

Candidate 1 evidence

Dissertation

Exploring the ways in which *Dracula* by Bram Stoker and *Interview with The Vampire* by Anne Rice changed the representation of vampires in English Literature through theme, character, and plot.

Gothic literature has been popular across the world for many centuries with authors such as *Bram Stoker*, *Percy Bysshe Shelley* and *Ann Radcliffe* being known and studied worldwide. Vampires can symbolise the fear of being cast away from society as they do not typically live around humans and isolate themselves. This attracts readers to vampires as they represent our fears. They also represent addiction, where in the novels, vampires are addicted to killing and in real life, humans can become addicted to drugs or alcohol, which makes them relatable to a degree. But in some cases, killing is not a choice and is mandatory for the vampire's survival. Vampirism can also be forced upon people showing that it is not always a choice.

One of the most popular pieces of literature that revolutionised the gothic, horror genre is the infamous Bram Stoker's *Dracula*¹ written in 1897. *Dracula* is a piece of gothic fiction that takes the form of diary entries, letters, newspaper articles and telegrams from the viewpoints of numerous characters. *Dracula* revolutionised vampires across English literature by being the first famous vampire. But why was it so successful? The use of varied narrative techniques and viewpoints alongside how well the novel plays between the world of real and supernatural sets it apart from other novels written around that time period. It is established clearly what The Count can and cannot do which gives him human limitations to his inhuman monster character.

Dracula was one of the first vampire books ever written however Bram Stoker did not invent vampires. He took different ideas from diverse cultures of what vampires are and made his own idea of what a vampire was. Vampires had been around for 800 years² prior to *Dracula* but were not widely known until the 20th century. Historically, vampires did not all have 'human' bodies and took the shape of many types of monsters, but they all shared the common factor of consuming blood.³ Stoker may have taken inspiration from Vlad the Impaler⁴ who was born into the noble family of Vlad II Dracul, in Transylvania in the 15th century and would dip bread in his victim's blood and eat it.

¹ Stoker, Bram, *Dracula*, UK, 1897

² Stanley Stephanic, TED Ed, 2018, *How did Dracula become the world's most famous vampire?*
<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-did-dracula-become-the-world-s-most-famous-vampire-stanley-stepanic>

³ Michael Molina, TED Ed, 2014, *Vampires: Folklore, fantasy and fact*
<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/vampires-folklore-fantasy-and-fact-michael-molina>

⁴ Richard Pallardy, Britannica, 2024, *Vlad the Impaler*
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vlad-the-Impaler>

A book with similarities to *Dracula* is *Interview with the Vampire*⁵ (*IWTV*) by Anne Rice released in 1976. *IWTV* put vampires in a new perspective for gothic literature as it was written from a vampire's perspective. The novel was unique as every character has major flaws and characteristics; Lestat- manipulation "You don't have the power. *Either* of you."⁶ Where Lestat convinces Louis and Claudia, he is the most powerful; Claudia- sexuality "A coven of children? That is all I could provide..."⁷ which is ironic as Claudia is in a child's body and is a vampire so cannot provide children; Armand- wisdom and experience "You fear that, the isolation of it, the burden, the scope of eternal life."⁸ which shows that Armand knows what Louis feels and believes even before Louis realises it, he has a gift for reading people; Louis- guilt and uncertainty "What does it mean to die when you can live until the end of the world? And what is the "end of the world" except a phrase, because who knows even what is the world itself."⁹ Conveying the guilt that Louis feels for possessing immortality and the limits of his knowledge of vampirism.

The description of female vampires comes from *Carmilla*¹⁰ and was described in *Dracula* as: "The ruby of their voluptuous lips...red lips"¹¹ This description is still replicated throughout modern-day vampire novels and media. However, the sensuality of female vampires does not have the same effect on readers when *Dracula* and *Carmilla* were published, as women were viewed as objects and did not have the same rights as men. This description would have been shocking to read at the time whereas now it is deemed normal. "The overt eroticism of the female vampire is no longer frightening because sexuality in women is now acceptable, even desirable, trait."¹² This shows that society's views have changed since the release of both books where women are now not frowned upon for being or appearing sexual and are not sexualised as much in media. The theme of sexuality is now embraced and encouraged in some cases whereas previously it was viewed as disgusting and disrespectful.

Claudia's ultimate wish was to be a grown woman. As a vampire stuck in a 5-year-old's body, she was considered a weak vampire. She could not possess strong powers like Lestat as she was too small and undeveloped. She was not big enough to turn anyone into a vampire as she

⁵ Rice, Anne, *Interview with the Vampire*, San Francisco, 1976

⁶ (Rice, p.121)

⁷ (Rice, p.180)

⁸ (Rice, 255)

⁹ (Rice, p129)

¹⁰ Sheridan Le Fanu, *Carmilla*, London, 1872

¹¹ (Stoker, p45)

¹² Judith Bell, University of Arkansas (2016). *Deliberate Voluptuousness: The Monstrous Women of Dracula and Carmilla*. <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3109&context=etd#:~:text=Carol%20Senf%20similarly%20argues%20that,Daughters%20of%20Lilith%E2%80%9D%2013>

did not possess enough blood. She was jealous of everyone as she could never experience being sexual and asked Louis what it was like to feel these emotions as a human, “But tell me one thing, one thing from that loft height. What was it like...making love?”¹³ She will never know what it feels like to do or feel this. She can dress up like an adult, but she will always be seen as a child in society. As Claudia was only a child when she was transformed, she cannot empathise with humans as she was not one for long enough to understand them; her character suggests that men have failed to treat women fairly for so long that women have been forced to fight to be equal.¹⁴ During the 1970s, a woman's job was to get married and have children but due to Claudia's vampirism and age, she would have been deemed ‘useless’ as she was unable to do these things. Rice does not include representation of a ‘normal’ family-orientated woman in the book, instead, she creates Claudia who has no real role in society and comes off as unkind and bratty as she lashes out at those around her because she feels isolated and does not have a real female figure to look up to and learn from. Rice also does not provide readers the opportunity to sympathise with Claudia or make her actions justifiable as her story is told from a male perspective and how a man perceives women. She is also one of the only characters not to get their own book which would allow them to tell their own story through their point of view. With modern-day vampire media, female characters and vampires have been the focus point of their novels and TV shows with characters such as Bella from *Twilight*¹⁵ or Sookie Stackhouse from *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*¹⁶ series, later rebranded to *True Blood*,¹⁷ where both novels are told from the point of a female lead character. They get to tell their own stories without men telling it for them and without men sexualising them.

Lucy in *Dracula* was sexual and heavily embraced this. She is everything Claudia wanted to be but never got the chance to. “A dim white figure, which held something dark at its breast...lips crimson with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death-robe.”¹⁸ The language of “its” suggests that the characters did not view Lucy as human and did not want to refer to the woman they once loved as a monster or vampire. The “purity” is a specific word choice as Lucy was stripped of her virginity, or purity, when Dracula sexually assaulted her to turn her into a vampire. She is not ‘pure’ anymore. She can no longer produce children of her own, so she drinks the blood of children, representing eternal youth. She is not allowed to create vampire children (like Lestat

¹³ (Rice, p.190)

¹⁴ Judith Bell, University of Arkansas (2016). *Deliberate Voluptuousness: The Monstrous Women of Dracula and Carmilla*. <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3109&context=etd#~:text=Carol%20Sent%20similarly%20argues%20that,Daughters%20of%20Lilith%E2%80%9D%2013>.

¹⁵ Meyer, Stephanie, *Twilight*, USA, 2005

¹⁶ *True Blood*, 2008, Created by Alan Ball,

¹⁷ Based on: Harris, Charlaine, *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, USA, 2001

¹⁸ (Stoker, p.225)

did with Claudia) as Dracula does not let her,¹⁹ Dracula is the 'bearer' of the vampire race, he is the only one who creates other vampires and brings them into the vampire world as females are not needed, they cannot carry children as vampires, they only exist for Dracula's sexual desires. This is still relevant in modern day society however there are a lot more women claiming managerial or professional and successful roles within the workplaces and life. They are now needed in society and are not viewed as objects to men's sexual desires. Although women are not treated quite the same as men, e.g. equal pay, they have more power than they did at the time of the novel. Women are now not pressured into having children, it is deemed normal for women to not have children which would have suited Claudia who physically cannot have children.

Claudia's inability to have children relates to women who are unable to reproduce. During the 70s, every woman was told to have children, but not every woman could have a child for numerous health reasons. Claudia could relate to this as because she was turned into a vampire and was stuck in a child's body. Despite this disadvantage, Claudia still took control of her sensuality and used it to her advantage "Yet more and more her doll-like face seemed to possess two totally aware adult eyes, and innocence seemed lost...she became an eerie and powerful seductress...resonance which was womanish."²⁰ Although in modern day, women who cannot have biological children have other ways of having children, this was not necessarily the case back then. This would have created a very isolating feeling for Claudia and other women as they would have felt like they were not fitting in with the views of society.

Another character similarity across the books is Dracula and Lestat. Lestat's 'evil' comes from trauma within his family, but we do not know anything about Dracula's history, so it is unclear if he was born evil or made evil. Dracula does not care about his victims and shows no mercy. Lestat appears similar to Dracula with both treating their victims like a show and making them suffer. Lestat lures them into a false sense of security, forcing them to act in certain ways before killing them and playing with their fears. He views killing as a joke "But my friend is a priest," said Lestat, smiling. As if he had just thought of it as a joke."²¹ This shows that he enjoys playing with his victims' emotions and to see them suffer emotionally before he makes them suffer physically. He is comparing Louis to a priest which shows irony as priests are supposed to be against the supernatural that appear evil and are often described as Satan. This highlights the theme of religion as Satan is known as an angel who rebelled against God and got banished to hell.

A similarity across all vampire books is the symbolism of blood. Dracula can be viewed as a metaphor for blood-transmitted diseases such as HIV and AIDS as well as illnesses such as

¹⁹ Caitlin Brown, *Feminism and the Vampire Novel*, (2009), The f Word
https://thefword.org.uk/2009/09/feminism_and_th/

²⁰ (Rice, p.194)

²¹ (Rice, p.80)

Leukaemia²² and rabies²³. The characters avoid this blood thirsty character like how people in real life take safety precautions to avoid these diseases. The characters fear of Dracula also represents the fear people had, especially in the 1980s, about the AIDs epidemic. Vampires must feed on the blood of the living to survive and the characters who are 'infected' by Dracula are considered to have 'bad' or 'dirty blood' whereas the other characters are 'clean' which is terminology that was typically used historically when discussing people with AIDS. HIV and AIDS were also previously linked with homosexuality (although anyone regardless of their sexuality can get it) which links to the theme of homosexuality throughout the book with Dracula, Mina, and Lucy. Mina and Lucy were 'infected' by Dracula which can be interpreted as the two potential lesbian characters having the 'disease' historically thought to be found in homosexuals. The novel also hints at Dracula being queer as although he only carries out sexual relations with women, he wishes to also become intimate with Jonathan. "How dare you touch him any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? ... This man belongs to me!" This appears that Dracula is jealous of his three brides for wishing to be intimate with the man he so desires. He knows that it is frowned upon to exhibit homosexual tendencies in this time period and cannot act upon them, but he still wants to engage in his intimate thoughts with Harker. He views people as objects to collect rather than human beings.

There are many times blood is symbolised throughout *Dracula* such as when Renfield, Dr Seward's mental asylum patient, desired to eat living animals and drink their blood to gain their 'life force.' Renfield says "I tried to kill him for the purpose of strengthening my vital powers by the assimilation with my own body of his life through the medium of his blood-relying, of course, upon the Scriptural phrase, "For the blood is the life."²⁴ The phrase "For the blood is life." represents the irony of vampires taking away blood from a human for their own survival. Humans need their blood to survive but vampires need to drink blood to survive and remain powerful, they will never need it to 'live' as they are not 'alive.' The more blood a vampire consumes the more powers they will possess. This is reflected when Dracula moves to England, he begins to look younger, "It is the man himself! ... I believe it is The Count, but he has grown young. My God, if this be so!" Jonathan was in shock when he and Mina were out in Exeter and saw The Count. He had last seen him in Transylvania appearing as an old man but now he was young. This shows that he had been taking human blood which gave him the power to appear young, highlighting his powers of manipulation. Manipulation is a popular power for vampires to possess in modern literature such as in *The Vampire Diaries*²⁵ where vampires can compel²⁶ humans. This shows control and allows them to manipulate

²² Helen Pitlick, *The science behind vampires*, Blood Line 2022
<https://blog.bloodworksnw.org/the-science-behind-vampires/>

²³ James Hanton, *Rabies and Beyond: How Dracula has Informed Common Conceptions of Disease and Infection*, Medium, 2020
<https://jhantonwriter.medium.com/rabies-and-beyond-how-dracula-has-informed-common-conceptions-of-disease-and-infection-fa37215fab3#Betwixt%20and%20Inbetween,%20Life%20and%20Death>

²⁴ (Stoker, p.249)

²⁵ L.J. Smith, *The Vampire Diaries*, USA, 1991

²⁶ The Vampire Diaries Wiki, *Mind Compulsion*

them into doing whatever the vampire wants. Older 'Original' vampires can even compel other vampires as they are the 'leader' vampire, similar to Dracula, Armand or even The Volturi²⁷ from *Twilight*. If a human was on vervain²⁸, then they could not be compelled as in this universe everything has to have balance. This relates to current beliefs and traditional phrases such as "an eye for an eye" where if we take or do something there will always be a consequence. It makes the books more relatable to society.

Lucy receives several blood transfusions before her death. How Dracula takes blood is like a human committing sexual assault as he takes advantage of his power and manipulates his victims into letting him drink from their neck. "His right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom."²⁹ The neck is an "erogenous zone"³⁰ where romantic partners typically bite each other's neck, usually in a territorial way. The neck is sensitive area which is used intimately within romantic relationships. Hence, where the term "love-bite" is used and has relations to the stereotype of vampires drinking from the victim's neck. None of the victims consented to Dracula taking their blood. It reflects the Victorian belief that blood is sperm³¹. The theme of blood overlaps with sexual relationships where blood transfusions were a new procedure in the 1890s and most of the men in the novel ended up giving their blood to her which became personal to some of the characters who had romantic feelings for Lucy. They wanted their blood to save her. Instead of the men giving Lucy their 'sperm,' they give blood to save her life. It shows the stereotype of men being controlling and being in power whilst women are powerless and needed saving. This belief is not demonstrated as such in today's society however the relevance of sexual assault and the power of manipulation is heavily used in modern vampire novels and society.

An important relationship in *IWTV* is Louis and Lestat who had a love-hate relationship. The process of Lestat turning Louis into a vampire would have been a very intimate experience as their bloods mix and they create a strong bond. The theme and symbolism of blood, links with the theme of love, seduction, and sexuality. In *IWTV*, the vampires feed on strangers and

https://vampirediaries.fandom.com/wiki/Mind_Compulsion

²⁷ Adrienne Tyler, *Twilight: Every Volturi's Powers Explained*, Screen Rant, 2021
<https://screenrant.com/twilight-volturi-vampires-powers-abilities-strongest-explained/>

²⁸ Veronica Ellis, *VERVAIN... Vampires, Myths and Medicine*, 2021, Nature's Grace
<https://naturesgrace.co.uk/873/>

²⁹ (Stoker, p.300)

³⁰ Andy Talajkowski, "Embodiment of evil" - *Sexual Predation and Molestation in Dracula*, Academia, 2016
https://www.academia.edu/32650497/Embodiment_of_evil_Sexual_Predation_and_Molestation_in_Dracula?auto=download

³¹ Nilifer Pektas, *The Importance of Blood during the Victorian Era: Blood as a Sexual Signifier in Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Södertörn University College, 2005.
<https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:16204/fulltext01.pdf>

drink until the person dies. They do not typically have connections with whom they drink blood from unless they are turning someone into a vampire which is a more personal experience. Blood sharing is very intimate for vampires as it is seen as a sexual act. In the TV series of *The Vampire Diaries*, Damon says, "Because blood sharing is kind of...personal."³² highlighting that this is an intimate experience shared between characters and is now a common addition across modern-day vampire literature. At the start of the novel, Louis and Lestat got on reasonably well and exchanged some flirty comments. Once he became a vampire, emotions and senses are heightened meaning smell and hearing is more sensitive. "I checked myself because I realized that the drum was my heart, and the second drum had been his."³³ Again, this is another intimate, bonding moment between both vampires as they are now a part of each other. It also creates a romantic picture of how humans would have their heads resting on their significant others' chest and hear their heartbeat and links with the intimacy of the neck. They even shared a coffin in the beginning: "and you will get in on top of me if you know what's good for you."³⁴ "And I did. I lay face-down on him... handsome and intriguing though he was."³⁵ which suggests that Louis is attracted to Lestat, and they were in a tightly enclosed space. Louis also obeys Lestat with no questions asked showing that he is submissive to his manipulative powers. In the *IWTV* TV series, movie and later books, Louis and Lestat were in a relationship. This is now socially acceptable in society due to new laws allowing gay couples to be together and marry in many countries across the globe as well as it being common on all TV shows, movies, books etc. However, a homosexual relationship in the 70s would have still been frowned upon and not standardised within society. The AIDS epidemic also did not help queer people's rights as it was believed they were the cause of the outbreak.

Another relationship in *IWTV* is Louis and Armand. Due to Armand's years of knowledge, he is incredibly wise and helps Louis navigate his way through his journey of vampirism. When Louis first met Armand, he had many questions and no answers. Armand helped Louis by answering his questions, but he does not get the answers he was looking for. "I can now accept the most fantastical truth of all: that there is no meaning to this!"³⁶ Vampirism does not benefit anyone, there is no actual purpose for it. Louis must come to terms with his immortality. The "invaluable truth" is that there is no truth or answer. This sent Louis into a spiral as he now feels he has no purpose. He does not understand what he is on earth to do but Armand helps him out of this rut by teaching him about his powers. "Use the power inside

³² *The Vampire Diaries*, 2009, Directed by: Julie Plec
<https://screenrant.com/vampire-diaries-blood-sharing-personal-important-reasons/>

³³ (Rice, p.22)

³⁴ (Rice p.26)

³⁵ (Rice p.26)

³⁶ (Rice, p.217)

you. Don't abhor it anymore. Use that power!"³⁷ Armand always supported Louis' choices, unlike Lestat who always put Louis down. Armand took on a 'teacher' roll and mentored Louis about his vampirism. The power inside him is Lestat's blood that gave him his powers. The 'powers' are the power of vampirism, but they are not specifically physical, but more internal strength and belief. If you believe you can do something, and convince yourself to do it, then you can do it. This is prevalent in *Twilight* where Carlisle Cullen takes on the role of adopting young vampires to teach them and get them accustomed to their new 'life.' He teaches them how to live off animal blood and how to live within the public.

In conclusion, *Interview with the Vampire* and *Dracula* are both essential pieces of literature that have inspired many other vampire stories such as the award-winning book and movie series *Twilight* and the successful book-turned-TV show *The Vampire Diaries*. Throughout these books, theme, character, and plot are used to make them so successful. Themes such as sexuality, religion, knowledge and wisdom, immortality and gender are central in both books with symbolism being reflective of these issues, making the books important even in modern-day society by representing the characters' issues and messages.

³⁷ (Rice, p.231)

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Stoker, Bram, *Dracula*, UK, 1897

Rice, Anne, *Interview with the Vampire*, San Francisco, 1976

Secondary Sources:

Stanley Stephanic, TED Ed, 2018, *How did Dracula become the world's most famous vampire?*
<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-did-dracula-become-the-world-s-most-famous-vampire-stanley-stepanic>

Michael Molina, TED Ed, 2014, *Vampires: Folklore, fantasy and fact*
<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/vampires-folklore-fantasy-and-fact-michael-molina>

Richard Pallardy, Britannica, 2024, *Vlad the Impaler*
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vlad-the-Impaler>

Sheridan Le Fanu, *Carmilla*, London, 1872

Judith Bell, University of Arkansas (2016). *Deliberate Voluptuousness: The Monstrous Women of Dracula and Carmilla*.
[https://scholarworks.uark.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3109&context=etd#:-:text=Carol%20Senf%20similarly%20argues%20that, Daughters%20of%20Lilith%E2%80%9D%20213\).](https://scholarworks.uark.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3109&context=etd#:-:text=Carol%20Senf%20similarly%20argues%20that, Daughters%20of%20Lilith%E2%80%9D%20213).)
[arily%20argues%20that, Daughters%20of%20Lilith%E2%80%9D%20213\).](https://scholarworks.uark.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3109&context=etd#:-:text=Carol%20Senf%20similarly%20argues%20that, Daughters%20of%20Lilith%E2%80%9D%20213)

Meyer, Stephanie, *Twilight*, USA, 2005

Harris, Charlaine, *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, USA, 2001

True Blood, 2008, Created by Alan Ball, Based on: Harris, Charlaine, *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, USA, 2001

Caitlin Brown, *Feminism and the Vampire Novel*, (2009), The f Word
https://thefword.org.uk/2009/09/feminism_and_th/

Helen Pitlick, *The science behind vampires*, Blood Line 2022
<https://blog.bloodworksnw.org/the-science-behind-vampires/>

James Hanton, *Rabies and Beyond: How Dracula has Informed Common Conceptions of Disease and Infection*, Medium, 2020
<https://jhantonwriter.medium.com/rabies-and-beyond-how-dracula-has-informed-common-conceptions-of-disease-and-infection-fa37215fafb3#Betwixt%20and%20Inbetween,%20Life%20and%20Death>

L.J. Smith, *The Vampire Diaries*, USA, 1991

The Vampire Diaries Wiki, *Mind Compulsion*
https://vampirediaries.fandom.com/wiki/Mind_Compulsion

Adrienne Tyler, *Twilight: Every Volturi's Powers Explained*, Screen Rant, 2021
<https://screenrant.com/twilight-volturi-vampires-powers-abilities-strongest-explained/>

Veronica Ellis, *VERVAIN... Vampires, Myths and Medicine*, 2021, Nature's Grace
<https://naturesgrace.co.uk/873/>

Andy Talajkowski, "Embodiment of evil" - *Sexual Predation and Molestation in Dracula*, Academia, 2016
https://www.academia.edu/32650497/Embodiment_of_evil_Sexual_Predation_and_Molestation_in_Dracula?auto=download

Nilifer Pektas, *The Importance of Blood during the Victorian Era: Blood as a Sexual Signifier in Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Södertörn University College, 2005.

<https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:16204/fulltext01.pdf>

The Vampire Diaries, 2009, Directed by: Julie Plec

<https://screenrant.com/vampire-diaries-blood-sharing-personal-important-reasons/>