

Kayla Swain

Dr. Mitchell-Buck

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“Only a Demon in Her Shape”: A Queer Positive Reading of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*

I.

When living in a world that is overflowing with vampires like Anne Rice’s Louis de Pointe du Lac, who live off the blood of animals and strangers, Jim Jarmusch’s Adam and Eve, who drink exclusively from blood bags, and Billy Balibally’s En and Ichii, who feed off of one another, it can be hard to imagine that there ever was a time when vampires preferred prey was human beings or when they desired an intimate connection with their food. But in the nineteenth century it would’ve been out of the ordinary to see a vampire whose diet didn’t consist predominantly of human blood and, more importantly, who didn’t crave some kind of companionship with the person or persons they chose to prey upon. In those days, it was a staple feature, a tradition of vampire literature to have the vampire seek out an intimate relationship with their human prey and it crops up not only in some of the most popular and celebrated vampire stories of the age, like J. Sheridan Le Fanu’s 1872 Gothic novella, *Carmilla*:

“She used to place her pretty arms about my neck, draw me to her, and laying her cheek to mine, murmur with her lips near my ear...she would press me more closely in her trembling embrace, and her lips in soft kisses gently glow upon my cheek...with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper,

almost in sobs, ‘You are mine, you *shall* be mine, and you and I are one for ever.’ Then she has thrown herself back in her chair, with her small hands over her eyes, leaving me trembling” (Le Fanu, 89-90).

But also in lesser known titles, such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs’ 1885 short story, “Manor”:

“The form approached him slowly, then got into bed beside him. The boy trembled but did not dare to move. His cheek was stroked by a cold hand. Oh, so cold, so cold. Shivers ran down his back. His warm quivering lips were kissed by ones that were icy. The youth could feel the wet clothing of his beloved, and he could see his hair hanging over his forehead. Fear seized him, but it was mingled with joy. The form sighed as if to say, ‘A yearning drove me here to you. I have found no peace in my grave’ ” (Ulrichs, 80).

Even Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), which is known to defy and “destroy” the traditions of its predecessors (Auerbach, 64), follows in this particular tradition of the vampire pursuing intimacy with their human prey:

“As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal, The Count, evidently noticing it, drew back; and with a grim sort of smile...” (Stoker, 23).

“She still advanced, however, and with a languorous, voluptuous grace, said: – ‘Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!’ There was something diabolically sweet in her tones – something of the tingling of glass when struck – which rang through the brains even of us who heard the words addressed to another. As for Arthur, he seemed under

a spell; moving his hands from his face, he opened wide his arms. She was leaping for them, when Van Helsing sprang forward and held between them his little golden cross. She recoiled from it, and, with a suddenly distorted face, full of rage, dash past him as if to enter the tomb..." (Stoker, 227).

"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... 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!...' " (Stoker, 175).

" 'I was appalled and was too bewildered to do or say anything... With that he pulled open his shirt, and with his long sharp nails opened a vein in his breast. When the blood began to spurt out, he took my hands in one of his, holding them tight, and with the other seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound, so that I must either suffocate or swallow some of the – Oh my God! my God! what have I done?... ' " (Stoker, 306).

In all of these examples from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, we do indeed see a vampire attempting to foster an intimacy between themselves and their human prey. However, there is a slight difference between these examples I've pulled from *Dracula* and the ones I referenced earlier from *Carmilla* and "Manor." Just because Stoker doesn't go against the tradition of vampires desiring to be good friends with their human prey doesn't mean he doesn't break any other conventions of traditional vampire literature (which we'll see more of in chapter two), but that's beside the point for now. In the examples that I pulled from both *Carmilla* and "Manor" the human prey of those vampires end up accepting the intimacy offered to them by their vampires. Laura, who is the vampire Carmilla's

chosen prey, notes at one point that admits feelings of both deep attraction and something akin to repulsion for her father's latest guest "...the sense of attraction immensely prevailed..." (Le Fanu, 87). According to her, the vampire had "...interested and won [her]..." (Le Fanu, 87) with how indescribably beautiful and engaging she was. She even remembers how, because of her strong attraction to the girl, she would never resist the tender embraces and kisses Carmilla would offer and bestow upon her.

The same goes for Har, who the vampire Manor preys upon. He explicitly states that, despite his initial fear of the vampire (which is perfectly understandable on account of the fact that Har thought Manor dead, wouldn't you be a bit frightened if your dead lover showed up alive and reasonably well in your bedroom?), Manor's visits and the intimacy that was bestowed upon him during them "...[never] tormented [him]..." (Ulrichs, 85). He also, like Laura, never shies away from the intimate embraces Manor offers and accepts every kiss the vampire gives him, he even actively attempts to stop his mother and the people of his village from putting a stake through Manor's heart and ending his night time visits. Clearly he is not bothered by the vampire's attempts at companionship and even seems to accept and enjoy them.

In the examples I've pulled from *Dracula*, however, as you can probably already see, Stoker's heroes are not nearly as accepting of their vampires' advances as Laura and Har are. In fact, every time a vampire in Stoker's novel attempts to get close to one of his human characters they are harshly, if not violently, rejected. Johnathan shudders and "...a horrible feeling of nausea [comes] over [him], which, do what [he] would, [he can] not conceal..." (Stoker, 23) when Dracula leans over and touches him. Then when the Un-Dead Lucy asks Arthur to come to her, embrace her, and kiss her, Van Helsing steps in between the two and presents his golden cross to her, which causes her to react as if such an action has actually physically harmed her in some way. And when

Lucy is on the brink of death she doesn't try to protect Dracula in any way, doesn't give any indication that she appreciates or enjoys what the Count has done to her, as Har does with Manor and the affections Manor bestows on him. She literally tells Van Helsing to “ ‘...guard [Arthur], and give [her] peace!...’ ” (Stoker, 175), implying that she wants the good doctor to hunt down Dracula and kill him, save them all from his schemes. Very different from Laura and Har who either actively try to stop their vampires from being killed or refuse to participate in the execution of their vampires. No affection is lost here with Lucy that much is clear.

Now, since Dracula embodies a lot of Queer stereotypes from the time and multiple members of Stoker's band of heroes show signs of being closeted, many scholars such as John Allen Stevenson, Talia Schaffer, and Nina Auerbach have taken to reading Stoker's heroes' rejection of Dracula as a rejection of their Queer identities. The problem with such readings is that they tend to emphasize the groups' acts of Queer shame without acknowledging the fact that they come to find love and acceptance among one another and so, resolve their fears, insecurities, and the self-hatred they feel as a result of being a Queer person living in late nineteenth century England. By acknowledging neither the acceptance the group receives from one another nor the resolution of their Queer shame, those who read Stoker's horror novel through a Queer lens have repeatedly reached the conclusion that Dracula is symbolic of and or intended to represent Stoker's heroes' Queer desires and sentiment. All the while, another interpretation, one that acknowledges the groups' acceptance of their Queer identities and paints Dracula as a symbol of the negative, monstrous image of the “homosexual” that tormented the Queer community in the aftermath of the 1885 Amendment and Oscar Wilde trials, has gone mostly unexplored and ignored.

Take, for instance, Jonathan's situation at Castle Dracula. Upon discovering that he's the Count's prisoner, Jonathan takes to wandering the corridors of Castle Dracula in the early hours of

each morning in hopes of finding a way to escape. Obviously aware of his prey's latest hobby and worried that it could potentially lead to an encounter between his former lovers and the young solicitor, Dracula warns Jonathan, before leaving him to his own devices one evening:

“...my dear young friend...should you leave these rooms you will not by any chance go to sleep in any other part of the castle. It is old, and has many memories, and there are bad dreams for those who sleep unwisely. Be warned! Should sleep now or ever overcome you, or be like to do, then haste to your own chamber or to these rooms, for your rest will then be safe...” (Stoker, 38).

Initially, Jonathan is clearly unsettled and frightened by the Count's cryptic warning, returning to his assigned chambers after his nightly searches for three consecutive mornings before succumbing to any drowsiness that threatens to overtake him. However, curiosity and a desperate need to regain some control over his fate soon overwhelm his fear and unease, and on the fourth night since being advised by Dracula to sleep nowhere but his own rooms, Jonathan purposefully takes his rest in an unfamiliar part of the castle. As a result, when he wakes up, the young solicitor finds himself in the presence of three ravenous female vampires (Dracula's former lovers), all looking to make an apparently most satisfying meal out of him.

In the scene that follows, which plays out like an intimate sexual encounter, Jonathan lays back, taking a submissive position (where typically we would expect to see him as the man taking a more dominate or active role in such a situation), “...[closes his] eyes in a languorous ecstasy and [waits] – [waits] with [a] beating heart...” (Stoker, 44) for “...the hard dents of two sharp teeth...” (Stoker, 44) to puncture “...the supersensitive skin of [his] throat...” (Stoker, 44). To put it another way, what Jonathan is experiencing here is the desire to be penetrated by something that Stoker is describing as “hard.” The obvious interpretation here is that this moment is a reflection

of Jonathan's Queer desires and sentiments. A reflection of the fact that, despite being engaged to a woman, Jonathan is perhaps not as straight as he might first appear, that he may desire men in the same way he desires Mina or that he at least is not opposed to the idea of anal sex.

And there is clearly some shame that comes with being confronted so directly by these desires of his. Immediately after he has the encounter with Dracula's former lovers he writes in his journal; "...I suppose I must have fallen asleep; I hope so, but I fear, for all that followed was startlingly real – so real that now, sitting here in the broad, full sunlight of the morning, I cannot in the least believe it was all sleep..." (Stoker, 42). So, Jonathan "hopes" that his encounter with Dracula's former lovers was just a dream but "fears" that it was "...startlingly real..." (Stoker, 42). Of course, you could read this simply as Jonathan being terrified of such creatures actually existing and desperately hoping that they were just figments of his imagination. But considering that the encounter lends itself so readily to being interpreted as a "dream" about repressed Queer desires, as Jonathan being confronted with his Queer identity, I'm inclined to read it as Jonathan hoping that the desires he experienced, what he did during said encounter, were not real and as him fearing that they might be more real than he is ready to believe. Making this here a clear display of Queer shame on the young solicitor's part.

Then there is the fact that, upon escaping Castle Dracula and making it to safety, Jonathan seems to forget everything that happened over the course of his stay there, including his encounter with the three vampire women. Now, it could be that Jonathan has genuinely lost his memory of this time, that his stay at Dracula's Castle was so traumatic and mind breaking that, to protect itself, his brain has blocked out and locked away all memories associated with it. However, what Mina writes to Lucy about her husband's condition has me thinking that might not be entirely true. Look at what she writes, "...He is only a wreck of himself, and he does not remember anything that has

happened to him for a long time past. At least, he wants me to believe so, and I shall never ask...” (Stoker, 116). “At least, he wants me to believe so,” implying that Jonathan may not be as forgetful as he may initially appear, implying that he may be feigning memory loss. But if that is the case, then why? Why would he fake having no recollection of his time spent at Castle Dracula? Perhaps he’s afraid that people will think he’s crazy, blood sucking women and men who can scale down a wall like a lizard does sound a little out there in terms believability. Or maybe, seeing as he hopes that the desires he experienced during his encounter with Dracula’s former lovers was all a dream but fears that they were not, this is him choosing to disregard those feelings. Him employing the “ignore it and it will go away” strategy on his Queer identity and him, yet again, displaying shame in his Queer sentiments and desires.

So, yes, indeed, Jonathan does seem to reject his Queer identity just as he rejects Dracula’s attempts at intimacy. But what is so interesting and something that few scholars take into account when claiming that his, and the rest of Stoker’s heroes, rejection of Dracula is a rejection of their Queer identities, that Dracula is symbolic of our heroes’ Queer desires, is the fact that, although he initially rejects and oppresses his Queer self, as do Stoker’s other heroes, Jonathan, and all the others, find acceptance among themselves and eventually embrace their Queer identities. As I’ve just shown, Jonathan wants nothing more than to hide, deny, and repress his Queer sentiments and desires. He is ashamed of them, and doesn’t really want any one knowing about them. Even when he gives his journal, in which he has record his encounter with Dracula’s former lovers, over to Mina, telling her that she may “...keep it, [and] read it if [she] will...” (Stoker, 117) he does this out of a sense of obligation to her, out of a belief that, as his wife, she is entitled to all his secrets. He does not do it because he really wants her to know about the encounter and what it may tell her about him. No, he even asks her at one point if she is “...willing...to share in [his] ignorance...”

(Stoker, 117), clearly wanting her to be to just blind to the situation as he himself is pretending to be. Most likely because he is worried that her knowing about that part of himself may negatively affect his relationship with her.

His fears, however, are completely unfounded. For, when Mina does eventually read her husband's journal, when she "...[breaks] open his closet..." (405), as Talia Schaffer puts it, and discovers the secret he was hiding within, it has no negative repercussions on their relationship whatsoever. She learns that Jonathan may identify as Queer, and it makes no difference to her. She even seems kind of excited, thrilled even, by the prospect of it. Perhaps because she herself harbors Queer desires and finds joy in the idea of her and Jonathan sharing in this identity. And she is not the only one to show such acceptance of the young solicitor's sexual preferences. After perusing Jonathan's journal for himself, Dr. Van Helsing informs the young man; " '...I have read all of the letters to poor Miss Lucy, and some of them speak of you, so I know you since some days from the knowing of others; but I have seen your true self since last night...' " (Stoker, 203), that is, when he read the journal, then asks Jonathan; "...You will give me your hand, will you not? And let us be friends for all our lives..." (Stoker, 203). Dr. Van Helsing has "...seen [Jonathan's] true self..." (Stoker, 203), his Queer self, from what we know about the contents of the journal, and requests not only to shake the young solicitor's hand but that they "...be friends for all [their] lives..." (Stoker, 203). Clearly, an "I see you and I accept you moment," for sure.

Upon receiving such love and acceptance from some of the most important people in his life, Jonathan comes to embrace his Queer desires and identity. Not only does he stop trying to ignore the encounter he had with Dracula's former lovers and the desires he expressed during it, but he also starts actively sharing his experience with the other characters. For example, he helps Mina compile a written record of the group's encounters with Dracula in which his journal entries

are included, seemingly unedited as Van Helsing is keen on being privy to everything that has happened thus far, which he and Mina then share with the rest of Stoker's heroes. Before, when he gave Mina his journal to "...keep...[and] read...if [she] will..." (Stoker, 117), he did so out of a sense of duty. He shared his experience with her because he felt that she had a right to know not because he felt comfortable or wanted to share it with her. This time, however, when he and Mina hand out the manuscript to Stoker's other heroes it is not obligation that drives him to share and be open with the group but rather an acceptance of himself and who he is.

With the acceptance the group finds among one another and the resolution of their Queer shame that results from it in mind, Dracula being representative of the group's Queer identities make little sense. If Dracula was truly intended to symbolize Stoker's heroes' closeted Queer desires and sentiments than, upon coming to accept and embrace their Queer identities, they should have also come to accept and embrace Dracula, as he is, supposedly, supposed to be a physical manifestation of their Queer identities and desires. Their initial rejection of him, like their initial rejection of their Queer identities, should have transformed into an embrace once they find acceptance among the group. However, where they eventually end up accepting and embracing their Queer identities, Stoker's heroes never ends up accepting or embracing Dracula. They continue to reject him despite their acceptance of their Queer identities. Therefore, Dracula can't be a physical manifestation of their Queer identities, desires, or sentiments.

So, that begs the question; What does Dracula really symbolize? And what is the Crew rejecting by rejecting him if not their Queer identities? In the following chapter, we will explore those questions, coming to the conclusion that Dracula is a physical manifestation of the negative image of the Queer community that spawned out of the 1885 Amendment and Oscar Wilde trial

and that what Stoker's heroes are rejecting by continuing to reject him despite their apparent acceptance of their Queer identities is that negative image, the Queer stereotype.

II.

Today, we are quite used to thinking about vampirism as Stoker describes it in *Dracula*, a transmittable condition humans' contract after being bitten by a vampire. In the nineteenth century, however, prior to *Dracula's* release in 1897, when a person was preyed upon by a vampire there was no guarantee that they would become a vampire themselves. In fact, in those days, it was much more likely that, upon being bitten and drained of all their blood, a person would simply die. Of course, there were some stories that alluded to the idea, J. Sheridan Le Fanu's Lesbian vampire novella, *Carmilla* (1872), being one of them:

“ ‘There occurred that night what has confused the picture, and made its colours faint. I was all but assassinated in my bed, wounded *here*,’ she touched her breast, ‘and never was the same since.’ ‘Were you near dying?’ ‘Yes, a very – cruel love – strange love, that would have taken my life. Love will have its sacrifices. No sacrifice without blood. Let us go to sleep now...’ ” (Le Fanu, 101).

Here, with Carmilla claiming that she “never was the same since” she “was all but assassinated in [her] bed, wounded [in her breast],” the same place she prefers to bite her own human prey, Laura, in, there is little doubt that the young Countess contracted her vampirism from another vampire, that her being bitten by a vampire is what caused her to turn into a vampire herself. But her case was far from the norm at the time. Even in her own story, her own universe, the majority of people who are attacked and preyed upon by a vampire (Luara's good friend Bertha, the scullery maid,

and a few young women from the village) end up more like Ianthe from John Polidori's short story, "The Vampyre" (1819):

"At the desire of Aubrey they searched for her who had attracted him by her cries; he was again left in darkness; but what was his horror, when the light of the torches once more burst upon him, to perceive the airy form of his conductress brought in a lifeless corpse...There was no colour upon her cheek, not even upon her lip; yet there was a stillness about her face that seemed almost as attaching as the life that once dwelt there; – upon her neck and breast was blood, and upon her throat were marks of teeth having opened the vein..." (Polidori, 15).

"A lifeless corpse," never implied to join the ranks of the Un-Dead, than anything like Carmilla herself, whose "...features, though a hundred and fifty years had passed since her funeral, were tinted with the warmth of life..." and whose "...limbs were perfectly flexible..." (Le Fanu, 134). Or Stoker's Lucy Westenra, whose death at the hands of Dracula "...[gives her] back part of her beauty...her brow and cheeks...[recovering] some of their flowing lines...[and her] lips [losing] their deadly pallor..." (Stoker, 176). So, although we're used to vampirism being a transmittable condition, passed from vampire to human after an intimate encounter is had, we must remember, especially for the sake of this paper, that *Dracula* is the text that made transmittable vampirism a common feature among vampires. That when Stoker wrote, "...for all that die from the preying of the Un-Dead become themselves Un-Dead, and prey on their own kind..." (230), when he made it so that, had Arthur (or any of the suitors for that matter) met their dear Lucy's Un-Dead "kiss," they "...would in time, when [they] had died, have become Nosferatu..." (230), he was breaking a tradition of nineteenth century vampire literature, going against convention. And that is true for many of the quirks Stoker gives to his vampire.

Take, for instance, Dracula's need to take his rest in boxes filled with soil from his native land. Again, this is a characteristic that we're used to seeing in vampires today, a need that modern audiences are accustomed to them having. However, just as vampirism being a transmittable condition wasn't an overly popular thing back in the nineteenth century, neither was this. For the most part, you see vampires from that time sleeping in coffins "...floated with blood..." (Le Fanu, 134), like Carmilla here:

"The limbs were perfectly flexible, the flesh elastic; and the leaden coffin floated with blood, in which to a depth of seven inches, the body lay immersed. Here then, were all the admitted signs and proofs of vampirism" (Le Fanu, 134).

Or in coffins such as Azzo's from "The Mysterious Stranger" (1860), which is seemingly filled with nothing of note outside of the vampire's body itself:

"In the coffin lay Azzo as he lived and breathed, as Woislaw had seen him at the supper-table only the evening before. His appearance, dress, and all were the same; besides, he had more the semblance of sleep than if death – no trace of decay was visible – there was even a rosy tint on his cheeks. Only the circumstance that the breast did not heave distinguished him from one who slept" ("The Mysterious Stranger," 62-3).

As you can see, when *this* vampire's coffin is opened, the author merely describes the appearance and state of the body that lies inside it, providing no details about what surrounds and or encases the body other than the fact that it is indeed a coffin. Giving the impression that there is nothing out of the ordinary or strange about the coffin Azzo is sleeping in, otherwise they most likely would have saw fit to comment on it. The vampire is laying in a simple wooden coffin, no blood, dirt, or anything else of particular interest included. Now, sure, there were some exceptions to this tradition

just as there were to the tradition of vampirism being non-transmittable; Augustus Darvell from Lord Byron's unfinished vampire novel, *Fragment of a Novel* (1816), Polidori's Lord Ruthven, and Manor from Karl Heinrich Ulrichs' short story, "Manor" (1885) all sleep in a bed of dirt or some other form of earth:

"We dug as deeply as the time permitted us, and throwing the dry earth upon all that remained of the singular being so lately departed, we cut a few sods of greener turf from the less withered soil around us, and laid them upon his sepulchre" (Byron, 6).

"Rising early in the morning, he was about to enter the hovel in which he had left the corpse, when a robber met him, and informed him that it was no longer there, having been conveyed by himself and comrades, upon his retiring, to the pinnacle of a neighboring mount..." (Polidori, 18).

"They went to the dune where the sailors were buried. One man carried the stake, another a heavy axe. They opened Manor's grave" (Ulrichs, 83).

None of them, however, are quite like Dracula's bed of dirt, which is not only made more bed like by the fact that it is contained within a "...great wooden [box]..." (Stoker, 54) rather than being a loose plie of earth, but is also described as having "...a deathly, sickly odour, the odour of old earth newly turned..." (Stoker, 54). Meanwhile, Darvell is laid to rest in soil that is described primarily as "dry" and "withered" (Byron, 6), Manor is "...buried...in the sand dunes of Wago..." (Ulrichs, 79), which are implied to be far enough way from the sea to lack moisture as those who open his grave are shocked to find his body soaking wet as if he had just gone for a swim, and none of them (Ruthven included) rest in earth that smells of "... a deathly, sickly odour..." (Stoker, 54), or any odor for that matter. That is to say, where the few vampires before him who chose to sleep in piles

of earth decided on dry, withered, and unscented beds, Dracula elects to rest in a bed of soil that is fresh, seemingly moist, and so foul smelling that Stoker's heroes actually contemplate abandoning their search for the vampire on account of it, even though they knew that to do so would not only doom themselves but the whole of England (Stoker, 268).

Or what about the change in appearance Dracula goes through depending on whether he is fed or not. Once more, we as modern readers are quite familiar with vampires who shrivel up, turn old and grey, when refraining from drinking blood then, upon allowing themselves to feed again, fill out, "bloat," and regain their youthful features. Stoker's nineteenth century readers, however, would've never before encountered a vampire whose outward appearance is altered so drastically in accordance with their eating habits and practices. Certainly, there were some vampires at the time who, when it was time for them to die and be reborn under "...the first cold ray of the moon that rose after [their] death..." (Polidori, 18), would grow sickly, weak, and behave as if they were an elderly person, but not even then did their appearance alter to match these new habits; Byron's Darvell is a prime example of this phenomena:

" 'The constitution of Darvell, which must from his appearance have been early in life more than usually robust, had been for some time gradually giving away, without the intervention of any apparent disease: he had neither cough nor hectic, yet he became daily more enfeebled; his habits were temperate, and he neither declined nor complained of fatigue; yet he was evidently wasting away: he became more and more silent and sleepless, and at length so seriously altered, that my alarm grew proportionate to what I conceived to be his danger' " (Byron, 3-4).

Notice how Byron's unnamed narrator comments strictly on his vampiric companion's demeanor and conduct, giving no indication that the vampire's youthful appearance has been diminished or

faded in any way as a result of him becoming so enfeebled and temperate. As far as we know, the vampire keeps the appearance of a man "...early in life..." (Byron, 3), only "...a few years [our 17-year-old narrator's] elder..." (Byron, 2), all the way up until the moment he disappears into the shallow grave Byron's narrator digs for him upon his sudden death. And that was the norm for the time. Vampires, even if they became weak and sickly due to it being time for them to be reborn or as a result of not eating as they should, never grew old and withered in appearance.

Take Azzo, for example, it is heavily implied that it has been a while since he has had a proper meal, as he lives in the graveyard of an abandoned castle located in a scarcely populated portion of the Carpathian Mountains and the group of aristocratic travelers he preys upon over the course of his story are the first visitors to the area in quite some time. Yet, when he is first introduced the author describes him as "...a man of about forty..." ("The Mysterious Stranger," 50), which perhaps, isn't young per say, but it is no older than he was the day he died and became a vampire. Meaning that his fasting has not caused him to turn old and grey, that his inability to get a proper meal has not changed his appearance in the slightest. Dracula, on the other hand, when he is lacking in fresh blood, looks as such:

"A key was turned with the loud grating noise of long disuse, and the great door swung back. Within, stood a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white moustache...[his] hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion...the backs of his hands...seemed rather white and fine; but seeing them now close to me, I could not but notice that they were rather course – broad, with squat fingers. Strange to say, there were hairs in the center of the palm" (Stoker, 20 & 22-3).

Old and withered. Similarly, when nineteenth century vampires had no shortage of food and were able to glut themselves on blood, they never appeared younger or any more ample than they had prior to being able to satisfy their appetite. Carmilla displays this fact quite well for us, as in her tale she is never left wanting food, it seems like every other page they are holding a funeral for her latest victim. Nevertheless, no comment is ever made on her appearance post-feeding, giving the impression that her gluttony hasn't affected her looks in any noteworthy way. That she still appears to all as she did the night she arrived at Laura's father's door; a charming, slender, and wonderfully graceful stranger with a "...complexion...rich and brilliant,...features...small and beautifully formed...[and] eyes large, dark, and lustrous..." (Le Fanu, 88). A notion that is further proven by the fact that Laura describes a portrait of Carmilla done prior to the young Countesses death as being "...a wonderful likeness..." (Le Fanu, 97) to the present day Carmilla, explicitly calling it her "effigy" (Le Fanu, 97), and this is after she has already feed on over half the village's female population. Dracula, meanwhile, when he's eating well and often, his appearance goes through a massive and repulsive transformation:

"...then I saw something which filled my very soul with horror. There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half renewed, for the white hair and moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood...Even the deep, burning eyes seemed set amongst swollen flesh, for the lids and pouches underneath were bloated. It seemed as if the whole awful creature were simply gorged with blood; he lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion. I shuddered as I bent over to touch him, and every sense in me revolted at the contact..." (Stoker, 58).

Not only is his youth “half renewed” but his body has literally become “swollen” with the blood of his victims. He has “gorged” himself and is now “...bloated...like a filthy leech...” (Stoker, 58), as Jonathan puts it. Very much unlike Carmilla (and pretty much any other nineteenth century vampire for that matter) who, as I’ve said, seems to remain her “small” and “slender” self despite glutting herself on blood just as Dracula has done here.

Now, the most interesting thing about all these deviations *Dracula* takes from traditional vampire literature is that each of them finds a parallel in the image Oscar Wilde’s prosecutors and detractors constructed of the famed playwright and poet when he was on trial for acts of “gross indecency” in 1895. Looking first at Stoker’s choice to make Dracula’s vampirism a transmittable condition, spread from vampire to human through intimate contact with one another; according to Talia Schaffer, at one point during Wilde’s trial, the prosecution “...introduced several young male witnesses who claimed Wilde had ‘ruined’ them, which forced them to make a living by buying other boys, spreading the circle of pimping and prostitution...” (400). This testimony, apparently, fostered the idea that Wilde was capable of “spreading” his Queer identity to others, that a person could “contract” Queer sentiments and desires by coming into some form of intimate contact with someone who already held such thoughts and feelings. That is, Wilde’s Queer desires were painted by his prosecutors as transmittable to others, which, as I’ve just reiterated, is exactly how Stoker, and Stoker alone, painted vampirism in his work.

And that’s not all, as both Schaffer and David Skal are quick to point out, not only does the “...*image* of a monstrous progenitor...” (Italics mine; Schaffer, 400), which was generated during Wilde’s trial, reappear in *Dracula*, so do the exact *words and phrases* that were used to construct that image, and not just once either but multiple times throughout the novel. To give an example,

in a widely circulated comment, the judge presiding over Wilde's case called him "‘...the center of a hideous circle of corruption...’" (Schaffer, 400). In *Dracula*, when Jonathan first lays eyes on the Count laid out in his "coffin," he terms the vampire as the creator of "...a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten the helpless..." (Stoker, 58). Later, when Lucy's suitors and Van Helsing are getting ready to put her vampiric self to rest, Van Helsing tells the other men; "...all that die from the preying of the Un-Dead become themselves Un-Dead, and prey on their kind. And so the circle goes on ever widening..." (Stoker, 230). Notice how not only does Stoker employ the word circle on both of these occasions, which is the exact word Wilde's judge uses in the comment above, he is also using it to craft the exact same image, that is, "...of a monstrous progenitor amidst a horrible circle..." (Schaffer, 400). The cause of a "...most hideous [corruption] among young men..." (Skal, 351), which keeps on spreading outward from him.

Moving on to Stoker's decision to have his vampire sleep in a box filled with "...notably smelly dirt..." (Schaffer, 407); Schaffer tells us once again that "...[one] of the worst pieces of evidence against Wilde was the presence of fecal stains [found] on sheets in which Wilde had slept, [which was cited] as evidence of anal sex..." (Schaffer, 406-7) by the prosecution. Presenting this evidence "...led to a rhetorical efflorescence of Wilde as a creature of the sewer, living in stinking filth..." (Schaffer, 407), which is exactly how Stoker wants us to see *Dracula*. Not only does he replicate "...Wilde's 'dirty bed'..." (Schaffer, 407) in the form of the "...great wooden [box]..." (Stoker, 54) packed with earth that smells strongly of "...a deathly, sickly odour..." (Stoker, 54) in which the vampire sleeps, he also makes one of the defining characteristics of *Dracula*'s "dens," his living quarters, the fact that they are incredibly foul smelling. And not just any kind of foul smelling, but foul smelling in the exact same way that his bed of earth are, just look at how our heroes describe the scent of the air in Carfax Abby:

“...here the place was small and closed, and the long disuse had made the air stagnant and foul. There was an earthy smell, as of some dry miasma, which came through a fouler air...” (Stoker, 268).

And at Dracula’s Piccadilly apartment:

“ ‘The place smells so vilely,’ said [Lord Godalming] as we came in. It did indeed smell vilely – like the old chapel at Carfax – and with our previous experience it was plain to us that the Count had been using the place pretty freely” (Stoker, 318).

In the first quote, they explicitly state that the chapel smells of an “earthy smell.” Calling back to the description Jonathan gave to smell that emanated from the Count’s bed of earth inside Castle Dracula; “...a deathly, sickly odour, the odour of old earth newly turned...” (Stoker, 54). And in the second they claim that the apartment smells just “...like the old chapel at Carfax...” (Stoker, 318), telling us that it bares the same foul “earthy smell” as the Carfax residence and, in turn, the same smell as the box of earth Dracula sleeps in.

Finally, let us take a look at Stoker’s choice to have Dracula’s appearance change in accordance with how starved or well-fed he is. Believe it or not, records from the time, newspapers and accounts from those who encountered Wilde near or during the time of his trial, tell us that a similar phenomenon seemed too happened to Wilde’s appearance and for a similar reason. At the height of his fame, right before he was taken to court, Skal and Schaffer both claim that there were countless descriptions made of Wilde that painted him in a strikingly similar fashion to how the young solicitor, Jonathan Harker, describes a gluttoned Dracula laid out on his filthy, stinking bed of earth. As Schaffer says, just “...[compare] a typical description of Wilde, this one by Stoker’s shady acquaintance Frank Harris:

‘There was something oily and fat about him that repelled me...his hands were flabby, greasy; his skin looked bilious and dirty...His appearance filled me with distaste. I lay stress on his physical repulsion, because I think most people felt it...’” (399)

To the image that greets Jonathan when he peers into Dracula’s tomb for the second time:

There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half renewed, for the white hair and moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood...Even the deep, burning eyes seemed set amongst swollen flesh, for the lids and pouches underneath were bloated. It seemed as if the whole awful creature were simply gorged with blood; he lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion. I shuddered as I bent over to touch him, and every sense in me revolted at the contact...” (Stoker, 58).

Notice how both the description of Wilde and the image of Dracula focus heavily on the plump, bloated nature of their subjects and the fact that both Harris and Jonathan make known their own repulsion at the sight before them. And that is far from where the similarities between Harris’ impression of Wilde and Jonathan’s account of a blood gorged Dracula end. Recall that what the young solicitor sees here is Dracula when he has just been very well-fed, when he has just satisfied his lust (blood lust) by indulging on the life force of others, when he is sated. The same thing might be said about the image of Wilde here, this is a description of Wilde before his fall, when he thought himself untouchable in many ways because of his fame and affluence. When he indulged in the company of as many young men as he desired, when he too was “well-fed,” in a sense, and sated on the life of others. That is to say, when both Wilde and Dracula are not wanting, when they are well and truly satisfied, when their needs and desires have all been met, they both “...[bloat]...like a filthy leech...” (Stoker, 58) it would seem.

But what about when they are not? Surely, Wilde couldn't also share in the rapid ageing Dracula experiences when he refrains from or is forced to stop drinking blood for an extended period of time, when he must live unsatisfied. However, that is where you would be wrong. Even while imprisoned newspapers from the time continued to report on Wilde, and one thing that was apparently repeatedly said in multiple of them was that "...[after] a year of imprisonment, Wilde's hair turned white..." (Schaffer, 405). It is well known that, while in prison, Wilde was kept alone for extended periods of time, that all letters he wrote and that were sent to him were inspected by the prison governor for inappropriate material (which would then be removed or redacted) before being mailed or passed on to the disgraced artist, and that his reading material was limited and generally abysmal. In other words, prison life was far less satisfying and fulfilling than Wilde's life on the outside. Plus, he was unable to indulge in all of the things that, according to some, made him appear as he did in the Spring of 1895. That is to say, he was without and unable to partake in his string of male lovers. Thus, just as we see Dracula transform into a shriveled old man when starved of life, so do we see Wilde seemingly experiencing the exact same metamorphosis, ageing at an expedited rate due to a lack of satisfaction in his desires.

Now, since Wilde became the face of England's Queer community in the aftermath of his trial and most things that were purported about him were then translated onto the Queer community as a whole, which is evident by Hall Caine's claim: "...It haunts me, [it being the monstrous image of Wilde the prosecution sold to the masses] it is like some foul and horrible stain on our craft and on us all..." (Schaffer, 395) and by the fact that " '...the desire of Oscar Wilde' became a euphemism for homosexuality..." (Schaffer, 399), I could easily read these parallels between Dracula and Wilde as Stoker Queer coding his monster. Just as I could easily read Stoker's repeated reference to vampires as "...[creatures]...in the semblance of [men]..." (40) as a nod to a statement

made by Sir Vincent Howard, the Director of Criminal investigations at Scotland Yard from 1878-84, in which he called Queer people "...[those] monsters in the shape of men...[who] walk the street same as the whores, looking for a chance..." (McKenna, 107). But I'm not going to, rather I would like to propose a more Queer positive reading of the Dracula, Wilde parallel and Stoker's description of his vampires as "...[creatures]...in the semblance of [men]..." (40) using an excerpt from a letter Willie Wilde, Oscar Wilde's older brother, wrote to Bram Stoker about two months after Oscar was incarceration. It reads:

"Bram, old friend, poor Oscar was not as bad as people thought him. He was led astray by his vanity & conceit, & he was so 'got at' that he was weak enough to be guilty – of indiscretions and follies – that is all..." (Schaffer, 396).

"Poor Oscar was not as bad as people thought him," implying that Wilde is not the monster the prosecution made him out to be. That the negative impression the public has of Wilde and the Queer community is not an accurate representation of them but rather, is them as monsters, not as they truly are. Thus, could it not be so that, instead of referencing the Howard statement with his description of vampires as "...[creatures]...in the semblance of [men]..." (40), Stoker is actually referencing this letter from Willie? That when he calls his vampires "...[creatures]...in the semblance of [men]..." (40) he means it in the sense that they are a negative representation of the Queer people they were in "life," that they are Queer-as-monster, not an accurate depiction of the Queer individuals whose shapes they have taken?

If so, then the parallels Stoker draws between Wilde (or more specifically the negative, monstrous image that was created of Wilde) and Dracula are not an attempt to Queer code his vampire or make his vampire symbolic of Queer desires. Rather they serve to paint Dracula as the negative image of the Queer that was constructed over the course of Oscar Wilde's trial. Meaning

that, when Stoker's heroes reject Dracula they are not, as I've said, rejecting their Queer identities or Queer life, they are rejecting the negative impression people have of the Queer community, running out of their country and slaughtering it.

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