Bram Stoker's Dracula as Saviour: Nietzschean Reading

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Summary

Bram Stoker's Count Dracula is traditionally and popularly regarded as the villain of Stoker's classic 1898 novel. Drawing on Nietzsche's theories on power and morality, as well as on existing theories on late-Victorian England and on the novel itself, this article argues that the famous Count emerges ironically as the novel's tragic hero. In particular, the preoccupation with appearance and boundaries that in part characterised late-Victorian England will be outlined with reference to Ronald Pearsall's *The Worm in the Bud* ([1969]2003) and Prescott and Giorgio's (2005) research on *Dracula*, which situates the novel within the late-Victorian climate of anxiety and power.

In this process, credence is given to Nietzsche's theory that morality is a construct borne from humanity's will to power and not a natural, historic given. As such, judgements formulated around this construct need to be carefully scrutinised and their value questioned. In the same vein, characters cast as either villainous or heroic within this constructed framework must be re-evaluated. Thus, the proposed article re-evaluates conventional ways of thinking with regards to power and morality, and focuses on how transgression can represent a meaningful challenge to a repressive, hypocritical status quo.

Opsomming

Die tradisionele, en gewildste, beskouing van Bram Stoker se Count Dracula is van hom as die booswig van Stoker se klassieke 1989 novelle. Hierdie artikel hou voor, aan die hand van Nietzsche se teorieë aangaande mag en moraliteit, dat die befaamde "Count" ironies na vore tree as die tragiese held van die novelle. In besonder word die laat-Viktoriaanse Engeland se karakteristieke besorgdheid met aanskyn en grense hier omtrek, met verwysing na Ronald Pearsall se *The Worm in the Bud* ([1969]2003), en Prescott en Giorgio's (2005) se navorsing aangaande Dracula, wat die novelle midde in die laat-Viktoriaanse klimaat van angsvalligheid en mag plaas.

In hierdie proses word geloofwaardigheid verleen aan Nietzsche se teorie dat moralitieit 'n maaksel is, gebore uit die menslike sin na mag, en nie 'n natuurlike, historiese gegewe nie. Sodanig is dit nodig om die uitsprake wat rondom hierdie maaksel geformuleer word sorgvuldig te ondersoek, en hul waarde te ondervra. In dieselfde gees word vereis dat karakters wat binne hierdie gekonstrueerde raamwerk óf as skurkagtig óf as heroïes uitgewys word, soortgelyke herskatting

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ondergaan. Die artikel heroorweeg dus konvensionele denkwyses aangaande mag en moraliteit, en fokus op die wyse waarop oorskryding 'n betekenisvolle betwisting van die bedwingende, huigelagtige status quo kan aanvoer.

Bram Stoker's Dracula as Saviour: A Nietzschean Reading

Count Dracula is the archetypal villain. He is the invader of sovereign lands and bodies, and the polygamous murderer of babies. However, Dracula is only "evil" in so far as he is the opposition to what the novel presents as "good". Acceptance of Stoker's protagonists and London as such casts The Count automatically as morally reprehensible and therefore "bad".

Drawing on Ronald Pearsall's study on sexuality and morality in late-Victorian England as well as on Nietzsche's philosophy on power, I argue that Dracula represents the only opposition to the late-Victorian climate of moral hypocrisy and self-delusion and as such is ironically the most "Christ-like" figure of the novel. Nietzsche's philosophy is particularly relevant here given the time period in which he wrote and his focus on power – a human characteristic that shaped the late-Victorian moral superstructure of which *Dracula* was a reflection.

Nietzsche's theories on power have been contentious, not least because his only book whose title includes the word "power" is not entirely his. In his book *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (1974), a composed yet clearly irritated Walter Kaufmann outlines the less-than-ideal conditions under which *The Will to Power* (1901) was published, citing Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth Forster-Nietzsche as the main antagonist in the ordeal – for Kaufmann, the anti-Nietzsche. According to Kaufmann, following Nietzsche's death in 1900, Forster-Nietzsche compiled a book comprising Nietzsche's unpublished, and random writings culminating in what *she* titled, *The Will to Power*. This book, which has often been erroneously considered as Nietzsche's final work, is for Kaufmann a "fabrication" (Kaufmann 1974: 6) and the reason behind popular opinion of Nietzsche's work as self-contradictory and incomprehensibly circular (p. 7). Whereas Kaufman asserts that *The Will to Power* as it has been published was never the magnum opus that Nietzsche intended, Rivkin and Ryan (2004) seem to provide an alternate view, writing that "Nietzsche died before being able to complete what was to be his major work, *The Will to Power*" (2004: 266). Nevertheless, the circumstances of the publication of *The Will to Power* necessitate that Nietzsche's other works be consulted in conjunction with this text in any analysis of Nietzsche's philosophy on power. However, let us tentatively approach this controversial text before supplementing the discussion with works that were published under the scrutiny of Nietzsche himself.

The aphorisms in *The Will to Power* develop the concept of humanity's innate need for order and control and how actions based on this need have

resulted in the construction of artificial categories and a fabricated reality designed to guarantee comfort. According to Nietzsche, humanity's "need for security, for quick understanding on the basis of sights and sounds, for means of abbreviation" (2004: 267) results in the construction of false categories that would satisfy these needs and the formulation of a fictional reality. Nietzsche writes how humankind attempts to "impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require" (p. 268) and that "the fictitious world of subject, substance, 'reason' etc. is needed – there is in us a power to order, to simplify, falsify, artificially distinguish" (p. 268). In other words, faced with a world that is disorderly, chaotic, and random, humankind is intrinsically driven to impose order upon that chaos and in doing so simultaneously construct a fictitious reality and assert itself dubiously as master of the environment.

While I have mentioned that the posthumous publication of *The Will to Power* renders the study of it problematic, it remains true that the concepts of power and illusion can be traced throughout Nietzsche's works. For example, in *Seventy-Five Aphorisms from Five Volumes,* Nietzsche claims that

> [w]e have fixed up a world for ourselves in which we can live – assuming bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content: without these articles of faith, nobody now would endure life. But that does not mean that they have been proved. Life is no argument; the conditions of life could include error.
>
> (Nietzsche [1882]2000b: 171)

The implication of this passage is that reality is not consistent with ideals. Indeed, Nietzsche's claim that "life could include error" suggests that reality is imbued with imperfection and that a failure to acknowledge this results in a life informed by assumption and therefore in a life unreal. Perhaps the most succinct description of this situation is to be found as early as in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* ([1872]2000a) in which he writes that "philosophical men even have a presentiment that the reality in which we live and have our being is also mere appearance and that another, quite different, reality lies beneath it" (p. 34). Emphasising this point, Nietzsche discusses the relationship between the will to power and the notion of truth, writing that "truth" is the will to be master over the multiplicity of sensations and to classify phenomena into definite categories. In this we start from a belief of the "in-itself of things (we take phenomena as *real*)" (p. 268). The false belief in the "in-itself" of things relates to, and indeed greatly influenced, the philosophy of post-structuralism in general and has informed the work of writers such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault[1]

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1. Foucault's *Power/Knowledge*: *Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (1977) borrows Nietzsche's concept of will to power and his evaluation on morality.

who, too, interrogate traditional assumptions regarding "truth", and whose work would have been impossible without their reading of Nietzsche and the consequent anti-Hegelian stance concerning the notion of the "in-itself". Crucial to the will to power is the desire for constancy – given that "change and happiness exclude one another" (p. 270), humankind in general is provoked to seek constancy. Related, Nietzsche problematises the notion of identity as a solid, stable structure – indeed, the philosopher contends that the notion of the autonomous, constant subject is in actuality a fiction. In other words, the idea that an individual possesses a singular, cohesive and unchanging identity is delusional – where humankind believes the individual or the subject to be capable of influence on the environment, as capable of creating effects, Nietzsche asserts that in reality, such a powerful "subject" is fictitious, and the product of humankind's will to power and will to truth. Gerald Gaylard, writing more than a century after Nietzsche, provides a similar perspective by positing that the misconception of reality relates largely to the confidence in or even the dependence on the stability of one's surroundings, or in "the belief in Western signs to represent accurately" (2005: 13). Gaylard further remarks, in a quote that echoes the major injunction issued to Adam (man) in Genesis, that Western culture is composed of a "desire for order and dominion over the flocks of the earth, which has the obvious appeal of making the world seem sane and rational" (p. 14). Thus, to own more is to be more powerful and also more deluded.

Recognising a similar trend in Nietzsche's philosophy, Nadeem J.Z. Hussain in his essay "Honest Illusion: Valuing for Nietzsche's Free Spirits", writes that "Nietzsche claims that for many of us, and perhaps for all of us, some of the time "untruth" – having false or inaccurate beliefs – is a "condition of life". Such false beliefs are necessary in order for us to keep on living" (2009: 159). The words "condition of life" here are interesting in that they imply that humanity's belief in and construction of false realities is not merely a defining characteristic – it is a means for survival. Through these words, and through establishing a link between avoiding reality and survival, Nietzsche communicates the severity, the absolute level of alienation of reality to humanity and therefore emphasises our disdain for it.

Bernard Reginster (2009 provides a contrasting view of the will to power, contending that Nietzsche's belief was not that humanity is evasive of suffering, but rather that we actively seek out resistance to the satisfaction of power. In justifying his position, Reginster cites the following quotation from *The Will to Power*:

> Human beings do not seek pleasure and avoid displeasure … what human beings want, what every smallest organism wants, is an increase in power; driven by that will they seek resistance, they need something that opposes it – displeasure, as an obstacle to their will to power, is therefore a normal fact …; human beings do not avoid it, they are rather in continual need of it.
>
> (Nietzsche quoted in Reginster 2009: 37)

On the surface, where Reginster remains, these words appear to confirm his position that Nietzsche believed that rather than avoid suffering, humanity seeks it out, given the satisfaction that arises from the overcoming of obstacles. However, in his focus on this particular aspect of Nietzsche's will to power theory, Reginster neglects to acknowledge Nietzsche's focus on and discussions of illusion that are so crucial to his work. In addition, his study is problematic in that it considers Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* in isolation from his other works and commentaries on the subject. While it may be that Nietzsche acknowledges humanity's tendency towards suffering in the process of satisfying power in this passage, his continual mention of self-delusion as a central characteristic of humanity as a whole portrays the will to power as a negative force, an obstacle in itself to the attainment of freedom – it is given form by humanity's illusion of mastery over its environment. Furthermore, Nietzsche's statement that humanity is in "continual need" of displeasure may be interpreted as an extension of his assertion that humanity *needs* to confront that which is unpleasant, that which is real, in order to free ourselves from the false realities we construct and take comfort in – perhaps this need to confront displeasure is part of his prescription of what humanity needs to do in order to transcend nihilism.

Where authors such as Reginster have interpreted Nietzsche's will to power as a positive force, as a means to overcome our flawed human condition, others have read it rather differently. For example, Kaufmann (1974) argues that Nietzsche "scorned power" (p. 180) and that his conception of the will to power as a whole is inseparable from his friendship with and ultimate estrangement from Richard Wagner, just as all his writings are inseparable from the context in which they were written. According to Kaufmann, Nietzsche was initially impressed by Wagner's creativity and used the composer as a case study for his theories on power. This would lend credibility to Hill's argument for the link between creativity and power and the potential for enlightenment in exploring this link. However, as Wagner increasingly conformed to religion and conventional morality, Nietzsche concluded that his will to power was responsible for his (as Nietzsche perceived it) degradation: Kaufmann writes that, ultimately, "Wagner had been thoroughly corrupted by his belated 'success' and 'power' and that, to maintain and increase them, he had made his peace with State and Church and bowed to public opinion" (p. 180). In a similar vein to Kaufmann this time, Rivkin and Ryan (2004) interpret the will to power as an aspect of human nature that Nietzsche criticised. Their argument is that power for Nietzsche was linked to the relationship between the pursuit of mastery as a self-delusion and humanity's drive to use words to assign definitions to an otherwise unstable and threatening environment. For Rivkin and Ryan, the will to power disables humanity from attaining Nietzsche's prescription of courage, which "consists of being able to tolerate the non-

identical and the meaningless without having to resort to words which posit identities or meanings in things" (p. 266).

Still other authors advance more ambiguous and ambivalent arguments. Lee Spinks (2003) frames the will to power as crucial to insight into ourselves and into life: "the conception of will to power represented to Nietzsche the possibility of moving beyond the contradictions imposed by critical thought by conceiving a principal of life *interior* to life, rather than occupying a critical position above and beyond life in the form of transcendental reason" (p. 134; original emphasis). However, in his later discussion of perspectivism in Nietzsche's philosophy, Spinks states that the "will to power appears whenever an individual, group or institution reinterprets 'fact' to promote its own values and interests" (p. 141). Nietzsche's assessment of the relationship between "birds of prey" and "sheep" finds particular resonance with Spinks's comment here. Nietzsche writes that "lambs" evaluate themselves as "good" out of fear of, and in opposition to, "birds of prey". The lambs formulate a system of morality that reads: "these birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey, but rather its opposite, a lamb – would he not be good?" (p. 481). Thus, the passive lambs, who "dislike great birds of prey" (p. 480) and entirely because of their dislike, display a will to have power over their situation in the form of moral evaluation. This statement appears to represent the will to power as a tool for humanity to preserve its own agendas and false realities – it is a means with which to distort the truth. Thus, Spinks begins his argument by viewing the will to power as integral to insight and then develops it by acknowledging its entanglement with illusion. The argument is thus on one level self-contradictory but on another representative of the many interpretations of Nietzsche's work.

Indeed, such differences in positions emphasise the level of interpretation involved in studying Nietzsche – there are no facts. Inescapably, Nietzsche's philosophy is often circular and self-contradictory (and not entirely owing to his sister). For instance, Nietzsche's prescriptions for the *Übermensch* (or "Overman") seem to jar at times with his values expressed elsewhere in his philosophy. For example, in *Ecce Homo* ([1908] 2000f) during his review of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*[2], Nietzsche emphasises the nature of the *Übermensch* as benevolent and tolerant. The characteristics of the *Übermensch* are embodied by Zarathustra and explained in part by Nietzsche thus:

> And how Zarathustra descends and says to everyone what is most good-natured! How gently he handles even his antagonists, the priests, and suffers of them, *with* them! – here, man has been overcome at every moment; the concept of the "Übermensch" has here become the greatest reality –

2. See Ziolkowski (2012) for the influence this text has had on philosophy, politics, and popular fiction.

> whatever was so far considered great in man lies beneath him at an infinite distance.
>
> (Nietzsche [1908]2000f: 761)

These words, particularly the word "gently" ([1908]2000: 761), seem to suggest that becoming an *Übermensch* involves not only insight into reality but also compassion and empathy in the face of knowledge which would otherwise incite resentment. Further illustrating this, Nietzsche maintains that even after terrible insight, even after "the most terrible idea" (p. 762) the *Übermensch*'s approach to existence is characterised by positivity and a sense of joy – the *Übermensch* becomes "the eternal Yes to all things, the tremendous unbounded saying Yes and Amen" (p. 762).

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, however, Nietzsche states that the stifling of cruelty towards others produced guilt and "the bad conscience" ([1887] 2000e: 521). According to Nietzsche, moral expectations condemned natural instincts such as "hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction" (p. 521) as "bad" and "wrong", with the result that they were curtailed and subsequently internalised, leading directly to self-destruction. The argument put forward by Nietzsche is that with the condemnation and elimination of outward expression of these natural instincts, people began to direct these instincts inwards and thus destroy themselves. Nietzsche writes that

> the man who, from lack of external enemies and resistances and forcibly confined to the oppressive narrowness of custom, impatiently lacerated, persecuted, gnawed at, assaulted and maltreated himself; this animal that rubbed itself raw against the bars of its cage as one tried to "tame" it; this deprived creature, racked with homesickness for the wild, who had to turn himself into an adventure, a torture chamber, an uncertain and dangerous wilderness – this fool, this yearning and desperate prisoner became the inventor of the "bad conscience".
>
> (Nietzsche [1887]2000e: 521)

Humanity, then, incapable of recognising that the source of its suffering is the misguided condemnation and curtailing of his natural instincts, invents the false construct of guilt to give his suffering a name and make possible his continuing conformity to morality.

At one juncture, then, Nietzsche appears to champion empathy, and at another, cruelty. Given apparent contradictions such as these, it must be conceded that the arguments for the positivity of the will to power, and an argument for its negativity are equally valid.

Following my argument, then, Nietzsche criticises the will to power and the faith in a fictitious world that results from it, and recommends that humankind ideally should be able to embrace the world as it is, and not as it is constructed. He states in *The Will to Power* that "it is a measure of the

degree of strength of will to what extent one can do without meaning in things, to what extent one can endure to live in a meaningless world because one organises a small portion of it oneself" (2004: 270). Thus, true wisdom and happiness, according to Nietzsche, is attained through the surrendering of the will to power and an acknowledgement of the meaningless, chaotic, and dynamic nature of reality. Although Nietzsche is not habitually optimistic in his philosophy, he acknowledges here that life itself is not worthless and, given the right approach, has the potential to offer joy. In other words, Nietzsche affirms life, including the suffering and meaninglessness that it entails.

Nietzsche's philosophy on power is especially relevant to the formulation and sustenance of late-Victorian society. In particular, his research on the dubious origins of words such as "good" and "evil" in his [1887]2000e book *On The Genealogy of Morals* reflects the level of self-interest and will to power prevalent in late-Victorian society, and in particular the Church institution. In this text, Nietzsche traces the origins of the words "good" and "bad" in an attempt to find the origins of value judgements. His primary finding is that the word "good" was a term coined by people in positions of power (including those involved in the Church) to describe themselves, while the term "bad" was used to describe those who were less powerful. Nietzsche writes that through his research in the matter, with particular focus on English society, he discovered that

> everywhere, "noble" "aristocratic" in the social sense, is the basic concept from which "good" in the sense of "with aristocratic soul", "noble" "with a soul of high order" "with a privileged soul" necessarily developed: a development which always runs parallel with that other in which "common" "plebeian" "low" are finally transformed into the concept "bad".
>
> ([1887]2000e: 464)

The argument in this case is that the formulation of morality and the assigning of value were informed by power, and the desire to sustain that power. The idea that a person could be "good" regardless of the nature of the character involved, or the behaviour displayed introduces Nietzsche's view of the inauthentic, some might say fraudulent nature of morality. In addition, ever-present in such formulations is religion, and Christianity specifically – the "good" are always blessed and have God on their side, whereas the "bad" are "Godless, Godforsaken, and damned" (Sedgwick 2009: 144).

In particular, Nietzsche criticises Christianity for its condemnatory nature that betrays a hatred for life itself and implies that it is an extension of humanity's damning tendency of self-delusion which denies us enlightenment. Expressing these sentiments, Nietzsche in his *Attempt at a Self-*

Criticism[3], published in 1886, maintains that "Christianity was from the beginning, essentially and fundamentally, life's nausea and disgust with life, merely concealed behind, masked by, dressed up as, faith in 'another' or 'better' life" ([1886]2000d: 23). From this passage, it is clear that in the seemingly benevolent ideas of a "heaven" (a "better life") and of "salvation", Nietzsche recognises humankind's intense dissatisfaction with its current existence, reducing the central concepts of Christianity to nothing more than a means of distraction and escape from the world. According to Nietzsche, our focus must be on *this world* and our goal must be to come to an understanding and acceptance of its true nature. For Nietzsche, then, Christianity represents a refusal to confront reality and therefore an obstruction and threat to the experience of legitimate joy in the true nature of the world. Like the subject, then, the notion of God is fictitious and is constructed in order to ensure comfort. Nietzsche continues his tirade, describing Christianity as representing "hatred of 'the world', condemnations of the passions, fear of beauty and sensuality" (p. 23) and the concept of heaven as "a beyond invented to slander this life, at bottom a craving for the nothing, for the end, for respite, for 'the Sabbath of Sabbaths'" (p. 23). He explains that

> all this always struck me, no less than the unconditional will of Christianity to recognise *only* moral values, as the most dangerous and uncanny form of all possible forms of a "will to decline" – at the very least a sign of abysmal sickness, weariness, discouragement, exhaustion, and the impoverishment of life.
>
> ([1886]2000d: 23)

Thus, Christianity according to Nietzsche is governed by loathing and fear and is the manifestation of humanity's cowardice. Additionally, Christianity is associated with the deprivation of true joy, and how "from the beginning we have contrived to retain our ignorance in order to enjoy an almost inconceivable freedom, lack of scruple and caution, heartiness, and gaiety of life – in order to enjoy life!" (p. 225) Here, Nietzsche suggests that the sustenance of ignorance, or the refusal to recognise the true meaningless nature of the world by the insistence of imposing meaning, has become necessary for humanity "to enjoy life". To ensure that life is bearable, humanity constructs for itself fictions and keeps itself in a state of perpetual ignorance in which true joy, true wisdom and courage, is suffocated. This, according to Nietzsche, is the danger of Christianity and the reason it is the object of his contempt. Finally, Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1885) encapsulates his view of organised religion by stating that the love of God is

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3. Nietzsche revisits, and criticises, his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) in a reissue of this book in 1886.

barbaric given that it is "exercised at the expense of all others" ([1885] 2000c: 269).

Furthermore, Nietzsche's criticism and deconstruction of morality in works such as *Daybreak*, *Beyond Good and Evil* and the *Genealogy of Morals* highlights the extent of the late-Victorianism concern with combatting threats against the status quo by reinforcing the binary definitions such as good/bad, moral/immoral, straight/deviant, and suchlike oppositions that so characterised this period of British history, and by doing so reinforcing the hypocritical, illusionary nature of late-Victorian society. Through tracing Nietzsche's concept of the will to power in late-Victorian novels, one becomes aware of the extent to which power, illusion, and anxiety were the driving forces behind the construction of Victorian morality. At the fin de siècle, late-Victorian society and its conception of morality were driven by anxiety over the issues of identity, sexuality, morality, and the continued sovereignty of the British Empire. Nietzsche's philosophy on power and morality, particularly his discussions on self-interest and illusion, is useful for analysing British culture at the turn of the 19th century.

On the point of the ironic character and purchase of Victorian morality, Ronald Pearsall ([1969]2003) contends that the sexual and moral restraint that the Victorian era is famous for applies only to middle-class Victorians, who, ironically, attempted to sexually and morally subdue themselves in an attempt to mimic the upper class who, while dignified, were in fact wildly decadent and "did not give a damn about conventional morality" (p. xi). Their misinformed idea of the upper class as pure and restrained led the middle class to construct a system of morality that demanded repression. For the middle class, then, conformity to rigid ideals of morality was essential and "sexual intercourse was a deed of darkness" (p. xi) ("darkness" refers to both the concealment of sex and sexual deviation from the public sphere and the condemnation it was met with). In her study *Modern Sexuality and the Myth of Victorian Repression*, Christina Simmons (1993) takes Pearsall's point to an extreme end: she posits that "Victorian repression" did not exist but was rather invented in the first twenty years of the 20th century to justify sexual excess or sexual "liberation" for women. The myth, contends Simmons, was created to satisfy a specific agenda that ultimately and inadvertently was to the detriment of women.

While these positions lend salutary complexity to the thesis of this article, particularly Pearsall's, the works of authors like Oscar Wilde, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Bram Stoker, and how they are structured, do seem to confirm a measure of repression in late-Victorian society, sexual and otherwise. Further, this repression is characterised by a complexity of its own: the demands of Victorian morality did not, as perhaps one would expect, produce a dramatically prudish society of people. What it did breed into the society was shame, and pervasive anxiety. For the prevailing moral standard did not prevent Victorians from expressing themselves sexually – brothels,

opium dens, and prostitution were standard fare among Victorians, who found that the moral standard did not so much extinguish their sexual desires and activities as redirect them. As a result, an undercurrent of sexual deviance ran beneath the respectable surface, which was judicially and religiously reinforced. Sexual practices were driven under the surface and into a place of anxiety for the consciousness of late-Victorians by both legal and religious codes. According to E.P. Thompson in his book *The Making of the English Working Class*, the wake of the industrial revolution bred citizens who were "more disciplined, more subject to the productive tempo of 'the clock', more reserved and methodical, less violent and less spontaneous" (1964: 410).

This began from childhood as Sunday schools were instructed to "tame the ferocity of [children's] unsubdued passions – to express the excessive rudeness of their manners – to chasten the disgusting and demoralized obscenity of their language – to subdue the stubborn rebellion of their wills – to render them honest, obedient, courteous, industrious, submissive, and orderly" (p. 410).

Here, Thompson shows an entanglement between the characteristics necessary for progress and the stripping of spontaneity and, essentially, humanity. Progress, then, brought about order but also, by nature, created systems that ensured the repression of the middle-class Victorian.

Because the respectable surface existed, as reinforced by both the law and the Church, the acts of transgression against it led to feelings of inescapable guilt, which did not only affect their perceptions of sexuality, but permeated all aspects of life. Explaining this, Pearsall writes that "the guilt and unease that simmered to the surface was reflected in the way [the middle-class Victorian] conducted himself in society, in the day-to-day business of living" (2003: 17). Indeed, even interpersonal relationships were affected by the climate of anxiety: "the most innocuous of relationships between men and women were conducted at fever pitch, and the whole paraphernalia of etiquette was brought into play to regulate what in the eighteenth century and in the Regency had been a quite normal boy-meets-girl situation" (pp. 17-28).

The implication, then, is that middle-class Victorians were condemning themselves for habitually acting in a manner contrary to the unrealistic and misinformed expectations they had created. Overall, the primary concern was with appearance, which meant that one could engage quite freely in sexual excess, pornography, homosexuality and other "perversions" as long as these were kept separate from the dignified, public sphere of society and were not viewed as a threat to the public facade. That the criminal trials of Oscar Wilde were so widely publicised and that he was so marginalised following his conviction is not a reflection of a prudish society but rather of one that is intolerant of private transgressions rising to the surface and threatening the appearance of middle-class Victorian society as it was

constructed. Summarising the conflict between private sexual deviance and anxiety, Pearsall writes that "despite the curtains of respectability which were intermittently dropped and hoisted, people could get all they wanted in the way of sex provided they did not make a song and dance about it" (p. 21) but that, as a result, "anxiety flourished ... there was anxiety over masturbation, anxiety over too much sex, anxiety over no sex at all" (p. 508). Moreover, because it had become forbidden in the public sphere and had therefore become repressed, sex for middle-class Victorians became a preoccupation, and was displaced into sexless objects resulting in almost hysteric attempts at reducing the sexuality of such objects that the middle-class Victorians *had assigned to them*. For example, the legs of tables, deemed to be too sexually suggestive, were covered with cloth and previous respectable members of society were imprisoned for selling products deemed to be of a phallic nature (p. 18). Such actions highlight the anxiety of the period, and the extent to which the strain of upholding an unrealistic ideal, exacerbated by the knowledge of continuous private transgressing against this ideal, affected individuals within the society.

Such a situation lends credibility to the theory that Nietzsche's view of the will to power was a barrier to human potential. His condemnation of illusion, as well as the illusion with which Victorians conducted their lives and the consequences of that lifestyle combine to reveal that to indulge in illusion, or to indulge in the will to power, is to damage oneself. This is the revelation that the character of Count Dracula attempts to communicate.

From the outset of *Dracula*, Stoker establishes that its protagonists, as well as the city they inhabit are symbols of "good". Throughout, there is a trend of idealisation which stands in stark contrast against the representations of London and its citizens as found in the works of Victorian novelists such as Wilde, Dickens,[4] and, earlier, Blake.[5] We are first introduced to lawyer Jonathan Harker, who is unassuming and studious and later proves himself to be courageous (in venturing into the Count's resting place and managing a daring escape) and a devoted husband. Likewise, Dr. Seward is educated, intelligent and respectful towards others, even in the face of rejection by Lucy Westenra. Quincey Morris displays the same level of respect in the same situation and also, with his courage, proves himself to be an integral part of the group whose aim it is to rid the world of Dracula. Another respected member of society and ardent devotee to his wife is Arthur Godalming, a descendent of nobility and in general a composed,

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4. See Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) where the city of London is a grotesque character in itself and the reflection of Pip's descent into self-destruction.

5. See William Blake's poem "London", published in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794), where London is the site and definition of oppression, restriction, and intellectual degradation.

dignified man. The last of the male protagonists and leader of the group is Dr. Van Helsing, who, despite his eccentricities, is a respected doctor and scientist, deeply religious, and overall a moral beacon for those around him.

As for the setting, a detailed description of London itself is not offered, but throughout the course of the novel there are no instances of brothel visits, prostitution, drug or alcohol consumption, or poverty of any kind. Thus, the characters, and the setting are archetypes for all that is admirable, and all that is "good". It is an idealised representation which establishes exactly what the protagonists attempt to protect and preserve throughout the course of the novel. It is also a representation of only the dignified, moral *public* sphere of late-Victorian society which was undercut and rendered hypocritical by the existence of the transgressive, private sphere. As noted earlier, this kind of moral, respectable public sphere was constructed by the middle class in a misguided attempt to mimic the upper class. It remained an image and a regulator, but was not an accurate reflection of the whole of late-Victorian London and Britain. Related to Stoker's painstaking attempts at idealisation in *Dracula*, David Glover (1996) has noted Stoker's preoccupation with the transgression of boundaries in this novel and argues that the author's preoccupation betrays a desire to preserve those boundaries. He maintains that Stoker's writing reveals "a fixation with unfixing the boundaries, with the attractions of liminality, in order that the lines of demarcation might be all the more strictly controlled" (1996: 48). Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio (2005) expand on Glover's theory by positing that Stoker's obsession with boundaries and transgression, particularly with regards to gender, is legible as an attempt to preserve the tenants of late-Victorian society which were being threatened by the kind of literature of the fin de siècle period that Stoker condemns in his article on censorship (Stoker [1897]2003b). Prescott and Giorgio state that "by exploring these borders and their effects, Stoker attempts to shore up the seemingly besieged categories of Englishness, manliness, and national identity" (2005: 487). Stoker's idealised representation of London is inescapably defensive and so is consistent with Prescott and Giorgio's point, and in the light of their research emerges as part of Stoker's endeavour to "save" London from immoral forces.

This idealised microcosm of late-Victorian society created in *Dracula* is undermined by the level at which Nietzsche's concept of the will to power governs the lives of the novel's protagonists. Indeed, Stoker's idealisation of London represents a will to power in itself – by constructing London as the epitome of goodness and restraint, Stoker betrays his anxiety over a changing society and his desire to somehow control it. By extension, the will to power is evident in *Dracula* in the confidence that the characters place in the sovereignty of London and the West: the overriding perception is that the West is superior to the East and that it is, in itself, an impenetrable moral fortress. Jonathan Harker on his journey to Transylvania

records in his diary that "there are no maps of this country as yet to compare with our own Ordnance Survey maps" (Stoker [1897]2003a) and comments that "it seems to me that the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains. What ought they to be in China?" (p. 8). This imperialist attitude is compounded by his description of the Slovaks as "barbarian" (p. 9) and his account of the poor state of the Slovakian roads (p. 13). By means of comparison, then, Harker establishes London as a civilized, orderly place.[6] The will to power becomes relevant in this case when this order is revealed to be a fiction by Dracula and the level of underlying sexual repression and anxiety within London that he represents. Harker continues to display the will to power during his ordeal at Castle Dracula, in particular when he attempts to find solace in the security afforded by objectivity: "let me begin with facts – bare meagre facts – verified by books and figures, and of which there can be no doubt. I must not confuse them with experiences which will have to rest on my own observation and memory of them" (p. 37). Harker in this case retreats from reality and into constructs that he heralds as havens of sense-making.

A close reading of Dr. Seward's interaction with his patient Renfield provides the reader with a further instance of will to power. While Renfield's behaviour intrigues Seward and demands more of his professional time, initially the doctor is not confounded by his patient's abnormality – indeed, Seward is at any point either confident in his understanding of his patient, or confident in his ability to come to understand him. Before his first description of Renfield, Seward absolves to become "master of the facts of [Renfield's] hallucination" (p. 68), a statement which makes his will to power plain to the reader. This will to power is expanded by Seward's scientific summary of Renfield:

> R.M. Renfield, aetat, 59. – Sanguine temperament; great physical strength; morbidly excitable; periods of gloom ending in some fixed idea which I cannot make out. I presume that the sanguine temperament itself and the disturbing influence end in a mentally accomplished finish; a possibly dangerous man, probably dangerous if unselfish.
>
> (Stoker [1897]2003a: 68)

The figure of the Priest and its relation to the scientist with respect to the will to power is especially relevant here. In *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche links the priest figure with the scientist figure by maintaining that both were involved in the process of inducing a sickness for which only they had the "cure". He states that "before [the priest] can act as a physician he first has to wound; when he then stills the pain of the wound he at the same time infects the wound – for that is what he knows to do best of all"

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6. Joseph Conrad would later explore the irony of Britain's faith in its own sovereignty and civility in *Heart of Darkness* (1902).

([1887]2000e: 562). Here, in painting a particularly sinister portrait of the priest and physician, Nietzsche echoes his sentiment that the endeavour of the priest, and the Church he represents, was to create guilt in order to obtain and abuse a position of power. While Nietzsche concedes that this religious will to power was the first time man became "an interesting animal" (p. 468) he also argues that the process was characterised by a will to power and "arrogance, revenge, acuteness, profligacy, love, lust to rule, virtue, disease" (pp. 468-469).

Thus, while Seward admits that his understanding of Renfield is not yet complete, he disguises this fact by reverting to scientific discourse to venture an explanation for Renfield's selfishness: "[W]hat I think of on this point is, when self is the fixed point the centripetal force is balanced with the centrifugal; when duty, a cause, etc., is the fixed point, the latter force is paramount, and only accident or a series of accidents can balance it" (p. 69). Thus, when Seward arrives at a juncture at which he is perplexed, he quickly uses words to mask his confusion and settle the issue with a comforting hypothesis. He is here acting as both physician and priest, trying to control an illness that his own discourse has created – for Renfield is only "mentally ill" according to the medical discourse of power that dictates he must be so. Further, Seward's use of words to control his surroundings and enforce order on the chaos that Renfield represents culminates in his naming of Renfield's condition and inexplicable behaviour ("Zoophagous" (p. 80)) and the confidence he derives from this act of labelling. This kind of confidence, the confidence in supreme understanding of another person's mind, represents a Nietzschean will to power in that such confidence acts as a mechanism to mask the lack of knowledge and understanding that one truly has. Dr. Seward's act of diagnosing Renfield's "disorder" and giving it a name brings him no closer to understanding the reason why Renfield eats animals in the manner of a "madman" and keeps a logical record of his consumption in the manner of a sane one.

The figure of the vampire in literature is inseparable from transgression – both in terms of what it represents and how it behaves and in terms of what it *reveals* about humanity. Wisker (2012) alludes to Count Dracula in her argument that the vampire performs this role by exposing anxieties over the continued sovereignty of the British Empire:

> In an age in which romance exposes the aristocrat and new capitalist rich as evil, the vampire in his frock and coat is the archetypal, fatally seductive villain. When foreign invasion threatens a weakening empire, he is a count from foreign parts buying up land and houses, invading spaces and disrupting hereditary and inheritance.
>
> (Wisker 2012: 167-168)

According to Wisker, then, the vampire is a disruptive force – an unreal presence in an otherwise "real" and stable world that has the effect of

exposing what has been hidden. David Punter (2012) expands on the disruptive capabilities of the vampire by discussing the capacity of Gothic images in literature to "deliver the world in inverted form" (p. 15) and to "represent those areas of the world and of consciousness which are, for one reason or another, not available to the normal processes of representation" (p. 15). Thus, the image of the vampire as a Gothic device affords an alternate representation of reality which in turn affords insight into the reality that has been constructed. Sarah Sceats (2001) develops this point in her discussion of the literary vampire as a liminal figure which, by its nature, provokes uncomfortable questions regarding identity: "being 'un-dead' involves an indeterminate, permanently ambiguous metaphysical condition that resonates with questions about embodiment and definition, about life, death, and immortality" (p. 107). Sceats encapsulates this observation in her statement that the vampire is essentially an "embodied oxymoron" (pp. 107-108). Therefore, as an ambiguous figure, and as a predator, the effect of the vampire in a literary work is an emphasis on the instability of structures presumed to be stable – as a liminal figure, the vampire makes plain the binary constructions of identity and morality and undercuts the notion of these as supreme systems that enable humanity to navigate the world efficiently.

The character of Count Dracula is congruent with Wisker's, Punter's, and Sceats's descriptions of the effect of the vampire in literary works in his capacity as a barrier to the will to power, proven by continually frustrating the protagonist's attempts to sustain it. The "evil" of Dracula as evidenced in the horrific acts he commits is merely sensational – it is his capacity to reveal the illusions of the Victorian protagonists and their will to power, to "deliver the world in inverted form" (Punter 2012: 15) and effectively leave them powerless that truly horrifies them. For example, we see a direct correlation between Dracula's entry into London and a decline in the confidence of Dr. Seward regarding Renfield. From the start, and before Dracula's influence, Renfield is categorised as "mad" or specifically as an "undeveloped homicidal maniac" (Stoker [1897]2003a: 79), a label that provides Seward with a measure of comfort as his perceptions of Renfield are built on the solid platform provided by his diagnosis. However, after Renfield encounters Dracula, the man's madness is randomly and inexplicably punctuated by sanity. His moods begin to fluctuate in a manner that renders Doctor Seward, previously so knowledgeable and in control, unable to explain them, and unable to venture any explanations. After what is later revealed to be the result of Dracula's influence, Renfield begins to alternate between moods of violent rage and serenity, which disturbs Seward in his inability to explain them – he comments that he feels "there is something ominous in his calm, and shall not forget this night" (p. 119), and later admits, without any scientific interjection or attempt to control his confusion, that he "cannot quite understand it" (p. 125).

Nevertheless, at this point Renfield remains to Seward little more than "a wonderfully interesting study" (p. 127). It is only when Renfield displays traits associated with sanity that Seward's attempts to disguise his lack of understanding with scientific posturing fail completely and his will to power is revealed. For example, when Renfield converses lucidly with Mina Harker, Seward recounts that he "positively opened [his] eyes at this new development. Here was my own pet lunatic – the most pronounced of his type that I had ever met with – talking elemental philosophy, and with the manner of a polished gentleman" (p. 249). Likewise, later when Renfield behaves in a decidedly sane and lucid manner when conversing with Quincey Morris, Arthur Godalming and Van Helsing, Seward simply admits that "we were all staggered" (p. 260). Seward's use of the pronoun "we" is interesting in that it suggests that his lack of understanding is shared – to admit that he alone was "staggered" is possibly too much for his will to power to permit. Thus, Dracula exposes the fallacy of Seward's presumed understanding of his patient and reveals the previous confidence he had in the matter, as well as the security derived from categorisation, to be illusion.

Dracula ensures a similar effect after biting Lucy Westenra and beginning her descent into illness and later into vampirism. When previously the men of the narrative were assured of her nature, Dracula not only transforms her into something they fear most but also first initiates a process which perplexes them and damages the misguided faith they had placed in the solidity of identity. When Lucy Westenra inexplicably falls ill, her fluctuations in health mirror Renfield's fluctuations between madness and sanity and have the same disarming, perplexing effect on the protagonists. A series of telegrams from Seward to Van Helsing sent on consecutive days illustrates this trend: "4 September: Patient still better today … 5 September: Patient greatly improved. Good appetite; sleeps naturally; good spirits; colour coming back … 6 September: terrible change for the worse. Come at once; do not lose an hour" (p. 127). Following this, Seward's diary entry for 9 September reveals that Lucy was "in cheerful spirits" (p. 136) and generally in good health. However, a day later her condition had deteriorated dramatically and she was "more horribly white and wan-looking than ever" (p. 137). While the reader knows that Lucy's illness is the result of her encounter with Dracula, the novel's protagonists, including Lucy herself, are left uncertain, and disturbed at their uncertainty. To illustrate this, Lucy laments about her sickness and fear of sleep: "I don't know; oh, I don't know. And that is what is so terrible" (p. 135).

Indeed, much emphasis is placed on the importance of *knowing* things: under the threat Dracula poses to their way of life (and life itself) the protagonists take comfort in being unwaveringly confident in what they can control. The result is a will to power that typifies the late-Victorian response to threats to their perfect surface, which sat precariously atop the transgressive underbelly. We see this drive for security in knowledge and certainty in

Dracula when Jonathan Harker, having escaped Castle Dracula and fearing that he might have gone mad, states that "it was the doubt as to the reality that knocked me over" (p. 200) and "I was in doubt, and then everything took a hue of unreality, and I did not know what to trust, even the evidence of my own senses" (p. 201). We see it again in Van Helsing's argument as to why Arthur must see Lucy in her vampire form before she is killed: "yet he can never be sure, and that is the worst of all" (p. 215). Crucially, it is always Dracula who is behind such uncertainty: it is always he who reveals the things that the protagonists invest their faith in, the things they consider to be stable and dependable, are not so. In effect, Dracula demonstrates that another, more real world exists beneath the fictitious surface the protagonists have created.

Identity in *Dracula* is one such concern where this becomes particularly clear. With his theories on identity, Stuart Hall has in effect expanded Nietzsche's broad will to power theory and applied it to humanity's error in assuming identity to be a singular, stable, and self-sustaining entity. In "Ethnicity: Identity and Difference" (1991), Hall proposes that humankind has constructed for itself a view on identity that serves to accommodate its insecurities in a changing world. According to the author, humanity's position on identity is that it is fixed, secure, and represents a stable point from which we can approach a changing world, a kind of "ultimate guarantee" against external influences that may be perceived as threatening (1991: 19). Hall proceeds to deconstruct this logical and rather simplistic construct of identity by naming four factors that play a role in destabilising it, namely history, the subconscious, language, and truth. In the same article, Hall attributes the notion of otherness as playing a crucial role in the formulation of identity, stating that "only when there is an Other can you know who you are" (p. 23). In *Dracula*, the protagonists display the will to power by perceiving identity to be stable. For instance, when Lucy begins to change and behave in unaccountable ways, her brief periods of "normalcy" are marked by relief and declarations such as "she looked her own self" (Stoker [1897] 2003a: 164) and "I was all myself again" (p. 161), which assume that any changes are a mere diversion from a core identity, or a place of safety to which one can always return. In addition, the protagonists' illusion of identity extends to the Otherness which Hall discusses: clearly, the protagonists define themselves as the opposite of the evil Dracula. However, this is also revealed to be a fiction as by the very act of defining their own identity in terms of Dracula (the Other) their own identity inescapably contains traces of his and indeed cannot fully exist without it. Here, Dracula fulfils the role of the literary vampire as a disruptive force to assumptions regarding identity as outlined by Sceats.

Finally, the will to power in the novel manifests in instances when Dracula reveals himself physically to the protagonists. When recounting his experience with Dracula's wives and then with the Count himself, Harker

somewhat unconvincingly acknowledges the reality of the situation while still, at some level, entertaining the possibility that the experience was a dream and therefore not real: "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 believe in the least that it was all sleep" (p. 44). Later, when Dracula reveals himself to Mina, she describes the event as though it were a dream: "[M]y dream was very peculiar, and was almost typical of the way that waking thoughts become merged in, or continued in, dreams" (p. 275). In both these cases, Mina and Jonathan Harker frame the disturbing event as a dream experience to escape the horror of the reality they are confronted with: in both cases, a will to power is evident. Likewise, although Van Helsing acknowledges the reality of Dracula's wives as they appear to him and Mina in the woods en route to intercept Dracula, he nevertheless retains a measure of the will to power as he entertains the idea of madness: "[T]hen they began to materialize, till – if God have not taken away my reason, for I saw it through my eyes – there were before me in actual flesh the same three women that Jonathan saw in the room, that would have kissed his throat" (p. 390).

Interestingly, Renfield is the only character who, without qualification of any kind, acknowledges the reality and danger of the presence of a vampire and even the futility in escaping from it by labelling it a dream. Initially, after he is attacked by the Count, he states: "I have had a terrible dream, and it has left me so weak that I cannot move" (p. 296). However, soon after, he displays a level of insight which neither Mina nor Jonathan Harker seems capable of: "I must not deceive myself; it was no dream, but all a grim reality" (p. 296). Thus, the "mad" Renfield is the only character capable of really recognising will to power and overcoming it. This goes some way towards undermining the authenticity of categories, both in *Dracula* and in the society in which it was written.

In a traditional sense, one might regard Dracula as a villain, but in a Nietzschean sense his ability to expose will to power and to reveal stability to be a fiction qualifies him as a more heroic figure. In turn, ironically, the Christian symbols that the protagonists use to combat Dracula come to resemble tools of self-destruction (and of self-delusion) rather than tools of salvation. Here, we have a conflict between the Church as will to power, and its opponent, Dracula as a "free spirit". Dracula represents all of the real aspects of life that characterised Victorian society but were kept concealed. He is a manifestation of a "will to power" in all its life-force cruelty – his natural instinct a foil to the hypocritical construct of Christian morality.

A further aspect of *Dracula* that must be considered in relation to the will to power is the sense of distance that pervades the novel. It is integral to any analysis of this text to note that all the information is related to the reader in the form of memory and is therefore, despite appearances, unreliable. Even the climax of the novel, the scene of Dracula's death, is narrated by Mina

Harker who observes the event from a distant mountain. She recalls that "from the height where we were it was possible to see a great distance; and far off, beyond the white waste of snow, I could see the river lying like a black ribbon in kinks and curls as it wound its way" (p. 397). Soon, she and Van Helsing see "a group of mounted men hurrying along" (p. 397) who, after much deliberation by Mina, are revealed to be Jonathan Harker, Quincey Morris, and Arthur Godalming. Mina's description of their subsequent actions is rendered vague and almost dreamlike by virtue of the physical distance between them. While this scene is the culmination of distance and barriers in the novel, a sense of isolation is established by the diary format and cemented by the interaction between Mina and Jonathan and the rest of the group. We see this in the men's excommunication of Mina from their plans to pursue and kill Dracula and the effect this has on her. Her reaction to the concealment is ambivalent, but a trace of confusion and anxiety is evident in her record about it:

> [T]hey all agreed that it was best that I should not be drawn further into this awful work, and I acquiesced. But to think that he keeps anything from me! And now I am crying like a silly fool, when I *know* that it comes from my husband's great love and from the good, good wishes of those other strong men.
>
> ([1897]2003a: 273)

Here, Mina uses emphasis and hyperbole in order to convince herself that what is causing her anxiety is for the best. Her emphasis on the word *know* as well as the repetition of the word "good" and the subsequent use of the word "great" indicate that she is perhaps not as confident in the matter as she wishes to be. Soon after, Mina expresses her dismay at the situation: "[E]verything that one does, it seems, no matter how right it may be, to bring on the very thing that is most deplored" (p. 274). Effectively, Count Dracula has brought about a breakdown in communication between Jonathan and Mina Harker, again proving himself to be a disruptive force and the catalyst for distance and isolation in the novel.

Dracula is essentially a novel of perfect surfaces and threatening undercurrents. The surface, which is ideal, is representative of the Victorian public sphere that late-Victorian society strove to maintain. It is characterised by dignity, respect, and scientific and intellectual progress. We see this in Stoker's representation of London and in the protagonists of his novel who embody all of these characteristics. Underneath the surface, though, there runs a tide of insecurity, anxiety, and repression that undercuts the perfect surface. Primarily, this manifests in sexuality and homoeroticism. What is crucial is the fact that this undercurrent is hidden and kept silent and only becomes apparent after careful analysis.

On the surface of the novel, Count Dracula fulfils the role of the evil antagonist who serves to confirm the goodness and perfection of the prota-

gonists and the society they attempt to save by opposing him. However, on a deeper level, his role is to expose the hypocrisies and ironies of late-Victorian morality and so reveal it as an imperfect system characterised by sexual repression and an intolerance of difference and transgression. A Nietzschean reading of *Dracula* provides the critic with the opportunity to take an alternate angle of criticism and, through analysing his concept of will to power in the novel, discover what is otherwise hidden. In particular, Dr Seward's illusion of scientific mastery is exposed to be so by Dracula's influence on Renfield and his behaviour, and the protagonists' "victory" over Dracula is rendered hollow by the realisation of exactly what they allow to continue by killing him: illusion is allowed to continue to thrive in the absence of its only opponent. Through such a reading, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* ironically takes its place as a fin de siècle text that forms part of the late-Victorian tradition of resistance to the status quo of invasive repression, hypocrisy, and intolerance.

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