so in a remarkably explicit way. At the beginning of the novella, the character of Douglas introduces the story and immediately informs his listeners and the reader regarding what is to follow:

Mrs. Griffin, however, expressed the need for a little more light. "Who was it she was in love with?"

"The story will tell," I took upon myself to reply.

"Oh, I can't wait for the story!"

"The story *won't* tell," said Douglas; "not in any literal, vulgar way." (James 1991, 3; emphasis in the original)

James's text indeed refrains from offering a "vulgar" way out of the ambiguity, and the reader remains uncertain of the true nature of the events, as they can be explained supernaturally or as a result of madness with equal plausibility.

As, therefore, an important part of the affective power of the Gothic lies in the inability to describe, situate, or define, reading the Gothic as a mode that relies on ambiguity can be a fruitful approach. This is particularly the case in the context of the eternal now, which, as I argued in section 3.1, can be approached as the indefinable "point" where the sublime is experienced. In addition, it is also important to take into consideration the functions served by this uncertainty. As Todorov underlines, "the fantastic permits us to cross certain frontiers that are inaccessible so long as we have no recourse to it" (1973, 158).

As I demonstrated in the second chapter, the ways reality expressed and revealed itself through the workings of the subconscious mind was an attractive topic in the Victorian period. It is fair to say that dreams were considered neither entirely real, nor exactly fictitious. Ontologically, the workings of the mind can be taken to be parallel to reality – Punter refers to "the *objective* realm of the unconscious" (1990, 1; my emphasis). One could argue that the Gothic seems to lie in the middle of an important metaphysical crossroads, as it becomes a tangent for a multitude of circles that, although at first do not seem to be directly relevant to each other, in fact acquire codependent meaning through their association with it. Temporally, ideologically, and ontologically, the Gothic is a focal point. It is both old and modern; both real and fantastic. This kind of incongruent-looking fusion

approximates the concept of the grotesque, not only in terms of aesthetics but, more importantly, in terms of ambiguity.

The grotesque in literature can be broadly defined as “a written form of expression which described that which could not be controlled by reason, was unnatural, and arose in opposition to the classical imitation of ‘beautiful nature’ and the rationalism and optimism of the Enlightenment” (Perttula 2011, 22). As mentioned in the beginning of chapter three, however, it is important to underline that the concept of the grotesque underwent an important shift during the romantic period, which “highlighted above all the dark, fearsome, and demonic nature of the grotesque”, though its comical aspect was still present (Perttula 2011, 22). The merging of what appear to be incongruent elements – comedy and horror, natural and unnatural, and so on – is precisely where the affective power of the grotesque lies, much as the Todorovian ambiguity between the supernatural and mere illusion can offer a productive placement for the Gothic. As Kayser argues:

The distortion of all ingredients, the fusion of different realms, the coexistence of beautiful, bizarre, ghastly, and repulsive elements, the merger of the parts into a turbulent whole, the withdrawal into a phantasmagoric and nocturnal world ... all these features have here entered into the concept of the grotesque. (1981, 79)

Kayser reaches this conclusion examining the works of Edgar Allan Poe, arguably an important figure in this post-romantic form of the grotesque, but in terms of evolution in the concept of the grotesque, Victor Hugo’s contribution should be emphasized. Whereas before him the grotesque was generally seen as something not existing in nature, Hugo, in his 1827 “Manifesto of the Romantic Movement”, introduced the idea that the grotesque was a part of natural reality (Perttula 2011, 22). The presence of something seemingly unnatural underlines the ambiguous placement of the grotesque between reality and fantasy, an element which is in fact visible also in the Bakhtinian grotesque, when its scope is examined more closely.

In particular, the examination of the carnival grotesque reveals that Medieval carnival festivities were “a second world and a second life” (Bakhtin 1984, 6), which functioned as a parallel, a reflection of the canonical one. Thoughts, expressions, and criticism that could not be voiced in the everyday life, could be revealed in this medieval version of virtual reality. The ontological status of the carnival grotesque is ambiguous, being at the fringe between reality and fantasy. As such it represents life, although distorted in ways that express hidden meanings. Other distinctions and separations also disappear, as everyone is at the same time actor and spectator, writer and reader, with individuality being scorned at and collectivity being elevated (Bakhtin 1984, 7).

The ambiguity of the carnival grotesque, as well as the undermining of personal uniqueness in favor of collective expression, can also be seen in the ways the body is distorted. As the grotesque body becomes a central theme, its exaggerated appearance becomes a mechanism that shatters individuality and facilitates totality, as it expresses “the collective ancestral body of all the people” (Bakhtin 1984, 19). It is important to notice the temporal element in these manifestations, as the grotesque body appears as something that not only nullifies space and borders, but also time. In the concept of the grotesque are hidden multitudes of temporal innuendos, and especially a sense of historical awareness and a conflict between cyclical time and linear evolution:

[T]he grotesque, including the Romantic form, discloses the potentiality of an entirely different world, of another order, another way of life. It leads men out of the confines of the apparent (false) unity, of the indisputable and stable ... [T]here is the potentiality of a friendly world, of the golden age, of carnival truth. Man returns unto himself. The world is destroyed so that it may be regenerated and renewed. While dying it gives birth. (Bakhtin 1984, 48)

The last phrase is particularly noteworthy, as it describes a form of eternal now. Past and future fuse into a Hegelian “becoming”, which contains both “being” and “nothing”, since at the indefinably small present moment that something “becomes”, it passes from nothingness to being. I will analyze this concept in more detail in section 3.3.

It becomes apparent that a certain dichotomy seems to emerge between the grotesque expression, on the one hand, and the “real” on the other. However, in actual fact, the dichotomy only seemingly appears as such. There is no real distinction, as the grotesque serves as a parallel of the “real”, by amplifying those expressions of the latter that could not have been manifested otherwise. As Kayser explicates, the grotesque lies ambiguously in regard to reality as an expression that is simultaneously both of this world and outside it, with its ambiguity and its affective power stemming from the realization that “the familiar and apparently harmonious world is alienated under the impact of abysmal forces, which break it up and shatter its coherence” (Kayser 1981, 37). Ultimately, therefore, the Gothic can be seen as a prime carrier of unexpressed experience, and, in particular, of the kind of experience that is habitually marginalized. It can be seen as a visualization of the unseen, an expression of the inconceivable:

[The] Gothic can be seen as a way of imagining the unimaginable, whether it be the distant depths of history or the even more distant soundings of the unconscious. The Gothic is a distorting lens, a magnifying lens; but the shapes which we see through it have nonetheless a *reality* which cannot be apprehended in any other way ... The Gothic castle is a picture seen out of the corner of the eye, distorted yet *real*;

and if it vanishes when you swing to look at it full on, this is only because of the historical limitations of *perception*. (Punter 1980, 111; my emphasis)

One of the examples offered by Punter is *Frankenstein*, signifying a transition between the older and ostensibly natural ways that govern the life of people, such as the seasons and the weather, and the industrialization and “regularisation of patterns of labour” that essentially deny the individual a deeper understanding:

Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising to find the emergence of a literature whose key motifs are paranoia, manipulation and injustice, and whose central project is understanding the inexplicable, the taboo, the irrational ... Gothic is thus a form of response to the emergence of a middle-class-dominated capitalist economy. (Punter 1980, 128)

Not only does Punter explicitly refer to the transition of temporal perception between an old, inaccurate way of time-measurement to a new, industrialized one, but he also argues that the Gothic, as a form, is directly relevant to this change, as much as the capitalist-related issues that this change generates. Punter also refers to the connection between the Gothic and Marxist alienation, as works like *Frankenstein* and later *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) are paradigmatic of a man being alienated from his labor and, crucially, from the natural world in general, which has as consequence the emergence of a Gothic dialectic between reality and “expressionistic substitutes for a realm which is vanishing from sight” (Punter 1980, 417).

What is important to emphasize is that through the Gothic, the separation between a private experience and a cultural one ceases to exist.¹⁴ Manifestations such as those described above transcend the borders of the individual and become (proto)cultural, that is, they signify the genesis and propagation of new social processes. One of the peculiarities of the Gothic, and perhaps one of the key reasons for the fascination it inspires, is its persistence in locating itself in those taboo areas of societal discourse which one should not interfere with too deeply, such as ideas associated with family, creation and productivity, or the state and patriarchy in general. In that aspect, too, the concept of the grotesque is pertinent, as “[i]t celebrates everything the process of civilization has tried to suppress and control” (Perttula 2011, 30). Essentially, as I have mentioned already, the Gothic opposes “the function of ideology to naturalise the presented world, to make its consumers think that the cardinal features of the world they inhabit are natural,

¹⁴ One would perhaps suggest that a private experience would not be separated from a cultural one even in non-Gothic contexts. The argument I present in this chapter, however, is that the Gothic becomes a prime means for the *realization* that such a separation is an illusion.

eternal, unchangeable” (Punter 1980, 419). This is not unlike Hugo’s argumentation on the necessity of the grotesque in art:

[U]gliness in all of its forms – evil, triviality, grotesqueness – is an essential part of serious art because art can best approach God only through illustrating his universe in a rigorous fashion ... [I]n Hugo’s view, antiquity could not have produced a work such as *Beauty and the Beast* until romanticism broke the paradigm of classicism and boundaries were transgressed into two partially opposite, partially parallel directions: the sublime and the grotesque. (Perttula 2011, 23)

The grotesque, with its ambiguously placed boundaries, serves as an exclamation mark which, by distorting reality, actually emphasizes it. David Punter argues that “[t]he complicated and muddled processes of social change are simplified in a series of acts of projection, and purified into cosmic battle, relying on an ideological use of hyperbole” (1990, 25). Punter refers specifically to language but acknowledges that the hyperbole in language can be an indication of external, that is, cultural pressures that are projected onto language as they strive to embody a new reality. Similarly, these expressions can be signs of new tasks that need to be performed by language “when a classical unity of discourse – which is also a falsely unified distribution of power – is being shattered” (1990, 26–27). In the concept of change is also hidden the temporal component, particularly that of an undefined eternal present that functions as a negotiator between past and future experience:

We might characterise these peculiar hybrids of hyperbole as a series of immense Gothic bridges thrown between the universe of discourse and the forces of history, standing like Atlas (or fallen, like Ozymandias) in the gap at the heart of the newly discovered world, that heart which ... has for a time to be in quarantine to quell the danger that this opening in the fabric of history might permit some unqualified contamination. (Punter 1990, 27)

The grotesque is also useful to consult in this context, as it is directly related to transformation through hybridization or combination. Importantly, this process does not follow the traditional, rational thinking based on harmony, hierarchy, and neat categorization, as it instead thrives on contradiction, shuns hierarchy and harmony, and transgresses categories. As a result, “grotesque fusion is built upon incongruence: a combination of such conflicting or mutually exclusive categories and elements that do not ‘normally’ belong together” (Perttula 2011, 35). It is important to stress, however, that although the idea of incongruent synthesis offers a starting point for defining the grotesque, the idea of incongruence is unacknowledged within the grotesque itself. In other words, “the recognition of any specific combination of elements as incongruent is based on such an arbitrary system of cultural classification as the grotesque was supposed to undermine” (Perttula 2011, 38).

The ambiguities surrounding the Gothic facilitate the formation of a certain paradox. As its boundaries are porous and its shape hazy, the Gothic might at first appear as inaccessible. As a literary mode, the Gothic might also be initially considered as impractical for expressing (or, from a scholarly perspective, interpreting) complex or marginalized experiences. However, I argue that it is this very fluidity that allows the Gothic to assume many forms – what Punter eloquently refers to as “imagining the unimaginable” (1980, 111) – consequently allowing many interpretations. Metaphors and allusions abound in the mode, and as a result there can be a plethora of interpretative possibilities, focusing on the ways the external and the internal world interact to define each other (Punter 1990, 135). In terms of a literary mode, this process of continual analysis, discovery, and redefinition, resembles the detective story in many ways. In fact, one should mention Edgar Allan Poe’s significant contribution to both Detective and Gothic fiction, with his stories “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841), “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” (1842), and “The Purloined Letter” (1844) combining elements from both worlds – albeit, mostly from Detective Fiction.¹⁵ The resemblances, however, come to their limit before a very crucial difference, namely what is at stake. On the one hand, in the detective story as in other realistic genres the outcome, although perhaps life-changing for the characters, leaves the world at large unaltered. There is no great philosophical mystery that is unraveled, no reevaluation of metaphysical presuppositions. In the Gothic, on the other hand, the balancing between two worlds can be tilted in ways that can have important repercussions (Punter 1990, 124).

The Gothic, therefore, can be approached as a mode that contains strong elements of social reflection. In particular, it often refers to the kind of subconscious, ongoing social transformation that by its very nature manifests as unknown and perhaps threatening, albeit sometimes attractive and awe-inspiring. The choice of words is not accidental, as this sublime, dual nature associated with change is clearly present in the Gothic, also with temporal implications, as I will describe in the sixth chapter in more detail. Reading the Gothic as a mode related to in-betweenness, ambiguity, and ongoing transformation can be productive. However, at this point I must emphasize a crucial element: occupying an in-between area means to separate and connect at the same time. These liminal areas that Punter aptly refers to as “Gothic bridges” (1990, 27), function exactly as such, namely, they are both separators and connectors. The power of the Gothic mode

¹⁵ John Richardson’s *Wacousta* (1832) is an example that blends elements of detective fiction while it remains predominantly Gothic (see Savolainen and Angelis 2013, 220).

arguably lies in its flexibility to *potentially* assume either shore – that of the uncanny or the marvelous, in Todorovian terms – without often doing so. The Gothic works examined in this dissertation possess significant affective power by refusing to suggest which direction they follow: one cannot exclude the possibility of Scrooge merely having a bad dream, or of the Frankensteinian creature or Count Dracula existing due to perfectly natural and rational explanations. This epistemological uncertainty underlines the unstable construction of reality in these narratives. Furthermore, it blurs the borders between the things it separates/connects. The hesitation espoused by the Gothic facilitates the creation of a discourse of doubt and “questions precisely the existence of an irreducible opposition between real and unreal” (Todorov 1973, 167). In the following section, I explore concepts related to Hegelian idealism and dialectics, to examine how the Gothic uncertainty is formulated as a synthesis of its opposing elements.

3.3 Hegelian Dialectics

When William Blake wrote in a letter “Pray God us keep / From Single vision & Newton’s sleep!”, he expressed feelings characteristic of the Romantic generation. At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, this generation saw science as “a dismantler of the divine in favor of a merely mechanical universe” (Ormsby 2008). There had been several shocks to the system before – the paradigm shift caused by Copernicus and the heliocentric worldview being one example – but perhaps Sir Isaac Newton and his theories on the deterministic nature of the universe facilitated the subsequent change in existential beliefs. Although Newton himself was spiritual in diverse ways, the universe his laws described was a rather cold, mechanically predetermined place, in which there was no room for spirituality and transcendence.¹⁶ Nonetheless, something was amiss. On this, it is important to recall that the Gothic, as a mode of writing and sociocultural expression, is directly connected to Romanticism, which can be seen as “[a] reaction against the rationalism and the empiricism of the period of the Enlightenment”, and as a movement based on “Kant’s theories in respect of the

¹⁶ For an overview of Sir Isaac Newton’s spiritual influences see Dobbs 2002. Noteworthy elements include Newton’s Arian theology (81), and a “religious interpretation” of the role of alchemy in Newton’s thought (251).

relation of self to the phenomenal world and of the unknowability of the noumenal world” (Flew 1984, 307).

The Gothic, therefore, occupies a rather central place between these two important philosophical movements: empiricism (directly connected with the Enlightenment and the newly emancipated scientific method) and idealism. These antithetical epistemological approaches are multifaceted, have many variations, and an extensive analysis is far beyond the scope of this dissertation. Attempting a short and perhaps necessarily broad definition, empiricism claims the existence of an independent “out there” objective reality that becomes partially available to human consciousness through senses and inductive logic. Conversely, idealism in its most general form affirms that reality is a mental construct. There is, however, a rather extensive gray area, ranging from weak idealism – acknowledging a world external to the senses – to strong idealism (typically, like that of George Berkeley) where there is nothing apart from minds and thoughts.

The branch of idealism that is historically most pertinent to the Victorian era is that of Neo-Hegelianism. Hegelian and Neo-Hegelian ideas pertinent to synthesis and hybridization are crucial in my argument of the eternal now, as they underline a drive toward a new paradigm that is all-inclusive; that incorporates contradictory elements, without actually erasing them. As the name implies, this school of thought draws from the works of the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Typical representatives of British Neo-Hegelianism were Hutcheson Stirling, in his *The Secret of Hegel* (1865), the brothers Edward and John Caird, in several works in the late Victorian era – such as *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (1880) – and also F. H. Bradley, in works such as *Appearance and Reality* (1893) and *Essays on Truth and Reality* (1914). In my dissertation I will focus on F.H. Bradley’s work, not only because he is considered “the most famous, original and philosophically influential of the British Idealists” (Candlish and Basile 2013), but also because his dialectical method is arguably more transparent and perhaps comparatively closer to Hegelian synthesis, which is the main area of interest for the purposes of this dissertation. Furthermore, as I will explain in more detail later in this section, Bradley’s approach to the concepts of linearity, teleology, and the Absolute, contrasts those of his contemporaries in ways that are important for the analysis of the eternal now. Like Hegel himself, Bradley put forward a form of absolute idealism, essentially a holistic description of reality, arguing that being can only be understood as an all-inclusive total. Of particular interest is the Hegelian approach to the nature of contradiction and conflict: Hegel believed that the spirit/mind (*Geist*) expresses itself through a series of oppositions and conflicts

through which it reaches a unified result, without eliminating them during the process (Redding 2016). Or, as Punter puts it, “*Geist* becomes the ambivalent signifier of namelessness, of a postponed shaping which cannot be known except in its avatars” (1990, 88). In Punter’s words one can detect an aura reminiscent of the sublime, through the idea of that which is beyond direct access. As I will demonstrate later in this section, Bradley’s theorizations also allude to the sublime.

The part of Hegelian philosophy that is related to my study revolves around the triad comprising thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The thesis signifies a proposition (generalizing, one can refer to any given perspective or posited fact); the antithesis is its negation, essentially a reactionary polar opposition; the synthesis offers a resolution of the conflict by incorporating both thesis and antithesis into a new thesis. Before proceeding, it is important to acknowledge a fact regarding this triad: Hegelian scholars are not in agreement regarding Hegel’s explicit use of these terms. For some, the process should not be associated with Hegel, and might be, in any way, a dead end – as Charles Taylor suggested in the 1970s (Redding 1996, xi). More recent Hegelian scholars, however, suggest that Hegelian synthesis is experiencing a revival of sorts. Redding adds that, although the term “revival” is not exaggerated, it is misleading because it implies a “reanimation of earlier Hegelian verities”, while in fact what has been occurring since the late 1990s is more of a reinterpretation (1996, xi). I align myself with the latter approach. In both the Hegelian and the Neo-Hegelian school of thought, the presence of the triad described above is indeed present, if not in terms of nomenclature, certainly in terms of content. In fact, an example from Hegel’s views on being also reveals a connection with aspects of temporality:

Thus, while “being” and “nothing” seem both absolutely distinct and opposed, from another point of view they appear the same as no criterion can be invoked which differentiates them. The only way out of this paradox is to posit a third category, “becoming,” which seems to save thinking from paralysis because it accommodates both concepts: “becoming” contains “being” and “nothing” since when something “becomes” it passes, as it were, from nothingness to being. That is, when something becomes it seems to possess aspects of both being and nothingness, and it is in this sense that the third category of such triads can be understood as containing the first two as sublated “moments”. (Redding 2016)

What the excerpt above suggests – although not explicitly, certainly very close to – is a resolution based on the sublime temporality of the eternal now, as I explained in section 3.1. By effectively isolating the past from the future, focusing on a suspended, timeless present, the thetical and the antithetical synthesize a new form (what essentially becomes the new thesis), without voiding each other. F.H. Bradley himself argues “[t]here will be no truth which is entirely true, just as there will be

no error which is totally false” (1893, 362). For him, the emphasis is placed on universal unity and in the inability to separate one thing from its relationally interconnected others, or, in the Hegelian terminology I employ in this dissertation, a thesis from its antithesis. As he argues, “[t]o find qualities without relations is surely impossible” (Bradley F.H. 1893, 26).

According to F.H. Bradley, this universal unity is directly connected with perception and human consciousness, as he argues that “the Absolute is one system, and that its contents are nothing but sentient experience” (1893, 146–147), adding that in order for the Absolute to be “theoretically harmonious”, it must contain no more opposition and struggle, no more theses and antitheses (1893, 155).¹⁷ It is important to emphasize the sublime qualities of this Bradleyan Absolute, a fact F.H. Bradley himself indirectly implies:

Fully to realize the existence of the Absolute is for finite beings impossible. In order thus to know we should have to be, and then *we* should not exist. This result is certain, and all attempts to avoid it are illusory ... But to gain an idea of its main features – an idea true so far as it goes, though abstract and incomplete – is a different endeavour. And it is a task, so far as I see, in which we may succeed. (1893, 159; emphasis in the original)

F.H. Bradley’s approach to the Absolute is in full accord with Philip Shaw’s description of the sublime as something that “marks the limits of reason and expression together with a sense of what might lie beyond these limits” (2006, 2).

Other Neo-Hegelians, such as Edward Caird, also theorized a state of “pre-awareness” of the Absolute. Caird argued for the evolution of the normal consciousness to a stage where people become completely aware of their metaphysical status. This stage is preceded by acknowledgment of the conflict between the subject and an ostensibly independent object. Hence, subject and object occupy opposite sides, with the field of experience being their pseudo-separator. Nevertheless, as Caird theorized, although the ego and the outer world appear to be opposing each other, in fact they are but parts of the Absolute. The subject and the object contain the secret of each other’s life, with “the unity of which we are in search [being] a unity which maintains itself not in spite of, but in, and through, the diversity” (Alexander 2006, 581). However, Caird’s and F.H.

¹⁷ The notion of consciousness is notoriously difficult to define or even describe, and many interconnected terms are often used interchangeably: consciousness; self-consciousness; self-awareness; perception; I-ness; and so on. Bradley employs the term “sentient experience”. Ultimately, this mostly linguistic issue is not of great importance. The key point is the fact that human perception is at the core of the reality-construction process – whether one wished to approach the matter from an idealist or an empiricist position.

Bradley's views in regard to the nature of the Absolute are contrasting in certain key aspects.

In more detail, the aspect of development and linearity was for Caird an integral part of the Absolute. He considered the Absolute as dynamic and evolving, and for him "there could be no true understanding of the Absolute which did not bring to the fore the notion of universal and ceaseless evolution" (Mander 2000, 51). Conversely, F.H. Bradley argued that "[t]here is of course progress in the world, and there is also retrogression, but we cannot think that the Whole either moves on or backwards. The Absolute has no history of its own, though it contains histories without number" (1893, 499). In this key difference, it is important to consider the aspect of temporality:

What perhaps most clearly distinguishes Bradley from Green or Caird, in [F.H. Bradley's *Ethical Studies*, 1876] as later, is his doubts about ... and his final rejection of ... linear or teleological accounts of historical process. In common with his literary contemporaries, Bradley does not see time as functioning in any resolute fashion. Temporal experience is no longer that positive movement of progressive discovery and achievement ... [It] is now a matter of frustration, deflection and reversal. (Bradley J. 1996, 61–62)

The Bradleyan Absolute, in a true sublime fashion as explicated earlier in this section, cannot be accommodated within the framework of a time that is linear and measurable, bound inescapably to cause-and-effect patterns. As F.H. Bradley fully admits, "[i]f time is not unreal, I admit that our Absolute is a delusion" (1893, 206). He goes on to argue, however, that time is in fact unreal, as it is indicated by the relation between past, present, and future. In his view, anything that is not present cannot be treated as real, and therefore if time and its flow are to be assigned any meaning at all, it must be treated as unreal. His question "how, if we seriously mean to take time as real, can the past be reality?" (1893, 208), indicates the predicament posited by the indefinability – indeed the sublime nature – of the eternal now. Yet in a fittingly ambiguous and contradictory manner, it is through the eternal now that a solution for such dilemmas is attempted, through the process of synthesis.

Contrasts such as those between subject and object or time and timelessness, as mentioned above, are very visible in the Gothic, and I must underline that the process is a self-feeding one; a tangled hierarchy where conflicts create realities, and realities create conflicts. Much like Escherian hands that draw each other, the plays and interplays of Gothic destinies continually create worlds that not only lack an objective reality, but by emphasizing the conflict-born meaning in them, they actually become ontologically equal to reality. This characteristically Neo-Hegelian

approach becomes so embedded in the psyche of the *fin de siècle* Gothic that F.H. Bradley's words seem an apt description of both ethical and metaphysical issues in *Dracula*:

I have urged that what matters and what is ultimately good is the Whole, and that there is no aspect of life which, abstracted and set utterly by itself, can retain goodness ... [I]n the end there can be no mere ideas. Every idea, no matter how imaginary, qualifies by its content the Universe, and thus is real; and ideas float never absolutely but always in relation to some limited ground ... My so-called 'real world' of solid fact, like the airy realms of dream and imagination, is but a single subordinate appearance of the Universe. (Bradley F.H. 2004, 472)

F.H. Bradley's words, in their essence, are remarkably similar to Mina's emotional speech in Stoker's novel regarding the undead Count's ethical – as much as ontological – bearings:

That poor soul who has wrought all this misery is the saddest case of all. Just think what will be his joy when he too is destroyed in his worse part than his better part may have spiritual immortality. You must be pitiful to him too, though it may not hold your hands from his destruction. (*D* 328)

What Mina implies here, against the Victorian tendency toward convenient categorization, is that the distinction between good and evil is fallacious, and there is no way to separate them into neatly definable entities. Hegel, much like F.H. Bradley after him, was quite explicit on this matter, and argued that “every actual thing involves a coexistence of opposed elements. Consequently to know, or, in other words, to comprehend an object is equivalent to being conscious of it as a concrete unity of opposed determinations” (Hegel 1975).

In this chapter I analyzed the connection between time and reality in a Gothic framework. I developed the concept of the eternal now, placing particular emphasis on its connection with the sublime. The important element to remember is that, although these two concepts are not synonymous, they can still be seen as homocentric. As I argued, the eternal now shares with the sublime three central aspects: firstly, the feeling that the experience is strongly transcendental, or even spiritual; secondly, the occurrence of dialectical collapse, that is, the coexistence of contradictory elements that have usually been clearly presented as separate; and thirdly, the realization that immense pressure is applied on the foundations of a continuous, coherent reality. In regard to the latter in particular, in this chapter I also explicated the unique placement of the Gothic between reality and fantasy.

In Todorov's terms, the Gothic could be seen as the uncertainty to distinguish between illusion or the supernatural. Marshall Brown notes that there is “an epistemological collapse inherent in the conception of monstrosity” (2005, 195). This finding is supported by examining the concept of the grotesque and its

similarly unique placement between categories it seemingly divides, such as the natural and the unnatural, the horrific and the comic, the beautiful or sublime and the ugly or bestial. The separation, however, is at the same time also a connection, and it is the uneasiness of this merging that assigns the grotesque and the Gothic their affective power. As Kayser argues (1981, 184–185), “[we] are so strongly affected and terrified because it is our world which ceases to be reliable, and we feel that we would be unable to live in this changed world. The grotesque instills fear of life rather than fear of death”. The suggestion that death is preferable to life under such circumstances is a recurring motif in Gothic narratives of immortality, as I will demonstrate in chapter four.

Furthermore, in chapter three I argued that the ambiguous placement of the Gothic should be emphasized in connection with its relevance to the eternal now and its sublime, in-between nature. It is also important to recall that “true sublimity occurs at ‘the point’ where the distinctions between categories, such as cause and effect, word and thing, object and idea, begin to break down” (Shaw 2006, 46). I argued that this “point” – with the quotation marks stressing the inability to define its precise temporal borders – is the eternal now. I also argued that this in-betweenness is not excluding and absorbing, but incorporating and synthetic. As I mentioned above, in my reading of the eternal now in the Gothic, the dialectical collapse refers to the coexistence of contradictory elements, and not to their nullification or complete assimilation. For this purpose, I examined the Hegelian concept of synthesis, which functions as a process that precisely incorporates oppositions into a synthetic new paradigm.

4 DIALECTICS OF PAST AND FUTURE

In the preceding chapters I illustrated the importance of time during the nineteenth century, and I argued that a reading based on the placement of the Gothic between reality and fantasy is a productive one. I placed particular emphasis on the concept of ambiguity, with a focus on the eternal now, the sublime, and synthesis. In this and the following chapters, I concentrate on the analysis of my primary texts. My goal is to demonstrate that very distinctive representations of temporality constitute a crucial part of these characteristic works of Gothic fiction, and that, by bringing the idea of a Hegelian synthesis to bear on the concept of the timeless eternal now, we may begin to discern more clearly how hybridized, alternative futures are envisioned in the texts analyzed.

The fourth chapter deals with what I have referred to as temporal distortions. I explore ways in which Gothic texts distort what would be perceived as the normal flow of time, mostly through ideas related to immortality and the reversibility of time. At the same time, I will introduce the first connections between temporality and reality, demonstrating how temporal distortions facilitate a more general undermining of perception, reality, and, ultimately, self-definition. The key concept here is ambiguity: by removing the foundations of temporal stability, the edifice of reality begins to crumble. Victor Frankenstein and Ebenezer Scrooge become immediate witnesses of this effect, with their existential agony increasing together with their doubt about their place in their respective worlds. In *Dracula*, the focalization is more complex, as it is projected not to a character, but to the implied reader. Section 4.1 also examines some other works by Shelley, which I refer to as her “Time Stories”, as their plot is directly connected with temporal anxieties. The justification for the inclusion of these stories in the analysis arises from the fact that they complement the issues presented in *Frankenstein*. The temporal distortions examined in section 4.1 become the starting point for the creation of temporal dichotomies, and although the split is often not immediately apparent, it is still very potent. After all, the dynamics involved in such distortions revolve around the great mystery of death which, appropriately, cannot be defined but by relating it to its antithetical element, that is, life. Death is the absence of life,

life is a failing postponement of death, and the two are intimately interconnected in this Hegelian pair.

The process of dichotomizing becomes more apparent in the temporal distortions presented in section 4.2. I will place these temporal distortions in a wider framework, where more explicit temporal dichotomies begin to emerge: night versus day, cyclical versus linear time, and others. To understand the presence and function of temporal dichotomies in these Gothic works is a crucial step forward for the topic of this dissertation. In particular, these dichotomies become the starting point of the Hegelian dialectics, the formation of a thesis and its antithesis that, through their conflicting interplay, underline the void left by the post-Enlightenment absence of a divinely mediated eternal now. In other words, the emergence and propagation of these temporal dichotomies not only accentuate differences (actual or assumed) between past and future, but also inadvertently indicate that between these two temporal realms exists yet another that is ambiguous and abstract.

4.1 Aspects of Immortality: Temporal Distortion

Perhaps the element from which any analysis of Gothic temporality should begin is immortality. Death has always been and – unless some unprecedented apocalyptic enlightenment occurs – always will be one of the most defining events of human existence, and from the perspective of the individual perhaps even more defining than birth itself. The reason is that while birth cannot be anticipated and can be reflected upon only after its occurrence – indeed much later – death can be pondered on due to its temporal placement, at the end of each and every life. As such, death and especially any forlorn hope of avoiding it, has become central to human thought and art. It is important to note that in most of the texts where immortality features, and certainly in the literature of the nineteenth century, immortality is a double-edged sword; a gift that becomes a curse. C.R. Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) is a Gothic expression of the centuries-long tradition of the Wandering Jew figure. Mary Shelley offers *Frankenstein* and also what I have referred to as her “Time Stories” in her coverage of the topic. Immortality is also anything but a gift in late Victorian Gothic texts such as *Dracula*. These texts underline the realization that immortality, artificial extension of life, and material resurrection are incongruous with the human essence, as the fulfillment of the

dream of eternal life is accompanied by a series of consequences. These vary in content and form, but their common denominator is very often the realization that immortality holds unforeseen repercussions. Indeed, the tragic arc invariably involves an outcome in which certain discrepancies become apparent, and concepts believed by some characters to be synonymous, are disclosed as not – examples being the bodily versus the spiritual, and immortality versus eternity, respectively.

Before proceeding any further, it is important once more to emphasize the function of immortality in a Gothic context. Immortality is an act of temporal distortion; an attempt to place the immortal in a position of timelessness, where past and future are no longer applicable. Such a position would traditionally be considered a godly one, as I mentioned in section 2.2, with a timeless Christian God who stood outside time and expressed a coexistence of past and present (West-Pavlov 2013, 63; Anderson 2006, 23). However, such a thesis was acceptable only during the pre-Enlightenment years. As Anderson argues (2006, 24–25), later years introduced a departure from the godly form of the eternal now. With the process of industrialization and the shift it brought to the perception of time, the view that the eternal now – and hence, immortality – could not be achieved through God became an accentuated feeling. In many ways, what texts like *Frankenstein*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Dracula* portray, is a clash between an ontologically perfect – albeit, increasingly more absent – Christian immortality, and a seemingly graspable but horribly incomplete modern one.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, death can be considered the most important part of human life, ironically enough. History is full of legends, tales, and myths regarding immortality, as humans have always sought ways to undo death. The loss of a loved one, in particular, accentuates this irreversibility of death for those left behind. Kenneth Branagh's 1994 adaptation of *Frankenstein* offers an intriguing interpretation in relation to Dr. Frankenstein's motives to discover immortality: although scientific curiosity is still present, the main thrust comes from Victor's losses. Victor suffers greatly from the deaths of his mother, his mentor, and, ultimately, his wife. It is an effort of a man, a scientist well ahead of his time as he believes, to conquer death; to cheat time, essentially, and distort the natural order of things. In Shelley's novel, such a motivation is not as evident, and is hinted at only very subtly. Victor's mother, on her deathbed, tells her family that she will "endeavour to resign [herself] cheerfully to death and will indulge a hope of meeting [them] in another world" (F 35). However, Victor does not find this thought consoling, and goes on to describe death as the "most irreparable evil"

(*F* 35). What this short but revealing scene describes is a clear rupture between the older paradigm and the newer, post-Enlightenment one. At the time of his mother's death, Victor does not believe in the immortality of the soul, or, at the very least, he considers it insufficient and unsatisfactory.

The language he uses to refer to his grand plan is also problematic: he does not speak of creating life, nor of resurrection – after all, there is not an individual person to be resurrected, only an assortment of decaying body parts. Instead, Victor speaks of “bestowing animation upon lifeless matter” (*F* 40). He appears to be confused himself regarding his aims and motivation, and his focus shifts from one idea to the next. He speaks of “the creation of a human being” (*F* 42–43), of the “ideal bounds” of life and death (*F* 43), and of the “new species” whose creator he would become (*F* 43). Earlier he had also been fantasizing about “[t]he raising of ghosts or devils” (*F* 33). As he becomes more preoccupied by selfish reasons, he focuses entirely on the material or bodily aspect of immortality. Even at the very end, his regret at what occurred is mixed with a sense of pride for what he achieved. Trying to prevent a mutiny on board the ship which rescued him from the icy fields, he speaks to the frightened crew with a peculiarly defiant tone:

And wherefore was it glorious? Not because the way was smooth and placid as a southern sea, but because it was full of dangers and terror ... [B]ecause danger and death surrounded it, and these you were to brave and overcome. For this was it a glorious, for this was it an honourable undertaking. You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species, your names adored as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honour and the benefit of mankind. (*F* 163–164)

Victor's speech is meant more for himself than the crew. Still, just before dying he eventually claims that “[t]he forms of the beloved dead flit before [him]” (*F* 166), acknowledging thus the presence of a spiritual immortality after all. However, this fleeting deathbed confession of sorts is marred by his apparent inability to grasp the metaphysical repercussions of his creation. Although he admits that he created a rational being and was thus obliged to give him happiness and comfort, he insists that he is not to blame and to desire the creature's death is entirely justified (*F* 165). By comparison, the creature appears to be more aware of what has transpired:

Light, feeling, and sense will pass away; and in this condition must I find my happiness. Some years ago, when the images which this world affords first opened upon me, when I felt the cheering warmth of summer and heard the rustling of the leaves and the warbling of the birds, and these were all to me, I should have wept to die; now it is my only consolation. Polluted by crimes and torn by the bitterest remorse, where can I find rest but in death. (*F* 169–170)

As I will demonstrate later in the present section, the motif of death being preferable to life is present in many of Mary Shelley's texts.

The complexity of Gothic immortality is also apparent in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, which arguably still remains an under-analyzed, deceptively simple text. Perhaps due to the rather jovial mood of the story – and certainly of the implied outcome – certain important Gothic devices can pass unnoticed. That is especially true for issues pertaining to the present dissertation, such as temporality, reality, and, for the purposes of the present section, immortality. Death is a very important business in *A Christmas Carol*. The beginning of the text makes this very clear indeed:

Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail. (CC 1)

The obvious conflict arises for the reader immediately, as the title of this first section is “Marley's Ghost”. Hence the text immediately questions the inevitability and non-reversibility of death.¹⁸ In fact, the narrator goes a step further and announces that it is of the highest importance to realize that Marley was indeed dead, otherwise “nothing wonderful can come of the story” (CC 2). Scrooge himself appears unable to believe his very eyes when he sees his old business partner's ghost. The specter asks him directly whether the old man believes in what he is seeing, and old Scrooge emphatically replies that he does not, distrusting his own senses, as they can be affected by the most trivial things (CC 18) – a very explicitly made point regarding the nature of reality, an issue that will become particularly interesting later on. In a stereotypically Gothic manner, the ghost of Marley warns Scrooge that after his death he was doomed to roam around the earth, unable to find peace, with the reason being that he had misused his life. Marley's ghost, full of regret, warns Scrooge that he will be haunted by three other ghosts, without the visits of which he will be cursed into the same kind of hapless immortality that Marley himself was (CC 13).

However, along the course of the story, certain elements seem to add complexity to Marley's seemingly clear and simple warning. A typical example is when Scrooge and the first Spirit, that of Christmas Past, visit the old miser's young self. As if in a dream, Scrooge sees the warehouse where he worked as an apprentice and exclaims seeing his old boss: “Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!” (CC 30). Fezziwig's apparent resurrection is of course of an entirely different metaphysical status than Marley's. The latter version

¹⁸ It also implicitly undermines its own narrative authority, a point that, as I will demonstrate later on, becomes important in a text that is directly connected to issues of reality and perception.

of immortality entailed consciousness, as Scrooge was able to discourse with his former business partner. Now, however, he can only be a passive viewer. Much like reading a novel (or, anachronistically but more aptly, like watching a film), the old man watches a world richly populated by characters, including his own younger self, that nonetheless do not seem to possess the same kind of self-awareness and consciousness he does. The Spirit is explicit on this matter, reminding him that “[t]hese are but shadows of the things that have been ... They have no consciousness of us” (CC 27).

The temporal element is important here, and poses several metaphysical questions in regard to the nature of reality and consciousness – with immortality being always implicitly present in this discourse. The Spirit’s words remind Scrooge and the reader that these characters are neither real nor unreal. In a Todorovian framework, these characters are not real in the same way Scrooge is, because they are construed as the long-gone past. However, at the same time, they are not portrayed as an illusion of the senses, either. Despite Scrooge’s earlier attempt (CC 18) to dismiss everything as a bad dream caused by indigestion, his attempt ends in failure as “[t]he more he thought, the more perplexed he was” (CC 23). The only separating line is that of time. The characters’ inability to communicate and interact with extratemporal beings (as Scrooge and the Spirit effectively are in this context) assures that there is no possibility for a so-called grandfather paradox.¹⁹ Scrooge cannot warn his former self and thus change history. He cannot undo the mistakes of the past, and he is deeply aware of this. Tormented by the things he sees, he asks the Spirit to remove him from this reality. The Spirit repeats that these are but shadows, “they are what they are” (CC 37). At this point, the text seems to imply a differentiation between consciousness and a qualitative dissimilarity in metaphysical status. In other words, although these shadows do not possess consciousness (at least from Scrooge’s point of view), it becomes obvious that they cannot be dismissed as fiction either. They are very real, and the old man’s emotional reaction proves the point.

Immortality in *Dracula* acquires a more ominous tint still, as the curse is not only construed as the inability to find peace, but also as the pressing need to attack others for nutrition. The suggestion of a possible reversal of the ageing process appears for the first time in Dracula’s castle, when Jonathan Harker sees the Count in his box “but looking as if his youth had been half renewed” (D 59). When

¹⁹ The grandfather paradox assumes a time travel to the past, where the time-traveler meets her grandfather, before he had children, and kills him. The paradox wonders how would then the time-traveler be born to travel back in time and kill her grandfather.

Jonathan relives the experience on English soil later on, the Count has “grown young” (*D* 184) – an oxymoron of sorts, as it includes two meanings with conflicting arrows of time. Not surprisingly, however, the person who presents the most intriguing references to immortality and longevity is Professor Van Helsing. After his query as to why Methuselah lived almost a thousand years while Lucy “with four men’s blood in her poor veins” did not live one day (*D* 204), he adds “there are men and women who *cannot* die” (*D* 205; my emphasis). By using “cannot” instead of “do not” or “would not” Van Helsing implies lack of volition in the process. The implicit assumption here is that Count Dracula, had he had a choice, would perhaps prefer to die. Van Helsing’s hypothesis becomes even more explicit later on, when he speaks of “the curse of immortality”, repeating that a vampire cannot die but must live on “age after age” (*D* 229).

The vampiric nomenclature in *Dracula* is also revealing. Count Dracula is neither alive nor dead: he is *undead*, which is telling with respect to the puzzling and ambiguous ontological status of the Count. What it signifies is a reluctance to define a creature like Dracula as alive, a fact that facilitates certain ethical assumptions to be made. More particularly, the dehumanization of Count Dracula and later Lucy as beings that are not really alive, effectively offers the excuse to annihilate them without any apparent moral problem. In addition, Bram Stoker’s novel makes the same assumptions about the existence of different “kinds” of immortality as *A Christmas Carol*. The point is made rather explicitly by Mina who, having essentially become a dormant vampire after Dracula’s bite, asks that her companions will not hesitate to kill her. In a scene saturated with sentimental tones, she says:

[W]ere I once dead you could and would set free my immortal spirit, even as you did my poor Lucy’s ... I cannot believe that to die in such a case, when there is hope before us and a bitter task to be done, is God’s will. Therefore, I, on my part, give up here the certainty of eternal rest, and go out into the dark ... This is what I can give into the hotch-pot ... What will each of you give? Your lives I know ... that is easy for brave men. Your lives are God’s, and you can give them back to Him; but what will you give to me? (*D* 351)

The text explicitly acknowledges two different kinds of immortality: a spiritual and a bodily one. Clearly, the kind of immortality promised by Dracula is not deemed worthy of consideration, as it does not even enter the discussion, while God’s will and possession of the men’s lives is mentioned twice. However, the scene is highly problematic, precisely due to its insistence on clear-cut differentiations. Mina herself stands between two worlds when she delivers her speech, sentimental to the point of sarcasm. Dr. Seward, who keeps notes of the meeting, affirms that nobody

was surprised when Mina asked to see the men a little before sunset, as “sunrise and sunset are to her times of peculiar freedom”, ostensibly free from other forces and presumably Dracula’s spell (*D* 350).²⁰

Not only is Mina caught in a temporal tug-of-war between day and night and what they signify (good versus evil; Crew of Light versus Dracula), but she is also in a no-man’s-land without distinct borders. Despite Dr. Seward’s wishful thinking that Mina is “her old self” in those moments, he admits that her state appears “some half hour or more before actual sunrise or sunset”, adding that “[a]t first there is a sort of negative condition ... [W]hen, however, the freedom ceases the change-back or relapse comes quickly” (*D* 350). After all, marking time by the sunrise and sunset are two characteristically older ways of time-measurement, in direct contrast with the accurate, technologically advanced Victorian context. Mina’s insistence on God and “eternal rest” – *not* eternal life – appears woefully old-fashioned in its sentimentalism, and completely out-of-sync with the secular, cutting-edge late Victorian technology that pervades the novel. Count Dracula and his undying status is not approached as a scientific wonder – as Victor Frankenstein’s monster was by his creator, albeit somewhat unwisely. Even Van Helsing appears enigmatically reluctant to study the being who “cannot die”. As Elmessiri argues, “[v]ampiric embodiment and affirmation of the porosity of boundaries between life and death may be terrifying, but Van Helsing’s ... adamant insistence on maintaining clear demarcations between the dead and the living, [is] also terrifying” (1994, 108–109). To some extent, what occurs is a temporal reversal of sorts. The new and modern becomes old and obsolete: the men and Mina (the only woman; Lucy is swiftly removed from the picture early on) appear to have surrendered to the fact that “old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere ‘modernity’ cannot kill” (*D* 43). What they cannot however consciously accept is that the temporal reversal they have undergone has also worked on Dracula as well:

Dracula awes because he is old, but within the vampire tradition, his very antiquity makes him new, detaching him from the progressive characters who track him ... Jonathan Harker looks in his shaving mirror and sees no one beside him. In Jonathan’s mirror, the vampire has no more face than does Dickens’s Spirit of Christmas Future. In his blankness, his impersonality, his emphasis on sweeping new orders rather than insinuating intimacy, Dracula *is* the twentieth century he still

²⁰ Dr. Seward kept notes of what Mina said after he was instructed to do so by Jonathan Harker. The layered authoring of the scene reaches such depths that it becomes hard to properly assess the overall narrative authority.

haunts ... [He is] less of a specter of an undead past than a harbinger of a world to come, a world that is our own. (Auerbach N. 1995, 63; emphasis in the original)

Several scholars connect Count Dracula with modernity, through the concept of the eternal now. *Dracula*, like other Gothic texts, presents a temporal model in which “[c]hronological time is ... exploded, with time past, present and future losing their historical sequence and tending towards a suspension, an eternal present” (Jackson 1981, 47). To this I will return in section 6.1.

As becomes obvious, viewing immortality as a curse has been a favorite element of Gothic writers. Exploring its consequences, they sought to understand issues related to life and death, consciousness and nothingness – both literally and in a way of sociocultural existence. This latter aspect becomes very obvious in Shelley’s “Time Stories”: “Valerius: The Reanimated Roman” (1819), “Roger Dodsworth: The Reanimated Englishman” (1826), *The Last Man* (1826), and the 1833 short story “The Mortal Immortal”. These have several things in common: firstly, they were all published after *Frankenstein*; secondly, they are far less known than that work; and thirdly, they are all obsessed with time. What becomes particularly significant is how these stories reflect a preoccupation with time that is symptomatic of societal changes of that period – namely, the first third of the nineteenth century. Richard Albright argues that Mary Shelley was to a great extent “a product of her time” (2009, 118). He also pertinently notes that the tradition of reading her work in an almost exclusively biographical way is overly simplistic, as it “overlooks the degree to which her personal preoccupations, and those of her *cultural moment*, frequently coalesce” (2009, 119; my emphasis). In addition, her texts reveal a strongly *socialized* essence of time:

[Shelley] returns always to the social construction of time, not time as constructed by physics. Time is shaped and given meaning by human relationships with one’s intimates, as well as with the wider world of society. One is part of one’s cultural moment, and, absent a network of human relationships, not only do her characters and the narratives they inhabit become aporias, but time itself can become inarticulable. (Albright 2009, 121–122)

Shelley’s works display a recurrent theme of connection between time and society. In a way, the relation between the two transcends being a mere bond, approximating a tautology. As society, the human experience, and the cultural moment of consciousness become time, they define it and are defined by it. In consequence, timelessness also acquires a double meaning. It is described as a condition of temporal non-existence, similar to the one experienced during sleep; or, in the case of “Valerius: The Reanimated Roman” and “Roger Dodsworth: The Reanimated Englishman”, similar to the one facing a person who would have been

asleep for centuries. In such a scenario, the revived individual is “out of time”, that is, an alien to the present:

Shelley’s juxtaposition of past and present is rendered from the unusual perspective of a man whose present is our past, and for whom all that we know as the present is the distant future. He is an aporetic hesitation in the flow of time. His temporally anomalous status allows Shelley to produce ironic inversions of temporal perspectives. (Albright 2009, 125–126)

This essence of timelessness, essentially an undefined, eternal present, becomes a key ingredient of these Gothic texts, leading to certain implications with regard to the appreciation of such an existence – a fact that becomes more evident after examining Shelley’s other “Time Stories”.

In “Valerius: The Reanimated Roman”, Shelley narrates the story of the eponymous character, who appears to have been in suspension of life for centuries, since the times of ancient Rome. The details of the process are not given, and the only clue besides the title is Valerius’s own words and his response to his environment. The fragmented story is told by Valerius himself and a second character named Isabell Harley. Therefore, the absence of an omniscient narrator means that the story, even within its own plot, could be fictitious or entirely metaphorical. Ultimately, however, this only serves as an intensifier of what the story really is about, namely the social construction of time. Valerius – whether a “true” reanimated Roman or an educated madman – is out of space-time. The collapse of the temporal continuum means that Valerius, from his perspective, is someone “whose present is our past, and for whom all that we know as present is the distant future” (Albright 2009, 125). Further complexity is added by the fact that, although for the contemporary, nineteenth-century person there is only one Roman past, for Valerius there are two, the one belonging to his own, republican period, and the one belonging to the imperial period – which, it is worth remembering, is actually a future that was never available for Valerius (Albright 2009, 126).

In its spiritual repercussions, the temporal manipulation in “Valerius” converges on an important contrast, namely that between superstition and enlightenment. Valerius despairs realizing that Rome has fallen, “degraded by a hateful superstition”, which Albright identifies as Catholicism, though not seen as superseded by some Protestant form of Christianity (Albright 2009, 126). More importantly, it is not contrasted with some secular, scientific approach on modernity and progress. Instead – in what could be construed as some sort of regression – Christianity is seen against the ancient Roman gods, but also against the “Pantheic Love with which Nature is penetrated” (Shelley 1990, 342) – an

explicit reference to holistic ideas of spirituality and existence, much in unison with romantic ideas of the time. “Valerius” personifies the very essence of the void I referred to earlier, namely the absence of a religion-based expectation of immortality. The timelessness he experiences is not spiritual at all, and, much like the ghostly afterlife in *A Christmas Carol*, appears to be a curse rather than salvation.

In modern terms, Shelley’s “Roger Dodsworth: The Reanimated Englishman” could be considered a sequel, since it was authored a few years after “Valerius” and there is an obvious connection between the two. More properly, however, “Roger Dodsworth” is rather a different approach to the topic of reanimation, as with it Mary Shelley explores the comic aspect of the topic. The story was based on a hoax that – to use another modern term – quickly became viral in Europe in 1826, with quite a few newspapers reproducing it (adding fanciful details in the process), and a significant number of people actually believing it to be true. In the story, a man called Roger Dodsworth appeared ostensibly out of nowhere and claimed to have been buried under an avalanche some 150 years earlier. As Shelley described in her own text, the frost was the reason for which, supposedly, Dodsworth existed in a state of suspended animation.

Although the satirical approach to the story, as much as its short length, do not allow for a sustained philosophical exploration of the topic, the existential anxiety of Dodsworth’s timeless existence is quite pronounced. Amid the comical dialogues pertaining to the political situation in England, the reader unavoidably wonders how ideas such as life, consciousness, identity, are experienced in a temporal stasis such as the one Dodsworth underwent.²¹ Furthermore, Dodsworth, like Valerius, becomes timeless not only for the “duration” of his suspended animation, but even after he is reanimated. He is out of time and place, a temporal and social relic that should not exist and, as it is implied, is destined to soon die. As Albright argues, both of these short stories, “Valerius” and “Roger Dodsworth”, have important implications regarding time and perception:

[Both tales] reveal that lives are strongly shaped by cultural forces. Both tales reinforce the concept of one’s “own” time, that is, the time of our contemporaries,

²¹ Dodsworth and his interlocutor suspiciously assess each other’s political views. As the former wonders whether any change has occurred in the country, the scene morphs into one remarkably reminiscent of Washington Irving’s “Rip Van Winkle” – authored only a few years before “Roger Dodsworth”. In Irving’s story, the eponymous character, an American, gets into trouble when he proclaims himself a loyal subject to the King, not knowing the American Revolution has taken place. Tellingly, the King’s portrait is painted over so that it *appears* like a portrait of George Washington. In both “Rip Van Winkle” and “Roger Dodsworth”, one wonders if, ultimately, anything at all has changed.

our families and friends, our heroes and villains; outside of our own time, life isn't really life, as it has no meaning. It is instead a kind of *ghostly afterlife* ... Shelley dramatizes in these two tales – first tragically, then comically – the notion that one's "own time" is a social construct rather than a law of physics. (2009, 130; my emphasis).

The notion of time as a subjective, socially bound construct is a remarkable conclusion in itself, but Albright stops short of exploring the repercussions for self-awareness and an ideological construction of the self implied by this argument – although, perhaps subconsciously, he does touch upon the subject with his term "ghostly afterlife". Because, indeed, this is what Roger Dodsworth undergoes, in two distinct but interconnected ways: His (short?) reanimated reality is a metaphorical ghostly existence outside of his own social universe of the seventeenth-century England, while his suspended animation is a quite *literal* one, a temporal stasis that is open to all kinds of interpretations and philosophical contemplations with regard to consciousness, awareness, and the nature of the self. In conclusion, what both "Valerius" and "Roger Dodsworth" underline, is that immortality is far more than a material, bodily affair – a problem emphasized by Shelley in all her "Time Stories", and in *Frankenstein* as well.

The novel *The Last Man* is an apocalyptic tale that, as the title suggests, deals with the possibility of someone being the last person left in the world after a plague has annihilated the human race. The status of immortality is once again present, and again it is seen in a context of loss, destruction, and forlorn hope. Although Lionel Verney, the surviving character of *The Last Man*, is not an immortal in the strict sense of the word, he effectively possesses immortal status: he survives the death of everyone he knows, to the point that he apparently outlives every single person on the planet. In *The Last Man*, death is presented as preferable to staying alive.

The novel features a remarkably complex temporal scheme. Not only does it follow the typical narrative mechanisms of the Gothic canon – discovered manuscripts, multiple narrators, dubious objectivity – but also a time flow so chaotic that it verges on incoherence. The reader discovers that in the universe of *The Last Man*, time exists on more than one layer, as Albright argues:

Shelley frames her novel as an ancient prophecy by the Cumæan Sybil, written on Sibylline leaves (in various ancient and modern languages) found in a hidden cave in 1818 by an anonymous "author" ... It is an ancient prophecy of a future apocalypse written retrospectively by its lone survivor, who looks back upon the final decades of the human race's existence from the year 2100. By narrating the close of human history, the novel reconfigures and humanizes time. Since history is now complete, we can perceive it in its entirety. (2009, 133–134)

The direct implication of this textual organization is that the reader – and, from Shelley’s perspective, the English reader of the 1820s – is in that very position: an accidental judge of humankind, who must survey the past and assess the future (or *a* future, in any case) and reach certain conclusions. For Verney time has ceased, as the history of the human race has reached its final chapter, and he is the last human being on Earth, responsible for compiling the final narrative. Essentially, Verney mans the figurative station of the Newtonian deterministic universe, where all the prior conditions are known and the mathematical but cold truth of the cosmos is in plain sight. As he claims, “[t]ime and experience have placed me on a height from which I can comprehend the past as a whole; and in this way I must describe it, bringing forward the leading incidents, and disposing light and shade so as to form a picture in whose very darkness there will be harmony” (Shelley 1826). The idea of harmony in darkness – that is, nothingness – is very strongly reminiscent of Eastern mysticism. Although in Shelley’s time Buddhism was not as widely known as it became later, there is still a well-argued association between Buddhist ontological views and the Romantic Imagination (see Economides 2007; Morton 2007; Rudy 2004). The idea of a holistic, omnipenetrating temporal perspective is offered as a solution to the temporal problem of Shelley’s time, which is none other than the inability to resolve the dialectics of past and future. More specifically in the context of *The Last Man*, an existence in an eternal present appears as the only available solution for Verney, who realizes that the flow of time has effectively stopped. The past has ceased accumulating and the future no longer exists in its socially understood sense of progress and evolution of humankind.

As Koselleck argues, at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the divide between past and future grew bigger. Expressed through the conflict between known experience and anticipated expectation, “lived time was experienced as a rupture, as a period of transition in which the new and the *unexpected* continually happened” (qtd. in Albright 2009, 25; my emphasis). There are several important elements in this realization: firstly, what Koselleck describes here is a process of modernization; of continual reevaluation and progression, both in practical and technological terms, but also in abstract and conceptual ones. Secondly, the idea of the eternal now is very clearly present in this approach, with “lived time” referring to an undefined transition between the past and the future. Thirdly, and most importantly, the process entailed a future that was unknown and unexpected. The pre-Enlightenment, divinely mediated eternal present no longer functioned as the negotiation between past and future – a future that, as mentioned in section 2.2, was not unknown at all but merely the fulfillment

of the present that “has always been”, as Erich Auerbach argues (2003, 74). In the *The Last Man*, where time has lost its traditional meaning, the novel attempts to renegotiate the conflict between past and future by offering a synthesis of sorts.

In a sense, Verney has arrived where Victor Frankenstein (somewhat unwisely) wishes to have been: at the vantage point from where all possibilities and variables are known and accounted for. Frankenstein implicitly wonders whether tragedies could thus be avoided, as for the one change he has acknowledged, “a thousand little circumstances might have by degrees worked other alterations, which, although they were done more tranquilly, might not be the less decisive” (F 58). It would seem, however, that Lionel Verney invalidates this hypothesis, as the only chance for Frankenstein’s wish to come true, is for humankind to cease to exist – since with it self-awareness and time also cease. This approach possesses sublime attributes *in extremis*, resonating with F.H. Bradley’s description of the Absolute as something that, for finite beings to fully grasp, “we should have to be, and then *we* should not exist” (1893, 159; emphasis in the original). Ultimately, the nature of time in *The Last Man* is so intrinsically connected with culture and society, that one could argue that time becomes the main protagonist of the novel. Furthermore, as a result of the apocalyptic setting of the story, the concepts of culture and society are promoted so that they essentially refer to the sum (both temporally and spatially) of the human cultures, that is, the entirety of humankind itself. The collapse of objective time in *The Last Man* is effectuated metatextually, with the authors of the text (Shelley herself included) being vague about time measurement, as if time is rendered insignificant due to the events in the story.

Perhaps more notably, however, temporal distortion is also displayed through puzzling and alarming changes in nature. The weather in December resembles spring, the autumn is excessively warm, the winter last only three days, and overall, temporal patterns and seasonal changes appear as strikingly abnormal (Albright 2009, 138). An interesting point to underline, however, is that the alarm caused by such changes in the weather is precisely due to the inability to be certain about their cause. The novel leaves ambiguously open the possibility that nature is somehow infected as well as, for example, chapter V of volume II opens with a description of how “some disorder had surely crept into the course of the elements” (Shelley 1826). Mary Shelley knew from personal experience that such changes could be witnessed in real life as well, because of the so-called “year without summer”. Due to the powerful eruption of Mount Tamboro in Indonesia the year before, the summer of 1816 was bleak and dreary. Sunshine greatly

decreased while overcast and rainfall increased. Temperatures dropped and there were massive crop failures throughout the northern hemisphere. More importantly,

[f]or many living on the other side of the world to the eruption, the reason for the disturbances in the weather would have been a mystery, but one that lent a sinister and perhaps even a supernatural quality to the need to light candles at midday as darkness descended, and the sight of birds settling down to roost at noon. (Buzwell 2016)

It was in such conditions that Mary Shelley conceived *Frankenstein*, and the ambiguity surrounding the origin of the puzzling weather in *The Last Man* should perhaps be seen in this context.

Furthermore, facilitated by the dystopic surroundings, a sense of temporal regression is obviously at work. As calendar time is vague, unreliable and ultimately not pertinent, events are described increasingly more in terms of seasonal changes or time elapsed since a prior event. Despite its worrying behavior, nature becomes the primary way of measuring time in *The Last Man*, something clearly alluding to the opposition between the industrial, modern time measurement, and the agricultural, traditional one. In addition, it is important to underline the significance of the summer solstice in the novel, as Albright observes:

Several important events take place during this month, and it is a tumultuous month in *The Last Man*, filled with cosmic phenomena and portents, particularly around the time of the solstice. This celestial event has traditionally been endowed with cosmic significance from the time of the Druids – and invocation of what Heidegger would term primordial time. (2009, 137)

Although Albright perhaps implies it, he does not explicitly emphasize the importance of this conclusion. In a story that is spiritually and existentially charged, to substitute mechanical time with agricultural, and to accentuate the importance of the solstice is a direct reference to paganism. The cyclical nature of pagan time is also present, even in this “end of days” scenario. For although Verney is the Last Man, at the same time he automatically becomes the First Man. The metaphorical clock of the humankind has been reset, back to the mythological time of Adam, and the end has become the beginning once again (Albright 2009, 152).²² Effectively, the novel resolves the past/future conflict by synthesizing them into a new form. The eternal now of Verney absorbs the past, as the regression to older, pagan temporal schemes shows. This regression, however, is not a simple reversal (that would simply imply that the present is substituted by the past). Instead, it incorporates the future as well, in the form of a future that is, once again, open to

²² This is an almost explicit acknowledgment of the eternal return. See Nietzsche (2001, 194) and Schopenhauer (1969, 283–284).

possibilities and outcomes. However, the crucial element here is that this new beginning appears to be possible only when looked upon from an external perspective.²³ Much like in F.H. Bradley's argument in *Appearance and Reality*, Verney, as a "finite being", seems incapable of fully grasping the concept of the Absolute (1893, 159).

For Verney, there is no real resolution in sight, and the text remains problematic regarding issues of subjective experience in this synthesized temporal scheme. Mishra argues that in *The Last Man* "[i]t is only through the Gothic dream that the sole survivor of the end of the world can present the unrepresentable, the world's end, the narrative of apocalypse in the making" (1994, 173). After all, from Verney's *subjective* position, time continues to be linear as long as it includes the hope of a change. At the end of the novel, he decides to begin wandering the earth, hoping to find some other human being. He explicitly rejects the form of eternal present that surrounds him, claiming "the monotonous present is intolerable to me ... [F]ierce desire of change lead me on" (Shelley 1826). He also admits his desire to look for changes in nature and the weather, which is a plan with distinct tones of tragic irony – to look for linearity in a characteristically cyclical mode of temporal expression. Still, the most telling confession of Verney is his very last sentence: "angels, the spirits of the dead, and the ever-open eye of the Supreme, will behold the tiny bark, freighted with Verney – the LAST MAN" (Shelley 1826). It is a direct, explicit desire of the last man: to be an *object*, for that would also entail that he is still a *subject*. What Verney fears the most is not only the lack of change, but also the lack of *exchange*, in terms of a subject/object split. The kind of eternal now thrust upon him is very different from the divinely mediated form of the pre-Enlightenment period, as it appears desperately void and does not entail the assurance of a pre-destined future. Verney, calling upon "the ever-open eye of the Supreme", essentially wishes that the end is predetermined: that he will eventually find death and salvation.

In Shelley's fourth time story, "The Mortal Immortal", the sociocultural as much as existential aspects of immortality also play a central part, as the title emphasizes. In the story, one of the students of Cornelius Agrippa gets his inexperienced hands on his master's elixir of eternal life. It is interesting to note that Agrippa is one of the masters whom Victor Frankenstein studies during his

²³ The reader who is interested in the philosophy of logic might see the parallel with Gödel's incompleteness theorems. Kurt Gödel formulated these theorems in the context of the philosophy of mathematics, but other branches have since attempted to adopt them. In very broad terms, Gödel suggested that a system is either incomplete or inconsistent – that is, any system complex enough will always entail a proposition that is unprovable *within* the system (see Raatikainen 2014).

attempt to create his monster. Winzy, the young apprentice, unwisely unleashes a curse of similar proportions upon himself.²⁴ He witnesses his young wife becoming old while he remains the same, with the abnormal situation having terrible repercussions, as he assumes the role of the caregiver, while she becomes jealous and grumpy. Much like in *Frankenstein*, the kind of immortality offered in “The Mortal Immortal” is a fake one. The source of anguish for Winzy (and of course the reader) arises from the unsolvable conflict between past and future, between life and death. The archetypal fear of the human experience, that life is finite, cannot be solved by the possibility of its infinite extension, as Winzy suffers greatly seeing his loved one withering away. That, however, is only the tip of the iceberg. The story essentially calls the reader to ponder what would happen if *all* humans lived forever. Would that form of immortality be anyhow more acceptable? The answer must be “no”. Winzy, although as he himself explicitly says is nowhere near being a Wandering Jew, still feels exhausted by living for three centuries. Besides mourning those he loved, who are long gone, what Winzy lacks is a sense of purpose. Much like other immortals in literature or films, he misses a teleology of life. In the linear, finite temporality scheme that Winze is placed, death appears hopelessly absent. Telling is also Winzy’s self-comforting idea that he drank only half of the elixir, and so perhaps he is, as he claims, only “half immortal” (Shelley 2010, 917). Still, as he promptly admits, the notion that infinity can be divided is a problematic one.

The kind of immortality presented in these texts only refers to bodily preservation, excluding aspects of the human existence such as consciousness, self-awareness and transcendental experience. Winzy himself explicitly claims that his master approached the matter from an entirely fallacious perspective:

He was a wise philosopher, but had no acquaintance with any spirits but those clad in flesh and blood. His science was simply human; and human science, I soon persuaded myself, could never conquer nature’s laws so far as to imprison the soul for ever within its carnal habitation ... I was a lucky fellow to have quaffed health and joyous spirits, and perhaps long life, at my master’s hands; but my good fortune ended there: longevity was far different from immortality. (Shelley 2010, 915)

The hapless apprentice realizes that full, metaphysically complete immortality does not depend solely on infinite time. As the human existence is located *within* time, once it loses its temporal foundation, it becomes degenerate. The reason is that temporal linearity without the end that is death is incompatible with the human experience, based on cause and consequence. As Kochhar-Lindgren argues, Winzy

²⁴ *Winze* means curse (OED, “winze, n.2”), a very relevant name for the main character of this story.

feels aimless and alone because by lacking the ability to die he has lost his “compass for the human passage from nothing to nothing ... a contoured horizon to existence ... enabling a certain type of *evaluation*” (2005, 74; my emphasis). The connection between moral stability and a destabilized linear time is also a central argument in Umberto Eco’s essay “The Myth of Superman”. According to Eco, in the time span of one story, the mythical superhero accomplishes a given task and, at the end of the story, there is a clear closure; a new comic book brings with it an entirely new story, totally disconnected from the past events. The crucial conclusion is that if the new story presented a sort of narrative evolution from the previous one, it would essentially mean that Superman “would have taken a step toward death” (Eco 1984, 114). However, the inevitable result is a situation in which the story presents a reality consisting solely of an “ever-continuing present”, and this absence of past or future as reference points fails to communicate a sense of moral stability and continuity (Eco 1984, 116).

The situation Umberto Eco describes is applicable to Winzy as much as Lionel Verney, with the issue of subjectivity and the eternal now arising once again. The key issue underlined here is the problematic status of linearity, of cause-and-consequence systems within an eternal present framework. Eco mentions that “existentialism and phenomenology have shifted the problem of time into the sphere of the structures of subjectivity”, describing time as an integral constituent of human – and subjective – ideas such as planning, actions, and expectations (1984, 112). In addition, much like in *The Last Man*, where the synthesized eternal now appears as such more strongly from an external perspective, Eco argues that the adventures of Superman are made credible only if the reader acknowledges the destabilized temporality of the stories (1984, 116). In other words, the lack of cause-and-effect on a larger scale, and the “ever-continuing present” cease to appear as such upon entering into the system, that is, the world of the text in question.

In conclusion, what immortality underlines in the Gothic is the apparent impossibility of temporal reconciliation between past and future. In more specific terms, it is expressed as an inability to separate life from death. On a personal level, it is the impossibility of coming to terms with the horror of extinction, a contact with the sublime *in extremis*. If we accept the suggestion that life and death are the most defining dialectical pair of the human experience, then their contact point should consequently be seen as the grandest of all sublime experiences:

[T]he sublime is the terrifying metaphor of the confrontation of the desiring self with a world that is ontologically locked into suffering (the Buddhist *duḥkha*) ... The

conflicting drives of life and death, therefore, find in the process of sublimation a substitute outlet for these conflicts that, if discharged, would make conscious life intolerable. (Mishra 1994, 37)

This element, directly relevant with what Winzy experiences in “The Mortal Immortal”, is a characteristic Gothic conflict – perhaps *the* Gothic conflict. The temporal dialectics between past and future, between life and death, appear irresolvable through the processes of resurrection, reanimation, and, generally speaking, immortality. The thesis of life and the antithesis of death remain two apparently immobile dichotomies that await something in between to move them.

4.2 Chance and Timing: From Distortion to Dichotomy

Concepts related to (im)mortality revolve around death and aging – which is a linear and non-reversible temporal event. The eventual and inevitable annihilation is unequivocally connected to the human experience, and any divergence from this pattern becomes a quickly recognizable Gothic flag. It effectively delineates the borders between human and non-human, natural and unnatural. As I mentioned at the end of the previous section, this proto-dichotomy revolves around the dialectics between past and future. At the same time, however, it facilitates the creation of a number of other temporal dichotomies that all together create a polarized Gothic landscape, consisting of theses and antitheses. Eventually, these begin to overflow the limits of mere temporal splits and begin to signify separations of other kinds as well – for instance, like those I mentioned in section 2.1 regarding forms of temporal otherness.

Textual differentiations between night and day, linear and cyclical temporal patterns, accurate or vague time measurement – for instance, time measured by a clock versus time measured by the cock-crow – often signify important events, supernatural presence, or spatial boundaries between holy and unholy places. Sometimes there are superficial connotations of otherness, and temporal distortions can be signifiers of non-normative ideas about such identity construction determinants as “race”, class, and gender. It is important, however, to stress the casual nature of these connotations. These binary oppositions are mere indicators of meaning, not guides. Even in its most basic temporal dichotomy, namely the evaluative comparison between past and future, the Gothic is far from being straightforward. In some Gothic contexts the old, the archaic, and the residual, are implied to be clearly inferior to the modern and the contemporary

(Punter 1980, 6). However, on other occasions, what takes place is what Bakhtin refers to as historical inversion:

[M]ythological and artistic thinking locates such categories as purpose, ideal, justice, perfection, the harmonious condition of man and society and the like in the *past*. Myths about paradise, a Golden Age, a heroic age, an ancient truth ... are all expressions of this historical inversion ... The present and even more the past are enriched at the expense of the future. (1981, 147; emphasis in the original)

Bakhtin's argument acquires particular importance when examined in the context of the utopia/dystopia split. Particularly in *fin de siècle* texts such as H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), there is a strong theme of temporal mixing: although placed in a distant future, the setting appears strongly reminiscent of the past, with the themes of regression and devolution implied very emphatically. Utopias are at the same time dystopias. What this realization emphasizes is the ambiguous nature of the temporal dialectics.

The negotiation between past and future appears as problematic precisely due to the inability to assign clear qualitative borders. Such dichotomies are not a prerogative of the *fin de siècle* (that is, the end of the nineteenth century in particular), and they appear during any period of tumultuous transition. Richard Albright offers some apposite remarks regarding the presence of dichotomies in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, one of the early and most canonical texts of Gothic fiction. Although the novel is nominally set in 1584, its temporal ontology verges on the chaotic as it includes anachronistic discussions and practices, such as discourses on the sublime and the drinking of coffee (Albright 2009, 33). This facilitates the introduction of a more general set of tensions and conflicts, typical of the transition between a past world and a future world – and, I must emphasize, more relevant to the revolutionary end of the eighteenth century, rather than the sixteenth. As Albright argues, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* contains a great number of dialectical pairs that the story attempts to resolve:

[These are] dialectics of sense and sensibility, reality and fantasy, movement and stasis, difference and repetition, past and present, memory and expectation. Synthesizing these dialectics is the work of Radcliffe's narrative ... This act [of narration] fashions coherence by uniting past, present and future, memory and expectation, in an extended present ... [accomplishing] its own peculiar coherence by its synthesis of temporalities. (Albright 2009, 33–34)

As I mentioned in the introduction, such instances of temporal intermixing occur often in the Gothic, with texts that rely on the reincorporation of the very dichotomies they originally manifest. Molesworth refers to this by employing the Greek terms *kairos* and *chronos*. The former essentially refers to the eternal now, the indefinably small moment, while the latter alludes to the linear progression of time.

Importantly, they are also seen, respectively, as a “rupture ... [and] the stream surrounding, and possibly containing, that rupture. Gothic fictions frequently create tensions and ironies between these two” (Molesworth 2014, 33). As Brown argues, experiences in Gothic novels exist only through the clash between “inner and outer stasis, inner and outer frenzy”, with natural time not occurring in the Gothic except as illusion (2005, 73). In other words, and as I have argued so far, it is precisely on such contact points that focus can be placed productively. It is precisely through the tangent separating (and yet uniting) dialectical spheres such as those described by Molesworth and Brown, that the inherent ambiguity of the Gothic can reveal its facets.

Focusing on *Frankenstein*, splits such as day versus night, or linear versus cyclical time, play a prominent part in the novel. This is already visible on the very first page of the narrative. In the letter written by Robert Walton to his sister, he enthusiastically describes his future plans to visit the northern regions, speaking of “a country of eternal light” (F 13). Although certainly true, in a sense at least, Walton’s words are semantically charged. One could as well speak of a country of eternal darkness. Considering the fact that the letter is written on December 11th, only a few days away from winter solstice, perhaps it is indicative of Walton’s sheer optimism that he chooses to see the eternity of light, rather than darkness. Inevitably, however, the stage is set for what could be taken to be a front-page that describes the entire novel: namely, a temporal conflict between polarized opposites, between theses and antitheses that, problematically, appear increasingly more difficult to define and thus resolve.

A rather characteristic example, filled with implication with regard to temporal dichotomies, is when after the creation of the monster Victor Frankenstein meets Henry Clerval, his good friend. This scene marks a change, away from his manic efforts with the dead, and back into the world of the living. This turnabout is clearly signaled by variations in temporality as well. Before, Victor had witnessed the passage of time only in the mechanistic ways of science, that is, as a series of completed tasks leading to the grand conclusion. Victor admits: “[w]inter, spring, and summer passed away during my labours, but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves ... so deeply was I engrossed in my occupation” (F 44). Victor essentially places himself outside time, by being preoccupied with his dubious projects and his macabre contraptions. Doing so, he misses the passage of seasons. Now, however, he recovers and notices that “the young buds were shooting forth from the trees ... It was a divine spring” (F 49). The religious overtone is important, as it contrasts with Victor’s prior claim to divinity – proven

to be false, after the hideous result. The cyclical temporality of nature is clearly in opposition to the linear sense of scientific progress.²⁵ This pattern will be echoed later, when Victor and Clerval are on their way to England, with the former planning to create a companion for his creation. In that instance, Clerval was joyful to see “the beauties of the setting sun” and the dawn of a new day, unlike Victor, who “neither saw the descent of the evening star, nor the golden sunrise reflected in the Rhine” (*F* 118).

Dichotomies of this kind are also abundant in *Dracula*, a fact that has been noticed in scholarly work. Punter refers to several such dichotomies in the novel:

Dracula stands for lineage, the principal group of characters for family; Dracula for the wildness of night, they for the security of day; Dracula for unintelligible and bitter passion, they for the sweet and reasonable emotions; Dracula for the physical and erotic, they for repressed and etherealised love. (1980, 259)

Although in this excerpt Punter specifically refers only to the day-versus-night dichotomy, in actual fact Dracula seems to be surrounded by a time of his own, in addition to or perhaps especially because of the fact that he is timeless. As Jonathan approaches Count Dracula’s castle, he quite literally enters a different time zone. The mysterious blue flames and the enigmatic driver of the carriage, together with the wolves howling in the dark night, cause Jonathan to believe that he was dreaming, as “the incident ... seemed to be repeated endlessly” (*D* 19), while later on he again claims that “time seemed interminable” (*D* 20). Yet a third time, soon after seeing the castle of Dracula, he describes the time he had to wait as “endless” (*D* 21). This clear and repetitive reference to a distorted sense of time functions as a flag demarcating Dracula’s territory. Furthermore, there is an implied but evident placement of this distorted temporality against a normative, linear “British time”. Jonathan, on his way to Dracula’s castle, quite explicitly mentions that “the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains” (*D* 8). Hence, even before the character of Dracula is introduced, he is surrounded by a sense of otherness that also encompasses his temporality.

Paradoxically, for a novel built around a multitude of narrative voices and named after him, Count Dracula is the only character whose voice remains unheard – excepting for relatively short and presumably heavily sanitized and edited excerpts. It is important to note, however, that some traces of this enigmatic figure do manage to elude the editing hands of Mina, Jonathan, Dr. Seward, and the rest of the narrators of the text. A typical example that is offered and then left

²⁵ Although, problematically, it also is in opposition to the linear temporal sense of divinity that entails the end-goal of salvation.

floating in oblivion is the Count's exclamation to the three female vampires in his castle: "Yes, I too can love; you yourselves can tell it from the past. Is it not so?" (D 46). In some sense, the dichotomy between the comparatively voiceless Count Dracula and the verbose Crew of Light is one of the most important ones in the novel, as it underlines its lack of objectivity.

As Jonathan admits, "there is hardly one authentic document; nothing but a mass of typewriting" (D 402), which is in direct contradiction with the promise of the preface:

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 later-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. (D 6)

In fact, the preface quite explicitly admits this lack by referring to "needless matters", presumably including Dracula's perspective. It also reveals another important issue in connection with the previous point: the dichotomy between the past, "wherein memory may err", and the *future* past – that is, the present – that will be considered factual, as the narrator believes. Essentially, the preface differentiates between a past compiled of memory or oral tradition (something that describes Count Dracula's origins as well) and one created through modern technology and is ostensibly objective. What the preface conveniently fails to address, however, is that by denying Dracula access to the narrative, it automatically renders it non-objective. Jonathan's end note underlines this fact, as Van Helsing unconvincingly states: "We want no proofs; we ask none to believe us!" (D 402).

The dichotomy between past and future is emphasized through a series of temporal splits that begin to appear early in the novel. After Jonathan meets with Count Dracula, he realizes that their conversations have to take place during the night. This increases Jonathan's nervousness, and he describes his experiencing "that chill which comes over one at the coming of the dawn ... They say that people who are near death die generally at the change to the dawn" (D 31). Just as in the dichotomy described by Punter, Jonathan feels the lack of the security of the day. What becomes revealing, however, is Jonathan's description of this series of nocturnal discourses as "night-existence" (D 32). Jonathan's words possess a dual meaning. Firstly, they draw attention to the state of being awake at night and asleep during the day, which is unnatural for a human being, but they also carry connotations regarding safety. Night-existence could also allude to illegal activities, such as prostitution or thuggery, as much as a general lack of safety. London, in

particular, was considered a dangerously unsafe city during the night, where crime was “developing itself into a mania ... London [had] ceased to be a city which one can traverse at night with mind at rest and the hands in the pockets” (Picard 2005, 329). Newspapers of the time were filled with reports of crime, lack of safety, and poor living conditions:

A police-constable said that every night persons of both sexes and of all ages slept huddled together on the seats of the [Thames] Embankment ... Respectable people who sat down on the seats during the day time got up with their clothes full of vermin ... [I]t was hardly safe for people to walk along at night. (*News of the World* 1886)

It is important to note the reference to vermin – the motif of contamination is well pronounced in *Dracula* – as much as the fact that the mere temporal shift suffices in altering the moral standpoints in relation to a given space. Brian Aldiss offers an interesting hypothesis, arguing that vampirism in *Dracula* is actually a metaphor for syphilis (1986, 144), while tuberculosis has also been linked to vampirism (Stetson 1896, 2). The people most prone to the disease were those living in poor conditions, typically present in working class urban areas of the *fin de siècle* period. In addition, it is important to remember that *fin de siècle* Gothic was particularly influenced by the real horrors of Whitechapel and the monstrous murders committed there by Jack the Ripper, and there was a very well-established anxiety connected with the night. Later on, Jonathan himself acknowledges the dangers lurking in the night, as he writes “[i]t has always been at night-time that I have been molested or threatened, or in some way in danger or in fear” (*D* 54). The verb “molest” is an interesting choice. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, its meaning “to cause trouble; to disturb” had existed since the fifteenth century, but the meaning “to harass, attack, or abuse sexually” also appeared for the first time in 1889, eight years before the publication of *Dracula*, and hence an innuendo cannot be excluded.

Temporal distortions leading to temporal dichotomies appear also during Dracula’s adventurous arrival in England. The abnormal onset of the storm underlines the dichotomy between the untainted, pre-Dracula English nature and the contaminated aura that he brings:

The silence was so marked that the bleating of a sheep inland or the barking of a dog in the town was distinctly heard ... A little after midnight came a strange sound 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 impossible to realize, the whole aspect of nature at once became convulsed. (*D* 86–87)

Besides the rapid coming of the storm, it is also worth noting that the scene takes place at midnight, implying that midnight is a threshold between good and evil – a rather long-standing Gothic tradition, considering the Radcliffean “gloom of midnight” (Molesworth 2014, 39). *Dracula*, after all, is time-bound, as Professor Van Helsing informs the others later on – a rather ironic attribute for a timeless creature. His power significantly weakens “as does that of all evil things” as the day comes, while his transformation can take place only “at noon or at exact sunrise or sunset” (*D* 255). As Quincey Morris aptly puts it, “[t]ime is everything with him” (*D* 258). By “time”, Quincey Morris here means “timing”, inevitably introducing what in layman’s terms would be called sheer luck. Bakhtin refers to this element as the chronotope of chance, or “a chain of random ‘suddenlys’ and ‘at just that moments’ that benefit the heroes” (1981, 93). “Suddenlys” of this kind occupy an enormous part in Gothic fiction. Indeed, one could argue that in certain Gothic works chance is the main reason the plot is driven forward, as *Frankenstein* exemplifies.

In Shelley’s novel, however, what seems to happen is anything but beneficial to the heroes, as the characters fall prey to their fate as a result of frustratingly well-timed occurrences. As Walton mentions in his letter to his sister, his plans would have been doomed to fail if he had not inherited a fortune “just at [the] time” of a failed previous endeavor (*F* 14). This is the first in a long series of those Bakhtinian “suddenlys”. Similarly, at the beginning of his narration, Victor Frankenstein mentions how “a variety of circumstances” did not allow his father to marry early (*F* 26). This is only the beginning, as Victor himself soon falls victim to the machinations of time. Just as he is about to leave Ingolstadt and return to his hometown, “an incident happened that protracted [his] stay” (*F* 40). Later on, Victor sees his plans falling apart again. As he plans to return to Geneva, he is “delayed by several accidents” (*F* 55). These instances of tragic irony are what I define as dichotomies of timing. Essentially, the plot is split into two different directions: the thetical one that is the actual outcome that leads to the events described in the story, and the antithetical one that is its opposite. Such a reading poses a question: Had Victor escaped these events, would the ensuing catastrophe have happened? Is fate avoidable?

Brown argues that coincidence in *Frankenstein* can be examined either as something indeed random or as something behind which a guiding hand is hidden, adding that in such a context “[t]he improbable becomes the inevitable” (2005,

195). This is an important point, as in the framework of Hegelian synthesis one could speak of *becoming*, as the one semantic category transforms into the other. The in-between ambiguity, perhaps especially when examined from the temporal perspective of the eternal now, has a clearly sublime aura around it. The undefinable eternal present, the “point” when sublimity occurs and when the improbable becomes the inevitable, allows a glimpse into another reality, but one which does not entirely come into focus:

The terror of *Frankenstein* lies in the collapse of the antinomial categories of reason into a grotesque deformation of the order of the experience. The narrative is perfectly connected with a ring of inevitability, but not with a logic humans can live by. The normal and the pathological can scarcely be distinguished. (Brown 2005, 195)

In effect, the novel seems less preoccupied with resolving the quandary as to whether the characters face the improbable or the inevitable, and instead underlines their ambiguous border. Employing Todorov’s approach once again, there is a contrast between the supernatural presence of fate or a “guiding hand” and the illusion that such a force exists. Furthermore, it is this very ambiguity – the temporally abstract “duration of the uncertainty” (Todorov 1973, 25) – where the Gothic can be most effectively located. The ambiguous placement of *Frankenstein* between reality and fantasy was already noticed right after its publication, as a contemporary critic reveals:

There never was a wilder story imagined, yet, like most of the fictions of this age, it has an air of reality attached to it, by being connected with the favourite projects and passions of the times ... Our appetite, we say, for every sort of wonder and vehement interest, has in this way become so desperately inflamed, that especially as the world around us has again settled into its old dull state of happiness and legitimacy, we can be satisfied with nothing in fiction that is not highly coloured and exaggerated. (*The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* 1818)

The perceptive anonymous reviewer notices not only the balancing of *Frankenstein* between reality and fantasy – as well as the fact that it represents a wider cultural milieu – but also the function Gothic novels can serve, namely as means of expressing the rebellion of “every sort of wonder” against the “dull state of happiness and legitimacy”. *Frankenstein*, by refusing to side clearly with either the improbable or the inevitable, the supernatural presence of fate or the acknowledgment of its illusion, underlines the need for a never-ending process of doubting, a permanent revolution of sorts, in a true Marxist fashion (Punter 1980, 128).

The idea that fate is unavoidable is also mentioned by Bakhtin in his description of this kind of adventure-time, where the plot is tied together through a chain of

“extratemporal and in effect infinite series” (1981, 94), paving the way for a theoretically limitless introduction of points of divergence:

All moments of this infinite adventure time are controlled by one force – *chance*. As we have seen, this time is entirely composed of contingency – of chance meetings and failures to meet. Adventuristic “chance time” is the specific time during which irrational forces intervene in human life ... [N]onhuman forces – fate, gods, villains – and it is precisely these forces, and not the heroes, who in adventure-time take all the initiative. (1981, 94–95; emphasis in the original)

Bakhtin’s argument on Gothic time in particular is also noteworthy, as he argues that in the Gothic, the chronotope of chance is mostly fulfilled by unknown benefactors and villains (1981, 96), and, as it becomes apparent, Gothic monsters, directly or indirectly. The importance of time is obvious in such chance events, and “[a]lmost nothing occurs in the gothic without some reference to the hour of its occurrence” (Molesworth 2014, 36). There is also an implicit comparison present in this scheme: the more accurately time can be measured, the greater the probability – or, in any case, the perception – that human fate depends on the minute, if not the second. Conversely, an older, pre-industrial time measurement certainly allows if not fewer missed moments, at the very least a vague degree of realization that man’s destiny depends on the factory hour, or the railway minute.

To realize the importance (actual or perceived) of the minutest temporal and spatial details is surely a painful reminder to humans. This is particularly the case for the post-Enlightenment man that, regardless of the technological and societal advances, sees human life as still subject to chance, at least to some extent. Clear elements of tragedy are present, and the character most affected by this is the creature. Perhaps two of the most defining moments for Frankenstein’s creation, and ultimately for the entire novel, are those two occasions that shape the moral balance for the creature. The first strips away his chances to be good, and the second seals his fate and that of the rest of the characters by rendering it evil. At virtually the same instant the creature opens his heart to the old inhabitant of the cottage, the rest of the family enter and “in a transport of fury” throw him out, leaving him with “heart sunk ... [and] overcome by pain and anguish” (*F* 104). The last hope is lost when, after saving a young girl from drowning, the creature is “suddenly interrupted” by a man who happened to pass from there and shoots the deformed monstrosity (*F* 108). The terrible course of future events is sealed, with the creature exclaiming: “The feelings of kindness and gentleness which I had entertained but a few moments before gave place to hellish rage ... I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind” (*F* 108–109). It is interesting to notice not

only the element of chance and its consequences, but also the phenomenally rapid change, as the creature itself affirms.

The relativity and fluidity of time is an element that is also present in Walton's first letter to his sister. It finishes with an ominous phrase: "If I fail, you will see me again soon, or never" (F 15). Accurate and self-obvious as it might be, it is worth understanding the temporal implications. Essentially, two distant points in the temporal continuum, the "soon" and the "never" are merged semantically, as they could both be possible outcomes. The relativity of time is expressed explicitly as Walton, in a following letter, claims that time passes frustratingly slowly (F 16). Once again, the contrast between humans and nature becomes evident, as Walton is unable to proceed due to the weather conditions. Perhaps, however, it is not a fair conclusion to divide humans and nature. What is truly in opposition here is nature and the human desire for exploration, expansion, and, ultimately, progress – although, admittedly, it becomes a matter of how the latter is defined. What is beyond doubt, nevertheless, is the temporal dependence on fate, in ways similar to Bakhtin's argument on nonhuman forces. As Walton explains to his sister, his advance is entirely dependent on the weather and the change of the seasons, which essentially define his time:

[M]y voyage is only now delayed until the weather shall permit my embarkation. The winter has been dreadfully severe; but the spring promises well, and it is considered as a *remarkably early season*; so that perhaps I may sail sooner than I expected. I shall do nothing rashly. (F 18; my emphasis)

The remarkably early season, in hindsight, becomes yet another element of fate and chance. In the vast icy wilderness, the chances of Walton's ship being exactly in the right place at the right time to meet Frankenstein and the creature, as it will later occur, must be considered astronomical, and subject to a chain of occurrences that approaches chaos theory proportions. The element of fate appears as a very possible explanation, at least from the characters' perspective. There is, however, a more complex truth hidden under the surface.

In *Frankenstein*, what the dichotomies of timing reveal is a transition; not simply the one already implied, that is, the chronotope of chance, but a transition much larger in scope. This transition is the one between the older and the newer forms of eternal now, as Erich Auerbach argues:

[A] connection is established between two events which are linked neither temporally nor causally – a connection which it is impossible to establish by reason in the horizontal dimension ... It can be established only if both occurrences are vertically linked to Divine Providence, which alone is able to devise such a plan of

history and supply the key to its understanding ... [T]he here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events. (2003, 73–74)

What was “linked to Divine Providence” before, however, now becomes linked to more abstract higher powers – the Bakhtinian “irrational forces” I mentioned before. What *Frankenstein* seems to offer is the hypothesis that the post-Enlightenment Newtonian universe, comprising of cold scientific facts and rationality, is still incomplete. An “irrational” facet is needed to supply a linkage to elements that seemingly cannot be connected temporally or causally. Nonetheless, although the novel explicitly refers to fate on a number of occasions, this appears to function less as an explanation and more as a placeholder: “fate” is not defined in any satisfactory way, and the mystery remains. The approach to the issue of “fate” or “irrational forces” is, in fact, self-contradictory. Victor alludes to the presence of more than one such force, one benevolent and one malicious:

Thus strangely are our souls constructed, and by such slight ligaments are we bound to prosperity or ruin. When I look back, it seems to me as if this almost miraculous change of inclination and will was the immediate suggestion of the guardian angel of my life ... It was a strong effort of the spirit of good, but it was ineffectual. Destiny was too potent, and her immutable laws had decreed my utter and terrible destruction. (F 34)

The novel does not metaphysically explain any of these forces in a way that would solve the contradiction. In a religious context, the idea that there would be another destiny that would override the divinely envisioned one would be considered heretical if not outright logically impossible. In some ways, Victor’s insistence on mentioning destiny and placing such importance on these dichotomies of timing, appears as an effort to displace responsibility. After all, if everything is predetermined, speaking of ethics is meaningless – an argument with recognizable Calvinist undertones which, as chapter 6 will demonstrate, echoes in *A Christmas Carol*. Ultimately, *Frankenstein* recognizes the existence of the problem, but its solution still seems elusive. In Shelley’s novel, dichotomies of time and timing – respectively, splits such as day versus night or linear versus cyclical time and splits based on the chronotope of chance – emphasize the ongoing negotiation between past and future, with the rupture between them growing bigger. The bigger the rupture, the more pressing the need for discovering a new “irrational force”, a new form of eternal present that can replace the no-longer-applicable older paradigm.

In the context of dichotomizing I have presented thus far, it is also important to notice the transformation of spaces. The reason is not only that space and time should be seen as two facets of the same underlying reality, but also because of the connotations Gothic spaces possess. Their allusive power opens up new directions

of meaning, as they emphasize the presence of the ever-widening rupture between past and future. Perhaps one would initially object to Gothic spaces being connected with dialectics of temporality. Nonetheless, the Gothic space – since its archetypal manifestation, that is, the castle – has been functioning as a prime signifier of dialectical temporality; of that which is caught between worlds and between histories. Not exactly a relic, as that would simply imply an element of the past “forgotten” in a modern world. Rather, the Gothic space stands for a past that is still here, together with a future (or, indeed, futures) still undecided, all blended together in a form of fusion that, more often than not, remains puzzling and unfathomable:

In this castle, then, as in many others, centuries of history are compressed into a single image, albeit one that never quite comes together. A common feature of many Gothic castles is that they seem to distort perception, to cause some slippage between what is natural and what is human-made; they act as unreliable lenses through which to view history and from the other side of which may emerge terrors only previously apprehended in dream. (2004, 259–260)

Punter and Byron refer, albeit not explicitly, to the process of being in a liminal state – that is, being in an in-between, intermediate condition. The castle, or any Gothic space that assumes the same function, signifies a liminal space and a liminal time. There is simultaneously a separation and a connection, a dichotomy and a linkage. Albright describes the castle as an embodiment of the Bakhtinian chronotope, underlining the fact that the castle is a spatio-temporal fusion, incorporating “the desires for randomness in both the spatial and the temporal realms because ruins are physical examples of time’s passage” (2009, 41).

Examining *A Christmas Carol* for such spaces, the reader quickly discovers how strongly the story defines its own Gothic territory. Scrooge’s house is as stereotypically Gothic as a space that is not a castle can be: it is described as “a gloomy suite of rooms” that once belonged to Marley, Scrooge’s deceased business associate – no wonder then it is literally haunted. The house is portrayed as old, dreary, with a yard immersed in darkness, and fog and frost “hung about the black old gateway of the house” (CC 14). Scrooge’s house effectively connotes the same sense of dread one feels when reading the description of Count Dracula’s castle, or Victor Frankenstein’s workshop, “a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house” (F 43), a direct reference to a castle tower.

In fact, such Gothic spaces are constructed in ways that, much like with the concept of time, often offer them a power of their own. *Dracula* begins and ends

with the castle.²⁶ In fact, the ending occurs *twice*: the first one in Mina's last journal entry, describing the seeming destruction of Count Dracula in his home ground (*D* 401) and the second in Jonathan's note, revealing their pilgrimage of sorts to the very same place seven years later (*D* 402). Dracula also says "to live in a new house would kill me. A house cannot be made habitable in a day" (*D* 30), essentially revealing that he needs to travel in dirt – in a sense literally carrying his roots with him. The castle of Dracula, much like the time that surrounds it and the Count, achieves character status in this part of the novel. The entire spatio-temporal continuum is thus distorted, underlining the uncanny feeling that the stability offered by modernity, or, indeed, by the Anglo-Saxon version of it, is a mere illusion:

[Jonathan] is as lost in time as he is in space, stranded uncomfortably in some uncharted territory between what he calls the "powers" of "the old centuries" and those of "modernity". The young solicitor's act of writing an "up-to-date with a vengeance" account of the bewildering events that transpire in this temporal and spatial limbo impresses upon him the consciousness of a profound historical dislocation, placing him squarely on the threshold of what might justifiably be called the post-Victorian. (Thomas 2000, 288–289)

Indeed, Count Dracula and his castle seem to exist in a synecdochal relation, not only as a spatio-temporal no-man's-land, but also as an actual metaphor of the *fin de siècle* itself (Angelis 2014, 15–16), "on the threshold" of post-Victorian times, as Thomas argues.

Space in *Frankenstein* also has multiple meanings. Victor Frankenstein, in order to procure the macabre materials for his task, visits places such as graveyards and charnel houses. These locations assign Gothic qualities to the narration, but also for reasons other than those ascribed by genre conventions. These are places that are spatio-temporally charged; locations in which time becomes distorted as a result of the very fact of the nature of the place. Victor has to secretly intrude into these spaces during the night – with the moon gazing on his "midnight labours" (*F* 43) – also stepping into a very fluid territory between life and death, as the course of events will prove. During the process he loses his sense of time, as much as a sense of himself. He describes how he immerses himself so much in his work that "the stars often disappeared in the light of morning" (*F* 40). Considering that the starry sky is the past itself, Victor witnesses a metaphor of his past disappearing. The loss of this night is to be repeated, presumably countless times, and the scientist refers to "days and nights of incredible labour" (*F* 41). It becomes apparent that the

²⁶ The few pages prior to the actual sighting of Dracula's castle should be considered part of the arrival and, indeed, elements that introduce the peculiar temporality and general essence of the place.

natural, older way of measuring time, namely the cycle of day and night, dissolves in favor of scientific progress, or so Victor believes. The repercussions of his excessive trust in technology are appalling, and there is a constant interplay and tension between tradition and modernity. *Frankenstein* anticipates the full impact of industrialization and presents a graspable danger of transitions: anything new and unprecedented – technological advances, in Victor’s case – marks the emergence of the unseen. Thus however, it becomes ethically and morally impossible to evaluate something before it exists. This temporal catch-22 is well underlined in the novel, the complex time frame of which – relying on chance and luck – draws attention to this very fact.

Gothic spaces, in *Frankenstein* and other works, are simultaneously places of temporal contrast, namely life and death, but also buffer zones, as the inevitability of death is in doubt. This lies at the core of the duality I referred to before, namely the simultaneous separation and connection. This in-between metaphysical status, seen in the context of Hegelian dialectics, approximates the resolution of the thesis/antithesis opposition. Effectively, Gothic space-time as the one described here incorporates life and death, past and future, being at the same time both and neither. The eternal now, then, probabilistically approximates the sublime “point” (Shaw 2006, 46) where there is an equal weight between each category, and as a result their distinction becomes harder to distinguish. In the suspended temporality of the eternal now, facilitated by the Gothic space, to be dead or alive becomes a matter of perspective. Similarly, although the graveyards and the charnel houses in *Frankenstein* portray a clearly linear temporal model, with a stark reminder of the certainty of death, at the same time they unavoidably reestablish the cycle of life and death, and therefore time. The climax itself occurs in Victor’s workshop, which, much like Scrooge’s house, is as close as a location can be to a Gothic castle without actually being one.

As the night approaches when the creature becomes alive, Victor suffers from bouts of fever that occur only during the nights, while he also offers another spatio-temporal reference: he describes himself like “one doomed by slavery to toil in the mines” (F 45). The mine is a very powerful metaphor, evoking an abundance of meaning. Firstly, there is the explicit mention of social classification; secondly, the Gothic association with entombment, as this is the second time Victor refers to himself as being buried, after mentioning being “like the Arab who had been buried with the dead” (F 42), a reference to *Thousand and One Nights*; and thirdly, there is the inevitable separation from the day-cycle, an important reference for the passage of time. The creature comes alive “on a dreary night of November” (F 45).

Victor quickly rejects his creation, and the suddenness of this change of heart is clearly the primary factor, as he himself acknowledges when he claims that “[t]he different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature”, adding that the enthusiasm of anticipation had vanished the instant his creation was complete (F 45). Soon he claims that what was once his dream, had become a hell, with a “change so rapid ... [an] overthrow so complete!” (F 46).

Besides the instantaneous change, there is another element of temporal importance, namely, once again, the chronotope of chance. Victor speaks of the “different accidents of life” in a rather casual manner – quite ironically, considering how important chance has been in the course of the story. Fittingly enough, an incident of similar nature occurs shortly after Victor escapes in horror:

Here I paused, I knew not why; but remained some minutes with my eyes fixed on a coach that was coming towards me from the other end of the street. As it drew nearer, I observed that it was the Swiss diligence: it stopped just where I was standing, and, on the door being opened, I perceived Henry Clerval, who, on seeing me, instantly sprung out. ‘My dear Frankenstein,’ exclaimed he, ‘how glad I am to see you! how fortunate that you should be here at the very moment of my alighting!’ (F 47)

Out of all the rather outlandishly presented occasions of chance acting in a fate-sealing way throughout the text, this instance might actually be the least surprising. Certainly, it cannot be placed on the same level as Walton’s ship being exactly in the right place in the Arctic, at the right time, to meet Frankenstein and his creation. Victor certainly assigns importance to it, as he cherishes this meeting with Henry Clerval – perhaps this is once again a reminder of the importance of subjective perception in the Gothic.

After all, the motif of temporal distortion that so much pervades the Gothic is often of such a nature. In some Gothic texts, and perhaps in more science fiction ones, time could *actually* move faster, slower, or stop altogether, in the sense that the text theoretically allows the possibility. What is important, nonetheless, is the characters’ *perception* that time is distorted. Ultimately, this very fact also amplifies the inference that reality is not absolute and objective, a motif often appearing in the Gothic. Furthermore, as I have shown so far, temporal distortions can be also expressed in the Gothic as feelings or states of mind of specific characters. There are very often recurring, direct mentions of time appearing to have stopped or of events to be repeated. Alternatively, there might be natural events, such as weather phenomena that appear or disappear abnormally fast. Once again, it is pertinent to note a connection between temporal and spatial components, as some spatial boundaries can allude to temporal differentiations very strongly. A prime example

would be the presence of cemeteries, tombs, and catacombs – all very eminently displayed in the Gothic – which encapsulate the idea of separation from the day-cycle, an important reference for the passage of time. Being buried, whether dead, alive, or un-dead, becomes tantamount to being atemporal. The motif of the relativity of time becomes an indicator of meaning and there is a consistent connection between temporal distortions and connotations related to normativity and its related expectations. However, I must stress once again that the emphasis is not on the existence of these dichotomies, but rather on the fluidity of their borders. This is much in accordance with the Todorovian in-between, which is arguably the origin of the affective power of the Gothic, as I explained in 3.2. In other words, what becomes important is not the presence of immortal beings, cyclical time, or cemeteries – to name three examples – but the uncertainty and even horror experienced by the inability to draw defining lines. Count Dracula would not have been as threatening without the possibility of infecting humans, and the fact that vampirism is portrayed as a possibly dormant condition only increases the effect.

In this chapter I examined the concepts of temporal distortions and temporal dichotomies. In regard to the former, I investigated ways in which Gothic texts distort the normal flow of time, placing a particular emphasis on immortality. As I argued, immortality in Gothic texts such as *Frankenstein*, *A Christmas Carol*, or *Dracula* can be read as a subconscious need to negotiate the past and the future; to create a suspended, timeless present that becomes the synthesis of the Hegelian triad. As Punter argues about Hegel, the latter's dialectical system seeks "the reversal of the topography of common sense; there is no finite, stable bloc afloat in an uncomprehended sea, no totally interpretable sign surrounded by darkness. Instead, the finite opens like a flower, reveals infinity in a grain of sand" (Punter 1990, 88).

I also explicated how temporal distortions facilitate the creation of temporal dichotomies, arguing that these can often allude to other splits, such as the natural versus the supernatural, security and stability versus danger and chaos, and so on. The crucial element which I presented is the existence of porous borders between such dichotomies. As I argued, the attempt to clearly separate such dialectical pairs becomes problematic and, if anything, these Gothic texts can be read precisely as examples of the inability to offer clear-cut differentiations.

5 DIALECTICS OF OTHERNESS

The process of temporal dichotomizing in the Gothic can also indicate dichotomizing of other types. In a mode of cultural expression that contains abundant conflicts and oppositions, as I have shown so far, it is perhaps to be expected that these assume many forms. After all, as I mentioned in chapter 2, in nineteenth-century British society time was often the fault line between gender, ethnic, and class groups. These divisions, perhaps unsurprisingly, are reflected in the reality-enhanced worlds of the Gothic. It is also important to note that this association between temporal divergence and normative views can also function in reverse: prevalent ideas about gender roles, for instance, can lead to expectations about temporality. The motif of children, birth, or childlessness is often repeated in the Gothic – some examples besides *Frankenstein* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* being *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). This motif becomes firmly connected with a specific kind of temporal distortion, namely the loss of the future, as a result of the inviability of creations that are formed in ways other than the traditional (marital) union between a man and a woman. As a result of this fact, the figure of the child is temporally connected with sexuality and, in particular, with reproductive sexuality. Furthermore, it is associated with gender expectations. Hence, the element of (re)production and child-bearing is a part of the dichotomizing process I refer to, with the first stepping stone of this dichotomy being the separation between reproductive and non-reproductive sexuality.

The fifth chapter will examine these kinds of associations between temporality and otherness, focusing on aspects of femininity and gender, ethnicity, “race”, and religion, as well as class and patterns of consumption. Continuing from the concepts of the previous chapter, I intend to demonstrate that there is a link between temporal dichotomies and dichotomies based on identity construction determinants such as those mentioned above. On the one hand, there is the Victorian obsession with linearity and progress, paired with a tendency to become disassociated from the past. On the other hand, there is the overwhelming realization of the impossibility of such a task. As I mentioned in section 2.2, the inability to negotiate the dialectics between past and future meant that the

Victorians preferred to place their belief in linearity, which was “a response to the unsettling changes witnessed during the century”, and a choice of “optimism rather than despair” (Murphy 2001, 19). This choice became increasingly more problematic, and despite the fact that Gothic texts reflected an ostensible preference for normativity – temporal and otherwise – they also registered the subconscious cultural knowledge that this was incomplete.

5.1 Sexuality, Gender, and the Child Figure

The model of femininity underwent important changes during the nineteenth century. Expectations and attitudes shifted, and to complicate matters further there was an asynchronous change across the class strata of society. At around the time of *Frankenstein*, the ideal woman was essentially a “perfect wife”. That included first and foremost childbearing, but lower class women were also expected to directly participate in the family income. Conversely, middle class women’s financial input was rather indirect, through the fulfillment of tasks associated with the household, such as preparation of food and making of clothes (Vicinus 1973, ix).

Later on, the feminine ideal transformed to that of the “perfect lady” – an ideal which, as Vicinus argues, “had little connection with any functional and responsible role in society” (1973, ix). The term “angel in the house” (from Coventry Patmore’s 1854 poem) was extensively used in the middle of the Victorian period to describe a woman who was both devoted and submissive to her husband. At the same time, she was inevitably conceived as powerless, selfless, above all pure – in other words, asexual – and, ultimately, mindless; a true emotional zombie. According to Nel Noddings, these kinds of expectations form the picture of a creature who is infantile, weak, and needs to be supervised and protected by men at all times, with “[u]ndertones of sadism [running] throughout Coventry Patmore’s hymn to the angel who is in reality a prisoner in the house she graces” (1991, 59). A conflict is present, much in accordance with the typical Gothic devices I have shown so far. What is at play in such a setting is a struggle that can often be unexpressed and repressed. This struggle is fueled by the positive (at least on a superficial level) attributes of meekness, kindness, and serenity, and their negative forms of bitterness, exclusion, and depression. As Noddings argues, under such circumstances, the angel in the house becomes “the devil’s gateway” (1991, 60).

In the late Victorian era, feminine ideals began to shift in ways that were often dramatic, not unlike the general upheaval and changes permeating British society of the *fin de siècle*. The New Woman was a woman who worked, wanted to educate herself, and fought fiercely for her political and legal rights. However, once again, there was a significant class chasm, with few women from the lower social classes benefiting from these changes (Vicinus 1973, ix). As Sally Ledger argues, the “New Woman” was not the only thing that was “New” in that time. Ideas such as the New Journalism or the New Unionism, signified “[t]he collision between the old and the new ... a time when British cultural politics were caught between two ages, the Victorian and the modern” – adding that gender was perhaps the most unstable element of the time (1995, 22).

It is perhaps justified to begin the analysis with *Frankenstein*, not for chronological reasons, but because it is a text that poses grave questions in regard to gender normativity. The fact that the novel was authored by a woman like Mary Shelley – with all the tragedies that befell her personally – simply adds to the complexity with regard to the gender dynamics of *Frankenstein*. Still, as I mentioned before, reading Mary Shelley’s works in a predominantly biographical way is too simplistic, as it overlooks the fact that Shelley’s personal experiences often move in a parallel direction with those of her time (Albright 2009, 119). The plot of the novel could be construed as blasphemous in more ways than one: firstly, Victor Frankenstein violates the natural order of things by nullifying death and essentially reversing time; secondly, he assumes the role of the ultimate creator, being able to give life, in all effect becoming a god; and thirdly, there is the issue of a “birth” without a woman.

Victor becomes so engaged with his unnatural plans that he loses the sense of time. In effect, by stepping outside the path of normativity, he also removes himself from time. He becomes timeless, as he is so absorbed with his work that “the stars often disappeared in the light of morning” (F 40). What follows are “days and nights of incredible labour” (F 41), with the moon gazing on his “midnight labours” (F 43). Victor’s constant repetition of the word “labour” is intriguing, considering the context of creation. Indeed, the “birth” of the creature, is a temporal anomaly in itself. As the child can be seen as a personification of the future (Cirlot 1971, 45), what Victor creates here is a future that lacks a proper past. It is a birth not requiring the participation of a woman, and also one without a pregnancy – although an incubation period of three seasons or nine months is mockingly alluded to (F 44).

The metaphor of the child possesses extraordinary allusive power in a Gothic context. The reason is that it personifies in graspable terms the ambiguous area between past and future; the link that both separates and connects the old and the new. Using the terminology applied in the current dissertation, the Gothic child can be read as a metaphor for the eternal present. It carries the past within – both literally, as the continuation of the parents’ genetic code, as well as metaphorically, as the continuation of a cultural, social, or simply family tradition – yet it is also the future. More important, still, it is a *potential* future, that is, it is neither determined nor materialized. At the same time, the child can be seen as a metaphor for the synthesis that can resolve the conflict between thesis and antithesis, between past and future. In *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge’s sighting of the first spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Past, offers a telling description of this allusion:

It was a strange figure – like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child’s proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin ... [A]s its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and what was light one instant, at another time was dark, so the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which dissolving parts, no outline would be visible in the dense gloom wherein they melted away. And in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever. (CC 24–25)

What Scrooge witnesses is a figure that, in its grotesque indistinctness, becomes a synthetic all-encompassing hybrid. It is both old and new, and yet it is neither; it is both a child and an old man, yet, it is neither.

Such allusions to hybridity also exist in *Dracula*, where the conclusion of the novel is left disturbingly open-ended, as Maurice Hindle argues:

[T]he strangest and most chilling ambiguity of the novel comes in the novel’s final ‘Note’ by Jonathan Harker. Writing seven years after the events of the story ... he tells us of the joy he and his wife Mina feel that their young son’s birthday ‘is the same day as that on which Quincey Morris died’ ... Harker goes on to confide that Mina holds the ‘secret belief that some of our brave friend’s spirit has passed into him’, conveniently forgetting that something *else* has ‘passed into’ the body of little Quincey too: Dracula’s blood. Of all Dracula’s victims, it is Mina alone who has been forced to drink his blood, having made her, as he gloatingly boasts, “flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin; my beautiful wine-press for a while”. (2003, xxxv-xxxvi; emphasis in the original)

In the deceptively neat and pristinely Victorian dénouement of the novel, the child is a fitting reminder of Dracula’s undead essence, and an apt metaphor of the

inability to completely eradicate the past. The child of Mina and Jonathan – and Dracula – is the synthesized eternal now, a temporal level including past, present, and future. More still, it is the very ambiguity surrounding the child's true essence, the Todorovian “duration of the uncertainty” (Todorov 1973, 25) that “cannot be situated, by and large, except in the present” (Todorov 1973, 42) which effectively underlines the key aspects of the eternal now: an inability to define its borders, along with a hybrid, synthetical all-inclusiveness characterizing the vampire/human child. The ambiguousness of the Gothic child figure is present in *Frankenstein* as well, where the creature – the hapless child of the story – becomes a typical example of ambiguous existence. Kelly Hurley argues that Victor's creation becomes an apt description of the liminal. As she underlines, the Frankensteinian monster challenges the boundaries between death and life, as much as between lifeless and sentient matter. It exists at the “threshold between two opposing conceptual categories, and so can be defined by both and neither of them” (Hurley 2007, 138).

Victor's unnatural activities are also reflected in his dreams, where anxieties related to sexuality and progeny are also present. Soon after the creature becomes alive, the appalled scientist attempts to seek solace in sleep, only to be haunted by a nightmare in which the main protagonist is Elizabeth – a character ambiguously balancing between being an adopted family member and a fiancée. As he attempts to kiss her, she morphs into the rotting cadaver of his mother – an image with significant symbolic power, as Punter and Byron underline:

[A]s Elizabeth changes into the corpse of the mother, the dream emphasizes Frankenstein's circumvention of the normal channels of procreation: giving life to the creature has effectively eliminated the mother. The dream also implies much about the psychological state of the dreamer himself, suggesting at the very least some anxieties concerning sexuality. (2004, 199)

The shape-shifting dream is also a form of an eternal present, as it connects scenes of both the past and the future. Punter and Byron refer only to the prophetic nature of it, as it anticipates Elizabeth's death in the hands of the creature. However, it is also a reflection of the past. On one of those numerous occasions where Victor and everyone around him fall victim to chance – the dreaded Bakhtinian “suddenlys” – Victor's departure for Ingolstadt is delayed because Elizabeth becomes sick with scarlet fever. His mother takes care of her, eventually saving her, but at the expense of her own life (*F* 34). Past, present, and future appear somewhat interconnected, although on a level that is hard to grasp by the protagonists of the story.

Besides Victor's rather obvious acts of deconstruction of traditional gender roles, the text of *Frankenstein* in its entirety is permeated by characters who are lacking in terms of normative expectations. What has to be noticed, however, is that the world of *Frankenstein* is a world dominated by men – a rather unsurprising consequence, considering that the novel is a reflection of Mary Shelley's early nineteenth-century England. There seems to be a hidden element of irony in the text, perhaps inadvertently, but still being an apt description of the contemporary reality: nothing is expected of women, but simply to be meek and submissive. In that, they succeed. They do exactly what society expects of them, namely listen to their husbands or male relatives in general. Although Dickerson argues that the women in Frankenstein's house are "failed keepers" (1993, 86), as they could not keep Victor away from the horrors that befell him, this is but a partial truth. In *Frankenstein*, it is men who fail to achieve what is expected of them. It is men like Victor and Walton who snub the domestic world. As for the creature, although he desires this domestic life and asks Victor to create a female companion for him, he is ultimately excluded by it. However, what perhaps surfaces from the novel is neither the incapability of the men – it would be daring but not out of place to use the word "impotence" – nor the obedience of the women. Rather, what is emphasized through this conflict is the realization that a true alternative is absent. In *Frankenstein*, "artificial role distinctions result in the creation of passive, dependent women who ultimately become monsters to be rejected" (Punter and Byron 2004, 201). Dickerson, in fact, calls the female characters of *Frankenstein* "so meek and withdrawn as to appear superfluous and accessory, if indeed not absent", akin to ghosts (1993, 82). The most spectacular such case is that of Margaret Saville, Walton's sister.

Not only is she a female character who is entirely absent from the narrative, and lives her ghostly existence only through Walton's letters, but like a true ghost she seems to haunt Walton's trip in many ways. Margaret "exists for the reader beyond Walton as some faceless, incorporeal other who serves as a high tribunal" (Dickerson 1993, 83). Although Walton never receives any letter from her, she still seems to affect and influence his thoughts. Still, there is more: in the general complexity of the plot, with stories within stories and horrifying events easily attracting all the attention, few readers realize the importance of Margaret for the narrative: "[A]s the designated recipient of her brother's writings, she will ultimately hold Robert's letters which contain Victor's story which contains the monster's story which includes the story of the DeLacy's [sic]" (Dickerson 1993, 84). It is a remarkable realization, that the entire narrative is dependent on the

hands of a woman – an element that will be much more explicit some decades later, when Mina not only keeps but also edits the narrative in *Dracula*.²⁷ Furthermore, the lack of an omniscient narrator in *Frankenstein* – just like in *Dracula* – leaves open all possibilities, including the one that the text of *Frankenstein* is, after all, edited by none other than Margaret Saville herself. Extending the skeptical hypothesis to its opposite limits, there is nothing to prove Margaret’s existence in the first place. She could as well be a creation of Robert’s imagination, just like the entire narrative. The metatextual twist is, of course, that the entire narrative *is* a product of the imagination, namely Mary Shelley’s – who shares the same initials as Walton’s sister, MS.

Ultimately, in terms of temporal and gender expectations, what *Frankenstein* portrays is once again a conflict; a struggle between past and future. In a novel that is either way obsessed with change, there is little wonder that issues related to gender roles receive significant attention. Indeed, some critics make a direct connection between women in *Frankenstein* and Mary Shelley’s own frustration – Dickerson refers to Shelley’s “humdrum reality” (1993, 81). Much as with other issues which I will explore in the following chapter, the text accentuates the failure of the contemporary social model to address reality. The women of *Frankenstein* are “perfect wives”, or at least aspire to be, but this is clearly shown as a non-satisfactory outcome. Essentially, women refer to a past that is no longer viable by itself – they are “morally animate angels, but physically and politically inanimate mortals” (Dickerson 1993, 80). Men like Walton and Frankenstein refer to a possible future, with their thirst for change, their doubting of established norms, and their willingness to question everything. Ultimately, however, this also appears unsatisfactory, since their efforts seem both naïve and ill-conceived, as well as dubious in terms of motives. Hence, the present seems confusing and caught in a temporal tug-of-war, not belonging either to the past or the future. The present in *Frankenstein* seems to be the very embodiment of the temporal gap Koselleck mentions, namely the “lived time [that] was experienced as a rupture, as a period of transition in which the new and the unexpected continually happened” (qtd. in Albright 2009, 25). In many ways, this present becomes as disjointed and disconnected as the creature himself, who not only lacks a past, but he is also

²⁷ It is important to notice the effect created by the epistolary structure in *Frankenstein* as well as *Dracula*. Not only is the epistolary novel a mode associated mostly with female writers (see Goldsmith 1989), but through the presentation of the narrative as a composition of letters, journal diaries and, in the case of *Dracula*, recordings and newspaper clippings, the story acquires an intense sense of immediacy, of events occurring “here and now”.

denied a future, as his creator denies him a mate and thus the possibility of any offspring.

The conflict and intermixing of past, present, and future is the key ingredient in *A Christmas Carol* as well. Issues regarding gender and time are somewhat obscure in Dickens's story, not the least so because women are almost invisible and largely insignificant in the text. Much like in *Frankenstein*, their only role is to function as props for the main character – in this case the egocentric Scrooge, and his journey to ostensible self-discovery. Unlike in other novels by Dickens, here there is a more visibly idolized “angel in the house” image of asexual women (who still have children), preparing dinner in a deceptively and ultimately misleading atmosphere of peace and serenity. Still, the text does present some subtle hints regarding gender issues, particularly in terms of temporality.

When Scrooge visits several instances of his past life with the help of the Ghost of Christmas Past, the latter literally forces him to watch what happened with Belle, Scrooge's fiancée. First, Scrooge views the collapse of their engagement. The sad young woman tells him that a golden idol has displaced her, adding that if Scrooge “were free to-day, to-morrow, yesterday”, he would never choose a dowerless girl (CC 35). In terms of narrative structure, Belle's phrase is unorthodox, as the past – “yesterday” – follows the present and future. Perhaps this is a hint at Scrooge's *then* future and from the reader's perspective present time-travel to the past. She adds that “the memory of what is past” makes her wish that Scrooge will be at least a bit sad for their parting, but quickly she admits that this will be “[a] very, very brief time, and [he] will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that [he] awoke” (CC 35). Her words are doubly ironic: firstly, she mentions Scrooge waking up from a dream, with his then-future-now-present self being, in all effect, trapped in one. Secondly, this very brief time turns out to be literally true for Scrooge, the viewer from the future, as the Ghost immediately and despite his protest shows him a later scene from the past. There, Belle is married and has children. The dynamics of gender roles in this scene are quite straight-forward, although their meaning is somewhat more difficult to discern, being open to interpretation.

As mentioned above, the scene portrays a very stereotypical image of the perfect middle-class family of the mid-Victorian period. Scrooge notices what he initially thinks is Belle, but instead it is her daughter. The status of progeny as a metaphor for the future is quite significant in this instance. Effectively, the daughter does not merely allude to the future, but also to a version of the present – which for Scrooge, the viewer, is still the past. In this complex and multi-layered

temporal grid, the implication seems to be that of consequences and of past choices, which is, after all, the central theme of the text. Hence, in this idealized depiction, Scrooge is shown a fairly typical version of the angel in the house. The balance is threatened, however, by this extra-temporal visitor. It is only fitting that someone outside time and space, someone outside reality as far as the characters of the scene are concerned, is the one who voices thoughts that should not be expressed so explicitly. In a sense, Scrooge the viewer becomes the solution “outside the system” (see footnote 23, section 4.1) that can provide the missing perspective.

Scrooge notices the numerous children – a quite direct hint of (over)productive sexuality – playing around with the daughter. That this daughter possesses the double function of being Scrooge’s *potential* daughter as well as being seen as the younger Belle, only emphasizes the idea of transgression, underlining the taboo nature of the situation. This is further accentuated by Scrooge vicariously experiencing the scene also as one of the children. Essentially, this visitor from the future exists in three temporal states simultaneously: as a child, seeing the daughter as a mother figure; as a partner, seeing her as his lover; and, implicitly, as a father, seeing her as a daughter that could have been his:

[The daughter] got pillaged by the young brigands most ruthlessly. What would I not have given to be one of them! Though I never could have been so rude, no, no! I wouldn’t for the wealth of all the world have crushed that braided hair, and torn it down; and for the precious little shoe, I wouldn’t have plucked it off, God bless my soul! to save my life. As to measuring her waist in sport, as they did, bold young brood, I couldn’t have done it; I should have expected my arm to have grown round it for a punishment, and never come straight again. And yet I should have dearly liked, I own, to have touched her lips; to have questioned her, that she might have opened them; to have looked upon the lashes of her downcast eyes, and never raised a blush; to have let loose waves of hair, an inch of which would be a keepsake beyond price. (CC 36)

In this quite remarkable excerpt, Scrooge very obviously describes a conflict, namely that between sexual desires and the pureness and pristine nature of domestic life. What is important to realize is that this gender-related conflict is expressed through a temporal one. In particular, Scrooge is able to notice and acknowledge the presence of his desires through the hindsight offered by his time-travel. It is the distortion of time (and space) that allows him to spot the conflict between the normative domestic life and the unacknowledged but pressingly existent acceptance of the woman as a sexual being.

While explicit sexuality is mostly absent in *Frankenstein* and exists but as a fleeting, barely acknowledged thought in *A Christmas Carol*, things are very different

in *Dracula*. Talia Schaffer refers to the novel's "homoerotic desperation, unconscious desire, and deeply buried trauma" (1994, 381). In fact, Count Dracula makes it almost explicit, when he warns the three female vampires that are about to attack Jonathan to stay back, stating "[t]his man belongs to me!" (*D* 46). Hindle notes that Stoker's earlier drafts were even more revealing, as Dracula's full warning originally was "[t]his man belongs to me I want him" (Hindle 2003, xxxiv). One should also recall Jonathan's voiced out fear of being molested. In this regard, it is pertinent to underline that this kind of sexuality implied here is non-productive. Not only is it contrary to the normative heterosexual monogamy encouraged by Victorian society, but through this very lack of procreation it also becomes atemporal; by denying the children, it essentially denies the future. This is further emphasized by a strikingly emblematic scene that occurs soon after Count Dracula's exclamation, and right before Jonathan becomes unconscious succumbing to horror. The three female vampires, held in check by Dracula's words, accept instead what is tantamount to a child sacrifice (*D* 47). As the child stands for the future in general, this vampiric sacrificial ritual can be seen as the death of the future and, consequently, as an act of temporal distortion. In terms of homoeroticism and temporality, it is also worth noting that Baudelaire considered the lesbian as "the heroine of modernism because she combines with a historical ideal the greatness of the ancient world" (Benjamin 1983, 90). Coppola's film includes a fleeting scene where Mina and Lucy kiss in the garden during the storm – hence, possibly, being under Dracula's spell. The connection between the eternal now, modernity, and Dracula is a very important one, as I will analyze in chapter 6.

Exploring *Dracula* for other elements pertinent to gender issues, one soon discovers that the New Woman debate appears, both directly and indirectly. Just before the attack on Lucy, she and Mina have a day that forces the latter to admit that their appetites "should have shocked the 'New Woman'" (*D* 99). The timing of this revelation is not at all accidental, as it greatly resembles the thoughts puzzling Mina before her own ordeal – becoming Dracula's object of desire. The implication presented to the reader is that Dracula's attack is a sort of punishment for a woman's progressive thoughts. Sellers argues (2001, 80) that the killing of Lucy is an act against female emancipation and the New Woman ideal, portraying a reversal of the temporary transformation and a restoration to her earlier sweet and pure essence. Sellers also claims that Mina undergoes a similar purification process:

The vanishing of Dracula's mark from her forehead once he is dead and the final portrait of her as a loving mother underscore her resumption of traditional female values and roles. Despite Stoker's efforts at authenticity and the undeniable power

of his creation, the unequivocal return to the status quo at the end of the narrative relegates Dracula to the comparative safety of nightmare fantasy. (2001, 80)

Although the conclusion of the novel hints at a return to the status quo, I do not agree that it actually embraces this suggestion. The end of *Dracula* appears naively simplistic, and perhaps outright ironic. In the center of this ambiguity, lies Mina.

In many ways, she is the most important character of the novel, in the sense that she expresses its underlined ambiguity, echoing the feelings of confusion associated with the *fin de siècle*. She offers stability by organizing the characters' thoughts and texts – thus offering temporal linearity and normativity – yet she also destabilizes the situation by displaying mixed allegiances, both to the Crew of Light and to Count Dracula, after his bite renders her a half-vampire. Mina “is a double agent. Her friends know this; she knows it, too, and knows that they know; they know that she knows that they know” (Acocella 2009). This sentence, although meant to be humorous, underlines the ambivalence and perplexity of the situation. Dr. Seward fears that Mina’s ambiguous behavior can be explained by “some of the horrid poison which has got into her veins”, adding with horror that “there is a terrible difficulty – an *unknown* danger – in the work before [them]. The same power that compels her silence may compel her speech” (*D* 343; my emphasis). Later on, after Van Helsing has been consulted, he concurs and recognizes the danger as well as its extent, saying “[o]ur task is now in reality more difficult than ever” (*D* 343). It becomes evident from their words that the ambiguity surrounding Mina’s status and allegiance is a source of greater fear than Dracula himself. In a Todorovian framework, it is precisely the uncertainty that assigns the Gothic its true affective power. Mina’s *potential* vampire nature appears as more problematic than a clearly supernatural, full-fledged manifestation.

In the New Woman debate, Mina also stands in the very middle as her personality includes elements “both of the assertive New Woman, but also of the compliantly feminine one. In trance, she is made to yield to the Count’s influence, yet also to resist it” (Hindle 2003, xxxv). Paired with her unspeakable thoughts that Count Dracula should be pitied, Mina becomes the very focal point of the novel’s puzzlement, as well as the bearer of the ending’s (un)dead end. There is not a real beginning and not a real end; only an incessant cycle of repetition, matching the modernist ideas the novel hints at. Besides the great enigma posed by Jonathan and Mina’s child – a sign of a vampiric future? – the ending contains more puzzling elements.

Mina, crucial in arranging and editing every text and every thought, indeed accounting for the linear temporality of the novel, is “unusually mute” and silently witnesses her husband “[pronouncing] as useless everything that [she] and her

cohort have constructed” (Smart and Hutcheson 2007, 11). Since typing was a task associated with women, and perhaps a New Woman such as those criticized earlier in the text, Jonathan’s words are “a criticism of both Mina and her spatial orienteering” (Smart and Hutcheson 2007, 11). Mina’s hypnotic gift temporarily renders her a partner equal to the rest, and perhaps this very fact, namely that she is needed and she is active once more, allows her “to lose sight of her trouble for whole spells” (*D* 342). This phrase revolves around the temporal motif on two levels, both directly, implying the loss of sense of time, and indirectly, in connection to memory. There is, however, one additional detail, namely the word “spell”. Although in this specific instance it refers to time, unavoidably it also connotes witchcraft; both meanings have been present in the novel by this point. The word is repeated not much later, when Jonathan refers to Mina’s “long spell of silence” (*D* 348), as much as in Dr. Seward’s diary entry of 11 October, when he mentions once more Mina’s “spell of warning silence” (*D* 350). Witchcraft hints at paganism as well as femininity, and in particular at the dangerous kind of independent, uncontrolled, “New Woman” femininity that threatens the masculine status quo. It comes as no surprise that Mina is muted once more by the men of the group, who decide to keep her in the dark, agreeing that she must “be simply guarded” by them (*D* 344). In many ways, Mina seems to verify the Marxist thesis describing a worker alienated from her product – her edited and organized manuscript. Her work appropriated, she is reduced to an object. This essentially hits the last nail in the coffin of narrative authenticity and underlines the fact that the apparently wrapped up conclusion, the traditional Gothic romance, is merely an illusion. Besides the question of whether Mina’s child is a vampire, there is no concrete proof that Mina is not a dormant one, either. Similarly, there is no hard evidence that Dracula is certainly dead, since Van Helsing himself had earlier claimed that killing a vampire is a very complicated task. In the end, this last note creates more questions than the ones it attempts to answer, placing the entire text and its authenticity in doubt, inviting “a revised reading ... that moves beyond the temporal conventions that have been sampled and rejected in the novel” (Smart and Hutcheson 2007, 11).

Ultimately, the text makes use of the temporal motif to engage in the discourse, by resorting once more to metatextual, indirect temporal distortion; it reverses the linearity of time by undoing Mina’s editing work, and renders itself open to doubt about its authenticity – a literary device that is also used in *Frankenstein* and *A Christmas Carol*. That its linear temporality is the work of a woman, perhaps even a New Woman, is puzzling considering the clear associations between women and

cyclical time. Murphy argues that in the nineteenth century there was a clear dichotomy between a male linear time that signified progress and civilization, and a female cyclical time that represented “stasis, chaos, and anachronism” (2001, 24). West-Pavlov also adds that “[t]he linearity of public action vanquishes the ‘non-linear’ (i.e. unpredictable) generativity of child-bearing” (2013, 101). In *Dracula*, however, the apotheosis of irony is that, in many ways, it is the actions of a man that cause the cyclical regression of the text: Jonathan Harker, with his final note, assures that the ending is unclear. This is both because of the ambiguity the note creates regarding the child, as well as with its referring to matters of authenticity that effectively create a direct linkage with the preface. Still, a clear categorization and neat association with either a linear or a cyclical temporal model is far from possible for the novel which stands squarely between two temporal worlds, the Victorian and the modern. Mina is both pristinely Victorian and a New Woman, displaying both obedience and initiative. Her allegiance is both to the strictly Victorian Crew of Light and the timeless, indeed the modern Count Dracula. By receiving Dracula’s blood, Mina also receives part of his timeless essence, and as a result expresses the ambiguity and self-contradiction characteristic of the time. The text offers a vision of the New Woman that is ambivalent. On the one hand, Mina matches or surpasses even Van Helsing in initiative and intellect, yet on the other, there is always an aura of anxiousness that stands as “[a] warning that the ‘professional’ woman armed by modern technology is necessarily evil” (Yu 2006, 159).

Female characters in the Gothic have always been a focal point for critics.²⁸ Many elements indeed point to ways of reading that justify such an outlook, such as existential anxieties, transgression of taboos (whether sexual or social), with women being victimized in the course of a plot that, largely, happens not because of them but despite them. Punter and Byron further argue that women in Gothic novels become “representations of the barriers between inside and outside that are to be broached by the transgressive male” (2004, 278). The term *Female Gothic* has been coined to indicate Gothic works that ostensibly transcend the stereotypes, by focusing on the heroine instead. As Punter and Byron correctly underline, however, such an attempt at theorizing a Female Gothic is lacking, at best. Although after the 1960s the Female Gothic was approached as a mode that was subversive, aiming to express “women’s fears and fantasies, their protests against the conditions of patriarchy” (Punter and Byron 2004, 280), there is a question

²⁸ See Fleenor 1983, and Wallace and Smith 2009.

mark as to whether such an emancipation actually occurs – or is implied at all. A happy outcome for the Gothic heroine is one where she is married and reintegrated into society.

Even in *Dracula*, Mina successfully returns to Jonathan to become a good wife according to Victorian expectations, despite having been bitten by a vampire.²⁹ In the end, there is something ironic about such a reintegration, as it “appears to reinforce precisely the domestic ideology which, throughout the narrative, is suggested to be the cause of all [the heroine’s] problems and sufferings” (Punter and Byron 2004, 281). In this paradox, a temporal theoretical foundation is worth taking into consideration. What is described is essentially a temporal conflict; a cyclical timing model that ultimately becomes an ideological trap for the Gothic heroine. By the end of the novel – which, as I explained, is far from a real conclusion – Mina finds herself back at a point where neither the masculine linear nor the feminine cyclical temporal model is a satisfactory description of her condition, let alone a viable resolution. What is sought is something else, something that can untie the dialectical knot without slashing it.

Women in *Frankenstein* and *A Christmas Carol*, as I have already mentioned, are entirely secondary – at least on the top, textual level – but even in *Dracula*, there does not seem to be a way out for Mina. Beginning from being a proper Victorian woman, she temporarily entertains thoughts that “should have shocked the ‘New Woman’” (D 99), only to return to the normative domestic life. Her brief adventure as a tourist in the land of emancipation is very short-lived. Worse still, it is implied that such a lifestyle entails fatal or near-fatal consequences, and the moralistic promotion of fear as a control method can certainly qualify as a patriarchal device. Eventually, there are only two ways out of this temporal and ideological repetition. The one is implied by the open ending of the novel, which promotes the suggestion that enlightenment and transcendence can only be a holistic process where all existing views, including conflicting ones, can be fused into producing something new. The other way out of the stalemate is death, which is what liberates Lucy. It is fitting for the situation that Lucy’s death occurs in a highly sexualized manner, in a scene Elaine Showalter describes as akin to a gang-rape with an “impressive phallic instrument” (1992, 181), namely the stake which Arthur, Lucy’s fiancé, strikes into her body “with all his might”, penetrating

²⁹ In Coppola’s film, Mina snubs Jonathan and the return to Victorian society, and remains with Dracula, her dying vampire lover. It is important to recall, however, that also Stoker’s novel possesses a very ambiguous ending, which should be considered far from settled.

“deeper and deeper”, as the men around him observe in voyeuristic pleasure (*D* 230).

Sexuality in *Dracula* is as problematic as it is in *Frankenstein*, as both texts share an element of horror that is entirely absent in *A Christmas Carol*: that of miscegenation. Victor’s dream of “a new species [that] would bless [him] as its creator and source” (*F* 43) quickly turns into the nightmare that forces him to destroy the creature’s female companion, out of fear that they would reproduce. This dread reaches its apogee in *Dracula*, where Jonathan fears that Dracula’s coming to London will create “a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless” (*D* 60). As I will demonstrate in the next section, the Gothic often pairs issues of ethnic otherness with temporal distortion.

5.2 Ethnicity, “Race”, and Religion

As I have demonstrated so far, Gothic temporal expressions can be reliably placed in a framework of division and conflict, with a plethora of elements appearing as polar opposites. Victor Frankenstein’s macabre, horrific deeds are carried out during the night, and his obsession means the cyclical rhythm of nature passes him by unnoticed. Similarly in *Dracula*, there are distinct spatio-temporal separations, as the spaces and time of the undead are portrayed as clearly divergent – and deviant, at least apparently. Matters of ethnic, “racial”, or religious othering in the Gothic are also subject to a process of temporal dichotomizing that often signals the presence of the Other.

Criticism has established a rather well-argued connection between the Gothic and aspects of ethnicity, through the prism of postcolonial assessment. I will repeat here Brantlinger’s definition of the Imperial Gothic as a mode that “combines the seemingly scientific, progressive, often Darwinian ideology of imperialism with an *antithetical* interest in the occult” (1988, 227; my emphasis). What Brantlinger’s definition explicitly refers to is yet another conflicting coexistence. Although it begins as a dichotomy, it eventually merges into a single component. It should also be underlined that there is a temporal element in this synthesis, as the scientific progress signifies the future – at least from the Victorian perspective – while the occult is a clear marker of the past, particularly in the *fin de siècle*. The Imperial Gothic is characterized by three major themes: regression, or devolution; invasion of the civilized modern world by barbaric or even demonic forces; the decline of

heroism and the lack of opportunities for exploration and adventure. (Brantlinger 1988, 230). Discourses of postcoloniality can often include Gothic associations, as they imply alternative futures and haunting pasts, as much as the uncanny feeling of “what ifs”, or what I referred to in the beginning of the third chapter as the discourse of doubt. As Punter and Byron argue, the term itself reveals these connotations:

[T]he term ‘postcolonial’ itself has an inevitably distorting effect. In one sense this can be seen as unavoidable in that the postcolonial world is itself distorted ... in deeper senses, to do with obfuscation of desire, impossible hybridities, the haunting ineradicability of paths not taken. The cultures and histories of colonized nations are shadowed by the fantasized possibility of alternative histories, the sense of what might have been. (2004, 54)

It is essential to discern an important element in this theoretical approach: the idea of synthesis from incongruence, the “impossible hybridities”. This term is reminiscent not only of Frankenstein’s creation, but also of Mina’s child, which is potentially a human/vampire hybrid. The apparent impossibility of the synthesized hybridity is an important element of subconscious anxiety: it is the despair produced by the realization that neither a current state nor its conflicting alternatives can satisfactorily explain the human condition. In all effect, the hybrid should be referred to as a grotesque creation (see 3.2) with the reminder that any incongruence and subsequent anxiety is seen as such only outside the grotesque system.

The impossible hybridity in *Frankenstein* is made explicit. However, beneath the character of the monster, which is a pastiche not unlike the text itself, exist a number of implications in regard to the ethnic Other. That the creature is *not* made in his creator’s image is made clear by Victor, who seems eager to disassociate himself from his creation the moment it becomes alive. He refers to its “dull yellow eye” and its “yellow skin” that shape a malformed pair with its “lustrous black” hair and its “teeth of pearly whiteness” (*F* 45). After Victor falls asleep, horrified by his creation, he awakens to see the creature in “the dim and yellow light of the moon” (*F* 46). This is an interesting association, as the close proximity of the descriptions of monster and moon, both matching in color, seems to imply a certain connection of the deformed creature with nature. There is also a temporal connection of the creature with nighttime, which is perhaps to be expected, since Victor did acquire all the gruesome materials for the creature during the night, with the moon shining on his “midnight labours” (*F* 43) – yet another connection between the creature and the moon. A subtle but certainly present allusion is also the one to the creature’s moral sense: that the creature is associated with the night

and darkness (also metaphorically), is because of the raw material used, as much as the *modus operandi* of his creator. This is one of the key concepts in the novel, namely that the creature's code of ethics is but a reflection of the way he is created and subsequently treated.

It is also interesting to note that, as the moon symbolically refers to femininity, the creature is othered on yet another layer, as there is a clear suggestion he is not a real man. In fact, in postcolonial readings, the Orient is often seen as feminine, weak, and sentimental (Said 1978, 138; 182; 206; 220). What is particularly striking, is that such an assumption is explicitly present in *Frankenstein*: Victor, talking about Clerval's studies of oriental languages, mentions how he did not have "any other use of them than temporary amusement", adding that he preferred the "*manly* and heroic poetry of Greece and Rome" (F 54; my emphasis). It becomes obvious throughout the novel that the creature should not be allowed to achieve the status of a complete man by obtaining the ability to procreate through a mate. This is of course an anxiety that is temporal in nature. What is at stake here is the future, when perhaps "a new species would bless [Victor] as its creator and source" (F 43).

After the creature comes alive, Victor witnesses the malformed being opening his mouth and "mutter[ing] some inarticulate sounds" (F 46), which is one more sign of otherness, and perhaps this inability to communicate in Victor's own language becomes the most striking example of ethnic differentiation. In fact, the reader is told at an earlier stage that the creature is most certainly an ethnic Other, as Walton, in a letter to his sister, describes having seen this strange figure. Later, when his crew rescues the stranded Dr. Frankenstein, Walton clearly says that Victor "was not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but an European" (F 21). Anne K. Mellor places significant emphasis on Mary Shelley's acquaintance of William Lawrence, Professor of Anatomy and Surgery at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London, who was a strictly materialist scientist, believing in distinct human races, to which, crucially, he assigned "specific *moral characteristics*" (Mellor 2001, 8; emphasis in the original). According to Lawrence's beliefs, Mary Shelley would have conceived the creature, as Mellor suggests, as someone belonging to the Asian or Mongol race (2001, 9). Ultimately, establishing the creature's origin is a rather secondary matter. What remains important and is very explicitly established in the text is that Victor's creation is seen as an ethnic Other.

Mellor does put forward another argument, claiming that Mary Shelley's motive of portraying the creature as such was not to contribute to the racial stereotyping of the time, but rather the exact opposite: to "[encode] in her novel a possible

solution to racial stereotyping and racial hatred” (Mellor 2001, 22; emphasis in the original). What Mellor seems to suggest is hybridity. In Hegelian terms, there is an allusion to synthesis through oppositions and conflicts, through thesis and antithesis. Whether such a process could be fruitful or the hybridity would be an impossible one, remains a well-kept Gothic secret, as the ambiguous, unclear ending of *Frankenstein* emphasizes the difficulty of assessing the hybrid synthesis. According to Brown, the open-endedness of *Frankenstein* produces an unsettling result in terms of meaning (2005, 185). Ultimately, much as in *The Last Man*, there is no single objective truth to this matter. Like Verney, Victor also appears unhappy and disillusioned with the result, unable to accept it, and unwilling to fully acknowledge his own shortcomings. From the creature’s perspective, however, it was not so much an inherent failure of the process itself, but of the ensuing circumstances:

I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned. Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all humankind sinned against me? Why do you not hate Felix, who drove his friend from his door with contumely? Why do you not execrate the rustic who sought to destroy the saviour of his child? Nay, these are virtuous and immaculate beings! I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on. Even now my blood boils at the recollection of this injustice. (F 169)

It is an argument most readers would find hard to deflect. The implication of the creature’s words is that, had he been treated differently, he would have also been a different creature. The text of *Frankenstein* explicitly underlines the consequences of othering and of forming assumptions about “specific moral characteristics” according to one’s ethnic background.

In such a context, replete with moral dilemmas and dichotomies based on otherness, it is perhaps not surprising to discover a multitude of religiously charged temporal dichotomies. Punter and Byron argue that Victor, although a modern Prometheus (as the subtitle of the novel underlines), lives in “a notably secular world with no gods against whom to rebel, and ... his search is conceived of in scientific terms” (2004, 199). Although, strictly speaking, the novel does indeed describe a secular world in a scientific context, this description is somewhat misleading. In terms of patriarchal structures and authority, Victor most certainly rebels against “religion”, which is what the existing scientific paradigm in many ways was in the Romantic period. As *Frankenstein* is a novel in which creation is a central theme, religious allusions could not be expected to be absent. This is made explicit already at the very beginning of the text. The presence of a religious register, with the words “heaven” and “Paradise” is repeated several times in the

three pages of the letter, while one should not overlook the fact that the novel begins with a quotation from *Paradise Lost*: “Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay/ To mould Me man? Did I solicit thee/ From darkness to promote me?” (*Paradise Lost*, X, 743–45. Qtd. in *F* 11). In a novel replete with dichotomies, the word “darkness” should be examined in connection with the phrase “eternal light” on the following page. The implication is between a temporal as well as moral conflict. It is also important to note that the novel ends with the words “lost in darkness and distance” (*F* 170) – a rather ominous conclusion, containing the possibility of relapse and return to an initial point. Adding to that, Walton refers to himself as a poet/creator (*F* 14), which is a parallel to Victor being also a creator and, as he would probably think himself, an “artist” kind of scientist, that is, a pioneer inventor. The first seeds of metatextual awareness are sown, subtly but clearly, as there is a direct association between writing and creating. In the context of the novel, this facilitates the generation of certain implications in regard to textual production. After all, the entire novel is based on non-objective viewpoints and textual arrangements. To this I will return in section 6.3.

Compared to *Frankenstein* and its numerous religious allusions, *A Christmas Carol* is remarkably secular. Even the central idea of Christmas does not receive a great deal of explicit religious attention, and this fact accentuates those few religious overtones that are present. Such an example is the point when Scrooge meets the second Ghost, that of Christmas Present. As the old man, uncertain and wary, enters the room from which the Phantom called, he is faced with yet another Gothic transformation of space:

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove; from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened ... Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty’s horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

“Come in!” exclaimed the Ghost. “Come in! and know me better, man!” (*CC* 39)
This banquet prepared by the Ghost of Christmas Present bears a remarkable resemblance to the one Satan offers to Jesus in Milton’s *Paradise Regained*. There,

Jesus awakes from his sleep at night and sees “a pleasant Grove” (*Paradise Regained*, Book II, 289),³⁰ where Satan appears and joyfully offers him food:

Our Saviour lifting up his eyes beheld
In ample space under the broadest shade
A Table richly spread, in regal mode,
With dishes pil'd, and meats of noblest sort
And savour, Beasts of chase, or Fowl of game,
In pastry built, or from the spit, or boyl'd,
Gris-amber-steam'd; all Fish from Sea or Shore,
Freshet, or purling Brook, of shell or fin,
And exquisitest name, for which was drain'd

Pontus and Lucrine Bay, and Afric Coast. (*Paradise Regained*, Book II, 338–347)

Although in Scrooge's case the banquet is but props, essentially a visual trick, it still possesses the same function in more general terms. *A Christmas Carol* is a story of transformation, and particularly of persuasion to transform one's self. In Dickens's text, morphing, shape-shifting, and transformation are the key parts that drive the plot forward. People, time, and space, all continually change in a rather characteristic Gothic manner, a fact that severely undermines the foundations of objective reality, as I will analyze in more detail in chapter 6.

Although explicit discussions about religion are mostly absent from *A Christmas Carol*, the text still creates a framework of otherness based on Scrooge's background and, in particular, his possible Jewishness. His occupation as a moneylender and the fact that he does not celebrate Christmas would have been obvious characteristic markers of Jewish origins for that time. Such stereotypes were not uncommon in Dickens's works at large. In *Oliver Twist*, the character of Fagin is referred to as “the Jew” almost three hundred times and the novel abounds in descriptions “that directly link him to Judas Iscariot and even Satan” (Muller 2003, xxvii), with connotations of the classic depiction of the Wandering Jew also present (Felsenstein 1995, 241).

³⁰ It should be pointed out that in that scene of *Paradise Regained*, much like in *A Christmas Carol*, the motif of dream versus reality is also present. Jesus is having dreams of banquets before the “actual” banquet appears before him.

The process of shifting from a racially motivated wariness – if not outright hostility – to an absolution has been suggested to exist within Dickens’s works, although not without controversy, as Grossman argues:

[T]his understanding of Dickens’ Jews elides how Dickens’ *narrators* engage the problem of narrating this racial and religious other. This elision has most obviously resulted in an institutionalized disregard for Dickens’ final 1867 revision of *Oliver Twist*, in which he only selectively deleted the term “the Jew”. (1996, 37; emphasis in the original)

The intriguing aspect of *A Christmas Carol* in regard to depictions of Jewishness is of course the fact that Scrooge is never explicitly referred to as Jewish although, as mentioned, his occupation as a moneylender and his refraining from celebrating Christmas strongly suggest it. More tellingly, not only does he not celebrate Christmas being an old misanthrope, but he tells the Ghost of Christmas Present he has never seen him or his “brothers” ever before (CC 40), implying he has *never* celebrated Christmas, even as a child. That would certainly be sense-making if Scrooge is of Jewish origin. Even his first name, Ebenezer, certainly alludes to Jewish origins – as does the first name of his deceased business partner, Jacob Marley (Grossman 1996, 50).

At the same time, the description of Scrooge is also quite telling. He was “[h]ard and sharp as flint”, as “[t]he cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red” (CC 8). In many ways, Scrooge is presented as a true Gothic monster, not only in terms of appearance but also temporally: a true undead, believed to be quasi-immortal (CC 59), a character that “frightened every one away from him” (CC 64). More broadly, Scrooge is presented as clearly an Other as he could possibly be, and this includes temporal elements. The fact that he does not celebrate Christmas holds temporal implications, as he places himself outside the cultural markings of time and the calendar – to the point that “no children asked him what it was o’ clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place” (CC 8). Scrooge is outside space-time, both culturally – that is, in terms of the Victorian Christian context – and, in the course of the story, also literally.

Characteristic is the scene between Scrooge and his nephew, after the former rejects the latter’s invitation to Christmas dinner. When his nephew asks Scrooge why he does not want to join him and his wife for dinner, the old miser replies with a question of his own: “Why did you get married?”. The young man’s reply comes naturally: “Because I fell in love”, which makes Scrooge grumpier still, “as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas” (CC 10–11). However, as Grossman argues, the exchange makes sense considering

Scrooge's possible Jewish origins. If Scrooge is indeed Jewish, then his nephew is also Jewish. For Scrooge, if his nephew celebrates Christmas, that is a consequence of his marrying a Christian woman (Grossman 1996, 50). For the old miser, however, the problem is not ethnic or religious. Rather, his is an issue of spatio-temporal inexistence.

Scrooge is all but completely isolated from society, and this lack of time and space reference becomes literally materialized – a rather typically Gothic device. After all, Scrooge's isolation does not end in the deceptively jolly ending of the story. As Grossman argues, the only thing that has ultimately changed is Scrooge's mood shifting; “depressive in the beginning, he is manic in the end”, and his peculiar jokes are still not a product of his desire to amuse others, but only himself:

His jokes, articulating the uneasy space between himself and society, reflect in their nervous releases how Scrooge's isolation from the novel's community is unbridgeable and, perhaps, partly unwritten. Perhaps because the possibility of Scrooge's Jewishness troubles, but never enters, the narrator's discourse, the narrative cannot fully resolve Scrooge's predicament. (Grossman 1996, 51)

Even Scrooge's obsession of identifying time with money, which is arguably the root of his problems and the central issue of the entire plot, does not seem to be resolved in an unambiguous way at the end. In particular, when the supposedly reformed Scrooge talks to the boy in the street, he says: “Come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes and I'll give you half-a-crown!” (CC 72) apparently “still indexing money to time in sound capitalist fashion” (Downes 2013, 25). Hence, the ending of *A Christmas Carol* cannot be fully taken as a true transformation. In temporal terms and in the context of Judaic cultural tradition, the birth of a new idea is not temporally placed in the future or the present in the sense most (Christian) Victorians would define it, but rather in “a radical reinterpretation of the past, which was not so much taken as past, but rather as part of the ever-living, redeemable present” (Hansen 2009, 114).

In some ways, Hansen's formulation is Hegelian in its constituents: unlike the mainstream, linear Victorian time, what Hansen describes is a process of synthesis. The past (thesis) is not discarded in favor of the future (antithesis) but is rather placed in a framework of doubt and reinterpretation. It is finally incorporated into the new form (synthesis; the new thesis) that, crucially, is materialized through what Hansen refers to as the ever-living present. In the context of *A Christmas Carol*, this eternal now is distinctly transcendental, almost spiritual. Scrooge's is a story of ostensible transformation, and the old man, panicked at the prospect of his future demise, is quick to pledge that he “will live in the Past, the Present, and

the Future” (CC 70), certainly an explicit way of describing an all-inclusive eternal present.³¹ However, the ending of the story is ambiguous. Much as in *Frankenstein*, it is impossible to establish an objective assessment of the hybrid synthesis. At the conclusion of the story, Scrooge seems to be attempting a reinterpretation, but the process appears at best incomplete and at worst doomed to failure, as the genuineness of his transformation is questioned.

Ethnic, “racial”, and religious overtones and tensions are well underlined in *Dracula* as well. As in *Frankenstein*, many of them revolve around the concepts of creation and are expressed through temporal distortions and dichotomies. In particular, the cyclical, non-linear time scheme that dominates the world of *Dracula*, creates an immediate allusion to opposing religious views on temporality, that is, pagan versus Christian.³² The novel makes no effort to hide this tendency to present the narrative as a whole and the Count in particular as an opposition to Christianity. Jacques Coulardeau argues that “Dracula [is] the heir of an older tradition than Christianity, that is to say paganism ... Older religions are centered on a cult to nature: the night and the day, as well as the earth, the sun, and the moon” (2007, 130), while Norma Rowen adds that the inverted Christian imagery in *Dracula* essentially renders the Count an antichrist, with Renfield’s phrase “the blood is the life” a parody of the Eucharist (1997, 241). Furthermore, by calling Mina his “bountiful wine-press” (D 306), *Dracula* introduces a metaphor often argued to carry religious connotations. The reason is due to the fact that wine is part of the Eucharist (Kreitzer 1999, 125), but also because of the allusion to Genesis, with Mina’s vampiric baptism becoming a parody of the creation of Eve (Loughlin 2004, 204).

In the third part of the novel, Mina, in a hypnotic trance, reveals enough details for the men to pursue *Dracula* back to Transylvania. They discover that the ship carrying *Dracula* back is called “Czarina Catherine” (D 337). Perhaps it would be tempting to read this solely as an allusion to the historical person after which the ship was named and thus as a hint at promiscuity, a threat evidently connected with Mina. Considering however that the novel refers to yet another ship, namely “Demeter”, the ship with which *Dracula* arrives in England, I argue that the two should be read as a pair. Rarignac makes such a comparison between the ancient Greek goddess Demeter and the Russian empress underlying the parallel:

³¹ For a connection between *A Christmas Carol* and Dante’s *Divine Comedy* – particularly in connection with a Divinely-mediated eternal now – see Bertman 2007, 168.

³² See section 3.1.

Mythical torch-bearing “Demeter” brings light to the world through her role in the Eleusinian Mysteries; Catherine the Great, native Pomeranian who was christened Sophie by her Lutheran parents, became known as the Enlightener or Illuminator, and brought Russian dominance and the spark of the Orthodox faith to the Black Sea region through her victories over the Ottoman Turks ... Voltaire celebrated the empress as “the Star of the North,” the immutable, thereby aligning her with Mina and contrasting her with the Count as Lucifer and the morning star – visible only at dawn and dusk. “The Czarina Catherine” is fittingly named for a vessel intended to transport a gnostic quest towards its ultimate ends: Wisdom and Purity. (Rarignac 2012, 167)

There is merit in such a reading. However, I argue that yet another comparison can be made, one focusing on Count Dracula, if the ships are examined in connection with the original bearers of their respective names, the ancient Greek goddess Demeter and Saint Catherine of Alexandria. The former is connected with time and the cycle of the seasons in particular, but also with paganism, as she can be seen as “the pagan Mother Earth” (Andriano 1993, 111). The latter, on the other hand, was raised a pagan but converted to Christianity before meeting her martyr’s death in the form of beheading (Alchin 2015). As a result, Count Dracula arrives in England aboard a ship named after a pagan goddess and is forced to retreat aboard one named after a converted pagan who became a martyr, and thus implicitly reached God after she was beheaded, much as the beheading of Lucy led to her absolution. The pagan-Christian dichotomy is repeated often throughout the novel, also in regard to temporality and the split between cyclical and linear time. This individual occasion is quite significant, however, not only because it alludes to linearity (and Christianity) apparently vanquishing cyclicity (and paganism), but also because the ship names foreshadow the future and Dracula’s ostensible demise. Of course, such an outcome also implies that Dracula will find peace.

Besides this tension (also temporal) between Christianity and paganism, *Dracula* also displays another similar split that again possesses temporal undertones; namely, several references the text makes to Dracula’s possible Semitic origin. As Jonathan describes the Count, the very first thing he observes is that his face was “aquiline” (*D* 24), a description that alludes to Semitic origin (Davison 2004, 135). Furthermore, he has a “pointed beard” (*D* 148), traditionally associated with the Devil as much as the Jews (Davison 2004, 135). An additional detail is the Count’s characteristic odor (*D* 25), “similar to the *foetor judaicus* long attributed to the Jews” (Davison 2004, 135). Furthermore, it is important to notice the similarities in terms of description between Count Dracula and Ebenezer Scrooge. They both have red eyes, neither is affected by the elements, and they both are connected one way or another with money – Scrooge is a moneylender, while Count Dracula is an

international investor of sorts. Dracula's implied Jewish origins also underline a remarkable temporal dichotomy, as for Judaism "thinking about the past relied on an ontology of the incomplete, a dialectic of fragmented, concealed, and accumulated histories that ran antithetical to the Catholic calendar and its ontology of linear time" (Hansen 2009, 113).

The Gothic has had a tradition of depicting Jewishness in particular, akin to mythological ways, long before *Dracula*. The figure of the Wandering Jew – itself including significant connections to distorted temporality – precedes *Dracula* by many centuries, not only in folklore but also in literature, as Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Pardoner's Tale", from *The Canterbury Tales*, could allude to the Wandering Jew. C.R. Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), perhaps the most characteristic Gothic treatment of the figure, was written almost eight decades before *Dracula*. According to Davison (2004, 122), anti-Semitic stereotypes and cultural concerns, particularly in connection with the Jews' assimilation into British society, remained a pertinent theme throughout the nineteenth century. Particularly after the 1870s, Jews were seen with increased skepticism, as their allegiance to the Empire was questioned, and their image had become synonymous with the Gothic monster. Gothic tropes were consistently implemented to refer to Jews, as "in popular parlance generally, unscrupulous company promoters and (often Jewish) stock-jobbers were 'vampires', 'bloodsuckers', 'wolves', and 'vultures'" (Malchow 1996, 160), underlining the Jews' position as Others. At this point it is important to recall that *Dracula* was written in the apogee of the British age of empire, and hence heavily influenced by the relevant anxieties of the *fin de siècle*. Fears related to degeneration, temporal reversal, foreign invasion and corruption of the British core, play a very important part in Stoker's novel. Although *Dracula* is perhaps not as a typical example of Imperial Gothic as, for instance, Haggard's *She*, it is still paradigmatic of how these fears are projected on an Other. The age of empires effectively facilitates the creation of the age of *vampires*.

The text very soon places the foundation of a spatio-temporal dichotomy between accurate Occidental time and inaccurate Oriental one, as Jonathan notes that "the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains" (*D* 8). Later on, when Jonathan meets Count Dracula, the innuendos that suggest a temporal split between the British and the Other continue. Jonathan notes how Count Dracula enjoyed talking, "if only for talking's sake" (*D* 28), an observation that seems in accord with the contemporary notion that the British do not enjoy small talk.³³

³³ As a newspaper article of the time reports: "The English are essentially a business people. Time is of the essence of all their contracts ... We are not a people who enjoy a great wealth of small talk"

Apart from the realization that Count Dracula might be Jewish, another issue is also the presence of Dracula's allies: the Szgany gypsies, who further augment the effect and underline the fear surrounding the British identity crisis of the *fin de siècle* (see section 2.2). Indeed, Jews and gypsies seemed in late-Victorian eyes to represent a similar kind of otherness. Both Jews and gypsies followed their own cultural laws rather than the civil laws of the British Empire, both were diasporic, and both were seen as suspicious, posing a threat to British national identity (Lyon 2004, 527). Furthermore, the gypsies were considered to be changeless and ahistorical, essentially living relics "of the rural, pre-modern world" (Lyon 2004, 518). Regarding their temporal essence, both Jews and gypsies seem to share the same kind of expressive power, rendered as such by the modernist forces of an Empire seeking a subconscious absolution from the guilty past. In particular, it is important to note that the gypsy, much like the Jew, represents an incongruous element in modern society. Yet, ironically enough, at the same time they both participate as inadvertent role players in the characteristically modern discourse of colonization. As Katie Trumpener argues reading Sir Walter Scott's 1815 *Guy Mannering*, the gypsy appears as a symbol of "both the traditional and the colonial unconscious of an industrializing, imperialist Europe – the trace memory of the traumatic cost of improvement and expansion" (1992, 868). It is important to notice that in *Dracula*, the one member of the Crew of Light that is killed during the pursuit of the Count is Quincey Morris, an American, hence alluding to British Colonialism, and he is killed by a gypsy.³⁴ The figure of the gypsy, much like the figure of the Jew, becomes a trope that functions as a cultural and temporal distorter, yet at the same time, also as "an operative element" of modernist literature, with a plethora of characteristically modernist expressions, such as the gypsy fortune-telling, the Bohemian salon, the gypsy ideas of free verse, free dance, free love, and others (Lyon 2004, 519).

The peculiar temporality of Jews and gypsies, signifying both the old and the contemporary, is an apt marker of contemporary Victorian worries. For the *fin de siècle* this meant that "Britain ... continued to displace its anxieties about its tendencies by projecting them onto a Jewish doppelganger" (Davison 2004, 124). The dual, conflictive temporal scheme surrounding the Jews and the gypsies,

(*Daily News* 1886). A problematic parallel emerges later on, when Mina suggests that the old men she encounters in Whitby "seem to do nothing all day but sit up here and talk" (*D* 72). Perhaps a warning sign of the impending doom that would befall the town, although it could also be related to aspects of class, age, and occupation.

³⁴ In 5.3. I will also refer to an argument linking the death of Quincey Morris with capitalist competition.

expressing both the ancient and the modern, is channeled through the figure of Dracula, “both an ancient figure and our perfect contemporary” (Godfrey et al. 2004, 34). Count Dracula is associated to Jews and gypsies alike, as I have demonstrated. For the British public, he represents a “subtle ‘invasion’ of displaced European Jewry” (Hughes 2003, 91), but he is also connected with a more general sense of abstract nervousness related to the Empire’s past, present, and future:

Dracula enacts the period’s most important and pervasive narrative of decline, a narrative of reverse colonization. Versions of this story recur with remarkable frequency in both fiction and nonfiction texts throughout the last decades of the century. In whatever guise, this narrative expresses both fear and guilt (Arata 1990, 623).

The conclusion of *Dracula*, if it can be called one, promises an apparent return to the status quo, assuring the continuation of the British national identity. Nevertheless, although “good old-fashioned ‘family values’ monogamy and honest ‘Christian’ capitalism” seem to prevail, the enigma posed by Mina and Jonathan’s child, and the fact that it perpetuates Count Dracula’s essence, presents queries pertinent to the role of Britain “as a vampire empire” (Davison 2004, 157). Furthermore, deep within the structure of *Dracula*, there is an allusion related to a synthesized future that offers an alternative solution to the predicament. This becomes evident if one divides the novel into its three most important acts, in terms of narrative motivation and mechanisms that drive the plot forward.

These three acts are: the opening of the novel, with Jonathan becoming a prisoner in Dracula’s castle; Count Dracula’s attack on Mina; and finally, Mina’s hypnotism and the chase back to Transylvania. I argue that these three acts become temporal metaphors, signifying, respectively, the past, the present, and an all-inclusive synthesized future. The most pivotal scene of the first part is Jonathan Harker’s encounter with the three female vampires, whom he meets after secretly visiting the forbidden rooms of Count Dracula’s castle. These three undead women are not only Jonathan’s essential initiation into the true nature of Dracula, but also the reader’s initiation into the hidden facets of the text.

Upon seeing the three women, Jonathan notices three things: firstly, that they were “ladies, by their dress and manner” (*D* 44), a fact that elevates them to the same aristocratic class as Dracula, unlike Jonathan who expresses the normative middle class; secondly, that they share Dracula’s supernatural connection with light and vision, as “they threw no shadow on the floor” (*D* 44); thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, that “[t]wo were dark, and had high aquiline noses, like the Count” while the third was “fair, as fair as can be” (*D* 44). Not only does the text allude to a possible Semitic origin of Dracula and the two vampires, but by placing

a fair woman next to them, it creates an aura of fear that such a “condition” is contagious – whether being a Jew or a vampire, there is little distinction, as they are both perceived as threats to the Englishness Jonathan represents. Jonathan insists that the fair woman’s face is familiar to him, “in connection with some dreamy fear”, but he cannot remember from where (*D* 45). The familiarity of the woman, besides being another hint that she is perhaps English, and the fact that Jonathan cannot remember – a dominant theme in *Dracula* – can be connected to the presence of repressed memories.

Many critics argue that the fair one represents a motherly figure. Phyllis Roth states that “the face is that of the mother ... she whom he desires yet fears” (2001, 473), while Joseph Andriano adds that she is “an image of the anima with the mother archetype still attached” (1993, 110). Laurence Rickels, instead, acknowledges the Freudian interpretation of seeing the fair woman as the mother, but calls this a “weird logic” and prefers a more metaphorical approach, connecting the fair-haired vampire with the issue of recognition and identification, and underlining the importance of the fair hair – with dark versus light color being a recurring element in the text (1999, 46). I argue that following a more metaphorical and less literal approach is more productive, and I read the scene as one where the figure of the mother stands as a metaphor of Mother England. Ken Gelder adds that Jonathan's “recognition of the fair-haired vampire ... amounts to *self*-recognition” (1994, 74; emphasis in the original).

The “dreamy fear” Jonathan mentions is a rather apt description of the feeling of both fear and guilt Arata mentions. What Jonathan and the three female vampires signify here can be seen in postcolonial terms as a repressed memory of the Empire of the past that has returned – looking *uncannily* familiar – to cause Jonathan, or England, anxiety. This is expressed both as guilt for the past, but mostly as fear for the future. After all, the theme of contagiousness is prominent in this reverse colonialism scenario. Jonathan shares his fear that Dracula in London will create “a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless” (*D* 60). Furthermore, it is important to notice the mixed descriptions offered by Jonathan concerning the fair vampire’s breath: at first it is “honey-sweet”, but ultimately with “a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood” (*D* 45). The proximity to Jonathan’s mention of singing ladies of the past, being “sad for their menfolk away in the midst of remorseless wars” (*D* 44) creates a connection to a colonial past – sweet at first, but with the cruelty of war and the spilt blood weighing heavily on English consciousness. Jonathan, trespassing spaces he was asked not to, reveals an ignorance akin to cultural offense. In doing so, he recreates

an image of Transylvania – a primordial Orient? – according to English ideas, as Martin Willis argues:

Dracula, conscious of the disease properties of his castle which are personified in the three female vampires, warns Harker against trespassing on certain areas ... [Jonathan's] panic at being so incarcerated leads him to abuse Dracula's trust and forcefully enter a suite of rooms in an older section of the castle ... Harker turns his intrusion into a romance narrative in which he plays the hero ... [recreating] Transylvania imaginatively, according to his own cultural traditions, in this instance of the stories of chivalric romance that make up England's cultural heritage. (2007, 318)

Jonathan's imagining of old ladies singing songs thinking about their men at war, describes precisely that. The young Englishman behaves in Dracula's castle as an Englishman abroad, a course of action that is the cause of the "[v]ampiric disease's long journey to the heart of the British empire" (2007, Willis 319). Kujundžić adds that Dracula, as a bulwark between Christendom and the Ottomans, becomes a champion of the former against the latter. However, as he increasingly imitates the methods and essence of the Ottomans, for example, by mimicking their savagery, he eventually becomes an Other himself and threatens "the heart" as well as "the veins" of the empire, London: "It is necessary therefore to purge him from the very empire that produced the vampire as its guardian at the border in the first place" (Kujundžić 2005, 92). There are other temporally important passages in this part of the novel, such as Dracula's request to Jonathan to predate his letters to England (*D* 49), which is akin to an indirect temporal distortion, and of course the puzzling sight of the Count laying in the box with his youth having apparently been half-restored (*D* 59). Nonetheless, the scene with the three female vampires is central to the beginning of the novel, typifying the events and atmosphere at Dracula's castle.

The elements related to the Empire abound in this first part of the novel, occurring in the foreign and unknown castle of Count Dracula. The fact that Jonathan is trapped in a no-man's land he has willingly entered – in a sense of both traversing the continent to reach it and crossing the final boundary, into the castle – underlines the idea that the realization of this outcome, the true evaluation of the repercussions, can only be *post factum*. This point is in parallel with Victor Frankenstein's inability to foretell the consequences of his scientific discovery – the temporal catch-22 I referred to in section 4.2. The constant references to England and the English language, Dracula's obsession with customs, and the general approach to ethnicity presented in these chapters of the novel, set a tempo that place *Dracula* in an Imperial context.

The second scene worth focusing on is Count Dracula's attack on Mina Harker. Structurally, the scene adds momentum to the plot by offering motivation for the pursuit back to Transylvania, much as the castle scene does for Dracula's travel to England. Furthermore, if the castle scene alludes to a colonizer embarking on an adventure in a foreign land, with the effect of causing a *counter*-colonizing mission, then similarly the attack scene emphasizes that Dracula's advances on Mina cause a response by the Crew of Light that amounts to total war. The journey back to Transylvania is no longer a matter of colonization, expansion, and national pride. It is a matter of survival, as Mina's life and soul (and implicitly Victorian identity as well as moral integrity) are at stake. If the castle scene is a metaphor for the colonizing past, including its moments of "honey-sweet" pleasure, then the attack scene is undoubtedly a reference to the confusing and increasingly more uncertain present.

Historically, *Dracula* coincides with a period in English history in which the Empire, although still strong, was seen in a light shadowed by issues related to colonialism and imperialism. Britain's influence abroad was not the same as before, overseas markets for British goods were being lost, rival powers such as Germany and the United States began to develop economically and politically, but above all, it all happened during a period of time characterized by growing uneasiness related to the morality of imperialism. All of these "combined to erode Victorian confidence in the inevitability of British progress and hegemony" (Arata 1990, 622). Therefore, the text can create visions of imperial vulnerability that, paired with a sense of colonial guilt and moral decline in general, can lead to a quasi-fatalistic idea that such an outcome is not only possible but also perhaps inevitable. In this sense, Count Dracula is parallel to the Victorian imperial ideology, only mirrored back to the Victorians in the form of a monster, and his journey to England is akin to an exploitation of the weaker, as Byron argues:

This mirroring extends not just to the imperial practices themselves, but to their epistemological underpinnings. Before Dracula successfully invades the spaces of his victims' bodies or land, he first invades the spaces of their knowledge ... Dracula's physical mastery of his British victims begins with an intellectual appropriation of their culture, which allows him to delve the workings of the "native mind" ... Thus, in *Dracula* the British characters see their own ideology reflected back as a form of bad faith, since the Count's Occidentalism both mimics and reverses the more familiar Orientalism underwriting Western imperial practices. (1999, 129)

The effect created by Dracula's imitation of British ways can be seen as comical. However, it still holds serious implications, namely the repercussions of imperialism.

The attack on Mina is also the core moment of the narrative arc in Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 film. Count Dracula, portrayed in the film as her long lost lover, enters Mina's room and with her encouragement tenderly transfers some of his blood to her, turning her into a vampire. It is the turning point of the film as it signals the moment that Mina shifts her allegiance. Unlike in the novel, there is eventually no ambiguity; Mina remains faithful to Dracula, her lost love from the forgotten past (Angelis 2014, 16). Although the novel does not explicitly suggest a love connection between Mina and Dracula, such a possibility cannot be excluded. Dracula does talk about Mina being his "companion" (*D* 307), and she admits that during his advances, she "did not want to hinder him" (*D* 306). She also expresses her unorthodox feelings of sympathy, suggesting that Dracula, "that poor soul", is a victim too (*D* 328). The idea that Dracula is to be pitied is unspeakable and unacceptable by the Crew of Light, for such thoughts would inhibit the sustained process of dehumanization Count Dracula undergoes throughout the narrative. The further away from a human being this Other is, the more acceptable – if not morally obligatory – his annihilation becomes.

The borders of the attack scene are somewhat blurry. Not only because the attack is implied to have taken place over a period of several nights, as Dracula tells Mina "it is not the first time, or the second, that your veins have appeased my thirst!" (*D* 306), but also because the events that lead to this attack are similarly hazy. Examining the facts from the night between September 30th and October 1st, Mina mentions how she cannot remember how she fell asleep but that she does recall an eerie stillness covering everything (*D* 274). What she construes as dreams or her imagination is in actual fact Count Dracula in the form of mist, invading the room like a "pillar of cloud" with red eyes (*D* 275). This image brings scriptural memories to Mina's mind, as she connects it with Exodus 13:21–22, "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: / He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, [from] before the people" (*King James Bible Online*). The temporal element is obvious, but it is Mina's observation that "the pillar was composed of both the day and the night-guiding" (*D* 276) that essentially renders the vampire timeless, since the day-night dichotomy disappears. Initially Mina is fascinated by the pair of red eyes that shine in the dark, but horror overcomes her when she recalls the three female vampires Jonathan encountered.

The seemingly incongruous grouping of desire and fear, fascination and repulsion, is repeated once more and transforms the attack scene into a link that is

added to the existing chain of associations between the vampire and the Empire the text has created so far. The attack scene is connected with the castle scene through Mina's recollection, essentially being rendered a replica of the similar mixture of "honey-sweet" and "bitter offensiveness" promised by the colonizing process. The attack continues the next evening. Mina has very little to say about it, limiting herself to admitting she slept a dreamless sleep, but also one that did not refresh her (*D* 276). The peak of the scene comes the third night, when the Crew of Light, Mina, and Dracula all come face to face. The first image the men notice when they enter the room is "the white-clad figure of [Mina] ... [and] a tall, thin man, clad in black" (*D* 300), a rather obvious image of a bride and a groom. Furthermore, Mina's white clothes are covered in blood, a sign implying consummation of the unholy union.³⁵ But perhaps the most ominous words, sounding like a judging triumphant voice, come in Dracula's explanation of the events and the cause of his attack, as he says that the men "should have kept their energies for use closer to home" (*D* 306). What the text seems to imply, through the words and deeds of Count Dracula, is that if England, instead of being preoccupied with foreign adventures, had focused her energy "for use closer to home", a disaster such as the one that occurred in *Dracula* would have been perhaps avoided. The character of Mina, a key depiction of the English woman and the core of Victorian values, inserts a moral dimension into the equation. Her appropriateness and adherence to the established norms having faltered, the energy of the men having been misplaced, it becomes an unsurprising outcome that the Empire is polluted from within. The threat becomes more horrifying and the danger more imminent through the fact that the invader is not only a foreigner, but also someone with connections to minorities established within England – even during the attack, Dr. Seward does not fail to notice "the great nostrils of the white aquiline nose" (*D* 300). Minorities such as Jews and gypsies not only display a particular connection with time, being old and in a way timeless, but also with a particular kind of collective English memory, representing the traumatic colonial past – "the trace memory of the traumatic cost of improvement and expansion" (Trumpener 1992, 868).

The third and final set of scenes signifies the future. The ending of *Dracula*, much like the endings of *Frankenstein* and *A Christmas Carol*, is deeply ambiguous.

³⁵ The image of a bloody wedding dress or sheets is often portrayed in literature and arts in general, with a variety of connotations. In *Othello*, Iago asks the Moor – in his effort to convince him of Desdemona's affair with Cassio – "Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief/ Spotted with strawberries, in your wife's hand?" (III.iii.437–438).

Similarly, the future alluded to in this final part of *Dracula* is characteristically lacking in objectivity and definitive answers. The idea of hypnotism belongs to Mina herself. According to Jonathan's journal, the idea came to her during the night and materialized without her realizing it (*D* 331). Jonathan must have surely felt very wary hearing these words, considering that "[i]t has always been at night-time that [he has] been molested or threatened, or in some way in danger or in fear" (*D* 54). The problem is accentuated through the fact that Mina had already been attacked by Count Dracula when she announced her idea. After her vampiric baptism, she is no longer trustworthy and her confession that the idea matured without her realizing it questions her authorship – suggesting that this is perhaps a trick of Count Dracula. It is important to remember that hypnotism was considered ambiguous in the late Victorian era, and as a result Mina's suggestion becomes a centerpiece of the ambiguity characterizing the scene. She suggests hypnotism, an act that carried negative connotations, as "immoral or criminal behavior" were considered possible consequences (Moss 1997, 128); the idea comes to her during the night, although she is unaware of its maturing; and lastly, the additional temporal element, that hypnotism must be performed before the dawn.

The representational value of the dawn is polymorphous. Not only does it mark the boundary before which the night and Dracula have dominance over the world, but it also holds another, more intricate temporal connotation. It signifies the regression to pre-industrial ways of time-measurement, when the norm was not the clock but the dawn, offering the countryman a signal that indicated the appropriate time for the various farming activities.³⁶ Furthermore, in the pages surrounding Mina's suggestion, the text makes a sustained metatextual effort to draw attention to the thematic elements of time, by constantly referring to time as being not absolute but relative, with frequent references such as Dr. Seward's "[t]he time seemed terribly long" (*D* 321), or "[w]e waited in a suspense that made the seconds pass with nightmare slowness" (*D* 325). The motif of regression is very well pronounced in this scene and the climax of the novel in general. Besides the old-fashioned coming of the dawn as a time-measuring mechanism, regression is also expressed through the act of hypnotism itself, which by 1897 had lost its mainstream status, as it now carried ambiguous or negative connotations. On a more subtle level, the fact that it is Mina who offers the solution can also be seen as a form of regression, since it indicates the at least temporary return to Mina

³⁶ The term "regression" is used in this section without any claim to Freudian readings, simply to indicate a return to a previous system; reversion.

being an active member of the Crew of Light, rather than the excluded feminine representation of their struggle (Boone 1993, 82). Indeed, it is Van Helsing himself who exclaims “we have got out dear Madam Mina, as of old, back to us today!” (*D* 331), emphasizing the element of regression to an older Madam Mina, although, crucially, not exactly the same one. As *Dracula* is a typical *fin de siècle* Gothic text, any hint of regression also alludes to the widespread ideas concerning the possibility of devolution, as Catherine Wynne argues:

By the late nineteenth century social and cultural anxieties culminated in the production of a Gothic charged with fears of imperial collapse. The fin-de-siècle dialectic of progress and degeneration produces the fear of regression. The paradox of Western civilization was that all that was deemed progressive might, in fact, be its concealed opposite. (2002, 9–10)

Therefore, to the existing alarm caused by Mina’s suggestion and the surrounding connotations, the novel adds a warning flag that focuses on one of the major sources of social anxiety in the late Victorian age. According to Luckhurst, the scene of hypnotism in *Dracula* reveals a “riot of meaning” that is allied not only to “degenerationist accounts, but also ... to an advancing modernism” (2002, 186). As if to leave no doubt about the importance of time, the text adds that “[t]ime is now to be dreaded” (*D* 334).

If the castle scene is a metaphor for a rather “honey-sweet” colonizing past, and the attack scene an uncertain present, then Mina’s hypnotism presents a prediction for the future. The complicating factor is that this resolution apparently involves regression. However, this is only a *pseudo*-return to the past, as it is essentially only an image; an act of mimesis that includes the knowledge of the present. There are a number of ways to interpret this regression and, perhaps in accordance with the ambiguous nature of the text, it is not easy to assign authority to any of them. It could be taken as a suggestion that regression, associated with devolution, will eventually facilitate a moral collapse that will lead the Empire to a perpetual repetition of a fruitless cycle of colonization, reverse colonization, and re-colonization. This reading is supported by the ending of *Dracula* and the problems presented by Quincey Morris junior. Another approach, however, would be to see the envisioned future as one that is synthetic and all-inclusive, with a focus on the very concept of modernity, the “here and now”, without any true, objective stand.

5.3 Social Class and Capital

As a mode that is fluid and open to interpretation, the Gothic has been associated with a variety of sociocultural changes. Perhaps one of the most pervasive and persisting ones is its connection with ideas related to capital, class, and consumption. On the surface, this seems to be due to a chronological coincidence. The emergence of the Gothic – particularly the Victorian Gothic – can be traced to the development of the market. As Alexandra Warwick explains, Dickens’s works are a vivid example of this, as “an articulation of the new forms of social relations inaugurated by capitalism” can be found in them (2007, 33). Similarly, one should not forget that the mid-nineteenth century also coincides with one of the most important theoreticians on capital, Karl Marx, who used numerous Gothic metaphors for his references to capitalism:

Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the worker works is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has bought from him. If the worker consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist. (Marx 1990, 342)

Additionally, there is an association between, on the one hand, ghosts and specters, and, on the other, the transcendent nature of commodities and the invisibility of wealth. The association is facilitated through the introduction of economic devices such as the stock market and the prevalence of paper money (Smith 2007, 149–150). Andrew Smith claims that such an element can also be found in *A Christmas Carol*, as Scrooge’s wealth “is both there (hoarded) and not there (not in circulation)”, with a parallel formed between the “spectrality” of money and that of ghosts (2007, 150). Scrooge becomes a prime example – if not an actual personification – of this very invisibility of wealth.

Nonetheless, apart from the mere chronological coincidence, there are also deeper issues at play. Franco Moretti, in his 2005 *Signs Taken for Wonders*, reads *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* as two opposite poles of the capital continuum:

Frankenstein and Dracula lead parallel lives. They are two indivisible, because complementary, figures; the two horrible faces of a single society, its *extremes*: the disfigured wretch and the ruthless proprietor. The worker and the capital ... The literature of terror is born precisely *out of the terror of a split society*, and out of the desire to heal it. It is for just this reason that Dracula and Frankenstein, with rare exceptions, do not appear together. The threat would be too great. (2005, 83; emphasis in the original)

At the same time, Gothic elements such as contamination and lack of volition have found their way into the discourse of consumerism and survive in our contemporary Gothic narratives. An additional element that is greatly emphasized in modern Gothic works is the temporal sense of cultural belonging. In other words, the peer pressure applied onto an individual to be an equal in terms of temporal placement within the current culture – in layman’s terms to be “trendy” or “in fashion”. I would argue that part of the fascination with zombie narratives witnessed in the past two decades could be traced to similarities the hapless, mindless creatures possess with the middle class masses that are eager to consume. There is a direct connection between the mindless, zombie-like consumer and the reference to cultural belonging made above. The horror inspired by the zombies lies in their contagious amassing. Just as healthy individuals can become zombies by being attacked by them, the modern consumer – partially because of his or her need for temporal cultural equality – is “infected” by peers and forced to consume and own goods. As Gordon and Hollinger argue, “Marx’s gluttonous capitalist rat has been transformed into an army of consuming mall-rats” (qtd. in Punter and Byron 2004, 269). It is a point of great irony that zombies have also been associated with a working-class uprising as much as “racial” agonies.³⁷

Class struggle has been a central Gothic motif since the birth of the Gothic mode. That is perhaps to be expected considering that the Gothic is, on the one hand, structured around issues of patriarchy, registering social and popular fears, and, on the other, fascinated with temporal conflicts and the hybridization of time. The castle – whether literal, as in *Dracula*, or metaphorical, as in the case of Scrooge’s counting house – exemplifies both a temporal and a class incongruence. The castle is a chronotope that defines the borders of the upper class or even the aristocracy, and as a sign it connotes temporal conflicts very powerfully. As I mentioned in section 4.2, the castle becomes a prime sign of dialectical temporality, of that which is caught between worlds and between histories. It is not merely the past, but rather a space where “centuries of history are compressed into a single image, albeit one that never quite comes together” (Punter and Byron 2004, 259). Furthermore, there was a special kind of macabre immortality in the class system, due to the fact that even the dead were treated according to their class. At the time of *Frankenstein* – as the story very graphically and explicitly portrays – body-snatching for the purpose of dissection was a widespread issue. The rich could afford protective measures such as guards and special coffins. Ironically enough,

³⁷ See Greenspan 2011, 206–207; Laist 2011, 105; Benardini 2004, 182; Bishop 2010, 71

metal coffins specifically designed for protection against body-snatching were introduced in 1818, the same year *Frankenstein* was published. The poor working class corpse, instead, was often doomed to end up dissected. Despite self-organizing to protect themselves against such an outcome, the fact remained that the poor were treated very differently than the rich, even after they were dead (McNally 2011, 57).

Moretti argues (2005, 84–85) that what makes the Frankensteinian creature truly frightening is his potential to transform into a mass of creatures – in other words, to reproduce and multiply, a fear present in *Dracula* as well. Although perhaps not obvious at first, this fear is temporal in nature, as in a class context it describes a social destabilization; a monstrous future.³⁸ This revolution manifests class aspects, since the Frankensteinian monster is portrayed as a clearly separate (and, at least on the surface, inferior) individual to Victor, as Moretti argues:

Like the proletariat, the monster is denied a name and an individuality. He is the Frankenstein monster; he belongs wholly to his creator (just as one can speak of a ‘Ford worker’). Like the proletariat, he is a *collective* and *artificial* creature. He is not found in nature, but built ... Between Frankenstein and the monster there is an ambivalent, dialectical relationship, the same as that which, according to Marx, connects capital with wage-labour. (2005, 85; emphasis in the original)

The temporal class aspects are placed in a dialectical framework, as the monster – representing the future – is opposed by an antagonist who is connected with the present. The polarization between the unknown future and the known present is portrayed in naively stereotypical and typological terms, as humans, rallying behind the antagonist of the creature, become cohesive thanks to the Other – a cohesion that would be lacking otherwise. Doing so, they fail to realize that the present, now conveniently placed against a threatening future, contains “a distillation of complacent nineteenth-century mediocrity”, forcing the public to silently condone the actions of the antagonist of the creature (Moretti 2005, 84).

Examining class and Gothic temporality, one realizes that vampirism has provided even more allusions, with the most well-known example arguably belonging to Marx. On what can be called the temporal element of vampiric capital, he describes as we have just noted how “[t]he time during which the worker works is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has bought from him” (Marx 1990, 342). Essentially, what Marx introduces is a temporal dichotomy between the capitalist attempting to expand the working day

³⁸ In some sense, fear is *always* temporal in nature, whether connected with the anticipation of a monstrous future or with the reminiscence of a traumatic past (see Toikkanen 2013, 20).

and labor struggling to keep it in check. Marx's vampiric metaphor inevitably acquires temporal connotations that echo in Gothic literature as a typical characteristic of vampires, who after having done "evil work by night, finally [confront] the harsh light of day, which is so horrific that it is the cause of [their] death" (Godfrey et al. 2004, 27). Temporal interpretations of Marx's metaphor of vampirism do not abound, although Punter refers to the need of Count Dracula to adapt to a changing world, thus alluding to the passage he must take from feudalism to capitalism:

To the peasantry of central Europe, it may well have seemed that the feudal lord *was* immortal: the actual inhabitant of the castle upon the mountain might change, but that might not even be known.³⁹ What would have been known was that there was always a lord ... at the expense, of course, of peasant blood, in the literal sense of blood shed in battle and cruelty. Dracula can no longer survive on blood of this kind ... [A]s the nobleman's real powers disappear, he becomes invested with semi-supernatural abilities, exercised by night rather than in the broad day of legendary feudal conflict. (1980, 258; emphasis in the original)

Although such an argument is valid, in the process introducing another day-night dichotomy, I would argue that in *Dracula*, the eponymous Count expresses a temporality much more complex than a simple transition from feudalism to capitalism.

Count Dracula can be seen as an expression of the modern, as both the vampire and the dawning modern world of the *fin de siècle* period shared in common a heightened awareness of the eternal present; a graspable sense of the "here and now", albeit with all the connotations of anxiety and conflicted emotions it carries. The text offers a remarkable scene in which this is expressed in very direct terms, and which intertwines temporality with capital and economics in an exceptionally visual way. When the vampire hunters succeed in tracking down the Count, finally meeting him face to face, Jonathan manages a blow with his knife against him:

The blow was a powerful one; only the diabolical quickness of the Count's leap back saved him. A second less and the trenchant had shorn through his heart. As it was, the point just cut the cloth of his coat, making a wide gap whence a bundle of bank-notes and a stream of gold fell out. (*D* 326)

Not only does the vampire bleed money, he bleeds timeless money – both gold, an older, rather obsolete form of payment, but also banknotes, an allusion to economic modernity. Also in this, "the vampire is both an ancient figure and our

³⁹ It is also worth noting that this indirect immortality applies to Scrooge as well. When the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows him the parallel universe where he is dead, the old man sees that upon his death, the people that owed him money are not released by their debt, as it is simply transferred to another creditor (*CC* 66).

perfect contemporary” (Godfrey et al. 2004, 34). This conflicted financial essence of Dracula, with his currency being temporally ambiguous, reflects the anxieties of the period in terms of financial stability and continuity. Moretti argues that in 1897 Count Dracula alludes to the period’s capital that, “after lying ‘buried’ for twenty long years of recession”, comes back to life to continue the same, inevitable path of amassing and monopolizing (2005, 92).

The Marxist metaphor of vampirism has also been expanded in ways that equate the corporate personality with a supernatural organism. As Ellis T. Powell argues, the financial system of the *fin de siècle* years had become an “organized, coherent and centralised financial force ... [growing] towards increasing complexity of structure and enhanced capacity of self-protection, self-adaptation, and self-repair”, essentially using the desire for “unbroken continuity” as a tool for achieving corporate immortality (Ellis, qtd. in Houston 2005, 124). As Houston underlines, “the terrifying ‘Count’ named Dracula whose consumption is overdetermined may be a synecdoche for the consumption and (ac)counting that dominate the lives of the English characters” (2005, 121). If the Gothic monster, Dracula, is obsessed with counting – as are the rest of the characters, including Renfield, who keeps track of his ingested life forms – it should come as no surprise that the association of the monstrous with the modern, as I have argued, produces “subliminal panic about and yearning for amalgamation and centralization, paralleling those same processes occurring in the economy at the end of the nineteenth century” (Houston 2005, 126).

Houston approaches the story from a socio-economic perspective, and hence the term “amalgamation” is examined only in its financial context. As such, Houston argues that *Dracula* is a story of competition between two incorporated entities, the Crew of Light on the one hand, and Dracula and his vampires on the other. The undead Count becomes “an amalgamated corporation of vampires of which he is the brains” (Houston 2005, 117). At the same time, however, he is also a *temporal* amalgamated corporation with links to his aristocracy and heritage: Dracula is not simply an individual, but a link to an entire history of Draculas, “a great and noble race” (*D* 256). The temporal aspect of class is important to emphasize, as it denotes a present that consists of an accumulated past. In a way, Punter and Byron’s examination of the castle as a sign (2004, 259) is once again an apt description. Like the castle – and Gothic spaces, more generally – the aristocratic background of Dracula is described as a saturated accumulation of the past, which approaches a threshold in the present time, without however achieving a fully defined status.

Furthermore, capitalist and consuming behavior in the Gothic includes temporal dimensions that suggest a dichotomy between previous and current/future economic transaction modes. The dichotomy is exemplified best in *A Christmas Carol*, where Scrooge transitions (at least ostensibly) from an obsolete and counter-productive hoarding of money that lies idle to a modern circulation of wealth. In fact, the Ghost of Christmas Present makes this quite explicit for Scrooge, by presenting the lavish banquet which then disappears as magically as it had appeared (CC 39). The bountiful feast, representing Scrooge's accumulation of money, is pointless and appears rather out of place.⁴⁰ By contrast, when the Spirit and Scrooge visit the streets later on, the very same imagery is given in its rightful context, that is, the market:

There were great, round, pot-bellied baskets of chestnuts ... There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions ... There were pears and apples, clustered high in blooming pyramids; there were bunches of grapes, made, in the shopkeepers' benevolence to dangle from conspicuous hooks, that people's mouths might water gratis as they passed; there were piles of filberts, mossy and brown ... [T]here were Norfolk Biffins, squab and swarthy, setting off the yellow of the oranges and lemons, and, in the great compactness of their juicy persons, urgently entreating and beseeching to be carried home in paper bags and eaten after dinner ... [T]he blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose ... the raisins were so plentiful and rare, the almonds so extremely white, the sticks of cinnamon so long and straight, the other spices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked and spotted with molten sugar as to make the coldest lookers-on feel faint and subsequently bilious. (CC 41–42)

It is only fitting that it is the Ghost of Christmas *Present* that offers Scrooge this guided tour of the contemporary market economy. According to Lukács, commodity capitalism facilitates a situation where individuals undergo a loss of sense of history, acquiring instead momentary experiences, and becoming “caught in a series of hermetically sealed presents” (West-Pavlov 2013, 130). The conclusion of *A Christmas Carol* also suggests an eternal “here and now” form of transaction where past, present, and future, fuse together, as Scrooge enthusiastically claims that he “will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future” (CC 70). As West-Pavlov argues, commodities in a capitalist economy are disconnected from past and future alike, “except in the ever-renewed lust after the newest model on the market” (2013, 130). The temporal reality of capitalism and consumerism is characteristically fused, as “[t]he investor needs tomorrow's money

⁴⁰ The connection between food – particularly exotic fruits and spices – and imperial capitalism is well established in the Victorian context. A rather characteristic example is Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* (see Tucker 2003; Lysack 2009)

so that he can invest it today; he also needs tomorrow itself so that he can invest the returns of today's investments, in order to generate profit for the day after tomorrow" (West-Pavlov 2013, 134). For Scrooge, the accumulation of wealth becomes as meaningless and pointless as the accumulation of food in his room: destined to become rotten.

Such a temporal model is also implied in *Dracula*, through the parallel between blood and capital, with the Victorians maintaining a strong association between the two (Houston 2005, 118). Expanding the parallel, the financial system of the *fin de siècle* becomes a capitalist behemoth that is akin to a supernatural immortal entity, growing increasingly stronger and more invincible by accumulating capital (Houston 2005, 124). Dracula personifies such an entity and becomes an embodiment of the "here and now" of commodity capitalism. However, as I mentioned above, the temporal tension between the past and the (imagined) future never explicitly assumes a distinct shape, although it reaches a threshold in the years the events of *Dracula* occur. On the surface, the dialectical placement is evident: Dracula is seen by the *fin de siècle* bourgeois as the old-fashioned monopoly of the middle ages, a definite relic of the past that needs to be destroyed in order for free trade and competition to thrive (Moretti 2005, 93). The problem arises from the subconscious realization that Dracula alludes to a *different* kind of monopoly, far more modern and threatening, as it is not properly understood. Moretti, reading Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy*, argues that "Dracula is thus at once the final product of the bourgeois century and its negation" (Moretti 2005, 93). Marx's original text is even more revealing regarding the synthetic nature of modern monopoly, as it explicitly employs Hegelian nomenclature to underline the fact:

Thesis: Feudal monopoly anterior to competition.

Antithesis: Competition.

Synthesis: Modern monopoly, which is the negation of feudal monopoly in so far as it supposes the *régime* of competition, and which is the negation of competition in so far as it is monopoly.

Thus, modern monopoly, bourgeois monopoly, is synthetic monopoly, the negation of the negation, the unity of contraries. (Marx 2008, 165; emphasis in the original)

The complexity in *Dracula* arises from the fact that this synthetic outcome carries undertones of the sublime – a "Gothic fear and yearning for amalgamation" (Houston 2005, 126). For although Dracula is seen as a terrible threat, the efficiency of his capitalist model cannot be refuted. The character of Quincey P.

Morris, perhaps the most enigmatic member of the Crew of Light, is the perfect proof of this efficiency, for he dies attempting to replace Dracula and assume control of his capitalist model.

As Moretti argues, the death of Morris appears rather puzzling and unexpected, considering the narrative logic of *Dracula*. The explanation lies in the fact that, according to Moretti, Morris *is* a vampire, at least metaphorically. The American is a mysterious figure, albeit in a charming way, just as Dracula is at first. Morris also appears so young that one cannot comprehend how he has been to so many places, having seen so many adventures that remain untold and, similarly, so many other details about Morris's life are not given (Moretti 2005, 95). Yet, nobody suspects anything, with the possible exception of Van Helsing, who seems to waver momentarily before allowing the American to donate blood for Lucy:

Van Helsing strode forward, and took [Morris's] hand, looking him straight in the eyes as he said: –

“A brave man's blood is the best thing on this earth when a woman is in trouble. You're a man and no mistake. Well, the devil may work against us for all he's worth, but God sends us men when we want them.” (*D* 160)

This transfusion is the last for Lucy, who dies not long afterwards – with the explicit acknowledgment that Morris's blood did not help as much as the others'. Moretti offers a series of other evidence that, although circumstantial, do underline the ambiguous, mysterious, and ultimately unreliable nature of Quincey P. Morris. According to Moretti, Morris would have been an entirely secondary, superfluous character, were he not so much associated with the world of vampires:

Morris enters into competition with Dracula; he would like to replace him in the conquest of the Old World. He does not succeed in the novel but he will succeed, in “real” history, a few years afterwards ... America will end up by subjugating Britain in reality and Britain is, albeit unconsciously, afraid of it ... For Stoker, monopoly *must* be feudal, oriental, tyrannical. It cannot be the product of that very society he wants to defend ... For the good of Britain, then, Morris must be sacrificed. (2005, 95–96; emphasis in the original)

The death of Morris, quasi-accidental and unexpected, by the hand of a gypsy, allows the narrative to neatly sweep these issues under the proverbial rug. Morris dies a hero, and order is ostensibly restored.

The fifth chapter examined temporal dialectics based on otherness. The existence of dichotomies related to femininity and gender, ethnicity and “race”, as much as class and economic activities has been studied extensively in a Gothic context. The argument I have made, however, is that these dichotomies also have significant temporal aspects. By applying a temporal reading of the ambiguity

between dichotomies based on otherness, and by employing the concept of the eternal now, the porosity of the borders between these dichotomies becomes evident. Inevitably, the very indistinctness between the two sides of a given dichotomy merely emphasizes the importance of the ambiguous area that both unites and separates them. Furthermore, the eternal now becomes once again a certain escape valve, a culmination point where such dichotomies can be placed in order for the negotiation of the temporal dialectics to occur. Such a resolution, as the cryptic endings of *Frankenstein*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Dracula* portray, is deeply ambiguous. The key point in the conclusion of these narratives has been the lack of an objective truth, let alone an objective assessment of the hybridized synthesis.

At the same time however, the *antithesis* of objectivity, namely subjectivity, does not seem to properly describe the full picture either. For Scrooge, the past shown to him by the Ghost of Christmas Past might perhaps be merely “shadows of the things that have been” (CC 27), but, despite their lesser ontological status, these shadows still participate in the formation of a new, *synthesized* reality, consisting of objective events as well as subjective reconstructions and reminiscences. Similarly in *Frankenstein* or *Dracula*, the entirety of the text is offered as a *mélange* of narrations, letters, and hearsay evidence, arranged on various levels of temporality and hierarchy, with the characters (and, metatextually, the readers) attempting to form a coherent picture of the whole.

The inability to generate a properly defined representation – that is, a clear ontological reference of the experience – possesses evident elements of the sublime. For the Gothic heroes this is occasionally acknowledged, such as in the case of Lionel Verney or Frankenstein’s creature. In other times, however, such as in the case of Scrooge or the Crew of Light in *Dracula*, what is left floating is merely a naive, blissful kind of ignorance. The sublime “beyond” is perceived only subconsciously; or, perhaps, only by those outside the system, that is, the readers.⁴¹ The need to transcend the system, the “universe” of the individual stories is in accordance with Bradley’s argumentation on the unity of the Absolute. That is “one system ... a single and all-inclusive experience, which embraces every partial diversity in concord” (1893, 146–147), yet is impossible for “finite beings” to access in its entirety (1893, 159). In the following chapter I examine how this synthesized reality functions in a framework of the sublime temporality of the eternal now.

⁴¹ See footnote 23, section 4.1.

6 DIALECTICS OF OMNIJECTIVITY

Before proceeding, it is important to summarize how the dissertation has so far analyzed aspects of temporality and the Gothic. In the second chapter I examined how matters of time affected nineteenth-century British society, both in terms of everyday practicalities, as well as in more abstract theorizing that connected temporality with deeper, existential meanings. The third chapter focused on analyzing the concept of the eternal present, and particularly how it is related to the concept of the sublime. In effect, the indefinably small, inaccessible “here and now” becomes the tangent where the sublime is experienced. This experience is strongly spiritual as the experiencer feels, on the one hand, overwhelmed by the dissolution of traditional separations, and, on the other, uncertain of what had been considered as hard, objective reality up until the “here and now” moment where sublimity occurs. As a result the Gothic mode, as the third chapter demonstrated, facilitates the introduction of alternative meanings and reinterpretations, through what I referred to as a discourse of doubt; an epistemological game of “what ifs”. With the fourth and the fifth chapters, I displayed how Gothic texts can be read with a focus on temporal dialectics. Of these, particularly strong is the struggle between a past that refuses to vanish and a future that is hesitant to materialize.

As I argued in chapters four and five, the Enlightenment left in its wake a spiritual void also in terms of temporality and the way the eternal present was conceived and perceived. Through the analysis of my primary material, I demonstrated the attempts to resolve the temporal dialectics through new forms of an eternal present, creating Hegelian, all-inclusive syntheses out of the theses and antitheses. These hybridized fusions, however, at first seem problematic – at the very least due to their non-objective status. The assessment of the synthesis appears to depend on perspective and viewpoints even *within* its textual confinements (as I will demonstrate in section 6.3, an entirely new level of complexity can be reached by transcending the limits of the text and taking into account the reader). The sixth chapter offers a new layer on the map of Gothic temporal dialectics. Using the same methodology of synthesis as I have been

employing so far, I argue that the hybridization of the subjective and the objective is one way to address the challenge of assessing these new forms of an eternal now.

At this point, however, an acknowledgment has to be made: I make no claim of a resolution that is absolute, unproblematic, or complete in any way. After all, such an assertion would be contrary to the idea of the Gothic as a mode that facilitates a discourse of doubt. It would also be contrary to the nature of assessment itself, which is an inherently non-objective concept. I argue that such a view is ultimately in concordance with Bradley's approach to the Absolute:

Is there, in the end and on the whole, any progress in the universe? Is the Absolute better or worse at one time than at another? It is clear that we must answer in the negative, since progress and decay are alike incompatible with perfection. There is of course progress in the world, and there is also retrogression, but we cannot think that the Whole either moves on or backwards. The Absolute has no history of its own, though it contains histories without number ... They are but partial aspects in the region of temporal appearance. Their truth and reality may vary much in extent and in importance, but in the end it can never be more than relative. (Bradley F.H. 1893, 499)

What an analysis of Gothic histories and realities (that is, different interpretations of reality) does is to offer a larger scope of theorizing, as temporal dialectics and the eternal now are not only about time, but about the perception and construction of reality. After all, this is already implied in the works examined thus far – perhaps most explicitly in *A Christmas Carol*, a story directly revolving around the “alternative reality” that is Scrooge's transformation. It is indeed questionable whether this is a true transformation or not. What I argue through my analysis of Gothic realities, however, is that such aspects are not pertinent for the concept of synthesis. In other words, examining reality in the Gothic resolves the predicament by suggesting that there was not one existing in the first place. The reason for this becomes clearer once the need for objectivity ceases to exist. As the Gothic can be seen as intrinsically connected with the implied and the subconscious, expressing “a second world and a second life” (Bakhtin 1984, 6), it is reasonable that it should also be examined from a perspective that valorizes not objectivity but perception.

At this point, I introduce a new term to refer to this synthesis of objective and subjective: *omnijective*. The concept of omnijectivity was coined by the researcher and science fiction author Michael Talbot to refer to phenomena that are neither purely objective yet not entirely subjective, as “[t]hey are indeed a product of the collective human psyche, *but they are also quite real*” (1996, 279; emphasis in the original). Talbot is not the first who has argued that the borders between the objective and the subjective are not as evident. Plato's allegory of the cave is an

early example.⁴² From modern approaches, it is important to underline the link with Bakhtin and his views on reality and fantasy, as much as his concept of “the collective ancestral body of all the people” (Bakhtin 1984, 19), a concept perhaps related to Carl Jung’s hypothesis of the collective unconscious.⁴³ Still, Talbot’s contribution arguably lies in the fact that he emphasizes the non-hierarchical relation between the objective and the subjective. He himself employs the term to ontologically describe apparitions, miracles, and other uncanny experiences that can be considered ultimately related to the Gothic, particularly in the Todorovian framework of ambiguity I have demonstrated so far. They are subjective projections or interpretations of an objective, albeit subconscious, collective social fear (Talbot 1996, 281). To a great extent, such experiences almost invariably involve a distortion that is both spatial and temporal, and here is a tangent where the Gothic deviates from more realistic modes. Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth claims that “[w]hat the faculty of sight is to space, the faculty of consciousness is to time”, drawing a parallel between three-dimensional spaces and the three facets of linear time: past, present, future (1998, 40). However, as she herself adds, narrative time can be far more complex as “every moment is both ‘present’ and at the same time already past, already part of a recollection taking place some time in the future of the event” (1998, 41). Furthermore, according to Ermarth, the cornerstone of realistic narrative is the assumption of a more or less clear and meaningful distinction between past, present, and future, which are placed in an objective temporal framework (1998, 41). The Gothic trinity formed by space, time, and human experience, alludes to a reality-rendering process that is sublime and unconventional in nature (Angelis 2014, 14–15).

Section 6.1 expands on the theoretical foundations of 3.1 by applying the sublime qualities of the eternal now onto the Gothic works examined in this dissertation. As the synthesis is a product containing self-conflicting elements, the study of the sublime becomes important. It offers a direct link between the presence of typically sublime pairs such as admiration and fear, or desire and

⁴² Plato describes a group of people who have spent their whole lives chained to the wall of a cave, facing a blank wall opposite. A fire behind them projects shadows on this blank wall, causing them to construct reality in terms of the shadows. Until an individual is freed from the cave and is able to see the objects projecting the shadows, the only existing reality is the shadows

⁴³ Admittedly, Bakhtin explicitly refers to “grotesque realism ... [being] the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level” (Bakhtin 1984, 19). I would argue, however, that Bakhtin’s mention of the “ideal” and the “abstract” does not specifically exclude the notion of a collective unconscious or some other noetic aspect of the human essence. One possibility is that it is expressed as such in a way to abolish the preconceptions involving a hierarchy between a “spiritual” authority and a “material” subject.

repulsion, and an experience that can be strongly spiritual in nature. In other words, the sublime is the foundation whereupon synthesis builds its transcendental qualities. Section 6.2 will then employ these findings, combining them with those of previous chapters (where some first elements of Gothic realities were introduced), and explore how this sublime eternal now refers to reinterpretation and redefinition by re-rendering reality and envisioning alternative futures. Finally, section 6.3 will point out the significant metatextual power of the Gothic, with direct implications for temporality as much as experience and meaning in more general terms.

6.1 Aspects of the Sublime

In *Dracula*, the arrival of the eponymous character in England causes both an unprecedented storm and a temporal distortion. According to Mina Harker, “[t]he time and distance seemed endless” (*D* 101). Importantly, this sense of timelessness is highly oneiric in nature, not only because of the gloomy images and the eerie stillness, but also because of Mina’s confession: “I must have gone fast, and yet, it seemed to me as if my feet were weighted with lead, and as though every joint in my body were rusty” (*D* 101), an uncannily accurate description of a dream. Similarly in H. Rider Haggard’s *She*, a novel which separates men and women “by means of an intricate series of temporally based oppositions” (Murphy 2001, 31), there is a clear connection between the sublime and altered states of consciousness:

Was I mad, or drunk, or dreaming, or was I merely the victim of a gigantic and most elaborate hoax? How was it possible that I, a rational man, not unacquainted with the leading scientific facts of our history, and hitherto an absolute and utter disbeliever in all the hocus-pocus which in Europe goes by the name of the supernatural, could believe that I had within the last few minutes been engaged in conversation with a woman two thousand and odd years old? The thing was contrary to the experience of human nature, and absolutely and utterly impossible. It must be a hoax, and yet, if it were a hoax, what was I to make of it? What, too, was to be said of the figures on the water, of the woman’s extraordinary acquaintance with the remote past, and her ignorance, or apparent ignorance, of any subsequent history? What, too, of her *wonderful and awful loveliness*? (Haggard 1951, 120; my emphasis)

It is important to note the unsolvable vacillation between “an illusion of the senses” and a reality “controlled by laws unknown” (Todorov 1973, 25). Moreover, one should note the unmistakable reference to the woman’s sublime essence, being

both wonderfully and awfully lovely. Murphy calls this woman, Ayesha, “a kind of Gothic sublime” (2001, 55), but I would specify that the sublime nature of the experience clearly originates from her temporal attributes and, in particular, her distorted temporality. Her past is concurrent with the Victorian present, not unlike Count Dracula’s amalgamation of centuries that amass in the present moment.

Furthermore, it is important to take into consideration that the “here and now”, the basic temporal building block, is ephemeral and insubstantial, giving its place to a new one in a never-ending motion of destruction and renewal. In this process, contradiction, conflict, and ambiguity thrive (Abbott 2007, 5), a fact that can be connected with elements of the sublime. Gothic monsters such as Ayesha or Dracula, who inspire both fear and admiration, disgust and desire, often because of their very timelessness and “ignorance, or apparent ignorance, of any ... history” (Haggard 1951, 120), become key figures in the creation of this temporal sublime. Ultimately, the Gothic can be seen as a mode that deals with temporal oppositions and conflicts. Mighall argues that “the principal defining structure of [the Gothic] is its attitude to the past and its unwelcome legacies” (1999, xix), adding that Gothic texts are “essentially Whiggish”, that is, they portray a dichotomy between those who facilitate or initiate progress and those who attempt to obstruct it (1999, 7). The sublime nature of the Gothic attitude towards the past is evident:

[T]he ‘borderland’ attitude of Gothic [sic] to the past is a compound of repulsion and attraction, fear of both the violence of the past and its power over the present, and at the same time longing for many of the qualities which that past possessed ... Montoni [of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*] and Doctor Moreau are both archaic and contemporary, attempts to understand the present in terms of the unexplained past, attempts to allay the past in terms of a threatening present. The code of Gothic is ... dialectical, past and present intertwined, each distorting each other with the sheer effort of coming to grips. (Punter 1980, 418–419)

If one wished to group these elements presented here into an encompassing semantic sphere, the best candidate would arguably be *ambiguity*. The great in-between, the bridge that both separates and connects, emphasizes the double and often self-contradicting nature of the Gothic. Hegelian syntheses and ideas of hybridity complicate matters further, as the line between natural and artificial or natural and unnatural becomes dangerously blurred.

Frankenstein’s creation is a typical example of the above, and the novel poses ultimately unanswerable questions, both ontological and ethical, in regard to the status of such a being. Similarly, the novel expresses significant concern regarding the human factor in this, as Victor expresses his despair at the ultimate inability of

humans to alter, control, or at least observe the workings of nature and fate.⁴⁴ As he claims, for the one change he has acknowledged, “a thousand little circumstances might have by degrees worked other alterations, which, although they were done more tranquilly, might not be the less decisive” (*F* 58). Mishra argues that in terms of the sublime, the novel appears to be more concerned with the created rather than the creator:

To create the Monster is akin to the momentary glimpse into the sublime, a moment, in the Kantian economy, when reason allows imagination to see in the terrifying, the unrepresentable, the moment of self-annihilation and destruction. *Frankenstein* the text has as its center not the creator but the created, not God but man. (1994, 212–213)

Mishra’s observation is a valid one. I would add, however, that the balance between Frankenstein and the creature is a dynamic one, transcending the traditional roles of creator and created. Both of them are creators; both of them are created. Ultimately, what is truly in focus in the novel is the tangled hierarchy between the creator and the created, between cause and effect. Each causes the other, and the synthesis, although on the surface it appears to nullify them both, in fact creates a hybrid form which, however, as one would expect from a Gothic work, is open to interpretation.

Soon after Victor’s pondering on chance and fate, he admits that contemplating the lake and the snowy mountains, the stability and unchanging character of nature gave him some peace of mind (*F* 58). His comment is interesting, and I examine it in connection with Elizabeth’s letter that Victor had read some time earlier, where once again nature is described as unchanging. In Elizabeth’s words, their hearts “are regulated by the same immutable laws” (*F* 51). The claim appears puzzling, if not ironic. Undoubtedly, a reversal of the argument would mean that, if human hearts are not in fact unchanging, then, quite much in accordance with the general atmosphere of anguish that permeates the novel, nature is far from constant and predictable itself. Hence, the temporary sense of security it inspires is actually an illusion. The power of nature is a recurring element in the novel, possessing sublime characteristics, as one would expect from a text that is a philosophical product of Romanticism. The grandeur, the beautiful yet terrible nature features on many different occasions throughout the text, but perhaps an element that is particularly important is storms and lightning.

⁴⁴ In many ways, the two should be seen as one and the same factor, namely an abstract grand Other, which possesses a Gothic-like connection with humankind. I refer to the connection as Gothic-like, because of its ambiguity and conflictive essence – humans being a part of nature and yet not – but also as a result of the repressed, familiar-yet-not emotions it inspires.

It has been long argued that Frankenstein's method of bringing the creature to life – something never explicitly revealed by the scientist in the text – involves the use of electricity, and quite often this comes from the immense power of lightning. This has been used extensively in subsequent adaptations of the novel, and today it is considered almost a given.⁴⁵ And, indeed, there is a good reason to accept that lightning might be a key. Victor narrates an event from his adolescence that clearly makes an impression to him. He witnesses a powerful thunderstorm:

As I stood at the door, on a sudden I beheld a stream of fire issue from an old and beautiful oak which stood about twenty yards from our house; and so soon as the dazzling light vanished, the oak had disappeared, and nothing remained but a blasted stump. When we visited it the next morning, we found the tree shattered in a singular manner. It was not splintered by the shock, but entirely reduced to thin ribbons of wood. I never beheld anything so utterly destroyed. (*F* 33)

Not only is this incident yet another instance where chance seems to creep into the lives of humans, but it is also offered as an example in which man uses nature – considered innocent, yet dreadful – and creates something sinister.⁴⁶ However, there is a crucial detail that often passes unnoticed. Namely, nature can be self-destructive. Although, one would argue, there is no malice involved in the annihilation of the oak by the lightning, as it is seen as a natural, random event, it still remains a fact that an element of nature destroys another. Ultimately, one could argue that the creature and its actions are, similarly, simply a product of its environment, not unlike the clouds that created the thunder. During the rainy night of the creature's birth, Victor describes how he planned to “infuse a spark of being”, mentioning the “glimmer of the half-extinguished light” of his candle (*F* 45). The events leading to that night are equally noteworthy, and temporally important, with a wealth of references to time, and, particularly, to time that appears significantly distorted.

Nonetheless, the most intense descriptions of nature are arguably the ones alluding to its sublime qualities. Not surprisingly, these are also the depictions of nature that contain significant temporal elements, as the sublime is the threshold

⁴⁵ In Branagh's film, there is also a scene from Victor's earlier days, in which he replicates Benjamin Franklin's kite experiment, mastering the energy of the lightning. In this specific film, electricity to animate the monster is produced by electric eels.

⁴⁶ Victor mentions his prior knowledge of electricity and galvanism (*F* 33), and the powerful image of the oak essentially creates a mnemonic anchor point, as he claims “[t]hus strangely are our souls constructed, and by such slight ligaments are we bound to prosperity or ruin” (*F* 34). The core issue of this – and any other occasion in which chance seems to guide the characters' actions – is that the human factor is a part of this cognitive chain. In other words, meaning is formed only with the participation of the individual.

where many of the dichotomies of the story unfold. When Victor wanders around the mountains and the lake of his home country, he in many ways stands for the opposing element: progress and mechanistic science versus nature; change versus (perceived) stability; admiration versus awe and fear. Victor, immersed in the conflicted but transcendental realm, is in the epicenter of temporal distortion. Space-time becomes unreliable, as the grief-stricken scientist appears to be lost between worlds, with reality becoming fluid. In fact, this is expressed on three separate occasions that are repeated in a relatively quick succession, and in such a typically similar way that it can be seen as a warning sign. In psychoanalytic terms, this succession has the strange characteristics of a *déjà vu* experience, with the disruption of space-time becoming a signal of the unfolding events.

During his first excursion to the mountains, Victor crosses the lake in a boat while watching the thunderstorm over the summit of Mont Blanc – an undeniably intense experience in the complete darkness that surrounds him. As he does not fail to notice, “[t]he storm appeared to approach rapidly”, referring to the tempest as “so beautiful yet terrific” (*F* 59). The importance of this scene is better appreciated when Victor returns to the location later on, ascending the mountain again. Utterly overwhelmed by the sight, he speaks of “a power mighty as Omnipotence”, not failing to mention the juxtaposition between the “[r]uined castles hanging on the precipices of piny mountains ... and cottages every here and there” (*F* 73). The temporal dichotomy is apparent, but the scene also possesses more complex insinuations, especially considering what other possible depictions are carried by the images of the ruined castle and the cottages. For example, there is a clear distinction with regard to class: the former stands for aristocracy and nobility, the latter for farmers and workers. Also, the castle can be connected with a more pragmatic, materialistic, and perhaps scientific way of life (for instance, with the development of war machines), while the cottage, particularly in its rustic environment, is clearly connected with farming activities and a more pastoral, perhaps paganistic way of registering temporal cycles.

Victor speaks of a “singular beauty” between the castles of the past and the cottages of the present, adding the important observation that it was the mighty Alps that rendered the scene sublime, as if it belonged “to another earth ... another race of beings” (*F* 73). The implications are almost disturbing. Victor, perhaps only subconsciously, refers to yet a *third* temporal part, namely the future; to “another earth” and an undefined future time where those dichotomies signified by the castles of the past and the cottages of the present all but disappear into a “singular beauty”. The sublime experience effectively places Victor in an eternal

now where past, present, and future coexist and where the synthesis between such opposing elements seems to render their differences insignificant. The most dramatic – and for Victor grotesquely ironic – element to support this conclusion is none other than that his own creation would have belonged to this other race of beings, “a new species [that] would bless [Victor] as its creator and source” (F 43). In the third sublime visit of Victor to the area, as he observes the “awful majesty” of Mont Blanc, and feels “something like joy”, he notices his creation approaching him “with superhuman speed” (F 76). This third occurrence is the most ominous and most intense, and the one which creates the setting for the ensuing tragedy between the creator and his creation. The fact that these deeply sublime scenes occur not singularly but in repetition, further enhances their dream-like metaphysical status.

The motif of repetition is very eminently present in *Dracula* as well. The first part of the novel revolves mostly around Jonathan Harker and his imprisonment in Dracula’s castle, and is replete with such elements. Particularly strong is the loss of objective reality, facilitated by the distortion of temporality. As the young solicitor ventures into the unknown, visiting the forbidden rooms of the castle, he experiences not only a spatial distortion, crossing Dracula’s imposed boundaries, but also a temporal one as well. As Jonathan sits at an oak table, he visualizes the past in the form of ladies who “in old times possibly ... sat to pen” (D 43), while later, he attempts to sleep in a space, “where of old ladies had sat and sung” (D 44). Being, therefore, in a spatio-temporal vacuum, he becomes disconnected not only from his ties to England, his home, family, and Mina, but also to his time, the Victorian time. Essentially, in his encounter with the three female vampires, Jonathan experiences an eternal present, a “here and now” series of distinct moments. This is emphasized not only by his wondering whether it was a dream (D 44), but mainly by his evident confusion, disorientation, and most importantly, his mixed feelings of terror and pleasure, disgust and desire, repulsion and lust. As a result, the nature of this experience can be seen as sublime and synthetic.

Furthermore, there are several other temporally charged sentences written by Jonathan on his journal. He argues: “[i]t is nineteenth century up-to-date with a vengeance. And yet, unless my senses deceive me, the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere ‘modernity’ cannot kill”, adding that “[s]afety and the assurance of safety are things of the past” (D 43). However, the most intriguing temporal reference is arguably his quoting from *Hamlet*, “My tablets [sic]! quick, my tablets!/ ’Tis meet that I put it down, etc.,” (D 43). Although Jonathan uses the

quotation in a deceptively simplistic manner, referring mostly to his act of writing, the original scene from *Hamlet* begins with a much more revealing view:

And you, my sinews, grow not instant old
But bear me swiftly up. Remember thee?
Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,

All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past. (*Hamlet*, I.v.94–100)

The meaning of “table” here is clearly different than in Jonathan’s quotation, alluding to memory, and particularly to selective memory. Jonathan’s misquoting of “table” as “tablet” is perhaps not an accident, but rather the result of the text revealing the importance of this specific word. Not only is there a parallel to the self-referencing, ongoing writing and editing process, which is a major theme in *Dracula*, but these lines also hide the element of timelessness and the eternal present, as Hamlet’s pledge to erase “all forms, all pressures past” signifies a pastless and hence futureless existence, with only the “here and now” being important. Additionally, as Thompson and Taylor argue (2006, 219), I.v.100 could be seen echoing in III.ii.22–24: “the mirror up to Nature to show Virtue her feature,/ Scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the/ time his form and pressure”, where the idea of “age and body of the time” could allude to the “essential reality of this moment in time” (Thompson and Taylor 2006, 297). This can be read as a strong connection to the concept of the eternal present, particularly in regard to the qualities examined here, namely the sublime and aspects of subjective perception.

A consequence of the sublime nature of the eternal now is also its connection with a future that is beyond representation. As I mentioned in section 2.2, time can be seen as a “paradoxical mixture of not-needing-to-be-discussed and not-being-able-to-be-discussed [that] constitutes a double subterfuge which is one of the most effective conspiracies of modernity” (West-Pavlov 2013, 5). Again, this inability of representation is echoed by Mishra, who argues that what lies in the core of the Gothic sublime is negativity and epistemological failure (1994, 36). Furthermore, West-Pavlov hints at modernism, which is another facet of a future beyond representation. Stacey Abbott offers a direct connection between the

vampire figure and modernism, with the concept of the eternal now possessing a pivotal role:

The modern vampire, from *Dracula* to present-day vampires ... has consistently challenged its relationship to convention and tradition, gradually escaping the confines of time and space to become free of the association with the past ... Charles Baudelaire described modernity as the here and now, a fleeting, intangible moment in time, co-existing with that which transcends time and space: the eternal ... Georg Simmel equally defined modernity as the perception and experience of the present moment ... [M]odernity becomes the act of living in the eternal present. (2007, 5)

If, therefore, the “here and now”, the basic building block of modernity, is ephemeral and insubstantial, giving its place to a new one in a never-ending motion of destruction and renewal, then modernity and modernism can be seen as a process where contradiction, conflict, and ambiguity thrive (Abbott 2007, 5), something that can be seen in *Dracula* as well.⁴⁷ This sublime, all-inclusive aspect of modernity is characteristic of *Dracula*, who inspires both fear and admiration, disgust and desire, and underlines the fundamental temporal side of the Gothic sublime.

According to Yu, *Dracula*'s most shocking attribute is “his uncanny modernity” (2006, 164–165), and even in the most basic technological dichotomies between the Count and the Crew of Light, there are enough common elements to nullify the effect of modernity being on the side of Van Helsing and his party. They use the telegraph to bridge the distances, when *Dracula* can mesmerize; they have Kodak cameras with film that does not like excessive light, much like *Dracula* – a fact that renders the vampire “the very emblem of cinematic production” (Kujundžić 2005, 93). Indeed, Abbott's reference to Baudelaire and modernity becomes perhaps surprisingly relevant to *Dracula* and the historical context of the novel, as it reveals one additional facet of the mysterious figure of the Count: his status as a dandy. Dandyism can be seen as “the performance of a highly stylized, painstakingly constructed self, a solipsistic social icon ... [A] man whose goal was to create an effect, bring about an event, or provoke reaction in others through the suppression of the ‘natural’” (Garellick 1998, 3). Considering that Baudelaire himself thought that the true subject of modernism is the hero (Benjamin 1983, 74) and that the figure of the hero is a dandy (Benjamin 1983, 96), it becomes easy to see the connection between *Dracula*, dandyism, and modernism. In fact, Baudelaire

⁴⁷ It is also important to remember the temporal connection between vampires and economy, with Godfrey et al. referring to both as “[played] out in an eternal present ... perfectly timeless” (2004, 25–26).

offers another crucial detail, namely that the dandy is “a descendant of great ancestors ... ‘[T]he last shimmer of the heroic in times of decadence’” (Benjamin 1983, 96) – a description that is virtually identical to Dracula’s long talk about his own proud ancestors (*D* 35–37) and his disappointment at the present time of “dishonourable peace” (*D* 37).

So far in this section I have focused on *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. The former in particular deploys very familiar depictions of the sublime, such as vast natural vistas, while the latter introduces mixtures of pleasure and pain, terror and admiration, to create a characteristically sublime result. The sublime essence of *A Christmas Carol*, however, is of a somewhat different variety. In Dickens’s text there are no massive mountains, nor vast bodies of water. As Leavenworth argues, at the time of *A Christmas Carol* the sublime becomes “[d]ecoupled from infinite vistas” and materializes in ways closer to the individual (2012, 264). All the constituents are there: transcendence, inability to express or represent, and the eternal now. After all, if one traced those instances where Ebenezer Scrooge experiences a complete loss of the ability for representation, the conclusion would be clear: the old miser spends a good portion of the story being completely at loss for words. Infinity and vastness are still present, albeit in more abstract or subtle ways. An example is Scrooge’s encounter with the Ghost of Christmas Present, who tells the old man that it has more than eighteen hundred brothers, all older (*CC* 40). Not only is this an enormous number, but it comes as a direct contradiction to the Ghost’s appearance: although very young, his size is described as gigantic (*CC* 43). Nonetheless, the most intense sublime experiences in the text are related to temporality and to how Scrooge finds himself within a distorted spatio-temporal setting.

The element of vastness is also present there, through the concept of immortality. Scrooge’s first graspable encounter with the sublime is the sighting of Jacob Marley’s ghost. Still staring in disbelief at his old partner’s form, unable to make sense of it and distrusting his own perception, he hears that the ghost has been traveling incessantly. Marley cries, exclaiming “not to know, that ages of incessant labour by immortal creatures, for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed” (*CC* 20). Scrooge is visibly shaken, realizing the consequences for his own self. The experience with the timeless figure, as much as the thought of sharing the same fate, leave Scrooge unable to construct a proper reality, incapable of forming a representation of “the Invisible World” of which he was offered a glimpse (*CC* 22). The uncanny experience continues after the old man wakes up – although, it is not exactly the

next day. Scrooge is hopelessly confused, as he finds himself again enwrapped in darkness. He hears the bell striking twelve and he thinks the clock must be faulty. His inability to make sense of the situation is so great that he momentarily wonders whether there is rather something wrong with the sun and it is noon rather than midnight (CC 23). Essentially, for Scrooge time has stopped and he is trapped in an eternal present – the “chance and hope” for an alternative future that Marley’s ghost had warned of before (CC 21). The appearance of the first spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Past, is also replete with sublime associations. As I mentioned in section 5.1, the Spirit appears grotesque and formless, as a child *and* as an old man, fluctuating and shape-shifting (CC 24–25), becoming thus the very definition of something that is being beyond representation.

The second of the three spirits also displays similar sublime characteristics, as I mentioned above. Not surprisingly, however, it is the third Ghost, that of Christmas Yet to Come, which conveys the greatest sense of awe. The mysterious figure filling Scrooge with “a solemn dread” was “tall and stately”, and wore “a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand” (CC 58). Scrooge would have not been able to separate the spirit from the enveloping darkness without this detail, an element that is telling of the relation between the third spirit and representation (or lack thereof). For Scrooge, the third spirit is tautological with the formless dark surroundings, identical with the “Invisible World”. By that point, Scrooge is able to realize another sublime attribute of the third spirit. Besides inspiring “solemn dread” and awe, and eluding representation, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come also offers a glimpse at what might exist beyond the threshold. Scrooge is explicit on this matter: filled with “a vague uncertain horror”, he tells the Ghost that he fears it more than the others, but he is ready to be guided onwards, hoping “to live to be another man” (CC 58). To reach this hope, however, Scrooge must encounter the ultimate Gothic sublime, death itself.

Like the spirits before, the third spirit transports Scrooge to an alternative space-time. The old man realizes it is the future, although he struggles to make sense of it, feeling confused he cannot find his own self, his own instance in this alternative universe:

He looked about in that very place for his own image; but another man stood in his accustomed corner, and though the clock pointed to his usual time of day for being there, he saw no likeness of himself among the multitudes that poured in through the Porch. (CC 60)

For Scrooge, it is unthinkable to visualize the future without his own self in it. This reaches a breaking point when the Ghost shows Scrooge a grave. The old man

begins to realize what is happening, and he is too frightened to proceed. Before he looks at the tombstone, he demands that the spirit answers a question: “Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?” (CC 70). The dark, ever-silent figure remains immobile and continues to point at the grave. Scrooge insists and, at the verge of panic, tries to reassure himself: “Men’s courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead ... But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change” (CC 70). In the end, he musters up the courage to read the tombstone, discovering his own name. The realization of his own death is beyond his capacity to conceptualize, and he cries: “Am *I* that man who lay upon the bed?” (CC 70; emphasis in the original). Scrooge’s emphatic way of pronouncing “I”, as the italics in the text reveal, is characteristic of a man unable to grasp his own annihilation. The Gothic sublime finds an apt embodiment in this scene. Scrooge cannot stand to see his own demise and face his mortality, much like Dracula, who cannot see himself in the mirror and thus face his *immortality*. Death becomes “the always recurring/repeating presence that threatens the subject with the image of his or her own impossible representation” (Mishra 1994, 79). Scrooge, seeking to alter this impossible representation, becomes a synecdoche for the Gothic representation of reality in general: omnijective and synthetic, it becomes the sublime sense of something that, although essentially unrepresentable, is metaphysically felt to exist, as I will demonstrate in section 6.2.

6.2 Gothic Realities

Steven Hall’s 2007 *The Raw Shark Texts*, a postmodern Gothic story explicitly blurring the lines between fantasy and reality, contains a remarkable section in regard to memory: Eric Sanderson, the main character of the novel, suffering from what appears to be a rare form of amnesia, discovers a note from a previous instance of himself. It is a note from himself to himself regarding the act of remembering the *future*:

It isn’t just the past we remember, it’s the future too. Fifty per cent of memory is devoted not to what has already happened, but to what will happen next. Appointments, anniversaries, meetings, all the rolling engagements and plans, all the hopes and dreams and ambitions which make up any human life – we remember what we did and also what we *will* do. Only the knife edge of the present is ‘hard’ to

any degree. Past and future are things of the mind, and a mind can be changed.
(Hall 2007, 262; emphasis in the original)

What Eric Sanderson from the past tells to his future self, in quite explicit terms, is that only the indefinably small – “the knife edge” – present is connected to some sort of reality. Apart from this eternal now, future and past *alike* are subject to change and reinterpretation. The Gothic mode routinely deploys the motif of memory to reconstruct both past and future, and so to underline the omnijectivity of reality.

Following Todorov’s argumentation on the nature of the fantastic – and, for the purposes of this dissertation, the Gothic – ambiguity should be seen as a chief component of the mode. As a result, not only are the boundaries between the realistic and the fantastic blurred, but spaces are similarly occupied simultaneously by real human characters and creatures that can possibly be of supernatural origin. The Gothic engages in a discourse of fear by employing confusion, transgression, and porous thresholds that affect the human capacity to assess and define. Kelly Hurley assigns particular importance to this aspect of the Gothic, claiming that the process of defamiliarization distances the reader from “the threatening contents of the unconscious” by rendering them “phantasmic”, thus offering “a pleasurable catharsis” unattainable by purely realistic genres (2007, 197–198). Although I do not fully agree with Hurley that the Gothic offers catharsis – I would argue that the concepts of catharsis and distancing/defamiliarization are mutually exclusive – there is a valid point in relation to the unique advantage of the Gothic to stand between the two worlds, the realistic and the fantastic, the subjective and the objective, with the term “omnijective” being an apt approximation of the Gothic metaphysical landscape.

The process of reminiscence and (re)creation becomes graspable in the Gothic, as *Frankenstein*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Dracula* all portray. The practice of keeping journals and its great importance become self-evident in *Frankenstein* and particularly in *Dracula* due to their epistolary structure. At the same time, in these texts as well as in *A Christmas Carol*, the element of creation from one’s memory is very evident, both textually and metatextually. In the case of Dickens’s text, this kind of creation *ex nihilo* (or rather, *ex memoria*) reaches literal levels, as Scrooge’s imagination and memory are the fuel behind the creation of the scenes from his past. Inevitably, however, the constant reliance on memory underlines its very fallibility. Characters have their texts edited or altered altogether, and the final narrative contains little if any proof of validity. This fact, namely the inability to properly distinguish reality, is offered both subtly and explicitly. In *Frankenstein*, on more than one occasion Victor alludes to a distorted sense of time, which

effectively precludes the possibility of defining reality – as the grieving scientist admits, “[s]ix years had elapsed, passed as a dream” (F 61). In a particularly telling example, Victor describes his fear of meeting the creature in explicitly nightmarish words, affirming that his helplessness was much like a bad dream, as he felt unable to flee, simply being “rooted to the spot” (F 128).

The most powerful sense of loss of reality perception comes after Victor’s friend, Henry Clerval, is found dead. Victor mentions how everything “passed like a dream from [his] memory” (F 135), and a little later, while in prison, he insists saying “if it all be true, if indeed I did not dream” (F 136). Importantly, Victor clarifies he does not refer only to the sad occurrence of his friend’s death. Rather, he confesses that his entire life passed before his eyes like a dream, causing him to doubt whether any of it was real, “for it never presented itself to [his] mind with the force of reality” (F 136). Victor, while narrating his story to a Genevan magistrate, refers to it as “too connected to be mistaken for a dream” (F 152). This, however, only reinforces the exact opposite conclusion, considering the fragmentation of the narrative. In fact, the scene is eminently self-conflicting: the magistrate “both believes and disbelieves Frankenstein’s story ... [having] a negative legal response and a positive ‘readerly’ response. Like the novel, Victor Frankenstein’s tale is presented both as realism and as Gothic romance” (Joshua 2001, 279). The intermixing of reality and fantasy is something that becomes evident when Victor directly and with no hesitation describes how “reality” and dreams are all but reversed:

[I]t was during sleep alone that I could taste joy. O blessed sleep! often, when most miserable, I sank to repose, and my dreams lulled me even to rapture ... During the day I was sustained and inspirited by the hope of night: for in sleep I saw my friends, my wife, and my beloved country; again I saw the benevolent countenance of my father, heard the silver tones of my Elizabeth’s voice, and beheld Clerval enjoying health and youth. Often, when wearied by a toilsome march, I persuaded myself that I was *dreaming*, until night should come, and that I should then enjoy *reality* in the arms of my dearest friends. (F 156; my emphasis)

It is telling that, as far as Victor is concerned, time is essentially reversed, with day becoming night and night becoming day. Time and space lose any objective status, as Victor’s reality comprises the dream-like intermixing of various temporal instances and spatial locations.

The crucial element that should be underlined is that this lack of objectivity is essentially not compared to some other, “more objective” reality; there is no qualitative arrangement of “realities”, as narrative accounts and described experiences (whether “factual” or “dream-like”) essentially form the omnijective

cosmos of the novel. In other words, although readers – or, indeed, Walton – might *feel* convinced about their ability to distinguish objective truth from subjective dream-like experience, the novel in fact highlights the very opposite. Ultimately, there is nothing to be certain of, nothing to feel assured of, and no other reality but the one offered by sensory inputs or, metatextually speaking, narrations.

With regard to the temporal scheme of the novel, it is also worth emphasizing that it is not what it appears to be on the surface. Linearity is only seemingly maintained, although not entirely, as there are still flashbacks, narrative breaks, and foreshadowing. On a deeper level, however, the novel in its entirety rather reinforces a picture of cyclical time at work. As Brown argues, the temporality of *Frankenstein* is “disjunctive – intermittent or repetitious, without growth and gradual change” (2005, 190). In particular, it becomes apparent that the novel possesses neither a real beginning nor a true conclusion. Despite the somewhat cathartic demise of Victor Frankenstein – and possibly of the creature – there is little if any evidence that Victor’s story changes the world in any significant way in regard to the anxieties presented in the text. In many aspects, everything is exactly as it was. It is implied that Walton decides to take the example and subdue his exploratory desires, although this is little more than an assumption. Indeed, considering the absence of any concluding comment on his behalf that would reveal his intentions, his last words – “lost in darkness and distance” (*F* 170) – are all but ominous in view of his intentions. Besides, one of the very first things Walton reveals is his inability to “be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation” (*F* 13). Even Victor Frankenstein himself who, if anyone, should have learned something from his miseries, tells Walton in the very end that perhaps others might succeed where he has failed. In a way he thus reinforces the menacing motif of the inevitability of fate. Perhaps the most depressing realization this cyclical essence of the novel presents is that the world at large remains unaltered. If not this specific Walton, then some other “Walton” would surely undertake some similarly risky endeavor – and indeed has, based on our knowledge of historical reality in regard to polar exploration. Like the monster itself, the ending of *Frankenstein* appears inaccessible and unseeable. It is an ambiguous, blurred rendering of the sublime, “at the limit of the tellable [that] concludes irresolutely, even incoherently. The legitimating epistolary frame is not only forgotten but positively dissolved into legend” (Brown 2005, 199).

As I mentioned above, the process of (re)rendering reality from memory becomes literal in Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*. Scrooge, with the help of the three

spirits, reconstructs scenes that are spatio-temporally ambiguous. From Scrooge's perspective, the scenes defy a proper ontological categorization, as they stand between reality and fantasy. The old miser cannot dismiss them as mere dreams, and yet he realizes that the settings and the people populating them do not have the same weight of reality as, for instance, his nephew and the discussion they had before it all began. Much like in Talbot's definition of the omnijective, the reality Scrooge constructs might be a product of his psyche, but it is also quite real, at the very least in terms of affective power. It is perhaps useful to also consult F.H. Bradley's opinion on the matter of degrees in reality:

The Absolute is each appearance, and is all, but it is not any one as such. And it is not all equally, but one appearance is more real than another ... Nothing is perfect, as such, and yet everything in some degree contains a vital function of Perfection. Every attitude of experience, every sphere or level of the world, is a necessary factor in the Absolute ... [A]pppearance is error, if you will, but not every error is illusion. (1893, 487)

For the priorly unemotional old man, the space-time travels offered by the ghosts do become more real than "reality", in that they allow him to explore a previously dormant side of his self, that is his emotional response. In Scrooge's current situation, this aspect of reality does indeed contain a vital function, as described by F.H. Bradley, in that it offers the unique opportunity to examine the unrepresentable. Much like Verney in Shelley's *The Last Man*, who is offered the exceptional temporal perspective of examining human history in its entirety, Scrooge can access the truly sublime beyond, including his own death. Memory is present, not only as the building block of this synthetic, omnijective reality, but also in its ability to reinterpret and reform future and past alike. Effectively, by employing the time-travel motif, *A Christmas Carol* emphasizes the mutability of memory and hence "reality". Scrooge visits a past (and later a present) to which he already had epistemological access, at least to some extent. By re-membering past and "reality" from the perspective of the sublime eternal now, Scrooge acquires knowledge of the future or, as he hopes, of a future he is able to alter. In all effect, much like in Eric Sanderson's words in *The Raw Shark Texts*, Scrooge re-members the future as a result of his changing the past.

The text of *A Christmas Carol* is particularly concerned with the process of reality-rendering. Spaces literally create themselves into existence, as Scrooge and the last Spirit "scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act" (CC 59). As I mentioned in section 4.1, Scrooge's travel to the past is characteristically visual. As if in a dream, he sees scenes from his younger years in a disconnected kind of way.

The narrator describes how Scrooge and the Spirit, “[a]lthough they had but that moment left the school behind them, they were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city, where shadowy passengers passed and repassed” (CC 30). This discontinuous, instant transportation is unmistakably similar to that of a dream, and the visual elements shift and display an almost graspable animation. Spaces morph into new ones, and characters shape-shift in a way that is very familiar to someone from our era – an era of digitally-rendered computer animations. Even before the emergence of computer graphics, the famous Soviet Russian film director and theorist, Sergei Eisenstein, referred to Dickens’s works as “cinema’s predecessors”, as a result of his use of visual effects (Jaffe 1994, 254).

Furthermore, besides the emphasis placed on the very process of creating reality, the text explicitly underlines how fallacious our perception ultimately is. Seeing Jacob Marley’s ghost, Scrooge doubts his own eyes. Not surprisingly, the scene begins with an accentuated temporal distortion: a long-forgotten bell begins to swing and ring, synchronizing every other bell in the house to do the same. The incredible event “might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour”, and eventually all bells stop together (CC 17). Right afterwards, as the old man sees the ghost of his former business partner, he insists on disbelief. Marley senses that, and challenges Scrooge:

“You don’t believe in me,” observed the Ghost.

“I don’t,” said Scrooge.

“What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?”

“I don’t know,” said Scrooge.

“Why do you doubt your senses?”

“Because,” said Scrooge, “a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There’s more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!” (CC 18)

Even later on, as Scrooge wakes up, he struggles to properly assess the situation. He sees darkness again and as the clock strikes twelve, he deems it impossible he could have slept through a whole day. Time is completely distorted, and Scrooge is trapped in an eternal now. He feels a sense of terror at the thought of this fact, and his sense of reality is compromised. More importantly, however, he feels unable to properly separate reality from dreaming:

Scrooge went to bed again, and thought, and thought, and thought it over and over and over, and could make nothing of it. The more he thought, the more perplexed

he was; and the more he endeavoured not to think, the more he thought ... Every time he resolved within himself, after mature inquiry, that it was all a dream, his mind flew back again, like a strong spring released, to its first position, and presented the same problem to be worked all through, 'Was it a dream or not?' (CC 23–24)

The greatest source of terror and awe for Scrooge is his inability to make sense of the situation, to either accept it as a fact, or dismiss it as a dream. His is a problem of failing reason and logic, a conclusion that assigns sublime qualities to his quandary. Scrooge is faced with the unrepresentable, temporally caught in the undefined eternal present. Facing “an event which cannot be explained by the laws of the same familiar world” (Todorov 1973, 25), he is unable to dismiss it as mere illusion, yet also unwilling to immediately accept it as supernatural and reassess the reality of the world. Scrooge is stuck in the ambiguous area of uncertainty.

The importance of memory as a tool for what amounts to reality rendering is also made explicit in *Dracula*, as Mina mentions to Lucy that “with a little practice, one can remember all that goes on or that one hears said during the day” (D 62), an ability that is proven vital later on. Although this element alone could be a strong enough basis for underlining the importance of memory, the text goes far beyond that. It creates a set of motifs that are not only related to temporality, but are also pertinent to the fabric of reality, thus undermining the authority and validity of the text even further, in a characteristic modernist approach. The occasions of memory loss begin early on for the characters. Jonathan, arriving at Dracula’s castle, suffers what appears to be a severe case of amnesia, as he claims “I must have been asleep, for certainly if I had been *fully* awake I must have noticed the approach to such a remarkable place” (D 21; my emphasis). Not only is Jonathan unsure of whether he noticed the approach or not, but his words imply that he is unsure of whether this was a result of dreaming or memory loss – hence his words “fully awake”. This realization echoes the events of the approach itself when Jonathan conveniently explains the recurrence of the incident as a dream (D 19). Jonathan’s persistence on rationalizing his experiences as dreams continues later, as he refers to everything appearing like “a horrible nightmare” (D 22). One exception comes at a point when, for a fleeting moment, he wonders whether a dream would be worse than “the unnatural, horrible net of gloom and mystery” that has entrapped him (D 40).

Jonathan’s reference not to Count Dracula directly but to the space itself is interesting. Dracula himself claims that the castle “is old, and has many memories”, containing “bad dreams for those who sleep unwisely” (D 40), a suggestion connecting space with experience in a rather Bakhtinian fashion, as “[t]he

unfinished and open body ... is not separated from the world by clearly defined boundaries; it is blended with the world, with animals, with objects” (Bakhtin 1984, 26–27). Count Dracula’s warning about the castle’s memories implies that traumatic experiences can leave material residue. It is worth noting that the porosity between self and environment was well analyzed in the late Victorian period:

William James describes clothes, furniture, and collections of personal property as extensions of the body that form the “innermost part of the material Self” (1: 292) ... Samuel Butler also described clothes and possessions as components of human identity in his controversial 1878 speculation on memory and heredity entitled *Life and Habit* ... Butler understands this interrelation [between individuals and the material world] as a testament to the permeable boundaries of individual personality. (Vrettos 2007, 200)

In essence, what Jonathan is subjected to is not necessarily merely the loss of his own memory, sense of reality, or perception of temporality, but also the projection of Dracula’s own understanding and experiencing of these elements, channeled through the spatial surroundings that are replete with the Count’s memories. Dracula goes as far as to claim that “to live in a new house would kill me. A house cannot be made habitable in a day”, not failing to mention “how few days go to make up a century” (*D* 30) – a quick, witty comment that Jonathan fails to understand at that time. The Count’s revelation, although quickly forgotten, also explains his limitations when traveling away from his castle.

Jonathan’s amnesiac, dream-like experiencing continues when he ventures outside his assigned room. He imagines being in the same room where “ladies had sat and sung and lived sweet lives” (*D* 44). Soon, however, the ensuing horrors compel him to write “I suppose I must have fallen asleep; I hope so, but I fear ... I cannot in the least believe that it was *all* sleep” (*D* 44; my emphasis). Once again, Jonathan undermines his own conclusions by refusing to say all were real or none were real, and opting for the middle ground of some events perhaps being real and some perhaps not, without elaborating further. Once again, the Gothic effect is produced by the ambiguous balancing between illusion and supernatural events.

Descriptions of events and experiences appearing like dreams, half-dreams, or other reveries in-between reality and illusion pervade the text, particularly in close proximity to Count Dracula or somehow related to his actions or essence. When Mina chases Lucy in the night, she narrates in vivid terms what can be perceived as a dream, not only because of the gloomy images and the eerie stillness, but particularly because of her words “I must have gone fast, and yet, it seemed to me as if my feet were weighted with lead, and as though every joint in my body were

rusty” (D 101), an accurate description of a dream, virtually identical to ones by other writers.⁴⁸ In the days following that night, Mina continues to refer to Lucy’s state as “half-dreamy” (D 105), adding that Lucy was talking in “a half-dreaming kind of way”, with the noteworthy speculation that this was because she was attempting “to recall it to herself” (D 108).

The motifs of dreaming and remembering – or lack thereof – intermingle continuously throughout the text. Soon after Dracula’s attack on Lucy, Mina departs to meet Jonathan, mentioning later in her letter to Lucy “I can hardly recall anything of the journey”, not failing to add that Jonathan himself “does not remember anything that has happened to him for a long time past” (D 114). More importantly, Mina seems to suffer the same kind of amnesia after her own encounter with Count Dracula, as she admits she cannot remember how she fell asleep (D 274), repeating again later on “I do not remember anything until the morning, when Jonathan woke me” (D 275). An additional detail is her references to what appears to be sleep paralysis – defined as a condition in which the person “is unable to move voluntary muscles (except respiratory muscles) for a period ranging from several seconds to several minutes”⁴⁹ – containing also a comment on the slowness the time seemed to pass: “I was powerless to act; my feet, and my hands, and my brain were weighted, so that nothing could proceed at the usual pace” (D 275).

In a novel like *Dracula*, presented as a collection of edited and adapted narrations, memory invariably acquires critical importance, as the flow of reliable information is essential for defeating Count Dracula. Consequently, any instance of memory loss in the text is viewed as a hindrance, and – particularly due to its association with Dracula’s actions – as something to be suspicious of. This is presented quite explicitly when Jonathan goes to meet Thomas Snelling and Joseph Smollet, the persons responsible for carrying Dracula’s boxes. The former “was not in a condition to remember anything”, as he had already begun “his expected debauch”, while the latter, “a decent, intelligent fellow ... remembered all about the incident of the boxes” (D 278). Incidentally, Jonathan receives information about Smollet from Snelling’s wife, “a decent, poor soul” (D 278). Furthermore, Mina refers to a journalist who had informed Jonathan that “memory was everything in such work” (D 194).

⁴⁸ Clark mentions that “[i]t is hard work to *run* in a dream ... Some horrid weight hangs to one’s feet” (1844, 66; emphasis in the original).

⁴⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Sleep”.

Professor Van Helsing, however, complicates matters by telling Dr. Seward “[r]emember, my friend, knowledge is stronger than memory” (*D* 130). This paradoxical statement – as Van Helsing basically asks from Dr. Seward to *remember* that he should not trust the act of *remembering* – effectively connects memory, temporality, and qualitative assessments. The problem for Van Helsing is that, as knowledge and time are inseparable, when he attempts to disassociate knowledge from memory, he cannot do the same for knowledge and temporality. Books are a source but they do not suffice, and Van Helsing acknowledges that “the proof of our own unhappy experience” (*D* 252) is required, as Eleni Coundouriotis argues:

Consequently, time and experience license the revision of the written record. The same documentary operation that establishes knowledge erases memory ... In contrast to Van Helsing’s obsession with controlling time, the Count has no control of time. Overwhelmed with the implications of long, historical time, the Count haunts the characters in the novel, subverting their effort to valorize only contemporaneity. (2000, 146)

Not only is Count Dracula living in an eternal present, essentially as a result of his timelessness, but as *Dracula* is a text which is presented as a multi-dimensional alloy of individual and hence subjective instances of knowledge and memory, the realization that these are dependent on temporality places an additional strain on the already weakened foundation of narrative authority and objective truth.

It becomes apparent that Jonathan’s, Lucy’s, and Mina’s amnesiac spells that I have described so far are all connected not only with Dracula but, in particular, with the consequences of the threat posed by the Count, real in the case of Lucy and Mina, and unrealized, with the three female vampires as Dracula’s proxy, in the case of Jonathan. A number of psychoanalytic readings of *Dracula* focus on these issues – particularly examining “the hysterical discourse ... embodied by the two brides, Lucy Westenra and Mina Murray” (Byron 1999, 57) – but I argue for another interpretation, based on temporality and what I referred to in chapter 2 as the Victorians’ despair in relation to their place in time and history. Indeed, the key element is the motif of recurrence. Acknowledging Dracula as a temporal Other, the text presents three main temporal threats, each with its own temporal repercussions. As Freud mentions in his eponymous essay, “the uncanny [*unheimlich*] is something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-beimisch*], which has undergone repression and then returned from it” (Freud 2002, 245), also underlining the importance of recurrence-repetition, arguing that “[it] does undoubtedly, subject to certain conditions and combined with certain circumstances, arouse an uncanny feeling, which, furthermore, recalls the sense of helplessness experienced in some dream states” (2002, 236–237). Elmessiri offers

as a possible source for the uncanny the fact that Count Dracula returns as a distorted Christ figure (1994, 112), but I would argue that the temporal elements are significantly stronger. On a textual level, the incessant repetition of loss of memory is a signifier of repressed memories and ideas pertinent to temporality. The uncanny repletion of *Dracula* with misplaced memories and amnesiac states is symptomatic of the uncertainty and anxiety in regard to time experienced by British society in the late nineteenth century. This anxiety is directly connected with issues of temporal significance, that is, the perception of one's place in history regarding origins as well ultimate destiny. The concepts of time, history, and progress underwent a major ideological reshuffle during the nineteenth century. However, the desolation and disillusionment of the *fin de siècle* period particularly contributed to a cultural discourse that included doubt, confusion, and conflict, and *Dracula* participates in this discourse as a text that stands on the timeless chasm between one world and another.

While the Crew of Light attempts a metaphysical explanation of the undead Count, Van Helsing offers an intriguing detail: the victims of a vampire are released from the curse once their creator ceases to exist. This assumption, proven true later on when the killing of the undead Lucy removes the vampiric curse from the children she had bitten, raises a number of important questions related to Count Dracula's own vampiric nature and, in particular, his pre-vampiric existence. Van Helsing only mentions some scattered pieces of information – themselves rather unreliable, as they are based on folklore and given to Van Helsing from his friend Arminius – about Count Dracula being “that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk” (*D* 256). There is not even a hint, however, as to how or why Count Dracula became a vampire originally. The possibility that he was the proto-vampire should be excluded, as Van Helsing speaks of vampires in ancient times, in Greece and Rome (*D* 254). Therefore, it is valid to suppose that Count Dracula himself was the victim of another vampire, a point that the text conveniently ignores almost entirely with the only exception of Mina – who, as mentioned earlier, profanely affirms that Count Dracula is to be pitied, too.⁵⁰ It becomes particularly interesting that Mina's transformation is conveniently implied to be a result of Dracula's attack. Actually, however, it can be noticed even prior to it, namely a couple of days earlier, on September the 30th, when she writes in her

⁵⁰ Coppola's film offers another interpretation that circumnavigates the problem of a creator vampire. The film implies that Count Dracula becomes a vampire as a result of blasphemy against God and the cross. Perhaps a rather weak suggestion which, however, introduces the notion of *hamartia* – that is, in a dramatic context, a protagonist's error or flaw – and hence alludes to Count Dracula being a tragic hero.

journal that “one ought to pity any thing so hunted as is the Count” (*D* 243). This and a number of other, increasingly disconcerting habits for a proper Victorian woman, such as writing and especially editing men’s texts, come back to bite her, if the pun may be allowed. Ineluctably, the process of her transformation is filled with temporal innuendos, as Count Dracula’s presence alters the passing of time. Mina describes how “[n]ot a thing seemed to be stirring, but all to be grim and fixed as death or fate” (*D* 274), while in a later entry she says that she is not sure “[h]ow long this horrible thing lasted ... but it seemed that a long time must have passed” (*D* 306).

It is important to note that in these instances Mina’s general sense of reality is compromised. Characteristically, she claims that she cannot remember with certainty how she fell asleep (*D* 274), repeating again later on “I do not remember anything until the morning, when Jonathan woke me”, also, importantly, referring to dreams and their connection to thoughts becoming “merged in” them (*D* 275). The connection between Dracula and dream states is more than a temporal one, as Punter argues:

[B]oth are night phenomena which fade away in the light of day, both are considered in mythological systems to be physically weakening, both promise – and perhaps deliver – an unthinkable pleasure which cannot sustain the touch of reality. Also the vampire, like the dream, can provide a representation of sexual liberation *in extremis*, indulgence to the point of death. (1980, 118–119; emphasis in the original)

Punter refers to “the light of day” and “the touch of reality”, but it would be misleading to assume an objective reality in *Dracula*, not the least so because of its narrative structure which essentially precludes an objective reality in any case. That is of course emphasized greatly by the fact that the novel is replete with dreams, trance states, memories (whether of actual or imagined events), and even substances that influence such states – Van Helsing prepares a narcotic for Lucy, although “time seemed endless until sleep began to flicker in her eyelids” (*D* 132).

Furthermore, arguably one of the key concepts in the novel – as much as in *Frankenstein* and *A Christmas Carol* – is the rather postmodern insinuation that reality and truth are merely a construct, much as dreams and altered states are ontologically similar to ostensibly hard reality. The inseparability of dreams from actuality places the Gothic in an omnijjective framework where no version of reality is offered priority but, rather, different versions coexist as superimpositions of possibilities. This quality possesses clearly sublime features: it entails the inability of representation and it “drastically undermines the coherence of one’s self” (Leavenworth 2012, 264); it also removes temporal linearity and places emphasis on the eternal present, the “here and now” of experiencing; finally, it introduces a

mixture of awe and fear that is connected to the uncanny-sublime, with the unrepresentable alluding to both (Mishra 1994, 76). In fact, there is a very particular instance of the uncanny-sublime, directly related to the construction of reality, which merits further examination: the concept of the so-called *Uncanny Valley* (Angelis 2014, 18).

The term “Uncanny Valley”, coined by the robotics researcher Masahiro Mori, refers to the hypothesis that there is a sharp drop (a “valley”, when imagined as a graph) in feelings of empathy and familiarity inspired by non-human entities as these become more human-like in appearance, manners, and movement (Liu 2010, 225). So, a figure that is almost but not totally human-like, will be seen as more upsetting than one which is more clearly artificial. The concept is highly relevant in the field of robotics and digital technology, but as the name implies there is a direct connection with Freud’s research and, as I argue, is highly pertinent in Gothic studies as well. It is important to underline the fact that the Uncanny Valley is not a fear based on a threatening Other. Rather, the feeling of uneasiness originates from the realization that the Other approaches the threshold of inseparability with one’s self. Applying the concept of ambiguity as I have done so far in this dissertation, one could construe this uneasiness in terms of Todorovian uncertainty: To meet with an almost but not totally human-like entity implies a difficulty or outright inability to properly distinguish between the human and the monstrous. Even aggressive non-human entities do not inspire this uncanny kind of eeriness if they are distinctly non-human. However, even visibly friendly human-like creatures can cause intensely negative reactions.

Among the large pool of possible explanations for the phenomenon, the ones that are more related to the Gothic revolve around existential fears, particularly those related with death, the ultimate unrepresentable. As MacDorman and Ishiguro argue, beings that appear human but have artificial innards elicit the subconscious human fear of us all being mere machines without a soul.⁵¹ Furthermore, the mechanical movement of such a creature underlines the subconscious fear of losing bodily control (MacDorman and Ishiguro: 2006, 313). In addition, MacDorman and Ishiguro refer to Rozin’s theory of disgust, to explain that creatures that are distinctively non-human will not appear threatening in terms of contagious diseases, as their genetic makeup is subconsciously understood as excessively different. Conversely, significantly human-like beings will not only

⁵¹ In this context it would also be useful to recall Kayser’s term *puppet play* in relation to the grotesque: “the unity of perspective in the grotesque consists in an unimpassioned view of life on earth as an empty, meaningless puppet play or a caricatural marionette theatre” (Kayser 1981, 186).

appear as possible threats, but their differences can also be subconsciously construed as symptoms of infection and illness (2006, 312).

Both the aforementioned factors are at play in *Dracula* (as much as in *Frankenstein*) where the discourse of contagion goes hand-in-hand with that of soulless creatures, “a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons” (*D* 60) threatening to multiply uncontrollably. That, however, is only the surface of the matter. What is the *true* cause of the characters’ alarm is their inability to establish a grip on objective reality. The conflict or outright contradiction between, on the one hand, the apogee of Victorian technology and reason, and, on the other hand, the superstition surrounding *Dracula* (and Van Helsing’s methods as well), further underlines the fact that the world of *Dracula* is a world that is neither objective nor subjective, but omnijective. Consequently, it is placed firmly at the bottom of the Uncanny Valley.

In Francis Ford Coppola’s film, perhaps more evidently than in the novel, much of the consternation surrounding the events of the first act (both in Transylvania and in England, with Lucy falling mysteriously ill), is emphatically portrayed as an epistemological failure, with apparent sublime features. The characters are not alarmed by what is happening to them, but by their inability to know what it is and their difficulty or inability to neatly categorize it as illusion or not. Arguably, therefore, the greatest source of fear in the novel is ultimately the lack of differentiation between reality and dreams. Punter makes the connection explicit, as I mentioned before, arguing that both *Dracula* and dream states are “night phenomena which fade away in the light of day” (1980, 118). Similar conclusions can be drawn for *Frankenstein* and *A Christmas Carol*, where, as I argued, the inability to differentiate between reality and dreams becomes unbearable for Scrooge, since it is displayed as a failure of reason and a peak of the unrepresentable sublime. As such, the placement of the experiencer and the experience in a sublime eternal present emphasizes the omnijectivity of Gothic realities. This element acquires further complexity once one takes into account another level of temporal expression: that between the text and other texts, with the reader as the link between them.

6.3 Gothic Metatextuality

The epistolary structure is a literary device that is used often in the Gothic. It has also become a way to distort time, space, and ultimately reality, on the metatextual level. In *Frankenstein*, for example, the text clearly draws attention to itself and the way it organizes time. Flashbacks, complicated dates and time frames that are dependent on other time frames, all construct a giant temporal puzzle, “a discourse of time references whose referents are destabilized when the reader attempts to discover how they fit together” (Joshua 2001, 281). As Brown argues, although the novel is seemingly presented as a consistent, linear story with a beginning and an ending, in reality this is only an illusion and the plot is devoid of continuity (2005, 190). Ultimately, *Frankenstein* is more about expression rather than representation and, much like the monstrosity itself, it “grips by virtue of its ungraspability” (Brown 2005, 183).

Obviously, at the same time a number of other implications emerge: as the text lacks historical reference, it introduces the motif of immortality. What is also worth noting is the realization that the text, by being autoreferential and aware of itself as a literary product, challenges its own authority. This acquires particular meaning in the Gothic dialectics of reality and fantasy. Wilkie Collins’s 1860 *Woman in White* is a characteristic example of such lack of authority. In Collins’s novel, the writer explains that the narration will be offered by the characters as they know it, just as in a Court of law a story is described by many witnesses, and it is up to the reader to “become both judge and jury, and [to] decide, as in a lawcourt, the truth or otherwise of the tales told” (Hindle 2003, xxxi).

In addition, Gothic texts regularly display a connection to other texts, especially Gothic ones, both as means to self-reference, but also to facilitate a certain temporal association. *Dracula* refers to a number of Shakespearean works, to Samuel Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*, and to John Keats’s “La Belle Dame sans Merci”, among others. Under these allusions exists a vast, complex network of interconnected meanings. These metatextual beacons create a connection of any given Gothic narrative with its tradition, at the same time perhaps assigning new meaning to its predecessors, much like Jorge Luis Borges’s claim in “Kafka and His Precursors”, where he compares Kafka’s work to some older texts:

Kafka’s idiosyncrasy, in greater or lesser degree, is present in each of these writings, but if Kafka had not written we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not

exist ... The fact is that each writer *creates* his precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. (1964, 108; emphasis in the original)

In many ways, the Gothic seems to be ontologically aware of itself, and on many occasions the term “meta-Gothic” could be employed to describe texts that “[reflect] upon the meaning of Gothic conventions, disclosing the points of connection between genre and discourse” (Miles 1993, 96).

The nullification of role assignments and separation mentioned in the third chapter – that is, participants of medieval festivities being at the same time spectators, both writers and “readers” – translates into the Gothic in remarkable ways. The continuous allusion to the act of writing/reading becomes an essential aspect of the metatextual Gothic essence. This fact becomes more apparent considering the (post)modern influences that the passage of time has brought to the Gothic mode. In any case, and beyond existing literary boundaries, the Gothic essence in general is strongly metatextual, and as a result it exists in a constant state of flux and literary doubt, occasionally even as a pastiche of other genres. What makes the Gothic postmodern in nature is this very act of skepticism, on textual as well as metatextual levels. In *Dracula*, a novel that constantly underlines the fact that it is a literary product, on more than one level, this is made almost explicit. The character of Professor Van Helsing claims “[w]e have been blind somewhat; blind after the manner of men, since when we can look back we see what we might have seen looking forward if we had been able to see what we might have seen!” (*D* 333). In this enigmatic phrase, Van Helsing essentially describes the processes associated with the act of reading:

The reader is always looking backward as well as forward, actively restructuring the past in light of each new bit of information ... Assumptions about causality lead to conjectures about the future; at the same time, the facts of the present lead to the construction of new retrospective causal chains ... We read events forward (the beginning will cause the end) and meaning backward (the end, once known, causes us to identify its beginning). (Martin 1986, 127)

What this ultimately means is that Van Helsing and his party are at the same time actors, readers, and ultimately writers of the very story in which they partake.

This postmodern approach has been proven to be as immortal as Count Dracula himself. Wendy Doniger mentions that “[a]ctors playing actors playing self-imitating vampires have had a long run in Hollywood” (2005, 19), with Neil Jordan’s *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), an adaptation of Anne Rice’s novel, being a prime example. In the characteristically postmodern “Theatre Des Vampires” scene, where vampires perform in front of an audience comprised of humans, the character of Louis notices that what he sees is “vampires pretending to be humans

pretending to be vampires”. At the core of this observation, the implied question is to what extent fiction and reality are separated, if at all. It is pertinent to remember that, according to Roland Barthes, “the first actors separated themselves from the community by playing the role of the Dead: to make oneself up was to designate oneself as a body simultaneously living and dead” (Wiseman 1989, 138). There is more, however: this Hegelian hybridization, the synthesis of contradiction *in extremis*, is applicable in more direct temporal terms as well, related to the eternal now. Barthes, in fact, explicitly acknowledged the essential identification between reading and writing, arguing that “the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text ... there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*” (qtd. in West-Pavlov 2013, 9; emphasis in the original).

I mentioned above how the self-referential essence of the Gothic challenges its own authority and, by association, also undermines both temporal cohesion and continuity, as much as reality in general. This pseudo-dichotomy between reality and fantasy or waking-life consciousness and dreams is portrayed very often in the Gothic. Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821) is a prime example in which the author “strives to speak the unspeakable language of the dream” (Thomas 1990, 100). Indeed, the text is virtually replete with descriptions of and references to altered states of consciousness, such as dreams, visions, and delusions. De Quincey talks of a “tremendous scenery” that populates the dreams of an addicted person (2006, 12), as much as “the phantasmagoria of ... dreams” (2006, 13). According to some researchers, *Confessions* also includes the description of what would today be called a Near-Death Experience (Talbot 1996, 249), as De Quincey mentions an incident in which a close relative fell into a river and very nearly died:

[S]he saw in a moment her whole life, in its minutest incidents, arrayed before her simultaneously as in a mirror; and she had a faculty developed as suddenly for comprehending the whole and every part. This, from some opium experiences of mine, I can believe. (2006, 157)

De Quincey’s text, besides being rich in such descriptions, also does not fail to refer to the distortion of time accompanied by such experiences and distorted consciousness:

The sense of space, and in the end the sense of time, were both powerfully affected. Building, landscapes, &c., were exhibited in proportions so vast as the bodily eye is not fitted to receive. Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable infinity. This, however, did not disturb me so much as the vast expansion of time; I sometimes seemed to have lived for 70 or 100 years in one night – nay, sometimes

had feelings representative of a millennium passed in that time, or, however, of a duration far beyond the limits of any human experience. (2006, 156)

The scene contains sublime features, as the author describes the vastness of both space and time. In fact, he refers to temporal infinity being more disturbing than the spatial one. Timelessness becomes reality, a reality transcendental and sublime, defying representation. Mishra refers to De Quincey's infinite dreams mentioning the Kantian colossal, "a means of containing, limiting (and yet releasing) the horrors of 'splendid dreams'" (1994, 226).

The undermining of reality is facilitated through a plethora of narrating spheres also in *Frankenstein*. The structure of the novel, which is based on viewpoints and narrations within narrations, becomes a method not unlike the very process of reminiscence itself. In the opening of the novel, that is, in the letters written by Robert Walton and addressed to his sister, there are already several instances that subtly hint at what is to follow. Firstly, there is Walton remembering the past time in his life in which he "became a poet, and for one year lived in a Paradise of [his] own creation" (F 14). This clearly resonates with the other references to paradise and heaven found in the letter – and, obviously, with the quotation from *Paradise Lost* that opens the novel – but it also offers an association with the concept of creation. Paired with the reference to poetry, there is a parallel formed between poetry, science, and the Divine, which is distinctly present. Essentially, the three are considered if not identical, at least analogous; three aspects of the same essence, that is, the process of creating a new world and populating it with new characters, new norms, and new expectations for the future. Another detail that is worth noticing is the way Walton signs his three letters. The first reads "R. Walton" (F 15), the second "Robert Walton" (F 18), and the third "R.W." (F 19), perhaps a sign of Robert Walton's feelings of confusion and distress about the future of his expedition. On one occasion he feels confident and on another pessimistic, as if he were each time a different person. There is also a fourth letter, left unsigned. In fact, it is not quite finished either, as it shape-shifts into Victor's narration, thus interjecting the first of the many narrative circles enclosed in the novel.

It is important to realize the temporal implications of this structure. The novel is presented through a finite series of narrative sequences: Walton's narration contains Victor's, which contains the creature's, which indirectly contains the narration of the De Lacey family, living in the cottage where the creature sought refuge (F 94). However, the subtle but evident fact is that there is the potential for an infinite series of narrations. In a sense, the novel thus hints at the potential vastness of story-telling itself, rendering the very act of its reality-construction as a sublime experience. Such an outcome – reminiscent of Scheherazade's never-

ending stories – ultimately underlines the inability to properly map a complete story in a traditional, objective way. In such a scheme time essentially loses its meaning. Furthermore, reality as it would be generally understood also becomes distorted. Any hint at authoritative narration is lost, and there is very little that can be construed as something approaching “objective” reality. There is gradually more and more subjectivity as the narration enfolds into deeper layers, as the narrators shift. Ultimately, the reader is told almost explicitly “to question the accounts offered” (Jansson 1999, xiv), the implication being that there are additional elements that have been left out. Matters become more complicated by the fact that even an individual’s own narration is tampered with, as Victor partially edits Walton’s notes (F 160). In addition, Walton has no direct access to the creature’s story, and the creature brings this to his attention when they meet near the end, effectively also offering a revision:

‘You, who call Frankenstein your friend, seem to have a knowledge of my crimes and his misfortunes. But in the detail which he gave you of them he could not sum up the hours and months of misery which I endured, wasting in impotent passions.
(F 169)

This is directly connected with what Jansson argues, namely that the novel invites the reader to be suspicious in regard to objectivity in its entirety. These homocentric narrative circles are much like a reality within a reality, a dream within a dream.

The cyclical time scheme of the novel, the notion of repetition, is reinforced by the ample use of allusion. *Frankenstein* is replete with references to well-known works, a fact that facilitates temporal manipulation. In fact, this kind of metatextual timelessness functions as a self-feeding mechanism: the more the metatextual links, the more pronounced the importance of temporality. At the same time, however, the importance of these temporal motifs renders the references to other works all the more significant. Perhaps the most explicit example of these works would be Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. It opens the novel, with the striking “Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay/ To mould Me man? Did I solicit thee/ From darkness to promote me? (*Paradise Lost*, X, 743–45. Qtd. in F 11).⁵² Obviously enough, there is a variety of elements from *Paradise Lost* that echo in *Frankenstein*, such as the theme of creation – particularly the connection between creators and their creations – but also the theme of knowledge. Indeed, I argue that in *Frankenstein* the latter is at least as important as the former.

⁵² As I mentioned before, Walton’s concluding words, “lost in darkness and distance” (F 170), essentially complete the cycle.

The novel keeps returning to the issue of knowledge and its connection with the quality of life. Much as in *Paradise Lost*, with the tree of knowledge, there are direct, dire consequences for all the characters of *Frankenstein* who seek knowledge. The creature is explicit in regard to that: “Increase of knowledge only discovered to me more clearly what a wretched outcast I was” (F 101). Indeed, knowledge is clearly seen by the creature as a burden, as he describes how his sorrow increased along with knowledge, and how sometimes he wished to “shake off all thought and feeling”, adding, pessimistically, that he realized the only escape to overcome pain was death (F 93). It is a noteworthy detail that *Paradise Lost* is one of the books the creature reads that lead to his increase of knowledge (F 100) – a subtle hint at the complex metatextual dynamics involved in *Frankenstein*. I argue that the motif of knowledge is intrinsically linked to the Gothic mode, as it is connected with the characters’ or readers’ potential capacity to escape uncertainty and take either the path of the supernatural or of the temporary illusion of the senses (Todorov 1973, 25). As a result, to know means to be aware, a process that in some Gothic works transcends the threshold of “inner reality”, that is the mind, to become a part of the “outer reality”. It is not surprising, then, that epistemological failures form the core of Gothic fear. As I mentioned in section 6.2, both Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* and the Crew of Light in *Dracula* seem occasionally more alarmed by their inability to reasonably assess reality than by whatever dangers surround them.

In regard to the motif of creation in *Frankenstein*, it is important to notice the fluid meanings of themes, as much as the roles of the characters themselves. The theme of creation transcends the literal role of creation as an act of formation of life, as in the case of God/Adam or Frankenstein/creature. Indeed, the narrative structure of *Frankenstein* leaves no doubt that creation is also highly relevant on a metaphorical level, as an act of creation of text. To make matters more complicated still, this metaphorical creation exists on multiple levels: the characters of *Frankenstein* are writers/creators, but, in the world outside the novel, Mary Shelley is the writer/creator of them all.⁵³ In this nexus of metatextual connections, temporality is split onto many parallel levels. When Victor partially edits Walton’s manuscript, the choice of words that both use is telling. Walton mentions how Frankenstein gave “life and spirit” to the text, while the scientist justifies his corrections by saying “I would not that a *mutilated* [narration] should go down to

⁵³ One could make a rather convincing argument about the existence of yet *another* level of conception. Mary Shelley, in her introduction, claims that *Frankenstein* was a product of her imagination, which “unbidden, possessed and guided [her] ... with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie” (F 4).

posterity” (F 160; my emphasis). As Joshua affirms (2001, 280), it is only fitting that the language describing their act of writing employs terms related to the literal creation of the creature. Importantly, Shelley herself describes her work as a “hideous progeny” (F 5). Furthermore, the roles of the characters of the novel are intermixed and interconnected in such a way that not only do the initial roles cease to exist (indeed, it is debatable whether we can use the term “initial”), but also the ultimate conclusion is that these roles are interchangeable, while time becomes transcendental and reality loses its absolute meaning. Although Victor is the creator of the creature, the latter is no less a “creator” of Victor, as the driving force behind Victor’s subsequent actions. In addition, he considers Victor his slave and himself the master (F 128). Walton is similarly an aspiring creator – of new lands and a new world. Obviously, they are all authors of various contributions to the whole.

In regard to *Paradise Lost*, there is an additional element that I should mention: the rather peculiar dialogue between Victor and the creature. When they first meet, at the top of the mountain – a space connected with the sublime, perhaps also carrying biblical connotations – their use of personal pronouns is revealing of the religious overtones. Initially Victor uses “you” to refer to the creature. The latter, despite his eloquence and coherent expression, uses “you” and “thou” interchangeably, without any apparent reason. Victor mimics the usage, continuing with “thou” and “you” within the same utterance. The dialogue continues as such (F 77). It is certainly puzzling that such an evidently random usage of these pronouns should happen. The fact that they were obsolete in the Standard English of the late-eighteenth century enhances the connection with *Paradise Lost* and the religious emotional dynamics involved. The incongruity and confusion is temporal as well, as the language effectively connects two worlds that are apart.

Frankenstein also features several allusions to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s works, mostly *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (F 18; F 47). An admittedly not very apparent connection could be found with Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan*. As Victor and the creature continue their dialogue on the top of the mountain, the creature speaks of “the caves of ice”, which only he does not fear (F 78). It is certainly attractive to link this with Coleridge’s poem: “It was a miracle of rare device, / A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!” (35–36). Both the poem itself as much as the story behind it, are certainly very relevant to the process of imaginative, even subconscious creation.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ In the introductory note of the poem, the author describes how its inception occurred during an opium-induced reverie.

One more metatextual connection worth noting is the one linking *Frankenstein* with *Hamlet*. Soon after Justine is executed, Victor laments her loss (and William's as well) exclaiming: "Thus spoke my prophetic soul, as, torn by remorse, horror, and despair" (F 70), echoing *Hamlet* I.v.40–41. Due to sheer proximity, it is impossible to ignore Victor's following words, opening chapter nine:

Nothing is more painful to the human mind, than, after the feelings have been worked up by a quick succession of events, the dead calmness of *inaction* and certainty which follows, and deprives the soul both of hope and fear ... [A] weight of despair and remorse pressed on my heart, which nothing could remove. (F 70; my emphasis)

Victor clearly identifies himself with Hamlet and fears that his indecision might lead him to inaction, while his first concern should have been, as he believes, vengeance. *Hamlet* echoes in Walton's words as well: soon after he despondently decides to return to England, abandoning his voyage, he scorns himself saying his hopes "are blasted by cowardice and indecision", adding that "[i]t requires more philosophy" than he possesses to patiently face this outcome (F 164). Besides the similar kind of indecision Victor seemed to struggle against, Walton's words echo *Hamlet* I.v. 165–166: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy".

The allusions in *Frankenstein* function as metatextual bridges, both in regard to time, but also as indicators of meaning. There is a significant level of intricacy involved, partly due to the structure of the novel. As I mentioned above, the temporal scheme employed constructs a giant puzzle, "a discourse of time references whose referents are destabilized when the reader attempts to discover how they fit together" (Joshua 2001, 281). The ample presence of literary works, as much as the obvious instances of self-awareness of the text as a literary product, facilitate the creation of a temporal landscape that is fluid. In this landscape, traditional distinctions between past, present, and future – that is, neat separations between cause and effect, placed on a linear temporal plane – begin to break down. Nora Crook argues that the text contains several anachronisms, a fact that has only two possible explanations: the temporality of *Frankenstein* is surreal; or, there is "a fictive editor" who has altered the final product (qtd. in Joshua 2001, 292).

In a different manner, Ebenezer Scrooge's own temporal adventures have a distinct taste of timelessness in them. After all, Scrooge is a man who stands outside time, as he has placed himself outside the cultural markings of time and the calendar – to the point that, as mentioned before, "no children asked him what it was o' clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place" (CC 8). What becomes particularly impressive in terms of

creating worlds and narrative is the mode with which *A Christmas Carol* intermixes the two. Much as in *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, Dickens's text reveals its preoccupation in relation to the ontological status of itself. Through the detailed visualization offered, especially through the visions Scrooge himself experiences, the text in its entirety seems to entertain certain ideas about vision, reality, and fiction. Although the Ghost of Christmas Past tells Scrooge that what he sees are mere shadows, without any consciousness of the presence of the Ghost and Scrooge, the text offers a convincing depiction of reality, and this emphasis is further augmented by Scrooge's reaction to these scenes from his youth.

When the Ghost shows him an image of his younger self reading, it is the process of imagination that projects the characters of Ali Baba and Robinson Crusoe, rendering them real. Audrey Jaffe creates a parallel between Scrooge's reaction to his visions and the reader's response to *A Christmas Carol*, claiming that "literature is here imagined as spectacle ... compelling identification while precluding participation" (1994, 257) – a suggestion I disagree with, as the text tempts the reader to engage in a discourse pertinent to reminiscence and reading. In terms of meaning and discovery, participation ultimately *becomes* the text, as the metatextual insinuation (emphasized by the deceptively jovial conclusion) is that there is more to the story than what the text explicitly mentions. Considering the importance memory and the act of remembering held for the Victorians, it becomes apparent that *A Christmas Carol* creates a second layer of temporal distortion. Besides the one in which Scrooge is already participant, this second one indirectly challenges the reader to an ethical debate pertinent to temporality, similar to the one experienced by the old man.

In terms of narrative and metatextual temporality, *A Christmas Carol* is a story that essentially becomes prophetic through its very structure. Scrooge – as well as the reader – is told by Marley's ghost that three spirits will follow. The old miser attempts to circumnavigate temporal linearity, once again standing outside time, inquiring whether it would be possible to "take 'em all at one, and have it over" (CC 21). At this point, neither Scrooge nor the reader yet know that the three spirits are placed in the temporal framework of Past, Present, and Future. In the interweaving of Gothic narrative mechanisms and temporality, the proposition becomes valid only if Scrooge and the reader transcend the linear structure of the text. For Scrooge, that means yet another act of timelessness, accessing information from the future knowledge of the three Christmas spirits. For the reader, it means a narrative travel back in time, and the reevaluation of past text. Once the first ghost is revealed to be the Ghost of Christmas Past, the ending is

already essentially predetermined. The two other ghosts cannot but be those referring to the present and the future. The fact that the ending is predetermined due to the narrative structure of the text becomes particularly intriguing. The reason is that what becomes a core element of the plot is whether Scrooge (and by extension anyone) could change his fate. *A Christmas Carol* alludes to the possible indeterminacy of the future in the dialogues between Scrooge and the last spirit – which, revealingly, are in fact Scrooge’s soliloquies; repeated questions that are left unanswered by the silent future:

‘I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?’ said Scrooge.

The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

‘You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us,’ Scrooge pursued. ‘Is that so, Spirit?’

The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an *instant* in its folds, *as if* the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received. (CC 58; my emphasis)

It is a point worth noting that it is Scrooge that creates all the assumptions about the future. Semantically, it is important he chooses to call the spirit “Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come”, as after the Ghost of Christmas Past and the Ghost of Christmas Present – both introducing themselves as such – one would expect the more natural “Ghost of Christmas Future”. Scrooge’s choice reveals a certain fear of inevitability, of the future being predetermined. The course of the story proves him wrong, or so it is somewhat implied, in any case. The ending, as I have already argued, is deceptively simple. This fact is also mirrored on Scrooge’s different choice of words soon after:

‘Ghost of the Future!’ he exclaimed, ‘I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?’

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

‘Lead on!’ said Scrooge. ‘Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!’ (CC 58–59)

The idea of a possibly predetermined, already decided future is expressed quite explicitly after the last ghost shows Scrooge the scenes from the future where Scrooge is dead. The frightened old man begs the spirit for an answer to his question: “Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?”. He receives no reply, and becomes as agitated as ever.

Clutching at the ghost's robe, he cries: "I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope!" (CC 70) – a very human, agonizing remark with Calvinist undertones.

It is interesting to note the highly stylized construction of spaces in this last segment. This is no surprise for the creation of a setting that becomes notoriously ambiguous in terms of ontological status. In this last spatio-temporal travel, more than before, there is little conceptual difference between creating narrative and actual spaces, between reality and fantasy. The introduction of the vague concept of the future – whether it is predetermined or not is never properly answered in the text – only further complicates things. Space-time becomes fluid and fuzzy to the extent that Scrooge's existential agonies overspill the confines of the storyline and are let loose. For if the metaphysical core of dreams, reality, and narrative is common, this clearly places further strain on the already weakened Gothic foundations of objectivity.

Moments before the end of the dream – if one should call it such – Scrooge pleads with the phantom in a characteristically ambiguous way, where temporality seems to be once again in focus. The terrified old man, faced with his own mortality – the *only* inevitable future – cries: "I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future" (CC 70). Scrooge's rather odd pledge to be in a permanent Christmas state is peculiar. This could hardly be attributed to his possible Jewish origins and cultural or religious ignorance. Rather, it could be a question mark as to whether Scrooge truly is changed or simply, in his frightened state of mind, he merely tries to persuade himself and the ghost for that. I interpret the old man's promise to live in the past, the present, and the future in two seemingly self-contradicting ways. The first one is that he would stop being timeless. He would stop being outside time as he had been until that point and he would join the Victorian mainstream way of measuring time – including all the associated repercussions, such as following a different model of economy, as I argued in section 5.3. The second interpretation alludes to an all-inclusive synthesis, a new existence for Scrooge, where all time co-exists in an equally timeless existence, but with the focus now being on hybridization and inclusion, rather than exclusion. This kind of Hegelian synthesis from incongruence is certainly one chief characteristic of time; in a truly sublime sense, it also defies definition. To repeat West-Pavlov's argument, "[t]ime is both eminently common-sensical and highly abstract at once ... This paradoxical mixture of not-needing-to-be-discussed and not-being-able-to-be-discussed

constitutes a double subterfuge which is one of the most effective conspiracies of modernity” (2013, 5).

The conclusion of *A Christmas Carol* appears rather vague and hastily put together, with the narrator assuring the reader (arguably as unconvincingly as Scrooge) that things changed for the better. In fact, the only true evidence the reader is offered is that Scrooge began offering money to people – with some people laughing at the alteration – and that the Spirits never visited Scrooge again (CC 76). As such, the conclusion of the story rather enhances the unanswerable nature of the core issues presented in the text. Ultimately, there is no way for Scrooge to know whether he changed his future or whether there is even a meaning in such contemplation. The result of *A Christmas Carol* emphasizes the sublime nature of time and the future in particular: it is sublime, for it is beyond representation. Furthermore, and despite the narrator’s assurances, the fact remains that a chief problem for Scrooge (and implicitly for the reader) is that the separation between dreams and reality ultimately fails. This kind of narrative open-endedness, also present in *Frankenstein*, would find its true embodiment a few decades later, in *Dracula*.

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* was published in 1897, four years before the end of Queen Victoria’s reign. In 1914, two years after Bram Stoker had died, a collection containing some of his short stories was published, among them “Dracula’s Guest”, which is widely considered as the first chapter of *Dracula*, removed from the original publication (Senf 1982, 34). This story itself contains some noteworthy elements of temporal distortion, but perhaps above all it is yet another, posthumous element of the temporal metatextuality that abounds in *Dracula*, containing the ultimate irony: a removed first chapter that comes back to life after the author’s own death. *Dracula* begins with a date, 3 May, as an entry in Jonathan Harker’s journal – incidentally, the excised first chapter begins with “a few months”. Jonathan then continues in a very analytical, Victorian way, and lists the schedules of the trains, departures and arrivals, not failing to mention that a certain train was late. Eventually, he links the temporal differences to spatial ones as well, noting that “the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains” (D 8). This realization becomes more graspable later on, at the Golden Krone Hotel, where Jonathan is met by an old lady who asks him if he knows what day it is. He replies the fourth of May, but the question is repeated, followed by the answer that it is the eve of St George’s Day, when, at midnight, “all the evil things in the world will have full sway” (D 11). If one wished to select the most important element of these first few pages of the novel, this could very well be the importance placed on

time, and particularly its connection with space. Furthermore, not only does the text intentionally draw attention to time, but it does so by dividing it into different kinds of time, as Jonathan acknowledges himself noticing the train schedules. It is also important to notice the fact that the text becomes autoreferential in that it presents itself as someone's writing, namely Jonathan Harker's journal.

Although *Dracula* is based on epistolary structural foundations, they are not the traditional ones. Besides letters and journal entries, the novel consists of typewriter material, phonograph recordings, and telegrams. Due to the fact that significant editorial work has altered these primary sources, Leah Richards suggests that *Dracula*, rather than being a true epistolary novel should be perhaps seen as "a novel employing journalistic discourse" (2009, 441). Furthermore, Farah Mendlesohn detects temporal as well as functional dimensions in the structure, arguing that the epistolary form facilitates indirect temporal distortion as it "encodes delay and waiting into a ritual ... [T]he epistolary mode is a control tap on the emotional stream" (2013, 131). This "motley fusion of speech and writing, recording and transcribing, image and typography" (Wicke 1992, 470), produces a destabilizing effect that distorts temporality. In the text of *Dracula* "the old becomes new, and ... patterns of negation and synthesis are disrupted by the paradoxical category of the un-dead" (Scarborough 2008). This split echoes in the ways information is kept and distributed, with the presence of two antithetical such systems, as Elmessiri argues:

[T]he aural/genealogical/memory-based as represented by the Count, on the one hand, and the non-rooted technological print-based, as represented by the Dracula-hunters on the other. In other words between "traditionalist" and the "modernist" information systems – hence the obtrusive appearance of typewriters, dictaphones, telegrams, etc. (1994, 128)

Although the text offers a linear temporal structure, beginning on May 3 of an unknown year and ending on November 6 – with an additional note by Jonathan Harker written seven years later – in reality there is no real beginning and no real end. The result is a "paradoxical and seemingly incessant cycle of premise and conclusion, which revolves around the dark spaces of the un-dead" (Scarborough 2008). Furthermore, the conclusion essentially contradicts the preface, in which an anonymous editor affirms that "[a]ll needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of later-day belief may stand forth as simple fact" (*D* 6). Jonathan, in the final note, claims that the presence of original documents would have made the story more credible, which is a rather enigmatic argument, since it is questionable whether the presence of original material such as phonograph cylinders and telegrams would render such an

incredible story any more reliable. According to Richards, this discrepancy underlines the fact that the text of *Dracula*, although ostensibly in praise of technology and the advancement of science, “is also enacting anxieties about the age, specifically the technological spread of information, none of which is authentic when it reaches its audience” (2009, 442). The recurrence of this theme of authenticity, bringing to the reader’s attention in the final note the question raised in the preface, could also be seen as emphasizing the element of recurrence. That is, that there is no real beginning and no real end, and the linearity of the text is in fact a mask for a cyclical repetition of events. Hence, the novel’s cyclical essence presented through a superficial linearity echoes the similarly conflictive ideas of temporality of the nineteenth century, particularly in the *fin de siècle* period.

An additional element worth noting is the distortion of time offered by the constantly altered temporal density of the narrative. The first entry of Dr. Seward’s phonograph diary is on May 25, with a second on June 5. Four more entries follow, all approximately ten days apart. Soon, however, this changes as Dr. Seward is compelled by facts to insert four more entries a few hours apart from each other. This indirect temporal distortion reflects on his words as well, as he says “[t]o me it seems only yesterday that my whole life ended with my new hope, and that truly I began a new record” (*D* 80). Similar temporal distortions take place throughout the text rather often. A typical example is the logbook of *Demeter*, the ship carrying Count Dracula to England. Mina, writing on August 9, essentially travels back in time, starting from July 6, as she enters the ship’s log entries into her own journal – incidentally, the logbook itself is a temporal anomaly, a time-travel inside the time-travel, as its writing began on July 18. To make matters more confusing and distant from any hint of narrative authority, Mina mentions that she writes “from the dictation of a clerk of the Russian consul” (*D* 92).

Pertinent to the autoreferential essence of *Dracula* is also the constant allusion to other works, often containing Gothic tints. As Jonathan notes down his first impressions of Count Dracula and his castle, he mentions that “this diary seems horribly like the beginning of the ‘Arabian Nights’, for everything has to break off at cock-crow – or like the ghost of Hamlet’s father” (*D* 37). The element of infinite narration, of a sublime vastness of story-telling as in *Frankenstein* is again present. Here, there is an overt connection with temporality and, indeed, with an older, agrarian type of imprecise temporality, measured by the cock-crow. In addition, there is an amalgamation of incongruous worlds, both temporally and spatially, which underlines the instability of the text’s temporal framework. Temporal coherence is further undermined by Jonathan likening himself to older writers, as

he imagines that the little table at which he sits to continue his journal was perhaps used “in old times” by “some fair lady [who] sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love-letter” (D 43), a similar incident with his imagining of old ladies sitting and singing.

Another allusion is the one made to Samuel Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The reference is offered as an entry in Mina’s journal, but it actually originates from a correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* newspapers, as Mina pastes the article into her journal. Describing the storm and the sighting of *Demeter*, the correspondent remembers Coleridge and mentions how the ship was “as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean” (D 86).⁵⁵ *Dracula* alludes to Coleridge in other ways as well, as Coleridge’s *Christabel* – itself a vampiric tale – possibly echoes in Count Dracula’s invitation to Jonathan: “[w]elcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!” (D 22), in that it indicates the passing of a threshold. Similar thresholds can be found elsewhere in *Dracula*, which copies from *Christabel* the trope of the evil that cannot enter a residence unless invited:

[In *Christabel*], Christabel must practically carry the evil Geraldine, apparently fainting, across the threshold of her home. Like Geraldine, Dracula must be invited into the house of his victims, with Renfield serving as his go-between later in the novel, inviting him into the asylum where he can prey on Mina Harker. (Edwards and Fry 2005, 48–49)

Besides Coleridge, *Dracula* also arguably alludes to Keats, as Jonathan Harker describes Mina as “still too pale, but [not] so haggard” (D 285–286), a phrase bearing significant similarity to Keats’s “La Belle Dame sans Merci”, and the knight-at-arms, who is “[a]lone and palely loitering” (2), as much as “haggard and so woe-begone” (6). Importantly, Keat’s poem contains Gothic, and perhaps specifically vampiric elements.

However, with regard to metatextual temporality, the third part of *Dracula* is by far the most intense and puzzling. A key point is Dr. Seward’s admission that his journal, kept in phonograph, is impractical. Although Mina believes this is offered as an excuse, the fact remains that modern technology here appears as inferior, as Dr. Seward says “although I have kept the diary for months past, it never once struck me how I was going to find any particular part of it in case I wanted to look it up” (D 235). Mina suggests that she could copy it out on her typewriter, an offer that is accepted after some initial hesitation. Not only does the text draw attention to itself and to the way it organizes time, but it also implies that the new ways are

⁵⁵ David Punter offers a connection between *Dracula* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* through Hegel’s notion of *ricorso*, that is, a recapitulation between cyclical and linear accounts (1990, 148).

not necessarily the best. In addition, after Mina listens to Dr. Seward's phonograph cylinders, she says "[t]his is a wonderful machine, but it is cruelly true. It told me, in its very tones, the anguish of your heart" (*D* 237). This echoes the view I described in section 2.2, namely that details which were too personal or revealing were often edited out of the text. Dr. Seward also mentions the Harkers' efforts to "[knit] together in chronological order every scrap of evidence they have" (*D* 240), adding in dismay that if that order had existed earlier, they would perhaps have saved Lucy. The importance of ordering seems to be repeated later on, when Renfield talks alone with Dr. Seward. The latter concludes "[s]everal points seem to make what the American interviewer calls 'a story', if one could only get them in proper order" (*D* 290). According to Elmessiri, "[t]he novel makes no attempt to disguise the fact that it was produced by this pursuit. Rather, it continually draws attention, sometimes to the point of tedium, to the mechanical processes that brought it into being" (1994, 104). There is more, however, as this realization implies that the readers of *Dracula* are similarly actors too, in the sense that, although they are offered what the characters are not, that is, the material in a chronological order, the associations and conclusions are still open to debate. This is similar to Collins's *The Woman in White* to which I referred earlier, with the reader in the position to "become both judge and jury, and [to] decide, as in a lawcourt, the truth or otherwise of the tales told" (Hindle 2003, xxxi).

Mina's copying of Dr. Seward's cylinders acquires importance later on. Dracula, having infiltrated the premises and having been in the room "only for a few seconds" – another subtle hint at Dracula being outside time – manages to make "rare hay of the place", burning the manuscripts and Dr. Seward's cylinders (*D* 304). Richards claims that Dracula is defeated by modernity, as the Crew of Light realize in relief that there is a copy of Mina's transcript that survives in the safe (2009, 450). However, one ought to carefully consider what is implied by "modernity". After all, the cylinders of Dr. Seward's phonograph are also destroyed, although the work of a woman, perhaps even a New Woman, survives. Dracula's motives can also be problematic to analyze, as in a way the burning of the manuscripts would ultimately mean the erasure of his story as well, albeit one that does not contain his viewpoint. Taken to the extreme, the destruction of the text would imply that Dracula ceases to exist in all worlds, as his annihilation in the "actual" world would be accompanied by his annihilation in the textual one. Perhaps the scene can be better read as a part of the metatextual, self-referring mechanism that pervades the novel. Dracula's act is ultimately an attempt to destroy temporality; to erase the past and, consequently, the future as well. After

all, without a written record of the events, the future is devoid of them. They have never happened, as far as the future is concerned, and the only temporal world that contains them is the one of the eternal present, the “here and now”. In a way, Dracula is not defeated by modernity, as Richards suggests; rather, he attempts to *redefine* modernity (Angelis 2014, 17).

Ultimately, the complex and fluid temporal scheme of the novel underlines this very instability of its temporal structure. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that time is offered character status in the novel. Besides Count Dracula himself, whose actual existence invalidates time, the text constantly refers to time measurement as much as narrative ordering. At the same time, it draws attention to itself emphasizing what one could call text status, or what Harriet Hustis refers to as a text that is “overly self-conscious of its own construction as a literary artifact” (2001, 19). In an excerpt that shuffles the deck of authorship in an almost explicit way, Van Helsing hijacks Dr. Seward’s phonograph to use it as a telegram, as he essentially sends Jonathan the message to stay with Mina. Near the conclusion of his entry, he says that it took Dracula “hundreds of years to get so far as London; and yet in one day, when we know of the disposal of him we drive him out” (*D* 335–336). This is one more enigmatic phrase that is never properly clarified, and Van Helsing’s previous explanations about Count Dracula’s child-brain (*D* 322) should be dismissed or, rather, be read figuratively. Surely, the suggestion that it took Dracula hundreds of years to get to England cannot be ascribed to the Count’s lack of intelligence.

I argue that there are two ways to approach the problem presented by Van Helsing’s phrase and they are co-dependent, each highlighting the function of the other. The first one is use of the phrase as a metatextual device. The text draws attention to itself and to time by underlining the temporal scheme it has been displaying so far, namely a distorted and ambiguous time measurement that reflects confusion and contradiction. If hundreds of years can be essentially equated to one day, that becomes the very definition of relative time. The second way to interpret Van Helsing’s words is to understand the dynamics of causality involved in Count Dracula’s coming to England. Although perhaps not fully explanatory, it is still a fact that Dracula comes to England *after* Jonathan’s visit to Transylvania. The theme of reverse colonization arises once more, and the text effectively forces that reading by presenting Van Helsing’s suggestion. Decoding Van Helsing’s “child-brain” argument, morphing it into a metaphor related to the place of the Empire in the *fin de siècle*, the realization is that this lack of experience and sophistication alluded to cannot mean Dracula, the Count, but Dracula as a metaphor: the

instigator of the reverse colonization scenario. In other words, the text describes the process of England being essentially under attack, pointing out that the forces behind this attack are still inexperienced but quickly become adapted to the situation. “[I]his monster has been creeping into knowledge experimentally”, says Van Helsing (*D* 322), before he makes a rather intriguing remark, at least when it is read in the context of the Empire and reverse colonization:

Do we not see how at first all these so great boxes [containing earth] were moved by others. [Dracula] knew not then but that must be so. But all the time that so great child-brain of his was growing, and he began to consider whether he might not himself move the box. So he begin to help; and then, when he found that this be all right, he try to move them all alone. (*D* 322–323)

If the boxes containing earth are a metaphor for Dracula’s roots, quite literally the foreign soil, then Van Helsing’s words imply that, given time, the forces threatening the very core of the Empire will become self-sufficient, and perhaps autonomous.

The element of time is also explicitly expressed by Van Helsing, as he argues that someone like the Count, with centuries behind him, has the patience to wait until the moment is right. As the professor characteristically puts it, “*Festina Lente* [hasten slowly] may well be his motto” (*D* 322), a rather fitting description of a temporal essence that describes the process of synthesis from incongruence. In addition, it is important to remember that the term “child-brain” also becomes a part of the motif of children in the novel, which, as I have demonstrated, is connected to temporality by becoming a metaphor for a synthetic future.

The act of writing, both in its physical and mental aspects, is underlined through the textual structure, as well as a result of the allusion to older texts. Finally, it is worth mentioning the importance assigned to specific hours of the day, presented both in pre-industrial and industrial terms, such as the coming of the dawn or precise hours respectively. However, although these precise hours – usually midnight – ostensibly refer to modern, industrial time measurement, they are also connected with traditional ideas and folklore, as in the passage where Jonathan characteristically admits that the mere sight of his watch indicating a few minutes to midnight increased his trepidation because of superstition (*D* 17–18). This amalgam of temporal elements is symptomatic of the temporal confusion and the ongoing dialectical interweaving between past and future that characterizes the Gothic.

In the sixth chapter I transferred the dialectics of temporality into the more general framework of reality perception and, consequently, reality construction. The conclusions of this analysis can be summarized as thus: firstly, it is important

to underline the sublime qualities of Gothic time. This is particularly true of the eternal now, which becomes a transcendental foundation; a spiritual escape valve for the temporal dialectics of past and future. Secondly, I argued that Gothic time places emphasis not on objectivity but on affective power, that is, on how experiences can guide characters and propel the plot regardless of whether they are actual or perceived. The process entails significant repercussions for the experiencer who, reaching the threshold of the inaccessible that lies beneath, still has to acknowledge that the experience is not entirely subjective either. Omnijectivity becomes a term that better describes the synthesis of thesis and antithesis, or objectivity and subjectivity, as it underlines that a hierarchical arrangement between the two is unattainable in a Gothic context. The third conclusion of this chapter is that Gothic texts display a significant degree of metatextual awareness. This results in a discourse of doubt that facilitates the transcendence of the textual limits, reaching out to the reader, as much as to other texts.

7 CONCLUSION: GOTHIC ASPECTS OF A REVISED ETERNAL NOW

The two major conceptual circles of this dissertation, time and the Gothic, share the attribute of being notoriously difficult to define. This dissertation has analyzed related elements that are equally complex and obscure – the sublime is a prime example, as it invokes non-definable temporality, the breakdown of distinct categories, and the limits of human cognition. As a result of the above, any examination related to Gothic temporality is necessarily open-ended – “who shall number the years of the half of eternity?” as the character of Winzy argues in Shelley’s “The Mortal Immortal” (2010, 917). The difficulty of definition and demarcation, however, can also be a blessing in disguise: to be obscure and complex, and to lack a distinct and definite form also mean that the Gothic possesses the flexibility to assume many forms. It also allows many different readings and interpretations that, in a true Hegelian fashion, need not be mutually exclusive. This dissertation examined the ambiguity and in-betweenness of the Gothic mode from a temporal perspective.

In more detail, the central temporal aspect this dissertation analyzed was the concept of the eternal now: the indefinably small “here and now” present, or “‘the point’ where the distinctions between categories, such as cause and effect, word and thing, object and idea, begin to break down” (Shaw 2006, 46). By linking the sublime with the eternal now, I argued for the existence of a transcendental, spiritual aspect in the latter. That, in itself, is not a new suggestion, as the eternal present as a concept is far older than the nineteenth century or the emergence of the Gothic. From St. Augustine, who argued that “in [God] today does not replace yesterday, nor give way to tomorrow; there is only an eternal present” (Kenny 1998, 106), to Dōgen Zenji, a Japanese Zen teacher of the thirteenth century:

When climbing a mountain or crossing a river I was present, and if I am, time is. As I am here now, time cannot be separated from me. If time does not have the form of coming and going, the moment of climbing a mountain is the eternal now. If time takes the form of coming and going, I have the eternal now. (Ohe 1977, 82)

However, I presented the hypothesis that the concept and theorization of the eternal now began a process of transformation in the post-Enlightenment years,

which culminated in the formation of a secularized, non-divinely mediated eternal now in the nineteenth century – a period in which, as I demonstrated in chapter 2, time itself underwent major practical and theoretical alterations. Respectively, there was an increased need for accuracy and centralized time measurement, but also a shift in the understanding and conceptualization of history and progress, of the past and the future. My analysis of temporality in the nineteenth century demonstrated that time should not be seen as a fixed, monolithic element that simply serves as a reference system, but rather as an integral yet malleable part of society and culture.

Focusing on time and the eternal now in particular, in chapter 3 I argued that the eternal now shares with the sublime three important aspects: firstly, the transcendental nature of the experience; secondly, a dialectical collapse, that is, a coexistence of contradictory elements that have usually been clearly presented as separate; and thirdly, the realization that a continuous, coherent reality, is no longer as self-obvious. In regard to the latter, I also explicated the unique placement of the Gothic between reality and fantasy, demonstrating that the Gothic can be read productively as the ambiguous uncertainty that is placed between mere illusion and something unequivocally supernatural (Todorov 1973, 25). Moreover, I examined the concept of the grotesque and its equally unique placement between categories it seemingly divides, such as the natural and the unnatural, the horrific and the comic, the beautiful or sublime and the ugly or bestial. I presented the argument that the separation is at the same time also a connection, and that it is precisely the uneasiness of this merging that assigns the grotesque and the Gothic their affective power. As in my reading of the eternal now the dialectical collapse refers to the coexistence of contradictory elements, and not to their nullification or complete assimilation, in chapter 3 I also examined the Hegelian concept of synthesis, precisely incorporating oppositions into a synthetic new paradigm.

Following these theoretical foundations, the fourth chapter examined the concepts of temporal distortions and temporal dichotomies. In regard to the former, I employed it to refer to ways in which Gothic texts distort the normal flow of time, with particular emphasis placed on immortality, which can be read as a subconscious need to negotiate the past and the future; to create a suspended, timeless present that becomes the synthesis of the Hegelian triad. At the same time I demonstrated how temporal distortions facilitate the creation of temporal dichotomies which, crucially, are separated (and connected) by borders that are porous. The attempt to clearly isolate such dialectical pairs becomes problematic

and these Gothic texts can be read as apt examples of the inability to offer clear-cut differentiations.

In chapter 5, I examined dialectics based on otherness, presenting the argument that those dichotomies have significant temporal aspects. By applying a temporal reading of the ambiguity between dichotomies based on otherness, incorporating the concept of the eternal now, the porosity of the borders between these dichotomies becomes more readily evident. Inevitably, the very indistinctness between the two sides of a given dichotomy merely emphasizes the importance of the ambiguous area that both unites and separates them.

The sixth chapter of the dissertation transferred the dialectics of temporality into a more general framework of reality and demonstrated the importance of the sublime qualities of Gothic time. Furthermore, I argued that Gothic time places an emphasis not on objectivity but on affective power, or in other words, on how experiences can guide characters and drive the plot forward regardless of whether these experiences are actual or perceived. As the experiencer reaches the threshold of the inaccessible that lies beneath, it becomes evident that the experience, though not properly objective, is not entirely subjective either. Omnijectivity becomes a term that better describes the synthesis of thesis and antithesis, objectivity and subjectivity, as it emphasizes that a hierarchical ordering between the two is unfeasible in the Gothic. Furthermore, the open-ended conclusions of these narratives underline the lack of an objective truth. Blurred boundaries, metaphysical thresholds, as much as a general sense of epistemological failure, they all play a central part in generating contrasts of various forms. It is precisely this failure, the difficulty or outright inability to establish clear defining lines between natural and unnatural, real or fantastic, that offers the Gothic its characteristic essence. This kind of suspended uncertainty – indeed, in the eternal now – by its very nature engages the reader and invites readings that overflow the strict confines of a given text. As a result, the discourse of doubt transcends the textual limits, reaching out to the reader and to other texts. As a result, and as I also demonstrated in chapter 6, Gothic texts display significant metatextual awareness.

In the end, the assessment of the Hegelian synthesis that is the eternal now remains open to debate. The study of reality construction in the Gothic, however, underlines the fact that this hybridity is still a reality, at the very least in terms of affective power. The timelessness of the eternal present, in all the forms it assumes, possesses undeniably sublime, transcendental characteristics. Consequently, it must by definition be beyond representation, although the experiencer can still gain some access to its implications – often perhaps only subconsciously. In Gothic

texts such as the ones examined in this dissertation, with all the ambiguity that characterizes them, one can read the modernized eternal now as a substitute for its pre-Enlightenment predecessor. If in the early form the synthesis included “something which has always been, and will be fulfilled in the future” (Auerbach E. 2003, 74), it is perhaps a sign of evolution – I dare refer to it as “progress” – that the modern form makes no such claim.

As the Gothic mode can be seen as an apt carrier of ambiguous, non-distinct meanings, concepts related to sublimity, synthesis, and suspended, all-inclusive temporality find a fertile ground within it. In the texts I analyzed in this dissertation, the eternal now is presented as a resolution of the temporal dialectics between past and future; the conflict between a past that is still existing, and a future that is unknown. The eternal now in these Gothic texts acquires a characteristically modern tint, describing to a great extent concepts and ideas still relevant to our current time. As Anderson rightly underlines, the shift from the pre-Enlightenment and divinely mediated eternal now to the modern form is an ongoing process, “a long time in the making” (Anderson 2006, 24).

In a sense, the Gothic is arguably a temporal anomaly in itself, as it appears to foretell social developments and to anticipate the future, with the added peculiarity of doing so often through its engagement with a discourse related to the past, real or imagined. Frankenstein’s creature, Scrooge, or Dracula, are not detached fictional characters, separate from one another, but rather links in a long process of cultural negotiation. Their ambiguous existence and their often uncanny external manifestation draw our attention to their otherness, as well as to our own place in the world. There is more, however.

Beyond the immediately evident external otherness, we quickly realize our inability to immediately categorize creatures such as Dracula, Frankenstein’s creation, or Scrooge. The traditional grouping process, with the world neatly falling into place after everything is divided according to its polar other, quickly collapses. In the face of an increasingly more intricate nexus of Gothic meanings, it becomes not only difficult but perhaps even meaningless to attempt to answer questions such as: Is Count Dracula evil? Has Scrooge really changed? Is Frankenstein’s creature to blame for anything? Attempting an analysis of what these characters stand for is perhaps ultimately doomed to remain incomplete. After all, because of Gothic literary conventions, the texts allow little in terms of narrative authority. In some sense, the more one learns about these characters, the greater the realization that there is so much left unknown. Frankenstein’s creature begins as an almost formless being, barely worthy of mention. This is of course offered from the

perspective of Victor, who seems to be preoccupied with an entirely aesthetic concept of creation – akin to creating a classical Greek sculpture; once the intended beauty is absent, there is no creation to speak of. Later on, the creature becomes humanized, in the sense that he becomes complex and not easy to assess. By the end of *Frankenstein*, the creature seems to be embracing the ultimate sublime, namely the realization that only in death will he find happiness (F 169–170). Victor, however, appears still confused and not really in full comprehension of what has transpired, insisting on his irreproachability (F 165).

In *A Christmas Carol*, the transformation is ever more accentuated. Scrooge, as the unknown narrator strives to convince the reader, is an entirely changed man. However, beneath the surface of Scrooge's newfound generosity and Christmas consciousness lies a multifaceted picture. As I have demonstrated, the hidden secret of *A Christmas Carol* is that Scrooge's dealings with Death cannot be elevated onto anything beyond a vicarious experience – albeit, an intense one. Although the old man faces his own demise and sees his own grave, these cannot necessarily be authentic displays of something that, after all, is inaccessible to mortal beings. Scrooge's insistent questioning of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come – begging for an answer to the question, Is this *the* future or *a* future? – is indicative of the situation (CC 70).

As for *Count Dracula*, perhaps one reason for the great success of Stoker's novel is that the more the text attempts to silence the Undead and portray them in the most negative light, the more they appear as intriguing, desirable, and fascinating. Subsequent adaptations of Stoker's novel and the vampire figure further enhance the vampire's reputation as a dangerous-but-charming individual, whose finesse, culture, and philosophical depth appear as a beacon of light in the gray, lukewarm existence of the human masses. This is particularly the case for recent adaptations, like Jim Jarmusch's 2013 *Only Lovers Left Alive*, where vampires are portrayed as immensely talented artists, while humans are referred to as zombies. The setting of the film, namely the collapsing industrial city of Detroit after the financial crisis of 2007–2008, only enhances the confusing relationship between past and future.

In the end, although Renfield's exclamation “the blood is the life” (D 152) is often considered a key statement in *Dracula*, I see Quincey Morris's “[t]ime is everything with him” (D 258) as the principal Gothic catchphrase. Time is everything for characters in such works, but what the Gothic reveals is that time is everything for humans, too. Works such as *Frankenstein*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Dracula* reveal that temporal fears are situated at the very core of the deepest

human existential fears. Past traumas, the inevitable future annihilation, dreams (and nightmares) of immortality, are but a small portion of the rich diversity of such themes featuring in the Gothic. It is this very diversity that, in a perhaps fittingly contradictory way, both emphasizes these fears and at the same time attempts to exorcise them.

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