Staking Salvation: The Reclamation of the Monstrous Female in *Dracula*

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**Victorian Sex and the (Mostly) Single Girl**

The concept of the Angel in the House—the pure, virtuous, non-sexualized female—is one of the most monolithic and immobile depictions of Victorian womanhood. First labeled as such by Coventry Patmore in his 1854 poem, *The Angel in the House* (later expanded in 1862), Victorian women, so it would appear, were either genteel young ladies or bad little children, either supportive helpmates or destructive slatterns, either chaste paragons of morality or lost and loose women. While Patmore might have created the label, he was not the only one who gave direction to England's women. Sarah Stickney Ellis wrote a series of conduct manuals, Mrs. Beeton told women how to manage their homes, and Hannah More's improving tomes were forced upon young female readers. Toward the end of the nineteenth-century, Victorian fears about women's behavior evolved into a national debate known as "The Woman Question," which encompassed issues such as property ownership, marriage contracts, inheritance law, and female sexuality, among others.

These competing ideologies are especially evident in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, and the issues regarding feminine behavior that are raised in Stoker's novel and other works of the period have long-reaching tentacles. In many ways, we find ourselves not far removed from the Victorian notions of womanhood, in that the social and cultural position of women is one that has been a constant ground for examination well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), *Ms. Magazine*’s first issue in 1972 in which Gloria
Steinem famously put Wonder Woman on the cover, Susan Faludi’s *Backlash* (1991), and more recent debates about Sarah Palin’s footwear choices and Hillary Clinton’s pantsuits and political ambitions, indicates that the Woman Question is still with us and shows no sign of disappearing any time soon. Moreover, we see depictions of vampires and femininity in our current culture, as well, in places such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (both the television show, which ran from 1997-2002 and the comic book series, which launched in 2007) and *The Twilight Saga* films (2008-2012). Vampire stories might have predated *Dracula*, but it was Bram Stoker’s novel that thrust the genre into the pop culture spotlight in both the late nineteenth-century and ensured its enduring popularity today.

**Good Girls Gone Bad: The Perils of Feminine Sexuality**

In *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel*, Ruth Bernard Yeazell writes that early English conduct books construct a parallel between immodesty and insanity, for as one manual intoned, “an Impudent woman is looked on as a kind of Monster; a thing diverted and distorted from its proper form” (5). *Dracula*’s brazen—and therefore monstrous—women do not adhere to standards of middle class morality, and Stoker gives us three very different portraits of womanhood, all of which play into Victorian anxieties about female sexuality and gender roles. From the nameless writhing vampires who attack Jonathan Harker, to the overly sexualized vampire-in-waiting Lucy Westenra, to the seemingly traditional Mina Harker, Stoker examines three divergent types of women, all of whom pose some threat to Victorian notions of social order and sexualized hysteria. When Stoker sets up feminine sexuality as diametrically opposed to femininity and does so in terms of insanity and monstrosity, he draws from a heritage that long reveres the idea of chaste, modest, non-sexual beings as the standard for Englishwomen and deviations from this norm as grotesque. As Rowena Mohr writes, “whatever is at stake in Stoker’s novel—Englishness, class stability, gender and sexual identifications—it is a text that anxiously defends the social,
political and sexual ideals of a conservative, middle-class, masculinist ideology” (80). Constructs of feminine behavior, overlapping with the burgeoning field of psychology (marked by Breuer and Freud’s 1895 *Studies on Hysteria*), created a fertile ground on which *Dracula* was created and can be interpreted.

Stoker’s interrogation of feminine sexuality happens very early in the novel when the three specters attempt to seduce Jonathan Harker:

The girl went on her knee, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the sharp white teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as licked her teeth and lips, and could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one’s flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer—nearer. I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the super-sensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited—waited with beating heart. (39)

Jonathan’s fascination quickly transforms into revulsion as the woman’s boldness increases. With each successively assertive move she makes, she becomes less and less humanized as “her lips” become “the lips.” Stoker does not ascribe sexual traits to women without either turning them into the Un-Dead or fragmenting them into disembodied physical features. Sexuality, then, is not associated with real women but rather with debased aberrations of the category of woman. Moreover, even as Stoker explores the potential ramifications of female sexuality, he becomes progressively less and less able to name it, which is indicated through his fragmenting and depersonalizing the sensual female body.

The way in which the lead seductress licks her lips and lowers herself onto Jonathan’s neck is a coded attempt at
fellatio. She is separate from her two darker companions for she is “fair, as fair as can be, with great wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires” (38). This one, the most blatantly sexual, is the most English-looking one, too. Jonathan says he “seemed somehow to know her face, and to know it in connection with some dreamy fear, but I could not recollect at the moment how or where” (38). Since he soon thereafter mentions Mina, this passage can be read as Jonathan equating the voluptuous blonde with Mina’s chaste form. However, what he fears is not necessarily her physical resemblance to Mina in particular, but her apparent Englishness. The other two vamps, who are “dark, and had high aquiline noses, like the Count,” (38) almost fade into the background in Jonathan’s further description. He finds all three attractive, yet the darker two serve as a sexualized chorus urging on their fairer sister. It is the blonde one, the English-looking one, the Mina stand-in, who mimes the act of fellatio on his neck prefatory to biting him into their vampiric world. Jonathan’s fascination and revulsion occur because the fair one tries to perform an act of aberrant sexuality, one which no good English girl should actually know about, let alone be willing to do. Hence Jonathan’s fear—if nice English girls are sexualized, particularly in that way, what does it mean for the English family? In The Book of Common Prayer, the Anglican marriage service mentions “the procreation of children” (423) and this was a time when sexual education for women was lacking. These were not the rules the blonde vamp was following: she takes a very active role, turns Jonathan into the passive recipient of her advances, and, had she succeeded, this particular act certainly would not result in the procreation of children. George Stade writes, “Female sexuality is insatiable and selfish, indifferent to the decent self-restraint, the self-sacrifice and suppression of appetite, upon which survival of the family depends. It is the very antithesis of motherhood” (212). If Dracula has his way in England, this woman will be the exemplum for what English female sexuality is to be: aggressive, violent, and non-maternal, and Jonathan’s “dreamy fear” will be realized.
Sexuality and anger are closely linked in this scene in particular and in *Dracula* generally. Not only are the three sirens, especially the English-looking one, infuriated when Dracula stops their seduction of Jonathan, but also Lucy displays flashes of anger when she is foiled in her attempts to seduce her fiancé, Arthur. This physical desire for him, combined with her earlier wish that she could accept all three of the marriage proposals she received, signals her immediate demise; since she no longer adheres to notions of the domestic angel, she must be eliminated. As Kathleen Spencer argues, “Lucy’s character is ‘flawed’ in a way that makes her fatally vulnerable to the vampire. She is a woman whose sexuality is under very imperfect control” (209). Right before she dies, John Seward, one of Lucy’s doctors and rejected suitors says,

I kept my eyes fixed on Lucy, as did Van Helsing, and we saw a spasm of rage flit like a shadow over her face; the sharp teeth champed together. Then her eyes closed, and she breathed heavily. Very shortly after she opened her eyes in all their softness, and putting out her poor, pale, thin hand, took Van Helsing’s great brown one; drawing it to her, she kissed it. “My true friend,” she said, in a faint voice, but with untellable pathos, “My true friend, and his! Oh, guard him, and give me peace.” (169)

The “good” Lucy returns right before her death and, by asking Van Helsing to “give [her] peace,” she tacitly awards him permission to defile her corpse. She becomes the perfect example of sacrifice, thereby achieving both domestic harmony and a renewed status as a domestic angel. She also becomes complicit in the acts which are to come and, in essence, agrees to her own rape.

Van Helsing’s “giv[ing her] peace” occurs in one of the most violent episodes in the text. Under the guise of preserving fair Victorian womanhood, Van Helsing, Arthur Holmwood, John Seward, and Quincey Morris go to Lucy’s tomb, where Un-Dead Lucy again attempts to seduce Arthur. However, while her good nature reasserted itself when her previous bid to beguile Arthur failed, now that she is a vampire, unabated fury reigns supreme:
The Thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together until the lips were cut, and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it. His face was set and high duty seemed to shine through it; the sight of it gave us courage so that our voices seemed to ring through the little vault. And then the writhing and quivering of the body seemed less, and the teeth seemed to champ, and the face to quiver. Finally it lay still. The terrible task was over. Arthur bent and kissed her, and then we sent him and Quincey out of the tomb; the professor and I sawed the top off the stake, leaving the point of it in the body. Then we cut off the head and filled the mouth with garlic. (227-28)

Like the blonde specter, Lucy is dehumanized. She becomes a "Thing," with a capital T; she loses her proper name but gains a new one, of sorts. Then her mouth is emphasized, just like the creatures at the castle. Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio write that,

Christopher Craft has identified the "vampire mouth" as "the central and recurring image of the novel" (109), an unstable sign of transgressive sexuality, signaling misplaced appetite, penetration that is not strictly penile. Blood sucking and generative, it is the site of complete confusion, invoking all gender codes simultaneously. (501)

Lucy's mouth stands in for her sexual organs, and this desecration of her corpse indicates both the loss of her virginity and the gang rape of her body as blood comes from her mouth and heart. These explicit images of violation also are imbued with the notion of duty; the main perpetrator of this act is her "husband" Arthur, who believes that "the transfusion of his blood to her veins had made her truly his bride" (184). This defilement is also a seemingly sanctioned religious act, for as Arthur hammers away, the band of men "read our prayer for the dead" (227), which quite likely was from The Book of Common Prayer.
Because Arthur is successful in “saving” Lucy, she is no longer a Thing and gets to be Lucy once more:

in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing that we had so dreaded and grown to hate that the work of her destruction was yielded as a privilege to the one best entitled to it, but Lucy as we had seen her in life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity. (228)

Her soul has been saved because her sexuality has been staked, yet her corpse would not have to be abused if she had not succumbed to the sexual danger posed by Dracula. This is a Victorian version of “blame the victim” which resonates with earlier conduct literature describing truly modest females as “restrain[ing] and control[ing] the violence of masculine love” (Fictions 5). Since she gave in to Dracula, her corpse must be destroyed. Arthur fulfills his charge, both as emblem of Victorian manhood and in the role of husband, as he neutralizes the threat to domestic order and proper Victorian femininity that vampire-Lucy represents. And, because in a moment of clarity before her death she asked Van Helsing to “give her peace,” she has authorized this mass violation of her body in order to regain her purity in death.

After Arthur’s task is complete, however, the desecration does not end. Not only does Arthur kiss Lucy’s dead body after despoiling it, which further encodes his power over her form, but also since the stake is not removed, the cadaver remains a perpetual rape victim. Despite all these indications of masculine power being exerted over the corpse, the final atrocity occurs when Lucy is decapitated and garlic stuffed in her mouth. The severing of her head serves as a means of separating the now polluted body—because of its previous carnal behavior—from the cranium, but, more importantly, removes the corruption from the seat of rational thought and speech. By disconnecting the brain and mouth from the rest of the corpse, Arthur and his cohorts disfigure the part of Lucy which originally chose to allow Dracula to seduce her, “for your Vampire, though in all afterwards he can come when and how he will, must at the first make entry only when asked thereto by an inmate” (320).
She is punished twice—once for inviting the carnal advances of Dracula and once for allowing her body to be sullied by these impulses. Prescott and Giorgio contend that, “Monster Lucy with her fangs and voluptuous titillation must be staked back into passivity not just to save her soul but to salvage the homosocial community her sexuality brought into crisis” (498). She must be destroyed for violating the tenets of Victorian domestic ideology because she embraced a non-standard—and therefore monstrous—construction of womanhood.

Mina Harker, too, is infected by Dracula’s overtures. Often, Mina is figured as the good Victorian girl who is an unwilling victim of Dracula’s overwhelming powers:

With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker’s hands, keeping them away with his arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man’s bare breast which was shown by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten’s nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink. (298)

She tries to preserve her chastity and rages ineffectually against him, even as he forces her to drink her own destruction. And of course she fails in preserving her chastity, as the red streaks on her nightgown indicate. The blood on the nightgown might be even more indicative of her losing her virginity to the vampire because, even though she and Jonathan are married at this point, he has been so ill and taken so long to recover, that it is quite likely that normal marital relations have not yet ensued. This scene can be rightly read as a rape, since she is assaulted in her own bedroom by a man not legally her husband and the act is violent and angry. Kathleen Spencer, though, sees this as seduction: “in sexual terms, [Dracula is] more seducer than rapist. For a modern reader, this might lessen the crime, but for Victorians seduction would have been infinitely worse. In Victorian theory, it is sexual desire rather than sexual activity that is the true source of danger” (217). Like the three vamps in the castle, Mina is put in a position where her body
Mina is forced to mime fellatio. This act indoctrinates her into Dracula’s harem of vampire women, and eventually will serve to make her as carnal, oversexed, and non-maternal as they are. Mina, like Lucy, has become a bigamist; Lucy was one woman with a desire for multiple husbands and Mina is now one of many wives. Sexuality has once more deviated from its acceptable norms, and it happens in front of the sleeping form of her rightful husband and the men who participated in Lucy’s staking and decapitation. This sexual threat, according to David Glover, is a conflation of a number of categories: “The extraordinary dense web of associations evoked by these descriptions—of castration, rape, fellatio, sadomasochism—are held in place by the vampires bizarrely composite persona, simultaneously that of rake and mother, a patriarch who gives birth to monsters” (256). Nancy Armstrong also argues this point: “By thus usurping the positions of wife, mother, and lover, Dracula strips these figures of their meaning...subjects them to another libidinal economy” (6). We are left, then, asking along with John Allen Stevenson, “What is going on? Fellatio? Lactation? It seems the vampire is sexually capable of anything” (146). That is precisely the point. Dracula can be all things at all times and is therefore the ultimate threat. By acting as lover, husband, mother, and provider, he makes traditional sex and gender roles collapse into each other and reform in a new and perverse sexual taxonomy.

This jeopardy to traditional cultural norms is encoded in Mina’s violation since the one who should protect her—her husband—is as incapacitated as he was when the three female vampires were bewitching him. In this instance, Mina is forced to take their place, just as Jonathan was almost forced into the role of the husband at the castle. As with Lucy, Mina’s punishment continues, for when she seeks comfort from Jonathan and bleeds on him from the wound in her neck, she realizes that she is “Unclean, unclean!” (300). This uncleanliness is a result of her newly sexualized self, for as Judith Weissman argues, “As the women in Dracula become vampires, they become too sexual for their husbands or fiancés to endure” (403). Then,
as Lucy was decapitated, Mina’s forehead is scarred with a communion wafer (313). Van Helsing assumes that the Host will protect Mina because she was apparently victimized, but he fails to realize that because she is indeed “unclean,” it will do nothing but render her infection visible. The resulting scar on her forehead indicates to her male compatriots that her state of uncleanness will become permanent unless they can conquer Dracula and reclaim her sexuality as well as her soul.

But is Mina an innocent party in this, as she is often portrayed? While her sexuality is less overt than Lucy’s, she is, in fact, sexually curious. When Jonathan escapes from Castle Dracula and is recuperating in the hospital, he gives Mina his diary and asks her never to read it (and if she does, never to tell him about it) unless there is an emergency. To show her faith, she wraps it up like a wedding present:

I took the book from under his pillow, and wrapped it up in white paper, and tied it with a little bit of pale blue ribbon that was around my neck, and sealed it over the knot with sealing-wax, and for my seal I used my wedding ring. Then I kissed it and showed it to my husband, and told him that I would keep it so, and that it would be an outward and visible sign for us all our lives that we trusted each other; that I would never open it unless it were for his own dear sake or for the sake of some stern duty. (112)

The package is tightly bound, uses Mina’s own neck ribbon, and is bridal and virginal. She exposes herself to Dracula’s threat at this moment by removing the ribbon from her neck thereby baring what is, in the organization of the novel, the most vulnerable part of herself. The phrase “outward and visible sign” is also religious in that the complete phrase is “an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace” and usually refers to baptism or communion (*Project Canterbury*). In this instance, Jonathan’s journal, as gift-wrapped, beribboned, and sealed by Mina’s wedding ring, serves as an “outward and visible sign” of her marital and sexual fidelity. While she plans to honor his request not to read the journal, just a few chapters later she undoes the wrapping. The steps toward infection that she took when she removed the protective ribbon from her neck
increase when she removes the diary's cover. She is not simply reading the tale of her husband's strange near-seduction, but is vicariously participating in it. Jonathan has willingly accepted Dracula's invitation into the castle, and Mina—both by reading the journal and in her position as Jonathan's now-wife—invites Dracula in, as well.

Moreover, by unwrapping the diary that she has named as a wedding gift and tied with her own ribbon, Mina is, in essence, devirginizing herself. She has unfastened the "gift" of purity which she told her husband that she would never do unless there was a compelling reason. The event that sends her scurrying to unbind the journal is Jonathan's sighting of Dracula in town, which, given that Jonathan has provided few details about what happened in Transylvania, hardly constitutes an immediately obvious need for opening it. Her curiosity, not her concern, makes her "take his foreign journal, and lock myself up in my room and read it" (188). After she is done, she says "that terrible record of Jonathan's upset me so. Poor dear! How he must have suffered, whether it be true or only imagination" (188). While she is horrified by what she reads, she is not horrified by the three vamps who attempt to seduce Jonathan or his response to it. Her acceptance of Jonathan's desires, as well as her curiosity about his near-sexual activities in Transylvania, is yet another invitation to vampiric infection.

She realizes her transgression and, like Lucy, asks to be murdered if necessary; unlike Lucy, however, she asks it twice. The first instance occurs when Jonathan hurls recriminations at Dracula for biting his wife and Mina urges kindness for, "perhaps . . . some day . . . I, too, may need such pity; and that some other like you—and with equal cause for anger—may deny it to me!" (327). Mina believes that the leader of the Undead also deserves compassion and that his is a soul seeking rest. She conforms to the tenets of the domestic angel, who, even in extreme circumstances is to be thinking of the welfare—spiritual and otherwise—of those around her. Because of this, she is a candidate for rescue when she is still alive, whereas Lucy and the other vamps are not. Her own particular salvation
is on her mind, as well, which prompts her second entreaty to the group: “I know, and you know, that were I once dead you could and would set free my immortal spirit, even as you did my poor Lucy’s... You must promise me, one and all—even you, my beloved husband—that should the time come, you will kill me” (349-50). Not only does she make them all agree, but also she dictates the timing of events. They are to act, “when you shall be convinced that I am so changed that it better that I die that I may live. When I am thus dead in the flesh, then you will, without a moment’s delay, drive a stake through me and cut off my head; or do whatever else may be wanting to give me rest!” (350). As with Lucy’s request to “give her peace” (169), Mina asks for the same violent treatment. If the time were to actually come, the scene in Lucy’s tomb would be replayed, only with Jonathan this time pounding away “like Thor” with the light of “high duty shin[ing]” on his face. Because she has been sexually curious, her fate might well be the same as Lucy’s. She opened the diary and was violated by Dracula, and, for the good of her own soul, she must be disciplined by her husband in his rightful role as the protector of his wife’s virtue. Yet she must also be the one who, like Lucy, gives permission for these acts to occur—she is performing an act of contrition by admitting her sins and asking for punishment so that she can be forgiven and attain the afterlife.

Mina is not the last woman in the text to be punished, however. Before the novel ends and Dracula is slayed, the three vampiric sirens must meet the same end as Lucy. This time, Van Helsing is the one who does the deed. Interestingly, the blonde vamp is the hardest to kill:

She was so fair to look on, so radiantly beautiful, that the very instinct of man in me, which calls some of my sex to love and to protect one of hers, made my head whirl with new emotion. But God be thanked, that soul-wail of my dear Madam Mina had not died out of my ears; and, before the spell could be wrought further upon me, I had nerved myself to my wild work. (391-92)

While he is Dutch, he is still drawn to the most English-(and most generally Western European-) looking one. She
poses a particular sexual threat to Van Helsing, just as she did to Jonathan. Van Helsing is married, although his wife is institutionalized, yet this blonde one’s beauty fascinates him so much that, in some measure, he violates his marriage vows. Up to this point, Van Helsing has urged the others to stay strong and to kill these women; he was also the ring-leader behind Lucy’s impalement and decapitation. He is less sentimental than the others, which tellingly is exposed in his assertion that “some men of my sex” feel compelled to “love and protect” women. This phrasing indicates that he is not necessarily among that group. Yet the fair vampire almost causes him to lose his nerve, and it is only Mina’s scream that calls him back to duty. Van Helsing’s wavering must be overturned by Mina’s voice—and her role as the domestic angel—so that he is empowered to destroy these sultry threats to chaste English womanhood.

They, too, ultimately are grateful for their annihilation. After he stakes them, Van Helsing says,

Had I not seen the repose in the first place, and the gladness that stole over it just ere the final dissolution came, as realization that the soul had been won, I could not have gone further with my butchery. I could not have endured the horrid screeching as the stake drove home; the plunging of the writing form, and lips of bloody foam. I should have fled in terror and left my work undone. But it is over! And the poor souls, I can pity them now and weep, as I think of them placid each in her full sleep of death for a short moment ere fading. (392-93)

As with Lucy, the creatures do not get to be female until after Van Helsing destroys them. They are a collective “it” until after “the soul had been won” at which point they become “them” and “her.” Van Helsing makes himself their bridegroom/rapist/murderer as he impales them with his knife and cuts off their heads. In the sexual landscape that Stoker has constructed, the women are grateful for this treatment since there is “placid sleep” after Van Helsing’s work is done, and there is no evidence of his actions, for these three, unlike Lucy, crumble into dust once he decapitates them. These women traveled as dust motes and reassembled themselves before both Jonathan in
the Castle and Van Helsing, and now they have been returned to dust. Once more the Biblical words of the funeral service apply—ashes to ashes and dust to dust. By doing the “butcher work,” perpetually invoking God’s aid in this endeavor, and figuring his behavior as one who is saving souls, Van Helsing wraps his actions in those of the church. He is not simply saving England and Europe from the monstrous threat of invading female vampires and their leader, but also saving souls from the Un-Dead. In so doing, the Dutch doctor is as much an English Christian hero as St. George slaying the dragon.

Dracula, as Head Vampire, must die so that the sexual threat can be banished forever. Fittingly, he is killed on his native soil so that good English girls and boys are protected from him and the invading force has been repelled. Jason Dittmer writes that, “Dracula is repulsed and driven back to Eastern Europe by the representatives of the West—Van Helsing the Dutchman, Harker the Englishman, and Morris the Texan. Thus, the new Balkan states are disallowed admission into Europe by representatives from the West” (239-40). However, Dracula’s death scene is significantly less violent than any of the others in the text. Unlike Mina, he is not scarred by the Host. And unlike Lucy and the three female vampires, he is not staked. Whether or not he is decapitated is unclear (a point which James R. Simmons also notes). His death scene is also much shorter than the others:

But, on the instant, came the sweep and flash of Jonathan’s great knife. I shrieked as I saw it shear through the throat; whilst at the same moment Mr. Morris’s bowie knife plunged into the heart.

It was like a miracle; but before our very eyes, and almost in the drawing of a breath, the whole body crumbled into dust and passed from our sight.

I shall be glad as long as I live that even in that moment of final dissolution, there was in the face a look of peace, such as I never could have imagined might have rested there. (398)

It is not surprising that Dracula has the neatest death of all. While he might have been the agent of infection, he was not the biggest danger in the novel. He could only infect if he
was invited in, a point made repeatedly throughout the text, and so Lucy and Mina could not have become vampires-in-training had they not willingly exposed themselves to his wiles. Consequently, they were much larger threats to English womanhood than Dracula ever could be—all he could do was ask, they had to accede. It was their moral failing that allowed him to be successful and their punishments had to be much greater as a result. Of course, Dracula had to be prevented from assailing other vulnerable young Englishwomen, but it had to be done because Englishmen could not count on their countrywomen to be strong enough to deter the menace on their own. The men save England from an invading peril and protect her women from a hazard that—simply because they are female—they are too weak to resist. As a result, English values are codified: the men are manly protectors once more, and the women have returned to their role as the domestic angel. Sexual chastity has been preserved and creatures like Lucy have been left to the grave. As we later learn, her suitors are either dead or married. Arthur Holmwood, her fiancé, might have loved and mourned her, and John Seward might have thought incessantly about her after her death, but they both have wed nice girls who, now that Dracula has been eradicated and Lucy staked in her coffin, will never again be exposed to the threat of sexual vampiric infection.

*Dracula*'s social commentary on the sexual weakness of the late nineteenth-century Englishwoman is frequently mirrored in the ways modern women are depicted, as well. For example, in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, female vampires are highly sexualized (Darla, Drusilla, and later, Harmony) and *The Twilight Saga* films center on a teen romance in which the female human's love options are either a sparkly vampire or a shirtless wolf. She ultimately marries the sparkly vampire, becomes a vampire herself, and retains a friendship with the shirtless wolf. In the case of Buffy, she has complicated romantic relationships with some vampires at the same time that she stakes and kills others. She is the Mina Harker of Sunnydale, torn between her job as a Slayer and her entanglements with
Angel and, later, Spike. Buffy, Twilight, and others of their ilk are modern-day iterations of Dracula and reflect the ways in which women's sexuality is a major complication to their remaining human (and alive). We continuously rehash the same tropes that Stoker did in 1897 as female morality is linked with female sexuality, thereby creating a system of classification wherein a woman's value is primarily based on her chastity and Angel in the House-like behavior. Michel Foucault's famous assertion in The History of Sexuality, Volume 1 (1976) that "We are the other Victorians" seems to resonate now more than ever, particularly when applied to women and the vampires who bite them.

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