

***DRACULA* AND THE ARCHETYPAL IMAGES OF THE VAMPIRE**

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Human strength and health reside within blood. It is the elixir of life; the child's first nourishment in the mother's womb. From awareness that blood was essential to life it was but a short step to the belief that it was, in fact, synonymous with life. The 'soul' of a living creature lay within its veins. (LEATHERDALE, 1985, p. 16)

Putting blood and *Dracula* together may result in an obvious connection. After all, one of the most popular recurrent images when defining a vampire consists on a long-fanged creature feeding on its victim's blood. However, one of Bram Stoker's novel's remarkable features is the possibility of several readings under different theoretical perspectives, and this multiplicity of analysis also happens when one considers the concrete and metaphorical possibilities regarding blood in the novel.

Three possibilities of interpreting blood might be applied in order to support the study of the archetypal imagery in *Dracula*. The first one relies on the popular and widespread idea of *blood as food for the vampire*, as something to be coveted and longed for, something the vampire cannot survive without; the second one involves metaphorical meanings for the use of the term "blood", mostly in the senses of *land*, *origin* and *family*. Such idea becomes relevant because Bram Stoker uses historical background in the formation of his main character, and Count Dracula is associated with fifteenth century Romanian ruler Vlad Tepes, or Vlad the Impaler. Stoker deals with the ideas of origin and land mainly through Dracula and the historical link between him and Tepes, whereas the idea of family appears in two diverse ways: either through kinship, when people share the same blood and belong to the same family, or through the

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vampiric family – which leads directly to the third idea, which is of *blood as a means of bond, but not through kinship*. Being blood so important in the vampire's existence, it also changes the vampire's relationship with the victim, broadening blood connections and, in a sense, creating an entirely unorthodox genealogy.

Four concepts are crucial in this reading, namely: *myth, archetype, symbol* and *image*. They are intimately connected with one another, and many scholars and theoreticians such as Northrop Frye, Gilbert Durand and Mircea Eliade defined them according to their viewpoints and fields of expertise, which may lead to contradictions and a certain confusion. Due to this significant amount of definitions and to the reliance of the concepts on one another, and also for the sake of organization and proper understanding, the concepts of *myth, archetype, symbol* and *image* applied in this analysis are the ones found in Carl Gustav Jung's writings, and along with these comes the concept of the *collective unconscious*, fundamental in order to fully understand Jung's theory. But before going deep into the novel, it becomes necessary to give further details concerning these concepts.

Carl Gustav Jung was a disciple of Sigmund Freud. Even though their break-up became clear only in the mid-1910s, the origins of Jung's most cherished theory can be traced to his earliest publication, *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena*, in 1902. According to John Freeman in the introduction for *Man and His Symbols*, Jung's main concern was to transform his ideas – that most probably sounded confuse, even absurd at first – into accessible concepts, so that anyone, even laymen, could understand. It also happened because Freudian Psychoanalysis was in vogue, therefore Jung wanted to state very clearly the differences between his thinking and Freud's.

The collective unconscious, Jung's *pièce de résistance*, turned out to be the source of a lot of discussion between Freud and Jung, and one of the major theoretical differences between the two. For Freud, the unconscious is associated to repressed or forgotten contents, consequently becoming some kind of tainted den in human mind. Also, Freud says that these contents in our collective unconscious have personal origins – we unconsciously select what ends up there.

Jung, on the other hand, creates a whole theory on how the unconscious works and exists, subsequently using the ideas of symbol, myth, image and, above all, archetype, to explain the unconscious' working process. In his article *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, he says that indeed there is a part of the unconscious that is personal – a superficial layer, which he calls

personal unconscious, that derives from personal experience and is a personal acquisition. Lying on this one rests the *collective unconscious*, a deeper, bigger, more significant layer of our unconscious that is inborn and universal. Also according to Jung, the collective unconscious “has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals.” (JUNG, 1969, p. 4)

Arising from the explanation on the collective unconscious come the *archetypes*, the contents of the collective unconscious. Jung brings his idea close to Lévy-Bruhl’s concept of the *représentations collectives*, but he points out a major issue here: even though the archetypes have an unconscious origin, they cannot be expressed without conscious thinking. Lévy-Bruhl deals with *symbolic figures*, which are “processed” archetypes, submitted to conscious “elaboration” (another term used by Jung). The archetype, in its pure form, is not processed or elaborated. Only after the elaboration process, the archetypes become *archetypal images* – in other words, unconscious contents that receive a defined form so that they can be represented. To the means of transmission of such processed contents Jung gives the name of *esoteric teaching*. The archetypal image is a cardinal point in the reading of *Dracula* presented further ahead, because all of the crystalized ideas about vampires are, in reality, archetypal images.

Images, on the other hand, are related to form, they express and shape figures of our unconsciousness. However, Jung recognizes that once more consciousness plays an important role here because there is no image without a conscious process, and that eliminates the true impact and the magnitude of the archetype. Due to the fact that man always thinks about images through reason, his views might be, as Jung states, *prejudiced* or *myopic*. (1969, p. 13)

Archetypal images can be conveyed through some forms, and Jung points the *myth* as one of the most relevant ways of expressing archetypes: “... myths are first and foremost psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul...” (JUNG, 1969, p. 6). In reality, our psyche provides us with material (images) to construct myths – in more practical terms, if one takes Bram Stoker’s description of Count Dracula, one will realize that the most classic and recurrent representations of the vampire nowadays, be it Dracula or not, be it in literature or in the movies, will not differ very much from the image Stoker proposed:

His face was a strong, a very strong, aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofty domed

forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows very very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth. These protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed. The chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor. (Stoker, chapter 2, p. 28)

In order to corroborate Jung's theory on archetypal images, one can rely on the fact that Stoker based the description of Count Dracula on John William Polidori's Lord Ruthven, in *The Vampyre*, written in 1816 and published in 1819. That means the image Stoker proposed can also be traced back some decades before *Dracula* was published, and that there already was some kind of archetypal image, a processed idea of how a vampire should look like:

Those who felt this sensation of awe, could not explain whence it arose: some attributed it to the dead grey eye, which, fixing upon the object's face, did not seem to penetrate, and at one glance to pierce through to the inward workings of the heart; but fell upon the cheek with a leaden ray that weighed upon the skin it could not pass. (Polidori, 2003)

Polidori also uses phrases such as “deadly hue of his face” and “the dread of his singular character” to describe Lord Ruthven, proving that Dracula's uncanny appearance was not created from scratch – more than that, it also proves that in spite of giving the “ultimate” version of the archetypal image of the vampire we have inherited, Stoker's was not the first one. But nor was Polidori's. The images regarding vampires can be traced back to thousands of years, for virtually every Ancient civilization had its own version of blood-sucking creatures, in spite of certain variations. J. Gordon Melton, in his *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead*, mentions vampiric creatures among Babylons, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Mayans, Aztecs, and other African, American and Asian civilizations, to mention a few. As it can be seen, archetypes and archetypal images are not the milestones of Jung's theory by chance.

If the archetype is the product of the unconscious in its pure form (that is, not processed, and therefore impossible to be represented accurately), the archetypal image is the archetype after

having suffered the influence of the consciousness and the myth is a wider form of expressing such images, the next stage is the *symbol*.

The concept of *symbol* has a major influence on all of his work, because among all the concepts described so far, the *symbol* is the most personal one. That becomes important when considering Jung because his theory relied on his practice very much. Many of his techniques were alternative ones, basing therapeutic procedures on representations of dreams and feelings through paintings, drawings and mandalas, for example. Based on his experience with the patients, Jung creates a dichotomy between *symbol* and *experience* so that the difference becomes clearer: one has an experience, but it is a moment that can never be fully recovered. Therefore, one will struggle to re-enact, remember or keep that moment to oneself as hard as possible. The point is that in order to recover the experience, one must use conscious material: something that is familiar and available in one's mind – hence his definition, that says that the symbol is “the best possible expression for an unconscious content whose nature can only be guessed, because it is still unknown” (1969, p. 6). In other words, the symbol is not the object it symbolizes, but an expression of it that depends on feelings, states of mind and moods.

Dracula provides its reader with plenty of rich imagery, and some of those images are so strong that they ended up forming archetypes recognized in various places, cultures and situations, reinforcing Jung's notion of a collective unconscious. The ideas people have regarding vampires are basically the same, and when they are put together they form a whole that does not vary in general.

The multiplicity of the vampire as a character manifests itself, for example, in an analysis of the differences between male and female vampires. The notions, images and expectations of the audience are different according to the gender on the vampire, and *Dracula* accounts for a large part of that. The only male vampire in the novel is Count Dracula, and his physical appearance is influenced by his feeding on blood. The classic description of Dracula in chapter 2 of the novel refers to his older and more repulsive physique, that is, before he feeds on blood. In chapter 13, however, Dracula appears once more, restored with an unnatural youth, shocking Jonathan Harker:

... a tall, thin man, with a beaky nose and a black moustache and pointed beard (...) His face was not a good face. It was hard, and cruel, and sensual, and big white teeth, that looked all the whiter

because his lips were so red, were pointed like an animal's. (Stoker, chapter 13, p. 207)

The comparison of the two descriptions leads to an obvious conclusion: blood makes the vampire young. Such youth proves to be a major tool in the vampire's exercise of domination towards the victims² he bites, all of them females and young themselves. In total, Dracula makes seven victims in the novel: Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker (née Murray), both of them being bitten as the story unfolds; the three nameless female vampires that inhabit Castle Dracula in Transylvania, and even though their biting is not described in the novel it becomes implicit that they were turned into vampires by the Count and no other, due to their devotion to him. And finally, the two male targets of Dracula's power, Mr. Swales, who is found broken-necked, and Renfield, who suffers with Dracula's psychological war and becomes a servant to the Count due to the latter hypnotic powers. It is important to highlight that neither Mr. Swales or Renfield are bitten, or seem to give blood or have their blood taken to feed Dracula.

That leads us to a second core aspect in vampiric imagery: the sexual connotations of the biting act. A huge amount of theoreticians have discussed that, and the proportions of such discussion become even broader considering the concomitance of *Dracula* and Sigmund Freud's first writings on Psychoanalysis. The sexual element is crucial in the vampiric universe: on the one hand, the vampire does not have sexual intercourse. On the other, the intimacy shared by the attacker and the attacked is undoubtedly sensual. When the vampire bites someone's neck, there is penetration and exchange of blood and saliva, two bodily fluids. The description of the "young Dracula" uses the word *sensual*, but it is not as important in the building of the archetype of the male vampire as it is with the female one.

The epitome of the archetype of the female vampire within *Dracula* is Lucy Westenra. Depicted in the beginning of the novel as a girl who likes to "build castles in the air" (STOKER, chapter 5, p. 70), who truly believes that "a woman ought to tell her husband everything" (idem, p. 73), whose cheeks are "a lovely rose-pink" (ibidem, chapter 6, p. 92) and whose look is sweet (ibidem, chapter 8, p. 121), she is what was expected from a young upper-class Victorian lady to be. The amazing shift in Lucy's psyche and physical appearance before and after the attack are

² The use of the term 'victim' should not be read here under any value judgment, for the term does not imply in this context that the biting of the vampire is necessarily something negative. Further discussion on this aspect is in the portion of this article that discusses how *Dracula* is representative of the Victorian society.

symptomatic of the era in which the novel takes place and was published. If Victorian straightness and sweetness characterize Lucy before her involvement with Dracula, this is the way Stoker describes her when she becomes a vampire: “The sweetness was turned to adamant, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness (...), the lips were crimson with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death robe.” (ibidem, chapter 16, p. 253). In comparison to the descriptions of Dracula previously mentioned, one can see how the sexual element is enhanced when it comes to the female vampire, especially through the use of the phrase “voluptuous wantonness” and the juxtaposition of the sensually red blood flowing on Lucy’s white death gown.

Many a critic have pointed out how the Victorian social conditions and structures influenced and are reflected in *Dracula*. Not by chance, the Gothic movement had its peak by the end of the nineteenth century, with the triad *Dracula*, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1893). All three works show the disease of the Victorians towards the social pressures and the obligation of keeping a straight life. Works dealing with late Victorian literature say that it “... reflected in a peculiarly vivid and urgent way the social anxieties of their time” (CALDER, p. 9), “... exposes and explores the desires, anxieties and fears that both society and the individual (...) attain to suppress.” (BYRON, p. 2) or “...expressions of both social and psychological dilemmas of the nineteenth century” (idem, p. 13). *Dracula* deals with those dilemmas through the contrast of imagery: typically Victorian values (life pre-Count Dracula) versus unacceptable, unorthodox and immoral values (life post-Count Dracula). And sexuality is one of the most explored values, for that matter.

The sexual features were not part of the Victorian female agenda established by the queen. Externalizing sexual desires and pursuing sexual equality was not expected from women, and if part of *Dracula* proves to be revolutionary as it shows Victorian ladies being openly sexual, it also reinforces other social values related to the role of Victorian women. All the females who are in contact with Dracula suffer some kind of punishment: after becoming a vampire, Lucy has her corpse beheaded and pierced by a stake (let us not forget that the method of saving the vampire – the desecration of the corpse – is as unchristian as the transformation into a vampire itself); Mina, whose transformation is never completed, becomes fully dependent from the men surrounding her, and her taint becomes physical and visible after Van Helsing burns her forehead with a Holy

Wafer: “Unclean! Unclean! Even the Almighty shuns my polluted flesh! I must bear the mark of shame upon my forehead until the Judgement Day!” (ibidem, chapter 22, p. 353). And finally, the three female vampires in *Castle Dracula*, who end up purified by the hands of Van Helsing.

In all cases the women fell for Dracula, the ones that became vampires were killed and later saved from damnation by the hands of men, and the only one whose transformation was not fully developed returned to her essentially Victorian condition, bearing her husband a child and being “the one to be saved”. Van Helsing’s words by the end of the final note in *Dracula* summarize Mina’s story brilliantly in that sense: “This boy will some day know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is. Already he knows her sweetness and loving care; later on he will understand how some men so loved her, that they did dare much for her sake.” (ibidem, p. 449)

A great evidence of the how the archetype of the she-vampire relies on the sexiness is the existence and the usages of the word “vamp”: even though the adjectives do not vary in gender in English, “vamp” is a word used exclusively to describe “a woman who is conscious of and makes use of her attractiveness to men in order to get what she wants” (according to the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary).

Literature has examples prior to *Dracula* and after it that reinforce this idea: Sheridan Le Fanu’s short story *Camilla* (1872) has a female vampire as its main character, and the sexiness in her behavior is latent; in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem *Christabel* (1798 – 1800), Lady Geraldine is a seductive vampire who drinks red wine and bathes in the river by the moonlight; and finally, Anne Rice’s female vampires also display a strong sexual quality, such as the eponymous character in *Pandora*, or Akasha, in *Queen of the Damned*.

As one studies literature about vampires, one cannot help coming across other media, especially cinema. The amount of vampire movies is enormous, mostly the ones based on Bram Stoker’s character, spin-offs based on Dracula’s family and other vampires, as well as movie versions of some of Anne Rice’s best-known vampire novels. The images on screen – or, in Jungian terms, the archetypal images proposed by moviemakers and artists – leave no room for diverse interpretations: the vampire, particularly the female one, must be sexy.

In the 1950s, when Hammer Filmes acquired the rights of *Dracula* and other “horror stories” (which had been considered too violent for the standards of the American censorship organizations), the idea was to have a seductive actor playing the main role. The studios took for granted that the male audience would be interested solely in the blood and the violence, so they

wanted to profit from the female market: the choice of Christopher Lee in the late 50s to play the role of Count Dracula proved to be effective in that sense, but male audiences did not respond the way Hammer expected. In the 60s and the 70s, the movies started focusing on the female characters, who invariably had bigger breasts and more revealing clivages than Bram Stoker and his predecessors had in mind.

Vampire movies became commercially convenient to Hammer Films, until the tendency faded by the late 70s. Until the end of the twentieth century, the connection sexuality and vampires was reinforced by plenty of vampire movies and variations on the theme: contemporary, spacial and funny vampires appeared on screen, but the notion of sexuality never lost its power. One good example is Francis Ford Coppola's version of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (c 1992). The changes in the plot are many, and they even include a romance between Dracula and Mina in her previous incarnation. However, what is symptomatic of the vampire's strong sex appeal is Coppola's depiction of the three female vampires: their white and plain gowns were replaced with shorter and more revealing outfits, at the same time reflecting mankind's unconscious ideas on the female vampire and taking advantage of the commercial potential of semi-naked women that already been explored by the movies from the 1950s.

The significant amount of vampire movies and the new breath of fresh air in vampiric literature that the chronicles of Anne Rice represented are evidences of the contemporary success of the vampire. One question remains, though: what is the secret of the success of the vampire as a character, be it in literature or on screen?

Many aspects may provide explanation. The fact that most civilizations had some kind of representation of the vampire in their myths and tales helps solidifying the basis for the character. Secondly, the publishing of *Dracula* in 1897 fills in a core blank: it is a book published during Victorianism, a time of deep and important questioning about issues that have not been fully solved so far. Humankind still focuses on appearances and a morality that is not necessarily true (once again, just like in Victorian times). The novel is related to topics that interest humans in the most instinctive ways: life, the existence after death, fears (including the fear of life and the fear of death), God and the devil, cowardice and courage, the supernatural, and sexual features: shared intimacy, domination and subjection and, to a certain extent, betrayal and covet.

These topics of common interest are closely related to the contents of our collective unconscious – the archetypes. That is why they arouse our curiosity so much, and constructing a

novel that deals with all of them in such a clear and effective way is probably Bram Stoker's biggest merit, considering that *Dracula* is the only among his seventeen novels to ever reach success. However, in terms of literature, it is an unparalleled success: the novel has never been out of print throughout these years, it has been translated into more than fifty languages worldwide, being the second best sold book in the world (outnumbered only by the Bible).³

Dracula has amazed readers, critics and scholars because of its multiplicity in many ways: it is a novel whose narrative scheme comprises the voices of several characters in varied forms (journal and diary entries, newspaper articles, memoranda and even the log of a ship); it describes the anxieties and issues of one specific time, and as it does so the novel connects Victorian England to medieval Transylvania, taking the reader back and forth in the timeline in a subtle way ; it deals with universal topics about which there is always something else to say; and the fact that it has been a prolific source of inspiration for several mass media (especially cinema) only reinforces public interest in the work.

The excitement around the novel elicits responses from its consumers, leading to conclusions and ideas shared by people. The more archetypes are established, the more interesting the novel becomes, in a never-ending cycle – and here lies another aspect of *Dracula's* multiplicity: instead of being a fad, or just another “horror story”, it unveils more layers of human consciousness, making room for more studies, more interpretations, and, with the passing of time, the reinforcement and creation of new archetypes.

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³ Of course, that piece of information cannot be proven easily, but many sources mention that possibility, such as the documentary *Vampires: Thirst for the Truth* (13'02"), Nandris (p. 369) and Leatherdale (p. 11).

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