Blooming Marvel: the garlic flower in Bram Stoker's hermeneutic garden

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Abstract

This article explores the use of floral symbolism within Gothic fiction of the *fin de siècle*. Taking as a basis the language of flower anthologies popularised throughout the nineteenth century, it investigates how this notoriously unstable floral language filtered through into the popular Gothic fiction at the end of the century. Whilst authors of Gothic may have adhered to existing codes and associations pertaining to particular flowers, they also destabilised traditional meaning, and introduced a new floral lexicon into the popular imagination. The article primarily considers Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in an attempt to locate floral significance through consideration of the production and widely discussed political agenda of the text. Through a close reading of *Dracula*'s garlic flower, the article asks whether there might be a Gothic language of flowers situated within the narrative that bears comparison with other Gothic fictions of the period and beyond.

Keywords: floriography, garlic, *Dracula*

The language of flowers and, in turn, floriography, is experiencing a 'second flowering' in literary criticism.[1] Dismissed by some as a 'fashionable Victorian fad' that 'ascribed plant species with a code of arbitrary "meanings" which had no connection whatever with the lives of the organisms themselves',[2] the language of flowers has nevertheless fostered literary analysis, biographical and gender studies, as well as considerations of aestheticism. It has been invoked to explore artifice and sensuality within decadent poetry, studies in love, death and femininity within Pre-Raphaelite art, and scent and the sensory in Victorian fiction. As a lens through which to investigate imagery and meaning, as well as cultural and synesthetic evocation in literature, the language of flowers may have more purpose and pertinence than has been previously assumed. Moreover, this language can be seen sprouting up in the unlikeliest of urban wastelands: the Gothic literature of the *fin de siècle*.

Debra N. Mancoff analyses the language of flowers in Pre-Raphaelite art, and the ways in which 'they cloaked their floral iconography in suggestive veils of meaning drawn from their own poetry, their favourite esoteric sources, and the incidents of their own lives'.[3] A recent offshoot of Mancoff's work has drawn attention to the symbolic and associative power of perfume. The subject permeates numerous literary and art-historical studies, most obviously the work of Catherine Maxwell, who discerns 'the poetics of perfume' in decadent poetry, through a focus on Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde and Arthur Symons; and Christina Bradstreet analyses 'the erotics of scent' in the paintings of John William Waterhouse and Charles Courtney Curran.[4] This transformative interest in what has previously been portrayed as a faddish and whimsical aspect of Victorian culture deploys metaphor to uncover interdisciplinary connections between politics, the arts, and sciences.[5] It also suggests a revenant afterlife for floriography that deserves attention in a wider range of texts, including popular modes like the Gothic, as I demonstrate through the example of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

The Victorian Language of Flowers and the Gothic

The poet Algernon Charles Swinburne felt horror and revulsion at the sight of cut flowers. He 'had an idea that it hurt the poor things to cut them. He described them as innocents who had undergone execution, beautiful heads that had been guillotined, severed from their fair fragile bodies and consigned to the sawdusty basket' of the florist.[6] Flowers are transformed, in an imaginative moment of Gothic anthropomorphism, into mutilated corpses on display as they are removed from the ground they grow in to the vase on the table. Swinburne's sensitivity intimates the potential of flowers, especially when manipulated by the human hand, to serve Gothic symbolism and imagery. In his influential work, *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3), John Ruskin identifies flora as an intrinsic component of the Gothic building. 'Naturalism' in design, translated into 'love of nature' in the workman, is the third and central feature in his Gothic checklist.[7]

> [...] trees, and fields, and flowers were made for all, and are necessary for all. God has connected the labour which is essential to the bodily sustenance, with the pleasures which are healthiest for the heart; and while He made the ground stubborn, He made its herbage fragrant and its blossoms fair. The proudest architecture that man can build has no higher honour than to bear the image and recall the memory of that grass of the field which is, at once, the type and the support of his existence.[8]

Ruskin advocates natural ways of seeing, and recommends incorporating the natural world into useful works of art. Whilst this is conceived as a male endeavour through

the 'workman', Ruskin also connected flowers to women and female attributes, as is evident throughout *Sesame and Lilies*, 'Lecture II. — Lilies: 'Of Queens' Gardens' (1865).[9] The association of women with flowers, and creative works such as scrapbooking, flower pressing and arranging 'tussie-mussies' also applies to the predominantly feminine Victorian occupation of collecting and displaying the 'language of flowers' books of popular culture. This, in turn, informs the floral significance to be discovered within another popular form, Gothic fictions. Beverly Seaton discusses the 'cross cultural intertextuality' of the language of flowers, a native form imitating and anglicising French gentility; however, she also asserts that it was in fact a 'consumer phenomenon' and an 'artistic construct' rather than a secret language that actually played a part in the romantic endeavours of the real middle-class Victorian woman.[10]

Seaton concludes that flower books, whether religious, poetic, sentimental, lexicographical or almanac, illustrate 'the dissemination of the romantic aesthetic, finding the self in nature'.[11] She discerns in these works 'little or no direct application to most nineteenth-century literature' and argues that there was no standard set of meanings agreed between these various works.[12] Yet critics such as Amy M. King and Molly Engelhardt have read floral iconography as directly informing works predominantly of female writers of the mid-Victorian period, through references to 'bloom', the marriage plot, and the deployment of a series of floral codes that hint to those readers initiated in the language of flowers the motives of particular characters and the direction of the narrative.[13] If, as Seaton concludes, the language of flowers books declined in popularity and use by the end of the century, what might their lasting influence be for floral symbolism, and how was this harnessed by Gothic fiction? In Roger Luckhurst's collection of *Late Victorian Gothic Tales*, meaningful floral iconography appears in nine of the twelve short fictions presented.[14] This selection includes fictions chiefly from male authors of the Gothic at the end of the century, who bed-into their works a host of floriographic symbols. Here, floral iconography connects readers with the texts through sight and smell, and stimulates feeling through synaesthesia. The use of floral symbolism in these works helps to produce a new, organic, aesthetic vision that moves beyond the textual in order to create meaning as well as sensation.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is an example of sustained and extended floriographic representation. In line with traditional floriography that focuses mainly on the visual symbol of the flower, Stoker's hermeneutic garden includes the lily, the rose and the garlic flower. His treatment of floral iconography, whilst principally entangled with the female characters of the novel, works to produce a set of meanings that may be compliant with male perceptions and interpretations. This is unsurprising, perhaps, considering the opinion of Stoker's contemporary reviewers that his content was too graphic and disturbing for an impressionable female readership liable to Donkinian hysteria.[15] The book thus appeared to be pitched at a manly or male demographic, and Stoker's place as one of the boys was thereby established.

Modern critics of *Dracula* can hardly be blamed for running with the idea that wayward women inspired a novel attempting to reassert patriarchy: in this line of criticism, Lucy Westenra plays a pivotal role. She is considered rampant and dangerously flirtatious — desiring more than one man and lamenting that she cannot marry three. Her promiscuous behaviour becomes punishable by transformation from vamp to vampire, culminating in an extremely brutal second death read as a 'symbolic sacrifice of New Women', and, often, as a 'gang rape'.[16] The alleged gang rape scene functions as a 'holy rite' sanctioning 'extreme brutality' in a 'searing moment of group fusion'.[17] Lucy is interpreted as a subversive female agent, an unnatural polygamist, undoing notions of true womanhood, masculinity and social stability. She is therefore put back in her box, as it were — literally, into her coffin.[18] Various opinions regarding the critical inference of highly sexualised content in *Dracula* have been offered — Robert Mighall's concept that a discourse of eroticism used by medical professionals masks genuine fear of the supernatural; Helena Ifill's argument that 'the vampire afterlife of Lucy [is] not a release of aggressive or perverse female sexuality but a Gothic playing out of a young woman's concerns about embarking on marriage'; and Nick Groom's assertion that 'Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) has been most vehemently over-sexualised but again is primarily a dissection of Victorian capitalism'.[19] Jordan Kistler revisits debates centred on the New Woman in *Dracula*, revealing that the novel may show sympathies with 1890s feminism and a movement away from the argument that it is Lucy's sexual proclivity which marks her as a threat to social stability. Kistler argues that Lucy can be seen to represent outdated modes of womanhood rather than typifying the dangerously sexual New Woman — she's read as uneducated, dependent, superficial and commodified, and she's vamped due to these deficiencies rather than as punishment for displays of dangerously inappropriate, overt sexuality.[20] Either way, Stoker's floriography foregrounds sex and sexuality as inescapable concerns of the novel. The garlic flower is a vital element in reaffirming, or reopening, these arguments.

In light of contemporary reviews that assumed or recommended a predominantly male readership for *Dracula* and that seem to invoke stereotypical, patriarchal notions of the mental capacity, capabilities and appropriate behaviours of women, it is worth investigating how Stoker rebrands or reconsiders floriography in his novel. If, as Molly Engelhardt asserts, the language of flowers was 'an attempt by amateur botanists to resist the efforts of scientific botanists to know flowers by instead codifying them to extend the parameters of courtship and imaginative play',[21] *Dracula* undoubtedly works against this. The flowers that emerge in the narrative are all introduced by Professor Van Helsing; they do not, for the most part, signify stages of courtship or changeable romantic feelings. Rather, the flowers become entwined in a discourse of science, medicine, empiricism and 'knowing', with very definite symbolic meaning. Stoker's Gothic floriography prescribes utility through action and purpose, perhaps to render it palatable to an imagined male readership by eliminating any frivolous or uncertain connotations of the language of flowers, commonly associated

with women and feminine pastime. *Dracula,* then, performs a Gothic reversal by appropriating floral symbolism within a masculine discourse.

Stoker's choice of the garlic flower as the main floriographic symbol within his novel may seem strange in the context of other floral symbols located within literary works at the *fin de siècle*. If any flower presents itself as a motif of *fin-de-siècle* Gothic, it is probably the exotic orchid, the cause of a Victorian obsession verging on monomania: Orchidelirium.

> Figure 1 P. De Pannemaeker, *Cypripedium exul var. imschootianum, Lindenia: Iconography of Orchids*, Conducted by J. Linden, Lucien Linden, E. M. Rodigas and R. A. Rolfe (Lucien Linden, Brussels, 1891), p. 33. © Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

The flower stands for a vampire in H. G. Wells' *The Flowering of the Strange Orchid* (1894); it is a 'shrivelled rhizome', imported at the cost of human life from the Andaman Islands, which looks 'like a spider playing dead', gains a new lease of life and tries to drain the blood of its amateur botanist-parent, Wedderburn.[22] The orchid also represents aestheticism and decadence in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), 'a marvellous spotted thing, as effective as the seven deadly sins' and an extravagant object of sensuality.[23] Wilde's depiction of the orchid is not surprising considering that orchids were grown in Britain in the 'hothouse': this word has suspect connotations ranging from brothels, artificiality of growth and production, to the unnatural development of young minds.[24] H. Rider Haggard has Allan Quatermain try his hand at orchid hunting in *The Holy Flower* (1915), in an African expedition to acquire a rare and worshipped Cypripedium. The tale is rife with slave traders, a demi-god gorilla, Zulu mystics, captive missionaries, cannibals, and squabbling 'orchidists' in the auction room.[25]

These novels dwell upon the dangers of the exotic and foreign, and on how excess, whether in the form of orchid harvesting, which was indeed very dangerous, or coveting orchids as an indulgent fashion accessory, can lead to calamity. In April 1894, *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art* ran an article that discussed the dangers and costs of orchid hunting in New Guinea, Madagascar, and Guyana – from malaria infested swamps and fever, run-ins with the Dutch, to insulting the natives and being burnt to death. Transporting the flowers was extremely perilous and likely to fail. The article concludes that:

> The orchid mania is not diminishing; on the contrary, it is more active now than ever it was. In spite of the constant risk of loss, and the inevitable difficulties and dangers of the enterprise, one nurseryman in this country devotes himself entirely to the orchid trade ... And there must be rarities for many years to come; because, although there are some two thousand varieties of orchids in cultivation, it is estimated that there are probably ten thousand in existence, could they all be found.[26]

During the time of *Dracula*'s composition, orchids had an aura of romance about them. Orchids inspired adventurers to journey far in pursuit of their charms (and remunerative prospects), and to confront a very real possibility of death. There is undoubtedly Gothic potential located in these tales of obsessive fixation and exploration. Meanwhile, in the year of *Dracula*'s publication, the *Wesleyan-Methodist* magazine was denouncing metaphorical orchids to convey a moral message about withstanding seduction:

> I read the other day that a poisonous orchid has been discovered: it was a lovely specimen, but it cannot be handled with impunity; its odour is fatal ... We have little to fear from the spotted toad-stool, from the ghastly, disgusting fungus which grows about the roots of the tree; these do not attract, they warn, they forbid: but the flower which dangles in dream-like beauty in the sunshine, this is the bait we have most to fear. Let us be wary, carefully cultivating the habit of vigilance. Let us constantly pray God not to lead us into temptation.[27]

Clearly, the orchid had acquired a reputation for duality, duplicity, corrupting seduction and bombastic display – even a fatal hue. Why, then, does Stoker select the seemingly unromantic and ordinary garlic flower as his main floriographic trope in *Dracula*?

> Figure 2 Ernst Schenk, *Allium sativum, Flora von Deutschland*, 5th edn, published 1880–88 by F. E. Koehler. Published 1880, pp. 124–5. © Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

The Garlic

> [*Dracula*] is for the man with a sound conscience and digestion, who can turn out the gas and go to bed without having to look over his shoulder more than half a dozen times as he goes upstairs, or more than mildly wishing that he had a crucifix and some garlic handy to keep the vampires from getting at him.[28]

> Mr Stoker keeps devilry well in hand, if such an expression is allowable; as strange event follows strange event, the narrative might in less skilful hands become intolerably improbable; but 'Dracula' to the end seems only too reasonably and sanely probable. Henceforth we shall wreathe ourselves in garlic when opportunity offers, and firmly decline all invitations to visit out-of-the-way clients in castles in the South-East of Europe.[29]

The *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Glasgow Herald,* respectively, signify the lingering effect of Stoker's garlic. Stoker's contemporaries here demonstrate its immediate inclusion in the mythology and lore of the vampire, an inclusion that stood the test of time, and various reincarnations, whether humorous or serious, throughout the decades in literature and film. That the imagery endures is shown by recent editions of *Dracula* utilising the iconography of the garlic flower as a recurring motif to produce impressive cover designs.

Figure 3 © Coralie Bickford-Smith, cover images after botanical plates from Mary Evans Picture Library and AKG images, *Dracula* (London, Penguin, 2012).

Figure 4 © Coralie Bickford-Smith, cover images after botanical plates from Mary Evans Picture Library and AKG images, *Dracula* (London, Penguin, 2011).

Search any language of flowers anthology, dictionary or keepsake written during the nineteenth century, and not a whiff of garlic can be discerned. *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* contained beautiful illustrations of the various genus of the flower earlier in the period; however, symbolic meaning is nowhere to be found. This is not surprising when we recall that the language of flowers is primarily a language subservient to that of courtship and romance. Books and directories of flora symbolica avoid the garlic flower like a bad smell; indeed, the pungent, heavy odour may wither any budding romance if included in an otherwise sweetly sensual bouquet.

This aversion had not always been taken for granted: garlic was anciently renowned as an aphrodisiac and an aid to fertility, as in the Book of Ezra in the Old Testament, the Brahma Net Sutra, and the Doctrine of Signatures in the seventeenth century.[30] However, in the Victorian period, alliums were the sustenance of the poor, as is evident in Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838), and the recipe *Soup for the Poor* (1847) by chef Alexis Soyer.[31] The language of flowers books were a genteel phenomenon, which perhaps accounts for the distancing from the common garlic within these collectables for middle- and upper-class ladies. Mrs. Beeton's 'Bengal Recipe for Making Mango Chetney' (1861) contains a telling footnote about the antisocial aspect of garlic:

> GARLIC. — The smell of this plant is generally considered offensive, and it is the most acrimonious in its taste of the whole of the alliaceous tribe. In 1548 it was introduced to England from the shores of the Mediterranean, where it is abundant, and in Sicily it grows naturally. It was in greater repute with our ancestors than it is with ourselves, although it is still used as a seasoning herb. On the continent, especially in Italy, it is much used, and the French consider it an essential in many made dishes.[32]

Garlic had evidently become a less than polite ingredient in many dishes, and maybe its historical link to sexual virility made it a saucy, inappropriate flower and cookery ingredient for genteel Victorian society. Stoker, though, reclaims garlic's medicinal and healing properties to recuperate its reputation, and dissociates the flower from promoting sexual virility but rather reframes it as an anaphrodesiac, as will be seen.

Figure 5 © Kate Beavis, Book Cover for *Dracula*, V&A Illustration Awards 2014.

If no source of inspiration for the garlic flower in *Dracula* can be found within the language of flowers, we must look instead to Emily Gerard, whose writings were cited by Stoker as source material for *Dracula*.[33] In her article 'Transylvanian Superstations' she asserts that: 'In very obstinate cases [of vampirism] it is further recommended to cut off the head and replace it in the coffin with the mouth filled with garlic [...]'.[34] Gerard's oddly quaint phrase — 'obstinate cases' — depicts the vampire as a naughty child with puerile and selfishly base instincts. Dracula is described as possessing a 'child brain',[35] and it is this chink in his otherwise seemingly impenetrable armour that allows his defeat. Stoker's inspiration here becomes apparent, but for the most part he writes of the garlic flower rather than of garlic cloves, and he takes Gerard's findings one step further in his imaginative floriographic rendering. Nowhere in nineteenth-century vampire fiction can the garlic be sniffed out — from John Polidori's formative short story *The Vampyre* (1819), to James Malcolm Rymer's serialised penny dreadful, *Varney the Vampire* (1845–6), to Sheridan Le Fanu's creepy novella of Sapphic vampire love, *Carmilla* (1871–2) — Stoker's Count was the first character to show symptoms of this particular floral aversion.[36]

In *Dracula*, the sense of bathos almost outweighs the eventual poignancy and potency of the garlic flower, as Van Helsing's methods for its application appear outlandish, bizarre and extreme:

> 'This is medicinal, but you do not know how. I put him in your window, I make pretty wreath, and hang him round your neck, so that you sleep well. Oh yes! they, like the lotus flower, make your trouble forgotten...' (122–3)

> [...] taking a handful of the flowers, he rubbed them all over the sashes, as though to ensure that every whiff of air that might get in would be laden with the garlic smell. Then with the wisp he rubbed all over the jamb of the door, above, below, and at each side, and round the fireplace in the same way. (123)

The concept that garlic possesses healing and medicinal properties is not a new idea, and survives to the present day. Whilst Roger Luckhurst views the inclusion of the garlic flower as evidence that Van Helsing gives 'credence to ancient superstitious

beliefs and marginal folk remedies', thus confirming his 'heterodox [...] medical and psychological practice(s)', Martin Willis perceives the garlic flower as a metaphor used by Stoker to explore nineteenth century medical debates relating to the 'contradictory political ideologies of disease'.[37] Willis identifies Van Helsing's use of the garlic flower as a sign of progressive and modern scientific thought, stating that the garlic flower functions as 'a metonymy for antiseptic that combats the metaphor of vampirism as microbe', allying Van Helsing with the principles of 'germ theory' over and above the increasingly outdated theories of miasmatism and contagionism.[38] Arguably, the association of the garlic flower with herbal medicine and regenerative power, and alternatively, with antibacterial, preventative sanitation measures, is an antithesis to sexual connotations of *carpe diem*, amorous codes, and flirtatious messages applied to the blooms of the language of flowers.

In 'Si(g)ns of the Fathers', however, critic Anne Williams argues for a sexual function of the garlic in Stoker's narrative:

> The smell of garlic is, of course, notoriously un-erotic, and some critics have speculated that the herb's reputation in folk medicine as a 'blood thinner' might account for its effectiveness against the vampire. But there are other, more immediate associations in the context of this reading. In ancient times garlic was widely regarded as inimical to the Mother Goddess. (Furthermore, the word 'garlic' is derived from two Indo-European roots meaning 'spear-leek' — hence it is, like the stake, phallic.) [...] In Stoker, the two means of control are conflated into one — driving the phallic stake is metaphorically a sexual conquest. In each the 'lustful' female is defeated supposedly on her own terms, within the realm of sexuality, where she must yield to superior masculine power [...] or violence.[39]

Williams considers the garlic flower as something like an extension of the male sexual organ, a tool in the agenda of asserting masculine prerogatives by means of sexual violence; in practice, however, the garlic flower works slightly differently from and more subtly than this. It is akin to a narcotic, subduing and drugging Lucy into passivity, and pacifying or suppressing wild, sexual desire. Stoker's garlic flower may also have a symbolic function in terms of medical botany, as it metaphorically works to counteract the threat of miscegenation and venereal disease from sexual profligacy, represented through vampirism. The garlic flower does enforce the masculine stratagems of the Crew of Light, albeit in a quiet, subduing sense in order to erase volatile sexuality in both the men and Lucy. Garlic, as Martha Jay comments, 'reproduces asexually rather than from seed; if you plant one of the cloves, it will grow into a garlic plant'.[40] If, then, the garlic reproduces asexually (for the most part), it is also a link to the role of the flower within *Dracula* as an emblem that stifles sexuality.

As Amy M. King has shown, original reactions to Linnaeus's taxonomical system were often outraged at the implication of the multiple sexual partners of plants

found within his botanical register.[41] If, conversely, the language of flowers usually embraces this flirtatious spirit, the garlic flower certainly does not. Dr Seward, former suitor and continued sufferer of unrequited love, finds the proliferation of the garlic flower around the private and potentially erotic space of Lucy's bedroom 'grotesque' (123). Stoker makes it explicit that garlic is an unromantic flower, so regular and every-day that an attempt to imbue it with gravitas initially seems comic, as Lucy reminds us:

> Whilst he was speaking, Lucy had been examining the flowers and smelling them. Now she threw them down, with half-laughter and half-disgust:-
>
> 'Oh, Professor, I believe you are only putting up a joke on me. Why, these flowers are only common garlic!' (123)

Here, we have Kathleen Spencer's 'frisson' essential to the creation of 'the fantastic', with the establishment of a sense of normality via fictional realism before supernatural elements are introduced.[42] The garlic has a grounding effect that reminds us that this is supposedly the reality we know, the 'nineteenth-century up-to-date with a vengeance' (37); it then emphasises the intrusion of the supernatural and the monster into 'our world'.[43] The garlic flower is also, perhaps conversely, Freud's *unheimlich* come to the fore — an unremarkable and familiar flower invested with supernatural powers of protection, and put to use as a vampire repellent.[44]

Having said that, the *unheimlich* element of Van Helsing's garlic flower actually becomes *heimlich* again to Lucy, as she learns to rely upon and feel safe among its petals:

> I quite love that dear Dr Van Helsing. I wonder why he was so anxious about these flowers. He positively frightened me, he was so fierce. And yet he must have been right, for I feel comfort from them already. (124)
>
> I never liked garlic before, but tonight it is delightful! There is peace in its smell; I feel sleep coming already. (124)
>
> I have grown quite fond of the garlic, and a boxful arrives for me every day from Haarlem. (127)

Lucy, in her conscious state, desires the protection of the garlic flower. Yet, as Dr Seward notes, she is not always so fond of the flower in parallel with her decline towards vampirism:

> Lucy had moved slightly, and had torn away the garlic flowers from her throat. I replaced them as well as I could, and sat watching her [...] It was certainly odd that whenever she got into that lethargic

> state, with the stertorous breathing, she put the flowers from her; but that when she waked she clutched them close. (149)

Lucy's polarised reactions to the flower serve to gauge her moral essence, as the garlic may represent both an indecision and a crossroad. Carol A. Senf perceives the garlic flower as symbolic of social conformity:

> The garlic flowers are, of course, a charm to ward off the vampire; and the reader witnesses a struggle between Lucy's conscious and conforming side — the side that feels guilty for her liaison with the vampire — and her unconscious side — the side that desires the freedom from social constraints that the vampiric condition entails.[45]

Similarly, for Kathleen Spencer, Lucy's 'saving grace' is that she dies in trance whilst her conscious 'self' rejects vampirism and, implicitly, the extreme, transgressive sexuality that it signifies:

> When she is awake and thus 'herself', she clutches the garlic flowers to her; but in her sleep, she thrusts away the protection, embracing her monstrous fate. Since she dies in her sleep, her future as one of the Un-Dead is inescapable.[46]

Senf and Spencer's assumption prompts an examination of contemporary theories from the then increasingly respectable science of psychology, as Lucy begins to display several of the characteristics of the 'nymphomaniac' — 'a morbid condition peculiar to the female sex' — prior to, during and after her transformation:

> Nymphomania presents various degrees of symptoms. At first it shows itself by simple excitement of the reproductive organs, which is brief, and upon which the will still exercises control; subsequently there is irresistible erotic impulse. The patient's expression is bright, the face turgid, the respiration quickened, the sexual organs are congested, and the gestures amatory. The appetite demands satisfaction without regard to age or person; the desire may even lead to murder if resistance is offered to the patient's desires.[47]

If Lucy is at best a New Woman, and, at worst, a Gothic version of the psychologists' nymphomaniac, then her punishment at the hands of the Crew of Light receives a militant justification as they are weeding out a weak link in society. Lucy's mental weakness and vulnerability are palpable, considered in this light, and it is a weakness that threatens the race, meriting a harsh and swift termination.

However, by pursuing a line of psychological readings, different conclusions may be reached. In 1891 F. W. H. Myers proposed a theory of 'The Subliminal Consciousness' that questioned the notion that our habitual conscious, the every-day self, affords the primacy of control assumed by many:

> I suggest that each of us is in reality an abiding psychical entity far more extensive than he knows — an individuality which can never express itself completely through any corporeal manifestation [...] For all which lies below that threshold [of habitual consciousness] subliminal seems the fittest word. 'Unconscious' or even 'subconscious,' would be directly misleading; and to speak (as is sometimes convenient) of the secondary self may give the impression either that there cannot be more selves than two, or that the supraliminal self, the self above the threshold, the self of common experience — is in some way superior to other possible selves.[48]

With psychological hypotheses like this circulating during *Dracula*'s composition, an alternative reading can be resurrected. Lucy, in trance, may not after all be completely under the vampire's thrall and direction (as Van Helsing assumes), but merely released to allow elements of her subliminal consciousness free domain and expression; namely, subliminal elements that motivate desire and act to achieve sexual freedom, which is being repressed by the pious and pure garlic flowers. By Myers's reckoning, it is possible to hold various and even conflicting personalities within our 'self', and Lucy, confronted with the garlic flower, displays such multiplicity.

It is possible to read Lucy as simultaneously a conformist, a rebel, a passive victim, an aggressor, a New Woman, a frightened girl, a would-be-mother, a sexual deviant, and simply as a woman who does not fully know or have control over her 'self'. Whether or not she is embracing her monstrous destiny, she may be read as at least desiring and occasionally acting to achieve an element of sexual autonomy. Lucy is at once a slave to prescribed gender roles embodied by her initial love of the garlic flower, and a dissenter, tearing away at enforced masculine ideology symbolised as a yoke of bondage in the wreath of garlic flowers positioned around her neck. The garlic flower becomes more than a mere symbol of social conformity, as its persistent application and smothering of Lucy takes a Gothic turn. Van Helsing repeatedly genders the garlic flowers as male, a 'him', and compares them to the 'lotus flower' (122–3). The lotus flower, as defined by Maud Dean, is said to represent 'silence').[49] Clearly, Van Helsing's simile is apt, as the flowers are performing a magical, medicinal ritual of quiet oppression by forcing Lucy to adhere to the definitions of decorum, propriety and womanhood imposed by the male characters that surround her. The Professor admits as much himself:

> We must obey, and silence is a part of obedience; and obedience is to bring you strong and well into loving arms that wait for you. (123)

The garlic becomes strangely monstrous itself in its proliferation throughout Lucy's narrative and its metamorphosis into the kingly bloom of a masculine-Gothic language of flowers.

It is possible, then, to read sexuality and sex back into the novel through the garlic flower as an anaphrodesiac, as it suppresses unruly or transgressive sexual desire, confining and isolating Lucy as she is alternately willingly and unwillingly smothered with the flowers that function as a kind of prophylactic against the disease of vampirism. Stoker is producing his own floriographic hermeneutics within *Dracula*, as he reinterprets floral symbolism in line with a masculine discourse of prescribed gender norms and super-scientific functionality. He takes a popular subject, the language of flowers, and rearranges it within his own popular Gothic novel. Arguably, Stoker's floriography is entwined in the narrative structure if we choose to view it in this way. The garlic flower holds mythological and medical status, and grows to represent a male, conservative consensus that binds the band of vampire hunters:

> This movement from the isolation and uncertainty of individual accounts to the mutual support and assurance of shared knowledge and beliefs drives the development of the whole narrative.[50]

Floriography takes its place in the narrative structure as an instance of Peter K. Garret's 'shared knowledge and beliefs', as the group utilises the agreed definition and symbolism of flowers to reach an understanding of the supernatural threat of the vampire. The garlic flower does not save Lucy from transformation, partly due to her mother's frenzied intervention during Dracula's attack on the women in wolf-form, as she tears the garlic wreath away from Lucy's neck, making her vulnerable (134). This can be construed as a demonstration of unruly and hysterical female interference with masculine measures of safeguarding women, measures that had until that point been effective through the floral shield of the garlic. This pivotal moment with the garlic flower therefore gives the reader licence to witness and, voyeuristically, to indulge in the vampiric spectacle that unfolds — it becomes an ineffectual preventative measure in Lucy's case, and holds value more for the symbolic meaning that it has conveyed (the garlic seems to be supplanted by the holy circle and wafer when Van Helsing orchestrates Mina's protection en route to Castle Dracula at the end of the novel (339–45).

Stoker's blooms highlight the degenerative potential of unrestrained and transgressive female sexuality and evolve into pragmatic tools in the fight against decadent and wanton behaviour that threatens the future of humanity. In a novel preoccupied with the dangerous instability of identity, form and knowledge, Stoker's floriography reasserts an element of empiricism — his flowers are beacons of light for a masculine ideology under threat: they define the borders of acceptability and respectability, and work to neuter any dissenters. The garlic coils around the rose and the lily, overpowering their potential for symbolic ambiguity, in Stoker's newly Gothicised, masculinised language of flowers: Seward observes that 'Lucy lay in her coffin, strewn with the wild garlic flowers, which sent, through the odour of lily and rose, a heavy, overpowering smell into the night' (159).

[1] Walter Pater, 'Aesthetic Poetry', in Harold Bloom (ed.) *Selected Writings of Walter Pater* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 190.
[2] Richard Mabey, *The Cabaret of Plants* (London, Profile Books, 2015), p. 7.
[3] Debra N. Mancoff, *Flora Symbolica; Flowers in Pre-Raphaelite Art* (London, Prestel, 2003), pp. 7–8.
[4] Catherine Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility: Perfume in Victorian Literary Culture* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017).
Catherine Maxwell, 'Scents and Sensibility: The Fragrance of Decadence', in Jason David Hall and Alex Murray (eds), *Decedent Poetics: Literature and Form at the Fin De Siècle* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 201–5.
Catherine Maxwell, 'Paterian Flair: Walter Pater and Scent', *The Pater Newsletter*, 61/62 (2012), 21–42.
Christina Bradstreet, '"Wicked with Roses": Floral Femininity and the Erotics of Scent' in *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*. Available online <https://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/46-spring07/spring07article/144-qwicked-with-rosesq-floral-femininity-and-the-erotics-of-scent>
[5], Caroline Arscott and Clare Pettitt (eds), Exhibition Catalogue for *Victorians Decoded: Art and Telegraphy* held at The Guildhall Art Gallery, London from 20th September 2016 to 22nd January 2017(London, The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2016), p. 7. Available online <http://www.scrambledmessages.ac.uk/>
[6] Clara Watts-Dunton, *The Home Life of Swinburne* (London, A. M. Philpot, 1922), pp. 202–4.
[7] John Ruskin, *On the Nature of Gothic Architecture: and Herein the True Functions of the Workman in Art* (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1854), p. 4.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 31–2.
[9] John Ruskin, 'Lecture II. – Lilies: Of Queens' Gardens' in *Sesame and Lilies*, ed. Deborah Epstein Nord (Yale, Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 68–93.
[10] Beverly Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Virginia, The University Press of Virginia, 1995), p. 110, p. 112 & p. 157.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 163.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 162 & 110.
[13] Amy M. King, *Bloom: The Botanical Vernacular in the English Novel* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003).
Molly Engelhardt, 'The Language of Flowers in the Victorian Knowledge Age', *Victoriographies*, 3.2 (2013), 136–60.
[14] Roger Luckhurst (ed.), *Late Victorian Gothic Tales* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005).
[15] Anon., 'Our London Letter', *Leicestershire Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury*, 10 July 1897, p. 5.
Anon., 'For Midnight Reading', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 June 1897, p. 11.
Anon., 'Literature', *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser,* 21 June 1897, p. 2.
H. B. Donkin, 'Hysteria', in *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* (1892), in Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (eds), *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c.1880–1900* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 245–250 (246–7).
[16] Carol Margaret Davison, 'The Victorian Gothic and Gender', in Andrew Smith and William Hughes (eds), *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 124–41 (124 & pp. 138–9).
Davison is not the only propitiator of this reading. Critics employ notions of Lucy's transgressive sexuality and sexual punishment as signs of narrative emergence of *fin-de-siècle* fears about degeneration, the New Woman, masculinity and social stability. To name but a few instances:

Victoria Margree and Bryony Randall, 'Fin de Siècle Gothic', in Andrew Smith and William Hughes (eds), *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 217–33 (221–5).
Christopher Craft, '"Kiss Me with Those Red Lips": Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', *Representations*, 8 (1984), 107–33.
Richard A. Kaye, 'Sexual Identity at the *fin de siècle*', in Gail Marshall (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 53–72 (59).
Carol A. Senf, '*Dracula*: Stoker's Response to the New Woman', *Victorian Studies*, 26.1 (1982), 33–49 (42).
[17] Peter K. Garrett, *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cornell, Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 135.
[18] Carol Senf, '*Dracula* and Women' in *The Cambridge Companion to Dracula* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 114–122. Senf here states that, 'In *Dracula*, the scene at the graveyard where Lucy is brutally put back in her box is because she has 'inverted' the normative feminine passive position to assert an active, masculine sexuality' (118).
[19] Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 216–7.
Helena Ifill, '"Sweeter and Lovelier than Ever": Re-Reading Lucy', in Samia Ounoughi (ed.), *Telegraph for Garlic* (London, Red Rattle Books, 2013), pp. 27–39 (p39).
Nick Groom, *The Gothic: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 97–8.
[20] Jordan Kistler, 'Rethinking the New Woman in *Dracula*', *Gothic Studies*, 20:1 (2018).
[21] Engelhardt, 'The Language of Flowers in the Victorian Knowledge Age', p. 156.
[22] H. G. Wells, *The Flowering of the Strange Orchid*, in the *Pall Mall Budget*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 August 1894.
[23] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 163.
[24] *OED Online*, 'hothouse, n.' Oxford University Press, June 2016, < http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/88811?rskey=eC1s3q&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid > [accessed 13 August 2016]
b. A brothel. Cf. bagnio n. 3, stew n.2 4. Now hist. and rare.
1556 H. Machyn Diary (1848) 104 The iij day of May dyd ryd in a care a-bowt London a woman that dwelt at Quen-heyffe at the hott howsse, for a bawde.
1602 2nd Pt. Returne fr. Parnassus i. ii. 257 Hee cannot swagger it well in a Tauerne, nor dominere in a hot house.
a1616 Shakespeare *Measure for Measure* (1623) ii. i. 63 Now shee professes a hot-house; which, I thinke is a very ill house too.
1699 S. Garth Dispensary ii. 21 A Hot-house he prefers to Julia's Arms.
b. fig. and in figurative contexts. A place where something is kept or developed artificially; an atmosphere or environment conducive to prolific growth or development. Cf. hotbed n. 1b.
1811 Byron *Farewell Malta* 46 Thou little military hothouse!
1827 J. Bentham *Rationale Judicial Evid.* V. ix. iii. iv. 121 The technical system is a hot-house of mendacity.
1846 Dickens *Let.* 6 Dec. (1977) IV. 677 Doctor Blimber's establishment is a great hothouse for the young mind.
1851 F. W. Robertson *Serm.* (1864) 2nd Ser. x. 135 Men nurtured in the hothouse of religious advantages.
[25] H. Rider Haggard, *The Holy Flower* (London, Ward, Lock & Co., 1915).
[26] Anon., 'The Romance of Orchid-Collecting: Some Facts about a Fashionable Craze', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art*, 11 (1894), 257–8 (258).

[27] The Editor, 'A Poisonous Orchid', *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*; 120 (1897), 470.
[28] Anon., 'For Midnight Reading', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 June 1897, p. 11.
[29] Anon., 'New Books of the Week', *Glasgow Herald*, 10 June 1897, p. 10.
[30] Robin Cherry, *Garlic: An Edible Biography* (Boston, Roost Books, 2014), pp. 13–22.
[31] Martha Jay, *Onions and Garlic: A Global History* (London, Reaktion Books, 2016), pp. 72–5.
[32] Isabella Beeton, 'Bengal Recipe for Making Mango Chetney', *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, ed. Nicola Humble (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 124.
[33] Bram Stoker, in Robert Eighteen-Bisang and Elizabeth Miller (trans. and ann.), *Bram Stoker's Notes for Dracula: A Facsimile Edition* (London, McFarland & Company, 2008), pp. 122–3.
[34] Emily Gerard, 'Transylvanian Superstitions', *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, 18 (1885), 130–50 (142).
[35] Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. Roger Luckhurst (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 315. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in brackets.
[36] John Polidori, *The Vampyre*, in Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick (eds), *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1–23.
James Malcolm Rymer, *Varney the Vampire: or, The Feast of Blood* (Crestline, Zittaw Press, 2008).
J. Sheridan Le Fanu, *Carmilla* (Oregon, The House of Pomegranates Press, 2013).
[37] Roger Luckhurst, '*Dracula* and Psychology' in *The Cambridge Companion to Dracula* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 66–75 (71); Martin Willis, '*The Invisible Giant*, *Dracula* and Disease', *Studies in the Novel*, 39.3 (2007), 301–25 (322).
[38] Willis, '*The Invisible Giant*, *Dracula* and Disease', p. 313.
[39] Anne Williams, '*Dracula*: Si(g)ns of the Fathers', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 33.4 (1991), 445–63 (454–5).
[40] Martha Jay, *Onions and Garlic: A Global History*, p. 12.
[41] King, *Bloom*, p. 18.
[42] Kathleen Spencer, 'Purity and Danger: *Dracula*, the Urban Gothic, and the Late Victorian Degeneracy Crisis', *ELH*, 59 (1992), 197–225 (199).
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 199.
[44] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in David McLintock (trans.), *Sigmund Freud: The Uncanny*, (London, Penguin, 2003), pp. 121–62: 'for this uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed', p. 148.
[45] Senf, 'Dracula: Stoker's Response to the New Woman', p. 43.
[46] Spencer, Purity and Danger', p. 211.
[47] Gustave Bouchereau, 'Nymphomania' in *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* (1892), in Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (eds), *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c.1880–1900* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 293–7 (295).
[48] F. W. H. Myers, 'The Subliminal Consciousness' (1891), in Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (eds), *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c.1880–1900,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 259–63 (262).
[49] Maud Dean, *The Language of Flowers* (London, Dean and Son, 1897), p. 20.
[50] Garrett, *Gothic Reflections,* p. 127.