Monsters Through History

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Declaration of Originality

This dissertation is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art Design & Technology, Dun Laoghaire in partial fulfilment of the examination for the BA (Honours) Animation. It is entirely the author's own work except where noted and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution.

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Abstract

This thesis will explore the evolution of Monsters in cinema, focusing on the Vampire's development in Hollywood. It aims to explore how and why the Vampire has changed across its longstanding position in popular culture, becoming adaptable to a variety of situations.

Discussion will focus on three areas; the changes of the Vampire over time and the influence of cultural moments on monstrous characters; changes made to the Vampire to adapt to different genres and still be readable as a Vampire; and an analysis of the Vampire and its relationship to race, colonialism and gender. Cohen's "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" will form the framework for the analysis of the Vampire as a Monster archetype, and discussion of Hutcheon's "Theory of Adaptation" will aid in understanding the Vampire as a character who exists as a "known adaptation" and recognisable cultural figure across its variations.

By understanding the Vampire's development due to these influences, we can better understand what is considered monstrous in society at given points, and trace societal views from ones of intolerance to acceptance, and promote a reflection upon our "Othering" of various sections of society.

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Introduction

Monsters are adaptable creatures, becoming metaphors for the issues that are relevant to their contemporary audiences, never staying stagnant due to our ever-changing world.[1] This research will aim to discover the changes and reasons for these changes that occur in Monsters in cinema, focusing specifically on the Vampire. It will discuss the character of the Vampire in Hollywood, and aim to explore how it has changed from its folkloric origins, to Browning's 1931 film, to the vampires of contemporary visual media.

Cohen's seven theses of "Monster Theory" will inform this analysis of the Vampire as a Monstrous figure, outlining the factors that influence the Vampire's place in popular culture over time - particularly his discussions of the Monster as "a Cultural Body", as one who "Dwells at the Gates of Difference", and the fear of whom "is Really a Kind of Desire."[2] Hutcheon's "A Theory of Adaptation", will inform analysis of the Vampire as a "known adaptation", one whom audiences are aware of as an adapted figure due to cultural knowledge of vampiric texts, namely Bram Stoker's "Dracula" (1897).[3]

The Vampire in Hollywood can be traced back to Murnau's 1922 film "Nosferatu", the earliest adaptation of Stoker's "Dracula" to survive the ages.[4] However, it was with Universal Studios' release of Browning's "Dracula" (1931) that the Vampire was cemented in the public mind. Babilas ventures that even those who have never read the novel or seen Browning's film are, "well aware of who Dracula is".[5] According to Babilas, Dracula's image as a foreign nobleman in a ruined castle has influenced audiences and directors alike in their perception of the Vampire.

Chapter One of this thesis will discuss the transformation of the Vampire over time, noting its history in myth and folklore. It will discuss the transition from this bloodthirsty beast to the refined Romantic Era "seducer", a duality that co-existed in Stoker's defining "ur-text"[6]. From this, the vampires of the 80's, 90's and 00's will be discussed regarding the influences of changing societal concerns and culture, and changes in audience attitudes towards religion, sexuality, and "Otherness" on the Vampire.

Chapter Two will focus on the adaptation of the Vampire story to different genres, and the "vampirisation" of genres.[7] It will discuss the Vampires of the horror genre in the 1920's and 30's, and how changes in audience sensibilities and changes in film censorship paved the way for "desirable" vampires that allowed audiences a romantic escape from reality. The adaptation of Browning's

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[1] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", in *The Monster Theory Reader,* ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 38.

[2] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 38-49.

[3] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 142-143.

[4] "Nosferatu (film by Murnau [1922])", Britannica, accessed February 10, 2026, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nosferatu-film-by-Murnau-1922.

[5] Dorota Babilas, "Tod Browning's *Dracula* 1931: The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", in *Dracula and the Gothic in Literature, Pop Culture and the Arts*, ed. Isabel Ermida (BRILL, 2015), 138.

[6] Jeffrey Weinstock, *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema* (Columbia University Press, 2012), 130.

[7] Weinstock, *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema*, 129.

influential characterisation of Dracula for younger audiences will be discussed, focusing on the differences and similarities between Lugosi's monster and children's television characters, as well as how "Otherness" is explored in children's media as an avenue for promoting tolerance.

Chapter 3 will examine the Vampire through the lenses of Race and Gender, discussing the Vampire's relationship to colonisation and how the use of the Vampire as a form of "Othering" can be related to racist imagery used by colonial powers to render those they oppressed as monstrous. The relationship between women and Vampires will be examined, discussing the roles of women as victims of the Vampire and as hypersexualised Vampires, rendering female sexuality as monstrous - also noting the twinning of female vampires with queerness and the demonisation of female queerness.

This research aims to explore how Monsters, particularly Vampires, reflect our society through their adaptation to audience needs. In an ever-changing world, such an archetype refuses to disappear - although today, the Vampire exists as a celebration of "outsiders" as opposed to a demonisation of them, becoming an avenue for the representation of those who were once the victims of this "Othering".

Chapter One:
Monsters Across Time

The Vampire is a character that has inhabited the cultural zeitgeist for centuries, stretching from Mesopotamian and early Eastern European folklore to modern-day interpretations of the Vampire in Hollywood. It is a character that is ever changing, with each interpretation drawing upon previous narratives, changing to suit the societal conventions of its time. In this way, the Vampire persists with its ability to combine "the recognition of the familiar and the delight in the variations."[8] The Vampire is always an outsider, an "Other", in some way - noted by Cohen in his discussion of the nature of monsters as ever-changing representatives of the outsider.[9] This chapter will outline the characteristics of the Vampire across its history in Hollywood, noting cultural influences on each interpretation, particularly the nature of "Otherness" throughout the decades and how it contributes to the "Otherness" of the Vampire.

Vampyres – From the Folkloric to the Byronic

Vampires and similar undead creatures can be found in folklore across the world. Ancient myths of the Satanic are one source of the Vampire story; Hebrew and Mesopotamian legend come together in the Old Testament story of Lilith, first wife of Adam, banished from Eden, who feeds on human blood. [10] Written references to the Vampire in Eastern Europe go back as far as 1047 A.D. in the form of the Upir, a dangerous spirit that appeared during death rites[11]. Sixteenth and seventeenth century writings bring the Greek "vrykolakas" to the attention of Western Europe; creatures that come back from their tombs to "haunt acquaintances and friends… feed on animals… scare and kill the children".[12] The 1720s saw the "Great Vampire Epidemic", where the diseases rabies and pellagra spread across Eastern Europe, for which hysteric blame was placed on vampires.[13]

Western viewpoints often held the belief of vampires in contempt – writings on the vrykolakas were typically "used to attack the alien faith", attempting to showcase stark differences between "the spiritual and salvation doctrine of Western religion, and the superstition and rude materialism of the East."[14] Western writers were dismissive of the myth, with one account attributing these local stories to symptoms of "mania, 'an epidemical disease of the brain, as

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[8] James Craig Holte, "A Century of Draculas", *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 10, no. 2 (38) (1999): 113 , https://www.jstor.org/stable/43308376?seq=1.

[9] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 38-41.

[10] Lejla Panjeta, "Monster as a Superhero: An Essay on Vampire Vogue in Contemporary Film Culture", *Studii si Cercetari de Istoria Artei : Teatru, Muzică, Cinematografie* 5-6 (49-50)(2012): 14, https://doaj.org/article/3794ded04629437ead5d46e932f6fc38.

[11] Stanley Stepanic, "More 'Disease' Than 'Dracula': How the Vampire Myth Was Born", UVAToday, published October 18 2021, https://news.virginia.edu/content/more-disease-dracula-how-vampire-myth-was-born-0.

[12] Álvaro García Marín, "The Son of the Vampire: Greek Gothic, or Gothic Greece?", in *Dracula and the Gothic in Literature, Pop Culture and the Arts*, ed. Isabel Ermida (BRILL, 2015), 22-23.

[13] UVAToday, "More 'Disease' Than 'Dracula'".

[14] Marín, "The Son of the Vampire: Greek Gothic, or Gothic Greece?", 25.

dangerous and infectious as the madness of dogs.'"[15] Through these writings of the Vampire, the East was effectively "Othered", depicted as superstitious, of lower rational thinking, and as culturally inferior to the West.[16]

The work of Romantic poets in the eighteenth century drew from these tales of the "Vampyre", with poets such as Stagg and Byron basing their writings on the "folklorish stereotype" of one returned from the grave, "endowed… with sadism, blood-thirst, and the parasitical qualities of the leech…"[17]. However, Romantic poet Polidori based his interpretation of the Vampyre on Lord Byron (noting an antagonistic relationship between them). His Lord Ruthven is "dignified, in a perverse kind of way"; playing the role of a nobleman, he is a seductive and awe-inspiring figure to all he meets, with his taking of victims imbued with a sense of sexuality rather than pure animosity. This depiction of the Vampire as a Byronic hero – "a dark angel bringing both love and death" would play a role in the characterisation of Count Dracula in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel. Occupying a middle ground between distinguished nobleman and animalistic, undead creature, this interpretation would be crucial to the evolution of the Vampire throughout its history.[18]

"Difference Made Flesh" – Tod Browning's "Dracula" (1931)

Browning's 1931 film "Dracula" began the establishment of the "classical screen vampire" in Hollywood. This "classic" depiction of the Vampire drew from both the hungry bloodsucker of early folklore and the seductive nobleman of Polidori, as well as theatrical influences, being an adaptation of the 1927 theatrical production of "Dracula" by Balderston.[19]

Despite his high status as a Count, Browning's Dracula is an example of the "Other" in horror. As Cohen explains, "the monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us", and monsters are used to represent differences between "Us" and "Them" within their cultural contexts – typically "cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual" differences. Cohen explains that, "representing an anterior culture as monstrous justifies its displacement or extermination by rendering the act heroic."[20] Writings on the Greek vrykolakas highlighted this "Othering" with the perception of Greeks as "lesser than" the rational Western man. Browning's film opens with a clear contrast between beliefs of East and West; Renfield is met with fearful warnings of creatures who "take the form of

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[15] Conrad Aquilina, "The deformed transformed; or, from bloodsucker to Byronic hero – Polidori and the literary vampire", in *Open Graves, Open Minds : Representations of Vampires and the Undead from the Enlightenment to the Present Day*, ed. Sam George and William Hughes (Manchester University Press, 2013), 24.

[16] Marín, "The Son of the Vampire: Greek Gothic, or Gothic Greece?", 26.

[17] Aquilina, "The deformed transformed; or, from bloodsucker to Byronic hero", 25-26.

[18] Aquilina, "The deformed transformed; or, from bloodsucker to Byronic hero", 27-31.

[19] "Dracula (film by Browning, 1931)", Britannica, accessed February 4, 2026, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Dracula-film.

[20] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 41.

wolves, and bats"[21] when he inquires about Castle Dracula. Renfield dismisses these warnings, as many Western men before him, as mere "superstition".

Relating these folkloric beliefs to religion, we see an Othering of the "traditional" beliefs of the locals in contrast to Western Christianity, but also an Othering of Dracula as "anti-Christian"[22] in contrast to the Christian protagonists of the film. Christian imagery is important in this film, particularly the use of the crucifix; when he attempts to feed from him, the Count is repulsed by Renfield's crucifix. The Vampire legend is associated with images of Lilith and demons, the unholy and eternal damnation, emphasising the contrast to Christian ideals of salvation.

Figure 1: Tod Browning, "Dracula" (Universal Pictures, 1931). Renfield's crucifix falls in front of his bloody finger, repelling Dracula.

The Vampire is also intertwined with the demonisation of Jewish people in Europe, explored by Weinstock who discusses the fourteenth century belief that "Jews [used] Christian blood in their unleavened bread (matzoh) and in their wine", being characterised as "demonic enemies of Christ". These anti-Semitic beliefs spread across Europe from the Middle Ages onward and contributed to the lore of the Vampire, just as vampiric lore contributed to misconceptions of Jewish people.[23] While not explicit in Browning's "Dracula" when compared to Murnau's "Nosferatu" (1922) – a German film depicting a Vampire with

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[21] *Dracula*, directed by Tod Browning (Universal Pictures, 1931), 00:03:39 – 00:03:52, https://archive.org/details/dracula.-1931.
[22] Jeffrey Weinstock, "Circumcising Dracula", *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 12, no. 1 (45) (2001): 98, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43308497.
[23] Weinstock, "Circumcising Dracula", 92-94.

"exaggerated stereotypical Jewish features" arriving alongside the plague[24] – this imagery is present; Dracula wears a pendant resembling a Star of David, and Babilas compares Renfield's monologue about "thousands of rats, with eyes blazing red" to Fascist propaganda. The Count is a representation of fears surrounding Eastern Europeans and the "stereotyped scheming Jew" threatening Western Christian society and values, as well as middle-class American audiences' distrust of "exotic European visitors".[25]

Figure 2: Tod Browning, "Dracula" (Universal Pictures, 1931). Dracula's pendant resembles a Star of David.

Dracula is not just a physical threat to the English folk; he is also a moral threat, bringing with him "perverse" ideals that threaten the Christian ideals of Western society. He places himself between the young couple, seducing Mina to become his bride. Baker's essay discusses the goal of the classic Vampire being to "insert himself between a young, usually engaged, heterosexual couple" and "arrest" the creation of community through their separation.[26] Dracula's hypnosis of Mina makes her a more seductive, "aroused" version of herself – by the standards of 1930s Hollywood – going against Christian ideals of purity. Furthermore, Browning's Vampire is depicted as a "dandy"; he is a well-dressed gentleman and the only male character to wear makeup, which created an assumption of a "perverse" character to 1930s Western audiences. This is reinforced by the relationship between Dracula and Renfield, one that Babilas describes as a "disturbing quasi-homoerotic relation".[27] If the Byronic Vampire is one whose

[24] Weinstock, "Circumcising Dracula", 95.
[25] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 145-146.
[26] David Baker, "Browning's Dracula and the development of the classical screen vampire: genre, form, and figure", *Continuum* 35 (2) (2021): 209-210, https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2021.1936826.
[27] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 147-152.

bite is sexual as well as animalistic, then it is significant that the first character bitten by Dracula is Renfield.

His homoerotic relationship with Renfield, his insertion into the young couple's relationship, his position as the foreigner and the anti-Christian, and his coding as a Jewish stereotype, reinforces the idea of Dracula as "Other" from the protagonists, and therefore monstrous. Browning's Dracula is an important interpretation of the Vampire archetype, blending the folkloric beast and the Byronic seducer together to create this outsider who "is marked by difference; he is both attractive and frightening because he is foreign."[28]

Vampires of the 80's – "The Hunger" (1983) and "The Lost Boys" (1987)

Where Browning's Dracula was dressed in noble finery, the vampires of the 80s were contemporary and individualistic – medallions and capes are replaced by black-out glasses in "The Hunger" (Scott, 1983) and biker jackets in "The Lost Boys" (Schumacher, 1987). Spooner discusses how the influence of vampiric imagery and Gothic and Punk styles on one another can be traced to the release of "Bela Lugosi's Dead" by Gothic rock band Bauhaus in 1979, and their performance of the track in the opening sequence of "The Hunger" in 1983, cementing the twinning of Goth and Vampire aesthetics in Hollywood.[29]

Figure 3: Tony Scott, "The Hunger", (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1983). Vampires Miriam and John enter a nightclub - they are dressed in contemporary Gothic fashion.

In "The Lost Boys", the vampires are not "outsiders" in terms of their biker gang style; the opening sequence shows that punk styles are popular amongst the teenagers of the town and that it is the newcomers, Michael and Sam, who are the outsiders. This style may be read as reinforcing the vampires as a "gang", as well as the idea of blending in, a detail comparable to Babilas' discussion of Browning's Dracula having "mastered the skill of mingling with the crowd".[30]

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[28] "Dracula (1931)", Irish Film Institute, accessed October 28, 2025, https://ifi.ie/film/dracula-1931/.

[29] Catherine Spooner, "Gothic Charm School; or, how vampires learned to sparkle", in *Open Graves, Open Minds : Representations of Vampires and the Undead from the Enlightenment to the Present Day*, ed. Sam George and William Hughes (Manchester University Press, 2013), 153.

[30] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 146.

These boys are seen as a gang of troublemakers, but they blend in with their fellow punk-rocker teens so that no one would suspect that they are not human.

Figure 4: Joel Schumacher, "The Lost Boys", (Warner Bros., 1987). The titular vampire gang are dressed in contemporary, punk-rock style clothing.

The vampires of Scott's film also blend into society, highlighted by their relationship with human character Alice. She doesn't notice anything "unusual" about them, having love for them but not being under any hypnotic spell – a contrast to the likes of Browning's Dracula, who unnerves and controls Renfield and all who meet him. Alice is a connection to the vampires' humanity, especially for the character John. Scenes of John's human-self playing the cello mirror scenes of him playing music with Alice, allowing him to reconnect with his humanity. However, as he rapidly ages and becomes desperate to survive, he feeds from Alice, killing her. John's moments of humanity from his past and his relationships with Miriam and Alice are contrasted with these moments of animosity, creating a tragic character.

These vampires, unlike their predecessors, are not entirely "Othered" by xenophobia or religious difference; the Lost Boys are locals to the area, with the story treating the protagonists as the Outsiders. The only reference to Miriam being foreign is used as an excuse by Sarah to explain their "strange" relationship to her partner. "The Lost Boys" references the Christian imagery evoked in Gothic literature and in Browning's Dracula, namely the use of holy water as a method of destroying vampires. These vampires represent a purely "satanic" side of vampires, as opposed to the blend of satanism and anti-Semitic rhetoric used in the likes of "Dracula" (1931) and "Nosferatu" (1922). In "The Hunger", the main religious symbol is the Egyptian Ankh worn by Miriam, placing the lore of these vampires in Ancient Egyptian belief, drawing from associations of the Ankh as a symbol of eternal life.[31] Unlike the vampires of folklore, Browning's Dracula, or even "The Lost Boys", the vampires in "The Hunger" are never banished or repulsed by Christian imagery.

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[31] "The Ankh", World History Encyclopedia, accessed October 29, 2025, https://www.worldhistory.org/Ankh/.

A notable development between “Dracula” in 1931 and “The Hunger” in 1983 is the depiction of sexuality and queerness in these films. Browning’s “Dracula” was made in a time where “any allusion to sexuality, however vague, was regarded as daring”, and the film was made in accordance with the Hays Code, forbidding nudity.[32] These censorships meant that even the Vampire’s bite was not seen on screen, with every instance of the bite being implied by a fade to black. In contrast to this, the vampires of “The Hunger” are explicitly and violently sexual, evident from their seduction and murder of two humans, intercut with the manic screams of a monkey to mirror the animalistic actions of the vampires. However, the relationships between Miriam and her partners are much more restrained compared to this violent opening scene. It marks a change in the sexual nature of the Vampire, with less of an inherent “sexual and murderous insanity”[33], marking their capability to have moments of humanity compared to the relentless vampires before them.

There is a more explicit depiction of queer relationships in “The Hunger” when compared to “Dracula” (1931), where the queerness of the Count was only implied through dress sense and his “homoerotic” relationship with Renfield.[34] Benshoff discusses how “The Hunger” characterises Miriam and Sarah as bisexual. According to Benshoff, this depiction has “done much to cement into place the current social construction of homosexuals as unnatural, predatory, plague-carrying killers”, while also serving as a “pleasurable, power-wish fulfilment fantasy for some queer viewers”.[35] This blurring of boundaries between the demonisation of homosexuality and the empowerment of queer audiences has contributed to the film’s status as a “queer horror classic”.[36]

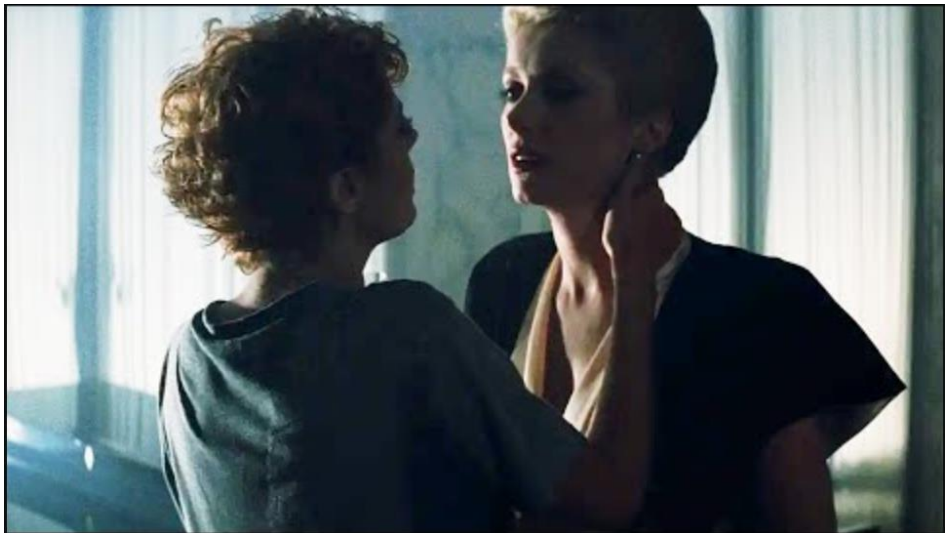

Figure 5: Tony Scott, "The Hunger" (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1983). Miriam and Sarah develop an intimate relationship throughout the film.

[32] Babilas, “The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat”, 151.

[33] Babilas, “The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat”, 153.

[34] Babilas, “The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat”, 147-148.

[35] Harry Benshoff, “The Monster and the Homosexual”, in *The Monster Theory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 231.

[36] “The Hunger (1983)”, Queer Cinema Archive, accessed October 28, 2025, https://www.queercinemaarchive.com/the-archive/the-hunger.

The Vampire's sexuality can also be read in the historical context of the time – in 1981, the first case of what would become the AIDS epidemic was reported by the US Center for Disease Control.[37] The Queer Cinema Archive discusses how the film "reflects… the plight of many living with HIV/AIDS in the early years of the pandemic."[38] A film with queer characters that focuses on the sharing of blood and the rapid, "unnatural" deterioration of loved ones, and the loneliness that comes along with this, can be read in the context of those living during the height of the AIDS epidemic. As such, these vampires can be read as tragic in their love as opposed to perverse in their difference. They are the middle-ground between the classic sexually animalistic creature who twins death and sexuality together, and the modern Vampire who yearns and loves in a gentle, tragic way.

The Romantic Vampire – "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (1992) and "Twilight" (2008)

In the 90's, Francis Ford Coppola's "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (1992) harkened back to the Byronic "Vampyre" and expanded upon ideas of the sympathetic Vampire explored in "The Hunger". Where the vampires of Scott's film were in one moment bestial and blood-soaked, and the next gentle and lonely, Coppola's Dracula is one who is from start to end a tragic villain, bearing "the dual markings of both villain and victim… yearning for redemption and ultimately finding none."[39] In Schoffman's essay on Trousdale and Wise's 1991 film "Beauty and the Beast", she discusses how the representation of that film's "monster" breaks with traditional views of beauty as being purely external, and also feeds into the "make-over paradigm" wherein the monster is made palatable and desirable to the characters and audience.[40] A comparison can be made to the evolution of the Vampire and its desirability at this time - desirability to the extent that preview audiences of Coppola's film rejected an initial ending wherein Mina returned to Jonathan, as she does in Browning's Dracula. Where before the Vampire was a violent predator and audiences desired his destruction, Coppola recontextualised this character as an object of desire, the centre of the heterosexual love story favoured by the genre.[41]

Moving forward to the 00s, this desirable, heterosexual Vampire is most notable in "Twilight" (Hardwicke, 2008). Scott discusses how "the incessant framing of heterosexual couples becomes the film's most stifling visual motif". The film's only same-sex bite is between Edward and Carlisle, framing "Edward as victim and focusing on his expression of pain". Another scene between Carlisle and his

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[37] "A Timeline of HIV and AIDS", hiv.gov, accessed October 29, 2025, https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/history/hiv-and-aids-timeline#year-1983.

[38] Queer Cinema Archive, "The Hunger (1983)".

[39] Aquilina, "The deformed transformed; or, from bloodsucker to Byronic hero", 28.

[40] Katja Schoffman, "The Break of Gender Stereotypes and its Relation to Desire, Eroticism and Love in Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" (1991)", in *Monsters, Monstrosities, and the Monstrous in Culture and Society*, ed. Diego Compagna and Stefanie Steinhart (Vernon Art and Science Inc, 2019), 51.

[41] Lindsey Scott, "Crossing oceans of time: Stoker, Coppola and the "new vampire" film", in *Open Graves, Open Minds : Representations of Vampires and the Undead from the Enlightenment to the Present Day*, ed. Sam George and William Hughes (Manchester University Press, 2013), 123.

wife Esme frames the transformative bite as suggestive of "sexual gratification". The film continues the trope of the Vampire's bite as sexual, but frames it in the case of Esme and Carlisle as loving rather than violent, unlike Dracula's bite in "Dracula" (1931) or even Carlisle's biting of Edward – something Scott explains by suggesting that "heterosexual relationships are also adopted as a means of distinguishing between 'good' and 'evil' vampires" in this film.[42]

Figure 6: Catherine Hardwicke, "Twilight" (Summit Entertainment, 2008). When Carlisle bites Edward, it is framed as incredibly painful, causing Edward suffering.

Figure 7: Catherine Hardwicke, "Twilight" (Summit Entertainment, 2008). Carlisle's biting of Esme, in contrast to Fig. 6, is framed as a sexual and pleasureful act.

The perceived "normality" and goodness of the "Twilight" vampires is what distinguishes them in the lineage of the Vampire. They are not foreign noblemen or warriors, they do not transform into beasts, they are not religiously, sexually or racially "Othered" – they are a seemingly typical American family who blend into society (though not as a hunting tactic as in "Dracula" (1931)[43]) and represent the beauty of eternal life as opposed to its ugliness as a curse. Their morals align with those of a Western Christian audience – monogamous, heterosexual, lacking the violent sexuality of their predecessors. They are more of an idealised human than a horrific monster.

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[42] Scott, "Crossing oceans of time", 126.

[43] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 146.

Scott discusses how these vampires' position as the "Other" in the film is "implied but never realised; glamorised or fetishised but never effectively explored."[44] The humanity of the "Twilight" vampires relates to their morality – their vegetarian diet, their politeness, their self-control, and their "respect for social customs and niceties."[45] Panjeta describes how our personal identification with characters leads to our fear for the outcome of the story, drawing upon Aristotle's ideas on catharsis.[46] While Panjeta is discussing Bella in this case, a similar phenomenon occurs with Edward; he is a character we sympathise with because of how human he seems. The Vampire is now a character we want to see succeed, a character who doesn't need to be exorcised in the end; it is an archetype that has transformed from being who we fear to being who we desire.

This research has outlined the changing nature of the Vampire in relation to changes in societal conventions and values. Beginning as a representation of the monstrous "Other" in horror, the Vampire overtime has become a tragic figure as it mirrors societal empathy towards previously "Othered" societal groups. Audiences begin to relate to the creature overtime as they are offered a creature who conforms to their desires and sensibilities, changing audience perceptions of those different to them from feelings of fear to those of idealisation and attraction.

[44] Scott, "Crossing oceans of time", 126.

[45] Spooner, "Gothic Charm School", 151.

[46] Panjeta, "Monster as a Superhero", 13-19.

Chapter Two:
Monsters Across Genre

Just as the Vampire is able to adapt to changing times, the Vampire can also be adapted for a variety of genres due to audience familiarity with the Vampire story and the "delight in the variations" that occurs.[47] In her work "A Theory of Adaptation", Hutcheon compares the function of "known adaptations" - stories that audiences are previously familiar with, either through direct consumption of the source text or "a generally circulated cultural memory" - to that of genres, as both genres and known adaptations operate using a set of norms that direct audience expectations and guide them through their viewing of a text.[48]

Discussing the "vampire film" as both an inherent adaptation and a potential genre itself, Weinstock argues that what defines a Vampire film is "the presence of an entity that either drinks blood or, more loosely, in some way 'drains' the life-force of someone or something else."[49] Similarly, Holte notes the consistent narrative points in Vampire media as the Vampire feeding on humans, being capable of living forever, and having a disregard for the established conventions of their text's society and culture.[50] Each definition establishes the "vampire film" as having its own established conventions tying each iteration of the Vampire together, with Weinstock describing it as the "colonisation (or vampirisation) of various genres".[51]

Combining Hutcheon, Weinstock, and Holte's arguments, we see that the "vampire film" carries a set of expectations from audiences due to their familiarity with the Vampire story, with Weinstock citing Stoker's 1897 novel "Dracula" as the "urtext" - the original, defining text - of the Vampire archetype, "to which all other vampire representations inevitably are compared."[52] Scott reiterates this point, describing Stoker's text as "our own shorthand for what we believe the vampire to be in the popular imagination."[53]

This chapter will explore the characterisation and representation of the Vampire as it is adapted across different genres of filmmaking, focusing in particular on its origins in the Horror genre and the subsequent "vampirisation" of the genres of Romance and Children's Media. This research will investigate how each iteration of this archetype is transformed to suit both their genre and audiences, while maintaining its relationship to its "ur-text".[54]

Bloody Hell – The Vampire and Horror

The horror genre of filmmaking defines itself upon the "principal aesthetic aim" of horrifying the audience.[55] The Encyclopedia Britannica further defines the

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[47] Holte, "A Century of Draculas", 113.

[48] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation,* 142-143.

[49] Weinstock, *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema*, 129.

[50] Holte, "A Century of Draculas",112.

[51] Weinstock, *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema*, 129.

[52] Weinstock, *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema*, 130.

[53] Scott, "Crossing oceans of time", 117.

[54] Holte, "A Century of Draculas", 109.

[55] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2000), 86.

horror film as having been "calculated to cause intense repugnance, fear, or dread."[56] Drawing upon these definitions, Carroll discusses how the horror genre is marked by the presence of a monster which defies scientific explanation or who draws upon supernatural lore, specifically a monster for whom the audience feels horrified and repulsed by.[57]

Such a monster is reflected in the early characterisations of the Vampire, going back to its folkloric roots and inherent associations with death, from the stories of the Upir spirit, to the "Great Vampire Epidemic".[58] The Romantic era of literature saw the Vampire depicted as sadistic, blood-thirsty and as having "parasitical qualities."[59] However, the monstrousness of the Vampire is not only in the principle of its being an undead, blood-thirsty creature - it is also inherent in its representation of "the Outside" and difference to societal norms.[60]

That which is considered "repugnant" to contemporary audiences influences views on the Vampire character. Holte discusses how contemporary Victorian audiences to Stoker's "Dracula", who believed in "order and progress" and were, "uncomfortable with subversive sexuality and violence", found the character of Dracula, who was the antithesis of these beliefs, to be monstrous.[61] In Browning's "Dracula", this subversive behaviour is represented in Dracula's seduction of Mina, as well as by the coding of Dracula as a "dandy" as discussed by Babilas.[62] The Vampire is also representative of that which is "un-Christian", and is linked throughout history to anti-Semitic beliefs.[63] Browning's film includes references to rats and the plague, which Babilas likens to Fascist propaganda, and Lugosi's Hungarian accent emphasises the fact that the Vampire is foreign, becoming a symbol for the "fear of the stereotyped scheming Jew" immigrating into Western Europe.[64]

Santilli argues that when an audience experiences horror, in this case "art-horror", it is due to the portrayal of "elements of *the real* that have not been assimilated into a culture", and that our experiences of horror as an audience come from our prejudices relating to some object presented to us on screen.[65] When watching Vampire horror films, such as Browning's "Dracula", audiences in 1930's America viewed such sexual differences and the seduction of Mina into the Vampire's "timeless harem"[66] as oppositional to their beliefs and therefore

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[56] "horror film.", Britannica, accessed September 5, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/art/horror-film.

[57] Noël Carroll, "Horror and Humor", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57, no. 2 (1999): 147-149, https://www.jstor.org/stable/432309.

[58] UVAToday, "More 'Disease' Than 'Dracula'".

[59] Aquilina, "The deformed transformed; or, from bloodsucker to Byronic hero", 26.

[60] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 41.

[61] Holte, "A Century of Draculas", 112.

[62] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 147-152.

[63] Weinstock, "Circumcising Dracula", 94.

[64] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 145.

[65] Paul Santilli, "Culture, Evil and Horror", *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 66, no. 1 (2007): 174, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27739626.

[66] Baker, "Browning's Dracula and the development of the classical screen vampire", 210.

"perverse", rendering the Vampire a monstrous threat.[67] Lugosi's Dracula was representative of "the stereotype of the Eastern European Jewish immigrant", a symbol for the "paranoia of reverse colonialism", creating a supernatural mirror for the fears and prejudices audiences held in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[68] In Cohen's "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", his fourth Thesis is "The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference" - what makes the monster monstrous is that it is different to us.[69] These examples collectively demonstrate that the horror-genre Vampire exists as an "Outsider" to the audience, and as such is rendered horrific.

Figure 8: Tod Browning, "Dracula" (Universal Pictures, 1931). Dracula and his three Brides approach an unconscious Renfield. Dracula's multiple wives and his homoerotic relationship with Renfield were considered against contemporary Christian ideals.

Desirable Monsters – The Vampire and Romance

The Vampire has been associated with sexuality from its early appearances in literature, with Polidori's "Vampyre" seducing his victims, marking the beginnings of the association between a Vampire's bite and their victim's sexual awakening.[70] Discussed in relation to the horror genre, the sexuality of vampires, such as Stoker and Browning's Draculas, were portrayed as "perverse"[71], a twinning of sexuality and violence made to repulse their contemporary

[67] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 147.

[68] Weinstock, "Circumcising Dracula", 97-99.

[69] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 41.

[70] Aquilina, "The deformed transformed; or, from bloodsucker to Byronic hero", 31-32.

[71] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat",147.

audiences.[72] Cohen discusses how the figure of the monster is "continually linked to forbidden practices", in order to affirm societal norms. However, these portrayals of the forbidden subsequently become avenues for "potent escapist fantasies". Cohen argues that this phenomenon is due to "simultaneous repulsion and attraction" being key to the monster's characterisation.[73] Lima argues that the "aesthetic distance" between the audience and monsters on screen allows a space for the exploration of "perverse impulses" and a "dark side of the human identity", allowing audiences to experience exhilaration and "the thrill of being haunted by the vampire" due to their knowledge that they are safe from them once they leave the world of the film. She suggests that the Vampire's eternal life and supernatural nature offer an escape from our "permanent dissatisfaction with our present condition with life".[74] The Vampire is in this way still representative of the "Other", but is rendered both horrific and desirable, rather than simply repulsive.

Over time, attitudes towards sexuality and eroticism in audiences change, and perceptions of the Vampire change with it. Holte argues that due to modern audiences' comfort with sexuality, compared to the initial audiences of Stoker's novel and Browning's film, the Count becomes "an attractive figure", rather than the perverse, sexual "Other" as originally viewed.[75] Where the homoeroticism in "Dracula" (1931) was seen as "disturbing" to contemporary audiences[76], "The Hunger" (1983) features reciprocated love between two women, demonstrating a shift in the representation of homosexuality in the Vampire film.[77] The dual portrayals of the Vampire's sexuality as monstrous and desirable is also portrayed in "The Hunger"'s opening scenes, with the vampires' seduction and murder of two humans being intercut with the violent screams of a caged monkey, while their personal relationships are portrayed as gentle and loving in contrast.

Holte describes Coppola's "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (1992) as "a love story disguised as a horror movie", comparing it to a "Beauty and the Beast" narrative, "a romance, even with all of the blood and fangs".[78] Coppola portrays the Count as one for whom we must "feel horror and compassion in equal measure", a "lovelorn vampire" yearning for lost love.[79] He presents Dracula in a way comparable to Aquilina's definition of the Byronic hero; "a dark angel bringing both love and death, yearning for redemption and ultimately finding none."[80] The

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[72] Holte, "A Century of Draculas", 112-113.

[73] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 49.

[74] Maria Antónia Lima, "*Forever Young*, Though Forever Changing: Evolution of the Vampire", in *Dracula and the Gothic in Literature, Pop Culture and the Arts*, ed. Isabel Ermida (BRILL, 2015), 263-265.

[75] Holte, "A Century of Draculas", 112-113.

[76] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat",148.

[77] Queer Cinema Archive, "The Hunger (1983)".

[78] Holte, "A Century of Draculas", 113.

[79] Scott, "Crossing oceans of time", 121-122.

[80] Aquilina, "The deformed transformed; or, from bloodsucker to Byronic hero", 28.

film is a "complex hybridisation" of the genres of horror and romance[81], and is sympathetic in its portrayal of the Vampire when compared to its predecessors.[82]

Hardwicke's "Twilight" (2008) draws on the portrayal of the "doomed love affair" between Vampire and human in Coppola's film as its basis.[83] Where "Bram Stoker's Dracula" blends the genres of horror and romance, Panjeta argues that "Twilight" is a mix of a number of genres, describing it as "a romantic fantasy about superheroes with elements of horror, fairy tales, action and comedy, aimed at younger audiences."[84] Discussing these films as "love stories" drawing upon elements of the horror genre, both films adhere to the "simultaneous repulsion and attraction" discussed by Cohen in his "Seven Theses"[85], portraying this "repulsion" through the fear experienced by human characters engaging in "risky and self-destructive acts" in their relationships with vampires.[86]

Both Panjeta and Lima discuss the notion of the romantic Vampire in relation to Freud's theories of Eros and Thanatos, the life and death drives. The creature is representative of death, and the human character falls in love with "the carrier of one's own death" - a narrative that Panjeta describes as "an intensive interaction of Eros and Thanatos."[87] Lima explains audiences' draw to the Vampire and its imagery of death and sexuality using this theory of the Eros and Thanatos drives.[88] Both "Bram Stoker's Dracula" and "Twilight" employ this "conflict between danger and attraction"[89] to create a romantic Vampire whose allure is intentionally more attractive and sympathetic than the repulsive "figures of evil" intended in vampires of the horror genre.[90]

Defanged – The Vampire in Children's Media

Monsters are typically used in the horror genre to exaggerate "cultural difference into monstrous aberration" and represent fears of that which is alien to audiences.[91] In children's media, the representation of the "Other" is also used to highlight cultural differences but, instead of monsterising this difference, these films are used as a "vehicle for showcasing tolerance."[92]

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[81] Scott, "Crossing oceans of time", 121.

[82] Holte, "A Century of Draculas", 113.

[83] Scott, "Crossing oceans of time", 124.

[84] Panjeta, "Monster as a Superhero", 17.

[85] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 49.

[86] Lima, "*Forever Young*, Though Forever Changing", 260.

[87] Panjeta, "Monster as a Superhero", 16.

[88] Lima, "*Forever Young*, Though Forever Changing", 260.

[89] Scott, "Crossing oceans of time", 124.

[90] Holte, "A Century of Draculas", 110-113.

[91] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 38-41.

[92] Mark Chekares, "Developing Co-Dependence between Monsters and Children in Animated Feature Films" in *Monsters in Society: an Interdisciplinary Perspective*, ed. Andrea S. Dauber (BRILL, 2019), 151-152.

Where “Dracula” (1931) involves the insertion of the monstrous “Other” into the lives of human beings in order to “arrest” the typical function of life[93], “Hotel Transylvania” (Tartakovsky, 2012) instead sees the intentional separation of monsters and humans, with Dracula’s hotel an intentional place, “of refuge from *them!* [humans]”.[94] Chekares notes that the film codes the human and monster characters as separate races, and that a “fear of the other permeates both cultures.” Dracula is desperate to protect the monsters from “the judgemental gaze of the dominant culture”, the humans, to the extent that he creates a “simulacrum” of a human town to scare Mavis into adopting his own fears and ideologies of the human “Other”.[95]

Figure 9: Genndy Tartakovsky, "Hotel Transylvania" (Sony Pictures, 2012). Mavis is surrounded by fire in Dracula's simulacrum of a human town, instilling her father's fears into her.

The aim of these interpretations of the Vampire, and of the monstrous “Other”, is not to promote these fears, but to encourage a reflection upon this “Othering”, promoting a message of acceptance. Dracula realises that not all humans must be feared after an experience with a “mob” of humans who, rather than act repulsed by him, form “a miles-long human tunnel” to protect him from sunlight. These humans are unafraid and accepting of the creatures their society once feared. Chekares finds that representations of monsters in children’s media serve to warn their audience of “the dangers of false judgment, stereotypes and bullying perpetuated by an adult dominated ideology”, turning the alienation and “Othering” of monsters in the horror genre into a commentary on how society treats those who do not “fit in”, and serving as encouragement for young audiences to examine these prejudices, promoting acceptance of others.[96]

As discussed by Hutcheon, audiences have expectations when they are a “knowing” audience to an adaptation, guided by knowledge of the work being

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[93] Baker, “Browning’s Dracula and the development of the classical screen vampire”, 209-210.
[94] *Hotel Transylvania*, directed by Genndy Tartakovsky (Sony Pictures, 2012), 00:09:30-00:09:45, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZmxDBbO01o&t=5172s.
[95] Chekares, “Developing Co-Dependence between Monsters and Children in Animated Feature Films”, 146-149.
[96] Chekares, “Developing Co-Dependence between Monsters and Children in Animated Feature Films”, 145-151.

adapted.[97] A similar phenomenon has occurred with the Vampire, specifically with Lugosi's performance as Dracula, with Babilas noting that the Count has been "unconsciously identified… with the face of Bela Lugosi."[98] Browning's "Dracula" depicts him as a horrific monster, and so interpretations of the Vampire in children's media which draw inspiration from Lugosi's performance and dress must themselves adapt this characterisation to suit their young audience. This strategy is evident in the development of Count von Count from "Sesame Street" (Ganz-Cooney & Morrisett, 1969-present), first introduced to the children's show in 1972.[99] The "Sesame Workshop" webpage for the Count describes a "comical resemblance to Count Dracula"[100], and creator Norman Stiles specifies Lugosi as inspiration for his voice and design.[101] This resemblance to Lugosi's Dracula is visible from his first appearance; slicked-back hair, long dark cape, thick eyebrows and a thick "Transylvanian" accent. Both Lugosi's Dracula and Count von Count hypnotise others using an intense stare and an outstretched hand "in the gesture of the master of puppets." (see Figures 10 and 11).[102] Where the horror Vampire uses hypnosis to mesmerise and seduce their victims[103], Count von Count uses hypnosis comically to get his way - using it in his debut to freeze Bert and Ernie,[104] and in a later skit involving the hypnosis of Grover to serve the Count more hot dogs.[105]

Figure 10: Tod Browning, "Dracula" (Universal Pictures, 1931). Dracula uses hypnosis on his victims.

[97] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 142-143.

[98] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 138.

[99] "Count von Count", Muppet Wiki, accessed November 21, 2025, https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Count_von_Count.

[100] "Count von Count", Sesame Workshop, accessed November 21, 2025, https://sesameworkshop.org/our-work/shows/sesame-street/sesame-street-characters/count-von-count/.

[101] Norman Stiles, "Norman Stiles discusses creating The Count on Sesame Street - EMMYTVLEGENDS.ORG", interview conducted by Adrienne Faillace, December 12, 2014, posted March 23, 2015, by FoundationINTERVIEWS, YouTube, 00:03:46, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWCX2gB-bL8.

[102] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 145.

[103] Baker, "Browning's Dracula and the development of the classical screen vampire", 211.

[104] "Sesame Street Classics, "Sesame Street: The Count's Debut with Bert and Ernie", clip from *Sesame Street*, posted October 17, 2019, YouTube, 00:03:34, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7AAwIWxIpM.

[105] MarshalGrover, "Sesame Street - Grover, The Count, and the hot dogs", clip from *Sesame Street*, posted June 20, 2015, YouTube, 00:03:29, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLDr_s5pcVU.

Figure 11: Sesame Street Classics, "Sesame Street: The Count's Debut with Bert and Ernie", clip from "Sesame Street", posted October 17, 2019, YouTube, 00:02:13. Count von Count looks and acts similarly to Lugosi's Dracula in his debut, including using hypnosis.

The Count went through changes over the course of the show to adapt to responses from the target audience of children and parents. Stiles notes that the character's laugh was initially accented with thunder and lightning, but this was changed in later seasons as parents responded that it was frightening their children.[106] The design of the Count also became softer and more colourful as the years went on - starting with a dark green cape and sharp, angular features in his debut, but now wearing a brighter green cape with a brightly patterned lining, a brightly coloured sash, more vibrant colours in his design overall, and having a rounder face.[107]

Figure 12: WIRED, "The Cast of 'Sesame Street' Answers the Web's Most Searched Questions | WIRED", posted February 22, 2017, YouTube, at 00:04:48. The Count's design is brighter, softer, and more colourful than his debut design.

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[106] Stiles, "Norman Stiles discusses creating The Count on Sesame Street", 00:02:30.

[107] WIRED, "The Cast of 'Sesame Street' Answers the Web's Most Searched Questions | WIRED", posted February 22, 2017, YouTube, 00:4:19-00:5:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fc2yFoq09ug.

Hutcheon's theories surrounding the "knowing audience" can be used to understand the reactions of some adults to Count von Count.[108] Stiles discusses how the "Sesame Street" team received a letter claiming that the Count was an "agent of the Devil" - an example of audience preconceptions influencing how a character is interpreted.[109] Associations of the Vampire with the horror genre creates fear in audiences who are aware of vampires as "figures of evil."[110] When the character is aimed at young audiences, however, these fearful images are not inherently associated with the character - as Stiles says in an interview, "The sound of thunder and lightning can be frightening for kids, but they have no previous context or knowledge that Dracula is supposed to be scary and drinks your blood".[111] For children, this character does not come with the context of the history of vampires in folklore and film, and is interpreted purely through his characterisation on the show. By removing aspects that can scare children, such as the thunder and lightning, and portraying the character as "happy…helpful…outgoing and enthusiastic", the Vampire is made suitable for young audiences.[112]

Research has demonstrated changes in audience attitudes towards Vampires over time, and how they contributed to its ease of adaptation to different genres. Audiences have become sympathetic to the tragedy of the Vampire as opposed to repulsed by its "monstrous difference". It has proved itself to be suitable for a variety of genres due to audience' pre-established knowledge of the character, capable of being a classic horror monster, a desirable and tragic figure, and a loveable children's character, all through responses to audiences' expectations of a specific genre, and to changing societal standards and beliefs.

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[108] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 142-143.

[109] Stiles, "Norman Stiles discusses creating The Count on Sesame Street", 00:02:40.

[110] Holte, "A Century of Draculas", 110.

[111] Jake Kring Schreifels, "The man who made Sesame Street's Count Von Count count", Polygon, published November 15, 2023, https://www.polygon.com/23947037/sesame-street-count-von-count-origin-story/.

[112] Sesame Workshop, "Count von Count".

Chapter Three:
Monsters Through a Different Lens

Chapters One and Two have focused on representations of the Vampire in Hollywood, but these representations have typically been white, male figures; it is important to consider broader perspectives on the Vampire in Hollywood and how it is adapted to address different audience and directorial perspectives and experiences. This chapter will discuss the Vampire and its relationship to race and colonialism; how the Vampire exists as a representation of the racial "Other" in its relationship to xenophobic fears of the "East" and the connection between Monsters and racist propaganda, and how the Vampire can be linked to ideas of colonialism. It will also discuss the relationship between the Vampire and the feminine, specifically in relation to the sexualisation of women as both victims of vampires and as vampires themselves, with some discussion of the relationship between female queerness and vampiric sexuality as the reason for the enduring nature of the Female Vampire and the "Lesbian Vampire" trope.[113] By discussing the Vampire in relation to Race and Gender, a broader image of the Vampire, how it relates to the Othering of women and racial "others", and how it can be adapted for the perspectives of different sections of society, can be revealed.

The Vampire, Race and Colonialism – "Blade" (1998) and "Sinners" (2025)

The use of the Vampire to "Other" certain groups in society plays into the fourth of Cohen's seven theses of Monster Culture; that "the Monster dwells at the gates of difference"; how the persecution of an "anterior culture" can be rendered "heroic" if this culture is framed as a monstrous outsider. He gives an example of the demonisation of the Jewish people, which allowed for the spread of propaganda and hatred during many periods of history.[114] Relating this to the Vampire, Weinstock notes that Bram Stoker's "Dracula" (1897) was "written at the apogy of British Colonialism", and represents the "paranoia of reverse colonialism" in the British mindset from Jewish immigration during this period, exacerbating fears of Jewish immigrants "feeding" from British people and their resources. This anti-Semitic coding of the Vampire can be seen in Murnau's "Nosferatu" (1922)[115] and in Browning's "Dracula" (1931), both with references to the plague and "thousands of rats, with eyes blazing red", which Babilas likens to anti-Semitic propaganda.[116]

This monsterisation and use of propaganda has been seen in the case of Black people in Western, White-majority cultures such as the United States. Knight discusses how for centuries, the Black diaspora was subject to "distorted representations" in Western culture in order to "justify enslavement and exploitation". These representations of Black people as "savage beasts" were portrayed in everyday life, with Knight pointing to numerous household products which included these racist depictions - a normalisation of these

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113 Zélie Asava, "You're Nothing to Me But Another . . . [White] Vampire": A Study of the Representation of the Black Vampire in American Mainstream Cinema", in *Images of the Modern Vampire : The Hip and the Atavistic*, ed. Barbara Brodman and James E. Doan (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2015), 124-130.

114 Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 41-42.

115 Weinstock, "Circumcising Dracula", 95-97.

116 Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 145.

dehumanizing characterisations which helped to uphold "asymmetrical power relations" and the institution of slavery.[117]

Knight describes two anti-Black stereotypes that can be compared to the Vampire: "The Brute" and "The Jezebel". Knight describes "The Brute" as a caricature of Black men, portraying them as animalistic, destructive and predatory, while "The Jezebel" is portrayed as an alluring woman who is promiscuous and predatory. She also discusses the belief in Black skin as being "cursed" and related to that which is sinful and evil.[118] Asava highlights this idea in her essay on Black Vampires in American cinema, explaining that Blackness is often associated with negativity and evil, while Whiteness is "linked to purity". However, she notes how, "Vampires complicate these binaries", with their Whiteness being linked to death, becoming a symbol of unholiness rather than holiness.[119]

This complication of binaries can be seen in Norrington's "Blade" (1998), with Asava describing Blade as a character who inhabits "a place in-between definitions". Blade is placed in opposition to the Western notion of Whiteness as holy, as it is he who is, "a black man, in the role of hero and as saviour of the world", and who faces threat from vampires who are mainly white (linking back to Asava's notion of the Vampire's whiteness as a symbol of death). However, Asava also notes the traces of Western colonial stereotypes in his character - she argues that Blade fulfils the stereotype of "The Brute", noting a scene where Blade feeds from Dr. Jenson, described by Asava as a "sexual moment which builds to a climax" that is violent and "monstrous". Asava notes this as a moment depicting Black sexuality as "monstrous". While Blade is a monster-hunter, he is still depicted as bestial and part-monster himself, "Othered" from his fully human counterparts. Despite this, "Blade" is defiant of the typical role of the "Other" in Vampire films - he is the hero of this story, a fact that Asava describes as "revolutionary" in the representation of Black characters in American cinema.[120]

Figure 13: Stephen Norrington, "Blade" (New Line Cinema, 1998). Blade roars in a climactic moment after feeding from Karen.

[117] Wanda B. Knight, "Looking B(l)ack: Examining the Monstrous History of Black Oppression through Racist Imagery and Artifacts", in *Monsters, Monstrosities, and the Monstrous in Culture and Society*, ed. Diego Compagna and Stefanie Steinhart (Vernon Art and Science Inc., 2019), 77-80.

[118] Knight, "Looking B(l)ack", 81-91.

[119] Asava, "You're Nothing to Me But Another . . . [White] Vampire", 124-126.

[120] Asava, "You're Nothing to Me But Another . . . [White] Vampire", 122-129.

The Vampire represents the monstrous "Other" in the context of its text - as Cohen describes in his Seven Theses[121] - and as such, we must consider the perspective of the Colonised in regard to the Coloniser as a monster. While Western cultures portrayed Black people as beasts in order to dehumanise them, these same people were themselves committing inhumane acts of violence and enslavement.[122] Asava discusses how stories of white vampires in various African cultures were representative of "the brutality of the 'white man'", with vampirism used as metaphor for the drainage of African land, resources and people by Western colonisers.[123] As such, the Vampire can be discussed not only in its relation to colonial fears of the Outsider, but also in its relationship to colonial forces themselves.

This relationship to colonialism can be seen in "Blade" in the attitude of the vampires towards Blade; these vampires condemn him for not being a "pure-blood". Asava compares this to "the language of fascism" and colonial ideals of race, such as the "one drop rule" (a human parent makes Blade not "enough" of a Vampire, much like how "one black ancestor could define you as black" in colonial ideologies).[124] While the vampires of the film aim to spread vampirism throughout the world, they cannot stand Blade as an "impure" Vampire who does not share their ideologies.

Figure 14: Stephen Norrington, "Blade", (New Line Cinema, 1998). Blade's final fight is with (white) vampire Deacon Frost.

Coogler's 2025 film "Sinners" employs this idea of the Vampire as Coloniser through the character Remmick. In his roles as Irishman and Vampire, Remmick manifests as both a victim of colonisation and as a coloniser. Remmick discusses the negative effects of colonisation and the enforcement of Christianity in

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[121] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 41.

[122] Knight, "Looking B(l)ack", 94.

[123] Asava, "You're Nothing to Me But Another . . . [White] Vampire", 124-126.

[124] Asava, "You're Nothing to Me But Another . . . [White] Vampire", 126-127.

Ireland, saying, “the men who stole my father’s land forced these words upon us. I hated those men…” in reference to a prayer. He later sings “The Rocky Road to Dublin”, a song which mirrors Ireland’s history with colonisation, poverty and emigration.[125] Unlike “classic” Vampire films, such as “Dracula” (1931), Christianity is not the saviour from evil in this film.

Despite being a victim of colonisation, Remmick in being a Vampire becomes a colonial force in the film, attempting to engage everyone into his vampiric hive-mind. The hive-mind acts as a way for Remmick to gain from the people he kills; wanting Sammie for his ability to conjure spirits, and Annie for her practice of Hoodoo and her knowledge that keeps the vampires out. Annie is a character who has not adopted any Christian practices and instead uses traditional West African practices of Hoodoo, resisting colonisation in a way that Remmick could not. It is these traditional, anti-colonial beliefs that allow the protagonists to keep the vampires out; an idea that places the Vampire in the position of the coloniser who attempts to profit and destroy, and the protagonists as those who resist colonisation.[126]

Figure 15: Ryan Coogler, "Sinners" (Warner Bros., 2025). Remmick and his hive-mind Irish-dance and sing "The Rocky Road to Dublin".

The Vampire, Gender and the “Monstrous Feminine”

The Female Vampire has its origins going back to the ancient myth of Lilith. Similar stories are found in various European folklores surrounding the Succubi, demonic women who prey upon men, drinking their blood in a similar fashion to the legends of vampires.[127] Female vampires appear in literature prominently,

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[125] “The Rocky Road to Dublin – A Soulful Dive Into Ireland’s Most Spirited Journey Song”, Mindful Irish Poetry, accessed January 8, 2026, https://mindfulirishpoetry.com/rocky-road-to-dublin/.

[126] Dr Rachel Stuart, “Sinners: how real stories of Irish and Choctaw oppression inform the film”, Brunel University of London, published April 30, 2025, https://www.brunel.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/articles/Sinners-how-real-stories-of-Irish-and-Choctaw-oppression-inform-the-film.

[127] Panjeta, “Monster as a Superhero”, 14-15.

notably in Sheridan Le Fanu's 1872 novel "Carmilla" which focuses on female Vampire Carmilla and her "close and amorous bond" with human Laura.[128] Stoker's "Dracula" (1897) features the vampiric Brides of Dracula and Lucy Westenra who is transformed into a Vampire by Dracula. Women are also at the centre of Vampire stories as victims of their violence and seduction; as such, there exists a duality where women in these stories may be both the victim and perpetrator of violence and exist as representations of perceived "purity" and "impurity" based on their respective contexts.

Discussing women's role in the Vampire story as victims involves awareness of the societal expectations surrounding the text. In examining Browning's film, Babilas notes that Mina's characterisation "inspired Biblical associations" - a meek woman who is a symbol of purity, goodness and life in the film.[129] She is contrasted with the character of Lucy, who is associated throughout the film with death.[130] The effect of Mina's vampiric transformation manifests as a complete change in her character; while the Hays code meant that no explicitly sexual actions took place on screen, she is a more sensuous and aroused character than before. This new behaviour is a symptom of the power of Dracula's evil; when Dracula is vanquished, Mina is at once brought back to her original innocence and meekness, returned to the "light" and to the prevailing status quo.[131]

Figure 16: Tod Browning, "Dracula" (Universal Pictures, 1931). After being bitten by Dracula, Mina's personality and dress-sense become more lavish and seductive.

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[128] Scott, "Crossing oceans of time", 118.

[129] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 151.

[130] Scott, "Crossing oceans of time", 122.

[131] Babilas, "The Vampire Wears a Dress Coat", 149-152.

As discussed in Mina's case in "Dracula" (1931), women's sexuality is heightened when they are transformed into a Vampire, rendering women's sexuality, especially when heightened, into something monstrous or dangerous. Lucy, being a fully transformed victim in "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (Coppola, 1992), highlights this monstrous sexuality. Lucy's transformation is highly sexualised, beginning with her seduction and rape by Dracula.[132] Revisiting her to feed, each time Dracula is near Lucy she reacts in a manner resembling orgasm, writhing and moaning loudly. In vampiric form, she employs this sexuality in her attempts to feed from the men around her, attempting to bite Quincy after beckoning him for a kiss, and seducing Arthur into her reach by appealing to his attraction to her. Lucy's character recalls the characterisation of Lillith as an early form of the Vampire; she uses her sexuality to entice others to her, making it dangerous and worthy of destruction in the eyes of the film's male protagonists. Lucy is at once one of the film's victims and predators.

Figure 17: Francis Ford Coppola, "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (Columbia Pictures, 1992). When Lucy is visited and bitten by Dracula, she reacts in a sexualised manner, resembling orgasm.

Other female vampires similarly become considered "predatory" due to their sexuality and the "Othering" of this sexuality. "Blade" depicts the titular character's vampiric mother as having an incestuous attraction to him that he must avoid.[133] "Sinners" (2025) sees a transformed Mary use her heightened sexuality to attract and kill Stack. In Scott's "The Hunger" (1983), Miriam was "supposed to be depicted as purely predatory" - something that was changed over the course of filming.[134] However, feminine sexuality in the context of the Vampire as monstrous is still evident in the intercutting of a sexual encounter between Miriam and a human victim with a shot of a violently screaming monkey.

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[132] Scott, "Crossing oceans of time", 123.

[133] Asava, "You're Nothing to Me But Another . . . [White] Vampire", 127-129.

[134] Queer Cinema Archive, "The Hunger (1983)".

Miriam is also an explicitly queer Vampire. The trope of the lesbian or bisexual Vampire is a persistent image of both Vampire films and queer films, with Asava going so far as to suggest that "lesbianism is implied in nearly all representations of female vampires." She explains that this enduring nature is due to the dual erotic and horrific feelings evoked in (specifically male) audiences at the concept of lesbian vampires; both "a male sexual fantasy" and "a male fear" due to their perceived predatory nature.[135] This concept of the duality of sexual fantasy and fear is part of Cohen's "Monster Theory", describing this "simultaneous repulsion and attraction" as being key to the Monster's endurance in media.[136] As such, the endurance of the Vampire as a whole, and the Female Vampire specifically, is due to this sexualisation of the character.

Research has evidenced the adaptability of the Vampire to various experiences, and its relationship to the "Otherness" of racialised and feminine characters. The Vampire is an outsider feeding upon resources, which can be related to both colonised people and colonisers. The Vampire's relationship to the sexualisation of women, particularly queer women, is also evidenced in the above research and outlines ideals over time of women's purity and hypersexuality.

[135] Asava, "You're Nothing to Me But Another . . . [White] Vampire", 129-130.

[136] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 49.

Conclusion

The Vampire has proved to be an ever-changing figure that persists in popular culture even after centuries in existence. Societal influences on the Vampire, particularly audiences' senses of morality and beliefs regarding sexuality, religion and cultural differences across the ages, have shaped its presentation in each adaptation of the "Vampire film". Murnau and Browning's early works focused on contemporary xenophobic fears and Christian ideals in the West. Later, Scott's "The Hunger" would interpret the Vampire as a tragic creature, influenced by the experiences of those living through the AIDS epidemic. The 90's and 00's would then see a "humanised" Vampire, a tragic and romantic figure, who would reflect audience desires for escapism and for that which is "foreign", exhilarating and new.

Using Hutcheon's theories and the idea that viewers of Vampire films are "knowing audiences" to these adaptations of the character, the Vampire has proved to have the ability to horrify us, seduce us and educate us through subtle changes to suit the needs of their audience while maintaining its readability as a Vampire. In relation to children's media, the Vampire has shown the ability to transform from a demonisation of differences to a figure promoting the celebration of difference.

The Vampire's relationship to colonisation can adapt from a representation of the "paranoia of reverse colonisation"[137] to a metaphor for the physical drainage of colonised lands and people - Coogler's film switches the typical Hollywood Vampire narrative, with the Monster representing not just the immigrant or colonised "minority" figure, but also the coloniser. The Vampire's connection to representations of persons considered "Other" in the West had its beginnings in anti-Semitic stereotyping, with a notable shift evident in the modern day, where a Black, half-Vampire can be the hero of the Vampire film as in "Blade". Similarly, representations of women in the Vampire film have outlined the ideals surrounding purity and women's sexuality in its early history, with the female Vampire historically monsterising female sexuality, particularly queer female sexuality. However, a change in this begins to appear in the 80s with "The Hunger" which made queer female sexuality both monstrous for male audiences and empowering for queer (particularly female) viewers.

This dissertation has found a clear development in the characterisation of the Vampire across time, genre, and perspectives, changing to reflect audience needs, beliefs and desires. What is considered "Other" or monstrous is, as per Cohen's "Monster Theory", "an embodiment of a certain cultural moment", a manifestation of "fear, desire, anxiety and fantasy".[138] By tracing the development of Monstrous characters such as the Vampire, we can develop a new understanding of that which a time period or culture deems a source of fear or desire, and can use these Monsters to hold a mirror to our society and reflect upon our treatment of those who it considers "Othered". Further research on this topic with a view to international film, as opposed to analysis of Hollywood cinema alone, would allow for further nuanced analysis of the Vampire and the

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[137] Weinstock, "Circumcising Dracula", 97-99.

[138] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", 38.

“Other” across different cultures and a greater assessment of the archetype in relation to Monsters in a variety of societal contexts, reaffirming the research of this thesis.

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