Sucks to Be a Woman:

Shifting Responses to Feminism from *Dracula* to *The Historian*

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Introduction

This ghastly trail of scholarship, like so many less awful ones, is merely something one person makes a little progress on, then another, each contributing a bit in his own lifetime.

-Elizabeth Kostova

Dracula— a household name. I have never known an individual who had not heard his name in some capacity. Yes, the form in which they know him may be different— but that's just it! Dracula, the front man of the vampire trope, is not specific to one form. He is a shapeshifter— literally, literarily, and culturally. Physically, Dracula can be a bat, a mist, a wolf lurking in the night— not to mention his existence within the mind of each and every one of his victims. He too, transforms himself through literature and media, becoming a cult classic before our very eyes. A cult classic urged on by the cultural identity, moving from myth to a marketing icon. The Dracula character recognized through classic and contemporary figures including the Sesame Street "Count" to Count Chocula—everyone's favorite cereal come Halloween— treks on through the years. Like the immortal being, needing to fit in with the changing world for survival's sake, this character in print is capable of adapting to the culture or time period he is placed in.

The vampire, known all over the world for its succubus nature, has sunk its teeth into its fair share of cultural folklore.[1] Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is by no means the first in vampiric literature; even if you were to exclude the oral tellings of the vampire, other literary mavericks such John William Polidori and Sheridan Le Fanu beat Stoker to the punch with "The Vampyre"

[1] Note that the vampire is not reserved to Dracula alone. While Dracula is included within the overarching vampire category, not all vampires are Dracula; nor are they the same as Dracula. Variations of the vampire existed prior to Dracula and numerous variations have followed Stoker's novel.

and *Carmilla*. This is not to discredit Stoker, however— *Dracula* was still influential for its time; it pulled together all the folklore and legends, and it was the first to connect the vampire back to Transylvanian origins and establish the vampiric trope so commonly understood today. His variation took on the warlord, Vlad Dracula IV,[2] who, with his historically terrifying actions, provided a foundation for the vampire character that involved strategy, intelligence, and a taste for blood. Stoker's novel is the main vampire story that we know—that others have built upon. His story, however, is questionably xenophobic, sexist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic, and it is difficult to read the story without those qualities in mind. Speaking toward sexism, Stoker sets his women up for victimization in the two-body dichotomy and makes them monstrous in the one-body system.[3]

When examining Stoker's novel, however, we must remember that literature is highly biased to the period in which it is written. A book reflects the anxieties, the societal expectations, and stereotypes of the time. The extent of an author's support toward societal norms and the inclusion of such norms varies; however, there is almost certainly some form of societal residue upon every story. This can become problematic when said stories last the test of time and find themselves in print hundreds of years later; they demonstrate the thoughts and ideals of a time long since passed which can limit societal progress and change if such assumptions are inaccurate or harmful to a group of persons. And while we can use problematic stories as a learning experience for what a general societal thought process looked like, as told from that

[2] Stoker's variation of Vlad Dracula IV is not an accurate portrayal. There were never any rumors of the war lord being a vampire; in fact, while Vlad Dracula did unspeakable things, it is said that he was actually rather tame for rulers of the period. Also, while Stoker used the Wallachian name, much of Stoker's inspiration for the vampire is likely Irish or Germanic in origin, as opposed to Transylvanian or Romanian (Nandris).

[3] The one-sex body, from ancient Greece to the eighteenth century, describes how Europeans viewed anatomy. Cyndy Hendershot says that "in this model women and men were perceived as having the same anatomy except insofar as the male body was perceived as a more perfect version of the same sex" (Hendershot 373). The two-body system, in contrast, suggests that men and women are inherently different through more than just genitalia.

potentially highly biased author, a modern reader may feel themselves disconnected from the story and fail to see the relevance. Furthermore, a classic work has the potential to bring those older ways of thinking into the new age and influence readers, hindering progress.

Ultimately, reading a classic gives the reader a glimpse into the past, giving some indication of the thoughts and expectations of another period through the style, narration, and the characters. As the world changes, scholars will reread novels through a contemporary lens, acknowledging the more troubling stereotypes and opinions that perhaps were not uncommon at the time of publication, hence not requiring much attention initially. *Dracula* is no exception, displaying qualities that could, as mentioned before, be interpreted as sexist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic. Within the last twenty years, *Dracula* studies have begun to focus on the unearthed messages within Bram Stoker's science fiction novel, reflecting the progression of our current society onto the Victorian text. Nina Auerbach and Cyndy Hendershot, for example, apply feminist theory and contemporary ways of thinking onto their analysis of the vampiric tale and help transform our perspective of the story. Their research and analysis allow readers to view *Dracula* critically as well as help them understand the possible disconnect. However, while this is one way of bringing such a story into the modern age, it is more geared toward those within academia or higher education; literary analysis and scholarly critiques are written primarily for other scholars. However, another method that is directed towards the general masses is the adaptation, or parody in some cases.

Adaptations and parodies are the true vampires of the literary world, connecting the old to the new, and changing their ways to blend in with the present situation they find themselves in; without them, *Dracula* may have disappeared into the vast unknown. They keep the characters and tropes alive, and with it, the new forms call upon the original story that with every

passing year continues to be adaptable. The original story continues to be relevant to the readers who cross its path.[4]

The adaptation at its foundation, as I am using it here, is the recreation of an original work that produces a new, and possibly highly differentiated, product within or outside of the original medium. Linda Hutcheon, University Professor Emeritus in the Department of English and of the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto, is one of the leading experts on adaptation and parody. In her books, *A Theory of Parody* and *A Theory of Adaptation*, she suggests a new way of looking at adaptation: while the use of the word *adaptation* has traditionally been associated with literature to film or the stage, it is not limited to such. Adaptation can also apply to a revision of another text. Adaptation, per this theory, acts similarly to Hutcheon's idea of *parody,* highlighting the technique of rewriting a story or theme with a difference. By this she means that parody is a source of change rather than criticism. In maintaining recognition of the original text but changing it ever so slightly, the new author is able to progress the story in a new direction.

Parody has traditionally been observed as the rewriting of another's work to mock or disagree with the original text—Hutcheon presents new parody as sharing similar themes of revision. She suggests a broader definition for the term: *parody* should not apply only to the negative critique of a previous work, but also to a rewrite that celebrates the original piece (*A Theory of Parody*). In Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation*, she notes that "like parodies, adaptations have an overt and defining relationship to prior texts, usually revealingly called

[4] Another example in contemporary popular culture might be *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet*, a YouTube series turned novel by Bernie Su and Kate Rorick. It is a modern retelling of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* which carries similar themes but through modern characters and scenarios. While *Pride and Prejudice* remains a well-known classic, the early 19th-century characters participate in experiences atypical of a contemporary society. In the retelling, modern audiences can relate to the characters and feel more connected with their experiences.

'sources.' Unlike parodies, however, adaptations usually openly announce this relationship" (*A Theory of Adaptation* 3). Hence, both suggest a revision of an original body of work, with the only difference being that adaptation directly acknowledges the original and states that it will be revising it to best fit the contemporary creator's meaning. Parody also refers back to the original text but does it in an implied, allusive fashion— as opposed to directly— requiring the reader to know the reference prior to reading the revision.

To place this idea of parody into context, turn to 1740 with Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded*. When this epistolary novel came out, it was received with criticism. From this one novel, others began to use it, change it, and make the narrative their own as a way to critique what Richardson had done. Such parodies included *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* by Henry Fielding and *The Anti-Pamela; or, Feign'd Innocence Detected* by Eliza Haywood. To the knowing reader, they are clearly satires—a form of parody— that reference Richardson's text, but as they do not directly state the connection, they cannot be classified as adaptation and could easily be viewed out of context, allowing the unknowing reader to read without knowing the reference to the original. In this manner, parody presents further dangers of carrying unintentional influences from past work, as it is not acknowledging that any—possibly problematic— residual biases are from a prior creation and are being revised in the attempt of change; however, if done carefully and in line with Hutcheon's theory of new parody, the differences should overcome any lingering biases. With enough change, the parody can successfully transform the narrative to a new meaning. All in all, it is the function of both parody and adaptation to interact with another text and make changes

based on varying perspectives; both of the terms then apply to the discussion of cross-historical intertextual[5] reinventions of past biases.

The importance of literature— specifically intertextual literature— to societal progression becomes apparent when observing the roles of these two forms. Literature represents the time in which it was written and therefore suffers the limitations and anxieties of said time period. It carries with it a timestamp, documenting the author's opinions on the world or how the general population saw current events. In some cases, past authors used the biases of the time period to evoke change; however, in other scenarios, the biases remain unharnessed and may even reflect the unfavorable opinions of that author, displaying thoughts that a modern reader might take issue with. While history can influence the contents of literature, literature too can create societal perspectives. Words are powerful and influential to the persons reading them, encouraging or hindering societal change. When a contemporary author uses themes or characters or styles from another older piece, they will place their own timestamp upon the old one. But the old mark does not go away. Instead they are fused together into a new narrative that uses the old to move the story into the present. But what happens if the old bleeds through too much and exerts the primary influence on the reader? Does the old then prevent progress?

Some critics believe that adaptation has the power to change the narrative of old texts through revision, causing the initial story to disappear under the new perspectives. Maurice

[5] Comparative literature can play a part in the analysis of this intertextual conversation. Alfred Owen Aldridge, professor of comparative literature and founder of the *Journal of Comparative Literature Studies*, describes comparative literature as the act of looking beyond boundaries to compare novels based on similar cultures or trends (Aldridge 1). There are three types of comparative literature: affinity, tradition, and influence. Affinity occurs when novels share similar style, structure, mood, or ideas, while tradition takes place when there is a common historical bond. Influence, the most relevant to this discussion, represents novels which are directly inspired by another. Influence can best be understood through viewing it as an extreme and extended allusion. It is the comparative literature that allows for a story to expand across time and is non-specific to a period. Affinity, likewise, can act as such, though it is often regarded in poetic periods in which a style becomes repeated.

Blanchot says, “work exists only when it has become [a] public, alien reality, made and unmade by colliding with other realities” (Blanchot 306). The truest form of work is established in the combining of multiple perspectives, evolving within the progression of thought. Ellen Friedman, using Blanchot’s ideas, argues that in this evolution, the story will become its own narrative with new authority that eliminates the past story, causing it to disappear into the past: “the shifting point of view prevents the reader from settling into any privileged or comfortable narrative site and thus aids in destabilizing master narrative and its facilitating conventions, in this case the authoritative narrator” (Friedman 123). Friedman stresses that a modern narration places the original text in a contemporary lens and thus makes the reader incapable of writing off the original biases as a product of their time. The authority of the original text disappears. In its stead are “holes and blank spaces through which a reader is compelled to look with a self-consciously twentieth century vision that will necessarily transform what it sees” (119). The holes destabilize and keep the reader from feeling comfortable in the old text: “the canonical and subversive make a difficult compromise, a compromise essential to modernity” (123). The plot changes; the perspective changes. The insight of a new voice makes it so the original cannot express itself in its original capacity; it is now exposed to the contemporary viewpoint and cannot go back—thus, in part or in completion, it disappears, as it cannot exist as it once was.

In contrast to Friedman, Helen Tiffin notes in her article, “Travelling Texts: Intertextuality and Resistance in V.S. Naipaul’s ‘Guerrillas’ and Jean Rhys’s ‘Wide Sargasso Sea’,” that despite the endeavor to break away from the conservatism of English narrative, the process of adaptation will always have remnants which keep the story from being rewritten. It is important to acknowledge that Tiffin’s argument is in relation to post-colonialism; however, the ideas are relevant to a general conversation of adaptation. Unlike Friedman, the very existence of

a modern text prevents the vanishing nature of the original. Tiffin analyses the two texts *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Guerillas* which, according to her, both comment on the revision of the colonial English script. She notes that while *Wide Sargasso Sea* attempts to break away entirely from this script, the novel eventually concludes that "Opting out of the text entirely [is] not possible," though it continues to claim that the flames of destruction can ignite change though not entirely achieve the change (Tiffin 64). *Guerillas,* in turn, suggests that the English script will always exist and "cannot be actively eradicated either - neither through re-writing or burning" (62). Through observing the two texts and what she believes they are communicating about adaptation, she continues on to say that reading and rewriting become inseparable within the text:

> Re-writing of texts implies their re-reading, and in intertextual counter canonical activity the two are virtually inseparable. But where, as in colonial and post-colonial societies, a radical separation underlies textual production and reception…the scrutiny and separation of the two-of the writing and reading - can prove instructive. (64)

Adaptation requires the reader to understand the original text before they can understand the rewritten document. In the process of writing an adaptation that will eradicate the old philosophies of the original text, the author is giving new life to the old — giving it more power to stay relevant. Furthermore, Tiffin suggests that the original framework will influence the new text unwillingly and the pursuit of progression will fall by the wayside under the domination of old ways of thinking that are lurking within the original storyline— unless of course a "radical separation" is made in which it then becomes informative (64). By this description, however, radical separation would seem impossible within the adapted framework as it is necessary to bring forth the original in order to make it new.

Acknowledging the two theories presented, the question becomes whether adaptation actually causes the original source and its opinions to disappear or whether it causes the text to gain power and continue pulsating its opinions into a new timeline. There are weak spots in both arguments. In actuality, it may be neither. In Blanchot and Friedman's perspective, the story disappears entirely—but if the story disappears, the definition of adaptation becomes inconsistent. If the original story no longer exists within the new story, then the adaptation functions on its own rather in conjunction with another; the changes made would be so intense, that it would appear as a completely original idea. While Tiffin's perspective may provide more insight into the nature of past work making an appearance, it fails to acknowledge *any* notion of progress that can be made from adaptation, no matter how small. While it is likely that an original work will leave residue on the new work, the level of residue can be controlled to the point where the progression of the text outweighs the absorption into the past. Perhaps this is what Tiffin means when suggesting a radical separation; though in this respect, separation remains impossible unless you were to consider Friedman's disappearance of the text, which is virtually unattainable given that revision using any amount of allusion promotes rereading and hence empowerment of the original text. Therefore, both descriptions are flawed and cannot be applied fully to a wide body of intertextual works.

While an adaptation may raise past thought from the grave, there is a need for adaptation and the acknowledgment of the past. Without showing awareness to the past, there is no potential for progress. One must recognize the problem before attempting to rewrite the narrative and make change. While Tiffin is justified in saying that the original ideas cannot be entirely eradicated, this does not mean that progress cannot be made despite the societal residue.

While *Dracula* is not a commentary on adaptation and parody, themes throughout the text connect back to the role of these forms. In the following section, Van Helsing theorizes on the ever-evolving nature of belief and their connection to the old ways. While the discussion is in reference to the nature of vampirism and Dr. Seward's disbelief, looking through a contemporary and comparative lens, the nature of the quotation fits in with this conversation:

> Do you not think that there are things which you cannot understand, and yet which are; that some people see things that others cannot? But there are things old and new which must not be contemplated by men´s eyes, because they know -or think they know- some things which other men have told them. Ah, it is the fault of our science that it wants to explain all; and if it explain not, then it says there is nothing to explain. But yet we see around us every day the growth of new beliefs, which think themselves new; and which are yet but the old, which pretend to be young. (Stoker 227)

As Van Helsing notes here, it is the nature of humanity to accept the initial conclusions made and assume that there cannot be revisions of thought when something cannot be fully explained. In saying that the recognition of the initial thought keeps it from being revised, the quote supports that, while new work can be created to represent the change of society, an old theory cannot be given new insight; keeping in mind that the revision adds to the original explanation, it changes some things, but never eradicates. It actually becomes necessary to recognize the original thought in order to show the inconsistencies and change the narrative. We build on what has come before.

The old ways, as established in *Dracula,* do not need to be the end-all be-all of the vampire story. Bram Stoker gave new life to the trope just as Stoker's story is utilized and mutated and given new life. Dracula, in adaptation, is not limited to Victorian ideologies and

patterns. It may be impossible to drive that final stake into the character, but we can continue to teach the story —and the character— to exist in a modern context with contemporary morals and ethics. In a recent retelling of *Dracula*, old and modern philosophies on topics such as feminism are outwardly expressed in the intertextual bond between it and *Dracula*. Walking the line connecting old and new texts as a form of evolving and keeping with the times, *The Historian* by Elizabeth Kostova reconfigures the biases of *Dracula* in relation to the feminist theory perspective while keeping the old story alive. It is difficult to determine if *The Historian* is parody or adaptation. On the one hand, Kostova pulls directly from *Dracula*, using similar characters and referring to the original text, even quoting portions of it. However, because it does not directly say it is an adaptation, though it acts to salvage the past and extend the story, the novel cannot technically be considered an adaptation. It is likely more akin to Hutcheon's new parody; however, defining the novel as parody implies that the imitation of *Dracula* and the changes made are fully intentional and that what is being done is even imitation. Within *The Historian*, Kostova uses the character of Dracula, who, though different, maintains a semblance to the original character; it is certain that, through *this character*, she is imitating Stoker's work. Furthermore, Kostova uses an epistolary style of writing that corresponds to the form that *Dracula* takes, and she heads the sections of the novel with quotes directly from *Dracula*. Yet, *The Historian* does not share the same story nor the same primary characters aside from the villain. While this could be the difference that Hutcheon speaks of in her theory of parody, it is possible that this is too big a difference. Despite the complexity, there is a level of intention in bringing this story to a twentieth-century world in which women are not the only ones victimized and made monstrous by the demonization of mixing masculinity with femininity. While Kostova's work is heavily influenced by Stoker's novel and may contain aspects of the two-sex

body philosophy oozing from the *Dracula* foundation, she defies the initial anxieties and stereotypes from Stoker's work; she demonstrates the line of progression through four decades of varying levels of female empowerment.

Kostova adapts the story in a new way. She outrightly defies the Victorian, leaving no room for the anxieties of the past to wriggle their way back into fruition and establish a critique of the feminine body— rather than reclaiming the monster as a feminist symbol, she denies the demonization and instead celebrates the woman as a neutral body. While the masculine qualities of her female characters are acknowledged as differing from perspectives similar to that of the traditional Victorian opinions, they also come to be accepted and respected throughout the novel. In the female representation within Kostova's novel, her characters, though masculinized, also have feminine qualities, supporting the non-essentialist perspective taken by many in the years of third wave feminism. Varying from previous adaptations that reclaim the monster, Kostova reclaims the woman as a person, as opposed to the masculine woman. She changes the original narrative of Stoker's female demonization in a progressive step toward a one-body system, continuing the path, which will hopefully, one day, lay that centuries-old monster to rest.

The following discussion will lay out the feminist connection to *Dracula* and *The Historian* and the progress obtained through the reworking of the original text. In the first chapter, I give a brief overview of feminist history and how the novels respond to the theories of the period. From there, I split *Dracula* and *The Historian* into their respective categories and analyze specific sections of the novels to demonstrate how the authors respond to the feminism of the given period. The conclusion is a discussion of whether *The Historian* is successful in allowing modern readers to enjoy a classic character with a new perspective—a perspective that

makes aware the problematic aspects— and whether this should affect our reading and enjoyment of *Dracula* or other troubling classics.

Chapter 1- A Bit of Feminist History to Sink Your Teeth Into

I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves.

-Mary Wollstonecraft

In the essentialist perspective of feminism, theorists believe that there is an inherent difference between man and woman. This difference goes beyond the physical and discusses the characteristics and personality traits that correspond with each gender. The essentialist philosophy is not meant to place women in an inferior position. In fact, the ideas state that though the qualities are placed with the individual gender, all qualities are equal. However, though the idea is the qualities are equal, in justifying that qualities are inherently masculine and feminine, the essentialist perspective has unintentionally supported the limitations placed on women. This perspective makes the masculine woman a monster of sorts. By this philosophy, the intermingling of personality traits becomes a deformity that breaks the individual away from the normative sense. While this idea is not limited to masculine women but could in fact be applied to the feminized man, for the purposes of this discussion, the masculine woman will be the primary focus.

According to the Victorians, an educated woman[6] was blasphemy, a sexual woman was unheard of, a powerful woman was dangerous— women couldn't act like men. At least to the public eye. Those women were considered abnormal, they were criticized, they were monsters. Any such personality was to be squandered and repressed— reserved to the mind and never exposed to the rest of humanity, especially the men. Both men and women were among those

[6] Educated in the sense that the education was synonymous to the higher education of men. Some believed that women should be educated but said education should not make men and women equal; the educations could be different and maintain the *ideal* separation of gender (Coit).

who rejected these powerful women; such opposition included but was not limited to Mary Augusta Ward[7] and *Punch* magazine.[8] Of course, with this societal ideal of women came a plethora of anxieties. If even one woman could attain such *masculine* qualities, what did it mean for the rest of the female species? Could they too be hiding these abnormalities under the surface of their delicate exteriors?

This way of thinking corresponded with the anxieties surrounding the New Woman movement of the Victorian Era. As Cyndy Hendershot phrases it,

> Fin-de-siècle anxieties included a fear of the destabilization of rigid gender roles: both the New Woman and the aesthete threatened gender "normality" through their redefinitions of sexual and gender codes. In a society in which gender was being radically redefined, belief in the biological differences between the sexes remained the only means of clinging to difference. (Hendershot 377)

The New Woman was rising up and pushback came from those who opposed. The New Woman, typically associated with the Victorian suffragette, rejected the gendered associations taken by many: "aggrandizement of the True Woman, sanctifying family, fueled the legislative triumphs of the New Woman, galvanizing society, for conservatives and radicals alike believe in woman's transforming power" (Auerbach 11).

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[7] Ward was among the conservative women of the Victorian period who opposed women's suffrage because it was a danger to what she believed was the natural order; she thought that men and women were inherently different and should remain separate in expectations. She did, however, believe in higher education for women, even taking part in establishing Somerville College, a women's college at Oxford established in the 1870's (Coit)

[8] *Punch* magazine is credited with creating the New Woman stereotype, primarily in physical appearance. Prior to the 1880's, the New Woman figure did not have a clear image associated with it; they were simply everyday women. *Punch* created parodied cartoons of the New Woman, creating an outwardly athletic looking woman who, in the text accompanying the illustrations, reinforced gender anxiety. The New Woman movement embraced the image depicted of them, using the athletic exterior to their benefit, however, the text in *Punch* magazine continued to be a detriment to the cause, creating further fear of the women on the rise (Collins).

The New Woman existed prior to 1894, but in this year, Sarah Grand coined the term in her essay, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" (Nelson ix). In the essay, Grand contested the long held Victorian account of the two-body system; she made a point that women were not limited to the house. This essay sparked discussion, and those who opposed rose to the challenge of deeming the New Woman comedic or demonic. Others came out of the woodwork to support Grand and take the woman question even farther. The New Woman movement began and with it conversation on the marriage question, the sexual double-standard, and female education and opportunity. New Women, with some variation among persons, believed that women should have free choice to marry whom they please and for reasons other than "social and economic forces" (xi). They also believed that women should be given at the very least the same sexual knowledge that men were given. Some took this idea further and believed women should have the same sexual freedom as men, while others took the opposite approach and suggested men should be held to the same standard of purity as women.[9] Furthermore, they saw the value in the educated woman and encouraged more schooling like that given at Girton College.[10] Despite some variations in theory, at the core of these issues was the shared belief that women were not reserved to the feminine archetype; they "demanded that women be given the same opportunities and choices as men" (x). These demands were often associated with power and that scared individuals of the Victorian era; change was coming and that was a threat to the social order.

[9] This discussion coincided with the issue of syphilis. Wives would often contract the disease from men who were not held to the same standard of innocence prior to marriage, sometimes resulting in the woman's death. Some New Women writers used this reality to prove their point of allowing women to have sexual knowledge and hold men to the same standard as women (Sandbach-Dahlstrom).

[10] Girton College, along with Newnham College, located in Cambridge, acted as one of the first women schools for higher education. At the beginnings of the school, many referred to the establishment as an "experiment," implying that the project would only last if all went well. Hence, the women at Girton College were judged harshly and under pressure to succeed. L. Jill Lamberton notes that the first generation of "Cambridge women's extracurricular writing practices amount to collaborations that changed social expectations and institutional culture" (Lamberton 563). Girton College, along with other women's colleges paved the way for intellectual women to pursue higher education at the same caliber as men.

The Victorian myth of womanhood, as suggested by Nina Auerbach, describes the polar extremes of woman as angel or demon: “the imaginative scheme does not believe in a human woman. The ‘normal’ or pattern Victorian woman is an angel, immune from the human condition and, unlike her feebly well-intentioned male counterparts, endowed by definition with superhuman powers'” (Auerbach 64). If a woman is to deviate from this angelic, and domestic, person, she in turn becomes the demon or monster figure. Auerbach explains that this myth “flourishes not in the carefully wrought prescriptions of sages, but in the vibrant half-life of popular literature and art, forms which may distill the essence of a culture though they are rarely granted Culture’s weighty imprimatur” (10). Auerbach, in saying this, means to separate fact from fiction in the perspectives consumed through literature. She argues that literary demonstrations of such opinions, such as those found in *Dracula*, create the general societal expectations toward women of the era. Yet, while literature may in fact have this power, one could argue that the real power of literature is not limited to creating ideologies, but rather to furthering opinions that already had an established, though possibly weak, foundation within society. Pushback came in many forms: satire, stereotypes of the masculine woman, and outright demonization and criticism towards what these women stood for. The New Woman was a threat to what Victorians normalized in the polarity of gender and in response, the possibility of non-essentialism was rejected through a demonization of women, intensifying the myth that any slight deviation from the extreme female expectation was monstrous.

One such critique was *Dracula*, created by Stoker in the midst of the movement, 1897. It provided a negative perspective of the *masculine* woman and commented on the move towards a one body system, implying that it was characterized by evil monstrosities. In *Dracula*, Stoker initially writes his main female characters, Lucy and Mina, in a surface level feminized sense;

however, from the beginning, masculine qualities, based on Victorian ideology, are hinted at within their characterizations. These qualities are further intensified as the women are attacked by Dracula and slowly begin the transition into vampires. In intensifying the masculine qualities through their demonization, Stoker supports the essentialist opinion that women are inherently different from men and that the interchangeable nature of masculine and female personalities is abnormal.

Female sexuality in the novel is criticized above all else, particularly in Lucy's character. Lucy, pre-vampire, is viewed as the belle of the ball – by the male characters. To them, she expresses a Victorian ideal: pretty, delicate, and containing a child-like innocence. Though with all her highly esteemed personality traits, she harbors secret desires that the men cannot bring themselves to see—as she is exposed to the power of the vampire venom, those desires make up the sole personality of the monster she becomes. In Lucy, she is a monster because of the power given over to these desires; the men fear what she becomes because it fully exposes her true nature and what they did not want to believe lay beneath the mask of repression.

While female sexuality is a much-discussed topic in *Dracula*, Stoker was not the first to sexualize the vampire. Prior to *Dracula*, the vampire was already a sexualized being as shown through *Carmilla* and the lesbian vampire trope. In *Dracula*, though, the one-sex body posed more dangers. To Stoker it was more than sex— aligned with what the New Woman stood for, it was intelligence, knowledge, power. Through Mina, Stoker presents a highly intelligent woman who is in fact celebrated for her brains— but only to the extent that her power does not become too great. At the onset of the book, Mina is prioritized in the pursuit of Dracula, but as time goes on and she becomes tainted by the vampire, her knowledge becomes dangerous. She must then be supervised at all times by a male authority and her thoughts controlled. Furthermore, Mina

acts as a quasi-omniscient narrator in that she is said to have transcribed the primary documents and placed them into the collection in which the reader views them. However, when the original documents are no more, the power fueled by Mina's production of the only surviving document is diminished through the suggestion that the story is now made inauthentic. Again, she is valued for the work she does until it becomes a source of power that must be crushed.

In the grand scheme of things, it appears as though Stoker was more scared of what could arise from a one-body system rather than just being critical of the New Woman. If women could be indistinguishable from men, change was certainly going to come, and the finely tuned patriarchy would crumble. The collapse of the two-body system would be the fall of male superiority.

Despite pushback from individuals like Stoker, the feminist movement prevailed. Since the New Woman, there have been three feminist waves, each expanding from the others and overlapping or criticizing what was believed before. The time period of each wave is difficult to classify as the terminology was not used until 1968, but generally the first wave includes the late 19th century into the early 20th century, second wave feminism began in the 1960s and 1970s, and third wave feminism came to power in the 1990's. While the New Woman movement fell into the period of first wave feminism, this wave was most characterized by the suffragettes who worked towards political and social equality, including voting rights. The second wave, involving the liberation movement, stressed equality in the workplace and equal pay. Within this wave, the role of the mother was put into question and the relationship between parent and child held prominence in the discussion. There was also increased concern for sexual violence. Third wave utilized many of the ideas from second wave feminism but more drastically broke away from the differences between women and men and stressed that there was not one type of

woman— all women are different and those differences should be celebrated. Imelda Whelehan, in the introduction of *Third Wave Feminism,* discusses the relationship of men and women within third wave feminism: "the role of men in relationship to the third wave is crucial, especially as some suspect [. . .] that young women share more of their social experiences with men of the same age than they do with women in general" (Whelehan xviii). Despite there being an aspect of non-gendered ideology, subsects of Third Wave Feminism ("Girlie" feminism) support the reclamation of *feminine* stereotypes such as wearing pink, further supporting the notion that women can be different – *feminine* or *masculine* leaning – and maintain a feminist title: "Power feminism, or girlie feminism, envisages not women combating institutional sexism, but girls experimenting with personal choices in a perpetual state of youth and innocence" (Nguyen 158) . Third Wave Feminism also largely stresses female sexuality and rejects the notion of sexual victimization being the result of the woman's actions; Elizabeth Keenan suggests, "the term has applied most prominently to specifically prosexuality pop-culture-oriented feminists," emphasizing celebrities and pop singers who have expressed their sexual freedom through clothing and music (Keenan 379). In the modern world, some suggest that we are still living in the age of third wave feminism while others characterize it as post-feminism. As feminism is the pursuit for equality and has branched off to involve queer and racial equality, it is hard to believe that a post-feminism could exist and is already here, particularly while injustices are still present and apparent.

Auerbach notes that the myth of the demonized woman, until the 1970's, had been rejected by feminist communities, taking the demonization as a form of female oppression. However, Auerbach goes on to say that "the mythologies of the past as well have become stronger endowments than oppression" (Auerbach 12). Through a modern lens, viewing

demonization as a strength is synonymous to a move toward reclaiming words or phrases meant to oppress or harm others. Instead of rejecting the monster, the monster is accepted within our culture as a positive rather than a negative. This is an important factor in viewing cross-historical adaptation of literature, as the rewritten narrative, rather than rejecting original concepts, may accept the negatives, changing them into an admirable quality. Through *Dracula* adaptations, this has been a common theme, particularly in the film industry. The vampires of the original novel possess increased sexuality, or rather an intense openness to sexuality, that, through demonization, is deemed taboo. However, through adapted media, the sexuality of the vampire is no longer rejected but celebrated (Amador). Yet, they are *still* monsters. Though redeemed— assuming a less negative role in contrast to Stoker's vampiric women— the celebrated monsters of the 20th and 21st centuries are *still* monsters. They lack victimization, but they are *still* monsters—monsters that are aberrating women who break away from the Victorian standards of femininity, primarily through sexual prowess. But if the female characters interacting with Dracula are never demonized— never become monsters— and maintain a one-body appearance, then the mixture of masculine and feminine can truly be celebrated and made positive as is the case with *The Historian*.

Elizabeth Kostova began writing *The Historian* in 2005, a time most characterized by third wave feminism. However, as the book traverses four time periods, she is able to include aspects of second and third wave feminism, while ultimately pushing for a non-essentialist point of view. *The Historian*, as omnisciently told from the protagonist's older self, shares the story of Dracula's return through four perspectives in an epistolary form, not unlike Stoker's original style. The genetic nature of the narrator and the process of seeing her grow from the innocent, sheltered young lady in her past self to the PhD holding historian in the present day propels the

original Dracula story into a time period where society has progressed through increased gender equality. The novel stays true to the time periods in which the story exists, and rather than placing the characters in a world where equality already exists, Kostova uses the historical background to demonstrate what was before and show what was being fought for and what Kostova herself supports in the feminist pursuit.

With the three generations of Getzi women, Kostova presents a progression of agentic women: Helen's unnamed mother, Helen, and the unnamed narrator who is also Helen's daughter. The mother, in her backstory, shows a powerful woman in the 1930's who demonstrates intelligence and sexual freedom, though she is not rewarded for her knowledge by her society nor is she accepted for her sexuality. She practices the independence associated with the first wave, but lives in a period where she suffers the limitations and must hide her own abilities. Helen, demonstrating a 1950's to 1960's woman, enters into the second wave, openly displaying her education and sexuality without shame. Furthermore, as she leaves her child to seek Dracula to, in turn, protect her child, she speaks to the mother question and denies the notion that an absent or working mother cannot be a loving mother. Helen's situation remains abnormal, however, showing a success in her field uncharacteristic of other women and she therefore, though progressed from her mother's situation, continues to face the limitations of her period. This then leads to the narrator. Being the last generation, representing the 1970's and 2000's, she shows the shift from second to third wave feminism. In her younger self, she remains wary of her sexuality and education, but throughout the novel, comes into her own as an adult, particularly in intellect. Her adult self, being a historian and professor at Oxford University, demonstrates her advanced degree of education, even surpassing her mother's masters. While it is unclear whether she accepts her sexuality, at the very least, she presents a growing acceptance

of educated women, specifically in academia. This final generation, specifically in the older variation, strips away some of the gendered expectations and allows for a more neutral person.

Using *Dracula* as a foundation, *The Historian* moves the story forward, using each time period to demonstrate something about the history of feminism. Kostova frees the women of *Dracula* by letting in new characters who are given more opportunity in their time periods and by not letting them be punished for expressing themselves as a person not limited by conventional gender roles.

Chapter 2- The First Bite: Victorian Women in Dracula

I suppose that we women are such cowards that we think a man will save us from fears, and we marry him.

-*Bram Stoker,* Dracula

To begin to identify the similarities and, more importantly, the differences between *Dracula* and *The Historian*, we must go back to where it all began. As mentioned above, Stoker's portrayal of Dracula and the female characters within the novel drew strongly on the New Woman movement of the late Victorian Era. He made monstrous the cross-gendered associations of personality that the supporters of the New Woman sought, making masculine perceived traits such as sexual freedom and scientific/ general intelligence a source of power that is villainous when manifested in the female. In this section, I will discuss the characters Mina and Lucy before and after vampirization, demonstrating how *Dracula* presents the anxieties around the New Woman through their demonization.

Lucy

Lucy exhibits the ideal of what a woman was expected to be in the Victorian Era. Cyndy Hendershot, former professor of English at Arkansas State University, notes that "Victorians began in the 1890s to see the challenge of the New Woman as centered around 'sexual issues'" (Hendershot 378). While this is not the full extent of the movement, it is part of it and Stoker emphasized this in Lucy. Lucy, in the vampiric form, is the sexually free New Woman, breaking away from her motherly role and assuming a carefree consumption of blood and lust. She is what Catherine Sandbach-Dahlstrom identifies as the innocent feminina sensualis (IFS), a young, unmarried woman driven by unconscious or semi-conscious sensuality. The key to this trope is the unconscious state of sensuality. The woman may maintain an image of purity and innocence

but because of the lurking sensuality, the idealized woman was but a mask to the more complicated nature driving them: sex. At the onset of the novel, Lucy is presented as an innocent, child-like figure consumed by piddly crushes. However, as she is overtaken by the vampiric parasite, she reveals more and more of her hidden sexuality that is only hinted at in the beginning. In writing Lucy to attain sexuality in her demonic transformation, Stoker is inherently demonizing the sexualized woman and expressing that a fear of the IFS is justified and necessary.

From the reader's first interaction with Lucy, she is presented as a silly young woman, frivolous in her worldly perspective and seemingly boy crazy. Upon her first letter to Mina, she is filled to the brim with bubbly energy desiring to speak of her latest crush, John Seward. While the mere presentation of Lucy's crush could imply underlying lust, the manner in which she presents the information denies that sex is of any importance. In fact, even in her silly expression of love at first sight, she admits to feeling guilty of her crush and her desire to discuss it with Mina. She is simply the child wishing to provide love and support to the men around her in an innocent desire for one day being married— a character that Stoker, and the Victorian era, may have classified as the ideal woman. She is not highly intelligent, she is young, she is pretty, and she places the man first.

However, the reader comes to find that these desires may not be as innocent as initially implied. Not only does she have a silly crush on Dr. Seward, she also has maintained an ongoing flirtation with Arthur Holmwood and Quincy Morris. Lucy isn't the girl feeling guilty for a silly crush, but rather a woman desiring the attention of three men, knowing that this desire is not what is expected of her. A passage studied often by *Dracula* scholars exposes the underlying sexuality of Lucy before she is in contact with Dracula: "Why can't they let a girl marry three

men or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it" (Stoker 73). After Lucy is proposed to by all three men of interest, she is faced with a difficult choice and with that choice staring her in the face, though she knows it is wrong to even think, she turns to polygamy as a desirable solution. In this moment, she maintains an air of purity through her admittance of her thoughts of polygamy being wrong; however, the mere expression signals to the reader that this character is more than Stoker's ideal exterior. In fact, in her guilt, Stoker emphasizes a fear of the IFS and the belief that female sexuality is wrong.

The vampiric venom throughout the novel acts as a parasite, though in a modern view, we might see it as feminist progress. As Lucy encounters Dracula night after night in her sleepwalking adventures, she becomes sickly and anemic in appearance, requiring blood even in her pre-vampiric state: "I could easily see that she is somewhat bloodless, but I could not see the usual anemic signs" (136). Often suggested by *Dracula* scholars, blood in Stoker's novel is symbolic of semen, so Lucy's body showing a physical need for blood equates to her requiring the sexual attention of a man. In her dying condition, the solution decided upon by Dr. Seward and Van Helsing is to give Lucy blood transfusions— transfusions that are only able to be given by strong, able men. With the symbolic nature of the blood, each transfusion is synonymous with a sexual encounter. Before her imminent "death," Lucy undergoes four blood transfusions— three being from her men of interest and the fourth from Van Helsing himself, who seems to fall just as in love with Lucy as the other men.[11] With each transfusion, she is reinvigorated and given new life, though the sexual craving returns. The transfusions are conducted by the very men trying to preserve Lucy's innocence and yet, through their infusion of blood, done without

[11] Quincy, after his own transfusion, states "Ten days! Then I guess, Jack Seward, that that poor pretty creature that we all love had had put into her veins within that time the blood of four strong men. Man alive, her whole body wouldn't hold it" (Stoker 182). With this line, we see the horror that Quincy experiences from the situation; whether that horror is simply in a medical or a sexual context is unclear.

consent from Lucy, they become just as bad as Dracula, the man who first debased her and seemingly took her virginity. And yet, through a modern perspective, the four men in "saving her" are conducting a form of rape, an act that makes their attempt worse than Dracula's.

In Stoker's original telling, Lucy had already ruined herself by seeking out Dracula and his lustful bite in her unconscious state; she already exposed herself as the IFS and therefore, the men in the story justify the transfusions as a means to save her— fulfilling her need while not encouraging the consensual lust as deemed undesirable in a woman.[12] The transfusions act as a means of putting Lucy *back in her place* as a woman, depriving her of the power they attributed to men. Cyndy Hendershot notes that "as vampires are socially subservient to the masculine-the father Dracula-yet biologically undifferentiated-their genital sexuality is eradicated-they seem to embody the worst fin-de-siècle fears that new gender arrangements would result in the end of 'Western civilization,' which for the Victorians was predicated on the two-sex model" (Hendershot 377). Dracula, in his relationship with Lucy, does more than debase her reputation— he encourages her to assume a masculine role, blurring the lines between male and female, the ultimate fear of the Victorians. Stoker, further exemplifying this fear, finds his solution through rape, encouraging the distribution of traits between man and woman, assigning sexuality to the man and innocence of mind to the woman. And yet, Lucy continues to express her *masculine* side, admitting that this desire was not caused by Dracula, but rather residing in her and encouraged to come out.

[12] In 1867, the Contagious Diseases Act was enacted allowing the government to arrest any woman suspected of being a prostitute, committing them to hospitals for detainment, treatment, or examination. In 1871, the Infant Life Protection Bill came about criminalizing the act of giving birth without telling authorities of the State. Both laws are likely in regard to the increase of baby-farms and the growing concern for the spread of syphilis (Roberts). While earlier than Stoker's book, both acts relate to Lucy's debasement as the State reinforced shaming women for sexual acts while the participating men walked free. Lucy feels all the repercussions while the men, not including Dracula, are not held liable for their act but are rather regarded as being temporary heroes for giving Lucy the blood to live.

It is not uncommon in vampiric folklore to find the woman drawn towards the vampire, initiating her societal debasement. James Twitchell, former professor of English at University of Florida, states that

> He is always polite and deferential, and his victim is almost always equally decorous in return. In folklore, the female often subtly initiates the affair by granting the demon lover access to her bedroom, or by helping him across a blessed threshold, or unhasping a window or even looking at him as if she were willing to be his victim. (Twitchell 85)

In the novel, Dracula does not need to seek out Lucy in the initial stages of their encounters. It is only when the four men of the novel get involved that Dracula must turn to other means of getting to Lucy. Prior to their involvement, Lucy sleepwalks to her nightly visitor, expressing her unconscious desire as fitting with the IFS. Though Mina begins to lock their bedroom door and save Lucy for a time, Lucy consistently attempts in her unconscious state to escape the room. Even when Mina notes the walking seems calm, there is "an odd concentration about her… even in her sleep she seems to be watching [Mina]. She [tries] the door, and finding it locked, goes about the room searching for the key" (Stoker 90). In the beginning, it is difficult to tell if Lucy is truly acting of her own unconscious volition or if she is being controlled by Dracula[13], yet in the act of having Lucy meet Dracula, as opposed to him seeking her out, Stoker identifies her participation in the act of becoming a vampire, confusing her role as victim and possibly suggesting that she is an accomplice to her demise, though the desire to be so lies under the surface of consciousness—the state in which the female can squander her underlying desires.

[13] We come to learn later in the novel that Dracula has the power to interact with Mina's mind, seeing through her eyes and she through his. With this in mind, we might assume that he also controlled Lucy; however, when controlling Mina, Dracula had already bitten her once, hence creating a blood bond between the two. This begs the question of how Lucy received the first bite and whether the sleepwalking followed this event, in which Dracula could control her, or led to it, introducing the possibility of the sleepwalking be unconscious and unrelated to Dracula's powers of enchantment.

Dracula came to fruition around the same time as Sigmund Freud's psycho-sexual model. Though deemed problematic in this day and age, particularly to the feminist cause, the model was of much interest at the time and could have some merit in the repressed nature of the Victorian period. It is likely that Stoker was aware of the model and used elements to further suggest the underlying unconscious desires of Lucy. Stephanie Moss says that, using protoFreudian models of gender and sexuality, the characters become hysterical, hypnotic, and vampiric in order to go against rigid societal expectations (Moss). In her sleepwalking state, Lucy reveals the sexual motive which Freud would suggest had already been there from early childhood. In her vulnerable state, Lucy exposes the repressed desires that she has maintained in presenting herself as the ideal and desirable woman. At this point in time, her undesirable qualities, repressed for years, have slipped into the forefront, urged on by Dracula in her most vulnerable capacity.

Thus, despite all the attempts to save Lucy, she ultimately relinquishes her life to the vampiric venom, becoming entirely motivated by her unmasked sensuality and therefore, masculinity. As a vampire, she is assigned the role of the Bloofer Lady. In this state, she is so far from the Victorian ideal that the men in the story deny that this character is Lucy. They are incapable of identifying the unmasked masculinity of the Bloofer Lady with the idealistic repressed woman they knew Lucy to be. At Lucy's funeral, Van Helsing says "In trance she dies, and in trance she is Un-Dead too. Usually when the Un-Dead sleep at 'home'— their face show what they are, but this so sweet that- was when she not Un-Dead she go back to the nothings of the common dead" (Stoker 239). Van Helsing suggests that the Bloofer Lady is a separate entity from the Lucy dead in the coffin. Lucy is but a vessel for the Bloofer Lady to possess.

In this form, the Bloofer Lady is aggressive and full of untamed sensuality. As the Bloofer Lady, Lucy seeks the kiss of Arthur, attempting to seduce him through her hauntingly beautiful undead self. Furthermore, in this state she relinquishes any maternal instinct, attacking children as her primary source of blood. In a vampiric role, Lucy is at the peak of masculinity, not only assuming the *masculine* but also denying the Victorian *feminine* more than ever. As Hendershot notes

> The vampire Lucy's ruthless attempt to seduce Arthur, her denial of maternal "instincts"-she feeds on babies rather than herself feeding them-her promiscuity in taking multiple partners/victims, and her freedom from immediate male control code her as a demonic version of the New Woman who, like the aesthete, has called forth the specter of the one-sex body in her attempt to disalign gender and biology. (Hendershot 378)

The men in the story do not recognize her as the same woman because whence they do, their fears of a true one-body system become fact. Dr. Seward goes so far as to refer to her as "a 'thing' which bears Lucy's 'shape'" (Stoker 380). As Hendershot argues, "Lucy and Dracula are 'things' not because of their aggressive sexuality but because they defy classification as male or female; they uncannily inhabit the human body and render supposed genital differences between men and women null and void" (Hendershot 380). In separating the two, the men can place the Bloofer Lady into the Other and maintain their fantasy of the original Lucy—femininity being the prototypical woman.

Mina

While Mina may not be the sex symbol Lucy is, she is just as affected by the hardships of the female Other. Rather than the IFS, Mina takes on the role of what Sandbach-Dahlstrom would call a "strong-minded woman" (Sandbach-Dahlstrom 72). Dahlstrom would say that

sexuality, though less up-front, is significant to the suppression of Mina's character and the danger she presents— but for Mina, it is more about Jonathan. Despite the two being married early in the novel, there is no indication that they consummate their marriage until the very end, once all is well with the world and Dracula has been vanquished. Hendershot presents the argument that the emasculation of Jonathan contributes to the prolonged virginity of Mina. She believes that Stoker's Dracula is drawn to Lucy and Mina because of their virginal states mixed with the sexual and intellectual cravings lurking in the shadows. Thus, because Jonathan prolongs her virginity, she is made more vulnerable to the bite of Dracula. While Jonathan is not the primary topic of discussion, it is important to note that he, in his imprisonment within Castle Dracula, was traumatized and made vulnerable. Stoker connects this vulnerability with the feminine and thus, while Dracula is alive and providing a constant reminder of the trauma, Jonathan struggles with rising to the idealized Victorian man, strong and capable. While his character in itself poses a fear of the one-sex body, it is in relation to Mina that he contributes to the ultimate fear of the New Woman. With her husband weakened by trauma and demasculinized, her masculinity is forced into the foreground. Not only is she challenging the status quo, she is encouraging the inferiority of her husband.

This is not overtly an issue up until Dracula attacks and Mina tastes the blood of another. Hendershot says that "the most traumatic blow to Jonathan's masculinity occurs when he witnesses Dracula and Mina engaging in vampiric sex" (Hendershot 382). In this scene, Mina drinks from Dracula's chest:

> [It was a] confusion of fluids-blood for semen, blood for milk, a man's blood for menstrual blood-of sexual acts-enforced fellatio on a man's chest, a man breast- feeding a woman, a woman performing cunnilingus on a man's chest-and of gender roles-a man

> nurturing a woman, a man's chest substituting for a menstruating vagina- [that] point back to the one-sex model discussed by Laqueur in which the body itself was prone to fluctuations between "male" and "female" organs and fluids. (380)

In assuming that the blood acts as a symbol for bodily fluids, the sexual act of his attack becomes more than just taking her virginity— it is taking away what might be deemed by the Victorians as Jonathan's *right* as a man and husband. The fact that he could not consummate their marriage before Dracula emphasizes his inferiority as a man and reminds them all that Mina wears the pants in the relationship. After this scene, Jonathan "groans, prematurely ages, and reverts to a childlike dependence on Mina" (382). While his reaction seemingly places her in the role of the mother and would restore her as a feminine, motherly figure, the damage has been done. Their eyes have been opened to the underlying threat of her power and in order to keep it suppressed, the men force her off the project, using her only when it helps them.

To understand the full extent of her fall from power, her agentic reach through narration becomes highly important to acknowledge. While sexuality plays a part in Mina's character and ultimately exposes her as a threat, the primary connection she has with the New Woman falls in her intelligence. Mina is smart, ambitious, brave. Authenticity in relation to the narration becomes a prominent point in demonstrating how feminism was observed in Victorian society. Though *Dracula* is written in an epistolary form, making it a multitude of voices and perspectives, a majority of which are male, there is an omniscient aspect to Mina's role in the narrative. Though each character is relaying their own words and information, Mina is identified as the one who is retyping their documents and putting them in order of importance. She contributes to the fight through her transcriptions and additions of her own and other's writings, compiling the narrative as she sees fit. Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio discuss in their

article, “Vampiric Affinities: Mina Harker and the Paradox of Femininity in Bram Stoker’s Dracula,” that the New Woman actively sought education and occupations that were atypical of the ideal feminine stereotype, one occupation manifesting in the Typing Girl pools. Prescott and Giorgio say that “Mina's commitment to work positions her as something other than Jonathan Harker's passive, chivalric ideal. Despite her disclaimers of wifely propriety, writing represents for Mina an attempt to establish a strong sense of self, which in this charged historical moment carries political resonance of the New Woman” (Prescott and Giorgio 490). Mina, despite suggesting that she is contributing to the fight against Dracula only for the sake of her husband, shows a wherewithal to be more than the stereotype. She is the typewriter girl who shows that she is more than a mother, wife, or daughter. As she writes to Lucy, she says she wants to “keep up with Jonathan’s studies” and practice her shorthand in order to be useful to him. This practice of her education remains beneficial for her husband and shows no ulterior goals; however, it is further said that she plans on writing a diary in shorthand:

> I do not suppose there will be much of interest to other people; but it is not intended for them. I may show it to Jonathan some day if there is in it anything worth sharing, but it is really an exercise book. I shall try to do what I see lady journalists do: interviewing and writing descriptions and trying to remember conversations. (Stoker 67)

In practicing her skills to be like the lady journalists, Mina demonstrates that she is actively trying to advance her intellect and ability for her own personal reasons and gain aside from helping Jonathan. And with this practice, she becomes helpful and, in the end, dangerous to the men’s cause of ending Dracula. She can work and, in that work, be equally successful, if not more successful, in comparison to men.

Alison Case, professor at Williams College, suggests feminine narration of the eighteenth and nineteenth century has been "characterized by the restriction of the female narrator to the role of narrative witness; that is, by her exclusion from the active shaping of narrative form and meaning" (Case 4). Case, in her argument of a feminized narrative created through the societal implications of a patriarchal system, says that the traditional westernized female narrative of the period was classified by passivity and morality. Women were not considered capable of putting the narrative events into an understandable whole and so, in associating female narration with "a status of convention," as she calls it, it gives the female narrator a sense of autonomy. While Mina is not the sole narrator of the story, she is the one who compiles a majority of the information into transcripts. In taking on the typing of the others' work, she assumes an omniscient sort of narration. Though Case says that the female narrator is neither allowed to "plot nor to preach" and Mina in fact does not preach, in compiling the documents in the manner she does, she plots in a roundabout way (13). She is the holder of information— that is, until the men step in.

For a time, Mina gets away with this agentic nature of controlling the conversation. In the initial stages of her contributions, Mina presents herself as the ideal wife, respecting her husband's wishes and doing everything as a means to serve Jonathan. She refrains from reading his diary, as he wishes, until it becomes urgent, for his safety, to read it. She types up the diary, as a means to help him destroy Dracula and be free of the traumatic throes of his existence. Her agency does not come across as agency at all. She controls their narrative, but it is for the benefit of the patriarchal system which is particularly necessary in the time in which Jonathan is at his lowest point and incapable of doing it himself. They need Mina to step up in those moments and assume that role.

However, with time, Mina's control is slowly purloined from her. Jonathan gains back strength and so, he begins to help Mina, taking away some of her narrative power. It is no longer clear who is arranging the narrative events we, the reader, are consuming. With Jonathan stepping in to help, Stoker is confirming the stereotype of the female narrative, saying that Mina does not have the means of assigning the order and arranging the plot points from her own perspective. And yet, at this point in the narrative, she at least is a contributor; it may be unclear how much power she has, but she still has it. That is, until it is further stripped from her. At the point when she is attacked by Dracula and debased to the status of "unclean," her contributions are considered dangerous to the group. She has too much power once the vampiric parasite of feminist progression enters her system. Once she is bitten, her mind is linked with Dracula, marking her as a one-sex body— both man and woman— and therefore, a threat to what the system holds proper. The group casts her out and makes a point of not showing her any more of the documents in case it proves the downfall of their cause.

In the end, her loss of innocence is redeemed, and her purity is restored— quite visibly through the scar on her forehead—but still, her narrative agency is stripped further from her. Even when she falls back into the maternal, wifely woman that the men idealize, they deprive her of the success of her documents, previously created and utilized to their highest effect. In the last moments of the novel, Jonathan, who in his writing of the final note seems to take credit for the compilation, writes:

> We were struck with the fact, that in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document; nothing but a mass of typewriting, except the later note-books of Mina and Seward and myself, and Van Helsing's memorandum. We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as

> proofs of so wild a story. Van Helsing summed it all up as he said, with our boy on his knee: We want no proofs; we ask none to believe us! This boy will some day know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is. Already he knows her sweetness and loving care; later on he will understand how some men so loved her, that they did dare much for her sake. (Stoker 443-444)

In the end, not only have the transcripts Mina so voraciously typed and protected been deemed inauthentic, but it is said that the authenticity is of no matter. Van Helsing proclaims that the important thing to remember is that Mina and her protection was what motivated the men to do so much. Mina's primary contribution to the cause were the documents she created and yet, when it comes down to it, her intellectual and skillful contributions and accomplishments mean nothing to them. It is only her feminine physique and the support given to the men that they wish to remember her by.

Mina, like Lucy, presents a figure who, unknowingly, exposes the flaws in the two-body patriarchal system. In assuming characteristics of the New Woman, they represent figures feared by the conservative public of the Victorian age, so much so that in the course of the novel they are each made, quite literally, monsters. And with each, Stoker's novel manages, whether through death or born-again purity, to thwart the one-sex uprising, decidedly suggesting this particular branch of progression is wrong and unfit for society. Though it is interesting that Mina does not need to die for her education while Lucy must for her sexuality, suggesting a possible hierarchy of masculinized traits women may have, both are grounds for demonization in the novel.

The sexist presentation of these characters has not gone unnoticed by others in the contemporary age. While Stoker gives us women who cannot be sexual or educated, Elizabeth Kostova presents powerful women who can do both without being Othered.

Chapter 3- Biting Back: Woman as a Person in *The Historian*

Remember, this was an era when only boys attended such a university as undergraduates, although you, dear daughter, will probably be able to enroll wherever you want to.

-Elizabeth Kostova, The Historian

While it would be easy to say that Kostova's characters are flawlessly feminist, it is more complicated than that. In *The Historian*, Kostova provides the reader with female characters of all walks of life—some might be hyper-feminine, some hyper-masculine, and some learning to find an in-between. What makes this novel revolutionary for the feminist cause is that her characters do not prescribe women to one type; she shows that there are a variety of personalities within the female subgroup, proving that, rather than viewing them as woman, we should just view women as people. Unlike Stoker's characters, who are demonized for deviating from the *ideal* woman, Kostova celebrates the differences.

Beginning with the foundation *Dracula* supplies, Kostova's novel follows an unnamed narrator and her father, through a similar epistolary style, on a journey to stop the famed Dracula who has returned to civilization. Though the story is primarily made up of letters and diary entries from the narrator and her father, the novel introduces the reader to three generations of powerful women of the Getzi family, each with their own personality and form of agency.[14] With each generation, the reader can observe the progression of time and of feminism, demonstrating what time would allow from women and what they can become despite expectations. Kostova gives us characters who are not demonized for being powerful; rather they are celebrated for who

[14] Some critics have said Kostova does not differentiate between the various voices of characters through her writing; however, though the style of writing may show similarities, in the actions and plot points, the reader can see how each has an individual state of being strongly influenced by their generational upbringing.

they are and what they can accomplish. She allows us a Dracula story where women are not the victims driving the men to save the day; instead, *women* save the day.

Helen's Mother

Helen's mother does not consume a large body of the text; however, this character provides vital information, not only to the storyline, but also to understanding the other characters. The reader views her life through two time periods: 1930's and 1950's. Helen's mother, the narrator's grandmother, is the matriarch of the family. She is the single mother left pregnant in Romania and forced to run away to Hungary to escape being socially outcast. She, with the help of her socially powerful sister, raises her daughter, Helen, to be the intelligent, professional, confident woman we see further in the book. And if this is not enough, she tells the reader of their family's bloodline.

Late in the book, when Paul and Helen, the narrator's parents, travel to Hungary to seek answers from Helen's mother, it is told that the Getzi family is actually related to Dracula himself. From the perspective of Professor Rossi in his letters to Oxford he says, "I was in all likelihood standing face-to-face with a descendent of Vlad Dracula. The thought was both astonishing and unnerving (although the girl's purity of face and graceful demeanor were as far as possible from monstrous or cruel)" (Kostova 418). Upon learning that the Getzis descend from Dracula, like Rossi, most readers would automatically think this is a negative reflection of the family's character; if these women are connected to an evil being like Dracula, it is assumed that they too would be evil. But the final parenthetical comment demonstrates how this blood connection is not meant to demonize. Helen's mother, though related to a demonic man, is not herself "monstrous or cruel." Looking at *Dracula* through a modern lens, what Dracula brings out in Lucy and Mina is not inherently bad; in fact, Dracula, if viewing him as the ammunition

for their agency, acts as a progressive instigator. In a similar vein, by being related to Vlad Dracula, the Getzi women have his progressive, powerful blood running through them, without turning into monsters or being demonized for that power. Rossi makes note of Helen's mother's intelligence saying, "this struck me as a remarkable phenomenon, to find such intelligence in this remote and simple place; perhaps further proof that she is descended from noble, educated, clever people" (418-419). In this quote, Rossi sees her heritage as a source of power. It is not something in which to find shame.

In Rossi's account, Helen's mother is a young lady who is highly intelligent—though living in a small village, she is literate with a quick perception— and daring. Despite what is expected of her, "to marry one of [the men in the village] so that [she] would not be a burden to [her] parents," Helen's mother goes off with the Englishman, Rossi, "jeopardizing her reputation with her people" and taking "a risk even in speaking alone with [him]" (419). She, like Lucy, accepts her sexual urges. But unlike Lucy, it does not require a vampire bite nor is she punished for her actions. She is instead rewarded with a child whom she is proud of. Well, eventually proud of. Once she knows she is pregnant and Rossi has left and not returned, Helen's mother plans to abort the child, but when it fails, she finds it is not a punishment: "In secret I gathered the herbs and roots that were said to prevent a child from coming into the world, but it was no use. My child was strong inside me, stronger than I was, and I began to love that strength in spite of myself" (382). She is forced to leave her village due to her premarital sexual encounter—and the evidence of such— showing that this time period is not yet accepting of female sexuality, but *Kostova* chooses not to punish her character. While the village runs her out, without knowing they are doing so, *Kostova* does not make that the end for Helen's mother, nor a horrible event in

her lifetime – *the author* does not punish her character. She lets her flee and live a life away from her little village that would have shamed her.[15]

Helen's mother encapsulates much of what Lucy and Mina are demonized for, but more than that, she, unlike the New Woman stereotype, isn't reserved to being a *masculine* woman; she is more. In Paul's eyes "this woman lived not only in remarkable simplicity… but also in great solitude… it was like the cell of a nun" (366). In her older age, Helen's mother is independent: "She could have married many times over… and yet she chose to live in this conventual silence" (366). She is religious. She is a bit coy. She is simple, taking a job which Helen finds "degrading work for someone of her intelligence" (363). And above all, she is motherly. Paul, in the short time spent with her, comments on the overwhelming warmth of this woman: "she held my hand fondly, simply, caressing it as if soothing a child" (367). This character seems drastically different from that in Rossi's account, but in truth, it is two sides of the same person. She is independent, intelligent, and freely sexual, but from this, she expresses the most *feminine* of traits. Kostova, in this minor character, shows a woman who can have *feminine* and *masculine* traits, without being criticized for either.

In truth, Helen's mother is akin to Mina. Mina, too, walks a fine line between *masculine* and *feminine*, showing motherly qualities every so often, particularly when she must comfort Arthur after Lucy's death.[16] Stoker, however, uses her *feminine* side as a means of survival. Mina is punished through vampirization for her *masculine* qualities but being both allows her to be

[15] Helen mentions, "if it has not been for my aunt and uncle, my mother might have died alone in some mountain forest and been eaten by the wolves. Both of us actually" (Kostova 323). Her quote implies that the practice of the Romania village would be to exile an unwed mother.

[16] Mina writes, "We women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above smaller matters when the mother-spirit is invoked; I felt this big, sorrowing man's head resting on me, as though it were that of the baby that some day may lie on my bosom, and I stroked his hair as though he were my own child. I never thought at the time how strange it all was" (Stoker 272).

saved from the demonic venom. And when she is saved, she becomes a true mother and seems to lose some of her *masculinity* through the denial of the aid she provided. This is where Helen's mother ultimately differs from Mina. She is not demonized for either and can be both all at once.

However, it should be referenced that Kostova makes note of the lasting general societal desire for the feminized qualities. Helen tells Paul before visiting her mother that he would like the mother more than the aunt, a woman who is loud, intelligent, economically and socially powerful, and taking on more of a hyper-masculine personality. And upon meeting the mother, Paul admits to liking her more than the aunt: "I understood then what Helen had meant when she'd said that of the two older women in her family, her mother was the one I would like best" (367). Furthermore, it cannot go unmentioned that Helen's mother is never named nor does she get to speak in her own writing. When given her story, it is through Paul's diary entry or in Rossi's letters, though Paul claims "when I got back to the hotel that night, I wrote it down from memory, to the very best of my ability; it took me much of the night I remember. By then many other strange things had happened, and I should have been tired, but I can still recall that I recorded it with a kind of elated meticulousness" (370). However, Helen's mother, only being able to speak Hungarian and Romanian, must speak through her daughter. And so, though Paul writes down what he heard, word for word, it is not Helen's mother's words. Helen's mother, in these ways, loses part of her agency. Though she demonstrates a character who puts essentialism up for debate, she does not reap the benefits. As the product of the generation, she is allowed to be more than Stoker's Victorian women, but still carries a silencing of her voice.

Helen

It has already been mentioned that Helen is a powerful woman, intelligent and domineering. She, in the course of the novel, works towards a masters in sociology, showing off

her level of education. Upon meeting Helen, Paul describes her as giving a stare that "although her eyes also had a curious amber in their depths, like honey— was extremely hostile" (69). In the first interaction with Helen, she is given a traditionally masculine trait: aggression. This woman, driven by her anger towards her father, Rossi, throughout the novel, does not prescribe to the passive woman stereotype. It is also noted upon first impression that her looks do not follow the trends for women in this 1950's period: "It was a young face but already aging very slightly and handsomely… her dark, almost sooty hair sprang away from her forehead with more vigor than was fashionable in those tightly groomed days" (69). Her demeanor is radical for the nuclear family 1950's, but in the course of the novel, Kostova seems to intentionally keep her from being demonized for it— though she walks a fine line with this character.

Beginning with Paul, the narrator's father and Helen's soon to be husband, the reader is given a perspective on women reflective of the societal progression occurring at this time. He comments on her masculine tendencies, particularly in look and intellect. At the beginning, his commentary comes across as verging on sexism, particularly in his protectiveness of Helen and his surprise when she does something unexpected of a woman. One moment in particular occurs near the beginning of their encounter with each other. While sitting in a diner, Paul questions whether she might be in league with Dracula as "Dracula's bride… the Sunday matinees coming back to me in rapid frames" (129). This comment comes from a place of paranoia for whom to trust; however, rather than saying she might simply be a vampire, he follows the stereotypes, automatically assuming her to be Dracula's bride, encouraged by her "smoky dark hair… the rich, un-identifiable accent, the lips like blackberry stain on the pale skin, the elegant black-and-white garb" (129). Paul's stereotypes follow him in their journey. At the point when they find one of the vampires and Helen pulls a gun on the monster, Paul is struck by the event and his

stereotypes are put drastically into perspective: “before I could so much as step between Helen and the ghoulish figure, she pulled a pistol from her jacket pocket and shot him” (273). He is stunned by her ability to shoot a gun or even carry a gun but, as he continues to think through it and comment on her ability, he does not seem against it. At the beginning of his 1950’s hunt for Dracula, Paul’s perspective is riddled with female stereotypes, but in Helen’s character, he experiences firsthand how the stereotype does not account for all women, and perhaps any woman.

Though it is important for Helen to be viewed through the lens of Paul in order to show the stereotypes and a changing perspective, the denial of narrative limits Helen. Like her mother, Helen is kept from assuming full authority of her story. We hear from her through another male character. It is only further on, in postcards to her daughter in which we hear directly from Helen. Though embracing her masculine self, in narrative she is still limited to the 1950’s confines. However, the few postcards in which we hear from Helen directly speak volumes.

Though her story is gathered through Paul, in his telling we are given the impression that she either left her child in search of Dracula and died or left her child and did not return. The postcards, however, show the underlying feelings of Helen leaving. The post cards, dated 1962, would have been written at the beginning of the second wave of feminism. In this wave, there was a focus on what is a mother (Whelehan). Helen leaves her daughter at a young age and without any context or insight into Helen’s perspective, this act can come across as selfish or uncaring— like she was a bad mother. But Kostova doesn’t place judgement on this mother leaving; she instead lets us into the mind of the character and gives her a place to stand up and express why. In every postcard, Helen begins the letter by saying “My beloved daughter” and

ends with “Your loving mother.” Furthermore, in every postcard she speaks of her daughter’s perfection and how she longs to be with her, though she knows it is too dangerous:

> I do not know how many times I have silently explained to you that in the first few months you and I were very happy together. The sight of you waking from your nap, your hands moving before any other part of you stirred, your dark lashes fluttering next, and then your stretching, your smiling, filled me completely. (563)

She loves her daughter and is anything from selfish in her act of leaving in pursuit of Dracula. The largest motivator for Helen not being around to be the traditional mother is to protect her daughter— a truly maternal act.

In the postcards, Helen reveals a personal, internalized trauma that leaves her feeling tainted and unclean, unworthy of her baby and putting her child at risk. This trauma comes from finding out she carries Dracula’s blood in her veins and from being bitten by two vampires:

> Then something happened. It was not something outside of me, not an external threat to you. It was something inside of me. I began to search your perfect body over and over for some sight of injury. But the injury was to me, even before this puncture on my neck, and it would not quite heal. I became afraid to touch you, my perfect angel. (564)

Helen in these letters describes herself as “tainted” and unclean, much like Mina does in *Dracula*. Though there is progress happening in this character and the storyline, her personal reflections show that she still feels demonized. In going after Dracula, she decides that the best thing for her daughter is to make the world a better place, so she never feels tainted or unclean. What Helen has to say reconfigures what it means to be a mother and asking can she be a loving mother if she is not there to do the traditional maternal tasks? In these letters, she makes it clear

that a mother's role is not reserved to the household, but rather in the emotions within the relationship between mother and child.

To further understand the extent of Helen's role, and demonstrate further how she is not demonized for her actions, we must also examine the bites and Kostova's vampire. It is commented upon early on that "the Dracula of Stoker's imagination had a favorite sort of victim: young women" (59). This is a point of fear for the narrator as she finds herself caught up in finding her father, but unlike Stoker's Dracula, this Dracula does not seem to care what gender he attacks. Kostova's vampire does not discriminate between victims. But, through the story, Helen is the only female character to be bitten.

Johan Höglund, Swedish professor of English Literature at Linnaeus University, writes about the matter of otherness in Kostova's Dracula, commenting more precisely on the East-West connection. Höglund notes that Kostova's Dracula is suspended between worlds; he does not belong to any given culture and acts as the Other in all scenarios. Thinking about the sexual connotations of the vampire in Stoker's work and other vampire tropes, the tendency to attack both male and female could act as commentary on bisexual individuals; however, Höglund suggests that Kostova's text seems to refrain, to some extent, from a sexual subtext. And even so, Kostova's vampire is not demonized in the same sense. Her vampire looks, acts, and passes for human. They do not crave blood the same way as Stoker's vampire, nor do they act in a domineering, take-over-the-world-with-a-vampire-army manner. Her vampire is driven by intellect, and, though still making questionable choices of interest, seems to undergo what Höglund refers to as a "epistemological transformation… characterized by a different perspective on knowledge, a change in the way the new vampires understand the past" (Höglund 9).

It is this variance in the vampire trope that allows Helen to be bitten but not feel the same effects of Stoker's Dracula. Kostova, in a pursuit to separate the female victim from the story, limits the number of female victims. However, if she were to simply flip the script and make it so vampires only attack men, then she is still drawing a line between the genders. If she is to make a point of changing the vampire trope to not be about sexuality or an attack of groups of people, then she cannot discriminate. And so, through Helen's bites, she separates the vampire from a preference, but with the three-bite rule,[17] Helen keeps from becoming a monster and being demonized by the author who created her.

And yet, though she does not become the monster, this does not keep Helen from finding an internalized issue with the bites. The first bite occurs because Helen attempts to corner a known vampire for information. While she is bitten, this particular bite doesn't seem to hold the same weight as the bites in *Dracula*. To begin, it is the first of three bites needed to become a vampire. But also, it comes from a place of her own conscious agency. If anything, it is more like a battle scar. However, despite this, Helen covers the scar with a scarf and Paul questions whether she is now "tainted" (Kostova 161).

The second bite occurs shortly after Helen agrees to marry Paul. Paul finds her in the morning, in the women's dormitory of the monastery they are staying at:

> where the nearly healed wound had been, in the deepest part of her neck, two small gashes oozed, red and open. There was a little blood on the edge of the white sheet, too, and more on the sleeve of her cheap-looking white gown, where she'd thrown one arm

[17] In *The Historian*, it takes three bites for a person to completely turn into a vampire. In the men, each bite pushes them further into feeling the effects of vampirism, including being repelled by holy objects; however, Helen does not show any signs even after her second bite aside from the un-healing fang marks on her neck. This could be a result of her family lineage or simply a choice made by Kostova to limit the demonization of female victims.

> back in her sleep. The front of her gown was pulled askance and slightly torn, and one of her breasts was bare almost to the dark nipple. (549)

Unlike the first bite, this one occurs while she is asleep and with the tearing of her nightgown, the attack seems more like a rape than a mutual battle. In this one instance, the vampire once again seems like the sexual monster of Stoker's novel. But in this scenario, Helen is not blamed. There is no question of being an instigator as is implied of Lucy in *Dracula*.

Helen's response to this act of violation lets the reader see another part of her character: "she put her head down over her bloody hand and broke into harsh low sobs, a horrifying sound. I had never before heard her cry out loud" (550). This response, though on the surface might seem *feminine*, given the severity of the situation, rather shows a human response. The drastic change of personality connects her to both masculine and feminine, and perhaps separates her from the terminology to further suggest an act of humanity rather than gendered stereotypes.

What's more, before her sexualized encounter with Dracula, she had a human sexual experience with Paul. Paul, in a love letter written to Helen after she disappears, writes of the experience, speaking in a tone that suggests love rather than lust and does not submit their experience to the same desires that Stoker suggested of his vampiric women. The letter does not look down on Helen for being sexual. Furthermore, the letter shows the progression that is happening in time:

> Since we were young, my dear, there has been a revolution about sex, a bacchanalia of mythic proportions that you have not lived to see—now, in the Western world, at least, young people apparently encounter each other without preliminaries. But I remember our restrictions with almost as much longing as I remember their legal consummation, much later. (434)

The experience of Paul and Helen shows that advancement has happened since Helen's mother and Rossi, however, this quote shows that there is more to come. Paul informs the reader that at the time of Paul and Helen's beginning, sexuality is still under wraps, but he also speaks of a future where change is happening in the time of the younger narrator.

The Narrator

In the novel, the narrator is separated into two sides of the same person, essentially creating two individual characters: the younger version and the older version. Neither is ever named. The older is the PhD holding, like Mina, is the omniscient narrator who has placed all the documents together and provides commentary every now and again. The younger version acts as the innocent young woman who is coming to find herself through finding her father, and in turn, Dracula. The younger's journey is expressed through the older's memories; however, the younger's opinions, personality, and experience with the world are different enough from the older self to make separating them necessary. Separating them also adds to the progression of the generation. We can view both the effects of the 1970's and 2000's.

At the beginning of the text, the younger narrator, being an actual child, demonstrates her innocence with life. This is not the same innocence sought after in Lucy, but rather a naivety that comes with knowing less of the world. The narrator describes herself as being overly sheltered: "it seems peculiar to me now that I should have been so obedient well into my teens, while the rest of my generation was experimenting with drugs and protesting the imperialist war in Vietnam, but I had been raised in a world so sheltered that it makes my adult life in academia look positively adventurous" (3). But as she ages and begins to interact more with her surroundings, she begins to find herself. In a *Bookends* interview with Elizabeth Kostova, the author says,

> I chose a young and innocent voice to introduce the novel because I felt that the narrator would have to be someone who grows tremendously in the course of the story. I wanted to show her maturing through her exposure to evil and through the necessity of taking responsibility for other people's safety and happiness after having been raised in a very sheltered way. (Whitlock 4)

Kostova wanted to show the growth of a young woman in a way that normalizes maturity. Stoker made Lucy an innocent character who as soon as she showed signs of losing her feminine innocence, was viewed as undesirable, a monster, another person. But Kostova views her narrator's change as a natural progression of human nature.

This growth in maturity is found primarily in the way the narrator takes control of the situation and utilizes her intelligence as a means of saving her father. However, Kostova from the beginning provides the reader with visual representations that physically show the narrator is at a shifting point in her maturity. Early on, the narrator makes a point to note the moment she begins her first menstruation:

> A spell had come over me that morning, the alarmingly belated trickle of blood my doctor was always worrying about and for which Mrs. Clay had awkwardly supplied my suitcase with a mass of cotton pads. My glimpse of this change had brought tears of surprise to my eyes in the train lavatory, as if someone had wounded me; the smudge on my sensible cotton underpants looked like the thumbprint of a murderer. I'd said nothing about it to my father. (41)

The beginning of a woman's menstruation is one worldwide symbol of womanhood. It is the female sign of puberty and is the ultimate physical indication of growing maturity, and really, despite the narrator viewing her period blood in a negative light, it is this moment where she

begins to shift into her adult person. More than a symbol, however, this scene demonstrates opinions surrounding the monumental moment. The narrator reveals to the reader a societal perspective around the beginning of feminine sexuality and reproduction. She, at sixteen, finally reaches this mark of womanhood and likens it to a murderer's fingerprints, hiding it from her one present parent. The women in her life were waiting in anticipation for this, even if surrounded by awkwardness. Though losing some stigma in its connection with maturity and health, it is shrouded in fear-inducing secrecy and continues to be taboo to discuss. In addition to what it tells us of the 1970's, it tells us something about the older version of the narrator. The older is telling us this story, and so, for her to find importance in documenting her menarche, the reader knows that her older self does not find the topic as taboo as she once did.

The shift to adulthood is further emphasized by the following scene; when visiting two of Paul's old friends, one of the friends pours her "half a glass of wine without asking my father and poured some water into it from the jug on the table" (43). Though watered down, the act of being able to drink alcohol without first receiving parental permission marks her growing maturity. Immediately after beginning menstruation, she finds herself in a scenario where she is regarded as an adult, a stark contrast from the sheltered childhood.

Furthermore, this shift from child to adult comes with an intensified boldness, beginning with sneaking out to the library to research Dracula and amounting to running away from home in search of her father and Dracula. All the while, you see her intellect, encouraged by the men in her life such as her father and Mr. Binnerts, the librarian that helps her with research. In the bulk of the novel, the narrator, even in her younger self, is regarded as intelligent. When first hearing of her father's past, Paul tells the narrator "remember, this was an era when only boys attended such a university as undergraduates, although you, dear daughter, will probably be able to enroll

wherever you want to" (15). For Helen, she was one of the few women in her master's program, but with the narrator, she has options. Her intellect as a woman is increasingly, though perhaps not wholly, accepted by the progressing society. Unlike *Dracula* in the time of the New Woman, the narrator has options to further her education and utilize her intellect, expanding further than Girton College or the self-taught short-hand Mina takes on.

Shifting to the older version, in the opening note to the reader, similar to the one found at the beginning of *Dracula*, the narrator reveals that she is now a historian and professor at Oxford University. The PhD title alone gives the reader some idea of the intellect the narrator has. She has made it in the world of academia: "Since that innocent day, I have seen most of those colleges and known some of them intimately, wandered through their libraries and chapels and dining halls, lectured in their seminar rooms and taken tea in their parlors" (166). What's more, the title *Doctor* is a gender-free honorific, which also might indicate why the narrator is never named. While not naming a character may deny them of agency, it could also eliminate the gendered confines that come with many names. *Doctor* is also a honorific that has respect. Lucy's character, when she becomes the more masculinized vampire— the Bloofer Lady— is often referred to as "it." Like *Doctor, it* does not imply either gender, but rather than showing respect and achievement, *it* holds a negative connotation in many contexts. *It* has been used with malice to create a separation from humanity and *normality*. Kostova, in using a positive genderless term changes the perspective of walking the line between masculine and feminine.

Through the generations, the reader sees a growing denial of gender norms, and so it would make sense to further separate the narrator. We still know her to be a woman, at least in her younger self, through the pronoun usage, but in leaving out her name, she, the omniscient narrator, does not confine herself to a feminine narration, particularly as the opening note does

not identify her gender at all. In separating gender from the narration, she, unlike Mina, can organize her story judgement free. In the opening note, the narrator details how she went about organizing the following narration:

> Where I felt it appropriate, I've stitched them together to make a continuous narrative, which I have occasionally had to supplement from my own reminiscences. Although I have presented my father's stories to me as they were told aloud, I've also drawn heavily on his letters, some of which duplicated his oral accounts. (xv)

Much like Mina's organization, the narrator is not the author of the whole text. However, unlike Mina, there is no doubt in this opening letter that the narrator is responsible for the organization of the documents. Also, parts of her father's stories are from oral accounts which the narrator wrote down, and so, in a way, those parts of the story, in addition to the telling of her own personal story, display her authority and agency in this narration. Returning to Alison Case's theory on feminine narration, she says, "the features of feminine narration clearly derive from and exemplify border culture strains of gender ideology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which associate femininity with passivity and lack of discursive authority" (Case 5). By controlling the story and having that "discursive authority" rather than being a "narrative witness," the narrator displays a level of power that separates her from a feminine stereotype dating back to the Victorians.

In addition to intellect and narration, sexuality plays a role in the narrator's self-discovery. Though less discussed compared with her intellectual abilities, in the narrator's relationship with Barley, we once again view the narrator's entry into adulthood. Sexuality plays a significant role in *Dracula*, often with a negative connotation. With the narrator's first thoughts

towards sexuality, while not explicitly negative, there is a hesitancy as she associates sexuality with a loss of childhood innocence:

> It gave me a feeling of temporary acceptance into that elite community to stroll across the quad at his side. It also gave me my first faint quaver of sexual belonging, the elusive feeling that if I slipped my hand into his as we walked along, a door would fall open somewhere in the long wall of reality as I knew it, never to be closed again. I've explained that I had led an extremely sheltered life—so sheltered, I see now, that even at nearly eighteen I hadn't realized how close its confines were. The quiver of rebellion I felt walking beside a handsome university student came to me like a strain of music from an alien culture. But I clutched my notebook and my childhood more tightly and asked him why the courtyard was mainly stone instead of grass. (Kostova 165)

The narrator, though experiencing sexual urges, grips her innocence as though sexuality is a bad thing—or really, a terrifying thing. Kostova presents this character's journey from childhood innocence to adulthood as leaving a sheltered life. In the hesitancy, she is not suggesting sexuality is negative, but rather a steppingstone into maturity. Much like the progression of society, we take the steppingstones with hesitancy and caution because change is frightening. The narrator refers to the plunge into sexuality as a rebellion of her sheltered life. The word rebellion implies that sexuality is resisting convention, and to her 1970's self, her openness to feminine sexuality would be an act of female progression, resisting the conventions of her sheltered life. In the manner in which the older narrator comments on her younger self's feelings, we see that she has likely changed: "so sheltered, I see now, that even at nearly eighteen I hadn't realized how close its confines were" (165). The older narrator sees now how her upbringing influenced her younger self and the views she had towards her own sexuality. It is also important

to note that Barley, the character which spawns these sexual urges in the narrator, is human as opposed to a vampire. Lucy and Mina both interact with human men in a romantic sense, but both have their sexual awakenings with Dracula, further demonizing the act. The narrator's experience is just a normal moment and while it shows the conflicting nature of growing up and entering maturity, it is not presented as an abnormal experience that is wrong in any way.

In the end, this novel is about how we move forward in history and how, no matter how far ahead we get, history will always be trailing behind— but that does not mean we cannot progress. In the opening note, the narrator writes "it is not only reaching back that endangers us; sometimes history itself reaches inexorably forward for us with its shadowy claw" (xv). While this speaks to Dracula finding his way into the contemporary, the quote also speaks to the role of adaptation and what Tiffin and Friedman discuss. *The Historian* is always in danger of having the claw of history drag it into the past from merely interacting with *Dracula*. The goal then is to reach back, discover the mysteries in the hopes of creating change, and escape the fangs that could lunge forward at any point in time. That is certainly the hope, but does Kostova pull it off?

Conclusion- Was He staked, or Will He Rise Again?

It's my belief that the study of history should be our preparation for understanding the present, rather than an escape from it

-Elizabeth Kostova, The Historian

Adaptations of *Dracula* have existed for decades. It is a special story that continues to be reworked and revised, having the potential to maintain a recognizable character while introducing change. Friedman suggests that the change causes the original text to disappear while Tiffin says that the original text, with its lurking residue, prevents the change from even occurring. Both criticisms pose logical arguments and perhaps each could be true of certain texts, but neither are perfect. *Dracula* and *The Historian—Dracula* and years of adaptations—demonstrate that changes are made without discounting the original. The fact that audiences will always know that Dracula began with Bram Stoker will memorialize that character, but the choices made, the choices keenly made to make a statement about the original story, allow the same audiences to be critical of the original and progress with the times and story.

Broadly speaking, adaptation has this power, but the ultimate question still holds: does *The Historian* succeed in bringing *Dracula* into the 21st century? Given the progression of the female characters from *Dracula* to *The Historian*, at the very least, Kostova manages to show the history of feminism and the change that has happened since Stoker's initial tale. However, her characters are not the same as Stoker's in more than just their personalities and what they are allowed to do without judgement. Kostova creates completely new characters, which could mean that she is not reinventing the original story, but rather creating something entirely new. In simply looking at the female characters, Friedman's concept of the changing narrative would

seem to apply; the original story is erased and in its stead are these new progressive characters. But Kostova doesn't deny the existence of Mina and Lucy. She may not acknowledge them by name, but in pulling Stoker's story into her narrative, firmly stating that his book and his characters exist in her character's world, even in their fictional format, proves that his story is not being erased but instead added to. It also cannot go unnoticed that she uses the same main villain and pulls in Stoker's words and ideas to question and contest his actions and motives while discovering what drives her Dracula. There is far more media utilizing the general vampire, but using Dracula specifically is less common. Yes, there have been countless *Dracula* adaptations, but it is no match to the whole vampire collection. Even so, most adaptations are Stoker's story with slight variation; if these adaptations did not use Dracula the character, they would not have a story. But Kostova didn't have to use Dracula. She could have chosen any vampire or created her own from scratch—but she didn't do that. She decided to use Dracula because of the original story. She wanted to change it and have a discussion with Stoker about what time can do. Referring to Kostova's line, "the Dracula of Stoker's imagination had a favorite sort of victim: young women" (Kostova 59), we see that Kostova does not wish to deny the characters Stoker created; she makes known that the villain, famed for generations, is traditionally correlated with the victimization of women. But her characters, and her Dracula, prove that even though we acknowledge what was written in the past, change can occur, and the old villain can interact with a new century of women, changing his own personal taste in victims based on what is reflective of the period. And in this way, she does succeed in giving the reader a new Dracula story, void of Stoker's New Woman demonization.

Of course, though she manages to place Dracula in a contemporary context with modern thought, there is another question: can Kostova's novel stand on its own for a broad audience or

do readers need to have a *Dracula* background to fully understand what is happening? Linda Hutcheon comments on the role of contextualism on parody:

> There is clearly a new interest in 'contextualism' today, and any theory of modern parody should also be premised on the belief that 'texts can be understood only when set against the conventional backgrounds from which they emerge; and… the same texts paradoxically contribute to the backgrounds that determine their meanings.' When that background actually grafted onto the text, as in the form of parody, such contextualism cannot be avoided. (Hutcheon 24)

Essentially, Hutcheon is saying that context matters when reading a parody because without the context, the difference is lost on the reader and the intention of the change goes unnoticed and misunderstood. The context matters in Kostova's book. Without it, the reader does not understand fully why it is important that women are not the only victims or that the female characters are supported in their varied personalities. The *New York Times* writer Janet Maslin said of *The Historian*, "[Kostova's] own contribution to the genre involves resurrecting Vlad the Impaler, separating him from Stoker's version and leading readers on a scavenger hunt based on Vlad's marauding travels and evil deeds" (Maslin). While true that it is partially separate from Stoker's novel, Maslin is wrong to suggest that it is completely detached. Stoker plays a valuable role in seeing the power of Kostova's choices. Without knowing *Dracula*, the utilization of the epistolary form and the references to female victimization would be lost—it would go unnoticed that there is intention in the power of the female characters. Kostova herself has said "her model was 19th-century literature: "'The Victorians did such a great job, and I wanted to see if I could write a book that was allowed to take its time if it needed to. Part of the joy of a Victorian novel is the setting and the analysis of character, but at the same time you really want to know who

gave Pip his inheritance, or where the moonstone is'" (*The Age*). There is a copious amount of research and detail in *The Historian* and with even a minimal level of Victorian fiction or *Dracula* knowledge, the book can become so much more.

However, *The Historian* isn't a typical parody. It does not use the same characters nor the same setting. It utilizes *Dracula*, but it remains its own unique entity. And so, while the details may go amiss to a reader unfamiliar with *Dracula*, the story can hold its own and provide readers a modern Dracula in an increasingly progressive world without the baggage *Dracula* carries with it. One might argue that the ability to exist separately from *Dracula* is an advantage as the primary argument against parody is that the old ideas will find their way into the new story. Kostova supplies what readers need to know from Stoker's work to understand the basics of history and the foundation for her story, but she does not require readers to know *Dracula* intimately. But that does not mean having that background discredits her work. Even for readers who know and love *Dracula* in its original context, the story becomes different enough that we do not see any hindering effects of the unavoidable textual residue in parody. Because she does not completely deny that Stoker's Dracula and his characters existed in the past and instead suggests that this is a continuation, readers can see the change along the way.

The nature of Dracula and his immortality are quite possibly the key to Kostova's success. Most characters cannot traverse centuries and appear in another time period through continuation. Logically, most characters would be confined to the limitations of humanity, suffering the process of aging and death. Dracula is special though. He is not easily killed; he can have a centuries old history and not be questioned for appearing in the 20th and 21st centuries.[18]

[18] Dracula is said to have died at the end of *Dracula*, so it is possible to question his ability to be alive; however, his "immortality" and invincibility against most causes of death make it possible for authors to creatively make the death in Stoker's book less permanent. Kostova also suggests Stoker's novel could be a partial history to her Dracula character, but it is not a complete and truthful history, providing leeway for his past death.

Other novels could have similar success by moving the characters into the present, though they would not maintain their history. Modernizations such as these can have a similar progressive nature; however, they might be considered less original and could run the risk of feeling the residual pressures in a higher capacity. While possible, it is highly difficult to maintain certain storylines without keeping certain character personality traits intact. Even in other continuations or prequels, growth can occur, but the time period often is not removed enough from the original to present enough change to make it worthwhile. *Wide Sargasso Sea,* for example, acting as a prequel, allows the reader to see a varying perspective written through a more modern lens; however, the characters are confined to the periods surrounding *Jane Eyre*'s setting. Thus, the characters cannot be too far removed from the characters in *Jane Eyre*, the reader simply sees a different perspective of what those traits mean and/or came about. Stories such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* can still be progressive, but in this manner, what Tiffin and Friedman suggest are more applicable than it might be in *The Historian*. Dracula provides increased opportunity to break free of the limitations parody and adaptation have, continuing the story in a far-removed setting and giving room for the growth needed to make change.

Even so, the acceptance of adaptation and parody are tricky because change is hard. In truth, *The Historian,* a *New York Times* bestseller and a popular choice among the general public was said to have a weak plot and dull characters by some critics including Susanna Sturgis of *Women's Review of Books* and Henry Alford of *The New York Times*. In part, such comments might be a reflection of a comparison of novels. *Dracula* is known for its horror and so *The Historian* is expected to follow suit. When it doesn't fulfill the fear-inducing presuppositions, there is an unavoidable disappointment. In this manner, the intertextuality puts Kostova's novel at a disadvantage. Admittedly, I too have felt the effects of this adaption disappointment; I am of

the sort who leans toward the original. When a film adaptation of a classic book I adore makes its way onto the silver screen, I find myself critiquing the changes more than is necessary and more often than not decide the original is far better than the remake. But even so, I value what those adaptations try to do. The changes made are decisive; they present the original story for a modern context and that has power in it. Adaptations like *The Historian* have existed for years, reworking the details Stoker created to make the story more appealing for a given audience—some changes are bigger than others. And while Kostova's text shares the same progressive power as those adaptations, her novel takes it a step further; the separation, the continuation, makes it so the changes are easier to consume, and the residue lingers less. While a classic will rarely fall off its podium as the first of its kind, cherished by many, adaptations and parodies help modern readers and viewers understand how the world changes and how flexible ideology is. There has been little discussion in scholarly circles of *The Historian* and perhaps the mixed reviews are the reason for that. Or maybe because the book is a loose adaptation, particularly an adaptation of a genre swarmed with folly, academic analysis is lacking. Kostova does something revolutionary, however, and even if this book is not noticed for what it does, it introduced a change in the *Dracula*-inspired media where female demonization is not a factor.

Despite the praise of adaptations and the push towards progress, this is not to say that *Dracula* should not live on as a classic. While certain implied perspectives, such as the opinion of what women should be, go against our progressive ideologies and make us question what the book stands for, it plays a part in history. It has inspired so many creators and allowed for an ongoing communication of ideas and critique. Having a text with old ways of thinking may feel like a danger to the changing world with readers admiring a work that is sure to have flaws, if only because it is a product of the time period. However, with the help of adaptations, parodies,

and the like, the dangers of letting those vampires of texts—the ones that stand the test of time—ease up and allow a broader audience to appreciate the characters of the past while maintaining a modern lens. In the end, Dracula cannot be killed and probably shouldn't be. Kostova's novel proves that the character Dracula does not need to be confined to Stoker's story; the character can be transformed and adapted to not only relate to a new generation but also teach us that change is all around us. So, let us keep our stakes holstered and let Dracula rise again.

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