

2018

Why Can't They Let a Girl Marry One Man?: The Origins of Lucy Westenra's Suitors

Leah Davydov
Cleveland State 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

Davydov, Leah (2018) "Why Can't They Let a Girl Marry One Man?: The Origins of Lucy Westenra's Suitors," *Journal of Dracula Studies*: Vol. 18, Article 1.

Available at: <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/dracula-studies/vol18/iss1/1>

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.

Leah Davydov

**Why Can't They Let a Girl Marry One Man?:
The Origins of Lucy Westenra's Suitors**

Leah Davydov

[Leah Davydov is a second-year MA student in the English Literature program at Cleveland State University. She is presently working on a thesis exploring *Dracula* and its relation to late-Victorian mad scientist narratives and theatrical adaptations of *Faust*, and she hopes to eventually pursue a PhD, with the aim of doing work regarding the impact of various medical models of hypnosis on nineteenth-century fiction.]

It has become routine in *Dracula* scholarship to frame Lucy Westenra as a character whose Victorian audience would have read her as morally suspect and possessed of insufficient sexual self-control. A single line in one of her early letters, “Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?” (60) has been repeatedly cited as evidence that Lucy unacceptably desires three husbands and has appetites that align her with the *fin de siècle's* dreaded “New Women.” Scholars advocating for this reading of Lucy often link her allegedly intemperate appetites to her conversion to vampirism and eventual destruction at the hands of her former suitors, often while claiming that the Count's assaults upon her while she sleeps somehow constitute a “seduction.” Carol A. Senf, for example, states that Lucy's “desire for three

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

husbands suggests a degree of latent sexuality” (42) and goes on to define her interactions with Dracula as a “liaison” (43) in which the Count is “both death and the bridegroom par excellence” (47). Kathleen Spencer likewise claims that Lucy’s “sexuality is under imperfect control” and that her unconscious sleep-walking to the Whitby churchyard constitutes an “invitation” to her assailant (209-10); and Tanya Pikula argues that Lucy’s observation about her three suitors associates her with “unrestrained consumption” such that she is later “unable to resist Dracula’s charms” (288-289). This narrative, in which Lucy desires Dracula’s attacks and is complicit in them, treats the monstrous, vampiric Lucy as the inevitable result of the human Lucy’s uncontrolled libido and treats her death by staking as necessary to control and contain her un-Victorian appetites. Lucy’s ultimate fate—her decline, death, and destruction—becomes predicated on a single sentence. From her single remark on the difficulty posed by her three marriage proposals comes the unbroken sequence of tragedies that terminates in her transformation into a vampire with desires so terrible as to require her destruction. As Patrick McGrath explains, “Poor Lucy Westenra . . . is doomed, we suspect, the moment we hear her voice the wish that she might have *all three* of the men vying for her hand” (45).

The assertion that the assaults Lucy endures are consensual or even sought-after encounters hinges upon the belief that *Dracula’s* audience would have read Lucy’s statement regarding her suitors as so transgressive that it justifies the

character's eventual annihilation. Critics writing in this vein, however, often draw their conclusions about *Dracula's* readers based on broad generalizations regarding Victorian culture, and this limited contextualization leads to the assumption that Stoker and his readers conformed to a generally-accepted paradigm of nineteenth-century prudery. Once we examine Stoker's treatment of similar heroines in his other fiction, however, the notion that his views on women and sexuality aligned perfectly with the archetypal Victorian patriarch's becomes hard to support. Contemporary reviews of *Dracula* also offer little indication that the book's audience would have read Lucy as unacceptably licentious, and Stoker's working notes for the novel reveal sketches of a proto-*Dracula* whose plot stands in contradiction to claims that Lucy's behavior with regards to her suitors makes her fate inevitable. An examination of documents pertinent to *Dracula's* creation, its reception, and its place among Stoker's works reveal that Lucy's behavior, including her utterances early in the novel, falls within the boundaries of acceptable Victorian morality. Stoker's notes for the novel and his treatment of sexuality in his other works also offer clues that the presence of Lucy's three suitors may well have been a device intended to *deflect* the appearance of sexual impropriety rather than a means of affirming it.

It would be foolhardy, of course, to assert that *Dracula's* author does no moralizing in regard to women or that Stoker's works do not betray deep

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

anxieties about the changing position of women in *fin-de-siècle* society. Much of Stoker's fiction asserts that nature dictates innate submissiveness to womankind and condemns women attempting to be the aggressor in romantic relationships or (even worse) to enter the masculine sphere of politics. In both *Snowbound* (ch. 14) and *The Lair of the White Worm* (206), characters make vitriolic asides regarding the suffragette movement, and in *The Lady of the Shroud*, Teuta Vissarion goes so far as to directly denounce “self-seeking women of other nations [who] seek to forget their womanhood in the struggle to vie in equality with men!” (319). Elsewhere, Stoker expresses disapproval for women who have the audacity to pursue male attention, with the entirety of his 1905 novel *The Man* being concerned with the ill effects of a woman fulfilling Mina's prophecy regarding the New Woman (*Dracula* 86-7) and proposing marriage to a man (ch. 9). In addition to this direct criticism of women who trespass into social and political realms reserved for men, *Dracula*, as many have rightly pointed out, is haunted by the specter of sexually overaggressive and monstrous women who not only reject their prescribed role in society but violently invert it, lustfully approaching men for deadly “kisses” and preying upon the children a “good” Victorian woman ought instinctively nurture (Boudreau 6-7, Griffin 143). The three women in the castle and the *transformed* Lucy are all examples of this figure, which Stoker later revisits in *The Lair of the White Worm* with the ambitious social-climber Arabella Marsh, a woman who is not

only inappropriately aggressive in matters of courtship, but also an inhuman, primordial monstrosity bent on murder and destruction (197-203).

Far from being similar to monster women such as Arabella or even over-assertive, “mistaken” women such as *The Man's* Stephen Norman, the *human* Lucy is consistent with Stoker's subservient feminine ideal. Lucy, in fact, narrows her matrimonial choices by informing Seward and Morris that her affections already belong to another (Ifill 31). In an era where second proposals were common, a woman inappropriately lusting after three men would not take such deliberate measures to prevent two of them from continuing to court her. Characters in Stoker's works also appear to approve of women being candid in rejecting marriage proposals. Not only does Quincey Morris praise Lucy for her “honesty and pluck” in *Dracula* itself (60), but in Stoker's later novel *The Mystery of the Sea*, the narrating hero makes it clear that such bluntness in a woman may be taken as a mark of character. Archie Hunter, after having his initial proposal of marriage rejected by American socialite Margery Drake, claims that her rejection demonstrates “the natural pluck and dominance the assertion of individuality,” which he praises as being an admirable quality setting American women apart from their coy English counterparts (78).

Not only do her actions limit her potential partners, but as Helena Ifill has observed, it is doubtful that Lucy's words regarding multiple husbands were written to establish her as

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

promiscuous (31-2). Lucy's phrasing clearly indicates that the romantic desire at play in her statement is not her longing for multiple men but rather multiple men's longing for her. The question she poses is "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or *as many as want her?*" and not "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or *as many as she wants?*" She contemplates polyandry not because of her own desires but because of her emotional distress at being unable to fulfill the desires of others, and this is underscored by the two pauses she makes in writing the letter, where she becomes too overwrought regarding the feelings of her unsuccessful suitors to continue (58, 60). In fact, what Lucy's remark communicates is her emotional hypersensitivity rather than her sexual appetite. Mina later reiterates this character trait by describing Lucy as "so sweet and sensitive that she feels influences more acutely than other people do" (85) and "too super-sensitive a nature to go through the world without trouble" (86). Instead of depicting Lucy as over-libidinous to justify her destruction, Stoker depicts her as over-empathic for a practical narrative reason: hypersensitive women were thought to be more inclined towards somnambulism and to more easily enter trance states. One of the sources Stoker's listed in his notes for *Dracula*, Herbert Mayo's *On the Truths Contained in Popular Superstitions*, makes this connection explicit, stating that "the liability to trance is in proportion to delicacy of organisation, and higher nervous susceptibility" (Mayo 80). While susceptibility to trances and somnambulism has been given by

Spencer, without a source, as a “habit traditionally associated with sexual looseness” (210), Mayo indicates that “a blameless life [...] suits the production of trance” (115) and emphasizes that an entranced woman is essentially “innocent” in her behavior and maintains her “propriety of conduct” (102-103). Lucy’s display of emotionality over her three suitors, rather than marking her as morally suspect, helps to establish her as a sleepwalker and therefore as a person vulnerable to mesmerism, which is the primary method by which Dracula facilitates his assaults upon her.

The notion that a woman ought to be punished for desiring multiple men, even without acting on those desires, is also inconsistent with Stoker’s portrayals of women in other works. While an author’s separate works do not always have bearing on one another, it is important to note that Stoker ceaselessly revisits the same subjects and ideas throughout his literary productions. Certain character types, plot elements, and even specific phrases present in *Dracula* may be found in works both before and after *Dracula*. Jonathan Harker, for example, is but one of a large collection of heroic lawyers, and along with the protagonists of *The Mystery of the Sea* (8) and *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (4), he doubtlessly reflects Stoker’s own legal training as a barrister (Murray 114-5). The Count, far from being unique among Stoker’s villains, shares his dominant nature, rapaciousness, aquiline nose, and/or sharp teeth (23) with a number of other Stokerian antagonists, including the Judge from

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

"The Judge's House" (38-9), Geoffrey Brent from "The Secret of Growing Gold" (65), Solomon Mendoza from *The Watter's Mou* (32), Don Bernadino from *The Mystery of the Sea* (269, 328), and Edgar Caswall from *The Lair of the White Worm* (18, 288-9). Given these trends, it is sensible to examine Lucy in relation to the other physically frail and emotionally suggestible young women appearing in Stoker's fiction. In contrast to the willful, masculine Stokerian heroines cast from the same mold as Mina, Lucy-esque women such as *The Shoulder of Shasta's* Esse Elstree, *The Lair of the White Worm's* Lilla Watford, and *Lady Athlyne's* Joy Ogilvie tend to be passive in their reception of both male admiration and male menace, and as a result, they often find themselves in situations analogous to those Lucy encounters in *Dracula*. A survey of their character arcs, however, hardly supports the moral that has so often been drawn from Lucy's plight. Instead, these women offer clear examples to contradict the notion that Stoker would have assumed that a woman juggling multiple men must meet with misfortune or that a woman free from sexual desire will find herself secure.

Stoker's 1895 *The Shoulder of Shasta*, for example, features a sickly woman named Esse Elstree, whose similarities to Lucy include not only her delicate health but also her receipt of multiple proposals. During a travel cure that she takes to California's Mount Shasta, she becomes deeply infatuated with an unpolished trapper named "Grizzly Dick." Following her return to San Francisco, Esse's health deteriorates as she grows ill

with lovesickness. She eventually directs Peter Blyth, a concerned family friend, to speak to Dick on her behalf in the hopes of alerting him to her feelings, and while Blyth travels to Shasta, Esse meets another man more compatible with her station, falls in love with him, and becomes engaged. The climax of the novel offers us not only another instance of multiple proposals but features the supremely awkward scenario of Dick proposing to Esse *at her own engagement party*. Yet, despite this highly unconventional event and Esse's seemingly fickle shift in affections, the story ends happily with Dick becoming a fast friend of the newly wedded couple. One would think, if Stoker were an author to condemn women's unacted-upon desire for multiple men, he might have penalized Esse, or at the very least provided some commentary condemning her behavior. Instead, he frames Esse's shift in affections as a typical step in maturing womanhood, indicating her infatuation with Dick to be a "preliminary canter" of her affections" with a "limited purpose," which naturally gives way to the "later and truer love" she finds with Reginald (198). Unlike Lucy, who maintains a singular devotion to Arthur Holmwood throughout *Dracula*, Esse enters into a romantic relationship with one man while knowing that a suit is being made on her behalf with another. While she never commits the "heresy" that Lucy does in asking why a woman cannot marry multiple men, Esse's actions are nevertheless difficult to reconcile with the disapproval of female sexuality that Senf and others have attributed to Stoker.

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

While Esse manages to be courted by and, more audaciously, to court multiple men without suffering any tragedy, *The Lair of the White Worm's* Lilla Watford is brutalized and killed by a vampiric assailant without showing romantic interest in anyone. She and her cousin Mimi form a pair of heroines so blatantly patterned on Lucy and Mina that Stoker appears to have barely remembered to change their names, with Lilla being super-sensitive, passive, and “gentle as a dove” while the orphaned Mimi possesses an extraordinary will and black “eyes that glow as do the eyes of a bird” (43).¹ Lilla has the misfortune to attract the attention of her predatory, mesmerist landlord, Edgar Caswell, who attacks her numerous times using his life-draining powers. Just as Lucy is initially protected from Dracula's mesmerism and vampirism through Mina's vigilance, Lilla is repeatedly rescued from Caswell by Mimi, and just as Lucy eventually dies in the absence of her protectors, so does Lilla, who perishes during one of Caswell's attacks while her cousin is absent. Unlike Lucy, however, Lilla has no suitors, expresses no romantic interest in anyone, and does nothing that might be construed as sexually suspect. She does her best to resist the attacks perpetrated against her, even though her weak constitution only allows her to do so “in a feeble kind of way” (66), and Stoker indicates that as “an unselfish, unegotistical person,

1. In *Dracula*, Mina is described as having eyes that resemble “pole stars” in their “spiritual intensity” (283).

she [cannot] fight so well in her own battle as in that of someone whom she love[s] and to whom she [is] devoted” (268). One must wonder if Stoker would have understood Lucy, whose assaults at Dracula's hands are never explicitly shown and have therefore been frequently interpreted as involving some form of complicity on her part, as also having likewise “carried herself bravely” (94). In *Lair of the White Worm*, however, Stoker needs no moral pretext to have a gentle woman of weak constitution die when attacked by a vampiric predator.

Even if we accept that Lucy's words regarding her suitors are indicative of sexual desire, there is little to indicate that Stoker believed female sexual desire alone was a breach of morality. As William Hughes has observed, Stokerian heroines frequently cater to the masculine sexual imagination by being virgins who are nevertheless knowledgeable regarding the sexual act (104-6). Desire in these women is attractive, but no disapproval is evident in Stoker's writing until that desire crosses into the realm of sexual action, whereupon it becomes either transgressive or acceptable depending on whether it is located within the safe confines of marriage. In *The Man*, Stephen's awakening fascination with the opposite sex and even her disastrous attempt to propose to Leonard Everard are not portrayed as immoral; they are merely wrong-headed, with Stephen's aunt explaining “no matter how foolish it may have been, it was not a wrong thing” (ch. 20). More blatantly, in *Lady Athlyne*, Joy Ogilvie and Lord Athlyne's physical desire for one another appears to

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

be explicitly endorsed, with the narrator claiming that “healthy people are healthy in their loves and even in their passions” (ch. 13) and stating that:

To say that their love was all of earth would be as absurd as to say that it was all of heaven. It was human, all human, and all that such implies. Heaven and earth had both their parts in the combination; and perhaps, since both were of strong nature and marked individuality, Hell had its due share in the amalgam. (ch. 13)

The novel's climax involves the two lovers nearly consummating their relationship in a hotel bedroom, and they are only stopped by the interruption of Joy's father, who finds them, partially undressed, in one another's arms. At this point, the reader is assured that, “when Love lifts the souls, whose bodies are already in earthly communion, Law ceases to be” (ch. 19). Afterward, a laborious examination of the minutiae of Scottish marriage codes validates the couple's actions, determining that they were technically married (albeit unaware of the fact) at the time of their indiscretion. Again, one would expect that were Stoker to be as hostile to female sexual desire as critics have claimed, he might have had some manner of misfortune befall Joy or inserted some manner of admonitory passage regarding the ethics of a woman attempting to initiate coitus with a man to whom she is not yet aware she is married. Instead of doing either, Stoker provides his lovers with a happy ending and has Joy triumphantly proclaim, “I love you enough for three husbands; and now we must have three

honeymoons!” (ch. 22). It is apparent here that a desire for the amatory pleasures three husbands might provide is not sufficient grounds to condemn Joy Athlyne so long as she manages to indulge them with a single spouse. It would therefore be puzzling to assert that Lucy, who is constant in her devotion to Arthur, must be held as morally suspect for possessing similar appetites.

As we can see, Stoker's works outside of *Dracula* hardly support the assertion that Lucy, as a human, acts outside of the boundaries of acceptable sexual desire or sexual expression as they would have been understood by her author. It is, of course, possible that Stoker's views on women and sexuality changed throughout his years as a writer² and that he *could* have thought it fit to punish Lucy for her brief moment of “heresy” despite his permissive attitudes towards heroines both before and after her. If he did, however, there is little evidence that his audience shared this attitude regarding Lucy's supposed transgressions. The majority of *Dracula's* contemporary reviewers do not seize upon the idea that Lucy, as a mortal woman, is inappropriately licentious, with *The Daily Telegraph's* W. L. Courtney even giving voice to his confusion as to what the character could

2. Senf has posited that such a dramatic change did take place over the course of Stoker's work, suggesting that his ability to pen the erotically charged *Lady Athlyne* was indicative of a profound shift in his opinions about the New Woman and her sexuality (“Rethinking the New Woman in Stoker's Fiction” 1).

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

possibly have done to warrant the violence enacted against her, stating that:

We resent the notion that a man or a woman can be turned into a wolf unless he or she has shown wolf-like propensities. What had Lucy Westenra done that her pure soul should be contaminated? (36)

Other reviewers seem to have shared this belief in the pre-vampiric Lucy's innocence, describing her as a "pure and gentle maiden" (129) whose grisly fate is "all the more poignant because of the charm of her character" (Rev. of *Dracula*. 49). Elsewhere, she and Mina are collectively named as "innocent persons" ("Book Reviews Reviewed" 70) and "virtuous women" ("*Dracula*" 47). The only hint among reviewers that anything might be suspicious about the human Lucy's behavior comes from Andrew Lang's lambasting of the novel in a 1901 issue of *Longman's Magazine*, where he states "The girl who became a vampire after receiving three proposals in one day must have been a minx" (123). However, given the general flippancy of Lang's article, in which he describes how he has "inexpensively perused, and thrown away" the novel in question (122), it seems unlikely that this jab reflected a widespread belief in Lucy's immorality so much as it reflected Lang's biting humor.

To assert that Lucy's comment regarding her suitors is transgressive, we must hold her as an exception to general trends in Stoker's work while also believing that most Victorian reviewers did not

perceive her subtextual promiscuity. The most compelling piece of evidence that Lucy's words regarding her multiple suitors are benign, however, lies within Stoker's working notes for the novel. In what appear to be the earliest outlines of the novel's plot, Lucy is listed as having only one suitor: John Seward. Two character lists name him as Lucy's sole lover or fiancé (Stoker, *Bram Stoker's Notes for Dracula* 14-15, 26-27), and other notes outlining the novel's plot have Seward, in addition to maintaining his role as Lucy's doctor, perform the same actions that Arthur does in the finished novel, including nearly succumbing to Lucy's "kiss" on her deathbed (56-57). While the majority of these notes lack dates, it is reasonable to assume that sketches of a plot in which Lucy's only suitor is Seward predate those that more closely resemble the story's final form. Supporting this chronology is the fact that Arthur Holmwood appears in the notes with far less frequency than other major characters, making him appear to be a relatively late addition to the text. In this proto-*Dracula*, then, where Seward is the successful suitor, we see a rendering of the plot in which Lucy still succumbs to Dracula's attacks and becomes a vampire yet does so in a scenario where having or not having multiple suitors cannot possibly be a factor in her fate.

As the weight of available evidence shows that the mortal Lucy's conduct was unlikely to have greatly troubled Stoker or his contemporaries, we ought to seek a new explanation as to why Lucy is assigned three suitors in *Dracula* as it was published. Given the prominence of Seward's

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

narration in the text, it is strange that Stoker appears to have demoted him from Lucy's fiancé to one of her unsuccessful suitors. Unlike Arthur, who narrates very little of the novel and who is frequently absent during Lucy's illness as he tends to his nameless and conveniently dying father, Seward narrates the majority of Lucy's decline, death, and transformation, virtually always being the first to witness and react to the vicissitudes surrounding her unstable health. He is, in fact, the most prolific narrator of the book, with over a third *Dracula* being in his voice, and in comparison to Arthur, he has much more thoroughly described emotional reactions to the events of the novel. Significantly more space is given to his narration regarding how he feels about Lucy rejecting his proposal, for example, than is given to Arthur's narration regarding his relationship to Lucy in general. This focus on Seward's thoughts and feelings rather than Arthur's would make considerably more sense in a *Dracula* in which Seward is Lucy's fiancé, and his prominence in the text is quite possibly a result of Stoker having planned or written Seward's narration at a point when he was still Lucy's sole love interest. It appears that once Arthur was inserted into the text, Stoker changed Seward's role to that of an unsuccessful suitor in order to preserve the romantically-charged tone of his observations while still employing him as the novel's primary narrative voice. Given Arthur's limited characterization and this seeming attempt to preserve as much of Seward's role with regard to Lucy as possible, the

question naturally arises as to *why* Stoker found it necessary to replace Seward with Arthur as Lucy's fiancé in the first place.

In unraveling the puzzle of Stoker's narrative decision, we must keep in mind that Seward's relationship to Lucy, both in the finished novel and in its early outlines, is not purely romantic; it is also professional. Unlike the idealized but frequently absent Arthur, Seward must balance his romantic desire for Lucy with the detachment expected of him as her doctor. In the novel as published, the tension between these dual roles is explicit, with Seward confessing after his initial examination of Lucy that he is unable to take “the full opportunity of examination such as [he] should wish” regarding her, as their “very friendship makes a little difficulty which not even medical science or custom can bridge over” (105). This loaded passage has caught the attention of more than one of the novel's annotators, who have been keen to speculate about the intimacy of the examination. In his *Dracula Unearthed*, Clive Leatherdale goes into detail about what he believes to be typical protocol for Victorian gynecological exams, explaining how a physician such as Seward would be required to “grope upwards through layers of garments” and quite possibly insert “blunt and crude instruments” in his patient (ch. 10, note 1333). Leslie Klinger, in his *New Annotated Dracula*, carries this a step further, including in his notes a reproduction of Jacques-Pierre Maygrier's³

3. Given as “Jean -Pierre Mayguier” in Klinger's note (182).

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

supremely awkward 1822 illustration “The Standing Touch,” which shows a young doctor feeling about underneath the skirt of a rather exasperated looking female patient (182). Both editors seem eager to evoke scenes of intimate contact between the two characters, imagining the possibility of an invasive gynecological examination as part of what should be a routine physical. The fact that this event still fires the imagination of commentators with its erotic potential speaks to precisely why Stoker included Seward's disclaimer in the first place: he knew that his characters' medical relationship would take on a different, possibly scandalous color given their courtship.

If Stoker seems eager to guard his fictional doctor against the appearance of impropriety when he is *not* his patient's fiancé, we can only imagine the degree to which Seward's professional relationship with Lucy might have been suspect should he have remained her intended. Elsewhere in his work, Stoker is clearly uneasy regarding doctors' ability to engage neutrally with female bodies. In his 1903 *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, a number of characters claim professional detachment as they ready themselves to view a naked woman's body, only to find that they are unable to do so without transgressing. As the book's protagonists prepare to unwrap the mummified witch queen Tera, Margaret Trelawney, the sole woman among them, protests the callousness of the act, arguing that “a woman is a woman” (293) despite the passage of centuries. Her father, Abel, is quick to dismiss her objections to Tera's exposure, explaining that the

archaeologists and the doctor in the group are so familiar with handling naked female bodies that they are able to remain dispassionate regarding them (293). Once Tera is exposed, however, it is clear to all involved that they have acted wrongly. Malcolm Ross, the novel's narrator, states, "It was not right that we should be there, gazing with irreverent eyes on such unclad beauty: it was indecent; it was almost sacrilegious!" (299). If Stoker believes that these men are unable to remain objective as they expose the body of a dead woman, it seems unlikely that he would imagine a doctor in Seward's position being able to disengage himself from the complications brought about by medically interacting with his fiancée's living body.

Additionally, while Stoker may have a permissive and even positive attitude about couples' physical *desire* for one another, there are boundaries regarding physical contact between lovers that are not crossed within his works. Seemingly benign actions that Seward takes as Lucy's doctor would take on a different character should she reciprocate his romantic interest. In Chapter 10, for example, he sleeps in a room adjoining hers with an open door between them (117). While this arrangement in *Dracula* might seem innocent enough for the purposes of a doctor tending to his patient, in *Lady Athlyne*, this same configuration of sleeping arrangements is used to provide a legal basis for the assumed, albeit not enacted, consummation of Joy and Athlyne's marriage (ch. 21). Elsewhere, Seward's observations while watching Lucy asleep tantalizingly focus on the rise and fall of her breast

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

as she breathes (117). Should we imagine him in a scenario where he is her fiancé rather than her rejected suitor, this focus on Lucy's physical body would be lent additional erotic potency by Mina's earlier observation that "'New Women' writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting" (86-7).

While a great number of Stoker's romantic couples do interact physically, the circumstances in which Stokerian lovers touch one another or observe at length one another's bodies almost always occur during dramatic emergencies that render strict adherence to propriety impossible. In the *Shoulder of Shasta*, for example, Esse tears apart her dress in order to bandage wounds Dick sustains after an encounter with a bear (117), and in *The Lady of the Shroud*, Teuta suffers a near deadly brush with hypothermia that forces her to approach Rupert St. Leger wearing nothing but the novel's titular garment (98). Even in *Dracula* itself, the aftermath of the Count's final assault on Lucy forces her doctors to bathe her in a state of ambiguous undress (134) and the pressing matter of Dracula's attack upon Mina makes it permissible for a group of men to break into her bed-chamber (246). The majority of Lucy's long decline, however, does not evoke the sense of panic necessary for Stoker to comfortably situate Seward as a fiancé who examines his betrothed's body and sleeps in a room adjoining hers, and this necessitates the change in their relationship as it appears in Stoker's notes. Making Seward Lucy's unrequited suitor, rather

than her intended, in fact, falls in line with Stoker's views on reticence and self-restraint in the oft-cited "On the Censorship of Fiction," in which he argues that authors must take initiative in excising harmful sexual matter in their works (154).

Understanding Lucy's three suitors as a means to circumvent, rather than to confirm, the appearance of impropriety on her part leaves us with a very different *Dracula* than the one presented to us by critics in which sexually transgressive women are punished with vampirism. In understanding the mortal Lucy as sexually innocent, the vampiric Lucy's wanton "voluptuousness" becomes a striking reversal of character rather than a natural endpoint. In a *Dracula* in which Lucy's mortal behavior is free from sexual transgression, there is no neat Madonna/whore dichotomy between her and the virtuous Mina to explain their respective fates. In this *Dracula*, Lucy falls victim to a vampire due to happenstance, and what befalls her is a non-consensual assault, rather than some form of "seduction" in which we are invited to hold her morally responsible for having the audacity to walk to a churchyard while unconscious or for failing to shrug off the mesmeric powers of the supernatural being attacking her. The luridly-described impalement of her vampiric self by the novel's protagonists lacks the same tidy explanations that a promiscuous mortal Lucy provides, and the reader is left to witness a spectacle of violence that does not present immediate or satisfying answers. The moral framework through which the novel is so often read, in which vampirism and violent death

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

are the penalties bestowed on overly-libidinous women, falls apart, leaving us with a story whose ambiguities make it all the more frightening.

Works Cited

- “Book Reviews Reviewed.” *Dracula: The Critical Feast*. Ed. John Edgar Browning. Berkeley: The Apocryphile Press, 2012. 69-70. Print.
- Boudreau, Brigitte. “Mother Dearest, Mother Deadliest: Object Relations Theory and the Trope of Failed Motherhood in *Dracula*.” *The Journal of Dracula Studies* 11 (2009). 5-22. Print.
- Courtney, W. L. “Books of the Day.” *Dracula: The Critical Feast*. Ed. John Edgar Browning. Berkeley: The Apocryphile Press, 2012. 32-36. Print.
- “*Dracula*.” *Dracula: The Critical Feast*. Ed. John Edgar Browning. Berkeley: The Apocryphile Press, 2012. 46-7. Print.
- Griffin, Gail B. "'Your Girls That You All Love Are Mine': *Dracula* and the Victorian Male Sexual Imagination." *Dracula: The Vampire and the Critics*. Ed. Margaret L. Carter. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1988. 137-148. Print.
- Hughes, William. *Beyond Dracula: Bram Stoker's Fiction and its Cultural Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2000. Print.
- Ifill, Helena. “Sweeter and Lovelier than Ever: Re-reading Lucy.” *Telegraph for Garlic*. Ed.

- Samia Ounoughi. Red Rattle Books, 2013. 27-39. Print.
- Klinger, Leslie, ed. *The New Annotated Dracula*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008. Print.
- L., H. M. "Literary Notes Read and Reviewed in the Library." *Dracula: The Critical Feast*. Ed. John Edgar Browning. Berkeley: The Apocryphile Press, 2012. 128-131. Print.
- Lang, Andrew. "At the Sign of the Ship." *Dracula: The Critical Feast*. Ed. John Edgar Browning. Berkeley: The Apocryphile Press, 2012. 122-123. Print.
- Leatherdale, Clive, ed. *Dracula Unearthed*. 2nd Ed. Westcliff-on-Sea: Desert Island Ebooks, 2012. File.
- McGrath, Patrick. "Bram Stoker and his Vampire." *Bram Stoker's Dracula: Sucking Through the Century, 1897-1997*. Eds. Carol Margaret Davidson and Paul Simpson-Housley. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997. 41-48. Print.
- Murray, Paul. *From the Shadow of Dracula: A Life of Bram Stoker*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2004. Print.
- Pikula, Tanya. "Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Late-Victorian Advertising Tactics: Earnest Men, Virtuous Ladies, and Porn." *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920* 55.3 (2012): 283-302. File.
- Rev. of *Dracula*. *Dracula: The Critical Feast*. Ed. John Edgar Browning. Berkeley: The Apocryphile Press, 2012. 48-52. Print.

*Why Can't They Let a
Girl Marry One Man?*

- Spencer, Kathleen L. "Purity and Danger: Dracula, the Urban Gothic and the Late Victorian Degeneracy Crisis." *ELH* 59.1 (Spring 1992): 197-225. File.
- Senf, Carol A. "Dracula: Stoker's Response to the New Woman." *Victorian Studies* 26 (1982): 33-49. File.
- Senf, Carol A. "Rethinking the New Woman in Stoker's Fiction: Looking at *Lady Athlyne*." *The Journal of Dracula Studies* 9 (2007). 1-9. Web.
- Stoker, Bram. "The Coming of Abel Behenna." *Dracula's Guest and Other Weird Stories*. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1914. 95-120. Internet Archive. Web. 30 Jun. 2015.
- Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Eds. Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997. Print.
- . *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1904. Google Books. Web. 30 Jun. 2015.
- . "The Judge's House." *Dracula's Guest and Other Weird Stories*. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1914. 19-44. Internet Archive. Web. 30 Jun. 2015.
- . *Lady Athlyne. The Complete Works of Bram Stoker*. Delphi Classics, 2012. File.
- . *The Lady of the Shroud*. London: William Heinemann, 1909. Internet Archive. Web. 30 Jun. 2015.
- . *The Lair of the White Worm*. London: William Rider and Son, Limited, 1912. Print.

- . *The Man. The Complete Works of Bram Stoker*. Delphi Classics, 2012. File.
- . *The Mystery of the Sea*. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co, 1902. Google Books. Web. 30 Jun. 2015.
- . "On the Censorship of Fiction." *A Glimpse of America: and other Lectures, Interviews and Essays*. Westcliff-on-Sea: Desert Island, 2002. 154-161. Print
- . "The Secret of Growing Gold." *Dracula's Guest and Other Weird Stories*. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1914. 63-80. Internet Archive. Web. 30 Jun. 2015.
- . *The Shoulder of Shasta*. Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1895. Internet Archive. Web. 30 Jun. 2015.
- . *Snowbound: The Record of a Theatrical Touring Party. The Complete Works of Bram Stoker*. Delphi Classics, 2012. File.
- . *The Watter's Mou*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895. Google Books. Web. 29 Jun. 2015.