The Savage and the Gentleman:
A Comparative Analysis of Two Vampire Characters in
Bram Stoker’s Dracula and Anne Rice’s The Vampire Lestat

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INTRODUCTION

The creatures known as vampires have inspired authors for several hundred years. These beings are stereotypically described as belonging to a “nocturnal species” who live “in shadows” and drink “our lives in secrecy” (Auerbach 1). However, they have by now appeared so often in literary works, and in so many different shapes and sizes, that they are much too nuanced to be called ‘stereotypes.’

This essay will make a historical comparison between two fictional vampires, one hundred years apart, in order to show that a change has taken place when it comes to how vampires as fictional characters have been portrayed in terms of their appearance, their psychology, and their roles in society. The first novel chosen is, for obvious reasons, Bram Stoker’s Dracula. It was written at the turn of the nineteenth century by a male author and is probably the first novel that comes into mind when the word vampire is mentioned. The second novel, The Vampire Lestat, was written almost a century later, in 1986, by a female author, who, to readers of vampire fiction, is a worthy successor of Stoker. Her name is Anne Rice, best known for her debut novel Interview with the Vampire (1976).

The two novels are naturally chosen because of their similarities, but perhaps even more so because of their differences. Dracula is a typically Victorian Gothic novel, which is set in the remote mountains of Transylvania, and in the modern capital London, contemporary to when the novel was published. It is written in epistolary form but never allows for the main character, Count Dracula, to defend or explain himself and his actions in a first-person narrative.

The Vampire Lestat, on the other hand, is a Neo-Gothic novel that focus less on conventional Gothic elements, for example gloomy settings, and more on the psychological aspects of what it is like to actually be a vampire. Unlike Dracula, it is the main character’s fictional autobiography in which he recalls his life in France, his transformation into a vampire, and his current career in the United States as a famous rock star. Nina Auerbach calls it “a series of temporal regressions in which Lestat . . . embarks on a backward quest out of the knowable world” (172).

Both novels used in this analysis are thus part of the Gothic genre, one being a Victorian Gothic and the other Neo-Gothic, but there are significant differences between the two. I will investigate how these differences reveal themselves when it comes to setting and plot. However, the novels are similar in that they present two male vampires who belong to the nobility and have lived on through the centuries. The vampires both want to be where the power is, which means, in the case of Stoker’s Dracula, that he tries to conquer nineteenth-
century London and seduce a young intelligent woman named Mina. Lestat, on the other hand, wants to become a famous twentieth-century rock star in the United States and simply have a good time while being a vampire (Auerbach 6).

The aim of this essay is to investigate what is typical of the genres that the two novels belong to and determine what has changed in the vampires’ physical appearance, their manners and their ability to adapt to modern society. In the first section of the essay I will give a description of the typical elements of the Gothic and the Neo-Gothic genres and then compare them in order to make a generic description of the two novels, *Dracula* and *The Vampire Lestat*. Vampire fiction will be treated as a sub-genre to the Gothic genre. In the succeeding two sections I will make comparative analyses of the two novels, particularly of the main characters, in order to describe the similarities and differences between the two and study how the vampire character has changed during the last century. Much of the discussion, especially regarding Dracula, will be based on Cesare Lombroso’s concept of the ‘criminal man,’ and various modern scholars’ opinion that the vampire is seen as an outcast and a threat to society.

**MATERIAL**

I have used the 1994 Penguin Popular Classics edition of *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker, first published in 1897. His story presumably does not need a detailed introduction, since it is considered to be the best known vampire novel of all times. The Ballantine Books edition of *The Vampire Lestat* by Anne Rice, published in 1986, is given a further presentation since it is fairly new and is not considered a classic.

The general literary terms that I have used when presenting genres in the **GOTHIC AND NEO-GOTHIC FICTION** section, and narrative perspective in the **BACKGROUND** section, are well explained in J.A Cuddon’s *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (1992).

A book that provides an excellent summary of practically all analyses concerning Dracula, and which I have based many of my ideas on, concerning the comparison of the vampires’ physical appearance, manners and ability to adapt to modern society, is Ambjörnsson’s *Mansmyter. Liten guide till manlighetens paradoxor* (1990). It presents Cesare Lombroso’s theory about the typical looks of the ‘criminal man’ and atavisms. Moreover, it makes interesting comparisons with other famous novels within the Gothic genre, such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and R.L Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, which I will not, however, use in my analyses.
More analyses of Stoker’s Dracula are collected in *Dracula: The Vampire and the Critics*, edited by Margaret Carter (1988). “Lombroso’s Criminal Man and Stoker’s Dracula,” by Earnest Fontana, and “The Narrative Method of Dracula,” by David Seed, once more discuss Lombroso’s theory and various aspects of narration and symbolism in *Dracula*, which I have used when discussing the narrative perspectives of the two novels.

Annika Johansson’s book, *Världar av ljus, världar av mörker* (2000), on the other hand, focuses mainly on contemporary authors of Gothic and Fantasy novels. This book contains a brief biography on Anne Rice, dealing with both her professional and personal life. Johansson also presents a rather extensive summary of the Fantasy and Gothic genres as literary phenomena, as well as giving a useful presentation of the various authors of these genres through time. For a more detailed description of the Gothic genre and its characteristics, I have used *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (Kilgour 1997).

Further information about Rice’s vampire novels is presented in *Blood Read: the Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture* (Gordon 1997). A chapter about the outsider, a term often used when discussing vampires in general and *Dracula* in particular, is used when I compare the vampires’ ability to adapt to modern society. Further information about this subject is also to be found in Nina Auerbach’s *Our Vampires. Ourselves* (1995), which is one of the best known books today dealing with the sociological approach towards vampirism in literature.

When discussing how Dracula adapts to modern society, I have used Samir Elbarbary’s ideas about the civilised world meeting the primitive in “Heart of Darkness and Late-Victorian Fascination with the Primitive and the Double” (*Twentieth Century Literature* 1993) and Carol Corbin’s “Postmodern Iconography and Perspective in Coppola’s Bram Stoker’s Dracula” (*Journal of Popular Film & Television* 1999).

Leah M. Wyman has written “Primal Urges and Civilized Sensibilities” (*Journal of Popular Film & Television* 1999), an article discussing the vampires as sexual creatures and their impact on women, which is used in the section about the characters’ physical appearance and manners. When analysing Dracula’s physical appearance in particular I have used the article “Phrenology, the History of Brain Localization” (*Brain and Mind: Electronic Magazine on Neuroscience* 1997) by Renato M.E. Sabbatini, which presents the Italian professor and criminologist Cesare Lombroso.

Finally, Andrew Schopp has written “Cruising the Alternatives: Homoeroticism and the Contemporary Vampire” (1997), which takes up both primary sources used in this essay. He examines the vampire character from a historical point-of-view and also discusses the implied
homosexuality among Rice’s vampires, which becomes useful when analysing how Lestat is adapted to modern society in comparison to Dracula.

BACKGROUND
A manservant named John Polidori first introduced the vampire character in literature when he wrote *The Vampyre* in 1819. This novel, which he at first claimed was written by his employer, the famous poet Lord Byron, is not regarded as a particularly well-written novel. Even so it influenced other authors to invent their own vampires. Although Polidori was the first to write about vampires, the best-known fictional story of this kind today is Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. Rice’s novel, *The Vampire Lestat*, is a recent example of the great influence that this supernatural creature still has on writers of vampire fiction today.

Unlike Stoker, Anne Rice uses autobiographical material in many of her novels. Her first novel, *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), was, furthermore, used as a sort of therapy in order for Rice to overcome the loss of her daughter Michele and the depression that followed (Johansson 274ff). In this novel, which won critical acclaim, she allows the vampire character to play the part of infinite sorrow, loss and disbelief. It is a character who receives its nourishment from human blood, which is a clear link to the blood disease leukaemia that killed Rice’s daughter.

Despite the success of her first novel, it took Rice several years before she started writing a second one, in what she herself calls *The Vampire Chronicles* series. During these years she wrote a number of other books, none of which were as well received as her debut novel. In 1986, her second novel in the series, *The Vampire Lestat*, was published. As is implied by the title, the story is told by the blue-blooded vampire Lestat, who played a small but significant role in *Interview with the Vampire* as the character who killed the story’s narrator Louis and made him into a vampire.

Lestat elaborately describes his life among the nobility in late eighteenth-century France and his first meeting with his master Magnus, who eventually turns him into a vampire. Lestat, who survives through the centuries, moves on to describe his life as a vampire in nineteenth-century New Orleans, and later as a rock star in the New World in the 1980s. This unusual choice of career almost causes the downfall of the entire vampire species, which is further explored in book number three, *The Queen of the Damned* (1988). *The Vampire Lestat* is commonly seen as Lestat’s fictional autobiography, and obviously Rice, who claims that
Lestat is a real person, was fascinated with this character, since she made him the first person narrator in the remaining novels in *The Vampire Chronicles* series as well.\(^1\)

While Stoker’s novel *Dracula* is told by a small number of people in epistolary form, Rice’s novel is told by an unreliable first person narrator, which means that the reader cannot quite trust the testimony of the main character Lestat. Only a limited number of other main characters appear in the novel, and since it is Lestat himself who quotes their speeches in his autobiography, the reader cannot be certain of what to make of their comments of his appearance or his behaviour. To be absolutely certain we have to read parts of *Interview with the Vampire*. It is told by another first person narrator, not Lestat himself, and therefore gives a second reliable opinion of a kind, which allows us to have a fairly clear picture of Lestat. Since these novels are parts of a sequel, we can safely assume that the name Lestat refers to the same character.

Both Stoker’s and Rice’s novels are written as though they are actual testimonies from those involved, but in the case of *Dracula*, one crucial perspective is missing from the story, namely that of the count Dracula himself, who “has no voice” (Auerbach 82). This leaves the reader with a “fatal silence” (Gordon 2). Contrary to Lestat, we never know how Dracula looks on himself, or if the descriptions that the narrators make of him are correct. In Stoker’s novel it is the female victims, Mina and Lucy, and the men who surround them, who are in focus. In *The Vampire Lestat*, on the other hand, we are supposed to sympathise with the vampire and not with his human victims (Gordon 20f), which is often the case in classical Gothic stories. The Gothic genre and its subgroups will now be given a more detailed presentation.

**ANALYSIS**

**GOTHIC AND NEO-GOTHIC FICTION**

In the eighteenth century, Horace Walpole, who wrote novels such as *The Castle of Otranto*, invented a term for the literary genre that is still known as Gothic fiction (Johansson 17). The typical elements of this genre can be divided up into sub-groups, which relate to the physical setting of a novel and the psychological aspects of both the characters in the story and those reading it, i.e. the audience.

A typical Gothic novel is often set in desolate places, such as dark forests, ruined abbeys and medieval castles, as is exemplified in *Dracula* (Cuddon 381). The house where the action takes place is owned by a nobleman, preferably degenerated and a bit odd. The plot

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often revolves around the rescue of an innocent female victim, such as Mina in *Dracula*, or Frankenstein’s young fiancée and foster sister in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (Johansson 12). Naturally the weather should be stormy, depressing and express an “atmosphere of dark and gloom” (Cuddon 381).

In all these novels, supernatural and psychological elements are frequently occurring, either separately or at the same time (Johansson 12). In many stories, for example “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allen Poe, they indeed play the main part. In this story, the owner of the castle is discovered to be insane and out of control; there is a person buried or locked up in the cellar; and every now and then strange noises disturb the sleeping guest in his room. Naturally, the truth is not revealed until the very end of the story, when the houseguest just barely manages to save himself from the evil forces of the house.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, appropriately called “The Golden Age of Gothic Fiction,” the interest in such novels drastically increased, leading to greater popularity and larger editions (Johansson 27). One of these novels, belonging to a group of novels which Johansson calls “Victorian Bloods” (27), was Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. It is also one of the most famous novels that belong to the genre of Vampire fiction, which, as is implied by the name, focuses mainly on a creature that exists in folklore all around the world under different names.² It is a person who is believed to be dead but only sleeps in his coffin during the day. At night he awakes and begins to search for victims, since he needs human blood in order to survive. There are traditionally certain tools used to kill a vampire, e.g. a pole of wood, a garland of garlic, or sanctified water. In modern Vampire fiction, however, these symbols have lost much of their supernatural powers and are no longer used as extensively as in, for example, *Dracula*.

Why the sudden fascination for Gothic novels awoke towards the end of the nineteenth century might be debated, but the fact is that the same tendency can be seen today. A plausible explanation is that the turn of a century, any century, gives rise to new, often depressing thoughts. The fact that, as Johansson says, New Age has a tendency to occur along with Gothic fiction can hardly be regarded as a coincidence (116), since they both deal with fundamental subjects such as “the horrors of loss, closure, and death” (Kilgour 223).³

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² *Strigoi*, *nosferatu* (Romania), *geung si* (China), *upierczi* (Russia), *asema* (South America), *obur* (Bulgaria), *rakshasa* (India), *sukyan* (Trinidad) and *lamia* (Greece) all refer to a similar mythological being which drinks blood from human beings.
³ New Age is a collective term often used for a kind of spiritual movement that occurs in tumultuous times when people search for answers within themselves, for example through mediation or yoga.
The function of Gothic novels can be discussed, but most scholars agree that they are meant to express the audience’s “paranoia and fears” and intend for the reader to experience a sort of catharsis, or cleansing (Johansson 134). Furthermore, Vampire fiction has a tendency to occur at times when sexually transmitted diseases are part of every-day life. It is common knowledge that, in Victorian society, sexuality was linked to syphilis, and consequently also to blood. There was, moreover, a clear link to the promiscuous upper class, which is represented by Lucy Westenra and her family in Dracula. Today, when new blood diseases such as HIV exist, the Vampire novel has, as we all know, once again gained popularity.

When it comes to the question of readership, it is interesting to note that Gothic novels were, and are still, mostly enjoyed by women (Cuddon 383). At the time when the genre first arose, women of the middle- and upper-classes were the most frequent readers of all fiction, much due to the fact that they had so much time on their hands, not being allowed to have a profession outside of the household. In today’s society, the Gothic genre has been “romanticised” (Schopp 6), for instance showing the vampire to be a tragic, passionate creature and a “wet dream” for women rather than a monster (Johansson 131). Since many women long for some romance in their lives, this sensual creature is probably more appealing to them than to men.

From this genre the present, ‘modernised,’ version has evolved, which is commonly called Dark Fantasy or Neo-Gothic fiction. It emerged in the 1970s and 80s and “has undergone a gradual revolution in prestige [among the general readership]” (Gordon 17, Kilgour 221), much due to authors by the names of Stephen King and Anne Rice. The Neo-Gothic genre differs from Victorian Gothic in that it focuses more on psychological aspects than outer events. Furthermore, it wants to understand and analyse the monster rather than sympathise with the victim, which we can clearly see when we compare Dracula and The Vampire Lestat. Dracula is portrayed as a callous monster without a known background who violates innocent women. Lestat, on the other hand, was forced into becoming a vampire and therefore only kills ‘bad’ people to begin with. Few typical Gothic descriptions are found in Neo-Gothic fiction. Rice’s books, for example, are often set in modern New Orleans, San Francisco or France, and the vampires live in luxurious apartments rather than deserted castles, as is the case in Dracula.

What is also typical of the Neo-Gothic genre is that the novels, which first appear to the reader to belong to the Horror genre, yet another sub-genre of Gothic fiction, on a closer reading lack the typically threatening ingredients that characterise Horror (Johansson 5).
Consequently, these novels are not meant to frighten the reader as much as to induce him to puzzle over the philosophical questions in life.

The so-called evil characters in the Neo-Gothic stories have human traits and morals and are portrayed more as social deviants than as Antichrist. This gives rise to a phenomenon that Gordon calls “domestication” of the monsters, which means that the reader cannot help but feel sympathy for them, e.g. Rice’s vampires, despite their faults and ill doings (2, 17). Rather than being a prototype, like Dracula, the vampire “now constitutes a mirror that reflects shifting cultural desires and fears” (Schopp 2). In my opinion, society demands a monster to blame for everything bad that happens, whether it is death, poverty or sickness. Consequently, authors invent vampires who can be held accountable.

STOKER’S AND RICE’S VAMPIRES: PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND MANNERS

Part of what makes vampires so fascinating to modern readers is undoubtedly how they look and how they act. They are commonly seen as sensual creatures with preferably thin bodies, dark hair and clear dark eyes that mesmerise their female victims. They are well behaved and always treat women in particular with respect – up until the moment when they attack their throats, that is.

However, it was not always so. When Bram Stoker wrote his famous novel, he was obviously quite clear about how he wanted his main character to be perceived by his readers. The original Count Dracula, before Christopher Lee and Gary Oldman imitated him in movies, was a smelly ugly creature with hair growing all over his body. He certainly did not fit into the modern ‘romanticised’ pattern of a sensual vampire.

At the very beginning of the novel, Jonathan Harker, who is a real-estate agent from London come to visit Dracula in Transylvania, describes his first meeting with the courteous Count:

> His face was a strong – a very strong – aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils . . . and hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive . . . the mouth . . . was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth . . . His ears were pale and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong . . . Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. (28)⁴

⁴ Only Stoker’s Dracula and Rice’s The Vampire Lestat will be quoted in this manner, with reference to page number only.
With this, hardly attractive, description of Dracula, Stoker reveals his familiarity with Cesare Lombroso, an Italian nineteenth-century professor, and his theories about ‘the criminal man’ and atavism. Besides working at a university, Lombroso was also a criminologist who was interested in studying ‘characterorology,’ in other words the relation between mental and physical characterisation, which has later been called ‘criminal anthropology.’ He presented his ideas in L'uomo delinquente (Criminal Man 1876), which was never taken seriously by the scientific world but still helped to raise some important questions about criminals.

Lombroso and his many followers believed that certain criminals share certain characteristics, so-called stigmata, when we compare their skulls, which are often asymmetric in face, jaw and forehead. Furthermore, Lombroso spoke of atavism, which means the “reappearance of characteristics which were present only in distant ascendants” and are reminiscent of earlier human stages (Sabbatini 1).

The main character in Dracula is physically portrayed as a “gothic villain” (Carter 35), with the typical Lombrosian features of a criminal man. He has a sloping forehead, aquiline nose, great nostrils, white sharp teeth and long nails (Ambjörnsson 129, Elbarbary 9). Dr van Helsing, who is a Dutch physician and the hero in the story, feels that Dracula is only a child in many respects (Kilgour 33). He says that Dracula has “not [a] full man-brain. He is clever and cunning and resourceful; but he be not of man-stature as to brain. He be of child-brain in much” (405), meaning that Dracula, like a child, is unaware of the consequences of his actions.

In the novel, Dr van Helsing thinks that Dracula is a criminal, a clever one, and real-life scientist Elbarbary even goes so far as to call Dracula a “savage genius,” like R.L Stevenson’s Mr Hyde (Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde) and H.G Well’s Dr Moreau (The Island of Dr Moreau). According to Lombroso, the criminal man can be detected by his physical appearance, but also by his manners. Since criminals are also atavisms, i.e. remnants of earlier human stages, they are apt to act selfishly, sexually, aggressively and according to habit (Elbarbary 3). This means that Dracula, being an atavism, manages to stay alive by acting on instinct. Mina, the female victim and Jonathan’s fiancée in the story, explains to the men in the search party:

The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and qua criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind. Thus, in a difficulty he has to seek resource in habit. His past is a clue, and the one page of it that we know – and that from his own lips – tells that once before, when in what Mr Morris would call a ‘tight place’, he went back to his own country from the land he had tried to invade, and thence, without losing purpose, prepared himself for a new effort. He came again, better equipped
for his work; and won. So he came to London to invade a new land. He was beaten, and when all hope of success was lost, and his existence in danger, he fled back over the sea to his home; just as formerly he had fled back over the Danube from Turkey land. (406)

Dracula, regardless of the fact that he is against changing his behaviour, does not remain the same man in appearance throughout the novel. After he has met Jonathan, made him his prisoner and possibly stolen his youth from him, he changes shape into someone slightly younger, but not necessarily more attractive. He is described as being “a tall, thin man” with “a ‘ook nose and a pointed beard, with a few white hairs runnin’ through it” (104, 67). Jonathan himself remarks to Mina, when they are in London sometime after his escape, that the man who is standing at the opposite side of the street “is the Count, but he has grown young” (208).

Auerbach declares that Dracula does not only “go from a steely old man to a frisky young one in the course of his novel, stealing the youth from a Jonathan grown white-haired and tired; he becomes at need a wolf, a bat, a dog, as well as fog and mist” (86). The reader is given a hint of this when, by chance, Jonathan happens to look out the window one night when Dracula has, as usual, locked him in his room in Transylvania:

The window at which I stood was tall and deep . . . I drew back behind the stonework, and looked carefully out.
What I saw was the Count’s head coming out from the window. I did not see his face, but I knew the man by the neck and the movement of his back and arms . . . I was at first interested and somewhat amused . . . but my very feelings changed to repulsion and terror when I saw the whole man slowly emerge from the window and begin to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss, face down, with his cloak spread out around him like great wings . . . I saw the fingers and toes grasp the corners of the stones, worn clear of the mortar by the stress of years, and by thus using every projection and inequality move downwards with considerable speed, just as a lizard moves along a wall. (47)

The description makes us think more of a reptile than of a human being (Carter 161). The purpose of using animal imagery, according to Elbarbary, is to show Dracula’s connection with the primitive, which fits well into the Lombrosian pattern of atavism (8).

Still, Dracula does not only have the ability to climb downward on walls; he can also literally transform himself into different shapes which might be useful. As Dr van Helsing says: “He can transform himself to wolf, as we gather from the ship arrival in Whitby, when he tear open the dog; he can be as bat, as Madam Mina saw him on the window at Whitby . . . He come on moonlight rays as elemental dust” (286). He can become “empty as the air,”
“grow and become small . . . vanish and come unknown” and turn into a horrific creature with “white face and red, gleaming eyes” (106, 283, 113). For instance, when he is discovered in Mina’s bedroom, he quickly transforms himself into vapour and vanishes:

The moonlight suddenly failed, as a great black cloud sailed across the sky; and when the gaslight sprang up under Quincey’s match, we [Dr van Helsing and Lucy’s suitors] saw nothing but a faint vapour. This, as we looked, trailed under the door, which with the recoil from its bursting open had swung back to its old position. (337)

As if this supernatural ability is not enough, Count Dracula also possesses the skill to “direct the elements” and “command all the meamer things: the rat, and the owl, and the bat – the moth, and the fox, and the wolf” (283). When he feels in need of help from the outside world he summons these meamer things to aid him, and sometimes even kill for him:

Somewhere high overhead, probably on the tower, I heard the voice of the Count calling in his harsh, metallic whisper. His call seemed to be answered from far and wide by the howling of wolves. Before many minutes had passed a pack of them poured, like a pent-up dam when liberated, through the wide entrance into the courtyard.

There was no cry from the woman, and the howling of the wolves was but short. Before long they streamed away singly, licking their lips.

I could not pity her, for I knew now what had become of her child, and she was better dead. (60f)

Dracula prefers to go by boat since this kind of transportation floats on water and can be ushered forward with the help of the winds which he controls, although the trip to London would have been accomplished in much less time if he had gone by train (Ambjörnsson 130). He also controls “those individuals in society who are apt to fall into his behaviour patterns” (Carter 160), i.e. lunatics. One of these less fortunate people, Renfield, frequently appears in the novel in Dr Seward’s testimony, who is one of Lucy Westenra’s suitors and Dr van Helsing’s apprentice.

Renfield is a former real-estate agent and the predecessor of Jonathan Harker, who became mad after he had visited Dracula’s castle in Transylvania. He is locked in an asylum near Carfax Abbey, the house which Dracula purchases in London, and impatiently awaits his master’s arrival to the modern world. He strongly believes that he will become immortal because of his obedience. Unfortunately, for Renfield, Dracula has no interest in him after he has found Mina Harker. Dr Seward, who takes care of Renfield, writes in his diary: “The attendant came bursting into my room and told me that Renfield had somehow met with some
accident. He had heard him yell; and when he went to him found him lying on his face on the floor, all covered with blood” (327).

Dracula clearly shows that loyalty means little or nothing to him when he has obtained what he wants, and although he infuses “fear of the hated unknown,” Mina still feels sorry for him. She writes in her diary: “I suppose one ought to pity anything so hunted as is the Count. That is just it: this Thing is not human – not even beast. To read Dr Seward’s account of poor Lucy’s death, and what followed, is enough to dry up the springs of pity in one’s heart” (273f). To her he represents something that is repulsive, and yet she feels drawn to him, perhaps because he differs so completely in physical appearance and behaviour from her fiancé Jonathan and all the other men whom she meets (Ambjörnsson 138).

The same could not be said about the next vampire discussed in this essay, who is definitely not repulsive, at least physically. Although the two vampires are both white, aristocratic, European males (Gordon 154), a noticeable change has taken place during the almost one hundred years that separate them when it comes to how authors look upon vampires.

Rice’s Lestat “shatters all the old smelly stereotypes at once” (Auerbach 153), and in many respects he is more civilised and is seen more as a human being than Dracula ever was (Ambjörnsson 123). One thing that still connects the two, however, is the vampire’s supernatural powers. He can no longer change shape into other creatures or objects (Gordon 19). Lestat cannot control animals or weather, although he reveals a sort of kinship with stray dogs. However, he can defy gravity:

I found it absurdly easy to jump over the garden walls, to spring from the earth to low roof tops. I could leap from a height of three stories to the ground, and climb the side of a building digging my nails and my toes into the mortar between the stones. (114)

I threw out my arms. I crooked my knee, and I began turning as the acrobats and dancers could turn, round and round on the ball of one foot, effortlessly, going faster and faster, until I broke, flipping over backwards into a circle of cartwheels, and them somersaults, imitating everything I had ever seen the players at the fairs perform.

Applause came immediately. I was as agile as I’d been in the village . . . I turned and jumped and spun again, and then gazing at the ceiling I willed my body upwards as I bent my knees to spring.

In an instant I touched the rafters and I was dropping down gracefully, soundlessly to the boards. (137)
Unlike classical vampires, embodied by the masculine and primitive Dracula, the “sexual, sensual and attractive” Lestat shows some traits that are often typically female (Gordon 22), such as analysing things to the extreme, and wanting to cry when life becomes too difficult for him. These traits make him seem somewhat androgynous to modern readers (Ambjörnsson 143). In the following extract from the text, we can see that he even describes himself as if he were a woman:

I’m six feet tall . . . I have thick blond hair, not quite shoulder length, and rather curly, which appears white in fluorescent light. My eyes are gray, but they absorb the colors blue or violet easily from surfaces around them. And I have a fairly short narrow nose, and a mouth that is well shaped but just a little too big for my face. It can look very mean or extremely generous, my mouth. It always looks sensual . . . I have a continuously animated face . . . My vampire nature reveals itself in extremely white and highly reflective skin that has to be powdered down for cameras of any kind . . . and the only consistent indication that I am not human is my fingernails. It’s the same with all vampires. Our fingernails look like glass. (3)

The reason why Rice chooses to portray her vampires in this androgynous manner is probably because she wants to separate them from classical vampires, such as Dracula (Gordon 96). “ ‘It is a new age . . . It requires a new evil. And I am that new evil . . . I am the vampire for these times,’ ” says Lestat about his looks and his behaviour (228). Not only does Lestat look different than the stereotypical vampire, who is often a tall dark nobleman in a black cloak who haunts women in the middle of the night; he also acts differently. Dracula is, says Kilgour, a sort of “parodic version of a romantic child” (36), which would also be suitable to describe Lestat, who indeed calls himself “a rebel” and does not want to conform to the rules of vampirism set up by the older vampires (308).

Lestat is described by his vampire friends alternately as a “murdering monster who is filled with light” and “a deadly gentleman” who, unlike most vampires, actually has a conscience (266, 324). Lestat is decent since he is “a reluctant killer”, meaning that he does not want to kill innocent victims and would rather only drink the blood from murderers and thieves (Gordon 21). On the other hand, he has a strong will and acts mostly on impulse.

Since he is unwilling to spend eternity alone, Lestat constantly breaks the older vampires’ rules and creates new vampires to keep him company, which causes the old vampire master Marius to call him “the damndest creature” (488). Lestat even goes so far as to create a companion out of a dying five-year-old girl named Claudia, who, by the way, is supposed to be the alter ego of Rice’s own daughter, Michele. He is, one could say, very
much alike the fallen angel Lucifer who is a “seducer, saviour and liar” combined into one person (Ambjörnsson 144).

In similarity to Count Dracula, Lestat does not want to be recognised as a being who is not human, but he goes one step further than the Count in his quest to become modern. Hence he has the habit of wearing “mirrored sunglasses,” to hide his vampire eyes, and actually stealing clothes from his victims (15):

I wore gorgeous black leather clothes that I’d taken from my victims, and I had a little Sony Walkman stereo in my pocket that fed Bach’s Art of the Fugue through tiny earphones right into my head as I blazed along. (6)

Lestat tries hard to separate himself from the image of the classical vampire, claiming to be a modern vampire, who is not “just pretending to be any vampire. Or Count Dracula. Everybody was sick of Count Dracula. They [Lestat’s fans] thought it was marvelous that I was pretending to be the vampire Lestat” (13). The fact is that many humans, who find him truly fascinating although they do not believe that he is a vampire, imitate Lestat. They wear clothes that are similar to his, and they visit his concerts and hope to meet him in person. To them he does not present a threat.

To summarise this section of the analysis, we can see that Dracula and Lestat represent two completely different sides of vampirism. Dracula, who does not fit into the ‘romanticised’ pattern, has the physical appearance of Lombroso’s criminal man and a smaller brain than humans have. He basically acts on instinct in order to survive and is by some regarded as a ‘savage genius.’ Furthermore, he has the ability to change shape. He becomes at need a young man, an ugly beast or a reptile-like creature. He changes into vapour or disappears altogether. Dracula represents the hated unknown, which humans want to kill because it is different.

Lestat, on the other hand, is a civilised being with limited supernatural powers, such as the ability to defy gravity. Unlike Dracula, Lestat looks and acts in a female manner, and is hence perceived as more civilised. He successfully separates himself from the image of a classical vampire and seems a bit androgynous to readers. Lestat is a reluctant killer in a gentlemanly disguise who acts more on impulse than on instinct, like a spoiled child. He is a modern vampire, who, rather than spending eternity alone, wants to socialise with other vampires and humans. The significance of this is that he is envied by humans for the way he looks and acts and is not, as will be seen in the case of Dracula, regarded as an outsider to fear and feel threatened by.
STOKER’S AND RICE’S VAMPIRES: INTEGRATION IN SOCIETY

If we consider the society in which Stoker’s novel was written, perhaps we will get a better idea of why the vampire was seen as a threat during the Victorian era. This was a time of colonialism, a time when the civilised western nations conquered the smaller and supposedly wilder eastern and African countries (Ambjörnsson 123). “The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East,” says Jonathan Harker on the first page of Dracula, implying that he feels separated from this unknown part of the world. The East was even connected with cannibalism in some novels, for instance Joseph Conrad’s The Heart of Darkness (1902). More often than not the East was also connected with savage sexuality, which in itself presented a threat to the Victorian ideas and morals and the belief in white superiority (Elbarbary 1). Some scholars go so far as to claim that “the dichotomy between the modern and the pre-modern . . . is the central theme of Bram Stoker’s Dracula” (Corbin 2).

Outside of the civilised world, in the remote mountains of Transylvania, lives Count Dracula. He belongs to a warrior family, who fought together with the great king Attila of the Huns several hundred years earlier (41). He cannot accept that the old aristocracy is slowly dying out and is being replaced by new social classes. Indeed, one of the main reasons why he manages to continue living among mortals in his home country is that because of his heritage he is above them in rank, thus both feared and admired. He explains to Jonathan that he is afraid to travel to London, although he is truly fascinated by that whirlpool of civilisation and science (Ambjörnsson 123):

Well I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble; I am boyar; the common people know me, and I am master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not – and to know not is to care not for. I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stops if he sees me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words, to say ‘Ha, ha! a stranger!’ (31)

When Dracula eventually travels to London to find Mina, the oppositional forces of east and west, the supernatural and scientific good and evil collide (Corbin 2). Dracula is a nocturnal being from the wild mountains in Romania who realises that in order to gain control over Jonathan and ultimately over his fiancée Mina and her friend Lucy, he has to travel to the centre of power, which in these times was London. This is why Dr van Helsing, who
represents science in the story, wants to find the brutal, aggressive and wild Dracula and kill him before he is able to populate the civilised world with vampires (Elbarbary 4).

In similarity with Dracula, Lestat also has a scientific opponent in a British scholar named David Talbot. Unlike van Helsing, however, Talbot does not want to kill Lestat because he presents a threat to modern society and civilisation. Instead he tries to make contact with Lestat on a number of occasions in order to examine him further. They eventually become friends. Being the scientist he is, Talbot wants to understand this creature, and ultimately he is so fascinated with it that he actually wants to be one himself. The fact that Lestat feels accepted by Talbot and his scholarly friends, allows him to proceed as planned and enter the stage as a rock star without having to experience the fear of being hunted or killed.

It is obvious that vampire or no vampire, Dracula would be hated and present a threat to the progressive civilised Victorian world in which Jonathan, Mina and the others live, simply by being from Romania (Carter 19). The fact is that many fictional villains, for example Joseph Conrad’s Kurtz, William Shakespeare’s Shylock and Bram Stoker’s Dracula, are eastern citizens, Hebrews or Jews (Gordon 19). As a result they differ, in body and mind, from the part of the world which considers itself as superior, meaning the white western society. “We are in Transylvania; and Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways,” says Dracula (32), which refers to the fact that Jonathan knows little about every day life, tradition and supernatural beliefs in Romania, and that we often fear what we do not know or fail to understand.

Although Dracula continuously “struggles to pass, perfecting his English accent and idioms” (Auerbach 112), he is obviously content with being a monster and has no desire to change in order to fit into society. Modern vampires, however, “take the color of their times so well that they make their stagy originator Dracula appear quaintly obsolete” (Auerbach 109). Lestat, being one of these modern vampires, constantly battles with the great questions of good and evil in life. He himself is not absolutely evil, although he kills humans and has an unfortunate tendency to make the so-called life difficult for his fellow vampires (Gordon 18ff). He desperately wants to change for the better, and knows that he has to in order to fit into modern society (Schopp 3).

According to Wyman, there are traditionally certain traits that are determined by society, traits that are connected with a specific gender. Masculinity, for example, is often linked with primitive and savage behaviour, whereas femininity represents delicate and civilised sensibilities. One way for Lestat to fit into society is by cultivating his female traits,
so that he will be perceived as more civilised than, for example, Dracula (7). He thinks as a
man but has the heart of a woman, which means that although he is intelligent and impulsive
he still takes his emotions into consideration before doing something (Ambjörnsson 143).
This reveals itself in that Lestat has the annoying (female) habit of bursting into tears at
various occasions and drives his vampire friend Louis mad by constantly arguing about the
true meaning of life and death, heaven and hell. Dracula, on the other hand, is very much a
man who acts on instinct. His sexual desire tells him to win the innocent, intelligent and
civilised Mina away from her fiancé, and Dracula therefore presents a threat to the strict rules
of sexuality and society (Ambjörnsson 136).

Although modern vampires are romanticised and desired by humans, they still have to
struggle with the same monstrous desires that Dracula struggles with. This is revealed by
animal behaviour towards men and women in the heat of the killing moment. The scene in
which Dracula seduces Mina and eventually turns her into a vampire is described in
particularly sexual and brutal terms:

The moonlight was so bright that through the thick yellow blind the room
was light enough to see. On the bed beside the window lay Jonathan Harker,
his face flushed, and breathing heavily as though in a stupor. Kneeling on the
near edge of the bed facing outwards was the white-clad figure of his wife.
By her side stood a tall, thin man, clad in black. His face was turned from us
[van Helsing and Lucy’s three suitors], but the instant we saw it we all
recognised the Count . . . His right hand gripped her [Mina] by the back of
the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom . . . The attitude of the two had
a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten’s nose into a saucer of milk
to compel it to drink . . . His eyes flamed red with devilish passion. (336)

Dracula clearly wants women, and Mina in particular, whereas Lestat is open to all
suggestions, from people of both sexes. In their separate societies these urges are seen as
threats to morality. The Victorians disapproved of female sexuality and modern society has
not entirely accepted homosexuality (Ambjörnsson 136). Rice differs from Stoker in that she
allows her vampires to act out their homosexual desires as well as their heterosexual ones
(Schopp 5). Consequently, Lestat tries to seduce both men and women as The Vampire
Chronicles series progresses, but of course he never makes love to anyone, since Rice’s
vampires do not have that ability after they are dead.5 Dracula, on the other hand, has no less
than three wives hidden in his castle in Transylvania who probably satisfy his sexual desires
at need, which is, according to Wyman, yet another sign of his uncivilised behaviour (6).

5 In The Tale of the Body Thief (1992), however, Lestat changes bodies with a human being, which allows him to
have sexual intercourse with a woman.
No matter how different Lestat is from the uncivilised Dracula, he is still a vampire and, consequently, a metaphor for the outsider (Gordon 27). This will not change, no matter how much Lestat struggles to fit in. He is well aware of this and says: “Pure evil has no real place. And that means, doesn’t it, that I have no place” (10). Consequently, Lestat decides to become a more socially accepted outsider who can walk about among humans without being judged too harshly for being rebellious. He becomes “what America calls a Rock Superstar” (3). Regarding his ‘new profession,’ Lestat says that:

I was enchanted by the world of the rock music – the way the singers could scream of good and evil . . . Sometimes they seemed the pure embodiment of madness. And yet it was technologically dazzling . . . It was barbaric and cerebral in a way that I don’t think the world of ages past had ever seen. (5)

Unlike most vampires, Lestat is keen to understand the society in which he now lives, “the twentieth century . . . this future” (10). He admits to being “scared from time to time . . . The drone of the air conditioners and the whine of the jet planes overhead hurt my ears” (6). However, rather than hiding from new inventions he decides to face them and, possibly, learn something from them: “I was enraptured with the cathedrals and castles, I went to the heart of society: I drank up its entertainments and its gossip, its literature and its music, its architecture and its art . . . I struggled to understand” (329).

Lestat convinces his band members to buy “superior instruments” in order to achieve the best sound possible on stage (14); he purchases a “portable computer word processor” to use when he is writing his autobiography since he does not have patience enough to write it in longhand (18). He even buys a “big black Harley-Davidson” and “roars” around New Orleans “making plenty of noise” (6). Whenever he wants to go somewhere, unlike Dracula, he enjoys driving his brand new car rather than going by boat or train.

Lestat realises, after he has been a vampire slightly less than a hundred years, that “history [has] no meaning” for him any longer (23), which means that he no longer feels the need to remember his past as a human now that he has become a vampire. At this period in time, right after the French Revolution has taken place, he is in France, visiting some vampire friends of his who own a theatre in Paris. The leader of this French vampire group, Armand, says to Lestat:
‘You can’t endure in the world, living among men, you cannot survive.’
‘But I do,’ I [Lestat] said simply. ‘The old mysteries have given way to a new style. And who knows what will follow? There’s no romance in what you are. There is great romance in what I am!’
‘You can’t be that strong,’ he [Armand] said. ‘You don’t know what you’re saying, you have only just come into being, you are young.’ (229)

However, unlike many of the older vampires that Lestat runs into on his travels, he manages to stay sane and invisible from human beings for a long time. Not even his attorney in Paris realises that his client is a vampire, although Lestat only visits him during the night. He blends in so perfectly with humans that he himself says that “maybe we [the modern vampires] had found the perfect moment in history, the perfect balance between the monstrous and the human, the time that ‘vampiric romance’ born in my imagination . . . should find its greatest enchantment . . . ” (500). What he means is that, considering what society has become today, people experience more difficulties and are not as apt to feel threatened by that which is different from the norm. Consequently, the vampire is not, as it was in the Victorian society, regarded as an outsider as much as an interesting part of existence.

Let us now sum up what has been stated in this section of the analysis regarding the similarities and differences between the two vampires. Dracula lives in a Victorian society that is characterised by colonialism, white superiority, chaste ideals and morals. Since Dracula is from the East, he represents savagery, primitive behaviour, cannibalism and uncontrolled sexuality. He does not belong in the civilised world and therefore presents a threat to modern society, which is symbolised by the Dutch scientist van Helsing. Dracula, the fictional villain, is content with being a monster and has no desire to change.

Unlike Dracula, Lestat knows that he has to change in order to fit into modern society. He has the brain of a man but the heart of a woman, which makes him seem civilised. Both Lestat and Dracula are outsiders, but Lestat wants to understand the new inventions and ideas of the world. One of the few things that connect the two vampires is that they have to struggle with monstrous sexual desires, Dracula with female sexuality and Lestat with homosexuality.

However, Lestat blends in with humans and manages to balance the monstrous and the human within himself so well that he is not perceived as an outsider: “I could fool mortals! I could move among them!” (115). The importance of this difference between Dracula and Lestat is that the latter does not present a threat to humans and is therefore not likely to be killed for being a vampire. Many mortals would, probably, consider Lestat to be the perfect gentleman. Dracula, on the other hand, seems to have given up the idea to fit in among
humans and lives his life as he chooses, as a savage, outside of the civilised world. Since he does not conform to the rules of the Victorian society, he is destroyed, whereas Lestat becomes a well-known rock superstar who is envied by humans and kills them one-by-one instead of being killed himself.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent that a change has indeed taken place in the century that separates Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* from Anne Rice’s *The Vampire Lestat*. The first novel, which belongs to the Victorian Gothic genre, presents us with many of the typical elements of this genre. It is set in Transylvania in an old castle and contains dungeons, hidden cellars and haunted rooms. The weather and atmosphere in the story is dull and gloomy. This novel is meant to reflect the Victorians’ fear of blood diseases, such as syphilis, and uncivilised behaviour that threatens to disturb the moral laws in modern society. Being unable to conform to these rules, Dracula must be rooted out of society. Simply by being in London he disturbs the frail balance between what is proper and improper, and awakens feelings in women especially that are not accepted. Furthermore, the main character is described as a villain with a multitude of supernatural powers who looks like an animal and behaves like one as well.

Rice’s novel, on the other hand, belongs to the Neo-Gothic genre. Although the plot sometimes involves churchyards and ruinous castles, the setting of the story is not significant. The focus of the story revolves around psychological aspects rather than on what takes place in it. The vampires in *The Vampire Lestat* discuss serious issues such as life and death. They analyse each other’s behaviour and want to find meaning in their after-life. This novel, in similarity to the Victorian Gothic novel *Dracula*, also expresses a fear of sexually transmitted blood diseases, such as HIV. However, uncivilised behaviour is not seen as a threat to society as much as an interesting part of existence.

When we analyse the vampire Dracula’s appearance in greater detail, we clearly see that the traits that were established by Cesare Lombroso regarding the criminal man all apply to this vampire. He is an outsider, not only because he is a vampire, but also because he is an eastern citizen. This, in the western civilisation, is connected with primitivism, savagery and uncivilised behaviour. He therefore represents a threat to the modern world that he comes to invade, the result being, naturally, that people want to see him dead.

Almost an entire century later the androgynous vampire Lestat enters the literary arena. He bears little resemblance to the classical vampire, and rarely acts on instinct, unless he feels threatened or is about to kill someone. More than anything else, Lestat is perceived as being
the perfect gentleman whom humans envy, physically and mentally. He is intelligent, often well behaved and has a charisma that attracts the attention of both men and women.

Lestat is also aware of the fact that in order to fit into modern society and not be discovered to be a vampire and therefore killed, like Dracula, or at least persecuted by those who oppose his race, he has to change. Consequently, he tries to quench his monstrous desires and focus on cultivating his female traits and learn about new inventions and ideas instead. He blends in perfectly with humans and is not afraid of pursuing a profession as a rock star, another metaphor for an outsider. On the contrary, he enjoys the attention he receives on stage and is envied by humans for being what he is.

It is obvious to the reader of these two novels that a significant change has taken place when it comes to how authors treat vampire characters. We can draw this conclusion since Dracula certainly represents how the vampire was described in most, if not all, Victorian Gothic novels. When Rice eventually published her novels in the 1970s and 80s she helped to resurrect the entire Vampire genre, which is probably why a vast majority of all vampires in Neo-Gothic fiction are similar to Lestat in behaviour and looks. Rather than being perceived as primitive monsters with uncivilised behaviour, vampires today represent something desirable, something that humans long to become. They are no longer creatures of the night that scare female victims out of their wits, but rather attractive men and women who seduce mortals with little or no effort. The savage nocturnal creature, personified by Dracula, is no longer present in modern vampire fiction. Today, vampires are fictional gentlemen whom women turn to when they long for some romance in their lives.

It is difficult to predict what the future holds in store when it comes to the question of the vampire’s further development, physically, mentally and socially. However, we can rely on the fact that the new ideal set up by Anne Rice of a socially acceptable individual with gorgeous appearance will outlast Stoker’s old prototype. As long as there is loss and horror in real life, as long as sexually transmitted blood diseases continue to spread, and as long as death is seen as something to fear rather than accept, vampires will continue to exist in fiction as metaphors for these events. Something that has existed together with humans for so many hundred years is difficult to eliminate, and for the time being, vampires as a fictional phenomenon seems to allure and fascinate the audience too much to just vanish, like vapour, into thin air.
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