Sexuality in Bram Stoker`s Dracula vs sexuality in Francis Ford Coppola`s Dracula

Written and set in the late 19th century, Bram Stoker`s novel *Dracula* is one of the most famous horror novels of all time. Published in 1897, the book garnered much critical and popular attention at the time of its publication and through the years has spawned countless stories and novels by other authors, as well as numerous theatrical and cinematic adaptations. Many critics regard the novel as the best-known and most enduring Gothic vampire story ever published.

The dated ideas reflected in *Dracula* focus primarily on the concepts of lust, sex and evil as they were viewed during the late 19th and 20th century in what can be viewed as a strongly conservative society. At the time, sex and homosexuality were controversial topics. These topics are boldly represented throughout the book and often centre on the glorifying resistance of temptation.

In Victorian society, women were constricted to very narrow gender roles. Essentially there were two paths, she could either be pure and virginal otherwise she was regarded as a whore. This ideal is represented through two of *Dracula`s* main characters, Mina and Lucy. Both these woman are inexplicably feminine – pure, naïve and almost dependent on their husbands – but each with one exception. Mina is a secretary and secretarial duties were a man`s job then. And Lucy had three suitors, suggesting her promiscuity and desire to break social confines.

The threat *Dracula* poses in transforming these women which becomes a battle that lies upon women`s sexuality. If Dracula succeeds in turning the ladies into vampires, this will fully release their sexuality and its expressions. This is shown as an evil in the novel perhaps because a woman that embraces her sexuality obtains power. This power is demonstrated in the passage where Harker is "raped" by three Weird sisters. The women take on the dominating role that a traditional Victorian man is supposed to possess. Thus the real fear in the book is not darkness and vampiric nature but the loss of female innocence.

But in the novel, as you can see, there is not the theme of women`s sexuality shown openly. It is hidden in symbols of repressed Victorian sexuality - vampires, blood or women`s blood-stained nightdresses - surely because of period, in which the novel was written.

We are no longer in the Victorian era, however, and women`s erotic desire are better shown in the 1992 film version directed by Francis Ford Coppola than in the novel. Dracula is not the usual monster movie you would expect at first. Instead, it is a very romantic story.

In this modern version there is a great focus on the sexuality of the female that would have never been acceptable in Victorian England. In the novel Mina`s character is much more acceptable. She was truly the perfect Victorian lady in keeping her emotions in check.

In the film when Jonathan prepares to take his leave of Mina to go to Transylvania, he is very stoical and formal towards her. Mina however, takes the initiative, pulls him aside and begins to kiss him passionately. And both Lucy and Mina lose their Victorian ways through Dracula`s influence; they share a lesbian moment in a rainstorm, while Lucy becomes in need of seduce and bite everyone in sight. They change from good Victorian girls into creatures far more like Dracula`s brides. Mainly the sexual experiences are the driving force throughout the plot of the film.

The novel written by Bram Stoker is full of sex, although it may not be seen for the first time. Because Stoker`s classic Dracula shows only symbols of repressed Victorian sexuality not sexuality itself. While Coppola does not really attempt to reconstitute Bram Stoker`s original vision of vampire sexuality amid Victorian England. The violence, sex and love story is much more explicit in the movie, because Coppola wanted to adapt the tale for a late twentieth century audience. That`s why Coppola changed a horror story to a tale of redemption through love.