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DRACULA

LITERARY ANALYSIS, CRITICISM, AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BACHELOR OF ARTS (ENGLISH LITERATURE AND DRAMA SPECIALISATION)

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to, through four chapters of discussion, provide a reference to the novel *Dracula* that will benefit literary enthusiasts who wish to understand the depth and vitality of the literary story, which are lost in most of the filmic adaptations. The first part of the study will look at Stoker's background and the people and events that influenced the writing of the novel. The effects of his socio-economic background will be examined along with the influence of both his feminist mother and the charismatic actor, Sir Henry Irving, both of whom provided inspiration in a subtle manner. This background section would be incomplete without mentioning the novel’s place in the Gothic tradition of literature, as well as the disputed relevance of the notorious Romanian ruler, Vlad Dracula, termed affectionately as “Vlad the Impaler”, who ruled in the middle ages. The second section will be literary based, and will explore through two chapters, psychoanalytic and feminist criticisms of the story and its characters. Issues of sexuality, repressed fears, Victorianism and gender roles are addressed by Stoker with varying degrees of subtlety. Links will be drawn between these and both the cultural context of the time and Stoker’s own social commentary. The main purpose of this analysis is to highlight to the metanarrative of the novel which has been all but lost since the story took its place in mainstream culture. It is my opinion that a grasp of the intricacies of the literary text heightens the impact of *Dracula*. The novel’s role in popular culture is more relevant than is often credited. In the third and final section, his place in culture will be discussed, along with the inspiration that the story has provided. The appeal of the myth will be considered, and thus this final chapter will tie in the importance of the literary vampire.
Introduction

Bram Stoker seems to be ignored in literary circles as a writer of any great skill or importance. In his time, the articles and columns which he used to hawk around local publications were regarded with passing interest. Indeed, had he decided not to work for the actor Henry Irving in London's Lyceum Theatre in 1878, and instead relied on his prose for income, his lifestyle may have been stark by contrast. Of the 19 books published under his name, 18 are largely forgettable, whilst one has inspired in religious proportions.

Stoker never lived to see the full effect that his novel Dracula (1897) had on popular culture. A relative success when the book emerged, it was only after his death in 1912 that the book seemed to reach a wider audience, particularly through its cinematic interpretations and theatrical adaptations. Now, some 90 years after the author's death, it is regarded as a Gothic fiction masterstroke, and arguably one of the biggest sellers in the history of the written word. However, with the ubiquity of the cultural vampire, the complexities and interpretations of the novel have been somewhat lost. Of the innumerable cinema depictions of Stoker's monster, only a couple have ever attempted to embrace the deeper issues which the story holds. The purpose of this thesis is to highlight and explore these themes across three chapters. In doing so, I wish to celebrate the literary Dracula, which has been subsumed by adaptations which have deprived those interested in the story of the nuances within the text. By providing a treatment of the resonance of the novel, it is hoped that the reader will be made more informed and aware of how deeply this story can affect.

*Dracula* has provoked literary discourse on a scale that a Shakespearean tragedy would provoke. There exists a whole current flowing beneath the ambiguous story which is unexplored by many viewers of the material, be it in a literary or cinematic setting. The vampire is really an audacious creation for an Anglo-Irish clerk to suddenly propagate. Thus, the first chapter looks at the author primarily, including some of the key events in his life that helped to spawn the concept and why exactly they had the effect that they did. By looking at Bram Stoker’s early life and times, it may be possible to gain an understanding of the mind behind this creation. What emerges in the examination of his life is not the figure of an ordinary man who fluked a globe-gobbling Gothic novel – it is one of a paradoxical figure, who was emotionally charged, aggressive at times and intensely intelligent. *Dracula* was therapy for Stoker; it was both a release and a social commentary, caused subconsciously by the resounding taboos the Victorian age and the standards it imposed. Thus, *Dracula* is as potent allegorically as it is fictionally. Stoker was always abreast of the latest developments in the world, whether it be in a technical sense (the Count shares the limelight in the story with a range of modern equipment and gadgetry) or a medical sense (psychology, blood transfusion, hypnosis etc). Stoker was a student of the modern ways, and the placement of these innovations in the story suggest that he was invigorated by them.

The psychoanalytic relevance of a story like *Dracula* cannot be overlooked, and, once acknowledged, it transforms the book into something quite extraordinary in its mordant relevance. Charcot himself, Freud’s very own guru, visited the Lyceum Theatre in the 1880s, and Stoker undoubtly met the famous hypnotist; undoubtedly,
as both Charcot ("alas that he is no more")\(^2\) and hypnosis are mentioned in the text. In
the second chapter, a psychoanalytic criticism of the novel will be provided in order
to demonstrate how resonant this interpretation is, whilst highlighting its absence in
the modern cinematic depictions. It was Stoker’s familiarity with the psychoanalytic
developments of the time which meant that he was able to best manipulate the
recrudescence of such innate fears through his text. Stoker infected the tale with the
most instinctual anxieties of our sexuality, for it is from these that the novel would
terrify in a manner which struck the very core of our unconscious minds. These
manipulations will be given attention alongside the psychoanalytic criticism, in the
following chapter. Although volumes could be filled with theories related to this
approach, only the most potent and important concepts have been provided here to
avoid any of the discursive pomp which can mar an otherwise enjoyable exegesis.

Also, Dracula was cutting-edge in its resonant feminism which courses
through it regularly. The depictions of the two sexes are violently inverted and
distorted on a number of occasions and, once again, can be viewed as Stoker’s
reaction to the Victorian paradigm in which he lived. By examining the
representations of the genders, it is hoped that the reader will appreciate the social
aspects of the time, and how bold a proposition Stoker’s novel was.

The full effect of the novel, in cultural terms, will be examined in the fourth
chapter, where the literary and cinematic impact of the monster is discussed. The
vampire is an attractive prospect in today’s mass consciousness – he is treated with
James Bond-like reverence and interest. In conclusion, it will surmise the appeal of
the vampire, and how it has succeeded in captivating the world in the manner it has.

quotations from the text of the novel will be referenced with the page number in brackets immediately
after the quote. The edition being referenced is this annotated version, edited by Maurice Hindle.
By the end of the main text, the reader, it is hoped, will have a greater awareness of Stoker's achievement with this novel, and will thus realise its importance and strength. Essentially, the goal is to show that Dracula is something of a cultural iceberg – and this thesis shall hopefully expose the submerged parts.
CHAPTER 1

Bram Stoker, Gothic Fiction and the Writing of Dracula

Everything must have a beginning...and that beginning must be linked to something that went before. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of a void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself.

--Mary Shelley, preface to Frankenstein, 1831.

By acknowledging the background of the author, one can immediately achieve an understanding of context and metanarrative, with which the effect of the story is accentuated. We begin this exploration of the literary Dracula by attempting to understand Bram Stoker, seeing the roots of this inaugural vampire story, his placement in the Gothic canon, and how the people around him were so influential as to be manifested within the text and its characters.

Born in 1847, Stoker spent his early years in the terraced family home on the North-Dublin city suburb of Clontarf. The third child of seven, he was named Abraham after his father who was an employee at the chief secretary's office in Dublin Castle¹. It was his mother Charlotte, however, who would have the most compelling influence on his life for a number of different reasons.

Charlotte Stoker (nee Thornley) was an intriguing character. Strong-willed, determined and devoted to her sons, if less so to her daughters ("did not care a tuppence")², she was highly active in promoting the rights of women at a time when it

² Raymond T. McNally & Radu Florescu, In Search of Dracula (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 137.
was quite audacious a topic. Stoker seems to have been tainted by this political stance and, as we will see, he represents the women of *Dracula* in a manner that suggests he viewed women in an unconventional manner. Although a typically Protestant Anglo-Irish family, Charlotte was keen to instil something of her traditional 'Irishness' in her children. The socio-cultural grouping to which they belonged was an ambiguous one; Stoker, from a young age knew of this ambivalence and accepted that he was essentially English, but stained with the quintessentially Irish mindset of romance and rebellion.

For the first eight years of his life, Stoker was confined to bed. Due to an unknown illness, he had not felt the sensation of walking until he was nearly nine years of age. The nature of the disease has never been diagnosed, neither was his full and quite sudden recovery, leading one to believe that the symptoms were largely psychosomatic. Whatever the cause, Stoker was obviously effected by the sensation of relying upon a fixed abode for survival, as echoed in the Count's dependence on his coffin and home soil. Similarly, it is no coincidence that most of the novel is concerned with a strange undiagnoseable ailment. It was here too that other seeds of effect upon his muse would be sown. Firstly, he was very well read by the time he recovered, making great use of his father's extensive book collection. Charlotte was a woman who was very much in touch with the Gaelic tradition of story telling and folklore. She would regale the week and bed-ridden Bram with tales of fairies and fantasy from her childhood. She was a Sligo woman, and had spent most of her childhood growing up there. She had promoted Irish culture to her children and Bram in particular was enamoured with it. In his first novel, *The Snake's Pass* (1890) he depicts a story set in the west of Ireland with admirably well-observed dialect. But

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Charlotte was also fond of telling Bram another type of story before he went to sleep at night. She would often recite stories from her childhood of the dreaded cholera epidemic that swept through the continent and onto her native Sligo. During the early 1870s she transcribed these in a letter to her son from France, where she and Abraham Snr now resided for financial reasons. Bram intended to use the materiel for a horror story of sorts and she subsequently sent him the details which make for an implicit horror tale of their own. Stoker's adapted version appeared as a short children's story "The Invisible Giant" in the collection Under the Sunset (1881)⁴.

Many of the key elements of Dracula's elusive terror have obviously been fashioned from the invisible threat of the cholera, as described in this letter. Charlotte speaks of a "new and terrible plague"(498) which was passing through the continent. But there are various lines in particular which lay down the blueprint, if not the physical embodiment, of the vampire threat for her son. That sense of impending danger and the horror felt by the characters as they gradually learn more about what they will face seems to echo some the descriptions that Stoker's mother provided. For example; "It's bitter strange kiss, and man's want of experience or knowledge of its nature, or how best to resist its attacks, added, if anything could, to its horrors." (498-499).

This compliments the sensation felt by the characters of an unfolding menace and, thus, the terror of the pestilence suddenly takes on a new potency. One of the most bluntly discomforting scenes in the story is immediately after Lucy's death, where Van Helsing informs an unaware Dr. Seward that her death is merely the beginning. Stoker knew the resonance of being 'in-the-know' and that sometimes, as his mother duly pointed out in the above extract, ignorance can be bliss. This is an

example of the subtle tools that his mother surreptitiously highlighted, through the letter, of how to create genuine terror in a scenario. Van Helsing catalyses the tension by asking his colleagues to be patient and all will be revealed when they are ready.

The sense of something as dangerous as cholera, or indeed, a vampire, gradually making its way through far and unknown lands to one's doorstep is a regularly played upon motif. Just as Dracula travels through Europe, infecting and sapping life as he goes, so too did the cholera plight as Charlotte described,

Rumours of the great plague broke on us from time to time, as men talk of far-off things which can never come near themselves, but gradually the terror grew on us as we heard of it coming nearer and nearer. 'It is in France,' they said. 'It is in Germany,' and 'It is in England.'(499)

This feeling of the enemy, be it mortal or immortal, slowly gaining ground on one's territory, creates that most paralytic of responses – insecurity. However, these stealthy influences on the efficacy of Stoker's horror writing are applicable to any well-scribed thriller. But what of the particulars of the vampire itself? Evidence can be seen in the same letter of various characteristics of the monster, and for some of the profound imagery upon which the traits of Dracula are based. For example, describing how victims were treated, Charlotte observed, "They [the villagers] dug a pit and... pushed him living into it."(499) This resonates in the novel implicitly – the notion of the 'Un-dead', inhabiting a grave, whilst still animate. Similarly, another particularly memorable anecdote from her Sligo memoirs depicts a local Sergeant, who awoke from his coffin after a blow was administered to his legs, in order that the undertakers may be able to break them and "fit his huge stature into the coffin"(501). He made a full recovery from a shallow grave. Many were buried alive, and were seen by Stoker's mother to be writhing under the soil. Like the vampiric tendency to be

5 Stoker had originally intended to call the book 'The Un-Dead', even when he had signed a contract with publishers Archibald Constable & Company on March 20th, 1897. He only changed the name to Dracula at the very last minute.
selective in choosing a victim, Charlotte noticed, "One house would be attacked, and the next spared."(499).

There were other people and incidents in Stoker's life which helped to shape the story of Dracula. Stoker entered Trinity College, Dublin, in 1864. His illness now behind him, he seemed to make up for lost ground and become a sensational athlete. He fitted in immensely well to college life, becoming widely popular on campus and being elected president of the Philosophical society. It was here that he not only once gave a lecture on sensationalism in fiction and society, but also spoke out on the right of women to have the vote. It was around this time that the young Stoker would first encounter that other great influence in his life; the physical embodiment of Count Dracula – the actor Henry Irving.

One evening in August 1867, Stoker attended a performance of The Rivals in Dublin's Theatre Royal, in which Irving was starring. The young man was captivated and enchanted by the actor's aquiline features and charisma. This would be the beginning of something akin to an obsession for the impressionable Bram. He graduated the following year and again saw Irving in the comedy Two Roses, accompanied by the younger G.B. Shaw. Both became involved in drama criticism, but on Stoker's part it was a reaction to the scarcity of press that Irving's performance had received. He offered to write reviews, for no remuneration, for the Dublin Mail, thus beginning his colourful writing career.

By 1878 Stoker was married to Florence Balcombe, a childhood acquaintance of Stokers, and reputedly one of the most beautiful women in Dublin. She had turned down the proposal of a young Oscar Wilde, who subsequently fled Dublin, broken-

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6 McNally & Florescu, In Search of..., 138.
7 Ludlow, A Biography..., 47.
8 Ibid.
9 Stoker, Dracula, ed., Maurice Hindle, xxii.
hearted, to pursue his career. Although undoubtedly the more talented of the two, it should be noted that in _A Picture of Dorian Grey_, Wilde had created his own Gothic saga about a character who retains their youthful vitality by sapping it from others. Both men were literary disciples, who had places in their hearts for both Walt Whitman and Henry Irving.

The couple went to work for Irving in London. Irving and Stoker had become firm friends prior to this, and it would seem that the actor appreciated the praise his young admirer would sing him. Irving undoubtedly was the structural template for the character of Dracula. Stoker’s early reviews portray Irving as something of a larger than life character. Tall, austere and flamboyant, his power over Stoker was quite immense. Echoed in the trance-like dominance the Count has over Renfield, Stoker was so affected by one of Irving’s impromptu after-dinner recital of the Thomas Hood poem _The Dream of Eugene Aram_, that he reportedly, “burst into something like a violent fit of hysterics”.

Irving adored such acclaim and attention. But Stoker did more for him and his Lyceum Theatre than Irving could acknowledge. Both a confidant and private secretary for some 27 years, he described their friendship “as profound, as close, as lasting as can be between two men.” A Spartan worker, Stoker managed the theatre and turned it around into a reputable business. He introduced the process of numbering expensive seats, whilst opening up the ability to take bookings and marketing the place through advertising and giving advanced notice on upcoming

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10 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 141.
attractions\textsuperscript{13}. It could be said that it was Stoker's keen business acumen which helped to mould the modern theatre.

Whilst doing all of this, and trying to raise a son (predictably named Henry), Stoker continued to investigate vampirism and the Gothic literary tradition. His notes show the sources he used in the years of research invested into the formulation of the story; books on the occult, superstition and Eastern Europe\textsuperscript{14}. So well read was the man, that in 1890, he had an outline for the story. Thus the writing of Dracula commenced at Whitby, Yorkshire, where he used to spend his summers, away from the London heat. The seven or so years spent on the task compliment the fact that he was editing continuously, digesting facts he had come across and making amendments to the intricacies of the plot.

Already we have seen some of the more subliminal influences on Stoker's creation of the horror story, such as his mother, his employer and his socio-economic background. But what of the already established Gothic style? Although it was Stoker who has made the myth the household name it is today, he by no means invented the vampire.

The Gothic is of course clearly noticeable by its emphasis on dark, supernatural matters and tends towards themes of cruelty and horror, whilst being encapsulated within a wide romantic perspective. Both the vampire and Frankenstein's monster seem to have been created at the same time, and more bizarrely, in the same place too! The now popular story goes that Mary Shelley, her stepsister and husband, along with Lord Byron and his personal physician John Polidori, had gone on vacation to Cologny, a small village outside Geneva during the

\textsuperscript{13} Ludlum, A Biography..., 50.
\textsuperscript{14} Clive Leatherdale, Bram Stoker's Dracula Unearthed, (Essex, Desert Island Books, 1998) 19. A fascinating reproduction of Stoker's sources for Dracula, as they appeared in his notes is provided here.
summer of 1816. Atrociously wet weather dampened their spirits so much that they were forced to amuse themselves by staying indoors and reading horror stories. One night, June 16th, as a thunderbolt struck down a tree in the gardens, Lord Byron began reading ghost stories in a Dionysian manner, whilst his younger lover Polidori spoke of the latest innovations in the field of science and more particularly, electricity. Heavily under the influence of laudanum (opium), challenged those present there on that evening to write a truly timeless and chilling Gothic masterpiece. Shelley eventually produced *Frankenstein* and in doing so, presented a new possible factor in the genre – science. She had now suggested that there can be horrors which we create ourselves, whilst there can be the type which science cannot explain. It is likely that she inspired Stoker through both this intertwining of science and the supernatural in the plot, and her distinct narrative structure. *Frankenstein* is told through many frames of reference; similarly, *Dracula* is told by many different angles, in the form of mere diary extracts and journal clippings, meaning that Stoker can create immediate discomfort through the sheer lack of reliability (this was a staple part of the Gothic fiction paradigm, and one which has been subsequently used, even in modern film making). Science is given a place in *Dracula* too, Van Helsing and Dr. Seward being the principle exponents of medical expertise, blood transfusions and technological innovations.

Vampire novels became somewhat of a craze in popular English literature around the 1840s. It is thought that Joseph Sheridan LeFanu’s (1814 – 1873) *Carmilla* was the book that brought the myth to Stoker, given that its author was Irish. Published in 1871, it tells of an almost lesbianic between a young heroine and her vampiric countess, who although eventually killed, haunts the girl continuously. It is

16 McNally & Florescu, *In Search of...*, 142-143.
17 Ibid., 139.
uncertain as to which Gothic literature Stoker actually read and was influenced by, but LeFanu’s novel was definitely one which seemed to make an impression on the then unpaid theatre critic. Thus Stoker was indebted to the flourishing Gothic tradition of the time.

Stoker also had a close friendship with the prominent orientalist Sir Richard Burton. Burton had translated the Eastern manuscript *The Arabian Nights*. This included a Hindu vampire tale. Although their friendship lacked the intensity of that with Henry Irving, Burton none-the-less made an impression on Stoker. In one description, he describes how impressed he was by Burton’s particularly canine teeth. All of this information portends to the fact that Stoker had researched the myth studiously, and had taken note of the international resonance of the vampire. In his characteristic broken English, Van Helsing makes the point,

> Let me tell you, he is known everywhere that men have been. In old Greece, in old Rome; he flourishes in Germany all over, in France, in India, even in the Chersonese; and in China, so far from us in all ways... (307).

One source that appears in Stoker’s notes is the article written by Emily Gerard entitled *Transylvanian Superstitions* that appeared in the *Nineteenth Century Magazine* in 1885. Stoker also contributed articles to the same periodical, so it makes sense that he should come across it here and take note of the author’s depiction of the land. She makes reference to *Nosferatu*, as mentioned in the novel by Van Helsing as the name given to the monster in Eastern Europe. It was here too that Stoker would have become acquainted with the idea of the vampire casting no reflection. The Count however, is not entirely analogous to the Romanian folkloric concept of the vampire.

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It is interesting that we gradually see Van Helsing explicating the knowledge that Stoker has accumulated on the monster. He is the voice of Stoker in many ways, as we shall see in the following section. Most of this information was amassed at the British Museum, which Stoker frequented in order to study the geography and history of the land that he was to so concisely document and trace in the novel. The accuracy with which he describes the contours, the climate, the infrastructure and the mass consciousness is testament to his skills as a researcher, given that he had never visited the country. Stoker is believed to have dined on several occasions with the Hungarian scholar Prof. Arminius Vambury, who had travelled extensively and written on the ways of the land, and whom Van Helsing, once again, makes reference to as a source of information.

Given that the folklore and geography of Eastern Europe were so rigorously dissected by the author, it was only a matter of time before he came to that name. Dracula. It was in his readings, particularly of Gerard’s article, Stoker was to meet the historic Dracula.

Vlad “The Impaler” Dracula (1431 – 1476) was a ruthless prince who ruled in Transylvania with legendary cruelty. He has been the subject of much documentation, especially during the advent of Stoker’s novel and the vampire myth. The name ‘Dracole’ comes from the Romanian for Devil or Dragon, such was his reputation. Many folk tales, especially those from the German tradition, tell of a man who seemed to relish on the spilling of blood. Impalement, perhaps one of the slowest and most painful ways one can die, was his favoured form of execution, and judging from some of these tales which I have read, he seemed to invent punishments as an excuse

20 McNally & Florescu, In Search of..., 146
21 Florescu & McNally, Dracula; Prince of Many Faces, 229
22 Ibid., 34
for an execution. One of his trademark characteristics was his need to have dying people impaled near the dining table, as he found it made for a more enjoyable meal!

The legacy of the prince and his kin is only touched upon in the novel, as Van Helsing speaks of the Dracula's as "a great and noble race... though, now and again... had dealings with the Evil One." (309).

There is nothing in the book to suggest a concrete connection between the Romanian warlord and the vampire. It seems that the name, the Machiavellian reputation and the thirst for human suffering were all that Stoker took from his readings on the reign of Prince Vlad.

Several references are made to Shakespeare throughout the novel, in particular Hamlet seems to be close to the author's heart and characters are seen to make various comparisons between their situation and that of the Prince of Denmark. In the early stages of the tale, as Harker recounts his evening in the company of Dracula, he muses that the count's sudden departure at sunrise is reminiscent of a ghost; "everything has to break off at cock-crow... like the ghost of Hamlet's father." (44)
The link is made all the more potent, only a few days later in Harker's journal, as he notes

Of all the foul things that lurk in this hateful place the count is the least dreadful to me... I begin to get new lights on certain things which have puzzled me. Up to now I never quite new what Shakespeare meant when he made Hamlet say: "My tablets! Quick, my tablets! 'Tis meet that I put down." (52)

As with many of the events which befall Harker in the castle, they are mirrored quite cleverly in the lives of his compatriots at home. In one of Lucy's diary extracts from September, she makes another reference to the play, writing "Well, here I am to-night [sic], hoping for sleep, and lying like Ophelia in the play, with 'virgin

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23 McNally & Florescu, In Search of..., 193 (see appendix)
crants and maiden strewnets.” (173). These mentionings of Shakespeare and his play were more than likely the result of Henry Irving’s subliminal influence on Stoker. It should be noted that Irving’s was one of the most renowned Hamlets in the world at the time, and indeed, was one of the first roles that Stoker ever saw the actor fill. As an employee of Irving’s at the Lyceum Theatre, Hamlet ran for a hundred nights, the first theatre production that Stoker was involved in. The death of Stoker’s father, Abraham, occurred the same year that he met his friend, employer and idol.

Immediately, one can see from this collection of observations on the novel, that Dracula is was a work inspired from many different directions, and, as we shall see, has duly inspired in as many. There is no doubt that Stoker was a spectacular academic, and was highly studious of almost every branch of knowledge available to hand. What remains now is to examine the possible interpretations of the story. This may allow the reader to develop a sense of what exactly the author was striving to communicate through the tale, and whether or not these themes were consciously dictating his direction of the novel.

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24 Ludlam, A Biography..., 50
CHAPTER 2

Psychoanalysis – a Freudian Approach to *Dracula*

It is only rarely that a psychoanalyst [sic] feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics, even when aesthetics is understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty, but the theory of the qualities of feeling.

--Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*

In his article, *The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories* (1956), Maurice Richardson says of the psychoanalytic approach to *Dracula* that “from no other does the story really make any sense”

1 Many of the films that have been produced during the 20th Century often fail to represent this psychoanalytic resonance in the story and how important it is that those approaching the book for the first time appreciate the subtext and its intricacies. It could be argued, however, that cinema is a less than ideal medium with which to communicate such subtleties, thus the importance of the literary *Dracula* is confirmed in this respect.

Psychoanalytic research was in its infancy when *Dracula* was published in 1897 but by acknowledging the psychoanalytic relevance, the story is effective on a number of levels. The vivid, Gothic imagery works on the most immediate aesthetic level, with a dialogue that is psychologically charged. But there are various symbols of meaning in the story that can become triggers for innate, unconscious fears which the reader may harbour. Whether or not this was purposefully employed by Stoker to heighten the potency of the terror, it is understood that he was aware of psychoanalysis, hypnotism and hysteria. Charcot, Freud’s teacher is credited in the text as also being Dr. Van Helsing’s mentor. Before looking at how and perhaps why

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The story is so packed with psychoanalytic references, a brief introduction to the main ideas that Freud hypothesised would be useful.

The most fundamental belief of Freud's was that people have three levels of awareness. These are the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious. Psychoanalysis, in essence, is concerned with how the unconscious mind governs our thoughts and actions, and what factors contribute to the formation of it. Within the unconscious are three constructs - the id, the superego and the ego. The id is that primitive part of our mind which seeks only pleasure, through the erogenous zone most associated with our stage of psychosexual development. The ego seeks to act as a mediator between the id and the superego; the former looks for fulfillment through sexual gratification, whilst the latter seeks to suppress these or at least keep them in check. Thus our erotic drive is an important part of our psychic energy. But it is when the drive is repressed, that it takes the form of guilt or neuroses. Freud spoke of five stages of psychosexual development, each attributing a different erogenous zone to the different stage of development. For healthy development, the parents must satisfy the child's need at each particular stage successfully, in order that they may proceed to the next stage. For example, the first stage is called the oral stage, and in this, the child's outlet for pleasure is its mouth, through which it feeds, suckles and explores. The next is the anal stage, in which the child seeks gratification through defecating. Arguably, it is the third stage, the phallic, which is the most discussed of all. This arrives at about 4 years and sees the child's libido becoming attached to its sexual organs. Freud theorises that the child wishes to be rid of the same-sex parent, so it can have its mother to itself. This is the infamous Oedipus complex.²

Those familiar with the story of *Dracula* can already see where the psychoanalytic relevance of the novel begins. Dracula is continuously represented to us, in every medium, as a highly sexual creature, who seeks gratification through forced intercourse with the women of the novel, to the humiliation of the men who try to protect them. But this intercourse is not of the conventional kind. The Count could be seen to be stuck at a regressively infantile stage of psychosexual development – the oral stage. His pleasure derives from using his mouth and teeth. Sexual and culinary pleasures have always had an association of sorts, given human tendency to engage in kissing and love biting as part of the sexual act. Dracula could be viewed as being childish and infantile. The reader sees examples of this through his primitive hungers and his desire to adopt some identity, namely the quintessential ‘Englishness’ that Harker exudes. Paradoxically, he is also one of the two father figures of the story whom we will look at shortly. Van Helsing, the other father figure, describes the Count as having a brain similar to a child. The oral sadism in Dracula can be viewed as the infant learning that it can damage with its teeth during the oral stage, but it is when it realises that its mother can bite back, should it try to consume her breasts, that this forms one of the strongest male anxieties according to Freud – castration anxiety. This materialises when the child fears the retribution of the parent for the libidinous impulses of its id.

Freud believed that many of the creations of *The Uncanny* were the product of such displaced fears as castration anxiety. The Gothic genre in general has been viewed as a product of what Freud called, ‘the return of the repressed’ – the underlying fear of retribution from an internalised parent is given a new and tangible

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form. He felt that ghosts and ghouls, or "the phantastic" [sic]⁴, were a secretly familiar class of terror which had links back to our childhood. Many of the ideas he states in his essay *The Uncanny*, are startling in their relevance to Stoker's novel, for example; "Apparent death and the re-animation of the dead have been represented as most uncanny themes." (369). He goes on to suggest that fear of the dead is not only a particularly strong anxiety, but an incredibly primitive one also, the worry being that the dead wish to take revenge on the living. Essentially, such fears of the supernatural can be attributed psychoanalytically as transformations of other fantasies.

The incestuous theme of the Oedipus complex is also highly potent in the novel. There are many examples throughout, leading one to ascribe roles on each character, depending on their position in the Oedipal trinity of father, mother and son. Lucy's blood transfusions involve three of the main characters donating their life-force into her, Van Helsing subsequently describing the men as all being husbands to her. When the Harkers have a child at the end of the story, once again, the heroes are fused together in the name of the child, which acknowledges all involved in the slaying of the primal, threatening father; Dracula is a typical Oedipal adversary – he wishes to take the women away from his sons and leave them with nothing. Mina, who represents something of a mother figure to all the distraught men, is his ultimate prize. Just as the Count represents the threat of parricide, it is Van Helsing who is the other father figure in the story, and the one who restores balance and resolve of the Oedipus complex. By the end of the story, Van Helsing is the only father figure who survives the adventure – Mr. Hawkins, Harker's employer, Arthur Holmwood's father, Quincey Morris (a retrospective father preserved in the name of the Harkers' son) and finally the Count, all meet their demise. These deaths are largely gratuitous.

⁴ Ibid., 349.
and do not contribute to the plot in any major way. Similarly, Mina is the only mother-surrogate to live to the end, as we see both Lucy’s mother and the Transylvanian peasant woman bowing out in the early stages of the story. The ambiguity always looms over whether the Count’s victims are children or sexual partners.

Infanticide imagery is another strong factor in the story. On a symbolic level, it is Lucy’s mother who is responsible for her death – she both removes the repulsive garlic from Lucy’s bed and opens a window through which the Count can enter. Dr. Seward describes her reaction to her daughter’s death as being less than grief-stricken; “She was alarmed, but not nearly as much as I expected... The terrible change in her daughter [does] not seem to reach her...” (157). The Count, to whom Van Helsing makes the comparison of having the intellect of a child, is finally killed by this father figure. In more graphic terms, we see the Count forbidding his three bride/daughter vampires from touching Harker, and making a concession in the form of a young child for them to devour (55). Similarly, the vampire Lucy begins her career in the novel by preying upon young children (228 – 230).

Questions must now be raised at this point regarding Stoker’s anxieties and his psychoanalytic profile. His sexuality has always been viewed with inconsistency by critics and historians. Many felt that his undivided devotion to Henry Irving was a way of fulfilling his sexual urge toward the actor. In a particularly revealing letter to Walt Whitman, another early idol in his life, Stoker confessed

How sweet a thing it is for a strong healthy man with a woman’s eyes and a child’s wishes to feel that he can speak so to a man who can be... wife to his soul.5 Thus Dracula may have been an expression of unconscious guilt for Stoker, who possibly had homosexual tendencies. The novel portrays many clues alluding to the

fact that its author was uncomfortable with female sexuality. Of all the vampires in
the story, it is the female ones which are the most vividly described and experienced.
The three vampire sisters in Harker’s journal and Lucy’s vampire are the most
horrible, while the Count is really only being referred to as an absent, faceless menace.
It was Freud’s belief that the incestuous urges of the libido at the Oedipal stage can
lead to hatred and subsequent fear through the rejection of the mother. Stoker, in this
case, may have had some unresolved repressed anxiety from his relationship with his
strong-willed mother which was returning in the form of the Count, but more
particularly, the more sensual female vampires and the flirtatious, sexually forward
Lucy. Stoker’s descriptions of these female Vampires tread the line between the
grotesque and the pornographic. The most blatantly sexual encounter in the whole
story demonstrates this perfectly. Harker describes his experience with the three
vampirellas in the third chapter, with an almost lewd account:

The fair girl went on her knees, and bent over me fairly gloating. There was a
deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she
arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal... Lower and lower
went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and
seemed about to fasten on my throat... I could feel the soft, shivering touch of
the lips on the supersensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two soft
teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous
ecstacy and waited - waited with beating heart. (54)

This presents the question: why is sexuality generally associated with evil in
the novel? Similarly, why is the sexually hungry Lucy the one who is preyed upon by
the Count before being conveyed as a paedophilic monster to be destroyed? Taking
into account the taboo regarding sexuality and promiscuity in women during the
Victorian age, the representations of the lecherous females of the story, cement the
notion that such women discomforted Stoker, and, possibly through how he emerged
from the phallic stage of development, his relationship with his mother was somehow involved. This idea will be given undivided attention in the following chapter.

Equally notable is the phallic imagery that appears in the text. Fangs are the most obvious example of this, but knives, lancets and perhaps most strikingly, stakes. The scene in which the vampire Lucy is being destroyed in her coffin, has a subtext that is hugely sexual in its phallic innuendo. Arthur Holmwood administers a blow to the heart of his partner, and the procedure is described with intensity:

The thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut... But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his un trembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it (227).

Freud speaks of a psychoanalytic phenomenon which is related to the castration complex, and one which seems to be relevant to this discussion. Vagina Dentata is an unconscious fear of the vagina having teeth with which it could devour or bite the penis. Passages such as this support the idea that Stoker expressed this anxiety unconsciously by making teeth, blood and the female orifice interconnected through the horror of the literary vampire.

Dreams and madness are core factors in the psychoanalytical paradigm. Dreams were believed by Freud to be the enactment of repressed unconscious desires and Dracula as a novel supports this by making numerous allusions to the part that dreams play in the story. Indeed, many of the characters report to being unable to fully distinguish between dreams and reality at various points in the tale. Harker, for example, dismisses the absurdities of his journey to Dracula’s castle as being unreal or merely a dream. Mere days later, in the presence of the Count, he is warned that
"There are bad dreams for those who sleep unwisely" (47). The attitudes to sleep gradually change in the course of the story. Initially, sleep is viewed as the very shield to our anxieties which Freud believed it to be, but as the horrors of the story ensue, sleep is changed into something to be feared, for it is during their sleep that the characters are more susceptible to the Count’s predations. Lucy’s sleep-walking is described as being like a weird dream, resulting, later on in the first half of the book, to her being too scared to sleep. Most telling, however, is Mina’s encounter with Dracula, after which, she reports on the whole episode that she thought she was asleep. If Dracula is to be the sexual predator that this psychoanalytic interpretation has suggested, then it may be plausible to suggest that Mina’s repressed, unconscious desires were, indeed, being fulfilled in this surreal experience.

Similarly, it is another trance-like state, hypnosis, which allows the unconscious mind to dictate the course of the story. Van Helsing administers the hypnotic state upon Mina, whereby a psychic link is established between her and the Count. Hypnotism is incorporated on a few occasions in the story, mostly towards the end and bears a parallel to the Count’s powers of seduction – it will only fully work (as in the case of Lucy) if it is invited in. The hypnotised must consent to being ‘taken’ in the same way that it seemed Lucy wished to be vampirised. Mina was more stubborn of the Count’s advances and thus, she was able to defy his powers. Van Helsing is the dispenser of these psychological innovations – as we have mentioned, he purports to being a student of Charcot, and echoes Freud’s preferred therapy method by being a sensitive listener to the rest of the characters.

Dracula is a novel which cannot escape the question of whether or not the characters are of a sound state of mind. The issue of madness, another factor in Freud’s psychoanalytic treatise, is one which appears and reappears continuously.
Again, it is Van Helsing who makes most of the relevant suggestions. He claims that all men can be called mad 'in some way or the other' (251). Accused of madness himself by none other than Dr. Seward, Van Helsing defends himself by saying “Would I were!...madness were easy to bear compared to truth like this” (250).

Renfield is, naturally, the focus of the story's implicit insanity, but by the time of his demise, the boundary between his lunacy and the fears and anxieties of the other characters is less definite. Describing Lucy shortly after appearing in the plot, Dr. Seward posits that she “makes a curious psychological study” (76). Indeed, both she and Mina are characters who are overly looked at nothing more than token females, particularly in the celluloid interpretations of the novel, whose sole purpose is to give the male characters something to rescue. This, however, should by no means the case, as shall be proved in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

Dracula, Gender roles and Victorian Sexuality

A close analysis will show that the only emotions which in the long run harm are those arising from sex impulses, and when we have realised this we have put a finger on the point of danger.


Attitudes towards sexuality and the roles of men and women in the Victorian age were rigid to say the least. Both sexes had their place in a bourgeois, oppressively heterosexual and patriarchal society, through a residing mass consciousness which prevailed. In its essence, the standard dictated that men were the bearers of energy, and were accepted as being of a mindset that required them to express this. Alternatively, women were the receptors of this energy and were obliged to resist until marriage, hence being mere vessels when the time came to receive this energy. The energy in question is obviously sexuality, and like the celibacy imposed on the Catholic clergy in medieval times, this cultural suppression of instinctual biological desires had its repercussions. I make the Christian reference\(^1\) because it undoubtedly had a part to play in the cultural depiction of women in Stoker’s time. At its most base level, women were the temptresses, a mere rib from the chest of Adam, and thus made in succession to him, the Virgin Mary being very much the exception. With the marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, a new morality swept across Britain that embraced the idealism of the royal wedding, whilst being in synch with Christian

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\(^1\) There are various religious references throughout *Dracula* - the vampire’s fear of the cross and holy water, the drinking of blood and the subsequent resurrection which comes with vampirism. Similarly, Dracula’s depiction in the novel has been looked at as being very Semitic in its representation - the pronounced nose, the preoccupation with property and money, and the all-encompassing defiance of Christianity.
evangelism. Due to the prevalent ideology that primitive instincts such as sexuality were to be repressed by both sexes in favour of a more controlled and pure family existence, prostitution flourished in Victorian Britain. This resulted in a society where women could only be one of two things – the goddess in the home, or the whore on the street.

What is often overlooked by those who are familiar with Stoker’s Dracula through the novel’s cinematic legacy is that the story was a bold statement at the time, and one which illustrated the pervasive fear of female sexuality. Novels such as Jane Eyre were allied to Stoker in his benign social criticism. Bronte’s novel was one of the first examples of a story portraying a nymphomaniac woman (Bertha Rochester), and indeed, she is likened to a vampire by the narrator in Chapter 25. The depiction is used as a contrast to the main heroine – Bertha is aggressive, lecherous and seemingly deranged. Stoker made similar use of his female characters for social commentary, but executed the task with far more impact. Francis Ford Coppola’s 1993 film adaptation, Bram Stoker’s Dracula, was arguably the first to demonstrate the bravery of Stoker’s depictions of the genders, showing the multidimensional perspective that Stoker intended. The preceding movies had favoured thickset damsels who were objects of protection and who were customary devices of the horror film genre.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the description of the three vampirellas in the fourth chapter is the most vivid journal extract of the whole novel, and indeed, the most terrifying vampires encountered. But this chapter places most of the focus upon the two central female protagonists – Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker. It is through them that the reader is provided with two polar representatives of Victorian femininity, and an outline of Stoker’s attitude towards the same. These pseudo-
pornographic entities in the novel are heavily associated with evil, and their demise is conveyed as something of a purge.

*Dracula* is a story that displays both adulation and contempt for women by means of Lucy and Mina. The two are presented to the reader as being the closest of friends yet they contrast in a number of ways. Both, however, exude qualities of the ‘New Woman’, the embodiment of a 1890s feminist movement that was in its infancy by the end of the Victorian era. Although Mina, as we shall see, was the ideal, Lucy was the woman who represented the more primitive virtues of femininity. Lucy is fickle and silly but sexually progressive in the story. She is flirtatious, leading on the advances of three suitors and poses the question to Mina in a letter “Why can’t they let a girl marry three men, or as many want her, and save all this trouble?” (81).

Although the flirtations could be shunned, the liberation of her desires should not – it must be remembered that she chooses her husband without the consent of a parent. This was most certainly not the norm at the time. She is ambivalent regarding her attitudes towards the three suitors; she wants them all for different reasons. Whilst this is happening in England, Harker is doing his best to resist the predations of the highly eroticised female ‘vamps’ in Dracula’s castle. In both incidents, it is the women who are dictating the progress of the intimacy. Between the three vampire sisters and Lucy, Stoker is very much appealing to the general Victorian fear of female sexuality. It has been a device that many Gothic writers have employed – the inversion of the gender roles. These female characters of Stoker's are aggressive, hungry and seem to

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2 Pornographic literature was popular during the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras. Charles Carrington in particular was the most well-known mogul and publisher of this genre.

3 The Oxford Dictionary defines the word ‘vamp’ as ‘woman who uses sexual attraction to exploit men’. The fact that it is an abbreviation of Vampire is included in the definition. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992).

4 Mary Shelley used a similar device in *Frankenstein*, by effeminising Victor Frankenstein in both his characteristics and the symbolism of him giving birth to the monster.
be, through their vampiric predations, trying to enslave the men who have always traditionally tried to save them.

As mentioned in the previous psychoanalytic interpretation, sexual imagery abounds in this novel, and a considerable portion of the innuendos involve the character Lucy. Perhaps she was something that Stoker could funnel his moralistic ethos through, a voice to explicate his opinion of Victorian morality. If this is the case, it bodes poorly for his attitude toward female sexuality, here, an evil to be destroyed before it distorts established gender roles. Similar to the fear of immigrants during this time of colonialism\(^5\), vampires and female sexuality were suspected of making “seditious attempts to change others”\(^6\). Such anxiety is expressed through actual dialogue between characters. The warden in charge of the wolves at the zoo comments that ‘you can’t trust wolves no more nor women’ (179). Van Helsing makes many generalisations regarding the sexes, quantifying his remarks by claiming to “have studied all my life men and women” (238), and it is he in particular who makes allusions to Stoker’s attitude. He praises Mina throughout, saying in one scene

> She has a man’s brain – a brain that a man should have were he much gifted – and a woman’s heart. The good God fashioned her for a purpose, believe me, when He made that so good combination. (302)

This concurs directly with the opinion of the time, that men were the cerebral creatures and women were primarily nurturers.

As we understand, Van Helsing resembles the author in many ways – his very physical description in the story (235), his attention to detail and his huge fund of knowledge for science, art and history. So what we see in the character Mina is the ideal woman as far as Stoker was concerned. Van Helsing sings her praises, reminding the reader that she is quite exceptional in the context of the novel, her

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\(^5\) See footnote 1 regarding anti-Semitism.

attitude and behaviour compelling him to comment that “it is not always so with young ladies” (236).

It is at this point that this feminist perspective of Dracula can throw more light on the character Mina, for it could be said that she is the most important character in the story. Although we have seen that Lucy harbours some of the attributes associated with the ‘New Woman’, Mina is the very embodiment of the emancipatory movement. The movement took issue with various social restrictions on women, particularly that of a financial nature. It believed that women could be independent and have careers, thus placing their traditional role as mothers and wives on hiatus. What Stoker produces in Mina is a strong-willed, resourceful and practical thinking ‘New Woman’. Indeed, she herself makes something of a sarcastic reference to the nature of marriage, saying:

...I suppose the New Woman won’t condescend in future to accept; she will do the proposing herself. And a nice job she will make of it, too! There’s some consolation in that. (119)

Mina’s skills as a stenographer and a secretary are unquestionably vital to the eventual downfall of the Count. She collects and organises all of the documentation and information necessary to co-ordinate their attack on the vampire. She sacrificed her career for marriage, and in this, she is the quintessential New Woman. Whilst embracing the assertiveness of the New Woman, she is also the traditional, compliant female. It is she who seems to facilitate the male characters, taking pity on all of them (including the Count) and playing something of a surrogate mother to all. She comforts Arthur after Lucy’s death, and is the shoulder to cry on for most of the men during their quest to destroy Dracula. There is nothing overtly sexual about her, and one must wonder if that is why Stoker allows her to live, whilst the grotesque sexuality of Lucy is mercilessly staked. But in this progression in the tale, what
emerges as a blatantly feminist writer using the characters of a Gothic novel to make a contextual analysis of the time. Stoker embraced feminism in a most unusual manner, and one suspects that it was again, a product of his relationship with his mother.

As the first chapter highlighted, Charlotte Stoker was a feminist activist, and was always considered to be something of a robust and iron-willed woman. Mina is the ultimate personification of the politics that Charlotte infected her son with. Mina is similar to Charlotte, whilst being much more also. Where Lucy fails and Mina succeeds is in their attitudes towards men – Lucy defines her very existence on the men that propose to her, or upon who her eventual suitor will be. There is much more to Mina than this – she never seems to need the men as much as they always seem to need her. She is skilled and independent, yet fully aware of the fact that men and women are both different and does not try to disrupt the balance. She appreciates the men and loves them, but Mina always exudes such a strength of character that one almost would have faith in her destroying the Count single-handedly.

One of the most affirming moments in the book, and one that cements the importance of our heroine, is when Mina suggests that she be hypnotised by Van Helsing, in order to establish a psychic link with the Count. She is less acceptant of Dracula’s sexual predations than Lucy ever was, and it is for this very reason that Mina is the better woman in the novel. She should have died, but such was the strength of her will that she could resist the temptation, unlike the frail and greedy Lucy. The evil father figure hypnotises Lucy and the good father-figure (Van Helsing) hypnotises Mina. As mentioned in the second chapter, hypnosis must always involve the consent of whoever is to be hypnotised, and is unsuccessful otherwise. Similarly, a vampire must always be invited in before they can enter a house. Lucy belonged with the sexually ravenous Count Dracula, and thus allowed him in physically and
hypnotically. Both women consented to the cerebral advances of the father-like men, but whereas Lucy’s hypnosis was largely a passive affair, Mina resisted the Count and allowed in only the sexually honourable men.

It was only by way of this telepathic link to the Count that the heroes were able to intercept him and ensure his demise. And what Stoker seems to go through great pains to communicate was how unwelcome Mina was on the hunt – the male characters did all they could to dissuade her, saying that she would only end up in danger. The ethos of chivalry and decorum was, of course, prevalent at the time, but was Stoker making a sly comment with this set of circumstances? It is quite possible that he was heralding the place of the New Woman in the activities and livelihoods of the patriarchal society. The manner in which he depicts this woman defying all gender obligations, in order to accompany a ‘witch-hunt’ through a strange and unfamiliar country, results in Mina being the bravest character in the plot. This “brave and gallant woman” (486) is, however, notable for another reason related to the subject of gender roles.

Through Mina’s benign pseudo-masculinity, she serves to highlight another great Victorian fear – the feminisation of men. Homosexuality was akin to paedophilia at the time and was shown no tolerance whatsoever. Dracula shows this feared effeminacy of men in varying degrees of intensity. Most of the male characters are quite frail, and seem to require someone to direct them. They are continually seen buckling under the threat of the Count while Mina and Van Helsing are the parental figures – strong, collected and comforting. It is the ultimate terror in the story – the Count himself – who is feminised the most by Stoker. The imagery of Mina sucking from the breast of the Count is the most immediate example, and one that remains as a

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7. Oscar Wilde, a former contemporary of Stoker’s and contestant for the love of Florence Balcombe, was subject to prosecution for indecency in 1895. Stoker was writing Dracula during the trial of his fellow Dubliner.
genuinely disturbing description in the novel. He can be seen as the mother of the new vampire generation he wishes to asexually propagate. The direction of his gender identity is also distorted in the scene in the castle, where Harker’s encounter with the three vamps is interrupted by the Count, who banishes them protectively, saying in a possessive tone, “Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me!”(55). What only serves to cement the presence of this gender distortion is that, immediately, one of the three vampire women accuses Dracula of being unable to love, to which he responds by looking “attentively” at Harker’s face and assuring the sisters that he is well capable of love.

All of these ideas pertain to the fact that Stoker obviously had his own demons to confront regarding the nature of the gender roles. His depictions were quite blunt, and it seems that he was at pains to communicate the fragility of the genders, and, perhaps, how important it was that the two co-exist with their inherent worth intact. What is a little more complicated however, is the role of the New Woman as far as Stoker was concerned. Mina was his ideal, and she is very much the template of the controversial Victorian feminist. This would lead one to believe that Stoker was certainly in favour of the New Woman, provided she did not adopt the sexual aggression which he so feared. He seemed, like the vampire, to live liminally between traditional values and social progress.
CHAPTER 4

Culture, Appeal and Longevity – a Conclusion

No book since Mrs. Shelley’s *Frankenstein* or indeed any other at all has come close near yours in originality, or terror – Poe is nowhere... In its terrible excitement it should make a widespread reputation and much money for you.
--Charlotte Stoker, in a letter to her son (quoted in Ludlum, *A Biography of Dracula*)

At this point in the proceedings, we have looked at reasons that support the notion that the *Dracula* of the written word is far more intriguing than the Hollywood versions could ever hope to be. The text employs the generic principles of traditional Gothic fiction, as disseminated through Shelley, Polidori and Le Fanu, whilst heightening the depths of the supernatural through Stoker’s keen knowledge of the latest innovations in science and medicine. We have also seen how his life up to the publication of the novel had been more or less para-phrased, or perhaps more appropriately, characterised within the novel; Van Helsing, the alter ego of Stoker; Dracula, a combination of the hypnotic charm of his idol Sir Henry Irving, and an embodiment of the social and psychoanalytic fears he wished to comment upon. And most distinctly, his mother’s insistence on instilling the virtues of story telling and femininity in her son are manifested in the text - she provided him with urban horror stories from her time in Sligo, and encouraged him relentlessly in his pursuits.

What has emerged through the literary criticism in the middle two chapters is the psychological depths of a story that is continually overlooked as a simple ghost yarn. Keenly aware of the existence of psychoanalytical research, Stoker has presented the world with a text that is fuelled with unconscious desires, projections of anxieties held by the mass consciousness and the phenomenon described by Freud as
‘the return of the repressed’. Dracula is an acute cocktail of the grotesque and the intriguing. The role of the psychoanalytic references throughout the story is to consume the reader, ultimately achieving that which every writer aspires to – the involvement of the reader. The supernatural element is unsettling, but to explore the psychoanalysis of the text, its characters, subplots and dialogue is to awaken fears within us all.

Taken as a piece of feminist commentary, Dracula is a revelation. A bold exposition of the Victorian ideals of gender identity, it served to surreptitiously paint a picture of a ‘New Woman’ (the character Mina) being the best hope against a threat to society in the form of sexual predation. Mina exemplifies this early feminist cause, and is perfection in character. Lucy (along with the other vampires) was the sexual animal who was to be exterminated as she threatened to convert the other characters. Lucy was one type of feminist and Mina was another, but Stoker, whilst giving both sufficient representations, is very clear as to which one is favoured and which is frowned upon. In this manner, Stoker is producing a proclamation of the ideal femininity, and laying out the blueprint with which he believed all New Women should model themselves.

But why then, with a story so involving and all-encompassing, do so few of the vast catalogue of films depicting the tale ever make a similar impact? As mentioned, Coppola’s recent film adaptation came closest, with all characters exemplifying the sexual tension throughout and adding a vaguely hysterical metanarrative. The preceding thrill of mediocrity was prosaic, camp and ultimately unaffected by comparison to the potential of the story. None-the-less, they appealed
to a mass audience and from the start\footnote{F. W. Murnau’s \textit{Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens}, is the first surviving film based on Dracula. Released in 1922, the film was nearly lost after a legal battle with Stoker’s widow, Florence, who claimed that Murnau had not secured permission from the estate of Bram Stoker to use the outline of \textit{Dracula} for the film’s plot. Although characters’ names were changed and the setting moved from Transylvania to the Balkans, it essentially follows the novel.} of \textit{Dracula}’s film career onwards, the trajectory, along with the budgets and flamboyancies, increased with severity.

It remains to be explored exactly why we seem to need the vampire. Stoker’s book has spawned a myth and culture which is so ubiquitous that it extends beyond ‘household name’ status – the vampire is now a staple apparition in our society. There is never a gap of more than three years between the release of a vampire film, whether that is a serious horror outing or a comedy. There are thousands of books involving various reincarnations of the Count, the latest, and easily most successful being the books of Anne Rice who has brought the vampire into the modern age of computers, sexually transmitted diseases and terrorism, whilst all of the same issues of lust, repressed fears and gender identity are as relevant and appropriate as they were in Victorian Britain. Thus the crux of \textit{Dracula}’s appeal may lie in the fact that Stoker was addressing sensations, emotions and social issues that were timeless, and would provide food for thought regardless of setting. If the preceding chapters have highlighted anything, it is that \textit{Dracula} still has much to say to our society, and similarly poses many universal questions about our psychological make-up and lifestyles.

In February (2003), I interviewed theatre director Jim Culleton, who works for the Trinity School of Acting after seeing a fascinating stage adaptation of the novel, and one which attempted to translate the particulars of Stoker’s assumed cultural reflections with great style. His take in the popularity of the myth was very interesting and was one that complimented many of the ideas that have been laid out in the earlier chapters. He highlighted for me the fact that \textit{Dracula} is about people who are
attracted to something that they have been told is dangerous, and bears a vague resemblance to the story of the Garden of Eden. It is about temptation, repressing your desires for what is not good for you, or being at risk by quenching them. It is a situation that everyone encounters continually in life, and is therefore, yet another eternal predicament that Stoker is addressing. Another thing that Jim Culleton pointed out was that there is a perennial ambiguity surrounding the character Dracula – he is an outsider, and we fear outsiders – It is now psychologically accepted that humans are innately racist. Whilst this is the case, it is also to be noted that we harbour a fear of being the outsider – we are gregarious animals, and thus seek interaction and recognition from those we live around. Dracula is denied this luxury, and thus the paradox is set in place; we sympathise with the evil one. Increasingly, especially with those living in large cities, there is this growing sense of alienation from society.

With the advent of the Hammer Films, the 1960s and '70s introduced the visually erotic vampire. With Christopher Lee typecast as the Count, the myth was slowly becoming something to almost be aspired to. Although the analogy is a little trite, the character James Bond is not dissimilar in the fundamental appeal – men would like the experience of being him, and women would like the experience of bedding him. The Count, as played by Lee, was now swooned upon by female viewers, heightening the affect of the whole horror in a manner analogous to the novel – the temptation of that which should not be explored. Lee's chiselled good looks were, however, a long way from the grizzly and gnarled description of the Count in Jonathan Harker's journal (28).

The vampire is now sexy. The novels of Anne Rice have glamorised the vampire to new levels of elegance. Her vampires are, much like Stoker's creation, highly sophisticated, splendidly beautiful monsters with heightened senses and openly
seek sexual gratification through drinking blood. Some, such a Louis in *Interview With The Vampire*, have morals and are tortured by their inherent evil. Rice’s novels are the most recent step in the vampire’s evolutionary progress – she has ensured that the vampire is even easier to empathise with. Rice’s vampires are arguably easier to relate to than the Count, being the metaphor of our dark and lustful natures. Vampire fiction addresses the nature of evil and our existence. Killing in order that we may survive is a philosophical predicament that is older than time. The vampire is inherently evil just as we are, in this respect.

Another great appeal of the vampire, besides their sexual power and apparent flair, is their denial of death and disease. The vampire is admired for its transcendence of the dullness of mundane human life. One of the twentieth centuries most lauded vampire films was director Joel Schumacher’s *The Lost Boys* (1987). The slogan for this coming of age story sums up the perennial fascination with vampires: “Sleep all day. Party all night. Never grow old. Never die. It’s fun to be a vampire”. This film depicts a group of biker punks who have rejected conventional life for vampirism and the inherent immortality and insubordination of social norms that are associated with it.

Although the aesthetics and conventions of modern vampire fiction and the handful of noteworthy filmic progressions on the vampire myth may be divorced from Stoker’s blueprint, they none-the-less keep the fundamentals of the monster alive. The grotesque sexuality and the gender discrepancies are now an integral factor which cannot be escaped. All of the films and novels share common ingredients – they all have the Van Helsing figure, wise, sage-like and seeming to know more than he is letting on. They all share the father-like head vampire who has sired the younger

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generation, and is the source of the infection. Similarly, all vampire stories have that dilemma of temptation and the situation whereby a victim is actively seduced into becoming a vampire. And all, bar none, contain that romantic atmosphere, central to Gothicism.

Essentially, it must never be forgotten where, or more particularly, the template was forged – the Count, in all his splendour, was the product of an Anglo-Irish man, who had been so affected by the people and experiences of his formative years that they manifested themselves in the form of this cultural deity. That all this mass cultural supplication has arisen over the course of a century is quite phenomenal. It seems appropriate to finish with this concluding cultural overview, given that the previous chapters were providing reasons to revere Stoker’s text. History has, time and again, provided evidence that one man with an idea can change the way the world thinks – they can provoke revolution, start wars or, perhaps most poignantly, inspire the imagination amidst all of this.
REFERENCES


