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The Fluid Nature of the Vampire in Literature and Film

Introduction

The vampire is one of the most resilient and enduring monsters in the history of literature. The vampire has been a mainstay of gothic horror, and most importantly a mainstay that has persisted for many years. While there have been times where the vampire was not the most popular of villains, it has managed to remain relevant as a literary device nonetheless. But how has the vampire been able to continually reemerge in texts? With the world being in constant flux it is striking that the vampire has continued to appear in texts since its initial inception. Tales of vampires have been told since ancient times, but in literature the focus has primarily been on gothic horror when it came to vampires. This specific archetype of vampire spawned a following of stories that continue to captivate readers to this day. While there are older works of gothic horror, it is widely agreed that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* from 1897 is the defining vampire story of the genre. Modern interpretations of the vampire myth can still be traced back to Stoker's original novel. Vampire stories have varied a great deal over the years since their original inception. Nina Auerbach described the fluid and dynamic nature of the vampire in her book *Our Vampires, Ourselves*: "To the jaded eye, all vampires seem alike, but they are wonderful in their versatility" (Auerbach 5). The goal of this paper is to examine how the vampire has managed to remain relevant in literature and movies over the course of the last 100+ years.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is a staple of the Gothic Horror genre. It is a novel that has been scrutinized by countless readers over the years. It has spawned an absolutely massive following that still persists to this day, more than a hundred years after it was initially published in 1897. While Stoker's novel is certainly not the first example of a piece of gothic horror, or even the first example of a gothic horror story focusing specifically on vampires, it still managed to fully capture the attention of the public. But not only did *Dracula* enthrall the readers of its time, but it continued to be a mainstay of the gothic horror genre, and was continually discussed over the following years.

The myriad of ways this novel has been interpreted over the years speaks both to the depth of the novel and its themes as well as to the fascination that the public has had with vampires and the way Stoker described them. The interesting thing to note about these various readings of the novel is the way they have changed over time. While the text itself has not changed noticeably over the years (save for the abridged text which Stoker published following the original wherein he edits parts of the novel in various ways), the interpretations of the text have varied wildly depending on the reader as well as what time period the reader was examining the novel in. These changes to the way the novel has been read marks both the passage of time as well as the evolution of how the themes of the novel have been viewed at various points in time.

The vampire is certainly not the only popular monster that stems from the gothic horror genre, but in stark contrast to many of its peers, the vampire has undergone a remarkable amount of changes since its initial beginnings as a horror villain. It is this constant change that happens to the vampire that we will explore over the following pages. What caused these various changes to occur? What historical context caused the vampire to warp and change to better fit contemporary readers? How have the interpretations of Stoker's *Dracula* changed with the times? While the original text remains virtually unchanged, the perception of the readers have changed dramatically and caused the idea of the vampire to change along with it. Modern vampire interpretations have moved in a variety of different directions depending on the specific message that a given author or director was looking to convey.

Theory and Methodology

The way the readings of *Dracula* have changed over the years is due to a variety of reasons. An example would be the idea of cultural fears and how they change as time passes. If a culture has a certain issue that they feel is the greatest threat their lifestyle is currently facing, then it is natural for members of that culture to see these fears within the horror genre. Simultaneously, the horror genre will warp itself to better fit the cultural fears that surround it in order to function better as a horror text. An example of this relating to *Dracula* would be the way sexuality and eroticism were viewed in Victorian Britain. The erotic nature of the vampire Count Dracula and the changes he causes in the women he bends to his will spoke directly to the suppressed nature of sexuality within the Victorians themselves. The wanton lust displayed by Dracula's brides when they attack Jonathan Harker at Castle Dracula was so unlike the Victorian ideal of how a woman should behave in the context of sexuality, that it must have been a disturbing notion to the readers of the Victorian Age.

The notion that women were sexual creatures with ravenous desires, and that these desires could be awoken even in pure and innocent Victorian women like Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker was terrifying to the contemporary readers of *Dracula*. At the time the idea of the "New Woman" had gained a certain degree of infamy and Mina Harker even mentions it in the novel itself. The idea of women branching out from their previous role was an enormous change to the Victorian way of life, and changes within society are often met with apprehension and even outright fear (Klinger 157). By evoking this feeling in the Victorian readers Stoker called upon the shared experience of the readers in order to make the horror of his novel more tangible.

This potential reading is one that changed as time passed. Since women did in fact gain more personal freedom and equal rights as the years passed, the notion of strong independent female characters became much less of an oddity to the readers of later time periods. If independent women are more the rule than the exception then the idea of these free and sexually active women won't have anywhere near the same impact on the reader. But the more modern reader will instead potentially focus on this part of the novel as an expression of the beginning of women gaining more personal freedom within society. So instead of appealing to the cultural fears of a modern reader directly, the idea of the changes occurring within the women of *Dracula* seems more progressive and could perhaps be seen as a symbol of the change that was already in full swing at the time the novel was published. Since the modern reader has the invaluable gift of knowing which course history eventually took, it then could potentially lead modern readers to an interpretation of the novel as Stoker's personal commentary on the situation and how it was playing out at the time of the novel. This in turn allows the reader to interpret Stoker's personal opinions on the matter from the way the characters of the novel react to a given matter.

This is an example of how a reading of a particular aspect of the novel has changed over the years because of the way society has changed from the time which the novel was published. While the focus of the two example readings are the same: the personal and sexual freedom of women within society. The context of the reading alters how the same situation is viewed by readers from different times or even different cultures within the same period in time. So the potential readings of *Dracula* change as the historical context of the readings change.

The various readings of *Dracula* are a diverse bunch with the primary reading and focus changing significantly over the years depending on what happened to fascinate the scholars of a given time period. In the following section we will explore the various readings we will be

examining in this thesis and look at the theoretical basis of each particular reading as well as the theoretical basis of the overall analysis of the novel itself.

Theory

Dracula can as mentioned previously be read in a myriad of different ways depending on what the individual reader happens to be drawn to or fixate upon within Stoker's narrative. But which individual reading that ends up catching the readers imagination is often dependent on what aspect of the novel the reader finds frightening. But what is fear really? On a base level fear is a survival tool. As humanity moved towards a more civilized way of life, the things we feared changed as well. Threats changed, we became far better at defending ourselves from the more basic fears. Specifically fears about not being able to survive. Hunger and the threat of wild animals were the primary fears that humanity managed to shed as we moved towards civilization (Dozier 14). But different fears quickly took their place. While we no longer needed to fear attacks from wild animals (at least not often), and while we became far more skilled at procuring enough food to live comfortably, we also discovered a multitude of other threats to our way of life. These fears differed greatly from culture to culture and became known as cultural fears. Cultural fears is the idea of a society developing a shared collective anxiety about various issues that evoke feelings of fear within the members of that society. In 1919 Sigmund Freud wrote *The Uncanny*, an essay that dealt with feelings of fear in human beings. The basic idea of what "the uncanny" is: "the 'uncanny' is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (Freud 1). An example of a familiar fear that all human beings must eventually come to terms with is the fear of death. While many other fears vary from culture to culture, a common denominator when it comes to fear in humans (and to an extent most living creatures) is the fear of life ending. Freud elaborates on the nature of this fear of "the uncanny" by explaining that human beings fear what they don't understand (Freud 14). This makes sense in the context of the fear of death since we don't know what happens to us when we die. This uncertainty makes death quite a scary thing to face. Fear of the unknown can also manifest itself in a variety of other ways which we see in *Dracula*. Fear of changes within society or the familiar people within one's own society evokes these feelings within the band of vampire hunters. But such fears are certainly not exclusive to horror stories like *Dracula*.

Fears vary wildly from culture to culture depending on a variety of factors including historical events, tradition, religious views and even current events. The main point is that as the world

changes, some things become frightening to members of a given society depending on how events and cultural texts are perceived. These perceptions often change over time which explains why the popularity of some texts fluctuate wildly over the course of history. The vampire genre of horror is a fine example of this phenomenon as vampires have waxed and waned in popularity over the years depending on public perception and how the genre evolved over the years. Stoker's *Dracula* plays upon a variety of different cultural fears derived from the historical context of the novel, and we will examine several of these in connection to the world the readers of Stoker's novel lived in during the Victorian Age as well as how present-day readers perceive these cultural fears.

Fear is an integral part of human evolution. It is an emotion that functions as a survival tool. Once the fear reaction is triggered, several physiological factors take place immediately. The heart rate rises, palms become sweaty, blood drains away from the face to other parts of the body in order to enable a sudden and quick escape from the perceived threat (Dozier 14). All of these are reactions to a direct perceived threat, but what about the more subtle threats that occur over the course of history? Cultural threats? Threats to the way of life as we know it? How do we react to these potential dangers?

Cultural fear is a concept that encompasses the previous statements about fear and society in a single concept. Once a particular danger (or perceived danger) becomes established within a specific culture it can be referred to as a cultural fear. The nature of cultural fear obviously varies wildly from culture to culture based on historical factors and the shared experience of the people of a given culture. Cultural fears have a strong tendency to be expressed through texts and media. By examining texts that are native to a specific culture, it becomes possible to pinpoint some common factors that get repeated within the texts of a culture (Dozier 159). In the case of cultural fear these fears often refer to experiences and/or situations that are generally considered scary by members of a cultural group. An example of a cultural fear influencing texts can be found in the Japanese monster films that became popular in the years following the atomic bomb attacks at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The parallel here is that the people being terrorized by Godzilla and the like are similar to the people of Japan in relation to the atomic bombs. Small and utterly helpless when faced against the unfathomable power of the threat they were facing. This is one of the most obvious examples of a cultural fear being expressed within texts, but cultural fears exist in every culture. Often these fears will be significantly more subtle in nature, which is the type of cultural fears that Bram Stoker uses in his novel in order to create a sense of danger within his Victorian

readers. Obviously there are parts of the novel which are quite universal in their ability to frighten the audience, but other times situations have a special significance for a Victorian reader. By playing on fears that were especially prevalent within society at the time of his writing Stoker succeeded in creating a monster whose threat seemed plausible and all too real to the readers of the novel.

Successfully utilizing cultural fear leads to a more effective and memorable horror story than simply using more generic horror tropes. By tailoring his novel to fit the shared experience of the Victorian readers, Stoker tapped into the shared cultural experience of the people. This is most likely a large part of the reason why the novel ended up being so popular with its readers, and why we are still discussing the novel today, more than a hundred years after its initial publication. There is a common tendency in human beings to confront fears in an attempt to overcome them. An example of this would be people who actively enjoy horror texts in spite of their frightening nature. Emma Westwood explains the nature of these confrontations in *Monster Movies* in the following statement:

"Monsters are the physical manifestations of our subconscious fears, anxieties, paranoids and other primal impulses" (Westwood 11)

Dracula as a character manifests many of the cultural fears that existed within Victorian society. He is simultaneously the foreigner encroaching on British land, bringing strange customs and the threat of change to the very doorstep of society, as well as a sexual deviant with the power to corrupt the otherwise pure population of London and bend them to his will. Essentially, Dracula is a combination of several cultural fears within a single character. By making the villain of his novel a personification of a number of different threats to Victorian society, Stoker created a memorable and frightening villain within the patchwork that is Count Dracula.

One of the primary readings of Stoker's *Dracula* has always been the reading that focuses on the sexual nature of the vampires and their actions. Specifically focusing on female sexuality and to a certain extent, feminism. The act of biting a willing or unwilling victim has some very powerful sexual references in Stoker's novel, and has become a mainstay in vampire stories that followed in Stoker's wake. This aspect of the novel has captivated readers since the initial publishing in 1897, and remains one of the mainstays of vampire stories in the present day. Dracula and vampires in general are strongly linked to sexuality, and this has persisted in vampire literature throughout

history up until the present day. While some vampire narratives are more subtle in their dealings with sexuality, it is still present in nearly every single vampire story. Because of the intimate nature of the way Dracula (and vampires in general) bites his victims it is easy to see how Dracula's attacks can be viewed as being sexual in nature. First of all there is the exchange of bodily fluids between the vampire and the victim. Secondly there is the close physical connection between the victim and the vampire, often the pose wherein the vampire feeds upon the victim is very reminiscent of a passionate kiss between two lovers. This image is utilized to great effect in movies featuring vampires because it simply is such a powerful image: a character (often a woman) being overwhelmed by the sheer power of the vampire's raw sexuality. And in the cases of hypnotized or otherwise transfixed victims it is an act that happens with the same willingness as the aforementioned kiss. An example of this situation from *Dracula* would be the multiple attacks on Lucy Westenra at the hands of Count Dracula himself. The first attack takes place while Lucy is in a dreamlike trance where Lucy herself sleepwalks in the middle of the night to meet up with Count Dracula. Or read in a different way: a woman sneaks out in the middle of the night to meet with a tall, dark, stranger. The sexual undertones of this meeting of the vampire and his victim are abundantly clear. This reading is further emphasized by the reaction of Mina Harker when she finds Lucy following Lucy's meeting with Dracula. Mina's focus on how embarrassing it would be for Lucy to be discovered in that state hints that the acts that transpired moments before were indeed very sexual in nature (Klinger 160). This desire for secrecy and keeping sexual matters behind closed doors was a strong tradition of the Victorian Age in Britain. Sexuality, and particularly female sexuality was not a topic that was frequently discussed in the public sphere. In fact, female sexuality was considered to be something that should be suppressed as much as possible and women displaying their sexual tendencies too freely were quickly ostracized by the rest of society. Phyllis A. Roth comments on the subject of female sexuality in her article *"Suddenly Sexual Women in Bram Stoker's Dracula"* in the following way:

"Moreover, I would emphasize that for both the Victorians and twentieth-century readers, much of the novel's great appeal derives from its hostility toward female sexuality. In "Fictional Convention and Sex in Dracula", Carrol Fry observes that the female vampires are equivalent to the fallen women of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction." (Roth 31)

The main point to take away from this is how Dracula's influence corrupts the otherwise pure Victorian women into sexual beings. This was most definitely a cultural fear that was highly prevalent in Victorian society at the time Stoker wrote the novel and it was certainly an issue Stoker was keenly aware of, especially considering not only the research that Stoker did on the subject, but also his subsequent works that also touch on similar subjects such as in *Lair of the White Worm* which was published in 1911. The changing nature of female sexuality and how it was viewed in Victorian society is actually something Stoker comments on directly within the novel through his character Mina Harker. Mina comments on the ideals of the "New Woman" and how that school of thought was gaining traction amongst women of that time and how the "New Woman" went against the traditional gender roles that were established in Victorian society. Mina uses the example of proposals and how the "New Woman" would approach this subject in the future:

"soon she will be doing the proposing herself, and a damn fine job of it!" (Stoker 130)

Mina's comments about the "New Woman" establishes the idea of changing female sexuality within the novel even if the reader happens to be unfamiliar with the political motivations behind the "New Woman" movement of the Victorian Age. The "New Woman" was a political movement that began during the Victorian Age. Essentially it was a group of females who worked towards gaining more personal freedom for women in Britain. Female rights had been repressed for a number of years, and this was not exclusive to sexual rights and sexuality in general. The right to own property and the right to vote were other issues that had been up for discussion previously. The idea that female sexuality needed to be harnessed and kept firmly under control was a well established part of Victorian society as mentioned above, and the followers of the "New Woman" movement sought to change this perception. By altering the negative connotations that were traditionally associated with a woman expressing her sexual nature as a human being on equal footing with males, the "New Woman" movement worked to make female sexuality less of a taboo than previously. Since sexuality and the ability to express this is a significant aspect of personal freedom, it makes sense that this was one of the key issues for the "New Woman" movement, and the movement quickly gained a significant following amongst the women (and later men) of the Victorian Age (Klinger 157-158).

The initial public reaction to the movement was quite similar to Mina Harker's reaction from Stoker's novel. Mina takes note of the movement and states her somewhat joking feelings on the subject, while simultaneously denying the ideas of the "New Woman" through her actions.

Throughout the novel Mina remains subservient to her husband as well as the other males of their little band of vampire hunters. She assists them in their work to rid the world of the threat of Count Dracula, but is simultaneously excluded from a great deal of the proceedings such as some of the meetings and more dangerous events that are undertaken by the group of hunters. Since Mina eventually becomes the target of Dracula's hunt her role in the group does end up changing slightly. Since she becomes a telepathic link to Dracula which allows the hunters to track Dracula's movements as he flees to Transylvania, Mina is included in more of the discussions. But even after this development she still remains subservient and loyal to the authority of her husband and the other hunters. Mina's actions are further reinforced as a positive thing by the constant praise Van Helsing showers upon Mina throughout the novel. "She has a man's brain, a brain that a man should have were he much gifted, and a woman's heart" is one of the somewhat unfortunate statements Van Helsing spouts in the novel (Stoker 335). A statement like this is undoubtedly part of the reason why movements such as the "New Woman" gained support from women from all layers of society.

The ability to earn money was a critical part of the wishes of the "New Woman", in order to achieve independence from their husbands, women needed to be able to make a living on their own. Financial stability gave women far better options when it came to resolving disputes with their husbands, or simply when looking for opportunities in life. Women being able to earn money also meant that the relationships between men and women would take on an entirely different nature. For example: if the woman is unable to earn a living wage on her own, she is entirely dependent on the funds she can acquire from her husband in order to sustain her lifestyle. This relationship is parasitic in nature and leads to the idea of women leeching money from their husbands. Clearly this situation has a great deal of negative associations accompanying it. Winnifred Harper Cooley wrote about the nature of this relationship in her book *The New Womanhood* in 1904:

"Who has not heard wives commended for wheedling their husbands out of money, or joked because they are hopelessly extravagant? As long as caprice and scheming are considered feminine virtues, as long as man is the only wage-earner, doling out sums of money, or scattering lavishly, so long will women be degraded, even if they are perfectly contented, and men are willing to labor to keep them in idleness!" (Klinger 157)

The way the relationship between husband and wife had historically functioned left women in a severely weakened position of power compared to their husbands. The new woman sought to

change this dynamic in order to give women more opportunities, and thereby increased personal freedom. But as Mina Harker demonstrates in the novel it is not all women who immediately jumped on the bandwagon of the "New Woman". When Stoker wrote *Dracula* the "New Woman" movement was not at the same level of popularity and prevalence as it would later reach. Because of this, Mina Harker's reactions to the actions of the "New Woman" seem a bit more fitting to the character in general. If the new school of thought had not spread amongst the general population yet, then Mina's reaction could easily be an expression of the women who were not pleased with the ambitions of the "New Woman". An anonymous woman wrote the following in the *Illustrated London News* on February 6th 1892:

"Home duties she has discarded as degrading to an educated woman, wifely respect she despises as the sign of craven submission to an inferior, children she dislikes as hindrances and nuisances, love is a dream fit only for lunatics and idiots. What she wants is freedom to do as she likes - the key of all the fields of life, not barring one...The two objects of her ambition are - to have plenty of "oof," no matter by what means, and to be as much like a man as it is possible for a woman to make herself"
(Klinger 158)

Most change is difficult to achieve, and statements from women such as the previous one certainly illustrate that point quite clearly. If the ideas of the "New Woman" were too much for women who simply desired to be subservient to their husbands then it certainly presented some obstacles for the political movement to overcome in order to be taken seriously by the general population.

Stoker himself was not a strong proponent of feminism throughout his life. While he maintained contact with several writers who were supporters of the "New Woman" movement, Stoker himself was, apparently, unconvinced by their arguments about sexual equality. David Glover comments on this in his book *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals*:

"...However, Stoker redeployed their tropes and devices, turning them against the women's movement and pressing home sharply revisionist conclusions. No matter how chivalrous or romantic his literary sentiments were, he seldom missed an opportunity to excoriate the presumption of sexual equality. Moreover, whereas Stoker's own

brand of Liberal politics seems always to have been staunchly antifeminist, his convictions hardened appreciably as the decade wore on." (Glover 106)

Stoker's opinions about the ideas of gender equality were shared by many people at the time of the publication of *Dracula*. How Stoker's personal opinions reflect upon the characters of his novel, and how they deal with various political issues will be discussed in greater detail below.

Dracula is not the first gothic novel that deals with vampires and their abilities. While Stoker's novel is certainly the most prevalent and well-known of the vampire novels, there are other examples of vampires appearing as the villains of gothic horror stories before the publication of *Dracula*. This ends up helping Stoker's narrative since many of the vampire "rules" are already somewhat established from folklore as well as previous vampire novels and stories such as Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* from 1872, *Varney the Vampire* by James Malcolm Rymer between 1845 and 1847, and *The Vampyre* written by John Polidori in 1819. Because the readers of *Dracula* are usually familiar with vampires from previous encounters, it meant that Stoker was able to have Count Dracula work behind the scenes in the novel. The fear of the vampire being the driving force of the novel rather than actually seeing the actions of the vampire himself. Naturally there are sequences that feature Dracula himself, especially the early chapters from Jonathan Harker's journal where Dracula plays a prominent role. Overall, Stoker makes extensive use of older folklore about vampires in general, and if the reader is already familiar with parts of the established vampire lore, then several parts of the book become enhanced by that knowledge. This is especially true for modern readers who tend to be very familiar with vampires in general because of the many years where vampires have been staples of the horror genre. At the time of the publishing this was further reinforced by Stoker's choice of geographic location for the novel to take place. From Stoker's personal notes in his original manuscript for *Dracula* it appears that Stoker had several different locations in mind and ultimately ended up settling on Transylvania as the setting for Dracula's castle. From Stoker's notes it appears that he was initially set on using Styria as the location of his novel rather than Transylvania. This is the same location as the vampire Countess Mircalla Karnstein from the novel *Carmilla* lives. The point to take away from this note is that Stoker was keenly aware of the importance of the setting when it came to creating his monster. By selecting a region that is the focal point of a large number of myths and stories about supernatural occurrences it allowed Stoker to start the readers off in a certain state of mind. Transylvania ended up being the final choice, this was also a region with a rich folklore about the supernatural, as well as being a

battleground for a variety of conflicts over the course of history. It is this history Count Dracula entertains Jonathan Harker with when they first meet and discuss the world at Castle Dracula. Victorian readers that had any previous knowledge of the location would probably be drawn further into the mystique of the novel simply through the power of the setting. The same occurs to a modern reader, with the exception being that Victorian readers were drawing upon their previous knowledge of the region and the customs and folklore, while modern readers recognize the connection between vampires and Count Dracula himself. When readers pick up *Dracula* today they draw upon this experience and quickly find themselves in a position where they understand far more about what is going on in the novel, than the characters within the novel itself. To be fair, there are situations in the novel where any reader fully comprehends what is happening, while the characters are left in the dark about the events that are transpiring around them. This is a consequence of the reader being privy to more information than the characters in the novel simply by having access to all of the available accounts of the events that have transpired in the novel. But the cultural history of the vampire is certainly also very useful to the reader when attempting to decode the events of Stoker's novel.

As mentioned above, there are many potential readings of *Dracula* especially when factoring in the different time periods where the novel has been read. By examining the methods Stoker used in the novel in the historical context of given reader it gives us insight as to why vampire novels have managed to maintain a high level of popularity throughout the course of history. This in turn means that the analysis of the text in the following pages is focused on analysis of culture and historical context. By placing *Dracula* in the context of a given reader, it will allow us to learn more about how the novel has continued to be effective over the years. Another way of examining the novel and its content is by comparing it to similar pieces of vampire fiction and how these newer (and older) vampire narratives place themselves in relation to *Dracula* itself. We will be examining the major themes of *Dracula* from several different perspectives. First and foremost we will be examining a given theme in the historical context within which it was written originally. This should be quite useful as a way to enlighten us about what Stoker himself was thinking while writing the novel, and what his original intentions with the novel were. Once a given theme has been placed in relation to the original historical context we are then able to proceed to a different historical context in order to examine how a given theme changes when viewed from a different perspective. As the world has changed, so has the way readers view events of the novel.

The vampire in literature has changed greatly over the years. From its original role as a monster and villain of the gothic horror genre, it has continually changed and warped as authors sought out different ways to enhance the readers experience of the vampire, as well as how to update the vampire to fit the desires of contemporary readers. By comparing and contrasting the original gothic horror stories featuring vampires to modern interpretations of the vampire character we can see how the nature of the vampire has completely changed over the years: From a monster of gothic horror, to a tall, dark, stranger who is forced to live in secret, isolated from the rest of society.

Analysis

In order to understand the way the vampire has changed, we must first examine the key elements of Stoker's narrative. By examining the main themes in various contexts they should be able to shed some light on the evolution of the vampire story in relation to the historical context surrounding them. The primary themes we will be examining below will be sexuality, feminism, homoeroticism, cultural fears and colonialism (as well as reverse-colonialism). Each of these various subjects will be examined in two different historical contexts. The first will be how the given subject was perceived by the original readers of the Victorian age and by extension, how Stoker himself most likely intended his novel to be viewed by his contemporaries. The second will be a modern reading of the events of *Dracula* specifically focusing on Vampire stories from the late 1980s and up until the present day. By comparing these two periods in time it should be easier to unravel which parts of the vampire story have stood the test of time, and which parts have been discarded or altered in favor of an altogether different angle of approach.

Sexuality in *Dracula*

Vampires are almost always sexual creatures by their very nature. While there are outliers in the form of vampire stories which feature vampires who are barely more than mindless beasts who hunt the living for sustenance, the sexual and civilized vampire is far more prevalent in literature. As mentioned above, the concept of a vampire biting a non-vampire (or even other vampires) is charged with sexual energy. Many recent film interpretations of vampire lives depict the act of biting as the vampire latching onto the victim, and the victim lashing in delicious agony. Instead of crying out in pain which would seem to be the natural response to being attacked and bitten by a predator, the victims instead embrace the vampire attack in what can often be described as ecstasy. This image is one that can also be found in *Dracula* particularly when it comes to Dracula's

dealings with Lucy Westenra in the novel. The initial interactions between Count Dracula and Lucy Westenra depict Lucy as being in a sort of trance. Dracula's power over Lucy is tangible and leads Lucy into his clutches. But Lucy's resistance is not all that prevalent in the situations, while she is entranced, she longs for Dracula. After Dracula bites Lucy the first time, Lucy attempts to cover up the markings from Dracula's fangs. This seems to be done subconsciously as part of Dracula's spell over her, but it could also be read as a woman attempting to cover up evidence of adultery (Klinger 200). One of the key passages surrounding the attempted cover-up of these markings, well as giving several potentially sexual indicators occurs when Mina Harker discovers Lucy sleepwalking in Whitby:

"When I bent over her I could see that she was still asleep. Her lips were parted, and she was breathing, not softly as usual with her, but in long, heavy gasps, as though striving to get her lungs full at every breath. As I came close, she put up her hand in her sleep and pulled the collar of her nightdress close around her, as though she felt cold...I must have been clumsy in my anxiety and pinched or pricked her with it, for by-and-by, when her breathing became quieter, she put her hand to her throat again and moaned." (Stoker 133)

This is Dracula's first "attack" on Lucy. Lucy's reaction certainly doesn't resemble the reaction a person would have to being bitten by a predator, but instead it is closer to the reaction of a person languishing in post-coital ecstasy. At this point in time in the novel, the reader will be aware of the vampiric tendencies of Count Dracula. Jonathan Harker's journal entries describe him finding Count Dracula in his tomb with fresh blood on Dracula's lips. While a similar attack has certainly happened to Lucy at Whitby, Lucy's reaction to the attack is the key to identifying the situation as sexual. This sexual interpretation of the events that transpire at Whitby are further reinforced by Lucy's sleepwalking. Lucy longs for Dracula, since she is firmly under Dracula's spell while she is asleep, but makes no indication that anything is wrong while awake. Curiously Lucy's reactions following Dracula's attacks vary a bit within the novel. Ranging from the near sexual ecstasy immediately following the attack in Whitby to ghastly paleness and weakness following some of the attacks back at the Westenra estate. The morning following the first attack contains the following observation by Mina Harker about Lucy's condition:

"All goes well. Lucy slept till I woke her and seemed not to have even changed her side. The adventure of the night does not seem to have harmed her, on the contrary, it

has benefited her, for she looks better this morning than she has done for weeks."
(Stoker 135)

This is quite an observation by Mina Harker. Lucy looking better following her ordeal is certainly interesting considering Dracula drained some amount of blood from Lucy during their encounter in the night. It seems very curious that Lucy should appear healthier having suffered through that. This reinforces the idea of the vampire's bite being something very different from a regular attack. Instead this is an additional situation where Lucy seems to be basking in some form of post-coital bliss (Klinger 160-161). Similar to Lucy's reaction to the attack, Jonathan Harker experiences a similar situation earlier in the novel. When Jonathan was at the mercy of Dracula's brides at castle Dracula, he felt a deep longing for the "attack". He wanted to be bitten or "kissed" as he perceived their intentions. This longing feeling certainly recalls a strong sexual connection between the vampire and the victim. In her article "Suddenly Sexual Women in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" Phyllis A. Roth describes the relationship between vampirism and sexuality in the following way:

"The equation of vampirism with sexuality is well established in the criticism. Richardson refers to Freud's observation that "morbid dread always signifies repressed sexual wishes". (Roth 31)

Dracula certainly exemplifies this feeling of "morbid dread" but Roth goes on to draw attention to the anticipation that both Lucy and Jonathan Harker feels in Stoker's novel. The anticipation here is key, for while Dracula, and by extension vampires in general, can certainly be considered part of Freud's "morbid dread", there is also a great deal of anticipation on the parts of the victim in Stoker's novel. Stoker's novel is filled with anticipation and "morbid dread" of all kinds. From Jonathan Harker exploring Dracula's castle, to the band of hunters attempting to unravel the true nature of Dracula's dealings there is a constant sense of danger surrounding the characters. The times this sense of danger is set aside is usually when the sexual allure of the vampires are at their fullest. Not to say that the danger or the fear truly vanishes, the harsh realities of the nature of the vampires soon shines through to shatter the illusion. When Lucy returns to her tomb and finds Arthur and the other hunters waiting for her she casts aside her monstrous state for a moment, and instead lulls the band of hunters until they fall under her spell:

"Still she advanced, however, and with a languorous, voluptuous grace, said, "Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!" There was something diabolically sweet in her tones, something of the tinkling of glass when struck, which rang through the brains even of us who heard the words addressed to another. As for Arthur, he seemed under a spell, moving his hands from his face, he opened wide his arms. She was leaping for them, when Van Helsing sprang forward and held between them his little golden crucifix." (Stoker 302-303)

The deadliness of the vampire's sexual attraction is nearly irresistible. Only Van Helsing who was aware of this power beforehand seems to be able to escape the deadly charms of Lucy's vampire form. Her wanton female sexuality is in this situation a threat to all of the present males. Particularly to her betrothed Arthur Holmwood. This is a clear example of obvious female sexuality demonstrating its power over males. The wanton, lustful creature that Lucy has become renders the band of males powerless to resist her charms. This certainly fits the profile of males being terrified of a more direct and powerful female sexuality. This particular cultural fear was quite prevalent during the Victorian Age as mentioned above. Stoker goes to great lengths to ensure that any sexual acts are carried out exclusively at the hands of the vampires of his novel. While the pure Victorian characters of his novel engage in no such fornication. Instead they retain a strict distance from one another at all times throughout the novel. This keeping of distance includes even the married couple Jonathan and Mina Harker. In spite of the two being married, they still keep to their virtuous ways and do in no way make any sexual indicators throughout the novel itself. Roth takes note of this striking difference between the two factions of the novel in the following statement:

"...Only relations with vampires are sexualized in this novel; indeed, a deliberate attempt is made to make sexuality seem unthinkable in "normal relations" between the sexes. All the close relationships, including those between Lucy and her three suitors and Mina and her husband, are spiritualized beyond credibility. Only when Lucy becomes a vampire is she allowed to be "voluptuous", yet she must have been so long before, judging from her effect on men and from Mina's descriptions of her." (Roth 33)

By making this very clear distinction between the characters Stoker attempts to make it abundantly clear that the virtuous Victorians would not become sexual deviants on their own.

Instead they would first need to be corrupted by an external force before finally unleashing their inner fiends. As Roth mentions, this seems rather unlikely simply from looking at the descriptions of Lucy in the novel. Her beauty is a talking point for nearly all of the main characters that encounter her yet Lucy is only viewed as a sexual creature when she is fully transformed into a vampire. Because of this clear dividing line, Stoker made it clear that Lucy was not to be thought of as impure in any way before she was transformed. In this way sexuality, and sexual liberation become directly linked to vampirism in Stoker's novel (Roth 33).

Lucy's reaction following her first encounter with Count Dracula is also noteworthy when compared to Mina Harker's reaction to a similar situation. While Lucy is seemingly none the worse for wear the morning after the incident (in fact quite the opposite), Mina is instead suffering greatly following her ordeal at the asylum. Klinger describes Mina's ordeal in *The New Annotated Dracula* in the following statements:

"As we will learn, during the night Mina has suffered her first attack by Dracula. Wolf (The Essential Dracula) points out that unlike Lucy, whose response to the visitation by Dracula was to sleep soundly and to look "better...than she has done for weeks", Mina suffers guilt and remorse-"surely this is because Mina is a married woman," writes Wolf. That is, the women's reactions strike Wolf as being equivalent to postcoital behaviours one might expect of women in each of their circumstances - Lucy single and satisfied, Mina married and guilt-ridden." (Klinger 360)

The civil status of each of the women having some influence over their reactions to Dracula's advances is an interesting theory. It has some merit on the basis of Victorian morals (and morals surrounding married women to this day) that the single woman should indeed be feeling satisfied following a sexual encounter with a stranger, while the married woman is suffering from a combination of guilt and remorse. Mina describes her ordeal as a nightmare that causes her to constantly dwell on past "mistakes" such as taking Lucy to Whitby where they encountered Dracula in the first place. The guilt is certainly present in Mina's thoughts since she is going down that path of reasoning. Wolf's interpretation of the events echoes the sentiments of many modern readers of *Dracula*. Since Lucy was not married at the time of her initial encounter, the absence of guilt does seem fitting. This also combines with Lucy being the more "promiscuous" of the two main female characters. While both women do engage in relations with Count Dracula, it is their encounters surrounding the vampiric attacks that are telling. Mina is loyally devoted to Jonathan with the

exception of her encounters with Count Dracula. There does not appear to be other suitors present at any point in the novel. Unless we count the amount of praise that gets showered upon Mina by the band of vampire hunters as attempts to woo Mina. Lucy however, has several suitors seeking to claim her hand in marriage. Interestingly nearly all of the band of vampire hunters have asked for Lucy's hand in marriage. With both Quincey Morris and Dr. Seward making proposals before Lucy ultimately accepts Arthur Holmwood's proposal she is certainly in the spotlight of a number of different men. To be fair, having multiple suitors request her hand in marriage certainly does not make Lucy promiscuous by definition, it is more subtle than that. The implications that Lucy is being pursued by multiple different suitors does set up certain connotations about a woman in her position. This matter becomes further complicated when one considers the issue of the blood transfusions and the sexual nature that these are seemingly granted in the novel. Mina does not undergo the same procedures involving blood transfusions as Lucy did when she was dying/changing in to a vampire. Mina's condition never gets quite as bad as Lucy's which in turn means that the band of hunters is never forced to go through with further transfusions in order to stabilize Mina. Since they drive Dracula back to his castle in Transylvania before it gets that far, there is a clear divide between the character of Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker when it comes to the purity of their relations with males within the novel. In his article "Kiss Me with those Red Lips" Christopher Craft describes these transfusions and their effect on Lucy's character in the context of the vampiric women throwing aside traditional gender roles and transforming from the party that is penetrated, into the party that penetrates:

"Countering the dangerous mobility excited by Dracula's kiss, Van Helsing's penetrations restore to Lucy both the stillness appropriate of his sense of her gender and "the regular breathing of healthy sleep", a necessary correction of the loud "stertorous" breathing, the animal snorting, that the Count inspires. This repetitive contest (penetration, withdrawal; penetration, infusion), itself an image of Dracula's ambivalent need to evoke and then to repudiate the fluid pleasures of vampiric appetite, continues to be waged upon Lucy's infinitely penetrable body until Van Helsing exhausts his store of "brave men", whose generous gifts of blood, however efficacious, fail finally to save Lucy from the mobilisation of desire." (Craft 106)

According to Craft, the real threat the band of hunters are faced with is the idea of sexual mobilization at the hands of vampiric transformation. The shift that occurs when it comes to

traditional gender roles in relation to vampirism is what truly terrified the Victorian readers of Stoker's novel. The threat of a female suddenly being able to not only take charge of sexual situations, but actually acquiring the means with which to penetrate males in order to become the dominant sexual partner evoked strong feelings of fear in the readers. This shift was unthinkable to many and extended into the fears of the "New Woman" movement as well as fear of growing female independence in general certainly amplified the effects of the threat of Count Dracula turning women into his vampiric brides. Lucy initially preys upon children after she turns into a vampire, but it is quite clear that she will soon "graduate" to adult males as her main source of prey. As mentioned above Lucy calls out to Arthur and attempts to seduce him into coming to her and letting her penetrate him through her vampiric bite. Craft underlines that Van Helsing cannot allow this situation to happen and instead stops Arthur from going to Lucy, and instead instructs Arthur on doing the ultimate act of penetration:

"Van Helsing will repeat, with an added emphasis, his assertion that penetration is a masculine prerogative. His logic of corrective penetration demands an escalation, as the failure of the hypodermic needle necessitates the stake. A woman is better still than mobile, better dead than sexual." (Craft 106)

Interpreting the act of staking a vampire as an act of sexual penetration is certainly not unheard of, nor unthinkable in the context of modern vampire stories. Female vampires reactions to the stake can often be seen as somewhat sexual. The suddenness of the penetration and the surprised scream from the vampiress' mouth as the penetration occurs isn't altogether that far from a scream of sexual ecstasy. An example of this is found in the modern movie *Van Helsing* from 2004. While this is certainly a very action-centric depiction of Van Helsing compared to the character from Stoker's original novel, it does contain several instances of Count Dracula's brides getting staked by the eponymous hero of the film. The first of Dracula's brides that is killed by Van Helsing in the film is shot by a crossbow bolt dipped in holy water, the brides reaction to this shot is nearly orgasmic, as is her excessive panting as she slowly crumbles to dust after being struck by a series of anointed crossbow bolts (Sommers). Penetration and sexual power are seemingly linked when it comes to gender roles and is the answer to the question: "who has the power in the sexual relationship?" Basically this means that traditionally the male assumes the dominant role because of the ability to penetrate while the female is subservient to the male because she lacks this power. Dracula's power changes the females to the point where they are suddenly able to penetrate males

which creates a feeling of "morbid dread" within the male reader of *Dracula* (Craft 106-107). The act of hammering a stake into a vampire reasserts the "penetration-relationship" between the involved parties to their natural state. Craft describes the act of staking a female vampire in this manner as a violent return to a natural (according to Van Helsing and Victorian males in general) state:

"One might question a mercy this destructive, this fatal, but Van Helsing's actions, always sanctified by the patriarchal textual tradition signified by "his missal", manage to "restore Lucy to us as a holy and not an unholy memory". This enthusiastic correction of Lucy's monstrosity provides the Crew of Light with a double reassurance: it effectively exorcises the threat of a mobile and hungering feminine sexuality, and it counters the homoeroticism latent in the vampiric threat by reinscribing (upon Lucy's chest) the line dividing the male who penetrates and the woman who receives." (Craft 107)

The way the act of staking Lucy to her tomb is described is quite heavy-handed as a metaphor of putting the traditional gender roles firmly "in their place". By literally hammering Lucy down onto her tomb where she is no longer a mobile sexual threat balance is restored and the people who clung to traditional gender values felt a bit safer in the knowledge that containing threats like Lucy was in fact possible thanks to the brave band of vampire hunters. This speaks to a large degree of uncertainty within the readers of *Dracula* at the time it was written. If Stoker felt that this staking was needed in order to reinforce and secure traditional gender roles then some amount of uncertainty and worry had to be present amongst the population (Craft 108). The stake itself is certainly a highly phallic object with which to drive home this point. Stoker also goes to great lengths to describe the changes that occur to Lucy after she is staked in her tomb:

"There, in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing we had so dreaded and grown to hate that the work of her destruction was yielded as a privilege to the one best entitled to it, but Lucy as we had seen her in life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity." (Stoker 309-310)

Lucy is certainly described as having returned to her usual state of being, in death she returned to purity and innocence, free of Count Dracula's influence and back in her traditional role as a sexually submissive and innocent female rather than the ravenous creature that she was merely moments

previously. This remarkable change that occurs with Lucy echoes the changes that happened to her appearance earlier in the novel when she was fully turned into a vampire.

An interesting indicator of the change that occurs in Lucy is how the description of her appearance changes depending on which state she is in. Before she transforms her hair is described as light and fair: "He had even brushed Lucy's hair, so that it lay in sunny ripples." (Stoker 229) while following her transformation this description suddenly changes to "a dark-haired woman, dressed in cerements of the grave." (Stoker 301). The contrast between light and darkness within a single person is quite striking in relation to Lucy's imminent transformation. The changes to her appearance end up matching her descent into darkness. The change in color also gives the reader another clear visual indicator that Lucy has in fact undergone a significant change. This change is not only how she behaves, but also her appearance. The "bloofer lady", as Lucy is called by the children she preys upon, is not the same girl as the Lucy Westenra who loved Arthur Holmwood and rejected to proposals of Quincey Morris and John Seward. She has instead changed into a "child of the night" who now fully in the clutches of Dracula and will serve Dracula until she is vanquished.

The ritual which the hunters perform to liberate Lucy's soul from the horrible fate of the undead also contains several clear sexual indicators (Roth 32). The act of driving the stake into Lucy's heart in order to fully destroy her and "purify" her corpse from the sexual corruption of Dracula is certainly quite sexual in how it is performed. The stake itself is phallic in nature, and the fact that it must be Lucy's former husband who does the deed further reinforces the idea that the ritual is returning Lucy to a purer state of being. By having Arthur Holmwood do the work of transforming Lucy back to herself, Lucy is simultaneously returned to a normal state of sexual affairs. Arthur impales Lucy with a phallic object, and this ends Lucy's corruption and causes Dracula's corruption to release Lucy from its hold. By having Lucy back in a more normal state of sexual affairs where only her husband is allowed to penetrate her she returns to the Victorian ideal of what female sexuality should look like; submissive and faithful to a single man (Craft 102). While modern marital relations are similar to Victorian ones in the way they also emphasize faithfulness between the involved parties, the increasing level of personal freedom that females have acquired since *Dracula* was originally written means that the balance of power in modern relationships have shifted quite a bit compared to how they looked during the Victorian Age. With the increased opportunities for financial independence that have come to women over the course of the last

century, women need no longer be viewed as the submissive half of a sexual relationship. So overall the idea that the blood transfusions should constitute a form of adultery is an absurd statement to a modern reader of *Dracula*, unless of course one interprets the transfusions as being a cover-up of fluid exchanges of an entirely different nature than the ones that are explicitly described in Stoker's novel. This particular point may have some merit considering Lucy's reaction to the first encounter with Count Dracula. Particularly Lucy's actions immediately following her sleepwalking adventure in Whitby:

"Before falling asleep she asked - even implored - me not to say a word to any one, even her mother, about her sleep-walking adventure. I hesitated at first to promise; but on thinking of the state of her mother's health, and how the knowledge of such a thing would fret her, and thinking, too, of how such a story might become distorted - nay, infallibly would - in case it should leak out, I thought it wiser to do so." (Stoker 134)

What exactly is Mina afraid will leak out about the sleepwalking adventure? If the events transpired exactly as Mina describes them in her diary then it seems unlikely that anything could be concocted from the actions of Lucy and Mina. Now, one could argue that two innocent Victorian ladies should not be out and about at that time of night, and the list of reasons for Lucy to leave the house at that hour is quite short, and several of the potential answers (such as visiting a secret lover in the middle of the night) are of a problematic nature for a woman who is about to be married. Mina apparently agrees with this statement enough that she agrees to keep the whole affair a secret from everyone. An additional question that arises from Lucy's reaction is whether or not this secrecy is a product of Dracula's hypnotic spell or Lucy worrying about her own personal reputation. Since Lucy does make some attempts to cover up the wounds on her throat, it is certainly not impossible that the act of swearing Mina to secrecy is also a part of Dracula's spell in order to protect his interests, and to allow him to turn Lucy without investigation from people such as Van Helsing and the other hunters. While being faithful when in a relationship is certainly still a fixture of modern relationships, it does not have the same level of strict behavioral codes as the ones that were present during the Victorian Age. Modern readers can certainly still understand how the events of Lucy sneaking out in the middle of the night could be interpreted as something sinister, but with the vastly increased amounts of personal freedom we enjoy today it seems less likely that a modern reader would immediately jump to the conclusion of adultery.

Adultery and blood transfusions

Lucy's faithfulness is a matter that deserves some amount of investigation. Not only does Dracula end up corrupting and transforming Lucy, but in their attempts to save Lucy from the fate Dracula has planned for her, Lucy undergoes a series of blood transfusions from members of the band of vampire hunters. These blood transfusions are not treated as one would treat simple medical procedures. The amount of fanfare that surrounds each of the transfusions which end up being delivered by each of Lucy's previous suitors as well as Dr. Van Helsing makes it easy to call the nature of these procedures into question. The true nature of these blood transfusions is something that has caused debate among vampire scholars for years. What most agree on is the sense of rivalry that exists between the band of hunters when it comes to the affections of Lucy Westenra. Roth describes the nature of the blood transfusions in "Suddenly Sexual Women":

"Perhaps this is most obviously symbolized, and unintentionally exposed, by the blood transfusions from Arthur, Seward, Quincey Morris, and Van Helsing to Lucy Westenra. The great friendship among rivals for Lucy's hand lacks credibility and is especially strained when Van Helsing makes it clear that the transfusions (merely the reverse of the vampire's bloodletting) are in their nature sexual; others have recognized, too, that Van Helsing's warning to Seward not to tell Arthur that anyone else has given Lucy blood, indicates the sexual nature of the operation." (Roth 34)

This logic certainly makes a strong case for the transfusions being highly sexualized in their nature. One could argue that both blood transfusions and sexual intercourse involve the exchange of bodily fluids which puts them on a similar level of intimacy. A level of intimacy that should only exist between a man and his wife. The fact that the blood transfusions can be considered highly sexual also emphasizes the sexual nature of the vampiric activities in general. If the reversal of Dracula's attacks are considered sexual then Dracula's attacks are certainly also sexual in nature. In an attempt to maintain some form of purity in their rituals, Van Helsing is quite adamant about Arthur Holmwood being the first one to give his blood to Lucy. By having Lucy's husband give blood initially it staves off any thoughts of adultery, at least temporarily. Unfortunately for this plan Van Helsing is almost immediately forced to continue performing transfusions in order to keep Lucy alive through her terrifying ordeal at the hands of Dracula. Roth also notes that Arthur Holmwood feels that the transfusion does in fact consummate his marriage to Lucy on the basis of

their exchange of bodily fluids: "Furthermore, Arthur himself feels that, as a result of having given Lucy his blood, they are in effect married." (Roth 34)

An interesting contrast arises at this point in the interpretation of the novel. For while Stoker certainly felt that the blood transfusions that were given to Lucy were sexual in nature, this is not something that modern readers will recognize today. Blood transfusions were relatively new to medical science when Stoker wrote *Dracula* originally, but are quite commonplace today. Since the amount of blood transfusions that are needed every day in modern medicine is staggering, they are no longer viewed as anything more than a medical procedure. Completely bereft of any potential feelings or other distractions. That is not to say that a modern reader would be unable to understand how the blood transfusions could be construed as being sexual in nature, but in order to interpret them as such several alternate explanations have been given as to what Stoker was "really" describing in his novel. In *The New Annotated Dracula* Leslie S. Klinger gives the following alternative explanation of the nature of the blood transfusions following Van Helsing stopping John Seward from donating as much blood to Lucy as her fiancé Arthur had previously given:

"Van Helsing seems to be underlining that blood transfusion = sexual relations, and it would be improper for Seward to be given the same opportunities as a fiancé."
(Klinger 203)

As Klinger observes, the blood transfusions are a touchy subject when it comes to speaking about them in the presence of others, and even amongst the two medical professionals the transfusions are treated as an incredibly sensitive subject. Considering even the amount of blood that was allowed to be transfused this was certainly a very touchy subject to Stoker when he originally wrote the novel. There is a stark contrast between the Victorian Age and present day in situations such as with this blood transfusion. To a modern reader it seems pretty clear that if Lucy is anemic, then she should obviously receive a blood transfusion. Instead a modern reader would probably spend more time considering the potential medical complications of giving blood transfusions without testing the donor's and recipient's blood types in order to avoid a catastrophic mismatch which could easily have fatal consequences for poor Lucy. Klinger also takes note of this remarkable oversight on the part of Seward and Van Helsing, even though the science of blood transfusions wasn't fully explored at the time of *Dracula* there was still some understanding about potential problems arising between donors and recipients.

"Detailed studies of the causes of posttransfusion trauma were undertaken. Defibrination of blood to prevent clotting - clearly known to Van Helsing - was advanced, and some researchers began to experiment with calcium as an anticoagulant." (Klinger 195)

Klinger refers to Van Helsing's knowledge of some of the dangers that were present when doing blood transfusions on the basis of Van Helsing's comment about the nature of Arthur's blood and how it affects the procedure Van Helsing and Seward perform: "He is so young and strong and of blood so pure that we need not defibrinate it" (Stoker 176). This seems like a comment that is highly unlikely to ever be uttered by any true medical professional who had any real understanding of medical procedures. Stoker certainly was not a physician, although he did actually have some help with describing the medical procedures, we must assume that this specific comment was Stoker's and only his responsibility. The comment reeks of pseudo-religious science and it seems impossible that Seward who is himself described as a surgeon wouldn't protest against this particular medical procedure. But instead they simply proceed with the transfusion as if nothing is amiss and fortunately for all parties involved, everything goes off without a hitch.

On the subject of the purity of blood in relation with blood transfusions it is also interesting to note the order of which the hunters are chosen to donate blood to Lucy. First Arthur Holmwood is chosen, this makes sense as he is her fiancé and the one who is closest to Lucy on a personal level. Interestingly he is also the aristocrat of this little band of hunters, this means that in addition to being Lucy's fiancé he is also the hunter with the highest social status. Inheriting the title of "Lord Godalming" from his father when he passes away during the events of *Dracula* elevates Arthur above the others. Following Arthur's transfusion the hunters turn to Dr. Seward. Seward is also an Englishman and therefore apparently has rights above those of Van Helsing (who is present at all of the transfusions) who is a foreigner, and finally Quincey Morris, another foreigner. All of the men feel differently about their transfusions, with Arthur being convinced that him and Lucy are now officially married (and the transfusion was equivalent to them consummating the marriage sexually). Seward is constantly reminded that he should not have the same rights as Lucy's husband and Van Helsing even goes so far as to declare himself a bigamist following his transfusion to Lucy. Craft also emphasizes this point about the state which Lucy is in following these transfusions from various different men:

"...And Van Helsing, after his donation, calls himself a "bigamist" and Lucy "this so sweet maid ... a polyandrist". These transfusions, in short, are sexual (blood substitutes for semen here) and constitute, in Nina Auerbach's superb phrase, "the most convincing epithalamiums in the novel". (Craft 106)

By interpreting the events of *Dracula* as being metaphors or a way to cover-up certain sordid affairs between the main characters the nature of the relationship between the characters of the novel is called into question. If the blood transfusions are instead actual sexual relations then Lucy is certainly corrupted according to both Victorian and modern ideas of virtue. It also leads to new interpretations of other events that take place in the novel. Consider the situation between Jonathan Harker and Dracula's brides. Jonathan is quite overwhelmed by the desire to have the three vampire women "kiss" him. Since we have established that the vampiric relations that occur in the novel are sexual in nature it become quite clear that the Victorian Englishman Jonathan Harker is being seduced by these dangerously sexualized "women". Here we find another expression of fear and danger in relation to sexuality among Victorians. Like Lucy after her transformation, Dracula's brides represent the dangers of wanton and unrestrained female sexuality, and how the males of the Victorian age were apparently powerless to fight against such a power. When Jonathan Harker first lays his eyes upon Dracula's brides his thoughts sum up his ability to resist their allure quite well:

"All three had brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips." (Stoker 55)

Here we find another example of what Freud described as "morbid dread" and Jonathan Harker's desires towards these vampire women certainly fit the description of "repressed sexual wishes" (Roth 31). The puritan way of thinking about sexual relationships that was prevalent in the Victorian Age meant that Jonathan Harker certainly felt fear when it came to the powerful and blatant sexuality of Dracula's brides. This is in line with the cultural fear of the changing way females were perceived in Victorian England. Women gaining more power through the ability to express themselves sexually meant a significant change to the composition of society was approaching quickly. Dracula's brides are a personification of this change occurring right before the eyes of the readers of Stoker's novel. It is also worth noting that on the surface all of these scenes are heterosexual in nature, but when we look deeper into some of the situations it turns out that

there might be something entirely different present as well. The idea of homoeroticism in *Dracula* will be discussed in greater detail below.

Homoeroticism in *Dracula*

At no point during *Dracula* does a male get bitten or penetrated. This is quite interesting, because there are in fact multiple opportunities for this exact scenario to play out within the narrative. We have discussed some of the situations previously but from a different perspective, one that focused entirely on female sexuality and female victims of Count Dracula. The first example of a male nearly being penetrated in *Dracula* occurs when Jonathan Harker cuts himself by accident while shaving at Castle Dracula. Count Dracula nearly lunges at Jonathan upon seeing the blood flowing, but manages to contain himself at the last minute. What would have happened had Count Dracula been unable to restrain himself? Would this have been the first example of the Count bleeding a male dry through his vampiric bite? We have no way of knowing, but the fact that it is even mentioned in the novel is quite interesting in the context of the Victorian perception of homosexuality. Christopher Craft mentions the looming presence of potential male penetration with *Dracula* in the following comments:

"...This should remind us that the novel's opening anxiety, its first articulation of the vampiric threat, derives from Dracula's hovering interest in Jonathan Harker; the sexual threat that this novel first evokes, manipulates, sustains, but never finally represents is that Dracula will seduce, penetrate, drain another male." (Craft 96)

It is quite interesting that the looming sexual threat of Count Dracula, and later Dracula's brides is initially directed towards the male protagonist Jonathan Harker. Obviously the Count later turns his attention towards the young women in the novel, but Jonathan is the first target of the sexual pull of the vampires. This relationship is further emphasized by Stoker within the novel when Harker encounters the three brides after he falls asleep in a dangerous part of Castle Dracula. Here it is quite clear that the male Jonathan Harker actually assumes the subservient (at the time) female role in the sexual relations. Rather than the more dominant male role which the brides instead take on. They desire to "kiss" Jonathan and he deeply wishes for the brides to give him these "kisses". By using Dracula's brides as surrogates for the Count himself, it allowed Stoker to openly discuss the penetration of a male and thereby introduce what can essentially be interpreted as a homoerotic coupling under the guise of a heterosexual act since Dracula's brides are females (Craft 97). Stoker lets the situation go on right up until the point of no return, just before penetration occurs before

Count Dracula interferes and speaks the intriguing line: "How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me!" (Stoker 57). This line raises so many questions about a potential homoerotic connection between Count Dracula and Jonathan Harker. What does the Count mean when he says "This man belongs to me!"? Is Jonathan only allowed to be penetrated by Dracula? Or does Dracula simply not want the brides draining his most useful asset this early on in the process? Perhaps Dracula is convinced that he can get much more use out of Jonathan before he ultimately lets his brides have him? Or is it because Dracula's desire to penetrate others is so great that he has no regard for the gender of his intended victim, he merely wishes to grow his army of consorts in order to make his position in the world as powerful as possible. While the potential explanation of Dracula's outburst simply meaning that Jonathan would be more useful to him undamaged rather than drained is a logical explanation, it is remarkable how close the brides come to penetrating Jonathan, and how long Stoker's narrative chooses to linger at the point of no return before ultimately being stopped. Harker eagerly awaits his fate: "I closed my eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited - waited with a beating heart" (Stoker 56). Craft describes the events just before the penetration in the following way:

"This moment, constituting the text's most direct and explicit representation of a male's desire to be penetrated, is governed by a double deflection: first, the agent of penetration is nominally and anatomically (from the mouth down, anyway) female; and second, this dangerous moment, fusing the maximum desire and the maximum of anxiety, is poised precisely at the brink of penetration. Here the "two sharp teeth", just "touching" and "pausing" there, stop short of the transgression which would unsex Harker and toward which this text constantly aspires and then retreats: the actual penetration of the male." (Craft 97)

Stoker teases the possible penetration of a male several times throughout the text and each time the act is interrupted at the last second and instead maintains the traditional gender roles throughout. The second example of near-penetration occurs after Lucy has turned into a vampire. She calls to her husband Arthur in an attempt to compel him to come to her and allow her to bite him. She hides this desire under a thin veil of sweet words and hypnotic suggestions. Van Helsing is able to resist Lucy's spell at the last moment and forcibly pulls Arthur away from Lucy's demonic voluptuousness. Besides his initial encounter with a bleeding Jonathan Harker, Count Dracula does

not himself come close to penetrating another male throughout the text. Instead the vampiric sexuality is enacted purely through surrogates in the form of the females Dracula intends to bend to his will in order to create a world where the Count is surrounded by his brides who are ready and willing to do his bidding (Craft 98). By using female vampires to do the penetrating, Stoker was able to conceal any direct homoerotic links between the characters since the vampires who threaten to penetrate male victims are all female. This allows Dracula to transcend the usual boundaries of gender and instead drain males through surrogates but avoiding draining males directly. The most telling example of this comes when Van Helsing reveals that since Lucy was drained in spite of the fact that she received no less than four separate blood transfusions from members of the company of hunters, Dracula has added the strength of the four male hunters to his own strength. Craft also touches upon this point:

"Dracula drains from Lucy's veins not her blood, but rather blood transferred from the veins of the Crew of Light: "even we four who gave our strength to Lucy it also is all to him". Here, empathetically, is another instance of the heterosexual displacement of a desire mobile enough to elude the boundaries of gender. Everywhere in this text such desire seeks a strangely deflected heterosexual distribution; only through women may men touch." (Craft 98)

Craft's final statement is remarkably accurate in the context of Stoker's narrative. While it is directly expressed by Van Helsing that Dracula has now drained the blood of the male members of the Crew of Light, the Count did so through the female vessel Lucy Westenra. By setting up his narrative in this manner Stoker manages to once again avoid having to depict direct relations between males. Setups like this also makes Dracula's gender become much more fluid and changeable since he apparently does not have many scruples when it comes to who's blood Dracula consumes.

Stoker's reluctance to show direct male-on-male sexual relations make sense in the historical context of the novel. It wasn't until the later years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century that Victorians even began discussing homosexuality, and even then they didn't label it as homosexuality. Instead they used the term "sexual inversion" apparently in order to avoid stating the obvious (Craft 99). In the case of lesbian relationships Victorians still made use of traditional gender roles within these relationships. One of the two women in such a coupling was deemed to be the dominant "male" sexual partner while the other was the submissive and feminine

partner (Craft 104). These attempts at trying to place lesbian relationships with a heterosexual box were quite farfetched even amongst medical professionals of that time as George Chauncey explained:

"The early medical case histories of lesbians thus predictably paid enormous attention to their menstrual flow and the size of their sexual organs. Several doctors emphasised that their lesbian patients stopped menstruating at an early age, if they began at all, or had unusually difficult and irregular periods. They also inspected the women's sexual organs, often claiming that inverts had unusually large clitorises, which they said the inverts used in sexual intercourse as a man would his penis."
(Craft 104)

This is a clear example of how homosexuality was generally not only frowned upon during the Victorian age, but when it did occur it was usually covered up under the pretence of heterosexuality as far as it was possible to do so. By placing even blatantly homosexual relations in the context of a "normal" heterosexual relationship it shielded the "innocent" Victorians from being forced to come to terms with something that was deemed unnatural.

There is a clear contrast between the way homosexual relationships were approached during the Victorian Age compared to how they are handled in modern times. While a certain amount of prejudice and negative connotations surrounding homosexuals still exists in some cultures, the world as a whole has generally become more tolerant and aware of the existence of homosexuals within society. What this means in terms of understanding and analyzing the text is that, the idea of homosexuality was so foreign to many Victorian readers that the events that contain homosexual indicators in the text, most likely went unnoticed by a large amount of readers. But to the ones who did register the "close calls" of near penetration of males almost undoubtedly must have felt the "morbid dread" Freud described. Yet another aspect of the novel that could potentially evoke these feelings of dread within the readers, even if they weren't necessarily aware of what exactly it was that was causing them to feel uneasy. As a sharp contrast to this, modern readers seem far less likely to be overcome by a feeling of "morbid dread" when the subject turns to homosexual relations. Because such relationships have become much more common in modern times, it no longer evokes the same feelings of fear as these previously unknown or misunderstood relations did to the people of previous generations. So while sexuality and the threat of forceful penetration are still frightening

to modern readers, the idea of homosexual relationships no longer has the same weight as they did when Stoker's original novel was initially published.

The connection between vampires and sexuality has been well established by vampire scholars since vampires first made their appearance in literature. But the interesting part about the sexual nature of a vampire's bite is how the victims as well as the vampires react to it. Depending on the disposition of the victim their reactions can vary quite a bit. The reaction of the victim naturally also depends on which text is being examined. The vampire has changed dramatically over the years as multiple different writers have attempted to bring the monster to life. The reaction of the victim also reveals quite a bit about the way the author feels about a particular character. Or perhaps more accurately, how a given author thought the readers should feel about a certain character. In Stoker's *Dracula* the two primary examples are Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra. As mentioned previously, their reactions to being bitten by Dracula were remarkably different. The most logical explanation for this disparity in reactions is that Lucy was unmarried at the time of her encounter, while Mina was married as well as "taken" much more forcefully than Lucy was. Since sexuality is such an integral part of what makes the vampire tick, perhaps there is something within their sexual nature that explains how vampires have managed to change and remain relevant over the years. As Freud stated about "the uncanny", the things we human beings fear are expressions of repressed sexual desires and urges given a tangible form (Freud 6). Sexuality is a subject that is always relevant to most human beings. It is the primary purpose of life, to procreate and continue the existence and creation of more life. So it makes sense that we humans are also obsessed with sexual desires and urges. Freud emphasized this part of the human psyche as well. An explanation for the constantly changing vampire figure in literature could then be that because vampires are inherently sexual by nature, then it allows the vampire to remain relevant on the basis of this fact. While a myriad of other monsters with rich folklore also exists in various cultures across the world, not many of them are so overtly sexual as the vampire we recognize from gothic horror. The idea of being overwhelmed by an external sexual force is also a cultural fear that has persisted over the years. The idea that one's lineage and genetics will be overwhelmed by an external threat is a scary one to most cultures. This is also in line with many cultures fearing the influence of foreigners since not only are they sexual competition when it comes to procreating, but the foreigner is also a threat to a cultures way of life. If foreign customs begin to find a foothold amongst the general population, then the traditional values which a given culture has elected to embrace, suddenly become threatened. This resonates with the readers of *Dracula* since Count Dracula is certainly a foreigner who is

encroaching upon British soil with all sorts of outlandish customs. While the most frightening aspect of Count Dracula might initially be his vampiric attacks and the consequences of these attacks, perhaps the act of turning people into vampires like himself represents a different cultural fear, one that is not as directly sexual as the previously discussed fears?

Reverse colonization in *Dracula*

Fear of foreign influence is another common cultural fear that exists throughout the world. It is based in the basic fear of the unknown that most human beings experience to some degree. The idea that a foreign power changing their very way of life has been perceived as a common threat since the dawn of time. Count Dracula certainly fits the mold of a stranger who shows up with strange and outlandish customs that threaten the traditional values that the Victorians held dear. One of the ways Stoker's *Dracula* was groundbreaking was how it brought the gothic horror "home". By setting the main part of the novel in the familiar setting of London it brought the fear right into the heart of the British empire (Arata 119). This certainly helped making the threat of Count Dracula more tangible to the British readers of the late nineteenth century. By involving Dracula in the decline of the British empire an external threat suddenly becomes tangible to Victorian readers. This threat isn't quite as tangible to modern readers, since the downfall of colonialism ended many years ago. That isn't supposed to mean that fear of the foreigner is no longer relevant in the modern age. Recent events concerning refugees from warzones across the world indicate that even in today's modern world, people still aren't too happy about the idea of multiple foreigners coming to their homeland and potentially changing their everyday lives. Stephen D. Arata discusses the idea of "decline narratives" and reverse colonization in his article "The Anxiety of Reverse Colonisation":

"Dracula enacts the period's most important and pervasive narrative of decline, a narrative of reverse colonisation. Versions of this story recur with remarkable frequency in both fiction and nonfiction texts throughout the last decades of the century. In whatever guise, this narrative expresses both fear and guilt." (Arata 120)

Fear and guilt are certainly very powerful emotions, and these emotions allowed Stoker to weave a tale containing both of these elements into a highly effective horror story with a villain who personifies multiple cultural fears within a single body. Each member of the band of vampire hunters realize the gravity of their situation when they consider the potential implications of having Count Dracula living within the great city of London. Free to go about his business amongst its "teeming millions" and shape the world in the matter which he prefers. If Dracula got his wish, the

world would descend into darkness. This fear becomes all the more real because the threat is suddenly located in London. Not safely tucked away in some far off corner of the world where evil can be ignored or contained. Instead Dracula has reached the heart of Victorian society, and it is here he begins to set his plan into motion.

Arata mentions guilt several times in his analysis of reverse colonisation narratives, the main point to take away from that discussion is the idea that the British empire extended its reach to the far corners of the world, and the empire did not always treat its subjects with equal levels of fairness. The terrifying aspect of this guilt comes with the idea of the colonies turning this behavior around to be used against the people of the British empire (Arata 121). One could make the argument that the colonial countries deserved this potential turn-around as punishment for their actions while establishing the colonies in the first place. So the idea that foreign powers would return to reap what was sown was a prevalent and common fear amongst the colonial powers of the late nineteenth century (Arata 119-121). The geographical location of Stoker's novel also played a significant part in placing the events of the novel firmly in the minds of Victorian readers. By selecting Transylvania which was already an area that was under scrutiny by the public because of the amount of unrest present in the area as the location of his novel Stoker brought his novel alive in the minds of the public. It made sense that a powerful and ancient evil such as Dracula came from this region of the world. A place where there had always been conflict. Dracula himself recounts many of these conflicts to Jonathan Harker during their first meetings at Castle Dracula. Arata argues that these conflicts are ultimately what caused Stoker to place his narrative in this location:

"The region was first and foremost the site, not of superstition and Gothic romance, but of political turbulence and racial strife. Victorian readers knew the Carpathians largely for its endemic cultural upheaval and its fostering of a dizzying succession of empires. By moving Castle Dracula there, Stoker gives distinctly political overtones to his Gothic narrative. In Stoker's version of the myth, vampires are intimately linked to military conquest and to the rise and fall of empires." (Arata 122-123)

It is clear that Stoker went to some lengths to anchor *Dracula* firmly in reality in order to bring the horror that is Count Dracula to life as vividly as possible. As mentioned above, Stoker mentioned "Styria" in his notes as a potential location for his novel but ended up deciding on Transylvania instead. This location certainly had a more genuine attraction to the readers since it was a region that was already on the mind of the public. By using real world events to fuel the fires

of his narrative Stoker created a very powerful feeling of realism in his text which certainly contributed to the feeling of fear surrounding *Dracula*. Knowing that a creature of his nature came from such a war torn area certainly made for a compelling story. Arata argues that the threat of vampirism is a reference to racial strife that was prevalent in Transylvania at the end of the nineteenth century. He refers to this racial strife as: "For Stoker, the vampire "race" is simply the most virulent and threatening of the numerous warrior races" (Arata 123-124). Fear of the conquerors suddenly becoming the conquered played upon the real fears of the people of the British empire as their empire slowly collapsed. This fear was made all the more real by the amount that was being written about the general decline. Since most texts from that era dealt with empirical decline it quickly escalated to a feeling of dread that came to be associated with the idea of foreign powers growing stronger while the empire continued to grow weaker. This increase in coverage of current events is interesting when compared to the way news events are covered by modern media. Even though the world has generally become significantly more peaceful in recent years compared to previously, we still live under the impressions that the world is as violent and dangerous as it has ever been. The increased amounts of media coverage of every single act of conflict or unrest means that the amount of threats we perceive in our everyday lives multiply because we are bombarded by so many reminders of conflicts happening all over the world. Because of this, the fear of racial conflicts and foreign influence are still alive and well to this day.

Another aspect of the conflict between the British empire and Transylvania is the idea of the old world going up against the new. Jonathan Harker speculates about this conflict quite early in *Dracula* when he explores Castle Dracula for the first time: "And yet, unless my senses deceive me, the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere "modernity" cannot kill" (Stoker 53). The idea that the old world had some ancient power that the newly forged empires were unable to comprehend and fight against certainly underlines the idea of the power of the foreigner and their ability to change everything about the culture they end up infiltrating. This is especially true in *Dracula's* case since he can literally change people through the use of his powers in order to turn them into what he himself is. Overall, fear of an external foreign threat is a very common cultural fear and *Dracula* makes good use of this. It is another timeless feeling of dread that is useful not only to frighten the readers of the Victorian age, but it is also quite useful in frightening modern readers.

Conclusion

Dracula takes advantage of cultural fears. But how has the original text from 1897 continued to be relevant even to modern readers? The answer lies not only in the changing and changeable nature of the vampire, but also in the fact the cultural fears that are utilized in *Dracula* are somewhat universal fears. Sexuality is always relevant to human beings, fear of the foreigner or the unknown is another example of a cultural fear that simply continues to persist in the minds of human beings. People tend to fear what they don't fully understand, and since they don't understand something they instead become cautious of it.

Nina Auerbach wrote the following about the constantly changing nature of vampires: "Because they are always changing, their appeal is dramatically generational" (Auerbach 5). This statement was made in the context of teaching a class on vampires and coming face to face with an incredibly diverse audience of all ages. This meant that the people who were present each had their own favorite type of vampire from some point in the last one hundred years. This exemplifies the idea of the constantly changing vampire and how the countless varieties of vampires appeal to people in wildly different ways. The sexual nature of the vampire is a common denominator in many of the various vampire stories that have continued to be popular following Stoker's original novel. As mentioned previously, sexuality is a powerful selling point since it appeals to many people regardless of the historical context. The sexual nature of the vampire certainly gives the vampires an advantage over many other monsters who have different appeals. Because sexuality by itself is also quite changeable by its very nature it is able to change along with the vampires. Another crucial development when it comes to keeping the vampire relevant is the sheer amount of lore surrounding vampires and how this base of knowledge can be manipulated in order to fit the specific type of vampire a given author is looking to create or make use of in a given text. An example of this development is the slow transition away from the villain vampire from Stoker's *Dracula* and towards a more heroic version of the vampire. Since the vampire was such a fan favorite for so many years, it makes sense that the vampire eventually finds itself on the right side of the conflicts within the texts vampires appear in. Basically, vampires have transitioned from being incredibly evil villains who stood for corruption and selfish motives such as turning the entire world into slaves to the will of the vampire to tragic hero characters that should be pitied. Angel from the tv-show of the same name is an example of a vampire that has a dark past but is actively seeking redemption and atonement for his past crimes. This is essentially a classic anti-hero redemption story. While the nature of the vampire inherently leads vampiric characters towards evil since they

are somewhat forced to feed on others in order to survive, tv-shows and movies get around this problem by depicting the heroic vampires only feeding on animals or in the case of the 2003 movie *Underworld* the vampires simply own their own blood bank and get their supplies straight from there. The cherry on top of that situation is the fact that the blood is bio-engineered and isn't even harvested from human beings anymore. The vampires in that film have officially freed themselves from the bonds of vampirism through advancements in technology. This is a good example of the vampire element of a modern movie being somewhat unnecessary for the actual plot of the movie. Obviously the back story of the movie plays heavily upon the vampires, but many of the classic vampire "rules" have either been sorted out through science as mentioned previously, or are simply ignored for the sake of convenience. A good example of a rule established in Stoker's narrative but gets frequently ignored in modern interpretations of vampire stories is the idea that Dracula is unable to cross running water "at the slack or flood of the tide" (Stoker 343). This is a critical part of the novel since it requires Dracula to receive outside assistance in order to travel. Dracula basically relies on others in order to travel any significant distance since virtually any travel will require him to cross running water in the form of the ocean or a river at some point during the journey. Because modern interpretations of vampire stories are free to pick and choose which of Van Helsing's "vampire rules" they will follow it allows writers to tailor the specific type of vampire they need for a given text. The key is that by using a vampire character it evokes a great number of feelings in many audiences depending on the popularity of vampires in general at a given time. In general vampires are a subject that has fascinated readers for hundreds of years and will almost certainly continue to do so for many years to come. The ability to adapt and change along with the times is the vampires greatest strength compared to the other monsters that feature prominently in literature and movies. While many other monsters have similarly rich histories they often lack the ability to undergo changes to the same degree as the vampire does. Part of this is certainly that the vampire is one of the monsters that is quite close to being human compared to many other monsters. While vampires certainly aren't human beings, they are still close enough that they can be easily relatable to the audience. Sexual desires are present in most human beings and the same goes for the vampires. Vampires simply personify the more dangerous aspects of sexuality as well as some of the darker sides of humanity. These dark sides can then be used to warp the vampire into either a villain or a hero depending on the story. Heroes that contain a bit of darkness tend to be quite compelling since their flaws resonate within audiences who recognize the same

types of flaws within themselves. Nina Auerbach sums up the possibilities when creating vampire characters and types in *Our Vampires, Ourselves*:

"Some come to life in moonlight, others are killed by the sun; some pierce with their eyes, others with fangs; some are reactionary, others are rebels; but all are disturbingly close to the mortals they prey on. I can think of no other monsters who are so receptive. Vampires are neither inhuman nor nonhuman nor all-too-human; they are simply more alive than they should be." (Auerbach 5-6)

Because vampires can change so remarkably, they are able to constantly be relatable compared to other monsters. And because they are human beings that get turned into vampires it leaves the door open for vampires to retain their humanity and by doing so retain a good purpose in life in spite of the vampiric curse they are afflicted by. In situations like this vampires often behave quite similar to superheroes since they are often gifted with powers that echo classic superhero powers.

Overall the vampires main advantage over many of its peers in the monster world is how strongly vampires are connected to sexual desires and urges. Because sexuality is such a timeless and universal concept to human culture it means that the vampire is unlikely to ever go completely out of style. There will certainly be periods where vampires take a back seat to some of the other monsters of gothic horror, but the vampires will simply bide their time and return in a new form, ready to take its place at the head of the table of monsters.

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Abstract

Vampires have been a constant presence in literature and movies for more than one hundred years. But what is it that has granted this fictional monster such remarkable resilience and staying power? It is the constantly changing nature of the vampire that allows it to keep up with the times and maintain its position as one of the favored monsters of gothic horror and literature in general. Writers who use vampires in their work often make use of cultural fears in order to make the vampire more compelling. The advantage of using specific cultural fears tailored to a specific audience is that it is far more likely that the audience will react to the type of vampire that the writer has designed. By knowing ones audience it allows the writer to select which societal issues to touch on, thereby making the vampire a much more effective and frightening villain. Or as has become prevalent in recent years, a tragic hero with a dark past. Previously vampires were evil forces of corruption, and while this type of vampire certainly still exists in texts, it has become quite common to encounter vampires who work hard to make the world a better place, or at least vampires who are simply trying to survive rather than actively seeking to turn human beings into vampires. In this thesis I have focused most of my attention on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* from 1897. Comparing Victorian interpretations of the events that transpire within the novel to more modern interpretations tells us how the original vampire horror novel has managed to keep itself relevant in spite of it being published more than a century ago. The main focus points of this comparative analysis were the evolution of the ideas of sexuality, the perceptions of homoeroticism in *Dracula*, and finally how the threat of reverse colonization translates quite well into how Count Dracula encroaches on traditional English values. These three themes were analyzed on the basis of the historical context within which they were originally written. By examining these various dangers that *Dracula* poses in connection with the time where the novel was written it becomes easier to decipher what Stoker's motives were when he decided to include certain aspects in his narrative.

All of this leads to an answer to the question of how vampires continue to be very popular in both literature and film: writers of vampire stories have updated the vampires to fit the times constantly since Stoker's original narrative was published. While there are many other monsters from gothic horror that are also quite well known today, the vampire is one of the few creatures which has managed to keep up with the times and constantly reinvent itself in order to stay relevant. This has lead to several periods in time where vampires suddenly skyrocketed in popularity amongst the general population. These jumps in popularity are most likely indicators of when vampire writers managed to sync the idea of the vampire up with whatever happened to be going on

in the world at the time. When the audience can recognize elements from their own lives then the characters in vampire novels become much more believable and realistic.