

**The Morality-Transgression Axis in the Field of Sexuality
in the Dracula Tradition**

Eszter Muskovits

Theses of PhD Dissertation

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1. The topic of the dissertation:

In my dissertation I explore the questions of morality and transgression in the field of sexuality in the Dracula tradition. My goal is to present evidence that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is a dichotomy between ideal love and sexuality, which corresponds to the morality – transgression axis of the Victorian ethos. Transgressive sexuality is a *sine qua non* with which gothic novels operate, and I argue that the acts, desires and motives of the vampire can be explained as some kind of manifestations of subdued drives pertaining to general human nature. I also examine the changes that love and sexuality representations undergo in the cinematic history of Stoker's fiction.

2. Methods of Research:

The main approaches I take are prompted by psychoanalysis, analytical psychology as well as morphological studies of popular culture (literature and film), and contexts constituted by the cultural history of vampirology. I define the vampire genre along elementary codes, such as the father-mother-ego, the feminine-masculine and the libido-destrudo code.

3. Structure of the Dissertation

The first chapter presents the background sources of the Dracula character; mythological, folkloric and literary antecedents are reconstructed to detect the latent and overt manifestations of the main motifs. The second chapter focuses on Stoker's novel, *Dracula*: issues such as the relationship between human beings, the women characters, sexual otherness and hidden paraphilias are discussed and two sequels of the novel are examined as later representations of some of the moral issues. The third chapter is about film adaptations, wherein I examine how love and sexuality representations have evolved in the cinematic history of *Dracula*.

4. Main arguments:

1. Tracing back the origins of vampirism, it can be stated that superstitious beliefs have apparently been seen by the popular mind as corroborated by real life incidents and experience. The most conspicuous characteristic of the vampire myth is its presence in all the cultural traditions of the world. Vampires have been with mankind since the beginning of time, and they have never lost their appeal to the imagination. The vampire figure's popularity and *raison d'être* lie in the fact that the vampire figure is part of the collective unconscious, that is, it embodies an archetype.

2. Several mythological creatures can be considered prototypes of the folkloric vampire. All these libidinous supernatural creatures with vampiric qualities are evil. The ugly revenants are endowed with human traits in literary works. It was in the Romantic period when the sexuality of the vampire was beginning to intensify. Byron was the model for Polidori's Lord Ruthven, who revolutionized the vampire character. The upper-class vampire is different from his folkloric counterparts: being a member of the aristocracy, he became part of society.

3. Based on few literary predecessors, Bram Stoker created his fictitious aristocratic vampire, Count Dracula, who is the most well-known vampire to the general public. To the question why Stoker's Dracula was so successful, the answer may be that he was in the right place at the right time, that is, the novel came out in the late nineteenth century, when scientific investigations were taking place in the field of sexology. In an era of sexual Puritanism, *Dracula* challenged the orthodox view on sexuality and its normative ethics.
4. The fear of *the other* is inherent in individuals, and the ambiguous character of the vampire can be seen as an agent of what the normative patriarchal gender system marginalized as *the other*. Anything apart from heteronormative sexuality was a menace to the Victorian ethos, and Dracula and his vampiresses, who correspond to excessive lust and sexual nonconformity, represent this threat. The vampire's polysexuality indicates that desire itself was considered transgressive at the time.
5. As far as the vampiric sexual nature in *Dracula* is concerned, it can be claimed that all sexual relations are anatomically heterosexual in the novel; homosexuality, however, emerges as well in metaphorical implications. Same-sex desires can be found in heterosexual displacements. It is not only homosexual tendencies that the presentation of the vampire suggests, but actually the fluidity of gender identity in a seemingly rigid gender structure of Victorian society.
6. It is Dracula who is in control of the moral world of the novel: as soon as anybody is tainted by him, she shifts to the transgressive pole on the axis of sexuality. Interestingly enough, in the definition of the female characters the orthodox moral values of the society dominate the narrative: the woman of moral rectitude survives, while the immoral woman is damned. This picture corresponds to the dichotomous Victorian concept of woman: as it is well-known the feminine was seen either as submissive to the patriarchal scale of values or as provocative, disturbing, i.e. whorish.
7. When it comes to power relations, Victorian society tends to be sadomasochistic, in the sense that men represent the active and women the passive pole. The appearance of the New Woman in the late nineteenth century challenged this notion and aroused anxiety about gender reversal. Female vampires reflect the concept of the New Women in so much as vampirization makes women lustful, dominant and sexually active. These females are allowed to enjoy their sensuality. Women gain sexual power, and this power imperils the male characters' masculinity.
8. Bram Stoker carries love representations to the extremes. The friendship between human characters is based on the notion of mutual concern and affection. Love between man and woman is highly spiritualized. Passion is excluded from such relationships, while sexuality is connected to vampirism. However, both the dark side of sexuality between the vampire and his victims and the spiritualized, ideal love between the human beings are exaggerated. Love and sexuality are separated in Bram Stoker's novel just as in the conventional Victorian mind.
9. Every age has its twist on *Dracula*, and at the end of the twentieth century the question of transgression has been reassessed. In the two official sequels of Bram Stoker's novel ((Freda Warrington: *Dracula the Undead*, Dacre Stoker és Ian Holt. *Dracula the Un-Dead*), there is a much more liberated attitude reflected.

10. Sexuality becomes more and more explicit in the movies. Censorship bans sexuality in early adaptations, and symbolic intercourse, bloodsucking is treated carefully in these films. The acts of blood-taking are present in hidden forms of allusion. The intimate parts of the physical contact between the vampire and his victims are not yet discernible for the audience. Later, the meeting of the neck and the lips is shown, although without any visible signs of violence. Only the heroine's death from anaemia implies the negative side of this contact. Both the sensual and the violent nature of the vampiric kiss are parts of the visual world of modern adaptations. Blood spurts from the scars on the neck, not only two punctures indicate the atrocities of the vampires. Later the symbolic intercourse shifts to a more naturalistic depiction. In the 1992 screen version there is an explicit reference to the coitus, while in 2000, the union with the vampire literally becomes sex.

11. The character of Dracula is endowed with more and more human traits in the films. Initially, he is an inhuman monstrosity both externally and internally. Later he is attributed some human features, which, however, are used merely to make it easier for him to seduce his victims. He gets invested with human feelings and emotions. In modern adaptations bestiality is shown as a natural part of human nature.

12. Elizabeth Bathory's name has been interwoven with Dracula's name several times in literature and cinematic history. They are blood fetishists, they have an obsessive interest in blood; a tool which delays their fleshly deterioration. The vampire is an ancient creature who is supposed to live for hundreds of years without changing in appearance. This is where the Báthory legend juxtaposes the vampire myth. According to popular legendary ideas about Erzsébet Báthory, the Countess struggles to stop time, which entails the avoidance of death. She is unable to accept the natural order of things and challenges universal laws. Dracula does the same, except that he goes through the natural way of existence, he experiences death but he is reborn. In both cases, eternal youth is unnatural and manifests people's projected yearning for the capacity of having the youth-immortality-power triad. The Bathory and vampire legends have preserved their popularity up to the present day, because they both raise ontological questions and such problems that every human has to cope with.

13. There is an archaic form of erotica, not separated from destructivity, which underlies these vampire stories. These tales are about the power of the subconscious; the fight takes place between the conscious and the unconscious for control. Vampire figures lack the moral codes of civilization, they personify the instinctive drives. It is the victims' attitude to them that reflects the given age's ethos. It can be stated that Bram Stoker's novel is one of the last bulwarks of Victorian values against modernism.