



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

POSTMODERNIST CONSUMPTION IN BRAM STOKER'S  
*DRACULA*: A MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY

by  
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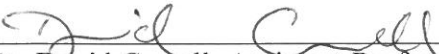
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# AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Postmodernist Consumption in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*:  
A Material Culture Study

This thesis analyzes Bram Stoker's *Dracula* through a materialist lens in order to study how the inventions in the novel:

- inform of the social changes taking place at the *fin-de-siècle*,
- reveal the social anxieties existing during that period,
- and help envision the fate of a society deeply invested in modernity.

In fact, a materialist reading quickly invites itself due to the characters' extreme reliance on up-to-date technologies in this novel, such as Kodak photography, phonograph recordings, and most importantly Mina's typewriter.

This analysis contextualizes the inventions under scrutiny as a creation of a newly nascent capitalist society which relied on mass production and mass consumption of manufactured goods, all of which were phenomena resulting from the Industrial Revolution. This new system was intertwined with cultural change so deeply that it transformed feudal conventions of labor, class, wealth and ownership of property but not without accompanying social anxieties.

This study borrows from various material culture critics, such as Peter Stallybrass, Daniel Miller, and Bill Brown, to define the field and to specify the particular approach adopted by this thesis. This study's specific use of material culture focuses on consumption of objects in the era of new consumer culture to present a problematic, but also productive, consumption in *Dracula*.

The technologies in *Dracula* ultimately reveal postmodernist suggestiveness that encompasses three main streams of postmodernist thought:

- Jean Baudrillard's absence of the real and its replacement with simulacra;
- Fredric Jameson's urgency to historicize and his postmodern emphasis on consumption;
- and Jean-François Lyotard's suspicion of grand-narratives and his criticism that modernity must take to itself the task of continuing the incomplete Enlightenment project – a project supposedly based on *progress*.

Finally, this analysis sheds light on the significance of *Dracula* as a text that has been itself infinitely consumed and reproduced, and that has evolved hand-in-hand with, and even defined, contemporary postmodernist culture.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary critics still ponder on the workings of capitalism at the turn of the nineteenth century, mainly because its intricacies still have a pronounced effect on the present. The Victorian *fin-de-siècle* marks a universal shift in lifestyle modes, notably through the rise of consumer culture. The commodities of this consumer culture are often ignored (Feibleman 329). However, in reality, they are significant because they can aid in understanding culture (Deetz 5).

This thesis serves to expand on a small, but already existent, theoretical framework which explores early signs of material culture in Victorian novels, in this case, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Other Victorian novels that have been examined through this lens are William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and Charles Dickens's novels, where the focus has been on older, everyday artifacts. Nevertheless, the presence of characteristically modern objects in *Dracula* makes for a more appealing choice.

Essentially, then, this thesis analyzes Bram Stoker's *Dracula* through a material culture approach in order to study how the inventions in the novel inform of the social changes taking place at the *fin-de-siècle*, reveal the social anxieties existing during that period, and help envision the postmodern fate of a society deeply invested in modernity. Close readings of excerpts from the text build this analysis. For example, in the following excerpt Mina speaks grandiosely of the phonograph and uses the typewriter to remedy the angst she felt at hearing Dr. Seward's technologized account of Lucy's death:



'...I have been more touched than I can say by your grief. That is a wonderful machine [the phonograph], but it is cruelly true. It told me, in its very tones, the anguish of your heart. It was like a soul crying out to almighty God. No one must hear them spoken ever again! See, I have tried to be useful. I have copied out the words on my typewriter, and none other need now hear your heart beat, as I did.' (Stoker 197)

Thus, passages where a character is shown to venerate a commodity invite a materialist reading because they present problematic consumptions of the new inventions of the capitalist era. These technologies constitute modern medicines, Kodak photography, phonograph recordings, and most importantly Mina's typewriter, among others.

A simple but comprehensive definition of the specific type of materialist approach adopted by this thesis is the following:

Material culture studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines the relationship between people and their things, the making, history, preservation, and interpretation of objects. It draws on theory and practice from such disciplines as art history, archaeology, anthropology, history, historic preservation, folklore, and museum studies, among others. Anything from buildings and architectural elements to books, jewelry, toothbrushes, or bubbles can be considered material culture. ("What is Material Culture?")

And Will Scott offers a more precise definition which relates to this study of consumerism in *Dracula*:

The rise of mass consumption was accompanied by a proliferation in objects and the multiplication of meanings, practices, and "needs" associated with these things. Material Culture Studies helps us to think about the objects, and the cultural, political, and economic systems that created them. ("What is Material Culture?")

In fact, *Dracula* makes for an interesting conversation on the questionable "needs" these objects attend to, on the multiple meanings these objects imply, and on the particularities of the systems which produced them.

Nonetheless, studies which focus on artifacts are likely to be met with some resistance from the literary academia. The reason for this is that for a long time academia has tended to prioritize the study of the subject at the expense of the object.

Not until recently have there been reactions against this inclination as many critics have newly voiced concerns relating this bias in criticism. The historical beginning of the trend which excludes the object could be traced back to the Renaissance. Many material culture advocates, like Peter Stallybrass, Bill Brown and Mathew Jones, blame Renaissance philosophy for divorcing intangible, or spiritual, reality from material reality in culture (Stallybrass 125). Moreover, Cartesian theory further exalted the subject and undermined the object:

When it comes to the Subject as such – that Cartesian Subject which becomes the abstract subject of democracy and psychoanalysis – Mathew Jones points to its emergence within the spiritual exercise of concrete work, work with rulers and compasses. He shows how "a simple mathematical instrument [the proportional compass]" became the model and exemplar of Descartes's new subject "supposedly so removed from the material." (Brown 7)

Ironically, then, the spiritual exercise of Cartesian epistemology which rejects the object is impossible to practice without material tools.

Furthermore, a third historical factor was modernity, which accentuated the subject/object dialectic by distinguishing between inanimate objects and animate human subjects (Brown 12). And a fourth influence was Karl Marx's claim that the object has been fetishized by modern society (de Grazia 17). Marx's "fetishism of commodities" entails cultural fragmentation and alienation from the means of production. When individuals are presented with products, these seem alien to them as they are unable to recognize such commodities as their own creations thereby creating a dysfunctional society (Marx 82).

However, Marx's limitations lie in his assumptions that the object is socially important only in respect to its production, and that the object denies a relationship to the subject (de Grazia 18). It was not until about the 1980's, well into the postmodernist

era, that humanities scholars showed renewed interest in the object (13-14). But, in *Dracula*, as early as the 1900's, that modernity proves already obsessed with objects and already suggesting the postmodern. Actually, an analysis of the material culture in *Dracula* gives in to postmodern views. After all, as Baudrillard declared, postmodernity "is the scene of the object's preponderance" (Brown 14).

This study adopts the theory of consumption posited by Daniel Miller in his *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. This is a comprehensive work which clarifies many misconceptions common in the humanities regarding contemporary material culture. Miller re-visits Hegel's subject-object duality in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Marx's "fetishism of commodities" to arrive at a theory which highlights mass consumption (3-4). In fact, it is essential to account for objects' use, abandonment, and circulation in any study of culture (Stallybrass 125). However, this thesis does not share Miller's extreme optimism in consumption. This is because consumption can be irrational, as often is the case in *Dracula*.

*Dracula's* stance in the socio-economic processes outlined by Miller is complex. Like Miller, this study does not promote the belief that capitalism's mass production and mass consumption of material goods tends to create subjects estranged from the objects they use, increasingly fragmenting society. Consequently, this thesis should not be mistaken as using the language of fetishism. In fact, the characters in *Dracula* come together through their use of these technologies. For example, Dr. Seward and Mina come to know each other through pivotal dialogues in which the phonograph and typewriter play key roles; Dracula and Harker come to a relation of exchange through Harker's sharing of the Kodak photos of Dracula's property during his

stay in Transylvania; and at several points throughout the text, reading Mina's typewritten material helps the characters fill in the gaps on the events they have missed.

Miller reconsiders Hegel's notion of objectification in relation to the 'subject-object' dichotomy in order to bring out a non-reductionist understanding (20). Miller contends that Hegel envisioned these two concepts as mutually constitutive and in dynamic relationship with each other. The objectification, or alienation, that happens at times between subject and object is actually a necessary step for the formation of culture (27). This necessary alienation precedes the subject's eventual reappropriation, or sublation, of the object (28). This cycle of alienation and sublation must be repeated many times until the final sublation takes place. In this final internalization of the object, the subject reaches a type of totality, which makes the fragmented world around him/her coherent (26).

In short, then, as posited by Hegel, the formation of culture through the subject-object duality constitutes a cyclical, progressive, dynamic, and non-reductionist process (26, 28, 30, 32). The realization that objectification, then, is an essential contradiction inbuilt in the progression of culture is particularly significant to modern society, seeing as it "has become increasingly a material culture" (Miller 33). In *Dracula*, to some extent, these objects – the medical drugs, the Kodak photos, the phonograph, and the typewriter, among others – indeed enable positive cultural constructions. And to use Hegel's terminology, it is the characters' reappropriation of these objects, of culture, which allows that positive cultural energy, despite their irrational use of them.

In Bram Stoker's novel, the vampire hunters' infatuation with the new commodities of the century might be mistaken for an obsession which encompasses Marx's view of fetishism. However, this veneration of objects does not necessarily imply fetishism that is due to alienation from institutions of labor and production. Instead, it implies a problematic consumption. Labor and production are not likely to play a significant role anymore in the staging of self-constructed culture as this stage is now occupied by consumptive forces (Miller 192). The connotations that become attached to specific objects are of endless possibilities not only because there is an unlimited variety of products offered by markets but also because even identical goods "may be recontextualized by different social groups in an infinite number of ways" (196). Although *Dracula* does not stage consumption in its full force, as might be portrayed through shopping in malls and supermarkets, the novel still seems more invested in consumption to a much higher extent than production.

Furthermore, the term 'postmodernism' has definitely been the scene of much debate among critics, as the term refers to a patchwork of ideas expressed by various theorists belonging to different disciplinary fields at different points in history. Plenty of contradictions exist among theorists with respect to the definition of the term. For example, some of these contradictions have risen in relation to postmodernism's appropriate periodization, resistance to modernism, and origins. While this study does not intend to compromise these debates, – interesting and rewarding as that task may be – it does aim to define the term to the degree that it serves the present analytic purposes. Unfortunately, any definition might ultimately seem reductive and exclusive, since it will account for some major trends in postmodern thinking and ignore others. Yet, it is necessary to outline the postmodern streams of thought relevant to this thesis.

In general, postmodernism marks a transition "from questions of epistemology (ways of knowing) to questions of ontology (ways of being and acting in the world)" (Brooker 21). In short, postmodernism could be defined as a body of theories which display cultural formations linked to the abandonment of epistemological certainties (Brooker 12); to contemporary consumer culture or late capitalism ("Fredric Jameson" 1935), to the absence of originals and their replacement by simulacra ("Jean Baudrillard" 1729), to the loss of confidence in modern ideas of progress and reason (Lyotard, "Defining the Postmodern" 1613), and to skepticism of metanarratives in favor of micronarratives, which better account for the complexity of truth ("Jean-François Lyotard" 1610-11). A material culture study of the up-to-date gadgets – such as the modern drugs, the Kodak photos, the phonograph, and the typewriter, among others – consumed in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* discloses postmodern behavior in accordance to the preceding discourses.

As well, periodizing postmodernism appropriately is difficult (Brooker 23). Jean-François Lyotard contends that postmodernism should not be considered an exact period but rather a phenomenon connected to the "modernism it tries to shake" ("Jean-François Lyotard" 1611). Moreover, Lyotard and Fredric Jameson disagree with respect to their periodizing of postmodernism. While Lyotard refuses to historicize this movement, Jameson treats postmodernism as a clear period defined by the rise of a new social order of late capitalism, or consumer culture ("Postmodernism and Consumer Society" 1962). Jameson describes this new social order as a "compulsively consumerist middle class" emerging during the transitional period between the late 1950's and early 1960's (1962).

This study borrows many of Jameson's general claims but does not concur with his periodization of postmodernism. While compulsive consumerism is indeed a postmodern characteristic, traces of this capitalist mentality are already evident in early consumerism at the turn of the century, as will be shown of *Dracula*. For example, Mina's dependency on the typewriter and Dr. Seward's consumption of drugs signal a premature but pronounced obsession with the commodities made available by capitalist forces. Nevertheless, this study supports Jameson's urgency to historicize in literary criticism and to treat texts as products of their time and of their social, political, and historical circumstances ("The Political Unconscious" 1937). In fact, contextualizing *Dracula* in its socio-economic background is a priority in this work.

Actually, since the beginning of modernity, vampirism has been employed to stage concerns over the new times. In both fiction and non-fiction, many authors have chosen the vampire figure to expose the contradictions they perceived in early capitalism. Robert E. Park's Congo Papers shows how the identity of the vampire has permeated real capitalist projects. Apparently, the newly nascent Belgian capitalist imperialism in Congo at the turn of the century was essentially vampiric (Lyman 505-06). "Always in need of its life-renewing blood supply, abject labor power..." corporate capitalism falsely pretended to bring "progress" to these primitive areas (508, 512). How to instill moral conscience to capitalist colonizing projects is still a pressing question today (512), as capitalist projects which demand cheap labor exist nowadays in the guise of corporate factory establishments in third world countries.

In fiction, for example, Daniel P. Scoggin shows how Charles Dickens borrowed the vampire metaphor in his *Our Mutual Friend* to comment on the distorted capitalist economies of the new era (99, 102). The avaricious characters of the novel,

such as Gaffer Hexam, are condemned for normalizing economies which not only disrespect but also negate different modes of death in a similar way as the *un-dead* vampire negates death (99). In general, this literary tendency of using the vampire metaphor to depict a diseased capitalism is suggestive of the threats felt by Victorian society:

The themes of un-dead permanence, foreignness, and parasitism were projected onto a certain type of capitalist [figure] throughout the period (and vice versa) because both figures – the vampire and the speculator – were perceived as threats to the integrity of [Victorians]... (105)

Therefore, analyzing *Dracula* promises to offer similar, relevant clues to the concerns of the time.

These capitalist works which partake of the vampiric on the whole run in line with Lyotard's criticism of the grand narrative of modernity, reason, and progress leading to utopia ("Jean-François Lyotard" 1609-10). Lyotard is suspicious of all kinds of grand narratives, especially the grand narrative of modernity, because they do not account for the complexity of truth (1614). Truth, Lyotard argues, is better represented by micronarratives, or 'language games,' which do account for world diversity and difference and denounce totalizing world views ("Jean-François Lyotard" 1609). The promise of progress through capitalism and scientific innovation is disappointing, as well, because it has not been capable of emancipating man (Lyotard, "Defining the Postmodern" 1613). Instead, medicine and technology have been arrayed against mankind (1613-14), since they are exploited to optimize commercial profits and to advance political wars ("Answering the Question" 139). For these reasons, it is necessary to abandon the Enlightenment project altogether ("Defining the Postmodern" 1614). Lyotard stands in opposition to other critics like Jürgen Habermas, who still have confidence in this project ("Jürgen Habermas" 1742) and wish to renew it (Habermas



1756). Vampirism, then, makes for a rich stage to voice mistrust at modernity and the exposition of vampirism in *Dracula* is no exception.

Lastly, Jean Baudrillard's the replacement of the real by signs also contributes to this study when analyzing the consumption of the technologies in *Dracula*. The two causes of this ontological reversal, contemporary consumer culture and western science ("Jean Baudrillard" 1730), make a mark in the text. The consumption of inventions, like the phonograph, reveals that the products of this Industrial society do not satisfy real human needs. This phenomenon makes the image anterior to the real, inducing hyperreality (Baudrillard 1732). Moreover, the codifying, organizing, and systematizing features which the typewriter in the novel allows further dissolve reality instead of preserving it. Finally, this analysis will shed light on the significance of *Dracula* as a text that has been itself infinitely consumed and reproduced, and that has evolved hand-in-hand with, and even defined, contemporary postmodernist culture.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* has certainly proven itself attractive to various types of literary critics ever since it was published a century ago. Psychoanalysis, feminism, queer theory, imperialist discourse and structuralism are but a few of the many literary theories that have been used to approach the novel. As interesting as this volume of criticism is, any study of *Dracula* must apologize for neglecting some of the material that has been written on the novel. Although interesting, some of the material is, thematically, of little relevance to the present analysis. Moreover, whether relevant or not, some criticism cannot be mentioned simply due to the physical restrictions of any piece of writing, especially since the novel's criticism is so vast. However, a serious attempt will be made throughout this paper to engage with the criticism most relevant to two literary theories: material culture studies and postmodernism, as these are the theories that relate to this study.

#### **A. Contextual and Theoretical Background: The Victorian *Fin-de-Siècle*, Material Culture Studies, and Postmodernism**

The Victorian *fin-de-siècle* produced fictions that changed the history of literature and culture for many reasons (Auerbach ix-x). This period was characterized by impressive technological advances, with the invention of the Kodak box camera (Marshall xv), duplex telegraphy, the telephone, the gramophone, wireless telegraphy,

cinematography, and X-rays to name a few. British politics pivoted between the Modern and the Victorian (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii). Such pronounced clash between the new and the old led to the formation of different types of cultural and political notions, like that of the new woman, the new imperialism, the new drama, the new journalism, the new realism (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii), and the new nationalism (Anderson 1-2). New fields of study such as psychology and sexology also emerged (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii). And the British nation seemed the most powerful it had ever been. But this power, which brought up modernity, did not come without its fears and anxieties of degeneration and decay (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii). The ambivalence of the *fin-de-siècle* is still fascinating today. This period's legacy is reflected in the "cultural icons of ambivalence" it has left behind (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii-xiv), cultural icons such as the modern vampire (Daly, "Introduction" 7).

Nicholas Ruddick's study of the popular "fantastic fictions" during this period includes many prominent works, such as Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Overall, Ruddick's claim is that during this period, literature achieved "a successful break with fictional realism" (189). Specifically on *Dracula*, Ruddick maintains that the novel's heterogeneous narrative, composed of several transcribed artifacts, serves to authenticate the fantastic events taking place in the novel, which existing audiences were not likely to believe (202). Keeping these considerations in mind, *Dracula* should not be dismissed as simply a Gothic text when it is actually a text which culminates "the century-long process of the domestication of the Gothic" (202).

Having framed *Dracula's* contextual background, summaries of sources on material culture studies will follow. "Material culture studies is an interdisciplinary field

that examines the relationship between people and their things" ("What is Material Culture?"). A simple but informative introductory article for material culture studies beginners is "The Philosophy of Tools" by James K. Feibleman, in which he stresses how material objects are often underestimated. He emphasizes the position of civilized man as a creator *and* a product of the tools he manufactures, and explores how that process is culturally significant (329).

Similarly, James Deetz in his "In Small Things Forgotten," illuminates how commonplace objects, and not only the written word, can help add to the understanding of culture (5). Of particular importance is Feibleman's definition of artifacts as "material objects which have been altered through human agency. There are two kinds of artifacts: tools and signs. Tools are material objects employed to alter other material objects. Signs are material objects employed to refer to other material objects..." (329). It is remarkable that, although Feibleman's discourse throughout his article is anthropological, he nonetheless mentions postmodern terms when referring to artifacts as signs. As will be shown in later chapters, postmodernism and material culture studies overlap in *Dracula*.

In Peter Stallybrass's "Material Culture: Introduction," he also traces the relation of material culture studies to anthropology and recognizes literary experts' recent attraction to the field (123). Stallybrass believes that "the process of divorcing a supramaterial 'culture' from its 'mere' material supports [began] in the Renaissance," and condemns such a tendency – which became more prominent with post-Cartesian epistemology (125). In fact, objects' use, abandonment, and circulation must be considered essential to any study of culture (125). With the new language of fetishism,

the object became further represented negatively as will be shown later in the discussion relating to Marx (129).

Bill Brown in his "Thing Theory," initially emphasizes the study of *things* as a warmer, simpler way to analyze culture, contrary to theory which can become tedious, especially in its overemphasis on the subject (1). But eventually, Brown realizes that "taking the side of things hardly puts a stop to that thing called theory" (2) because things themselves have an ambiguous nature (6). Like Peter Stallybrass, Brown cites Mathew Jones in order to criticize Cartesian theory for exalting the subject and undermining the object (7).

Furthermore, Brown claims that "modernity artificially made an ontological distinction between inanimate objects and human subjects," thus accentuating misconceptions in the subject/object dialectic (12). However, Baudrillard declared "that just as modernity was the historical scene of the subject's emergence, so postmodernity is the scene of the object's preponderance" (qtd. in Brown 14). Contemporary galleries feature commonplace objects, instead of subjects; for example, Claes Oldenburg's art, like his sculpture *Typewriter Eraser, Scale X* in Washington, D.C. and his exhibitions in New York's Green Gallery, testify to the new obsession with objects. Again, Baudrillard's claim that objects have newly been given importance in the postmodernist era is important to this study of *Dracula* since it shows the appropriateness of coupling material culture theory with postmodernism. In summary, Cartesian philosophy, subject/object dialectic, and modernity, Brown claims, are some of the culprits which made the academic practice internalize conventions of thinking that "accelerate the obsolescence of things," which have led to closed-minded analyses of culture that have been prominent until about the 1980's (13).

Moreover, Daniel Miller's *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* exposes the flawed conventions of academia with regards to Hegelian and Marxist concepts when studying contemporary culture. Some of these "blanket assumptions" brand contemporary culture as "materialistic" or "fetishistic" (3-4). Miller reconsiders the belief that capitalism's mass production of material goods tends to create subjects estranged from the objects they use thereby increasingly fragmenting society. Instead, he argues that mass consumption, which is often neglected by scholars, allows people to redefine themselves, rather than be oppressed by the objects they own. These objects help shape tastes, morals, and other social attributes (3).

As he explains in his "Introduction," Miller starts by offering a re-reading of the well-known Western philosophical subject-object duality posited in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (4). Afterwards, Miller attempts to correct misinterpretations of various Marxist concepts before presenting a modern theory of culture that prioritizes mass consumption (5-14). However, Miller warns that "culture...is always a process and is never reducible to either its object or its subject form. For this reason, evaluation should always be of a dynamic relationship..." (11). That is, he intends to invest on the object a rightful amount of importance in his study of culture and in relationship to the subject, rather than prioritizing the object over the subject (11).

In Miller's second chapter, "Hegel and Objectification," he reconsiders Hegel's notion of objectification, or alienation, in relation to the 'subject-object' dualism in order to better understand the origin of the concept of objectification and to later be able to apply it to a theory of culture and even to a theory of modernity (20). In very simple terms, Miller's interpretation of Hegel is that referring to just a 'subject' or just an 'object' tends to reduce the other and constitutes a misunderstanding of Hegel since

these concepts exist in a "mutually constitutive relationship" (27). In other words, the subject by definition is "constituted by the process of absorbing its own object" in dynamism, and thus is inseparable from it (27).

Furthermore, the concept of objectification was seen by Hegel as a necessary step for the formation of culture, a point which was problematic for Marx (27). Miller claims that Hegel considered it essential for the subject to be estranged from the object at times, in preparation for the subject's eventual reappropriation, or sublation, of the external world (28). Hegel claimed that culture consisted of this process repeated multiple times in a cyclical fashion until the final sublation took place, where the subject would reach a type of totality, which made the fragmented world around him/her coherent (26). The most important ideas to be pointed out are that this process whereby culture is created was seen as progressive by Hegel himself (28), offered a "genuine non-reductionist" understanding of the subject-object dualism (26), was dynamic (30), and considered objectification as a necessary step that would allow the subsequent internalizing of the object to occur (32).

The fact that objectification, or self-alienation, is a necessary contradiction inherent in the formation of culture is particularly significant to modern culture, which "has become increasingly a *material* culture" (Miller 33). Because of this, "materiality may play an ever more important part in the constitution of this contradiction" (33). Miller suggests resolving this contradiction through the consumption of that materiality:

appropriation takes place through an expanded process of consumption by means of which goods and services are distanced from the abstracted and alien, but necessary institutions from which they originate, and are recast as inalienable material culture...this process is equivalent to the Hegelian concept of sublation as the movement by which society reappropriates its own external form – that is, assimilates its own culture and uses it to develop itself as a social subject. So, far from being merely an extension of those social

conditions and relations generated by the organization of production, consumption is, at least potentially, their negation. (17)

Thus, Miller suggests that to make sense out of the great materiality of the modern world which has been, since the time of Hegel, complex and fragmentary, critics should turn their eyes to consumerism of goods now more than ever and avoid labeling such an approach "fetishistic" (18, 32).

In Miller's third chapter, "Marx: Objectification and Rupture," he turns his attention to Marx's interpretation of Hegel with respect to several concepts, such as objectification or alienation, fetishism, and reification, and to Marx's awkward pose between consumption and production (34, 43). Miller first shows that Marx removed the necessary progressive and dynamic features Hegel rendered to objectification (36). The basis for this change originates from Marx's belief that capitalism's distorted means of production was creating extremely alienated labor thereby upsetting Hegel's cyclical view of cultural fashioning (36). Marx contends that capitalism had created the most "pronounced" form of alienated labor yet, eliminating any possibility of sublation (37). Furthermore, this ultimate alienation takes the form of the "fetishism of commodities," whereby social groups are presented with products that seem alien to them and are unable to recognize such commodities as their own creations (Marx 82).

Miller mostly criticizes Marx's tendency to expose objectification negatively, as rupturing "rather than enabling the development of human social and material relations," (41) and as preventing the alienated subject from reaching some type of self-affirmation, or sublation (40). He cites Baudrillard in order to understand from which type of background a critic like Marx originated:

Baudrillard places Marx in the context of other Victorian British thinkers faced with the trauma of the contemporary industrial revolution, arguing that, in



effect, Marx was establishing one version of a [common and conservative] theme...This was the idea of work as the only true means of human self-creation, with the corollary that the factories of the day were producing every kind of product but were reducing their workers to the level of machines...It is this which allows Baudrillard to recast Marx as a conservative Victorian true to his time... (46)

In short, it follows that Miller's strongest critique is of Marx's overemphasis on the means of labor and production as the major criteria for cultural growth, while disregarding consumption. Miller shares this stand with Baudrillard, who similarly critiques Marx for devaluing consumption at the expense of production (46).

In his tenth chapter, "Towards a Theory of Consumption," Miller demonstrates that the conditions since Hegel or even Marx have changed (179) to such an extent that production could never again be the stage for self-constructed culture that it was before as that stage is now occupied by consumptive spheres (192), which expand from the domestic to the educational to the recreational and so on (189). He follows to explain the "unhappy consciousness," which "denotes periods of dichotomized subject-object relations resulting from the inherently contradictory nature of a number of aspects of modern society" (184). The unhappy consciousness consists of those moments where the subject feels alienated and pressured by post-capitalist forces of media and mass advertising (188).

Miller warns that these feelings of estrangement are often seen negatively, but it is a necessary pre-requisite for reappropriating culture. Thus, alienation, although negative, constitutes part of a general progressive process of acquiring culture (188). To elaborate more, "consumption as work may be defined as that which translates the object from an alienable to an inalienable condition; that is, from being a symbol of estrangement and price value to being an artifact invested with particular inseparable

connotations" (190). These connotations that become attached to specific objects are of endless possibilities, not only because there is an unlimited variety of products offered by markets, but also because even when "goods are identical at point of purchase or allocation, [they] may be recontextualized by different social groups in an infinite number of ways" (196).

After having summarized Miller's ideas, it is worth noting that other critics have also critiqued Marx for his faulty depiction of subject/object relations, where the object is commodified (de Grazia 17), denies a relationship to the subject, and is socially important only in respect to its production (18). Similarly, even Jacob Burckhardt has been criticized for creating the idea of an "individuated subject [who is] cut off from objects" (17). In other words, Burckhardt's subject claims the existence of an a priori subject who is "fully conscious and capable" (18), only once it is removed from all objects (17). Material culture denies both of these reductive understandings of subject/object relations.

With respect to capitalist criticism in fictions of the *fin-de-siècle*, *Dracula* has been especially attractive to critics. And although other notable vampire works, like Polidori's *The Vampyre* and Le Fanu's incompleated *Carmilla*, certainly date earlier than *Dracula*, these works do not, unlike Stoker's novel, encourage a sophisticated cultural reading. Franco Moretti in his "Dialectic of Fear," has brought up this point when he argues that the two new monsters of the century, *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, were especially threatening as "universal" monsters due to their *modernity* as opposed to earlier monsters which were characterized by their primitivism:

The literature of terror is born precisely out of the terror of a split society and out of the desire to heal it... *Frankenstein's* monster and *Dracula* the vampire are, unlike previous monsters, dynamic, totalizing monsters. *Dracula*...is an

ascetic of terror... [Dracula] is by its very nature insatiable and unlimited. [On the other hand,] Polidori's vampire is still a petty feudal lord...Time is against him, against his conservative desires. Stoker's Dracula, by contrast, is a rational entrepreneur who invests his gold to expand his dominion: to conquer the City of London...The modern monsters [unlike the ancient ones] threaten to live forever and to conquer the world. For this reason they must be killed. (67-68)

Moretti's capitalist-inspired concepts – such as Dracula being the quintessential monopolist/entrepreneur from the piles of gold that he accumulates and from his frugal behavior – tell of a "modern" – but nonetheless, fractured – society which dissipates terror universally (74). His commercial discourse highlights some of the anxieties inherent in this "split" society creating the objects of "progress," which cannot seem to find a comfortable seat between its feudal past and its capitalist present (68).

The three prominent postmodernist authorities which this project draws on are Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, and Fredric Jameson. However, their ideas cannot be grasped without first having a basic understanding of Jürgen Habermas's theory of the "unfinished project" of modernity, which is an idea these postmodernist thinkers generally disagree with and have critiqued ("Jürgen Habermas" 1744). Habermas's work goes back to the origin of modernity, the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment's promise was that reason will guide society into ultimate justice and freedom and will enrich culture and everyday life. This is often referred to as "progress" (Habermas 1754). From the days of the Enlightenment, modernity seems to have failed in this promise, as world inequality and human rights violations keep occurring ("Jürgen Habermas" 1741-42). But modernity itself is not at fault and its premise that reason will lead to progress universally still holds true (Habermas 1756). Rather, the culprit is capitalist modernization, which he claims created a split between culture and society (1751-52). He suggests that the solution to this split is to rekindle, rather than abandon, the incomplete project of modernity, correcting the past mistakes, and steering

modernization in a direction that enriches lay audiences (1756). However, he does admit that there is little hope for this to happen as the great majority of individuals are already deeply disillusioned by the failures they have witnessed (1758).

Jean-François Lyotard certainly critiques Habermas for his belief in grand narratives, rational theory, and progress leading to utopia ("Jean-François Lyotard" 1609-10). Reality, for Lyotard, is best represented by singular narratives, not metanarratives, which have constantly been a disappointment throughout the course of history (1612). The grand narrative of modernity did not account for the complexity of truth and did not give a voice to multiple narratives coming from minorities. This fragmented multiplicity should not only be acknowledged, but also commemorated (Lyotard, "Defining the Postmodern" 1614). Progress never emancipated man (1613). If anything, the two past centuries have promoted cynicism. Instead of leading to progress, medicine has advanced diseases, not fought them. Meanwhile technology, instead of attending to human needs, has created weapons of mass destruction which are being used in numerous atrocious wars fought in the name of mankind (1613-14). For these reasons, it is necessary to break with tradition and start anew, abandoning the Enlightenment project altogether ("Answering the Question" 141-42). To heal the unconscious of the crimes of humanity, Lyotard suggests an idea borrowed from Sigmund Freud, *arbeitung*, which consists of the act of repeating the past, through pastiche, in order to therapeutically heal oneself of the symptoms of post-traumatic-stress disorder ("Defining the Postmodern" 1615).

Fredric Jameson is highly responsible for reviving Marxism in academia ("Fredric Jameson" 1933). In his preface to *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, he encourages critics to study cultural texts in relation to their

direct historical, social (for Marx, this is equivalent to class struggle) and political contexts to achieve deeper levels of understanding (1933). Jameson deems such an approach necessary because, although not immediately clear to the critic, the text itself is indeed a product of its time and conditions, which played a role in shaping and limiting the imagination of the author (1934). Therefore, he calls for a historization and abandonment of "inherited interpretive traditions" ("The Political Unconscious" 1937).

His later work focuses on drawing connections between postmodernism and consumer society. In contrast to Lyotard, who defines postmodernism as a term implicating the very modernism it attempts to resist, Jameson identifies postmodernism as a clearly defined period in cultural history, characterized by an emergent class of consumerism:

a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order – what is often euphemistically called modernization, postindustrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism. ("Postmodernism and Consumer Society" 1962)

For Jameson, there no longer exists a modernist need to resist the long-gone bourgeoisie because social hierarchies have changed, the new social order being that of contemporary consumer capitalism ("Fredric Jameson" 1935). His postmodernism is also characterized by pastiche, which he recognizes as prominent in recent literary works ("Postmodernism and Consumer Society" 1963). He contends that because high modernism and Victorian norms have become obsolete, imitations in literature and art cannot be called parody. In other words, since ridiculing through parody presupposes deviation from a normal, pastiche has taken over (1963).

Jean Baudrillard is perhaps the most shocking of the postmodernist theorists. His great theme is the replacement of the real by signs thereby reversing the logical

understanding of culture to nature ("Jean Baudrillard" 1729). The absence of the real, for Baudrillard, creates the feeling of nostalgia (1731). He points his finger at two culprits for this reversal: contemporary consumer culture and imperialistic western science (1730). As for the first one, he contends that factories no longer produce items which satisfy real human needs. Rather, people are first told "what [they] want" through media and advertising thereby creating the demand for the product that will later be offered to meet that demand (1730). "Consumer society," he explains, "provides a "precession of simulacra," a parade of images that project a life that consumers are encouraged to try to live" (1729). In this way, Baudrillard does away with classical Marxism, where the emphasis was on production (Brooker 17). Consumerism has overtaken production, making the real "anterior to or underlying the image" (Brooker 17). This phenomenon of simulation without the reality which the sign signifies is called hyperreality (Baudrillard 1732). For example, sexual desire is no longer original, but is preconceived by the images from movies and celebrities that are constantly encounter on screens. So, when someone "falls in love" he/she is actually striving to fulfill the experiences he/she has internalized from media image. And even if one tries to avoid this tendency, these images are still at the center of cognition (1732).

Second, colonizing projects have destroyed the real, as well. When the West explored the world, they obliterated difference and otherness by translating, studying, classifying, and explaining aboriginal peoples. In doing so, they dissolved the reality of the aboriginals within their own scientific, although reductionist, systems (Baudrillard 1737). In studying ethnicities, thus, anthropologists killed ethnology (1736-37). Baudrillard cites as an example an episode which took place in 1971 where the Filipino government decided to return a group of aboriginals back to the jungle, where they were

previously found untouched by civilization (1736). Baudrillard ridicules such an attempt, since the people being returned had already been touched by civilization and were no longer "indigenous" people (1736-37).

## **B. Criticism of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*: Materialist, Postmodernist and Other Readings**

Having summarized sources used for material culture theory, postmodernist theory and contextual sources on the *fin-de-siècle*, summaries of journal articles and books tackling *Dracula* under these theoretical lenses will follow. Debbie Harrison's materialist article, "Doctors, Drugs, and Addiction: Professional Integrity in Peril at the *Fin-de-Siècle*," focuses on the use, prescription and abuse of drugs by doctors at the turn of the century in several texts, one of which is *Dracula*. She concentrates on two events: Dr. Seward's apparently frequent self-medication with chloral to combat depression and loneliness, and the well-intentioned yet risky drugging of Mina which renders her vulnerable to vampiric attack. Harrison thinks these episodes tell of "the doctor's flawed vision and impaired scientific objectivity," placing the doctor in an ambivalent position with regards to addiction debates at the *fin-de-siècle* (53). Based on these drug-related incidents, Harrison constructs an image of the doctor figure at the turn of the century. The prototype for the Victorian doctor consists of a "professional middle-class male" who holds the main authority over drug distribution (53). Nonetheless, the doctor's monopoly on drug distribution proved dangerous, as doctors like Dr. Seward appeared to be intellectually limited, lacking in vision, and themselves instigators of addictions (54).

The article in literature that seems the most invested in a truly materialist reading of *Dracula* is Jennifer Wicke's "Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and its Media," in which she treats *Dracula* as a modernist artifact more than a product of the ancient Gothic (467). Borrowing from Marx's *Grundrisse*, Wicke carefully analyzes the different artifacts in the novel to show how the text indirectly privileges a specific type of *modernist* consumption which encompasses both production and distribution, and paradoxically, proves essentially vampiric (467). For example, Dr. Seward's gramophone, which extracts essence from the voice, allows vampiric exchanges (470). Shorthand itself is indicative of the emerging workforce of modernity (471). Even Jonathan Harker's early behavior in Transylvania resembles that of the modernist cultural tourist and his Kodak pictures behave like vampiric analogs (472). They serve as simulacra when replicating an image because they also extract the essence of the original object "in an act of consumption" (472). Journalism as well reveals the mass cultural appeal when the text uses many mass-mediated newspaper articles (typewritten by Mina) as a mode of narration (473). Wicke most notably develops a theory of vampiric typewriting (467). She considers Mina's skill at the typewriter to be vampiric, specifically her use of the "Manifold" function, which produces many replicas of the original typewritten text. Although vampiric, this function of the typewriter ironically helps destroy the Count (477).

Although not a materialist essay per se, David Seed's "The Narrative Method of *Dracula*" also highlights the artifacts of the novel when he claims that Stoker's narrative tendency in *Dracula* is to break down the rationality of the Western characters, mainly Jonathan Harker (64). For example, Harker quickly finds a rational excuse as to why there is no map which marks Dracula's castle in Transylvania (64).



Most significantly, Seed considers the extensive use of modern means of communicating and storing information in the novel through artifacts such as Mina's portable typewriter, telegrams, and Dr. Seward's phonograph (68). From these objects, Seed concludes that the key to destroying the Count lies in information gathering methods produced by socially collective collaborations amongst the different characters (73).

Eric Kwan-Wai Yu, in his "Productive Fear: Labor, Sexuality, and Mimicry in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," examines different critical studies that have been written on the novel to arrive at an analysis of the Protestant work ethic, borrowed from Max Weber, that seems to be practiced throughout the narrative (146). The gist of his argument uncovers the anxieties behind the progress and reason embodied in the capitalist Protestant work ethic, which Mina most notably practices with her typewriter and her Puritan "man-brain" (146, 156). However, Mina can only make predictions about Dracula's route of escape from England once she has typed every piece of information down and has archived and organized all records (158-59). Rather than make her seem proficient, Kwan-Wai Yu argues, this tendency of hers actually depicts her as suffering from a "helpless addiction" to the typewriter, seeing as she cannot function properly without it; her brilliant "man-brain" alone is not enough (159). Ironically, besides Mina, the antagonist of the novel, Dracula himself rehearses the Protestant work ethic of capitalism with his ascetism and Puritanism, further blurring the morality in the novel (162).

Rosemary Jann, in her "Saved by Science? The Mixed Messages of Stoker's *Dracula*," takes on a materialist treatment of the novel as a "cultural document" (273). According to Jann, there are two contradictory voices in the novel, one which valorizes

blind faith, superstition and imagination mostly accredited to Van Helsing and another, and ultimately the stronger one, which supports scientific reasoning (273). Stoker's preference of the second voice serves to align [the novel] "firmly with the conventional bases of cultural power at the time" (273). To illustrate instances where Stoker favors the voice of superstition, although Van Helsing is one of the best scientists of his time, he urges Dr. Seward to use his imagination and have blind faith in things he cannot scientifically confirm, like the existence and workings of vampires (275). Van Helsing even arms himself with crucifixes and hosts, which are primitive – not modern – objects, to fight Dracula (275). Towards the end of the novel, when Jonathan laments the absence of any authentic relics that prove their adventures were real, it is Van Helsing who unscientifically proclaims "we want no proofs; we ask none to believe us," further encouraging the group to practice blind faith (277). But the stronger voice is ultimately pro-technology (279). For example, the up-to-date style of shorthand protects Jonathan during his stay in Castle Dracula by preventing the ancient Count from fully knowing his thoughts. And Mina's tendency to type everything down is explained by Jann as an "impulse to reduce the supernatural and the mysterious to a codified system [which] also operates in Stoker's handling of vampire superstition as a whole," thereby further preferring the stance of Victorian normative rationality over ancient methods (283).

On the other hand, Judith Halberstam's "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" takes a different turn by connecting the description and treatment of the vampire in Stoker's novel to contemporary anti-Semitic stereotypes (333). Two of her minor claims are nonetheless arrived at through materialist readings of the text. First, from the many written artifacts, such as newspaper clippings, diaries, letters, and

medical notes, Halberstam concludes that reading, writing, and the compilation efforts of Mina somehow provide a safe area impenetrable to the vampire (335-36). Second, from three episodes where Dracula's gold or money are involved, Halberstam forms her idea of the Gothic economy (346). Because Dracula's money appears static, unused or just being accumulated, Halberstam believes that vampirism interferes with the natural flow of capitalism (346).

Michael J. Dennison, in his *Vampirism: Literary Tropes of Decadence and Entropy*, claims that it is through the root metaphor of entropy that the modern vampire figure evolved during the nineteenth century "to become a major literary myth" (1). In his chapter on *Dracula*, Dennison illuminates the multiplicity and disorder inherent in the novel (83). According to him, Dracula personifies disorder itself, a disorder which the men of the novel try to reorder (83-84). However, Dennison calls Mina "the organizing intelligence" of the novel because, through her Remington "Manifold" typewriter, she is able to transcribe all the *disordered* information preserved or stored in different artifacts (telegrams, newspapers, phonograph recordings etc.) into an *ordered* whole (84-85).

Daniel P. Scoggin's "A Speculative Resurrection: Death, Money, and the Vampiric Economy of *Our Mutual Friend*" is interesting for this study in so far as it yet again employs vampire discourse borrowed from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Karl Marx and Franco Morretti, to analyze the distorted economies of the mid-Victorian era exposed in Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (99, 102). Scoggin claims that Dickens found in the vampire image a fitting tool to critique the diseased economies of capitalism (101). The image of capitalism which he extracts from *Our Mutual Friend*

and which he claims is vampiric is drawn from the greedy and sickly personalities in the novel, such as Gaffer Hexam's. It is an image of

...mid-Victorian capital successfully naturalizing the most nauseous of economies; according to the logic of equivalent exchange, the refuse of death – body parts, paper, waste and dust – are never safe from being recycled and made to turn a profit. (99)

Furthermore, he ends up connecting the vampire image to the "aggressive accumulation of wealth" depicted in the novel and to Jean Baudrillard's ideas in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. As stated in that work, once culture begins to negate death by accumulating wealth (which denotes life), it ironically ends up producing death (Scoggin 109). That is what happens in the modern society present in *Our Mutual Friend* (109).

Even in non-fiction, literary critics have found in Stoker's modern vampire a fitting metaphor for real capitalist projects. Stanford M. Lyman's article, "Robert E. Park's Congo Papers: A Gothic Perspective on Capitalism and Imperialism," elaborates on the particular critique Robert E. Park wrote on the newly nascent Belgian capitalist imperialism in Congo at the turn of the century (505-06). Park's critique, as shown by Lyman, heavily borrows from a Gothic perspective on capitalism and is greatly invested in vampiric themes (506). He comments on the West's changing perspectives of money as a result of such colonization projects (508). As Marx had argued, the "unique and uncanny power of money, valueless in and of itself, [is to] transform anything into its opposite" (506). Corporate capitalism, Lyman contends, undertook more and more colonizing ventures under the false pretensions of bringing "progress" to remote, non-Western areas (512), because it is "always in need of its life-renewing blood supply, abject labor power..." (508). Thus, this is one example in which the identity of the vampire has permeated real capitalist endeavors throughout history.

Still other critics, like Daniel Martin, do not believe the technologies in the novel deserve that much attention in relation to their novelty, but instead, to what they tell about modern perceptions of time and movement (524). Martin juxtaposes *Dracula* to early cinematography for that purpose. Borrowing from Baudrillard, Martin claims the text's constant confused visibility, movement, and communication serve to play with the production of reality in a similar way to early cinema productions (526-28). This confusion implies a resistance to "direct cinematic (photographic) influence" and a "crisis of subjectivity" (528). Martin's theory of the "seductive moving image" proves that the modern image is essentially vampiric and also obeys the description simulacrum as hyperreal (529-30).

John Bak's collection of essays on *Dracula* bears some resemblance to this study not only because it tackles the novel using postmodernist concepts but also because it acknowledges that multiple literary theories – like Marxism and post-colonialism – inevitably infiltrate any attempt to study *Dracula* (xxii). Bak argues that this tendency to resist simple analysis is characteristic of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (xxii). Moreover, the novel and particularly its multiple film adaptations are at least partly responsible for what Bak calls the "contamination and commoditization of blood," chiefly in relationship to AIDS (xi). In Bak's words, "if the Victorians believed seriously in the corruption of blood, literal and figurative alike, then the postmodernists have understood it to its fullest, epidemic extent" (xv).

Although not explicitly postmodernist, the essays in this collection are postmodernist in praxis and spirit (Bak xxi). For example, they exploit the following postmodernist concepts: Jean Baudrillard's simulacrum and "disappearance of the real," Fredric Jameson's pastiche, Jean-François Lyotard's skepticism towards metanarratives,

fragmentation, “bricolage,” – which Bak describes as “that patchwork of disparate materials which serves to unify a text” – and the blending of literary genres (xxi). According to Bak, the reason for these implicit postmodernist currents in criticism is because “postmodernism can explain more holistically the changes made in the Dracula myth since the dawn of modernism in Stoker’s late nineteenth century” (xxi).

Another interesting study is Nicholas Daly's book on romance in the *fin-de-siècle*, where he suggests that romance novels during this period represent the fantasies surrounding an emerging class of professionals who had authority and control over different modes of knowledge (“Introduction” 8). Daly is very careful in attributing the description of “Gothic” to novels of the *fin-de-siècle* because he considers that tracing the origins of these novels to the Gothic has “tended to short-circuit historical inquiry” (13-15). That is, critics who label these novels as Gothic usually bypass contextual research thereby missing a deep understanding of what these novels tell of the anxieties of the present time (15).

In Daly's study on *Dracula*, he considers each member of the Crew of Light to represent a different professional class emerging during this period (“Incorporated Bodies” 181). Not only does Jonathan represent the legal field and Dr. Seward the medical field, but also Mina is attributed multiple fields of expertise at different points in the novel. At some point she is a schoolmistress, then a stenographer, later a typist, and even a nurse (189). Daly argues that the true accomplishment of the novel lies in the alliance of these professionals (187). This new group of experts marks a significant historical shift. But their questionable professionalism exposes the anxieties inbuilt in the British expansionist program, making its myth of progress unconvincing (182).

Christopher Craft, in his article "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips:' Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," argues that Stoker follows a psychologically enigmatic narrative with a "tripartite cycle of admission-entertainment-expulsion" (108). As interesting as Craft's theoretical model is, however, what is of concern to this project is Craft's postmodernist discourse of signs, signifiers, simulacra, and loss of the Original throughout his essay (109, 119). For example, according to Craft, the female vampires at Castle Dracula about to suck Jonathan Harker's blood serve as diminished simulacra replacing the original vampire, Dracula, and his homoerotic desire to feed on Jonathan himself (109). Even when Craft borrows from Freudian psychoanalysis to explain the crisis of the absence of a phallus as exposed in the novel, he still refers to its replacement with a clitoris as a "perverse simulacrum" of the real phallic penetrator (120). Moreover, the female gender itself in the novel suffers from a crisis expressed in postmodernist terms; Mina most notably is seen as a sign, or mediator, that is deemed to be controlled by male authority (118). However, because Mina herself is increasingly changing throughout the narrative, her instability furthers gender anxieties (119).

## CHAPTER III

### DISCUSSION

#### **A. The Victorian *Fin-de-Siècle***

The clash between the new and the old was never as pronounced as in the Victorian *fin-de-siècle* and the literature of the time reflected the contradictions inbuilt in this era. Particularly, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* reveals this profound ambivalence in both explicit and implicit ways. For one thing, the novel's inclusion of many up-to-date inventions signals the rising Industrialism of the time. Industrialism, along with the emerging modern capitalism, promoted mass production and mass consumption of goods. Suddenly these advances made available to the public all kinds of commodities – the Kodak box camera (Marshall xv), duplex telegraphy, the telephone, the gramophone, wireless telegraphy, cinematography, and X-rays to name a few (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii). Thus, the novel's intense investment in technologies of photography, telegraphy, phonography, and typewriting, among others, could be far from accidental, and should be taken seriously as symptomatic of a changing age.

Furthermore, Lucy and Mina's early mockery of the newly-emerging concept of the New Woman (Stoker 86) depicts the public's conversations on new cultural and political perspectives. Other such notions, for example, were that of the new imperialism, the new drama, the new journalism, and the new realism. During that time, medical and psychological fields, among others, were also advancing (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii). In *Dracula*, Dr. Seward's overall character seems that of the archetypical modern doctor, which alludes to those expanding studies. Nonetheless, Van



Helsing's use of crucifixes, hosts, and demon cures against the Count hint at pre-scientific objects condemned by modern medicine. Bizarrely juxtaposed to modern life, they clearly accentuate the clash between the new and the old at the turn of the century (Jann 275).

Therefore, to promptly disregard fictions of the *fin-de-siècle*, like *Dracula*, as simply popular "Gothic" novels circulating at the time underestimates these texts. Tracing these novels to the Gothic has "tended to short-circuit historical inquiry," thereby missing a deep understanding of what these novels tell of the anxieties of the present time (Daly, "Introduction" 15). In fact, as Nicholas Ruddick has explained, this period has literary significance not only because it culminates "the century-long process of the domestication of the Gothic" (202) but also because this is when literature achieved "a successful break with fictional realism" (189). The way *Dracula* achieves this break is precisely in its incorporation of the modern juxtaposed to the primitive. And the novel's characteristically heterogeneous narrative composed of several transcribed artifacts serves to authenticate fantastic events which the then existing audiences were not likely to believe (Ruddick 202).

To carry this materialist emphasis a step further, *Dracula* has itself evolved through the decades to become a cultural artifact. Michael J. Dennison, in his *Vampirism: Literary Tropes of Decadence and Entropy*, claims that the modern vampire figure evolved during the nineteenth century "to become a major literary myth" (1). It is difficult to envision life without the notion of vampires, mainly because of the omnipresent contemporary screen and literary vampire productions that continuously invade lay audiences. Therefore, it seems that the Victorian *fin-de-siècle*'s modernity, with its accompanying fears and anxieties, indeed produced everlasting "cultural icons

of ambivalence" (Ledger and Luckhurst xiii-xiv). Mainly through Stoker's *Count Dracula*, the iconographic vampire has percolated popular culture, further testifying to the literary and cultural legacy of the Victorian *fin-de-siècle* (Daly, "Introduction" 7).

How exactly the inventions in the novel tell of the changes this particular society was undergoing will become evident later in respective analyses of these objects. It will suffice to say for now that the inventions themselves took a part in such transformations, by inviting new modes of living – such as the rise of modern professionalism and a sense of British nationalism – which ultimately resulted in a universal postmodernist world view.

## **B. Inadvertent Materialism and Postmodernism in Other Criticism**

Although critics have used other approaches to similarly ground *Dracula* in its socio-economic context, their studies nevertheless build on some materialist assertions. Franco Moretti in his popular "Dialectic of Fear" analyzes *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* through a capitalist/psychosexual lens. He is especially interested in extending Marx's vampire analogy to *Dracula*. The famous analogy states that "Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks" (qtd. in Moretti 73). Based on Marx's vampire metaphor, Moretti interprets that *Dracula* "must be the capital of 1897" (74). *Dracula*, then, symbolizes the end of bourgeois culture (68), since at the time free trade, mass consumption and mass production of commodities all contributed to the newly-rising capitalism, which did away with old Victorian social hierarchies (73-74).

Furthermore, Moretti cites Dracula's asceticism, rational entrepreneurial behavior, and expansionist goals as signs that he represents an oxymoron for the *modern monopolist* (68, 74). The contradiction in modern capital, Moretti contends, lies in capitalism's false promise to provide equal commercial opportunities to all competitors in the market thereby dissolving the monopolist past of feudal lords (68). However, this is contradictory because modern monopolists certainly do exist (74). Therefore, Dracula's position as a universal monster embodying the characteristics of the modern monopolists in the guise of a feudal lord exposes the fear and anxieties inherent in modern British society (67-68).

Actually, Moretti concludes that Dracula is the quintessential monopolist/entrepreneur by examining the way Dracula consumes – or rather chooses *not* to consume – his gold, a materialistic object. This approach to Dracula's gold allows Moretti to infer his frugality, as in this early passage where Jonathan Harker realizes he is locked in Dracula's castle and is looking for a means to escape:

The only thing I found was a great heap of gold in one corner – gold of all kinds, Roman, and British, and Austrian, and Hungarian, and Greek and Turkish money, covered with a film of dust, as though it had lain long in the ground. None of it that I noticed was less than three hundred years old. There were also chains and ornaments, some jewelled, but all of them old and stained. (50)

In other words, Dracula's monopolistic characteristics become evident because Dracula hoards piles of gold so much that they are covered in dust. Therefore, his gold, which appears unused, static, and un-circulating, suggests a diseased capitalist economy that is not allowing money to be used and recycled as it normally should in utopian capitalism (Halberstam 346). So it is by analyzing Dracula's mode of consumption that Moretti can claim that such a modern society dissipates terror universally (74). Therefore, a weakness in Moretti's study lies in his inability to acknowledge more explicitly the signs

of material culture and mass consumption the novel traces, preferring instead to discuss capitalist production through Marx.

Moreover, another critic who inadvertently depends on materialist claims to further his argument is Eric Kwan-Wai Yu, in his article "Productive Fear: Labor, Sexuality, and Mimicry in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*." Kwan-Wai Yu expands Moretti's claim that *Dracula* ambiguously embodies modern capitalist attitudes, specifically in his endorsement of the Protestant work ethic (Moretti 72). Moreover, Kwan-Wai Yu develops this claim to further a theory on the fears brought up by modern production (146). However, it is worth noting that Kwan-Wai Yu concentrates on different objects to advance his claims. For example, one of his major claims is that Mina's upholding of the Protestant work ethic through her Puritan "man-brain" is not convincing enough (Kwan-Wai Yu 146, 156). Nonetheless, this claim is only made possible by observing Mina's utter reliance on her *typewriter* (158-59), another object exploited by this material culture.

The postmodern suggestiveness presented in studies of *Dracula* is not sufficiently acknowledged, either. For example, Kwan- Wai Yu contends that *Dracula*'s upholding of Puritan work ideals

begets a curious kind of work ethic in the imperial subject, reaffirming Enlightenment reason and scientific progressivism while, at the same time, betraying the very unreason in reason and the profound anxieties underneath the confidence in progress and empire... I foreground...his puritanical hard work, intellectual power, and unmistakable modernity... Like Professor Van Helsing and Dr. Seward, *Dracula* is an industrious scholar who is curious about practically everything... (146-47)

Kwan-Wai Yu was probably alluding to Jürgen Habermas's idea of the incomplete Enlightenment project and to the necessity of modern society to take upon itself the job of completing it through free market capitalism, optimism in scientific reason, etc. In

other words, the fact that Dracula, the supposed enemy to British modern society, ambiguously rehearses Enlightenment reason and progress through his assiduous work deconstructs much of the confidence laid on modernity.

Actually, Kwan-Wai Yu's capitalist study on the whole runs in line with Jean-François Lyotard, who criticizes Habermas for his belief in grand narratives, reason, and progress leading to utopia ("Jean-François Lyotard" 1609-10). Lyotard is suspicious of all kinds of grand narratives. But he is especially suspicious of the grand narrative of modernity because its alleged progress, through capitalism and scientific innovation, is not capable of emancipating man as modern authorities claim (Lyotard, "Defining the Postmodern" 1613). For these reasons, it is necessary to abandon the Enlightenment project altogether (1614). Even Moretti's overall drive in his paper is based on suspicion towards modernity. Particularly, his exposition of the perverse possibility of monopoly in free market capitalism attacks the metanarrative of modernity.

### **C. Material Culture Reading: Artifacts**

Just as Moretti's materialist look on Dracula's riches illuminates the flawed capitalism of the time, and his and Kwan-Wai Yu's studies are to some extent postmodernist, the consumption of prominent technological objects in the novel will be examined one by one to disclose similar social concerns. To summarize some of the previously elaborated theoretical assumptions, this materialist study denounces the claim of an individuated subject "fully conscious and capable" only if removed from all objects (De Grazia 17-18) but rather assumes equal and mutual importance between subject and object and simply chooses to focus on the objects to disclose societal

concerns. The object will not be treated as socially important only in respect to its production, like many critics tend to do (18). Rather, the different attitudes surrounding the act of consuming the object by the subject will be of concern thereby highlighting the act of consumption, in line with Miller's theory of consumption (5).

These objects – chloral and other drugs, the Kodak photos, the phonograph, and the typewriter, among others – were carefully selected because they have two features in common. First, they all share a mutual newness, since they were all recent inventions of the late 1800's and were just barely starting to permeate social spheres when the novel was written (Marshall xv); in other words, they constitute products of the Industrial era. And second, especially when juxtaposed to the peculiar narrative of the novel, the problematic consumption of these objects discloses much postmodern suggestiveness.

### *1. Chloral and Other Drugs*

There are a few episodes where medicinal drugs are involved in the narrative. In general, they render the authority of the modern doctor unreliable in the midst of discourses of confidence on progress through scientific technology; and they also indicate a characteristically postmodern blurring of the logic of addiction. Actually, major new drugs were isolated in the second half of the nineteenth century, such as heroin, morphine, and cocaine, and doctors were only beginning to understand the dangers of introducing, prescribing, and even self-medicating themselves with these new medicines (Harrison 55). The typical Victorian admiration of doctors is portrayed early on when Lucy writes to Mina about her different suitors:

I think he [Dr. Seward] is one of the most resolute men I ever saw, and yet the most calm. He seems absolutely imperturbably. I can fancy what a wonderful power he must have over his patients. He has a curious habit of looking one straight in the face, as if trying to read one's thoughts. (Stoker 57)

Lucy attributes great sagacity to Dr. Seward and acknowledges his great power, in accordance to *fin-de-siècle* narratives surrounding the new medical and psychological professions (Harrison 53). And Dr. Seward himself seems to adhere to the identity of the doctor in accordance to this Victorian narrative as he presumes to exercise extraordinary, psychic powers over Lucy.

The earliest and most explicit drug-related instance in the novel is Dr. Seward's inclination to take chloral in order to alleviate his depression following Lucy's decision to marry Arthur Holmwood:

I am weary tonight and low in spirits. I cannot but think of Lucy, and how different things might have been. If I don't sleep at once, chloral, the modern Morpheus –  $C_2H_3Cl_3O_2$ ! I must be careful not to let it grow into a habit. No, I shall take none tonight! (Stoker 97)

Dr. Seward, it seems, is aware that his growing habit may develop into a full-grown addiction. Nonetheless, he appears thrilled at the possibility of consuming this new drug, since he praises it by calling it the "*modern* Morpheus" and he is even inspired to recite by heart its chemical formula to the phonograph.

Therefore, on one hand, his praising of chloral is an instance where the characters in the novel seem mesmerized by the latest gadget. But on a deeper level, ironically, Seward himself holds the authority to treat patients with addictions – such as Renfield with his zoophagous addiction, which Seward fails to treat properly. In addition, Seward's well-intentioned, but nonetheless, catastrophic, drugging of Lucy and Mina (Stoker 116, 250) with opiates and morphine to help them sleep (Harrison 5), makes them vulnerable to vampiric attack (Craft 126). Seward shows lack of judgment,

in spite of his authority over drug distribution when it comes to Lucy. He continuously drugs her to sleep (Stoker 116); and he leaves her bottle of medication carelessly accessible to anyone. Following the episode where the escaped wolf breaks Lucy's window and Lucy's mother dies of heart failure, the servants, thinking it only contained alcohol, drink from the bottle to calm down after the chaotic incidents. This unintentional drugging of the servants proved disastrous since afterwards they pass out, leaving Lucy alone to her vampiric fate (130-32).

Debbie Harrison has previously touched on

...the ambivalent role of the doctor in relation to addiction at the *fin-de-siècle* and consider[ed] how the professional integrity of the pioneering physician was undermined by his misunderstanding of the nature of this condition in relation to self-experimentation with drugs and in the treatment of his addicted patients. (53)

Therefore, although not as prominent as other artifacts in the novel, still the drugs do tell of the social dangers of the time. First, Seward's self-medication implicates him in the very addictions he presumes to be able to cure (Harrison 54). And the episodes where women are drugged create further damage instead of assisting the destruction of the Count. The doctor, then, is a source of danger to himself and to his patients, as he himself seems likely to cause iatrogenic addictions (61). There seems to have been much implicit uncertainty around the figure of the doctor at the *fin-de-siècle*, ensuing from the doctor's power over drug distribution and consumption (51, 53).

Who is the real addict here: the patient or the doctor? Is the doctor treating or instigating iatrogenic addictions? His failure as a doctor, and his self-medication with chloral expose Seward's unprofessionalism and flawed scientific objectivity (Harrison 53) leaving no room for an optimistic view on *fin-de-siècle* scientific progress and professionalism (Daly, "Incorporated Bodies" 185). In line with Lyotard's suspicion of



the grand narrative of modernity leading to progress, chloral is more likely to advance tragedies and addictions, not fight them. Particularly, the consumption of chloral, opiates and morphine in the novel distort the understanding of who is the original addict, expose the incompetence of the modern male professional with the power to treat addictions, promote suspicion on progress, and deconstruct the basic understanding of the doctor/patient relationship.

## **2. Kodak Photos**

Furthemore, Jonathan Harker takes to Transylvania Kodak photos of Carfax Abbey which he had taken with his camera in England to show Dracula his new property (Stoker 29). Oddly transported to the medieval Transylvanian setting, these images represent an early example of how modern gadgets feature in the novel, as the Kodak box camera had been very recently invented (Marshall xv). Significantly, it is the Kodak camera, a modern commodity, which permits trans-cultural, social exchanges between Harker and Dracula (Wicke 473).

Vampirism's relationship to photography is even more perplexing. According to Nina Auerbach's editorial notes on *Dracula*, Stoker had intended to register Dracula's image on photographs as a skeleton but eventually decided not to (29 n2). Stoker himself, then, apparently perceived the complexities between vampirism and photography. And Van Helsing's comparison of the Count to the much photographed Lombroso criminal prototype further accentuates the relevance of photography to the inner vampiric workings of the novel (Stoker 296, Wicke 473).

Jennifer Wicke in her "Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and its Media," has described Kodak photography as one of those technologies which allow "vampiric exchanges." In a vampiric exchange, a technology consumes an essence. But in this consumption, something else, usually a sign or a simulacrum, is produced (470). This situation is analogous to vampirism because the vampire consumes – drinks blood from an individual – but through this consumption, another vampire, who is a copy of the original vampire, is produced. Similarly, the Kodak camera extracts an essence from Carfax, by consuming the material existence of the estate. It also produces its simulated image, which is a copy of the original. Baudrillard's postmodern discourse on the absence of the real and its replacement by simulacra, then, refracts the narrative early on through the mention of photography, even before the particularities of *Dracula's* vampiric nature have been revealed.

In fact, the vampiric qualities pertaining to photography were recognized immediately after the Kodak camera was invented:

As various nineteenth-century theories of photography attested [like that of Mark Seltzer], the taking of a photograph was often understood as the equivalent of a vampiric act – an emptying out of the vitality that constitutes a life, but also the process of storing eternal celluloid bodies. (Martin 527)

So, not only do the Kodak photos entail postmodernism, but they also disclose Victorian anxieties caused by new information-storing techniques since these established a crisis in the subjectivity of mortality.

### ***3. Phonograph Recordings***

Dr. Seward's phonograph and Mina's typewriter both interestingly illustrate the most controversial cases of consumption of these technologies. Throughout the text,

these objects seem to be considered high-performance technologies, which the characters who are hunting the Count view reverentially and which they seem to depend on very strongly. Consider, for example, how thrilled Mina feels upon obtaining a 'Traveller's' typewriter after arriving at Galatz: "I feel so grateful to the man who invented the 'Traveler's' typewriter, and to Mr. Morris for getting this one for me. I should have felt quite astray doing the work if I had to write with a pen..." (Stoker 303). She even feels disheartened at the possibility of having to write by hand. And consider her earlier reaction to having seen a phonograph for the first time in her life:

...I had never seen one, and was much interested.

"I hope I did not keep you waiting," I [Mina] said, "but I stayed at the door as I heard you talking, and thought there was someone with you."

"Oh," he [Dr. Seward] replied with a smile, "I was only entering my diary."

"Your diary?" I asked him in surprise.

"Yes," he answered. "I keep it in this." As he spoke he laid his hand on the phonograph. I felt quite excited over it, and blurted out, "Why, this beats even shorthand! May I hear it say something?" (Stoker 195)

The need to be hypermodern, i.e. to have the latest technology, has become part of the very core of her being. Fredric Jameson correlates "the emergence of new formal [postmodern] features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order – what is often euphemistically called...consumer society..." ("Postmodernism and Consumer Society" 1962). That is, Jameson specifically defines postmodernism as a period marked by the emergence of a new consumer culture (1962). But in *Dracula*, the early traces of such consumer culture already seem evident.

The underlying assumption in the use of these inventions is that the latest gadget will help destroy the Count. This observation is irrefutable considering Dracula's

burning of the authentic manuscripts, the typewritten volume, and the phonograph (fortunately, there are spare copies) before escaping London (Stoker 249), as he perceives these technologies are being used against him. However, as previous critics have noted, even though Mina's information-collecting efforts through these inventions somehow advance the group's victory, ultimately it is the ancient methods of staking, beheading, and using crucifixes, demon wafers, and hosts that prove efficient against vampires (Jann 275). David Seed, in his "The Narrative method of *Dracula*," also highlights the ambiguous presentation of these modern artifacts and "their inadequacy to cope with Dracula's protean threat" (68). In short, both the inconsistent consumption of these technologies and the ultimate use of primitive methods to destroy Dracula further question the justification of the character's reliance on such inventions.

It is strange that Dr. Seward even owns a phonograph because it had been invented just recently in 1897 (Wicke 470). Amusingly, he does not understand very well how it functions and seems to have realized how inappropriate it was to use as a diary in the first place: "...although I have kept the diary for months past, it never once struck me how I was going to find any particular part of it in case I wanted to look it up..." (Stoker 196). When Mina suggests his diary entries could help hunt the Count, he reluctantly admits that he "does not know how to pick out" single diary entries from it, but has to listen to all the records from the beginning if he wishes to find an important piece of information (196). Dr. Seward at this point probably prefers to have written down by hand his diary entries, a suggestion which ridicules Mina's reluctance at having to write by hand upon her arrival to Galatz. Upon Mina's proposition to typewrite all the records, matters appear to have resolved nicely (Stoker 195-96).

However, the use of one technology (typewriter) to solve the setbacks caused by another technology (phonograph) further affirms Baudrillard's claim that there is much meaninglessness involved in the mass production and mass consumption of these commodities. If the phonograph is valued for its ability to store diary entries quickly, whatever amount of time Dr. Seward perceives to have saved by speaking out his entries to the phonograph – instead of writing them down, which is a slower process – was wasted, seeing as Mina had to type down the recordings on her typewriter. This situation most clearly demonstrates the clash between new and old techniques. A new technology (phonograph record) is desired in written text (ancient technology), despite the deep admiration the characters show for these modern artifacts. This new technology (phonograph recordings) is turned into printed text using yet another new technology (typewriter). Therefore, the text demonstrates much confusion through the intertwined use of technologies to remedy the setbacks caused by modernity itself.

One culprit for the loss of the real and its replacement by simulacra, Baudrillard argues, is consumer culture. Dr. Seward's mediocre and incompetent use of the phonograph illustrates Baudrillard's claim that factories do not produce items which satisfy *real* human needs, but instead media and advertising first amuse people by showing them "what we [they] want," creating ahead of time the demand for a product that will later be offered ("Jean Baudrillard" 1729-30). The truth is: Dr. Seward does not need a phonograph. The fact that he owns one but does not know how to use it to its full capacity illustrates the reversal of the demand/production dichotomy in capitalism as early as 1897. Matters would have been far less complicated if Seward had just stuck to writing down his diary as he starts doing from this point onward. The phonograph is not useful to the Dr. but only valued for its newness. Dr. Seward lives in hyperreality.

The phonograph's postmodern suggestiveness is further revealed by examining its mechanical properties. Again, to use Wicke's terminology in this respect, the phonograph is one of those technologies which allow fundamentally "*vampiric exchanges*" (470). The phonograph extracts an essence when recording voice; afterwards, it will provide speech but without the material reality of the person who spoke those words. Nevertheless, in its act of consuming the individual, the phonograph produces the recorded voice. That is the type of labor of consumption – a *productive* consumption – the text deals with. In producing the recorded voice, the phonograph does not provide *real* speech per se, but instead it is a simulacrum of speech. It is speech that has been mechanized, and mass mediated, i.e. vampirized, at a time when "phonography was not widespread, because [it was] still quite expensive, but indicative of things to come" (Wicke 470-71). I would go a step further than Wicke and argue that Dr. Seward's phonograph indicates impending postmodernism.

#### **4. Typewriter**

More levels of vampiric extraction arise when even this mechanized, artificial speech is held in conflict to the written word (Wicke 471). After listening to Dr. Seward's recorded account of Lucy's death, Mina is moved by the passionate and tragic feelings expressed by Seward's recorded voice. She contends that she has done well in typing down the account because no one should hear those words again and become as affected as she was (Stoker 197). Thus, the typewriter as well extracts an essence – the emotions in the already mechanized voice – from the recordings in an act of vampiric consumption. In turn, it produces the printed word (Wicke 470). Although Wicke does

not explicitly express vampiric exchanges with postmodern discourse, these exchanges certainly constitute multiple levels of simulacra and loss of the real.

Typewriting in this novel further testifies that many social concerns must have been circulating in the public's unconscious at the time. In fact, Mina's typewriter further discloses social discourses of anxiety in the face of the thriving Industrial Revolution, and British nationalism. Anxiety over decadence and degeneration, for example, seems to have been one of those prominent worries. Michael J. Dennison, in his *Vampirism: Literary Tropes of Decadence and Entropy*, claims that the modern vampire figure evolved during the nineteenth century through the root metaphor of decadent entropy (1).

Entropy or disorder, i.e. the Second Law of Thermodynamics, was first postulated when Sadi Carnot observed the irrecoverable loss of heat from the newly invented steam engine in the nineteenth century (Dennison 3-4). One cannot begin to understand what this discovery unveiled about the future of mankind and its universe. The discovery of entropy marks the abandonment of a universal perspective which supports the idea of a Christian God and heavenly order (3). Instead, entropy suddenly pointed at an ultimate heat-death of the universe after all energy has been lost in the form of heat. Therefore, the idea of a universe advancing towards more and more chaos, degeneration and decadence was scientifically acknowledged during this time. It is through the vampire myth that entropy permeated different modes of thinking, like economics – for instance, in Marx's vampiric metaphor for capital – and even literature as early as 1848 with Edgar Allan Poe's *Eureka* (3). Hence, the anxieties behind the Second Theory of Thermodynamics must have touched some nerve in the public mindset, and the literature of the time supports this hypothesis.

Actually, Dennison's analysis is not that irrelevant to this material culture study, considering the steam-powered boats – yet another of those recent inventions – featured in the novel. These steam boats certainly dissipated unrecoverable entropic heat. Moreover, Dennison's study runs in line with another thread in postmodern thinking. His contextualization obeys Frederic Jameson's urgency to historicize ("The Political Unconscious" 1937) and to treat the text as a product of its time and conditions ("Fredric Jameson" 1934), parameters which must have shaped and limited Stoker's imagination. Given its relevance to this postmodern reading, the entropic metaphor will not be abandoned throughout the rest of the analysis of the typewriter.

Dennison focuses on the multiplicity and disorder in-built in the novel to illuminate its decadent themes (83). Dracula, with his vampiric tendency to disorder all sorts of social hierarchies and norms, personifies entropy itself. It is up to the good men in the novel to try to recover that order (83-84). Mina constitutes the "organizing intelligence" because she transcribes all the *disordered* information stored in different artifacts (telegrams, newspapers, journals, etc.) into an *ordered* whole (84-85).

So, on some level the typewritten product, the novel itself, could be understood as an effort to resist the disorder propagated by the vampire. Similarly, Eric Kwan-Wai Yu notes that Mina is able to make predictions about Dracula's route of escape from England only once she has typed down every piece of information and has organized the material (158-59). Hence, to codify, i.e. to impose order, on the entropic vampire is "to diminish [him] in stature" (Jann 283; Seed 74). However, her dependency on technology proves Mina's much praised modern "man brain" cannot stand alone, but instead makes her seem like a "helpless" addict to the typewriter (Kwan-Wai Yu 159).



Therefore, Mina's obsession with typewriting further promotes suspicion of the grand narrative of modernity, in accordance with Lyotard.

The extent to which Mina succeeds in attempting to remedy loss is debatable. In very crude postmodern terminology, Mina's very attempt to recover loss is what causes that loss. For one thing, the typewriters she uses have the so-called Manifold features, which allow her to make multiple copies of whatever she typewrites (Stoker 199). Already the word "manifold," not one but many, suggests multiplicity and disorder. The typewriter, indeed, is an entropic invention even if through it organizing, i.e. modernizing, efforts are possible.

Furthermore, Wicke believes that it is the Manifold element which makes the typewriter a vampiric technology. To defeat Dracula, the very quintessential for entropy, vampiric typewriting is needed. This serves as another example of a productive consumption. Like the vampire, the typewriter consumes artifacts and in its consumption, it ends up producing *replicas*, or other vampires. The realization that "the reproductive process that makes vampires is so closely allied to the mechanical replication of culture" (476) shakes any remaining confidence in the apparently triumphant narrative.

The perverted nature of the typewriter is augmented considering that Dracula's final assault while still in London was not the force-feeding he imposed on Mina. Rather, as Wicke claims, it was a final "attack on language, the language of print culture itself" (489). This attack consists of Dracula's burning of Dr. Seward's study, narrated in the aftermath of the commotion following Mina's vampiric rape:

...So Art [Arthur Holmwood] went on:

'He had been there, and though it could only have been for a few seconds, he made rare hay of the place. All the manuscript had been burned, and the blue flames were flickering amongst the white ashes; the cylinders of your phonograph too were thrown on the fire, and the wax had helped the flames.' Here I [Dr. Seward] interrupted. 'Thank God there is the other copy in the safe!' (Stoker 249)

Something, therefore, was indeed irrecoverably lost in Mina's resisting efforts to preserve the information in these artifacts: the authentic manuscripts, the *real*. Only copies, *signs* of the real, remained.

According to Baudrillard, the act of preserving the real is itself what causes its destruction. Baudrillard cites the case of Filipino aboriginals who were studied by anthropologists. But in their studying and systematizing of them, the reality of the Filipino aboriginals was ruined; they could not return successfully to their primitive habitat, having been touched by civilization (1736). Analogously, Dracula is constantly after Mina precisely because she tries to preserve the information necessary to destroy him. Paradoxically, her very attempt at preserving the real by typewriting, systematizing and reordering it prompted Dracula to cause the fire and destroy the authentic documents. In other words, the act of preservation precedes, and even causes, the very act of obliteration. Therefore, recognizing the need to preserve the information necessary to eradicate vampirism already triggers the destruction of that information.

Like vampirism, then, the technology of typewriting transforms language by consuming its essence, the original manuscripts. The labor of this consumption is in the form of culturally mass produced – vampiric – copies:

If copying is the inevitable fate of the mass-produced, here it is also its salvation. The vampire hunters do not need sacral, original, authentic or auratic texts – copies will do, the more reproduced the better. Dracula's pyrotechnic outrage implies the desire for a primal relation to texts...but his little apocalypse in the fireplace cannot succeed in annihilating the reproductive powers of technologized language. (Wicke 490)

After seven peaceful years have passed since the seemingly happy victory against vampirism, the inconsistencies resulting from the use of modern technology seem significant enough to be brought up again when Jonathan Harker remarks

We were struck with the fact, that in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document; nothing but a mass of typewriting... We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story. Van Helsing summed it all up as he said...:

‘We want no proofs. We ask none to believe us!... (Stoker 326-27)

Although Harker seems disappointed at the absence of original relics (Jann 277), that impression is torn down by Van Helsing. The vampire hunters have fully adopted a postmodern existence. Copies are left and copies are good enough. The fact that the group is content with simulacra marks a postmodern shift in the way culture reproduces itself through language, where no intimate relationship to the word is desired anymore (Wicke 490).

### ***5. Other Transcribed Artifacts***

The volume of typewritten text produced by Mina – which, in fact, constitutes the entire novel – deserves a close look. It is a collection of copied artifacts – journal entries originally written in shorthand, telegrams, and newspaper articles – organized in a quasi-chronological order. The text is composed of many voices and sometimes dialects from characters belonging to different social strata. It is fragmentary in nature and nonlinear in narrative and temporal frame. These features demand to be scrutinized for what they can tell of the already copied, typewritten – i.e. postmodernized – word and of mass mediated printed language.

As was noted of the phonograph, technologies are indeed creating setbacks, instead of speeding up social and cultural processes. For example, telegrams allow crucial social exchanges throughout the narrative. The abundance of these verifies that the vampire hunters rely intensely on modern object through telegraphic communication. But the adequacy of their dependency should be questioned. After all, one of Van Helsing's most important telegrams is delayed by twenty-two hours. This is actually the telegram in which he urges Dr. Seward to visit Lucy the night of Dracula's final attack on her to ensure that their preventive measures are still in place (Stoker 130). Of course, Dr. Seward does not appear on time to prevent the tragic incidents due to the telegram delay. So, although valued as a rapid means of communication, the telegrams create difficulties, despite the characters' veneration of them.

Shorthand also stands out in the novel. On one hand, stenography speaks of the rising profession of journalism at the turn of the century. And, as Wicke notes, stenography signals a new "standardization of mass business writing" (471). Jonathan Harker keeps his diary in shorthand, a strategy which certainly protects him from Dracula; even when Dracula obtained the diary, Harker was able to hide his full knowledge from the Count since the Count does not understand shorthand (Stoker 37). Readers of the novel are likely to forget that what they are reading is what Mina transcribed from Jonathan's shorthand entries into Standard English. As previous critics have noted, the transcription of shorthand by Mina is questionable at times, since various expressions probably do not have shorthand equivalents. For instance, the sensual "kiss me with those red lips" – in the dialogue between Jonathan and the female vampires – is unfounded because it might not exist in shorthand (Wicke 471).

In the case of this technology, Jonathan Harker himself demonstrates the clash between the new and the old which stenography causes:

Here I am, sitting at a little oak table where in old times possibly some fair lady sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love letter, and writing in my diary in shorthand all that has happened since I closed it last. It is the nineteenth century up-to-date with a vengeance. And yet, unless my senses deceive me, the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere 'modernity' cannot kill. (Stoker 40-41)

He comes to the realization that not even the modern technique of shorthand can remedy the troubles he is undergoing. Depressed in Dracula's Castle, he curiously displaces his angst as a criticism of modernity. In any case, it is that modernity which brought him to Dracula, since his *modern* profession gave him a reason to travel abroad and *modern* means of transportation made his journey possible. Harker suddenly abhors modernity for its inability to solve the problems caused by ancient powers. The up-to-date mock Harker rather than aid him.

Furthermore, other artifacts which allude to the rising journalism of the time are the newspaper accounts typewritten by Mina. In part, they serve to substantiate certain extraordinary events (Jann 279), such as the particularities of the Count's arrival at Whitby (Stoker 75-80), the wolf's escape from the zoo (125-29), and Lucy's vampire attacks on the children (159-60). Although not a new technology, newspapers were recently becoming accessible to all social spheres during this period as a result of advances in printing techniques (Auerbach 159 n6). Significantly, Stoker chose to include many of the most trendy British newspapers of the time, like the *Dailygraph* (Auerbach 75 n1), the *Pall Mall Gazette* (125 n3), and the *Westminster Gazette* (159 n6). The inclusion of these newspaper articles suggests that the text's credibility depends on the culturally mass produced and mass consumed printed word (Wicke 472-73).

Benedict Anderson has famously claimed, in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, that the emergence of capitalist forms of printed discourse – such as newspapers and novels – constructed a unified narrative of American nationalism (1-2). Other critics have formulated analogous arguments to show how print culture paved the way for British nationalism (Seed 74, Wicke 493). In *Dracula*, however, newspapers not only promote but also distort the metanarrative of British nationalism.

For example, the humorous zookeeper who speaks with a cockney accent dominates the account of the wolf's escape (Stoker 125-29). His irregular dialect serves to stage class difference, specifically in its exposure of lower-class speech (Wicke 475). This strange inclusion of dialect shakes the narrative of British nationalism. To use Lyotard's terminology, the newspaper has paradoxically deviated from its grand nationalist role by favoring speech from a minority, i.e. a micronarrative or a 'language game.' The cockney zookeeper certainly does not represent the typical British, educated, middle-class, male nationalist. The interviewer could have assimilated his speech into Standard English but somehow chose not to. Therefore, this speech survives as a micronarrative, controversially included in a well-known newspaper, the *Pall Mall Gazette*. If nationalism is a metanarrative of unity and homogeneity which does not account for intra-national difference, then, it is peculiar that a newspaper – the very artifact allegedly promoting nationalism – acknowledges the existence of heterogeneous, *indistinct* people within the nation.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to expand on a literary framework which studies material culture in early modern works. In the case of *Dracula*, that analysis illuminated on the socio-economic conditions of the period and ultimately entailed postmodern existence. Postmodern existence in this work was characterized by problematic consumption, loss of the real, and suspicion towards modernity. Specifically, this study has contributed to this literary framework by *explicitly* pointing at postmodern traits in society at the turn of the century or, at least, in society as presented in a literary work from that period.

An overview of material culture was presented as an interdisciplinary field examining the relationship between people and the objects they own ("What is Material Culture?"). Moreover, a revamped version of Hegel's subject/object dichotomy was proposed borrowing from Daniel Miller's *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. Miller's version offers a non-reductionist look at the object in relationship to the subject in order to arrive at a theory of culture which focuses on consumption (20). This thesis joins Miller in his celebration of the phenomenology of consumption, although not as optimistically because consumption can be incompetent and irrational as was shown.

Furthermore, this thesis analyzed the major up-to-date commodities in *Dracula* – like chloral and other drugs, the Kodak photos, Dr. Seward's phonograph, and Mina's typewriter, among others. These artifacts were contextualized as newly emerging

commodities of the Industrial era. Indeed, the Victorian society pictured in *Dracula* problematically consumes the products of capitalism in ways which refract postmodern narratives, in the midst of anxieties towards the modern era. In general, the characters' adoration of and dependency on these inventions correlate to Jameson's association of postmodernism to the emergence of a new consumer society. And their controversial consumption of these modern objects advances Lyotard's suspicion towards the grand narrative of modernity and Baudrillard's views on hyperreality. These three theorists have been pivotal in defining postmodernism.

Dr. Seward's use, abuse, and prescription of chloral, opiates, and morphine promoted postmodern distrust surrounding the figure of the modern physician and his power over drug distribution. Second, the appropriation of photography was shown to ease cultural exchanges in the narrative. Yet, this modern technology also challenged the moral subjectivity of the novel; vampirism's close affiliation to the mechanisms of photography consists of interplay of simulacra replacing originals. Thus, this technology also proved ambiguous.

Moreover, Dr. Seward's incompetent use of the phonograph as a diary and Mina's subsequent transcription of the recordings to compensate for the phonograph's drawbacks reflect Baudrillard's claim that the real has been lost due to irrational consumerism. In this type of postmodern consumerism, factories produce and individuals purchase items which do not satisfy actual human needs. This proves the case with the doctor's phonograph. Telegrams, stenography, and journalism were also shown to suggest postmodernism. Jonathan Harker's consumption of stenography promotes suspicion towards modernity and newspaper accounts advance, albeit still undermine, nationalism.



Furthermore, the typewriter most prominently participates in the ontological reversal of the real – the signified – and simulations – signifiers. It achieves this most notably through its ability to create manifold copies of the documents typewritten by Mina. Actually, the whole narrative is produced through the vampiric technology of typewriting, which encompasses almost all the other technologies like phonography, telegraphy, stenography, and journalism. The survival of copies and the death of originals prove to be the ultimate fate of the mass culturally produced and technologized word.

Nonetheless, the act of extracting postmodernism in a work published decades before this theory became prominent in academia might strike readers as bizarre, anachronistic, or simply out-of-place. This is especially the case, considering that *Dracula* has been treated, at one extreme, as a Gothic text (Ruddick 202) and, at the other, as a modernist text (Wicke 467). However, Lyotard has provided the means to clarify this apparent discrepancy by declaring that "Modernity in whatever age it appears, cannot exist without a shattering of belief and without discovery of the 'lack of reality' of reality, together with the invention of other realities" ("Answering the Question" 146). In other words, the fact that *Dracula* was constructed in a modern context is not an obstacle in extracting postmodernism from it since modernism itself is inconceivable without the forces which negate and resist it.

Moreover, the inner workings of postmodern consumption in *Dracula* by no means end in the controversial consumption of modern technologies. In fact, *Dracula* projects this consumption textually and, one could argue, even meta-textually. For one thing, the very first words of the novel invite readers to consume the text:

How these papers have been placed in sequence will be made manifest in the reading of them... a history almost at variance with the possibilities of later-belief may stand forth as simple fact. There is throughout no statement of past things wherein memory may err, for all the records chosen are exactly contemporary, given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them. (Stoker 5)

On the surface, these words presume to be a self-explanatory and helpful note to readers of *Dracula*. Yet, this message almost apprehensively insists on the veracity of the events narrated by the novel; there is no possibility of error and all knowledge provided here is exact.

Heavily invested in the Victorian scientific discourse of empirical knowledge (Auerbach 5 n1), the note's assurance of the text's authenticity sharply contrasts Jonathan Harker's regret at the loss of authentic documents that prove the reality of their extraordinary adventures. The note's emphasis on empiricism even contradicts Van Helsing's indifference to evidence (Stoker 326-27). Paradoxically, then, the text has been regarded at one stage of the novel negatively, as nothing but a "mass of typewriting," (327) and at another stage positively, as representing authentic knowledge (5). If that is the case, readers must wonder what exactly does authenticate the group's adventures.

If no original relics remain but only a note which begs for the text's veracity, then vampiric copies have replaced the validity of originals since the very *beginning* of the novel. However, there is not even the need to mention or explain to the readers at this early point the fact that what they are about to read comes but from a copy, a replica treated as the real. And the reason for that is because, as was noted before, the mentality dominating this text has early on abandoned an intimate relationship to the original word.

The reading exercise called for by the text through this note is anything but ordinary. As Wicke interprets it, "[the text] knows it will be consumed – it stages the very act of its own consumption, and problematizes it... The reading of the mass of typewriting is the labor of consumption the text requires of us" (491-92). It is interesting to consider the outcomes of *Dracula's* textual consumption a century after the novel's publication. In fact, *Dracula* is one of those rare masterpieces which have never gone out of print (Auerbach 4) . Therefore, *Dracula* has evolved into an infinitely reproducible artifact itself. It has become a commodity to be consumed incessantly in the postmodern era.

While the same could be argued of other works which have never gone out of print, such as Shakespeare's plays, few of those works possess an intimate, intra-textual relationship to the workings of contemporary capitalism like *Dracula* does. Vampires *consume*: the very word of this era. Consumption is the new social order of this period, a consumption that is somehow culturally productive or, at least, productive in the pleasure it dissipates. It could no accident, then, that *Dracula* chooses to expand his race by coming to London, the center of modernity at the time (Auerbach 3).

It would be difficult to find a more appropriate figure than the vampire to depict this universal condition. Even the much used Bible by Van Helsing as the only other text with authentic power over the vampire has already been affected by the market forces of capitalism, since it was the first printed book by Johannes Gutenberg and has never gone out of print either. Therefore, also mass produced and mass consumed, the authority of the Bible over the supposed vices of the new times is only made possible – albeit tainted – by industrialist forces (Wicke 491).

Moreover, the consumption of the text has evolved to such a sophisticated, *meta*-textual level throughout the century after its publication that vampires themselves have become a commodity. Stoker's vampire has been endlessly copied, i.e. *reproduced*, through different artistic modes, as in plays, novels, and, most particularly, cinema and TV screens. *Dracula* has inspired hundreds of films, every one of which yet again stakes and beheads Dracula, or his surrogate. In fact, *Dracula* has permeated popular culture mainly through screen productions (Bak xiii). It is these productions which have been responsible for elevating the vampire figure to become an omnipresent icon.

The significance of this realization is that the characteristically vampiric consumption featured in *Dracula* has played a role in the staging of postmodernist thought. That is, *Dracula* does not simply portray postmodernism; it has evolved hand in hand *with* it thereby becoming a player in this cultural phenomenon. It has achieved this status through its intricate relationship to contemporary consumption.

Vampiric consumption, therefore, reflects in, but also refracts from, the novel. As was shown in this thesis through the analysis of the various commodities consumed by the modern society present in *Dracula*, consumption at this early capitalist phase proves vampiric in its extraction of an essence. But this consumption has also refracted from the novel in the various revivals of the vampire by postmodern society. Like the vampiric act of sucking blood, postmodern consumption is at least *productive* in the pleasure consumers obtain from it (Wicke 479). Pleasure is the end result of both postmodern consumption and *Dracula's* meta-textual consumption. Hence, these two phenomena share an intimate relationship:

Consumption is always labor – [not exactly] the work of shopping, but a form of cultural labor, including the producing of meanings. Because *Dracula* focuses on the entry into mass culture, it becomes one of our primary cultural expressions of that swooning relation and thus has needed to be revived

incessantly, in films books, and other cultural forms. The vampiric embrace is now a primary locus of our culture's self-reflexive assessment of its cultural being, since that being is fixed in the embrace of material consumption. (Wicke 477)

*Dracula's* film adaptations have certainly been culturally significant in their production of multiple meanings. *Dracula* is indeed one of those artistic forms which have provided an arena for the expression of what Lyotard calls 'anything goes' art, ("Answering the Question" 145) seeing as vampires have been successfully and commercially adapted to an array of settings, plots, and themes. Thus, pop-culture endlessly consumes the vampire, generating a mirror through which it can comment on itself.

Again, while the same could be argued of other classic literature which has been endlessly adapted cinematically, like *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*, few of these works hold an intimate, intra-textual relationship with the workings of postmodern consumption. For example, an exceptionally postmodern connotation *Dracula* has been responsible for propagating is the commoditization of blood. As John Bak has noted, *Dracula's* text and film productions have shaped postmodern ideas on blood contamination and disease contagion through unprotected sex:

It took little effort...to move from "unprotected love bites" back to "unprotected sex," though the sight of George Hamilton wearing tiny condoms over his fangs in Stan Dragoti's *Dracula* pastiche, *Love at First Bite* (1979), would hardly have been the stuff of Hollywood, horror spoofs or otherwise. (xiii-xiv)

While it is a trivial fact that sexual insinuations dominate the narrative, Bak contends that these were initially conceived by Stoker in the context of Victorian anxieties of blood corruption (xiv). However, contemporary audiences have understood the vampiric epidemic fully and literally in the postmodern context of AIDS, postcolonial wreckage,

and Third World poverty (xiv). Few texts resonate as sensitively to contemporary audiences as *Dracula* does.

Tim Burton's recent 2012 film, *Dark Shadows*, an adaptation of the famous 1970's TV series of the same name, is another example of the movie industry consuming the figure of the modern vampire. Although met with mostly negative reviews, it is remarkable that even this poorly executed movie invests some energy in linking Barnabas, the main vampire character, to the workings of postmodern consumerism. The most explicit instance of this is the early scene where Barnabas awakens in 1972, having been accidentally freed from his coffin, and mistakes the "M" in a McDonald's neon sign for the "M" in Mephistopheles, a demon Barnabas read of as a child. The "M" for this demon indeed suspiciously resembles the now commonplace "M" for one of the most popular fast-food corporations. McDonald's in this movie could be thought of as representing the market forces of contemporary food consumer culture. This vampire adaptation, then, indeed does not forget to comment on the cultural transformations brought up by postmodernism.

To sum up, then, this material culture study of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, which focuses on various modes of consumption, has ultimately shed light on *Dracula* as a text that has been itself incessantly consumed and reproduced thereby evolving hand-in-hand with, and even playing a role in defining, contemporary postmodernist culture.

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