



Bram Stoker's
Dracula

A Study Guide



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Character List

The Character list from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is slightly larger than that of the Balderston-Deane play. Stoker's novel contains the following characters:

Johnathan Harker
Count Dracula
Mina Murray
Lucy Westenra
Dr. John Seward
Professor Abraham Van Helsing
Arthur Holmwood
Quincey Morris
Renfield

The characters contained in the play are:

Dracula
Maid
Harker
Dr. Seward
Abraham Van Helsing
Renfield
Attendant
Lucy Seward

Similarities and Differences Between the Novel and Play

There are quite a few differences between the character list and relationships in the novel to that of the play. Not only are there characters missing, such as Mina, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincey Morris, but the relationships have changed as well.

The character of Lucy in the play is a combination of Mina Murray, who is also mentioned in the play, and the character Lucy Westenra. The situations involving these women have switched as well. Stoker wrote that Lucy was bitten first, and passed away, while Mina was bitten later. Mina was also the one who Dracula chose to be his bride, forcing her to drink

of his blood, after she was bitten by him. As mentioned before, Balderston combined these two characters, and placed the play in Seward's mental ward, after Mina's death.

Also, the relationship between Lucy and Dr. Seward was changed. In Stoker's version, Seward is actually one of Lucy's suitors, and in love with her. However, in the play, Dr. Seward is Lucy's father instead of her suitor, thus Lucy's name was changed from Lucy Westenra to Lucy Seward. In the novel, Johnathan Harker is married to Mina Murray. However, in the play, Harker is Lucy's lover, as opposed to Mina's husband. The omission of the characters Arthur Holmwood and Quincey Morris help to condense the play, and their presence would be unnecessary because of Lucy's involvement with Harker. The relationship between Van Helsing and Seward remains intact. But perhaps the biggest difference among the characters, is the involvement of Count Dracula. Balderston chose to incorporate Dracula more directly into the lives of the other characters. When Dracula buys the Carfax estate, he acquaints himself with his new neighbors without notice of his ulterior motives. This allows him to be incorporated into the lives of others, posing as a greater threat, as opposed to Stoker's Dracula character, who was allusive and acting as an outside force.

As shown in the character list, the relationships differ, as well as certain situations. Specific events were applied to different characters in the play, as opposed to the ones in the book. The most obvious example of this, is in the play, Lucy takes the place of Mina, and vice versa. In the book, Lucy falls ill, and eventually turns into a vampire. Mina remains to aid the gentlemen in defeating the demon, Count Dracula.

The play by Hamilton Deane and John Balderston is set in the 1920's, a far more modern period. Throughout the book, because it was set in the late 1800's, the main form of transportation is by carriage, and the end of the novel heavily involves a ship and transport by sea. However in the play it is mentioned on page 41, that the use of ships was substituted by airplanes. It is demonstrated through the bit of dialogue between Van Helsing and Harker:

Van Helsing. A vampire from Transylvania cannot be in England.

Seward. But why?

Van Helsing. Because, as I have told you, the vampire must rest by day in the earth in which the corpse it inhabits was buried.

Harker. In the earth.

Van Helsing. The vampire must return to its burial place by sunrise.

Harker. I found today that Dracula arrived at the Croydon airdrome in a three-engined German plane, on March sixth.

Seward. March sixth? Three days before Mina first was taken ill.

Harker. This plane had made a non-stop flight from Sekely in Transylvania. It left just after sunset. It arrived two hours before dawn. It carried only the Count and six packing cases.

The choice to set the play in a modern time adds a heightened sense of urgency to the action. With the invention of airplanes, Dracula can travel faster, and access many more places in a shorter amount of time. Van Helsing addresses this in a monologue later in Act II, Scene I:

Van Helsing. ...For five hundred years he has been fettered to his castle because he must sleep by day in his graveyard. Five centuries pass. The aeroplane is invented. His chance has come, for now he can cross Europe in a single night. He prepared six coffins filled with the earth in which he must rest by day. He leaves his castle after sunset. By dawn he is in London and safe in one of his cases- a great risk, but he has triumphed.

Traditionally two intermissions are taken because of the three different acts within the play. However, in the Pendragon Theatre Company's performance, the choice was made to stage a prologue and eliminate the intermissions. The intermissions were instead replaced with silent transition scenes. These scenes clearly demonstrate and emphasize the passing of time. It can sometimes be difficult to demonstrate the passing of time in a play, so adding these scenes not only makes this easier, but in a sense relates it back to the novel.

Despite these differences, both end in the triumph of good over evil, and equilibrium is restored. Many important similarities are kept in the novel and play as well. The themes of religion and superstition both serve as tools to ward off evil. Right from the beginning of Stoker's novel we are thrown into a safety net created by various religious relics. Harker, on his way to Dracula's castle, is given a rosary, and passes crosses along the roadside. This rosary also hangs above his bed during his stay with the count. When Lucy passes away, and the party of men go to the graveyard to discover the truth about Lucy's passing, Van Helsing creates a sealant around the door to her tomb. This sealant is a putty, containing bits of holy wafer. Once cornered in the graveyard, Lucy cannot enter her tomb until the putty is removed. She also cannot attack the men because they are protected by a golden crucifix. The same action is also directed towards Lucy in the play, as she begins to lure Jonathan during her process of changing over. There are also many references to garlic and wolfsbane. In the novel, Van Helsing, in hopes of restoring Lucy's health and warding off the evil spirits thought to inhabit her, creates garlands of fresh garlic for Lucy to wear. Van Helsing also uses the herb "wolfsbane" as a tool to detect evil, in the play. He says Pliny the Elder mentions wolfsbane, and that he uses it as "a form of

preventative medicine.”

Earlier on in the scene in which Van Helsing produces the wolfsbane, the lunatic Renfield says, “I warned you to send me away. Doctor Seward, if you don't you must answer for my soul before the judgement seat.” Amongst the play and novel, there are many references to the soul, and thought given to the afterlife. There are problems which seem to have no positive outcome. For example, in Act III Lucy confesses to the men that she was forced to drink the blood of Dracula. Knowing of her doom, she must carry the great burden of her judgement by God. Which raises the question: If Lucy was the victim of an evil and undead fate, but has thus far lived a virtuous life, do you believe that she should be sentenced to an afterlife of damnation? Do you believe that this situation blurs the line between good and evil?

Historical Context

Stoker clearly defines the different ethnicities, even just within Transylvania. For example, he speaks of the Saxons, Romanian, Szekelys, and Hungarians. He writes:

In the population of Transylvania there are four distinct nationalities: Saxons in the South and mixed with them the Wallachs, who are the descendants of the Dacians; Magyars in the West, and Szekelys in the East and North.¹

Stoker uses the people of those regions to establish a mood and setting:

The strangest figures we saw were the Slovaks, who were more barbarian than the rest, with their big cow-boy hats, great baggy dirty-white trousers, white linen shirts, and enormous heavy leather belts, nearly a foot wide, all studded over with brass nails. They wore high boots, with their trousers tucked into them, and had long black hair and heavy black moustaches.²

Stoker designated certain peoples as aids to Dracula. He often mentions the Szgany, and says, “These Szgany are gypsies;” and that, “There are thousands of them in Hungary and Transylvania, who are almost outside all law. They attach themselves to some great noble or *boyar*...” . Stoker was correct

1 Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, (First Signet Classics Printing: 2007), 2.

2 Stoker, *Dracula*, 3.

in referencing the boyar, because Vlad was closely involved with the boyars of Wallachia, which were one rank lower than the prince himself.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* takes place in multiple places that are surrounding Transylvania, the country thought to be home to Vlad Dracula. Vlad Dracula, the ruler that some believed was the inspiration to Bram Stoker's novel, was actually a 15th Century prince from Wallachia, a country slightly overlapping Transylvania. His name was actually Vlad Tepes, and his father was named to the Order of the Dragon, which was a militaristic organization dedicated to battling Turkish infidels.³ Because Vlad's father wore the symbol of the Order of the Dragon, the nickname "Dracula" came from "Dracul", the Romanian word for "dragon". Eventually the word "dragon" became interchangeable with the words "devil" and "vampire". This may be just one of the reasons why Vlad Dracula is associated with vampirism.⁴

Stoker uses the landscape to help readers feel as though they were traveling with Harker along a treacherous mountainside path. He speaks of the rough terrain and narrow roads that travelers must take while passing through the Borgo Pass. It is often believed that the castle of Count Dracula is found in Transylvania, and can be reached through the Borgo pass, just as Stoker depicted in his novel. The particular castle thought to have been the model for Stoker's novel, is located in Bistrita, a town in southern Transylvania. This castle was in fact often visited by Count Dracula, however it was not his home.⁵

According to the book *In Search of Dracula* by Raymond T. McNally and Radu Florescu, because of the numerous invasions and attacks by the Tartars and Turks, Prince Dracula had to be very mindful as to where he placed his castle. The road to what is believed to be Castle Dracula is not accessible and practically nonexistent. Castle Dracula was supposedly located at a very high altitude, and exactly at the source of the Arges river.⁶ The castle was impregnable because it was situated on such an isolated spot surrounded by harsh terrain. Stoker uses this landscape as an obstacle for Johnathan Harker, not only making it difficult for outsiders to attack the castle, but also making it impossible for Harker to escape. He writes:

The castle was built on the corner of a great rock, so that on three sides it was quite impregnable, and great windows were placed here where sling,

3 Raymond T. McNally and Radu Florescu, *in search of Dracula: a true history of Dracula and vampire legends*, (New York Graphic Society: 1972), 22.

4 McNally and Florescu, *Dracula*, 22.

5 McNally and Florescu, *Dracula*, 29.

6 McNally and Florescu, *Dracula*, 88.

or bow, or culverin could not reach, and consequently light and comfort, impossible to a position which had to be guarded, were secured.⁷

According to oral history and tradition, and Wallachian townsfolk, Dracula had a second castle as well. This castle, Castle Poenarie, was only about a mile from the original, and situated on the right bank of the Arges river, while the original Castle Dracula was high up on the left bank. There is a lot of speculation as to whether this is accurate, and it is difficult to prove because of the destruction of the Castle Poenari.

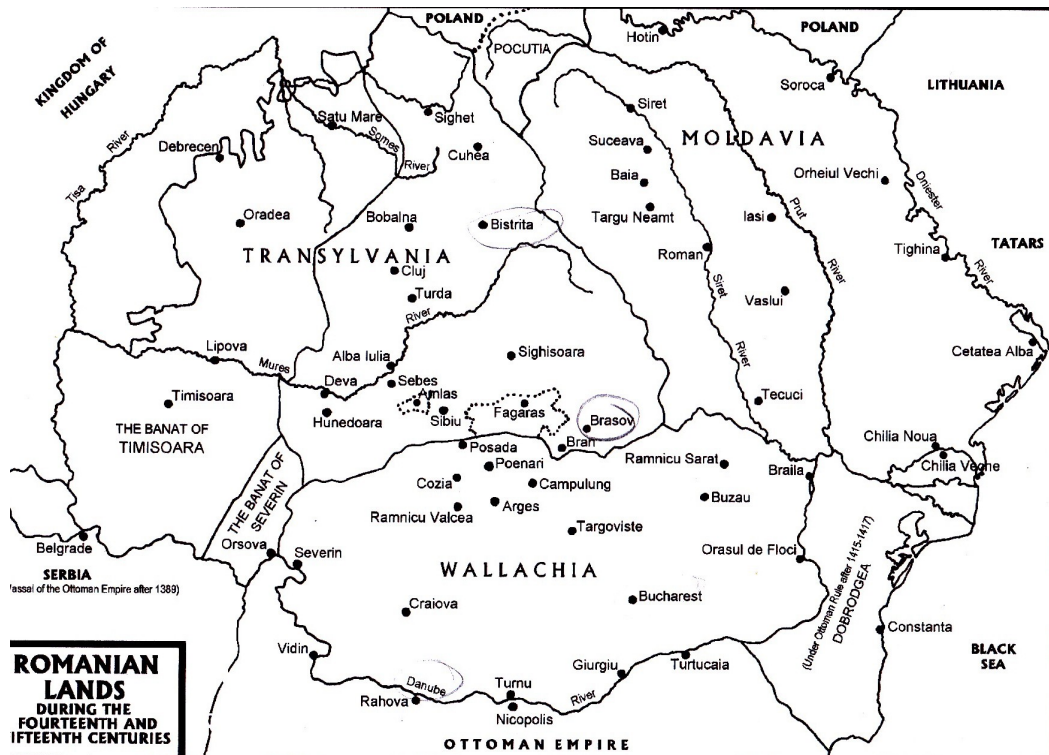


Illustration A: Romanian Lands During the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries in "Vlad III Dracula" The Life and Times of the Historical Dracula", Kurt W. Treptow.

Bram Stoker described the character of Dracula as “ a tall old man, clean-shaven, save for a long white mustache and clad in black from head to foot without a single speck of color around him anywhere.” This description can easily fit one of Count Vlad Dracula, which depicts a heavy dark mustache, and a face as pallid as that of the character.

⁷ Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, 36.



Here is a portrait of Prince Dracula at Castle Ambras, which is near Innsbruck, Austria, around either the 15th or 16th century. The castle Ambras was owned by Ferdinand II, who owned a collection of paintings from the 16th century.⁸

Gothic Literature

The Goths were a Germanic people who roamed throughout the Roman Empire. Goths were divided into two different categories: the Ostrogoths, and the Visigoths. Around the 3rd century A.D., the Ostrogoths founded an empire located North of the Black Sea. Two centuries later, the Ostrogoths grew and created empires throughout parts of what is now Italy. The Visigoths were originally part of the Ostrogoths, but separated themselves from the Ostrogoths around the 4th century A.D.. The Visigoths established kingdoms in present day Gaul and Spain.⁹

Throughout centuries, the Goth people have influenced many art forms, including paintings, architecture, music, and literature; all of which reflect the same dark, foreboding tones. Many Gothic-Era art pieces and architecture have distinct qualities. For example, Gothic architecture is identified by its high arches and flying buttresses. One can estimate the time period in which a building was erected by looking for these features. This style is commonly found in buildings such as churches, cathedrals,

⁸ McNally and Florescu, *Dracula*, 32.

⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica, "History & Society :: Visigoth", <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/630568/Visigoth>, (accessed October 9th, 2010)

castles, and even universities.



Illustration B: Gothic Architecture

death. There is an element of sexuality and romance involved, as well as a battle between good and evil, all with religious undertones.

The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole, includes many of these elements. It has an intricate plot, which now might seem outdated, due to its lack of “psychological truth” and a “...plot so cumbersome that it crosses the border of the ridiculous.”¹⁰

Many other books were written during the Gothic literature era, including: Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis, and *Melmoth the Wanderer* by Sheridan LeFanu; all of which rest heavily upon the concept of hell. *Dracula* was not the first work that contained the theme of vampires to be introduced into Gothic literature. In fact, there were three novels which preceded Stoker's *Dracula: The Vampyre* (1821) by John Polidori, *Varney the Vampyre* (1847) by James Malcolm Rymer, and Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla* (1872).¹¹

There is an interesting story behind the creation of some of the most well known Gothic Horror novels. It is believed that in June of 1816, four friends gathered in a villa in Geneva, Switzerland, that belonged to Lord George Byron. As entertainment on this dark and rainy night, Lord Byron presented his guests with a challenge: to each write a horror story. One of the guests, Percy Shelley, after many attempts, gave up on writing his ghost story. Bryon continued however, and eventually parts of his story could be seen in his poem “Mazzeppa”. Byron's physician, John Polidori, even took part in

¹⁰ Leonard Wolf, introduction to *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker (New York: Penguin, 1992), vi.

¹¹ Wolf, introduction, viii.

writing a story, which was successful. He called it *The Vampyre*, which wasn't published until 1821, and is credited for being the first novel to bring the idea of vampires into English literature.¹² But perhaps the most well-known of these Gothic tales was one about a crazed doctor, piecing together a human body, which inevitably led to the creation of a monster. The tale that was also created on this night, was *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley.

Biological Vampirism

Although vampirism has been the source of many myths and looked upon as a concept only found in horror stories, it is biologically plausible. There are many species that gain sustenance from the blood of other animals and humans. The most well-known is the vampire bat, or *Desmodus rotundus*.

Animals that consume blood are sanguivorous, meaning “feeding on blood” from the Latin word *sanguis* (“blood”) and *vorus* (“devouring”). Vampire bats are equipped with many biological tools that enable them to not only easily draw blood from their hosts, but to digest the blood and use it as an energy source. The vampire bat has an anatomy suited for its blood based diet: razor-like front fangs to draw blood painlessly from the host, a digestive tract suited for a liquid diet, and a special anti-coagulant found in its saliva. The bat doesn't necessarily “suck” the blood from its prey; rather it cuts the skin to induce bleeding, and then laps up the blood with its tongue. The anti-coagulant in the saliva is very important for the bat



Illustration C: Vampire Bat, copyright 2006 National Geographic Society. All rights reserved. Photograph by Michael & Patricia Fogden/Corbi.

because it prevents blood from clotting, enabling the maximum amount of blood available for their meal.¹³ It is also important to note that like Stokers character of “Dracula”, vampire bats easily risk starvation and are constantly in need of blood. Since there is a lack of fat in a blood diet, vampire bats cannot store fat, energy, and nutrients like other mammals.¹⁴ This suggests that Stoker drew many

¹² Wolf, introduction, viii.

¹³ “Desmodus Rotundus: Vampire Bat”, University of Michigan Museum of Zoology: Animal Diversity Web, accessed October 9th, 2010, http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Desmodus_rotundus.html.

¹⁴ “Vampire Bats - Vertebrate Sanguivores”, Bill Shutt, accessed October 9th, 2010, <http://www.darkbanquet.com/info.php?page=vampirebats&sid=ac06bedac20eb94efdec4eeb57c180>

qualities of his vampiric characters from the biological traits of vampire bats.



Illustration D: A parasitic fungus stalk erupted from the head of a dead carpenter ant whose jaws are gripping the underside of a leaf's major vein. Credit: David Hughes.

Another creature that has similar traits to Dracula is the *Toxoplasma gondii* a protozoan parasite capable of “mind control”. It is known to infect rats and lead the rat to become attracted to cat urine, which allows the parasite to spread to cats as well.¹⁵ Similar effects are found within the fungus *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis*. This fungus also controls the minds of its victims, particularly that of carpenter ants.

Carpenter ants, under the influence of the fungus, attack the underside of plants, tapping into the leaf's central vein. This occurs just before the ant dies, and after the death, the fungus quickly shoots a sprout through the head of its host. This sprout releases spores, which enables the spread of the fungus to other ants.¹⁶ The concept of mind-control isn't far off from the hypnotism noted in Dracula, and at times, even used by Van Helsing.

Vampirism Around The World

Vampiric myths exist within almost every culture. Eastern Europe vampire fables are perhaps the most well known, but throughout the world the concept of vampirism thrives. Each culture holds a different physical vision of these creatures, but many of the traits and features remain the same.

Many believe that vampires originated in Egypt. Since Egyptian culture is one of the most ancient, it is plausible that this is the birthplace of the vampire myth. It stems from the polytheistic religion practiced in Egypt. The practice of magic throughout Ancient Egypt was not uncommon. This practice is often associated with modern day witchcraft or “wiccan” practices today. According to Ancient Egyptian myth, there were two brothers, Set and Osiris, who came to be Egyptian Gods. Osiris married Isis, and became King. Osiris used his witchcraft to bring vegetation and prosperity to Egypt.

¹⁵ “Animals: Mind-Controlling Parasites Date Back Millions of Years”, Charles Q. Choi, (LiveScience), accessed October 9th, 2010, <http://www.livescience.com/animals/mind-controlling-parasites-fossil-leaf-100817.html>.

¹⁶ “Animals: Mind-Controlling Parasites Date Back Millions of Years”.

At this, Set became very jealous and began feeding on human beings, drinking their blood, and thus creating a vampire population, that Set used to murder his brother, and take over the throne. As revenge for his fathers death, Horus worked together with the sorcerer Ra, and placed a curse on Set and his vampire followers. Because of this curse, Set and his vampires could not go into sunlight, or else they would perish.¹⁷ This trait is referenced in Stoker's *Dracula*, and is a key moment within the play.

The Greeks also had their own version of vampires. The Vrykolakas, an undead creature, would prey upon the living. Much like the Egyptians, one of the earliest instances of vampirism was based around the Goddess, Hecate. According to myth, Mormos and Empusas, servants to Hecate, would feast on unruly children. Other Greek creatures were said to have drank the blood of children, such as the female monsters Gelloudes and Stringla. The concept of feasting on human bodies isn't a novel one in Greek mythology. According to the Ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus, in his play *Agamemnon*, Agamemnon's father, Atreus, murdered his brother's children, and then fed them to him.



Illustration E: *Asasabonsam*

Many cultures believed vampires to be “un-dead”, a term which was used by Bram Stoker as well. However, in West Africa, the creature Obayifo is considered to be a living witch. It is said that this witch, “...could leave her body at night and feed off the blood of sleeping victims.”¹⁸ Another African myth, is that of the Asasabonsam. This creature is undead, and described as “...having ferocious iron teeth. ... and lived in the trees and attacked from above.”¹⁹



Illustration F: *Vetala*

The Asasabonsam of West Africa and Vetala of India share similar traits as well. There are many Indian tales and myths written in Sanskrit, describing a ghost-like figure that hangs from trees and inhabits the bodies

17 “The History of Vampires”, accessed October 9th, 2010, <http://articles.mibba.com/History/3685/The-History-Of-Vampires>.

18 “Vampire Beliefs From Around The World”, *Vampires: The Occult Truth*, accessed October 9th, 2010, <http://books.google.com/books?id=RzQ-2u9ESBUC&pg=PA27&d#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

19 “Vampire Beliefs From Around the World”.

of the dead. Throughout Indian folklore, Vetal has been said to cause miscarriages, drive people mad at the sight of it, and devour children.

From Tradition to Pop-Culture

Recently there has been a sudden growth in the popularity of vampire pop-culture. Younger generations today are more familiar with pop-culture phenomenons such as the film *Twilight*, or the television shows *True Blood* or *The Vampire Diaries*. They even may recall reading the book *Bunnacula*; a childrens book about a vampire rabbit that sucks the juice out of his vegetables. It is important to note the earlier origins of vampire-themed entertainment.

The word “Nosferatu” is used throughout Stoker's novel and the Balderston-Deane play. In Romanian, this means “vampire” or “undead”. The 1922 film by F. W. Murnau was titled *Nosferatu* because it hadn't acquired the rights to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. According to the British Newspaper, *The Independent*, many of Dracula's characteristics were changed in order to recreate the story to avoid copyright infringement. This also meant that the names of the characters and places had to be changed as well, but the plot remained the same. Unfortunately, the film was taken out of movie theaters shortly after its release because Bram Stoker's widow claimed that the producers of *Nosferatu*, Prana-Film, were stealing her husband's intellectual copyright.²⁰ Many changes were made to the character of Dracula for the film *Nosferatu*. Nosferatu was very pale and thin like Dracula, but did not have a thick mustache or hair. Instead, Nosferatu was bald, with pointed ears and long claw-like hands. He resembled a sort of bat-creature instead of an actual human.

Almost a decade later, *Dracula* was brought to the silver screen. In 1931, Tod Browning directed quite possibly the most well-known adaptation of Stoker's novel. Using the Balderston-Deane play as a format, Browning was able to maintain the same characters. Browning cast the Hungarian actor Bela Legosi in the title role. Because of Legosi's acting style and certain direction to scenes by Browning, many view *Dracula* as a type of melodrama. The dramatic approach that Legosi took to his role as Dracula made him somewhat of a legend. Many people may play vampires onscreen, but Bela Legosi maintains the standard of Dracula.

Very similar to this rendition of *Dracula*, was a film released in 1979, starring Frank Langella

²⁰ “Nosferatu: Resurrection of the Vampire”, *The Independent*, (October 9th, 2010), <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/nosferatu-resurrection-of-the-vampire-397854.html>

as Dracula. Directed by John Badham, *Dracula* (1979) was also an adaptation of the Balderston-Deane play. It is noted by Leonard Wolf in the introduction to Stoker's novel, that much like Legosi, Langella was a very charming character, and what "...one may almost call a sunny version of the vampire."²¹ He also says that, "Langella plays the role with such dash and humor, with so much straightforward masculine charm that, caught up by the picturesque seductions on screen one forgets to be frightened."²² The sexuality and charm that is brought out through Legosi and Langella's performances, opened the door for future films, looking to portray that same sensuality.

Without the strict censorship of the 1920's and 30's, filmmakers and television producers today have the freedom to fully expose the sexual undertones that Stoker eludes to in his novel. Filmmakers today also have the liberty to expand upon the concept of vampirism, and modernize it so that audiences can better relate to vampiric folklore. An example of this, is the release of the novel *Twilight* in 2005, written by Stephenie Meyer. As part of a series, these novels were quickly turned into films. The film *Twilight* (also part of a film series), directed by Catherine Hardwicke, in 2008. Incorporating vampire culture into the lives of regular teenagers, Meyers places the character Edward Cullen in an Oregon high school, where he meets and falls in love with a human, Bella Swan. The novels and films quickly gained popularity, particularly among young adults. With this romanticized view of vampirism, many followers of pop-culture no longer saw vampires as a "creature of horror", but a mysterious being coexisting with humans in society.

Vampire myths have deep and ancient roots that span across the world and over time. Vampirism occurs within art, nature, and science. It can be the threat of horror, or something of charm and intrigue. Not only has the concept of vampirism survived throughout history, and is still being investigated today, but we will continue to unlock its mysteries. New concepts of old horror stories are conceived every day, and like Dracula himself, these stories will live on for many centuries to come.

21 Wolf, introduction, xv.

22 Wolf, introduction, xv.