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Trabajo Fin de Grado

***The Vampyre* by John William Polidori: An Introduction to Lord Ruthven**

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0. ABSTRACT/ RESUMEN

The aim of this literary essay is to show and to analyze the model of the vampire in John William Polidori's *The Vampyre: a Tale*, which is a prototype used in subsequent works in literature and beyond this literary field as it is Opera, Drama or films.

The main concepts which are going to be studied are the context in which the author lived, together with a study of his biography, the preceding and subsequent works, paying also special attention to the Gothic movement and influences in general. Furthermore, we will also illustrate the so-called folk vampire and the most important one: the vampire in 19th century English literature who evolved into the aristocratic vampire which takes form in Lord Ruthven, one of the protagonists of the work, This character will receive our full attention, both on his own and through the comparison with the rest of Polidori's characters, all in the context of contemporary society. Finally, we will present some conclusions about this important and decisive figure in literature, a new perspective of a vampire imagined by Polidori.

Key words: Polidori, *The Vampyre: a Tale*, Lord Ruthven, vampire, aristocrat, folk vampire, Villa Diodati, Lord Byron.

El objetivo de este ensayo literario es mostrar y analizar el modelo de vampiro usado por John William Polidori en *The Vampyre: a Tale*, el cual es un prototipo usado en las obras literarias posteriores así como más allá de este ámbito como lo es la ópera, el teatro o las películas.

Los principales conceptos que van a ser estudiados son el contexto en el que vivió el autor junto con un estudio de su biografía, las obras precedentes y posteriores, movimientos como el Gótico e influencias en general. Además se comentará el vampiro folclórico previo al más importante a tener en cuenta: el vampiro del siglo 19 en la literatura inglesa, el cual marcó un cambio histórico, el vampiro aristócrata que toma forma en Lord Ruthven, uno de los protagonistas de la obra, que será analizado en profundidad y comparado con el resto de personajes de la obra al igual que con la sociedad de su época. Finalmente, expondré algunas conclusiones sobre esta importante y decisiva figura en la literatura, una nueva perspectiva del vampiro imaginada por Polidori.

Palabras clave: Polidori, *The Vampyre: a Tale*, Lord Ruthven, vampiro, aristócrata, vampiro folclórico, Villa Diodati, Lord Byron.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Vampyre: a Tale is a work which was published in *The New Monthly Magazine* on April fool's Day (April 1) in 1819 the owner being Henry Colburn. The success was so great that the tale was published as a book by Sherwood, Neely and Jones reaching up to seven printings in the same year of apparition. Furthermore, it was subsequently translated into German, Italian, Spanish or Swedish.

I would like to explain the reason why I have selected this topic. My thoughts about vampirism were about the famous Bram Stoker's work *Dracula*. I wanted to know more about this subject. What I discovered the first time I dealt with this theme was that this magniloquent novel had its roots and precedents in the model of vampire created by Polidori. Previously, I had been working with works belonging to the Romantic period but this one is a fictional genre which has some characteristics taken from this wave and from the Gothic world together with the most tenebrous mysterious components that shape this tale: "The Romantic poets focus on the awe and mystery inspired by the natural world and the Gothic novelists on the awe and dread in mysterious people and places". (Senf, 2013: 28)

The method that I will follow in the analysis of this work of fiction is to make a close reading of the text, illustrating the most relevant aspects in the light of the author's known ideas, opinions and personal circumstances. I will also take into account the historical context in which *The Vampyre* was composed. In order to provide additional support to my comments, I will make use of secondary critical sources.

1.1. AUTHORSHIP

It has been argued that there was a kind of confusion around the authorship of the work.

"*The Vampyre* heralded a new phase of modern British fiction in which the opportunist sensationalism of the monthly magazines assumed an unprecedented importance" (Polidori, 1998: xiii). This quotation is related with the previous issue and, moreover, with the fact that it was Henry Colburn who benefited from this mess; he attributed the tale to Byron. It is proved that he was not the real author because himself send a letter to Colburn denying the authorship and moreover Polidori himself had to act; as Alan Ryan states:

The New Monthly Magazine for April 1819 contained a story called "The Vampyre", which was attributed to Byron. The next month's issue, however, contained a letter

from Polidori, in which he claimed the story as his own work while admitting that it was based on the story Byron had begun and abandoned in Geneva in 1816. (1987: 1)¹

and as Polidori expressed himself:

I produced that tale, and left it with her from thence it appears to have fallen into the hands of some person, who sent it to the Editor in such a way, as to have it so doubtful from his words, whether it was his lordship's or not, that I found some difficulty in vindicating it to myself (Polidori, 1998: 244)

But the clutter did not finished here, a third person, John Milford, was probably involved: "The question remains whether Polidori offered the tale to Colburn as his own work based on Byron's idea- or whether Colburn obtained it from Milford" (Macdonald, 1991: 184)

What is clear is that Polidori did not hand over his story, which was published without his knowledge:

No manuscript has been discovered, and though the tale appeared in book form shortly after it was published in the New Monthly Magazine, both the magazine and the book text were almost certainly printed without Polidori's knowledge (Polidori, 1998: xxiii)

Besides, he was not paid and on top of all, Colburn did not retract. Nevertheless, Julio Ángel Olivares states that Polidori was paid but a misery and added that all the mess was a Colburn's strategy to obtain income:

The Vampyre: a Tale se publica en el número de abril de *New Monthly Magazine* en el año 1819, tres después de la reunión en Villa Diodati, y en su primera edición el relato, por el que su autor recibió la irrisoria cantidad de treinta libras, es atribuido a Lord Byron. Dos motivos explican este "desliz" editorial. Por un lado, y como veremos, el vampiro de Polidori, Lord Ruthven es reflejo más que explícito, retrato literario poco menos que despiadado, del prestigioso y polémico poeta; por otro, y como es lógico, la editorial prefirió que el escrito constara como obra propia del afamado autor, jugada que le aseguraría un elevado índice de ventas y un éxito notable, como de hecho fue el caso. (2001: 253)

¹ The unfinished Byron's story is known as Fragment of a Novel and it will be discussed later in the section 2. Before Polidori: precedents. The letters are included in the appendix.

1.2. VILLA DIODATI

An interesting fact about Polidori's story is the circumstances that happened around its creation. The work emerged from a kind of challenge proposed by Lord Byron to the people present in villa Diodati, situated on the shores of the lake Lemman in Geneva, the night of 16 June of 1816, and, as claims Antonio Ballesteros, "fecha con una recurrencia tripe del dígito 6, detalle al que pueden sacar punta los amantes apocalípticos de la estadística de lo extraño" (2000: 44), hadst say that 666 would be the date of the great creation that would transform the vampire motif. The people who attended that meeting were Jane Claire Clairmont, Mary Wollstonecraft, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley, Lord Byron and John William Polidori.

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The *Vampyre* was not the unique piece of literature written on that ingathering, but also the famous novel of Mary Shelley *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, Byron's *August Darvell or Ernestus Berchtold; or, the Modern Oedipus*, a tale written by Polidori inspired also on this affair. This challenge, to make matters worse, was not the unique personal dare:

I built *The Vampyre*, at the request of a lady, who denied the possibility of such a ground-work forming the outline of a tale which should bear the slightest appearance of probability. In the course of three mornings. (Polidori, 1998: 244)

As Polidori declared, he showed his capabilities to literature. What is striking about the people related with the villa Diodati is that almost everyone who stayed there died in mysterious circumstances as shows the following quotation:

Two years later, Byron himself was dead. At his funeral, Hobhouse reflected on the strange fatality that had hung over his friends: 'Of the five that often dined at Byron's table at Diodati, near Geneva-Polidori, Shelley, Lord Byron, Scrope Davies, and myself- the first put an end to himself, the second was drowned, the third killed by his physicians, the fourth is in exile! (Macdonald, 1991:240)

²Jane Claire Clairmont (1798- 1879) was the stepsister of Mary Shelley and had a child named Allegra with Lord Byron. At the moment in which they were reunited at Villa Diodati she was eighteen years./Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was an English philosopher and writer. She defended the woman's rights. She was the step sister of Byron and she was also eighteen years at that moment./Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792- 1822) as a poet and a Romantic English playwright, one of his most famous works is *Ozymandias*. / Mary Shelley (1797- 1851) was a philosopher and a playwright. She was married with Percy Bysshe Shelley./George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) was an English poet and a distinguished figure in the Romantic period. / Some of the works of these authors are enumerated within this section.

1.3. AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

John William Polidori (7 September 1795- 24 August 1821) was born in London (capital of England and the United Kingdom) and died in the same city, concretely, in his father's house.

He was a physician, studied law and, what interests the literary world most, he was a writer. He is known due to his relationship, both of doctor-patient and admiration-envy-friendship, with Lord Byron.

He has been distinguished for some of his compositions *The Vampyre: a Tale* (the most famous one), *Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus* and *The Fall of the Angels* even though he was a marginal figure in his times.

His parents were Gaetano Polidori and Anna Maria Pierce who married in 1793 and formed a large family; they had eight children, four sons, and four daughters being Polidori the oldest one. One of his sisters was married to Gabriele Rossetti³. Polidori's progenitors were intellectuals; his mother was a mistress and his father an Italian scholar. John William died so young that he had not offspring.

Religion took an important role both in his family and education. His father was Catholic and his mother Anglican; they decided to educate in faith their children, being the males Catholics and the females Anglicans according to the father and mother's spiritualism respectively. To be a Catholic in the early XIX century implied prejudices even persecutions; furthermore, Polidori had to endure norms and his father's figure lifelong, which Polidori considered very strict and to whom he felt a great devotion and some kind of depression for not fulfil his expectations as Macdonald states "He had done enough to satisfy his father's expectations" (1991:6) "Polidori could not live on introductions. For the rest of his life, he remained largely dependent on his father and on his godfather"(1991:143) These John Deagostini's words, collected in Macdonald's work, reinforce the idea of Polidori's dependence and hollow, not wanting to fail their parents. This fact led him to felt also unsuccessful in what he tried to do. In the following quotation of Gaetano himself, extracted from the letters that father and son exchanged, it can be seen clearly the values transmitted to his son: "Be obedient & respectful to your Rector & masters... Think that the first duties are due to God; the second to your parents the third to your masters, the fourth to your friends, the fifth to mankind in general..."(Macdonald, 1991: 8)

³ Gabriele Pascuale Giuseppe Rossetti (1783-1854) was an Italian poet who married with the sister of Polidori, Frances and had the famous Dante Gabrielle Rossetti (1828- 1882), who was a painter. He furthermore was a poet and made English translations.

Accordingly, he received a classical education at Ampleforth College (Somerstown) in 1804, where he was taught the good disciplines, and later on, from 1811 to 1815, he studied at the University of Edinburg. Thus, he grew up with the “fear of having his morals corrupted by the bad example of dissolute young men” (Macdonald, 1991: 17). Finally, he abandoned medicine and was admitted into Lincoln’s Inn to study law.

With respect to Polidori’s style, it cannot be commented properly since his literary career is too short as well as his few compositions together with the fact that he also abandoned literature as he did with the rest of goals to reach. Notwithstanding, if a reference is made to style, it was varied through his life, he wrote essays, short fragments even poetry, an example is his tragedy *Count Orlando; or The Modern Abraham*, known lately as *Ximenes*, which was written when he was only seventeen years, actually, John William manifested his great ambitions since childhood; “he would not let the book go before reading it from cover to cover”(Macdonald, 1991: 5) Alan Ryan considers him as “the youngest man ever granted a medical degree by the University of Edinburgh.” (1987: 1). Macdonald adds: “showed his desire for glory my ambition aims at general fame” (1991: 20). This last quotation was achieved as shows the great influence that has generated in the last nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In order to understand the literary attitudes which took John William, it is crucial to know that he lived during the Victorian Era, where romanticism and mysticism were the wave towards he saw life and even death. He was also highly influenced by paternal figures as his father and Lord Byron, who brought him to the fame and marked his lifetime and work as well as the own travel with him in which they toured Europe. It can be inferred that these influences were negative towards Polidori’s expectatives:

Su deseo era el de llegar a ser escritor, deseo que no se vio cumplido; lo único que le acercó a la literatura fue el trabajar como médico y secretario para el poeta Lord Byron y recorrer con él Europa en 1816 (Indurain, 2000: 496)

Polidori was an aspiring person as it has been mentioned above, “he is anything but an amiable man, and has a most unmeasured ambition, as well as inordinate vanity, the true ingredients of misery”, (Macdonald, 1991: 103) misery which was probably felt by Polidori who tried to suicide himself twice, achieving its objective in his last attempt on a Friday, 24 of August (1821) after not having felt happy but alone in London and due to his gambling

debts. His death is surrounded by mystery; the reason is the secretion of his suicide, which was not considered as such in order to bury him in a sacred place:

One consequence of the verdict was that Polidori could be buried in consecrated ground (English suicides were still being buried at crossroads as late as 1823). He was buried on 29 August in Old St. Pancras Churchyard (...) Polidori's headstone has since been removed. (Macdonald, 1991: 237)

2. BEFORE POLIDORI: PRECEDENTS

“Most histories of the vampire similarly gesture towards a multiplicity of origins, whereby the vampire's identity is thoroughly dispersed across history and across place” (Gelder, 1994: 24), furthermore “The vampire thus both enables a national identity to cohere, and ceaselessly disturbs that identity by showing it to be always at the same time foreign to itself” (1994: 41). These arguments show the difficulty to frame the figure of the vampire, both in time and place, but it is not an impossible aim.

Our starting point to locate the precedents of vampirism is the 19th century author of *The Vampyre*, which belongs to the second generation of Gothic writers, thus, the first key within the origins is related to the Gothic period as it is going to be argued below. Additionally, in connection with Polidori, we should go back to villa Diodati and the environment in which *The Vampyre* was written; there are several authors that comment an important fact which must be taken into account. Antonio Ballesteros, Alan Ryan, Julio Ángel Olivares and Estrella Cardona comment respectively:

Allí mataban el tiempo charlando acerca de temas filosóficos y estéticos, y de cuando en cuando se entretenían contándose cuentos góticos alemanes contenidos en una antología traducida al francés titulada *Fantasmagoriana* (2000: 44)

The group was staying at the Villa Diodati on the shores of Lake Geneva. To pass the time, they began reading some volumes of ghost stories translated from German into French. The circumstances and the mood came together, and one day Bryon announced, “We will each write a ghost story.”(1987:1)

Es una lluviosa tarde de julio de 1816 y, tras departir sobre aspectos variopintos como el galvinismo o las teorías de Erasmus Darwin, todos se disponen a comentar la excelsa colección de relatos góticos alemanes publicados en el mítico libro

Fantasmagoriana, editado y rescatado ulteriormente por BenoîtEyriès*en 1912.
(2001:247)

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Este personaje nació cierta noche de tormenta a la orilla del lago Ginebra, en Villa Diodati, noche de relámpagos y truenos que alumbrara a dos monstruos semihumanos, surgido al conjuro de una idea oscura y verdaderamente malévola expuesta por el propio Byron más como el que arroja el guante que no como el que hace un simple comentario. (Cardona Gamio)⁵

All the four coincide in mentioning *Fantasmagoriana*, thus it can be affirmed that “The English interest in the vampire comes directly from Germany” (Senf, 2013: 21). From this last quotation it can be seen clearly the second key within the origins that we search, Germany is one of the places where vampirism’s precedents can be located. “The vampire was simply one more example of a mysterious subject that appealed to the German Romantics” (Senf, 2013: 21). The last word of this note shows another period, Romanticism.

Up to this point, it can be summarized that the most recent influences that had Polidori were Gothic fiction and Romanticism movement and, to some extent, these waves could be positioned in Germany.

One of the most important influences for Polidori was Lord Byron, who wrote the unfinished work *Fragment of a Novel*, published in the appendix of his *Mazeppa*’s poem in 1819. Some authors state that *The Vampyre* is a plagiarized idea taken from this work. The reality is that there are striking similarities which form part of the core of the plot. Both stories share the idea of a travel, in Byron’s case called “Grand Tour”, made by two companions that have a relationship of submission, the narrator and August Darvell, which have the same roles as Aubrey (the narrator) and Lord Ruthven. Furthermore, in the two tales, there is an oath. This pact is demanded by August Darvell and Lord Ruthven to their respective comrades and both ask for silence, they do not want anybody to know about their deaths. Notwithstanding, the figure of a vampire is not explicit in Byron’s narration although

⁴ Jean- Baptiste BenoîtEyriès (1767-1846) was a French geographer who made several publications, works editions and translations. Among his translations we found Friedrich August Schulze et Johann August Apel : *Fantasmagoriana, ou Recueil d'histoires d'apparitions de spectres, revenants, fantômes, etc., traduit de l'allemand par un amateur.*

⁵ The date of publication is unpublished; furthermore it is an article in a journal which has an only page. The same happens two more times, on page 11 and 25, when Estrella Cardona appears mentioned. It can be consulted at: <http://letralia.com/ciudad/cardonagamio/08polidori.htm> .

it could be the source of inspiration to its successor Lord Ruthven. Polidori was inspired also in Byron himself as Noelia Indurain and Óscar Urbiola say:

Lord Ruthven, el protagonista vampírico del relato, un aristócrata tan encantador como cruel, estaba inspirado, contaban, en el propio Byron; afirmación que parece confirmarse cuando el nombre de dicho personaje era el mismo que Lady Caroline Lamb, antigua amante de Byron, había creado para referirse a éste en su novela *Glenarvon*. (2000: 498)

Estrella Cardona supports the same idea:

El vampiro se llamaba *Lord Ruthven* y el nombre se le había ocurrido a Lady Carolina Lamb, escritora ocasional y desechada amante de Byron; lo que no deja de resultar significativo es que fuese un despreciado John William quien recogiera ese nombre para su demoníaco personaje.

Nevertheless, there was an attempt to disconnect this association with Byron:

In his revision of the tale, Polidori gave Ruthven the name of Strongmore, to make the association with Byron less obvious, but also to suggest his power, and conversely Aubrey's inability to save Ianthe, his sister and himself from the vampire's machinations. (Vanon Alliata 2011: 7)

Finally, the latest version of *The Vampyre* presents the vampire named as Lord Ruthven and although this was not the name, Lord Ruthven will be compared with Byron due to the most obvious reason, the kind of bibliographical reflection of the relationship between Byron and Polidori and the one of Lord Ruthven and Aubrey and it will be commented below, in the next block.

Once Polidori's closest influences have been displayed, it is necessary to keep going back to the past in order to set the real origins of vampirism:

Originating in the exotic past and in primitive cultures, the vampire enters English literature through Romantic poetry, where it remains an exotic supernatural creature. Within two decades, however, the vampire enters the second-generation of Gothic fiction in works such as Polidori's *The Vampyre* or the penny dreadful *Varney the*

Vampire, works that accept the vampire's supernatural abilities as givens. (Senf, 2013: 30)

Senf introduces a new key element in our quest, it is clear enough that Romanticism took part on the ingredients of *The Vampyre*, but the new information speaks about an exotic past and primitive cultures. It is time to reveal that, as Senf states, "Almost no culture is free of the superstition of blood-sucking ghosts" (2013:18). Senf adds "While the belief in vampires is almost universal, England seems to have been singularly free from this superstition" (2013:19). So, it would be interesting to discover from where these universal beliefs come and why England seems to be a special case.

If we come back to our starting point for this analysis, the model of Polidori, it is said that:

The superstition upon which this tale is founded is very general in the East. Among the Arabians it appears to be common: it did not, however, extend itself to the Greeks until after the establishment of Christianity (...) In the West it spread, with some slight variation, all over Hungary, Poland, Austria, and Lorraine, where the belief existed, that vampyres nightly imbibed a certain portion of the blood of their victims, who became emaciated, lost their strength, and speedily died of consumptions. "(Badini et al.: 2010:13)

These quotations display a recapitulation of the scenario of the belief in vampires. Into the bargain, Julio Ángel Olivares mentions other examples of cultures in which these superstitions occurred and evinces the reasons of their existence:

De hecho, el vampiro folclórico surge de una serie de leyendas paganas de religiones politeístas anteriores a la era de Cristo- egipcias, hindúes, japonesas, chinas, asirias o caldeas, similares a las anteriormente citadas- que se generaron en la tradición oral de varias culturas, en primer lugar, como respuesta a una serie de requerimientos sociales y psicológicos, en segundo, como justificación a factores o aspectos de la existencia que no tenían explicación racional. De este modo, como comodín de las tinieblas, la figura del vampiro ocupaba el vacío existencial plañidero que remanecía como estela de ciertos infortunios, manifestaciones o hecho análogos para los que la ciencia moderna halla en la actualidad justificación y racionalización sin rodeos, eventos otrora inefables como la muerte prematura, el nacimiento de un niño muerto o

deforme, el suicidio o enfermedades mentales que enajenaban al ser desde su más temprana edad. Estas desgracias se explican, casi impositivamente, acudiendo a razonamientos sublimes sobre la influencia diabólica del vampiro y, así, se conjuraba en la proclividad histérica de los lugareños la imagen de un ente superior, una bestia que, supuestamente, al caer la noche, rondaba cada pueblo, para acechar a las gentes y, aprovechando el anónimo vitelo de oscuridad, aparecérselos en sus propios hogares con el propósito de succionar su sangre. (2001:101)

The different places that shape the basis of vampirism have already been exemplified, so, apart from the setting, other features can be commented like the superstitious beliefs which arise from a mixture of elements such as the tales which travellers narrated about singular local customs of the places where they wandered (typically faraway villages like Serbia, Hungary or Silesia or the above mentioned), mythological items or legends, well-known ballads or romances of the medieval period. In respect of the remote places seen as the home of the vampire, it is almost obligatory to mention Greece and Rome because the protagonist of *The Vampyre* found in the Greece cities the authentic vampire atmosphere. Antonio Ballesteros writes about this issue:

En muchas ciudades helenas alentaba un fermento de superstición en el que se incluía la ferviente creencia en los vampiros o *vroukolakas*. (...) Éste es el hogar del *vruokolakasy* el destino de jóvenes arriesgados, turistas accidentales /occidentales que desearon continuar la senda byroniana, y que se convierten en la imagen del caminante solitario, en perpetuo estado de exilio, que se haría popular como actitud turística. (2000: 53)

This blend of components that build this figure is more complex than it may resemble, as Senf states:

What the reader sees in the vampire in nineteenth-century literature is the result of writers combining at least three broad strands: folkloric treatments of posthumous magic, earlier literary characters (...) and responses to genuine changes in social roles for men and women. (2013:18)

Furthermore, she adds: "... nineteenth-century English writers learned about the vampire from at least three distinct sources: folklore, eighteenth-century literature, and scientific discussions of primitive beliefs." (2013: 23)

Hitherto, incorporating the new elements discovered in our research of the origins of the vampire, it can be stated that the precedents of the vampire before the archetype of Polidori are movements such as Gothic and Romanticism, several foreign and exotic settings, odd customs of these places and all these is interpreted as folklore and as a reaction to those beliefs. Some examples of stories in which the figure of a blood-sucker took place previous to the one of *The Vampyre* and in which some of the elements that have been exposed appeared are Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Bride of Corinth* (1797) , Robert Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1799; work in which it was first coined the word "vampire"), Byron's *The Giaour* (1813) and *Manfred* (1817), Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816; "18 June Polidori wrote to Murray on Byron's behalf to order a number of books (...) of Coleridge *Christabel*" (1991:92),) or John Keat's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*(1819) and *Lamia*(1819),

Previously, we have dealt with the several origins of the vampire stories and it has been mentioned several settings, but as England is what interests us, it can be asserted that England's influences about vampire superstitions have their provenance in the Northern cultures as Eugenio Manuel Olivares:

Since these cases are all recorded in twelfth century English texts, my stance is that medieval traditions in England did play a part in the shaping of the European vampire, despite the unquestionable importance that Slavic folklore had in the spreading of the myth during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (2010:153)

It has been argued that England is a special case in the history of vampirism, apparently because it has been free from superstitious elements regarding blood-suckers until the 18th century. Conversely, Eugenio M. Olivares has shown several examples of what could be considered the English ancestors of the vampire. Although they do not fulfil all the characteristics of a vampire," Hay historias en las que la sangre está presente pero no quiere decir que el reviniente la haya succionado"(2006:217), they set the basis for them.

Consequently, that idea seems to dismantle the theory which sets England as a figure aside of the history of vampirism. Some of these examples are the William of Newburgh's *Historia rerum anglicarum* (which compiles some stories of this sinister thematic and where

it is found the first reference to a vampire), Walter Map's *De Nigis Curialium*, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, Sir William Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* or the very anonymous primitive epic poem *Beowulf*, which came to be known as *A vampyre of the Fens* and whose features could be considered as the very ancient roots of the vampire. The traits of these characters are going to be commented in the following subsection.

It is important to highlight that these above listed examples are not, strictly speaking, works containing cases of vampirism, but they have, in some measure, a story that resembles this thematic.

Finally, Eugenio M. Olivares evidences with his detailed exemplification and argumentation that, according to his own words (referring to the examples):

They prove that by the end of the twelfth century there was a well established English revenant tradition which had found its way from oral tradition into texts, from both Latin chronicles and a work written to excite the curiosity of the upper class. (2010: 171)

2.1. FOLKLORIC VAMPIRE

According to *MacMillan Dictionary*, the term vampire is defined as "a character in stories who appears at night to bite people's necks and suck their blood.". This modern definition has nothing to do with the original vampire, and it is due to a change or progression of the vampire's figure throughout history. With respect to the history of the English vampire, it can be commented that "Dudley Wright's book *Vampires and Vampirism* might well be said to be the first serious attempt in English to compile vampire stories and reports from all over the world"(Olivares, 2005:88).

Vampires are distinguished or labeled under two categories, the folkloric vampire and the aristocratic one. It was John William Polidori who brought on this distinction and the one who marked the beginning of the aristocratic vampire with *Lord Ruthven*. He provoked a before and an after in the history of vampirism.

As we are dealing with the precedents of the vampire, we are going to analyze the prototype of bloodsucker before Polidori, that is to say, since the apparition of this figure until 1819.

As general characteristics it can be stated that the folkloric vampire is related with the low classes, it appears among common people. Furthermore, we deal with a creature which is savage, who drinks blood directly from the chest of his victims; the consumption of blood is a

crucial feature. The vampire has a similar behavior with animals, even assaulting the cattle; they are conducted by their instincts, they are beings without reasoning.

Some of the stories which set the precedents for the vampiric ones are considered as Eugenio M. Olivares has argued as:

Transitional case between the 'draugar' like cases of revenants (in which a wicked man returns from his grave causing havoc and often dead among the living) and those often moralizing narrations in which the souls of the departed faithful appeared to the living to ask for their prayers (2010: 157)

The victims chosen by vampires of this kind were member of the family or friends but not strangers. With respect to the setting, as it has been explained above, the stories and the attacks took place in remote villages of foreign lands as Serbia, Hungary or ancient Greece. The most outstanding shared features are that as the victims are familiar to these creatures, the action ratio is local; moreover, they act at night (obscurity is related to evil) and are noisy, brutish and wicked.

It is interesting to know in which manner people could fight against these creatures. They could not be destroyed with ordinary weapons. There were differences in the execution of the killing but, the common repeated pattern among the primitive stories was to dig up the corpse, to cut it into pieces and to burn it. In some cases, the head was cut off and located in other position; the hearts could be also extracted and burnt, thus, Eugenio M. Olivares explains that:

Originally, their unnatural life principle is located in their own bodies, which- after the spreading of Christianity- are reanimated by Satan. Therefore, the only way to destroy them is to render the bodies useless, be this by burning or mutilating them. (2010: 174)

Religion played an important role in the shaping of the vampire. Most of the first stories took place in religious places or were starred by religious people as priests. The techniques used to kill the vampires belonged to the pre-Christian superstition, thus, with the apparition of Christianity it was defended the purification and liberation of the devil with fire, the corruption of the body was not more necessarily needed. The current techniques that we can see in vampire movies in which objects such as sacred crosses or the use of Holy Water

show also the presence of religion within this fictional genre. With respect to the pre-Christian superstitions, the church acted and as Eugenio M. Olivares shows: "The relevant issue here, once again, is the attempt on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities to apply some kind of spiritual `placebo` against the superstitions of the people, one which this time was eventually successful "(2010: 173). He also states that:

In many of the cases reported we can distinguish two levels: the cultured skeptical attitude of the ecclesiastical witness(es)/victim(s). Thus, when the ecclesiastics are asked to interfere, they often try to find a balance between spiritual solutions and other, more physical measures to appease the victims. (2010: 175)

Finally, it could be interesting to contemplate the following words, which summarize the idea of the impact that had religion on vampirism:

When Christianity established itself in Scandinavia in the eleventh century, monks from those lands compiled and wrote down the oral traditions. They frequently mention malignant walking corpses, huge and revolting, who abandoned their dwelling places (the barrows) to torment people and cattle: Only when their bodies were burnt, their heads cut off (...) did their marauding come to an end. (Olivares, 2010: 25)

Here, it is evidenced that thanks to Christianity, the precedents of the folkloric vampire were settled. These roots were established by writing down these pre Christian superstitious beliefs which built up the concepts of the folkloric vampire.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE ARISTOCRATIC VAMPIRE: LORD RUTHVEN

To start with the core of this essay, Polidori's tale is going to be summarized. Then, Lord Ruthven will be compared to the previous studied model of folkloric vampire. Finally, the figure of Lord Ruthven will be deeply analyzed, pointing out the characteristics that make him a unique figure in the story of vampirism.

To begin with, *The Vampyre: a Tale* (1819) tells the story of two main characters, the narrator, who is Aubrey, and Lord Ruthven. The former is manipulated by the latter without

he being aware of this issue. Aubrey is attracted by the mysterious figure of Ruthven and joins him in a travel which will mark the rest of his (short) life:

Lo que había comenzado siendo un viaje de ensueño y arrobamiento pintoresco, un trayecto en pos de dilatar el conocimiento y experiencia vital, se convierte a la postre en sórdido periplo de decadencia. (Olivares, 2001: 251)

Aubrey is progressively discovering some details about Ruthven that make him a tenebrous person until he notices the real truth about his master: he is a vampire. Lord Ruthven provokes misfortune wherever he goes. His main victims are women to whom he corrupts their moral and even causes their death: one of them is Aubrey's friend's daughter, another, Ianthe and the last one is Miss Aubrey. Lord Ruthven's crimes become more and more gloomy. Aubrey cannot stop him because he made an oath in which he had to keep silence for a year and a day in order to not tell about the death of Lord Ruthven, who returns to life thanks to his supernatural power. The tale ends with two deaths, Aubrey's and his sister's. It is a story of mystery, suspense and terror in which an aristocrat, Lord Ruthven, ends being discovered as a vampire, who corrupts the souls of those who approach him "Polidori emphasizes that Lord Ruthven is a cruel man who ruins some of his unsuspecting victims financially and socially" (Senf, 2013: 35). Furthermore, values such as honour are defeated by evil. Along this section the different components of the tale will be displayed.

Michella Vanon shapes the main ideas of the tale as follows:

The major narrative sequences are the following: Aubrey's initial idealisation and identification with Lord Ruthven, his difficulty in separating from him, the subsequent transformation of the object of his admiration into a vampire which inevitably takes on persecutory aspects, and finally his impotence and surrender signified by his death and by the triumph of the monster's evil powers. (2011: 3)

She focuses on the relationship between Aubrey and Lord Ruthven and its progression. Both characters are going to be compared below. But first, let us focus on the first prototype of aristocratic vampire. The tale describes this figure as follows:

...a nobleman, more remarkable for his singularities, than his rank [...] throw fear into those breast where thoughtlessness reigned. Those who felt this sensation of awe,

could not explain whence it arose[...] his peculiarities caused him to be invited to every house (Polidori , 1998:3) ⁶

Lord Ruthven is also said to have:

The reputation of a winning tongue; and whether it was that it even overcame the dread of his singular character, or that they were moved by his apparent hatred of vice, he was as often among those females who form the boast of their sex from their domestic virtues, as among those who sully it by their vices. (Polidori, 1998: 4)
“Lord Ruthven [...] was always the same: his eye spoke less than his lip” (Polidori, 1998: 6)

The first key element present on Polidori’s Ruthven: “is definitely modelled on the vampire from folklore (...) The introduction shows that Polidori is familiar with the folklore that identified the vampire as a dead body “(2013:34) And Senf further adds: “Despite these changes, Polidori leaves the reader with very little doubt that Ruthven is modelled on the Eastern European vampire” (2013:35). With “these changes” she makes reference to all the innovations that Polidori himself introduces, but as Senf states, despite this fact, it is clear enough that the new model of vampirism, the aristocratic vampire, was born from the existent one, the folkloric vampire. There are other authors like Eugenio M. Olivares who supports this view: “The primitive and brutal medieval blood sucker, the folk vampire, was deprived of its atavistic attires and dressed up as a gentleman to seduce the twentieth century “(2010: 23). The relationship with the folklore is also explicit on the tale “The journey to Greece brings Aubrey into contact with the folklore, which is where the origins of vampire superstitions are located.” (Gelder, 1994: 34)

As we have previously seen, Polidori’s is a story about values: as Senf puts it: “Seeing Ruthven as both a vampire and a derivative of the eighteen-century rake, Polidori often chooses to emphasize his character’s moral failure rather than his supernatural ability. “(2013:36). He reinforces the idea that Lord Ruthven is a continuation within the history of vampirism that follows the folkloric model. Notwithstanding, it is not only a mere continuation but:

⁶ All the quotations from *The Vampyre: a Tale* are taken from this edition Polidori, John William, Robert Morrison, and Chris Baldick. *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Clearly influenced by both folklore and by a popular literary tradition in his portrait of the vampiric Lord Ruthven, Polidori also contributes greatly to the modern concept of the vampire. Among his contributions is the recognition that the vampire exists in civilized settings as well as in primitive ones. (2013:36)

These arguments show some of the new characteristics that Polidori incorporated to the vampire. He adds civilized settings such as the capital of Britain or attributes moral values to the characters.

Following the analysis of Lord Ruthven, it is important to comment that vampires used to be nightly creatures but Polidori invented a character who does not care about when to commit a crime. That was so that “Polidori is the first to suggest that moonlight can rejuvenate a vampire” (Senf, 2013: 34). In this way, the night does not lose its magical properties and the vampire is reinforced with the idea that the sun’s rays do not debilitate him. On top of that, Polidori breaks with the duality in which the light is associated with goodness and, in contraposition, the darkness is linked with evil doing.

Another new aspect is sexuality. Before Ruthven, vampires used to attack family or friends, but, from that point onwards, vampires will choose women and strangers as victims.

Polidori’s story was the first to introduce the by now familiar association between vampirism and sexuality which did not exist in folklore mythology with allusions to “the nocturnal orgies” of vampires whose predations “provide an obvious analog for sexual experience”. (Vanon Alliata, 2011: 4)

Hence, Lord Ruthven is a seducer, furthermore it is important to add that: “The women Ruthven kills do not become vampires, but the women he seduces do become sexual monsters” (Macdonald, 1991; 201). There are other authors such as Senf who also work on this idea:

While the vampire in most folklore versions had been simply a hungry corpse with no special preferences about the choice of victim, Polidori suggests an erotic attachment- often perversely so- between vampire and victim (2013:34).

Lord Ruthven drinks the blood of his victims. In the tale explicitly he consumes the blood of Ianthe and the sister of Aubrey, but the difference with respect to the previous vampires is that he is not a cannibal.

So it is clear enough that Polidori inserted a sensual aspect in the vampire. All in all, the new aspects that we have commented can be summarized briefly using a quotation from Vanon:

Polidori was the first to recast the Eastern European vampire mythology by transforming a hideous, mindless village vampiric ghoul not only into a person, but into a mysterious, sardonic aristocratic seducer who preys among high society. (2011: 1)

In the book *The vampire and other tales of the macabre* we find a quotation which shows a new aspect to take into account, one about a moral tale:

Lord Ruthven is really the conventional rakehell or libertine with a few vampiric attributes grafted onto him. For Ruthven, at least, vampirism is merely a continuation of rakery by other means, and for Polidori, the vampire story is conceived as a variant upon the moral tale, a tale designed principally as a warning, here, against the fascinating power of the libertinism represented by his employer Byron. (Polidori, 1998: xix)

Furthermore, Lord Ruthven himself, raises the moral issue “Polidori also makes his vampire a moral parasite” (Senf, 2013:35). In addition, Julio Ángel Olivares has argued that “Ruthven más que demulado libador apetente de sangre, es un vampiro de conciencia que se alimenta de la amoralidad humana” (2011: 260)

It is, more concretely, as some authors state, a variant of the moral tale, but it is important to take into account that this is not the first reference to morals, as we have stated above, *The vampire: a tale* is full of moral values and it will be discussed later. The last lines of the previous quotation show the autobiographical point of this story together with the most immediate reality in which Polidori lived.

Furthermore, Lord Ruthven, as a continuation of the vampire already established, has some characteristics in common with his ancestors, for example, he is pale “In spite of the deadly hue of his face, which never gained a warmer tint, either from the blush of modesty, or from the strong emotion of passion, though its form and outline were beautiful” (Polidori, 1998: 3), he is also related with evil and there is a sense of predestination throughout the whole story. As it will be often the case in later narrations, Ruthven is not affected by

ordinary weapons: “Lord Ruthven received a shot in the shoulder that brought him to the ground” (Polidori, 1998: 14) “ in two days mortification ensued, and death seemed advancing with hasty steps [...] he sunk laughing upon his pillow and breathed no more” (Polidori, 1998:15). Lord Ruthven does not die, in fact, “ he found no trace of either the corpse of the clothes”, Lord Ruthven would appear later in the tale as the Earl of Marsden: “Lord Ruthven again before him-circumstances started up in dreadful array- the dagger- his oath.- He roused himself, he could not believe it possible- the dead rise again!” (Polidori, 1998:18) What it is unknown is the fact that he is not killed and, consequently, we disavow the possible techniques that would be used. Other component which is similar with the ones in the previous vampire literature is the setting; the murder of Ianthe takes place in Greece, at night, in the middle of a cemetery when it is storming. The framework is the typical of the folkloric vampire’s stories.

3.1. COMPARISON BETWEEN LORD RUTHVEN AND AUBREY

In the second place within the nude of the essay, we are going to focus on Aubrey with the purpose of establishing a comparison with Ruthven. Firstly, some characteristics of this character are going to be described briefly. Aubrey, as Carol describes him, is

The most important of these ordinary characters- indeed the only one Polidori presents in any detail- is Aubrey, a young man who is fascinated and eventually destroyed by the vampire. Polidori introduces Aubrey by commenting on his naivete; at the same time, he reveals the perfectly ordinary human weakness that will prove fatal to himself and to those he loves. (2013: 37)

Aubrey could be considered as an innocent man, a character who defends his honour beyond his own life. He is the antagonist of the story with respect to Ruthven, both characters are in contraposition. Aubrey symbolizes purity, the most simple-hearted feelings; he is an ingenuous young man who is dragged by the vampire. He is an orphan who set off on a journey in which he thought he would become a man: “He was an orphan left with an only sister in the possession of great wealth, by parents who died while he was yet in childhood. Left also to himself by guardians, who thought it their duty merely to take care of his fortune.” (Polidori, 1998: 4) Thus, Ruthven, to some extent, is a paternal figure who is going to teach him the secrets of the world and, society. Aubrey trusts on somebody who is a complete stranger. I think that the reason why he follows Ruthven is explained by a typically

Romantic urge, Aubrey wants to discover, his curiosity; Lord Ruthven is a dare for him, a kind of muse which has to be investigated: “He soon formed this object into the hero of a romance, and determined to observe the offspring of his fancy, rather than the person before him” (Polidori, 1998:5) Aubrey feels the call of Art. He will visit the origins of the civilization, Rome and Greece, the temples of the culture. Aubrey is a kind of naive bohemian who is destroyed by the most obscure reality which Lord Ruthven hides. But beyond all this spiritualism, Aubrey follows Lord Ruthven in search of mystery: “Desirous of gaining some information respecting this singular character, who till now, had only whetted his curiosity, he hinted to his guardians, that it was time for him to perform the tour” (Polidori, 1998:5)

There is a duality between Lord Ruthven and Aubrey; these two characters are going to be compared by means of a table. Firstly, the most striking elements have been shown, these traits are complementary and moreover, in opposition. These features are extracted from *Vampire Chronicle, Historia natural del vampiro en la literatura anglosajona* (2000: 47-50)

LORD RUTHVEN	AUBREY
Aristocrat	Orphan aristocrat
Unknown origin	London
Supernatural, vampire	Common young man
Master of eloquence	Fascination for Ruthven (he is a hero for him)
Corrupting fame	Sense of honour
Hypnotic vision	Mere witness
Hidden monster	Man who becomes mad, a monster known by everybody.
Winner	Loser

In the following table more attributes appear which shape both protagonists. The incoming aspects are not compared among them; they are simply enumerations of the different patterns of each character.

LORD RUTHVEN	AUBREY
Singularity	He cultivates the imagination more than the reasoning.
Beauty, modesty and secrecy	Romantic outburst, perdition.
Attraction by all types of vices	Illusory projection of all their fantasies on Ruthven
Hypocrisy	Alienation

The tables have been used in order to be direct and to show the characters' attributes in the simplest manner. Some conclusions can be extracted from these tables. This duality reflects the tense relationship between Lord Ruthven and Aubrey, they are opponents. There is a clear winner who is Lord Ruthven. In this case, evil beats down goodness. The duality is represented in the character's attributes, which are totally the opposite. Notwithstanding, there are some other elements which are inherent of each character and cannot be compared with the other one.

In the following quotation, it can be proved how the tension is present in the relationship of both characters: "En todo caso, "The Vampyre" refleja, como bien percibe el agudo crítico Christopher Frayling, "las tensas relaciones entre Polidori y Lord Byron (o "Lord Ruthven") a lo largo del verano de 1816" (1991:107). As well as a new comparison to establish (the previous quotation follows):

Se trata de un relato ambientado en una atmósfera de decadencia en la que, en efecto, el malvado Lord Ruthven parece asemejarse a Byron, mientras que Aubrey, su víctima, mantiene analogías con el propio autor.(Ballesteros González, 2000: 46)

Once again, we talk about the autobiographical style of the tale. It seems that Polidori shaped the negative aspects of the personality of Byron in the vampire. I have dealt previously with the common points as the travel, the relationship master- disciple... A new aspect of similarity would be the end of Aubrey and Polidori "In some strange ways and by an ironic twist of fate, the end of *The Vampyre* seems to adumbrate the very end of poor Polidori, a true case of life imitating art" (Vanon Alliata, 2011: 8). Senf also shares this idea and he argues that "Polidori and Aubrey share several important characteristics, including innocence and a strong sense of honour. In fact, Polidori's life could be described as a case of life's imitating art" (2013: 37)

The tale describes Aubrey as: “he cultivated more his imagination than his judgment. He had hence, that high romantic feeling of honour and candour.[...]He thought, in fine, that the dreams of poets were the realities of life.” (Polidori, 1998:4), these are irrefutable evidences of a life which imitates art.

What is clear is that Byron marked Polidori’s life, he probably felt disillusioned after being fired. Furthermore, what it is true is that Polidori ended committing suicide, he could not put up either with his failures or with his gambling debts.

There are several authors who stand up for this idea, *The Vampyre: a Tale* is the manner that Polidori used to represent his agony:

Inocentemente, o quizás no tanto, Polidori, interviene en el relato bajo el nombre de *Aubrey*, convertido para la eternidad literaria en compañero de viaje del malvado en un inconfesado anhelo de no separarse de él jamás.

Pero ésta no es la idea original del presente trabajo. Al comenzar hablábamos de burla y burla hubo en el menosprecio con el que Byron trató a Polidori, riéndose de él como persona ya que lo encontraba ridículo en sus arrebatos, y burlándose de cuanto escribía, por considerarlo inferior a él intelectualmente y su torpe émulo. Lo que entre unas cosas y otras llevó a John William a un intento frustrado de suicidio.

El mal, sin embargo, ya estaba hecho, y aun cuando se separasen, la sombra byroniana no dejó de planear sobre el infeliz hasta el final de su existencia; nadie le tomaba en serio y sus obras, novela, piezas de teatro, como si estuvieran contaminadas por un juicio demasiado corrosivo, naufragaron lamentablemente, hasta el punto de que incluso su propia familia dejó inéditas varias de ellas a su muerte, enterrándole por segunda vez. (Cardona Gamio)

In connection with the writing style of Byron and Polidori, it can be said that they were very different. The former used to use the first person retrospective whereas Polidori preferred the omniscient and objective third person narrator. It can be added that the kind of narrator that Byron used was mature and sophisticated, one who looked back on his novitiate life.

On the whole, there are several authors that agree in the autobiographical view of the tale; it is true that there are several similarities between the life of the author and the one of Aubrey’s character. Notwithstanding, there are also authors, like Senf, that claims the differences between both subjects:

Despite these points of similarity, however, it is important not to overemphasize the autobiographical details in *The Vampyre* because there are very specific differences in Polidori's life and in that of his characters. For example, Aubrey is an orphan; and Polidori came from a large and close-knit family. Moreover, it was Byron who suggested that the two part company, not Polidori. (2013: 38)

Until the point in time under discussion, the comparison among Aubrey and Lord Ruthven, in the first place, and Polidori and Byron, later on, has been contemplated. The main protagonists have been described; nonetheless, there are other characters that are secondary but not less important. Accordingly, it is time to deal with the rest of characters.

3.2. ANALYSIS OF WOMEN CHARACTERS

To start with, we are going to focus on the role of women. They are simply victims. Although the new model of vampire attacks strangers, in this case, all the reported cases are women who are related to Aubrey. Three are the women who suffer the aggressions of the vampire; they are going to be commented in order of appearance in the tale.

The first victim is the daughter of an Aubrey's friend. She is not murdered but: "Her parents were in distress, their fortune ruined, and she had not been heard of since the departure of his lordship" (Polidori, 1998:16). Furthermore, she loses her honesty. This is one of the first evidences of the erotic side of the vampire; it is a sensual and graphic attack. It takes places in Rome, during the already mentioned travel. It is the moment in which Aubrey starts to be aware of what is happening. He tries to inform the woman's family. He notices the evil intentions of his companion and reproaches Lord Ruthven: "Aubrey's eye followed him in all his windings, and soon discovered that an assignation had been appointed, which would most likely end in the ruin of an innocent, though thoughtless girl." (Polidori, 1998: 8) This is the reason why he abandons his comrade. Ruthven does not change his behaviour and, as Aubrey does not agree with him, he determines to prosecute the travel alone.

The second woman is Ianthe, she has a more direct relationship with Aubrey. He is in love with her: "Under the same roof as himself, existed a being, so beautiful and delicate, that she might have formed the model for a painter" (Polidori, 1998: 8) although he is not totally corresponded: "Ianthe was unconscious of his love". (Polidori, 1998: 10). Ianthe is killed by Lord Ruthven in the most dreadful manner: "The brutality of the attack on Ianthe might have come directly from folklore, for it is apparently a crime of simple hunger." (Senf, 2013: 34). This quoted author explains the circumstances of the Ianthe's death:

A young Greek woman with whom Aubrey has fallen in love, Ianthe- the first victim- is attacked by a vampire when she attempts to warn Aubrey from an area known to be frequented by vampires, and the unwitting Aubrey even grapples with the vampire though without seeing his opponent's face. (Senf, 2013: 35)

Senf may consider Ianthe as the first victim because she is the first one who is murdered. Aubrey meets Ianthe when he arrives at Rome; once he has made his decision to continue the journey on his own. It was at that moment when he discovered the true of Lord Ruthven:

However, Lord Ruthven drops his dagger during this scuffle; and Aubrey, who had already "wondered at the many coincidences which had all tended to excite a belief in the supernatural power of Lord Ruthven", now knows the truth: his former travelling companion is a vampire. (Senf, 2013: 35)

Ianthe has an active role because she is the one who introduces Aubrey in the vampire world:

She told him the tale of the living vampire, who had passed years amidst his friends, and dearest ties, forced every year, by feeding upon the life of a lovely female to prolong his existence for the ensuing months[...] Ianthe cited to him the names of old men, who had at last detected one living among themselves, after several of their near relatives and children had been found marked with the stamp of the fiend's appetite; and when she found him so incredulous, she begged of him to believe her, for it had been remarked, that those who had dared to question their existence, always had some proof given which obliged them, with grief and heartbreaking, to confess it was true. She detailed to him the traditional appearance of these monsters. (Polidori, 1998: 9)

The third and last victim is Miss Aubrey. " However, the circumstances involving Ruthven's second victim are more complex and interesting because the vampire takes time to seduce Aubrey's sister and even to make her his wife" (Senf, 2013: 35). This murder is the one who characterizes the new model of vampire, is totally the opposite in comparison to the previous assassination. There is a progression in Lord Ruthven's crimes, this last is the worst. This woman is the most known and loved to Aubrey, she is his sister. Ruthven takes his time

to commit this atrocity. Aubrey is, to some extent, an accomplice of his sister's death, he does not tell her the truth about her future husband because the oath ("Its secrecy may still have intrigued him; a quasi- Masonic oath of secrecy is prominent in *The Vampyre*" (Macdonald, 1991: 142)). Her sister is also innocent: "She was yet only eighteen, and had not been presented to the world" (Polidori, 1998: 17). She is a young honourable woman who ends her life being consumed by a vampire: "Lord Ruthven had disappeared, and Aubrey's sister had glutted the thirst of a VAMPYRE!" (Polidori, 1998: 23).

This character has, to certain extent, an active role because she chooses to be in love with the Earl of Marsden, who is in reality Lord Ruthven: "and Miss Aubrey, despite her apparent innocence and interest in matters beyond the material world, is at least a willing participant, for she accepts his proposal of marriage." (Senf, 2013: 39)

Lastly, we could mention Lady Mercer; she is a character who appears at the beginning of the tale but who has not any relevance in the plot, all we know about her comes in the following lines:

Lady Mercer, who had been the mockery of every monster shewn in drawing rooms since her marriage, threw herself in his way, and did all but put on the dress of a mountebank, to attract his notice; - though in vain:- when she stood before him, though his eyes were apparently fixed upon her's, still it seemed as if they were unperceived- even her unappalled impudence was baffled, and she left the field. (Polidori, 1998: 3)

The tale shows us a negative view about Lady Mercer, as a corrupted soul who does not receive Lord Ruthven's attention. Women are affected negatively by Lord Ruthven:

In fine, that all those females whom he had sought, apparently on account of their virtue, had, since his departure, thrown even the mask aside, and had not scrupled to expose the whole deformity of their vices to the public gaze. (Polidori, 1998: 7)

In this way, the secondary role of women is evidenced; we do not even know the name of the first victim. "...for he is shown to destroy at least two people by drinking their blood" (Senf, 2013: 35); only two of the three women are murdered but they all are Lord Ruthven's misdeeds. Their role is passive, they are mere victims, and they used to be innocents, young and beautiful women. Furthermore, they are considered in need of protection by men. On the one hand, the first woman that appears in the tale is not even an active character, we know

about her by means of the two protagonists but she does not speak. On the other hand, Ianthe, not only speaks but also is the woman character who participates more in the story, she warns Aubrey about the vampires. An interesting fact is that Ianthe is another antagonist to Aubrey, she belongs to the low class, moreover, she is an illiterate woman, opposing qualities to those of our protagonists. This tale represents the reality of the period in which it was written, women were in a second place within society. As Aubrey's sister, women had to marry; they were presented in society with this aim. Finally, it would be interesting to conclude that Lord Ruthven destroys everything Aubrey loves; this is the way to hurt Aubrey. Lord Ruthven could be considered as a ladykiller because he chooses women as victims.

4. LORD RUTHVEN AND 19TH CENTURY ENGLISH SOCIETY

In the following section, I would like to develop and to comment on the relationship between the aristocratic vampire and its social context.

As it has been commented above, Lord Ruthven is a character which is corrupt; he generates wickedness and thus, he could be considered a parasite vampire:

Depredador económico, parásito social erigido por las sombras de un sistema en decadencia más la amoralidad de la aristocracia “Ruthven esclaviza a los desgraciados, no sólo a los que se consumen en la más sórdida pobreza y desesperan por una moneda, sino también a los que, viviendo en la más absoluta riqueza, se dejan llevar por el tornado de corrupción y caen desde lo más alto, perdiendo todo para desesperar ante esa indigencia que jamás han sufrido” (Olivares, 2001: 258)

This kind of corruptor, which is denominated as a parasite, is the product of a damaged society. Hence, the vampire could be also seen as a victim of it, as corrupted at its highest level: the aristocracy. The evil seed is located within the high spheres even though he despises those who live like him. Money is maybe one of the precursors of this rottenness as it can be seen in the previous quotation; it affects both, the rich and the poor. Therefore, the vampire of Polidori is humanized; he has the same weaknesses that a human being could have. The supernatural resides in the consumption of blood but the human part can be located in an evil moral together with the murders that can be also committed by human beings:

Looking closely at *The Vampyre* reveals how quickly writers transformed the merely brutish character from folklore into a complex and interesting literary character. For

example, Polidori, although he adapts material from folklore in his portrait of Lord Ruthven, makes his human characters responsible for much of the death and destruction that occur and therefore focuses his readers' attention on the horrors of everyday life. As a vampire, Lord Ruthven is shown to be directly responsible of the deaths of only two people- Ianthe and Miss Aubrey. (...) the others- those he ruins at the gambling tables as well as the women whose reputations he destroys- may be corrupt even before meeting Lord Ruthven. (Senf, 2013: 39)

It is frightening to think that all the misdeeds carried out by Lord Ruthven could be perpetrated by anyone. Here resides the danger of the vampire; the model of Polidori creates a common figure, a vampire inserted in society, who lives like a person, even like a reputed figure in the aristocracy. To conclude this idea it could be said that Lord Ruthven is like any other, the truly horrifying is his acts: "Satán y el vampiro son reflejo, pues, del hombre que, endiosado en su narcisismo solipsista y absorbente, busca su naturaleza y se desata de las ligaduras existenciales, renunciando a Dios si es necesario." (Olivares, 2001: 273). In the previous quotation we see how Lord Ruthven enslaves the unfortunate, he makes so by giving them money with the purpose to corrupt them; he wants that they use the money to gambling:

There was one circumstance about the charity of his Lordship[...] all those upon whom it was bestowed, inevitably found that there was a curse upon it, for they all were either led to the scaffold, or sunk to the lowest and the most abject misery. (Polidori, 1998:6)

As yet, it is clear that Lord Ruthven is a social corruptor; he is the reflection of the existent social hypocrisy. This devastating forecast leaves Europe without any hope for the forthcoming years. It is important to recall that this tale was written in the 19th century, where there was a confrontation between radicalised liberal and conservative positions. Polidori describes his most immediate context, the era in which he lived: "By changing the emphasis, he focuses his reader's attention on the horrors of everyday life: the corruption of the innocent, the destruction of the ignorant and the exploitation of the young" (1988c: 205) (in Olivares 2001: 262).

To a certain extent, Lord Ruthven is a literary figure that represents the bad part of the humanity. The method that he carries out to spread the misery is the influence that Lord Ruthven exerts on his victims:

En este sentido, la fascinación de Polidori por su personaje malvado es extrema, tanto que llega a donarle la gracia de triunfar sobre el menguante Aubrey- de quien liba toda la energía y esperanza, como evidente vampiro psicológico, hasta abocarlo a la alienación y posterior muerte- y los edictos de una sociedad ignorante, y por ende, ataráxica. (Olivares, 2001: 270).

I would like to highlight that, as the previous quotation states, Lord Ruthven could be considered as a psychological vampire. He is the corruptor of rationality; as much as he gets carried away by the sensations, feelings, and passions:

The great object in life is Sensation- to feel that we exist even though in pain - it is this "craving void" which drives us to gaming - to battle - to travel - to intemperate but keenly felt pursuits of every description whose principal attraction is the agitation inseparable from their accomplishment.

This is a quotation from Byron, which resumes Lord Ruthven's attitude, a vampire that fits perfectly in its contemporary society. Although, as Eugenio M. Olivares states: "For Victorians the interest in the vampire was never openly confessed. "(2005: 94)

It is clear enough that Lord Ruthven is a social corruptor, nevertheless, he lives in an already impure society as we can see in the tale itself: "Many of the female hunters after notoriety attempted to win his attentions, and gain, at least, some marks of what they might term affection." (Polidori, 1998: 3)

The general idea studied in this section could be summarized in this final quotation: "Like all monsters, the vampire was not only a horrifying creature but a metaphor of everything that was feared, repressed or desired." (Olivares, 2005: 94). Thus, it is demonstrated that Lord Ruthven is both inspired and the reflection of the society, concretely the one in which it was written, 19th c. English society.

5. AFTER POLIDORI: INFLUENCES.

Firstly, in the above sections of this essay, we have seen the influences which inspired John William Polidori in his work. Now, it is time to deal with the influences that this author left to the later generations. It is also of a great importance to consider that not only were writers who took Polidori, or, in fact, his model of vampire as a reference but people

belonging to all the different arts (cinema, music...), who found in the aristocratic vampire their source of inspiration.

During the nineteenth-century English literature showed a particular interest in vampires. The blood-sucker became not only the most familiar character of popular culture, but also an icon in the writing of “serious” artists and philosophers (Charlotte and Emily Brontë, George Eliot, Dickens or even Marx and Engels (Olivares, 2005: 94)

Vampirism attracts all kinds of public, its audience goes from common people, low classes to the literate, well known people coming from the highest circle. This fact was of such a magnitude that Polidori himself felt attracted by this world. As him, many were the authors who also felt on this wave, and those who came after Polidori who also loved vampirism were influenced inherently by Polidori as far as he changed the vision and the role of the main protagonist in the vampiric stories, the vampire himself, the one who converted into an aristocratic figure: “Polidori is also the first to present the vampire as an aristocrat; and nineteenth century writers will continue to present the vampire as an aristocratic threat” (Senf, 2013: 34)

Some of the most prestigious and renowned vampire works in literature as the most famous one *Dracula*, written by Bram Stoker in 1897, might not have being possible without the innovation carried out by John William Polidori:

Polidori’s anticipates some of the ways that other writers will use the vampire as a social metaphor in realistic fiction. In the decades following its publication, numerous words were based on *The Vampyre* (Senf, 2013:39).

There are plenty of authors who were influenced by Polidori but we are going to highlight only a few of them just to transmit the really important idea, the repercussion of Polidori and not the works of his successors. Some of these authors, apart from Bram Stoker, were J.M. Rymer with his *Varney the Vampire*, written in 1847, *El Vampiro* from Alejandro Dumas (1851) and J. Sheridan Le Fanu with his work *Carmilla* from 1872. They were also predecessors of the distinguished *Dracula*.

Polidori also influenced in other fields such as in opera *Everlasting Universe* by John Mueter or *Der Vampyr* by Heinrich August Marschner in 1827.

The films and series on television that are influenced by *The Vampyre: a Tale* are also numerous but all of them coincide on the similar patterns from Polidori; the works have as a main protagonist an aristocratic vampire, a seducer who is within society as someone else but

who enjoys the richness and lives in great castles or mansions. They are about an evil figure that is supernatural and causes misery in its wake.

Eventually, it is also important to recognize that not all the authors or the critics were positives: “Critics like Skarda and Barbour(1992), who see ‘The Vampyre’ as a crude narrative written under the influence of a greater and more subtle talent, ignore the ironic mode of (great) literature over sensationalist fiction.” (in Gelder, 1994: 31)

Whether or not, Polidori’s successors respected his authority, were in favour of this figure, or were aware of him and so on, the really important issue is that (conscious or unconsciously) they are John William Polidori’s followers, and thus, they are influenced direct or indirectly by this author. Therefore, they recreate over and over again the figure of Lord Ruthven in their works. In short, they develop the concept from Polidori under other names such as Dracula, Varney... having all of them the same roots, similar characteristics and the same vampire spirit.

6. CONCLUSIONS

First of all, I consider that it is really important to highlight that *The Vampyre: a Tale* marked a point of reference in the story of vampirism. It is for this reason that I have organized the essay taking this tale as the core and creating two main sections, the before and the after, being the former the model of aristocratic vampire’s precedents and the latter the model of aristocratic vampire’s successors. Furthermore, I have included other sections that I have considered important to comment such as the circumstances in which the work was written or a comparison of our model of vampire, Lord Ruthven, with its contemporary society, the nineteenth century in England.

Secondly, in order to present my apologies for having been working with the ideas of other authors I would like to share with you a quotation taken from Polidori himself:

A Young author must in many cases be a plagiarist, his personal experience is limited- he must therefore copy the feelings of others, and his imagination must fill up the shading were the original has only given the bold out line. (Macdonald, 1991: 27)

To tell the truth, I have not spoken about the literary work *Dracula* until the previous section because I have wanted to give prominence to the figure of Lord Ruthven. He is not as famous as Dracula, but he is the pioneer vampire who presented the characteristics that we know about Dracula. Lord Ruthven is an aristocratic vampire who is within society: he is one

of us, so to speak. In a sense he is a sexual predator, anticipating many 20th and 21st century characters whose sexuality as his main weapon to attack his victims. He is both a psychological and a moral vampire, who plays with his influences and intelligence to spread his evil and corruption.

As far as I am concerned, the reputation of John William Polidori is not brilliant but totally the opposite. I have wanted to focus on his work and to vindicate his position in the history of literature leaving his life. Consequently, I have made an analysis of the characters of the tale together with all the rest of aspects that have influenced on the composition of this story.

The next and final stage will be a brief summary of all the main ideas and achieved conclusions of each section. The authorship was polemic, one of the reason was that Polidori used a plot which is already known: “a naive young man travels into a foreign country and comes under the influence of an older and more sophisticated but evil companion” (Macdonald,1991: 207). He wrote this tale as a challenge and it was on this way that he changed the model of vampire already existent, which was rude, savage, out of the civilization and who attacked familiar victims. Lord Ruthven supposed the origin of a new model of vampire who is in contraposition with the folkloric vampire but, who, at the same time, shares several characteristics with him. Lord Ruthven was an aristocratic within society, who selected his victims, and attacked in a more planned way; he is also supernatural but uses the moral and the sexuality to corruption.

To conclude this essay, I would like to display a fact that, from my point of view and, as far as I am concerned about the opinion of other authors to those I agree, Polidori ,with his model of vampire, established a change in the story of vampirism and created the vampire as it is known nowadays. He established a new line which was followed by numerous works of different genres which are influenced by this, already studied, aristocratic vampire. In conclusion, I would dare to say that Polidori could be considered the father of the modern vampire.

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⁷ It is an annotated edition with an accompanying audiobook produced by a group of students of the Arizona State University under the direction of Dr. Cajsá C. Baldini.

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7.1. WEBOGRAPHY

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8. APPENDIX



John William Polidori (1795-1821)



Villa Diodati



Lord Byron (1788-1824)



Jane Claire Clairmont (1798- 1879)



Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797)



Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792- 1822)



Mary Shelley (1797- 1851)

Sir

I received a copy of the magazine of last 1st April the present month & am sorry to find that your Genevan correspondence has led you into a mistake with regard to the tale of the Vampyre which is *not* Lord Byrons but was written *entirely* by me at the request of a lady who upon my mentioning that his Lordship had said that it was his intention of writing a ghost story... saying she thought it impossible to work up such materials desired I would write it for her which I did in two idle morning by her side- I desire therefore that you will positively contradict your statement in the next number by the insertion of this note-

With regard to my own tale it is imperfect & unfinished I had rather therefore it should not appear in the magazine- and if the Editor had sent his communication as he mentions he would have been spared this mistake.

But sir there is one circumstance that I must request a further explanation- I observe upon the back of your publication the announcement of a separate edition, now upon buying this I find that it states in the title page that it was entered into stationers hall upon the 27 of March consequently before your magazine was published I wish therefore to ask for information how this tale passed from the hands of your editor into those of a publisher.

As it is a mere trifle I should have had no objection to its appearing in your magazine as I could in common with any other have extracted it thence & republished it but I shall not sit patiently by & see it taken without my consent and appropriated by any person As therefore it must have passed thro your hands from a correspondent as stated in the magazine I shall expect that you will account to me for the Publisher Mr Sherwood & Neely having possession of it & appropriating it to themselves & demand either that a compensation shall be made me or that its seperate publication be instantly suppressed- Hoping for an immediate answer which will save me the trouble of obtaining an injunction I remain sir

yr obednt Servant

John Polidori

Letter by Polidori to the New Monthly Magazine. (Macdonald, 1991: 179) ⁸

⁸All the following letters, including this one, are extracted from the book *Poor Polidori. A Critical Biography of the Author of TheVampyre* by D.L. Macdonald.

Sir Gentlemen

I see the title page of a tale purporting to [be] by Lord Byron the Vampyre that you are the publishers of it I therefore take the liberty of addressing myself to you-

Lord Byron is *not* the author- I who am referred to in the letter of the Magazines am that author I was the 'Gentleman' who travelled with his Lordship and who wrote the whole of that trifle- I therefore desire that you will account to me for it as by your having entered it at Stationers hall before the publication of the Magazine I am deprived of all copyright therein and cannot any longer take advantage of my own work- If I have not an immediate answer I shall immediatly procure an injunction from Chancery to stop its further sale for I will not in any manner allow myself to be deprived of what is mine – I shall at the same time if the title page is not cancelled & my name inserted instead of Lord Byron, immediatly publish in all the papers that there is a mistake in the author

Yr & c

J Polidori MD

MR. EDITOR,

As the person referred to in the Letter from Geneva, prefixed to the Tale of the Vampyre, in your last Number, I beg leave to state, that your correspondent has been mistaken in attributing that tale, *in its present form*, to Lord Byron. The fact is, that though *the groundwork* is certainly Lord Byron's, its development is mine, produced at the request of a lady, who denied the possibility of any thing being drawn from the materials which Lord Byron had said he intended to have employed in the formation of his Ghost story.

I am, &c. JOHN W. POLIDORI.

Two different versions by Polidori to Sherwood and Neely (Macdonald, 1991: 180-181)

Sir, - In various numbers of your Journal- I have seen mentioned a work entitled 'the Vampire' with the addition of my name as that of the Author. -I am nnot the author and never heard of the work in question until now. In a more recent paper I perceive a formal annunciation of 'the Vampire' with the addition of an account of my 'residence in the Island of Mitylene' an Island which I have occasionally sailed by in the course of travelling some years ago through the Levant- and where I should have no objection to reside- but where I have never yet resided.- Neither of these performances are mine- and I presume that it is neither unjust nor ungracious to request that you will favour me by contradicting the advertisement to which I allude.- If the book is clever it would be base to deprive the real writer- whoever he may be- of his honours;- and if stupid- I desire the responsibility of nobody's dullness but my own... I have besides a personal dislike to 'Vampires' and the title acquaintance I have with them would by no means induce me to divulge their secrets.

Letter written by Lord Byron to the New Monthly Magazine. (Macdonald, 1991: 184-185)

SIR,

As you were the first person to whom I wrote to state that the Tale of the Vampyre was not Lord Byron's, I beg you to insert the following statement in your paper...

The tale, as I stated to you in my former letter, was written upon the foundation of a purposed and begun story of Lord Byron's... Lord Byron, in a letter dated Venice, stated that he knew nothing of the Vampyre story, and hated Vampyres; but at the very time this letters was busily circulating in all the London and Provincial Papers, the fragment at the end of Mazeppa, with the date of June 16th [sic], 1816, attached to it, was in the hands of his publishers in Albermale-street, being, in fact, the beginning of his tale upon this foundation. My development was written on the Continent and left with a Lady, at whose request, and at whose side it was written, in the course of three mornings. From her hands, by means of a correspondent, without my knowledge, it came into those of the Editor of *The New Monthly*, with a letter, stating it to be an *ebauche* of his Lordship's. Mr. Watts, as *Editor* of that Magazine, stated in his notice, that 'the tale which accompanies the letters we also present to our readers, without pledging ourselves for its authenticity as the production of Lord Byron.' This, however, after the publication and distribution of some hundred copies [sic], which were recalled, was cancelled by the Proprietor, and another notice inserted, stating directly the tale to be his Lordship's, by the same person, in direct opposition, as I am informed, to the Editor's will, who it appears, has since retired from the conduct of the Magazine.

Immediately it was published I procured a copy, and upon finding that it was an almost forgotten trifle of my own, I instantly wrote to you, as Editor of one of the most popular papers, stating the little share Lord Byron had in the work. This was on the Friday evening after its publication. I at the same time wrote to the publishers of the tale in its separate form, and to those of the Magazine, to stop its sale under his Lordship's name. On Monday, the publisher of the Magazine called upon me, and promised it should be instantly announce as mine. With regard to my property in it, he brought fort a paper, in which he proposed to give me a share in its profits, but as he said the paper was rough, and not of any use, he bade me trust to his honour. I was persuaded so to do. In the course of the conversation I stated having written to you. He immediately begged of me as a favour to allow him to withdraw that letter, stating, that as he being the publisher, was more compromised than myself, he wished I would allow the first explanation to come from hi, promising, that if I would sign a short note he would send me, that he would attach to it an explanation, completely freeing me from all imputation. I consented, and he sent me the note

signed by me, which appeared in his Magazine, but in which in the original was written *more extended development*, which erase. - He then obtained a short delay, on the plea, that having heard it asserted that Lord Byron was really the author of it, by those who had been present at the conversation mentioned in the letter, he wished to have a few more days to clear the matter up entirely. I granted him to the end of the wee, which delay he further lengthened by making me not find him at home, &c.

This gentleman has, at the same time, so cautiously in his correspondence with me, avoided mentioning the name of Vampyre, or any thing that could positively be brought against him as a proof of his acknowledgment of its being my property (always mentioning it as the affair), that when I came to claim my share in the profits, I was offered 30 £. Instead of nearly 300£. and found myself at the same time without any paper, which could directly and at once force him to give me my right. I agreed therefore to take 30£ to account, determined to sue for the rest; but, upon taking advice, I have been frightened by the expense of law, and must therefore, I fear leave him to punish himself.

Hoping that this statement will put to rest all the hints about my share in the profits, & c., so lavishly dropped , even at the present time, and at the same moment free me from the imputations he has convertly been throwing upon me,

I remain, Sir, your obedient Servant,

JOHN WILLIAM POLIDORI, MD.

Letter by Polidori to Perry. (Macdonald, 1991: 186-188)