# "It is not good to note this down": *Dracula* and the Erotic Technologies of Censorship

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IN 1908, ELEVEN YEARS AFTER THE PUBLICATION of *Dracula*, Bram Stoker published an essay in *The Nineteenth Century* calling for the censorship of "dangerous" fiction:

> ... a number of books have been published in England that would be a disgrace to any country less civilized than our own. The class of works to which I allude are meant by both authors and publishers to bring to the winning of commercial success the forces of inherent evil in man.... The evil is a grave and dangerous one, and may, if it does not already, deeply affect the principles and lives of the young people of this country.... If no other adequate way can be found, and if the plague-spot continues to enlarge, a censorship there must be. ("The Censorship of Fiction" 485–486)

Stoker concludes that reading fiction poses a specifically sexual threat. Putting a finger on the actual point of danger, he declares, "the only

emotions [evoked by reading] which in the long run harm are those arising from sex impulses" (483). Critics, for the most part, have been unable to reconcile Stoker's prudish call for censorship with the eroticism of his novel *Dracula*. Reading a paradox in his identity, they have theorised two opposed Stokers: a Victorian puritan and a liberated writer of provocative fiction. As if under a spell of repression, Stoker wrote *Dracula*, these critics conclude, without knowing he had written "one of the most erotic books in English literature" (Farson 210).[1] Challenging this interpretation as a misreading of both Stoker and censorship, this essay will trace the collusion between eroticism and censorship in *Dracula*. Stoker's writings prove contradictory only because critics have assumed that censorship and sexuality are opposed, censorship being regarded as wholly repressive and eroticism as wholly expressive. Turning to Michel Foucault's "repressive hypothesis," it would seem that Stoker deconstructs the repression-expression opposition in *Dracula* to reveal a continuum between censorship and eroticism.

In volume one of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault explains that restrictions on sexuality in the modern age are less about the repression of sexuality than about its production in discourse. Beginning with confession manuals of the Middle Ages, sex has continually been transformed or displaced into discourse even by institutions that prohibit sexual activity. Indeed, Foucault notes that by the seventeenth century it became a fundamental duty to transform desire into discourse by confessing sexual desires in detail (20–21). Foucault concludes that the modern age is not marked by censorship at all but by a "veritable discursive explosion" in the "multiplication of discourses concerning sex" (17–18). To understand Stoker's discourses of eroticism and censorship, I want to extend Foucault's analysis by suggesting a necessary connection between repression and production within the field of censorship itself. As recent studies of censorship have suggested, censorship is paradoxical because it focuses attention on that which it attempts to eradicate.[2] Censorship works productively rather than repressively by calling attention, albeit negative, to sexuality and by actually creating sexual metaphors, myths, and symbols. *Dracula* is one example of "productive" censorship, vampirism representing a monstrous exaggeration of the evil Stoker locates in "obscene" fiction. The eroticism of *Dracula* condemns while defining deviant sexuality and, like Stoker's censorship essay, its goal is "the preservation of boundaries."[3] Yet even as Stoker's human characters police vampiric sexuality by hunting the Count, they also produce and disseminate a discourse about vampirism. Indeed, this discourse structures and commands their vampire hunt. Stoker's sexual exposé neither simply liberates sexuality nor simply represses it since it

produces erotic sexual symbols while simultaneously demonising this eroticism. Like the confession manuals Foucault describes, *Dracula* is a paradoxical disciplinary discourse, attempting to impugn obscene impulses ("the forces of evil inherent in man") by writing about them. Thus, Stoker is paradoxical, not because he writes erotica and advocates censorship, but because this form of censorship is itself paradoxical. Repressing sexuality and speaking about it are interdependent, and a reading of the continuum between *Dracula* and Stoker's censorship essay can suggest ways in which censorship produces "erotic" material even in its efforts to prohibit sexual discourse and behaviour.

First, historicising both the vampire myth and censorship, I will draw a connection between the productive myth-making of censorship and the "vampirism" of obscene discourse. Both *Dracula* and "The Censorship of Fiction" work out of this history of demonising both sexuality and its discourses as a means to censorship and social discipline. *Dracula*, I will argue, presents one of the first modern transformations of this censorship theme since it links vampiric sexuality with the "cutting edge" technologies of the typewriter and the phonograph.[4] While the paradox of censorship is borne out in Stoker's erotic and puritanical writings, it also functions in the plot of *Dracula* itself, where Mina Harker achieves the modern freedom to quickly produce and distribute her own discourse by using a typewriter. Through technological inventions which facilitate the dissemination of information, Mina Harker and her "brave men" produce and distribute a potentially dangerous erotic discourse in order to police the deviant sexuality of the vampire. In my conclusion, I will turn to the "postmodern" technologies of censorship in Francis Ford Coppola's film *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, which elaborates upon the sexual threat of technology and more subtly repeats the reactionary gesture of "The Censorship of Fiction."

## Vampires and the Sexual Discourse of Censorship

HISTORICALLY, CENSORSHIP AND other social restrictions are justified by the rhetorical invention of evil, whether it assumes the form of obscenity, disease, or monstrosity. The myth of vampirism has functioned as one such moral regulator. Like witch hunts, the vampire myth was used as an instrument of social control, a means to define and name deviance. Not just any corpse was considered a likely candidate for vampirism. Most often, vampires were individuals who defied social or religious mores. In the early Church, most of those accused of vampire attacks were deceased excommunicants, suicides, and those buried unbaptised or apostate (Barber 29). It was widely held that "people could protect themselves from vampires

by observing the sacraments of the Church" (Masters 176, 180). More specifically, vampirism was a means of policing sexual behaviour, often through demonising female sexuality. While one form of folkloric vampire was strictly monster — a walking dead, short, plump, grotesque — other versions, particularly female, were clearly eroticised. Female vampires were a form of succubus, the female demon said to descend upon a man while he slept for the purpose of sexual intercourse. Gabriel Ronay describes the Lamia as "a type of female vampire [greatly feared in ancient Greece] that used the pleasures of lovemaking to ensnare handsome youths, drain them of their blood, and devour them" (5). The Talmud's Lilith, another version of the vampire succubus, "mischievously filled the minds of sleeping men with erotic dreams, thus causing them to excrete semen" (Masters 170). Generally, vampirism represented the monstrosity of "pure sexual expenditure." Seeking erotic pleasure in defiance of social laws commanding the propagation of the human race, vampire were represented as alien creatures who threatened the survival of humanity as a whole.[5]

By the nineteenth century, the vampire myth was brought closer to home as ordinary women gaining intellectual and sexual autonomy were thought to be potential Lamias and Liliths. In "Onanism: Essay on the Ailments Produced By Masturbation" first published in 1758 but widely influential in Victorian culture, Samuel Tissot wrote that women who masturbate "are particularly liable to attacks of hysteria or frightful vapors; ... falling and ulceration of the womb, ... lengthening and scabbing of the clitoris; and finally uterine fury, *which deprives them at once of modesty and reason and puts them on the level of lewdest brutes*" (Kendrick 89, emphasis mine). Masturbation's most egregious symptom was androgyny, a feature also common to the sexually penetrating female vampire. While men who masturbate, according to Tissot, become diseased and impotent, women who masturbate become diseased and sexually potent. Unnaturally masculinised, they become lewd "brutes." Indeed, they become *like vampires*. A pseudo-scientific tract designed to repress sexual behaviour, "Onanism" delineated sexual perversion by naming it and defining it as bestial. Like certain myths of the vampire, it reproduced discursive forms of deviant sexuality even as it attempted to control sexual acts.

Masturbation represents only one activity which generated Victorian anxiety over sexuality. It accompanies, in the Victorian mind, another increasingly rampant perversion — reading. With the growing mass of common readers in the nineteenth century came heightened anxiety over the potentially subversive sexual influence of print material. Monstrously auto-erotic, women were now potentially autodidactic. Akin to the temptation of masturbation, reading even threatened to inspire the

act. Encouraging independent ideas and autonomous sexuality, reading in fact became another pernicious factor in the dangerous domain of sexuality. According to the logic of the nineteenth century censor (and to Stoker himself), as lewd fiction was withheld from the masses, so too was their sexuality kept in check.

Yet the censorship of pornography and "dangerous" fiction was accompanied by its own production of sexual discourses. Henry Spencer Ashbee, a Victorian bibliophile who specialised in pornography, "damned the very things he was immortalizing." Erotic bibliography, he contended, "would protect the world from pernicious literature by highlighting it instead of blotting it out" (Kendrick 74–75). More dramatically, the prosecutions of obscene novels in the nineteenth century staged their own productions of these works by detailing content, inventing new and especially lewd titles, and citing their offending passages verbatim.[6] These trials, in a sense, produced their own form of lewd fiction, enforcing censorship through both the prosecution of obscene literature and the reinscription of it. As Richard D. Altick observes, print journalism became a crucial instrument in the moral policing of literature in the nineteenth century: "[once] 'superior orders of society' ... conceded it was impossible to prevent the lower ranks from reading, they embarked on a long campaign to ensure that through the press the masses of people would be induced to help preserve the status quo" (85). Thus was censorship forced away from the simple repression of discourse into a production of its own discourse, which, to obtain full effect, had to be convincingly erotic as well as convincingly evil.

## Dracula and the Technologies of Censorship

READ IN THE context of Victorian-style censorship, *Dracula* exemplifies censorship's complex repression and production of sexual discourse. The sexuality of *Dracula* cannot be interpreted autonomously from the disciplining rhetoric of earlier vampire myths or the creative rhetoric of nineteenth-century censorship. Stoker's vampirism is a mythic cousin to uterine fury. Count Dracula is the classic inhuman Other. A monstrous embodiment of human sexuality, he represents a perverse sexuality that defies institutional definition.[7] As a demonic representation of this defiance, the vampire reinforces such institutions as marriage, heterosexuality, and patriarchy. Yet, even as *Dracula* reinscribes boundaries of sexuality, it transgresses them. The symbol of the vampire works to repress *and to expose*: it represses human sexuality, replacing it with monstrous anatomy and preternatural reproductive functions, yet it highlights "deviant" sexuality unacceptable to Victorian culture such as sex with multiple partners,

sex outside of marriage, adulterous sex, homosexuality, and potent female sexuality.[8]

This paradox within Stoker's vampire myth is mirrored in the novel by a paradox within its generated sexual discourses. *Dracula* is preoccupied with the spread and control of vampiric sexuality and its representative discourse. Technological advances in communication and transcription such as the typewriter and the phonograph form a type of vampiric reproduction. As Jennifer Wicke points out, "the social force most analogous to Count Dracula's ... is none other than mass culture, the developing technologies of the media in its many forms" (469). The narrative of *Dracula* is "pasted together" from letters, newspaper articles, and telegraph messages. It features diaries written in shorthand, typed on a typewriter or recorded on phonograph cylinders. These technologies of discourse have a specular relationship to vampirism in the novel: like the Count, who represents the source of perversity, these media are a well-spring of erotica, conveying a contagious passion that requires vigilant supervision. Powerfully reproductive, they engender a type of techno-vamping of discourse, potentially spreading sexual information widely and indiscriminately. Characters employ these modern inventions paradoxically, however, to facilitate and to impede communication. Jonathan uses shorthand, for instance, to correspond with Mina and to ensure that the Count is unable to read his correspondence. Like a censorship which both produces and denounces sexual discourse, shorthand and the novel's other forms of communication technology simultaneously police and expose the Count and his perverse sexuality.

Documenting events surrounding the vampire attacks thus constitutes both a primary moral duty and a moral transgression, an ambivalent activity evidenced by characters simultaneously writing down and censoring their thoughts. Writing to Mina of her "polyandrous" fantasy, for instance, Lucy adds the proper disclaimer: "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy and I must not say it" (59). Curiously, Lucy is compelled to chronicle her heresy even if she must denounce it. Since the strategy allows for both her indulgence and her restraint, she is seldom inclined to restrict her language. When she writes to Mina of her love for Arthur Holmwood, she fears her letter is an improper expression of emotion which she is nevertheless unwilling to contain. Her letter is a vehicle for her desire, a displaced discursive consummation of her sexual urges. "I do not know how I am writing this even to you," she tells Mina; "I am afraid to stop, or I should tear up the letter, and I don't want to stop, for I *do so* want to tell you all" (55). Anticipating her subsequent feelings of desire and repulsion

for the Count, Lucy's ambivalent desire to tell all reveals her simultaneous femme fatale seductiveness and "angel in the house" sweetness. She is both naive and brazen. Hers is a discursive ejaculation which prophesies her final plunge into "undead" licentiousness. Lucy's excited desire to speak ("I *do so* want to tell you all") becomes unquestionably vampiric, giving way to unchecked sexual hunger.

Even as Lucy revels in discursive and vampiric flirtation, she recognises the illicitness of both her discourse and her vamping. Both she and Mina understand that her letters and her mysterious excursion to the churchyard must be kept "secret." Lucy adds in one letter, however, that Mina can tell Jonathan of her engagement to Arthur since "a woman ought to tell her husband everything" (56). As sexually devoted partners, Mina and Jonathan are socially sanctioned partners in discourse as well. Indeed, as Jonathan's fiancée, Mina performs the premarital rite of learning his discourse, and the couple finally communicate in their own language — shorthand. Before they are married, however, Jonathan resists fully open correspondence with Mina, especially suppressing his brush with vampirism. His ambivalent desire for the vampire women in Count Dracula's castle, like Lucy's desire for Dracula, is replayed in his ambivalent inscribing of it. He writes in his journal, "I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. It is not good to note this down, lest some day it should meet Mina's eyes and cause her pain; but it is the truth" (37). As Victorian publishers censored fiction for the protection of the "weaker sex," Jonathan censors both his journal and his correspondence to Mina. Theirs is still a premarital, virginal communication: "To her I have explained my situation, but without the horrors [sexual desires] which I may only surmise. It would shock and frighten her to death were I to expose my heart to her" (41).

Jonathan's apprehension attests to the novel's fixation with the danger of spreading sexual information. As deadly as vampirism itself, communication about vampirism is frequently censored in *Dracula*, usually for the protection of the physically and emotionally fragile women. Arthur Holmwood writes, for instance, that he dare not ask Lucy's mother about her daughter's failing health "for to disturb the poor lady's mind about her daughter in her present state of health would be fatal" (109). Lucy is likewise never told the origin of her illness, her physical fragility specifically requiring that she be kept ignorant, while Mina is excluded from the vampire hunt because she is physically and emotionally weak. Dr. Seward declares it is "no place for a woman," insisting "if she [Mina] had remained in touch with the affair, it would in time infallibly have wrecked her" (256). The act of withholding information about these symbolic sexu-

al transactions does not apply exclusively to women, however, since Arthur too must be kept in the dark about Seward's transfusion of blood to Lucy. Revealing the particularly sexual nature of the transfusion, Van Helsing advises Seward, "If our young lover should turn up unexpected, as before, no word to him. It would at once frighten him and enjealous him, too" (128). In this episode, Van Helsing wishes to protect the feelings of Arthur and perhaps ensure the success of his own operation. Threatened by the knowledge of this symbolic sexual mingling of his friend's and his lover's bodily fluids, Arthur would no doubt attempt to put an end to the "adulterous" project.

In this instance, Van Helsing also outlines the double-edged nature of the recipient of information who is easily frightened and potentially menacing. Access to information can indeed turn the innocent into the guilty, the weak into the dangerous. Serving as a sort of caretaker-censor in the novel, Van Helsing leads the campaign to hunt Dracula, a campaign which involves the strict control of the dispersal of vampiric discourse. In a somber speech which echoes Stoker's own fears about the dangers of spreading sexual knowledge through literature, Van Helsing advises Seward to censor the communication of his medical knowledge and motives:

> ... my good friend John, let me caution you. You deal with the madmen. All men are mad in some way or the other; and inasmuch as you deal discreetly with your madmen, so deal with God's madmen, too — the rest of the world. You tell not your madmen what you do nor why you do it; you tell them not what you think. So you shall keep knowledge in its place, where it may rest — where it may gather its kind around it and breed. (118)

Van Helsing's insistence on keeping "knowledge in its place" suggests an anxiety about the spread of discourse which is equal to the fear generated by the vampire itself. Discourse, like sexuality, is reproductive: it too must be subject to social control. The technological advances of the phonograph and the typewriter spur fears about the control of knowledge since they allow for faster production, multiplication, and easier, more widespread dissemination of documents. Indeed, as vampiric promiscuity pervades *Dracula*, so too is discourse reproduced and distributed in a veritable pornographic orgy: Van Helsing reads Lucy's papers, Mina reads Jonathan's diary, Van Helsing reads Jonathan's diary, Van Helsing gives Seward Mina's writings to read, and Seward gives Mina his diary for tran-

scription. While presenting a challenge to censorship and the control of sexuality, this discursive promiscuity is at the core of the novel's moral imperative. Accounts of the vampire must be compiled, reproduced, and read during the hunt for the Count. As Van Helsing comments, "I have studied, over and over again since they came into my hands, all the papers relating to this monster; and the more I have studied, the greater seems the necessity to utterly stamp him out" (301–2). The transcription of sexual deviancy, Van Helsing suggests, serves as a mode of discipline. Here lies the paradox of discourse in *Dracula*: characters must suppress *and produce* information about the vampire who represents deviant sexuality. Jonathan's written account of his erotic desire to be kissed by the vampire women's "red lips" *does* meet Mina's eyes once they are married. Similarly, Mina's account of her symbolic act of fellatio with Dracula is recounted to all of the characters as part of the greater campaign against the Count. Indeed, the connection between *Dracula* and "The Censorship of Fiction" becomes increasingly clear: all of the content that makes *Dracula* an erotic novel is, in the plot of the text, the means of destroying the erotic source. Stoker's eroticism comes replete with censor.

The strange dynamic between the repression and production of sexual discourse is best exemplified in Mina's wholly ambivalent role in the novel. Mina compiles the vampire narrative, the text of evidence against the Count, yet as the Count's victim and as the novel's leader in modern technology, she also occupies the role of vampiric Other. These two roles are indeed complementary. While Lucy's discursive freedom and sexual promiscuity render her a prime partner for the Count, it is precisely Mina's knowledge and management of communications technology which ultimately render her vampiric. If Lucy writes down her desires too freely, it is Mina who *reads* and copies these desires and others. She is akin to the Count, even before she is bitten, in both her ambitious acts challenging the common practices of discourse — her study of learning typewriting and shorthand — and her transgression of gender conventions.[9] As Van Helsing observes, Mina has the mind of a man (234). She longs to be a partner to Jonathan in his work, thus she practices shorthand and typewriting "to be useful to Jonathan." She also keeps a diary to improve her powers of memory, as she writes to Lucy:

> When I am with you I shall keep a diary in the same way. I don't mean one of those two-pages-to-the-week-with-Sunday-squeezed-in-a-corner diaries, but a sort of journal which I can write in whenever I feel inclined.... I shall try to do what I see lady journalists do: interviewing and

> writing descriptions and trying to remember conversations. I am told that, with a little practice, one can remember all that goes on or all that one hears said during a day. (53–54)

Such vigilant chronicling borders on the vampiric in its almost supernatural strength of memory and perception. Mina's increased powers of observation and reproduction — her mastery of technology — present a challenge to the censors of her age since knowledge cannot easily be hidden from a woman so well trained. Indeed, Mina threatens to supplant the Victorian male censor: her proficiency with a variety of communication technologies empowers her access to, and control of, information. Performing the role of censor in the novel, she nearly upsets the patriarchal dominion over discourse controlled by Van Helsing. While Mina is protected from the physical dangers of the vampire hunt, her typed manuscript in fact organises it. Thus, it may be argued that Mina's diligent typing parallels the heroism of the men who physically chase and destroy the vampires. By ordering in typed form all details about the Count's British tour, she controls sexual discourse and symbolically imposes order on an untamed vampiric sexuality.

Mina's role as censor is most evident when she copies Seward's phonograph diary on her typewriter, mechanising and therefore sanitising his emotions and desires more palpably expressed in speech. Discovering the bare truth of Seward's heart as she listens to his phonographic diary, Mina dutifully conceals his feelings by typing out his spoken words. As she tells him:

> That is a wonderful machine, but it is cruelly true. It told me, in its very tones, the anguish of your heart. It was like a soul crying out to almighty God. No one must hear them spoken ever again! See, I have tried to be useful. I have copied out the words on my typewriter, and none other need now hear your heart beat, as I did. (222)

Offering a mechanical objectivity to written expression, typewriting tempers the personal emotions that might arouse the listener or invade her privacy. As such, it becomes a modern technology of censorship as well as a modern challenge to it: it reproduces, yet represses, the very discourse it copies.

Having this primary access to information about the Count in the novel, Mina faces it at its most dangerous core, thus mitigating its threat to

others. If her typewriting tames original documents, it equally clarifies them. She translates, for instance, the opaque shorthand of Jonathan's diary for the seemingly omniscient Van Helsing. Significantly, when Van Helsing asks to read Jonathan's journal, he approaches Mina as a sort of "official keeper" of the vampire documents. Van Helsing's request affords Mina the irresistible opportunity to assert her technological authority. Perhaps in retaliation to his surprised reaction over her discursive powers, Mina decides to play a trick on Van Helsing by handing him Jonathan's shorthand journal:

> I could not resist the temptation of mystifying him a bit — I suppose it is some of the taste of the original apple that remains still in our mouths — so I handed him the shorthand diary. He took it with a grateful bow, and said:
>
> "May I read it?"
>
> "If you wish," I answered as demurely as I could. He opened it, and for the instant his face fell. Then he stood up and bowed.
>
> "Oh, you so clever woman!" he said. "I long knew that Mr. Jonathan was a man of much thankfulness; but see, his wife have all the good things. And will you not so much honour me and so help me as to read it for me? Alas! I know not the shorthand." By this time my little joke was over, and I was almost ashamed; so I took the typewritten copy from my work-basket and handed it to him. (183)

Mina's posture as the dissembling temptress is carried to its logical conclusion when she becomes the Count's next mistress. As a female censor, she upsets Victorian social order, emerging both as a demonised threat and a matriarchal protectress. An Eve figure who acquires supernatural perception, Mina's vampiric telepathy with the Count marks her crowning achievement in techno-vampirism. Mentally connected to the Count, she essentially obtains an exclusive knowledge of the vampire's symbolic sexuality since she alone knows what the Count knows. Indeed, this "mind meld" with the Count functions as the climax of her techno-vampirism aptitude developed through typewriting and shorthand. A "supernatural" form of communication between Mina and the Count, their telepathy also serves as a symbolically adulterous rival to her "secret" communication with Jonathan through shorthand. Mina's position now becomes wholly double-edged: she is a powerful weapon for her friends against the Count, yet, as they discover, she

is also a dangerous weapon that may be used by the Count against them. Now seduced by telepathic discourse with the Count rather than by a desire for physical penetration, Mina becomes the embodiment of the inconstant woman tempted by the erotic discourse of pornographic literature who may not be able to maintain loyalty, even if she so desires.

Appropriately, Mina's strength falters at this point in the novel as she seems unable to withstand the knowledge about her symbolic fellatio with the Count. When Van Helsing explains to her the nature of her vampiric infection, she faints into Jonathan's arms, an act which supports the men's conviction that women are too weak to confront the truth about vampirism. Both a victim and a threat, Mina is paradoxically the weakest and the most powerful among Van Helsing's Christian soldiers. Grown knowledgeable beyond the level normal for her gender, Mina is now "leagued with [the] enemy" (332), a menace to her friends and the entire human race. She remains, nonetheless, the moral backbone of the novel, imploring Jonathan, "Promise me that you will not tell me anything of the plans formed for the campaign against the Count. Not by word, or inference, or implication" (326). Acting as her own censor in this instance, Mina denies herself access to what she has documented. Her "wisdom" ultimately reflects the censorship polemic of her author, who maintains with regard to the reading and writing of obscene fiction, "Women are the worst offenders in this breach of moral law" ("The Censorship of Fiction" 485). Mina recognises her own potential to violate this law and wisely and courageously seeks to counter it.

As Mina's heroism makes clear, Count Dracula and his rivals struggle for the control of discourse and its technologies. The Count not only threatens the possession of Lucy and Mina ("Your girls that you all love are mine") but the eradication of human discourse. A purely villainous version of Mina, Dracula performs his own censorship manoeuvres even as he disseminates perverse sexual knowledge. He censors Jonathan's letters, actually burning the letter written to Mina in shorthand. Striking again later in the novel, he breaks into Seward's office, burning the typewritten manuscript of evidence against him along with Seward's wax phonograph cylinders. Once under Dracula's spell, Lucy becomes his accomplice in censorship, attempting to destroy her own written account of Dracula's attack on her (152). As the novel ends with the victory of the human race, however, the righteous censors prevail. Mina and her "brave men" are successful in finally destroying Dracula because they maintain control over their discourse, successfully opposing the Count's attempts to destroy all written evidence against him. As Mina states after Dracula burns her manuscript of evidence, "Thank God there is the other copy in

the safe" (285). Protecting and policing the proper boundaries of discourse and sexuality, Mina's skills in techno-vampirism ultimately ensure the Count's defeat.

## Dracula 1992: Censorship and Romance

THE LATE TWENTIETH century has borne witness to an advanced technology of computer transmitted information. "Cybersex" has become the latest form of vampiric discourse, threatening to spread moral degeneracy as the vampire threatens to propagate sexual deviance. Cybersex has recently become the target of censors who fear "lascivious material" is falling into the hands of minors at "lightning speed" through the Internet. Enforcing decency codes on Internet traffic, however, is nearly impossible (Lewis A1). Censors are again faced with an uncontrollable threat since sexual material now travels to tens of thousands of computers via digital bits. As this represents a noteworthy permutation in techno-vampirism, what better moment in history to adapt Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to the screen? Indeed, Coppola's film serves a purpose similar to Stoker's novel: while highlighting the erotic aspect of the vampire figure, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) promotes an ethics of devotion and romance which aims to counter the threat of promiscuous, anonymous sexuality in the age of cyberspace.

Since Francis Ford Coppola's version of *Dracula* claims to be the most accurate rendition of the original Victorian novel, no links are forged in the movie between vampirism and contemporary cybersex. Late Victorian media inventions nonetheless pervade *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Coppola attempts an accurate rendering of Stoker's narrative's production process: we see Jonathan writing his diary in Romania (although not in shorthand) and Mina typing hers on her typewriter. As in the novel, the film draws parallels between these media, sexuality, and vampirism. Typing functions as a displaced form of sexuality, for instance, when Lucy asks Mina if her "ambitious Jon Harker" is forcing her "to learn that ridiculous machine when he could be forcing [her] to perform unspeakable acts of passion on the parlour floor?" Coppola also skillfully incorporates vampiric media which are better suited to film than literature. He makes particularly good use of the 1890s invention, the cinematograph. Serving as a simulacrum to vampirism just as the technologies devoted to the production and dissemination of discourse do in the novel, the cinematograph functions as an aid in the Count's foreplay in the film. Posing as a tourist in London, he introduces himself to Mina as Prince Vlad from Romania and asks her directions to the cinematograph. She takes him to a tent where they watch a bawdy silent film featuring scantily clad women "playing"

with a man (the scene is reminiscent of Jonathan Harker's romp with the three vampire women). While Dracula first attempts to bite Mina in a corner of the tent, a nude woman dances on the screen in the background, reminding us of the monstrous threat of unregulated technology.

Coppola, however, clearly aims to treat this union of technology, monstrosity, and sexuality ironically. Featuring bare breasts and erotic scenes of orgasmic passion, Coppola's film provides the 1990s version of the early cinema's titillation. It offers up a blatant version of the sexuality more prudishly figured in Stoker's novel and thus has the opposite function of Mina's typewriting of Seward's phonograph diary, for it explicitly visualises the novel's erotic language. Like the cinematograph before it and cybersex after it, the motion picture offers new potential for the reproduction and transformation of sexual discourse. It, therefore, presents a new challenge to censorship. Coppola makes the most, for instance, of Jonathan's experience with the female vampires at Dracula's castle, depicting it clearly as a heterosexual male fantasy of group sex. The novel's vague seduction scene with Lucy in the churchyard becomes, on film, the episode where Dracula-as-beast copulates with Lucy in her garden. Lucy appears half naked throughout most of her vampiric illness. She lies on her sickbed with legs spread, writhing in the throes of erotic passion. Coppola's interpretation, literalising Stoker's sexual suggestion, rests on what Foucault calls "the speaker's benefit." The film's presentation of sexuality has the appearance of "a deliberate transgression" of the censoring mind-set of Victorian England (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 6).

The film also appears to be more "liberated" than the novel since vampirism offers an escape to Lucy and Mina from Victorian strictures. Albeit to different degrees, both women are bursting with sexual desire and curiosity. Censorship in the film is portrayed as the suppression, as dictated by her Victorian sensibility, of Mina's true passions. Coppola highlights the connection between lewd books and vampirism when Mina takes a break from typing her diary to look at pornographic illustrations of Richard F. Burton's *Arabian Nights*. "How disgustingly awful," she exclaims as she peeks at the colourful drawing of copulation. When Mina accidentally drops the book on the floor, her secret is out, and both she and Lucy giggle while gazing at the pictures. When Mina wonders, "do men and women really do this?", the free-speaking Lucy replies, "I did it just last night in my dreams!" Mina tells Lucy she shouldn't say such things, but also types in her diary that she truly admires Lucy's ability to speak freely. Mina is, in fact, impatient for sexual experience. When Jonathan departs for his trip abroad, Mina kisses him hungrily. When she says to him, "we've waited this long," we know she is bemoaning a further defer-

ral of sexual consummation. While Victorian rules force Lucy and Mina to wait until marriage for sexual fulfillment, vampirism offers them immediate consummation. The Count is in this sense un-demonised since he rescues even while he attacks. But what does it mean to un-demonise Dracula? Does *Bram Stoker's Dracula* subvert Victorian censorship ideas since the perverse "Other" of sexuality is "Other" no longer?

As my reading of Stoker's *Dracula* has shown, eroticism can be used to quite divergent ends, serving both to discipline and liberate, to censor and expose. Yet Coppola's hero-vampire offers a new strategy for a productive censoring of sexuality, at the centre of which is romance. Coppola uses vampiric sexuality not merely to condemn it as is Stoker's method, but to contain or even to dismiss it by way of a sublimated conjugal love between the Count and Mina. Thus, the original novel's tension between the display of sexuality and the repression of it, between the reproduction of discourse and the control of it, is relaxed in Coppola's film through the romantic sanctioning of the vampire.

In his effort to humanise Dracula, Coppola presents a pre-credit sequence of the pre-vampiric Count Dracula, drawing on some of the folkloric myths of vampires and on the historical prototype for Count Dracula. Coppola attempts to subvert the moralism of the vampire myth by recreating the "true" origin of the vampire. The film opens in 1462 in a Wallachia embattled by Turks. Vlad Dracula, a knight of the order of the Dragon, departs from his wife Elizabetha to go to battle defending Christendom "against the enemies of Christ." The subsequent scene of battle featuring Turks impaled on stakes evokes Count Dracula's historical namesake, Dracula, Prince Vlad V of Wallachia, remembered by his people as both a ruthless and heroic figure.[10] Returning home victorious, Dracula finds his wife has committed suicide after being told by vengeful Turks that her husband is dead. Because she transgressed the laws of the Church by committing suicide, Elizabetha is denied a Christian burial, and her husband, in a spectacular blood bath, vows revenge. The focus on suicide in this preamble is significant since suicides in the middle ages were commonly feared to become vampires after death.[11] Evoking pity for Elizabetha and Prince Dracula, the film exposes and challenges the religious dogmatism that condemned suicides to eternal damnation and gave rise to the vampire myth. In this case, the suicide, Elizabetha, does not rise from her grave as a vampire; instead, her husband vows to return from the grave to avenge her death. Thus Count Dracula is "born" both of rebellion against Christian intolerance and out of devoted love. In 1897, this same knight, now the undead Count Dracula, buys real estate in London in order to be reunited with Elizabetha in her new incarnation as Mina Harker. He travels to

London, finds Mina and courts her, while Jonathan is safely held prisoner in the Count's castle in Romania. While the Prince offers Mina a walk on the wild side, taking her to the pornographic cinematograph and getting her high on absinthe, his higher amorous motives prevail. "The luckiest man on earth is the one who finds true love," he tells Jonathan in a moment of emotional transparency.

Coppola's Dracula unites Prince Charming and monster. He is a hero-villain tragically doomed by his own rebellious righteousness. A sort of Byronic hero, the Count is "the monster that men would kill" because his love surpasses that of the common man. In fact, his "visionary" love fosters certain supernatural powers which he passes on to his vampire progeny. When Lucy is bitten by the Count, she describes her illness as fostering hypersensory perception, rendering her able to hear a pin drop on the opposite side of her mansion. Mina expresses her desire to share in this superhuman vision when she implores Dracula to make her a vampire: "I want to see what you see, hear what you hear."

The romance of Dracula and Mina, despite its erotic passion, is in fact a spiritual love. Dracula proves to be more repulsed by his own monstrous sexuality than Mina. He refuses to make Mina a vampire even when she asks for it: "I cannot let this be," he says. "I love you too much." Vampiric lust proves too base even for Dracula himself. He rapes Lucy only for nourishment, and these attacks effectively constitute his "misery," his damnation. He is condemned to this blood lust when Mina leaves him in order to attend to Jonathan who is ailing in Romania. Here, both Mina and the Count prove to be unfaithful to each other, to their "deeper" love. Indeed, when Mina finds the beast Dracula astride Lucy in the garden, he feels shame at being discovered. "No, do not see me!" he telepathically conveys to Mina, hypnotising her into ignorance of his adultery. While vampirism for Lucy is bestial (and devoid of love), for Mina it is a sacred bond with her soulmate. Offering a crude version of the madonna/whore cliché, vampirism is split here into conjugal spirituality and promiscuous bestiality. Despite its romantic sublimation, vampirism still functions to demonise Lucy's flirtation as it does in the novel. Her fiancé, Arthur, is still allowed the vengeful and exhibitionist pleasure of driving a stake through her with his romantic competitors as witnesses.

The film's focus on Dracula's romance, however, illustrates how vampiric sexuality conclusively emerges as a means of reaffirming the institution of romantic love. In a sort of family values interpretation of vampirism, Mina is, effectively, married to the Count. Ultimately, however, the fires of even the conjugal undead must be smothered. The spiritual fulfillment of Romantic love precludes any sexual liberation at the end of the

film when Mina kills Dracula so he can be reunited with Elizabetha in heaven. Mimicking Stoker's own deployment of the sexual vampire for a conservative platform of censorship, the explicit sexuality in *Bram Stoker's Dracula* proves to be a means of channelling sexuality into the boundaries of marriage, of sublimating it into the ideal of romantic love. Coppola's cinematic rendition of *Dracula* thus offers the latest paradoxical shape of vampiric sexuality: it is unbounded in its conjugal devotion, unstoppable in the lengths to which it will go to achieve "true love."

# NOTES

1 Considering *Dracula* in the light of Stoker's censorship essay, Daniel Farson concludes that "coming from the author of *Dracula* these views seem incredible.... Is it possible that Stoker did not realize he had written one of the most erotic books in English literature?" (210). Christopher Bentley effectively answers Farson by claiming, "it must be assumed that [Stoker] was largely unaware of the sexual content of his book" (26–27). Similarly, George Stade sees a disparity between Stoker's censorship writing and his fiction. "Stoker was not a hypocrite," he writes, "he simply did not know his own mind. He would not have been able to write a book like *Dracula* if he had" (xiii).

2 Michael Holquist describes the paradox of censorship as "a version of litotes" which necessarily states the positive through the negative, and necessarily includes the Other it seeks to exclude. Richard Burt deconstructs this conception of censorship as originally "negative," arguing that "censorship never operated in the modern terms in which it is generally thought to have operated — as negative, repressive exercises of power" (xv). Suggesting the ways in which censorship is a "positive exercise of power," he describes book burnings as "staging an opposition between corrupting and purifying forces and agencies" (xviii). *Dracula* intensifies this opposition by staging a struggle between the monstrous and the human.

3 Kathleen L. Spencer categorises *Dracula* as an example of the "Urban Gothic" of the late nineteenth century characterised by an "attempt to reduce anxiety by stabilizing certain key distinctions, which seemed in the last decade of the nineteenth century to be eroding: between male and female, natural and unnatural, civilized and degenerate, human and nonhuman" (203).

4 Jennifer Wicke reads *Dracula* as "a chaotic reaction-formation in advance of modernism, wildly taking on the imprintings of mass culture" (469). Thus in the narrative structure of the novel — which incorporates phonograph recordings, typewritten and telegraphed documents — nineteenth-century epistolary effusion "is invaded by cutting edge technology" (470).

5 In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault describes "the obsessive worries that medicine and pedagogy nurtured on the subject of pure sexual expenditure — that unproductive and partnerless activity — from the eighteenth century onward. The gradual exhaustion of the organism, the death of the individual, the destruction of his offspring, and finally, harm to the entire human race, were regularly promised through an endlessly garrulous literature, to those who would make illicit use of their sex" (16).

6 Walter Kendrick describes the trial of Madame Bovary where prosecutor Ernest Pinard "concluded the first of his attack by replacing Flaubert's subtitle, *Provincial Customs*, with a new one: *The Story of a Provincial Woman's Adulteries*." Pinard also interposed paraphrases of the novel and read the novel verbatim with his own declamations (107–109).

7 See Carrol Fry and Christopher Bentley for discussion of the sexual symbolism of vampirism in *Dracula*.

8 Christopher Craft describes the inversion of the gender-based categories of penetration and reception in *Dracula*, "as virile Jonathan Harker enjoys a 'feminine' passivity and awaits a delicious penetration from a woman whose demonism is figured as the power to penetrate" (169). Craft also locates an implicit homoerotic desire in this "demonic inversion of normal gender relations" (170).

9 As a figure that displaces eroticism from the genitalia to the mouth, the Count transgresses the traditional separation of gender roles by fusing the acts of penetrating and receiving. The Count's mouth, Christopher Craft notes, is "the primary site of erotic experience in *Dracula*," and it defies the easy separation of the masculine and the feminine. Craft explains, "Luring at first with an inviting orifice, a promise of red softness, but delivering instead a piercing bone,

the vampire mouth fuses and confuses what Dracula's civilized nemesis, Van Helsing ... works so hard to separate — the gender-based categories of the penetrating and the receptive" (169). Mina foreshadows her own vampiric gender inversion, her feminine penetration, through her "manlike" intellectual ambitions. Her mastery of communication technologies, indeed, allows her to read and spread information — sometimes lewd in content — much as the Count spreads vampirism. Mina's knowledge of shorthand, for instance, allows her to read Jonathan's journal chronicling his stay at the Count's castle and his rapture over the vampire women. The danger in this knowledge is indicated by Jonathan himself who fears the contents of his journal: "I have had a great shock, and when I try to think of what it is I feel my head spin round, and I do not know if it was all real or the dreaming of a madman. You know I have had brain fever, and that is to be mad. The secret is here [in the journal], and I do not want to know it. I want to take up my life here, with our marriage" (104). Mina subsequently types this information and passes it on to Van Helsing, Seward, Morris and Godalming (229).

10 Prince Vlad, also known as Vlad Ţepeş (*ţeapă* meaning spike in Romanian), lived from 1431 to 1476. He is known for his heroism as a Christian who fought against the Turks, and for his bloodthirsty practice of impaling his enemies on tall stakes (Farson 127–130).

11 In Stoker's novel, it is no coincidence that Lucy fearlessly sits on the grave of a suicide before her descent into vampirism. The old man at the cemetery tells Lucy and Mina that the young man who "blew nigh the top of his head off with an old musket" had "hoped he'd go to hell, for his mother was so pious that she'd be sure to go to heaven, an' he didn't want to addle where she was." Upon hearing this gruesome tale, Lucy resolves, "it is my favorite seat and I cannot leave it; and now I find I must go on sitting over the grave of a suicide" (67). While in theory, as Jean Marigny notes, "everyone is susceptible to becoming a vampire after death, ... some ... are more vulnerable than others". Those others include "the excommunicated, *suicides*, victims of violent death, witches, the stillborn, and anyone who has not had a Christian burial" (56–57, emphasis mine).

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