Writing into Existence: Rethinking History through Literature in *Beowulf*, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, and *The Enchantress of Florence* by Salman Rushdie

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ABSTRACT

My thesis analyzes comparatively from the perspective of the dialectic relationship between history and literature three different historical writings from three different time periods: the Anglo-Saxon world through *Beowulf*, Victorian England through Bram Stoker's novel, *Dracula*, and postcolonial Europe and India through Salman Rushdie's novel *The Enchantress of Florence*. It discusses how these writings use a common metatextual trope represented by the idea of glory which implies that literature becomes the territory where historical characters are textually built rather than reconstructed based on historical evidence. It also indicates how this metatextual dimension also generates a second level of meaning, one related to the ideological needs of their time. Thus, it demonstrates that *Beowulf* contains the frame of a utopia, *Dracula* becomes a myth, and *The Enchantress of Florence* encloses a sophisticated play between history and literature.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my husband, Ryan, who has read all my work before anyone else, and to my daughter, Sophia, who has grown from an infant into a preschooler since I started this degree. Thank you both for your patience and sorry for all the hours I was not there for you.

Chapter I:

INTRODUCTION

Literature and history have always been closely related, yet in the last few decades this closeness has become increasingly problematic as many writers or cultural thinkers have investigated the limits and similarities between the two. The interrogation, however, seems to have affected mostly history because it questions its very scientific status, and it makes its texts dissolve at times into the larger area of cultural studies. As David W. Noble observes, it is during this period that historians and writers alike have shifted away from the narrow focus on national identity, from the "timeless national state" to a "timeful" transnational culture (96). This shift has caused, Noble continues, both categories to feel that they lost a sacred story which constituted their object for centuries, and it has made many historians and literary critics convert to cultural criticism (95-96).

One of the most notorious representatives of this trend is Fredric Jameson, who in his study *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* affirms that we live in a culture of fragments which determines a "crisis in historicity," as the fragmentation prevents us from giving a homogeneous structure to our reality (24). Moreover, Jameson continues, since "the subject has lost its capacity actively to extend its pro-tensions and re-tensions across the temporal manifold and to organize its past and future into coherent experience," its cultural productions will reflect this randomness and represent only "heaps of fragments" (25). Jameson believes that the "political form of postmodernism, if

there ever is any, will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as spatial scale" (54). He means, among other things, an abandonment of individualism and a new social and economic order based on group identity.

Jameson did not limit himself to considerations about history, but also extended his analysis to literature. According to him, "the disappearance of the individual subject, along with its formal consequence, the increasing unavailability of the personal style," and the culture of the simulacrum, led to the proliferation of "pastiche," so history becomes for Jameson a text that keeps reproducing itself (16). Pastiche is a speech in a dead language, but a subversive one, and, in the case of literature, what used to be considered "real" in terms of the historical novel as a genre proves, according to him, fictional; it becomes an impossibility. The very idea of authenticity is outdated. Jameson exemplifies this impossibility by analyzing E.L. Doctorow's novel *Ragtime*, a novel in which the characters range from historical figures to fictional and intertextual ones (22). The process makes the novel all the more powerful because it creates a blend between fiction and an "already acquired knowledge or doxa" that filters the novel's representations. Following Jacques Lacan, Jameson suggests that postmodern historical novel in particular and postmodern culture in general have turned into a schizophrenic territory in which there is a breakdown "in the signifying chain, [in the] interlocking syntagmatic series of signifiers which constitutes an utterance or a meaning," as Saussure once defined them (26). This break has consequences at the level of the self: since our personal identity is an effect of a temporal unification between our past, our present, and our future at the level of the entire language or even at sentence level, we are no longer

able to control our biography, our experience is reduced to one "of pure material signifiers," and we are dissolved in a perpetual present (27). The historical novel itself becomes a *mise-en-abyme* in which the referent is not history but fiction. In other words, for Jameson, the genre converts into metafiction.

This metafictional dimension of the historical novel could seemingly bring Jameson closer to Linda Hutcheon, who speaks in her famous study *The Politics of Postmodernism* of the so-called "historiographic metafiction." However, Hutcheon criticizes Jameson for his use of the term "pastiche," because Jameson thus dismisses parody and implies, as mentioned above, that originality and individuality are virtually impossible today (2002, 90). In addition, Hutcheon also disagrees with Jameson's view on the postmodern subject's incapability to deal with time and history and remarks instead that postmodern films and texts are in fact "obsessed with history and with how we can know the past today" (109). As Hutcheon observes, as far as the nineteenth century, "literature and history were considered branches of the same tree; [therefore,] it is not surprising that there would be overlapping of concern and mutual influences between the two genres" (1995, 72-3). The current tendency to separate the two started only with the rise of the scientific history theorized by Leopold von Ranke. As a result, Hutcheon brings forward the notion of "veracity" which characterized most of the historical novel genre: within it literature was considered a complement of history, a "secondary" imperfect text, as Virgil Nemoianu puts it in a 2006 study, but not an equal to it (73). In postmodernism this inequality is nullified. The postmodern historical work, or what Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction," "keeps distinct its formal auto-representation and its historical context, and in doing so problematizes the very

possibility of historical knowledge, because there is no reconciliation, no dialectic here – just unresolved contradiction" (72-73). Thus, in Hutcheon's terms, historiographic metafiction blurs the barriers between history and fiction and "acknowledges the paradox of the *reality* of the past but *its textualized accessibility* to us today" (82). It manifestly admits the questionable textual nature of both history and reality.

The same type of manifestly displayed conventionality of metafiction, "which explicitly and overtly lays bare its condition of artifice," was analyzed, a few years before Hutcheon, by Patricia Waugh in her study *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, yet Waugh sees metafiction not as an exclusive feature of postmodern literature, but as one "as old as the novel itself" (2-5). Citing Bakhtin's dialogic novelistic nature, she observes that all fiction ultimately assimilates a variety of discourses that sometimes question or relativize each other's authority (6). The process of assimilation also includes, of course, the discourse of history. The only feature that individualizes metafictional novels is their "writing which consistently displays its conventionality, which explicitly and overtly lays bare its condition of artifice, and which thereby explores the problematic relationship between life and fiction" (4). James Joyce's *Ulysses* and even Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* could both be examples of such works. They usually exaggerate "the tensions inherent in all novels: of frame and frame-break, of technique and counter-technique, of construction and deconstruction of illusion" (14). It is a problematic relationship that, Waugh believes, is particularly likely to emerge during periods of crisis in the history of the epic genre, and it is especially prominent in contemporary novels because of the postmodern concern with a redefinition of consciousness (9).

The representation of history in literature and the textual dialogic nature of the two did not start, however, with the contemporary historical novel. In fact, the historical novel itself is arguably a relatively new genre that emerged, Virgil Nemoianu observes citing György Lukács, as a nineteenth century "middle-class substitute for the epic" (68). Historical writing, however, is congeneric with the narrative itself and can be found, Jerome de Groot argues, in every genre, "within numerous fictional locales: romance, detective, thriller, counterfactual, horror, literary, gothic, postmodern, epic, fantasy, mystery, western, children's books," and so on (2). Its dynamism derives precisely from its "intergeneric hybridity and flexibility" which can incorporate virtually everything, from propagating dreams of nationhood or highlighting the textual dimension of history and attacking its conventions to demanding strict realistic representations and authenticity (2). It attracts multiple audiences, and it enriches, according to Alessandro Manzoni, the very structure of history by making the past both recognizable and unfamiliar at the same time (de Groot 3). Moreover, de Groot continues:

> Yet [historical writing] fundamentally entails an engagement on the part of the reader (possibly unconsciously) with a set of tropes, settings and ideas that are particular, alien and strange. The experience of writing, reading and understanding historical fiction is markedly different from that of a novel set in the contemporary world. Knowingly or not, the three participants of the historical novel, writers, readers, students, bring a set of reading skills and premeditated ideas to the experience. A historical novel is always a slightly more inflected form than most other types of fiction, the reader of such a work slightly more self-aware of the artificiality of the writing and the strangeness of engaging with

> imaginary work which strives to explain something that is other than one's contemporary knowledge and experience: the past. (4)

A "more inflected" form means here a second level of signification, as there are three factors involved in the creation of such a novel: reality, history, and literature.

Both de Groot and Nemoianu also analyze the first officially recorded historical novel: Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*. As Nemoianu notes, Scott's work appeared in a context when society as a whole felt the need for an ideological reform that would involve not just the present and the future, but also the past (70). Moreover, de Groot observes in his turn, Scott's novel contains extensive paratextual notes, some written by the author, some genuine accounts of historical events, which are meant to preserve continuously the illusion of authenticity (8). The writer strives to demonstrate that his work is educational, and that it is based on real events. The readers, who are presumably somewhat familiar with earlier accounts of the historical events described, are thus invited to play along; their previous knowledge imposes certain limits to the extent of fictionality the novel can carry, and at the same time, the text itself forces them to become aware of the artificiality and subjectivity of the version Scott proposes (8). In other words, even from its official beginnings as a genre, the historical novel contains a pronounced metatextual element.

Nevertheless, as discussed above and as de Groot further observes, Walter Scott's *Waverley* is by no means the first "historical" account in literature. It is preceded by countless other accounts in other genres, with early examples like Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, and so on. Katherine Callen King, who analyses the bardic tradition, adds the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to the list and emphasizes the social function these

oral stories fulfilled. They represented models to the community, and they carried on its traditions: "choosing from a vast repertoire of stories passed down by poets from the Bronze Age to the present, poets sang of extraordinary deeds done in the distant past by gods and heroes, ancestors of the ordinary men and women who listened to the stories" in order to give them a sense of stability in the world (33). In addition, these stories usually contained the important political messages of the time: for example, de Jong observes, regardless of their historical reality, both the stories of the Argonauts and the Trojan War reflect the struggle for power between the Greek kingdoms and the ones in Asia Minor during the Late Bronze Age (34). Thus, bardic literature's purpose was not only educational, but also social and ideological.

In light of these considerations, an interesting case of historical writing is the category that disregards or challenges the conventions of authenticity. An example is Miguel de Cervantes's novel *Don Quixote*, included by de Groot in the list of historical writings, but which, Ingo Berensmeyer asserts, incorporates a different type of reflection on history and fictionality as a whole because Cervantes is not preoccupied at all with the authenticity of his account, but with different other ways of "making sense of the world" (626-627). He consciously ignores the rules of the type of veridicity or authenticity that later Walter Scott and the tradition he inaugurated would emphasize. Additionally, the work presents another interesting characteristic: it combines the tropes of epic heroism and romance chivalry, adding a second level of signification, which, Berensmeyer argues, plays with the readers' expectations and therefore relativizes both categories of tropes. On what remains of their frame, Cervantes builds a new form, the parodic novel, a form that delegitimizes the very metanarrative of heroism.

The result of this relativization, however, does not annul either reality or fiction. The barriers between them become completely irrelevant, but their functions remain intact. Similarly to what J. Hillis Miller once described in his essay "The Critic as Host," dichotomies, such as reality and fiction in our case, are no longer enclosed in a system of binary opposites, but in a relationship of parasite-host: they cannot exist without one another; they are at the same time on both sides of the boundary line, but also the boundary itself (219). The fact that Cervantes does not focus at all on authenticity helps in truth to problematize it and to build on its absence, transforming his work into a self-reflective, metafictional, and hybrid text that, as Berensmeyer notes, questions the very nature of fictionality itself (627). The work "shows the intrusion of one world of meaning into another," and parodically warns its readers against the risk of reading too many works of fiction that can interfere with their sense of reality (627). Moreover, the parody exposes the fiction's conventionality, and it demonstrates that its nature is "ascribed to the text by individuals who act within a literary system or a frame of reference, a system or frame that we would have to assume had been in operation at the time *Don Quixote* was written and published" (627). Strictly speaking, even when we consider pseudo-historical, parodic, subversive, and metafictional works such as *Don Quixote,* the second level of meaning that they build still retains a social function. They address a legitimate ideological or political need of their time.

A similar deviation from the canon of authenticity combined with historical referents characterizes the three historical writings that this thesis intends to analyze. Even though not always as subversive as Cervantes's novel, they all problematize one way or another the boundaries between history and fiction. They are all engaged in the

interrogation of the nature of historical writing without specifically referring to it, yet still pointing out its constructed and fictional dimension, exposing the inherent contradictions and potentialities of literary historical writing in general. Moreover, in the hybrid space between history and fiction, they all build an extra level of meaning; in fact, as this thesis will emphasize, this extra level is meant to meet certain ideological expectations on the part of their audience.

The first evidence for their complexity is the difficulty of categorization: although all three texts have been described by critics as historical writings, they all contain elements and tropes of other genres. *Beowulf*, for example, has been interpreted by critics as a historical poem, but also as an epic, heroic, and elegiac one or even as a folktale, saga, or quest narrative. *Dracula*, in its turn, has been placed in many categories, from a Gothic fantasy or *fin-de-siècle* story built on a travel narrative, to a *Bildungsroman* or a postcolonial novel. Jerome de Groot summarized in fact the hybridity of the entire category of the Gothic when he observed that this type of novel generally represents "a nightmarish type of historical novel," later abandoned and subsumed by the less subversive fiction Walter Scott exemplified. Finally, Salman Rushdie notoriously incorporates elements of history, folktale, and myth, into what is usually referred to as the "magical realism" of his novels. It is this very complexity, however, which gives these texts such an exceptional seductive power and places them at the center of the English literary canon.

Another element that brings the three texts together is the fact that they all incorporate true historical events or personages, but concomitantly they all manifest a relative disregard for authenticity. In fact, their commitment to the latter is so

insignificant, that it does not constitute the object of this paper *per se*. *Beowulf*, although the least bound by authenticity requirements of the three, as it belongs to the oral-formulaic tradition, contains numerous historical references found in many other poems and chronicles of its time. It describes, for example, the culture of the Germanic kings, the so-called *comitatus*, documented, among others, by the Roman historian Tacitus. Even though the depiction of this culture, as this paper will reveal, contains an important political and social message, and it becomes the center of the poem, its combination with a multitude of mythical, Christian, and heroic tropes which connect the story and its main character to a collective rather than a personal experience, denies the reader the impression of complete authenticity.

Dracula, on the other hand, works completely differently. It transforms the authenticity of the Transylvanian travel narratives Bram Stoker freely absorbs in his fiction, the castle as a feudal setting, and the recognizable historical figure of the Count into tools meant to amplify the impression of horror. In addition, it uses (and challenges) the travel journal, a genre that demanded a high degree of authenticity, and of which Victorians were very fond, to make the exotic and the Other seem even stranger. History in the novel, similar to what Jameson called previously "acquired doxa," is used in order to make the impossible seem possible, to connect the supernatural to the "real" world, and to validate its danger. Authenticity and fiction mirror each other within the text, but, contrary to Jamesonian terms in this case, although the connection between the signified and the signifier is lost and the metanarrative is reduced to fragments, the signifier is capable of producing its own meaning.

The same is true for *The Enchantress of Florence*. Rushdie consciously blurs the boundaries between history and fiction in the novel and allows the latter to create its own referent. Thus his novel becomes a multilayered and multicentered story in which, as the writer himself declares in interviews, what readers believe to be fiction is in fact history and the other way around. The link between the historical characters in the text, such as Machiavelli or the emperor Akbar the Great, is intermediated by fictional characters like Mogor or Angelica. Going much further than Stoker's novel, *The Enchantress* not only refuses the confinements of authenticity, but also lays bare the very mechanisms of its production. We are in the territory of pure metafiction, as Linda Hutcheon and Patricia Waugh define it.

Apart from the problem of authenticity, itself of metatextual nature as seen above, all three writings that constitute the subject of this thesis contain a very interesting metatextual trope: the idea of glory, that, as long as someone's life is recorded, or as long as an individual is written about and chronicled in a book, he or she will continue to have materiality. In *Beowulf*, the *comitatus* code of honor itself revolves in part around the glorification of someone's life through speaking of his noble deeds. Glory is in fact one of the main obsessions in the poem. The protagonist is constantly preoccupied with it, and many of the critical debates surrounding it refer precisely to his appetite for fame and to what some critics believed to be his tendency to boast about his heroic deeds. In the larger context of metatextuality, however, as this analysis will prove, the tendency can be regarded in a different way, as the protagonist's promise of support and as his sign of respect for the Danish king and his community. Moreover, it can be regarded, at a more general cultural level, as a promise of an ideal world made to the generations that follow.

The work of Bram Stoker goes even further: in time, with the popularity of his novel, the figure of his character has become predominant in public consciousness, appropriating and transforming the historical personage. Vlad Ţepeş, the medieval leader, has been contaminated (colonized) by the image of the vampire as he was given a new identity, a new castle, and a new appearance; a proof that our previous acquired historical knowledge can be very fluid, and that accounts or perceptions of reality can be altered by literature. The same mechanism is explored by Rushdie in his novel, where historical and fictional characters alike meditate on their condition of textual immortality. For Rushdie, Stoker, and the medieval bard, literature is not the territory of imperfection that novelists such as Walter Scott or cultural critics such as Virgil Nemoianu described, but an equal, if not a stronger, producer of reality.

A final important feature that brings these works together is their tendency to build, once they have transgressed the limits of historicity, new ideological premises. As was discussed above concerning Miguel de Cervantes's novel in which metafiction and other subversive mechanisms produce the parodic novel, all three literary works investigated in this thesis develop a new level of significance meant to address the needs of society in their time. Thus, this analysis will concentrate, following the ideas of cultural theorists or literary critics such as Jean Servier, George Kateb, or Howard P. Segal, on the utopian ideology in *Beowulf*; it will investigate, based on theories belonging to folklorists or historians of religion such as Vladimir Propp or Mircea Eliade, the mechanisms that helped develop the modern myth of Dracula; and it will discuss, following Johan Huizinga's anthropological approach, the complicated play within culture encompassed by *The Enchantress of Florence*. It seems that by deconstructing

historical authenticity, each of these texts completed their story by replacing this authenticity with metanarrative elements meant to correct or improve their present. If *Don Quixote*, as Ingo Berensmeyer once observed, was fighting against the naïveté of his contemporaries, the medieval poet composing *Beowulf* was trying to offer his readers hope by presenting them with the model of rightfulness and integrity contained in the code of the *comitatus*. Likewise, Bram Stoker exploited his contemporaries' fears of the Orient and used the frame of the folktale to create the myth of the hybrid being and of reversed colonization. Finally, Rushdie uses a play of history and fiction to remind his readers, at a time when artistic originality and our very sense of history comes into question, of the beauty of the storytelling, an almost sacred function of literature.

This thesis does not aim to create patterns where they do not exist, but the affinities between the three literary works are undeniable. They transcend the limits of genres and historical periods. They interrogate similar elements belonging to historical representations in literature and contain metatextual components that are akin. They elaborate on common tropes. They discuss the features of narration itself, and its capacity to render historical reality. In the end, they all thematize the narrative as an essential activity. Its purposes are ethical, social, and ideological: that is why, even when subversive, the story has to mean something for the community it addresses, as it inevitably incorporates the subjectivity of the storyteller.

Chapter II:

BEOWULF AND THE IDEALIZATION OF THE *COMITATUS*

Writing about *Beowulf* is not an easy task. It requires much more than trying to understand the Anglo-Saxon world because it involves selecting the critical material from an almost infinite number of sources and trying to navigate through just as many debates. As my chapter will discuss, the main critical controversies concerning the poem revolve around what has been referred to as the multivalence of its meanings, the combination in its fiber of the old Germanic code and Christian ethos, and the difficulty of genre classification.

My interpretation does not allege to appease these controversies, but to analyze the poem from a different perspective – as a literary attempt to idealize and reclaim a world, specifically the well-organized, heroic, just, traditional world of the *comitatus* in a manner that reminds of the ways utopias are usually built in literature. Drawing from several studies – R. D. Fulk and Christopher M. Cain's *A History of Old English Literature*, Jean Servier's *Histoire de l'utopie*, and Gregory Claeys's *Searching for Utopia* – it will create a connection between the image of the *comitatus* as a strict and austere society in which the life of an individual makes sense only as part of a collective being, and the desire Jean Servier and others identify in many utopian writings of a return to the rigid practices of the traditional community. It will investigate the actions of exemplary heroes following the rules of a society in which fame is the most important commodity, and those of deviant or exiled citizens who enthrall or represent evil by

disregarding or opposing those rules. Similar to other utopian writings such as Thomas More's *Utopia*, the world described in *Beowulf* emphasizes the infinite possibilities and the capacity of the human being to be victorious against all odds with little or no help from divinity; the religious theme, although present, does not interfere significantly with the course of events. Moreover, the chronology and the topography in the text also contain clear resemblances with other literary utopias, while the process of gift-giving is a suggestion of an egalitarian world preoccupied with the welfare of its inhabitants. Finally, my chapter will discuss the parallel between the *nostos* in the poem – Beowulf's return home and then back to the sea in his final voyage, together with the designation of Wiglaf as his heir at the end – and a more symbolic return, this time a literary one containing the promise that world exemplarity is still attainable. *Beowulf* thus represents at a more metatextual level, a way for the people trapped in a complicated and sometimes insecure medieval society to escape into a more tolerant and dependable world which only literature can render.

Review of Literature

A. The Difficulties of Interpretation

Beowulf has long been, as Hugh Magennis describes it, "the most celebrated Old English poem," a permanent part of the Western canon (qtd. in Saunders 93). That is why it "has prompted, by far, the most intensive study" and continues to be read fervently by new generations of readers (Fulk and Cain 194). Its unique fascination comes from the fact that, as Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle observe, masterpieces in general and *Beowulf* in particular, "are works that give a sense of having been spirited up, of working

by themselves. Great works call to be read and reread while never ceasing to be strange, to resist reading, interpretation, and translation" (186).

However, this strangeness and resistance against one-sided interpretations has led to some categorization problems and to many controversies. Dorothy Whitelock, for example, decries the complex problems that arise because the poem was written such a long time ago. She considers that the poem "is far removed from us in time, so that we are not entitled to assume without investigation that the audience in the poet's day would be moved by the same things as we are" (280). In addition, Whitelock asserts, other difficulties emerge because "much of the poem is composed through a subtle technique of allusion, reminder, and suggestion," and we cannot guess the meanings behind them unless "we know something of the meaning and associations [the poet's] hints and allusions carried to those for whom he composed his poem" (280). In his turn, James B. Kelley believes that "part of the challenge for the modern reader comes from the work's having been written over a thousand years ago in an early, very different form of English" and considers that poetic conventions such as alliterative verse or kennings contribute to the impression of strangeness the poem often instills in its readers (132). Following the same line, in her article "*Beowulf*: A Poem in Our Time," Gillian R. Overing claims that it is almost impossible to respond to what she calls "the challenges of [the poem's] multivalence," and explains that many "beginning students of *Beowulf* are frequently puzzled (…) by the coexistence of so many disparate elements" of meaning (310-11).

Connected to the multivalence of meaning and language difficulties caused by the passing of time, several other aspects of the poem have made the center of critical

disputes over the years. One is the problem of its dating – *Beowulf* survived in a manuscript believed to be written about the year 1000, but, Daniel Anlezark affirms, "there is no doubt that the poem was composed well before this copy, though there is considerable debate as to *how* long before" (qtd. in Saunders 142). In addition, Anlezark continues, "it also appears that Beowulf may have gone through some revisions in the process of transmission, leaving us with evidence variously dating the poem anywhere between 700 and 950" (142). This difficulty of dating the original poem is important when we take into consideration another source of polemic among scholars: the coexistence in the text of the Germanic heroic code with Christian elements. While earlier scholars used to deem the latter as inconsequential additions, recent critics have acknowledged their importance in the society that created or performed the earliest versions of the poem. Fulk and Cain believe, for instance, that this coexistence of two contrasting strains – the "military culture of the Germanic peoples who invaded Britain in the fifth century and the Mediterranean learning introduced by Christian missionaries from the end of the sixth" – is a more general characteristic of the entire Anglo-Saxon culture (Fulk and Cain 2). Peggy A. Knapp, Holly M. Wendt, and Dorothy Whitelock also refuse to speak in terms of contrasts. Knapp in her turn writes that the "fracture between its Germanic/heroic spine and Christian evocativeness," does not truly exist (84). In fact, "the hero's courage and wisdom prefigures the courage and wisdom of Christ" (84). Wendt uses Gayatri Spivak's terms to argue that in *Beowulf* the Christian element is seen as "appropriating and colonizing the values of the pagan comitatus for its own goals, and drawing strength from deliberately embracing – and subverting – the disadvantaged position" (40). Whitelock goes further, and declares that, although we

cannot disprove with certitude the existence of a heathen *Beowulf*, "the author who was responsible for giving the poem the general shape and tone in which it has survived" and his intended audience were definitely Christian (280). It is very clear, therefore, Whitelock goes on, that "the Christian element is not merely superimposed," and that "it permeates the poem" in its entirety – from its imagery to its metaphors (281).

Finally, among the multitude of problematic aspects usually discussed in connection with *Beowulf*, another important one is represented by its classification. The poem's intergeneric hybridity, in the sense defined by Jerome de Groot earlier, determines the multileveled textual inflection usually specific, according to the critic, to metatextual historical novels. Some classify it as a "historical poem (due to the incorporation of many real-world events into the narrative)" (Kelley 133). Others, like Stanley B. Greenfield, consider it a "combination of the heroic and elegiac," and note that passages such as "The Lament of the Last Survivor" create a contrast between the "former days of earthly wealth and glory with the present decline of the speaker's nation" (227-29). W. P. Ker decides to abandon the heroic dimension completely and writes instead that "the impression of reality and weight (…) makes *Beowulf* a true *epic* poem – that is, a narrative poem of the most stately and serious kind" (26). Ker's opinion is shared by one of the most important translators of the poem, Kevin Crossley-Holland, who also labels it as "epic" in his 2009 anthology *The Anglo-Saxon World*. Finally, Kelley regards it as a quest narrative, while critics such as Corinne Saunders or Scott Gwara, admit the impossibility of categorization. Gwara notes that:

> *Sui generis* in length, structure, action, versification, and diction, the work confounds standards that attend most readings of Old English poetry and

> figuratively straddles every conceivable generic classification, as folktale, heroic verse, epic, elegy, saga, and the like. In other words, few native literary parallels can illuminate so distinctive of a poem. (1).

B. The *Comitatus*

Despite these controversies, there seems to be a general consensus among critics that Beowulf is an exemplary character of exceptional strength and generosity, and, although his description is mostly fictional, the poem as a whole includes historical references that appear in other poems or chronicles of the time. As Fulk and Cain among others observe, the poem depicts what Cornelius Tacitus described once as the culture of the *comitatus*, in which Germanic kings or aristocrats are supported by a "war-band of retainers" who help them in battles, but who also pay them tribute in cattle or grain (Fulk and Cain 3). In their turn, these leaders have to provide the retainers with gifts – horses, arms, and feasts. This culture, Fulk and Cain continue, values loyalty and fame above all and "it is the duty of the *comitatus* to glorify their lord by their deeds" (3).

Another interesting aspect of this world that Tacitus records is the treatment of women. Unlike Roman women who were considered second class citizens, Germanic women play an important role in their society. As Tacitus observes, as cited by Fulk and Cain, these women are held in high esteem: they are "close at hand in warfare, and their presence serves to deter cowardice, making men conscious of their honor" (6). Women are *freothu-webbe*, "peace-weavers,[1]" as many times marriages bring peace between rival tribes. They are valued for their advice or their prescience and, opposite to Roman

[1] The term *freothu-webbe* used by Fulk and Cain represents an object of dispute among critics. However, as the dispute does not constitute an important aspect of my thesis, I decided to use it in the context.

customs, in marriage it is the man who has to bring a dowry to the wife. Therefore, examples in Old English poetry reveal that the model "wife should be generous with gifts, kind to those under her care, cheerful, trustworthy with secrets, courteous in the distribution of mead, and she should advise her husband well" (6).

Loyalty and good advice, however, do not always ensure peace. In times of war, the members of the *comitatus* have to fight assiduously and make sure that their lord is protected. Two of the basic tenets of the code, John M. Hill writes, are "revenge obligation regarding injury or death, on behalf of kinsmen as well as for one's lord; and fame assuring battle courage, especially if a successful outcome – battlefield victory – seems impossible" (qtd. in Wendt 39). In the same fashion, as many Old English poems reveal, there is no higher disgrace for a warrior than allowing his lord to die before him, and such events are usually followed by the dreadful experience of exile.

Moreover, as Tacitus describes, death within the *comitatus* intervenes even in times of peace, during the feasts that the community frequently shares. Many times the feasts are long and, as the participants consume "a fermented drink made from barley and wheat," they sometimes end in quarrels and manslaughter (Fulk and Cain 3). These feuds are not taken lightly, and they are always a matter of honor. The family of the slain can seek vengeance, or the killer can pay compensation to the victim's family, a compensation called *wergild*. As many critics observe, the majority of these *comitatus* customs, including the *wergild*, are recorded in *Beowulf*, making its meanings more difficult to decipher from a modern perspective due to the fact that these customs are no longer practiced today.

However, this glimpse in a world that is now accessible only through literature does not explain *Beowulf's* longstanding appeal, no matter how much the poem would emphasize the exceptionality of the main character as a *comitatus* leader and king. Moreover, as seen above, some critics agree that *Beowulf* is probably written for an audience of aristocratic Christians, an audience that would normally reject the rules of the *comitatus* as pagan beliefs, and indeed, there are parts in the poem that refer directly to the "hellish things" or heathen customs Hrothgar's men perform in their attempt to escape Grendel (*Beowulf* 78). What then is the reason behind the fascination the poem still elicits in its audience, a fascination that has helped it survive centuries of an often very strict and religious Christian society? One possible answer could be that the *comitatus* has the characteristics of an ideal world, a world in which courageous lords do everything possible to protect the weak, and a world based on loyalty in which people are almost equal. In addition, this world can be found at all the levels of the poem – from style and tropes to its imagery and themes – and it resembles what Gregory Claeys calls "proto-utopia," a genre mostly present in the writings of the Greek and Roman Classical Age that glorifies a past golden era of virtue (18). Essentially, through the recreation of the Golden Age every time *Beowulf* was performed, the austere pre-Enlightenment Christian audience would have had access to an age of honor that did not contravene thematically their religious beliefs, while the modern reader is drawn to it by the heroic and the egalitarian principles constituting the foundation of the text.

C. Utopia

One common feature in many utopias is their plausibility, because, as Howard P. Segal writes, "genuine utopias frequently seek not to escape from the real world, but to

make the real world better" (7). Segal's opinion is supported by Jean Servier, who notes in his seminal study *Histoire de l'utopie* that most of the times in literature, utopias take the form of social reactions promising peaceful, bright[2], and planned societies. They do not attempt to shatter completely the world of their time but to offer alternatives for improvement. Moreover, Servier asserts, an analysis of the literary utopias throughout history reveals an astonishing fact – they usually resemble the culture of the traditional citadel. They proclaim the maternal peacefulness of a world in which the individual is, paradoxically, "liberated" from his own free-will, in which he becomes again, like his ancestors in the traditional society, the prisoner of an entire array of rules and interdictions, meant to protect him and keep him happy. As Servier further discusses, one reason for this resemblance is the fact that traditional society in its turn has constantly strived to build itself as a copy of the mythical plan of the universe. Hence, utopia itself, if it desires to depict what I would call a "meta-society," an improved version of a historical society, needs to establish the same pattern, only this time, centered almost exclusively on the achievements of man. Utopia is, George Claeys observes, "a harmonious society where rules enforce justice, subjects pay taxes, authority and age are revered, and ritual observance of the principles of order and the will of heaven binds society together" (5).

Another important aspect rigorously organized in ideal worlds refers to their chronology and their topography. In the most notorious example of such a world, Thomas More's *Utopia*, time and space are clearly delineated and segmented. Time becomes some sort of permanent present because it is mostly spent in leisure and, as Claeys notes,

[2] In fact, Servier calls Utopia a "city of the Sun" (116).

"instructive amusements, such as public lectures, frequently occupy several hours a day" (64). Moreover, its world located on an island[3] resembles England of the time as it is divided into fifty-four citadels, just as England was then divided into fifty-four regions. All the citadels are similar in appearance, they are "all spacious and magnificent," and they all contain a population equally distributed (Claeys 61). The capital, obviously designed to mirror London, is fortified and serves as the *axis mundi* for the whole complex. Each city has wide streets, and it is organized into four quarters, the most important one being the shared dining hall.

Finally, since the laws of men are so important in utopias, ideal citadels share the promise of an egalitarian model, in which all men can have access to resources. That is why in More's *Utopia*, the social system is generally democratic, and men are mostly equal, everything is shared, especially meals, and mealtimes are followed by music, conversation, games, and reading. Gold and wealth are seen as unnecessary and often lose their value. Women do the cooking, assisted by slaves and children, and everyone receives plentiful supplies. The leader of *Utopia*, Claeys observes, is fully committed to upholding simplicity and to mitigating any type of scarcity. An interesting part of this system is, however, its fundamental imperfection – crime and criminals still exist because, Claeys further remarks, Utopia "recognizes, but resists, the possibility of decadence and moral degeneration, (…) [it] is not about perfectibility (…), [but] remains attainable, indeed has in some senses been attained, though the price enacted may be one many are unwilling to pay" (59). The only fear Utopians have is to be excluded or separated from this collective being. If the separation ever takes place, it is described as a

[3] That is why, Servier asserts elsewhere, almost all utopias involve sea traveling (249).

reason for terrible suffering, and the individual affected by it sometimes manifests violent tendencies against the society that rejected him. Many of these characteristics can be found in *Beowulf* as well, including the fact that, similar to More's *Utopia*, *Beowulf* also uses historical background and transforms it into art.

Textual Analysis

In a manner comparable to the ordered utopian meta-space, the beginning of *Beowulf* marks the entrance into the territory of literature through the abrupt and metatextual "Listen!" (or in other versions "Lo!") addressed to the audience (*Beowulf* 74). The formula is obviously meant to direct the listener or the reader towards the stories of the famous Danish kings in Hrothgar's lineage, especially of the noble Scyld Scefing, whose honorable deeds ensured his long-lasting recognition within his community. It might seem that we are in front of a common historical saga in which the heroic time of the Danish kings is brought back to the memory of the audience, yet the text proves anything but conventional even at this incipient point: although one would expect a heroic poem depicting Scyld Scefing's struggle to conquer his rivals, there is almost no description of an actual battle in this part. The text only mentions that Scefing "terrified his foes" but otherwise he

> Prospered under heaven, won praise and honor,
> until the men of every neighboring tribe,
> across the whale's way, were obliged to obey him
> and pay him tribute. He was a noble king! (*Beowulf* 74)

Scefing's lineage, all the way to Hrothgar, is described in an identical way – Beow of Denmark was "a beloved king, / [who] ruled long in the stronghold, famed / amongst

men" and Healfdene "brave (…) redoubtable, ruled the noble Danes" (75). Similar to what Evelyn Reynolds observes regarding Beowulf's journey to the mere in a later episode, "the emphasis rests [here] not on activity but on existence," and the text consists mainly of static verbs and descriptors (46). In other words, from its very beginning, the poem transgresses the limits of a heroic or epic saga as its focus does not revolve solely around the intense adventures of the heroes, and becomes a philosophical meditation on the features of an ideal leader. The text transcends the limits of a historical account and acquires ideological dimensions. As the portraits of Scyld, Beow, and Healfdene prove, a hero's fame is his most important attribute, and it is not dictated by his action, but by his honorable and noble deeds towards his society and the *comitatus*.

The first truly actional character in the text is in fact Hrothgar, who after he "won honour in war, / glory in battle, and so ensured / his followers' support" decides to "build a hall, / a large and noble feasting-hall" (75). At a closer look, Hrothgar's hall has many common characteristics with the geometric architecture in *Utopia*: it aims to become the center of the kingdom, the shared place that everyone – "tribes without a number, even / to the ends of the earth, were given orders / to decorate the hall" – helps to build (75). Moreover, its importance is suggested by the fact that it is even given a name, Heorot, and by the ascensional referents – "the hall towered high, / lofty and wide-gabled" – which give it the structure of an *axis mundi* (76). Thus, similar in function and structure with the dining-halls in More's later text, Heorot is intended to be a place of communal feasting, of "merry-making," of poetry, and of songs (76). Its entire description converges in many ways with all the ideals of community and egalitarianism in human history.

However, a problem arises at this point – as we have previously been informed, in the strict society of the *comitatus*, although common people are gift and treasure loving, rulers establish their fame in different ways – through noble deeds that secure the protection of the citizens. The golden, decorated Heorot is, therefore, a violation of this rule. In fact, the hall also violates at a more general level the rules of ideal societies that usually frown upon the unnecessary display of richness. Heorot thus represents Hrothgar's pride and his modality to gain fame to an extent illicitly. In addition, it contradicts, if not a fully egalitarian model, the rules of fair play in general.

There could be several reasons for this violation. One might be the fact that Hrothgar has aged, and he feels that his strength is abandoning him, so he can no longer fight honorably. Another could be excessive self-importance – the high tower could be perceived as an attempt to gain fast exceptionality among the Danish tribes. We can never know, but, as Peggy A. Knapp observes, the elevation of Heorot and what it ultimately symbolizes "can be appropriated by Christian thought [as well]: men build civilizations with huge beams and towering gables decorated with finely wrought gold, and their pride in accomplishment is the cause of their eventual fall" (90). Thus, the construction is destined from the very beginning, both from a Christian or egalitarian perspective and from the perspective of the *comitatus*, to create animosity among the Danes and between the Danes and forces exterior to their community, to attract the deviant, as it is suggested in premonitory lines such as:

> … fierce tongues and loathsome fire
> had not yet attacked it, nor was the time yet near
> when a mortal feud should flare between father-

and son-in-law, sparked off by deeds of deadly enmity. (76)

The scene that follows is probably one of the most commented on in the poem. Grendel, "the brutish demon who lived in the darkness / [and] impatiently endured a time of frustration," becomes attracted by the beauty and power of the hall and begins "to perpetrate base crimes" in it (76). Although some commentators, such as Leonard Neirdof, invoke metrical ambiguities and claim that the expression "seed of Cain" / "Cāīnes cynne" should be replaced with "Came cynne" – which would make Grendel the descendant of another biblical villain, Ham, son of Noah – the majority of the critics agree with the choice of the manuscript. Cain is a much more appropriate figure in the context, representative for the poem's target audience of a more suggestive image of evil. As Dorothy Whitelock asserts, the allusion to Cain reflects the type of audience the poet had in mind from the beginning: "he was composing for Christians whose conversion was neither partial, nor superficial. He expects them to understand his allusions to biblical events without his troubling to be explicit about them" (281). In fact, the text openly indicates a recurrent theme in many medieval texts – the position of Cain as the first biblical fiend after the falling of man, making him the symbolic source for all the other monsters and exiles in literature:

He could no longer
approach the throne of grace, that precious place
in God's presence, nor did he feel God's love.
In him all evil-doers find their origin,
monsters and elves and spiteful spirits of the dead,
also the giants who grappled with God

for a long while; the Lord gave them their deserts. (76-77)

The incidental mention of the giants here has nothing to do with the Flood, but it simply describes a lineage because, as we have seen in the case of Hrothgar and we are about to witness in the case of Beowulf, lineage carries with it the implication of belonging to a category of characters. Grendel needed one, too.

The monster, therefore, is assimilated to an entire line of evil doers. On a more allegorical level, however, as Fulk and Cain note citing Jane Chance, Grendel embodies very the idea of envy, while his mother and the dragon personify pride and avarice. In other words, all the monsters in the text defy the cooperative dream of the ideal world. On another note, nevertheless, Grendel's frustration and consequent punishment cannot be attributed entirely to his greed or temptation for treasures. After all, Hrothgar demonstrates the same characteristics, but he is not exiled as a consequence. What makes Grendel different from Hrothgar is, hence, the fact that he unquestionably aspires to transgress his marginality, his borderline state, and insert himself in the community of the "warrior Danes [who] lived [such] joyful lives / in complete harmony" although he was previously excluded from it (76). Similar to Cain, whom God banishes from society for his crimes, and to the exiled of *Utopia* who, as Servier suggested above, react violently when they are separated from the rest of the society, Grendel illustrates the outcast, the "notorious prowler of the borderland, ranger of the moors," as the text stresses, who attempts to find a way back into the community (76). Hrothgar's deviation from the rules of the *comitatus*, his crime in the order of the ideal society, offers Grendel the perfect location and reason, and he is willing to take this opportunity. Hrothgar's transgression

makes both of them, in a sense, consubstantial: that is why they start from now on to take turns ruling over the hall – Hrothgar during the day and Grendel during the night.

Yet, once back in the community, Grendel does not know how to behave, as the rules of the ideal citadel are foreign to him, and he becomes, Ali Meghdadi asserts, "an affront to their collective, (…) the proverbial individual, a consummate loner; who threatens the union of humanity" (91). As the poem further emphasizes, the community does not know how to cope with him, as his "enmity was utterly one-sided, too repulsive, / too long-lasting" (77). We witness Grendel desperately trying to surround himself with others, seizing "thirty thanes" to take to his lair but killing them on the way (77). The same idea is present in the reference to the *wergild* that follows: "he had no wish for peace / with any of the Danes, would not desist/ from his deadly malice or pay *wergild*" (79). Grendel simply refuses to follow the laws of the ideal city, and installs instead the tyranny of the unpredictable[4]:

> But the cruel monster constantly *terrified*
> young and old, the dark death-shadow
> *lurked in ambush*; he prowled the misty moors,
> at the dead of the night; men *do not know*
> where such hell-whisperers shrithe in their wanderings.
> Such were the many and outrageous injuries
> that *fearful solitary*, *foe of all men*,
> endlessly inflicted. (78, emphasis mine)

[4] Which contrasts not only the Christian element in which the sense of recurring morality dictates human life, or the *comitatus* code of behavior that requires rulers to protect their subjects, but also the strictly organized ideal society.

Even though, as we've seen, crime and criminals still exist in Utopia, and later Unferth is another clear example of an accepted criminal, Grendel's behavior is too anomalous to be tolerated. Hrothgar, however, a trespasser of codes himself, is too weak or too guilty to exclude him again. Hence, the necessity of an exemplary hero, one that can follow the societal codes, becomes at this point an urgency. In addition, similar to the majority of utopias, as Jean Servier noted above, this hero will come to the rescue by sea[5], another sign that contributes to the configuration of the poem as an ideal citadel.

Some critics have discussed Beowulf's apparent imperfection – the fact that he seems at times, while boasting about his heroic achievements, "to succumb to pride, (or its Germanic equivalent), a notorious vice inimical to Christian humility" (Gwara 1). Moreover, Scott Gwara observes, "both a hero and a king, the potentially reckless Beowulf coexists in the same text, and often in the same verses, as the potentially generous and wise Beowulf. Judgments of the Geat's motivation are [therefore] a matter of perspective" (2). In fact, many times in the text it appears as if Hrothgar warns the protagonist against this type of behavior in his speeches, in an effort to appease his arrogance and "thymos" – "a quality associated with one's personal ambition for honor and a touchy regard for its public acknowledgment," as Gwara puts it (23). The critic goes further and compares Beowulf with a mercenary, affirming that Wulfgar, Unferth, and Beowulf belong to the category of *wrecca*, "warriors 'forced out' or exiled from their homelands, mostly because of rivalrous dispositions and impetuous violence" (16).

[5] It is interesting to note here that the trope of traveling overseas is present in all the texts analyzed in this thesis: Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* contain it as well. In all three texts, the trope contains the same idea of the main character traveling towards the place of action and of a connection between nations or civilizations.

Gwara's theory, however, ignores the fact that Beowulf was by no means excluded from his community. In reality, part of this community, his *comitatus*, decided to follow him and fight to save Hrothgar's citadel from Grendel's oppression. Although he is their ruler, he treats them from the beginning as equals, asking them to follow him as a travel team and not as his subjects, while he welcomes their encouragement and advice: "Dear to them though he was, they encouraged / the warrior and consulted the omens" (79). Moreover, when he enters Hrothgar's kingdom, he does it, as the Danish watchman points out, in a very "open manner," following diligently, in other words, the rules of Danish society. This idea is also clear upon the arrival at the court when in a modest fashion, Beowulf does not flaunt the fact that he has come to save Heorot, but asks Hrothgar for guidance instead: "We have sailed across the sea to seek your lord, / Healfdene's son, protector of the people, / with most honorable intentions; give us guidance!" (80). This is why, towards the end of his arrival ceremony, it becomes very obvious that he has earned everyone's trust, including the one of Wulfgar, Hrothgar's most trusted counselor.

His civility is reflected not only in the modality by which he introduces himself, but also in his fights. What has again been viewed as a manifestation of his condescension – his refusal to use weapons during the battles – is in fact a more profound understanding and respect for his rivals. Beowulf *knows* that Grendel does not adhere to the societal rules because he has never learned them: "despite his fame for deadly deeds,/ he is *ignorant of these noble arts*" (91, emphasis mine). He does not want to create an unfair advantage for himself. Moreover, he only kills the monster during a second encounter, after the fight with his mother, the text suggesting to some extent that the exile

at the beginning would represent a fair punishment in an ideal society that wants to be tolerant even with its outcasts. The only principled reasons to proceed to a more definitive solution from the beginning would be persistence in malice, as in the case of Grendel's mother, or someone's attempt to endanger the ideal society, as happens with the dragon.

Another proof that Beowulf and his men embody the citizens of the solar-ideal citadel described by Servier is that they are seen in many of the passages in the text as carriers of light. Even if the poem does not contain any physical descriptions of the protagonist and of his *comitatus*, it repeatedly reiterates their luminous nature in relation to their armor. For example, as the poet records, they wear "gleaming armor," and "flashing shields," with "the boar crest, brightly gleaming," adorning their helmets, which in turn "are plated with glowing gold." So is "the shining chain-mail" of their corslets gleaming, etc. (79-82). The brightness traverses the entire text and never abandons the hero, at times following him, "light came from the east, [as] God's bright beacon," at times guiding him, as is the case during the fight with Grendel's mother when "his head was guarded by the gleaming helmet, / which was to explore the churning waters," or simply coming to his aid, as we see in the last episode during the slaying of the dragon, when Wiglaf's sword is described as "gleaming and adorned" (88, 110, and 142). Sometimes this light emphasizes the dimension of the hero as a warrior of God: after Grendel's mother is killed, her den is transformed in a celebration of light: "a light gleamed; the chamber was illumined as if the sky's bright candle were shining from heaven" (113). The detail is not incidental because, Jean Servier notes, light is a

suggestion of the ideal city's superior organization, of its solar[6] and positive nature. Therefore, as long as he continues to represent this light, Beowulf will remain an exemplary figure, defying any critical attempt to categorize him otherwise.

On the other hand, the text contains references to another type of light which, in contrast with the brightness of the first, represents the malignant light of evil and greed. Evil is the gleaming of gold in Heorot defying the Christian or utopian self-restraint, and that is why it attracts Grendel's envy. Grendel himself, a creature of darkness who hates the light of day, has "a horrible light, / like a lurid flame," flickering in his eyes (92). The same light catches the hero's eye in the mother's lair, when it is unclear whether this light belongs to her or to her son: "a light caught his eye,/ a lurid flame flickering brightly" (11). Finally, when the dragon emerges from his cave, we are told that he can make the light of day disappear in order to replace it with his own:

> Then daylight failed
> as the dragon desired; he could no longer
> confine himself to the cave but flew in a ball
> of flame, burning for vengeance. (132)

Light seems to represent for the monsters in the poem a threat and an aspiration at the same time; it develops into a symbol of power or wealth they unsuccessfully attempt to control.

Certainly, Beowulf's civility at his arrival, the respect he has for his opponents, and the motif of light do not fully resolve his apparent candid arrogance in other episodes. Lines such as the ones describing how Beowulf was advised to help Hrothgar

[6] As mentioned above, Servier notes that many early utopias were solar-centric.

by men who knew of his "great strength" and of the way he once "destroyed five, / a family of giants" seem to indicate, as some critics have noted, his resemblance with the "ambivalent personality of the Germanic 'hero'" who is "always glorious, fearless, and solitary on the one hand; [and] potentially spiteful, vain, barbaric, even murderous, on the other" (Gwara 22). This Germanic image would contradict, therefore, not only his image as an egalitarian leader, but also the Christian ideal of humility, and would transform the hero into an imperfect character, more heathen than Christian, and a negative example for the Christian audience. However, many elements in the text contradict such an interpretation, especially the fact that, apart from a few formulas that connect the idea of fate with God's will, and the episode in which the poet decries the "sacrifices to the idols" performed by Hrothgar's men, the poem does not seem to be especially devoted to any religious theme (78). Its didacticism refers to something else – to the literary recreation of a better world which has already vanished, set as an example for the poet's contemporaneity. Moreover, Beowulf's boasts are interestingly enough not performed post-battle, when in fact he is usually very reserved about his achievements, as the story he tells Hygelac upon his return suggests. Far from being centered on the self, the version of the story his "prince" hears contains digressions, such as the one involving Hrothgar's daughter, Freawaru, and Ingeld of the Heathobards, or the description of Hondscio's terrible death. When Beowulf finally talks about the actual fight, he hesitates to portray himself as a hero, and offers Hygelac the credit for the outcome:

> It would take too long to tell you how I repaid
> that enemy of men for all his outrages;
> but there, my prince, I *ennobled your people*

with my deeds. Grendel escaped,

and lived a little longer; but he left

behind at Heorot his right hand; and, in utter

wretchedness, sank to the bottom of the lake. (126)

It is then safe to say that Beowulf's so called "boasts" / *beot* reflect something different than pure arrogance. As Peggy A. Knapp observes following John M. Hill, these boasts exhibit "a public, almost ritualistic tone" that resembles "a culturally sanctioned legal promise" (92). They do not indicate hubris or personal instability, "but a solemn vow to enact in battle the strength and courage being claimed" (92). Earl R. Anderson in his turn attributes the boasting to what he calls "symbolic politics" and concludes that, together with gestures such as gift-giving, drinks being served by queens, and the funeral customs at the beginning and the end of the poem, they belong to the demonstrative behavior associated with it. They are marks of the court protocol, signs once again that Beowulf follows the societal laws. Such "demonstrative behaviors" adds Anderson, "are often negotiated or planned in advance, especially in political contexts" (201). In Anglo-Saxon times, they "were staged in public settings, but the negotiations that preceded them took place in council, or in private meetings. An example of that is Wulfgar's advice to Hrothgar" and their common decision to receive Beowulf at the court (204). Therefore, the hero's boasting becomes in this context a symbolic gesture, one meant to promise that the hero will do everything in his power to help. His claim, after all, does not come with the warranty of victory. Beowulf is well-aware that he might die. His only demand, in the context of this symbolic politics, is that, if he dies in battle, his "coat of mail" and the corslet that protects his chest and that once belonged to Hrethel, be sent to Hygelac, his

lord, as an ultimate token of his loyalty. From the perspective of the *comitatus*, there cannot be a more honorable gesture than this. In other words, as paradoxically as it may seem in the light of the humility topos, these "boasts" prove once more the nobility of the protagonist.

Beowulf and his warriors are not the only ones in the text that follow the strict rules of traditional courtesy. Wealhtheow represents such a character too. Her role, although allegedly minor, proves to be of extreme importance from both the perspective of the *comitatus* in which women were "peace-weavers" and advisers, and from the perspective of the egalitarian model in ideal societies. As two of the key moments in the text demonstrate, she is not just an adviser; she is at a deeper level the defender of the rules of the citadel. First, in the moment when the hero finishes his politically symbolic promise, we see Hrothgar's queen majestically coming forward and sealing an agreement between the Danes and the hero that would not dishonor her husband:

> Wealhtheow came forward,
> mindful of the ceremonial – she was Hrothgar's queen;
> adorned with gold, that proud woman
> greeted the men in the hall, then offered the cup
> to the Danish king first of all. (89)

She also plays a role, however, in what could have become Hrothgar's second deviation from the strict rules of traditional society: the moment when, after the battle against Grendel, Hrothgar recklessly decides to make Beowulf his son. As we have seen in the case of the monster, the second transgression is considered a mark of evil; it is equivalent to a moment of hubris. It seems that in order to avoid any future dangers to his power,

Hrothgar is capable of breaking Scyld Scefing's lineage, and of transforming his sons into commoners. Beowulf does not reply in the heat of the moment – he knows that the laws of civility would prevent him to either reject or accept the offer. We witness instead his account of the battle, a subtle way to avoid any definite answer. The true answer belongs to Wealhtheow, who comes and defends her sons reminding her husband that they are the true descendants of the Danish kings. She speaks frankly to Hrothgar in front of all the participants at the feast, in a fashion which leaves no doubt over their relative equality:

> I am told you intend to adopt this warrior,
> take him for your son. This resplendent ring-hall,
> Heorot, has been cleansed; give any rewards
> while you may, but leave this land and the Danish people
> to your own descendants when the day comes
> for you to die. (103)

As the poem further hints, Hrothgar's second mistake foreshadows the destruction of his line and Hrothulf's betrayal, but from the perspective of the ideal society, it allows the hero and Wealhtheow to prove once more their exemplarity.

In the context of the ideal society of the *comitatus*, gifts also acquire meta-signification because they are no longer simple objects; they become demonstrative behavior themselves, tokens of the giver's generosity. Gift-giving appears, Earl R. Anderson asserts, seven times in *Beowulf*: it begins with the feast after Grendel's renewed exile, when both Hrothgar and Wealhtheow present Beowulf with treasures. It continues with the "gift" Beowulf offers Hrothgar upon his return from the fight with

Grendel's mother – the head of the monster. The gesture is reciprocated in the form of the twelve treasures Hrothgar gives Beowulf before he leaves Denmark. The fifth time gifts are exchanged in the text occurs on the way back to the ship when Beowulf offers "a sword round with gold / to the ship's watchman," and this moment is followed by his magnanimous renunciation of almost all the gifts he received from Hrothgar, which he presents to Hygelac and his queen, receiving lands in return (*Beowulf* 121). Finally, the seventh gift-giving moment, Anderson remarks, occurs when "mortally wounded by the dragon, Beowulf gave his war-gear and torque to Wiglaf, his only living relative" (219). Most of these exchanges have political implications – the ones involving Hrothgar and Hygelac consolidate the protagonist's position in the wider structure of the *comitatus*. Two, however, have a special significance. One of them is the moment involving the watchman, which demonstrates, Anderson notes, Beowulf's genuine benevolent nature as the action is not dictated by any custom. The other is the one at the end of the poem, which in Anderson's opinion represents a new allusion to the position of a king as a "ring-giver" or a "gold giver" (220). However, the part of the text preceding the offering suggests that the gift represents more than that:

> And now that I have bartened my old life
> for this treasure hoard, *you must serve*
> *and inspire our people*. I will not long be with you.
> Command the battle-warriors, after the funeral fire,
> to build a fine barrow overlooking the sea;
> let it tower high on Whaleness
> as a reminder to my people.

And let it be known as Beowulf's barrow

to all seafarers, to men who steer their ships

from all over the swell and the saltspray. (144-45, emphasis mine)

Some would say that this scene has to do with the trope of glory with its variant in the poem "fame," the true commodity in the world of the *comitatus*. Indeed, fame is a very important motif throughout the whole poem. Nonetheless, what is interesting about it is that it relies on story-telling, on people reflecting on the actions of other people; in other words, similarly to utopia, which involves the betterment of another world, fame is metatextual too. It implies reflection, so it becomes the story of another story. It completes the signified represented here by a history that is only partially known. The biblical references discussed earlier in the case of the Grendelkin are also, *sui generis*, metatextual. So is the presence of Unferth, who, Ali Meghdadi believes, although "a seemingly minor character within the narrative, takes on a great significance in light of his effect upon the metanarrative that traces Beowulf's identification as a Christian hero" (94). Unferth only speaks once in the entire poem, Meghdadi continues, but to some extent "indelibly incarnates the symbolic monster attacking Beowulf's ego and identity" (94).

However, the most obvious metatextual episodes are the various digressions, Beowulf's journeys, and the funeral descriptions. On one hand, they represent at times poetry about poetry, creating a *mise-en-abyme,* a textual mirror-like experience, extremely revolutionary in a text written during the first millennium, as it is the case with the moment of entertainment in the aftermath of the fight against Grendel. On the other hand, the *mise-en-abyme* persists at a more profound level – at the level of history. In

Beowulf, the history of the Danish people is intricately woven in the texture of the poem, and both of them combined seem to determine the hero's actions. If the digressions are suggestive for the later events in the poem or in history (for example, "the surprise attack" in the Finn digression lays the foundation for the vengeful moment orchestrated by Grendel's mother, and the episode with Freawaru, as Adrien Bonjour notes, is representative for "the leitmotiv of the precarious peace," inexorably linked with the later downfall of the Geatish people), the funeral description at the beginning and at the end of the poem combined with the hero's *nostos* back to Hygelac's court create an impression of repetitiveness that ultimately renders – more than once – circularity to the poem (324). Beowulf leaves Hrothgar's cleansed and friendly court only to become, eventually, through his own merits and fame, the ruler of his own kingdom, following figuratively, in another land, the lineage of the great Danish kings evoked in the first part of the text. The image of the barrow containing the protagonist's ashes together with "rings and brooches" and other adornments, surrounded by mourning warriors, also echoes perfectly Scyld Scefing's funeral in the beginning of the poem. In fact, the only major difference is the modality in which the lineage is perpetuated – since Beowulf does not have an heir, he entrusts his kingdom in his final moments to Wiglaf, as seen in the suggestive episode cited above. Wiglaf is, therefore, supposed to continue "to serve and inspire" the people because this is the only way the now idealized world of the *comitatus* will survive in the collective memory (*Beowulf* 144).

What is, however, the more profound significance of this circularity? Why does the text assure us that the lineage of the famous but childless hero is perpetuated? How does this continuation adhere to the beliefs of the Christian audience? It seems that this is

the point where the talent of the Beowulfian poet becomes the most manifest. He manages to create a world that speaks to any type of audience at any time because it values morality, generosity, nobility, equality, and fame above all else. These values create an *ideal ethos* that remains vivid over time. Moreover, the world contained in *Beowulf* is never subversive as it is not preoccupied with an escape from the real world, but with the possibility to improve it by returning to ideal past. Additionally, Beowulf and Wiglaf are plausible characters, preoccupied with the prosperity and protection of their lord and of their subjects, and, therefore, possible role models across time. This suggests that whenever the poem is performed, their exemplarity will provide the audience with a sense of historical stability in an otherwise fragmented world.

The circularity of the poem thus acquires a deeper signification: it is a sign that the poem encompasses a world that would be otherwise lost if it were not for the art that preserves it and revive it every time the poem is performed or read. The *comitatus* lives on, and, as long as its posterity is ensured symbolically through Wiglaf, it becomes accessible again. As Evelyn Reynolds asserts: "the poem raises us from normal sequential time into suspension, giving the illusion of an escape from transience and participation in *permanence*" (55, emphasis mine). This permanence exemplifies, at a more general level, the trope of time in ideal societies.

Although aspects such as classification, dating, and interpretation have frequently allowed scholars to claim that *Beowulf* is a difficult poem, too complex for modern readers because of the cultural differences created by time, the text's difficulty resides in its metatextual character, in its capacity to incorporate elements of history, features of the Germanic code of honor, and Christian beliefs and to transform them in a more general

image of an ideal society that manages to fascinate readers across time. Following the lineage of the ancient utopias decrying the loss of a golden age and preceding the modern ones hoping for the betterment of the world, *Beowulf* represents the constant human nostalgia for an idealized traditional world, with just laws and honorable heroes protecting the community in a fair and open manner. With every reading we become part of that world, we appropriate the values of its hero, and we participate in a *mise-en-abyme* of meaning that connects us with the original function of literature: the ritualistic creation of worlds.

Chapter III:

DRACULA – HYBRIDITY AND METAFICTION

The myth of Dracula has undoubtedly become one of the most prolific and interesting legends of the modern age. Since Bram Stoker published his famous novel in 1897, the theme of the vampire and of his Transylvanian castle has been over-circulated and recycled in various areas of pop culture – from movies to graphic novels, from music videos to anime, from Halloween costumes to toy figurines – and we have witnessed, in Iulius Hondrila's terms, the flourishing and the "persistent mutability of an imago-myth evolving around borders" being continuously imagined and renegotiated (101).

However, the myth's popularity has also translated into an array of critical readings whose often conflicting variation has led to controversy. As Jarlath Killeen observes, "*Dracula* has provoked a plethora of different critical readings from literary critics, who have seen him as everything from a Jew, to an Irish landlord, to an Irish rebel, to an incarnation of sexual perversity, to a primordial savage: [and] he is all these things and more" (87). Nevertheless, this variation risks deconstructing its own premise because, as Carolyn Hartford notes, quoting Maud Ellmann, the multiplicity of meanings associated with the character of Count Dracula, might eventually make that character lose his significance. Moreover, Hartford continues,

> In a sort of Occam's Razor of literary criticism, for some critics it may seem preferable for a literary figure or work to have a single meaning, or a small, manageable set of meanings, with other interpretations readily identifiable as

> wrong. A wild proliferation of meanings, without obvious boundaries, may seem to make a mockery of the entire exercise of literary analysis. If something can be made to stand for anything, then ultimately, it stands for nothing. (49)

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Indeed, if earlier critics have interpreted Stoker's novel in terms of psychoanalysis or have considered it an example of the clash between monopoly capitalism and the proletariat, among the multiplicity of the more recent interpretations, one important category is represented by those who talk about *Dracula* as a mythopoeic text exploiting mythical patterns that are, as Matthew Beresford notes, well-documented throughout the history of many European cultures, from the Greek, Balkan, Central European, and Norse mythologies to the Western Christian beliefs in which Judas becomes the embodiment of the first vampire (19). Carolyn Hartford herself concludes that the novel "reinscribes an archetypal mythologem" also present in the abduction and rape of Persephone in the Greek mythology (50). The critic believes that Dracula is a modern image of Hades, and Lucy's violation is reminiscent of Persephone's rape eventually agreed upon by Demeter, because it is performed with Mrs. Westenra's unknowing consent. Iulius Hondrila, on the other hand, examines the very concept of "myth," following Mircea Eliade's 1959 definition of the myth as a "paradigmatic model that tells the sacred history of a primordial event which took place at the beginning of time" and argues that, even though, at a more general level, the myth of the un-dead vampire, a variant of the myth of immortality, "goes centuries back in Eastern European folklore," the Dracula myth in particular only came to life in the novel, and it was consecrated by the power of its polymorphism (89). Also quoting Mircea Eliade, this time his 1961 study *The Sacred and*

the Profane, Beth E. McDonald believes that Transylvania and Dracula's castle represent profane spaces, and "Dracula's invasion of England becomes a de-creation of the sacred, extending chaos to the religious institutions and habitations of the British population" (99). As she concludes, the legend of Dracula is a "numinous fiction, (…) a story of salvation, of initiation into the sacred," in which humans "evaluate their own evil potential and their longing for reaffirmation of a spiritual future because the chaos of the unknown, the chaos of living death, is too frightening" (McDonald 136).

Other critics have pointed out the Gothic features of the novel. In *The Cambridge History of the English Novel* edited by Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes, Richard A. Kaye affirms that *Dracula* belongs to the category of the *fin-de-siècle* texts heavily influenced by Darwin's theories, and that the vampire is the embodiment of the bestiality that overshadows human nature representing an underworld of perversity (446), while Peter K. Garrett considers *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* expressions of extreme sensations, and considers Stoker's novel the most lurid of the monster stories in the nineteenth century, one that proves how sensationalized Gothic fantasy can use realistic techniques such as the diary or journal to convey the preternatural (469). Catherine Wynne, in her turn, connects this sensational dimension to Stoker's passion for the theatre, more specifically for the plays of the eighteenth century, which, like the Gothic novel that had a "rich machinery of spectacular potential," also placed their action in ruinous castles and depicted gloomy forests or stormy seashores (13). For Jarlath Killeen, in his comprehensive study *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature 1825-1914*, *Dracula* is another example of what he calls "the horror of childhood," Victorian texts in which the characters are orphans "who have relapsed into versions of their own childhood, and who

are desperately searching for substitute parents to comfort them in the face of a terrible new father" (84). Killeen continues by affirming that "Dracula is a monstrous translation of the God the Father Almighty, whose desire is to make all the characters his 'children of the night,' (…) an ultramasculine threat to his hysterically effeminate enemies, (…) [and] a child-abusing patriarch" (86). In addition, Killeen explains, Van Helsing becomes the Count's double in the plot, "a bereaved parent whose own son died," and who "goes on to convert all the Crew of Light into his children" (88). Finally, Ross G. Forman postulates that Stoker's novel contains the fear of malaria associated with racial fears, and that malaria offers the key explanation of "how the text functions as a body of writing to be acted on by agents that are ostensibly both internal and external to it – agents that actively blur the distinction between different narrative forms (the novel, the newspaper, the medical report, the diary, etc.) and in doing so actively performs vampirism on these genres so as to co-opt them" (927).

Nonetheless, the most substantial number of critical analyses of *Dracula* in recent years have been dedicated to the postcolonial implications of the novel. To a certain extent, the references and metaphors of racial anxieties are present in many of the previous texts cited – for instance, Iulius Hondrila, Jarlath Killeen, and Ross G. Forman also allude to problems of race and otherness mainly because these problems are familiar themes of Victorian literature in general and Gothic novels in particular. As William Hughes and Andrew Smith observe in their introduction to the collection of *Gothic Studies*, the Gothic "has historically maintained an intimacy with colonial issues, and in consequence with the potential for disruption and redefinition vested in the relationships

Self and Other, controlling and repressed, subaltern milieu and dominant outsider culture" (1). Moreover, the two critics assert:

> Gothic fiction in this respect proclaims the basic contesting powers – intellectual, physical, spiritual – that are all too easily lost behind the specificities of Empire writing, both fictional and theoretical. Empire, in Gothic writings, is frequently conducted at a personal level, where the invasive urge and its frequently negative consequences hold a synecdochal relationship to excesses committed under numerous names and in diverse theatres of culture. Gothic fiction arguably opens up to view the power relationships that the fictions of politics strive to conceal. (2)

In the case of *Dracula*, however, there are two types of postcolonial critical interpretations: one that interprets the novel in the wider postcoloniality of the world, and one that is more strictly interested in the Anglo-Irish postcolonial dimension. The two of them are, nevertheless, related as the issues of British postcolonialism transgress the borders of Ireland and become metaphors of universal racial struggles.

In probably one of the most important articles dedicated to the Irish postcolonial perspective, Joseph Valente speaks of what he calls the "metrocolonial Gothic." This type of Gothic, Valente asserts, emerged in Irish literature after the Act of Union in 1800, an act through which "the Irish people found themselves at once agent and object, participants-victims, of Britain's far-flung imperial mission – in short, a 'metrocolonial' people" (46). Being a racially mixed author, with a father of Anglo-Saxon descent and a Celtic mother, Stoker "was a member of a conquered and a vanquished race, a ruling and a subject people, an imperial and an occupied nation" (47). Therefore, he installs in his

writing what Valente calls a 'double-born' device built on "a structurally determined ambivalence, even skepticism, toward the racial distinctions, social hierarchies and political assumptions that inform the Anglo-Protestant literary heritage" (48). Consequently, in Valente's terms, the novel becomes "a far less reflexive 'Victorian' elaboration of ethno-national anxiety and a far more vivisective, incipiently Modernist, engagement with the identitarian mindset" (48). Valente's observations are continued by Calvin W. Keogh, who in his article "The Critic's Count: Revisions of *Dracula* and the Postcolonial Irish Gothic," includes them in the larger category of Irish postcolonial investigations together with the ideas of critics such as Luke Gibbon and Joe Cleary. Keogh in his turn contends, however, that "the novel also lends itself to revisionism in the direction of postmodernism. Systemically multilayered and thoroughly fragmented, it relentlessly recycles earlier fictions and proconnects with alternative versions in newer media and with the kindred and ever-proliferating 'semi-demons' of the twentieth century popular culture" (206).

Contrary to Keogh's progressive view, critics such as Robert A. Smart, Michael Hutcheson, or Raphaël Ingelbien consider Stoker's text a metaphor for a conflicting or painful Irish past. If Ingelbien compares it with Elizabeth Bowen's family memoir *Bowen's Court* and concludes that both of them contain the themes and descriptive strategies of the Anglo-Irish tradition, and that the Count resembles an Ascendancy landlord (1089), Smart and Hutcheson argue in their 2007 article that the historical stories in *Dracula* are a camouflage story for the "one tale they cannot or will not tell," a tale that is "hidden in cultural memory" – the tale of the Great Hunger or Famine in Ireland between 1845 and 1851 (2). In a similar fashion, Smart asserts a few years later in

another article included in a 2013 volume edited by Tabish Khair and Johan Höglund that:

> In addition, these postcolonial elements of the Irish vampire tale have most to do with the fraught relationship between the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and the Catholic majority of the colony; this troubled divide between the two cultures of colonial Ireland produced a monstrous semiotics in which Protestant fears about the Catholic majority were refracted through a register of terror in which Catholics and Catholicism became monstrous, vampiric, as well as desirable, in another misalignment typical of this Gothic tradition. (13)

Critics that go beyond the discussion around Anglo-Irish postcolonialism place the novel in the more general light of cultural issues involving race. In his 1990 seminal article, "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reversed Colonization," Stephen D. Arata observes that through *Dracula*, Stoker brings the terror of reverse colonization, typical for a fin-de-siècle Britain whose world power was declining, very close to home (623). In Arata's terms, Jonathan Harker's journal expresses Orientalist stereotypes, while in reverse the Count's actions in London mirror the British imperial activities in the colonies. Moreover, the terror that the Transylvanian character inspires is generated by the fact that he can "pass" as a Westerner; this impersonation, this talent for mimicry, was always represented in Victorian texts as unidirectional – it was always Westerners who could pass as natives, and never the other way around. Similarly to Arata, Mario Vrbančić also notes the fear of reversed colonization: the vampires are an expression of what the British at the time used to call the "Eastern Question," an example, Vrbančić explains, of the horrifying possibilities they envisioned after the

dissolution of the Ottoman Empire – after all, another empire similar to their own. Stoker's character, concludes Vrbančić, "is not just a Byronic, wandering aristocrat but an industrious, global menace" capable of conquering and colonizing "the territories, bodies, thoughts, [and] knowledges" of the Londoners (4). Andrew Smith believes that the novel also elicits a fear of Americans seen as a conquering race – hence the death of Quincey Morris who becomes an alter ego of the vampire in the novel, while Patrick Brantlinger in his article "Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians" accredits the idea that "*Dracula* incorporates a complex range of modern mass fetishes and phobias including occultism, anti-Semitism, anti-feminism, xenophobia, fears about sexual perversions, and anxieties about imperial and racial degenerations" (201). Finally, Eric Kwan-Wai Yu following Max Weber speaks of the novel as an expression of the Protestant ethic, and observes what he calls the Count's "incredible mimic power," which points to Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry (147). The critic concludes that "while the menace of colonial mimicry comes from the unexpected recognition of difference and otherness, Dracula's shock tinges on the imperial subject's surprise discovery of the King-vampire's modernity and Englishness" (164).

Of course, one may infer that all of these critical perspectives have little in common. However, there is always a tendency in Stoker's text for ambivalence or even plurivalence as the vampire himself is a character that refuses to remain one-sided; he is situated between the limit of life and death, myth and reality, historical character and demon, stereotype and fear of Otherness and attraction to the intriguing stranger, colonized and colonizer, sensationalism and palpable *fin-de-siècle* desperation, victim and victimizer, host and parasite, etc. Each of these elements and others appear

concomitantly with their antithetical equivalents in the novel, which is built in essence at the confluence of their features, in the ambivalent or even plurivalent space where they manifest their *hybridity*, their multiple inflection. It is this very hybridity that brings them together and gives meaning to the discordant interpretations. It is partially a hybridity as Homi Bhabha defined it, one that rejects the abrupt delineations of West vs. East, but mostly a hybridity in the sense of rejection of one-sidedness, of creative contamination between narrative forms, types of characters, and plots normally belonging to different genres. It is the hybridity noted by John Paul Riquelme in the case of the characters in *Dracula* which provides a model for the ones "of the future and of modern experience," but it is more than that (8). It covers *everything*. Similarly to *Beowulf* analyzed above, the plurivalence and hybridity in Stoker's text is illustrated by tropes that establish not an utopian world, but a mythical one, one created by the confrontation between good and evil, which can be interpreted this time in postcolonial terms, and by the metatextual narrative technique, which converts into a meditation on how history and myth interact.

Textual Analysis

A. A Hybrid Myth

Many critics have investigated the elements that help establish the powerful myth of Dracula. As Iulius Hondrila observes, following Mircea Eliade, the myth as a genre has to do with a sacred story and a primordial event which have taken place *in illo tempore*, in the time of the origins, "a re-enacted sacred time of the cosmogony" (89). Although Hondrila does not elaborate this idea, it is obvious from the very beginning of the novel that the text emphasizes, under the disguise of a travel narrative, precisely the

problem of time, which progressively loses the contours of its reality as Jonathan Harker moves from the West to the East:

> *3 May. Bistritz*. – Left Munich at 8:35 P.M. on 1st May, arriving at Vienna *early next morning; should have arrived at 6:46, but train was an hour late.* Buda-Pesth seems a wonderful place, from the glimpse which I got of it from the train and the little I could walk through the streets. I feared to go very far from the station, as *we arrived late* and would start as *near* the correct time as possible. The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering East… (Stoker 5, some emphasis mine)

In fact, the trope of time is combined here with spatial references, some of which have generated the postcolonial interpretations mentioned above. However, the distortion of what Mikhail Bakhtin called the *chronotope*, the combined trope of space and time, is completely unusual in a personal journal and a travel narrative. It suggests that the myth contaminates these two genres, transforming the text into a *hybrid* territory. The distortions continue throughout the entire first part of the novel, with Harker progressively recording time and space metaphors which might seem realistic, but which have in fact no real reference: they become signifiers devoid of their signified, allowing the preternatural to creep in: "it was *on the dark side of twilight* when we got to Bistritz," "hillsides *like the tongues of flame*," "an *endless perspective* of jagged rock and pointed crags, till they were themselves *lost in the distance*," "*serpentine* way," "*shadow*s of the evening," "as the evening fell it began to get very cold, and *the growing twilight seemed to merge into one dark mistiness the gloom* of the trees," etc. (Stoker 7-13, emphasis

mine). At some point, the difference between the two temporal registers that merge into each other is made even clearer:

> When I told her that I must go at once, and that I was engaged on important business, she asked again:
>
> "Do you know what day it is?" I answered that it was *the fourth of May*. She shook her head as she said again:
>
> "Oh, yes! I know that! *I know that*, but *do you know what day it is*?" On my saying that I did not understand, she went on:
>
> "It is *the eve of St. George's Day*. Do you know that to-night, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway? Do you know *where you are going, and what you are going to do*?" (Stoker 9, emphasis mine)

Such references abound not only throughout the journey to the Count's castle, but also after it; the chronological and the mythical time, the real space of Transylvania and the space of the myth (the underworld, the world of the un-dead, the territory of Hades, as it has been observed by critics), go together, hand in hand, in an ambivalent stance in which they no longer exclude each other. Even the Count's castle, which becomes the *axis mundi* of this underworld, is affected by chronology: "a vast ruined castle, from whose tall black windows came no ray of light, and whose broken battlements showed a jagged line against the moonlit sky" (Stoker 19).

Although many of these elements belong to the usual Gothic inventory, and they contribute to the complex feeling of fascination and repulsion the place elicits, the novel never truly abandons the realistic pretenses. In fact, there is a permanent sensation that the oddity of the place might represent only an English tourist's inadequacy in

Transylvania. As the Count himself declares, "Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you strange things," which implies that he knows that Jonathan Harker might not be accustomed to some of his habits (Stoker 27). Moreover, Dracula himself can pass most of the time, even in Transylvania, as a plausible person, coming from a very old and historically recorded family, who is only trying to keep his guest safe. For instance, when Jonathan feels entrapped in the castle, the Count explains to him candidly that there are many dangers awaiting him outside. A proof of his honesty can be the fact that the wolves, very present in the text, force Jonathan at some point to prefer to remain indoors. At another time, he warns his guest not to enter other parts of the castle because "it is old, and has many memories" (Stoker 40). This continuous oscillation between supernatural and a reasonable explanation of events, similar to the hesitation generated by the fantastic that Tzvetan Todorov once noted, creates a continuous ambivalence of the tropes in the story.

In addition, Jonathan Harker himself is not Orpheus; he is by no means a heroic figure who travels to the underworld for initiation, and he typically does not understand or does not react properly to situations. In fact, even his exit from Transylvania takes place in a coma: a sign that he has learned very little throughout the journey. Jarlath Killeen is right, from his arrival at the castle, Jonathan seems emasculated and weak, in other words, *hybrid*, in a clear contrast with the Count's vigor,

> When the calèche stopped, the driver jumped down and held out his hand to assist me to alight. Again I could not but notice his prodigious strength. His hand actually seemed like a steel vice that could have crushed mine if he had chosen. (…) He insisted on carrying my traps along the passage, and then up a great

> winding stair, and along another great passage, on whose stone floor our steps rang heavily. (Stoker 20, 22)

Later, when in one of the most dramatic scenes of the novel, Harker accidentally cuts himself, and the Count aggressively takes away his mirror, the Englishman does not fight back, and exhibits instead an attitude of resignation. His dry comment suggests that he considers the Count's reaction banal: "it is very annoying, for I do not see how I am to shave, unless in my watchcase or the bottom of the shaving-pot, which is fortunately of metal" (Stoker 32).

Such scenes, together with the one in which the Count defends Harker against the attack of the three female vampires when he exclaims, "This man belongs to me!" configure a character who cannot defend himself; a character far from the vampire hunter he will become at some point back in Britain (Stoker 47). However, one could wonder how such a character configuration supports the long-lasting power of the myth? How can an action that, although placed at the beginning in a quasi-legendary place like Transylvania, eventually moves to London, become a "sacred story" in Eliade's terms? John Bender believes that the answer does not reside in the novelistic theme, but rather in what he calls "lack of stylistic polish" (226). In an article in which he discusses three of the most important English novels which in his opinion have become myths – *Robinson Crusoe*, *Frankenstein*, and *Dracula* – Bender follows Claude Lévi-Strauss and Vladimir Propp and concludes that common style is very important in the transmission of a myth because, the critic believes, "the myth or archetypal is somehow antithetic to literature" as it is more vivid and more immediate, while the focus of literature is the individuality and the creative style of the writer (229). Moreover, continues Bender, this "plainness of

style enables the illusory, even apparitional effects of realism," a procedure that enables the naturalization of myth as ideology and the blocking of our "critical faculty in the same way that our ordinary use of language requires us to pass over profound etymological or metaphorical resonances and contradictions" (231).

Undeniably, Stoker's novel uses the plain style Bender observes, and this style, combined with the verisimilitude of some of the time, space, and character references, makes it realistic and easily transmissible. However, it also contains a structure anticipated by Bender, who mentions it briefly in connection to the easiness that characterizes the translation of this mythogenetic plain style – the structure of the folktale. This structure maintains the unity of the novel after Jonathan Harker returns to Britain. Moreover, it also demonstrates the theme of Otherness and makes the transition towards postcolonialism in the novel because folktales always support stories that set heroes and villains in binary opposition, with the latter commonly depicted as foreigners.

According to Vladimir Propp in his 1958 study *Morphology of the Folktale*, although a folktale classification based on plots is impossible, such texts can be categorized according to motifs or "functions," as Propp calls them, which are recurrent, constant, and stable elements of their structure. Propp, therefore, distinguishes thirty-one successive folktale functions which appear in folktales regardless of changes operated by characters – in Propp's terms "*dramatic personae*" – or plot (20). Stoker's text contains the majority of these functions; nevertheless, some of them migrate from one character to another due to the more pronounced complexity of the novelistic genre. Such an incorporation in the seemingly historical and travel novel of the folktale structure, which

in its turn helps develop the myth, represents, nevertheless, another proof of its intergeneric flexibility.

Thus, a first function is the "absence": in a folktale the initial situation usually implies that the parents are absent or dead (24). *Dracula* multiplies this function at the level of the majority of the characters - as Jarlath Killeen rightfully notes, Jonathan, Mina, Lucy, Dr. Seward, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincey Morris are all orphans, partial orphans, or those about to be orphaned. In any case, by the end of the novel, they are all in search of a father figure. The second and third functions also present in the novel would be the "interdiction" and "the violation of it" – Jonathan Harker disrupts the order of things in Transylvania at least twice: first as he travels to the Count's castle in spite of all the warnings on the way, and second as he wanders through the castle ignoring Dracula's interdiction (26). The fourth and fifth functions identified by Propp are even more interesting than the previous ones; Propp calls them "reconnaissance," and "delivery" (26-27). In Propp's terms, they represent the moment when the villain asks questions and attempts to find more information about his victims or "reconnaissance," followed by the moment when he receives a usually spontaneous answer, "delivery" (27):

> "Come," he said at last, "tell me of London and of the house which you have procured for me." With an apology for my remissness, I went into my room to get the papers from my bag. (…) He was interested in everything, and asked me myriad questions about the place and its surroundings. He clearly had studied beforehand all he could get on the subject of the neighborhood, for he evidently at the end knew very much more than I did. (…) When I had told him the facts and got his signature to the necessary papers, and had written a letter with them ready

to post to Mr. Hawkins, he began to ask me how I had come across so suitable place. I read to him the notes which I had made at the time… (Stoker 28-29)

This function is followed closely by "fraud" and "complicity," or the villain's attempt to take into possession his victim and the victim submitting to his deception – a function covered in the novel by the part in which Harker, a prisoner in the castle, only feebly tries to fight back or even willingly decides not to leave the castle for fear of the wolves during his last night there (28).

The functions become less clearly delineated once the novel moves the plot back to Britain, probably due to the impression of authenticity and modernity the text acquires after it leaves the exotic land of Transylvania, but their succession is indisputable. The moment the Count, the villain, moves to the city, he starts causing harm or injury to Lucy – the function of "villainy" in Propp's study – and this prompts the "mediation," the moment when the misfortune is made known and the hero is asked to intervene (32). This time the heroism is shared as Arthur Holmwood asks Dr. Seward to come to Lucy's rescue, but Dr. Seward also brings with him his friend, Professor Van Helsing, specialist in obscure diseases, "a philosopher and a metaphysician, and one of the most advanced scientists of his day" who becomes both a hero in the novel, and a helper or a "donor," as Propp calls this type of character (126).

The subsequent functions in Propp's succession such as the "receipt of a magical agent," translated in Stoker's novel in the garlic or the Catholic paraphernalia, the "translocation" to Transylvania, and the "struggle" which takes place first in London against Lucy metamorphosed into a vampire, and then in Transylvania against the Count himself, cover a larger portion of the text than they would do in a folktale, as they have to

abide to novelistic norms (36 and 46). These functions contain constant re-runs of the same actions and involve a larger number of heroes (the Crew of Light), but the skeleton of the folktale is still discernible. In a very interesting twist, however, the "branding" of the hero is done evenly (Propp 46); both Mina and the Count are branded, as they are the only legitimately strong personalities in the text, the main characters: the villain and the woman with a "man's brain" – a complement of her effeminate husband – who puts the entire text together (Stoker 261). The end of the novel marks the "victory" over the villain, the "liquidation of the misfortune" and a "return" to Britain combined with what critics call the survival of the vampire – the baby born on the anniversary of the villain's death. This strange outcome could represent in fact a substitute for the function of the "wedding" which is usually, as Propp observes, the culmination of a tale (57). The novel only briefly mentions that two of the members of the Crew of Light are happily married, but does not actually end with their weddings:

> Seven years ago we all went through the flames; and the happiness of some of us since then is, we think, well worth the pain we endured. It is an added joy to Mina and to me that our boy's birthday is the same day as that on which Quincey Morris died. His mother holds, I know, the secret belief that some of our brave friend's spirit has passed into him. His bundle of names links all our little band of men together, but we call him Quincey.
>
> (…) When we got home we were talking of the old time – which we could all look back on without despair, for Godalming and Seward are both happily married. (Stoker 421)

Ultimately, the mythical construction is anchored in the verisimilitude of real spaces, even though one of them is less known, in the reality of a historical character transformed into an undead villain, and in the structure of a folktale written in a plain and realistic style, which makes it easier to transmit and translate into other forms of art; these elements explain the fascination it still elicits in pop-culture.

B. Orientalism and Hybridity

In his 1978 *Orientalism*, Edward Said writes emphatically:

> The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. (Said 88)

Many critics who have investigated Stoker's novel have pointed out that he never traveled to Transylvania, the land he attempts to depict so vividly. Some have tried to catalogue his sources: from the stories of his friend, Ármin Vámbéry, a Hungarian Turkologist and traveler, Emily Gerard's Transylvanian folklore collection *The Land Beyond the Forest* (1888), or Major Edmund Cecil Johnson's observations in *On the Track of the Crescent*, the latter being, as Santiago Lucendo notes, profoundly racist, especially against Gypsies, whom Johnson perceives as dangerous and animalist. Others have pointed out that placing the plot in Transylvania represented a last-minute decision: Stoker initially intended to locate it in Styria, the scene of Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). Still others contend that the land Stoker actually had in mind all along for the

action of the novel was Ireland, his home country. These observations confirm a metatextual hypothesis in the making of the novel, and possibly explain Jonathan Harker's striking Orientalism while in Transylvania. After all, it mirrors the Orientalism of his creator.

Indeed, from the very beginning of the text, an "imperial scout," as Robert A. Smart calls Jonathan Harker, keeps a diary in which the "East," which, as discussed above, becomes a land he only ponders upon meagerly (2007, 3). Although Harker carefully documents his observations and declares that he keeps his "diary for repose" as the habit of writing soothes him, he never scratches beyond the surface of things (Stoker 44). In fact, his entire journey resembles an expedition meant to confirm his assumptions about the Orient: for example, since he read that "every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool," he has no reaction when people talk about the possibility of evil; he never tries to find out more about the reasons why they fear the Count. Most times, he allows everyone around to monologue because he refuses to take part in the conversation: he says nothing when someone in the coach taking him to the castle touches his hand and gives him interesting details about the place; he asks nothing when the Count, "warmed up to the subject wonderfully," speaks about the history of his people; and he does nothing to help the woman who is devoured by wolves even though he witnesses the whole event (35). As Stephen D. Arata observes, his "textual knowledge gathered before the fact, the same knowledge that any casual reader of contemporary travel narrative would also possess – structures Harker's subsequent experiences" (636). In the terms of Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, when they speak of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the

discourse of the diary here establishes its own category of truth and simultaneously encourages "the production of certain kinds of statements or texts" (99). We are situated in a truth both the novelist and his readers *expect*, and so they *produce*, of a *textualized* historical reality agreed upon by Stoker and his readers.

Harker's diary never abandons this perspective of the Transylvanian reality. The Count is depicted as a pale mask marked by cruelty, with strange hairs in the center of his palms, and a rank breath which makes Harker nauseous. For him, Dracula represents alterity, someone he can only classify from a point of view of difference because he feels they share nothing in common – and that is why in one of the monumental scenes of the novel, Harker looks in the mirror while the Count is next to him, but he can only see himself. The Occidental can only acknowledge his own existence. The Count is for Harker, therefore, someone who looks human but is unquestionably not. He is only a parasite ready to destroy Britain:

> There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half renewed, for the white hair and his moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran over the chin and neck. (…) He lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion. (…) There was a mocking smile on the bloated face which seemed to drive me mad. This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening cycle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. (Stoker 60-1)

The same one-sided blindness characterizes the entire "Crew of Light," the crew of "Occidentals" in the novel, especially the men, who all represent the greatest colonizing powers of the West at the time: Britain, America, and the Netherlands. Dr. Seward is prejudiced against the occult for most of the novel, trying desperately to convey an easy, scientific explanation to the vampire phenomenon. Quincey Morris, who had seen vampire bats before, shows his incapacity to understand them when he fails repeatedly to shoot Dracula. Arthur Holmwood / Lord Godalming represents, as Jarlath Killeen observes, an incompetent and mentally unbalanced "Lord God-alm(ighty)ing" who cries in Mina's arms like a child, while Van Helsing, in spite of his extensive knowledge of anti-vampire magic agents and rituals, cannot find a way to defeat the count until Mina becomes the medium of communication with the demonic Other (Killeen 86). As in the case of Jonathan Harker, all the male characters in the Crew of Light are hybrid only in the sense of their weakness and of an almost "feminine" behavior that they all evince during repeated episodes of hysteria. The women, on the other hand, are hybrid because they manifest such traditionally "male" features as Mina's "man brain" or Lucy's secret desire for polyandry, which makes her exclaim at some point: "Why can't a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (69).

Dracula himself, however, is more than a bare image of the Orient. Stephen D. Arata notes that "Stoker's disruption of Harker's tourist perspective at castle Dracula also calls into question the entire Orientalist outlook. Stoker thus expresses a telling critique of the Orientalist enterprise through the very structure of his novel" (635). A *hybrid* creature, a beast with semi-human appearance, as he is described by Harker, Dracula

resembles at first, as the critics rightfully pointed out, a mimic man who shocks his guest with his impressive collection of English books in the middle of Transylvania:

> In the library I found, to my great delight, a vast number of English books, whole shelves full of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers. A table in the centre was littered with English magazines and newspapers, *though none of them were of very recent date*. The books were of the most varied kind – history geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law – all related to the England and English life and customs and manners. (Stoker 25-6, emphasis mine)

In fact, Harker's inadequacy at the Count's castle might have to do precisely with the menace he feels when he realizes Dracula's progressive Englishness. The Count seems to have traveled to England before, although not recently, as the paragraph above suggests, and he knows well its language and its culture. However, the moment Harker becomes uneasy with Dracula is the one in which the Count appears ready to acquire more knowledge, knowledge that at some point, Harker admits, can eclipse the knowledge of the Englishman himself. It is also the moment when Dracula transgresses the mimicry condition which, Bhabha affirms, "conceals no presence or identity behind its mask" and becomes a *hybrid* self with a clear English personality, yet still anchored in Transylvania as well, hence the sacred earth which he will take with him to London (88). Although his new identity manifests fully later in England, it develops in front of his guest's eyes back in Transylvania, and it forces a terrified Harker to face the possibility of reversed colonization. Moreover, Harker witnesses the fact that the Count can pass as an Englishman to his own people, as happens after the episode when Dracula wears his

clothes and impersonates him, and a woman comes to the puzzled Englishman demanding the child Dracula has taken:

> When she saw my face at the window she threw herself forward, and shouted in a voice laden with menace:–
>
> "Monster, give me my child!"
>
> She threw herself on her knees, and raising up her hands, cried the same words in tones which wrung my heart. (54)

When Harker records his belief that the woman is "better dead" after Dracula throws her to the wolves, he unknowingly expresses his vengeance at someone who dared equate him to his mimic man. Dracula is a Grendel who can play by the rules of the society because he *knows* them. He has passed the limits of what Bhabha once called "almost the same, but not quite" (89). With him, "hybridity shifts power, questions discursive authority, and suggests, contrary to the implications of Said's concept of Orientalism, that colonial discourse is never wholly in the control of the colonizer" (Childs and Williams 136). As Eric Kwan-Wai Yu notes, "in *Dracula*, none of the Western characters expect the count to be like them, and the shocking effect relies more on the perception of sameness rather than difference" (164). It is specifically at this point that Stephen D. Arata's "reverse colonization" can take place - "the racial threat embodied by the Count is thus intensified: not only is he more vigorous, more fecund, more 'primitive' than his Western antagonists, he is also becoming more 'advanced.' As Van Helsing notes, Dracula's swift development will soon make him invincible" (639-40). It eventually does, because the end of the novel marks the birth of the Harker child

on the anniversary of Quiney Morris's death, but not the day of the vampire demise, an indicator of the fact that the Count is never defeated.

In a way, Stoker is obliged to surmount the limits of mimicry with Dracula because mimicry usually generates tragic outcomes, as is the case with Renfield, the only true mimic man in the novel. Caught in his human condition of a lunatic, he feels compelled to traverse the entire food chain in an attempt to try to transgress this state. However, he becomes trapped from the beginning in an intermediary condition, which makes Dr. Seward invent a new category for him – "zoöphagus (life-eating) maniac" (81). In spite of his attempts to become more human, he cannot overcome his primitiveness in the presence of the doctor, who always perceives him as different: "Am I to take it that I have anything in common with him, so that we are, as it were, to stand together?" (121) As the Count's presence approaches, Renfield appears increasingly sane, but his desire to achieve immortality through the ingestion of other lives and blood still places him in the category of mimic men, resembling the people around and the Count, but never truly assimilated by either side. He thus becomes in Dr. Seward's mind not an equal, but "a sort of index to the coming and going of the Count," at best a way to get to know the vampire better (Stoker 250). He remains, however, up till the end, a mimic man, trapped into an asylum, as Dr. Seward's journal records:

> You, gentlemen, who by nationality, by heredity, or by possession of natural gifts, are fitted to hold your respective places in the moving world, I take to witness that I am as sane as at least the majority of men who are in full possession of their liberties. (…) Will you never learn? Don't you know that I am sane and earnest

now; that I am no lunatic in a mad fit, but a sane man fighting for his soul? Oh, hear me! hear me! Let me go! let me go! let me go!

I thought the longer this went on the wilder he would get, and so would bring on a fit; so I took him by the hand and raised him up.

"Come," I said sternly, "no more of this; we have had quite enough already. Get to your bed and try to behave discreetly." (Stoker 274)

The mimic man dies, crushed by the vampire's colonizing appetite, with his spine broken – a metaphor of his malleability to Dracula's influence. In this point his death does not have anything to do with a refusal of salvation, as Beth E. McDonald contends, because his salvation would be "only physical if he received the immortality the vampire is prepared to give," but rather with Renfield's willingness to give himself up and copy a creature whose power he cannot even approximate (117). Ultimately, the Count seems to have found other resources that ensure his legacy.

C. Hybridity and History

In spite of the structural implications that the intergeneric hybridity and the monstrous protagonist manifest in the larger context of the novel, the sense of realism that John Bender observes above, of authenticity, still persists. All the elements analyzed contribute to this sensation – from the ambivalence of the *chronotope* and the construction of the tale-myth in the subtext of the novel, to the hybrid characters, the fear of reversed colonization, and a culturally amphibian Transylvanian Count who can pass as British. Almost everywhere in the novel, we have the sensation like Dr. Seward, that things might still have a rational explanation, and that the vampire is only the projection of our anxiety about strangers. This desire for a logical explanation marks the absence of

historical authenticity because the novel denaturalizes the relationship between past and present. It would not be reasonable to go as far as to call Dracula a historiographic metafiction, or as Patrick Brantlinger, to declare the first "the first postmodernist novel rather than the first modernist one," or consider, like he does, the vampires as post-human examples of simulacra (200). However, a certain distortion of reality definitely exists, and it starts with the sense that the past has contaminated the present and the other way around.

Of course, the main reason for this sensation has to do with the fact that Stoker used a real historical character to name his vampire and placed him in the same area where this character, Vlad Ţepeş, had previously lived. In addition, Ţepeş had already established himself an ambivalent image in history – a heroic but bloodthirsty ruler. This gives verisimilitude to the mix, exacerbating the threat that the novel's effect relies on, and so descriptions such as the following become possible:

> "We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights for lordship. Here, in the whirlpool of European races, the Ugric tribe bore down from Iceland the fighting spirit which Thor and Wodin gave them, which their Berserkers displayed to such fell intent on the seaboards of Europe, ay, and of Asia and Africa too, till the peoples thought that the werewolves themselves had come. Here, too, when they came, they found the living flame, till the dying peoples held that in their veins ran the blood of those old witches, who, expelled from Scythia, had mated with the devils in the desert." (36)

The Count's list goes on and on, and suggests among other things that he participated in the events, but the essence is the same – anyone, from any part of Europe or elsewhere, could find something related to their own history or mythology in these phrases. Contrary to Roland Barthes, a vehement contester of the very notion of history, history in Stoker's novel does not have to find its *signified*; it creates it in a movement that reflects the narrative back to itself. The myth built on the structure of the folktale contributes to the connection with a shared cultural memory, be it Irish, British, or otherwise, hence the pervasive references to the Transylvanian "memory" in the text. It creates, contradicting Jamesonian terms, its own protensions and retensions and it inflicts its own structure on the historical account. After all, Maureen A. Ramsden notes, "any attempt to recapture and understand the past must always entail an imaginative leap to achieve a sense of identity with the past, and also a process of selection and construction" (54). In other words, we build the past in order to identify with it.

It is interesting to observe at the same time that the myth carries with it postcolonial implications, in part because, as Derek Walcott points out, postcolonial writers in general "reject the idea of history as time, for its original concept as myth, the partial recall of the race. For them, history is fiction, subject to a fitful muse, *memory*" (370, emphasis mine). After all, continues Walcott, "in time, every event becomes an exertion of memory and is subject to invention. The farther the facts, the more history petrifies into myth" (370-71). Although Bram Stoker probably did not have in mind a postcolonial novel *sensu stricto*, his hybrid main character and the allusions to memory certainly reinforce such an interpretation: the novel becomes an illusionary memory of history that builds and rebuilds itself as the Count attempts to colonize the Empire. In any

case, the problem of memory did preoccupy Stoker, as is obvious from an apparently marginal episode in the text, the moment when Mr. Swales and Mina talk about how the tombstones in the cemetery would tell "lies" to a stranger:

> "The whole thing be only lies. Now look here; you come here a stranger an' you see this kirkgarth. I nodded, for I thought it better to assent, though I did not quite understand his dialect. I knew it had to do with the church. He went on: "And you consate that these steans be aboon folk that be happened here, snod an' snog?" I assented again. "Then that be just where the lies comes in. (…) Look at that one, the aftest abaft the bier-bak: read it!" I went over and read:–
>
> "Edward Spencelagh, master mariner, murdered by pirates off the coast of Andres, April, 1854, aet.30." When I came back Mr. Swales went on:–
>
> "Who brought him home, I wonder, to hap him here? Murdered off the coast of Andres! an' you consated his body lay under! Why, I could name you a dozen whose bones lie in Greenland seas above." (Stoker 75-76)

Like the mariner's body who died elsewhere, the truth can lie anywhere in a historical account. Similar to *Beowulf*, what remains behind is the memory of the narrative, and the way people transmit it forward. Stoker is not an innovator in this respect; glory means being spoken of, being remembered in the collective consciousness. In addition, also similar to *Beowulf*, the history thus performed speaks to the feelings of its contemporaries, and in *Dracula* we deal here with the anxieties of the British *fin-de-siècle*. The only difference is that Stoker is more aware of his possibilities, uses them deliberately, and avoids, subtly, the criticism usually surrounding such a partially made-up story. Ultimately, history itself has proved that Stoker was right: the majority of the

people in the world today associate the image of Dracula, not with the medieval Romanian leader, but with the image of the vampire. The novel itself becomes one huge parasite on what constitutes "official history," in the sense attributed once by J. Hillis Miller, as a "fellow guest" to a host, that deconstructs it, but at the same expands its meanings (220).

However, as with any self-reflective narrative, this hybrid construction reinforced by myth demonstrates at the same time insecurity and playfulness. While Jonathan Harker has the impression that the Count's historical account reflected in his diary is the consubstantial with the Arabian Nights, and that everything will disappear and "break off at cockcrow," Mina constantly works throughout the novel to put together the narratives in what she calls chronological order (37). This opposition is obviously another metatextual device, but the result is quite ingenious: this represents another way to make the illusion of history – chronology – possible. In addition, the dialogue of the journals, diaries, newspaper clips, etc., that results in the process confers the necessary polyphonic novelistic structure, camouflaging the folktale frame and offering the text a depth that the singular travel narrative would not have been capable to render. Many of the events are thus seen through the eyes of multiple characters, making them more plausible, and more authentic.

Nonetheless, this attention for detail and plausibility in the deliberate construction of history explains what was considered surprising by critics – the so-called double-ending of the novel:

> *Dracula*, however, is finally *divided* against itself; it strives to contain the threat posed by the Count but cannot do so entirely. The novel in fact ends twice. The

> narrative properly closes with a fantasy of revitalized English supremacy: his invasion repulsed, the Count is driven back to Transylvania, and destroyed there. (…) But the satisfaction of closure brought by Dracula's diminishment and death is immediately disrupted by Harker's "Note," which constitutes *Dracula's second ending*. (Arata 641, some emphasis mine)

Apart from the fact that this second ending was to a point unavoidable from the perspective of the folktale frame because, as I mentioned above, it contains the "wedding" function that usually represents its closure, it also contains a reference to a return of the Harkers to Transylvania after "seven years," a magical number. Moreover, the suggestion that the family commemorates Quincey Morris's death rather than the death of the vampire, also represents an oddity in the context. Such a return to the Oriental place of superstitions and this particular choice for the memory of events would make no sense from the perspective of the rational Westerner. However, the Harkers, and not the rest of the members of the Crew of Light, have once been marked by the Count and thus belong to him. They are, consequently, part of his history. Revisiting Transylvania implies not only a revisit of this history, but also a ritualistic practice that reinstates the myth: the two of them divided all along in the novel, but also complementing each other in a productive way. The note also indicates, in an interesting self-reflective passage that there is "hardly one *authentic* document; nothing but a mass of typewriting" among the papers that compose it, meaning that the author was conscious all along of its artifice and ultimate hybridity (Stoker 421, emphasis mine).

Dracula thus demonstrates that a metatextual novel, supported by myth, can be a generator and not just an emulator of history. In the multivalent space that it thus creates,

it can attract elements from many registers that no longer exclude each other. Thus, on the frame of the folktale that creates a myth, under the disguise of a travel and detective narrative, playing with postcolonial fears and using techniques that normally belong to the Gothic, Bram Stoker introduces the modern vampire to the world, makes him real, and generates a multitude of interpretations which, if not for his hybridity, would seem contradictory, and almost meaningless.

Chapter IV:

LITERATURE AS ENCHANTMENT OR THE REGAINED GRANDEUR OF THE NOVEL. SALMAN RUSHDIE'S NOVEL *THE ENCHANTRESS OF FLORENCE*

The Enchantress of Florence is not one of the most celebrated novels by Salman Rushdie, but it contains an interesting relationship between historical reality and fiction. As the chapter will demonstrate, this relationship converts into a sophisticated and playful story in which the author interweaves elements of history and literature, a story that transcends the canonical limits of postmodernism where the novel has constantly been placed by the critical establishment, and it goes back to the beginnings, to the anthropological function of play as an essential human activity that was once defined by Johan Huizinga in *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture***.** Moreover, it will explore how this play becomes Rushdie's attempt to return to the original function of literature which used to "enchant" and inform at the same time. Once these roots have been reached, however, and the secondary reality of the literary play is well-established, Rushdie manages to break the barriers between history and fiction, and through versatile textual mechanisms, to make them merge. Consequently, he composes a play within fiction that is just as powerful as reality itself and suggests the fact that representation has more ontological consistency than the represented body or event itself. Similar to what we have seen in the case of *Beowulf* and *Dracula*, the novel argues that we exist as long as we are written and talked about, and nothing in the order of the real can be as powerful as the reality built by language.

Review of Literature

Salman Rushdie's tenth novel *The Enchantress of Florence* has received over time a multitude of mixed reviews. While the majority of the critics agree that the novel is definitely not of the same caliber as the masterpiece *Midnight's Children* and even accuse it of redundancy of themes and literary motifs, they also have to admit that we are facing the novel of a great writer, a novel that would have probably deserved the Man Booker Prize the year it was published, 2008, with Andrew Anthony's interview with Rushdie in *The Observer* and John Sutherland's review in the *Financial Times* being open supporters of it in their articles. Other interpretations, such as William Deresiewicz's essay in *The Nation* or the excellent study on Rushdie's work edited by Robert Eaglestone and Martin McQuillan, are more reserved and discuss the image of the storyteller or the subtle relationship in the text between reality and imagination, while others, such as Andrew Martino in *World Literature Today*, criticize the novel for parts that lack quality or depth.

Among Rushdie's interviews about his work and the novel *The Enchantress of Florence,* three of them are particularly important, especially because they were broadcast or published for wide audiences. The first is the interview conducted by Robert Siegel for *All Things Considered* on NPR, on May 27, 2008, in which Rushdie explains how certain characters in the novel are "figments of other characters' imagination" (2008), the motif of Pygmalion that this idea is based on, the hybridity of a character such as Johda who is unclear to have even existed in reality, and the fine line between reality and fiction. Later in the same interview, the writer points out an idea that will be discussed at length by many of his reviewers: mainly that he thinks "all the stuff that

people will think of as magical realism [...] is actually in the historical record [...]. And vice versa - all the stuff that people will assume is real" is actually fictional (2008). The same idea had been discussed in April earlier that year when in an interview for the British magazine *The Observer*, Rushdie claimed that "a lot of [the novel] is true [...]. All kinds of stuff that I suspect people will assume is magic realism, isn't" (Anthony 2008). Later that same year in an interview for Charlie Rose, Rushdie deplores the inaccurate use of the term "magical realism," in which, he says "what [people] hear is magical and what they don't hear is realism," and addresses the ambivalence of the famous historical characters in a novel which have to be made up but at the same time still have to be "faithful to the historical record" (2012). The main problem of these interviews is the fact that they are destined for a wide audience, and thus the author cannot venture too far into the theoretical background of his novel, but even so, it is clear from all of them that Salman Rushdie is permanently preoccupied with what Linda Hutcheon would call the "veracity" of the representation of history and has tried repeatedly to defend the connection between his writings and historical reality. He feels the need to make clear that many times his texts incorporate truth that is very often mistaken as magic. When the interview genre boundaries do not apply, Rushdie becomes even more explicit, as he does in his memoirs, this time referring not only to a historical, but also a geographical connection, as well. This is Rushdie speaking about himself in the third person in *Joseph Anton*:

> He needed to connect those worlds to the very different world in which he had made his life. He was beginning to see that this, rather than India and Pakistan or politics or magic realism, would be his real subject ... the great matter of how the

> world joined up, not only how the East flowed into the West and the West into the East, but how the past shaped the present while the present changed our understanding of the past, and how the imagined world, the location of dreams, art, invention and, yes, belief, leaked across the frontier that separated it from the everyday, 'real' place in which human beings mistakenly believed they lived. (68-69)

But if Rushdie sees his literature as a way to change human perceptions, this idea may contrast with another reference to his own writings in the same interview with Andrew Anthony mentioned above, when he claims that he just wants "to stay at home and write stories and send them out every couple of years. That's why [he] got into the *game*" (2008, emphasis mine). Is literature for Rushdie a space in which everything falls into place, reality and imagination coexist, contraries disappear, past and present connect, or is it a place of play, or both?

One possible answer belongs to Kenan Malik in his "Foreword" to the highly acclaimed study on Rushdie's work edited by Robert Eaglestone and Martin McQuillan. Malik argues that "the truth that emerges from Rushdie's writing is the truth of the experience of that in-between world, the world of migration and mélange, belonging to more than one place, multiple rather than singular" (viii). The writer allows the imagination to change the real world by "forcing ideas, and memories, and thoughts and histories to clash with each other" (viii). The critic suggests that the real force behind Rushdie's novels is this emphasis on the power of imagination, but he doesn't elaborate where exactly this power leads. Neither does Marianne Corrigan in the third chapter of the same study when she discusses, following Mads Rosenthal Thomsen's theory, the

link between Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze's concept of rhizome and Rushdie's fiction. However, in spite of the fact that Rushdie's novel contains indeed a "plot that travels across continents from the Mughal court of Akbar to Renaissance Florence, while simultaneously engaging with the cultural and philosophical ideas of the historical periods in question" (42), it remains a one-dimensional, highly organized world in itself, and such a rhizomatic model would only complicate the discussion surrounding it. Putting together these very distant and distinct elements of geography, culture, and historical periods means for Rushdie more than the call of multiculturalism or postcolonialism, or any -ism for that matter, including postmodernism, to which his work is usually attributed, but rather an attempt to tell what Martin McQuillan calls in the same study "a story about storytelling and the intrigue it engenders" (82). As strange as it may seem, this "phenomenalization of reference" as the same critic later names the ambiguous fictional nature of some of the characters as Qara Köz, shows that, for Rushdie, literature is "a space where the tension real-unreal remains as a constant question that predicates reading" (97).

McQuillan's opinion is not singular. Several reviews of the novel, written right after its publication, seem to follow the same line of thought. One example is JoAnn Conrad's essay which argues that in *The Enchantress of Florence* there is "no clear-cut boundary between reality and fantasy," yet historically and geographically Rushdie "is not so much fictionalizing this interconnected world [that spreads on several continents], but bringing it to light" (433). Mogor's story is the "central puzzle of the book" (434) and, just as in a *1001 Nights*, his outside frame includes many other interconnected stories as well. The novel is thus, in Conrad's opinion, an interrogation of "the nature of

narrative and the specifically human tendency to narrate and thus fabricate reality" (436). In a review of the novel published in *The Atlantic*, Rushdie's friend Christopher Hitchens writes in his turn that "the worlds of illusion and enchantment seem to collapse in upon themselves, leaving a rich compost of legend and myth for successor generations" (135). He also notices, very importantly, the presence of the element of water as a central image of the story to which, as Hitchens points out, "all potentates and serfs are in the end equally subservient" (136). For John Sutherland in "Of Medicis and Mughals" there is "more magic than realism" in Rushdie's novel, but the reviewer does not give any further explanation of how the two of them relate (2008 n/a), while for Martin Tucker in *Confrontations* "Rushdie's fascination - or obsession - with the reality of illusion plays a climatic role in the novel," one example of how this fascination materializes being the character of Qara Köz who "exists as surely as those she inspires. It is their belief which sustains her, and their vision she inspires" (214).

There are, of course, critical voices, such as Andrew Martino or Justin Neuman, who talk mainly about the novel's shortcomings. For Andrew Martino *The Enchantress* is "at best a wonder of intertextual thought, and, at worst, a burdensome game [in which] postmodern calisthenics defeat the number one rule of storytelling: keep the reader captivated" (70-71). Justin Neuman goes further and declares that the novel "eschews the significant stylistic innovation and overt, high stakes cultural commentary that energizes Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*" (675). The critic notices, however, the importance that the motif of the mirror has in the novel, an importance analyzed in depth by D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke as well in his study on Rushdie, but which is for Neuman "a mirror veiled with gauzy multicultural platitudes" (675). Nevertheless, Neuman's essay has the merit

of offering a deeper explanation for the dialectical relationship between reality and fiction in Rushdie's work. As he asserts, "Fiction and narrative are powerful transformative forces; narrative is less a means of representing the world than a mode of apprehension, a metaphysical hammer he uses to smash certainties of causality, a forge of the alternate real. For Rushdie, fictions are the world entire" (680). The critic does not go further in his interpretation of the metafictional dimension of the novel which he considers, again, a series of "platitudes and pomposity" (682). Finally, in a more moderate tone, William Deresiewicz observes that Rushdie "seeks to reanimate the printed page" and places in the center of the novel the "storytelling [in] itself" (34). Deresiewicz further asserts that even if the novel "exhibits none of the complex allegorical structures, dense systems of allusions or broad political implications - in short, none of the satanic ambition - that both weigh down his major work and give them weight, [it] is probably Rushdie's most coherent and readable novel" (34). The writer, as Deresiewicz rightfully observes, "never fully commits to the magic-realist premise, a hesitation that makes his practice more sophisticated and less satisfying. [...] Rushdie is also testing [in *The Enchantress*] the power of imagination to affect reality. This is his highest theme, his persistent obsession. If so much of what seems magic at first turns out to be the result of art or artifice, that is exactly the point" (35).

Indeed, Rushdie's novel does seem to intermingle fiction and history together, trying at the same time to demonstrate the impact the first has on the second. It is a double process though, a play of mirrors that can go both ways. None of the reviews above answers, however, the question of purpose - why does Rushdie go to such great lengths to combine reality and imagination? Why does he choose this particular way to

connect cultures and historical figures under the spell of fiction? Is his novel a place where reality and fiction influence each other antagonistically, or do the two of them coexist? How are that tension or coexistence connected to the idea of play, as some of the reviewers discussed it, or "game" as Rushdie himself called it? A possible answer to all these questions is offered by two studies: one is Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture* which analyses the origins and the manifestations of play in culture, and the other is Virgil Nemoianu's study *Imperfection and Defeat: The Role of Aesthetic Imagination in Human Society,* an essay on the relationship between fiction and history.

Huizinga's study analyzes the nature of play as a cultural phenomenon from an anthropological point of view. In "Chapter I: Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon," he observes that "play is older than culture" because man is not the only being that plays (1). He goes on by discussing its main features. First of all, "play" is not a material activity because it has a supra-logical nature that breaks the "absolute determinism" of real life, and therefore it is essentially different from it (3). Second, since play existed even before the creation of culture, it becomes an inherent element of it, accompanying it through all the stages of civilization and through all "the great archetypal activities of human society," such as language - even metaphor is a play upon words - myth, literature, etc. (4). Third, "play is based on the manipulation of certain images, on a certain 'imagination' of reality [and] it is the direct opposite of seriousness" as it is usually seen as fun, yet the rules of the game are serious for its participants (4-5). It "lies outside the antitheses of wisdom and folly, and equally outside those of truth and falsehood, good and evil" (6). Play, the Dutch anthropologist

continues, is always a voluntary activity, one beyond duty, one that is essentially free, and limited only in terms of time and place; its time and place are well-defined and distinct from ordinary life. This distinctness from ordinary life also implies its repetitiveness and its ability to create its own order, an order, explains Huizinga later, which has strict rules, so anyone who trespasses them immediately destroys its elaborated structure. Moreover, "the words we use to define elements of play belong for the most part to aesthetics [...] play casts a spell over us; it is 'enchanting', 'captivating'" (11). It likes to surround itself with secrecy and it has an element of tension as well, the tension of trying to achieve something difficult. Finally, play has the ability to bring people together, "it promotes the formation of social groupings" (13); it is "indispensable for the well-being of the community" (26), a sacred sphere where the child, the savage, and the poet feel equally at large. In "Chapter VII: Play and Poetry," Huizinga discusses *poiesis* as a play-function, a play of mind. Ancient poetry was equally "ritual, entertainment, artistry, riddle-making, doctrine, persuasion, sorcery, soothsaying, prophecy, and competition" (120). The poet is a *poeta vates*, the possessed and the voice of God, but by reciprocity also the one who possesses the knowledge of the world. Throughout history, his image ranges from prophet to priest, from sorcerer to philosopher, from *rhetor* to the buffoon or jester. An analogue to the play which has certain "limits of time and space, in a visible order, according to rules freely accepted, and outside a sphere of necessity and material utility," poetry in particular, and literature in general, is an "arrangement of language, [...] the deliberate disguising of sense, the artificial and artful constructions of phrases" (132). The writer's goal, in Huizinga's terms, is to "enchant the reader and hold

him spellbound" (132). As Salman Rushdie's novel suggests from its very beginning, the trope of enchantment is an essential element in its story.

Apart from the play of fiction, another interesting aspect in Salman Rushdie's novel is the way this play interacts with reality, which could suggest what Virgil Nemoianu considers to be the dialectics of historical progress/reality versus literature/fiction. This distinction, which, as pointed out above, is mentioned frequently as the main theme of *The Enchantress of Florence,* does not seem to be fully explained by the critics. Nemoianu's text investigates precisely this relationship between reality and its textual reflection in literature and argues that in the course of historical evolution certain elements are lost and defeated, certain parts are inevitably imperfect, and this imperfection is the domain of literature. In other words, literature is secondary to history, and its role is to warn of the existence of historical imperfection and to attempt to organize it, because otherwise human consciousness will not be able to function. Progress is a sum of human efforts to shape and organize reality in a homogeneous unit, but the process is risky because, Nemoianu asserts, homogeneity "is closely akin to death" (8). Literature, on the other hand, preserves the heterogeneity, and in its reaction to it manages to reestablish "the very possibility of vitality and survival" (8). A literary text is characterized through multiple meanings and textual openness, a quality that scientific texts do not acquire, even though some of them do become more literary with the passing of time. In what we generally define as progress, the principal and the secondary coexist in a permanent mutual transformation, but the first is dominant and the second is its antagonist. Nemoianu compares this relationship with what Mircea Florian called "recessiveness": an interaction in which one dominates the other (and the domination can

always be reversed), synthesis is impossible, and there is always a tensional coexistence between them (14). Literature "tends to collect what is abandoned and discarded" (16) – in other words the imperfection – and reintroduces it in reality while opposing orderly progress. Basically, it restores what was missed by history. Its conflict with history relies precisely in its compromising and synthetic nature, which contradicts the nature of rationalism, politicking, and the historical reality. As literature does not usually have to obey the rules of the political establishment, "the role of the writer and artist in [a pluralist] society is simultaneously that of a conservative" and of an opponent of the ideology of the day (26). Good literature "unmasks and subverts its own prevailing ideology. In doing so, it provides for the preservation and transmission of values for keeping the historical process open" (30). This openness becomes important in Rushdie's novel because, as the writer suggested in his interviews, he believes that fiction and history are interchangeable.

Textual Analysis

The *Enchantress of Florence* is from the beginning not only a historical novel, but also a meditation on the role this type of novel in particular, and the representation of history in general, have in culture. The first lines in the text mark the entrance into the territory of fiction. The traveler is in the liminal space between the world and the city, and his every step is marked in a language that deserves to be quoted fully:

> In the day's last light the glowing lake below the palace-city looked like a sea of molten gold. A traveler coming this way at sunset - this traveler, coming this way, now, along the lakeshore road - might believe himself to be approaching the throne of a monarch so fabulously wealthy that he could allow a portion of his

> treasure to be poured into a giant hollow in the earth to dazzle and awe his guests. And as big as the lake of gold was, it must be only a drop drawn from the sea of the larger fortune - the traveler's imagination could not begin to grasp the size of that mother ocean! (5)

As the sun sets, the sea of gold proves to be an illusion, and it's reduced to a simple lake, with the water being the only remaining "treasure to offer"(5). Through the "manipulation of images" as Huizinga once put it, we have entered not only the territory of fiction, but also the territory of play, or rather, the two of them are equivalent here. It is not random, therefore, that water was chosen to be the barrier for such a passage; with water we are talking of a space of "play" different from the space of real life, a space with a life of its own. Water is an archetypal element with a dual nature - it is primordial, and it can make life appear, but it can also be deadly for those who trespass its boundaries unprepared. Water in Rushdie's novel allows a fluid passage between empirical reality and the play of literature, but it does not necessarily mean a farewell to the first and the beginning of life for the other. It becomes a metaphor of the flexibility of the literary play capable of incorporating but also producing reality, and this is the very reason the writer defends the realism of his novel. Its importance is clear throughout the whole text as it is always referred to in the most important moments, sometimes even mentioned to be the real ruler of the world, because "even an emperor, denied water, would simply turn to dust" (8).

Not surprisingly, the thirsty traveler accepts the gift of water, and thus he symbolically completes his arrival to the city market, a place of trade and commerce, an obsession in Rushdie's novels as William Deresiewicz once noticed, but a place that, just

like play, brings people together. His situation, gestures, and appearance are in the beginning hilarious at best, but as the description unfolds, the irony is replaced slowly by seriousness. He travels in a bullock-cart, a risible means of transportation, yet he progressively instills admiration into the puzzled driver as he stands like a god wearing "a fool's unsuitable clothes" but "a graceful fool," nevertheless, "or perhaps not a fool at all" (6), a stranger, as the driver says to himself later, who seems "not so foreign [...] after all" (6). This description of the main character who belongs to the space of fiction, seen as a fool, or even a jester, a magician, or a sorcerer in the following episodes of the novel, places him outside the antithesis of wisdom and folly mentioned earlier by Huizinga, just as the rules of play require. As he attains more and more centrality in the novel, his image tends to juxtapose with that of the *poeta vates*, the owner of knowledge, and the enchanter who is meant to keep the reader spellbound. We are far away here from Mario Vargas Llosa's traveling storyteller who was supposed to save the world of the Machiguengas with his stories; in *The Enchantress of Florence* the storyteller is very aware and in full control of his magical abilities, of the rhetorical mechanisms of language, but he intends to use them for himself, to make his way through to the emperor and the reader alike. He tells the bullock-cart driver that he is in the possession of a secret meant only for the kings, another sign of the presence of play which in the early rituals was supposed to surround itself with secrecy while it was performed by masked or disguised players, and, as we go further in the novel, we read about the nature of this disguise: he stole a diplomatic document from a Scottish milord, in fact a former pirate suddenly turned into an emissary of the Queen of England, and he pretends now to be the rightful representative of the British Empire at the court of the Indian emperor Akbar the

Great. This secret will be just a means to an end, a way to grab Akbar's attention; his other secret, a distant claim to the throne, will be revealed far later in the novel. What is important for now is that, as the traveler falls asleep, he has the world of play and fiction in his mind:

> As soon as he fell asleep half the world started babbling in his brain, telling wondrous travelers' tales. In this half-discovered world every day brought news of fresh enchantments. The visionary, revelatory dream-poetry of the quotidian had not yet been crushed by blinkered, prosy fact. Himself a teller of tales, he had been driven out of his door by stories of wonder, and one in particular, story which could make his fortune or cost him his life. (10)

Apart from the motif of Scheherazade which is obvious in the text and has been mentioned before by various critics, Rushdie's novel seems to follow extremely closely Huizinga's recipe: the enchanter is there, ready to exhibit his sorcery and even compete with the divinity - hence, for example, the episode in which Mogor - Ucello di Firenze multiplies "fishes and loaves with a couple of passes of his elegant hand" (12) - and to create a second, more poetic world different from the real one but not necessarily opposing it. Space and time are also clearly delineated: the place of the story, the time of Akbar combined later in the novel with Florence in the time of Machiavelli, the freedom with which characters move and invent themselves or others, all are there too. The novel becomes a magic circle, an arena of thought with its own special rules, a temporary world within the world of reality. The secret the storyteller carries with him is a play within language, but also a play of life and death, which brings this language close to its biblical meaning. It can help him get to Akbar, and in this point the novel is a demonstration of

linguistic virtuosity, but it kills Lord Hauksbank, and it kills Ucello symbolically when Mogor abandons that name as if he would leave behind the "skin of a snake" (23). As a matter of fact, it almost kills Mogor too, who ends up in Akbar's prison, but saves him at the same time when he realizes that his only mission is to tell his story because without the story he would cease to exist:

> He would die without telling his story. He found this thought intolerable and so it refused to leave him, it crawled in and out of his ears, slid into the corners of his eyes and stuck to the roof of his mouth and to the soft tissue under his tongue. All men needed to hear their stories told. He was a man, but if he died without telling the story he would be something less than that, an albino cockroach, a louse. The dungeon did not understand the idea of a story. The dungeon was static, eternal, black, and a story needed motion and time and light. He felt his story slipping away from him, becoming inconsequential, ceasing to be. He had no story. There was no story. He was not a man. There was no man there. There was only the dungeon, and the slithering dark. [...] He would not rest in peace. In death as in life he would be full of unspoken words and they would be his hell, tormenting him through all eternity. [...] The most beautiful woman. The story was saving his life. (89-90)

Contrary to the threatening substance the reference to *1001 Night*s acquires in *Dracula*, the one in Rushdie's novel is ambiguous. Paradoxically, Mogor is a copy of Scheherazade, but at the same time he is not. He relies on his storytelling to stay alive, but, unlike his predecessor in *1001 Nights,* he understands that the story is not a burden he has to perform out of duty, and he sees it as the art it truly is, an art that creates and

destroys characters, images, places, empires, but an art in the absence of which the memory of humankind itself would disappear. Similar to Stoker's novel and to *Beowulf*, immortality is here a matter of glory, which resides on men's lips and in their minds, but in Rushdie's text, which comes after an entire line of writers and philosophers who attempted to deconstruct the ability of literature to create new meaning, to abolish its value, and to deny the writer's power of originality; this is quite an interesting move. It is not a very surprising one, however, for someone who openly declared that he wants to stay in the game of literature, to be left alone to write stories. He understands that he needs to create a tension, as Huizinga defined it, to play with images and characters, to work within the limits of the imaginable and instill mystery in the story, so he can keep the reader committed. In other words, in this point, the writer himself becomes an enchanter, and the creation of meaning represents a play with the readers.

The same is also true for Akbar because the only true enchanters in the story, apart from the story itself, which becomes a vehicle for the writer's enchantment, are Mogor and Akbar. Of course, one can argue that the real enchanter in the novel is the enchantress Qara Köz/Angelica; after all, even the title is dedicated to her. However, there is little in the novel that does not suggest that she is ultimately just a character in Mogor's story. Akbar is probably the most powerful enchanter in the text though, one even more powerful than Mogor/Niccolo Vespucci who keeps the story together, because Akbar, mirroring the writer at another level, is also in the possession of storytelling power. In fact, the narrator admits it: "he was the Enchanter. In this place he would conjure a new world, a world beyond religion, rank, and tribe. [...] An emperor was a bewitcher of the real, and with such accomplices his witchcraft could not fail" (43).

Through his power he can not only enchant, but also manipulate reality, as is the case with Jodha, one of the most interesting characters in the book. As Rushdie observes in his interview with Robert Siegel mentioned above, it is unclear if Jodha has ever existed as a historical figure, although she is mentioned by history books as Akbar's Hindu wife. Rushdie concludes, however, that she does not have enough historical consistency, so he recreates her in the novel not as a real person, but as the product of Akbar's imagination. His decision to make her come into being, and the process that follows it, remind us indeed of the myth of Pygmalion, but goes even further than that:

> She had heard from the emperor a traveler's tale of an ancient sculptor of the Greeks who brought a woman to life and fell in love with her. That narrative did not end well, and in any case was a fable for children. It could not be compared with her actual existence. Here, after all, she was. She simply was. Only one man on all the earth had ever achieved such a feat of creation by pure act of will. (47-48)

Her influence grows as art helps her acquire more existence, "Tansen wrote songs for her and in the studio-scriptorium her beauty was celebrated in portraiture and verse. Master Abdus Samad the Persian portrayed her himself, painted her from the memory of a dream without even looking upon her face, and when the emperor saw his work he clapped his hands at the beauty shining from the page" (28). In other words, Johda's creation is a metatextual and self-referential artistic act equivalent to a *mise en abyme* ("the memory of a dream"). Still following closely the rules of the play, the novel undermines the barriers between truth and falsehood, fiction and history, and situates itself beyond their antithesis. Rushdie's choice for a historical novel is not, therefore,

surprising at all; for him history is imperfect because none of the accounts about a certain historical figure is complete, but in the space of the novel this imperfection is annulled because a character does not have to prove its authenticity. After all, it does not truly matter if Jodha has existed or not. In the end, even after people's physical death, there is no reality other than the word reality; like Beowulf and Dracula, they continue to exist only if they are spoken of: "in the end her victory will be apparent to everyone, for in the end none of the [real] queens will exist anymore than she does, while she will have enjoyed a lifetime of your love, and her fame will echo down the ages" (45). Rushdie thus goes beyond what canonical representatives of the historical novel did; in his view, literature, as a play of words, is not the domain of possibility, but that of fictional freedom. Moreover, similar to Johda, who knows she simply is, so is play. It can exhibit its mechanisms, but that does not mean they need to be explained. Since play is not a material activity and its nature is supra-logical, it does not matter if such an operation is justified. Thus, what many critics have considered an array of intertextual platitudes, is actually Rushdie's idea of freedom in building a historical character.

The same freedom manifests itself again in the case of Akbar's contrasting personality features. As has been observed before, Akbar himself is a sum of paradoxes. He is described as "a Muslim vegetarian, a warrior who wanted only peace, a philosopher-king: a contradiction in terms"(45). We find him throughout the novel striving to become, trying to balance the different parts of his personality or his different duties, dealing with relatives' betrayals, falling in love and being enchanted by one figment of imagination after the other – Johda, Queen Elizabeth of England, Qara Köz/Lady Black Eyes/Angelica - and also being genuinely interested in the life of his

subjects and in the life of the other city that he manages to travel to through Mogor's stories, Florence. There is, however, a very interesting moment in his trajectory, the moment when, in conversation with Jodha, he desperately tries to abandon the pronoun *We*, the plurality reserved only for the emperors, and to reduce his persona to the singular pronoun *I*:

> He was the definition, the incarnation of WE. He had been born into plurality. When he said 'we,' he naturally and truly meant himself as an incarnation of all his subjects, of all his cities and lands and rivers and mountains and lakes, as well as all the animals and plants and trees within his frontiers, and also the birds that flew overhead ... he meant himself as the sum of all his victories, himself as containing the characters, the abilities, the histories, perhaps even the souls of his decapitated or merely pacified opponents; and, in addition, he meant himself as the apogee of his people's past and present, and the engine of their future. [...] Perhaps this idea of self-as-community was what it meant to be a being in the world, any being, such a being being, after all, inevitably a being among other beings, a part of the beingness of all things. Perhaps plurality was not exclusively a king's prerogative. (31)

At this point the novel challenges again the boundaries of its genre. It states that a novelistic character, a historical figure, and, ultimately, any human being have one thing in common: they all depend on the way they survive textual interpretation. Glory itself becomes a fragmented construct, as the image of a historical figure is reflected differently in the mind of every reader. Therefore, Akbar cannot transgress his status and become one-dimensional. No matter how much he tries, he is not allowed to become a singular

person: he remains all of them in the novel - a character, a historical figure, and even a man - and perceives this idea as traumatic. He is a plurality "in the eyes of the world" (52), a metaphor of the fact that, as in Johda's example too, characters and historical figures, no matter how well known or documented, cannot escape the countless possible interpretations which the world bestows on them. The play, the novel, the historical figure, the work of art in general can be seen again, repeated or revisited, and with each time they acquire a different meaning. Again this is not a very new idea; it is very recurrent in the works of the philosophers of postmodernity, from Jean Baudrillard to Francis Fukuyama, but in Rushdie's novel the fact that such an endeavor is attributed to a Mughal emperor is indeed unique. So is the fact that he feels utterly alone in his meditation. Not even Johda, the perfect queen, the product of his imagination, is capable of understanding it. She is too focused on the problems concerning her own existence, on her possibility to stay alive even without his help:

> The question of her independent existence, of whether she had one, insisted on being asked, over and over, whether she willed it or not. If God turned his face away from his creation, Man, would Man simply cease to be? [...] Was her will free of the man who had willed her into being? Did she exist only because of his suspension of disbelief in the possibility of her existence? If he died, could she go on living? (49)

This point marks the end of their relationship. Akbar learns his lesson and will never refer to himself otherwise than plural, and he gets a companion in his counterpart - enchanter - storyteller - Ucello di Firenze/Mogor dell'Amore/Niccolo Vespucci, who just like him, although not always so evident, is another pluralistic personality, this time one built

exclusively on his own stories meant for others to read and make them complete. Like two chess players, they will accompany each other throughout the rest of the novel, with Akbar almost determined to name Niccolo his successor at some point.

All of this said, some questions still arise. What is the real purpose behind this complicated mechanism of "play" within history and fiction? Is Rushdie's only goal to show the dissolution of the barriers between fiction and history, to put them both *sub specie ludi*, or just to write a novel that demonstrates, as many analysts have said before, the fact that the world of illusion can exist independently of history? Or to even unify in a playful and very postcolonial manner the East and the West, and two different historical periods in one place and time?

Indeed, it seems that way at first. With Machiavelli, Botticelli, Andrea Doria, Amerigo Vespucci, Lorenzo de Medici, Simonetta Cataneo as historical figures, with Nicollo Vespucci, Qara Köz and Argalia as fictional characters that create the links between them, with the action unfolding in two placeable, recognizable cities such as Fatehpur Sikri and Florence, and even with the impressive bibliographical exhibit at the end, *The Enchantress of Florence* could be just another example of a historical novel which, as Virgil Nemoianu defines in connection to Sir Walter Scott's novels, has established even from the beginning of the genre a rule, according to which "the main and well-documented historical characters ought to function as secondary fictional characters in the background (or obliquely referred to), while secondary or outright invented historical figures are the ones who function as a foreground" (75). The distinction between literature, which Nemoianu calls secondary, and historical progress appears to be in place, too; Akbar's hesitations, the episode with Rana, the prince

executed for defiance, in which Akbar declares himself using the plural pronoun of the kings "a poet with a barbarian history, and a barbarian's prowess in war, which we detest," Argalia's defeating Vlad the Impaler which fills a historical gap since Vlad's real opponent is not known (after all, a gap in history that Stoker's novel also exploits), the story of the hidden princess Qara Köz/Lady Black Eyes/Angelica who manages to connect all the continents together in her travels; every one of them are possible examples of the imperfection of the secondary because literature is meant, as Nemoianu suggested, to recuperate what was lost or defeated and thus challenge history, and to stir up the complacencies of linear progress by reintroducing those elements (35). Rushdie seems indeed to use the freedom of the fictional text to explore the psychological and cultural motivations behind the acts of recognizable historical figures, and in the case of Akbar he appears to pursue the process through which literature alters the signified from an individual, as a sum of characteristics documented by historical records, to "human by adding retrospection to reality" (20). Also, if we follow Nemoianu's argument, the novel would elicit a clear distinction between literature and history because the two of them are never meant to merge completely; they are only destined for tensional coexistence, for a relationship of recessiveness which puts them in a condition of inequality. This would explain the fervor with which Rushdie's novel was interpreted as a triumph of imagination over reality, a flip between two worlds, and a magical realist tale with nonconformist historical conjunctions.

However, this interpretation elicits a few technical problems. The first and the most important one is that, if the highlighting of the antagonistic relationship was the real purpose of the novel, the idea of a textual play loses its significance, as it makes no sense

to build a separate world with its own time, space, rules, enchanters, mythology, etc., if one only wants to oppose the world of fiction to historical reality. Such a binary opposition would make the play redundant. Second, in spite of the fact that the text seem to breach the laws of history and geography and make the time of Akbar and the Florence of Machiavelli collide in one place, there is no direct reference to the actual city of Florence at all; in fact, Akbar's image of it is permanently filtered through Niccolo Vespucci's story:

> Akbar was walking the streets of that other stone city in which nobody seemed to want to stay indoors ... When solitude was banished, did one become more oneself, or less? Did the crowd enhance one's selfhood or erase it? [...] But Akbar's cloak was cut from the cloths of time and space and these people were not his. Why, then, did he feel so strong a sense of kinship with the denizens of these braying lanes? Why did he understand their unspeakable European tongue as if it were his own? (139-40)

In other words, it is only the fictional play put together by Vespucci's story that connects the two cultures and makes Akbar exclaim so many times in the novel that "the curse of the human race is not that we are so different from one another, but that we are so alike" (311). In the world of play where all the contraries and boundaries are nullified, languages are translated, cities are traveled through a fictional character's eyes, emperors can have paradoxical personalities, pirates can become emissaries of queens, and East and West of different historical times can meet and people share the same dreams and aspirations. Just as for Bram Stoker before him, the product of imagination can become for Rushdie more real than real life itself; it can dissolve in it. Rushdie himself confessed

in his 2008 interview with Charlie Rose that he wanted to write a novel which would explore the differences between two worlds, but ended up demonstrating their similarities. In other words, in the space of play there is no difference between history and fiction.

Moreover, since in the same world reality and its representation are no longer separate, the story of Qara Köz and the episode with the Memory Palace, whose mind is populated with someone else's story, but who has no story of her own, are just means to establish the rules of the game, to create the "great matter of how the world joined up" that Rushdie mentioned in the interviews above. Significant in this respect is the motif of the mirror prevalent in the novel. D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke makes a rigorous inventory of the mirrors in the novel in his study on Rushdie's work and observes that "Qara Köz has her own Mirror" which towards the end of the novel is suspected to be Vespucci's mother; "the hero of Dashwanth's pictures became the emperor's mirror" (117). Apart from them, the critic discusses further the mirrors of the artists and their models Danshwanth - Qara Köz and Filipepi/Botticello - Simonetta, Fatehpur Sikri and Florence as cities, Elizabeth I as the western mirror of Akbar, and the lake Sikri as the mirror of the city. To this we could add, as mentioned above, the mirrors of Akbar and Vespucci and the writer himself as enchanters, of Akbar and Machiavelli as philosophers, and even the solitary mirror from the Medici castle which predicts the fate of Qara Köz once she ceases to enchant the city, and her presence becomes overly familiar. The mirror reflects the object without excluding it, and in the European cultural tradition, including in Romanticism, it has represented a means to reach the essences of the soul or to access higher knowledge; in *Dracula* it reflected Jonathan Harker's inability to understand

otherness. In the same way, the essence reflected by the mirrors in Rushdie's novel refers to the relationship between the referent and its representation as the latter supports the existence of the first. Regardless of their historical or fictional nature, the characters in *The Enchantress of Florence* exist as long as they are talked about or represented, as long as they reflect in other characters' minds. It is the reason why Qara Köz has to leave Florence, it is what determines Johda's replacement, and it is also the reason for the beautiful, poetic promise at the end "until *you're not*, the Universal Ruler thought. *My love, until you're not*" (349), which speaks of the same threat of a possible replacement and symbolic death, this time referring to Angelica. Ultimately, this is the writer's/enchanter's and his novel's/play's most important role - to make these characters and events reflect in the minds of the readers and hold them under the spell of literature. The mirror in *The Enchantress* thus develops into a metaphor of metatextuality.

The same type of self-referentiality is present in what was seen as a shortcoming of the novel – the incest between Ago Vespucci and his own daughter with Qara Köz which leads to the birth of Niccolo Vespucci. As easily as it would stand for a prosaic explanation of the jump over time through which the plot operates, I think it suggests in fact the same idea of a self-sufficient novel, turned toward itself, following the rules of a play contained only within its limits and offered to the readers to be shared and reiterated with every new reading. After a long period of time in which literature in general and the novel in particular have been so bluntly denied originality and purpose, Rushdie's novel tends to return to its origins, to the point where, as discussed at the beginning, "the visionary, the dream-poetry of the quotidian had not yet been crushed by blinkered, prosy fact"; in other words, to the point where reality and the world of dreams and illusion were

not yet separated (10). The story becomes a desire to re-establish a sacred world in which the two of them comingle, and the play as a suspension of logic can help the novel achieve that. That is why the writer sees no point in placing his work within the narrow boundaries of magical realism and defends its historical accuracy. The novel/play has its own substance which incorporates both of them and makes them merge. The distinction between principal and secondary, historical progress versus literature, and all the terms associated with them (imperfection, defeat, etc.) is no longer necessary. Through this complicated labyrinth of play, the writer attempts to return to a primordial state in which literature had the sacred function of bringing people together under the spell of the storyteller, and this state is symbolized in the novel by the element of water which even disappears from the city once the enchanter and his magic of language are gone. Thus, the end of the novel also marks the exit from this sacred world of play, a return to the "prosy" everyday life.

In fact, at a closer look, Rushdie actually fulfills the conservative role of the writer as Virgil Nemoianu defined it: in a time in which literary texts have become consumer objects and their importance has been under scrutiny, Rushdie tries to write novels that challenge how we see reality, how we define our place in history, and how we conceptualize otherness. It is a novel which returns to its former complexity and represents a world in itself, one in which characters are not plain textual beings, but they attempt to reconnect their readers to a complex archetype to which everyone can relate. As he declares in his book of memoirs, *Joseph Anton*, Rushdie misses the good novels of the past in which:

> All writers and readers knew that human beings had broad identities, not narrow ones, and it was the breadth of human nature that allowed readers to find common grounds and points of identification with Madame Bovary, Leopold Bloom, Colonel Aureliano Buendia, Raskolnikov, Gandalf the Gray, [etc.]. Readers and writers could take that knowledge of broad-base identity out into the world beyond the pages of books, and use the knowledge to find common ground with their fellow human beings. (627)

More exactly, in his writings in general and in *The Enchantress of Florence* in particular, Salman Rushdie tries to help the novel as a genre regain some of its lost grandeur, and this is probably the very reason why his work is considered so important.

Salman Rushdie's novel *The Enchantress of Florence* manages to go beyond other metatextual historical writings because it thematizes the very relationship between history and reality. Through a complicated textual play, the text suggests that, although true authenticity is an illusion, the value of fiction is its creative freedom, its capacity to "enchant" the minds of its readers and to create its own historical premise. As the writer seems to imply, what we generally call reality is caught in this play of fiction, and exists only as long as it is reflected in the minds of the readers.

Chapter V:

CONCLUSION

My thesis has revealed that the dialectic relationship between history and literature is much more complicated than the way it has been perceived in the cultural criticism of the past few decades. Instead of a strict delimitation of their territory and exploration of what is usually called in the case of the historical novel the sensation of authenticity, history and literature have always been involved in a reciprocal interrogation of their abilities to preserve or interpret historical truth. In addition, based on the examples discussed, these abilities have been influenced over time by different ideologies as they had to meet the fluctuating needs of society.

As my analysis emphasizes, this interrogation is particularly obvious in historical writings that disregard to some extend the premise of authenticity because they evade the usual pressure exerted by the historical over the literary that characterizes the canonical historical novel, as it was represented in the works of Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, Alexander Pushkin, Achim von Arnim, etc. When it is no longer forced to imitate historical events and to design authenticity, or when it is not affected by the constraints of national ambitions, historical writing is finally free to investigate the real possibilities of its genre. Therefore, it questions its own representations and the aptitude to imitate history in general. It deconstructs historical tropes and displays their artificiality, building instead new levels of meaning. Finally, it incorporates reflection on history and

fictionality in general, which relativizes both to a certain extent, but it also emphasizes their intergeneric hybridity. In other words, historical fiction can become metatextual.

All three texts analyzed in this thesis have in common this metatextual content and the reflection on history without an all-consuming concern for authenticity. They all contain a second level of signification, and common tropes such as the idea of glory with its importance for the posthumous image of a historical personage. They all satisfy the needs or meet the fears of the society of their age. These common features dissolve the difference of time between the writings and bring them all together in the same quest for understanding how "the literary" is able to construct history and not vice versa. The bard in *Beowulf*, the journal in *Dracula*, and the storyteller in *The Enchantress of Florence*, all have in common the belief in the importance of the literary and its capacity to produce its own historical signified.

The first chapter of my thesis thus represents a comprehensive analysis of the way *Beowulf* attempts to reclaim and idealize the well-organized and historically documented world of the *comitatus* and to transform it into a complex utopia aimed to encourage the insecure medieval society of early England by offering it an escape in a world where exemplarity was still attainable, and heroes such as the protagonist made the world more dependable. It investigates how the coexistence in the text of the Germanic heroic code and of the Christian elements can also be explained through the needs of its audience. It discusses how these two became the premise of the meditation on history, and it also reviews the trope of fame, a version of the idea of glory, that coverts the medieval bard into a generator of historical truth at metatextual level. Ultimately, with every reading or reiteration of the poem, the hero's image and the values that he embodies are perpetuated

in history, and the readers or listeners are active participants in the process of their idealization.

The second chapter revolves around the idea of metatextuality and glory in Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*. Similar to *Beowulf*, the novel uses historical references such as the name of a medieval leader, the real space of Transylvania, and a feudal castle to construct a new level of significance in the form of myth. Following cultural critics and anthropologists such as Vladimir Propp, Mircea Eliade, or John Bender, the chapter discusses the hybrid structure of this myth, and the way it builds itself on the frame of the folktale. Moreover, it examines the connection between the mythical structure and postcolonial ideas, including the fact that this connection was intended from the beginning to be a response to certain fears of reversed colonization persistent in the Victorian society of Stoker's time. Lastly, it explains how a metatextual novel, supported by myth, can be a generator of history because "the glory" of a novelistic character, of Dracula, has transformed and appropriated the image of the real Romanian medieval leader. Unwillingly, by imposing the myth of Dracula in the public consciousness, Bram Stoker has managed to make the fictional reality more relevant than the historical reality itself.

Finally, in the case of Salman Rushdie and his novel *The Enchantress of Florence*, the primacy of fiction over historical reality is no longer an accident. It represents a conscious authorial play. As my thesis demonstrates, this play has all the characteristics of a self-referential world aimed to reevaluate the role of the writer in general and of the function of literature in society. It proves that a literary text is more than a consumer object, but an instrument that can create its own rules and challenge our

conception of reality and otherness. The *Enchantress of Florence* is thus a meditation on the status of the historical novel and of the possibility of the writer to be original. Its characters, although textual beings, manage to reconnect us to an archetypal structure represented by play. Ultimately, Rushdie is trying to restore this way the pleasure of storytelling and the ability of literature to "enchant" its readers.

In the end, there is another characteristic that all these three historical writings or their characters have in common: they are all hybrid, impossible to truly fit in one genre or one character category. *Beowulf* has been categorized as a historical poem, a combination of a heroic poem and an elegy, an epic poem, a quest narrative, a Christian poem, etc. Dracula as a character has been seen as a Romanian medieval leader, a Jew, an Irish landlord or a rebel, a representation of the Orient, a sexual predator, etc. The storyteller and Queen Jodha in the *Enchantress of Florence* willingly situate themselves in the space between reality and fiction, manifesting a primordial ambiguity. In addition, each text incorporates a secondary level of signification, building a utopia, a myth, and play. However, the heterogeneous structure of each of these texts could be an indicator, at a deeper level, that the intersection between literature and history has anthropological motivations, and it is never incidental. The utopia, the myth, and play all speak to certain ideological necessities. They are all projections of our humanity with our concerns, desires, and ludic nature. They transcend the neutral confluence between history and fiction and express a more fundamental tension between reality and our ability to structure it.

Beowulf, *Dracula*, and *The Enchantress of Florence* are not singular. They can be included into an long line of historical writings that disregard authenticity that could

range from ancient Greek and Roman epics, to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain*, through *Don Quixote*, to Ismail Kadare's construction of an Albanian Troy or Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. However, what individualizes these three historical writings is their capacity to reflect on the way history produces its meaning and to privilege the status of their own representations. In other words, they attempt to become, in Virgil Nemoianu's terms, not an "addition to pastness" as the historical novel normally is, but a creation of it (20).

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