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**Topic:** Sensory versus Suprasensory Input: A Victorian Struggle in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

**Abstract:** This research explores the malleability of the human sensorium. There is also a focus on suprasensory input that trespasses the understanding of the world through the senses. The sensory and the suprasensory experiences are involved in perception, and they have permeated the historicity of the aesthetic experience. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Victorian society was immersed in the convulsion of new forms of manufacturing, transportation advances, innovation, artistic experimentations that contributed to the enrichment of popular culture, and the growth of cities. Consequently, the Victorian Era is a period of overwhelming sensorial input where people even developed aversion to noises. The Victorian metropolis was a hectic setting that was transitioning, and this influenced social and cultural practices. Moreover, the aesthetic experience suffered important transformations when considering that Victorians were exposed to stimulations that might have made them trust their senses rather than their rational analysis of events, and this is how the struggle emerged. In addition, this research considers *a historicity* of the senses that is also suprahistorical since human beings have always had encounters that transcend the perception of the traditional five senses. *Dracula* is a Victorian Gothic entity that embodies the dichotomy of sensory versus suprasensory input. His varied physical forms trigger different sensorial responses that make other characters undergo a suprasensory experience where rational judgements lead to validate the sensorial input. Van Helsing also takes part in this Victorian struggle since his scientific discourse questions reality and intends to validate his perception of it. As a result, sense-perception and rationality become two opposing forces that collide and generate an aesthetic effect. Though the aesthetic experience is unique to every subject's understanding of the sensorial and the rational world, many faculties involved in this delight can be explored to provide insight into its nature. Therefore, this research surveys a 19<sup>th</sup> century view of senses and rationality by addressing a Victorian struggle in Stoker's *Dracula* where the main character's shape-shifting, and the surrounding rational environment become clashing forces of sensory and suprasensory input.

Key words: *Senses, rationality, Victorians, Gothic, historicity, vampire, sensorium.*

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### **Biography**

María Carolina Ureña Abarca is currently concluding her Master's Degree Program in English Literature at Universidad de Costa Rica. Her main areas of interest are Victorian Gothic literature and border writing. She is currently working at Centro Cultural Costarricense Norteamericano where she developed a sensory-focused approach for EFL students. Her current projects are focused on the production and edition of audiobooks for Costa Rican literature that aim to trespass the traditional audiobook soundscape.