

Haverford College

The Blood Is The Life

Female Vampires, Sexuality, and Disgust in *Dracula*

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“The blood is the life!” (Stoker 178). In *Dracula*, blood is of utmost importance. The novel opens with Jonathan Harker’s experience in Dracula’s castle, the first proof of the supernatural power and unnatural pull of vampires, and the first few examples of their overwhelming appetite for blood. The act of taking blood and allowing blood to be taken is eroticized in the novel, and the absolute necessity of blood for vampires in order to survive connects the creatures and their blood lust to exaggerated, violent sexual images. Built on many aspects of Gothic horror with these tropes of Dracula’s castle shifted to and set against Victorian-era London later in the novel, *Dracula* emphasizes the corrupting foreign influence of the Transylvanian vampire and his hunt for blood as he invades the patriarchal society at the center of the story. The lead characters are modern and chaste, as per the era’s societal expectations, directly in opposition to Dracula, an inhuman demon, a creature on a constant hunt for young blood, a predator whose influence tests Victorian conceptions of gender roles and the expression of sexuality. Dracula directly attacks women, so the men seek to protect the women and their innocent forms from the sexual outsider, Dracula, but in turn, the men are tempted greatly by the corrupted females with their inviting, vampiric tendencies. These warped women appear first in the form of Dracula’s brides, three vampiric beings exerting a tempting force on Jonathan Harker, and later Lucy Westenra becomes a threat as well in her vampire form. Mina Harker’s possible transformation into a vampire

leads up to the climax in the novel, as the male characters race to prevent her change into a monstrous and hypersexualized form.

I will be focusing on the female vampires and the men's disgusted response to them. By characterizing the men's response to the female vampires as disgust, a dynamic of attraction and repulsion is highlighted along with the possibilities that follow the dynamic of disgust. The female vampires tempt the men with the appeal of their sexual openness and pale beauty, but their need for blood and their undead state threaten the men. The males are both drawn to and appalled by the vampires, with these feelings threatening to overtake their more reasonable and conservative minds. They experience disgust, both at themselves because they feel as though they lose their power of self-control around the female vampires and also because of the visceral imagery of blood and teeth, threatening them with disempowerment through the female vampires' attainment of control, relating to their fears of an intimidating New Woman.

The men are drawn to the freedom of an unrestrained and active sexual appetite offered by vampirism, their fantasies of breaking free from restraint and fully satisfying their desires reflected in their attraction to the vampires. On the other hand, disgust can draw characters towards something new with a strong sense of curiosity, or it can have a more aggressive response that rejects it. I argue that the male characters progress from attraction and milder disgust to almost complete, violent repulsion by the end of the novel, and highlight the use of the female vampires as monster figures, drastically changed and bastardized female forms that gain sexual control and power over the males. They are essential in

presenting Stoker's novel as a metaphoric warning about the dangers of the rapidly ascending New Woman figure. Curiosity appears less possible when the novel moves to England and engages with the cultural problem of the New Woman, indicated by the trajectory of the novel and how the male characters deal with the attraction and repulsion relationship they have with disgust. As I examine evidence from encounters with the brides of Dracula and vampire Lucy, it can be seen that the men are attracted in a number of ways, but they need to shut this attraction down violently in order to prevent further challenges to their self-control, to preserve the patriarchal balance in society, and to "save" the females from this hypersexual and unbecoming state. In their fight to protect the women, they also limit the women and the means by which they can exert themselves in a more independent manner. William Ian Miller touches on the idea of curiosity or attraction and disgust being connected in his book, *The Anatomy of Disgust*. They are repulsed in the way that Miller describes: "Repulsion, however, might bring in its train affects that work to move one closer to what one just backed away from. These affects could range from curiosity, to fascination, to a desire to mingle. Repulsion also can raise resentment for having been repelled and a consequent desire to reclaim lost territory. And that too draws one forward again" (Miller 111). The male characters begin at a point of fascination with the unknown, and by the end of the novel, the vampires have repelled them to the point of resentment and need to reclaim their territory and control.

Before looking specifically at the progression of how the female vampires are represented and how the male characters respond to them, there are two primary

points to be made: the female vampires' unnatural hunt for blood, their appetite, is portrayed as sexual at its core, and the disgust of the sexualized blood hunt, with its attraction and repulsion, can be understood in relation to Victorian gender norms and the New Woman's disruption of them. Jonathan's experience with Dracula in his castle provides an early example of how blood suggests unrestrained sexual satiation. When shaving, Jonathan cuts himself, surprised that he did not notice the Count sneak up on him. Even more surprising and unnerving is Dracula's reaction to the blood: "the blood was trickling over my chin...When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat" (56). This first sign of vampiric bloodlust is but a hint of what's to come, a trait that his vampire minions and his brides share. Dracula is beastly and dangerous, a force to be reckoned with, and his thirst for blood is one of many attributes he has as creature of the night, as a monster, repulsing Harker in a way that is similar but separate from the repulsion experienced with female vampires. After feeding and replenishing his stores of blood, Dracula becomes a far more attractive figure, though not to the point of the female vampires' attractive pull, with these examples highlighting even further the relationship between desire and repulsion that the characters have with vampires, a relationship established first by the presence of the Count:

...then I saw something which filled my very soul with horror. There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half renewed, for the white hair and moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath;

the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran over the chin and neck. Even the deep, burning eyes seemed set amongst swollen flesh, for the lids and pouches underneath were bloated. It seemed as if the whole awful creature were simply gorged with blood; he lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion. (83)

The fully satiated Dracula echoes images of the female vampires and their appearances, though Harker finds both of Dracula's forms, filled with blood and gaunt and pale, absolutely horrific. The image of full satiation brings to mind a sexual appetite fulfilled, with the ingestion of blood making Dracula appear gorged, filled to the gills with the erotic, suggestive fluid. With the female vampires, the erotic element is even more palpable. These vampires are monsters: "A monster is born only at this metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place. The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy, giving them life and an uncanny independence" (Cohen 4). The role of vampires' physical attributes viscerally repulsing the males and signifying deeper fears are present in a number of points in the novel, and these examples of blood and teeth move beyond just individual male fears. As Cohen says, the actual body of the monster incorporates fear and anxiety, among other things, and these physical parts of the vampires are not just present for show.

Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, a compendium of sexual pathology first published in 1886 and translated into English in 1892 meant mainly

for medical and other scholarly scientific study, includes a version of sexual satiation in a female by the drinking of blood included. Of two female focused case studies, Case 48 relates to the fears of the time in his discussion of sadism in women: "When he wished to approach his wife, who was young and somewhat 'nervous,' he first had to make a cut in his arm. Then she would suck the wound, and during the act became violently excited sexually" (Krafft-Ebing 125). Noted by the author alongside this case is a reference to the legend of vampires, linking the hypersexual woman's arousal with vampires. As with the example of Dracula, the hunt for blood represents unrestrained sexual satiation. The act of sucking a bodily fluid such as blood out of the body engages with blood as a symbol of sexual transgression, indicative of aggressive female sexuality in the novel as well as within the popular imagination of the time.

The novel presents that through vampirism, restricted females explore the darker side of their suppressed sexuality, indulging a sexual appetite that poses a threat to the men, used to the more modest expectations placed upon women in the late 1800s, and inverting the common gender roles. Instead of men wielding sexual and societal power over the women, the female vampires lord over the men with exaggerated feminine wiles and sexual appetites while also repulsing them as they stray far from dominant gender ideals of the time. Stoker engages with these ideals: a single, chaste woman of extreme purity and innocence, or a married woman whose sexuality is focused on purposes of procreation. "In the novel's (and Victorian Britain's) sexual economy, female sexuality has only one legitimate function: propagation within the bounds of marriage. Once separated from that function, as

Lucy's desire is, female sexuality becomes monstrous" (Arata 632). If women did not fit into predictable categories, they were not viewed favorably. Dracula's arrival in London allows the women to finally break free of the structures built by men, but only at a terrible price: by becoming monsters.

These gender ideals must be understood in relation to the idea of the New Woman. A development that appeared late in the Victorian era, most expressly in the 1890s, the concept of the New Woman resonates with Stoker's writing of women in the novel. Mina even references her knowledge of the New Woman early on: "I believe we should have shocked the 'New Woman' with our appetites" (123). This idea of appetites being so strong they shock the New Woman positions the New Woman as having more of an appetite than regular woman, both for food and sex, unrestrained from pursuing satiation. Similarly, the vampires operate with monstrous forms of appetite, a hunger for flesh and blood as sustenance and sensual experience. Neither Mina nor Lucy completely fit the role of the New Woman, as both hope to find happiness and satisfaction in a traditional marriage, with Mina set to marry Jonathan and Lucy having her pick of suitors, following the common female trajectory of marrying a man with the means to provide for them, having children, and remaining primarily in the domestic setting, continuing to raise the children and run the household. Early on Mina does have a career outside of her commitment to Jonathan and seems to be an intellectual equal to some of the male characters, but she does not agree with the emphasis placed on sexuality by the supporters of the New Woman, even though she does seem to believe that this 1890s idea will continue to advance a more feminist agenda: "Some of the 'New Women' 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!" (123-124). Her excitement at the idea of a woman proposing to a man does show a bit of an acceptance towards the progression of the New Woman, but she disregards and does not discuss the more sexual aspects of the New Woman, stopping at the idea of seeing someone asleep, which to her is almost unheard of. Lost in her positive thoughts surrounding the progression of the New Woman, she seems to forget that by marrying Jonathan, she is doing exactly what is expected of her as a woman, and by entering into the institution of marriage, her focused career (with a job she doesn't like, nonetheless) will be turned to a life of domesticity and child-rearing. She is staying within her limits, and she is not entering the role of the exciting New Woman figure.

The New Woman desired to have a life based around an educated, professional career path, living by her own means and finding other avenues to express her independence outside of societal expectations and common female roles of the time (Senf 36). These are all important traits of the emerging New Woman, though the most integral part in terms of Stoker's response gives the sense that the female vampires are closer than either human females initially are. As Gail Cunningham puts so succinctly, the New Woman became "a symbol of all that was most challenging and dangerous in advanced thinking" because of one factor: "The crucial factor was, inevitably, sex" (2). The openness and manner with which sexuality was approached by these New Women, the way they freely choose their

sexual partners outside the boundaries of purely marital procreation (Senf 35), connect more to the symbolic function of the vampires than the modern women Mina and Lucy. The disgust directed at female vampires act as a sort of critique and, in a sense, condemnation of the more progressive concept of the New Woman, since the vampires operate as a corrupted and extreme version of women, sexually deviant creatures, almost completely independent from the male control of patriarchal structures of the time like marriage. Described in such a way, the curiosity and interest in the unknown erotic possibilities offered by the vampires and, symbolically, the New Women bring forth the men's most base, primal, and animal method of thinking, their strong physical desire, but in the end, their expression goes too far to be accepted by patriarchal society and must be ended violently. Lucy's progression from beautiful young female victim towards the exaggerated New Woman-like role of the female vampire displays the male characters' reactions and approaches to a creature that holds such duality in her hands.

However, the men, in their repulsion, are also curious about these female vampires and in achieving a full realization of their own sexual desires that they feel they should not want. This idea of dual feelings of attraction and repulsion is embodied by the male characters' interaction with the female vampires in *Dracula*. After his experience with Dracula, Jonathan has his first encounter with the female brides, an encounter that ends up leaning more towards the curiosity that is possible within the relationship between attraction and repulsion. This is the first instance and appearance of being tempted and repulsed by hypersexual female

vampires. Vampirism allows the brides the power of sexual expression that would be unavailable if they were proper women in Victorian England:

In the moonlight opposite me were three young women, ladies by their dress and manner. I thought at the time that I must be dreaming when I saw them, for, though the moonlight was behind them, they threw no shadow on the floor...Two were dark, and had high aquiline noses, like the Count, and great dark, piercing eyes, that seemed to be almost red when contrasted with the pale yellow moon. The other was fair, as fair as can be, with great, wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires. I seemed somehow to know her face, and to know it in connection with some dreamy fear, but I could not recollect at the moment how or where. All three had brilliant white teeth, that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips...They whispered together, and then they all three laughed – such a silvery, musical laugh, but as hard as though the sound never could have come through the softness of human lips. It was like the intolerable, tingling sweetness of water-glasses when played on by a cunning hand. (68-69)

Just their description, their physical appearances invite in male attention. They cut a pretty image and create sensual sounds, and Harker is drawn to these traits. All

throughout the scene, however, there is a current of terror and repulsion. While Harker is tempted by the pleasures they offer, the unknown aspects of their monstrous sexuality and the power they hold in this gender-inverting scene repulses him. They are as beautiful as human women can be, but with inhuman attributes that unnerve Harker, like the breath of one of the vampires: "Sweet it was in one sense...but with a bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood" (69). His interaction with these vampires is described in contradictory terms, with vocabulary that highlights both his simultaneous disgust, partially at his realization that he is giving in sexually to such creatures, and delight, as he embraces his restrained sexuality and seeks to express it by his submission. His curiosity to explore what the creatures have to offer can be seen in his "wicked, burning desire," and the possibility of sexual satisfaction is not overwhelmed by "some deadly fear" or "dreamy fear" that he feels at the same time. Terrible but sexually desirable, the images of these vampires differ greatly from the ideal Victorian women, Lucy and Mina in the case of this novel: "...There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal" (69). These animalistic qualities and powerful sexual desire are enough to push Harker into submission. This is the one case where the era's expectation of a male is upset, as Harker does not fight back against the three vampires and their temptation: "I closed my eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited" (70).

Unlike the other strong men in the novel who encounter female vampires and are able to successfully fight their temptation, Harker gives in to the wiles of

these “women,” attempting to satisfy a curiosity that the other men do not display in such a manner. His resignation to let the brides do whatever they want with him echoes the strength of the female vampires’ wiles, as it is overwhelming enough for Harker to ignore his repulsion at their more animal and disgusting attributes. Oddly enough, this makes Harker more like Mina and Lucy when each is attacked by Dracula, as he is feminized in giving himself over to the lustful creatures, much like how Lucy and Mina fall under Dracula’s thrall. He also flips even further into a conventionally feminine role as the vampiric act about to take place on his neck involves penetration and blood, often symbolic of sex. The female vampires exert their control over him and make him realize his denied sexual side, but these bloodthirsty brides also threaten him, an example of the slaves men could become if a balance is not struck between desire and disgust, leaning in the favor of disgust. Unlike the other men in the novel, who utilize their disgust as a way to reassert their control and gain a tighter hold on their self-control, Jonathan, even in his repulsion, has a curiosity that moves him to mingle with the women, letting go of his self-control and moving closer to sexual satisfaction through the same route as the brides once did, and how Lucy and Mina will later.

However, even after controlling such a male character as Jonathan with great ease, flipping the stereotypical gender constructions, the male vampire still reigns supreme. It is as though Dracula, the original vampire, is the only one who cannot be controlled, and does not fit neatly alongside the idea of female vampires holding a monstrous amount of agency, as he, the male vampire, still holds the primary position of power: “I saw his strong hand grasp the slender neck of the fair woman

and with giant's power draw it back...Never did I imagine such wrath and fury, even to the demons of the pit. His eyes were positively blazing...he hurled the woman from him, and then motioned to the others, as though he were beating them back" (70). The novel does not commit entirely to vampirism's monstrous freeing up of women, as the vampire women still answer to the male Dracula. This returns to the fact that the women are empowered through freedom of sexual expression, but this empowerment through eroticization is still limited, as Dracula holds the greatest level of empowerment through his sheer level of monstrous freedom. Still, the female vampires retain a grasp on the male characters in the novel, manipulating their darkest fears and desires, not only evidenced by Jonathan's experience, but also, to a lesser degree, by the other male characters' encounters with these nightmarish creatures.

Juxtaposing the first and last experiences with the brides, the escalation from curiosity and milder repulsion to savage violence stemming from strong disgust becomes evident. Near the end of the novel, Van Helsing embarks on a final quest before Dracula's destruction: vanquishing the three vampire brides. When Van Helsing comes across the "sleeping" trio of female vampires he feels a surprising attraction to them: "She lay in her Vampire sleep, so full of life and voluptuous beauty that I shudder as though I have come to do murder. Ah, I doubt not that in old time, when such things were, many a man who set forth to do such a task as mine, found at the last his heart fail him, and then his nerve" (410). He is drawn to the desirable female form but unlike Harker, who is overcome by curiosity, he fights to suppress his sexual attraction successfully. While Harker, more like the female

characters, gained a sense of empowerment through an attempted sexual release with the brides while also losing grasp on his self-control, Van Helsing, like the other men in the novel, reinforces his self-control and empowers himself through suppressing a sexual reaction. What looks to be a sexual reaction turns to more of a protective sort of "love." He is tempted, but repulsed enough that he sees through their false exteriors: "She was so fair to look on, so radiantly beautiful, so exquisitely voluptuous, that the very instinct of man in me, which calls some of my sex to love and to protect one of hers, made my head whirl with new emotion. But God be thanked, that soul-wail of my dear Madam Mina had not died out of my ears...I had nerved myself to my wild work" (411). He does not submit, though he believes that many men before him have given in to the hypnotic faces of the vampires, frozen in place until nightfall when they will be drained of their blood and life and turned into the undead. The vampire brides exude sexuality, expressing it even when at rest, with the word "voluptuous" returned to on many different occasions. Like the good, solid male he is, he must extinguish these hellish figures of sexually expressive and aggressive female vampires that threaten the sexually curious women and men, while also keeping the gendered idea of males always saving females intact as he "saves" these ages-old women from their sexual freedom and hell by savagely killing them. Repulsion wins out, thanks to the innocence of Mina sticking in Van Helsing's head.

Most of the men in the novel, namely Seward, Holmwood, Morris, and Van Helsing, are written as idealized images of Victorian men, with strong self-control and controlled sexual sides, as well as being morally straight and solid in character,

enough so to battle against Dracula and his powers of corruption. More important is the male characters' struggle to fight against the more attractive pull of the female vampires' sexual energy (aside from Harker's encounter with the female vampires, making him sound more sexually open than the rest of the men), which they do so successfully, but only through drastic and violent means, signaling how the male characters were both at once drawn to and repulsed by sexual expression. This sexual curiosity is on display even more prominently in the characters of Lucy and Mina, although both are initially described as pure, holy, and overall the ideal images of Victorian women, meaning they are restrained sexually and, for the most part, innocent. They do not fit the role of the New Woman in their entirely human forms, but the corrupting force of vampirism shifts them closer to the progressive freedom, at a great price.

Stoker presents the male characters as gentlemen of their time, who attempt to conduct themselves as such, rising to the challenge when called upon to save the women. Though three of the men fancy Lucy and are attracted to her, they never express their desire for her in an explicitly sexual manner, instead being chivalrous and moral, ideal Victorian men, even in failure, as evidenced by Mr. Morris' reaction to the rejection of his courtship: "That's my brave girl. It's better worth being late for a chance of winning you than being in time for any other girl in the world. If it's for me, I'm a hard nut to crack; and I take it standing up...Thank you for your sweet honesty to me, and goodbye'" (92). By maintaining their gentlemanly ideals, the male characters retain self-control and exert expectations on the women to also bend to control. However, the men are tempted, specifically Holmwood, by the

undead Lucy and what used to be their love for her. Miller discusses the interplay between the ideas of sexual love and disgust, considering how some level of disgust is necessary and must be present when it comes to the sexual aspect of love:

“Disgust rules mark the boundaries of self; the relaxing of them marks privilege, intimacy, duty, and caring. Disgust also figures in the attractions and repulsions of the sexual...In the sexual setting disgust’s relation to love is more complex, involving us in the pleasure that attends the breach of prohibitions” (Miller xi). As much as the men love Lucy, this love is intertwined with disgust. By loving her, they open themselves up to being manipulated and tempted by her vampiric form, and if they did not love her, her vampiric presence would not disgust them as much, as they would likely not have seen her progression from human to monster. Ultimately, a violent repulsion wins out over love.

Most of the story displays women and the more feminine Harker, in his encounter with the female vampires, as giving in to their emotions and desires when tempted; they have more sexual curiosity, it would seem, an idea that would most certainly be a fear of the uptight men controlling the patriarchal Victorian society. The men are uptight for such a reason: they also hold a strong sexual curiosity, but their positions in society as protectors and gentleman give them a strong need to cut off such feelings. In part, the novel ends with repulsion overtaking desire and curiosity as violent killings take place because although by the very end the story moves back to Transylvania, having moved through England the threat of the New Woman intersects too much with the female vampires for them to be approached curiously instead of getting shut down. It is still a difficult process for the male

characters because they aren't just encountering the brides. They see Lucy change, unlike the brides who are only seen as monsters from the very start.

Lucy is the first of the two main women in the novel to be exposed and drawn to the sexual freedom of vampirism. Being more vivacious and beautiful than Mina, the young Lucy is found to be very attractive and a ripe victim for Dracula. Her beauty makes her a more likely victim for Dracula as he seeks out prey that he finds sexually attractive and full of blood to take, with purity he can corrupt and take advantage of. Lucy is bitten by the Count and her health deteriorates quickly, with attempts at saving her failing. Through Dracula's corrupting powers, she turns into one of the sexualized undead, striking fear into the hearts of the male characters while drawing them in. The male characters want what they should not and cannot have, a challenging position that makes puts the female vampires in a position of power, with their manipulation of male desire: "The disgust of prohibition, we saw, has a paradoxical relation with desire. By prohibiting, it actually augments, even helps create, the desire it wishes to prevent" (Miller 120). The male characters are expected to resist the tempting pleasures offered by the sexually free vampires, but the fact that they cannot have sexually free relationships like the unsuppressed women heightens the relationship between their repulsion and desire. However, they still strongly commit to their roles as protectors of women and destroy these threats, even as Jonathan Harker falters in his first encounter, overwhelmed by the three brides. The men are not only repulsed by the vampires, and as the novel progresses, they conquer the insatiable sexuality they are tempted by, forcing themselves to deny any such thoughts of pleasure by vicious destruction of the

female vampires. They are disgusted by their personal loss of power and self-control, not only at the hands of females, and their disgust begins to shut down their feelings of attraction faster.

By turning into one of Dracula's victims Lucy in a way becomes her repressed sexuality, entering into a new form that allows her the agency in terms of desire that she would not have attained otherwise. Lucy's powerful sexuality upsets the Victorian patriarchal structure, and her undead form becomes a corrupting force much like Dracula, posing a foreign threat. She moves back and forth between creating desire in and repulsing the men as she slowly morphs into a dangerous creature of the night. Immediately before her death, after the sexualized act of blood transfusion fails, she stokes the desire and disgust in the men's hearts: "Her breathing grew stertorous, the mouth opened, and the pale gums, drawn back, made the teeth look longer and sharper than ever. In a sort of sleep-waking, vague, unconscious way she opened her eyes, which were now dull and hard at once, and said in a soft, voluptuous voice, such as I had never heard from her lips: --'Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come! Kiss me' " (197). The men immediately recognize the physical attributes Lucy has developed, the same as those displayed by the vampire brides, revealing male vulnerability much like before. Her sharp teeth and hard eyes strike a contrast with her sweet, inviting voice, and Van Helsing, seeing the attributes of a beast, steps in to prevent Lucy from tempting Arthur and turning him into a creature of the night. Her voice is an attractive quality, but outweighed by her new physical qualities, as the men are drawn in by curiosity but ultimately are repulsed. The transfusion before Lucy's death also reminds the male

characters who gave blood of the sort of sexual communion in sharing blood, making them feel guilt and disgust, as Van Helsing, after Lucy's funeral, questions the process as he compares it to the consummation of marriage: " 'Said he not that the transfusion of his blood to her veins had made her truly his bride?...But there was a difficulty, friend John. 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!' " (213).

The way Lucy attracts the characters and causes them to recoil is of utmost importance, though once dead she becomes less of a threat, re-attaining her beauty. Vampirism restores her, while also giving Lucy the power of seduction. This can be seen in two accounts of her once she begins to turn soon after her death, beginning with the first account: "Some change had come over her body. Death had given back part of her beauty, for her brow and cheeks had recovered some of their flowing lines; even the lips had lost their deadly pallor" (198). The second description shares the same general idea, that Lucy's corpse has suddenly become as desirable as Lucy before she became sick: "All Lucy's loveliness had come back to her in death, and the hours that had passed, instead of leaving traces of 'decay's effacing fingers,' had but restored the beauty of life, till positively I could not believe my eyes that I was looking at a corpse" (201). In her slow change towards full vampirism, Lucy becomes more attractive and voluptuous, drawing hints of curiosity from the men much like how Jonathan was pulled towards the brides, but her tempting form is bared in her tomb, terrifying and beautiful at the same time, when Holmwood,

Seward, Morris, and Van Helsing encounter her in her crypt: “She seemed like a nightmare of Lucy as she lay there; the pointed teeth, the bloodstained, voluptuous mouth—which it made one shudder to see—the whole carnal and unspiritual appearance, seeming like a devilish mockery of Lucy’s sweet purity” (252). She is both desirable and appalling, alternating between an inviting but unnatural presence and terrifying sexual power, preying on the unrecognized desires of the men. The focus on her “voluptuous mouth” suggests that it entices the men, but the pointed teeth and presence of blood present a physically monstrous appearance, the teeth not only signifying the beastliness of Lucy’s new form, but also a reminder of the threat she has become.

Lucy in her vampire form is disgusting partly because the male characters remember her before she turned. They remember what a beautiful, sweet girl she was before she moved into the role of a New Woman. Dracula’s brides, while dressed as ladies, are never seen or mentioned as anything other than vampires, and so their times before their dark forms are unavailable to relate to. They are monsters of the night through the whole novel, and the shift from human to vampire is obviously never present. As mentioned earlier, Van Helsing likely had an easier time slaying the brides so violently since he had never seen them in an earlier, more innocent state. He just sees beautiful beasts and hardly hesitates to kill them. Lucy, seen by all the males in the state of a naïve, feminine ideal, has a transformation that the men are also privy to, and they see what becomes of her as she is less and less human and more of a threat as she moves beyond her previously limited and innocent state into the sexually free realm of an exaggerated New Woman.

Because of the sexual threat she poses to the men and to others, Lucy must be killed. Her transformation from a fragile young lover to a monstrous creature inspires such harsh versions of disgust, reflecting how Stoker portrays Victorian anxieties about women moving outside of their gendered expectations in society: “Lucy’s eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew. At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing; had she then to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight” (249). In her corrupted state full of sexual aggression as described by a dutiful Victorian male figure, Dr. Seward, Lucy is so feared that she needs to be killed. She cannot be allowed to become more powerful than the men, otherwise there will be chaos or perhaps reversal of gendered power. The fact that the disgust is so potent that Dr. Seward would take “savage delight” in killing a woman displays how much the repulsion has escalated since Jonathan’s encounter with the brides. Jonathan was uncomfortable, but not to the point of fighting back violently, and his curiosity towards the female vampires overwhelmed feelings of disgust. After witnessing Lucy’s horrible transformation into a vampire and her movement from ideal figure to a New Woman threat, the men have a overpowering disgust towards her, seeing her not as an object of curiosity or route to obtain sexual satiation, but as an inhuman monster.

It is also interesting to consider how Lucy was not so violently attacked by Dracula in order for her to change, instead being a part of the more sexually thrilling act of being bitten. She is only bitten by Dracula, with two small but noticeable bite marks present on her neck, but the men savagely kill her, stabbing her in the heart with a stake and cutting off her head, filling it with garlic. The male characters deny

the Victorian females' sexuality, expecting them to repress it and deny its presence so that they can maintain their power in the patriarchal structure and remain masters over their own sexuality, never giving in to the desire and curiosity. Their violent assertion of control is a way to prevent the females from attaining what the men perceive as a form of empowerment, and in their disgust and fear, the men also use such a level of violence to forcefully deny satisfaction to their own desires.

There is no way to rid the characters of vampirism peacefully; every possibility involves violence. The vampire brides are all slain by Van Helsing where they lay, staked through their hearts. Lucy has a stake driven through her heart and is beheaded. Mina is saved from the fate of these hypersexual female vampires, as the men destroy the sexual foreigner Dracula in order to prevent her from becoming the abomination they fear most: a sexually expressive and actively desiring female, a monstrous being that both tempts and repulses all of the male characters. After the failed lengths they take to save Lucy, eventually having to slay her in her vampiric state, they take all the measures they can in order to prevent Mina from turning, displaying how much of a threat they consider female vampires, in their powerful state.

Mina, described as virtuous and intelligent, has a level of intelligence that seems not to create fear in the males' hearts the way sexuality does, as she reins in her sexuality to marriage in a way other women, the vampires, will not, making her safe from condemnation and savage attack, though her need for a sort of unattainable masculine agency does create a slight threat. She does have a sort of intellectual independence, but what really becomes threatening is the sexual threat

that her prospective vampirism evokes. She must be saved by the courageous male heroes, with the males keeping their traditional gender roles intact by banding together to rescue the damsel in distress from full sexual realization as a vampire. Van Helsing, the most knowledgeable and unflappable male in the novel, sees the early symptoms of vampirism, similar to those found in Lucy before she reached a fully undead state. He understands that the time may come when she must be destroyed, as difficult as it may be: "With the sad experience of Miss Lucy, we must this time be warned before things go too far. Our task is now in reality more difficult than ever...I can see the characteristics of the vampire coming in her face...Her teeth are some sharper, and at times her eyes are more hard. But these are not all, there is to her the silence now often; as so it was with Miss Lucy" (363). The sharp teeth and hard eyes stand as stark physical reminders of the vampiric transformation, as well as the cultural fear of the New Woman. As Cunningham states, one reason the New Woman way of thinking was considered especially dangerous and challenging is because it is sexual. The men recognize what Mina could become, especially after Lucy, and ready themselves to destroy her so she can be, from their perspective, "spared" from the monstrous sexual, undead fate if they fail to prevent her from turning. She resists the unrestrained appetite of the vampires, knowing that the men, though they could at first be attracted to her, would eventually have to rid society of her so that she does not corrupt others, spreading the disease of vampirism: "Think, dear, that there have been times when brave men have killed their wives and womenkind, to keep them from falling into the hands of the enemy...It is men's duty towards those whom they love, in such times of sore trial!"

(372). Mina endorsing the men to kill her acts as a way of her recognizing the male disgust having a violent end. She knows what occurred with Lucy, and she understands the kind of barrier-breaking monster she could become. She fears possible destruction at the hands of the men, and Van Helsing stays with her in case the circumstances ever call for it. In place of slaying Mina, though, Van Helsing goes to the brides and kills them, as they pose more of a threat, and Mina has not fully turned.

The male characters in the novel are disgusted by the female vampires, particularly the brides and Lucy, and they are both attracted to and repulsed by these beings. They are curious to discover more about the unknown, driven by their curiosity concerning the expression of female sexuality and the erotic pleasures they also desire. John Allen Stevenson touches on the reason humans would be threatened by the sexual presence of such creatures: "Although the vampire reproduces differently, the ironic thing about vampire sexuality is that, for all its overt peculiarity, it is in many ways very like human sexuality, but human sexuality in which the psychological or metaphoric becomes physical or literal. It initially looks strange but quite often presents a distorted image of human tendencies and behavior. What is frightening...then, is that...sexuality is simultaneously different and a parodic mirror" (Stevenson 142). The males see how similar vampires are, while also fearing that the exaggerated, hypersexual traits of the female creatures pose threats to their well-being and societal hierarchy, much like the progressing ideas of the New Woman. At the same time they are being tempted, and after eventually overcoming their sexual attraction to the vampires, the males attempt to

protect their dominant positions in the patriarchal society of 1890s Victorian London. They also make an effort to adhere to the gentleman's expectations placed upon them and seek to keep the gender roles intact, leading to the men recognizing their repulsion by slaying the. Van Helsing's slaying of the brides especially shows how far the novel has progressed from Jonathan's curiosity, showing the range of possible effects of disgust.

Dracula ends with the triumphant males vanquishing the lord of darkness, destroying all of his vampire progeny in the process, and saving Mina and all future women from the corrupting threat of his foreign sexuality. They are successful in desexualizing the female characters, even at the cost of death to four of these women (Lucy and the three brides of Dracula), displaying the novel's strong hostility towards unrestrained sexuality. The female vampires break the boundaries placed by society, specifically sexual boundaries, much like exaggerated, demonized New Women, and the men, fearing for the purity of their women and cognizant of the threat sexual freedom poses to patriarchal structures, are written as a courageous band of heroes willing to do whatever necessary to maintain the norm, reestablishing their control and self-control. They see the vampires as monsters, and although tempted by the offering of the realization of their fantasies, they reassert themselves violently when these females move beyond what is expected of them: "Through the body of the monster fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space. Escapist delight gives way to horror only when the monster threatens to overstep these boundaries, to destroy or deconstruct the thin walls of category and

culture" (Cohen 17). The female vampires progressed beyond their boundaries as the New Woman also pressured the limits of society, and as such, they become horrifying, subverting expectations and creating a threat to carefully constructed cultural ideas in Victorian England. The men feel disgusted because these creatures exist at the limits of societal boundaries and their control, and they assert themselves with drastic violence, destroying the monsters, to maintain a sense of control and put an end to those living outside their societal boundaries. The form of disgust works as a form of curiosity that could explore something different and new, culturally in gender politics, but it can also rigidly reinforce society's norms and gender inequality. Stoker writes the female vampires as the apex of sexual appetite, significant for what they stand for: exaggerated New Woman, among other things. The way the sexually free women are set up as monsters allows the reader to see how Stoker and others of his time approached the threatening New Women, with fear and an odd desire. Stoker shapes the disgust towards and fear of the New Woman into the form of monsters, signifying the fear of the emerging, freer woman in this late Victorian era, which must be destroyed.

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