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# Dracula or the Hybrid Forms of Stoker's Vampirism

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# ***Dracula* or the Hybrid Forms of Stoker's Vampirism**

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**UFR LANGUES ETRANGERES**

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## Introduction

*Dracula*. As Jean Marigny once said, Oscar Wilde had declared that this novel was the most beautiful one of the nineteenth century. (1) Bram Stoker's novel has undoubtedly known a fantastic "career". However, this hero does not appear to be pleasant at first. He is much nearer the monster we would not want to be confronted to, than the heroic character we would all look like. But it seems interesting to try to see why we can be so fascinated by Bram Stoker's character. We should recognize that what is particularly attractive in *Dracula* is that he is an un-dead who has to drink blood in order to reach eternal life. So this would be a way to push death aside and live forever. We would be the masters of our destiny. We then are faced both to life and death. We are brought back to the past and "exoticism", and at the same time firmly rooted in the nineteenth century. Still according to Jean Marigny, "Drakula" or "Drakulya" would derive from "drakul", a Romanian word meaning "devil" or "dragon". But Bram Stoker chose to situate his novel in England, in the century during which he was living and to set apart from the traditional Valachia of the cruel Vlad Tepes. Tepes means "the man who impales" or "Drakula".

*Dracula* is interesting because it emphasizes all that Victorian society rejected. *Dracula* constantly defies the traditions and the codes of living of the time. And it quickly appears that Bram Stoker's character is reversing these traditions and these codes. He acts contrary to the "normality" of the usual facts and events. In *Dracula*, we are faced to what constitutes our own lives: blood, death, life forever. It represents all what we may feel: our own desires and fears. That is undoubtedly the reason why we are so fascinated. A fascination that may make us question ourselves about the constant reversals we come across throughout the novel. That is undoubtedly the reason why it seems to be interesting to study this myth and to do so in the light of these turning overs.

Abraham (Bram) Stoker was born at Clontarf, in the north of Dublin, Ireland, on November 8, 1847. He was the third child of seven children. His father,

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(1) Marigny, Jean, *Dracula*, Figures mythiques Editions Autrement, Paris, 1997

Abraham, was working as a civil servant at the Dublin Castle (the law courts of the time). His mother, Charlotte, was fond of and a great expert in Irish folklore and legends. As a child, he was often sick and had to remain in bed, until he was about seven years old. His mother was telling him stories and, more particularly, fantastic tales. Later on, he studied at Trinity College in Dublin, a very famous university known for its affiliation to Protestantism. (The Catholic Church said that Catholics who wanted to go and study there would be excommunicated). He was a great admirer as well as a defender of Walt Whitman who was a controversial American poet at the time. Bram Stoker graduated in mathematics. Like his father, he also worked at the Dublin Castle, as a junior clerk. He went on to study and received another degree: a Master of Arts.

Bram Stoker was fond of theatre, just like his father. He became an art critic at the *Dublin Evening Mail*. At the same time, he was writing short stories. He then became for some months the newspaper publisher. The publication of *Carmilla* by John Sheridan Le Fanu in the *Dublin University Magazine* deeply affected him. In 1876, Bram Stoker met a famous and talented actor, Henry Irving. They became friends and he soon became the business manager of Irving's theatre actors, the London Lyceum. He married Florence Balcombe two years later. His son was born in 1879. Bram Stoker met many famous people from the artistic world: Oscar Wilde, Arthur Conan Doyle, Mark Twain.

He published *Under the Sunset* in 1882. It was a collection of children stories. In 1890, he published his first novel entitled *The Snake's Pass*. From that date until 1897, he worked on *Dracula*, the novel which would bring him his reputation as an author. He continued writing novels such as *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909), *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911). He also wrote horror short stories such as *Dracula's Guest* (a part which had been excluded from *Dracula*), and *The Judge's House* (a story close to Edgar Allan Poe's style).

Whatever the various novels or short stories by Bram Stoker are, the most famous one is *Dracula*.

He died in 1912.

Jonathan Harker is a young English lawyer who is travelling to Transylvania in order to finalize a transfer of real estate in England to the so-called Count Dracula. He quickly feels ill-at-ease when he detects the fear among the local people when they know he is going to visit Count Dracula. Nevertheless, he goes on his trip. He meets his host who is a rather strange person. He very soon becomes a prisoner in Castle Dracula. He discovers that the Count is, in fact, living thanks to the blood he is drinking. He writes everything he has witnessed in his diary. Then he becomes sick and he is left alone in the castle.

The action then shifts to London. There, Mina Murray, Jonathan Harker's fiancée meets with her best friend, Lucy Westenra. One night, during a walk, they can see the arrival of a wrecked ship on the beach, carrying boxes of earth from the castle Dracula. Nobody seems to have survived the shipwreck except a huge dog which disappears as quickly as it has appeared. Lucy is prone to sleepwalking crises. One night, Mina discovers her friend sitting near the graveyard. She wraps her in order to protect her from the cold and thinks she has pricked her with a pin as she discovers two tiny red marks on her neck. From then on, Lucy's health starts to decline. She loses her blood with no sign of haemorrhage. Doctor Seward cannot diagnose what she suffers from with certainty. So, he decides to ask Doctor Abraham Van Helsing, his old friend and mentor, for help. The latter is rather preoccupied with the two little red marks on Lucy's neck.

When Mina hears of Jonathan's sickness, she leaves and goes to nurse him. During that time, Lucy is transfused several times. Her health improves quickly after blood transfusions but not for long and her health starts to deteriorate again. Doctor Van Helsing decides to protect Lucy by spreading out garlic everywhere in her bedroom as well as around her neck. But Lucy is about to die. Arthur Holmwood, her fiancé, is asked to come to her side. She tries to attack him and they can see she has longer canine teeth than before. Lucy dies.

During that time, Mina and Jonathan get married and go back to England. Mina gives Jonathan's diary to Doctor Van Helsing who reads it. At the same time, he hears of a creature, named "the Bloofer Lady" who is attacking little children. Particularly disturbed by these events, he decides to examine Lucy's coffin with Doctor Seward, and by doing so, they discover that Lucy does not look like a dead corpse. She is even more beautiful than when she was alive, and she



seems to be much healthier as well. Doctor Van Helsing finally explains to Lucy's friends that he believes she has been bitten by a vampire and has become a vampire herself. He decides to save her from that state by driving a wooden stake through her heart, cutting off her head, and stuffing it with garlic.

Then, Jonathan, Mina, Doctor Seward, Doctor Van Helsing, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincey Morris, all decide to confront the vampire. But one night, Van Helsing and Seward find Mina being forced to suck Dracula's blood, while Jonathan is lying unconscious on his bed. Dracula manages to escape.

They finally discover the boxes of earth coming from Dracula Castle, except one which is sent back by ship to Transylvania. They manage to follow Dracula's voyage thanks notably to Mina's hypnosis. This box is carried by a group of gypsies. They overcome the gypsies, open the box and discover the Count's body in it. Jonathan cuts off the vampire's head and Morris drives his knife through his heart. The Count crumbles into dust. The novel ends with Morris' death because of a wound inflicted by the gypsies while trying to retrieve the box.

Let us introduce the history of the vampire itself: what it is, where it comes from, who its ancestors are. Both Jean Marigny (2) and Robert Baudry (3) have studied its origins. We will try to describe and introduce its genesis from Ancient Greece to Arabian folklore, from the Bible to Dracula itself. Beyond the myth of the vampire, we will then study the human beings who were described or referred to as vampires in the course of history, with examples taken from Gilles de Rais, Vlad Tepes, Erzsebet Bathory. We will also mention the ones who were called "human vampires" such as Peter Kürten, (the vampire of Düsseldorf), and Richard Trenton Chase (the vampire of Sacramento). After this historical approach, we will take a closer look at the literary field, asking ourselves who the predecessors of Bram Stoker were as writers of vampire stories, and how he may have been influenced by them: Dom Augustin Calmet who wrote a long, detailed study about vampires in general, or John William Polidori, John Sheridan Le Fanu

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(2) Marigny, Jean, dir. *Les vampires*, Actes du Colloque de Cerisy, Cahiers de l'Hermétisme, Albin Michel, 1993.

(3) Baudry, Robert, Epiphanie des Vampires, in *Les vampires*, colloque de Cerisy, Cahiers de l'Hermétisme, Albin Michel, 1993

who is said to have influenced Bram Stoker the most, and Alexis Tolstói. We will then try to define the literary genre to which *Dracula* supposedly belongs to: the gothic or the fantastic.

Our second part will be devoted to the historical period during which both Bram Stoker and *Dracula* lived: the Victorian era. The period brought about problems of gender relations, sexism and the emergence of the New Women movement. We will end this second part with a short study of the two main female characters of the novel: Mina Murray Harker and Lucy Westenra. What are their roles in the reversal of traditional Victorian codes? Bram Stoker created indeed the three vampire women in the castle of Dracula who, even if they appear briefly, reveal how extreme their roles were in terms of transformation from the Victorian woman to the New Woman.

Our third part will deal with the two main themes which are inherent to vampirism: blood and sex. The common beliefs about blood during that period will help us study what diseases may be linked both to blood and vampirism. Porphyria will be our first and main point in this pathological part as it is a disease which presents the most similarities with vampirism. And, of course, a short study of Renfield will allow us to say a few words about female hysteria. We will conclude on the issue of sexual love. In *Dracula*, sex is associated to violence and the roles are reversed to serve the vampire's purposes.

Our fourth and last part will look back on the religious aspects of vampirism, based on the cases of three characters: Mina, Van Helsing, and Renfield. We will consider Dracula as a Christ figure with the critical help of Clive Leatherdale (4) and Christopher Craft's works on the subject. (5)

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(4) Leatherdale, Clive, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, Wellinborough, The Aquarian Press, 1985

(5) Craft, Christopher, "Kiss Me With Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*", *Representations* 8, 1984

## Part I. The Mythic Figure of the Vampire

What is a vampire for ordinary readers? Well, it is a creature which sucks blood out of beings while they are quietly sleeping at night, in order to reach eternal life. It is depicted as being pale, having long sharp teeth, always going out at night because it cannot bear light. It is afraid of Christian symbols such as the Cross and the Consecrated Host, and fears the scent of garlic. It is supposed to sleep with its eyes wide open in a coffin full of earth. It is said to be able to transform itself into a bat and is associated with wolves baying at the moon.

These commonly known features have all been evoked by Bram Stoker who used them in his novel *Dracula*. He described a pale character: (“The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor”(6), having long and sharp teeth: (“peculiar sharp white teeth” (7), long nails: (“The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point”(8), a firm handed, and icy skin: (“holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed as cold as ice” (9), and sleeping his eyes wide open in a coffin: (“There, in one of the great boxes, of which there were fifty in all, on a pile of newly dug earth, lay the Count! He was either dead or asleep, I could not say which – for the eyes were open and stony” (10). He described wolves baying at the moon outside his castle, and showed him leaving his castle by crawling down the wall like a lizard:

What I saw was the Count’s head coming out from the window. (...) I saw the whole man slowly emerge from the window and began to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss, face down, with his cloak spreading out around him like great wings. (...) I saw the fingers and toes grasp the corners of the stones, worn clear of the mortar by the stress of years, and by thus using every projection and inequality move downwards with considerable speed, just as a lizard moves long a wall. (11).

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(6) Stoker, Bram, *Dracula*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Popular Classics, 1994, p 28

(7) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 28

(8) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 28

(9) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 26

(10) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 63

(11) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 47

The term “vampire” is thus used in various ways. Jean Marigny has noticed several assumptions to the word (12). The term “vampire” has not only been used to refer to strange creatures, it has also been applied to people’s particular behaviours. Robert Walpole, for example, was compared to a vampire as he and his Whig followers were said to be tyrants who were sucking human blood. This political dimension became more and more commonly used when the people felt they were submitted to a particularly abusive form of government. In France, Voltaire used the term to refer to religious men, feeding themselves with the blood of kings and faithful servants. Victor Hugo used the term as well to define all kinds of tyrants. Jean Marigny adds that in the twentieth century, Bolcheviks, Nazis, partisans of Stalin as well as all kinds of capitalists were often assimilated to vampires. Needless to say that most of these monsters we have just mentioned have not sucked people’s blood but have shed it.

Vampires were not born with Bram Stoker and his *Dracula*. They have existed long before. However, the way they were described later on in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not correspond to what they looked like earlier.

#### A. The Vampirical Book of Genesis

##### 1) The Vampire’s Bestiary

###### a) Around the World in Five Creatures

Among the vampire’s ancestors, we can find lamias, empusae, striges, ghouls and Lilith. (13)

Lamias were born in Greece. In Ancient Greek mythology, Lamia was the queen of Phrygia. Zeus fell in love with her but Hera, Zeus’s wife, was

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(12) Marigny, Jean, op. cit

(13) Baudry, Robert, op. cit.

very jealous. So, she decided to kill all the illegitimate children her husband could have. This made Lamia so jealous towards mothers that she started kidnapping young children in order to kill and then eat them. Lamias are said to be monsters, half-woman, half-serpent, who sucked young people's blood. They literally cling to them as ivy to stones. The term "Lamia" makes us think of the poem by John Keats *Lamia* in which the poet described the transformation of a serpent into a woman before disappearing completely when it was found out that she was in fact a vampire.

In Greek mythology, once again, lived some sort of polymorphous night spectres called empusae, able to transform themselves into very sensual young women in order to seduce young men before sucking their blood and eating their flesh.

Let us now travel from Ancient Greece to Rome and its famous striges. According to Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, striges were female bird demons who were drinking young children's blood as well as eating their bowels.

Ghouls were monsters belonging to the Arabian folklore, according to Arabian Nights. They could have different shapes, that of a hyena or that of a female. They were creatures who attacked young children, drank blood and ate the dead. Paul Féval, a nineteenth-century French novelist, made the ghouls the vampire's female. For Edgar Allan Poe, a ghouls was neither man nor woman, neither an animal nor a human being but it was a monster which was able to transform itself into a woman in order to seduce its victims.

To end with our world tour of the vampire's ancestors, let us turn our attention to Lilith. She is a character belonging to Jewish mythology. She was said to have been Adam's first wife, before Eve. She would have been created directly from the earth contrary to Eve who was born out of a man's rib. She was beautiful but disobedient, refusing to obey to man's authority. She finally was sent away from paradise. According to some traditions, she was angry with her exile and she transformed herself into a demon lining at night and sucked children's blood.

## b) Introducing Dracula

The vampire will eventually bloom out from all these various spectres. In the Middle Ages, “Broucolaques” were found in Greece. They were spectres looking like werewolves. They soon became vampires, able to suck blood and kill their victims. But it is the Slavs who had the strangest beliefs in vampires. In Poland, vampires were called “upirs”. In Romania, they were often called “strigoï”, that is to say creatures able to transform themselves into various animals (as Dracula himself is able to transform himself into animals). They were also considered as living dead who were reborn for a second life. And at last, heretics who died without having recanted were said to be transformed into vampires and named “drakul”. (14) From Drakul to Dracula, we are a few letters away... And thus Dracula was born. To add one last piece to our puzzle, we could mention the existence of the nosferat. Bram Stoker used the name of Nosferatu in his novel, through the words of Van Helsing: “You would in time, when you had died, have become ‘nosferatu’, as they call it in Eastern Europe.” (15)

The nosferat was a ghost. It was often a stillborn child. Once buried, he came to life, came out of his tomb and would never go back to it. It could take the form of an animal, such as a black dog or a cat. The baby who would then be born was a hairy baby.

So, we can see that the vampire is many centuries old and existed long before the eighteenth century.

2) Once upon a time... The History of Vampires from Gilles de Rais to Erzsebet Bathory.

Gilles de Rais was born in 1404 in the castle of Machecoul, near Nantes. His family was one of the richest ones in France. His parents died when he has

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(14) Baudry, Robert, op. cit.

(15) Stoker, Bram, *ibid.* p 257

just turned eleven years old, and he was brought up by his grandfather. This latter was said to have been responsible for misappropriation of money, corruption, blackmail, and other more or less violent or illegal actions. He started a military career and fought with Joan of Ark against England during the Hundred Years War. He abandoned his military career after her death and lived in luxury. Having retired, he became interested in alchemy. He wanted to find out the secret of the philosopher's stone and he thought blood would reveal that secret. He sacrificed children and used their blood for rituals. He was accused of witchcraft as well as of being a murderer. In order to escape excommunication, he confessed he was really guilty of all the charges against him and he asked for forgiveness. He was sentenced to be hanged, and then to be burned at the stake. Thanks to that attitude of repentance, he obtained some sort of preferential treatment: he would then know when he was going to be executed, and after his death he would not be entirely burned as he wished, before his burial in Nantes.

Gilles de Rais gave birth to many legends because of his behaviour as a monster, and because of his great cruelty towards his victims. He raped children and tortured them. Then, he let them die and remained unruffled when facing the agony of his victims as they were bleeding to death. In the end, he gave them the fatal blow by cutting their throats or heads.

Gilles de Rais is nicknamed Bluebeard. He is also often said to have been a vampire while others see him more as an ogre than anything else.

Vlad from Valachia (Romania) was born in 1431. He was nicknamed "Tepes", meaning "to impale" and "Dracula", (a diminutive of Drakul), meaning "devil" or "dragon". He was both a hero and a bloodthirsty tyrant. He was a hero because he defended his country against the Turkish army which was trying to invade it. He was also a bloodthirsty tyrant because he was murdering men, women, and children mercilessly. The ones who could survive his attacks were finally impaled. At that time, impalement was a commonly used way of torturing people in order to send one's enemies to death. But Vlad had to flee to Transylvania where he died in 1476.

Bram Stoker showed some interest in Vlad's life. He seemed to have been inspired by that story. He was fascinated by his reputation as a bloodthirsty tyrant. Because he chose to use his name (Dracula) for his novel, Bram Stoker



reinforced the link between Transylvania, Dracula and vampires in his readership's mind.

Erzsebet Bathory was a Hungarian Countess from the seventeenth century. She lived in a castle in the Hungarian mountains. She married a soldier who was very often called out to war. Feeling alone, she became interested in black magic. Rumours spread about her. She was accused of kidnapping and killing hundreds of young women living around her castle during several years. She had them killed by bleeding them to death. She filled her bathroom with their blood and she bathed in it in order to keep herself young and beautiful. She also apparently took great pleasure in drinking blood. Facing those rumours, soldiers and representatives of the law went to see what was really happening in the castle of Erzsebt Bathory. They arrived right around the time when blood started flooding everywhere and young women were dying under the tortures ordered by the Countess. Corpses were found and women who were still alive were waiting to be tortured to death. They had already been submitted to various violent acts and were near the pangs of death. She was imprisoned and her trial took place in 1611. She was not condemned to death because she was related to her country's Royal family, but she was locked up in her bedroom. Her companions of torture were not as lucky as her and were all executed. Rumours and legends continued to spread after her death and it was said that she had become a vampire because she was still spreading blood around her.

She was considered as having influenced Bram Stoker for the writing of *Dracula*.

### 3) The Killer Vampire: Your Next Door Neighbour

As we have mentioned in the introduction, the term "vampire" has been used to define different types of characters. It is possible to meet real characters who are said to be vampires without being supernatural creatures of fiction at all, but who identify with them, or behave as such. These living characters may be human beings who behave like violent predators to others. This is the case of serial killers for example who often recall "vampiristic" acts.

a) The vampire of Düsseldorf

Peter Kürten was born in 1883 in Germany. He spent his childhood in a poor family of twelve brothers and sisters. His father was violent towards his mother. He very soon became a petty criminal and regularly ran away from home. From childhood onwards, he behaved like a sadist and showed a great fascination towards blood and blood shed. He was nicknamed “the vampire of Düsseldorf” because of the great number of murders he committed there. He was known to be an extremely violent man. He declared he had felt great pleasure in drinking his victims’ blood.

b) The vampire of Sacramento

Richard Trenton Chase was born in 1950 in California. (16) He was nicknamed “the vampire of Sacramento” or “the Dracula killer”. From a very young age, he developed a particular interest in torturing animals. Once he injected some rabbit’s blood in his veins. He was said to be suffering from the Renfield Syndrome (we will come across a character named Renfield in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*). He caught birds in order to drink their blood. In the novel, Renfield himself has a strange behaviour towards animals: “The attendant has just been to me to say that Renfield has been very sick and has disgorged a whole lot of feathers. ‘My belief is, doctor,’ he said, ‘that he has eaten his birds, and that he just took and ate them raw!’” (17); and also: “He was catching flies and eating them”. (18) Richard Trenton Chase himself tortured and killed animals. Then he mixed their organs with their blood and finally he ate the mixture. Once, he killed several persons and started eating one of them in a cannibalistic fit. He was persuaded that people wanted to poison him. So he practised transfusions upon himself with the blood of animals first, then with

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(16) Ramsland, Katherine, *Vampire Crime*, in *Journal of Dracula Studies*- Dracula Research Centre: [www.blooferland.com](http://www.blooferland.com)

(17) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p 89

(18) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 141

human blood in order to save his life. (19) Once again, we can notice some similarities with Renfield in the novel:

I used to fancy that life was a positive and perpetual entity, and that by consuming a multitude of live things, no matter how low in the scale of creation, one might indefinitely prolong life. At times I held the belief so strongly that I actually tried to take human life. The doctor here will bear me about that on one occasion I tried to kill him for the purpose of strengthening my vital powers by the assimilation with my own body of his life through the medium of his blood – relying, of course, upon the Scriptural phrase, ‘For the blood is the life’.” (20)

## B. Bram Stoker’s Predecessors: From Dom Calmet to Tolstoi

Dom Augustin Calmet (1672-1757) was a Benedictine monk. He is well-known for his book entitled *Dissertation sur les vampires, revenants en corps, les excommuniés, les oupires ou vampires, broucolaques, etc.* published in 1751. He collected all the reports or popular legends about ghosts and, more particularly, vampires. He was the first one to describe the vampire as a dead man coming out of his coffin at night to drink people’s blood in order to aspire to eternal life. He was also the first one to show that Christian symbols such as crucifixes or holy water could help get rid of him. Dom Augustin Calmet’s book presents the major characteristics of the vampires. These characteristics will constantly be found in vampire stories.

John William Polidori (1795-1821) was both Lord Byron’s personal secretary and doctor. Lord Byron used to meet with friends in Geneva, Switzerland. Among his friends we could find John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley, as well as Mary Shelley. Being reunited in Geneva in July 1816, Byron and his companions competed to write fantastic novels. Lord Byron developed the idea of writing a novel in which the hero would be a vampire and confided in to Polidori. He never finished his book. The two men did not stay in good terms and Polidori left Geneva to come back to England. Once there, he decided to use

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(19) Bourgoïn, Stéphane, *Le vampire de Düsseldorf*, Editions Méréal, 1998

(20) Stoker, Bram *ibid*, pp 279-280

Byron's idea and to write the book by himself. The story was published in 1819 in *The New Monthly Magazine* under the title: *The Vampyr*. It was the first great appearance of the vampire in British literature. The creature described in that book was able to create a great sense of anxiety for people. For the first time the vampire was represented as being a gentleman. He was also the first vampire-womanizer, a vampire version of Lord Byron's *Don Juan*. Polidori was describing a strange, strong, pale, grey-eyed creature. When he died, he was exposed to the moon rays as he had asked to be. The following day he was no longer there. Lord Ruthven - such was the creature's name - was not condemned to death, so he would be able to come back and would go on sucking people's blood. The book was an immense success.

John Sheridan Le Fanu wrote his novel *Carmilla* in 1871. We are here in the presence of a female vampire. Carmilla seems to look like the previously mentioned Countess Erzebeth Bathory. Carmilla is a young woman who arrives in an isolated castle in Styria. She looks like a mysterious woman. She is an aristocrat: her real name is Countess Mircalla of Karnstein – Mircalla being the anagram of Carmilla. She died more than a century before. She is endowed with a certain number of powers: she can transform herself into a cat, she can go out from her bedroom without opening either the door or the window. John Sheridan Le Fanu was the first one to give the vampire sharp teeth which were going to become a major vampire feature. He also gave his character other features belonging to the vampire: she does not eat, she does not prey, she sucks blood. *Carmilla* was also a scandalous story for the time, as it showed the homosexual relations between two women. But morality is saved as Evil is defeated thanks to a divine intervention.

John Sheridan Le Fanu was the author Richard Sheridan's great-nephew and Thomas Sheridan's grandson, one of the most famous Irish actors of his time. He is seen as having been great influence on Bram Stoker. His reading of *Carmilla* had a decisive impact on his desire to write a vampire story.

Alexis Tolstoï wrote *La Famille du Vourdalak* in 1847. Contrary to John William Polidori or John Sheridan Le Fanu, he did not bring a personal touch to the image of the vampire. His novel was based on traditional legends. He

nevertheless gave some details, throughout his book, which undoubtedly refer to the vampire: to get paralysed when the monster comes next to someone, to be contaminated, or scared of religious symbols. In his novel, Alexis Tolstoï described more particularly the transformation of a whole family into vampires.

### C. Dracula's Identity

Gothic? Fantastic? First, let us have a look at these different genres and let us try to find out which one can define *Dracula* the best.

Pierre-Georges Castex particularly studied French fantastic stories from Nodier to Maupassant in *Le Conte fantastique en France, de Nodier à Maupassant* published in 1951. He defines the fantastic as being a brutal intrusion of something mysterious in real life. He thinks that the fantastic is more or less linked to nightmares and hallucinations which give birth to anxieties and terror in our consciousness. Pierre-Georges Castex focuses himself on some French writers such as Gautier, Mérimée or Maupassant and so proposes a definition of the fantastic through the studies of a certain number of novels. He does not give a general definition of the genre but rather a description of the fantastic as it is used by a certain number of writers.

In his *Anthologie de la littérature fantastique* published in 1966, Roger Caillois states that the fantastic is something which roughly interrupts the course of the real world. This is something which is threatening our everyday stability. He finds interest in everything which appears as natural but can be turned into something supernatural. It means that the most ordinary element of nature – a flower, an animal... – can be defined as being fantastic if we think that their appearances do not correspond exactly to what they are supposed to be. In other words, the most ordinary elements may become fantastic depending on the angle of vision we have of them at a given moment. He seems to forget the relationships between the characters and the disruptive element to give prior importance to the disruptive element itself. If we focus on *Dracula*, we can say that he does not express himself a lot. What we know about him is from the

relationships the characters of the novel establish with him through their own perception and their own personalities.

In his famous *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (21) published in 1970, Tzvetan Todorov defines the fantastic as being the sudden appearance in a familiar world of an event which cannot be explained by the common rules of this world. According to him, the literary genre can be characterized by the presence of supernatural events but not just. It can also be defined by the reader and the character's reactions when faced with a supernatural phenomenon. Then, once faced with these disruptive elements, the reader has to choose between two possibilities. Either he decides that these events are no more than a product of his imagination or, on the contrary, he prefers to think that they have really existed and reality is then framed by rules which are unknown to him. In sum, he is prone to hesitation. Still according to Todorov, the fantastic is the product of this reaction felt by somebody who does not know anything else than natural laws to oppose supernatural events.

Todorov tries to clarify his definition by saying that the fantastic is bound by three specific conditions. The first one is directly linked to the one we have just mentioned: the reader has to look at the characters as being real human living beings and hesitates between a natural vision of the events or, on the contrary, a supernatural one. The second one is about the hesitation itself. It can be felt by both the reader and the character. Once it is felt by the characters, it can therefore become one of the themes of the book. The third one concerns the reader's interpretation. It is important for the reader not to interpret the book in an allegorical way, meaning that he should have no doubt at all about what it is written: everybody knows that a flower cannot speak. It is also important for him not to interpret it in a poetical way, meaning that poetry may easily be defined as being fantastic but it is not expected to be representative.

Unfortunately Todorov seems to minimize the book itself and the genre

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(21) Todorov, Tzvetan, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, Editions du seuil, 1970

on the whole, as he seems to undermine as well the importance of the disruptive elements themselves in the story.

In sum, it seems difficult to define the fantastic genre in a satisfying way. But perhaps the fantastic could be defined as the combination of two elements: a character and a disruptive element. The aim is to disrupt the protagonist mentally as well as to make the reader question his own consciousness. These elements act as a great disruption which contributes to cause deep trouble in the character's life.

Now regarding the Gothic genre: gothic fiction is characterized by the presence of several elements, mainly fear, darkness, and supernatural events. Horace Walpole is said to be the "father" of Gothic fiction with *The Castle of Otranto* written in 1764. He introduced the basic elements of this literary genre: fear, anxiety, horror, evil settings and trips to Southern Europe (unknown, exotic places which aroused both curiosity and fear), dark places such as old castles, dungeons or monasteries, women being turned into victims, supernatural elements... He was soon followed by other writers such as Ann Radcliffe with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794, Matthew Lewis with *The Monk* in 1797, Mary Shelley with *Frankenstein* in 1818. Writing as well as reading Gothic stories became very popular.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the genre seemed to lose its grandeur before its revival at the end of the century. It is then that writers such as John Sheridan le Fanu appeared, author of a dark story – one of the first stories dealing with vampirism and lesbianism. And then Bram Stoker released his novel *Dracula* in 1897.

*Dracula* can be regarded as belonging to the Gothic genre. From the beginning of the book, we are introduced to Jonathan Harker travelling to Transylvania. Everything he can see seems to be mysterious to him. Superstitions play an important part in the journey of Jonathan Harker. The supernatural can be found in the rituals used to fight against and ward off bad luck: the crucifix to protect oneself, the numerous signs of the cross made by people and gestures with their hands in order to make the evil eye go away. On a strict literary point of

view, the fantastic is characteristic of short stories and does not really withstand a long narration. Needless to add that *Dracula* does not fit the category of short stories but rather that of novels.

Elements of the Gothic genre are clearly gathered together in the novel.

Throughout the book, we are faced with strangeness and mystery. Jonathan Harker arrives in Transylvania, a place which is totally unknown to him as he has never visited it before. Everything seems to be unfamiliar compared to England, a feeling Dracula himself is going to admit to later on:

‘We are in Transylvania; and Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you many strange things. Nay, from what you have told me of your experiences already, you know something of what strange things here may be.’ (22)

Supernatural elements are also present from the outset of the story. Rituals to fight against the evil eye are mentioned as well as the use of the crucifix in order to shield oneself: (“She then rose and dried her eyes, and taking her crucifix from her neck offered it to me” (23) or (“By the roadside were many crosses, and as we swept by, my companions all crossed themselves.”)(24)

The symbol of the cross is recurrent as well as other gestures made by people for their protection:

When we started, the crowd round the inn door, which had by this time swelled to a considerable size, all made the sign of the cross and pointed fingers towards me. With some difficulty I got a fellow-passenger to tell me what they meant; he would not answer at first, but on learning I was English, he explained that it was a charm or guard against the evil eye. (25)

We could also add the dark, stormy nights, Dracula’s ruined castle, superstitions or the opposition between good and evil which reinforce the idea of *Dracula* being a Gothic story.

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(22) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 32

(23) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 13

(24) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*. p 17

(25) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p 15



Part II. *Dracula* and Victorian Society

## A. The Roles and Representations of Womanhood

### 1) The Issue of Gender Relations

Gender relations may be referred to in two different ways. First, we can have a look at the activities or the behaviours which are traditionally associated to men and women. For example, a man is much more expected to work within the harsh industrial world than a woman. On the contrary, a woman is much more expected to remain at home, looking after her children. The world of work was men's world, and the world of home was women's world. As a consequence, gender relations are usually divided into two different and separate groups often referred to as spheres. John Ruskin in Sesame and Lilies developed this doctrine of "separate spheres":

The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation, and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest... But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle – and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision... She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise – wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but she may never fail from his side." (26)

Secure in the strength of the so-called masculine qualities, men can be the governing sex and dominate society, and be the actors in everyday life. On the contrary, women are dependent and submitted beings.

As Jan Marsh points out in her article, men occupy the public scene, taking all the decisions in political, legal and economic affairs. Women occupy the private scene being submitted to father, husbands, brothers, or even adult sons. (27) Men are hard and tough, unemotional, authoritarian, powerful, strong, and wise. The socially well-integrated male should conform to these qualities and

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(26) quoted by Jan Marsh: *Gender, ideology and Separate Spheres in the Nineteenth Century*, [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

(27) Marsh, Jan, *ibid*

is not expected to transgress them. On the contrary women are soft, emotional, obedient, powerless, vulnerable, intuitive. In the same way than men, a good woman should conform to these qualities and is not expected to transgress them either. This was viewed as the natural order of things.

But gender has to be differentiated from sex. Sex is biological (male/female), and so refers to physical differences that make the distinction between men and women. Gender (man/woman) refers to the roles and behaviours that are determined by society, and is constructed. Simone de Beauvoir expresses it in *Le Deuxième sexe*: “On ne naît pas femme : on le devient”.” (28)

For Judith Butler, men and women only behave as the society in which they live is expected them to behave. In other words, gender would be both an artifice and a performance.

The relationships between men and women are often presented as binary oppositions. It means that these relations are based on the notion of “binary sex” (male/female). There is then a mimetic relation, and nothing more: “The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it.” (29) She adds that:

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one. (30)

Gender is very often a question of stereotypes that is to say to believe that certain characteristics are much more appropriate to women than others that

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(28) “One is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one”

De Beauvoir, Simone, *Le Deuxième sexe, L'expérience vécue*, Paris, Gallimard, 1949

(29) Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, Chapman & all, Inc., 1990

(30) Butler, Judith, *ibid*

are much more appropriate to men. They are more or less beliefs and attitudes towards masculinity and femininity.

## 2) The Science of Sex(ism)

The characteristics that differentiate men and women and so the two different spheres in which they are both “labelled” are based on a biological point of view. Women are portrayed as being not only physically inferior to men but also mentally inferior. Physically, women are smaller than men. They are weaker and have less endurance than men. They are seen as being unable to have sex for a few days every month because of menstruations. Their nervous system is believed to be more irritable than that of men. Intellectually, women are inferior to men because physicians stated that they have smaller brains than men. Moreover, according to phrenology (the study of the bumps, curves and shapes of the skull) the woman’s brains is not as developed as that of the man and that is why a woman can be regarded as a childish person. (31)

The same can be said about female sexuality or rather the way female sexuality is perceived. Women should not be intellectually active because they should keep all their energy for reproduction. The development of the reproductive organs needs blood. Being intellectually active would waste her vital energy. So once pregnant, the foetus would not have enough blood and as a consequence, the baby would be insane. So women are asked to think about their reproductive system and to take care of it in order not to damage their organs. Motherhood is regarded as the ultimate aim of a woman’s life.

Scientifically speaking, the two different spheres in which men and women are classified are determined by physical and mental differences.

## 3) The Victorian Woman

Women were expected to shape their lives according to male principles. Being both irrational and sensitive, there was no other solution for

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(31) Lavender, Catherine, *The Cult of Domesticity and True Womanhood*, [www.library.csi.cuny.edu](http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu)

them. Marriage was the only solution for women to live and even to survive as they could not earn their living on their own and be financially independent. So a woman was dependent on her husband's income, and she was either under her father's authority or to her husband's property. (32) Women had no economic independence: her rights and property disappear in marriage. Everything became her husband's property and the children also became his property, just as objects were. A woman had just the right to bear them, raise them but they belonged to their father. After a visit to England in the 1860s, Hippolyte Taine wrote that women were only servants who had only to look after her home and children. (33) Beatings and marital rape were neither rare nor illegal. A refusal to consummate the marriage could lead to its annulment.

Women were expected to be virgins which was not necessarily required from the husband-to-be. Sex was considered as dirty and outrageous except if its aim was to have children. Women should be free from sexual desire and passion, a notion that was reinforced by religion. The loss of purity – or virginity – would have been worse than death for a woman. That would mean she would no longer be a “proper lady” and so her condition would be shameful. Purity was highly essential for a woman.

Motherhood turned women into “angels in the house” and was presented as the best achievement a woman could reach in her life. Mina is very well aware that women are expected to be nurturing and maternal. “We women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above smaller matters when the mother-spirit is invoked”. (34) She also deeply feels it while she is comforting Lord Godalming: “ I felt this big, sorrowing man's head resting on me, as though it were that of the baby that some day may lie on my bosom, and I stroked his hair as though he were my own child.” (35) A woman's place was at home. She was expected to create a refuge for her husband who was confronted to the hard world of business throughout the day.

Submission was also an essential characteristic of the Victorian woman.

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(32) Bash, Françoise, *Les femmes victoriennes: roman et société*, Payot, 1979

(33) Taine, Hippolyte, *Notes sur l'Angleterre*, Hachette, Paris, 1899

(34) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 275

(35) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p275

From the cradle to the grave, a woman was expected to be obedient and submitted to men as well as to the traditional rules of the society of the time. Mina is modelling her actions on her husband. While she is writing to her friend Lucy, she suddenly stops writing: "I must stop, for Jonathan is waking – I must attend to my husband!" (36) She is ready to nurture her husband. This is her ideal role of a married woman.

Opposite the "angel in the house", there was the "fallen woman" – the prostitute – who was meant to satisfy men's sexual needs.

On the contrary the New Women opposed themselves to the Victorian codes. To be as socially and sexually free as men in the Victorian era, women had to rebel and refuse society's conventions, men's rules and their control over them. The idea of separate spheres was meant to be abolished leading to the emergence of the New Woman.

The New Woman's desires were to change the relationships between men and women, to change the place of women in society. They were fed up to be regarded as worthless. They wanted to exist apart from men. They wanted to be independent from men. They no longer wanted to be mothers, they also wanted to have other occupations than motherhood. They demanded what they had been refused. They wanted to be allowed to ride a bike without any chaperon, to smoke in public, to dress differently (to get rid of tight corsets which made them suffocate, and many undergarments or heavy dresses that prevented them from walking with ease). In other words, these New Women were in rebellion against traditions. They wanted to reach equality with men in all the domains: political, educational, economic and sexual. (37)

## B. Bram Stoker's Own Vision of Women

What was Bram Stoker's point of view about women? He was clearly a man of his times. As Jean Marigny points out, Bram Stoker described all the

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(36) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 130

(37) Leatherdale, Clive, *op. cit.*

prejudices of Victorian society and as such, he is in perfect harmony with the prevailing ideology of the time. (38)

Bram Stoker introduces two types of women: Mina Murray Harker and Lucy Westenra. They belong to two different types of femininity.

He is in line with the traditional conception of women in the Victorian period as he himself views women as weak and vulnerable while he is viewing men as being dominant. Through the words and actions of his male characters, he is a victim as well of the sexist ideas of his time.

To think that a woman could be as intelligent as a man is an idea that does not cross the minds of Bram Stoker's male characters, and especially Van Helsing. When Mina has just finished typing the journals, she is seen as an instrument by Van Helsing, an instrument that can be used to achieve his main goal: to definitely eradicate the Count. She is not seen as a woman who is bright, and talented but as a woman who is fulfilling her as a wife: to serve and support men in general and her husband in particular:

I have been working very hard lately, because I want to keep up with Jonathan's studies, and I have been practising shorthand very assiduously. When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan, and if I can stenograph well enough I can take down what he wants to say in this way and write it out for him on the typewriter, at which I am practising very hard. (39)

Van Helsing cannot imagine that Mina's intelligence can exist as such. Normality prevails him from conceiving it. He can only admit that she has something special that other women do not have: a man's brain. He believes in man's superiority so that any form of talent and intelligence could only be referred to as what is normally possessed by men.

Bram Stoker also presents women as being weak and particularly fragile, delicate, unable to be strong enough to bear emotional strain, contrary to men:

'And now for you, Madam Mina, this night is the end until all be well. (...) We are men, and are able to bear; (...) but their minds were made up, and, though it was a bitter pill for me to swallow,

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(38) Marigny, Jean, op cit

(39) Stoker, Bram, ibid p 70

I could say nothing, save to accept their chivalrous care of me.”(40)

By being turned into vampires, Bram Stoker transforms both Lucy and Mina into “fallen women”. This corresponds exactly to the common thinking of the Victorian era. During this period, a woman could only be either a virgin or a wife and mother. In that way, Bram Stoker does not betray the spirit of the time. By the end of the novel, he has broken this strict image of the Victorian woman as he depicts Lucy’s and Mina’s downfall even if the latter is finally rescued by her husband, John Seward, Arthur Holmwood and Van Helsing. Bram Stoker shows that there is no intermediate place for a woman. If a woman is neither a virgin, a wife and a mother, then she is a “fallen woman”: there is no other alternative in the Victorian period.

Bram Stoker thus develops a rather misogynous point of view about women in general. (41) This is noticeable when Van Helsing says: “Ah, then you have a good memory for facts, for details? It is not always so with young ladies.” (42) This is also noticeable when the keeper in the zoological gardens says: “But, there, you can’t trust wolves no more nor women.” (43) This can also emphasize a certain vision of the animal side of women. An animal side that is found in Lucy when she transforms herself into a vampire:” When Lucy – I call the thing that was before us Lucy because it bore her shape- saw us she drew back with an angry snarl, such as a cat gives when taken unawares. (...) growling over it s a dog growls over a bone.” (44)

Bram Stoker also develops a critical point of view towards New Women and their desire to give less importance to motherhood in their lives, even if his mother had contributed to promote the rights of women. He shows this through the three vampire women who feed from babies instead of feeding them. (45)

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(40) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p 289-290

(41) Leatherdale, Clive, *op. cit.*

(42) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 219

(43) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 167

(44) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 253

(45) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 53



This is an extreme example of this particular demand of the New Women towards motherhood. Lucy herself starts her career as a vampire by attacking herself to children:

(...) and far down the avenue of yews we saw a white figure advance – a dim white figure, which held something dark at its breast. The figure stopped, and at the moment a ray of moonlight fell between the masses of driving clouds and showed in startling prominence a dark-haired woman, dressed in the ceremonies of the grave. We could not see the face, for it was bent down over what we saw to be a fair-haired child. There was a pause and a sharp little cry, such as a child gives in sleep, or a dog as it lies before the fire and dreams. (...) I could hear the gasp of Arthur as we recognized the features of Lucy Westenra. (...) we could see that the lips were crimson with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death-robe. (...) With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast. (46)

### C. The Women of *Dracula*

At first, Mina seems to be a woman who lives in harmony with the social and moral traditions of her time. She is portrayed as the prototype of the ideal Victorian woman. She behaves as a proper lady: she is dressed adequately and has good manners at any time. She is consciously aware of the fact that, as a woman, she is not equal to men and that she is quite inferior to them: “My dear Mina, why are men so noble when the women are so little worthy of them?” (47). She seems to have no other ambition than that of satisfying and helping her husband after their marriage. She is submitted to her husband and she is ready to make sacrifices for him. She is ready to compromise herself in order to protect Jonathan: “And if it be wanted, then, perhaps, if I am ready, poor Jonathan may not be upset, for I can speak for him and never let him be troubled

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(46) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, pp 252-253

(47) Stoker, Bram *ibid*, p 76

or worried with it all.” (48) She is not allowed to take part in the decisions that should be taken in order to organize the struggle against Count Dracula. This is a man’s duties. She may be said to be a typical Victorian woman as she is a dutiful wife: “When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan” (49) In addition, she performs what was regarded as the most important Victorian standards, that is motherhood. On several occasions, she plays the role of a mother with the men around her. She comforts them. Later on, she will use all the men’s names to name her own son. This emphasizes her role as a mother much more than her role as a woman.

Mina constantly moves backward and forward between tradition and modernity, between the Victorian woman and the “New Woman”. While she seems to behave as a traditional Victorian woman, Mina seems also to be a representative of the emerging “New Woman” in the 1890s. She herself evokes this movement in the novel when she says:

Some of the ‘New Woman’ writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But 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. (50)

But she also expresses some hesitation about it in a humorous, even ironic tone: “I believe we should have shocked the ‘New Woman’ with our appetites! Men are more tolerant, bless them!” (51)

Mina is wealthy and financially independent. She works as an assistant schoolmistress. She teaches etiquette and decorum to young girls. In that way, she no longer corresponds to a real Victorian woman. Mina has a great sense of duty. She wants to help her husband with his work. She really takes care of her husband by assisting him as well as by supporting him emotionally. If a Victorian

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(48) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p 215

(49) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p 70

(50) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p 111

(51) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p 110

woman was expected to serve her husband, she was expected to do so within the family circle but not in the professional arena. There again, Mina reverses the roles. She seems to like serving men but in a Victorian context, a woman should not exceed the limits of the family circle to exercise her service. Mina tries to use her knowledge in order to help her husband. This was not common in the Victorian era. In accordance with Victorian women, Mina seems to cry easily. She even admits becoming at times hysterical which was quite commonly acknowledged as a specific characteristic of women at the time. But, once again, we notice in the novel a complete reversal of gender role as Van Helsing is described as having been even more hysterical than Mina herself:

The moment we were alone in the carriage he gave way to a regular fit of hysterics. He has denied to me since that it was hysterics, and insisted that it was only his sense of humour asserting itself under very terrible conditions. He laughed till he cried and I had to draw down the blinds lest anyone should see us and misjudge; and then he cried till he laughed again; and laughed and cried together, just as a woman does. I tried to be stern with him, as one is to a woman under the circumstances; but it had no effect. (52)

This can be rather surprising when we know that hysteria was usually a pathology specific to women.

We can say that Mina is both a combination of a highly developed intellect and a spirit of submission. She is a woman who borrows some characteristics from the New Women and at the same time she is a woman who remains rooted in Victorianism by being a traditional and devoted woman and wife, as society expects women to be. Her manners are proof enough. She thinks it is not decent for her to be seen in the street while Jonathan is taking her arm:

Jonathan was holding me by the arm, the way he used to in old days before I went to school. I felt it very improper, for you can't go on for some years teaching etiquette and decorum to other girls without the pedantry of it biting into yourself a bit; but it was Jonathan, and he was my husband, and we didn't know anybody who saw us – and we didn't care if they did – so on we walked. (53)

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(52) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p 209-210

(53) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p 206-207

A “New Woman” would surely not have considered this behaviour as a shocking one. She finally allows him to do so as she feels that such norms are too strict. She accepts his attitudes towards her only because they are married and thus no reproach can be made about their behaviour. They just behave as a married couple, entirely according to the codes of the Victorian society. This shows that Lucy is trapped between tradition and modernity once again.

Finally Mina is not portrayed as a typical woman. She is interested in new technologies. She has learnt how to use a typewriter, as a man would: the usual thought of the time being that such things would certainly be too difficult to be understood by a woman. Van Helsing even declares: “Ah, that wonderful Madam Mina! She has man’s brain- a brain that a man should have were he much gifted – and women’s heart.” (54) By saying she “has man’s brain” and “women’s heart” he grants her the highest qualities of both men and women. One of the traditional Victorian male stereotypes is to be intelligent and rational. One of the traditional Victorian female stereotypes is to be full of compassion and benevolence. Mina can feel strong emotions and at the same time she can go beyond them to be an active woman. Moreover Mina can write “shorthand” and she appears quite proud of her knowledge. As “the great” Van Helsing cannot read it, he is forced to ask her to read her diary for him: “And will you not so much honour me and so help me as to read it for me? Alas! I know not the so much honour me and so help me as to read it for me? Alas! I know not the shorthand.” (55)

Like the New Women she tries to go beyond traditions and to get rid of the rigid rules imposed by the Victorian society. But she does not plot a violent revolution in order to rival with the stronger sex. She does not playing a game of the musical chairs. She does not seek to be a dominant woman over dominated men. She just wants to use what she knows to help others and be useful to them. This is the reason why she does not represent a threat to Victorian society. This is probably also the reason why Bram Stoker will save her from Dracula’s teeth at the end of the novel.

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(54) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p 281

(55) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 220

Bram Stoker has created a woman who is intellectually equal to the men around her but who, in her family life, chooses the Victorian traditional roles of wife and mother.

Bram Stoker physically describes Lucy as a New Woman. She is a beautiful young woman who seems to be attracted to more than one man. She is showing some sort of sexual energy even before becoming a vampire. She is engaged to Arthur Holmwood but she writes in her letters that she will not be able to shape her life according to Victorian principles, that is to say, to love just one man as a “proper lady” was expected to. She writes to Mina that she is in love with Doctor John Seward: “Well, my dear, number one came just before lunch. I told you of him, Dr John Seward, the lunatic-asylum man, with the strong jaw and the good forehead.” (56) Both John Seward and Quincey Morris proposed to her but she finally refused. She is in love with Arthur: ”Oh, Mina, couldn’t you guess? I love him. I am blushing as I write, for although I think he loves me, he has not told me so in words. But, oh, Mina: I love him, I love him, I love him!” (57). She is happy to write to Mina that she has had three proposals of marriage: “Here am I, who will be twenty in September, and yet I never had a proposal till to-day, not a real proposal, and to-day I have had three. Just fancy! THREE proposals in one day!” (58) She is confused because she has to choose one husband and she is unable to decide who he is going to be: “Why can’t they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?” (59) But as society does not allow multiple marriages, her many loves cannot come true. There is a symbolical way to live her love life without enticing society’s wrath: the use of blood transfusions. By this brutal method Lucy will make her dream become real, by having organic sexual relations with every one of her lovers. This blood-to-blood

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(56) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p 73

(57) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* p72

(58) Stoker Bram, *ibid*, p 73

(59) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 76

relation equals sexual intercourse. (60) In the words of Van Helsing:

‘Said he not that the transfusion of his blood to her veins had made her truly his bride?’ (...) ‘If so that, then what about the others? Ho, ho! Then this so sweet maid is a polyandrist, and me, with my poor wife dead to me, but alive by Church’s law, though no wits, all gone – even I who am faithful husband to this now-no-wife, am bigamist.’ (61)

Lucy’s sexual desires threaten Victorian moral and sexual codes. She attacks the institution of marriage (to marry one man forever) and she defends the benefits of polyandry.

Lucy’s reversal of roles is not acceptable because her actions do not benefit men. On the contrary, men lose their patriarchal supremacy.

The three vampire women – also called the “three weird sisters” by some critics – (62) can be portrayed as being the representatives of the New Women. They aggressively seduce men – and Jonathan Harker in particular – by sexually dominating them. They are typical of what a woman should not be in the Victorian era: voluptuous and sexually aggressive. The power is in their hands. They are shown feeding themselves on babies. They represent the reverse of the ideal of Victorian women as they oppose to two of their main characteristics: to be sexually dependent on men, and to be a mother-figure. The three vampire women desire sex and they behave as anti-maternal women as they feed on babies instead of feeding them:

‘Are we to have nothing to-night?’ said one of them, with a low laugh, as she pointed to the bag which he had thrown upon the floor, and which moved as though there were some living thing within it. (...) If my ears did not deceive me there was a gasp and a low wail, as one of a half-smothered child. The women closed

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(60) Rosenberg, Nancy F., *Desire and loathing in Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, in *Journal of Dracula studies* – Dracula Research Centre: [www.blooferland.com](http://www.blooferland.com)

(61) Stoker, Bram, *ibid* pp 211-212

(62) Duperray, Max, Sipièrè, Dominique, *Dracula: Bram Stoker et Francis Ford Coppola*, Armand Colin, 2005

round, whilst I was aghast with horror; but as I looked they disappeared, and with them the dreadful bag. (63)

They are reminiscent of the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. They are also creatures appearing at night. As the three vampire women in *Dracula* who plot to suck Jonathan's blood using their charms, the three witches plot against Macbeth using their spells and prophecies:

The Weird Sisters, hand in hand,  
Posters of the sea and land,  
Thus do go about, about:  
Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,  
And thrice again, to make up nine  
Peace! – the charm's wound up. (64)

As the identity of the three witches is not clear, apart from the fact that they are servants of Hecate (the goddess of witchcraft who helps them plot against Macbeth) we are left with the same uncertainty regarding the three vampire women of the novel. The only truth we know of is that they live in Dracula's castle and are related to him in one way or another. Some critics say that they are three sisters: "the weird sisters" exactly the same way the three witches in *Macbeth* are often referred to by other characters. (65)

Bram Stoker has portrayed three different types of women. Lucy is described as a beautiful, innocent woman who has been seduced by evil, and then once transformed into a vampire became a sexual predator. Mina is described as the ideal Victorian woman. She appears as the perfect wife and mother for her time. And the three vampire women are described as a representation of the *femme fatale*, exercising their domination over men.

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(63) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 5

(64) Shakespeare, William, *Macbeth*, Act I, scene III, The Arden Shakespeare, 1986

(65) Duperray, Max, Sipièrre, Dominique, *op. cit.*

### Part III. Blood and sex



## A. As Red as Blood

The taboo surrounding blood is transgressed in *Dracula*, as it is in other vampire stories. By exchanging blood with his victims, through mutual contamination, the vampire is then allowed to reproduce himself: his victims will, in turn, become vampires.

### 1) The Various Beliefs Associated to Blood

Apart from being associated to the belief of a life after death, vampirism is also very closely linked to the magical power of blood. Blood and sex are closely linked in the Victorian period as people then believed that blood was sperm.

At the end of battles, the winners drank the losers' blood. By doing so they meant that they had now reached a dominating position. But this was not the only reason. It was also thought that by drinking their victims' blood they were at the same time drinking their strength and their courage.

In the Bible, blood is life. When blood is running out of the body, it is synonymous of death. As the power of life belongs to God, it is then forbidden to consummate blood, a law under strict obedience: ("But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof shall ye not eat" (66) or ("For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (67) This should also be respected because, after dying on the cross, Christ has offered his blood to purify: ("How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (68), to sanctify: ("Wherefore Jesus also, that he might

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(66) Genesis, 9, 4

(67) Leviticus, 17,11

(68) Hebrews, 9, 14

(69) Hebrews, 13, 12

sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (69), to release the faithful sinners from their sins (“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (70), and to redeem and reconcile with God:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (71); “being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” (72); “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. (73)

In the New Testament, the Gospel according to Saint John says that if people drink Christ’s blood during Mass, they are then sure to have their sins forgiven and to live eternally: “ Whose eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meet indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.” (74) Moreover, during the Eucharist, bread and wine are not the symbols of the Christ’s body and blood: they *are* Christ’s body and blood. This process is called transubstantiation.

It was believed early on that blood was not only necessary to life but that it was a synonym for life. Blood was the soul. There was nothing else to do than to take the plunge. Indeed, if blood loss was known to weaken the body, to consummate blood could bring strength and life back. It was thought

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(69) Hebrews, 13, 12

(70) Revelation, 1, 5

(71) Acts, 20, 28

(72) Romans, 3, 24-25

(73) Ephesians 1, 7

(74) The Gospel according to Saint John, 6, 54-56

that diseases were due to immorality, or that a divinity had been offended by an inadequate way of living. In order to cure diseased people, it was necessary to make them bleed in order to get rid of that impure blood. This process of “venesection” was both curative and punitive.

In the novel, the first reference to blood is made by Dracula himself when he evokes his ancestries. The first meaning given to it is related to family history:

We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship. (...) Again, when, after the battle of Mohacs, we threw off the Hungarian yoke, we of the Dracula blood were amongst their leaders (...) Blood is too precious a thing in these days of dishonourable peace; and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told. (75)

## 2) Pathological Mythographies

### a) Porphyria: a Bloody Disease

And if being a vampire was nothing more than be affected by a disease? Porphyria is not a very well-known affection and it is rather rare. Its symptoms are very similar to the characteristics which define the vampire, according to David Dolphin, professor of chemistry at the University of California. What is porphyria? It is a complex hereditary disease which is related to the circulation of oxygen in the blood. There are several types of porphyria. Our interest lies in the so-called Günther disease as it is the most vampirical of all. What are the various manifestations of this disease? First, someone affected by this type of porphyria is hypersensitive to light. He or she cannot stay in the sun because he or she would suffer from serious eruptions on the skin looking like blisters which could provoke permanent scars. We know from the beginning of the novel, thanks to Jonathan Harker’s journal that Dracula is never seen during the day time: “I have not yet seen the Count in the daylight. Can it be that he sleeps

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(75) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, pp 41-42

when others wake, that he may be awake whilst they sleep!” (76) Doctors think that it is necessary for these people to live in darkness as much as possible. It is the reason why they are often deathly pale – a paleness that can be compared to corpses. “The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.” (77)

Other symptoms are neuropsychiatric troubles. The patient can become violent. This is the case for Dracula: “...the blue eyes transformed with fury, the white teeth champing with rage, and the fair cheeks blazing red with passion. But the Count! Never did I imagine such wrath and fury, even in the demons of the pit.” (78) They can also be prone to hallucinations as well as delusions. We find the same kind of symptoms in Renfield, who seems to be under the influence of Count Dracula: “All those outbreaks were in some way linked with the proximity of the Count.” (79)

A third symptom is that of an excessive hairiness. This is the case of Dracula as we can see in the description made by Jonathan Harker: “... and hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. (...) there were hairs in the centre of the palm.” (80)

In some cases, teeth and gums are deformed. Their colour can change and become a mixed breed of red and brownish. Teeth are then prominent and can also be fluorescent in darkness: “... with peculiar sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips.” (81) The lips become purple as well as urine, still according to Jonathan Harker’s description of Dracula.

Another symptom that can affect people suffering from porphyria is convulsion and muscular weakness that can lead to some sort of paralysis. We know that the victims of vampires are weakened by their loss of blood. This is the

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(76) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 61

(77) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 28

(78) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 52

(79) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 270

(80) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 28

(81) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 28

case of Lucy herself: "... and I feel so weak and worn out" (82); or "This morning I am horribly weak. My face is ghastly pale, and my throat pains me. It must be something wrong with my lungs, for I don't seem ever to get air enough." (83)

Dracula himself seems to be completely paralysed when he is lying in his coffin during the day, without making any movement or showing any sign of life: "But there was no sign of movement, no pulse, no breath, no beating of the heart. I bent over him, and tried to find any sign of life, but in vain." (84)

To bleed the patients was the solution chosen to try and improve their health. They were transfused in order to compensate their loss of blood (about half a litre a week). Before the discovery of transfusion, the patients were made to drink animal blood, as was the case of Richard Chase, the so-called "vampire of Sacramento", who drank animal blood and then human blood in order to save his life. In *Dracula*, blood transfusions are performed thanks to Van Helsing. "She wants blood, and blood she must have or die. My friend John and I have consulted; and we are about to perform what we call transfusion of blood – to transfer from full veins of one to the empty veins which pine for him." (85) And thanks to Arthur, Lucy seems to feel better for a while:

It was with a feeling of personal pride that I could see a faint tinge of colour steal back into the pallid cheeks and lips. No man knows till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own life-blood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves. (86)

Vampires suck the blood of other people and their victims themselves will then suck blood to recover their strength and live for ever:

...he can flourish when that he can fatten on the blood of the living. Even more, we have seen amongst us that he can even grow younger; that his vital faculties grow strenuous, and seem as though they refresh themselves when his special pabulum is plenty. (87)

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(82) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 134

(83) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 134

(84) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 63

(85) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 148

(86) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 156

(87) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 286

To end with the symptoms of porphyria, we may notice that the patients and vampires develop an allergy to one of the components of garlic. Dracula and his fellow vampires cannot eat garlic or even smell it. That is the reason why it was commonly used to protect oneself from vampires. “Then there are things which so afflict him that he has no power, as the garlic that we know of...” (88)

There is some mystery about vampirism as a disease. As Bram Stoker’s death is mysterious as well. Towards the end of his life, his health started declining quite quickly. To this day, his death is still a mystery. Daniel Farson, (89) Bram Stoker’s grand-nephew, published his death certificate in the biography he devoted to his uncle. It was indicated that Bram Stoker died from “locomotor ataxy”. This disease was known as being the general paralysis of mad people. This seems to mean that Bram Stoker was suffering from syphilis and died of it. But nothing is sure as far as his death is concerned.

#### b) The Renfield Syndrome

The Renfield Syndrome, also known as “medical vampirism”, is a rather rare mental disease. It generally affects men rather than women, and it pushes them to drink blood, either one’s own or someone else’s. This is the reason why this disease is compared to vampires’ behaviours. People affected by this syndrome can develop some sadistic, necrophiliac or even cannibalistic attitudes.

The name of the disease comes from an American psychologist, Richard Noll, who himself borrows it from Bram Stoker’s character, Renfield, in *Dracula*. In the book, Renfield is suffering from the same symptoms as the ones

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(88) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p287

(89) Farson, Daniel, *The Man who Wrote Dracula: A Biography of Bram Stoker*, Michael Joseph, London, 1975

described by this doctor. (90)

c) A Medical Study of Renfield

Elizabeth Winter, a psychiatrist in Baltimore, stated in one of her lectures (91) that Bram Stoker seemed to have been greatly inspired by his sister-in-law's mental illness to portray his character Renfield in such medical terms. William Thornley Stoker, Bram Stoker's brother, was a famous surgeon specialized in neurosurgery. So, he had medical knowledge within reach. William Thornley Stoker had been President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland for three years, from 1894 to 1897. He had been President of the Royal Academy of Medicine for three years, from 1903 to 1906. He had also been on the Board of Governors of the Richmond Lunatic Asylum in Dublin for a short period of time. He improved the technique of trepanning after an epidural haemorrhage. Bram Stoker therefore uses this scientific method in his novel when he depicts Renfield being trepanned by Van Helsing:

The Professor thought a moment and said:-  
'We must reduce the pressure and get back to normal conditions, as far as can be; the rapidity of the suffusion shows the terrible nature of his injury. The whole motor area seems affected. The suffusion of the brain will increase quickly, so we must trephine at once or it may be too late.' (...) 'We shall wait', said Van Helsing, 'just long enough to fix the best spot for trephining, so that we may most quickly and perfectly remove the blood clot; for it is evident that the haemorrhage is increasing.' (92)

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(90) Noll, Richard, *Vampires, werewolves and Demons: Twentieth Century Reports in the Psychiatric Literature*, ed Brunner-Mazel, 1992

(91) Winter, Elizabeth, *All in the Family: A Retrospective in Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Journal of Dracula studies – Dracula research Centre: [www.blooferland.com](http://www.blooferland.com)

(92) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p329-330

#### d) The Hysterical Female

The word “hysteria” comes from the Greek “hysteron” meaning “uterus”. In the first studies that have been made about hysteria, its main symptoms have been described as follows: amnesia, paralysis, nervous twitches, loss of speech, sleep-walking, hallucinations, and convulsions. Hysteria was first largely linked to the question of female sexuality.

In the Renaissance era, hysteria was thought to be cured by pelvic massages, the aim being to obtain an orgasm.

According to statistics made in the Victorian era, it was shown that a quarter of all women were suffering from that disorder. The French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot who worked at the Salpêtrière Hospital stated that hereditary problems in the nervous system were responsible of hysteria. He used hypnosis to treat this illness. It is thanks to a course of hypnosis that Mina can give details to locate Dracula, and help Van Helsing and his companions to eradicate him. Sigmund Freud also used hypnosis but very quickly turned himself to therapy through talking. He thought that any problem could find a solution if diseased people managed to chase them out of their subconscious. His technique was inspired by Joseph Breuer. They wrote a book together about hysteria entitled *Studies on Hysteria* in 1893. This is just the beginning of an attempt to understand this mental illness when Bram Stoker published *Dracula* in 1897. In the very beginning of his book *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, Freud states that hysteria is connected with people’s sexual lives. So let us now turn towards the theme of sexuality in *Dracula*.

#### B. Sex and Vampires

During the Victorian period, being a “proper lady” meant that women should not have any sexual desires. Sex was part of women’s lives only because it was the only way to have children within the sanctity of marriage. So before marriage, virtuous women had to be virgins. This was the basic conditions of a patriarchal society as it was codified in that period. If we take a look at the women in the novel, we can see that they are presented as being seduced and penetrated by Dracula. Men are presented as dominating just as it was the case



in the society of the time. They are strong and they control everything. But things are not so simple in the novel as very often traditions are reversed to thwart the habits and customs of that period.

In *Dracula*, vampirism is closely linked to sexuality. Both involve desire, penetration, and exchange of “bodily fluids” (blood or sperm).

### 1) Jonathan Harker’s “Rape”?

At the Castle of Dracula, three beautiful women come and visit Jonathan Harker. They physically look like Dracula himself. The roles are here reversed right from the beginning of the encounter between Jonathan and the three women. Jonathan is no longer a womanizer but, on the contrary, he is the one being seduced. He is no longer the dominant male of the Victorian period who is courting women. Women have taken his place. The relation is immediately highly sexualized. The romanticism of this encounter turns quickly into something more violent from the three women’s part. Jonathan is faced with three sexually aggressive women. He thinks he should not describe this scene in his diary but he does not resist the urge. This thought just crosses his mind for a few seconds. He is completely captivated by the three women.

The reversal of gender role is shown by the description Bram Stoker made of Jonathan Harker: “I lay quite, looking out under my eyelashes” (93) and: “I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes.” (94) This attitude can very well be that of a young, timid, prudish lady while being courted by her fiancé, for example. This is the kind of behaviour which is typically expected from a young Victorian lady, and not from a man. Jonathan no longer corresponds to what was expected from a young Victorian man.

This scene can make us think of a rape, more or less consciously accepted by Jonathan: “I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips.” (95) It is the stage of a reversed rape. Bram Stoker

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(93) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 51

(94) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 52

(95) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 51

turns Jonathan into a weak, passive man seduced or even attacked by strong, sexually active women. The sexual approach is first a soft one: "The fair girl advanced and bent over me till I could feel the movement of her breath upon me. Sweet it was in one sense, honey-sweet". (96) Then the scene quickly turns into an atmosphere which makes Jonathan feel ill at ease: "and sent the same tingling through the nerves as her voice, but with a bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood." (97) Jonathan is constantly both attracted and repulsed: "There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear." (98) A few lines later, we again come across the same feeling of both attraction and repulsion: "There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive." (99) Jonathan is totally submitted to the three women: he does not even try to escape them. They are both a dream and a nightmare. He is unable to control himself and behave like typical Victorian men. One of the three women turns into a more sexually aggressive being and she then prepares herself to "rape" him:

and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. 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. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips, and could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one's flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer – nearer. I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the supersensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. (100)

Jonathan appears to be totally submitted and sexually passive, exactly what was expected from women: "I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited

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(96) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, pp 51-52

(97) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 52

(98) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 51

(99) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 52

(100) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 52

– waited with beating heart.” (101)

It is Dracula himself who is going to break the process of the reversed rape: “I was conscious of the presence of the Count, and of his being as if lapped in a storm of fury. As my eyes opened involuntarily I saw his strong hand grasp the slender neck of the fair woman and with giant’s power draw it back”. (102) We expect the Count, through his violent intervention to reverse once again the reversed sexual scene. Indeed, he shifts the situation but to transform it into another form of sexuality which was not only a taboo but above all a crime during the Victorian period: homosexuality. (103) Dracula has kept Jonathan for himself. So the heterosexual relations that could have existed between Jonathan and the three women are turned into homosexual relations between Jonathan and Dracula: “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! Beware how you meddle with him, or you’ll have to deal with me!” (104)

Dracula seems to be a saviour for Jonathan as he prevents him from being “raped” by the three women, but at the same time he forces him into another relation that is not socially more enviable than the previous one.

Nevertheless, Dracula is ready to make concessions. He accepts to “share” his partner with the three women but only when he is done with him: “Well, now I promise you that when I am done with him, you shall kiss him at your will.” (105) The Count seems to prefer virgins. He wants to be the first lover.

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(101) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 52

(102) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p52

(103) The Oscar Wilde scandal is there to remind us that homosexuality was a crime. At the very end of the nineteenth century, Oscar Wilde was accused by Lord Alfred Douglas’s father of having sexual relations with his son. After his trial, Oscar Wilde was ruined, he had to divorce, was stripped of his rights as a father, and condemned to prison. He spent his two-year sentence in the Reading prison. This affair broke him both as a man and as a poet.

(104) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 53

(105) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 53

By his sudden apparition in the sex scene, Dracula also reverses the traditional gender role in fiction. Usually, the female victim is rescued by the male hero who fears nothing. In *Dracula*, Jonathan is playing the female role while Dracula is playing the part of the male character.

## 2) Lucy's Sexual Role Play

As we have already seen in the previous part, Lucy admits to her friend Mina that she is confused about choosing one man for all her life. Bram Stoker shows how Lucy seems to be dissatisfied with the institution of marriage which imposes monogamy: "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (106) Through these words Lucy questions the traditional institution of marriage. She expresses her desire for a polygamous marriage. She could give birth to it through blood transfusions. Victorian people believed that blood was sperm, so there is only one step to go to equate a blood transfusion to a sexual relation. Blood transfusions that are made for medical use are transformed into an act of pure sexuality. Feeding on blood equals an exchange of "bodily fluids" that can be linked to sexual relations. Moreover, Lucy is not only allowed to experience sex with many men but she is allowed to experience it even outside marriage. Needless to say that this is totally contrary to the strict codes of Victorian society.

After having become a vampire, Lucy lures Arthur into her arms and longing for sex:

She still 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!' (107)

This scene reveals a gender reversal on the part of Lucy as no woman ever asked for sex at the time.

Through Dracula's way of acting, men are turned into passive beings and women as active ones as they are made responsible for their *vampirisation*

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(106) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 76

(107) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 253

by Dracula himself. Indeed, the Count can go somewhere only if he has been invited to come. So, this can mean that Dracula can only penetrate a woman if she has invited him to do so. This is a reversal of roles as it is well-known that Victorian women were not explicitly expected to seduce men. They could only be seduced. Bram Stoker is upsetting the traditional codes and, at the same time, he allows Dracula to say that nothing is his own fault. On the contrary, it is entirely women's own faults. Women are portrayed as deprived, fallen women. Sexual seduction is embodied by women and Dracula only gives them satisfaction.

To end with this part, we should mention the moment when Lucy is killed in order to save her from being a vampire for all eternity. This scene is symbolical of a deflowering. This scene is also a reversed symbolism: the murder scene is turned into a sexual one. Arthur is driving a stake through Lucy's heart. The stake is a phallic symbol. It symbolically represents Arthur's penis. This is the reason why it is Arthur who stabs Lucy. Symbolically, he is going to deflower his wife. Lucy is considered as his wife because he has given his blood to allow Van Helsing to perform a transfusion. Let us take a more detailed look at this scene:

Arthur took the stake and the hammer, and when once his mind was set on action his hands never trembled nor even quivered. (...) Arthur placed the point over the heart, and as I looked I could see its dint in the white flesh. Then he struck with all his might. (108)

The act of penetration from Arthur to Lucy is thus depicted.

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 and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam. (109)

Lucy here expresses the pain that can be felt during the first sexual relation experienced by a virgin.

But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling 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. (...) (110)

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(108) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 258

(109) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, pp 258-259

(110) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 259

Arthur does not take into account Lucy's reactions and continues to perform the sexual act. The blood from the pierced heart may be compared to the blood that proves the woman's virginity during her first sexual relation:

And then the writhing and the quivering of the body became less, and the teeth ceased to champ, and the face to quiver. Finally it lay still. The terrible task was over. (111)

The sexual act ends with a climactic orgasm (*la petite mort*) which is in fact Lucy's real death. We can also note a form of voyeurism here expressed as the others are looking at the scene.

So, to stab someone which is normally an act of murder is reversed into an act of love. This is a violent act of love in Lucy's case. As Lucy cannot naturally consummate marriage, she "supernaturally" consummates it.

To destroy Lucy and to free her from Dracula's influence as Arthur has done in the passage we have just commented upon, it is necessary to exhume her body. By this act, we can notice, once again a reversal of situation. Lucy does not look like any other dead corpse:

There lay Lucy, seemingly just as we had seen her the night before her funeral. She was, if possible, more radiantly beautiful than ever; and I could not believe that she was dead. The lips were red, nay redder than before; and on the cheeks was a delicate bloom. (...) 'And yet she has been dead one week. Most peoples in that time would not look so.' (112)

In Lucy's case, death is not death. Death is transformed into life, another kind of life, another way of living. People who have been victims of a vampire are defined as dead people, they are called the "un-dead" – a category Lucy belongs to. She is half-way between life and death, and half-way between death and life.

Alain Pozzuoli (113) reported that Bram Stoker had perhaps been greatly influenced by a short story based on a real event which happened in 1869 to describe a dead female body after an exhumation. He went to Cruden Bay and read *The Secret of the Growing Gold*. This is the story of the exhumation of the

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(111) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 259

(112) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, pp 240-241

(113) Pozzuoli, Alain, *Bram Stoker, une vie*, in *Bram Stoker, Oeuvres*, Omnibus, 2007

well-known Pre-Raphaelite painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti's wife, Elizabeth Siddal. Rossetti asked for the exhumation of his wife's coffin in the cemetery of Highgate seven years after her death. He wanted to get some poems he had written for her and had put in her coffin before the funeral. Another version of the event says that it was in fact to take the jewels she had kept. Whatever the reasons might be, the exhumation took place. When the coffin was opened, Elizabeth Siddal's body appeared intact, without any sign of decomposition. It was noticed that both her hair and her nails had continued to grow.

We are confronted with the same spectacle in Lucy's case, even if it is not so long after her death. This is a way to cast away what frightens us most, that is to say our own death, and at the same time our only certainty in life. Everything is not dead. Bram Stoker portrays death as another kind of life, as if he could not bring himself to die. Just as Dracula cannot bring himself to die and so transforms himself into a predator who sucks the blood of others, refuses to die and stays alive for all eternity.

### 3) A Reversed Mother-Figure

Dracula reinvented the role of motherhood. He behaves as a mother would with Mina. He has then turned the traditional role of a mother into a diabolical one. One night, he comes in Jonathan's and Mina's bedroom. While Jonathan is sleeping, he forces Mina to suck his blood:

On the bed beside the window lay Jonathan Harker, his face flushed, and breathing heavily as though in a stupor. Kneeling on the near edge of the bed facing outwards was the white-clad figure of his wife. By her side stood a tall, thin man, clad in black. His face was turned from us, but the instant we saw it we all recognised the Count – in every way, even to the scar on his forehead. With his left hand he held both Mrs Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of her neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast, which was shown by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink. (114)

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(114) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 336

This scene is a reversal of the mother-like figure. Dracula is transformed into a mother who is feeding her child. Blood is transformed into milk. And Mina is transformed into a young baby who is sucking her mother's milk. Jonathan becomes a father who is sleeping while his wife is feeding their child in the middle of the night. The mother-like figure is perverted by Dracula. Alain Pozzuoli suggests this is "an act of fellatio". (115) We should recognise that the situation in which Mina and the Count are portrayed can absolutely suggest a sexual act. They are both half-naked, Dracula is forcing Mina, like in the rape scene, to drink his blood. Mina is sucking Dracula's breast as a woman can suck a man's penis in the case of a fellatio. In that case, the blood which is running through Dracula's breast would be transformed into sperm, which itself shares a similar colour with milk.

About two years after the publication of *Dracula*, Bram Stoker started to change his mind. He developed some sort of a prudish attitude towards his contemporaries. In 1908, he even wrote a pamphlet in which he asked that the authors who were too erotic in their writings be censored.

After having noticed the numerous allusions to eroticism and sexuality in his novel, we can see a change of opinion in Bram Stoker's behaviour as well.

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(115) Pozzuoli, Alain, *Bram Stoker, prince des ténèbres*, Paris, Librairie Séguier, 1989



## PART IV : Vampirism and Religion

Clithe Leatherdale himself studies the notion of reversal in his book. (116) He states that everything that has been made by Jesus Christ is inverted or perverted by Dracula. Christ is good, Dracula is evil. Jesus Christ belongs to a humble family, Dracula is an aristocrat. Christ symbolizes light and hope, and resuscitates while Dracula enjoys living in darkness. Christ's death on the cross which can be seen as a "double stake" is the announcement of his re-birth, while Dracula's death by the stake means his definite death and oblivion. Christ offers his life to save humanity while Dracula steals people's lives in order to be saved and to go on living for eternity.

The other characters in the novel are also led to transgress the various rules that define Christianity and more particularly Catholicism.

#### A. The Strange Case of Mina

Mina seems not to be a Catholic. We do not know if she really is an Anglican or if she converts to Anglicanism in order to have a religious wedding with Jonathan. We should remember that she does not get married to Jonathan according to the Catholic rite:

I have asked Sister Agatha to beg the Superior to let our wedding be this afternoon, and am waiting her reply...  
She has come and told me that the Chaplain of the English mission church has been sent for. We are to be married in an hour, or as soon as after Jonathan awakes... (117)

The reversal of roles seem to be less clear in Mina's case than it is for the other characters such as Van Helsing or Renfield. When Dracula comes to pay Mina a visit for the first time, we can notice that her description is reminiscent of a passage from Exodus. The Hebrews appeared in a column of smoke and fire while Dracula appears in a cloud of fog:

The mist grew thicker and thicker, and I could see now how it came in, for I could see it like smoke – (...) I got thicker and through my brain just as the cloudy column was now whirling in pillar of cloud in the room, through the top of which I could see the

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(116) Leatherdale, Clive, op. cit.

(117) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p129

light of the gas shining like a red eye. Things began to whirl through my brain just as the cloudy column was now whirling in the room, and through it all came the scriptural words 'a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night'. (118)

The Hebrews are guided through the desert thanks to that column of smoke or fire. They are guided by God. On the contrary Lucy is not guided by God but by the Devil. She is fooled at first: "Was it indeed some spiritual guidance that was coming to me in my sleep?" (119) She is not immediately aware of the fact that it was the devil that was at work:

Suddenly the horror burst upon me that it was thus that Jonathan had seen those awful women growing into reality through the whirling mist in the moonlight (...) The last conscious effort which imagination made was to show me a livid white face bending over me out of the mist. (120)

Perhaps she would have acted or thought differently if she had she been aware of it sooner.

Another reversal of roles can be noticed when Dracula forces Mina to suck his blood from his chest. "With that he pulled open his shirt, and with his long sharp nails opened a vein in his breast." (121) This can make us think of the similar act of the pelican.(122) In the Middle Ages, the pelican was regarded as a symbol of Christ as well as a symbol of paternal love. It was then commonly believed that this bird could cut its chest to make itself bleed in order to feed its offsprings that have been suffocated by the female. This is an image of Jesus Christ who sacrifices himself for the salvation of humanity. That is why we can often see a pelican above the cross of the crucifixion. Blood and water coming from the heart were a symbol of life (blood and water were regarded as life potions). We can also add that both blood and water had run from Jesus Christ's speared side when he was crucified. The roles are here reversed as

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(118) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 309

(119) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 309

(120) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 309

(121) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 343

(122) Feuillet, Michel, *Lexique des symboles chrétiens*, Que sais-je, PUF, 2011

Christ gives his blood for the salvation of humanity while Dracula gives his blood for his own salvation, and force Mina and his other victims into hell.

There is also an equivalent of the stigmata of Christ on Mina's forehead – a stigmata due to Van Helsing's Host. This mark is a sign of recognition. It testifies to the presence of the devil. Mina's mark will vanish when Quincey Morris will die for her sins. Then he will have embodied the role of Christ who died to save people from their sins. As sins disappear from people's lives in the case of Christ's sacrifice, the mark disappears from Mina's forehead thanks to Quincey's sacrifice. Jesus Christ stages his own sacrifice to follow God's laws but Quincey Morris's sacrifice is a way to stop following the devil's laws. In the first case God is the master. In the second, it is the devil who is the master. By his death, Quincey Morris breaks this state of things.

We cannot end this study of Mina's case without mentioning what is undoubtedly the most remarkable reversed symbolism as far as religion is concerned, and more specifically the transubstantiation process. First, what do we mean by transubstantiation? During the Last Supper, Christ shared some bread and some wine with his apostles:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (123)

He is *really* present in the bread and in the wine. Bread and wine are really his body and his blood. Jesus Christ shed his blood for the salvation of humanity. By drinking Christ's blood, the faithful can then live an eternal life. In the case of Dracula, his victims drink his blood directly. Or he himself drinks blood from his victims to reach eternity. By making Mina drink his blood, Dracula also offers her to live eternally but the condition is to become a vampire. Dracula contaminates Mina – and all his victims – and condemns them to become a mirror image of him. To drink Christ's blood and eat Christ's bread does not bring the faithful to the same conditions of eternal life.

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(123) The Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 26, 26-28

## B. The Portrait of Van Helsing

Van Helsing is depicted as having a deep faith. But what kind of faith? He believes in vampires and in pagan remedies, such as garlic, in order to fight them. At the same time he uses the Host in a way no Christian people would. (124)

Van Helsing gives his “own” definition of faith – a faith which would not be shared by a great number of Christians. More strictly speaking, this is in fact a definition he borrowed from someone else:

‘My thesis is this: I want you to believe.’

‘To believe what?’

‘To believe in things that you cannot. Let me illustrate. I heard once an American who so defined faith: “that which enables us to believe things which we know to be untrue.” For one, I follow that man. (125)

The Roman Catholic Church would surely not define faith as a belief in things that are untrue!

Moreover, Van Helsing shows little respect for the Host as he uses it here and there according for his own purposes:

First he took from his bag a mass of what looked like thin, wafer-like biscuit, which was carefully rolled up in a white napkin; next he took out a double-handful of some whitish stuff, like dough or putty. He crumbled the wafer up fine and worked it into the mass between his hands. This he then took, and rolling it into strips, began to lay them into the crevices between the door and its setting in the tomb. (126)

Thanks to Arthur who seems to be highly puzzled about what Van Helsing is doing under his very own eyes, we learn that the wafer-like biscuit is in fact the Host: “The Host. I brought it for Amsterdam.” (127)

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(124) Starrs, D. Bruno, *Keeping the Faith: Catholicism in Dracula and its adaptations*, <http://eprints.qut.edu.au>

(125) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 232

(126) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 251

(127) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 252

We can notice some inconsistency between Van Helsing's acts and words. He seems to be full of respect towards the Host: "Van Helsing reverently lifted his hat as he answered:" (128) He talks highly of the Host and, at the same time, he uses it in a disrespectful way.

As he uses both the crucifix and the sacred host as weapons to exterminate Dracula, he is much more acting like a magical man rather than as a priest or a pastor. He transforms both of them into magical objects so that they are no longer the signs of a faithfulness to Christ. This is a transgressive use of sacred objects.

Van Helsing also refers to the use of an "Indulgence": "I have an Indulgence." (129) In the Roman Catholic Church, an "Indulgence" is some sort of an annulment of a sentence which, as a consequence, would lead to an absolution of a sin. Any sin, even if it has already been forgiven, should be repaired. Let us take an example: someone who has stolen something from someone else should return what he has stolen to the injured party. In other words, an "Indulgence" is used after a sin has already been committed. So, in any case, it is used for a sin-to-be. On the contrary, Van Helsing reverses the use of the "Indulgence" as he wants to use it for what he is going to do: to stab Lucy through her heart with a stake.

### C. The Diabolical and Lunatic Character of Renfield

If Dracula is portrayed as being the opposite of Jesus Christ, Renfield is the heir to John the Baptist. (130) As John the Baptist was preparing Jesus Christ's coming, Renfield is preparing Dracula's coming. Each of them has his own messiah.

John the Baptist is the last prophet from the Old Testament, and in the New Testament, precedes Christ. He was the son of Zachariah and Elizabeth (the Virgin Mary's cousin). The four Gospels introduce him as being a messenger sent by God to prepare Jesus Christ's coming. "For this is he, of whom it is written,

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(128) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 251

(129) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 252

(130) Leatherdale, Clive, *op. cit.*

Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” (131) “This he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” (132) John the Baptist offered sinners to be christened in order to live a pure life, devoid of sins, therefore announcing the coming of someone who would be more powerful than he was, who in fact was already there among the crowd: “This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.” (133) Being endowed with great influence on the crowds he spoke to, Herod Antipas decided to arrest him and throw him in jail. He was finally beheaded. This is the common fate between John the Baptist and Renfield: the first one was beheaded and the second one died because of a wound to his head.

Renfield may also be compared to Jesus Christ. But the comparison is once again a reversal of Christ’s actions, as it has been for the other characters. There is a similarity between Renfield and Christ in the events they each had to face with the Devil. The Devil constantly tries to ensnare Renfield as it has tried to ensnare Jesus Christ in the desert. Bram Stoker here reproduces the biblical scene of the desert. Renfield is tempted by the Devil. This is how he describes the scene to Van Helsing:

He came up to the window in the mist, as I had seen Him often before; but He was solid then – not a ghost, and His eyes were fierce like a man’s when angry. (...) Then he began promising me things – not in words but by doing them. (...) He beckoned me to the window. I got up and looked out, and He raised His hands, and seemed to call out without using any words. A dark mass spread over the grass, coming on like the shape of a flame of fire; and then He moved the mist to the right and left, and I could see that there were thousands of rats with their eyes blazing red – like His, only smaller. He held up His hand, and they all stopped; and I thought He seemed to be saying: “All these lives will I give you, ay, and many more and greater, through countless ages, if you will fall down and worship me!” (134)

There is no great difference between this episode and that of the Bible when

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(131) The Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 11, 10

(132) The Gospel according to Saint Luke, 7, 27

(133) The Gospel according to Saint John, 1, 30

(134) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, pp 332-333

Satan tried to tempt Jesus Christ: “It is written again, Thou shall not tempt the Lord thy go.” (135) Christ answered: “Get thee hence, Satan”, (136) whereas Renfield replies: “Come in, Lord and Master!” (137) So, while Jesus Christ beats the Devil off, Renfield welcomes him. Once again, we come across a shift in roles.

When Renfield happens to flee from the asylum, he goes to the nearest chapel. There, there is no doubt about the fact that he is praying:

I am here to do Your bidding, Master. I am Your slave, and You will reward me, for I shall be faithful. I have worshipped You long and afar off. Now that You are near, I await Your commands, and You will not pass me by, will You, dear Master, in Your distribution of good things. (138)

But contrary to people who believe in God and who pray, Renfield has his own god: Dracula. The capital letters used by Bram Stoker to write personal pronouns and possessives show that Renfield addresses a divine being. (139) And as we have just seen, he is preparing for Dracula’s coming. It means that Bram Stoker here insists on the fact that Dracula is invested with some sort of a divine status. Renfield is expected to reach immortality thanks to the devil represented by Dracula, while Christian people are expected to reach immortality thanks to God represented by Jesus Christ. This is another example of the religious symbolism which Bram Stoker seems to transgress, if not reinvent, in his novel.

Renfield constantly uses biblical references. He has, for example, constantly in mind the principle according to which “blood is life”: “The blood is the life! the blood is the life!” (140) Or later on, as it is related in Dr Seward’s diary:

The doctor here will bear me out that on one occasion I tried to kill him for the purpose of strengthening my vital powers by the assimilation with my own body of his life through the medium of

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(135) The Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 4, 7

(136) The Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 4, 10

(137) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 333

(138) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 126

(139) Leatherdale, Clive, *op. cit.*

(140) Stoker, Bram *ibid*, p 171



his blood – relying, of course, upon the Scriptural phrase, 'For the blood is the life'. (141)

But his real wish is to drink blood. He does not take into account that, according to the Book of Deuteronomy, you should not “eat blood”: “Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.” (142) To consummate blood was considered as a pagan sacrifice that should not be perpetrated.

Renfield drinks blood by taking lives. He eats flies, then spiders, then birds. When he tries to kill someone, this is just because he wants to lick and consummate his blood, and nothing more.

Victorian society was scientifically expanding and saw the emergence of new technologies. This is reflected in *Dracula*. Mina not only knows how to use a typewriter but she can also write shorthand, Doctor Seward is recording his diary on a phonograph. Christian values were disrupted, thus transformed into old folkloric superstitions. The religious faith was progressively rejected to adopt a new faith: a faith in science and technology. This was undoubtedly emphasized with the publication of a book by Charles Darwin, in 1859, *On the Origin of Species*. In his book, Darwin declared that man evolved from the ape and was not created by God in His own image. In *Dracula*, Bram Stoker shows that Victorian society was close to moral collapse. At the same time, he tries to show the dangers that can emerge if Christian values are reversed or rejected.

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(141) Stoker, Bram, *ibid*, p 280

(142) The Book of Deuteronomy, 12, 23

## Conclusion

Throughout his novel, Bram Stoker constantly turns things around. The New Woman challenges man's intelligence by mastering new technologies. Van Helsing turns hysterical while hysteria was a specific characteristic of women. Jonathan was going to be raped if the Count had not intervened. Blood transfusions, more commonly known as being medical treatments, have been transformed into sexual relations. Lucy's death is assimilated to her first sexual relation with her husband-to-be. Dracula transforms himself into a mother-figure while forcing Lucy to suck his blood/milk. And to end with, both Renfield and Dracula question the truth and virtue of Christ's actions.

With *Dracula*, Bram Stoker creates a novel which is out of the ordinary at least formally. The epistolary form helps to emphasise the truthfulness of the story he is going to relate. He wrote a story which seems incredible: a man who comes back from the dead is not so common in everyday life. Nobody could believe this was possible. And yet... It was precisely what happened to Jesus Christ. He resuscitated after his death and appeared to his apostles. Bram Stoker liked to play with reversal adaptations and perversions, as well as with his contemporaries' own anxieties or sexual fantasies.

In *Dracula*, Bram Stoker has broken the taboos of Victorian society. He has disrupted the Victorian codes. His book was first published with a yellow cover which was reserved at the time for books which were considered as too "sexualized". For Jean Marigny (143), the vampire is a representation of everything that Victorian society rejected. The killing of Dracula at the end of the novel is a way for Bram Stoker to show that middle-class morality can win over the corrupt morality embodied by the aristocracy. The illusion of good wins over the fascination for evil. Christianity wins over the Devil, even if the means used by Van Helsing to reach his goal are much more akin to simulated superstition than actual faith.

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(143) Marigny, Jean, dir, *Dracula*, Figures mythiques, Editions Autrement, 1997

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## Key words

Blood; gender; Jesus Christ ; New Woman and Victorian society ; reversal ; sexuality

## Abstract

The vampire is a creature which sucks blood out of beings while they are quietly sleeping at night in order to reach eternal life.

Blood is reminiscent in vampire stories in general, and in *Dracula* in particular: blood is life. Vampirism is also closely linked to sexuality. Both involve desire, penetration and exchange of blood or sperm. Blood transfusions are transformed into sexual acts. The stabbing of Lucy symbolically means that she is deflowered by her husband-to-be. Mina is forced to drink blood from Dracula's chest which represents a reversal of the mother-like figure.

Religion is also very present in *Dracula*. Everything that has been made by Jesus Christ is inverted or perverted by Dracula, even the process of transubstantiation itself. Both Renfield and Dracula question the truth and virtue of Jesus Christ's actions.

Bram Stoker constantly turns things around. He has broken the taboos of Victorian society. The vampire is a representation of everything that Victorian society rejected.



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