



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 11. Issue.3. 2024 (July-Sept)

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

THE PROMINENCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF FEMME FATALE AND
FEMALE VAMPIRES IN STOKER'S *DRACULA* AND MEYER'S
TWILIGHT

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doi: [10.33329/ijelr.11.3.6](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.11.3.6)



Article information

Article Received:03/6/2024
Article Accepted:06/07/2024
Published online:15/07/2024

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to discuss the significance and prominence of supernatural *femme fatales* in two key Gothic texts: Stoker's *Dracula* and Meyer's *Twilight*. These texts were chosen due to the wealth of *femme fatales* and vampire within their pages. The research considered the significance of blood and also the sexual power inherent in these supernatural *femme fatales*. In relation to *Dracula*, the discussion focused on Lucy Westenra, the three *femme fatales* in the castle, Dracula and Mina Harker, whereas in *Twilight* Victoria, Renesmee and Bella were considered. There were considerable similarities regarding the supernatural *femme fatales* in both of the texts. Furthermore, psychoanalytical theory proved crucial to my discussion of these figures. It was discovered that the *femme fatales* are a significant figure due to their role as seducers and the fact that they inhabit a place outside conventional boundaries of society. They are a well-known cultural stereotype and their characteristics have been demonstrated throughout different mythologies and histories. In particular, Eve and Lilith were relevant to the research. In Conclusion, the prominence of supernatural *femme fatales* in *Dracula* and *Twilight* was established.

Keywords: *femme fatales* -Gothic Literature – female vampires

Introduction

This research considers the female Gothic in particular the role of the supernatural *femme fatales*. Some feminist critics such as Kate Millett and Elaine Showlter, states that male-authored texts tended to reflect patriarchal culture and social stereotypes. Gothic texts differ in the treatment of the Victorian woman: some writers never mention her, and the others demonize her. The fear of female sexuality is a key characteristic in Gothic literature (Chaplin, 2008, p. 206). In order to discuss the significance and prominence of supernatural *femme fatales* two key texts were chosen: *Dracula* by Bram Stoker and the *Twilight* series by Stephanie Meyer. This research focuses in particular on the supernatural *femme fatale*

and in both key texts In this study, psychoanalytic theory is applied to the concept of supernatural femme fatale as well as the psychology of vampires.

Dracula

In the iconic Gothic text *Dracula*, the pivotal vampire is male, yet he exists in a world of women. In this novel, we see examples of the supernatural *femme fatales* and the NEW WOMAN. The dominant sexual ideology reveals that women were not supposed to feel any passion (Ledger, 1997, p.100). Therefore, these two types of women were terrifying to the reader of that time. However, *Dracula* is also focused on the NEW WOMAN and her sexual decadence. This figure weakened the man's power and masculinity. In Chapter three the reader has the first encounter of the figure of supernatural *femme fatale*. This chapter provides an access to a nightmare world. Stoker uses the *femme fatale* to introduce a number of terrifying themes, such as lust and sex. In this chapter Jonathan is in a liminal state between sleeping and waking. In this dream-like state he has a visitation from three attractive and sexual female vampires: "All three had brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips" (Stoker, 2011, p.39). In relation to Victorian times, these women are indecently sexualized. In addition, Jonathan confesses his intense desire to be kissed by these supernatural women. Within Gothic fiction, dreams are often used to highlight the desires and wishes of an individual (Freud,1913,). In this novel, Jonathan sexual desires surprises even himself: "I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (Stoker, 2011, p.39). The conventional characteristics of the *femme fatal* are displayed in this highly erotic passage which depicts the movements and sounds of these female vampires. Stoker's figurative language has a salient presence in the text, for example, the simile compares this woman with an animal as she "licks her lips" in a similar way to an animal. Furthermore, the contrast of the colours "scarlet red and white" within one line is striking. The red is symbolizing blood and what they desire from Jonathan and the white representing Jonathan innocence.

To the annoyance and frustration of the women, Jonathan is saved from these supernatural *femme fatales*. However, they question Dracula about what they can eat: "are we to have nothing tonight?" (Stoker, 2011, p.41). It is inferred that the Count gives them a small child for their meals. In this chapter Stoker's subverts traditional gender codes through his portrayal of the *femme fatales*: "Within conventional gender codes, women are supposed to provide infants with breast milk, to nurture them through the giving of bodily fluids. Here, though, the position is reversed, so the woman, rather than giving bodily fluids to the baby actually sucks the life's blood from the child" (Ledger, 1997p.104). The reversal of gender role is shown in chapter three as Stoker presents these supernatural women subverting conventional concepts of the maternal instinct.

Psychology of vampire

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theory has been applied to the text of *Dracula* numerous times. For the purposes of this research, it is proved useful to focus on few of these interpretations in relation to the vampire Dracula and the supernatural *femme fatal*. However, Stoker referred to the study of psychology in the diary of Dr, Seward: "Why not advanced science in its most difficult and vital aspect-the knowledge of the brain" (Stoker, 2011, p.75). The critic Richard Noll (1992, p.10) states: "Stoker's *Dracula* is an extremely important work for two connections it makes that are essential to the understanding of the ease histories of the clinical vampires of today: 1. The linkage of psychiatry and folklore, that is "insanity" and vampirism; and 2. The fusion of sexual excitement and the drinking of blood". Another critic Ann Ramsland (2002, p.9) suggests that one of the reasons that makes Dracula terrifying is due to the fact that it highlighted the battle between science and religious belief. This issue had provoked anxieties amongst the late Victorian reader. Since the publication of the novel, many people have been interested in discovering if there is historical truth behind the character of Dracula. Indeed, McNally and Florescu claim to have found conclusive evidence that indicates that Stoker based

his vampire on a real man (McNally and Florescu, 1994, p.3). In Freud famous work entitled with Uncanny, he tries to define this term; "Uncanny". One critic E. Jentsch (cited in Freud, 2003, p. 135) writes that one of the most popular methods that result in the uncanny being reflected in writing, "is to leave the reader wondering whether a particular figure is a real person or an automaton". To install this eerie element in his work, Stoker constructs a frightful yet believable character. Research reveals that Stoker read about the Romanian prince Vlad the Impaler. Stoker's manuscript notes clearly revealed that he chose the name of Count Vampire as his first choice for his main villain. However, the notes also show that this was eventually crossed out and replaced with the name Dracula. In Romanian "Dracul" means devil and it can also signify a dragon (McNally and Florescu, 1994, pp.8-9. This has significance as Vlad the Impaler's father was the leader of the order of the dragon. Therefore, dragon flags would be displaced at their castle which local town folk would interpret as a sign of devil. Therefore, Vlad the Impaler was viewed as the son of the devil. Vlad the Impaler is known throughout the history through his sadistic and horrific punishment. Furthermore, both Vlad the Impaler and count Dracula used blood as a mean of a certain control (McNally and Florescu, 1994, pp.8-9).

Freud's theory of personality stated that there were three distinct parts that made up this area. Firstly, he proposed the id which he believed was an innate part of the personality. He called this the pleasure principle and believed that this is concerned with achieving gratification (Sue, Sue and Sue, 2000, p. 40). A part of the id is called the libido which focuses on sexual gratification. Secondly, Freud termed the concept of the ego which he said developed when the child was two or three years old. The part of personality is driven by reality and the child need for survival. Finally, the superego or conscience develops which is the moral part of the personality. The superego is shaped by parents and other social forces (Sue and Sue, 2000, p. 40). An understanding of Freud theory of personality is crucial to fully appreciate the applications of these terms to the novel *Dracula*. For example, it is obvious that count Dracula is driven by his id and libido rather than considering any moral viewpoint. It could be argued that Johnathan provides the perspective of the superego or moral guardian. Furthermore, Dracula's erotic desire to drink blood is an oral pleasure which was a taboo in repressive Victorian society (Bohn, 2007, p.25). McNally and Florescu (Cited in Bohn, 2007, p.24) state: " sharing bodily fluid is an act between lovers that symbolically binds their hearts and minds. Sharing of blood is the deepest union of all, binding the lovers for eternity.". A quotation that emphasizes the significance of sharing bloods can be taken from the count as he tries to force Mina to share his blood: " and you, their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin; my bountiful winepress for a while; and shall be a later on my companion and my helper" (Stoker, 2011, p.304).

Twilight

Critics have focused on number of literary references that are clear in Stephanie Myer's *Twilight* series. Yvette Kisor (2010, p.47) acknowledges that Myer not only uses vampires legends and native American folklore. She also uses canonical literature in the course of her stories. Kisor indicates the texts which Myer uses in each book in the saga: "Jane Austin's *Pride Prejudice* for *Twilight*, William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* for a *New Moon*, Emily's Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* for eclipse and Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's dream* and *Merchant of Venice* for *Breaking Dawn*" (Kisor, 2010, p.35)

In the epigraph of book one of *Breaking Dawn*, there is an important literary reference: the epigraph according to Kisor, is very appropriate for the content of book one as in this book Bella changes from fiancé to wife and then to pregnant woman. The Epigraph consists of the opening line of a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay entitled " Childhood is the Kingdom where is no body dies" (Kisor, 2010, p.47). Then in book two there is a reference to *Midsummer Night's Dream* in the epigraph. Kisor suggests that this epigraph predicts the resolution of the impossible love between Jacob, Edward and Bella. The epigraph is taken from a line in play spoken by the comical character, Bottom. Finally, the last book of *Breaking Dawn* uses the *Merchant of Venice* to foreshadow how the saga will finish. Myer (Cited in Kisor, 2010, p.51) confirms this: " I put a clue into the manuscript as well. Alice tore a page

from the *Merchant of Venice* because the end of the *Breaking Dawn* is going to be somewhat similar: blood shed appears inevitable, doom approaches, and then the power is reversed and the game is won by some clever verbal strategies; no blood is shed and the romantic parents all have a happily ever after". Finally, by using a range of influential texts from Western literature, Myer indeed gives her vampire stories an added depth and more significance. According to Wilson (2011, p.109), In *Dracula*, repressed sexuality is a key characteristic of the text, whereas in *Twilight* the male vampire Edward saves the innocent character of Bella from becoming a fallen woman. Another critic Weissmen (cited in Wilson, 2011, p.111) reads *Twilight* as an example of one man saving a female from her desire by transforming her into a vampire. Therefore, Edward takes a role of saviour. Some critics have compared him to the Christ. Continuing this Biblical comparison, Bella can be viewed as the Virgin Mary. This due to her sexual encounter with a super-human being: vampire. Gail B. Griffin (cited in Wilson, 2011, p. 110) discusses the fact that *Dracula* turned the women in the novel into sexual predators whereas "Edward Cullen like his vampire father, domesticate women, turning them into wife and mother". Griffin continues her argument by highlighting the women in *Twilight* and the moral issues associated to them before becoming vampires. Therefore, they could be all seen as "fallen women" before their transformation. For example, Alice had mental weakness; Rosalie was extremely vain; Esme could be considered "falling" due to her pregnancy and suicide attempts. Finally, Bella due to her undeniable and powerful sexual desires. In conclusion, we can see that the psychoanalytical theories and references to the Bible concerning these fallen women prove useful in analysing this literary saga.

Psychoanalysis of *Twilight*

In a similar way to *Dracula*, psychoanalytical theory proves to be useful in exploration Edward and Bella's relationship. Moreover, the conflict between the id, the ego and the super-ego can be demonstrated through Edward and Bella's relationship. For example, Edward's id desires Bella's blood yet his super-ego tries to stop his urges (Park and Wilson, 2011, p.41). In a similar way, Bella has strong sexual desire for Edward, but she relies on Edward abstinence and well-developed super-ego to keep her safe (Park and Wilson, 2011, p.41). A psychoanalytic critic, Normand Holland (cited in Park and Wilson, 2011, p.41) states that reading these conflicts regarding fictional character provides satisfaction for the reader. This is due to the innate human interest in discovering the psychology of the human and what motivate us: " Modern readers..... need release for psychological tension between id and super-ego, I.e., between desires and responsibility, and *Twilight* provides the platform for this unconscious drama to play out".

Twilight also highlights Freud's belief in the two main instincts that motivate human being: the Eros (sexual impulse) and the Thanatos (destructive impulse). Freud suggests these two instincts, located in the id, represent the life and death impulses in humans and are often "fused, blended, and alloyed with each other" (cited in Park and Wilson, 2011p.45). It becomes obvious that the figure of the vampire is a perfect representation of both of these instincts. This was discussed in the first section of *Dracula* as it was discussed that sex is closely linked with death in stoker's novel. In the first novel of the saga, Bella's desires and fears of Edward is apparent. She realizes that Edward is dangerous, yet she still wants and desires him (cited in Park and Wilson, 2011, p.41). She begins to dream of Edward which links with Freud theory of dreaming as a mean of wish fulfilment (Freud,1913, p.11.) Furthermore, the critic Donnelly (cited in Park and Wilson, 2011p.190) emphasizes on the fact that Myer focuses on Edward self-control and the way he protects Bella:

"Bella is liability to herself, needing Edward's help to not injure herself or wonder into dangerous situation. Edward treats her desires as silly and irrational and takes upon himself to dictate her life decision."

Furthermore, another critic provides an example of what Edward protects: "Bella is not in control of her body, as abstinence proponents would argue; she is absolutely dependent on Edward ability to

protect her life, her virginity and her humanity." (Seifert Cited in Park and Wilson, 2011, p.190). However, after the marriage Edward's strength becomes apparent. For example, the following quotation indicates Bella's description of their first sexual encounter: " under the dusting of feathers, large purplish roses were beginning to blossom across the pale skin of my arm. My eyes follow the trail they made up to my shoulders, and then down across my ribs... Edward places his hand against the proles on my arm, one at a time, matching his long fingers to pattern" (Myer, 2008, p.89). This vivid and disturbing passage highlights Edward masculinity. Shacher (Cited in Park and Wilson, 2011, p.158) reads this passage as a "rape fantasy with the rapist literally "imprinting" himself upon his victim's flesh, as if she were an object".

Conclusion

Throughout religious teaching and mythology, the supernatural *femme fatale* can be traced back in the early historic and religious mythology. Due to this association, these figures gain their power. As stated in the research by Wilson, both *Dracula* and *Twilight* link female characters to Eve. Lucy and Mina resemble " the two faces of Eve" (Wilson, 2011, p.29). These two characters represent the notions of good and evil in the novel. Whereas Mina was acting as one of "God's women", Lucy after her transformation turned into a supernatural *femme fatal* was depicted as an evil woman and sexually assertive. In *Twilight*, we see Bella as representing a good side of Eve whereas Victoria can be seen as an evil side of Eve. As mentioned in the research, Victoria can be described as similar to Medusa both in the way she looks and also the manner of her death. In both of the novels, the vampire figure represents human fears of the sexualized woman. For example, in *Dracula* after Lucy and Mina have been bitten, they become more dangerous, and Lucy becomes a powerful sexual threat. In a similar way, Victoria's power lies in her apparent sexuality and physical attractiveness. Liminality features prominently in the two key texts considered in the research: "Monsters entering a human place from different, wilder space are inherently "liminal" creatures" (Clark and Osborn, 2010, p.21). By their nature vampires and *femme fatales* are liminal (Clark and Osborn, 2010, p.21), for example vampires are un-dead, walking among the world of living and the supernatural *femmes* inhabit a place outside the normality. In *Twilight* Myer inserted the fusion of a magical or fantasy realm into the normal functioning world. For example, Cullen's house is hidden among the dark forest, yet this house is full of light. The liminal moment in *Twilight* is demonstrated through Bella's transformation from a normal human into a supernatural vampire: she is dead and she is apparently not alive. There are a number of liminal moments in *Dracula* involving the supernatural *femme fatales*. For example, the sexual encounter between the three female vampires and Jonathan at Dracula's castle. Additionally, another sexual example occurs after Lucy's transformation when she tries to seduce Arthur. These episodes show the thin line between the supernatural and natural realm and indicates this liminal space.

It could be argued that Bella can also be seen as a supernatural *femme fatale*. Wilson states that the character Bella "seems to function as descendent of Lilith, Adam's first wife" (Wilson, 2011, p.146). According to some accounts from Christian mythology, Lilith was known for her "unabated lust". In a similar way to Lilith, Bella desires Edward and tries to seduce him throughout the series. However, at the beginning of the series, Bella is depicted as passive, clumsy and not a typical *femme fatale*. After her transformation to a vampire the reader begins to see her possessing some of the conventional characteristics of a *femme fatale* such as power, strength and sexuality. It could be argued that her sexuality which increased after her marriage acts as determinant for her to become *femme fatales*. Wilson (2011, p. 145) also suggests that Bella becomes a type of "Super-Eve". However, Wilson believes this is not reached before she has suffered from giving birth to Renesmee. Wilson indicates the quotation from the Bible where God informs Eve that she would suffer great pain in childbirth. Therefore, to become supernatural *femme fatale* and a Super- Eve Bella must endure and experience pain. The concept of liminal state is again demonstrated in this incident: she was un-dead yet not a live. During *Breaking Dawn*, we see Bella moving from one state to another and become a supernatural *femme fatale*. At the

beginning of the *Twilight* saga, Bella is viewed as a geographical outsider and unlike the teenager at school she feels that she does not fit in the school environment. The following quotation represents Bella's expectations of her new school community: " I would be the new girl from the big city, a curiosity, a freak " (Myer, 2005, p.12). Obviously supernatural elements are prevalent in both texts. They are psychic powers that could appear as if they were real. Lucy, after her transformation could be described as elusive with regard to her nighttime roaming and secret missions. In *Twilight*, Victoria is also seen as elusive, due to her speed, she appears and disappears at a glance, following Edward and Bella. The prominence of the supernatural *femme fatales* increases the elusiveness of these Gothic texts and also suggest to the reader that physical reality is not the only reality.

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