

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL
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**THE CONSOLIDATION OF A CONTEMPORARY FEMALE GOTHIC HEROINE
THROUGH FILM ADAPTATIONS**

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PORTO ALEGRE

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To my mother, for being mother and father, for the constant love, support, encouragement, and for introducing me to the wonderful world of storytelling.

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“There is reason that all things are as they are, and did you see with my eyes and know with my knowledge, you would perhaps better understand.”

Bram Stoker

ABSTRACT

This work aims at analysing the construction and stereotypification of the image of the contemporary gothic heroine in literary and audiovisual texts majorly based on Julie Sanders's adaptation studies (2006) and Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory (2010). We intend to analyse the character of Mina Harker in the novel *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker (1897) and in the film adaptation *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, by Francis Ford Coppola (1992), to understand how she becomes a new stereotype for gothic heroines. Next, we will analyse some analogues, adaptations and appropriations of the character to confirm the existence and perpetuation of the stereotype, with emphasis on heroines Bella Swan, from the *Twilight* series of novels and films (MEYER, 2005; Summit Ent., 2008) and Elena Gilbert, from *The Vampire Diaries* novels and TV series (SMITH, 1991; The CW, 2009), both main characters from popular young-adult novels which present gothic elements.

Key-words: adaptation, appropriation, literary polysystem, gothic, film, literature, *Dracula*

RESUMO

Este trabalho tem por objetivo analisar a construção e a estereotipificação da imagem da heroína gótica contemporânea em textos literários e audiovisuais, baseado principalmente nos estudos de adaptação de Julie Sanders (2006) e na teoria dos polissistemas de Itamar Even-Zohar (2010). Pretendemos analisar a personagem de Mina Harker no romance *Drácula*, de Bram Stoker (1897) e na adaptação fílmica *Dracula de Bram Stoker*, dirigida por Francis Ford Coppola (1992), para entender como essa personagem se torna um novo estereótipo de heroína gótica. A seguir, iremos analisar algumas adaptações e apropriações da personagem para confirmar a existência e a perpetuação do estereótipo. Daremos ênfase às personagens análogas a Mina, heroínas Bella Swan, das séries de romances e de filmes *Twilight* (MEYER, 2005; Summit Ent., 2008), e Elena Gilbert, das séries de romances e de TV *Diários de um Vampiro* (SMITH, 1991; The CW, 2009), ambas personagens principais de obras populares voltadas ao público infanto-juvenil que apresentam elementos góticos.

Palavras-chave: adaptação, apropriação, polissistema literário, gótico, filme, literatura, *Dracula*

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INTRODUCTION

This work aims at analysing the construction and stereotypification of the image of the contemporary gothic heroine in literary and audiovisual texts majorly based on Julie Sanders's adaptation studies and Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory. With this in mind, we will be looking at some works of fiction, chosen keeping in mind the concepts of adaptation and appropriation (SANDERS, 2006), presenting gothic elements to see how this heroine is presented and what her origins are as a stereotype of a character.

We will be discussing Mina Harker, the main female character from the novel *Dracula* (STOKER, 1897), and how this heroine is distinguished from the previous gothic motif of the damsel in distress. First looking on the impact Coppola's 1992 film adaptation of the novel, *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, caused on the cultural system of *Dracula's* adaptations, we will try to understand Mina's influence in contemporary gothic fiction and how, even though she is not representative of the contemporary woman, she eventually becomes a new model for contemporary gothic heroines. For that, we will discuss the relevancy of the actor on the creation of a character and how Coppola's choice of actress Winona Ryder to play Mina Harker in his film adaptation contributes to the creation of this new stereotypical heroine.

To illustrate our argument, we will be looking at two contemporary young-adult novels with significant female heroines who can be seen as analogues, or appropriations, of Mina Harker, and their film and TV adaptations. Our first object, chosen for its phenomenal success among children and teenagers, is the *Twilight* series – a series of four novels written by Stephenie Meyer (2005 - 2008) and adapted into five films by Summit Entertainment (2008 - 2012); we have in *Twilight's* protagonist Bella Swan an excellent example of a heroine created after the stereotype we will have discussed and we will be analysing the character on both the novels and the films. Our second object is the most intriguing one, however. Another series of four young-adult novels, *The Vampire Diaries* was written by L.J. Smith and published between 1991 and 1992 – we will be focusing our analysis to the first book in the series, *The Awakening* (SMITH, 1991), as this is where we have the introduction and construction of the heroine Elena Gilbert. Its adaptation into a TV

series occurred in 2009 and it is the differences we find in the characterisation of protagonist Elena Gilbert that will help us solidify the idea of the existence of a stereotype created after Coppola's film.

To finish our discussion, we will be looking at some more direct adaptations and appropriations of *Dracula* (STOKER, 1897) and of the character of Mina Harker alone, as is the case of the comic book *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (Moore & O'Neill, 1999), the British TV series *Demons* (ITV, 2009) and of several works who use "*Dracula*" in their titles, to establish how this new stereotype affected the characterisation of Mina herself. With these discussions, we expect to better illustrate how works from different media can influence literary systems and help to keep a novel popular in its system, sometimes even adding new meanings and enriching both the text and the readers perception of it.

1. ADAPTATION, APPROPRIATION AND THE POLYSYSTEM

In her work *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006), Julie Sanders defines these two phenomena as sub-concepts of Kristeva's notion of intertextuality (1980), which states that every text evokes or reworks other texts. Both adaptation and appropriation are seen as texts that are subsequent to a sourcetext, but that are independent from said sourcetext. For Sanders, an adaptation shows a clear relationship between sourcetext and final text, often working merely as direct translation from one media to another, for example, a novel being adapted into a film or a TV series. Or, as Sanders exemplifies, "a cinematic version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, for example, although clearly reinterpreted by the collaborative efforts of director, scriptwriter, actors, and the generic demands of the movement from stage drama to film, remains ostensibly *Hamlet*" (p. 26). Appropriation, on the other hand, does not always indicate clearly the relationship with the sourcetext, using references or working as a commentary or an analogue text to the sourcetext, for example, when people refer to Disney's *The Lion King* as a version of *Hamlet*, we can see the animated film as an appropriation of Shakespeare's play in the use of some aspects of the plot and themes.

Itamar Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory (2010) states that we can view literature as a system of systems, a huge system formed by several systems consisting of groups of works that gravitate together due to similar characteristics (literary, geographical, historical etc) , which exist in balance, influencing each other. In his words, the literary polysystem is

[...] a multiple system, a system of various systems which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent. (EVEN-ZOHAR, 2010, p. 41)

However, as Elaine Indrusiak proposes in *Viagem ao Centro do Polissistema: O Papel das Adaptações Cinematográficas na Dinâmica de Sistemas Literários e Culturais* (2012), even though Even-Zohar first thought of the Polysystem Theory as applied to literature only, his latest works state it is possible for us to

imagine this concept as something broader, less restricting, encompassing not only literature but also texts in other languages and semiotic systems, such as cinema and television, resulting in what Indrusiak names “cultural polysystems” (op. cit., p. 66).

As we saw before, part of the Polysystem Theory is based on the fact that the works within a system influence each other, and works in adjacent systems, creating the relations in which they exist inside the polysystem. As the term cultural polysystem intends to imply, the phenomenon is not restricted to literary systems, and different semiotic systems also participate to create the balance: we can say a film or TV can influence literature as much as literature influences them. From this perspective, an adaptation is not simply the product connected to a sourcetext, but it also exists as an element inside a system, exerting the same influence as other works, being capable of influencing or repositioning the elements of a literary system. With these concepts in mind, the primary sourcetext chosen for the analysis in this work is *Dracula* (STOKER, 1897), focusing on the character of Mina Harker, with a secondary sourcetext in the film adaptation *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (COPPOLA, 1992), again focusing in the character of Mina, here played by actress Winona Ryder – though an adaptation of the novel, this work will also be seen as sourcetext for the subsequent works analysed. The main subsequent texts chosen are, in both literary and audiovisual versions, *Twilight's* heroine Bella Swan (MEYER, 2005; Summit Ent., 2008) and *The Vampire Diaries's* Elena Gilbert (SMITH, 1991; CW, 2009). The choice of two sourcetexts – one literary and one of its film adaptations – results from viewing in contemporary fiction an amalgam of literary and film appropriations that cannot be fully explained by a traditional approach to source-target relations in a one-to-one basis, but only with a systemic view that perceives all the different semiotic systems that influence each other within the cultural polysystem.

1.1. The Fictional Character in Literature and Film

According to Anatol Rosenfeld, in his introduction to *A Personagem de Ficção* (1968), the character's function in a fictional text is to provide the reader, or viewer, experiences – when we read a novel or watch a film, for example, we live it through the characters. For that, a fictional character has to be built carefully –

through words in a literary text or through the aggregation of acting, verbal text and settings in drama and film –, providing readers and viewers with a relatable element inside the text. For Rosenfeld, the importance of the fictional character for a text is such that it is its characterisation that will define if a work is to be considered fiction or non-fiction.

As we can see, the function of the fictional character is the same in both literature and film, and the differences we will find in the two medias is the language used to build the character – and this poses a great difference in how we, as readers and viewers, will see face this character. In literature, as characters are “made of words” and the words the author chooses for them, and the frequent presence of an omniscient narrator, we have the advantage of being able to see more of the interior of the characters, their thoughts. As Candido states in *A Personagem Literária (A Personagem de Ficção, 1968)*, the characters are what is most alive inside the novel, as we can relate to them, and it is through them that the plot exists. For the readers, this means the characters’ truth is our truth and we can create an intimate relationship with them.

In film, though there are features to be explored in the place of the omniscient narrator we more commonly find in literature, such as voiceovers, we normally lose some of the intimacy we share with the fictional characters; we do not usually have the same access to the characters’ inner thoughts since this aspect is not as easily created on camera as it is on paper. When watching a movie, we need to rely on the actions, on the appearance, and even editing choices as much as we rely on the dialogues to understand the character. More importantly, though, as Sales Gomes highlights in *A Personagem Cinematográfica (A Personagem de Ficção, 1968)*, the characters we see on the screen are built by actors, actors who will influence us when judging the characters.

1.1.1. The Importance of the Actor

During the pre-production of a film, one of the challenges producers and directors are faced with is the casting of actors for the roles. The choice of actors proves crucial for the success of a film enterprise not only because of the quality of

their performances, but also because when actors are chosen to play certain parts in certain films, they bring in, along with their physical attributes, their personas and a load of meanings which undoubtedly affect the final result. As Gerald Mast states in his work *Literature and Film* (1982), an actor can be as much of a text as any book: he uses Humphrey Bogart as an example of an actor who became an icon, “one of the great archetypes of the twentieth-century culture, more familiar spiritually (and not only facially) to the citizens of our planet” and “more influential to both writers and authors of future generations” than many famous authors or novels. The choice of an actor is, therefore, a very meticulous process and is not to be taken lightly, as mere accident. Director Lars Von Trier has stated as much in an interview (2003):

“I feel that the past and the image of an actor mean a great deal. It’s definitely something to take into account when you cast. If an actor has a back catalogue of work and even a private life that stands for something then of course he brings it into the film. And you can just as well work with these things, take advantage of them.” (LUMHOLDT, 2003, p. 67)

This phenomenon sometimes causes what we know of as type-casting, when actors are branded by their history on, and even off, the screen and consequently are always cast to the same type of roles, or absolutely never cast to a specific role.

As tão numerosas adaptações e apropriações de obras literárias, por exemplo, estão sujeitas às mesmas regras aplicáveis aos roteiros originais, mas com um agravante: a nenhum leitor parece agradar o fato de uma de suas leituras favoritas subitamente ser transformada em um blockbuster. Imaginemos, apenas a título de sutil divertimento, as reações apaixonadas que geraria o anúncio de uma produção de Hamlet, por exemplo, tendo o experiente ator Sylvester Stallone como protagonista. Nem mesmo as muitas lições de Alfred Hitchcock demonstrando que, em cinema, talento dramático não é condição *sine qua non* para a produção de um grande filme, salvariam essa obra. Mesmo antes de qualquer tomada ser feita, o filme e seu diretor já estariam irremediavelmente fadados

ao massacre da crítica. Certamente, um exemplo assim tão improvável chega a ser risível, mas é suficiente para percebermos a existência dessa premissa segundo a qual a adaptação de grandes obras literárias para o cinema deve pautar-se por um tratamento artístico, não comercial, seja lá o que, exatamente, isso venha a acarretar em termos de roteirização, tradução intersemiótica e produção cinematográfica. (INDRUSIAK, 2012, p. 73)

Therefore, when we are dealing with a film adaptation of a novel, we can imagine the concern with the casting is even bigger, since a general view of the character already exists in the cultural system, and the public may have varied opinions on the matter – opinions that can boost the success or cause the disgrace of a film.

2. GOTHIC, *DRACULA* AND THE HEROINE

2.1. Gothic and its heroine

From its origins, the gothic has been explored in different media, with different characteristics. The traditional gothic literary narratives, however, are marked by stereotypes and *clichés*. Though not the only formula, one of the first that comes to mind is the old stone castle, inhabited by some sort of monster that offers a threat to a young lady, who then needs to be rescued; the dark and gloomy atmosphere; characters that carry in their appearance their role in the story - the monster is ugly and somewhat deformed, the heroine is of fair complexion etc. Although these elements do not necessarily represent everything gothic has to offer, they somewhat do represent the gothic novel and their repetition made them the aspects by which people judge a work being Gothic or not. Eve Sedgwick reinforces that in *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*:

Surely no other modern literary form as influential as the Gothic novel has also been as pervasively conventional. Once you know that a novel is of the Gothic kind (and you can tell that from the title), you can predict its contents with an unnerving certainty. You know the important features of its *mise en scène*: an oppressive ruin, a wild landscape, a Catholic or feudal society. You know about the trembling sensibility of the heroine and the impetuosity of her lover. You know about the tyrannical older man with the piercing glance who is going to imprison and try to rape or murder them. You know something about the novel's form: it is likely to be discontinuous and involuted, perhaps incorporating tales within tales, changes of narrator, and such framing devices as found manuscripts or interpolated histories. You also know that, whether with more or less relevance to the main plot, certain characteristic preoccupations will be aired. These include the priesthood and monastic institutions; sleeplike and deathlike states; subterranean spaces and live burial; doubles; the discovery of obscured family ties; affinities between narrative and pictorial art: possibilities of incest; unnatural echoes or silences, unintelligible writings, and the unspeakable; garrulous retainers; the poisonous effects of guilt and shame; nocturnal landscapes and dreams; apparitions from the past; Faust- and Wandering Jew-like figures; civil

insurrections and ; the charnel house and the madhouse. The chief incidents of a Gothic novel never go far beyond illustrating these few themes, and even the most unified novel includes most of them. (SEDGWICK, 1986, p. 09-10)

This may read as a statement that the gothic novel is a cake recipe, and although it can be said to be slightly prejudicial, Sedgwick is showing us how these elements are used and reused, in literature and cinema and TV, due to their success – which, consequently, led to the popularisation and propagation of these elements. Fantasy in general, but especially young-adult fantasy fiction, has been using some of those popular gothic *clichés*, consciously or unconsciously on the part of the author, in an attempt to cause recognition and to call on a public already conquered by the gothic. One strong example in recent years has been the popular boom of vampires and werewolves in literature, cinema and TV – works that sometimes remind us of nothing or very little of what we would call the classic gothic narrative, but that still make use of such gothic characters, in this case, to benefit from their popularity.

2.1.1. The Damsel in Distress

One of the best-known and most recurrent *motifs* of the gothic novel is its heroine, easily recognisable as the "damsel in distress". Originated by the influence of themes, legends and art of the Middle Ages in gothic fiction, the damsel is inserted in a tradition of striking oppositions, such as good vs. evil, where feminine characters are either evil, old, witches or innocent, beautiful ladies. The damsel is, then, the heroine whose function in the story is to be saved by the hero. In most cases, she is a virgin, pure and innocent, full of virtues, and very vulnerable – so untouched that, sometimes, she is not even capable of recognising evil doings or sensing peril by herself. Usually, this damsel has no direct influence over the action and is merely a passive plot device around which the action revolves. One recurrent plot in traditional gothic novels is that of a male hero protecting the damsel from the violence of a nefarious villain or avenging her honour.

Though the damsel is the dominant motif of heroines in gothic fiction up to the 20th century, aspect noticeable in horror films throughout the last century,

examples of a “deviant” heroine start appearing in gothic novels around the 18th century, especially in the work of female writers. Ann Radcliffe, one of the most popular writers of gothic novels in the 18th century, and one of the most remembered nowadays, already has in her protagonists a new type of heroine. Emily (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794), for example, already shows the ability to sense peril, of analysing situations and expressing some of her thoughts and opinions. Though Emily still seeks her lover as a support, using his letters for encouragement to face her troubles, and her reward as a heroine is a good marriage in the end of the novel, the changes we see in Radcliffe’s heroine are still very significant as she is not just another object in the story but she has become active part of it.

A problem we encountered while searching for material for this work was the difficulty in finding studies on female characters inside gothic fiction. Though we could find several works in the topic of the gothic feminine, the bulk of the critical and theoretical production was focused on female writers and how gender affects their production. If there are works which focus exclusively on the feminine representation inside the text, regardless of the gender of the author, they were not found.

2.2. *Dracula* and Mina Harker

When *Dracula* is published in 1897, we can already see these changes reflected in the treatment of the female characters, especially its heroine, Mina Murray. Mina is the fiancée of Jonathan Harker and, although she displays some of the characteristics of the tradition of Gothic heroines to the date, she is no damsel in distress. As a Victorian woman in a Victorian novel, with Victorian values, the main function of the character is to body forth the values of the English middle class and support the male characters. Mina works as a teacher, reinforcing her middle class status, and she states she is to continue working after getting married, even if as a secretary/assistant to her husband. We have the reassurance of her intelligence and skills throughout the novel, in the actions and voiced opinions of others. One of the first incidents of this sort is when her then fiancé, Jonathan Harker, muses a way to communicate with the outside world while a prisoner of the Count:

“So I determined to write only formal notes now, but to write fully to Mr. Hawkins in secret, and also to Mina, for to her I could write shorthand, which would puzzle the Count, if he did see it.” (STOKER, 1897, p. 45)

From this passage alone we can assume how special knowing shorthand is to Jonathan and how the fact that Mina knows it is unusual. Also, her friendship with an aristocratic girl, Lucy, shows us the contrast between Mina’s character, for in the novel she represents the perfect woman, and a female character that embodies all the vice of the upper class women: while Lucy is frivolous and shallow with her affections, Mina is sensible and loyal to her fiancé; while Lucy is socially smart and has a “quick mouth”, Mina is intelligent and ponders her thoughts and words very carefully. Still, though she abides by the social rules where men must be regarded with the utmost respect, Mina is not afraid to spiral her mind and give her opinions, even after married and surrounded by men in a very masculine atmosphere. We know Mina through the eyes of these male characters, and she is regarded as a special/one-of-a-kind woman, her character and action are never judged frivolous, and her points are heard and valued by the men. The most representative description we have of Mina is that she “*has man's brain, a brain that a man should have were he much gifted, and a woman's heart. The good God fashioned her for a purpose, believe me, when He made that so good combination.*” (p. 281), by Professor Van Helsing, when praising Mina to her husband. At this point, it is important to remember *Dracula* was written and published in Victorian England, a strict patriarchal society where women were not generally regarded as intellectual, and a society structured around behavioural rules that had to be followed. Within this context, saying a woman has the mind of a man is considered praise, and not the patronising or offensive remark it would probably sound like nowadays.

The most interesting aspect of the novel’s character construction, however, is the lack of physical description. Bram Stoker does not give us any clue as to what is Mina’s appearance. If we must, we may assume she will be some sort of counterpoint to Lucy’s beauty, as they are opposed in personality, but we do not know exactly what that brings about to Mina’s appearance. Even though Mina is far from the idea we have of a contemporary woman, being originally Victorian, she is

closer to us than the damsel in distress and I believe her distinctive traits in the context in which she appears, together with the great success that *Dracula* has had from the moment it was published, have updated and replaced the model for the heroine in contemporary gothic fiction.

3. WINONA MINA RYDER-HARKER AND HER LEGACY

3.1. Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*

According to the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 "version of *Dracula* is closely based on Bram Stoker's classic novel of the same name" and is a "romanticized adaptation of Bram Stoker's 1897 classic", both assertions are correct in using lay terms to express Sanders's idea that an adaptation does not need to be simply a transposition from one genre to another, that an adaptation "of novels and other generic forms, contain further layers of transposition, relocating their source texts not just generically, but in cultural, geographical and temporal terms" (SANDERS, 2006). What we have in Coppola's work, besides a small shift in temporal terms, as the film is set in 1913, instead of the late 1800's of the novel, is the inclusion of themes which do appear in the novel, but that become central issues in the film: love and sensuality. While in Stoker's work the apparent main theme is the fight of good versus evil, in Coppola's we have a love story laced with sensuality to the point of eroticism.

The first major shift we have is in the public's perception of Dracula himself: while in the novel we have an evil monster with no redeeming qualities, in the film we have a man who, after returning from fighting a religious war, discovers his beloved bride, Elisabeta, was tricked into committing suicide for thinking him dead, which results in an act of blasphemy that curses him to a life of monstrosities, which he spends waiting for the return of his lost love. More relevant to our discussion, though, are the differences we see in the character of Mina Harker. Though Mina is essentially the same Victorian woman we have in the novel, the film adds another layer of meaning to the character by making her mirror Elisabeta, therefore making her much more relevant to the plot than her character was in the novel. This double construction of Mina-Elisabeta – easily made by the casting of the same actress for both parts and the shooting of flashback scenes which account for the origin of Count Dracula's curse – not only enriches the female character, but allows for the introduction of large doses of sensuality and romance to her relationship with Dracula. This results in an interesting narrative twist, for while Stoker's Mina was merely another of Dracula's victim, in Coppola's film she becomes the very reason for

all of Dracula's actions, gaining in relevance while also placating the audience's reaction to the vampire's cruelty and inhumanity.

While we can only make assumptions as to the reasons for Coppola's choices while adapting *Dracula* into film, we can imagine they were necessary, as a commercial film is not only a creative text but also a product from which profit is expected and it is reasonable for us to think that the novel's morality and religious themes alone could not be as relevant to the public at the end of the twentieth century as they were at the end of the nineteenth century. More important than the reasons, though, is the fact that Coppola's choices for his adaptation were extremely successful with both public and critics, creating a film that not only stands as a singular text but that also renovates the public's interest for the original novel, renovating and increasing its cultural influence in the literary polysystem.

3.2. Coppola's and Ryder's Wilhelmina "Mina" Harker (née Murray)

When director Francis Ford Coppola chose Winona Ryder to play the part of Mina Harker in his 1992 adaptation of *Dracula*, he added to the character all the meaning the actress brought with her. By 1992, Winona Ryder was a well-known face in Hollywood and worldwide. Due to her leading roles in acclaimed films such as *Beetlejuice* (Tim Burton, 1989) and *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), Winona was seen as somewhat an icon to the Gothic culture, an image reinforced by her very public relationship with another Gothic icon, actor Johnny Depp.



Picture 1 - Actress Winona Ryder



Picture 2 - Winona and then fiancé Johnny Depp (1991)

Profiting from Winona's image and reputation, as well as from a skilled and thorough adaptation process, Coppola's *Dracula* was bound to influence upcoming works. Taking into consideration the lack of physical description for Mina Harker in the novel, the character takes hold of Winona's image. That, added to the new psychological traits the character displays and the narrative functions she undertakes in the film version, led to the consolidation of a new stereotypical character which amalgamates Stoker's Mina and Coppola's Mina to renew and replace the "damsel in distress" with the "vampire's girlfriend".



Picture 3 - Winona Ryder as Mina Harker

This influence can be easily seen with the popularisation of fantastic and gothic vampire novels in the past few years, where the "vampire's girlfriend" became a very common character. This newest female character became, indeed, one of the most striking characteristics on this segment of literature, which then proceeded to appear also on film and television. The "vampire's girlfriend" is not a traditional gothic heroine because, though still always human, she is not only a victim anymore, she is also a character who takes action but who still presents what may be seen as outdated – to our contemporary point of view – personality traits. Physically speaking, this

character tends to be fragile-looking, usually fair-skinned, *petite*, and of average beauty; but, while her looks are ordinary, her intelligence and character can be considered superior to those of girls around her, and, very important, her social status is that of a commoner, a middle class girl. In short, the “vampire’s girlfriend” is a very ordinary girl, the “girl next door”, who can easily be replaced in any girl’s imagination with herself. In what is next, I bring two of these characters I believe can be seen as analogues to this new text of post-Winona Ryder Mina Harker: Bella Swan and Elena Gilbert.

3.3. *Twilight*

Twilight is a series of four young-adult fantasy novels written by Stephenie Meyer from 2005 to 2008. The books revolve around 16-year-old Bella Swan when she moves to Forks, Washington, to live with her father. The same small town is the home of a family of “vegetarian” vampires, the Cullens – vampires who have decided to stop hurting humans and only feed on animals. The series’ heroine, Bella, meets and falls in love with one of the younger vampires, 104-year-old Edward, and the story follows their romance. From the moment the first book, *Twilight* (MEYER, 2005) was published, the series was a huge success worldwide, success which only increased with the announcement of the film adaptations in 2008.

For her vampires, author Stephenie Meyer tries to create a new mythology, a mythology very different from what we came to expect from vampire fiction: where we usually have the vampire as a creature strongly based on beliefs and superstitions – both very important aspects of gothic fiction –, Meyer tries to give her creatures a more “scientific” (I here use the term loosely, as I do not know enough biology or DNA studies to know if this aspect of her work has actually any grounds in scientific facts) aspects. Still, we have the vampire, a presence that *per se* implies gothic connections, but the creatures are not the strongest gothic elements we find in the work. At the opening of the novel, we have Bella moving to Forks and she already introduces her to the small town, setting the tone of the story and maybe even trying to guide the reader’s perception of the place:

In the Olympic Peninsula of northwest Washington State, a small town named Forks exists under a near-constant cover of clouds. It rains on this inconsequential town more than any other place in the United States of America. It was from this town and its gloomy, omnipresent shade that my mother escaped with me when I was only a few months old. It was in this town that I'd been compelled to spend a month every summer until I was fourteen. That was the year I finally put my foot down; these past three summers, my dad, Charlie, vacationed with me in California for two weeks instead.

It was to Forks that I now exiled myself— an action that I took with great horror. I detested Forks. (MEYER, 2005, pg. 3)

This introduction clearly states to the reader that Forks is a sombre town, a place where you should not expect sunshine, beautiful days or – from Bella's perspective, at least – any form of happiness. Interestingly, the town of Forks is a real town and it really has the highest rainfall rates and the lowest incidence of open sky days in the United States, which shows a deliberate attempt from the author to make this atmosphere as real as possible for the readers and this lack of sunlight and gloomy, depressed atmosphere play an important part in the story. Firstly, because this is the reason the town was chosen by the vampires – as they hide from the sun, since their skin glows inhumanly in direct sunlight; second, Bella's moods are generally related to the weather and, last, the good weather seems to indicate unusual happy times (for example, when Bella arrives at Forks, it rains constantly and it even snows, but the first days after Bella and Edward meet have unusual good weather, as the locals comment how rare it is to have sun more than one day in a row). Also, the protagonist's repeatedly unhappy remarks on the bad weather, including the wet climate and the green tones of moss that cover the town are indicators of her dissatisfaction with her life in general. Usually, in gothic fiction we have a strong presence of oncoming storms and grey days signalling tragedies or changes, but still we can say the weather is a strong element in the story.

It is not only the weather that makes Forks a very common setting in gothic fiction, though. The small town is surrounded by woods that house two very important elements: the vampires' home and an Indian reservation. The vampires' home is a glass-walled mansion, big enough to house 7 people, in a location almost impossible

to find, which has become an urban legend among the people of Forks – though not a dark and old stone building, the house certainly fills its role as an intimidating and striking location. Native-American legends on shapeshifters and spirits are a very popular theme in North-American gothic fiction – the old Indian burial ground as the reason for supernatural events is a largely explored element and has become a sort of *cliché*; the presence of the Indian reservation is important in *Twilight* (MEYER, 2005) because it brings a sense of mysticism lacking from the vampires in this work and we have several scenes where the Native-Americans are gathered telling legends of the tribe's origins and how they are related to vampires and werewolves in the heroine's presence – tales that almost always have the function of revealing secrets and assisting her through the story.

All these gothic elements are essential to the story and they help create the atmosphere in which the novels and films are set – and if the popularity and figures the works achieved are anything to go by, these elements were very successful in their function. Though many may debate over the literary quality and value of the work, as many do, the success of the *Twilight* “brand” is undeniable and simply discarding the work without any attempt to understand the phenomenon behind it seems to be a waste.

3.3.1. Isabella “Bella” Swan

Isabella “Bella” Swan is the protagonist of the series of books *Twilight* (Stephenie Meyer, 2005-2008) and its films adaptations *The Twilight Saga* (Summit Entertainment, 2008-2012). Bella Swan, our protagonist, is a very timid and “awkward” (in her own words) girl, with no remarkable features. The author herself has said, answering a question in her website, she decided not to describe Bella physically in detail to leave it open to the readers' interpretation. However, she gives us what her appearance could have been in the books:

What does Bella look like?

I left out a detailed description of Bella in the book so that the reader could more easily step into her shoes. However, so many people have asked this question, I have decided to tell you what she

looks like *to me*. But I want to stress, Bella's looks are open to interpretation.

In my head, Bella is very fair-skinned, with long, straight, dark brown hair and chocolate brown eyes. Her face is heart-shaped—a wide forehead with a widow's peak, large, wide-spaced eyes, prominent cheekbones, and then a thin nose and a narrow jaw with a pointed chin. Her lips are a little out of proportion, a bit too full for her jaw line. Her eyebrows are darker than her hair and more straight than they are arched. She's five foot four inches tall, slender but not at all muscular, and weighs about 115 pounds. She has stubby fingernails because she has a nervous habit of biting them. And there's your *very* detailed description.

(http://stepheniemeyer.com/twilight_faq.html#bella)

The answer was posted some time after the release of the first book but before the second instalment was out, between October/2005 and August/2006, almost two years before the production for the film began and actress Kristen Stewart was chosen to play Bella. As we can see in the authors words, she was already thinking of the exact “vampire’s girlfriend” stereotype when creating the main character. Even more marking are the words of Bella herself in the first book of the series:

“But physically, I'd never fit in anywhere. I should be tan, sporty, blond — a volleyball player, or a cheerleader, perhaps — all the things that go with living in the valley of the sun [Phoenix, AZ]. Instead, I was ivory-skinned, without even the excuse of blue eyes or red hair, despite the constant sunshine. I had always been slender, but soft somehow, obviously not an athlete [...]. I looked at my face in the mirror as I brushed through my tangled, damp hair. Maybe it was the light, but already I looked sallow, unhealthy. My skin could be pretty — it was very clear, almost translucent-looking — but it all depended on color. I had no color here. Facing my pallid reflection in the mirror, I was forced to admit that I was lying to myself. It wasn't just physically that I'd never fit in. [...] I didn't relate well to people my age. Maybe the truth was that I didn't relate well to people, period.”
(MEYER, 2005, p. 10)

Through the character's words we can gather she considers herself physically, and socially, unattractive. Though often other characters rebut Bella's opinion of herself, and sometimes her brown eyes are mentioned by herself and others, she is never referred to by her physical appearance one way or the other - others never call her plain, or even ugly, but they also never mention her as being beautiful. She is, however, constantly referred to as intelligent, smart, independent, responsible, mature, giving emphasis to the importance of her personality over her appearance – even when Bella talks about herself.

“I kept my eyes down on the reading list the teacher had given me. It was fairly basic: Brontë, Shakespeare, Chaucer, Faulkner. I'd already read everything. That was comforting... and boring.” (MEYER, 2005, p. 15)

“I had decided to read *Wuthering Heights* — the novel we were currently studying in English — yet again for the fun of it [...]” (MEYER, 2005, p. 34)

Even if unintentionally, she is giving us another piece of the stereotype: she mentions her love for books, reinforcing a very common stereotype for intelligence. Her love for literature is stressed throughout the series, as often Bella seems to be reading or to have read a classic to which she can trace a parallel with whatever her current situation is. Bella also presents several traits expected from a teenager in her situation, such as stubbornness and the will to be a part of the confrontations between the heroes and the villains. However, as a heroine, she still appears vulnerable in the face of the supernatural, she is strongly attached to, and dependent of, a male character and, as a human, she rarely takes action in fights and confrontations.

In the film adaptation, the characterisation of Bella, both physical and psychological, follows quite closely the guidelines set in the novels with the casting of

actress Kristen Stewart. Her casting was, however, lightly criticised by some groups of fans who considered Stewart, a natural green-eyed blonde, too pretty for Bella, showing the expectations the public already had.



Picture 4 - Actress Kristen Stewart's natural appearance

However, Stewart has almost always kept her hair in tones of brown, specially for her films, and that is how she was first presented to the *Twilight* fans. As we look at her, even considering Stewart's green eyes, we can already notice the resemblance to actress Winona Ryder.



Picture 5 - Actress Kristen Stewart

We can better see the similarities between the two actresses when we have Stewart in character, with dark brown hair and brown contact lenses. Interestingly, Bella's "*chocolate brown*" eyes are only briefly mentioned in the first three books of the novel; it is in the fourth novel where their colour becomes relevant to the plot, novel only released two months before the first film was out in the theatres and long after the production had finished. Still, Stewart wears the coloured lenses from the first film and, as the novel's author Stephenie Meyer had no power over the production of the first three films, we can safely assume this decision was made solely thinking of the film general visual – not a light decision, as from experience we can many adaptations oversee or do not worry as much about details like eye colour.



Picture 6 - Isabella "Bella" Swan



Picture 7 - Winona Ryder as Mina Harker

Bella and the *Twilight* series show us how popular this new gothic heroine is and how relevant she has become to readers and viewers. However, the next case makes it more obvious how the stereotype has been used to cause immediate recognition and acceptance in the public, so as to boost the chances of success and recognition of a work of fiction within this specific genre, or mash of genres.

3.4. The Vampire Diaries

The Vampire Diaries is a series of four young-adult fantasy novels created and written by L.J. Smith, published between 1991 and 1992. While the books made a certain amount of success in the United States on the occasion of their original publishing, the series did not reach worldwide success until the release of its adaptation into a TV series in 2009 (produced by writer L.J. Smith and ordered by American channel CW). The TV show made such a success that the publisher, Alloy Entertainment's Book Division, decided to bring the series back 20 years after the original series was released, with the addition of three new trilogies in the same universe so far, *The Vampire Diaries: The Return* (L.J. Smith, 2009-2011), *The Vampire Diaries: The Hunters* (Ghostwriter, 2011-2012) and *The Vampire Diaries: The Salvation* (Ghostwriter, 2013-????).

The series follows 17-year-old Elena Gilbert and her life in the fictional city of Fell's Church (in the novels; due to legal issues, it was named Mystic Falls in the TV

series) after meeting and falling in love with vampire Stefan Salvatore and his brother, also a vampire and with whom she eventually also falls in love, Damon Salvatore. Great part of the series is focused on the love triangle between these three characters and the supernatural forces at work in their small town. As the focus of this work is on female protagonists, the references to story and plot in *The Vampire Diaries* will be limited to the first novel, *The Awakening*, where Elena's character is introduced and built.

The presence of vampires, and other supernatural creatures, already indicates the strong gothic presence in the *The Vampire Diaries* though it already follows the trend that becomes extremely popular in the beginning of the years 2000's, the vampires are not only the monsters traditionally depicted in gothic fiction anymore – here, they are also the heroes, fighting against evil that is often merely human. We also have the presence of a heroine considered pure, innocent, but remarkable as a counterpoint to the creatures, a heroine marked by great violence, as happens in classic Gothic novels: in Elena's case, the tragic death of her parents in a car accident shortly before the beginning of the story has changed her perspective on life, leaving her more introspective and less worried about "shallow" things such as school popularity and social interactions, things for which the girl was known previously. In the TV series adaptation, we can perceive a greater focus on this specific aspect of the character, whereas in the novel it is only slightly approached and has limited influence in Elena's life.

The story is set in a small historical town in southern Virginia, surrounded by woods where the great mystery is a huge stone mansion, unoccupied until the arrival of the Salvatore brothers, a mansion whose outside seems to be in ruins and whose interior resembles a medieval castle in description. As a work directed to a young-adult public, in addition to the gothic elements, there are several fantasy, action and adventure elements; there are witches, angels, magical objects, chasing sequences, vengeance plots, human villains, supernatural villains, etc.

In addition, the main plot is strongly supported by one particular gothic element, the Double. The vampire brothers feel a strong connection with Elena partially based on the fact that she looks identical to the woman who turned them into vampires 400 years earlier, Katherine. Elena, then, is the human *doppelgänger* of

vampire Katherine – significantly, the brothers are also emphatic in stating that Elena’s personality is the complete opposite of Katherine: where Katherine was malicious and evil, Elena is innocent and good. The Double, or the *Doppelgänger*, is a common concept in Gothic fiction, usually with great importance to the plot and reflecting a deeper psychological aspect of the characters or the story.

3.4.1. Elena Gilbert

At the beginning of the story, Elena is living with her aunt and younger sister (in the novels; in the TV series, she has a younger brother), after the death of both her parents, in the small town of Mystic Falls. This is as far as the similarities go between the character of Elena Gilbert in the novels and the Elena Gilbert in the TV series, and that is the reason I believe this case specially illustrates the influence Winona Ryder’s portrayal of Mina Harker has had on this heroine. The Elena Gilbert of the novels is a beautiful, sexy, popular girl in school, she is part of the cheerleader squad, she dates the most popular guy – and even though we can see she is not exactly satisfied with her life, probably due to a certain depression after her parents’ deaths, she is not in any way humble or an outcast – as was *Twilight*’s Bella, for example.

“I’ve got to see the crowd today, though. We’re supposed to meet in the parking lot before school. Is that why I’m scared? Am I frightened of them?”

Elena Gilbert stopped writing. She stared at the last line she had written and then shook her head, pen hovering over the small book with the blue velvet cover. Then, with a sudden gesture, she lifted her head and threw pen and book at the big bay window, where they bounced off harmlessly and landed on the upholstered window seat.

It was all so completely ridiculous.

Since when had she, Elena Gilbert, been scared of meeting people? Since when had she been scared of *anything*? She stood up and angrily thrust her arms into a red silk kimono. She didn’t even glance at the elaborate Victorian mirror above the cherrywood dresser; she knew what she’d see. Elena Gilbert, **cool and blond and slender, the fashion trendsetter, the high school senior, the girl every boy**

wanted and every girl wanted to be. Who just now had an unaccustomed scowl on her face and a pinch to her mouth.” (SMITH, 1991, emphasis added)

This excerpt is one of the first appearances of Elena and she is at home, writing on her diary. As we can see, at the beginning of the novel we already have a very clear description of Elena’s personality, and how the narrator expects us to perceive her, leaving very little to the imagination of the public. Even further details of her appearance are given right after, this time not by Elena but by one of the vampire brothers, Stefan.

“Katherine! But of course it couldn't be. Katherine was dead; no one knew that better than he did.

Still, the resemblance was uncanny. That pale golden hair, so fair it almost seemed to shimmer. That creamy skin, which had always made him think of swans, or alabaster, flushing faintly pink over the cheekbones. And the eyes... Katherine's eyes had been a color he had never seen before; darker than sky blue, as rich as the lapis lazuli in her jewelled headband. This girl had those same eyes.” (SMITH, 1991, p. 19-20)



Picture 8 - Elena drawn by a fan

Through this description (specially after it is made into drawing by a fan) we can clearly see the author did not intend for Elena to be anything but an extremely sexually attractive, beautiful, blonde, popular young girl, as physical appearances go; nothing like the stereotype we have been discussing do far. Even her personality does not fit the stereotype, as we see an apparently very confident, independent, young girl, who relies on her looks and does not give enough importance to intellect to mention it in a first opportunity, nothing like Bella Swan or Mina Harker. However, when *The Vampire Diaries's* TV series is released in 2009, we see a clear shift in the heroine, even more glaring due to the fact that the author of the novels, L.J. Smith, was involved in the adaptation as one of the creators and one of the main writers.

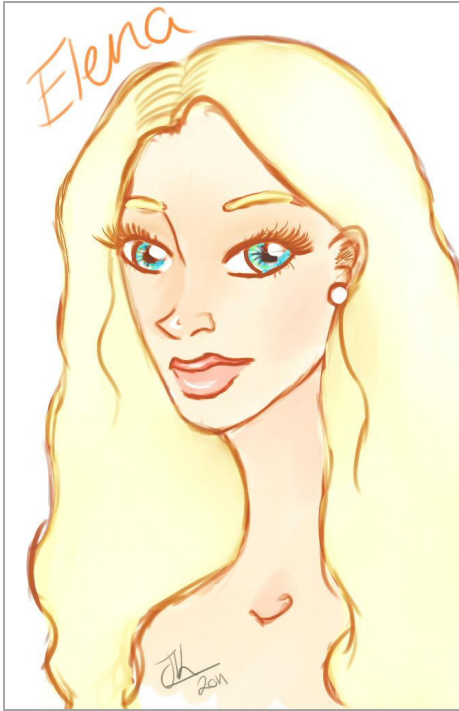
When a commercial film adaptation is made, there is a lot more involved than just the creative aspect, especially in television. Marketability and profits are essential for the success and continuation of a show, and shows are rarely produced out of personal wills or targeted at very small or specific fan bases, so when *The Vampire Diaries* was turned into a TV series, we can, with some degree of certainty, affirm it was intended to “ride” the success vampire stories were having after the booming success of the *Twilight* series. Creatively speaking, with the author of the original

novels involved in the adaptation project, one could expect the show to bring the books to life as “faithfully” as possible, but when it comes to pre-production, right at the casting of the protagonist, we see a surprising choice of the relatively unknown actress Nina Dobrev to play Elena Gilbert.



Picture 9 - Actress Nina Dobrev

We can clearly see Nina Dobrev does not fit at all the description we have of Elena in the novels, and although this is a very common occurrence in adaptations and it does not necessarily interfere in the quality or general appreciation of the adapted text, it is curious how far the Elena in the TV series strays from the original author’s view, specially because it was a character with such striking features.



Picture 10 - Draw of Novel's Elena

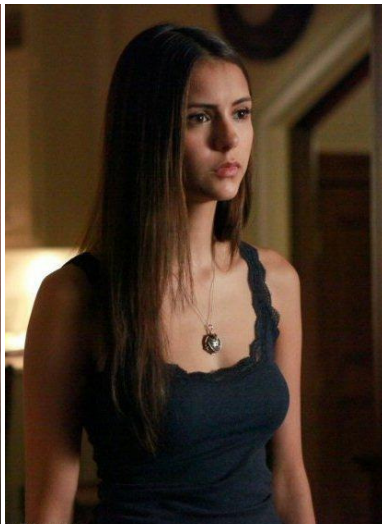


Picture 11 - Actress Nina Dobrev as TV series's Elena

Most striking, though, is Nina's similarity to both Kristen Stewart and Winona Ryder.



Picture 12 - Kristen Stewart as Bella Swan



Picture 13 - Nina Dobrev as Elena



Picture 14 - Winona Ryder as Mina

Besides her appearance, we can see a clear change in her personality as well. While the novel's Elena is confident to the point of being arrogant, in the TV series we have a much more serene Elena, trying to find her place in the world after the car accident in which her parents were killed but she survived. When we first see her in the pilot episode, she is writing in her diary and her first lines are:

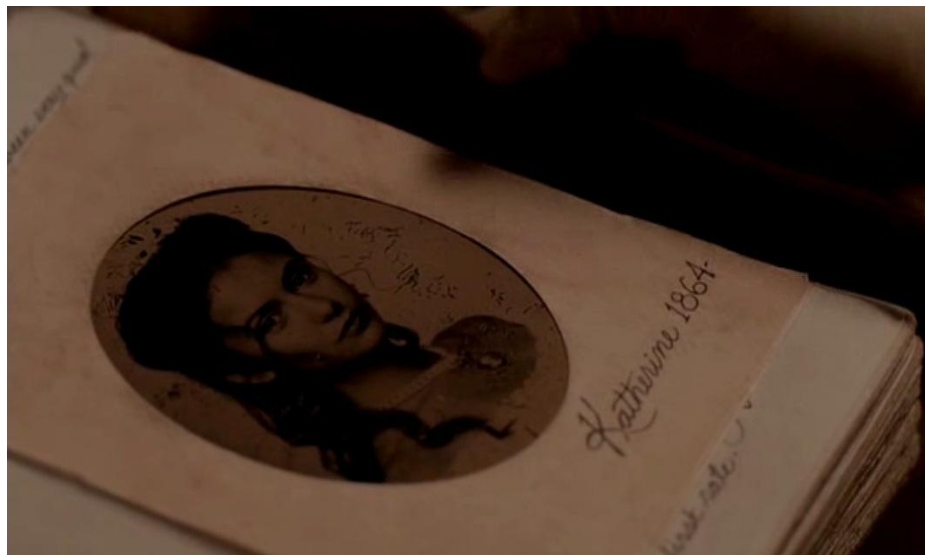
"Dear diary, today will be different. It has to be. I will smile, and it will be believable. My smile will say "I'm fine, thank you.", "Yes, I feel much better." I will no longer be the sad little girl who lost her parents. I will start fresh, be someone new. It's the only way I'll make it through." (WILLIAMSON & PLEC, 2009, at <http://vampire-diaries.hypnoweb.net/pisodes/saison-1/101pilot/script-vo.153.396/>)

Those opening lines already set a tone for the character and we can notice the difference in attitude between the two Elenas. It is not only Elena's lines, though, that shows us this difference from the novel, but also several visual elements – in this scene, Elena is wearing simple, stay-at-home clothes, sitting on a couch. However, in the similar scene in the novel, where appears writing Elena in her diary for the first time, she is said to be wearing a “*red silk kimono*” and to be sitting in her “*cherrywood dresser*” which may infer a certain snobbish quality to the character.



Picture 15 - Nina Dobrev as Elena Gilbert

Also, Stefan's perception of Elena is an important part of the story, as he is the one who first recognises her as a doppelgänger, but a physical description as we have in the novel would be redundant, we have the use of photography to help with the characterisation. In the pilot episode, there is a scene where his character looks at an old photograph of Elena's double, Katherine, to emphasize the similarities he mentions in an earlier moment and where it is made clear for the viewers they are not the same person (with special attention to the distance in time between both women, as the photograph is dated). Curiously, in the TV series the brothers are only around 150 years old, opposed to the almost 400 years in the novels – a very interesting change that places their origins during the American Civil War (1861-1865), which happens to be a very recurrent theme in North-American gothic fiction.



Picture 16 - Scene of *The Vampire Diaries*

In addition to that, we have the following dialogue between Stefan and Elena, in which another feature of the “TV Elena”, is highlighted. Unlike the character in the novel, she does not succeed in hiding her grief, having the habit of spending time by her parents' graves to think and write in her journal.

ELENA: You know, you're kind of the talk of the town.

STEFAN: Am I?

ELENA: Mm-Hmm. Mysterious new guy, oh, yeah.

STEFAN: Well, you have the mysterious thing going, too. Twinged in sadness.

ELENA: What makes you think that I'm sad?

STEFAN: Well, we did meet in a graveyard. (WILLIAMSON & PLEC, 2009, at <http://vampire-diaries.hypnoweb.net/pisodes/saison-1/101pilot/script-vo.153.396/>)

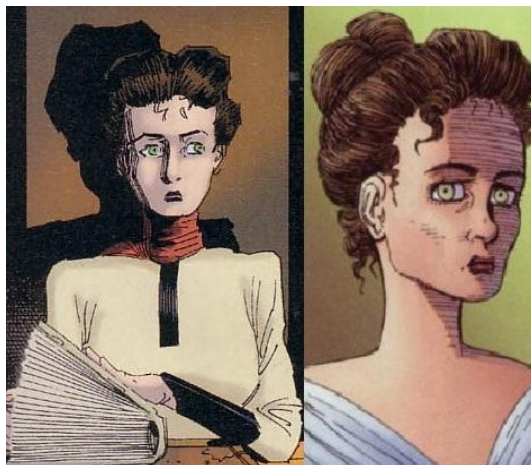
All of these differences between the construction of the character in the novel and in the TV series, which result in different ways readers and viewers perceive and regard her, bring the heroine closer to the image of a Mina Harker-esque character as previously discussed. The physical characteristics chosen in the casting of actress Nina Dobrev in the adaptation, the more introspective personality, the hint of an outcast girl in high school, all turn Elena into a more relatable heroine, ensuring a certain amount of recognition from the public the channel expected to gather for the TV series, reaffirming the influence of the aforementioned stereotype in the gothic-inspired young-adult fantasy genre.

3.5. Mina's Afterlife

Fiction works based on Stoker's *Dracula* have been numerous and popular since its release and we can find prequels, sequels, retellings of the story, appropriation of characters and mythology, etc. One popular theme to these works, particularly explored in works intended as sequels, or continuations, to the novel is Mina Harker's life after *Dracula*. Even though Mina has a defined ending in the novel, as it ends with a note by Jonathan Harker that works as an epilogue, alluding to their happy – and absolutely normal – life seven years after the death of Count Dracula, the changes the events in the novel might have had on her is a popular theme explored by diverse works. These new texts give an afterlife to the character, appropriating the novel's events in Mina's past to create a character deeply affected by those events – very commonly, Mina has turned into a vampire herself, due to Dracula's bites, or some kind of super-hero figure. Sometimes, this new character is

barely recognisable as Mina Harker at a first glance. Even so, we can find certain homogeneity among these Minas, and not only through the name, or because they are vampires, or that they have a tragic past and have broken free from it. These Minas are also, very frequently, easily recognised by their physical appearance. Though we can find several examples of appropriations of *Dracula*, and of Mina, we bring here two examples where we can see clearly how, even though we have a very different character than the Mina Harker we would expect, the physical stereotype set by Coppola and Winona Ryder in the 1992 film still holds.

The first case we have is *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, comic book series created by Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill in 1999 and adapted into film in 2003. In these works, we have several characters of different works of fiction gathering to become a strange group of superheroes in a Steampunk setting, and Mina Murray is one of these characters. Here we have a scarred Mina, thanks to her encounters with Dracula, who divorced Jonathan Harker and eventually joins the league of men to use her experience and intellectual prowess to help save the world. The character is still very sexually charged, as we have a very empowered Mina who uses her femininity as an asset and who has affairs with more than one male character without judgement in the text (though we do not know the reason for her divorce, sexual frustration on her part is hinted at).



Picture 17 - *League's* Mina Murray (O'Neill, 1999)

Little information is enough for us to see how she strays from the Victorian lady we have in the novel and, still, Mina is the *League* member who uses her mind

and intellect to solve problems, instead of only fighting, and she still dresses conservatively, even if her position is anything but conservative. Also, the physical aspect of the stereotype remains as we can clearly see the resemblance between the comic Mina and the actresses we have discussed so far. (except, perhaps, for the blue eyes).

Another case is the TV series *Demons* (ITV, 2009), that follows a descendent of Professor Van Helsing as he becomes a supernatural hunter in modern days. In the series, Mina Harker first appears as a famous blind pianist, and, later as a warrior and the curator for the collection of books and artefacts on the supernatural the Van Helsing's have amassed through the centuries. We find out that her character was married to Jonathan until he died of natural causes, but that Mina herself has not grown old – thanks to Dracula's bites, Mina became immortal, but blind, unless she consumes human blood, in which case she presents herself as a vampire for a period of time.



Picture 18 - Actress Zoë Tapper as Mina Harker



Picture 19 - Actress Zoë Tapper as Mina Harker

Again, in *Demons* we have a character whose actions are very different from what we would expect from *Dracula's* Mina Harker – in the course of the miniseries, we discover Mina has turned her son, Quincey, into a vampire to save his life and great part of her action seems to be towards restoring the balance she broke with this action. Mina, in this work, can be seen as a character working for redemption from the unnatural events in her past, as she considers herself an aberration. Actress Zöe Tapper, however, again fits our stereotype (with maybe a small exception in her hazel eyes, which change from dark green to brown sometimes during the series).

3.6. A Timeline of Mina in Audiovisual Works

To further illustrate the influence we believe the image of actress Winona Ryder has had on the characterization of Mina, here we display a timeline of portrayals of Mina in the most famous adaptations and appropriations of *Dracula* since the first authorised film version was released in 1931.

1931 – *Dracula* (Tod Browning): Famous for Bela Lugosi's portrayal of Dracula, in this film Mina is Dr. Seward's daughter and is portrayed by Helen Chandler, popular actress in the 20's and 30's. Her biography at AllMovie.com says "*With her pale almost translucent eyes and seemingly permanent air of exhaustion, blonde Helen Chandler was perfectly cast as Dracula's near-tragic Mina Seward [...]*"



Picture 20 - Helen Chandler as Mina Seward

1958 – *Dracula or Horror of Dracula* (Terence Fischer): Famous as Christopher Lee's *Dracula*, in this film Mina is married to Arthur Holmwood and portrayed by blonde Melissa Stribling.



Picture 21 - Melissa Stribling as Mina Holmwood

1977 – *Count Dracula* (Philip Saville): Two-part mini-series aired by BBC, *Count Dracula* is part of the series *Great Performances*, where literary classics were produced for TV. In this version, Mina is Lucy's sister and portrayed by actress Judi Bowker.



Picture 22 - Judi Bowker as Mina Westenra

1979 – *Dracula* (John Badham): Romanticized adaptation of the novel, with a charming and handsome Dracula (along the lines we see later in Coppola's version).



Picture 23 - Jan Francis as Mina Van Helsing

1992 – *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Francis Ford Coppola):



Picture 24 - Winona Ryder as Mina Harker

1995 - *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (Mel Brooks): Mina again is Dr. Seward's daughter. This film is part of the Mel Brooks' project parodying 1930's horror films; the sourcetext here is the 1931 production.



Picture 25 - Amy Yasbeck as Mina Seward

2006 – *Dracula* (Bill Eagles): TV film produced by BBC. In this film adaptation, the Romanian Count is famous for his medical cures. Without knowing the Count is also a vampire, Lord Arthur Holmwood summons Dracula to London to cure his syphilis before his wedding to Lucy.



Picture 26 - Stephanie Leonidas as Mina Murray

2012 – *Dracula 3D* (Dario Argento): Version by Italian Dario Argento, best known for his heavily erotic horror movies.



Picture 27 - Marta Gastini as Mina Harker

2013 – *Dracula* (Cole Haddon): Upcoming series produced by NBC, it introduces Dracula as he arrives in London, posing as an American entrepreneur who maintains that he wants to bring modern science to Victorian society. In reality, he hopes to wreak revenge on the people who ruined his life centuries earlier. There is only one circumstance that can potentially spoil his plans: Dracula falls hopelessly in love with a woman who seems to be a reincarnation of his dead wife (Mina).



Picture 28 - Jessica De Gouw as Mina Murray

Though these are just a few works picked out from among the hundreds of productions inspired by Stoker's *Dracula* we can find, we can clearly see a shift in the choice of actresses playing the part of Mina after Winona Ryder's portrayal in Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Blond, blue-eyed, Minas seem to belong in the past and the new Mina brings us a less ethereal beauty, an ordinary beauty easier for readers to relate with.

CONCLUSION

In this work, we saw how the heroine Mina Harker in the novel *Dracula* by Bram Stoker (1897) differentiates from the previous gothic heroine motif of the damsel in distress, as she is more participant in the story, her actions and words influence the plot and she is not only the girl who needs to be saved anymore. Even though Mina still presents very Victorian traits and is not a representation of the contemporary woman, her differences from the damsel make Mina a more relatable character for contemporary readers of gothic fiction. Adding to that the success of the novel and its constant presence in popular culture through adaptation and appropriations, we have in Mina the beginning of a new stereotype for gothic heroines.

Based on adaptation studies (SANDERS, 2006) and the polysystem theory (EVEN-ZOHAR, 2010), we then discussed the impact the film adaptation directed by Francis Ford Coppola, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), has on the novel and on further adaptations and appropriations due to its success. We focus on the influence Coppola's film has on the characterisation of the character of Mina Harker, as when actress Winona Ryder plays the part she adds a load of meaning to it that creates the a stereotype of gothic heroines, the "vampire's girlfriend".

By analysing the heroines Bella Swan (*Twilight*) and Elena Gilbert (*The Vampire Diaries*) as analogue characters to Mina Harker, we tried to show the confirmation and the reproduction of this stereotype in contemporary fiction, as both belong to young-adult works which present gothic elements and which have becomes successful, in part, due to these elements. To finish our arguments, we then saw some direct adaptations and appropriations of *Dracula* (STOKER, 1897) and of Mina Harker to demonstrate how Coppola's film influence not only created a new heroine but also influenced the characterisation of Mina herself.

The resemblance among the characters we have discussed cannot be simply a coincidence as we have many aspects in common, aspects which depended on deliberate decisions made by authors, directors or producers when deciding on the heroines' characterisation. We can see this phenomenon as an example of how works from different semiotic systems influence each other and what we have is the

reiteration of the stereotype created due to the success of Coppola's film with the objective of causing recognition in the public, as a form of insurance for acceptance and success.

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DRACULA: Dead and Loving It. Directed by: Mel Brooks. Produced by: Mel Brooks. Screenplay by: Mel Brooks, Rudy De Luca, Steve Haberman. USA/FRA: Castle Rock, 1995. 1 DVD (88 min.), colour.

TWILIGHT. Catherine Hardwicke. Produced by: Wyck Godfrey, Greg Mooradian, Mark Morgan. USA: Summit Ent., 2008. 1 DVD (122 min.), colour.

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