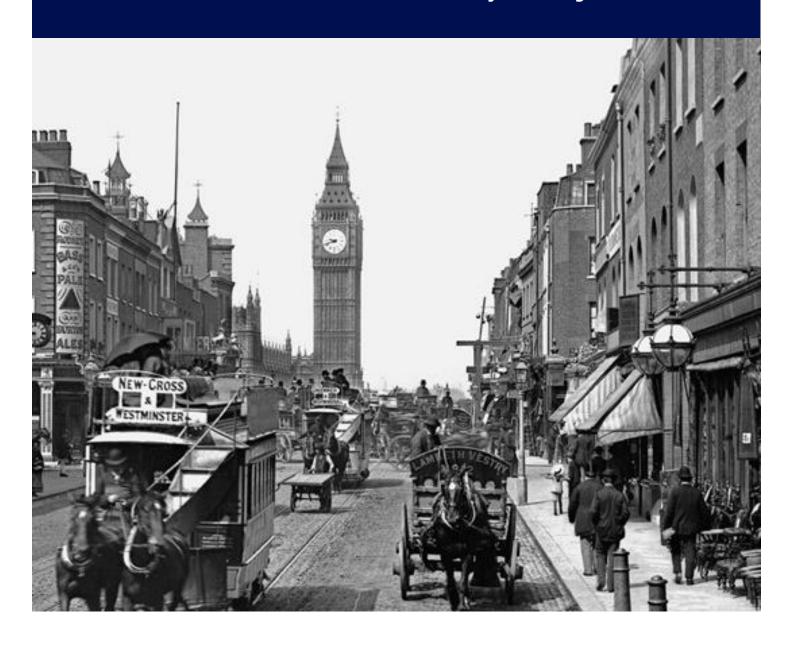**THALE ISABEL FOSSDAL**
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NEWFOUND SEXUALITY AND THE NEW WOMAN: CHALLENGING SOCIETAL FEARS AND CULTURAL PREOCCUPATIONS WITH BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA.

Bachelor thesis, 2024

(L)ENG290

Faculty of humanities

Lector education humanities subjects 8-13 grade.

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine how Bram Stoker's *Dracula* reflect societal fears and cultural preoccupations of newfound sexuality and the New Woman in the late 19th century. In recent discussions of *Dracula,* scholars have argued that how women are portrayed and treated in the novel, represents different ways the New Woman appeared and were feared in the Victorian society. In the words of scholar Ioana Baciu, "to be accepted in society, the woman could only exist as the male projection of purity envisioned by her suitors and husband-to-be" (84). According to this view, the Victorian woman could either adhere to society and the male perspective of how a woman should behave or behave however they like with the risk of being shunned and mistreated. Similarity, both scholars Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio dive deeper into the new women who strive to achieve the same as any man, but at the same time does anything to please their husbands. Building on this is the element of sexuality, which the scholar Christopher Craft argues controls of numerous actions taken throughout the novel.

In the context of discussions on *Dracula*, I will focus on the different aspects of societal fears surrounding changes in gender roles, gender inversion, and the New woman of the late 19th century. The New Woman brought a change to society, which is one of the major themes in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. To achieve this, I will analyse Stoker's description of Mina and Lucy, and their role in society, how the two women were treated by the male characters, and how Dracula affected the women' s traditional femininity, as well as how he influences Jonthan Harker's masculinity. This is significant, because at the time the novel was written, women started to change their attitude against their position in society, wanting more equality and opportunities, both inside and outside of marriage. Overall, I want to examine how *Dracula* reflects on gender and sexuality in an era where this topic was still socially taboo.

**Newfound sexuality and the New Woman: Challenging societal fears and cultural
preoccupations with Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.**

Bram Stoker's famously gothic novel *Dracula* (1887) has long captivated readers with its
haunting portrayal of the vampire Count Dracula and the characters entangled in his web of
seduction and terror. However, beneath its surface, Stoker's novel serves as a complex
exploration of societal fears and cultural preoccupations of newfound sexuality and the
emerging New Woman in late 19th century Britain. The aim of this thesis will therefore focus
on the different aspects of the New Woman and the social fears towards changes in femininity
and gender roles of the late 19th century. To fully understand the different aspects of the New
Woman and the aforementioned social fears surround femininity and gender roles, there are
four key issues that we must consider: First issue we need to consider is how *Dracula*
presents the way the New Woman was seen and treated socially at the time. The second key
issue is perceived threats posed by female independence and sexual agency. The third issue is
the theme of gender inversion in the novel, particularly through Dracula's androgynous nature
and seductive power that challenges conventional notions of gender, reflecting broader
anxieties about the destabilization of traditional gender norms. Lastly, the fourth issue to
consider is how Mina's character embodies both traditional femininity and elements of the
emerging New Woman, navigating societal expectations while asserting her agency in
confronting Dracula. Key scholars such as Ioana Baciu, Christopher Craft, and Charles E.
Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio provide a multifaceted examination of *Dracula* and an
exploration of societal fears and cultural preoccupations surrounding gender, sexuality, and
the changing roles of men and women in late 19th-century Britain linked to the issues above.
Through their analyses they offer perspectives on how Stoker's novel continues to resonate
with contemporary discussions on gender and sexuality. Continuing from them I will focus on
the changes in femininity and masculinity in this century and how the societal fears of the
New woman is illustrated in *Dracula.*

In order to engage in societal fears and culture preoccupations of newfound sexuality
of the turn of the century woman, the first issue we need to consider is how *Dracula* presents
the way the New Woman was seen and treated socially at the time. Ioana Baciu *Medical
Gothic Masculinities in Bram Stoker's Dracula (2021)* examines the view of the New Woman
in a more medical aspect, which interestingly supports my argument by diving deeper into

that current society's view on women. Baciu argues that the manner in which the men in *Dracula* act when Lucy and Mina become vampirized illustrates a clear line between how the two women represent two avatars of the turn of the century femininity. The novel includes Lucy who is seen as promiscuous and uncontrollable, and Mina who uses her intelligence and knowledge to help the men without emasculating them. This makes Mina into the favourable one in society's eyes, resulting in being the one the men work harder to save. As Baciu states: "Lascivious and voluptuous Lucy simply cannot be herself; she only exists as the male projection of purity envisioned by her suitors and husband-to-be. Any such manifested attitudes can only be the result of her possession by an alien, malevolent spirit, that of the vampire" (84). In other words, Baciu argues that in this Victorian era a woman cannot express her sexuality or her wants if they are not socially accepted, nor if they are not tailoring to the men. This quotation is arguably a way of expressing that if a woman is not behaving virtuously in the eyes of the men, then the only explanation can be that she has gone mad, or hysterical, and are no longer the same pure woman, resulting in her not having the same rights in society anymore.

Forwarding on from this point, Baciu explores how Stoker's depiction of masculinity intersects with this portrayal of femininity in the novel. Dracula, the epitome of male power and sexuality, exerts control over both Lucy and Mina, embodying patriarchal authority and representing societal fears about the consequences of unchecked male desire. However, Baciu suggests that Dracula's manipulation of Lucy and Mina ultimately reflects Dracula's own vulnerability and insecurities, and, in doing so, undermines traditional notions of masculine dominance. Furthermore, Baciu explores how Dracula embodies fears about masculine degeneration and the loss of control. Dracula's vampiric nature, symbolizing contagion, and disease, represents a threat to both physical and moral health. Baciu argues that the other male characters in the novel care more about keeping societal view on masculinity and femininity unchanged, while Dracula, along with Lucy and Mina continues to challenge those notions. Continuing on this, Baciu suggests that Stoker's portrayal of Dracula as a corrupting force reflects broader cultural anxieties about the dangers of embracing desires, more specifically female sexuality, deemed deviant by society. Therefore, Baciu's exploration of masculinity and femininity in *Dracula* underscores the novel's enduring relevance as a reflection of cultural anxieties surrounding gender, power, and sexuality.

In the contexts of depictions of femininity and masculinity in *Dracula* set out above, the next key issue is perceived threats posed by female independence and sexual agency. Baciu argues that Stoker's portrayal of Lucy's downfall and Mina's empowerment reflects these exact anxieties. Initially, Lucy embodies the ideal Victorian woman, a symbol of purity, innocence, and docility. She conforms to societal expectations of femininity, epitomizing the passive and submissive role assigned to women during this period. However, as the narrative develops, Lucy becomes susceptible to Dracula's seductive influence, marking a dramatic shift in her character. She becomes sexually assertive, exhibiting desires and behaviours that oppose conventional gender norms. Baciu argues that Lucy's descent into vampirism symbolizes the loss of her innocence and the corruption of her purity. Furthermore, Baciu suggests that Lucy's fate serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of defying societal expectations (81). Her vampiric seduction represents a threat to the moral order and patriarchal control, reinforcing the notion that women who deviate from traditional gender roles will face dire consequences. Lucy's transformation serves as a poignant commentary on the challenges faced by women who dare to assert their desires and challenge established gender norms in a society governed by patriarchal values.

Unlike Lucy, who succumbs to Dracula's seduction and embodies fears about the destabilization of traditional femininity, Mina represents a more modern and empowered woman. Baciu emphasizes Mina's intelligence, resourcefulness, and active involvement in combating Dracula as key aspects of her character. Mina's role in the narrative extends beyond that of a mere victim or damsel in distress. She actively participates in the fight against Dracula, using her intellect and determination to aid the protagonists in their pursuit to defeat the vampire. Baciu argues that Mina's agency and resilience serve as a direct challenge to traditional gender norms, reflecting the emergence of women who seek autonomy and empowerment in a patriarchal society. Furthermore, Mina's relationship with Jonathan Harker is portrayed as one of equality and mutual respect, defying traditional gender dynamics prevalent at the time. Baciu suggests that their partnership represents a departure from conventional notions of masculinity and femininity, offering a more egalitarian model of relationships. Baciu's analysis of Mina's character underscores how Stoker's portrayal of femininity in *Dracula* reflects broader societal changes and challenges to traditional gender roles. Mina's empowerment serves as a positive representation of the evolving role of women in late 19th-century Britain, highlighting their capacity for leadership, agency, and independence in the face of adversity. All in all, Baciu's arguments proclaim the mistreatment

and prejudice of the turn of the century New Woman, and the fear the practical society experienced with this new visual of a woman's sexuality. This is something that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* displays by including two divergent female characters that receive different treatment based on behaviour, and by making Count Dracula into someone that manipulates both men and women which disrupts traditional gender dynamics.

To get a deeper understanding of the newfound sexuality and the societal preoccupations of the New Woman, it is important to look at the third key issue that revolves around gender inversion, in order to get a different viewpoint than Baciu's focus on the women role in this change. A good argument to present is Christopher Crafts arguments in his paper *Kiss Me with Those Red Lips: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1984). While Baciu focuses on how Lucy and Mina are treated and perceived by the male characters, Craft focuses on Dracula and Harker's relationships and how masculinity and femininity changes. Craft argues that Dracula serves as a potent vehicle for challenging traditional gender roles by embodying traits that blur the boundaries between masculinity and femininity, comparable with Baciu's argument regarding Lucy and her transformation. Most importantly, Craft delves into Dracula's androgynous nature, emphasizing how his ability to seduce both men and women unsettles conventional notions of gender with introducing gender inversion.

Dracula's seductive power symbolizes a broader societal anxiety about the destabilization of traditional gender norms and the emergence of alternative forms of masculinity and femininity, especially relating the parallel narrative between Dracula and Lucy, and Dracula and Harker. In both narratives, Dracula exerts a powerful influence over his victims, using seduction and manipulation to control them. Like Baciu examines, with Lucy, Dracula's seduction leads to her transformation into a vampire, symbolizing the corruption of innocence and the dangers of female sexual agency. Similarly, Dracula's interactions with Harker unsettle conventional notions of masculinity, challenging Harker's sense of control and dominance. Craft analysis goes deeper into Harker's and his experiences with Dracula. At the beginning of the novel, Harker embodies the characteristics of a typical Victorian man: he is rational, self-assured, and in control of his surroundings. As a solicitor, he is tasked with assisting Dracula in his real estate dealings in England. Initially, Harker approaches his assignment with confidence and a sense of professional duty. However, as Harker goes deeper into his interactions with Dracula, he begins to experience a shift in his

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perception of masculinity. Craft suggests that Dracula's seductive power and manipulation unsettle Harker's sense of control and dominance. To clarify, Harker's encounters with Dracula challenge his traditional understanding of masculinity, as he finds himself increasingly vulnerable and submissive to Dracula's influence. As Craft states: "…by interrupting the scene of penetration, it suspends and disperses throughout the text the desire maximized at the brink of penetration, and it repeats the threat of a more direct libidinous embrace between Dracula and Harker. Dracula's taunt, "This man belongs to me" …" (110). In other words, Craft suggests that Dracula feels a sort of ownership over Harker, not unlike men had ownership over women during that time. Furthermore, this can illustrate a change of masculinity within Harker, where he has in a way taken the role of a women, and Dracula who shows masculinity with his demands of ownership, but also femininity in his protectiveness and care for Harker. Craft argues that Harker's vulnerability to Dracula's seduction represents a destabilization of traditional masculinity, as he struggles to maintain his sense of control in the face of Dracula's overwhelming presence. Similarly to Baciu's argument about how Lucy's transformation changes her standing in society, Craft point to that this transformation in Harker and his show of, or rather lack of the acceptable form of masculinity, results in him being preserved different or negatively by the general society.

In contrast to Baciu's argument that Lucy's descent into vampirism symbolizes the loss of her innocence and the corruption of her purity, Craft suggests that Lucy's transformation serves as a foil to Jonathan Harker's experiences, highlighting the destabilization of traditional gender roles for both men and women in the face of Dracula's influence. Added to the impact on Harker, Craft examines how Dracula's influence extends beyond his immediate victims to impact other characters, particularly Lucy and Mina. Lucy's transformation is highlighted from a submissive Victorian woman to a sexually assertive figure under Dracula's influence. Like Baciu also states, Craft dives into Lucy's defiance of societal expectations of female purity and passivity reflects broader anxieties about female empowerment and the destabilization of traditional gender roles. She becomes sexually assertive and independent, defying societal expectations of female purity and passivity. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that Lucy's vampiric seduction serves as a metaphor for the dangers of female sexual agency and the erosion of patriarchal authority. Conversely, Mina's character embodies the emerging archetype of the New Woman seeking autonomy and agency in a patriarchal society. Mina's intelligence, resourcefulness, and active involvement in combating Dracula is

emphasized as evidence of her empowerment. Mina's partnership with Jonathan Harker also challenges traditional gender dynamics, as they work together as equals to confront the threat posed by Dracula. Craft suggests that Mina's character serves as a counterbalance to Lucy's transformation, representing a positive portrayal of female autonomy and empowerment in the face of societal anxieties about female sexuality and agency. Overall, Craft's analysis is similar to Baciu's in some ways, but underscores how the experiences of Lucy and Mina intersect with Jonathan Harker's transformation to highlight broader themes of masculinity and gender dynamics in *Dracula.*

While Ioana Baciu and Christopher Craft offer differing perspectives on *Dracula*, their analyses complement each other, providing a nuanced understanding of the novel's engagement with gender and sexuality in late 19th-century Britain. However, to provides an additional layer of understanding to the exploration of societal fears and cultural preoccupations surrounding gender, sexuality, and the New Woman in Bram Stoker's *Dracula,* it is important to consider Prescott and Giorgio's analysis in *Vampiric Affinities: Mina Harker and the Paradox of Femininity in Bram Stoker's Dracula* (2005). Their examination of Mina Harker's character offers valuable insights into the shifting dynamics of masculinity within the novel, illuminating how these dynamics intersect with Mina's own journey of agency and empowerment. They also comment om the complexities of femininity and female agency in relations to a women's husband in late 19th-century Britain.

In their analysis, Prescott and Giorgio explore the fourth issue that we need to consider, namely how Mina's character embodies both traditional femininity and elements of the emerging New Woman, in particular asserting her agency in confronting Dracula. They adeptly argue that Mina navigates a delicate tightrope walk between societal expectations and personal agency, embodying a blend of qualities that challenge simplistic stereotypes of women prevalent during the late 19th century. Prescott and Giorgio highlight Mina's portrayal as a woman who embodies loyalty, devotion, and self-sacrifice, traits emblematic of traditional femininity. They provide insightful analysis, indicating, for instance, Mina's unwavering commitment to her husband, Jonathan Harker, even in the face of peril. "I must stop, for Jonathan is waking-I must attend my husband!" (*Dracula* 109), Mina expresses, underscoring her devotion and selflessness. However, alongside these traditional attributes, Mina also exhibits a remarkable intelligence, resilience, and active participation in combating

the formidable antagonist, Count Dracula. Prescott and Giorgio aptly illustrate Mina's cognitive prowess when she actively engages in deciphering Dracula's plans, demonstrating her agency and autonomy in the pursuit of knowledge and survival. The nuanced portrayal of Mina as a complex character challenges conventional gender norms and underscores the intricate layers of female identity during this period of societal transformation. Prescott and Giorgio's analysis seamlessly aligns with Baciu's argument concerning the shifting role of women and the perceived threats posed by female independence and sexual agency. Both scholars emphasize Mina's remarkable agency and autonomy in confronting Dracula, positioning her as a beacon of female empowerment in the face of patriarchal hegemony. However, Prescott and Giorgio also delve into the paradoxical nature of femininity embodied by Mina, acknowledging the tensions she faces in reconciling societal expectations with her own desires and aspirations. Despite her active role in combating Dracula and asserting her autonomy, Mina grapples with the weight of societal expectations, seeking to navigate the treacherous waters of gender dynamics while maintaining her own sense of identity and agency. In essence, Prescott and Giorgio's meticulous analysis of Mina's character offers valuable insights into the complexities of femininity and gender dynamics in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Through their nuanced examination, they shed light on Mina's role as a symbol of female empowerment and resilience in a patriarchal society, while also acknowledging the complexities and challenges she faces in navigating the expectations placed upon her.

Furthermore, Prescott and Giorgio differ from Baicu and Craft's analysis on the ground that they delve into Mina's relationships with male characters, particularly her husband Jonathan Harker and the enigmatic vampire Count Dracula. Through their examination, they offer valuable insights into the shifting dynamics of masculinity within the novel, illuminating how these dynamics intersect with Mina's own journey of agency and empowerment. Prescott and Giorgio argue that Mina's partnership with Jonathan Harker represents a departure from traditional gender roles prevalent during the late Victorian era. They highlight how Mina and Harker work together as close to equals, forming an almost egalitarian relationship characterized by mutual respect, which is displayed in different ways, and cooperation. Prescott and Giorgio aptly observe, " Mina Harker, the proper woman with the man's intelligence, … She works diligently, in a Victorian society that overvalues work, to be helpful to her husband; … she works efficiently to transcribe and collate the knowledge by which Dracula will be destroyed" (501). This close to egalitarian dynamic challenges

traditional gender hierarchies and underlines the evolving nature of gender relations in late Victorian society. Moreover, Prescott and Giorgio analyse Mina's interactions with the vampire Count Dracula, highlighting the complexities of masculinity embodied by the antagonist. They argue that Dracula's seductive power and manipulation unsettle conventional notions of masculinity, challenging the traditional roles of dominance and control typically associated with male characters. As Prescott and Giorgio astutely note, " Although Mina has internalized a heterosexual performance as the only acceptable space within her society, the incursion of the vampire radically calls any straightforward understanding of femininity into question. Despite his uncanny effects, Count Dracula represents a threat that is paradoxically posed as stabilizing. (504). Dracula's ability to exert power over both men and women defies traditional gender binaries, highlighting the fluidity and complexity of masculinity within the novel.

To further enrich this discussion, Baciu's analysis of masculinity in Dracula can be integrated. Baciu explores how Dracula embodies traditional notions of masculinity while simultaneously challenging them. Dracula's portrayal as a powerful and seductive figure disrupts Victorian ideals of masculinity, as he exerts control over both male and female characters. Baciu argues that Dracula's manipulation of gender roles reflects broader societal anxieties about the erosion of traditional masculinity and the emergence of alternative forms of male identity. This perspective adds depth to the discussion of masculinity within the novel, highlighting the ways in which Dracula's character destabilizes traditional gender norms. Additionally, Craft's analysis of gender inversion in *Dracula* offers valuable insights into the complexities of masculinity within the novel. Craft explores how Dracula's androgynous nature challenges conventional notions of gender, blurring the boundaries between masculine and feminine traits. This perspective can enhance our understanding of masculinity in *Dracula,* illustrating how the character's fluidity disrupts traditional gender binaries and reflects broader societal anxieties about gender identity and sexuality. In essence, integrating Baciu's and Craft's analyses with Prescott and Giorgio's examination of Mina's relationships with male characters provides a comprehensive exploration of masculinity in Bram Stoker's *Dracula.* Together, these perspectives can offer a nuanced understanding of the complexities of gender dynamics within the novel and their intersections with broader societal anxieties about masculinity, power, and identity.

Forwarding on from Baciu, Craft, and Prescott and Giorgio, I will argue that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* presents a narrative that questions traditional gender norms and suggests the emergence of a new social system in which individuals, regardless of gender, exercise agency and power. In line of the objectives set out in the introduction, I will look at key scenes from the novel: first, in order to illustrate gender inversion, a scene where Dracula shows ownership over Harker; second, the concept of purity in relation to female independence and sexual agency, specifically Lucy and her death; and finally, the differences between how Lucy and Mina are treated by the men around them, and how the novel illustrates two avatars from the New woman movement. My central concept through this entire reading is social anxieties and preoccupations towards changes between femininity and masculinity and the emergences of the New woman in the turn of the century novel.

The first key element to understanding societal fears surrounding the changes between femininity and masculinity, involves analysing the scene between Dracula and Harker, where Harker loses control over himself to Dracula, and with that arguably challenging the traditional notion of masculinity. Christoper Craft specifically examines this scene, where in his analysis suggest that Dracula feels a sort of ownership over Harker. Furthermore, he proposes that Harker's encounters with Dracula challenge his traditional understanding of masculinity, as Dracula's seductive power and manipulation unsettle Harker's sense of control and dominance and he finds himself increasingly vulnerable and submissive to Dracula's influence (110). Therefore, building on Craft analysis, Dracula's protective stance towards Harker can be interpreted as a reversal of traditional gender dynamics, where men are expected to be the protectors and women the protected, Dracula becomes the protector, while Harker the protected. This illustrates how fast traditional gender roles can be altered when an individual is faced with unconventional situations. Furthermore, in this scene Harker stumbles upon the room where the three women that Dracula has transformed into vampires reside. The woman starts discussing who should drain Harker of his blood, turning him into the target of their predatory desires, highlighting his vulnerability in the face of female aggression. Right before they manage to bite into him, Dracula appears and calls out: "How dare you touch him, any of you. … This man belongs to me!" (*Dracula* 47). This sudden outburst can be a representation on how Dracula defies the general behaviour that men were supposed to have towards each other. Instead of adhering to the expected behaviour of assisting a fellow man in distress, Dracula displays a possessive and protective attitude towards Harker. By claiming

ownership of Harker, Dracula assumes a position of authority and control typically associated with patriarchal figures, thereby destabilizing the conventional notion of masculinity, which often emphasizes physical strength, dominance, and independence. Dracula's intervention in the scene shows in other words his dominance over the female vampires, but also highlights his manipulation of gender roles with asserting control and dominance above Harker, blurring the conventional line between femininity and masculinity. Altogether, this scene demonstrates the flexibility and complexity of masculinity in *Dracula.* Stoker challenges societal expectation of masculinity and femininity by portraying Dracula's unconventional behaviour and his subversion of traditional gender norms, while also changing the male dominance Harker started with, going from the protector to the protected. This invites readers to reconsider how power and authority are constructed and expressed within the novel, and arguably how changes within gender roles and gender inversion in society is inevitable.

To further our understanding of how *Dracula* questions traditional gender norms and suggests the emergence of a new social system, it is necessary to go deeper into how masculinity and femininity was viewed in the Victorian era, as well as how this is portrait in the novel. This leads us to the second key element which regards the concept of purity regarding female independence and sexual agency, specifically how it relates to Lucy, her death and the societal fears surrounding this. Like Iona Baciu argues, Lucy's descent into vampirism symbolizes the loss of her innocence and the corruption of her purity, and that Lucy's fate serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of defying societal expectations (81). In other words, Lucy's transformation into a vampire symbolizes that traditional gender roles are being challenged and that patriarchal power is losing stability. However, to get a full understanding of the concept, it is important to clarify what purity means in this context. Female purity in the 19th century was an expectation which women were taught and trained to meet throughout their entire upbringing. Along with piety, submissiveness and domesticity, purity was largely related to a woman's virginity which they were taught to keep intact as it was their greatest asset and was sometimes referred to as the "pearl of great price" (Cruea 3). This purity was described as "the true woman" which was considered the protector of society and religion. The concept of the true woman preceded the idea of the New woman which is largely relevant in Bram Stoker's *Dracula.*

With this form of purity in mind, the concept of purity is a central aspect of the narrative within the novel, particularly as it relates to the character of Lucy Westenra and her

eventual demise. In the novel, Lucy fulfils the function of a central figure in the examination of societal anxieties surrounding female sexuality, power, and the changes within gender roles during the Victorian era. Lucy is initially innocent, virtuous, and subservient to patriarchal expectations, and is introduced as a representation of Victorian femininity. Later in the novel, Lucy transforms into a vampire, resulting in a departure from these values. At the outset of the novel, she conforms to the Victorian societal expectations of femininity, being pure, docile, and obedient. However, as the narrative develops, Lucy falls victim to Dracula's seductive influence, making her sexually assertive, disobedient, and giving her individual power, in other words unleashing her latent desires and impulses. This transformation symbolizes broader fears about the perceived dangers of female independence and sexual power. To the male characters in the novel, this transformation is deeply unsettling on the grounds that they are accustomed to exerting control and dominance over woman, but lost that when facing Lucy as a vampire. Dracula's control over Lucy shows how vulnerable traditional masculinity is when faced with female strength and sexual freedom, instead of obedience and purity. This is change in purity is illustrated in *Dracula* within the scene where Lucy eventually dies:

> For she is not grinning devil now-not any more a foul Thing for all eternity. No longer is she the devil's Un-dead. She is god's true dead, whose soul is with him! (205)

This passage of the scene where Lucy eventually dies, shows the male characters want to uphold society's ideas of female virtue. They were more concerned with upholding her purity then actually saving her, resulting in their contribution to her death by using intrusive medical measures, like blood transfusion, and then later killing her with a stake. Her death, which was orchestrated in a misguided attempt to restore her purity and innocence, serves as a critique on the negative consequences of attempting to confine woman to certain rules of femininity and gender roles. Stoker's characterization of Lucy's illustrates how dangerous it can be to try to keep women within certain gender roles, and at the same time shows how women can fight back and gain more power despite society's expectations, feeding into the societal fears that existed surrounding the New woman in this time period.

        The final key element that is important in examining how *Dracula* questions

traditional gender norms and suggests the emergence of a new social system, is the

differences between how Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker are treated by the men around them

and how the novel illustrates two avatars from the New woman movement. Prescott and

Giorgio analysis argue that Mina's partnership with Harker questions traditional notions of

femininity and masculinity, when they work together in the fight to confront the threat posed

by Dracula, making their relationship the focus (501). I, however, think it is important to look

at what makes Lucy and Mina stand apart from each other in other to get a clearer

understanding as to why the two women are treated differently. As previously stated, Lucy is

in the beginning of the novel seen as pure, innocent, and submissive, conforming to societal

expectations of women during the late 19th century. However, as the story continues, Lucy's

character undergoes a profound transformation, making her sexually assertive, disobedient,

and giving her individual power, making her challenge Victorian ideals of female passivity

and virtue. In contrast, Mina Murray represents a more modern and empowered woman. She

is depicted as resourceful, intelligent, and actively engaged in combating Dracula alongside

her male counterparts. Mina's partnership with Jonathan Harker portraits a different form of

marriage where there is a form of mutual respect and trust between them, challenging the

prenotion of how a married man and woman should act towards each other. While Lucy falls

victim to Dracula's seduction and represents the fear of changing traditional femininity, Mina

shows strength in her determination and independence. She symbolizes the New woman who

wants freedom and strength in a society dominated by men. In addition, Mina's way of

navigating societal expectations while using her intelligence and resourcefulness to help the

men, illustrates the emergence of the New woman and her place in a changing society. With

Lucy representing the break from the traditional woman to one with sexual freedom and

individuality, Mina represents the collaboration of the conventional woman and the

emergence of the new one that is resourceful and knowledgeable. In this way the two woman

illustrates two avatar of the New woman movement, while also showing that Mina's avatar is

the one that will be most accepted by society.

        This reading of *Dracula* presents a new way of interpreting societal fears and cultural

preoccupations surrounding gender, sexuality, and the emergence of the New Woman in late

19th-century Britain. Through the analysis of different scholars and of key scenes and

characters in the novel, we have observed how Stoker challenges traditional gender norms and

illustrate the societal anxieties and preoccupations regarding newfound sexuality and the New woman. By examining the scene between Dracula and Harker, it is clear how Dracula's manipulation of gender roles opposes the conventional notions of masculinity in Victorian society. Dracula's possessive and protective attitude towards Harker advances gender inversion and culminate the complexity and ambiguously separated state of masculinity and femininity within the novel. This also relate to the concept of purity, where Lucy's transformation from a submissive Victorian woman to a sexually assertive figure illustrates the perceived dangers of female empowerment, fluidity between feminine and masculine traits, and the erosion of patriarchal authority. While Lucy represents the fear of changing traditional femininity and the consequences of female independence, Mina embodies the intelligence, strength, and newfound independence of the emerging New Woman.

Since the Victorian woman could either adhere to society and the male perspective of how a woman should behave, and upon rejection were shunned and mistreated, the novel subtly and clearly gives new insight to how societal fears can determent the course of a life.

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