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Gentleman Death in Silk and Lace: Death and the Maiden in Vampire Literature and Film

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Gentleman Death in Silk and Lace:

Death and the Maiden in Vampire Literature and Film

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by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis contains an examination in the psychosocial significance of Hans Baldung Grien's "Death and the Maiden" art motif, created during the Renaissance period following the Black Death, and its resurgence in the vampire fiction genre of both literature and film. I investigate the motif in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) as well as their film adaptations by Francis Ford Coppola (1992) and Neil Jordan (1994), respectively. By examining the presence of the motif in art, literature, and film, I found that the common threads across all investigated works were the dominant social fears of their relevant historical societies and the allure of the taboo, as described by Georges Bataille and Slavoj Žižek, among others. The significance of these findings lies within the ability to gauge the values and fears of societies through their use of the motif.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to me.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1. DEATH AND THE MAIDEN

Fascinations and Repulsions of Women and the Macabre

The pioneers of the Death and the Maiden motif, sixteenth-century artists Niklaus Manuel Deutsch and Hans Baldung Grien, are far from household names to the average observer. Their work is, perhaps, more recognizable than their names alone – their visions of beautiful young women, their bodies contorted in titillating contrapposto alongside the anthropomorphized and eroticized character of Death, have long piqued the interests of certain viewers inclined to the macabre or morbid. This sordid fascination with Death rose to popularity in the Renaissance and even more so in the Baroque period with the increasingly sexualized portrayals of martyred saints, torture victims, and homicide – the blurring of what would later be coined as Freud's Eros and Thanatos. This motif persists into modern society, though it has taken on a form much different from the what the paintings depicted: I believe this motif to have been revamped (pun intended) into the genre of supernatural romance – namely, romantic tales of the vampire. By examining the role of women at heart of the motif (in terms of historical significance across time and the surprisingly unchanging psychology), I seek to express the desire for, and oftentimes horror of, romancing the vampire as stemming from sociological reflections upon one's own society.

Before Deutsch or Baldung Grien, Plutarch considered love to be "a sickness unto death," already blurring the lines between romance and death (Dundas 38). This blurring exists alongside the Renaissance sexualization both in art and literature, such as Henry Peacham's *De Morte et Cupidine* (figure 1) and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* – in the former, Cupid and Death mistakenly swap arrows, causing quite the issue when young men are slain just before their

weddings and old men fall in love with beautiful women. The latter seems to expound on the point – love and death, both wrought by arrows, are equally as indiscriminating and beautiful.

Figure 1. Peacham, Henry, "De Morte et Cupidine," Minerva Britanna (London, 1612), p. 172. Photo courtesy of Judith Dundas.

But why is this motif so often a coupling of the masculine Death and a young, beautiful woman? Women historically represent the innocent – or rather, the naïve – purity of life, untouched by the immodesties of sex, death, sickness, or moral tainting. They are the mothers – nurturers, caregivers, and (most importantly) life-bringers. They exist as the very opposite of Death, and yet they are the ones so often beguiled and charmed by the skeletal hands of the Grim Reaper or the fiery caress of the Devil. Further, the arrival of the motif came at a time when Europe was reeling in the aftermath of the Black Death and the estimated 50 million casualties that devastated Europe's population (Benedictow 869 – 877). In a culture so saturated with tragedy, and one so misunderstood by the medical knowledge of the time, death became an object of fixation: just as Georges Bataille theorizes in *Death and Sensuality,* we are intrigued and beguiled by what should repulse us. In this introductory chapter, I aim to explain the historicism that leads these narratives (both artistic and literary) to include predominantly women as Death's victim – both willing and unwilling – as well as apply these same ideas onto the

contemporary literary phenomenon of vampire romance and explain how the historical fears of the societies in which they belong reflect the similar sentiments as the Renaissance motif.

As posited by Philippe Aries in *The Hour of Our Death*, the joining of love and death was all but unheard of prior to "the end of the Middle Ages" in Western culture, but by the end of the 18th century, they had "formed a veritable corpus," presumably brought about by the mortal reckoning spurred by the Black Death, as previously stated (Aries 392-393). This blending of sex, love, and death became visually evident through the artwork of the time, such as the works of Deutsch and Baldung Grien – citing, for example, Baldung Grien's two paintings entitled *Death and the Maiden* (figures 2, 3) and Deutsch's *Death as Landsknecht embraces a girl* (figure 4). In Grien's painting, pictured on the left, the character of Death is represented by a skeletal, uncanny figure (although, interestingly, still possessing something akin to skin). The second figure in the painting, the Maiden, wears an expression of almost serene surrender – she is not fighting back against Death, nor is Death enacting violence against her in any discernable form aside from the hand gripping her hair. The painting was created in 1517, an estimated one year prior to the second painting, in which we can see a progression of what can almost be described as consent: in figure 3, both Death and the Maiden become more active participants in the narrative provided by the painting. The pair are locked in a kiss (or what appears to be a kiss) – though the Maiden appears visually disgusted and frightened by the actions of Death, she still holds open her robes, and there is no twisting of her body to indicate an attempt at escape. The opposite, really: she twists *towards* Death now, as though to look at him fully, rather than the Maiden's gaze *away* from Death in the first Grien painting. We also see the introduction of a more sensual positioning: in the first painting, the visual movement of her body is minimal, whereas this is not the case in the second painting, as though Grien's envisioning of the motif

became more eroticized as he continued to produce the work – the allure of the taboo in action, as displayed through a sort of "triptych" of the motif's origins.

Figure 2. Baldung Grien, Hans, *Death and the Maiden*, 1517. Courtesy of Kunstmuseum Basel, Sammlung Online.

Figure 3. Baldung Grien, Hans, *Death and the Maiden*, 1518-1520. Courtesy of the Web Gallery of Art.

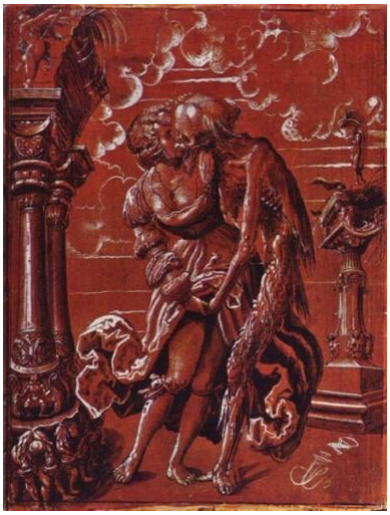

Figure 4. Deutsch, Niklaus Manuel, *Death as Landsknecht embraces a girl*, 1517, Kunstmuseum Basel. Courtesy of Wikipedia.

In Deutsch's case, the positioning of both Death and the Maiden are highly eroticized, suggestive, and even romantic – Death and the Maiden are depicted as two lovers entwined in a passionate kiss, with the Maiden's breasts nearly exposed and Death's hand between her thighs. All paintings depict the central figures using contrapposto, inspiring a psychological stimulation of beauty that Renaissance painters frequently employed in depictions of women, saints, and the apostles – particularly St. Sebastian comes to mind, described by Aries as "his beauty and his agony stir the emotions of holy women, whose tender hands pluck the arrows from his soft body with gestures that are more like caresses" (372). Through this depiction and use of contrapposto, we can see the women represented as figures of saintly, nurturing, gentle creatures, ones whose sympathies are automatically prodded and furthered by the images of "beautiful" despair, implying that there exists something implicit in womanhood that desires to care for and rectify pain, death, and suffering. This is a reductive and generalized statement and is certainly not true for all women, but the repetitive presence of women in these positions signifies their role in the motif – at best, they are being preyed upon by devilish forces due to their sensitive natures, and

at worst, they are actively seeking out romance and sexuality with Death, as with Deutsch's work.

Intriguingly, the tale turns from one of eroticism and romance to a tale of horror once the young woman herself dies. Judith Dundas, in "Masks of Cupid and Death," illustrates the consistent theme of death as a lover in Shakespeare's work, and the troubling tragedy that follows when that young woman must die. In *Romeo and Juliet,* she writes, Capulet's monologue upon discovering Juliet's dead body aligns the very concept of death with the role of the lover, previously held by Romeo in act 5, scene 3:

> Shall I believe
> That unsubstantial Death is amorous,
> And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
> Thee here in dark to be his paramour?
> For fear of that, I still will stay with thee,
> And never from this [palace] of dim night
> Depart again. (V.iii.102-08)

Dundas goes on to say that aligning death with the role of a "paramour" makes death "seem a rival to Romeo as husband," and that "to prevent that from happening, Romeo too must die to claim his bride" (42). I'd like to posit the implication here that Death is more romantically alluring to women in literature and art, and that this reflects a deep fear within patriarchy that women must be saved from the allure under the guise that they do not know any better than to follow the natural instinct of healing, caring, and nurturing the sick and dead. Of course, this is an antiquated idea, and as the motif has progressed through history and exited the pre/early modern period, it has been subverted and reappropriated to mean very different things. Particularly of note, the motif has transformed into depictions of woman entangled with supernatural, romantic figures, and especially the vampire as a lover.

To be loved by Death is to be loved eternally, unrelentingly, and possessively. It is easy, and almost intuitive, to ascribe these feelings and desires to the necrophile, but in the case of vampire literature there is no outstanding evidence to point towards simple necrophilia. There is something deeper, something more psychological than a paraphilia or fantasy at play. For example, romantic necrophilia, outlined by Anil Aggrawal in his book *Necrophilia: Forensic and Medico-Legal Aspects*, involves a bereft loved one seeking to preserve the body of their deceased loved one in order to avoid a final goodbye (48-51). The typical case in vampire literature (and vampire media in general) involves the mortal party first encountering the vampire only after he or she has existed for some time as a vampire – there exists no prior relationship between the mortal and the vampire as a mortal. In the case of this thesis, since I am examining both Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) in later chapters, I will use these works as examples: Lestat de Lioncourt and Count Dracula, both positioned as the undead lover, are introduced to the narrative as vampires. Narratively, within these works, no one knows firsthand knowledge about who either of these characters were prior to their vampirism (except in the case of Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 screen adaptation of *Dracula*). Given the strong romantic leanings of vampire media – since it is important to note that supernatural romance is not always erotica – it is reductive to assign the allure simply to necrophilia.

However, in *Death and Sensuality*, Georges Bataille theorizes that the link between the taboo of violence and the taboo of death combine to form a morbid and paraphilic fascination with the corpse (34-42). We, as mortals, unconsciously recognize the corpse as our inevitable end – we see our own mortality within the sight of the dead, and as such, as are attracted to the mortal reminder. We see this in Freudian psychology: we *want* to live. Seeing death firsthand prompts our morbid curiosity, the Eros, and draws us closer to the world of the dead. While I do

not consider the allure of vampire media to be entirely necrophilic in nature, Bataille's theory aligns with both the art motif of Death and the Maiden and the trends within vampire literature – Death is fascinating to mortals because it is our end, universally, when so much of what we examine and know in the world cannot be universally applied to anyone or any group of people. To witness Death is to witness one's own finality, transposed into the Other; it comes as no surprise that life is so often characterized as a beautiful and robust young woman and Death as the masculine figure of, on opposite ends of the spectrum, as protector and aggressor. Death is dominant; life is submissive. Life must always give way to death. The vampire, then, being undead and the facsimile of the Death we saw in the art motif, lends himself to this characterization of the dominant, masculine lover alongside the submissive, feminine mortal.

In much the same way that Death as a lover cannot change or abandon his conquest, he is also entirely stagnant, leaving the narrative to fall centered onto the representation of life: the Maiden. Naturally, as living beings, we are going to gravitate towards what we can relate to within storytelling. We cannot relate to Death, as much as we may want to do so psychologically, and so our eye is pulled to the Maiden. Karen Backstein makes a similar point in her article "(Un)safe Sex: Romancing the Vampire," in which she notes that "all these [vampire] stories are driven largely by female desire and the female voice" (38). Of course, the older the example, the more patriarchal the narration, which Backstein addresses on the same page: "the virginal Victorian ladies of *Dracula* may have had needed Jonathan Harker to tell their tale; no more" (38). Life, the mortal, the woman, is the only party able to tell the tale of her rendezvous with Death to the living, since Death cannot convene with mortals in the same way. (Of course, in the case of Anne Rice's work, given its explicitly queer narration, there is no female voice or narration – this role falls to Louis de Pointe du Lac, which I will examine in chapter 4.) The

transition from skeletal figures to the vampire comes after many centuries of romanticization of Death, and with that romanticization comes reflections of ourselves and what we find relatable: the (once) human man, now a little pallid and cold to the touch, still looks like a suitable suitor to most mortal protagonists. He drinks blood to survive – but he feels real feelings and can communicate those emotions.

Here is the obvious bridge between the two: the vampire, like Death, is stagnant, everlasting, and a promise of what is to come. Mortality lends itself to Death, and Death willingly and lovingly takes Life into his arms in the final hour. We are at once repulsed by and attracted to this; we shouldn't long for Death in this way, because it is the lack of everything we have ever known – death is violent, uncaring, Godless, and cruel, the opposite of all that life should represent. But at the same time, Death is secure and promising. Why shouldn't we embrace what we are, what we will become?

Further, it should come as no surprise that the genesis of Death and the Maiden came about during a time where people were both questioning the afterlife and greatly fearing their own deaths due to a second wave of the Black Plague striking Europe in the 16th century. The art of a society reflects the social fears and triumphs of those belonging to its culture; thus, the contemporary vampire media – and appropriation of Death and the Maiden for the modern age – becomes a reflection of contemporary social issues. Feminism, sexuality, and LGBTQ issues exist at the forefront of the genre as these issues grew to become the forefront of social focus – interestingly, the tales progress from words of warning to celebrations of the macabre. The Victorian vampire is the specter of what dangers may come from foreign landscapes and new ideals forming around women's sexuality, as in Stoker's *Dracula*; in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, we move from these antiquated ideas of women's sexuality and instead see 20th

century American fears of the homosexual. When we examine the film adaptations of these texts, both produced in the 1990s, we see something similar: Neil Jordan's 1994 adaptation of *Interview* continues to allude to homophobia, with the added concern of displaying explicit queerness in a society that was terrified by the AIDs crisis – and Coppola's *Dracula*, released just before *Interview* in 1992 and transformed into a heterosexual romance, illustrates American society's changing priorities.

Of course, there is another crucial component to all forms of art – the audience. The storytelling portion of art would lose so much of its impact without an audience to witness and experience the narrative behind any medium: painting, novels, film alike. While this is true for everything in the art world and not necessarily unique to Death and the Maiden, I would like to posit that the audience themselves are entangled in the motif, as not only a vessel for the story, but as an active participant in it. We, the audience, watch as Death seduces or molests the Maiden; we understand that she has fallen from ladylike graces and into unfortunate hands; and we do nothing but revel in (or even romanticize) the ghastly scene. We are able to walk away while the Maiden remains trapped in the violence, whether she invites it or not – and this role, applied to tales of the vampire, reveals a social psychology of perverse curiosity: we seek these stories out not because we wish to heed their cautions, but because there is something to be gained from witnessing the development and enaction of this type of violence. Socially, we fear what the vampire represents: Death, sin, the social alienations we put onto that which we deem repulsive or reprehensible. But we also desire him, because we desire that which we should avoid, as discussed by Batailles. This places the views into the role of the voyeur; Laura Mulvey, in the case of film specifically, posits that film viewership places "a sense of separation" between the audience and the narrative unfolding onscreen that gives the viewer "an illusion of looking in

on a private world" (Mulvey 806 – 7). While Mulvey's observations are grounded within the world of film, the same principles apply across the genres in which I am examining the motif. Visual art – the paintings and engravings, specifically – posit a single, static narrative. There is no "point A" or "point B" of plot in the same way there is that movement in film and literature; and in the case of literature, it is all movement, without the visual anchor of visual art. Film rests in the middle, striking the balance of plot movement with the opportunity for a perfect example of Freud's notion of "scopophilia," upon which the concept of the voyeur is grounded, though it exists in all three mediums. Examining all three mediums allows the depth of the motif to be more thoroughly traced and understood; this is a motif that has lasted through time, though changed, and maintains its integrity through changing vehicles of artistic expression.

CHAPTER 2. BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA* (1897)

"What Manner of Man is This?"

Dracula, published in 1897 by Irishman Bram Stoker, is largely regarded as the most influential and significant work within the genre, though several examples of vampire fiction precede its publication. The depiction of the motif in Stoker's *Dracula* (1892) is manifold: we see, within the Count, a reflection of the changing Victorian social climate and the anxieties brought about at the turn of the century: particularly the fears of the invading foreigner, the loss of religion, and the rising threat of feminism. When Jonathan Harker ventures into unfamiliar territory and sets the personification of Death on everyone's heels, he begins the motif: Stoker, by initially introducing us to Dracula as primarily a foreigner and non-Englishman, sets up the role of Death as primarily an outlander. This attribution coupled with the later violence against Mina and Lucy echoes the familiar Victorian England sentiment that the stranger, the interloper, is not only a threat to empire, but a sexual aggressor and defiler of "good women." Whereas Jonathan's Maidenhood is representative of the xenophobia within England and the belief that England contains some aspect of racial purity, the women's Maidenhood is, unsurprisingly, the manifestation of the fear of the Victorian New Woman – an "intelligent, educated, emancipated, independent and self-supporting" young woman whose role in late Victorian fiction "dealt frankly with sex and marriage as well as women's desires for independence and fulfilment" (Diniejko). Both Mina and Lucy exist somewhere between the ideal of the late Victorian New Woman and the conservative idea of womanhood. But they exist on a spectrum; within this spectrum, we find them, in varying degrees, representative of the archetypical Maiden. Lucy's place on this spectrum places her alongside Stoker's unfavorable view of the New Woman's open sexuality; in being so sexually open, she finds herself in the role of the perfect victim (or

Maiden), whereas Mina's characterization as the independent, steadfast, stoic New Woman solidifies her as the novel's driving force to defeat Dracula.

When we first enter Transylvania as an observer of Jonathan's dairy entries, we see him admiring the beauty of the natural landscape of the Carpathians; he comments, though, on the barbarism of the locals – intentionally separating them and marking them as "Other," just as Dracula will be marked, though the mortal inhabitants of the area repeatedly warn and caution Jonathan of the seemingly commonplace evils of the region (Stoker 3). This sort of xenophobia seems to be allocated specifically to the east; Jonathan makes a note that the trains run late, and states that "the further east you go the more unpunctual are the trains" – while framed as nothing more than a humorous joke in this text, this seems to imply a certain uncivilization of the east relative to England (Stoker 2). Similarly, the closer Jonathan gets to Castle Dracula, the more oppressive the landscape becomes, given Jonathan's recount of the steep mountainsides and, eventually, the sound of wolves and immense darkness once night falls – though the locals try to warn Jonathan about the dangers of traveling to Castle Dracula, he ignores their warnings and simply marks them as strange, rather than genuinely heeding their advice (Stoker 7-13). Here we see the precursor to the Maiden's peril: his willingness to ignore all warnings offered him and each increasingly obvious sign of danger send him directly into the arms of Death, delivered appropriately to Dracula's door.

Inside Castle Dracula, Jonathan is repeatedly pursued by the Count – the Maiden of England, no longer in the safe haven of his home country and instead vulnerable in the uncivilized foreign territory, has become the prey of Death, the stranger, whose strangeness is amplified by his odd habits and enigmatic speech. Jonathan, though, makes a point to let us know that "the light and warmth of the Count's courteous welcome seemed to have dissipated all

my doubts and fears" – here is Death seducing the Maiden (Stoker 16). Dracula offers every display of politeness and respect to Jonathan but declines them for himself: though his welcome is warm, his handshake "seemed cold as ice – more like the hand of a dead than living man" (Stoker 15). Much in the same way, these parallels continue when Dracula offers Jonathan a hearty dinner and good wine, but does not dine with him, nor does he join Jonathan by the fire with a cigar (Stoker 17). Other than the obvious, Dracula has now been cemented as the Death figure through these superficial creature comforts: just as the typical Maiden is lured in by Death through temptation and the freedom offered by godlessness, Jonathan's defenses are lowered by Dracula's warmth and superficial pleasantries. As the days progress, however, we see Dracula becoming more controlling, as when he admonishes Jonathan for shaving and bars him from entering any locked room in the castle (Stoker 23, 25). In closing the second chapter of the novel Jonathan confesses that "the castle is a veritable prison, and [he is] a prisoner" – the illusion of warmth is shattered now, with Dracula's motive being drawn into question (Stoker 26).

While the establishing of Dracula as the Death figure has been solely rooted in xenophobia for the majority of Jonathan's entries, the more traditional sexual violence of the motif enters the narrative with Jonathan's discovery of the three vampire women. This violence is depicted in a scene of metaphorical sexual assault: Jonathan, while looking for answers to the endless questions brought by his prison, discovers the three women that Dracula seems to keep as begrudging companions, and in a scene fraught with sexually charged language, they attempt to "kiss" him (Stoker 35 – 36). The presence and action of the women vampires is particularly interesting; if we are to assume that Dracula's characterization as Death comes from his vampirism and physical state of Undeath, we can then assume that the vampire women are given this masculine role as well. Accordingly, they adhere to the active role of Death as molester and

aggressor against the Maiden; though aligned with Dracula, they share none of his warmth. They are “interested only in sexual uses of [Jonathan] that will render [him] helpless …” (Demetrakopoulos 107). This characterization returns again with Lucy Westenra once she has become a vampire.

Worthy of note, it is Dracula who stops the scene; he enters, seemingly out of thin air, to command the women to release Jonathan:

> How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me! Beware how you meddle with him or you'll have to deal with me. (Stoker 37)

In response to Dracula's outburst, one of the vampire women claims that Dracula “never loved”, to which Dracula responds, “’Yes, I too can love; you yourselves can tell it from the past’” (Stoker 37). Now we see the blatant characterization of Death as a lover; Dracula claims to love Jonathan, though his willingness to hand him over to the women once he’s finished with Jonathan seems to signal that he loves him not as a companion, but as an object, something to possess and use for himself. Though painted as more sympathetic and genuine than the women, Dracula’s love for Jonathan (as can be implied) is entirely predatory. Importantly, Jonathan is able to “break out” of the motif; he recognizes the danger he has landed himself in, and with careful planning and awareness, he manages to break free of the castle and escape to a nearby convent. His ability to remove himself as a victim of the motif undoubtedly mirrors Mina’s own ability, shown later in the novel: Jonathan is tethered to his monogamy and love for Mina just as she is tethered to him, and it is this devotion that keeps them out of Death’s clutches.

Once the stage has been set with Jonathan’s encounter with Dracula, we move on then to the epistolary exchanges between Lucy and Mina, and immediately we learn that Lucy has been pursued by not one, but three men, and comments that she wishes she could marry them all.

Upon her introduction, Lucy is depicted as little more than a "floozy," as good-hearted as she may be (it is noteworthy, here, that Lucy does reject both John Seward and Quincy Morris in favor of Arthur Holmwood, but happily remains friends with both, and there is no quarrel with any of the four in the novel save for sparks of longing exhibited by the rejected suitors). However, whereas Mina's safety is largely hinged upon her relationship with and devotion to Jonathan, Arthur is rarely by Lucy's side, and she is left to the protection of Dr. Seward and Quincy (and later Van Helsing). Through her prolonged bout of vampiric sickness and experiences of Dracula's sexual violence, Elizabeth Signorotti's observation that "Stoker presents the problem of Lucy's sexual aggressiveness, a problem to which he ultimately provides a violent solution" rings exceptionally true; Lucy represents the facet of the New Woman that includes sexual appetites and non-monogamy, which seem to be aspects Stoker particularly dislikes (621).

Whereas Lucy's side of the letter deals extensively with her escapades and her three suitors, Mina is exceptionally worried and preoccupied with thoughts of Jonathan. Immediately upon introducing Mina and Lucy we are given the knowledge that these two women's relationship to men established their character more than their interpersonal relationship. They exist as maidens in the motif, of course, but the larger narrative of *Dracula* seems notably rooted in a male perspective. It is through this perspective that the horror of the novel is revealed, as well as the anxiety of the motif – as Stevenson describes, "the real horror of Dracula [is that his] purpose is nothing if it is not to turn good English women like Lucy and Mina away from their own kind and customs" (Stevenson 140).

It is within Arthur's absence that Dracula first preys upon Lucy as she sleepwalks. Mina finds her friend "half reclining with her head lying over the back of the seat" after having been

molested by a figure that the audience knows to be Dracula (Stoker 88). Again, just as with Jonathan, we see the clear allegory of sexual assault – Death taking advantage of the Maiden, just as the motif displays in the visual art. Lucy bears the weight of Dracula's violence because of her vulnerability to feminine desire – just as in the paintings of Death molesting the resistant Maidens, Lucy does not wish for this to happen, nor does she invite it, but the social shaping of her character as sexually curious invites the familiar narrative that she was "asking for it." The metaphor of sex continues in the proceeding entries, written by Mina; here, we see the connection between blood and sex. Mina remarks that she spots a bloodstain on the collar of Lucy's nightdress, and the audience is aware that the blood came from Dracula's bite, presenting a familiar image of the loss of virginity, tying blood and sex to each other, and establishing that "[Dracula's] sexuality is simultaneously different and a parodic mirror" (Stevenson 142). This stirs panic in the men, because this defilement of Lucy makes her "impure" – her blood, anyway. To remedy this impurity, Lucy, over the course of several chapters, receives blood transfusions from Dr. Seward, Quincy, Van Helsing, and Arthur – as Stevenson posits, these transfusions indicate "the desperation these men feel about the threat from Dracula" (142).

The transfusions prove to be a bust, however, and this impurity follows Lucy into undeath. In her vampiric state, she appears just as the women in Dracula's castle: "voluptuous" (a word Stoker abuses when describing vampire women) and ghastly, whereas in life she was simply "sweet" – given that this trait presents in multiple of Stoker's vampire women, we see now that the vampirism Dracula passes on creates "the emblem of the degenerate body" (May 20). But Lucy is afforded the mercy of real death, whereas the women in the castle are not; it is the band of men who offer her this repose, sending the Maiden back into the gentler hands of

polite society and out of Death's domain: Demetrakopoulos describes this return to the gentler world by positing that:

> they all revert and register purity and morality just as the stake enters their heart. In other words, their perverse sexuality is only an evil overlay, not truly integrated into their personalities or character. Lucy becomes again a woman of "unequalled sweetness and purity" (p. 241). (111)

As such, it is no accident that Lucy's deliverance into a pure death mirrors yet another sexual assault, especially given the phallic nature of stakes. It is Arthur Holmwood's repeated penetration of the stake "deeper and deeper" into her heart that "'cures' Lucy and returns her to the accepted role of sexually passive female;" through this "mercy," shown to her by her fiancé and three other men, "Lucy's sexuality is 'corrected.'" (Stoker 208, Signorotti 624).

Mina dominates the latter portions of the novel, after the death, undeath, and redeath of Lucy – and by this point, she is now married to Jonathan, setting her apart from Lucy, who died twice before ever being able to marry Arthur. The marriage in question happens almost randomly; when she visits her ailing Jonathan in Budapest, they have an impromptu wedding at Jonathan's sickbed (Stoker 101-103). This marriage solidifies Mina as a "good woman," (i.e., a woman whose sexuality can safely exist under the Godly banner of matrimony, unlike Lucy, whose male attention inherently made her a whore). With her sexuality now safely protected by her marriage, Mina is no longer a viable Maiden, both in terms of the motif and in social definition – though Dracula tries to take her just as he claimed Lucy, he ultimately fails, and his attempt leads to his own demise. Through her marriage to Jonathan, the two are woven together. Curiously, where Jonathan possessed feminine traits in the beginning of the novel in which he was established as a vulnerable Maiden, Mina adopts a masculinity as she and the band of men plot their takedown of the Count; she is no longer simply admired for her motherliness and caregiving nature, as she was in the first half of the novel, but rather her "intelligence and

strength," as Demetrakopoulous describes; further, Mina ultimately "survives the ordeal, resisting Dracula and his three 'proto-sisters' as they call to her in the night" out of sheer strength of character (and a bit of help from Van Helsing) (110). Demetrakopoulos also notes that "Stoker's protestations of her 'masculine' traits do not negate her femininity but rather show that she is less enthralled by her sexual role and less excessive in her stereotypical femininity than Lucy" – while both women possess traits of the "new woman," Mina seems to harbor what Stoker would consider the "good ones," whereas Lucy was comprised of the "bad ones," which is why she dies (110).

At the end of *Dracula,* we see the group rendering the Count impotent by sabotaging his lair at Carfax in an attempt to exile him back to Transylvania, where the official slaying takes place. This plan succeeds, though before he makes his way back to the Carpathians, he warns the men: "'your girls that you all love are mine already,'" and that his "'revenge has just begun'" (Stoker 295). Of course, he is wrong, and it is Mina's intellect and courage (alongside Van Helsing's knowledge) that lead to his vanquishing. Mina breaks out of the motif just as Jonathan broke out of it in the beginning of the novel; she uses what she knows of the Count against him, though the knowledge comes as it happens through the use of hypnotization. It is her ability to use the connection forged between herself and Dracula against him that ultimately results in the destruction of the motif. Once again, both through her marriage literally removing her Maiden status and her possession of all the "right" qualities of the new woman, Mina saves not only herself but the men around her (where Lucy could not).

Beyond the narrative, we enter another facet of the motif: the voyeurism of the audience. While it is true that every piece of art – literature, film, painting, etc – necessitates a witness, an audience, the role of the voyeur in *Dracula*, like in the motif, plays a tertiary role that

emphasizes the narrative itself in the same metafictional way as with the paintings. Specifically, within the epistolary format, we, as readers, gain a sense that we are privy to something we perhaps should not be privy to. Mina, upon allowing Van Helsing to read Jonathan's diary from Transylvania, feels as though she is breaking Jonathan's trust; in turn, we are assigned the role of voyeur. This role allows us to experience the narrative vicariously; we cannot, in reality, encounter Dracula, or marry Jonathan Harker, or bear witness to the staking of Lucy Westenra, but we *can* watch as the social fears and hegemonic beliefs unfold before us – we can watch Death prey upon the Maiden, unable to look away despite our shock and sensible disgust. But what drives this need to participate in such a narrative? Socially, what causes us to seek out these supernatural facsimiles of our real world, with our real-world problems? Much the same as when the motif first arose in art, social unrest abounded at the time of *Dracula*'s publication: the tale came about during a time when "the Victorian body, social and individual, felt itself under perpetual assault from all quarters within and without" (May 16). While *Dracula* undoubtedly centers itself on the male perspective, the overarching social intrigue of the Victorian "New Woman" and her attitudes to sex and independence colors the entire text – and, in true human fashion, we desire to see the dark, taboo places, to wallow in our fears through the strange and the macabre.

Stoker's *Dracula* was born from a turbulent, turn-of-the-century shifting of values, and longstanding political fears: the former being the rise of a new, independent, sexually autonomous woman, and the latter being the xenophobia that inspired distrust and even fear of the "outsider." In much the same way that Death and the Maiden arose in the art world to navigate new fears of Death, and longstanding fears of falling into Godless hands, we see Victorian fears represented through the reprisal of the motif in *Dracula*: we see the Maidens

within Mina, who represents the “good” New Woman (independent, headstrong, devoted, and loyal to her husband and lifestyle); within Lucy, whose sexual curiosity and romantic generosity ascribe to her the “bad” aspects of the New Woman; and Jonathan, whose venture into the Carpathians creates a political Maiden: that of the Maiden of England, representative of the western anxieties surrounding eastern Europe.

CHAPTER 3. FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA'S *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* (1992)

"Take Me Away from All This Death"

Francis Ford Coppola has many an impressive title in his repertoire: *The Godfather Trilogy* (1972, 1974, and 1990)*, Apocalypse Now* (1979)*,* and *The Outsiders* (1983), to name a few. He is a fixture within the Criterion collection and a master of the art form; it comes as a surprise, then, that Coppola's 1992 film adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is a divisive subject. Its structural changes to Stoker's 1897 novel render it nearly unrecognizable to some due to its introduction of a love story between Dracula and Mina Harker. However, when viewed through the lens of the Death and the Maiden motif, we, as viewers, are given a curious new vision: the introduction of a romance between Mina and Dracula now places Dracula into the role of a romantic death, whereas Stoker's Dracula was a dyed-in-the-wool villain. Coppola's Dracula, too, can only find satisfaction in Mina's acceptance; he dismisses Jonathan and enacts fatal violence against Lucy in pursuit of his lost love, whereas the original vampire sought only chaos and control. Coppola's introduction of Dracula's persistent romantic fascination in and lurid obsession with Mina creates an interesting turn from Stoker's original novel: whereas Dracula did not seek out Mina for love in Stoker's novel, Coppola's Dracula desire for her allows the narrative to take on the new direction of an altered motif: Mina, in her own way, has become a dead Maiden; with her previous incarnation's death spurring Dracula into his own rein of undead torment, she beat Dracula to the role – and by reincarnating in the Mina Murray, already an anti-Maiden by Stoker's characterization, she pushes Dracula into an almost submissive role. It is Mina who controls the narrative now, not only through the reincarnation that motivates Dracula, but through her ability to call the shots. By having the Maiden lure Death, for once, the motif becomes subverted, and Mina gains the upper hand. The reasoning for this change comes

from the simple fact of age: the narrative, like Dracula himself, has crossed oceans of time. The same fears and anxieties of late Victorian England are no longer the fears of 1990s America – the priorities were different in 1992, and much less focused on women's independence and sexuality than they were in 1897. Instead of a cautionary tale about being the "right" kind of woman, we receive, from Coppola, a heterosexual romance that tugs at our sympathies.

Coppola's Dracula opens initially with the setup for Dracula's love story: we see a virile, young Dracula heading off to a bloody battle after giving a goodbye kiss to his beloved Elizabeta (played by Winona Ryder, who also plays Mina Harker, the reincarnation of his lover). He emerges victorious, but she promptly dies by suicide, plunging him into madness and Undeath: it is Elizabeta's death at the beginning of the film that prompts Dracula's motivations and the larger narrative arc of Coppola's film. Now a vampire, Prince Vlad is on the hunt for his beloved. However, we do not see Ryder's reprisal until after Dracula encounters Jonathan Harker; as in the novel, Jonathan's arrival to Castle Dracula is what spurs Dracula's movement into England, though Coppola introduces Dracula's desperation to find and claim Mina for himself. But before Mina, Dracula sets his sights on Jonathan – our first encounter with the insatiable vampire. Upon Jonathan's initial entrance to the castle, we see what will become a frequent visual motif throughout the movie, which is the displacement of Dracula shadow from himself. Dracula's shadow, in the film, seems to linger from scene to scene (most without Dracula himself being present) like an omnipresent and omniscient voyeur into the lives of all three of his conquests: Jonathan, Lucy, and Mina. Specifically in the case of Jonathan we see the counts shadow lurching away from Dracula's body in order to monitor Jonathan more closely; the Count, though he has invited Jonathan into his home, is seemingly distrustful, or at the very least suspicious, of Jonathan's presence, but in the same moment titillated and intrigued by the young man. This,

much like in Stoker's original text, seems to imply a certain xenophobia in which both parties mutually distrust the other – Jonathan is a stranger in a strange land; Dracula has invited an outsider into his most sacred space. Just as in the original text, this characterization mirrors the visual motif of Death and the Maiden, in that Jonathan has once again become the maiden of England; his virtuousness as an upstanding young solicitor from London is preyed upon by the figure of the outsider, of Death, represented by Dracula.

Here is where the film and the source material depart significantly – whereas there is no blatant or purposeful romance in Stoker's original novel, we see an abundance of explicitly homoerotic and sensual imagery applied between Coppola's Dracula and Jonathan Harker. This tension feels at first fragile and hesitant until the point where Dracula first sees the photograph of Mina that Jonathan keeps on his person; once Dracula knows of Mina, the tension dissolves, and Dracula's interest in Jonathan is no more than a need to locate Mina (and his longing for Jonathan's blood). Dracula "abandons his male guest when he spies Mina's picture" – it is Mina, then, who drives the plot, rather than the Count's motivations, whose "heterosexual union" with Prince Vlad champions in favor of Dracula's "sexual ambiguity" (Scott 123). I find it interesting that this coupling seems to defang the role of Death in the motif: as we see in the art, Death does not seek out the Maiden; she falls into his violent clutches by way of divorcing herself from polite society or altogether pursuing him for herself. In both interpretations, Death is given an "in" rather than seeking one out, as Coppola's Dracula does with Mina. Through this pursuit, and Dracula's insistence upon making Mina his lover by any means necessary, Coppola's Dracula is emasculated and made submissive through the hunt and subsequent denial of Mina due to her loyalty to Jonathan. However, this submission is masked carefully beneath the layers and layers

of Mina's coding as an obedient and demure Victorian bride-to-be – from the outside, we see a predatory, hungering Death, just as we would expect to see in the motif.

This painting of Mina as the "good girl" begins upon our first glance of the reincarnated heroine. Once Dracula learns of Mina's existence, the camera cuts from Transylvania back to London where Mina sits idly at her desk, curiously thumbing through a scandalously illustrated copy of *Arabian Nights* as her voiceover dictates a letter to Jonathan. She regards the book distastefully, though continues to leaf through its pages until she hears the approaching footsteps of Lucy Westenra, the book's owner. She drops it to the floor; here, Lucy notices Mina's browsing, and the pair examine the illustrations in an almost comical display of Victorian prudishness (or the ideal of prudishness, anyway). The costuming here implies something I find interesting about the characterizations of Lucy and Mina: Lucy is shown in a white, lacy grown, which typically would signify some degree of purity or ideal womanly disposition. Mina is clothed in teal, which is admittedly still a pastel color and therefore indicative of a certain cleanliness of spirit; however, we see immediately that Lucy is more sexually open than Mina through their exchange following an illustration that captures their mutual interest: Mina questions if it is truly possible for a man and a woman to obtain and enact the position depicted, to which Lucy replies that she "already has." A scandalized Mina accuses her of lying – and Lucy, giggling coquettishly, counters: "Yes, I did! In my dreams." We then learn that Mina has only ever kissed Jonathan, and that she finds Lucy's attitudes towards sex distasteful. Mina is represented as a deeply practical and decent or modest individual – this is reflected through her costuming, with the high neckline and long sleeves on her dress as opposed to Lucy's very low-cut and gossamer gown (figure 5).

Figure 5. Coppola, Francis Ford. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). Courtesy of Columbia Pictures.

If we are to translate these costuming decisions into the Death and the Maiden motif, we would see two different forms of the Maiden represented here. First, we see Lucy represented as the typical maiden figure – she is promiscuous, sexually curious, but still swathed in the trappings of a pure and virginal being; she presents an easy Maiden upon which for Death to prey. Mina, on the other hand, presents the exact type of Maiden that she will come to represent throughout the rest of the narrative – our first look of her is in a modest, teal dress, a color representative of decency and practicality; her virtuousness and modesty are clearly pitted against Lucy's same, though superficial, qualities. Interestingly, she seems to engage with the illustrations in the same way as an audience would engage with the motif itself; she is at once repulsed and fascinated, and though her sensibilities implore her to look away, there is still a morbidly curious streak within her that cannot resist the temptations. Despite the differences in characterization, Lucy and Mina are not pitted against each other but tied indelibly to one another – they are rarely seen without the other throughout the duration of the film until Lucy's

death, and their strong friendship remains as it did in the novel. Whereas Stoker's Mina represents the "good" facets of the New Woman and Lucy represents the "bad," Coppola's version of the women seem to skirt over this characterization in favor of simply dumping floozy traits onto Lucy and attributing the qualities of a housewife onto Mina, very much driving home the image of Lucy as a woman fallen from Victorian social graces and into the clutches of a sadistic and cruel Death (Dracula). The film version of Mina, the pure, devoted wife, is our complicator – she resists the advances of the castrated Death, who desires her for romance rather than simple possession, as Stoker's original vampire desires her.

To further drive home this perception of Mina as a new, stronger, more complex type of Maiden against Lucy, in the immediate next scene, we are introduced to Lucy's three suitors: Arthur Holmwood, Quincy P. Morris, and Dr. Seward. Each one of these introductions are lewd in their own way, further expressing Lucy's laisse-faire attitude towards sexuality – Mina, on the other hand, is quietly tucked away off to the side of the screen, nearly forgotten in favor of the camera's focus on Lucy and her suitors. It isn't until the end of this scene that we see the towering shadow of Dracula looming over the shot: he cloaks Lucy and all three of her suitors in darkness, but Mina remains safely out of the shadow, and off-screen until the camera pans over to her entirely; she is the only character who seems to be aware of Dracula's ghostly presence, and thoroughly unsettled (figure 6).

Figure 6. Coppola, Francis Ford. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). Courtesy of Columbia Pictures.

Through this separation of Mina from Lucy, we now see the development of the two Maidens: Lucy is, as implied in the *Arabian Nights* scene, the typical sacrificial Maiden figure: she, falling under the Count's shadow, has already had her fate spelled out for her in the eyes of the viewers – while Mina, on the other hand, is an exception to the motif, as displayed by her exclusion from the shot; she is not meant to be a victim (or, really collateral damage, as Lucy becomes), but the center of the narrative and the motif by extension.

After establishing the Maiden roles for both Mina and Lucy, we are returned to Transylvania, where Jonathan Harker is shaving. Whereas Lucy and Mina are representative of a more traditional maiden in the sense of sex and desire Jonathan, much like in the novel, represents a Maiden of politics. During this scene, which resembles a similar (though much shorter and less erotically charged) scene in the novel, Dracula floats into Jonathan's room and gets a bit too close for comfort; the distress is visible on Jonathan's face, though Dracula seems

not to notice anything out of place or odd about their embrace (notably, Dracula only ever lays his hands on Mina in a similar fashion, later in the film). While Jonathan is shaving, he mistakenly nicks his neck and draws blood which, in turn, startles Dracula enough to very nearly bite into him. Dracula takes the razor from Jonathan's hands after admonishing him and imploring him to be careful with the razor and licks the blood from the surface, out of Jonathan's field of vision. Dracula then also suggests that Jonathan should grow a beard, as it is the custom in Transylvania – "This is not England," he says, with a tone holding a certain degree of distaste. Jonathan is appropriately put off by Dracula's scolding; however, despite his own suggestion, Dracula then returns to help Jonathan shave in what can only be described as a supremely and intensely homoerotic cradling, shot from above, allowing the viewer to see clearly just what the Count wishes to do with his visiting solicitor – but never fully enacts, seeming to signify some manner of impotence within Dracula (figure 7).

Figure 7. Coppola, Francis Ford. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). Courtesy of Columbia Pictures.

Later, we see more of this impotence when Jonathan is preyed upon by the Dracula's brides – three beautiful and sexually predatory young vampire women who lure Jonathan into their bed by mimicking Mina's voice. The three women engage with Jonathan in an intensely erotic antagonization, rife with phallic imagery that stems from the brides themselves – at the beginning of the scene, the bride played by Monica Bellucci rises from beneath the duvet, positioned perfectly between Jonathan's legs; several instances of the scene apply the visual weight of the sexual aggressor to the Brides and render Jonathan utterly passive, trapped within their web of desire and hunger – both bloody and carnal. Using Laura Mulvey's concept of the gaze, we see a perfect recreation of her point in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema:* these women exist solely as temptation, as exhibitionists, and their narrative role in the film begins and ends with the sexuality of the scene – as Mulvey writes it: "women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness"* (Mulvey 809). However, despite this display and exhibitionism, it is the Brides who take on the "active" role – a subversion of what Mulvey observes as typical in film (Mulvey 808). Here is the anxiety of the motif again: that a vulnerable Maiden (Jonathan) would fall into the cruel and ill-intentioned hands of the Death figure (the Brides); this anxiety is made worse by the subverting of gender roles – another point from Mulvey brought to fruition, as when she says, "the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification" due to the hegemony of heterosexual society (Mulvey 810). In so doing, Coppola's Brides visually maintain the motif; this scene is the only one within the film that seems to subconsciously lean into the societal fears of the audience rather than attempt to craft a narrative of a sympathetic romance plot. Its resolution, then, lends much to these sympathies by drawing Dracula as the savior.

It is only when Dracula appears and scolds the Brides for their bad behavior that Jonathan is spared: “How dare you touch him! He belongs to me!” he yells, and the Brides turn their attentions instead to the infant Dracula has brought them for dinner. This scene is, importantly, markedly different from Stoker’s original scene; there is no exchange between Dracula and the Brides about Dracula’s ability to love – one must wonder if this is due to Coppola’s Dracula’s insistence on resurrecting Elizabeta through Mina rather than Stoker’s Dracula’s desire for power and antagonism for antagonism’s sake. He cannot love Jonathan; he cannot even lie about it; he is too clouded by his desire for Mina.

Now that Dracula has his motivation, the film moves us into London again. This time we see a clearer and more blatant subversion of the motif – Dracula spots Mina in the crowded streets of London and asks for directions to the Cinematograph, but she repeatedly rejects his advances and attentions. At one point, after insistently attempting to garner her attention and company, Mina turns to Dracula to ask if he is “acquainted with her husband.” To this, Dracula seems to recede into submission, agreeing to no longer bother Mina – but now, she acquiesces, and takes him where he wishes to go. Here is the Maiden courted by Death; and here she rejects him in favor of her mortal, moral lover.

But Mina’s rejection does not fall on Coppola’s aged, sexually ambiguous Dracula that stalked Jonathan in Transylvania – Dracula is now a much younger man, dashingly suave, and the picture of swoony handsomeness. In the same way that Death is attractive to the Maidens (and the viewers) in the motif, Dracula must now be attractive to both Mina and the audience, and what better way to lure and tempt the sensitive Victorian Maiden than with the very product of her time? Dracula’s broody, dark, noble countenance here mirrors that of the Byronic romance protagonist – he is Byronic because Byronic vampires lend to a sympathetic death; we find

ourselves attracted the Byronic hero because we are attracted to his “gloomy magnificence” (Fry 273). Below he is shown costumed in a top hat, his eyes eclipsed by a pair of darkened sunglasses – notably, all of his clothes are varying shades of black, while Mina is once again costumed in a practical green. He is set off from the rest of the milling crowd because of his dressing choice; our eyes are drawn to him, even when he is not the focal point of the shot, because of this significance of costuming (figure 8). He commands attention, and yet Mina rejects him until he displays some modicum of submission – solidifying Mina as the dominant force in the motif. This swapping of the dynamic differs from Stoker’s *Dracula* in the sense that, while Mina does ultimately resolve the narrative conflict and kill Dracula in the source material, she is doing so out of a sense of fulfilling a conservative Victorian agenda; when she does it in Coppola’s direction, she is doing so out of the strength of her identity.

Figure 8. Coppola, Francis Ford. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). Courtesy of Columbia Pictures.

When the pair finally do arrive at the Cinematograph, we see a new example of Dracula’s impotence; he takes Mina to a secluded area, to which Mina resists (although to no avail); he

positions her in such a way that suggests sexual violence, just as the violence he enacts on Lucy Westernra is blatantly allegorically sexual – but he cannot bring himself to bite her, to end her life. “I have crossed oceans of time to find you,” he tells her, just before his fangs elongate in his mouth (a hamfisted visual metaphor), though just before the moment of penetration, he rescinds. His love for Elizabeta-Mina once again renders him impotent and incapable. However, though he cannot kill her, he does bewitch her; the scene ends with Dracula’s promise that “there is much to be learned,” and immediately we see Dracula cordially walking Mina to her front door with a kiss to her hand.

But before we saw this romantic, charming Dracula, we witnessed the monstrous violence enacted against Lucy; prior to the Cintematograph scene, Lucy is seen sleepwalking through the manor grounds and is eventually attacked by Dracula in wolf-form, in a scene very strongly implying sexual assault that leads, ultimately, to Lucy’s undeath (and real death). Coppola’s Lucy seems to exist exclusively as a narrative foil to Mina – she is the archetypical Maiden, painted as a simple floozy meant to highlight and amplify the traits that make Mina the dominant figure of all three of Dracula’s intendeds: Jonathan, Lucy, and Mina. Similarly to Mina’s repeated rejections of Dracula, we find that she is the only one capable of breaking Lucy out of Dracula’s spell as Lucy sleepwalks nearly into the hands of Death himself – with a kiss.

Mina, now charmed, has fallen into the trap: she becomes near identical to the archetypical Maiden, wrapped in Dracula’s embrace: in a scene I can only describe as their consummation, Mina gives herself over entirely to Dracula; she “wants to be what [he is].” Even when Mina learns of Dracula’s true identity, seconds apart from this plea, and even after realizing that he is the one to blame for Lucy’s death, she can’t help but love him; in his arms, half weeping, she confesses: “Oh, I love you. Forgive me, I do.” Following this exchange,

Dracula draws blood from his own chest, and Mina drinks from the wound. Tom Whalen best describes this scene in “Romancing Film: Images of ‘Dracula’”:

> in a sense, then, Dracula is more alive than the film's living. He is a giver of life, not death, when Mina drinks his blood. What we have thought of as life (the "normal" world of Harker and Lucy's fiancé) now is seen by Mina as "all this death." (100)

Moreover, he is the utterly romantic Death figure, the one we, as voyeurs, both abscond and revel in, and Mina is the helpless Maiden, charmed and taken by his lure – pointedly against her will, if we examine her characterization in the first half of the film. A Mina in her right mind would never give into such fantasies – and when she is finally “snapped out” of the trance by Van Helsing’s information, her goal switches from simply being with him (and like him) to slaying him entirely.

The film’s ending resolves the motif in a curious way; Mina dispatches Dracula, but rather than the scene unfolding as an epic monster-slaying, it is a quiet, lovelorn goodbye. She kisses Dracula’s corpse, now aged and batlike. Mina understands, now, how her love “could release [them] from the powers of darkness;” she must kill him in order to set him (and herself) free. “Our love is stronger than Death,” she says, as Dracula returns to his younger visage and begs her for peace, delivered by a knife through his heart. Death can no longer have his Maiden; she is resistant to his allure, his enticing, but still pulled to him in some cosmic sense. And, in the film’s concluding shot, we see the broken motif in all its power: the Maiden has slain Death himself; he has no power over her any longer, as much as she may love and desire him.

Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* gives us a version of the motif with three Maidens, all hunted by the same figure of Death. We see, first, the political Maiden – the virtuous Englishman, venturing into the harsh and unknown territory of Transylvania, only to be hunted by the Count’s depiction of Death; but he is also a source of homoerotic desire, coupling

Coppola's Dracula to the overt sexuality and eroticism that appears more strongly with the introduction of Lucy and Mina. Lucy, while reminiscent of Stoker's original character, presents a sexually curious, though still virginal, representation of the Maiden – a stark contrast to Coppola's version of Mina as a dead or anti-Maiden: she enters the film with all of the power over Dracula through her death, pushing the Count into the narrative rather than presenting as a means to an end, as in Stoker's original text. Of course, though, the motif cannot be finished without the role of the audience as voyeur – in film, this is perhaps the most tangible depiction of the role, given that we, in the audience, passively watch the events unfold with the expectation of entertainment in mind. Coppola exemplifies exactly what I mean by the role of the voyeur, too, by bringing the sexuality to the forefront of this version of *Dracula*; we are watching, captivated, as such sordid and lurid fate befalls the fixtures of the motif – we, as participants, are removed from the narrative itself, and therefore not enacting or experiencing the direct actions of any of the film's characters, but immersed in Metz's apparatus of film as fetish: we live vicariously through the characters on the screen, substituting our societal fears and desires for the unfolding of, in this case, a scandalizing vampire romance onscreen (Flitterman et al. 185). Its differences from the source material (and the ways in which it seems to skirt and even avoid aspects of the motif) are the result of changing societies: whereas Mina's original role in the motif was to represent the Maiden that escapes the danger, she becomes instead the liberator of Dracula and the initiator of his voyage back into peaceful death – instead of a strong, independent female character, we have her instead as what would be compelling to 1990 audiences: a lover, determined to save her soulmate from himself.

CHAPTER 4. ANNE RICE'S *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE* (1976)

"Vampires Pretending to be Humans Pretending to be Vampires"

Stoker's vampires presented an almost picture-perfect retelling of Death and the Maiden: Mina depicts the Maiden, a perfect rule-follower and Victorian "good girl" who escapes Count Dracula's clutches by killing him. But society outgrew the Count; the eventual resurgence of the vampire in popular culture led to the use of him as a reference point, for better or for worse. Enter Anne Rice, author of the 1976 novel *Interview with the Vampire* and the eventual thirteen-novel series *The Vampire Chronicles*, with her dashing, disarming Lestat and his beautifully tortured Louis: the new century's Death and the Maiden, though undeniably and fascinatingly twisted. *Interview with the Vampire* begins with Louis' narration of the beginning of his vampire life – the Maiden's voyage if she were to fully cross over into the world of Death, to become his bride. And within his narration the motif is perfected – Louis paints himself as the perfect Maiden: vulnerable, tormented, and begging for the help of the charming, dark stranger that is Death, but he is, by virtue of being a vampire, the embodiment of Death, from a mortal perspective. This "twisting" of the motif results in a split psychology: the vampires of Rice's invention are at once exposing the idiosyncrasies of a society both obsessed with and repulsed by the marriage of sex and death, but in the same breath, Rice's vampires mirror and perform the motif within their own vampiric societies. The split psychology is most evidently seen in the Theatre des Vampires, wherein Louis watches as the Parisian vampire coven torment and eventually murder a young, beautiful mortal woman – the Parisian coven have made a living through taking advantage of mortal society's fascination with the motif by parodying their reputation in the living world; they recognize the voyeurism of mortals and prey on their naïve belief that it is, to them, only a motif and a work of fiction. Louis, by joining the mortal audience

rather than the vampires onstage, places himself into the role of Death in denial, insistent upon remaining a Maiden though he is, fundamentally, on the "other side" of the motif.

One could easily draw the conclusion that Louis' interview is a cautionary tale, just as Death and the Maiden presented a cautionary tale against straying from God and the ideal sexual relationship between husband and wife. However, Louis is not a woman, and as such he is no wife, so already we see the motif subverted in one sense. Inherently made queer, then, by this comparison, we see a new and fascinating navigation of the motif: the added layer of homosexuality during a time when, historically, homophobia ran rampant in America. George Haggerty states, in "Anne Rice and the Queering of Culture," that "Rice may well be tapping the vampiric past in her delightfully lurid tales, but she is also tantalizing the homophobic present with her sleek and sultry undead" (6). This "tantalization" echoes the similar draw towards the world of the dead that we see in Medieval Europe and the original Death and the Maiden artwork, and the gaps between are bridged (or perhaps even braided) by the status of the vampire as a being caught between life and death, with Louis simultaneously representing both figures of Death and the Maiden – he is, at once, the predator and the prey; the role of the predator befalls him simply by his status as a vampire amidst mortals, and try as he may to avoid drinking the blood of human beings, he cannot untether himself from what he is: an undead creature, dependent upon draining life to continue his existence. He becomes prey, too, because he clings so insistently to his mortality and humanity; Lestat creating a vampire of Louis did not remove Louis from his sensibilities and sensitivities, and he consistently implores us, his audience, to view him as a victim of Death's manipulation and ability to prey on the Maiden's vulnerability.

Beyond this, Judith Butler explains the societal draw towards the queerness we see in *Interview* and the blending of vampires and homosexuality in *Bodies That Matter*, when she

writes that "[m]uch of the straight world has always needed the queers it has sought to repudiate through the performative force of the term" (223). That is to say, heterosexual society requires queerness and homosexuality by which to measure itself as heterosexual, and further, heterosexual hegemony thrives on the expelling of queerness; it provides a spectacle. Haggerty applies Butler's observation to Rice's vampires by stating that vampires "fulfill the needs of the 'straight world' that attempts to repudiate the lure of darkness," almost identically describing the allure of Death felt by Medieval society (6). Following the logic, now we see the queer vampire as a culmination of these intertwining fears and desires: society wants the experience of the homosexual, and the taboo of Death as a sensual lover, no matter how they perform the shock and disgust when presented with these same themes.

Moreover, psychologically, we can bridge the vampire with the homosexual just as we can bridge death with sex. In fact, all four facets culminate in the middle like some sort of Venn diagram of simultaneous taboo and curious desire. Through Slavoj Žižek's unpacking of Lacanian psychology, we understand that "whenever we have a symbolic structure it is structured around a certain void, it implies that foreclosure of a certain key-signifier" (73). Foreclosure, meaning the ostracization of the key-signifier, or the thing that presents in the social "void." It is the continuous absence of a thing that defines its presence in social consciousness, developing into an "obsession" or structure. This is where we see queerness as a foreclosed object and rejection of sexuality as a whole; society rejects the obviously sexual and lustful, and in doing so, the sexual being that is the homosexual becomes a symbol of the foreclosed. Haggerty elaborates on this and states that:

> Žižek's argument explains not just why, in his words, woman returns as the symptom of man, but also why the predatory homosexual, foreclosed from the symbolic, would return as the symptom of a culture that is so caught up in its own sexuality that it cannot even see its sexual obsessions for what they are. (9)

Here we see, alongside the return of the homosexual as a symptom of repressed sexuality and sexual obsession, the return of the vampire as the symptom of societal fears of death; these fears are longstanding and could be traced all the way back to the Middle Ages and the inception of the Death and the Maiden motif. Combine the two, and we have the immortal blending of sex and death.

Paradoxically, Rice's novels are at once an examination and subversion of the motif. Such paradox is presented in the metafictional Theatres des Vampires scene: vampires pretending to be humans pretending to be vampires, as Brad Pitt's version of Louis so eloquently describes it in Neil Jordan's 1994 adaptation of the novel. The scene begins with what we would recognize as a virgin sacrifice – though, here, she is virginal not only in the sense of sex, but in death (and here she represents one of many instances of blurring between sex and death in vampire media). Not even a full paragraph later, Louis admires the mortal woman, the sacrificial lamb – and she is as perfectly Maiden-like as Stoker's Lucy Westernra. When the Maiden appears on the stage for the first time, Louis' comments echo the sentiment intended for purveyors of the original art:

> And she who had been advancing towards the footlights, saw him suddenly and came to a halt, making a moan like a child. Indeed she was very like a child, though clearly a full-grown woman. Only a slight wrinkling of the tender flesh around her eyes betrayed her age. Her breasts though small were beautifully shaped beneath her blouse, and her hips though narrow gave her long, dusty skirt a sharp, sensual angularity. As she moved back from the vampire, I saw the tears standing in her eyes like glass and the flicker of the lights, and I felt my spirit contract in fear for her, and in longing. Her beauty was heartbreaking. (221)

Here is the motif at once subverted and upheld: Death preys upon the beautiful, innocent living Maiden, torments her as she shivers, naked and terrified. In attempting to make a mockery of the motif, the Theatre des Vampires adheres to it as well, seeming to echo Žižek's foreclosures and structures though this time within vampiric society specifically; the foreclosed is now the structure, creating a perfect Mobius strip of subconscious and cognition.

But why do these vampires enact these ironic "plays" at all? Why toy with their food when they've already placed their fish in a barrel? The audience is semi-willing, after all, to be subjected to what they believe *could* be a houseful of bloodthirsty vampires. Here we return to Rice's vampires' concept of camp: the deliberate, darkly humorous exaggeration of Death and the Maiden, meant to simultaneously exploit the ironies of heterosexual society and, simply, to entertain themselves. In Rice's metafictional world, Stoker's *Dracula* exists as a sort of joke to the "real" vampires, though to the mortals, it's taken as vampire canon. Katie Harse makes the astute observation that Rice's vampires wear the authority of Stoker's *Dracula* like costumes, referring to this superficiality as "vampire drag;" further, she posits that such costuming "blurs the boundaries – often themselves artificial – between reality and fiction, and between perceived self and constructed other" (256). In fact, to build upon the metafictional nature of Rice's vampires, we frequently see them making passing references to Stoker's vampires, though never in kind: in *The Vampire Lestat*, book two of the series, Lestat refers to *Dracula* as simply a "gothic and fantastical tale," a simple bit of drivel that exists only as the "vulgar fictions of a demented Irishman," as Neil Jordan's Louis describes Stoker's novel. (*The Vampire Lestat,* 500; Jordan, *Interview with the Vampire*). As such, Rice's vampires adhere the motif not unlike the queer concept of "camp;" in the same way that *Dracula* is a joke, Death and the Maiden is a costume, a theatrical and ironic nod to heterosexual society's desire for a "forbidden romance" – a romance they live out daily, hidden in plain sight.

However, within Harse's blurring of the boundaries between reality and fiction, there exists still some facet of the motif in earnest. Rice ascribes the role of Death to Lestat, who refers to himself as "gentleman death" in *The Vampire Lestat*, and within Louis, as previously stated, we see the trend of the Maiden – the beginning of his story assigns him as an immediately

vulnerable figure after the untimely death of his brother, a figure which Lestat preys upon at the first opportunity. Haggerty most aptly describes this vulnerability by stating that "Louis is already trapped within the rhetoric of loss that has … placed him in a position vulnerable to the power of Lestat's seduction but immune to the consequences of his desire" (*The Vampire Lestat* 200, Haggerty 14). However, if we were to invert perspective and focus on Lestat, we see that he is equally as vulnerable. Of course, *Interview with the Vampire* is locked into Louis' perspective alone, which complicates our ability to sympathize and analyze Lestat's action through Louis' unreliable narration. We see only glimpses of Lestat's true motivations through gaps in Louis' storytelling, such as when he finds Lestat weeping over the loss of Claudia, their child, with her yellow dress in hand, revealing a sympathetic Death (304). Through this display of Lestat's feelings about Claudia – which we can assume are genuine, given that Louis did not know Lestat was even alive at this point in the novel, and certainly did not expect him to show up in Paris – Lestat is stripped of his status as Death, as monster, and becomes a father mourning his daughter.

Haggarty succinctly explains this intricate weaving of narrative parallels: "Readers of *The Vampire Chronicles* are offered a conflicted relation to Lestat and his posturing. They are like the audience in the Theatre of the Vampires: they desire a voyeuristic participation in something they want to believe and disbelieve at the same time" (8). Lestat is painted as uniquely lonely in his undeath – Haggerty describes a scene of blood-drinking from the fifth novel of the *Vampire Chronicles*, stating that "[Lestat's] love can only be expressed in this draining of life, this absolute possession" (16). Here we see the most intriguing and perhaps most important translation of the Death and the Maiden motif in Rice's work: Death is now reachable by human sympathy rather than posing as a nearly anonymous figure of simple hedonism. He is no longer a warning, but a reflection.

I would also like to posit that a queer vampire and all it represents psychologically also lends itself to an outlet of projection. As Haggerty goes on to say, "the vampire represents the return of the repressed in a culturally significant way: … the vampire represents everything that the culture desires and everything it fears" (9). This is perhaps best represented by the antagonism of the mortal woman in the Theatre, in which Santiago questions the young woman who, for all intents and purposes, is no different from any of the un-endangered mortals in the audience; he even offers to allow her to exchange places with a friend or audience member, if she so despises the idea of death, to which she vehemently refuses. This refusal is met by Santiago's own sadistic reasoning, unstated but understood by Louis in his narration: "And I knew, if she said she could, how he would only condemn her, say she was as evil as he for marking someone for death, say that she deserved her fate" (224). The projection is experienced by the fictional audience; they see the young girl being tormented on the stage, they sense her fear and discomfort, and instead of addressing their discomfort or balking in empathy, they continue to watch, enraptured. This young woman is experiencing Žižek's foreclosure of the social structure, on the opposite end of how the audience experiences it.

But we see not only the antagonism of the young woman, but the allure of Death in action. Louis refers to Santiago's "character" as "handsome" and "Death in love" as he enters the scene, defining in no obscure terms the allure of his character and the sensuality of Death (221). Further, even the dialogue delivered by Santiago allows for the audience to plainly view this character as a suave, desirable man, and one who is explicitly interested in this Maiden figure romantically: he asks her, as she is begging for her life to be spared, "'Do you know what it means to be loved by Death? … Do you know what it means to have Death know your name?'" (224). The deliverance of these questions is the very instance that hinges *Interview with the*

Vampire to the motif: is Louis not loved by gentleman Death? Is the source of his torment not the very fact that Death knows his name? Louis is both the Maiden and the Maiden's voyeur; he is witnessing his own seduction into the hands of Death and doing little to stop it, but everything to revel in the tale after it's been said and done and Lestat is no more, abandoned and alone in the very same place in which the story began – New Orleans. Louis is the surrogate for the motif to be at once subverted and illustrated in perfected form – and his admiration of the young woman on the stage shows that he is at least consciously aware of this paradoxical entanglement.

The role of the voyeur here exists on a convoluted level: Louis forces himself into the role of the passive observer (and occasional Maiden) rather than the active Death because he does not wish to be viewed as a monster or villain; he wishes to control the audience's perception of him as something to be pitied rather than feared. By joining the audience in the Theatre, he aligns himself with the mortals once again and marks himself as a watcher of the motif rather than active participant. This contradicts the beginning of the interview, where Louis attempts to cement himself as the Maiden figure – it seems as though, through his proximity to Armand and distance from Lestat, Louis begins to navigate through his self-victimization and into a purgatory-like state between the roles: voyeur, vampire, mortal. Given that the novel is an interview, told entirely by Louis with no other input from the other characters within the novel, Louis becomes an unreliable narrator; he controls how he is presented, the progression of events, and what he does and does not choose to withhold. He spins a story of his own design, manipulating our (the audience's) perception of him and the events he describes – and, because he seems to be aware of this motif at least on a fundamental level, of course he is going to place himself in a passive role of both Maiden and witness. By aligning himself with the audience in the Theatre des Vampires, he places himself among the same role as the reader of his interview,

absolving him of all guilt – though this absolution is just as superficial as the "actors" (really, predatory vampires) in the Theatre.

Anne Rice, through her tangled web of blending fiction and reality, reveals a complex and often perplexing commentary on the mingling of social fears and desires – by placing her vampires in a metafictional context wherein Louis' interview serves as a spectacle for mortals, she brings a sense that Louis is aware, at least partially, of the core functions of the Death and the Maiden motif: that humans are drawn to vampires (in this case, the representation of death) and the danger they represent. Her vessel for this navigation is Louis de Pointe du Lac – her melancholic Maiden, married to Death, consummate bride. And through Louis, too, we see the reflection of a purveyor of the motif as he watches the scene unfolding in the Theatre; his blindness to the very things he's witnessing reflect the blindness of the audience members, though curiously, he seems to be deeply aware of his own involvement in the motif as he regales his tale to the journalist at the story's beginning.

CHAPTER 5. NEIL JORDAN'S *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE* (1994)

"But Death We Are, and Death We've Always Been"

Neil Jordan, the director of *The Crying Game* (1992), *Mona Lisa* (1986), and *The Company of Wolves* (1894) (among twenty-two other films), has long been known to undertake gritty, tense, dramatic narratives. His direction of the film adaptation of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* in 1994 came relatively early in his career – and at a time when American society was held in the grip of the AIDs crisis. Though the popular general discussion of the film seems to carefully take every opportunity to deny the blatant sexual tension that abounds in the book, the opening sequence seems to perpetuate the mirror images of the Death and the Maiden motif as we saw them in the source material. At the start of the film, we are met with the first glimpse of Louis de Pointe du Lac looking beautifully tortured. We learn that he is a recent widower who has buried his wife and child mere months into his marriage – this is, of course, a departure from the source material, in which Louis' tragedy stems from the death of his brother, for which he blames himself. Interestingly, this change seems to further posit Lestat de Lioncourt as Louis' replacement lover – mere moments into the film's opening scene, we are met with the sight of Lestat watching over Louis from a tavern balcony as he is threatened by a sore loser with a gun over a game of blackjack.

Jordan's 1994 adaptation of Rice's novel translates the textual evidence of the motif back into the visual; here, just as in the novel, we see Louis painted as caught between the role of both Death and the Maiden within both his turning scene and the Theatre des Vampires scene. Historically, as with the novel, we see much of the same homophobia at the center of the motif; where Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) existed in a society psychologically fixated on women's sexuality, Rice's novel navigated a society one century older, with different fears: the

homosexual. Jordan's adaptation, released two decades after the novel, shows the ways in which society has *not* grown – this dodging of homoeroticism and queerness through the veil of vampirism only proves the motif. More still, through lighting, coloration, physical blocking, and costuming, we see the voyeuristic examination of the motif from both Louis and the audience – both when he is telling the story, and when he is watching it.

I first want to examine the initial scene in which the audience can see Lestat standing on the tavern balcony, shown below (figure 9).

Figure 9. Jordan, Neil, *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures.

He is framed just out of sight, showing only his hand, while Louis sits in the Tavern below, prepared to meet his death. Interestingly the only clear figure in this shot is Louis who reclines in his chair exposing his chest to the man before him with a gun he invites Death, and, in turn invites Lestat – who, as we later discover in the film is the blatant representation of Death as we see him in the Death and the Maiden motif. Louis' positioning as the Maiden comes mere moments later, in the scene in which Lestat abducts Louis from an alleyway to sink his fangs into

his neck. Notably, in the scene pictured below, Louis' face shows him in a state not unlike sexual rapture – his hand, just out of shot, is positioned onto Lestat's shoulder, while Lestat bites into Louis' neck from the side (figure 10).

Figure 10. Jordan, Neil, *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures.

Their positioning as visually lying horizontal – though in the film they are in the air – implies further sexual contact between the two men. This contact is only broken when Lestat drops Louis from a height into the Mississippi River – as Louis describes it in his narration: "He left me there, on the banks of the Mississippi, somewhere between life and death" (Jordan 00:09:29). This positioning of Louis as existing somewhere in the liminal space between life and death further sets up his perspective for the entirety of the film – he is, at once, the Maiden and Death and the voyeur watching the motif unfold.

However, these same observations could be made for the novel itself; the important departure from the textual evidence of the motif in the novel into the visual evidence of the motif in the film begin shortly after Louis plunges into this liminal space between life and death. We see Lestat enter Louis' bedroom unannounced, uninvited, and standing at the foot of his bed, promising him immortality and an enriched, renewed life – a new sense of purpose. Visually, this positioning is reminiscent of Stokes' *Death and the Maiden*, in which the figure of Death lingers at the foot of the Maiden's bed (figures 11, 12).

Figure 11. Stokes, Marianne*, Death and the Maiden,* 1908. Courtesy of Wikipedia.

Figure 12. Jordan, Neil, *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures.

Through this visual, we now have confirmation of Lestat as the Death figure and Louis as the Maiden figure. In terms of the motif itself, despite the changes made, we still have Louis in this beautifully melancholic and perfectly tortured mindset in which he is the prime target for the clutches of Death, as shown in the paintings depicting the motif – instead of a beautiful virginal figure we see Louis who views himself as not only the narrative center, but also the victim.

Typically, in the artwork, here is where the narrative ends. Per the artwork, we are privy to the alluring seduction of Death unto the Maiden, but we rarely ever see their relationship consummated. This consummation, for Louis, happens in the following scene in which Lestat takes him to the Pointe du Lac family cemetery in order to complete the ritual of turning him into a vampire: draining Louis entirely of blood and allowing Louis to drink from Lestat. Much like the scene outside of the Tavern we witness Lestat and Louis locked in a heavily erotically depicted embrace that almost uncomfortably mirrors human sexuality (figure 13).

Figure 13. Jordan, Neil, *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures.

Further, we encounter the narrative pivot in which Louis, for the first time, is depicted biting Lestat back in order to fully complete the transformation. Through completing this ritual, we witness Louis stepping into the liminal space and occupying it rather than simply living in purgatory as he was in the bedroom scene, prior to biting Lestat back. In a more blatant sense, we also see Louis physically die on screen; this is depicted shortly after drinking from Lestat, in which the camera focuses on a close up of Louis' motionless face and his unblinking, opened eyes: he has become Death (Jordan 00:13:35). By watching Louis enact this form of agency with which he chooses Death (and vampirism), we watch him transpose from the simple one-dimensional role of the Maiden and blending into a manifold depiction of all sides of the motif, including the voyeur.

Though Jordan's depictions of Rice's vampires obviously still abound with the same homoerotic tension as the source material, the reception and perception of this tension, especially

by those involved with the production of the film, proves interesting: cited in Katherine Ramsland's essay "*Interview with the Vampire*: How the Movie Got Made," Tom Cruise, when presented with the topic of the sexual tension between Lestat and Louis, described their relationship as "vampire-erotic" rather than "homoerotic" – he similarly went on to say that "there is an eroticism, but I think if someone is a homosexual, it will be homoerotic, and if they're not homosexual, it will be hetero-erotic" (184). The same psychology that suggests that people within a society are drawn to what the society condemns seems to be at play in a very tangible manner through the discussion of this film: the vampire is the condemned object within the society – it is Žižek's foreclosed object; the same can be said for the homosexual. Even Jordan, who considers himself a proponent of getting weird with sexuality and gender in his movies, seems to not believe *Interview* is as sexually divergent from social norms as his other projects – and example of note being 2011's television series *The Borgias*, a dramatic retelling of the papal family of the same name, rife with sexuality and the bending of social expectation of both women and positions of power. Ramsland cites him as saying that he "had less to be concerned about *Interview*" than his other films because:

> What's so great about this movie is that the vampires don't have sex – the blood-sucking act itself is their orgasm. Therefore, every possible facet of life becomes an erotic possibility. If you eliminate the act of two people mating, you can put eroticism into everything. That, more than anything, is the visual metaphor of the movie. (184)

While Jordan is correct in his analysis that there is no actual on-screen sex between Lestat and Louis, and that the blood-drinking is analogous to orgasm and sexual relations between the two, he also seems to ignore the fact that this is still a queer love story, albeit a toxic one. It seems as though the homosexuality and sexual tension between Lestat and Louis are discarded in favor of discussing the monstrous and the vampiric – they are vampires before they are homosexuals, before they are a facsimile of human relationships.

What similarly interests me about Jordan's observation is that he seems to be just on the mark of the observation I am attempting to make, which is that the sexual tension in the movie comes from the very absence of the actual sex itself; we, as the viewers and the voyeurs, are so obsessed with Žižek's foreclosed objects of heterosexual society that we are collectively hallucinating a sexual relationship between these two vampires. Jordan himself says something similar in an interview with Harper's Bazaar:

> Everything is sexual—the blood, the taste of another person's life, is sexual. But they don't take of their clothes and go at each other ... so we got to make a beautifully erotic thing with the issue of sex everywhere, yet nowhere. Once we began filming we realized how charged every little thing was, every little gesture between Tom and Brad. (183)

However, we see again a denial of the homosexuality between the two men and, rather, we focus only instead on the fact that these are vampires engaging in sexual relations with each other – the sex is now blood, because witnessing a sex scene between the two male characters would disturb the narrative and resolve the tension; this is not satisfying to the viewers of a monster movie. While one could argue that a vampire-vampire relationship is more or less semantically identical to the definition of a homosexual relationship, it is still worth noting that the queerness is sidestepped in favor of the monstrous fraternizing with the monstrous – the social psychology aligns the two on the same latitude. In fact, this very point is made in P. Stuart Robinson's "Tamed Monsters and Human Problems." Robinson states that, "simply put, the monster is a living being, which is in some way held to be wrong, to deviate from the norm" (107). In what is objectively a deeply homophobic society, it comes as no surprise that the unconscious desire to explore homosexual relationships must first be buried beneath several layers of horror and monstrosity, in much the same way that we are, in one fell swoop, repulsed by and attracted to death. To explain the strange concept of presence within absence (in terms of Jordan's observation that the lack of sex is what generates such intense sexual tension) Robinson further

states that “Social dynamics are experienced, at the very least, on an unconscious level, and leave their mark—quite literally—in the symbolic traces of desire” – meaning, there is an absolute recognition of this latent social desire to explore the taboo subject of homosexuality, but, like with Death and the Maiden in artwork, the denial of consummation fuels the allure and seduction of the curiosity (108).

Perhaps even more interesting (and equally as maddening), we see this exact psychology playing out subtextually within the scene in which Louis visits Theatre des Vampires in Paris – a den of sadistic debauchery wherein, as Brad Pitt’s Louis describes, a small coven coven of “vampires pretending to be humans pretending to be vampires” seek their prey in almost-volunteering mortals (Jordan). The scene spans approximately three minutes of the film's runtime; within these three minutes we watch a broody, dark robe-clad Santiago torment a fair-haired and light-complected young woman on a stage lit with candles and chandeliers. The deeply romantic imagery within this scene mirrors precisely the same romanticisms of Death and the Maiden artwork; the dusky, seductive “mood lighting” of the stage at allures the passive witnesses – the voyeurs, the purveyors of art – into placid rapture. As the scene begins, we are met with a wide shot of the audience, in which a young woman sits central with an expression of both disgust and intrigue on her face as she watches the young mortal woman’s torment enacted on the stage (figure 14).

Figure 14. Jordan, Neil, *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures.

But there is an important observation within this examination of the audience – Louis is there, too. He has surpassed the role of both death and the maiden and has slotted himself comfortably into the role of the purveyor. He now watches as the scene unfolds before him, just as he unfolded the scene for the boy to which he is delivering his interview. Even Louis' voyeurism here has the distinct but faint essence of superficial sensibility, just as viewers of the art motif – he watches, he reacts in disgust, but he does not look away. Perhaps most notably Louis displays this sensibility when he watches Armand disrobe the young woman until she is fully nude on the stage: his only comment here, then, is the simple word: "monstrous" (01:18:56). Of course, what separates Louis from the rest of the audience is the fact that he is one of these "monstrous" beings – he is a vampire, and there is little to separate him from the beings on the stage. In fact, Louis' fascination with his own victimhood and melancholy creates a muddled portrait of who is the monster and who is the victim in the Theatre des Vampires – who is Death and who is the

Maiden? The entire scene in the Theatre is one long gallery of the motif: the undressing, the "gentle" touches, the passive victimhood of the young woman – all of these elements are present in the artwork, from Baldung Grein's 16th century paintings (figure 15) to Adolf Hering's (figure 16) at the cusp of the 20th century.

Figure 15. Baldung Grien, Hans, *Death and the Maiden*, 1518-1520. Courtesy of the Web Gallery of Art.

Figure 16. Hering, Adolf, *Death and the Maiden*, 1900. Public domain.

With this new positioning as an audience member rather than a storyteller, Louis has shirked the label of either starring role, instead landing himself in the liminal space between both: he is Death, and he is the Maiden; he is the cruel voyeur bearing witness to the scene.

This blending of roles becomes apparent in the visuals of the film rather than the text of the novel within the fact that the camera repeatedly cuts to Louis as these figures of death arrive onto the stage; just before the young woman's death we watch as Armand sinks his teeth into her neck and then, in the immediate next shot, we see Louis, as though representing a manner of eye contact between himself and Armand as Armand kills the Maiden on the stage (figures 17/18).

Figure 17. Jordan, Neil, *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures.

Figure 18. Jordan, Neil, *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures.

Whether these allusions to the motif were intentional or not per Jordan, they certainly give a depth of analysis to the scene that seems to stretch outside of the boundaries of simple fiction and storytelling – we, the viewers of the film, are aligned much with the audience in the Theatre, just as Louis is aligned with them and the vampires both. We have passively consumed the story of Louis' vampiric life throughout the course of the film, have witnessed what Louis wishes us to regard as the tragedy that is his circumstance, and we have done nothing but participate. Like the mortal audience in the Theatre, once the credits roll, we are free to walk calmly out of the tale, satisfied with the narrative laid out before us of the very things we at once condemn and desire.

In terms of adaptation, where *Interview* departs from *Dracula* stems from the fact of changing societies. Whereas the core of *Dracula* was lost in the mix of societies dramatically changing and developing new sensibilities, *Interview* (1994) maintains much of its core messages from the novel because of the two decades of time between novel and film: society had not changed as intensely or dramatically as Stoker's England compared to Coppola's America. Rice's use of the motif has always dealt with the concepts of condemned desire in a society that demonized queer sexuality, even prior to the AIDs crisis. With Louis, have a Maiden who denies his alliance with Death through the manipulation of the voyeur, of which he seems to be aware – he wishes to convince the audience that he is one of the victims. Jordan's adaptation remains faithful to that execution of the motif, though adapting it into film reveals a similar, underlying social truth: by Jordan himself denying the sexuality of the film, it becomes a strange new layer of social denial, feeding further into the motif itself.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

The Death and the Maiden motif began in a time when humanity was forced to reckon with the fragility of their own lives after the Black Death tore through Europe and devastated the population unlike anything prior. This constant exposure to death morphed into a morbid fascination; Baldung Grien and Deutsch, pioneers of the motif, were the first to express this fascination, though it would be amiss to assume they were the originators of the fascination itself – the psychology behind fetish, taboo, and sensuality is far too established by Batailles, Freud, and Žižek to make such a claim. However, in representing this draw to the weird and morbid through art, they created a lasting thread by which to measure the values and foreclosed objects of a social consciousness, reflected especially in the genre of vampire fiction that carries across both literature and film.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) laid bare the fears of late Victorian society: the Victorian New Woman, independent, autonomous, and headstrong; and the foreigner. Mina Harker's ability to resolve the threat presented by Dracula, the Death figure, came from her characterization as the stronger, more favorable New Woman (and by extension, the more capable Maiden – not a victim, like Lucy, her narrative opposite). Stoker's cautionary tale of the evils encroaching upon a vulnerable society reflected Victorian social fears and obsesssion much like Baldung Grien and Deutsch's paintings reflected the fears and obsessions of death and the consequences of falling out of Godly favor. And, just shy of a century later, when Francis Ford Coppola adapted the novel into film, these fears were largely irrelevant to 1990s American audiences, and thereby transformed: though it contained less of what to fear according to the original source material, new social sensibilities arose – that of heterosexual romance.

Dracula's initiation of the vampire fiction genre brought forth Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, another case study in the psychosocial profile of a society, this time 1970s America. We saw, with Louis, the arrival of homophobia as a dominant social attitude – the fear of sexuality, of denying the norm. Louis became the Maiden, and Lestat the figure of Death, but with a new take on the motif: our Maiden had joined forces with Death, and in his ability to understand the psychosocial forces at play, manipulated the story to cast himself as a victim rather than willing participant in the completion of the motif and arrival into the world of Death. Neil Jordan's 1994 adaption did much of the same, though allowed us the unique glimpse into the role of the voyeur through the use of visuals rather than text – a role that had, for the most part, gone unspoken in vampire fiction until its transparency in *Interview*, though one that had been there the entire time – it was us, the viewer, witnessing the motif unfolding and exposing our collective psyche.

It is important to keep a finger on the pulse of this thread; by examining the recurrence of the motif, again and again in art, text, and film, we lay bare the fears of contemporary society. While the things that posit and simultaneous fascination within us will change and mutate over time, the figures of the motif will not – making it a perfect template for which to study the evolving social constructions of human society.

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