Vampirism and Blood Identity:
An Analysis of Social Constructions and Anxieties

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"Identity is neither fixed nor singular; rather it is a constantly changing relational multiplicity" (qtd. in Weedon 130). However, in a world that thrives on social, racial and gender classifications, the various qualities that make up our individuality are instead clipped neatly into categories that determine our identity. Unlike humans, the vampire remains abstract and indefinable, with vampirism literary critic Nina Auerbach elusively characterizing these beings as "simply more alive than they should be" (6). Vampires escape the rigid social and gender boundaries enforced by societal norms, embodying a fluidity that is both liberating and frightening. Particularly referring to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, one can perceive the effectiveness of vampiric narratives in revealing the dominant issues surrounding identities and boundaries during the late 19th century and early 20th century. Through the presence of these strange and erotic creatures, vampire fiction foregrounds various underlying topics that reveal the deep-seated anxieties within late nineteenth century British society, which continue to linger on within American culture today.

While the makeup of a vampire remains ambiguous and fluid, in her literary work *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, Auerbach generally classifies the vampire as "an alien invader from occult order of being" (23). By constructing this marked "Other," the vampire works as a tool in divulging preconceived stereotypes of non-British persons, which likewise helps British society's perception of itself (6). Authors use this literary structure to reveal the homeland anxieties regarding imperialism's exposure of them to different races. Such concerns include the fear of the colonized people gaining power through means of infiltration, coerciveness or race expansion. In addition, vampire literature exposes the simultaneous attraction and repulsion one feels towards an "Other," and the widespread concern of becoming tainted through interaction, either social or sexual, with non-British people.

British anxiety arises from the British people's construction of social, racial and gender standards, which they feel the pressure to abide by, restricting their behavior to fit into these roles (Hall 209). Because vampirism reveals this truth adequately, the themes of the vampire genre transcend into other fictional works outside of this literary category. By using elements characteristically vampiric, works such as Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy* and Nella Larsen's *Passing* convey the internal unease and dominant British preconceptions that underlie Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

The most central characteristic of the vampire is his "otherness," which threatens societies with his embodied danger of "disease, violent criminality, and sexual contamination" (90 Fredrickson). Dracula's inner hunger for domination, and his ability to personally contaminate the British blood through coercive attacks on London's women, represents the realization of British anxieties. The vampire holds the obsessive desire to expand and uplift his race, weakening British blood through his infiltration, as

well as fortifying his own bloodline through each transfusion (295 Stoker). In addition, the vampire embodies qualities that racist theories assigned to members of non-British ethnicity; he is animalistic, sexually aggressive, irrational and heathenistic (53, 80 Winthrop). The ability of a vampire to pass as human demonstrates the fluidity of his nature, which creates an unclear identity that renders him a greater danger to the carefully demarcated British culture (Auerbach).

Although *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Iola Leroy* and *Passing* were published at different historical times, each of these novels contains elements that Stoker attributes as traits of vampirism. In addition, the issues underlying the novels regarding ambiguity in race, gender and sexual identity recall the fluidity and elusiveness of the vampire's nature. Their subjects align with those of *Dracula*, as all three novels expose British anxiety regarding the simultaneous strangeness, yet palpable similarity in their perception of the "other." The struggles of various characters to define their own identity and race, as well as classify those of others – mostly based on the abstract notion of blood – raises the question of how we identify ourselves, and more importantly, how realistic the grounds are on which we establish our identity.

From the beginning of vampire literature in the early 19th century, the vampire's source of life was the blood of another, with the creature's secretive life consisting of draining the blood of an unsuspecting female victim. In *Dracula*, Mr. Renfield alludes to the scriptural reading, "For the blood is life," claiming his own vampiric belief that he could prolong his life eternally by absorbing the blood of another (Stoker 225). The British public feared that other races would extend their existence and grow superior through the constant fusion of their exotic blood with that of the British. The British deeply worried that this would nullify the distinguishing internal elements that rendered their national and ethnic strength and power. Nanja Durbach has argued that, "The vampire's preoccupation with blood has thus been read as an aristocratic concern for the perpetuation of hereditary blood lines" (197). This idea reveals anxieties of becoming empowered by a foreigner, as well as signifies concerns of miscegenation resulting in weakened British bloodlines.

The emphasis that Britain placed on bloodlines became even more apparent during the late 19th century, when blood was considered as a natural way to distinguish themselves from the "uncivilized' natives of their colonies. The British justified their tyrannical exertion of power by claiming to have superior blood; thus legitimizing the imposed violence on the natives. In his article, "The Rise of Modern Racism," the historian George Fredrickson claims that the European belief of children sharing similar blood with their parents was based on traditional thought rather than scientific proof (8). Nonetheless, he alleges, "it sanctioned a kind of genealogical determinism that could turn racial when applied to entire ethnic groups" (8). Although Britain's mission was to civilize the native savages and reform them into acceptable members of English society, the British kept their identity distinct by claiming the cleanliness and supremacy of English, Anglo-Saxon blood.

In his article, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," Homi Bhabha points out the ambivalent goal of Britain's foreign policy, which sought to uplift natives to the level of British citizens without ever fully accepting them as equal members of society. Bhabha crucially claims that "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not

quite" (2). While white westerners sought to modernize the dark colored natives, they remained hesitant about enlightening them to the point of equality. Equality denotes interchangeability, and the British panicked at the idea of sharing too much similarity with foreign Africans, Asians or Indians. Moreover, the British feared that if natives reached their level of superiority, it would negate Britain's role as a dominant country. In this view, if the colonized person reaches the same level as the colonizer, the colonizer loses authority, as well as the necessity of civilizing the natives. Thus, the British nation depended on this slight difference, allowing natives to learn to value Victorian standards but never fully reach the equal status of a British citizen. (Bhabha)

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* reveals the anxieties underlying Victorian England during the fin-de-siećle period, when strict divisions between the separate races became blurry. As a vampire extremely alien to humanity who thirsts to possess and dominate humans, Dracula becomes a particularly frightening figure within the narrative context, as well as within the British mindset. Designating Transylvania as Dracula's place of origin, a country on the border dividing Europe from the East, Stoker suggests the vampire's remote and enigmatic nature from the beginning. David Glover articulates the predominant Victorian fear produced in the novel *Dracula*, claiming, "it is matter out of place that matters, the contamination and dissolution of the pure and sacred that counts, the transgression of boundaries and borders that is the ultimate horror" (205 Auerbach). Dracula's presence in western London unnerves the characters, particularly the men, as his existence invades the integrity of their bloodlines, the clarity of their identity and the gender roles of their women (205-209 Stoker).

Dracula preys on women, thirsting for the blood of a pure female, while also feeding his voracious appetite for the entire English culture. He takes effort to perfectly imitate a British gentleman, despite his cultural and internal strangeness as a vampire ruler from eastern Transylvania. The vampire's ability to mimic the British instills in Harker a fear that he will infiltrate Victorian society and, infecting the British culture and the purity of its women. Jonathan Harker's expresses horror of transporting the Count to England, where he would "satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless" (50).

Harker's fear of Count Dracula's access to England society provokes Harker and the other men's internal desire to destroy him and his race by any means possible. However, their greater fear lies in his ability to mimic the British, thus forcing the men to constantly distinguish themselves from him through terms of religious morality and inherent goodness (Stoker 308). Even amidst his repulsion, Harker recognizes Dracula's logical and precise maneuvering, suggestive of the vampire's success in mimicking the British embodiment of scientific reason and enlightenment (Stoker 217, 229). However, the men must maintain a difference, which can only be done thoroughly by annihilating the "other". Hence, Dracula's mimicry leads toward their menace, as they violently mutilate Lucy's vampiric body before eventually destroying Dracula himself (Bhabha 324).

Lucy completely transforms into a vampire after numerous attacks by Dracula, thereby realizing the fear of foreign penetration within British society. Lucy also sleepwalks towards Dracula, indicating her personal discontentment as a proper British woman whose sexual freedom is limited. While she represses the internal desire to be with multiple men, after she mutates into a vampire, Lucy's desire becomes fulfilled

through the blood transfusions of all the male characters. The foreign influence of Dracula awakens Lucy's inner desire for polygamy, a longing that collides with her society's interpretation of an upright, British woman. Auerbach contends that the "interfusion" of the vampire and human "makes familiar boundaries fluid, offering a wider world than home and a larger self that one sustained by sanctioned relationships" (19). As a vampire, Lucy no longer remains confined within the walls of Victorian principles.

Nevertheless, Lucy's internal lust to be with multiple men is unorthodox. British society links her lascivious, animalistic desire with that of exotic foreigners, particularly dark-colored women of far-away lands (Weedon 164). Because her blood now contains vampirism, she begins to behave like a hypersexual "other," who the men quickly slaughter through physical coercion and a display of masculine dominance. Lucy's taboo desire, along with her transformed foreignness, pollutes her role as a Victorian lady and transforms her into a symbolic threat to the sanctity of British society. While all the men love Lucy, Dr. Seward admits that he does not object to mutilating Lucy's body, if that is the necessary action to extricate the alien presence of the Undead from his home of London (Stoker 194). The men exercise violent dominance over the "Other" through vehemently staking Lucy's body, and by doing so, prevents her unorthodox sexual behavior from unsettling British norms. Ultimately they violently destroy her body in a ritualistic rape-like scene.

The men describe Arthur as looking "like some figure of Thor, as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it" (208 Stoker). Identifying Arthur as a replica of Thor symbolizes his shared identity with Dracula, for the vampire has earlier conveyed Thor as a member of his family lineage. In his aggressive exertion of masculine authority over Lucy, Arthur tries to repossess her from Dracula's hold. His exertion of patriarchal authority demonstrates the "set of power relations aimed at securing male control of women's bodies: our sexuality, procreative power and labour" (27 Weedon). Both Dracula and the men claim their supremacy through the possession of female's bodies. Dracula threatens the men, "Your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine" (295 Stoker). Like Dracula, the men obsessively drive to reclaim their power and dominance, and only succeed in doing so by killing Dracula and preventing the expansion of his bloodline.

Harker's horror extends past Dracula's contamination of British purity and lies in the deeper concern of his identification with this repulsive being. This concept of objectionable recognition with an alien being underlines the entire novel, as Harker and the other male characters continue to reassert a form of difference between themselves and the vampire. Ultimately, their only way to clearly distinguish themselves from the abhorrent vampire is to annihilate Dracula completely. As Harker watches Dracula slither down the castle's walls in terror, he asks "What manner of man is this, or what manner of creature is it in the semblance of a man?" (33 Stoker). He is more repulsed by his recognition of humanity in Dracula's appearance and animalistic behavior. Auerbach claims that while Harker loathes the "vision of otherness in human shape," at the same time it helps him to "briefly expand his awareness of his own potential elasticity," as he mimics Dracula when escaping from the castle (Auerbach 89). Although Harker remains disgusted by Dracula's ability to impersonate humanity while retaining animalistic

mannerisms, he nevertheless imitates the vampire's environmental adaptability and expands his own capabilities. The interchangeability between the two existing beings creates apprehension not only of Dracula's ability to pass as human, but also, if not more so, of Harker's identification with Dracula.

Count Dracula's ability to move within the human realm gives rise to his contamination of pure, British women. The scene of the Count's attack on Mina clearly symbolizes the intermixing of different bloodlines through intercourse. Taking on the dynamics of sexual violation, Dracula holds Mina's hands behind her back while forcibly imbibing her blood and compelling her to drink his own. Stoker describes in detail the whiteness of Mina's hands being smeared with Dracula's red blood, exemplifying the notion that this transgression has irretrievably ruined her wholesomeness. Mina recognizes her own tainted chasteness. She withdraws from Jonathan after soiling his shirt with both Dracula and her own blood, now blended ambiguously, shouting, "Unclean! Unclean! I must touch him or kiss him no more. Oh, that it should be that it is I who am now his worst enemy, and whom he must have most cause to fear" (Stoker 273). Although she has been desecrated against her will, Mina automatically deems her virtuous nature ruined. Nevertheless, the bloodlines are undeniably intermingled, blending the blood of woman and vampire and blurring the lines that define them both. She futilely attempts to wipe away the bloodstains from her lips although she believes that Dracula's alien blood has irrevocably dispersed within her being.

Mina saves herself from Lucy's fate by refraining from relishing in the vampiric aspect of her being. Nevertheless, she contains Dracula's foreignness that the British men seek to obliterate completely. In her chapter "Vampires, Vivisectors, and the Victorian Body," Nadja Durbach suggests that Stoker's novel questions the extent to which a person can be polluted by foreign blood, yet still be considered British (199). Michel Foucault's account of the history of sexuality in Victorian Britain asserts that throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the ruling aristocratic class and the rising bourgeoisie class used sexuality as a way to extend and strengthen the bloodlines of their own social group. Foucault claims that the deployment of sexuality is self-affirmation of one class rather than the enslavement of another: a defense, a protection, a strengthening, and an exaltation that were eventually extended to others—at the cost of different transformations—as a means of social control and political subjugation (123).

By understanding Stoker's Dracula as a figure obsessed with domination and possession, Foucault helps explain Dracula's motivation to feat on British women's blood as one that surpasses mere appetitive gratification. Indeed, Dracula purposely forces the women to absorb some of his own blood, as a way to elongate his own bloodline, spreading the vampiric gene and creating a larger class of his own breed. The Count realizes that by proliferating vampires in the heart of Britain, he can attain his ambition of achieving tyrannical power. While Jonathan Harker and the other male characters react with horror at the notion, various historical accounts reveal that their own Victorian society exploited the means of reproduction as a transfer of bloodline, with the end goal being greater power for their social division. (Foucault)

The idea of gaining power through progressing the bloodline appears in Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929), as Brian rationalizes Irene's simultaneous disgust with and defense of black women and men who pass as white, perceiving it as the "instinct of the race to survive and expand" (42). Brian insinuates that blacks condone the action of

passing because it prolongs their race's bloodline, while weakening that of the Anglo-Saxons. Believing this instinct is inherent in any race, Brian also considers the imperialistic whites as protecting their own race by diluting the black ethnic group through repeated miscegenation. Thus, Brian would consider the nature of Dracula's infiltration of his own bloodline within London society as something natural and common among all races and nations.

The notion of expanding and uplifting a race can also be seen in Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy*, published in 1892. Like *Dracula*, this literary work places emphasis on the connection between bloodlines and identity. While Iola remains quite capable of passing as white, she identifies herself wholly with the African race. Although only a small fraction of her bloodline traces back to black ancestry, Iola asserts herself as a black woman after feeling first-hand the plight of slavery and the discrimination of blacks despite her white external appearance. Dominant cultural racist preconception transforms her identity from a white Southern belle to an inferior black slave, stripping Iola of her humanity and flinging her into a defenseless position (Carby 73). The revelation of her African blood not only changes the public's perception of her, but also her individual view of herself. She lives her life solely for the purpose of strengthening the African race through educating blacks and identifying herself as one of them. Chris Weedon defines this social activity as a kind of identity politics defining "new senses of self and group" (168). While this might help uplift an oppressed and discriminated group, it might also deny the multi-culturalism that exists within those of a mixed identity (Weedon 174).

Through Harper's novel, the reader perceives how Iola and Latimer sacrifice their entire life for the sake of the African race. Iola rejects Dr. Gresham's proposal of marriage, opting instead to join with Latimer for the purpose of elevating their mulatto social status, as well as fortifying their black genes. In the work *Passing and the Rise of the African American Novel*, M. Giula Fabi clarifies, "Accepting his [Gorsham's] offer would reinsure her reintegration into the privileges of whiteness but at the cost of accepting a situation of racial invisibility, disavowing her genealogy and surviving family ties" (58). Just as the British middle class and Dracula both use the union of certain bloods to enhance their own group, Iola and Latimer change the concept of sex from an act of sexual pleasure to a feat of social purpose.

Throughout Harper's novel, Iola insists on remaining true to her African lineage and refrains from uniting herself with a white man. However, the fact that she contains a mixture of white and black blood reveals the widespread miscegenation that occurred during the history of imperialism and slavery. Despite racial classifications that discarded blacks as less than human, white men forced themselves sexually on black women, resulting in an extensive class of interracial individuals. The inferior status of black female slaves enabled white men to violently transgress their bodies. However, the colonists condemned white men not for their violation of black women, but for their pollution of the Anglo-Saxon bloodline. Winthrop Jordan claims that society condemned men for intertwining themselves in a sexual union with a black woman. Thus, "interracial propagation was a constant reproach that he [the white man] was failing to be true to himself" (Jordan 86). Society instilled in him the guilt of obscuring the racial and social ordering by intertwining the different bloodlines. *Iola Leroy* inverts this idea, portraying Iola as feeling responsibility to remain faithful to the black part of her identity and strengthen that fraction of her blood (208 Harper).

The emergence of a mixed race reveals the simultaneous aversion and attraction that the Anglo-Saxon male, as represented in the relevant literary texts, felt towards the exotic, foreign black woman. According to Winthrop Jordan, mulattoes signified the manifestation of a forbidden desire, which could never have been felt and gratified on an extensive level without some perception of similarity in the African race. However, the perceived difference between whites and blacks resulted in the overwhelming opposition to miscegenation, and the tensions that arose due to the pervasiveness of this interracial union (Jordan 70). These anxieties were felt both socially and personally. Even while the men felt deep desire for an exotic woman, they simultaneously felt guilty of disloyalty to their race and horror at their attraction towards a savage being. (Jordan)

In Stoker's Dracula, Harker's encounter with the three vampire women reveals his contrasting emotions of excited desire and extreme revulsion at the sight of the overpowering female creatures. Harker confesses, "There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal" (Stoker 36). The fantastic scene embodies elements of Harker's repressed fantasy, a desire that not even he was aware of until it presented itself to him in reality. He waits in anticipation as the vampire women tantalize him with their sexual aggressiveness and wild rapture. At the same time, their total divergence from British women and his virtuous, proper fiancé creates a profound uneasiness within Harker. When he looks back to the night in hindsight, Harker shudders at the notion of the women, repulsed not only by their attempt to ravish him, but more so by his excitement at the near consummation between him and an exotic "Other."

From this short excerpt, the reader perceives the prevalent Victorian beliefs that lust and hyper-sexuality link with barbarism, marking foreign women as clearly divergent from the righteousness and chasteness associated with white British women. Jordan analyzes the conflict existing within men who desire both the uninhibited sexual "Other" and the virginal, Christian white woman, as white men "tended to place them [white women] upon a pedestal and then run off to gratify their passions elsewhere" (Jordan 77). Society locked white women in this introverted role, where they were forced to stifle their emotional and sexual desires in order to keep up an image of wholesomeness and purity. At the same time, the labeling of exotic, black women as hypersexual, promiscuous beings condoned white men's repeated sexual violation of them, justifying their violence as a means of control. White men imitated Dracula's defilement of British women, reasserting their own individual superiority through the possession of a woman's body, particularly one that belonged to another race. (Jordan)

The character of Rochester in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* represents the imperialist British male of the nineteenth century. He embraces society's racial stereotypes, as well as embodies the widespread anxiety of contaminated bloodlines and the taint of imperialism on the British identity. While Antoinette is a white Creole who supposedly comes from a pure British descent, Rochester depicts her eyes as "long, sad, dark alien eyes" that "are not English or European either" (67 Rhys). Immediately, he seeks to remove himself from recognizing this exotic being as a person from his homeland, whose British identity has been tainted through her surrounding environment of foreign natives (127 Rhys). Like Harker, Rochester's inability to initially place Antoinette in a category is emasculating, for his "capacity to define those others was an important aspect of their own authority and power" (209 Hall). His own identity as

English rests on the notion that those different from him must reside in a lower category (209 Hall). By perceiving Antoinette's difference despite her claim of British ancestry, Rochester automatically places her in the rank of a native "other".

Feeling apprehensive in this strange world removed from Britain, Rochester shares Harker's "dread of this horrible place overpowering me" (Stoker 33). Thus, initially, Rochester relates to Harker's vulnerability, expressing British fear of foreign influence. In the colonized island setting, Jordan claims that the residing colonizers create a greater distinction between themselves and the natives in order to preserve their English identity (Jordan 73). Corresponding with Jordan and Hall's contentions, Harker and Rochester embrace the belief that "different" indicates savage, godless and hostile. Accordingly, they hold the fear that exposure to diverse beings and a foreign environment will taint their uprightness (Rhys 127-129). When Rochester acknowledges that Antoinette belongs to the island, rather than himself or his native England, he reveals his lack of control over her on this distant island (Rhys 172). His only way to claim his English superiority and sense of ownership is by removing Antoinette from the island, and bringing her to England with him.

If Rochester's vulnerability relates to that of Harker, then his horror of Antoinette's exotic nature and foreign land likens her to Dracula. Like the vampire, Antoinette's identity remains fluid and indefinable by herself or by others. However, unlike vampires, Antoinette's unstable character fails to bestow her with power; instead, European colonialism robs her of a coherent sense of self (Drake 205). In addition, Daniel Cosway's letter depicts Antoinette as possessing vampire abilities, capable of entrancing Rochester with her beauty, seeping underneath his skin and gaining control over him until "madness that is in her, and in all these white Creoles, come out" (Rhys 96-98). His letter weakens any mutual esteem between Antoinette and Rochester, solidifying Rochester's anxieties about the island and its people, as well as Antoinette's impurity. He renders her madness and savagery as a consequence of an "ambiguously dark blood Bertha [Antoinette] has inherited from her maternal line" (Meyer 69). His justifications for imposing coercive power over Antoinette reaffirm Britain's violent assertion of authority, reducing Antoinette to "economic and psychological helplessness by European colonialism and patriarchy" (Drake 194).

However, the truth remains that Antoinette does not originally contain vampiric qualities. Instead, she acquires them through Rochester's struggle to identify and understand her, as he latches onto social stereotypes and native rumors that could explain the lack of Englishness within this supposedly British woman. In his struggle to control what he does not quite understand, Rochester emulates Dracula as his penetration into Antoinette's life and body result in her "increasing reduction to the condition of zombie, to apparent death (insanity) shortly to be followed by real, self-inflicted death" (Drake 200). Just as Lucy enters the vampiric state through Dracula's absorption of her blood, Antoinette enters the undead state of a zombie; she appears alive, but is truly dead (Rhys 107).

Through this narration, Rochester is depicted as the one contaminating Antoinette's innocence and purity, as he claims, "I was thirsty for her…breathless and savage with desire" (93 Rhys). While Rochester experiences intense attraction and longing for Antoinette, at the same time he finds her strangeness too repulsive for him to truly love. He treats her as white slave owners treat Iola Leroy, asserting his dominance

and possession through sexual acts, and justifying them by insisting on Antoinette's excessive passion (Jordan 79). By the end of the novel, Rochester's masculine aggression and thirst for control surface, and he thinks to himself, "She's mad but *mine, mine*" (Rhys 166). Although Antoinette enters the vampiric-like zombie state, it is because of Rochester's contamination of her through his British oppressive and coercive nature. Overall, Antoinette and Rochester both contain qualities of Stoker's vampire, as well as his victim. This demonstrates the fluidity of their identities.

Rochester and Harker's thirst for supremacy and control emphasizes their intense unease regarding the possible infiltration of wholesome British blood through the mere interaction of strange beings from foreign origins. Clare Kendry/Bellew of Nella Larsen's *Passing* achieves what Rochester and Harker fear by successfully passing perceivably as of white origin, while containing a stream of black blood. Larsen uses the vampiric elements outlined in Dracula and other vampire stories to narrate a story about passing and illustrate the ineptness of socially constructed identities. Clare embodies the fluidity of vampirism, as she crosses into and out of white groups and institutions, obscuring her true identity as a woman of mixed blood (Larsen 16-19).

Through Clare's mutability, Larsen divulges the complications of racial identity. Social thought divided race into only two categories: black and white. Thus, the culture forces biracial individuals who externally appear white, like Irene and Clare, to choose an identity. Clare grants herself a superior lifestyle by assuming a white status, but sacrifices the ability to form a close, personal relation with anybody, including her unaware, highly racist husband (Larsen 52). Thus, Clare's encounter with Irene releases "this terrible, this wild desire" within her, for Irene's knowledge of her true makeup and promise of confidentiality renders Clare the freedom to form an intimate relationship with Irene (Larsen 3).

Embodying Dracula's mesmerizing quality, Clare latches onto Irene, forcing herself into Irene's social circle and using her compelling charm to debilitate Irene from refusing her desire. Like Harker and Rochester, Irene of Larsen's *Passing* undergoes the strong sensation of simultaneous repulsion and attraction towards Clare Bellew (Larsen 20-21). She is drawn towards Clare's seductive and compelling persona, despite her reproach for this woman and her passing lifestyle. She describes Clare's mouth as tempting, her eyes as arresting and mesmeric, although they appear to contain some hidden secret (Larsen 20). Like Dracula, Clare has luminous, gripping eyes that enable her to possess people and control them accordingly. Irene admits that Clare has the "ability to secure the thing that she wanted in the face of any opposition, and in utter disregard of the convenience and desire of others" (Larsen 60). In addition, she retains a secret, innate makeup as a person of black lineage, containing definite elements of otherness, despite her ivory skin and ability to pass as white.

While Irene declares her repugnance for this strange woman and affirms their dissimilar nature, she also finds herself not only attracted to Clare, but also helplessly bound to her, regardless of her resentfulness. Irene feels obliged to help Clare conceal her true nature, feeling obliged to her through the ties of race (Larsen 38). Jordan defines the very nature of passing as a conspiracy of silence not only of the individual, but also of the biracial society that denied this past (85). Because she knows Clare's true makeup, Irene is pulled into this dangerous scheme. Clare drains Irene of her life through this agreement of silence, just as the earlier fictional vampires consume their companions by

compelling them to agree to a binding oath, a promise to keep the vampire's predatory nature a secret (Auerbach 14).

Auerbach claims that this parasitic oath of early vampire works is "an interchange, a sharing, an identification, that breaks down the boundaries of familial roles and the sanctioned hierarchy of marriage" (47). Likewise, when Clare enters Irene's life, she tears down the walls of Irene's marriage and threatens her role of wife and mother. Her presence suggests Irene's inner homoerotic desires, as her kinship with Clare allows her to feel real, passionate emotion, negative or positive, that is lacking in her marriage. She looks at her husband with "curious detachment," estimating him as pleasant looking from a distanced, dispassionate stance (39 Larsen). Indicating that they sleep in separate bedrooms and share an undemonstrative relationship, Larsen insinuates that Irene possesses repressed homosexual desires. In addition, throughout the novel, Irene depicts Clare's seductiveness and beauty in detail, as she finds herself dreadfully attracted to this childhood friend (58 Larsen). While Clare encourages the intimacy between her and Irene, she also stimulates a romance with Brian, intensifying Clare's adaptable and indefinite identity, not only in terms of race, but also of sexuality.

Although Irene finds Clare's lifestyle of passing as dangerous and disgraceful to their race, at the same time, Irene first runs into Clare while sipping tea in a privileged hotel designated for whites only. When she first learns that Clare has succeeded in passing, Irene admits, even in her subjective portrayal of the story that succeeding in this "dangerous and abhorrent thing successfully…had for her a fascination, strange and compelling" (Larsen 19). While Irene condemns passing, she contradicts herself by sitting in a high-class hotel that is exclusively for whites. Unlike Iola Leroy, who fully, wholeheartedly accepts and identifies herself as black, Irene secretly possesses a desire to deny that portion of her existence (Larsen 78). Thus, there lies a part of Irene that identifies with Clare, envying and admiring her audacity to live an existence other than the one imposed on her at birth.

At the same time, Clare thirsts for Irene's freedom to move about black social circles without anything to conceal. When Irene first tells Clare about past and recent developments in her life, as well as that of their acquaintances, she describes, "Clare drank it all in, these things which for so long she had wanted to know and hadn't been able to learn" (13 Larsen). Clare embodies the same eagerness as Dracula to understand a remote world, and successfully gains access into the unfamiliar society. When Harker first enters Dracula's castle, he finds stacks of books regarding England and English society, which suggests Dracula's longing to grow familiar with London and become part of the culture (19 Stoker). However, Dracula also discloses his compulsion to retain his dominance, which he can only do by remaining elusive regarding his true nature. Likewise, Clare passes into both white and black societies, understanding both well enough to be included in either, without having to admit her true makeup (59 Larsen).

In addition to Clare's fluid nature, she also lacks the maternal instinct that society designates as an essential part of a woman's makeup. Just as Lucy feels the limitation of the domesticated role of loyal wife and mother, Clare admits the restraints of motherhood (52 Larsen). Irene quietly agrees with Clare's belief that motherhood feels like a burden, but nevertheless defends the feminine obligation to bear and raise children. Irene accepts the socially imposed gender and race classifications because of the safety

they offer her. However, she internally harbors secret homoerotic desires that surface during Clare's presence.

She reveals her internal rage, as she expresses the burden of her race and gender (78 Larsen). Lucy and Clare's external actions, as well as Irene's internal frustration, reveal women's dissatisfaction in their confinement within the socially appropriated domestic roles of wife and mother. Auerbach, likewise, claims that Stoker structures Dracula "around this fear of a condition utterly alien to domesticated identity (especially female identity), exposing bourgeois virtue as sufficiently frail to turn into its own destroyer" (29). Thus, Clare and Lucy, who behave in ways contrary and threatening to social standards, are annihilated by the conclusion of both stories.

These readings of *Dracula*, *Iola Leroy, Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Passing* support Weedon's comment that "'Westernization under colonialism served as a force against which to define an anti-colonial national identity based on particular construction of traditional life which supported conservative gender politics" (190). Vampiric characters competently reveal the deeply rooted social constructions and generalizations, as well as the anxieties surrounding these delineating identities. Reflecting the true colors of society, vampirism reveals the insufficiencies of a social order that designates every race, gender or class in terms of black and white.

Dracula's "ability to expand the identities of others beyond human limits" presents us with a limitless world (Auerbach 94). Clare's changeable identity results in her death, just as society's inability to designate Antoinette in a specific social category concludes in her zombie-like state and life-long seclusion. Irene suffers a life of resentment, as the safety of cultural conformity forces her into heterosexual marriage and an inferior racial role. Iola's attachment to racial constructions results in her ultimate sacrifice of self-happiness and pleasure for the sake of uplifting her race. Ultimately, these texts reveal the ineptness of social classifications; the question is how do we live without them?

Ultimately, the literary texts demonstrate the simultaneous attraction and repulsion to the idea of freeing oneself from culturally imposed identities and embracing a flexible, multifaceted self. Stoker's *Dracula* eloquently reflects the significance of racial, gender and sexual norms in one's sense of self-identification, as well as perception of others. Those deviating from these rigid standards, through visible appearance or abnormal behavior, posed a severe threat to one's understanding of reality. As the texts reveal, the only means of relief came through the complete annihilation of the "Other." The literary works that invoke vampiric elements are able to reveal the anxieties surrounding the loss of one's identity through intermingling with non-British "Others." In addition, they expose the limitations of any stereotypical classification that inadequately characterize persons by their nationality, ethnicity and gender, rendering the literary works universal and timeless.

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