

*Luminița Elena Turcu
Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava,
Faculty of Letters and Communication Sciences,
13 Universității Street, 720229 Suceava, Romania
E-mail: l_turcu@yahoo.com

KNOWING FROM WITHIN: THE OBSCENE BODY IN “THE SQUAW”

Abstract

The article focuses on the relationship between woman’s body and text in a piece of short Gothic fiction by *Dracula*’s author. Woman’s body is in Stoker’s “The Squaw” an obscene text that can be “read” and is open to exploration and interpretation. Woman’s body invites mutilation but is also a maze in which the explorer gets lost, losing his way in the entrails of a text that he violates and exploits but which eventually entraps him.

Keywords: Stoker, obscene language, gaze, woman’s body, Gothic, Iron Virgin

One of Bram Stoker’s most uncanny and perplexing tales of horror, “The Squaw”, was fashioned at the time he was writing *Dracula* and published in the 1893 Christmas issue of the highly popular magazine *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*. Nearly a decade later the writer decided to include it in a collection of short stories under the title *Dracula’s Guest and Other Weird Stories*. The title of the short story is itself puzzling for today’s reader as the meaning of “squaw” has been vastly controversial since the 1970s when it acquired a false etymology and came to be used as a synonym for “female genitals”. Anthropologists and linguists, such as Ives Goddard, attempted successively at clarifying the misunderstanding and asserted that in the Proto-Algonquian languages the original meaning of the word was “young Indian woman/ wife/ friend” and that it had an unoffending sense to the Native peoples (Hill, 2011). It is clear that Stoker used it with the connotation that it had embraced in the age, imported as it was by English or French explorers and adventurers coming from the North-American continent or brought to Europe by American travellers. The latter possibility is illustrated in Stoker’s short story through the creation of Elias P. Hutcheson, the narrator’s “Transatlantic friend”, who employs the word to denote disparagingly the Native-American woman as an “enslaved, demeaned, voiceless child bearer.” (Carstarphen and Sanchez, 2012: 132) That was the semantic field of the word in the late-Victorian age when Stoker was writing the story and Nancy J. Parezo and Angelina R. Jones make it obvious that the word was associated with obscenity:

During the 1850s California gold rush, when Indian women were frequently abducted and raped, ‘squaw’ became connected with sexual violence. (...) As regional colloquial vocabulary, ‘squaw,’ like the labels ‘tramp’ and ‘whore,’ came to mean a woman who masochistically allowed herself to be abused. As a rationalization for illegal violent male behavior, associations of promiscuity now clung to ‘squaw’; the word became analogous to the word ‘bitch.’ Just as ‘bitch’ is not used in polite society, so ‘squaw’ became a tainted word for Protestant European Americans. (2009: 380)

At some crucial point in the plot Hutcheson uses the expression to compare a wild cat with an “an Apache squaw” and gives it the detrimental connotations that Devon A. Mihesuah describes as decisive in building negative stereotypes mainly by linguistic means: “the dirty, subservient, and abused tribal female who is also haggard, violent, and eager to torture tribal captives.” (2003: 102)

Stoker’s story is however placed in Europe and not in the United States and the word is decidedly a signal of the interconnection between the colonial subject and woman’s subjection at home. Lillian Nayder agrees with this view when she writes that the author of *Dracula* was concerned in this

*Dr Luminița-Elena Turcu is Associate Professor at Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania, where she teaches Victorian and Gothic fiction.

story with “Britain’s declining imperial status” (1996: 78) and the growing North-American economic and political threat. Furthermore, Nayder observes the sexualization of these political anxieties:

Stoker transforms his narrator’s American rival into an emasculated brother. He does so by identifying wives and mothers as the real enemies of his male characters, American and English alike, and by suggesting that the primary threat posed to the British Empire lies at home. (*ibid*)

Apart from this unequivocal association with colonial ideologies, the story has proved to be a hard nut to crack for the few critics who have gone to the trouble of analyzing this bizarre piece of gothic fiction. Besides, their opinions, though convincing and innovative, are thoroughly divergent as they focus on different strata of meaning. Thus, John Sutherland reads it as a story of metempsychosis, an “ingenious tale of a persistent Red Indian spirit, reincarnated as a cat.” (2014: 612) On the contrary, Carol A. Senf is interested in the way in which “The Squaw”, that she catalogues within “Stoker’s most horrifying” literary works (2002: 35), “addresses the American temperament and the importance of technology” (*ibid.*). From this particular perspective, what seems to be at stake here is the proper use of science and technology and the sound inference that such a reading provides is that “understanding technology may well be essential to human survival” (Senf, 38). The critic also discerns some interesting analogies with *Dracula*, finding the depiction of the furious mother cat similar in tone and hue with the portrait of vampiric Lucy (Senf, 36). Emelyne Godfrey discerns “The Squaw” to be “an absorbingly grisly tale of male control and female resistance, ending with the narrator axing a cat to death with an executioner’s sword” (2012: 46) and reads the implausible sequences of events in tandem with “the Poe-esque mother” cat as “representative of late-Victorian anxieties surrounding the overlap between humans and animals” (*ibid.*). Then again, Jerrold E. Hogle complains that “there has been relatively little discussion of (...) the ways in which Bram Stoker’s ‘The Squaw’ portrays issues of racial otherness and vengeance for British readers” (2014: 163) given that the text “betrays the acute anxiety over the consequences of a cross-racial existence even as it too worries over the possibility of cultural decline.” (*ibid.*) The short story’s vagueness allows all such pertinent readings and many others as it expresses an anxious reserve towards woman’s body that is both physical and angelic, desired and abhorred, written on and writing back its messages of repression and revolt. Yet, I am inclined to share Andrew Maunder’s standpoint according to which “the story’s fears about women’s sexuality (figured in the Iron Virgin) invite Freudian readings.” (2007: 399) The fact is that woman’s body is at the heart of this narrative – that of the black cat, of the Iron Virgin, but also that of Amelia (perhaps they are one and the same to a certain extent) – and this body, in all its hypostases, is a place of inscription for desire, thus allowing for an endless semiotic production.

“The Squaw” tells the story of an English couple who have decided to spend part of their honeymoon in Nurnberg. Once arrived in the impressively gloomy town, they “*naturally* [want] someone else to join [their] party” (252, *my emphasis*)¹. They soon take advantage of “the pleasant benefit” (*ibid.*) of a jovial intruder, a disinhibited young American gentleman who has come “to see the most all-fired old Methuselah of a town in Yurrup.” (*ibid.*) This is one of the first narrative fractures that draw the reader’s attention upon the ambiguity of a text that is already beginning to disorganize distinctions and imperil postulations. We learn that both husband and wife are oddly enthusiastic to find a third interlocutor and companion during their honeymoon and that they are taking minute notes on the subject of their journey (“We found, on comparing notes afterwards...”). They are uncommon newlyweds since they appear to be more captivated with Gothic architecture and awe-inspiring landscapes as well as with imposing textual logic on their experience rather than with each other’s body. The second fissure occurs right away in the narrator’s self-congratulatory annotation on their long-ago decision to include a *tertium quid* in their post-nuptial vacation:

Amelia declares that ever since she has, *as the result of that experience*, advised all her friends to take a friend on the honeymoon. (*ibid, my emphasis*)

¹ All further quotations from Bram Stoker’s “The Squaw” will refer to the edition of Darryl Jones, 2014, pp. 252-64.

It is at least startling to discover the narrator's appreciation of a series of past events that have proved tragic exactly for their unnecessary escort and which are now, when the story is being told, known to have gone completely wrong. On the contrary, one would say, under no circumstance is it advisable for a newlywed couple to get involved in such a gruesome episode of meaningless violence instigated precisely by the irrational behaviour of "a friend", not to mention the fact that "the bloody incident is not an especially auspicious start to married life especially as the cat symbolizes motherhood." (Godfrey, 47) Yet, the text is already building up an ideological scaffold on which woman's body as mother and object of desire is to be expunged. The erasure of woman's body, specifically of the body of the mother-woman, will be perpetrated in the text through various techniques of sublimation and substitution.

The third person in this new wedlock is "Elias P. Hutcheson, hailing from Isthmian City, Bleeding Gulch, Maple Tree County, Neb." (Stoker, *ibid.*), his family name suggesting limitation and confinement whereas his "geographical address", as Kate Flint remarks, serves in an almost paradoxical manner "to highlight a well-established British perception of the presumption of frontiersmen toward the indigenous peoples they found in their way." (2009: 227) Undoubtedly, the "Isthmian City" and especially the "Bleeding Gulch" gesture towards the character's latent fierceness and violent past. Emelyne Godfrey also observes that "his predatory nature is alluded to in the name of the place he comes from." (46)

This curious threesome takes a tour of the city of Nurnberg and decides to leave the object of utmost interest, the medieval citadel, for the last. Finally and climactically, on the day chosen for this sightsee they wander "round the outer wall of the city by the eastern side" (*ibid.*), admiring the splendid panorama dominated by the venerable Burg. The fortress is seated on a rock and encircled by a "deep fosse" (*ibid.*) which has not been used for centuries as a defensive waterway for lack of enemies. As they dawdle in the sunlight they stop for a while to marvel at "the grimmest and most gruesome" Torture Tower (Stoker, 257) and lean over the moat wall. Down in the deep ditch that is now covered with vegetation, they can see a big black cat playing with her lovely kitten. Rashly but just for fun, Elias P. Hutcheson throws a small rock to the playful animals and, to everybody's horror, the pebble kills the kitten. The accident is narrated at slow-motion pace and the fatal blow is textually deferred through pseudo-scientific details with the definite purpose of increasing its terrifying impact:

It may be that there is some attractive force which draws lesser matters to greater; or more probably that the wall was not plump but sloped to its base - we not noticing the inclination from above; but the stone fell with a sickening thud that came up to us through the hot air, right on the kitten's head, and shattered out its little brains then and there. (Stoker, 253)

On the spur of the moment the mother-cat appears to display signs of human feelings as she furiously and repeatedly attempts to climb up the wall and attack the murderer. The cat's rage proves to be hopeless though, and the party leaves the "crime scene" to visit the Torture Tower and its major attraction for tourists: the Iron Virgin.

The custodian of the museum introduces the visitors to the ingenious torture device shaped as a woman's body cut in two and with a hinged door as a façade that could be operated by a pulley system. The interior is a spiked cabinet that is just fit to enclose lethally a human body:

This machine was coated with rust without, and covered with dust; a rope was fastened to a ring in the front of the figure, about where the waist should have been, and was drawn through a pulley, fastened on the wooden pillar which sustained the flooring above. (...) It was only, however, when we came to look at the inside of the door that the diabolical intention was manifest to the full. Here were several long spikes, square and massive, broad at the base and sharp at the points, placed in such a position that when the door should close the upper ones would pierce the eyes of the victim, and the lower ones his heart and vitals. (Stoker, 259)

The brash American traveller insists on being placed in the position of a victim inside the gory contraption so as to be able to experience the thrills of torture. To Amelia's horror and the narrator's slight amusement, Elias bribes the attendant and gets tied and fastened inside the Iron Virgin:

Judge, you jest begin to let this door down, slow, on to me. I want to feel the same pleasure as the other jays had when those spikes began to move toward their eyes! (Stoker, *ibid.*)

As the custodian feeds the rope slowly in the manner he has been required to, he is unexpectedly attacked by the unforgiving black cat and drops the rope. In that instant, the heavy iron sarcophagus closes upon the reckless American, swallowing his body, crushing his skull and piercing his eyes with its long sharp spears. The story ends with the narrator seizing “one of the old executioner’s swords” (Stoker, 264) and killing the cat that has climbed on the dead body of Elias and is now licking the blood from his eye-sockets.

The Iron Virgin proves deadly to the unwise man but also to the raging black cat. The cat’s body is cut in two by the narrator whereas the American’s body is hacked, torn into pieces, pierced through, slain, and mutilated. One can no longer ignore the blatant fantasy of *cutting the body* that has underlain this late-Victorian literary work since its opening paragraphs. This scenario of desire has been perceptible in textual patterns of fragmentation and deferral as well as in elliptical structures that render the astounding moments of silent terror preceding bodily mutilation. One more look at this last image reveals a man standing erect surrounded by other bodies: the dead body of Elias, the American, the dead body of the cat, the injured body of the custodian, and the fainted body of Amelia, the wife. With a sword in his hand, the intact narrator dominates the setting in a dignified pose of manliness. It appears that the entire narrative flow has been directed here with the definite purpose of consecrating a solemn portrait of the one who has witnessed it all (now and then Amelia faints so she is not a dependable witness) and has written it all. He has written the text both on paper and on the bodies that are scattered all around him in various hypostases of passivity (dead, wounded, fainted). The ceremonial of passivization has been essential within the set of antagonisms that at a certain moment in the story have tended to get interspersed and become analogous. Without a doubt, the cat is antagonistic to the male body as it is “the monstrous feminine body of the slimy depths” (Giblett, 2008: 74), clearly of the *other*, opposing the “monumental masculine body of the sublime heights.” (*ibid.*)

This polarity is first emphasized in the description of the two locations for their bodies are culturally locked in contrasting placement. The mother-cat belongs to the shrubbery of the cavernous ditch that is warm, irregular, and prolific - a place of carnal desires, as opposed to the city, which is placed on the vertical axis and postulated as superior by the very depth and abjection of the space below it:

The garden seemed quite fifty or sixty feet below us, and the sun pouring into it with an intense, moveless heat like that of an oven. Beyond rose the grey, grim wall seemingly of endless height, and losing itself right and left in the angles of bastion and counterscarp. Trees and bushes crowned the wall, and above again towered the lofty houses on whose massive beauty Time has only set the hand of approval. (Stoker, 252)

Opposed to the statuesque body of the white Western male, the cat’s is obscene. It is Bakhtin’s grotesque body: the female body that has just given birth, that has been oddly severed through conception and procreation (*cut in two*) so as to make room for and deliver *another person*; a body that has been inhabited by someone else until recently, a deformed and transformed body that smells and leaks and no longer nurtures man’s sexual desire, nurturing instead the basic physiological needs of the newborn. The fact that the cat is deliberately provoked to climb up the wall that sets apart the two spaces (the ditch - ostensibly a feminine area, and the citadel - an emblem of rectifying masculinity) allows for the most incomprehensible cravings to emerge and to be traced in the interstices of the text. The obscene body that exposes its alluring naturalness effaces the difference of the sublimated or official body.

While unpacking the various symbolic components of woman’s body as revealed by Stoker’s short-story we discover at least two main means of channeling male desire both within the Gothic textual maze and on/in the bodily labyrinth: first, the desire to stand-in for the mother, to become the mother, and secondly, the craving to substitute the infant, to return to the blissful maternal womb. As DalMolin justly remarks:

The male desire to return to maternal times springs from two different and paradoxical positions. First, the desire materializes in fantasies of reproduction whereby the male subject envisions his ability to conceive like a mother; second, it revives repressed images from the inferred memory of a

time both prior to and after birth, a time of pure bliss either as an unborn or a nurturing child. (2000: 148)

Though apparently at odds, the conflicting desires favour the convergence with Freud's drive for knowledge and Toril Moi's "epistemophilia" because if one's longing *to know* woman's body is pursued to the extreme, then the body has to be killed before it can be written about, that is transcribed, transformed into text. The perception of knowledge as cutting things down (as in *splitting hairs*), also as a form of violence, is partly derived from the ratification of the fact that knowledge is possible only through, on, and in the body. "The body held in the field of vision is *par excellence* the object of both knowing and desire, knowing as desire, desire as knowing." (Brooks, 1993: 99) The fecund body and especially the post-partum feminine body, through the changeful corporeality of afterbirth that infers "amniotic fluid, and blood, and the hormonal changes and lactation" (Ussher, 2006: 81), remind men of the fluctuation of woman's bodily identity, of the impracticality of disambiguating it, of assigning it to "the conceptual boundaries that structure dominant systems of knowledge." (Miller, 2010: 136) Hence the impossibility of knowing the body. Full stop.

In "The Squaw" it is precisely woman's body that obfuscates man's ambition to uncover the truth because the visible body of the mother cat (all other female bodies in the story are cloaked, dressed up, veiled) is the very illustration of the Rabelaisian, Bakhtinian grotesque or Bolens' articulated body, which "glories in the transgressive openness of its envelope and thrives on the exchanges of matter with the world outside – through every orifice and in both directions – which render it effectively uncontained." (Pettitt, 2009: 105) Stoker's short story constructs woman's body in dissimilar ways on the outside given that woman is not one, "she is plural." (Bray, 2004: 24) At first sight, the mother-cat, the Iron Virgin and Amelia appear to have nothing in common whatsoever. Yet, they do have something in common: they are all silent and they all bear "the mark of hysteria" (1981, 49), for, according to Cixous, "the great hysterics have lost speech, they are aphonic, and at times have lost more than speech: they are pushed to the point of choking, nothing gets through. They are decapitated, their tongues are cut off and what talks isn't heard because it's the body that talks, and man doesn't hear the body." (*ibid.*)

Amelia tries hard to draw her male companions' attention on the harm they may inflict on others and on themselves but she finds it impossible to utter her fears coherently and she is seldom heard. She pleads in a disarticulated manner for the life of the kitten ("Oh, be careful, you might hit the dear little thing!"), warns Hutcheson against the cat's rage ("Oh! You must be very careful. That animal would try to kill you if she were here; her eyes look like positive murder."), and diffidently expresses her dread of the fatal consequences of the American's imprudence ("Oh no! no! It is too terrible!") (Stoker, 257). Yet she is herself associated with disorder and irrationality and the boundary violations performed by their American friend are in fact attempts at reconstructing and redefining ideologies and identities. "Within the Symbolic Order the Other comes to function as the source of truth about the subject or Self." (Bray, 27)

As for the male narrator, he is not an innocent witness at all. He participates in this elaborate process of restoration but whereas Elias Hutcheson makes it solely through the body, the British narrator makes it also by means of the text. It is woman's body that has destabilized both ideology and identity because it is transgressive, erratic, and "saturated with sexuality" (Foucault) thus creating the urge in man to keep it under surveillance through the gaze, but also through the sword whenever it is necessary to reassess its position within the phallogocentric libidinal economy that defines her as the *other*. On seeing the mother-cat's uncontrollable body in close contact with that of the newborn, the man decides to intervene in actual fact, simultaneously trying to convince Amelia, in words that are far from reassuring, that he is not going to harm the baby: "I wouldn't hurt the poor pooty little critter more'n I'd scalp a baby." (Stoker, 254)

He does harm the kitten and dismisses sarcastically both the mother's grief ("Goodbye, old girl. Sorry I injured your feelin's, but you'll get over it in time!") and Amelia's horror ("I hope your wife don't hold no grudge against me on account of this unpleasantness?"). In spite of his effort to de-idealize woman's body as mother by exterminating the infant and thus annulling the basic function of the gestating body, the man finds himself worshipping this same body when he faces the Iron Virgin.

When they finally arrive at the Tower of Torture and they circle up the interior stairs as if rehearsing the most intimate contact with woman's body that has been fervidly anticipated, they actually enter the viscera of woman's body:

The lower chamber where we entered was seemingly, in its normal state, filled with incarnate darkness; even the hot sunlight streaming in through the door seemed to be lost in the vast thickness of the walls, and only showed the masonry rough as when the builder's scaffolding had come down, but coated with dust and marked here and there with patches of dark stain which, if walls could speak, could have given their own dread memories of fear and pain. (Stoker, 257)

Once in the presence of the Iron Virgin, Elias stands in awe, “evidently philosophizing” (*ibid.*), as the narrator comments fatefully, but in reality he is contemplating the perfect object of desire: the silent, catatonic, tangible body of the mother. The Iron Virgin is visibly fertile as she is “something of the bell order, or, to make a closer comparison, of the figure of Mrs. Noah in the children's Ark, but without that slimness of waist and perfect *rondeur* of hip” (Stoker, 258) and her generous belly can shelter the body of a grown-up man (not only of an infant!). Even more, she is a non-subject (“One would hardly have recognised it as intended for a human figure at all had not the founder shaped on the forehead a rude semblance of a woman's face”), being defined only by her permanence (*made of iron*), by her insatiable sexuality (*always a virgin*) and, above all, by the identity of the male that enters inside her to inhabit/inhibit her.

The Iron Virgin is the quintessence of the obscene body being primarily an expression of male needs. It brings together an entire set of sexual fantasies, such as returning to the womb, penetrating the gestating body, giving birth, becoming the mother at the same time with becoming the infant, killing the mother, etc. with some other set of nauseating male anxieties. Among the major sources of male panic, the castration anxiety comes first in Bram Stoker's writing that goes far beyond the logic of male-female opposition. With this in mind, one instantly recognizes the fact that the Iron Virgin is not exactly a body but the “negative” of a body, one that gives its shape to somebody else's body and is accordingly given materiality. Viewed from the inside, it is an empty space that is to be filled in with someone's desire that cannot be gratified from the outside. Though still marked by its “Thingness”, as Kelly Hurley qualifies “the all-too-embodied woman” (1996: 120), the Iron Virgin is an “uncanny female interior” (*ibid.*), a shell that envelops the void of sexual indefiniteness and encompasses the vacant space of desire for “there is desire every time there is Body Without Organs of one kind or another.” (Giblett, 69)

Yet, ambiguity accompanies this Deleuzian BWO historically, too. Despite its description as a medieval machine of malice, the instrument appears to be in fact an invention of the more refined late 18th century. Along with fake ancient ruins and forged medieval manuscripts, the sites and instruments of torture were among the most absorbing fabricated historical artifacts for the Europeans who had recently discovered the taste for terror and horror but also for cultural tourism. Ironically, the object, that was initially conceived as a wooden carcass and was only later added the head of Virgin Mary, had been most probably inspired from the metal “cloak of shame” (*Schandmantel*) that German prostitutes were made to wear for public humiliation. Hutcheson's decision to enter this BWO is similarly ambiguous. He confesses that he has experienced comparable thrills in the past as he has “been in some *queer* places in [his] time” (Stoker, 260, *my emphasis*): “Spent a night inside a dead horse while a prairie fire swept over me in Montana Territory – an' another time slept inside a dead buffler when the Comanches was on the war path...” (*ibid.*). After sleeping inside a dead horse and a dead buffalo, he anticipates the pleasure of being inside a woman's body: “... but now that I am here, havin' kem eight thousand miles, wouldn't it be too hard to give up the very experience I've been pinin' an' pantin' fur?” (*ibid.*).

Apart from the recollection of what Otto Rank named “the trauma of birth” and of the adjacent desire to remain/return inside the motherly womb that are identifiable in the moments when the American young man gazes at the bodies of the cat and of the Iron Virgin, there is here the male fantasy to be maltreated, to be placed in positions of submissiveness (so once again of a woman), to be enslaved, abused, tortured, eventually penetrated. For this to happen man has to become feminized, that is castrated. This process of substitution is made possible by entering the body that acts as a kind of *camera obscura*, wherein the most obscure desires are being revealed. Yet, when unexpectedly brought to light, they become subject to critical prohibitions and fade away at once for the reason that they are defined as outrageous. It is only in the darkness of this *camera obscura* that Hutcheson finds pleasure: he invades the female bodily space, which he chooses to be “his voluntary prison” (Stoker, 260), and gets

feminized by castration. What the narrator can see on opening the device is an obscene body that has been penetrated, maimed, and symbolically castrated (since his eyes have been pierced through by the protracted spears). One cannot ignore the lasting echo of Elias's disturbing words that he utters when he sees the furious cat approaching the Iron Virgin where he has been fixed. He shouts jokingly to the custodian: "Don't you slack that ar rope or I'm euchered!" (Stoker, 260).

As Daryll Jones comments, the phrase "'I'm euchered!' does not exist in the OED, but seems to be the slang for 'I'm done for!' or possibly 'I'm neutred' with overtones of 'eunuch'." (2014: 495) His last words are not listed in dictionaries because they are meant to name the unnamed and their function is to noiselessly record the irremediable fact of castration: "As the door closed I caught a glimpse of our poor companion's face. He seemed frozen with terror. His eyes stared with a horrible anguish as if dazed, and no sound came from his lips" (Stoker, 263).

The male narrator recognizes the dismembered male body as a feminized body and his own manliness is instantly activated by terror and abjection while he re-appropriates the phallus by cutting Medusa's head: "I think no one will call me cruel because I seized one of the old executioner's swords and shore her in two as she sat" (*ibid*).

One logical, though depressingly blank, conclusion might be that the Law of the Father is thus reinstated through the excruciating masculinization of the narrator's last deed. However, Emelyne Godfrey considers manly retribution to be unpaid "as the cat, and indeed, the Iron Virgin, have accomplished their mission of enforcing justice." (2012: 47) In contrast, Lillian Nayder reads the last confrontation as a "sinister childbirth scene", in which the American is killed "in the process of delivery." (1996: 92) I half agree with both views since just before seeing his friend killed inside the female body the narrator is surprised at the suspect behaviour of Amelia who gives the impression that she has established a tacit alliance with the enraged cat:

I saw her lips whiten, and felt her hold upon my arm relax. I looked around an instant for a place whereon to lay her, and when I looked at her again found that her eye had become fixed on the side of the Virgin. Following its direction I saw the black cat crouching out of sight. Her green eyes shone like danger lamps in the gloom of the place, and their colour was heightened by the blood which still smeared her coat and reddened her mouth. (Stoker, 264)

From such a perspective the feminine appears to have undone the repression of the body, which has turned into a means of retribution. As for the process of delivery that has gone wrong, since the "infant" Elias is "born" dead, this too seems a sound reading. Yet, one cannot ignore the fact that maternity and childbirth have already slipped into a metaphor of authorship and creativity since the story of Elias has survived precisely because the narrator has lived to tell it, that is "to give birth" to it, for "the body informs the text; the text embodies its writer; the reading reader embodies the body of the text." (Gliserman, 1996: 11) As for Amelia, she too gives birth but the son she brings in the world is no longer the "product" of her womb. He is a text that has been written right there, in Nurnberg, by the father: "My eldest son bears to this day a rude birthmark on his breast, which has, by family consent, been accepted as representing the Nurnberg Virgin" (Stoker, 264).

The exemplary revenge on woman's fluid sexuality has been written in blood on her body, through the scapegoating body of the *tertium quid*, so as to be genetically transmitted to the son. "Bodies are books of the law for all to see and read." (Giblett, 112) Hence the mark of the Law of the Father on the son's body burns like a hot-iron brand in the form of the Iron Virgin.

Works Cited

- Bray, A. 2004. *Hélène Cixous: Writing and Sexual Difference*, London and New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brooks, P. 1993. *Body Work. Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*, Cambridge MA and London UK, Harvard University Press.
- Carstarphen, M. G. and Sanchez J. P. 2012. *American Indians and the Mass Media*, Norman OK, University of Oklahoma Press.
- Cixous, H. 1981. "Castration or Decapitation?" in *Signs*, translated into English by Annette Kuhn, Vol. 7, No. 1, University of Chicago Press, pp. 41- 55.
- DalMolin, E. F. 2000. *Cutting the Body. Representing Woman's Body in Baudelaire's Poetry, Truffaut's Cinema and Freud's Psychoanalysis*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.
- Flint, K. 2009. *The Transatlantic Indian, 1776 – 1930*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press.
- Giblett, R. J. 2008. *The Body of Nature and Culture*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gliserman, M. J. 1996. *Psychoanalysis, Language, and the Body of the Text*, Gainesville FL, University Press of Florida.
- Godfrey, E. 2012. *Femininity, Crime and Self-Defence in Victorian Literature and Society: From Dagger-Fans to Suffragettes*, London and New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hill, J. H. 2011. *The Everyday Language of White Racism*, Wiley Blackwell Studies in Discourse and Culture, Chichester UK, Wiley- Blackwell.
- Hogle, J. E. 2014. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Gothic*, Cambridge UK, Cambridge University Press.
- Hurley, K. 1996. *The Gothic Body. Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de siècle*, Cambridge UK, Cambridge University Press.
- Darryl J. (Ed.). 2014. *Horror Stories: Classic Tales from Hoffmann to Hodgson*, Oxford UK, Oxford University Press.
- Maunder, A. 2007. *The Facts on File Companion to the British Short Story*, New York, Infobase Publishing.
- Mihesuah, D. A. 2003. *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism*, Lincoln NE, University of Nebraska Press.
- Miller, S. A. 2010. *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, New York, Routledge.
- Nayder, L. 1996. *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World: 1700- 1920*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press.
- Parezo, N. J. and Jones. A. R.2009. "What's in a Name? The 1940s–1950s 'Squaw Dress'", in *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 373- 405.
- Pettitt, T. 2009. "Books and Bodies, Bound and Unbound" in *Orbis Litterarum*, 64: 2, pp. 104 -26.
- Senf, C. A. 2002. *Science and Social Science in Bram Stoker's Fiction*, Westport CT, Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Stoker, B. 2014. "The Squaw", in Darryl Jones (Ed.). 2014. *Horror Stories: Classic Tales from Hoffmann to Hodgson*, Oxford UK, Oxford University Press, pp. 252 - 64.
- Sutherland, J. 2014. *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction*, London, Routledge.
- Ussher, J. M. 2006. *Managing the Monstrous Feminine. Regulating the Reproductive Body*, New York and London, Routledge.