On October 25, 2009, the Philadelphia Inquirer ran an article titled, “There’s no burying vampire mania,” in which the author writes that “after two years, vamp craze continues to rage.”¹ Indeed, in the past two years movies and books containing vampires have increased in mainstream American culture, but vampires have been a staple of popular and cult fiction for centuries. They are an expression of social fears and taboos. They disobey codes of conduct set forth in the Bible, such as consuming blood.² They live a cursed existence because they turn their backs on the principles that ground society. Vampiric disobedience is fodder for different social discourse. Take for example Elisabeth Bathory; she was an eastern European countess who lived between 1560 and 1614 CE. Bathory is often described as a sadist who enjoyed inflicting pain onto other women. She is also rumored to have bathed in the blood of young girls in order to keep her own youth.³ Bathory lived in a time were cruel nobles were expected, but she was so evil that she became infamous. Her story was a symbol for the cruelty and excess of the elite when it was first disseminated, but in more recent years it has become a myth. Bathory’s desire for youth, the sin of vanity,⁴ became a central part of the narrative. This sin leads to vampirism and murder. The story surrounding Bathory is turned into a myth about female vanity.

Roland Barthes writes that “myth is a system of communication… a message… a mode of signification, a form.”⁵ Myth in its most basic form is purposefully misplaced language. Language is made up of a concept (the signified) and an “acoustic” mental

² Leviticus 19:26 (NAS).
⁴ Proverbs 6:17 (NAS).
The relationship between the concept and the signifier is expressed in the sign. The sign is a “concrete entity.” Elizabeth Bathory’s cruelty is the sign or symbol of her moral failings. To make this personal shortcoming a myth the sign is put into a new discourse as the signifier. Mythmakers use Bathory’s vampirism as the mental image for female vanity. They want to say that women are evil and untrustworthy so they use this woman as proof.

Vampire stories are easy to use in language and myth because they are the basic other. They come in all shapes and sizes. The author only needs to impose his own thoughts into the figure. The most famous vampire and the clearest example of the versatility of vampires is Count Dracula. He was introduced to the world by Bram Stoker’s novel, Dracula, in 1897. Since the late nineteenth century Count Dracula has been used in films and fiction to engage in myths and work through deathly anxieties and desires. He is so well used that he is a myth himself. Before he becomes a myth in his own right, Dracula is used to formulate a conversation around death. Death is a natural occurrence. Every person in the world dies eventually, but no one knows why. Science answers how a person dies and religion explains what happens after death, but nothing makes clear why are people born if they are just going to die? A person lives her life walking, talking and interacting with her surroundings and one day she simply stops. The dead are devoid of motion, personality, and anything else that makes a person live. The community the dead person lived in must find a way to reconcile her departure from life. Death happens so often that communities have ceremonies to help them cope. John Burton writes that death is a “culturally constructed event” and “the human corpse is the

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6 Barthes, Mythologies, 113.
last stage on which the social drama of life is enacted."7 The corpse becomes a locus for social anxieties because people do not understand death. In order to work out these concerns people develop rituals for the treatment and disposal of the corpse. These funeral rites do not fully exorcise the fear of death. The rest of this anxiety comes out in creativity and mythmaking.

Count Dracula allows people to work through their issues with death. His movement from Stoker’s novel into myth is interesting to document. In Dracula we can see how myth is formed and perpetuated. In order to fully understand how Dracula changes we must see how Stoker uses Dracula in his novel. Stoker’s invention reaffirms British dominance over the east in his villainy. Dracula does many evil deeds throughout the novel, but he is silent when he does them. Dracula’s silence lets people continue to view him as evil. His two dimensionality allows people to impose modern discourses on him that keep him in the villain’s role. Mythmakers enjoy using Dracula because he starts off impressionable, but after a century of use the name and image of Dracula is bogged down in many myths. All of the myths concern death, but they are slightly different in their individual messages. We will look at three different depictions of Count Dracula that have greatly affected the way people view Dracula. We will see that F.W. Murnau uses the vampire to talk about death as a part of nature. He utilizes the ambiguously described physical body of Count Dracula to make a statement about disease. Francis Ford Coppola avoids talking about the naturalness of death in order to focus on life after death from a Roman Catholic standpoint. Joss Whedon parodies Count Dracula because Whedon himself already redefined the vampire genre. He does not need to make Count

Dracula his death myth. He can use the groundwork laid by Murnau and Coppola to form a new conversation with Dracula as a reference point. In looking at each of these depictions we will see the growth and development of Dracula from a simple sign to the ultimate myth.

In Bram Stoker’s novel, Dracula is exploited as most vampires are used. Vampires are often used in myth to naturalize fear and prejudice. They are the other that wants to destroy society. Nina Auerbach writes that “They inhere in our most intimate relationships; they are also hideous invaders of the normal.”8 They worm their ways into people’s lives. Vampires try to lure their victims in by appearing as if they belong in society, but they do not. They need to be shunned and avoided. Vampires are a symbol for otherness which all people are supposed to be able to reject. The vampire story is at its heart a story of rejection. The vampire rejects death and society rejects the vampire. Denunciation of the vampire binds people together because the community acts as one to rid itself of evil. Stoker confirms England’s excellence and its domination over the east by introducing Dracula to western culture.

In the novel, Dracula has no pressing reason to go to England. He buys Carfax Abby because he wants to “go through the crowded streets of … mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is.”9 He recognizes the greatness of London and tries to make his way into it. He wants to be part of society. This desire is one that people are expected to understand. It is not problematized at all in the novel. Dracula is a count, a man of some nobility, and he wants to leave his ancestral home for the greener pastures of England. No

one questions him because England has a mystique in the novel. Dracula says he has
“come to know… great England and to know her is to love her.” His opinion is based entirely on books. He does not have any personal experience with Great Britain or its people, but he loves it all the same. He is convinced that England has something that cannot be found anywhere else and whatever that thing is it is worth leaving his castle for. Jonathan Harker understands that there is no place better than England so he does not question his employer/host. Undoubtedly, if an English lord were to move to Transylvania Jonathan and the real estate agency would find it odd. Dracula’s reverence for London is part of Stoker’s nationalist agenda. Stoker shows his readers that even this alien aristocrat knows it is better to be a foreigner in England than a lord in Transylvania.

For Stoker, the problem is not that Dracula wants to go to England; it is that he expects the same treatment in England that he gets in Transylvania. Dracula tells Jonathan “I have been so long master that I would be master still.” In Transylvania, Dracula is reviled and revered. He is deeply rooted in Transylvania. His ancestors ruled the area and he has been in that castle for centuries. He enjoys being the master of his domain. He is fiercely proud of his ancestry: “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.” The Count takes pleasure in the accomplishments of his ancestors and continues to dominate the people living in the villages around his castle. He is accustomed to being a lord. The English will not care about Dracula’s ancestry or nobility because they have their own nobles to worry about. The power that goes with his

10 Ibid, ellipsis added.
11 Ibid.
12 It doesn’t seem like he has ever lived anywhere else.
13 Stoker, Dracula, 35-36.
title does not translate to English society. Dracula tries to bring his eastern powers to Western Europe. Dracula oversteps the acceptable boundaries for an eastern noble. As a result he is rejected and destroyed by society.

Dracula’s desire to retain his nobility colors many theorists’ reading of the novel. Nina Auerbach, in particular, takes issue with Dracula’s desire in her book, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*. Auerbach’s reading of Count Dracula is dictated by his desire to control. She finds the Count blank and impersonal. She does not think Dracula tries to connect with his victims the way his predecessors attempt to. Auerbach writes “earlier vampires insinuate themselves into a humanity Dracula reshapes, through magic and mesmerism, into his unrecognizable likeness.” She believes Camilla and Ruthven make sincere attempts to connect with their victims. They want to have a relationship with their prey, but Dracula eschews nineteenth century England. He wants to remake the world into his image. His desire for Godlike control is a source of constant concern and horror for Jonathan. The passage that supports Auerbach’s claim of impersonality appears when Jonathan figures out that Dracula has no servants. Jonathan realizes that the coach driver who brought him to the castle was Dracula and the person cooking all of his meals was Dracula. In Auerbach’s eyes Dracula’s lack of servants “only reinforces the master’s intimidating omnipotence.” In this moment Jonathan realizes that he is totally alone with Count Dracula. He is the only person Jonathan is going to have contact with for an entire month. Instead of trying to connect with Dracula as another man who does not have servants, Jonathan feels even more suffocated. To Auerbach this realization

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14 Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, 63.
16 Stoker, *Dracula*, 34-35.
17 Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, 70.
highlights Count Dracula’s uncongenial nature, but isn’t Jonathan being aloof too? Jonathan refuses to connect with the Count as a man. Jonathan expresses interest in Dracula’s ancestry, but his interest is more like a biographer’s than a friend or ally’s. Jonathan is interested in “put[ting] down all he said exactly as he said it;”\(^{18}\) not relating to him. He is too invested in his Englishness to admit any connection to an eastern lord.

Auerbach is invested in the dynamic between the evil Dracula and “the earnest Jonathan Harker.”\(^{19}\) She does not see Jonathan’s refusal to recognize Count Dracula as a man as racist. Jonathan’s aloofness is Dracula’s fault. At this juncture in the narrative where Jonathan is increasingly wary of the count; Dracula has been creepy, but he has not bitten Jonathan and Jonathan still has no idea that Dracula is a vampire. Dracula has not outright threatened Jonathan since he arrived at the castle. Yet, Jonathan refuses to warm up to his host. Count Dracula has to prod at Jonathan to get him to talk about England. Jonathan is very invested in his role as civil servant. He just wants to do his job and leave while Dracula wants some companionship before he sets off for a new country and a new life.

Even when Count Dracula warns Jonathan and saves his life, Auerbach views Dracula as the bad person. Dracula tells Jonathan in the library:

> Be warned! Should sleep now or ever overcome you, or be like to do, then haste to your own chamber or to these rooms, for your rest will then be safe. But if you be not careful in this respect, then – He finished his speech in a gruesome way, for he motioned with his hands as if he were washing them.\(^ {20}\)

Dracula is clearly telling Jonathan that he is only safe in his room and in the library.

Dracula makes it abundantly clear that something bad will happen if Jonathan does not

\(^{18}\) Stoker, *Dracula*, 35. My brackets.
\(^{19}\) Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*. 63.
\(^{20}\) Stoker, *Dracula*, 40.
stay in the appointed rooms. A smart man, or one truly afraid of Dracula as Jonathan claims to be, would have stayed in his room or the study, but mere hours pass before Jonathan disregards Dracula’s warning and falls asleep in a non-designated room. The direct consequence of this action is the introduction of three female vampires who have no problem attacking Jonathan on site; a deed Dracula avoided. As Jonathan is about to be devoured he is saved by Dracula. “Back I tell you all! This man belongs to me!” Dracula shouts at the other vampires. Dracula successfully saves Jonathan from the female vampires by asserting his mastery over Jonathan. Jonathan is protected by his host.

In her reading, Auerbach uses the line “This man belongs to me” as proof of Dracula’s wickedness. She writes that “these words define the vampire” because he wants to master the west. She ignores the fact that in this moment Jonathan’s saving grace is that Dracula is his master. Jonathan maneuvers himself into the situation and Dracula must save him. Dracula warned Jonathan that he would wash his hands of him if he disobeyed his injunction. If Jonathan had stayed in his room as he was supposed to he would not have encountered the other vampires. He forces anagnoresis by making Dracula defend him. Jonathan’s discovery pushes Dracula to start planning his disappearance.

Auerbach’s reading of Dracula is in line with Stoker’s intentions for his vampire. She does not soften her view of the vampire even though he is being used in an

21 Depending on the critic you read these women are Dracula’s wives, sisters or concubines. I think it best to leave their relationship with Dracula ambiguous the way Stoker does.
22 Stoker, Dracula, 40.
23 Auerbach, Our Vampires, Ourselves, 71
24 After this attack Dracula forces Jonathan to write post-dated letters to his family, takes his clothing, and goes out at night to mail the letters from different stops on what should have been Jonathan’s route home.
Orientalist discourse. She avoids mentioning this discourse by taking issue with Dracula’s age. Auerbach writes; “The up-to-date young people who hunt [Dracula] dread his ancientness. To them, Dracula is not simply evil; he is an eruption from an evil antiquity that refuses to rest in its grave.”25 Dracula refuses to move into modernity. He does not accept that things changes over time and he needs to change with them. Dracula insists on being master because he was a master in the past. His age threatens modern society because he refuses to die. He is a constant reminder of the past and restricts societal advancement. Auerbach’s claim that Dracula does not change is in direct opposition to the thesis of her book. She claims that vampires are not static creatures.26 She states vampires shape themselves to “personal and national moods”27 in order to promote some understanding or bias, but she insists on keeping Dracula as the villain. Dracula is supposed to promote English nationalism, Orientalism, and modernity through the vampire. Count Dracula is too old fashioned to become a nineteenth century man. To Auerbach, he represents all the worst aspects of the past. He is “encrusted with the corruption of ages,”28 which makes her unable to connect with him.

Auerbach’s investment in Dracula’s malice is a product of her personal relationship with the vampire which started before she read the original novel.29 Auerbach reveals the source of her bias when she admits that her favorite vampire movies come from the 1970s.30 Tim Kane explains in his book that vampire films of the 1970s

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27 Ibid, 5.
28 Ibid, 63.
29 I feel reasonably sure of this assumption. In my experience people do not read Dracula until they are in their teenage years or beyond, but these same people watch vampire movies long before this reading.
were in an “erotic cycle”. Kane elucidates that there are three cycles in vampire films. The first cycle is the malignant cycle, which lasts from 1931-1948. In these early films, Dracula goes into society to take away loved ones and cause pain. He does not allow his victims to go on with their normal lives. Dracula tears families apart by bringing people over to his way of life. During the late 1950s the second cycle began as a way of expressing anxieties toward sex. This erotic cycle changed Dracula’s preferred method of separation from death to sex. Dracula’s sexuality is alluded to in the novel, but during the erotic cycle his virility takes center stage. The emphasis in these films is not death, but blood. Dracula drains blood from his victims, forcing them to surrender to his will. Dracula asserts his dominance, causing blood to course through his body, sating his lust for a night and the next night he will do it all over again. Dracula’s reign of terror ends with the final sympathetic cycle in 1987. This cycle is a reflection of new attitudes toward sex, death, and disease. The late 1980s introduced the new vampire and the AIDS epidemic. AIDS changed the publics’ opinion of vampires because it turned vampirism into a disease. Before the sympathetic cycle Dracula initiated his victims into the vampiric way of life, but during this cycle he became a carrier for a disease. The notion that Dracula is diseased, in a time where disease is not a moral failing, changes Dracula from a cult leader/rapist to a victim of circumstance.

Kane uses the cycles to sort through the plethora of vampires in film and television, but in these classifications Kane illuminates the reasons for different readings

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 I know there are people who still view AIDS as a disease for homosexuals and that these people see homosexuality as a moral failing, but I am ignoring those people.
of *Dracula*. His cycles explain why Auerbach is adamant about Dracula’s unwavering evil and why I refuse to hate him. In Auerbach’s formative experiences with Dracula he is overwhelmingly evil. Even though she is reevaluating Dracula for her book she cannot escape Dracula’s malevolence in the malignant and erotic cycles. It was not until the late 1980s, during Auerbach’s “depression”\(^{35}\) that vampire films took on their sympathetic leaning. This new vision of Dracula informs my reading of the novel and forces me to engage in a different conversation with the Count and his myths. My experience with vampires comes from years of reading novels where vampires fight against injustice from the shadows or try to gain civil rights. I am programmed to see the good in every vampire. My reading of *Dracula* is greatly influenced by the myths of Dracula I encountered before reading the novel. Dracula’s myth and the sympathetic cycle is indelibly written into my vampire vocabulary.

Myths are powerful because they manipulate people subtly. Myths about Dracula start by introducing the viewer to a carefully constructed depiction of the vampire. The face of Dracula in film and television tells the viewer a lot about him. The image tells the viewer how plausible it is for Dracula to succeed in his goals and how she should feel when he fails.\(^{36}\) Some Draculas are “repulsive, ugly, fierce, bloodsucking killing machine(s)“\(^{37}\) while others are sexy, muscle bound, warriors, bound by an ancient code of honor that no longer has a place in today’s society.\(^{38}\) One vision of the vampire takes away all of Dracula’s allure and reduces him to a monster only out for blood and the other gives him more credit than he is due. If Dracula was just a “killing machine” he

\(^{35}\) Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, 4.

\(^{36}\) Dracula always fails.

\(^{37}\) Derakhshani

\(^{38}\) *Blade Trinity*, DVD, directed by David S. Goyer,(New Line Cinema, 2004).
could not captivate audiences of all ages. If he was so unattractive then no amount of hypnosis could draw in his victims (/audiences). But if he was so attractive and honor bound no one would hate him.

Bram Stoker had a particular image in mind for Dracula. He takes great care in introducing the reader to Dracula before it is revealed that he is a vampire. Stoker describes Dracula in this way:

His face was a strong – a very strong – aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, 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. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy mustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.39

Dracula’s strong “aquiline” face is a familiar description for Roman features and communicates the predatory quality of his face.40 His hairy face is in direct contrast with Jonathan’s shaved cheeks.41 Dracula’s copious amount of hair gives him a cave man-like appearance. It indicates that he is not as civilized as his English victims. Yet, Dracula’s lofty forehead connotes a large brain, which would make him an intelligent man. The redness of Dracula’s lips is an interesting detail because it suggests a certain level of sensuality. Dracula is an astonishingly pale man, but the part of his face that would be used during sex is bright red. Even though no blood seems to circulate in his face it

39 Stoker, Dracula, 24-25.
40 Aquiline features are reminiscent of an eagle’s features. Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. “Aquiline”
41 We know Jonathan starts off clean shaven because he carries and uses a shaving kit.
definitely goes to his lips. The points at the top of Dracula’s ears combined with arched nostrils hint at the animal hiding beneath Dracula’s noble surface and surroundings. Dracula looks predatory, odd, but overall still human. Stoker’s Dracula actually has a chance of entering into society though his pallor would not compel people to flock to him. Stoker crafts Dracula’s appearance in terms people can understand and imagine, but it is difficult to arrange these adjectives into a recognizable face. Derakhshani is correct in saying that Dracula is not an attractive man, but he is not hideous. The description is good for a general picture, but it leaves room for interpretation. Stoker’s Dracula needs to pose a threat to society; therefore he needs to appear as if he could blend into a crowd. The most dramatic aspects of Dracula’s body are his fangs, lips and fingernails. Dracula’s copious facial hair could hide his elongated canines and red lips and his fingernails could be cut. With these features changed or hidden Dracula is just another man in Great Britain.

Filmmakers and artists use this description of Dracula to create their own vision of vampirism. Some play up the underlying sexual tones while others make Dracula overwhelmingly animalistic. Certain depictions are able to be used in mythmaking while others play up an aspect of the vampire too much. One surprising interpretation of Dracula’s face was developed for the 1928 stage production of Dracula.42 The vampire’s face is absolutely grotesque. His face is green; his lips are blood red, the same red rims his eyes. Dracula’s forehead sports a fin and his ears are shaped like bat wings. At a passing glance this creature looks more at home in water than living in a castle stalking beautiful women. This face is simultaneously menacing and laughable. The open mouth,

showing Dracula’s fangs, is meant to impart fear, but the drool is trailing down the sides of Dracula’s mouth diminishes this fear. The hollowness of Dracula’s cheeks, the vacant look in his eyes, the spittle sliding down his chin give Dracula this moronic look. This advertisement stands as the audience’s introduction to the vampire. This image tells the viewer all she needs to know about Dracula. The vampire might frighten the viewer with his otherworldliness, but his slightly idiotic expression means he will not win. He cannot pass for human. He is too unnatural to pose a threat to society. The Dracula advertised could never go out in society without causing a ruckus. All he can do is maim and kill before the mob eliminates him. This Dracula’s otherness is undeniable. This mask does not allow the audience to see Dracula as anything but a monster. The person who created it obviously wanted to exploit the more animalistic features of Dracula in order to keep a safe distance between the viewer and the vampire. In order to make a myth this distance needs to fade away, or at least appear like it could. The audience cannot get past the way he looks so this figure cannot be used in myth.

The makers of 1922’s Nosferatu, Eine Symphonie des Grauens knew they wanted to have discourse in their film about death. In order to make the audience accept their myth they had to give the audience a much more relatable vampire. Nosferatu is the oldest film based on Dracula in circulation today. The makers of Nosferatu did not receive permission to turn Dracula into a film. They opted to change the names of the main characters instead, but it is stated in the opening credits that the film is based on Dracula. It is obvious that Nosferatu is based on Dracula; so obvious that Bram

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43 This is the full title of the film, but I will refer to it as Nosferatu.
44 Count Dracula is Count Orlock; Jonathan Harker is Thomas Hutter; Mina Murray ne’ Harker is Ellen Hutter.
45 “Opening Credit,” Nosferatu, iTunes, directed by F.W. Murnau. 1922.
Stoker’s widow, Florence Stoker, did everything in her power to destroy every copy of the film. In July 1925 all the copies of the film owned by Deutsch-Amerikansch Film Union were destroyed, but a few managed to survive.\footnote{The Vampire Book, s.v. “Nosferatu, Eine Symphonie des Grauens.”} The makers of this expressionist film, F.W. Murnau and Henrik Galeen,\footnote{A lot of people make a movie, but Murnau is the director and Galeen wrote the screenplay.} wanted to use Dracula to make a statement. The name they chose for the film Nosferatu is derived from the Greek word “nosrophoros” meaning “plague carrier.”\footnote{Vampire Book, s.v. “Nosferatu.”} The figure of the Count reflects fear of the plague and death.

Murnau and Galeen uphold a more animalistic vision of Dracula. Count Orlock looks like a cross between the inhuman beast from the 1928 advertisement and a human being. He is impossibly thin and tall even though his shoulders are constantly hunched over. The Count’s face boasts rat-like teeth protruding over his thin lips; dramatic black make-up gives Orlock sunken eyes that flow into his sunken cheeks. His bald head recalls the head of a cancer patient going through chemotherapy and his pale skin confirms the diagnosis. The stiffness of his movements gives the appearance that he is uncomfortable in his own skin. The only feature Orlock likes to accentuate is his creepy hands. His fingers are a bit too long and his nails a bit too sharp to let him pass as a normal person. Orlock keeps his hands close to his body at all times. They clutch his chest as if he is about to be laid to rest even though he is standing up or they rest directly against his legs. It is as if he has them on display when he keeps his white hands against his black clothing. The overall effect is that Orlock is close to death himself.

Thomas Hutter’s guide to vampires, “Of Vampires, Terrible Ghosts, Magic and the Seven Deadly Sins,” says Orlock belongs in “terrifying, caves, tombs, and coffins.
These are filled with goddamned soil from the fields of the Black Death.”  

Count Orlock is a harbinger of death that goes from one small town to another. One of the changes the filmmakers made to the story was to have Orlock move from Transylvania to the small town of Wisborg. Orlock does not move because there is power in Wisborg or because he loves the town. He goes because he needs to bring death to a new town. Orlock carries the soil of the damned to Wisborg and releases a plague onto the town because illness travels. Orlock’s pitiful frame lends credibility to his entrance into town in a coffin. Orlock looks as if he should be pitied as a sufferer of the plague and kept at an arm’s length. He is the embodiment of disease and death. The first time the viewer encounters Orlock he emerges from a dark tunnel to stand in a small lit courtyard kind of area. The scene is a forceful reminder of the saying “go into the light.” The Count looks plagued by illness. The robust figure of Thomas Hutter stands in direct contrast to Count Orlock’s frame making Orlock appear even sicker. The vaguely threatening look set on Count Orlock’s countenance is softened by the fact that a stiff wind could blow him over.

Orlock’s plague-ridden frame softens his evil to the point where his shadow poses more of a threat than he does. The original Count Dracula’s appearance had the effect of “extraordinary pallor,” but Orlock looks like death. To make up for Orlock’s frail body his shadow becomes the aggressor. Orlock’s shadow is scarier than his corporeal self. It stretches and changes in ways his physical being refuses to do. Orlock refrains from moving his arms when the camera focuses on his body, but in shadow his arms repeatedly stretch out to touch people. Orlock depends on his shadow to subdue his victims and spread the plague. The film never shows Count Orlock attack anyone who is awake.

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49 Nosferatu.

50 Count Orlock is also the coach driver, but Hutter does not know that and it is unclear whether he ever finds out.
Every time he attacks Hutter his shadow looms over the man, knocking him unconscious before the vampire feeds. Orlock’s reliance on his shadow is most visible in his death scene. Ellen, Hutter’s wife, lures Orlock into her bedroom. She offers herself as a sacrificial lamb to stop the plague. Ellen swoons as Orlock makes his slow progress into her bedroom. She clutches her breast and as her hand drops away Orlock’s shadow hand replaces it. The shadow trespasses first and Orlock’s body follows. The shadow appears to have more autonomy that the body. Orlock’s body is only needed to cast the shadow. It is the corpse’s inability to handle sunlight that destroys the shadow. In the end the vampire is defeated because his body is weak.

Count Orlock clearly delights in being a monster, psychologically, but his physical body is too pathetic. The townspeople need to fear Orlock’s shadow not a person. Orlock is merely a personification of the plague which is a part of nature. His preferred method of infecting people, his shadow, is the result of a natural light source. Wherever there is light there is shadow and wherever there is life there is death. Murnau and Galeen give the audience a personification of death to hate, but they integrate nature and inevitability into the figure. Even though Orlock dies and the plague he brought disappears the film does not end on a happy note. Galeen’s script focuses more on Thomas and Ellen Hutter’s relationship with the vampire than Wisborg’s plight. Orlock’s death may save Wisborg, but it does not save the people the audience cares about. Ellen dies and Thomas is left to grieve for her. The protagonists do not get a satisfactory ending because death is still around. It is a part of nature. Ridding Wisborg of Count Orlock will not make everything okay in the end. In the novel, Dracula’s death frees Jonathan and Mina from the constant threat of death and allows them to live a happy life together. In
Nosferatu, Orlock’s death does not help Hutter and Ellen marriage; the damage Orlock did by going to Wisborg is irreversible.

Nosferatu uses Dracula to communicate that death is natural. It is east to blame Orlock for the plague. His arrival definitely brings the plague, but it is a natural plague; as natural as a shadow cast on a wall. The townspeople are presented with two options for dealing with death. They can blame a person and kill him or they can blame nature and accept death. The plague cannot be defeated because it is not solid or quantifiable so the townspeople turn to social outcasts for scapegoats. In the end, Orlock is dead, but it does not seem as if death is defeated. Orlock is the ultimate scapegoat. He gives the audience a person to hate for the ambivalence of nature, but death is always going to be in Wisborg. Nosferatu begins Dracula’s appropriation into a death myth. It remains one of the most influential film adaptations of Dracula because Murnau’s message about death is still relevant. Throughout the twentieth century Dracula is used to promote many ideas about death. Some of these messages are better received than others, but Dracula is always used as a myth about death.

As the millennium drew to a close one film catapulted Dracula’s myth from death and dying to redemption and life after death. Francis Ford Coppola’s, Bram Stoker’s Dracula, is a very successful variation of Dracula’s story. The film claims a direct line to Bram Stoker’s novel and tries to stick as closely to the story as possible. The film debuted in 1992 a few years into the sympathetic cycle. In order to stimulate a sympathetic reaction to Dracula; the writers give him a romantic background. The tagline of the film is “love never dies” which prepares the audience for the tragic love story
Coppola turns Dracula into. Coppola uses the popularity of the sympathetic cycle to redeem Dracula and through him make death appear like a continuation of life.

Dracula’s first appearance in the film comes as he is preparing for battle. He stands in a large, lavish room wearing a bright red suit of armor. Dracula is still human so his looks are not distorted by old age or animalistic features. He still sports a mustache, but his facial hair is clearly groomed. Dracula is surrounded with religious paraphernalia which shows he is a pious man and a warrior of God. This introduction gives Dracula the appearance of being fierce. The film communicates that Dracula is a moral man, bound by honor to his homeland and God. The audience watches as Dracula fights his enemies fearlessly and know he is a force to be reckoned with. The only hint of trouble in Dracula’s life is the continued concern about his safety felt by his fiancée, Elisabeta. In a movie with any other name the audience would anticipate Dracula being the hero. The only reason Dracula falls from God’s grace is because Elisabeta commits suicide. Believing he died in battle and wracked with grief, she takes her own life. When Dracula returns to his castle his priests tell him she surely went to hell for her sin. Dracula rages against this news with the same forcefulness he demonstrated on the battlefield. He denounces his priests, God, and life in his heartbreak.\footnote{Bram Stoker’s Dracula, DVD, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, (Columbia Pictures, 1992).} Watching Dracula’s ordeal the audience is sensitive to Dracula’s plight. He comes across as impetuous and passionate; two traits that served him well in battle, but curse him in civilian life. This vision of Dracula is far more human than many earlier Draculas. He is damned because he lost the love of his life. After a loss that great the viewer understands why he sins. She does not entirely condemn him for being a vampire.
The background story and Gary Oldman’s powerful performance as Dracula makes the audience sympathize with the vampire. Oldman is able to portray the sympathetic downfall of Prince Vlad Dracul and the cruel old man Jonathan meets in Castle Dracula well. Oldman’s performance is so good that he brings out the humanity in Dracula’s most inhuman moments. In the original novel when Dracula does something it is assumed he does because he is an evil vampire. The audience expects it. The addition of Prince Vlad and Elisabeta’s tragic love story makes the viewer want to forgive Dracula his trespassing. It is difficult to reconcile the sympathy for the tragic hero Oldman plays with the pointless cruelty Count Dracula is prone to. Instead of asking the audience to accept the inconsistencies with Dracula behavior Oldman’s vampire retains hints of his humanity. These hints shine through at different points in the film. Once, when Jonathan questions him about his ancestry Dracula shouts at him about the great Szeklys. Dracula’s fiery disposition that cursed him in the past is still a part of him in the present.

Dracula remains the passionate person he was before he sins. In fact, his passion leads him to sin again in the film. The sin is not as grave as the one against God, but Dracula forsakes his relationship with Mina, the spitting image of Elisabeta, to have a dalliance with her best friend. In the novel, Dracula turns Lucy Westenra into a vampire because he wants to. This whim is problematic for the audience because they are invested in the love story between Dracula and Mina. In order to stay true to the narrative and keep the audience on Dracula’s side, Dracula and Lucy’s affair is kept brief. Coppola shows Dracula having sex with Lucy in werewolf form much to the viewer’s surprise. The rushed sex between Lucy and the beast on a bench tells the viewer that Dracula is overcome by passion. In the dark of the night when no one is supposed to be around he
succumbs to his lust and takes Lucy. The viewer is horrified, but it is not the suave Prince Vlad that has sex with Lucy, but a beast overcome by emotion. As a man Dracula would not betray Mina in this way. It is Dracula’s rational mind that feels shame when Mina finds him with Lucy. He tells her, “do not look at me,”52 because he does not want her to see him as a sexual beast. The audience is directed to disregard this indiscretion as a byproduct of Dracula’s passionate nature.

Despite Dracula’s infidelity the audience still desires to see Dracula at peace in the end. In the movie Mina hastens Dracula’s death because she has fallen in love with him. She looks into his face and releases him from his torment. Dracula’s face goes through a series of transformations. His death face starts off monstrous becomes Jesus-like and settles on being his original face. The movie ends with the image of the young Prince Vlad joining the image of Elisabeta on a mural in Castle Dracula’s chapel. Dracula’s death reconciles him with God so he is able to have an afterlife with Elisabeta. This means that both he and Elisabeta, two sinners who should be damned, are forgiven. They are together forever in the church’s mural. They are redeemed after death. Coppola uses Dracula as a signifier for redemption after death. He shows the audience that Dracula, a man who intentionally breaks God’s commandments for centuries, is not too evil for salvation. As long as you make peace with God death is not terrible. Coppola imposes a very Catholic view of death onto Dracula.

Coppola’s depiction of Dracula is one of the last original uses of Dracula in myth. The Dracula canon spans from death to eternity. The various myths of Dracula are so well known and ingrained into the name that it is impossible to divest Dracula of all of them. Contemporary mythmakers who want to use Dracula must do so in the confines all

52 *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, DVD, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, (Columbia Pictures, 1992).
the representations that came before their own. Some mythologists choose to create new vampires to avoid overlap with preexisting Dracula myths, but Dracula is always in the back of their minds. Joss Whedon is one such filmmaker. In his desire to use vampires as myth he created new vampires to avoid bringing other people’s work into his own.

Whedon’s television series, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, transformed vampires for an entire generation, but when he wanted to express the significance of death he turned to the biggest preexisting vampire around. Whedon capitulates to using Dracula, but only as a reference point for other deaths in the series. Dracula enters the world of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in its fifth season premiere; “Buffy vs. Dracula.” He materializes out of a cloud of ash. A cloud that reminds the viewer of the remains of a vampire after he is staked through the heart. Dracula’s body emerges from the remains of every Dracula that has come before him. This reincarnation appears different from Stoker’s description of the vampire. He is incredibly pale and has long hair, but the oddest feature he possesses is a pronounced widow’s peak. Stoker endowed Dracula with an interesting appearance that made him distinguished and animalistic at the same time. This Dracula is only attractive. Buffy, Anya, Buffy’s mother, and Willow find Dracula alluring, but he is not very different from any other attractive vampire Buffy fights. He has lost his oddly compelling looks.

Dracula claims he is in Sunnydale to seduce Buffy and his good looks should help him it. Unfortunately, his stony expression forbids anyone to get too close to him. Dracula’s unmoving countenance communicates to the viewer that he is not invested in succeeding. Like his namesake predecessors, Dracula brings a glut of lore with him. That lore tells Dracula that he will not succeed in bringing Buffy over to her darker nature.
This Dracula has gone through all of Kane’s cycles. He has been unnecessarily evil, he has been sexy and he has been sympathetic. Now he is just tired. In accordance with Dracula’s boredom, Whedon only uses him for one episode. Usually when a powerful vampire challenges Buffy he is researched by her friends so Buffy knows how to defeat him. If the vampire is commanding enough he merits a multi-episode arc. Dracula is not researched or part of any subsequent episodes. Buffy hurriedly accepts Dracula’s identity even though she has fought more than one fat and pimply “Lestat.”

There are two characters who claim to know Dracula personally, but neither of them is used to verify that this Dracula is the real Dracula. Dracula is a better known vampire than Lestat, but apparently no other vampires try to be him. Dracula is the only vampire who claims to be Dracula because his name means death for the person who boasts it. His body may be appealing, but his name equates death and failure for the vampire.

Whedon’s hurried treatment of Dracula fools some audience members into thinking that the vampire does not matter to the overarching storyline of this season of Buffy. He does not reveal any new information about Buffy or vampires. Dracula’s appearance is not explicitly figured into the rest of the season, but he is always in the background of the most important points of the story. This season of Buffy the Vampire Slayer is unique in the way it deals with death because Whedon introduces Dracula’s myths. Dracula’s death always has a hint of resurrection because he is used in many different death myths. He is killed at the end of every retelling, but he has to come back in order to communicate the next myth. It is clear at the end of every tale that Dracula is dead for good, but the audience knows he is not really gone. It is no surprise that Buffy

kills Dracula in the episode. She knows she will defeat him because every slayer defeats him. She also knows that he will not stay dead. Indeed, when Buffy kills Dracula he wastes no time in bringing himself back from the mist that produced him in the beginning of the episode. Buffy kills him again and threatens to kill him a third time if he tries to reform himself. She tells him “You think I don’t watch your movies. You always come back.”

Buffy accepts that she will not defeat the myth of Dracula, but she does take some of his myth and keep it for herself. Just as Dracula dies at the beginning of the season, Buffy dies at the end. Her death ends the series’ run on its original network and her resurrection brings it to life on a new channel. Whedon uses Dracula’s continuous death and resurrection to make Buffy’s death and resurrection more natural. Buffy’s death is hard to watch, but the audience knows that she will come back. This is not the first time Buffy dies and resuscitates, but Dracula’s myth is now imprinted on Buffy. The Dracula Whedon uses is tired of dying. As I mentioned above, Dracula is uninterested in life. He is just playing a role that everyone knows. In placing Buffy’s death alongside Dracula’s Whedon suggests that Buffy will also become jaded if she dies too often. Whedon tells his audience that his treatment of death needs to change.

The alluded change starts in this premiere and culminates in the sixteenth and seventeenth episodes of the season. “Buffy vs. Dracula” serves as Buffy’s mother’s reintroduction into the series. Joyce Summers is a supporting character in Buffy’s world, but she is left in the background so often that she becomes forgettable. This episode allows Joyce to use her voice for the first time in a long time. Joyce tells her daughter and her daughter’s friends that she is lonely. She tells Buffy that she misses her being around

54 “Playing with Fire,” Buffy.
55 The first of these episodes, “The Body,” focuses on Joyce’s death and the second, “Forever,” deals with trying to get her back.
the house." Joyce does not have a boyfriend or friends to occupy her time and now her
daughter is in college. Joyce is in a vulnerable position that opens her up to Dracula’s
charms. She knows that Sunnydale is full of vampires, but she still invites a deathly pale
man she met at night into her home. She explains to Willow and Tara that she invites
Dracula into the house because it is hard to meet a man. She has to be very lonely to
endanger her life this way. The viewer sees for the first time that Joyce is neglected. The
audience feels badly for Joyce because she does not have any companions. The viewer is
almost relieved when Buffy’s sister, Dawn, is introduced because Joyce will have
someone to talk to and take care of.

Dawn’s introduction is as mysterious as Dracula’s and like Dracula she provides
Joyce with someone to interact with. She gives Joyce a reason to stay in Buffy’s world.
Dracula allows Joyce to express loneliness and Dawn eliminates it. The audience has
renewed hope for Joyce after this episode. Whedon makes sure the audience remembers
Dracula by introducing Dawn in the same episode. By placing his death and her
introduction next to each other Whedon suggests that Dracula is somehow involved with
Dawn. When Buffy finds out that Dawn is not her sister she thinks Dawn is making Joyce
sick so there is a connection between Dracula’s appearance and Joyce’s cancer diagnosis
and death. Whedon wants the audience to use Dracula’s death as a counterpoint to
Joyce’s. The juxtaposition of these two deaths forces the audience to acknowledge the
distressing reality of death. Dracula’s death is inevitable, but he will also come back. He

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56 “Tall Dark and Undead,” in “Buffy vs. Dracula,” Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Season Five, DVD, prod
57 “Delivering the Slayer,” in “Buffy vs. Dracula,” Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Season Five, DVD, prod Joss
58 Dawn is not actually Buffy’s sister. She is the key to another dimension that monks send to Buffy for
protection. To ensure that Buffy protects her the monks magically insert her into Buffy’s life as her teenage
sister.
will always be around for reference, but Joyce will not return from the dead. She is gone forever and her family must deal with that fact. Joyce is the first and only original character close to Buffy who dies on the show.\textsuperscript{59} For the first time the characters have to work through the death of someone who is not coming back. Whedon shows the audience that having a death myth is useful, but the reality of death is still terrible.

Whedon does a lot just by invoking Dracula’s name. His presence in Sunnydale transforms the way death is handled on the show. Whedon does not plainly pronounce that he is using the myth of Dracula. He pushes that myth to its most natural form, parody. Parody is the ultimate form of myth because it presumes an intimate relationship with the subject matter. The mythmaker, Whedon, makes it appear as if everyone knows Dracula.\textsuperscript{60} In the episode, no one researches Dracula’s background because no one needs to find out who he is. Dracula is completely naturalized. He can step into Buffy’s life, interact with her three times, die, and still have a profound impact on the series.

We all come to Dracula with a general idea of who the vampire is, but that character changes over time. Dracula was created to articulate Stoker’s nationalist and Orientalist agenda. He justified Stoker’s claims until he was taken up by filmmakers to act as a mode of signification for death. He performed this role so well that the late twentieth century redeemed the vampire after death. While all of this transformation went on inside the character, the physical appearance changed too. Yet, people forget where Dracula came from because he always seems so old. Barthes wrote that “myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency

\textsuperscript{59} When I say original I mean in the pilot episode. Buffy dies briefly and comes back; Angel goes to hell and comes back; and Cordelia “ascends”, but she did that on the spin-off.

\textsuperscript{60} Auerbach agrees with this. The first sentence of her book begins with, “We all know Dracula, or think we do,” 1.
appear eternal.”61 Dracula does that every time he is introduced. Dracula has become the consummate myth.

61 Barthes, 142
Dracula Gallery:

Figure 1: Count Orlock and his shadow

Figure 2: Prince Vlad in his armor
Figure 3: Dracula and Lucy

Figure 4: Dracula in Buffy vs. Dracula
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