

2000

Filming Dracula: Vampires, Genre, and Cinematography

Jörg Waltje
Ohio University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/dracula-studies>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Waltje, Jörg (2000) "Filming Dracula: Vampires, Genre, and Cinematography," *Journal of Dracula Studies*: Vol. 2 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/dracula-studies/vol2/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Research Commons at Kutztown University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Dracula Studies by an authorized editor of Research Commons at Kutztown University. For more information, please contact czerny@kutztown.edu.

Filming Dracula: Vampires, Genre, and Cinematography

Cover Page Footnote

Jörg Waltje, Ph.D. is Director of the Language Resources Center at Ohio University. His academic interests also include instructional technologies and Computer-Assisted Language Learning.

Filming *Dracula*: Vampires, Genre, and Cinematography

Jörg Waltje

[Jörg Waltje PhD is Director of the Language Resource Center at Ohio University. His academic interests also include instructional technologies and Computer-Assisted Language Learning.]

On a Tuesday morning Katje discovered that Dr. Weyland was a vampire, *like the one in the movie she had seen last week*. (Charnas 3-4, emphasis added)

Films that belong to the same genre are like the links of a chain, yet any generic type of film will also mark its difference from its predecessors. These films remain aware of their heritage and draw on earlier examples by modifying and reinterpreting certain aspects that are generically coded, with differing results. Accordingly, Ken Gelder points out:

Each new vampire film engages in a process of familiarisation and defamiliarisation, both interpellating viewers who already “know” about vampires from the movies (and elsewhere), and providing enough points of difference (in the narrative, in the “look” of the vampire, and so on) for newness to maintain itself. (86)

As I intend to work out in this article, films of a particular genre have the ability to do more than merely propagate received motifs and structures. They also comment on the art form of film itself, and how it has changed over a period of time. An analysis of stylistic and technical devices entails information not only about the progress of cinematography, but also about the self-awareness of film as a medium that makes use of a certain apparatus – an apparatus of which the audience is generally kept unaware in other filmic genres.¹ I will look closely at three vampire films, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922), Tod Browning’s *Dracula* (1931), and Francis Ford Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992), and in an analysis of their filmic techniques work out how the two earlier films constituted what was then to become a genre, and how the structure of genre is closely related to the parameters of myth. My thesis can be summarized as follows: Stylistic/formal features that were developed in *Nosferatu* and *Dracula* with their combined influence molded the vampire films to come and found a preliminary culmination point in Coppola’s treatment of the *Dracula* subject. I will focus on the depiction of the vampire through gestures and make-up, lighting and editing techniques as well as special effects and framing. Lastly, I will point out how vampire films and fictions, like myths, mirror the structure underlying our psychic apparatus. The fact that *Dracula* is a prototype of myth as well as an ideal representative of genre is responsible for our conscious and unconscious attraction to the figure of the vampire.

Especially in the overtly self-reflexive horror subgenre of the vampire film, the (post-modern) technique of including intertextual references into texts can only be savored by those familiar with earlier horror films, who in turn will enjoy watching early films because of their inter-relation with the contemporary oeuvre. In the manner of a hermeneutic circle, each film bears the possibility of enriching the experience of the other, regardless of its ability to create suspense and terror. The epigraph introducing this article stems from Suzy Charnas’ 1980 novel *The Vampire Tapestry*, and perfectly illustrates that modern people derive their knowledge about vampires from the cinema. A random person who grew up in the western hemisphere, when asked for the name of a vampire, would almost certainly

¹“Apparatus” here is understood as the formal elements which make up a film and the effect their use might have on the audience. Varying use of lenses, light, camera angles, *mise en scène*, editing, sound, a particular film stock, etc. can be employed to evoke certain reactions/emotions in the audience, and a trained observer will be aware of that.

respond with “Dracula,” although not that many people might be aware of the fact that the name originated in a novel by the Anglo-Irish writer Bram Stoker. But where did the original audience for a film like *Nosferatu* get its information about vampires? Were those people who had not read Stoker’s novel *tabulae rasae* when they entered the movie theater? This is what often is assumed when we are thinking about the beginnings of a genre (any genre), disregarding the fact that a whole intertextual set of vampire depictions was already in existence all over Europe, for example through popular theater plays and operas, the Grand Guignol, woodcuts and book illustrations. Nevertheless, it seems safe to say that after the appearance of the vampire on film, all subsequent depictions are more or less heavily influenced by the earliest examples of cinematic adaption of Stoker’s master text. Since the beginnings of cinematography, literally hundreds of vampire films have been made, with no end in sight.² Murnau’s *Nosferatu* is generally considered the first full-fledged cinematic treatment of the vampire, while more recent examples are Francis Ford Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992), Neil Jordan’s *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), Wes Craven’s *Vampire in Brooklyn* (1995), Stephen Norrington’s *Blade* (1998), and John Carpenter’s *Vampires* (1998).

According to the credits in *Nosferatu*, the script by Henrik Galeen was “adapted from the novel by Bram Stoker,” but Galeen and Murnau ignored the existing copyright. In turn, Stoker’s widow procured a court injunction against this unauthorized version of *Dracula* and almost succeeded in having all copies of the film destroyed. Several copies were saved since they had already been exported abroad.³ However, this German version bears only a nominal resemblance to its source. Murnau and Galeen had changed the original names and transferred the locale to Bremen. The tale has been stripped and simplified, and although the plot of *Nosferatu* like *Dracula* consists of three principal parts (namely: Jonathan’s voyage to Transylvania/his and Dracula’s race to Bremen/Dracula’s influence and demise), the last part revised Stoker’s fiction considerably. As Judith Mayne rightfully insists, it is not the case that literature provides an “unquestioned master code” that has to be translated into some cinematic equivalent. Every kind of *Verfilmung* creates a relationship between two texts, “a dynamic encounter rather than a static rendering of a story line from one medium to another” (25). Thus, this first film version of *Dracula* not merely deviates from the original, it appropriates the predecessor to the new medium.

The narrative structure in Stoker’s work calls attention to itself; the book comes in the form of an epistolary novel which has no narration but rather presents letters and diary-entries from several people. The point-of-view is constantly changing, and Murnau transfers this pivotal feature by using point-of-view (POV) shots, subjective camera, and cross-cutting sequences to construct his narrative. The most impressive scene illustrating this technique occurs halfway through the film. When Jonathan hears a clock strike midnight, he gets agitated and runs to the door.⁴ As he opens it a crack, we share his POV. In a long shot, Dracula is visible at the end of a long, dark corridor. A dissolve brings him closer, his shadow lurking behind him, and although we have seen his ghastly figure before, for the first time he wears no hat in this scene, and we perceive his bald head with pointed ears, while his long arms like claws stick threateningly out of his sleeves. He is the center of this tableau, framed by light in a coffin shape and by the darkness that surrounds him – indeed, it almost seems to radiate from him. This framing motif recurs throughout the film in different variations, often as Gothic arches, creating a feeling of confinement and enclosure, which is emphasized by the conventional use of the iris and masked shots. Harker attempts to hide in his room, but the door flies open, and out of the darkness the vampire approaches, halts under the

²For the most comprehensive listings of vampire films, see Alain Silver and James Ursini, eds., *The Vampire Film: From Nosferatu to Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1993) and J. Gordon Melton, *VideoHounds Vampires on Video* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1997).

³David J. Skal, *Hollywood Gothic* (New York: Norton, 1990) provides a detailed account of Florence Stoker’s fights to block the Murnau film and later attempts to transfer *Dracula* from the written word to stage and screen.

⁴Depending on the print, the characters come with different names: Dracula/Graf Orlok, Mina/Ellen, Jonathan Harker/Thomas Hutter, Renfield/Knock, Van Helsing/Prof. Bulwer.

arched doorway and is framed by it. Through crosscutting, Murnau depicts simultaneous events in Bremen. Mina wakes up with fear in her eyes and walks to the balcony in a “somnambulistic dream” as an intertitle informs us. The sequence continues with crosscutting: Harker is hiding under his bedcovers, the shadow of the Count can be seen on the wall behind Harker, with hands held high and pointed ears. Mina screams, and as the shadow recedes, the camera cuts to the Count who turns his head around to look over his shoulder, as if he had heard the scream. The reaction shot is set up so slowly that it is almost suffocating, but this is the normal speed at which the Count moves, and when the camera cuts back to Mina, an eyeline match makes it appear as if she is looking straight at the vampire, who walks out of the room with the door closing itself behind him.

This is a sequence only a film can represent – although Stoker changes narrative perspective throughout the novel, he cannot depict two (or more) scenes going on simultaneously as Murnau does it at times. There are other advantages film has over the written word. The immediacy of the medium enables effects that operate instantly on the beholder. What follows is the description Jonathan Harker gives of Count Dracula early in the novel:

His face was a strong – a very strong – aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor [The hands] were rather coarse--broad with squat fingers. Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point. (27)

A purist might criticize the fact that Max Schreck’s physique as Graf Orlok in *Nosferatu* has very little in common with Harker’s depiction of Dracula. Yet, what counts is that Schreck’s first appearance out of a dark tunnel underneath an archway sets up his persona instantaneously. One look is enough to create an aura of terror around him, an effect even the most imaginative reader will not derive from the passage quoted above and that only film can achieve. With literature, the text lies between the reader and the image and description can only unfold over time. Film, however, can work directly on the viewer; although for film theorists the medium can function as a filter in other respects.

Many of the scenes and effects Murnau created for *Nosferatu* went on to become tropes of the genre: the use of shadows as the harbingers of doom, shots and reverse shots from the perspective of the vampire approaching its victim and the victim shrinking from him, the extremely slow gait of the vampire, his threatening gestures with his right hand raised and his claw reaching out, the twitching and jerking portrayal of madness in Renfield, and the use of reaction shots to portray the effect of a statement or noise on the listeners (Dracula’s name, the clock striking midnight, the herald’s announcement, etc.). Murnau’s repeated use of the relatively open form in which the action is not contained or completed within the frame also indicates the potential off-screen menaces.

As is fitting for a film that deals with the supernatural, *Nosferatu* repeatedly makes use of special effects: doors opening by themselves; superimpositions and dissolves of the vampire; his erect rising from his coffin; the under-cranked stop-motion technique that results in sped-up, jerky movements when Dracula’s coach first approaches Harker, and later when the Count loads his coffins on a cart. Finally, the scene in the film which probably has received the most critical attention, is an insertion of negative footage creating an effect of surrealistic distortion as the hearse-like carriage enters “the land of the phantoms,” the latter perhaps an apt description of cinema itself.

While there are many scenes that could be singled out as precursors of the genre, there is another aspect in *Nosferatu* that is worth investigating more fully. Murnau’s film is extremely self-conscious, and in numerous instances the spectator is made aware of the fact that s/he is watching a film. *Dracula* was

published in 1897, and although the novel repeatedly refers to contemporary technologies like the typewriter and the phonograph, it ignores the fact that the cinema was emerging at the same time. Murnau, however, constantly alludes to film as an art form.

Nosferatu not only relates the story of vampiric contamination, but at the same time the film also comments on the medium of film itself. Dr. Van Helsing appears in an almost non-diegetic insert, his prominent role in the novel having been reduced so much that he seems dispensable for the unfolding of the events. The short scene in which he is lecturing to a group of men about “natural” vampires is not important in furthering the plot, but rather contains a subtle comment on the medium. Metaphorically, the polyp under Van Helsing’s microscope represents the vampire as we have seen him in superimpositions – “transparent and without substance” as the intertitle lets us know. But does this insert not stand as an allegory for the medium of film itself? The film strip is transparent: whatever is projected against the screen has no substance and represents merely a play of light and shadow, a *Lichtspiel*, as films were called in German at the time of the Weimar Republic when *Nosferatu* was released. The recurrent use of light falling in from a window alludes on the one hand to offscreen space as an outside world free from lurking evil, and on the other, to filmmaking itself. What else is film, if not light that falls through an opening and is captured on a piece of celluloid?

Tod Browning’s *Dracula*, the first sound version of the vampire tale, was not directly derived from Stoker’s novel, but based on an adaptation by Hamilton Deane and John Balderston. Their *Dracula: The Vampire Play* had stripped Stoker’s novel to the core so that the central conflict could be portrayed on a stage almost in accordance with the Aristotelian notions of unity in the drama. *Dracula: The Vampire Play* was set in merely two locales, Dr. Seward’s parlor and Carfax Abbey. Jonathan Harker’s travel to Transylvania, the voyage on the *Demeter*, and the Crew of Light’s pursuit of the Count to Transylvania had been eliminated. The play had enjoyed continuous success after its opening in New York in 1927 and prompted Universal to produce a film version. With Bela Lugosi as Count Dracula and Edward van Sloan as Dr. Van Helsing, Browning cast two actors who had already portrayed their characters on the stage. The whole film has a theatrical flair; entirely shot in the studio, many of the scenes seem staged and static, like tableaux captured by a camera. Yet, in some portions of the film the apparatus is put to work, especially in the portrayal of the vampire, which owes a lot to camera and lighting techniques but also to the theatrical artifice of the protagonist, Bela Lugosi. His portrayal of Dracula as a foreign predator in the guise of aristocratic sophistication became the role model for many vampires to come.

Early in the film, in a sequence of high and low angle-shots/reverse-shots, the relation between Dracula and his victim Renfield is set up: vampire and prey, or master and servant as it will become clear at a later point. In frames that contain both Dracula and another person, there is always an imaginary diagonal between the two heads. Even when Dracula is not standing a few steps up on a staircase, he is always taller; looking down on his counterpart he has an air of authority and danger. He is in control; when he leans forward, almost into the faces of the other characters, he appears ready to pounce on them. While the vampire in *Nosferatu* is mostly depicted by long and medium shots that kept him at a distance, Browning uses close-ups and low-angles to give Dracula a fearful appearance.⁵ Low key and underlighting, as well as the recurring use of an eye-light, emphasize the hypnotic power of the vampire and often create a dramatic horror effect by distorting Lugosi’s facial features.

It is noticeably quiet through these scenes (the film has no score that supplies nondiegetic sound), but we must not forget that sound is available.⁶ In contrast to *Nosferatu*, this vampire has a voice, and a striking one at that. Many of Lugosi’s utterances have found their way into the successors of Browning’s

⁵A shift in film history becomes perceptible here, namely the move from more traditional and almost “primitive” film relying on a “proscenium arch” composition towards the establishment of close-ups and editing. For more information compare David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, Janet Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) 194-213.

⁶In 1999, 68 years after its original release, Philip Glass composed a score for *Dracula*. Universal Home Videos now makes *Dracula* available with this soundtrack played by the Kronos Quartet as part of their “Classic Monster Collection.”

Dracula. Lugosi's low voice, his staccato rhythm, and the extreme slowness of his articulation have often been mimicked and parodied, yet these features form another thread running through the genre. "I am – Dracula," he introduces himself nonchalantly to a baffled Renfield; when offscreen howling is heard he comments "Listen to them, the children of the night – what music they make," and when he serves wine to his guest he explains "I never drink – wine." His pronunciation is guttural, rolling his R's he sounds as if a dangerous animal is hiding underneath the surface of the well-groomed aristocrat, and his Hungarian accent characterizes the Count as the dangerous, intrusive foreigner that he is coded as being.

Like Murnau's *Nosferatu*, Tod Browning's *Dracula* is aware of its constructedness as a film and covertly alerts the viewer to this fact. Framing and editing call attention to themselves and foreground the apparatus whenever we see a character walking from one frame into the next without a cut on movement. It is striking that Browning wholly abstains from the use of special effects. The pans and cuts that circumvent the vampire's transformation from a bat to human shape and his rising from the coffin make no effort to create an illusion of verisimilitude. Browning plays with the medium and with the spectator. Instead of using dissolves and superimpositions, he consciously calls attention to framing and editing. Scenes the spectator is most eager to perceive are always relegated offscreen, undermining the expectations of the audience and mocking them by compromising their visual pleasure.

The fact that this vampire, unlike the one in *Nosferatu*, has no mirror-image finally presents us with a paradox. When Van Helsing opens the cigarette box, a close up of the mirror shows Mina but no image of Dracula. If the screen is considered a mirror, a representation of the vampire would be impossible, yet we can see him throughout the film. Indeed, we can only see him because of the screen: only film makes the vampire representable. In a way, film lends itself to be the medium of the vampire just as the figure of the vampire connotes the nature of film. An interplay of light and darkness – the *Lichtspiel* – defines the vampire as well as the audience. The vampire only comes out in the dark and spends the rest of the time in his coffin. The spectators voluntarily sit in a coffin (the darkened cinema), watching a screen on which not only light but also (within and between every frame) darkness is projected. Having turned themselves into vampires, they are waiting for the film-vampire to come out and join them. Furthermore, film has the same hypnotic power over its audience as Dracula in Browning's version over his victims.

The notions of transformation and constancy, of novelty and recognition, not only define the vampire but also its medium, film. Browning takes up the conventions Murnau had brought to life in his treatment of *Nosferatu* and expands on them. A coded use of lighting, editing techniques like crosscutting, the gestures, poise, and gait of the vampire, his pallid make-up and mascara-eyes, these are only some of the features Browning adapted from his predecessor. The portrayal of the Count as an aristocrat, mobile framing, tracking and craning shots, and most importantly the use of sound, both onscreen and offscreen, add a new dimension to the awaking genre. Creaking doors, howling wolves, the vampire's metaphorical association with vermin and rodents, and the ominous utterances of Lugosi became stock features for vampire films to come.⁷ Both *Nosferatu* and *Dracula* are more or less conscious of their constructedness and their cinematic apparatus, and make at least subtle efforts to communicate this self-reflexivity to the spectator. A sense of film history reflected in intertextual references as well as the preoccupation with the cinematic apparatus became a token of the vampire genre and finds its climax in Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (*BSD*), a film which not only covertly reflects on the medium of film, but rather makes film history and cinematic apparatus one of its central concerns.

Seventy years after *Nosferatu*, Coppola's version of *Dracula* seemingly takes the audience back to the original concept. The film, which opened on Friday, November 13, 1992, on almost 2500 screens throughout the United States and Canada, provided Columbia Pictures with its largest release ever.⁸ *BSD* had the seventh best opening for any film in history, which goes to show that the interest in vampire

⁷The use of diegetic sound is, indeed, one of the most striking features of the horror film in general: in well-executed horror films the soundtrack is always part of the narrative (diegesis).

⁸See J. Gordon Melton, *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1994) 124.

fiction runs high, a fact that is further documented by the number of vampire films which have appeared in the wake of *BSD*. Silver and Ursini point out that this ultimate version of the Dracula legend is “both the highest budgeted and largest grossing vampire film ever made” (155).

Bram Stoker’s Dracula was greeted with sarcasm by many critics although it not only revitalized the genre, but in certain respects – by rediscovering and foregrounding the eminent traits of the genre – it also redefined some of the crumbling generic boundaries. For Stoker purists *BSD* quickly became a very controversial film, since Coppola and his screen writer James V. Hart claim that they adhered as closely as possible to Bram Stoker’s original, while only including changes they deemed necessary to improve on the original story’s plausibility and cohesiveness.

Mainly, it was that no one had ever done the book. I’m amazed, watching all the other Dracula films, how much they held back from what was written or implied, how they played havoc with the characters and their relationships ... Aside from the one innovative take that comes from history – the love story between Mina and the Prince – we were scrupulously true to the book. (3)

There is certainly more than just one “innovative take” in *BSD*’s treatment of the original novel. Yet it is fairly obvious that Coppola and Hart felt compelled to draw on seventy years of vampiric cinematography. With a plethora of intertextual references, they are paying homage to their predecessors while trying to provide stimulating material to the devotees of the genre.

At an earlier point in our discussion we had recourse to an observation made by Ken Gelder which is worth restating here. “Each new vampire film,” Gelder points out, “engages in a process of familiarisation and defamiliarisation, ... providing enough points of difference ... for newness to maintain itself” (86). For David Glover the “protean durability of the un-dead” is exemplified in the vampire’s ability to “reproduce itself in a seemingly endless series of copies, always resourcefully different from previous incarnations, frequently altering the rules of the genre in order to secure a new lease on life” (126-27). This oscillation between new and old motifs, and the allusion to familiar, yet sometimes unconscious features and sentiments, seems to be what we find at the core of any genre fiction. In the case of *BSD* the technique of alluding to recurring staples of the genre, a trademark of any generic fiction, and the tendency for intertextual references has nevertheless met with on-going criticism ever since the film first opened.

Bram Stoker’s Dracula emerges “like a music video directed by Dario Argento,” Richard Dyer comments. “It’s post-modern allusionism, a welter of things to make reference to without any of them mattering much” (18). According to Kim Newman the film “revives the most tiresome of monster motivations ... : the search for the reincarnation of the lost love,” instead of providing new impulses to a faltering genre (13). Like other recent horror fictions, the film merely embodies “plagiarism and theft, dignified as ‘post-modernist,’” Iain Sinclair grudgingly observes of the achievement of Hart and Coppola’s endeavors (15).

Such harsh criticism clearly disregards the importance of what has to be defined as the *sine qua non* of generic fiction: repetition and recognition of familiar elements. “[The] rediscovery of what is familiar, ‘recognition,’ is pleasurable,” Freud points out, and pleasurable effects arise from “a repetition of what is similar, a rediscovery of what is familiar” (128). It is also worthwhile to recall Wellek and Warren’s dictum that both “novelty and the sense of recognition” are responsible for our pleasure when consuming (literary) fictions (225).

In *BSD* the pleasures of recognition indeed work on several levels:

- recognition of familiar elements of the *Dracula* story;
- recognition of the allusions to other treatments of the story (intertextual recognition);
- recognition of one’s own entanglement in the narrative (the underlying, repetitive structure of the genre mirroring the structure of our unconscious).

Thus, I would claim, one is doing the film an injustice by dismissing it so peremptorily. Indeed, as a prototype of generic fiction, the film has many redeeming qualities, one of which is Coppola's uncanny ability to synthesize the materials of his predecessors.

Many characters and incidents from Bram Stoker's novel which have never before found their way onto the screen are included in Coppola's version, and the frequent exercise of mis- and re-naming the characters has been avoided. The narrative technique, at least in the first two thirds of the film, directly reflects Stoker's epistolary style. Multiple strands of narrative, told by the use of varying technologies (Jonathan's diary entries, Seward's phonograph records, Mina's typewritten accounts, letters, newspaper-clippings, etc.) are held together by voice-overs, captions, maps, visual and aural cues and links.

The frequent, almost excessive, use of superimpositions and dissolves enables and enhances the depiction of multiple points of view and the unceasing flow of information, which the novel presents in a somewhat formal, almost pedantic manner. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* makes use of many of the formal elements we have determined as indispensable for the vampire genre in our earlier discussion of *Nosferatu* and *Dracula*. At the same time it incorporates the later Hammer-Film tradition (1960s to 1970s) in its use of coded colors and visible blood, and feeds on film versions of *Dracula* and other vampires. Examples include the motif of Dracula's search for his lost love (used in Dan Curtis's 1974 *Dracula* with Jack Palance), and the cut to roast beef (from Tony Scott's 1983 *The Hunger*).

The prominent use of shadows anticipating or announcing the arrival of evil, fast crosscutting enabled by increased editing technology, the familiar gestures, poise, and gait of the vampire, his pseudo-Hungarian accent, the pointed fingernails (we are even treated to the hairy palms of Gary Oldman's Dracula), the frequent use of low angle, (medium) close-up shots for Dracula, the claustrophobic framing of the vampiric world with the help of irises and arches, tracking and craning shots, the quasi-expressionist *chiaroscuro*-lighting, and many other allusions to its generic predecessors, combine and refine the now standardized elements of vampire cinema in *BSD*.

While both *Nosferatu* and *Dracula* were already covertly conscious of their constructedness as film and communicated their self-awareness of being an art form to the spectator, *BSD* makes film and the cinematic apparatus a central issue in its portrayal of Dracula's sojourn in London. An undercranked, jerky scene filmed in faded colors with a Pathé camera gives an impression of documentary material, and at the same time addresses the dichotomies between the real and illusory, representation and recognition for which both the vampire and its medium stand. We are (once again) made aware of the fact that a vampire has no mirror image, since the film shows us the reflection of a newspaper in a window pane which seems to float through the air where Dracula should be. Yet after a cut, the screen reverts to a depiction of the vampire, for it is the screen alone which makes the vampire visible for us. The sequence leads up to Dracula's first encounter with Mina and their subsequent visit to the cinematograph. With its inserts and backdrops of film-within-film the sequence embodies another, and this time highly foregrounded, self-reflexive acknowledgment of the art form and its conventions.

The most striking reflection concerning the paradox of the vampire's non-representability, however, is an earlier segment in which Mina comes upon the rape of Lucy in the maze at Hillingham. The wolf-like creature Dracula has metamorphosed into turns towards Mina and the spectators, who share her POV. For just a few frames (too fast to be *consciously* recognized) the "human" features of the vampire are superimposed on the wolf's face, and both Mina and the audience are ordered "Do not see me!" Only the screen can depict the vampire; although film is its medium, our recognition here is explicitly forbidden. Once again this scene reveals the paradox of the vampire's unrepresentability, at the same time that it addresses the hypnotic power both the vampire and film can have on the perceiver.⁹

Some of the outstanding novel elements contained in *Bram Stoker's Dracula* are the costume designs by Eiko Ishioko and the use of extra-diegetic sound to link scenes and characters. Both the costumes with their crests and insignia and the soundtrack by Wojciech Kilar add to the film as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a

⁹"See me now!" Dracula orders Mina/the viewer a little later, and in the subsequent scene at the cinematograph Mina articulates our uncanny recognition of the vampire: "My God, who are you? I know you."

complete and integrated work of art in which all elements are directed toward the same end. With their recurrent themes and motifs and by means of intra-textuality, they reinforce the film's underlying repetitive structure. The combination of tactile, visual, and aural elements, as for example in Dracula's undulating blood-red cloak and Lucy's floating orange gown when she falls prey to the vampire in the garden during a thunderstorm, can be singled out here. The gentle musical cues of the love-theme, Dracula's and Mina's dance among a myriad of candles, and the thunderous, angry instrumentation of Lucy's final bloodletting crosscut with Mina's and Jonathan's wedding in the Romanian convent, which at the same time reverberates with subtle musical cues from the above-mentioned love-theme – all these elements combine to provide the spectator with heretofore unknown synaesthetic pleasure, appealing more to the body than to the mind. The story itself as vampiric fiction contains no surprises and adheres to Stoker, with the exception of Van Helsing's meta-narrative of Dracula's fight against the Turks and both the pseudo-historical and the contemporary love connection between Mina and her "Prince." The way in which it is filmed and edited, however, is imaginative, and, at times, even breathtaking.

In Coppola's film, not only the forces of good and evil but also centrifugal and centripetal forces are battling against each other. The figure of Dracula is the center of the narrative, yet at the same time the film tries to break away from its center in an attempt to include all possible features of the generic tradition. The abstract concept "Dracula" has taken on a life of its own and represents a certain master-narrative, despite – but also in addition to – the fact that it simultaneously functions as a reconfiguration of other mythological and artistic motifs.

Both Richard Dyer and Manohla Dargis have alluded to the film's discreet references to Christian mythology. In Coppola's and Hart's treatment of what I shall loosely refer to as the Dracula myth, the figure of Dracula becomes an inversion of Christ. Deserted by God in his darkest hour, the defender of Christendom turns into a vampire, and thus becomes like Jesus, "a dead man who has eternal life" (Dyer 10). The idea that for the vampire blood becomes the life reverberates with the Christian dogma of transubstantiation. "The vampire has baptized her with his own blood," Van Helsing remarks when Mina begins to turn. As in the Christian belief system, redemption through love appears possible in *BSD*. In the final scenes (and even earlier on a portrait in Dracula's castle), the vampire's gory features metamorphose for fleeting moments into the bearded, long-haired figure which traditional Christian iconography depicts as the semblance of Christ.

"Love Never Dies" announces the original poster for the film's release, combining the public's interest in romantic stories, our preoccupation with the vampire, and our fascination with death, immortality, and reincarnation. The back cover of Coppola and Hart's *Dracula: The Film and the Legend*, a companion piece to the film which includes, among other things, stills and the original shooting script, defines its contents as "A Deathless Tale." Immortality here not only describes but inscribes the essential trait of the narrative, which strikes me insofar as important as the notion of immortality is closely related to the term "myth," a concept which, it has been hinted at, Dracula has become by now.

"Mythic thought is especially concerned to deny and negate the effect of death and to affirm the unbroken unity of life," David Bidney points out (10). For Marina Warner, myth's multiple functions consist of bringing binary oppositions into accord by "defining the forbidden and the alluring, the sacred and the profane, conjuring demons and heroes, saying who we are and what we want, telling a story which makes sense of things" (87). *Dracula* is indeed a prototype of myth as well as an ideal representative of genre. As vampire fiction the subject combines both the return of the repressed and the compulsion to repeat; thus it mirrors the structure underlying the psychic apparatus which is responsible for our conscious and unconscious attraction to the genre.

The simultaneous presence of folktales, medical case-histories, socio-historical and psychological insights, and twentieth century obsessions make up what has become the myth of the vampire, reflecting universal and innate fears, desires, and the structure of our mind. This is why any comprehensive version of *Dracula* unavoidably becomes a "maelstrom of sensations" (Dyer 10), "millennial rock'n'roll with all the stops out" (Sinclair 15). By now the vampire is a twentieth century myth, and its favored medium is film.

Yet, not only the preferred medium of the vampire has undergone some changes over the last century, the figure of the vampire itself has metamorphosed or been worked over again and again. In a fairly recent development, it has split into two halves, with its double leaving the realm of fiction. I am referring here to the figure of the serial killer, who embodies many of the traits of the vampire but presses closer to home and can be considered an updated and less “playful” version of one of our oldest obsessions. There has been a flood of commercially very successful serial killer fictions in recent years, which in my view reflect and exploit many of the traits set up by the vampire cinema but cater even more directly to the underlying repetitive structure of our mind and our innate desires, anxieties, and fears. Over the last 100 years, the image of the vampire has proven itself to be highly adaptable and it is far from being depleted. It will certainly be around for the next century, and as soon as the pendulum swings back from the blood-and-gore extremes, a definitive version of Bram Stoker’s novel – possibly this time starring Anthony Hopkins as Dracula but without any other “innovative takes” – would be more than welcome by most fans of the genre.

Works Cited:

- Bidney, David. “Myth, Symbolism, and Truth.” *Myth and Literature*. Ed. John B. Vickery. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1966.
- Charnas, Suzie McKee. *The Vampire Tapestry*. New York: Tor, 1986.
- Coppola, Francis Ford and James V. Hart. *Bram Stoker’s Dracula: The Film and the Legend*. New York: Newmarket, 1992.
- Dargis, Manohla. “His Bloody Valentine.” *Village Voice* 24 (Nov 1992).
- Dyer, Richard. “Dracula and Desire.” *Sight and Sound*. Jan 1993.
- Gelder, Ken. *Reading the Vampire*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Glover, David. “Travels in Romania: Myths of Origins, Myths of Blood.” *Discourse* 16.1 (Fall 1993).
- Mayne, Judith. “Dracula in the Twilight: Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922).” *German Film and Literature*. Ed. Eric Rentschler. New York: Methuen, 1986.
- Newman, Kim. “Bloodlines.” *Sight and Sound*. Jan 1993.
- Silver, Alain and James Ursini (eds). *The Vampire Film: From Nosferatu to Bram Stoker’s Dracula*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1993.
- Sinclair, Iain. “Invasion of the Blood.” *Sight and Sound*. Jan 1993.
- Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. 1897. New York: Signet, 1978.
- Warner, Marina. *Six Myths of Our Time*. New York: Vintage, 1995.
- Wellek, Rene and Austin Warren. *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956.