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### Cover Page Footnote

Dr. Lindsey Kurz is a lecturer of English at Clemson University. She received her PhD from the University of Cincinnati and her Master of Arts from the University of Manchester. Her research interests include representations of animals in literature, and the relationship between LGBTQ literature and the tragicomedy genre.

**Beast(s) of Burden:  
Animal Anxiety in Bram Stoker's *Dracula***

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In his book *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* James Turner explains that the nineteenth century is a historically significant period for changing ideas about animals.<sup>1</sup> Turner attributes the cultural shift in England and America to three factors: the “realization that human beings are not supranatural but are directly descended from beasts;” an increase in respect for science and scientific findings; and heightened awareness and “dread” of pain in oneself and others (xi-xii). These three components, combined with urbanization and industrialization, changed the way people thought about the “relationship between man and nature” (xii). Not only did people begin to consider the ways that humans and animals may be more similar than previously thought (both biologically and in terms

<sup>1</sup> Although humans are animals, for clarity's sake, “animal” in this essay refers to the nonhuman kind.

of sentience), but there was also heightened awareness of the role humans play in creating animal suffering. This awareness led to the creation of the first animal welfare organization, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1824 (the “Royal” was added to S.P.C.A in 1840 after it was approved by Queen Victoria), the passing and revision of legislation that sought to reduce cruelty to animals, and the formation of the National Anti-Vivisection Society in 1875 (RSPCA, NAVS). Bram Stoker’s 1897 *Dracula* was published in a culture uncertain about its relationship *to* and *with* animals and his novel reflects and reinforces various anxieties about the increasingly destabilized binary between human and animal. The character of Dracula, as he is represented as a hybrid of man and animal, reflects anxieties about Darwinian evolution. Stoker’s representation of horses and dogs as useful creatures worthy of human sympathy further works to reinscribe the human/animal hierarchy threatened by Darwinian evolution by aligning human-controlled animals with the heroes of the text and untamed, dangerous beasts with Dracula.

The first edition of *The Origin of the Species* was published in 1859; Darwin writes in his introduction, “In considering the Origin of Species, it is quite conceivable that a naturalist, reflecting on the mutual affinities of organic beings ... might come to conclusion that species have not been independently created, but had descended, like varieties, from other species” (22). Over one hundred and fifty years later, Darwin’s findings on

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Galapagos continue to be a site of contestation, so it is not surprising that the concepts of evolution were anxiety inducing for many Victorians. Regarding the pervasiveness of *The Origin* in upper-class nineteenth-century England, Turner states, “For months after its publication [the book] dominated conversation at sophisticated dinner parties” (Turner 60). By 1870 there was widespread acceptance by “well-educated” people that Darwin’s theory was at least a “tenable hypothesis” (Turner 61). Although “[t]he biological affinity of people and animals had grown increasingly evident since the end of the eighteenth century,” it was *The Origin* that made people consider the connection between humans and animals more closely (Turner 60). In *Victorian Animal Dreams* editors Deborah Denenholz Morse and Martin A. Danahay explain, “The effect of Darwin’s ideas was both to make the human more animal and the animal more human, destabilizing boundaries in both directions” (2). It was the “destabilize[ed] boundar[y],” as opposed to the preexisting belief that humans and animals were completely separate entities, that caused a feeling of unease for many people. Readers can see some of that unease manifested in *Dracula*.

Dracula’s physical resemblance to an animal, his ability to shape-shift into animal form, and his psychic connection with wolves and rats work together to form a character that embodies Victorian anxieties about Darwin’s theory of evolution and scientific establishing of a link between humans and animals. The reader first learns of Dracula’s physical characteristics in Jonathan Harker’s early

journal entries from when Jonathan is staying in Transylvania with the Count. Jonathan recounts several examples of physical characteristics that Dracula has in common with other species. We learn of Dracula's resemblance to an animal in the first line of Jonathan's first line of description. He states, "His face was a strong – a very strong – aquiline" (Stoker 23). As Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal, editors of the Norton Critical Edition of *Dracula*, note, "aquiline" refers to "a curve like that of an eagle's beak" (Auerbach, Skal 23); it is significant that the second adjective used to describe Dracula is one that directly ascribes an animal characteristic to a human embodiment of that feature. Jonathan then leaves the eagle analogy and moves on to describe Dracula in more non-human mammalian terms. He notes Dracula's "bushy hair," "massive" eyebrows, hair that grows "scantly round the temples, but profusely elsewhere," and the existence of "hairs in the centre of [his] palms" (Stoker 22 - 23). The Count's extreme hairiness conjures up the image of a wild beast despite contrasting descriptions of his "extraordinary pallor" and manicured nails.

Not only does Dracula have animal overtones in his human un-dead form, but he also has the capability of turning into a bat at his discretion. Although none of the novel's narrators directly address the fact that Dracula appears in bat-form, there are many instances of a bat appearing at the windows of the main character's dwellings. The Victorian reader, not already familiar with the Dracula-as-bat storyline like contemporary readers of the text, would notice that the bat and Dracula

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are one in the same when Dr. Seward reports a peculiar sighting of the creature. He writes, “I caught the patient’s eye and followed it, but could trace nothing as it looked into the moonlit sky except a big bat, which was flapping its silent and ghostly way to the west. Bats usually wheel and flit about, but this one seemed to go straight on, as if it knew where it was bound for or had some intention of its own” (Stoker 103). Here the line between human and animal becomes so blurred that an animal is adopting human characteristics, moving straight ahead instead of in an erratic manner, which is a particularly eerie idea even for people who are comfortable with the human/animal connection. The unnerving image of the human-within-bat is found in the memorandum written by Lucy on the night of her mother dies and Dracula sucks her blood (again). She writes, “I went to the window and looked out, but could see nothing, except a big bat, which had evidently been buffeting its wings against the window” (Stoker 131). As with other appearances of the Dracula bat, the human/animal is presented as sinister and predatory, potentially highlighting a fear that the connection between humans and animals is an evil, unholy melding.

Although Dracula does not take the form of a wolf, he does wield a control over them (as well as rats) and their howling serves as a constant reminder of danger for the characters. On approaching Dracula’s “vast ruined castle” Jonathan and his carriage driver are surrounded by a pack of wolves that become silent when they encircle the humans. Jonathan recounts, “They were a hundred

times more terrible in the grim silence which held them than ever when they howled. For myself, I felt a sort of paralysis of fear. It is only when a man feels himself face to face with such horrors that he can understand their true import” (Stoker 20). Again, the beast is presented as directly threatening to humans, but the wolves add a layer of complexity because they do the bidding of their master. It could be argued that Dracula’s “nineteenth-century faith in his own supremacy” and his treatment of the wolves as “servants” reinforces a hierarchy between humans and animals; I would argue, however, that the boundary is destabilized by Dracula’s psychic connection with these animals (Auerbach, Skal 23). Furthermore, ability to communicate with animals is presented as a phenomenon that leads to menacing and dangerous human/animal interactions for the “good” characters in the story. The villain’s animal like qualities, shape-shifting, and explicit connection to animals are devices that create fear (both for characters in the novel, and the reader); it is not hard to imagine that this fear could have worked in tandem with anxiety over the destruction of clear human/animal distinctions.

Inherent within apprehension over evolution is the idea that humans, because they are not far from animals, can be as ferocious as beasts. Turner writes, “‘Nature’ at its cruelest aspect meant specifically beast eating beast ... bloodthirsty creatures were the same animals that physiology, anthropology, psychology, and Darwinian evolution all certified as the near relatives of men and worse, women” (Turner 67). Concern that “even Victorians



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could have inherited [animals] ferocious nature ... was not new, but the explosion in scientific knowledge and the revolution in the scientific belief during the middle years of the century had intensified the fear painfully” (Turner 67). Preoccupation with the idea that humans could be as “bloodthirsty” as animals is what Charles S. Blinderman, in his essay “Vampurella: Darwin and Count Dracula,” locates as the most noteworthy example of Darwinian ideas in the text. He writes, “More significant than [vampires sucking the blood of humans] in illustrating the transmutation of flesh into flesh is the lunatic Renfield’s zoophagous appetite, which includes flies, spiders, and birds, and anticipates rats and cats” (415). Renfield’s motivation for eating animals, as he explains to Dr. Seward, is not to obtain their souls (“I don’t want any souls, indeed ... I couldn’t use them if I had them”) but rather to consume other lives in order to vitalize his own (Stoker 236). Blinderman points out that Renfield’s actions are in line with a materialist outlook. He explains, “Materialism emphasizes kinship – between the inanimate and the animate, between flora and fauna, between non-human and human animals – reducing all phenomena to matters in motion” (Blinderman 415). Following Darwin, T.H. Huxley expanded on materialism to Victorian audiences (his text titled “On the Physical Basis of Life” was largely successful), and “emphasized the kinship of all life, all living things being reducible to universal protoplasm which, created by plants and consumed by animals, is plastic enough to be variously

incarnated” (Blinderman 417). In this sense, Renfield was not only menacing because he ate live animals,<sup>2</sup> but because he viewed life in a way that took matters of the soul out of the equation. It is when Dr. Steward questions Renfield’s ability to “get the life without getting the soul” (Stoker 237) that Renfield shows a clear nervousness about the idea that the animals he has been eating have souls. He says to Dr. Seward, ““Why do you plague me about souls. Haven’t I got enough to worry, and pain, and distract me already, without thinking of souls!”” (Stoker 238). Interestingly, it is shortly after this crisis that Renfield is brutally attacked by Dracula. After his attack, Renfield works with Dr. Seward and Van Helsing to help them learn more about Dracula. Although a conclusion is not resolved about whether or not animals and humans have equally important souls, in this case Stoker is aligning the “good” characters with people who hold to the idea of the soul, in contrast with people that take the scientific materialist approach. It is a complex moment in the novel because animals are presented as having souls (an idea that Victorian animal rights activists promoted and believed was bolstered by Darwinian evolution), whereas elsewhere in the text (as shown in the case of Dracula having animal characteristics) the

<sup>2</sup> Presumably it is the manner in which Renfield eats an animal that is disturbing; the other characters in the book also eat animals (Jonathan eats “a chicken done up some way with red pepper” on the very first page).

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human/animal connection is presented as threatening.

Another example of a Victorian English culture reacting to the evolution theory is found in cartoons from the period. Turner writes:

In the 1860s, English and American cartoonists began to depict Irishmen as creatures with gorilla-like bodies and simian faces. The Irish had suffered obloquy before, but never like this. The barriers between men and beasts had never before broken down so utterly. Quadruped, ape, savage, and civilized man now followed close upon one another in a biological continuum where distinctions had become all but invisible. (Turner 63)

The depiction of Irish people as less evolved relates to the characterization of Dracula as “profusely” hairy human who has a deep connection with animals (as we have seen with his ability to transform into a bat and communicate with wolves); in both instances non-English people are positioned as “Other,” especially in terms of their closeness to animals. It is interesting to note that while British nationalism had history of distancing the Self from Other in terms of race, it was in post-Darwinian evolution that Victorians began to see that what is commonly thought of as Other, the beast, is more part of Self than previously imaged.

Stoker was not alone in depicting the Other as animal-like; the binary of British man/animalistic Other was a trend used in a variety of imperialist themed Victorian narratives. Deborah Denenholz

Morse accounts for many instances of this trope in her essay “‘The Mark of the Beast’: Animals as Sites of Imperial Encounter from *Wuthering Heights* to *Green Mansions*.” Denenholz Morse states, “The Other – a subject people of the Empire in its dominions or at home in England – is often depicted as a savage brute that needs taming” (181). She sites many examples of “animal metaphors” used in mid-Victorian through early Edwardian texts, with considerable attention given to the “distinctly canine” characterization of Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. Despite the many obvious differences between Heathcliff and Dracula (the former being born a penniless orphan and the latter a centuries-old aristocratic Un-dead, for instance) there are definite parallels between the two, especially with regard animal metaphors being used to express imperialist anxiety. Denenholz Morse explains that in an “imperialist context” Heathcliff can be read as “figure for the immigrant Irish during the Great Famine ... and he is viewed by the ‘civilized’ English as an animal, wild and dark, even ape-like”; or, he can be read as “a sign for all the Empire’s regressive aborigines, primitive dark man from somewhere in the British dominions” (182 – 183).<sup>3</sup> From a Marxist perspective, Heathcliff can be interpreted as emblematic of a “destabliz[ation of] social class boundaries” because he goes from orphan and servant of

<sup>3</sup> Denenholz Morse attributes the idea of Heathcliff as Irish to Terry Eagleton, Elsie Michie, and Mary Jean Corbett, and the “regressive aborigine” to Deirdre David and Susan Meyer.

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Hindley Earnshaw to owner of the Wuthering Heights estate (185 – 186). Denenholz Morse writes, “Whatever his class or racial status, Heathcliff as fearsome, predatory animal wrests territory away from its domesticated claimants, reversing English imperialist conquest, the dominion of the powerful” (186).

*Dracula* has also been read as a text reflecting Victorian fear of reverse imperialism. In 1990, Stephen D. Arata argued in his essay “The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization” that the historical context of the novel had not yet received enough critical examination. That context, he writes, “includes the decline of Britain as a world power at the close of the nineteenth century, or rather, the way the perception of that decline was articulated by contemporary writers” (622). Stoker combines Gothic fantasy with travel narration to “display aspects of imperial ideology” and maintain and transgress boundaries (Arata 626). Arata writes:

For Stoker, the Gothic and the travel narrative problematize, separately and together, the very boundaries on which British imperial hegemony depended: between civilized and primitive, colonizer and colonized, victimizer (either imperialist or vampire) and victim. By problematizing those boundaries, Stoker probes the heart of the culture’s sense of itself, its ways of defining and distinguishing itself from other peoples, other cultures, in its hour of perceived decline. (626)

Arata's point about the destabilization of essentialized binaries can be extended to include the human/animal binary. By reading the character of Dracula as a threat to British imperialism (like Heathcliff, he buys property in England) it is possible to see how both Brontë and Stoker employed animal-like representations of non-English Others to heightened the perceived biological and cultural difference between British people and non-Western people. A key difference between Brontë and Stoker's use of animal metaphor is that Brontë champions Heathcliff and his rise in social class, while Stoker presents Dracula as a threat that must be killed (and banished from the English empire). Brontë was "influenced by the work of Darwin and other progressive scientists," embraced the connection between humans and animals (Denenholz Morse 182). Stoker, on the other hand, created *Dracula* in such a way to reinforce anxiety about connection between humans and animals. In short, Brontë's "sympathies [were] with the natural world and with the animal in *Wuthering Heights*," while Stoker's sympathies sided with humans and a few chosen animals.

Horses and dogs are the two animals Stoker presents as noble and worthy of human admiration in *Dracula*. The impulse to inconsistently regard some animals as worthy of empathy is not a phenomena specific to the Victorian period, however, in *Dracula* the valuing of horses and dogs can be read as a glorification of animals that human's have been able to control, as opposed to wild beasts like wolves, bats, rats, and lizards.

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Horses and dogs are two animals that are connected to humans not in the Darwinian evolution sense, but in the sense that people have bred them to be useful humans. In her essay “Horses and Sexual/Social Dominance,” Elsie B. Michie explains that in the Victorian period prior to Darwin’s theory of evolution horses “represented dominion over the natural world but was valued simultaneously for its docility” (147). She also points out that because humans rode horses there was thought to be a “particularly intimate” connection between the human body and the horse. She goes on to argue that after *The Origin of the Species* is published there were changing ideas about the horse as a symbol of man’s ability to conquer nature. The question emerged of whether the human was controlling the horse or vice versa. She writes, “[T]he horse ceased to function as an image of secure dominance, an easy and masterful seat from which one could control a set of natural powers, and became instead a marker of forces barely kept in check that threatened to overturn, or, at the very least, disrupt traditional notions of hierarchy” (146). In *Dracula*, Stoker makes it clear that the animal that is malleable to human influence (by means of selective breeding and training) is the one that deserves to be valued. In this sense, Stoker resists Darwinian evolution by reinforcing that notion that there is a hierarchy between humans and animals and that the former can successfully control the latter.

Horses are featured prominently in the first chapter and the final chapters of *Dracula*. In chapter

one, Jonathan is being taken to Dracula's castle in a horse-drawn carriage when wolves start to howl in the distance, frightening both Jonathan and the horses. He writes, "I was minded to jump from the calèche and run, whilst they reared again and plunged madly, so that the driver had to use all his great strength to keep them from bolting" (18). Jonathan and the horses are aligned together in their fear of encroaching and threatening nature. Of their journey, Jonathan writes:

Sometimes, as the road was cut through the pine woods that seemed in the darkness to be closing down upon us, great masses of greyness, which here and there bestrewed the trees, produced a peculiarly weird and solemn effect, which carried on the thoughts and fancies engendered earlier in the evening, when the falling sunset threw into strange relief the ghost-like clouds which amongst the Carpathians seem to wind ceaselessly through the valleys. (15 – 16)

Here, and throughout the entire text, the natural world is menacing: trees close in on people, clouds are ghost-like, and later in the chapter thunder is oppressive and fire is mystical and dangerous. As the horses become increasingly frightened by the howling wolves, the driver (whom the reader knows to be Dracula) is eventually able to sooth the horses by whispering to them and petting them. Auerbach and Skal note that this scene is an instance where "horses are aligned with humans rather than with the wolves, bats, and rats who fall under Dracula's spell" (18). Dracula has to trick them into



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submission, just as he later tries to sooth Jonathan's fears in the castle (by taking steps to evade Jonathan's suspicions, like making up excuses for his absences during mealtime, et cetera). The bond between Jonathan and the horses is further solidified when the wolves encircle them and both fear for their lives. Jonathan, in the midst of his own terror, is sympathetic to the horses fear, he writes, "The horses jumped about and reared, and looked helplessly round with eyes that rolled in a way painful to see" (20). Horses, because of their connection to humans on human's terms (one of domination, not biological similarity) remain tied throughout the novel to "good" humans versus untamed nature and the beasts manipulated by Dracula, and because of their affiliation with humans they are afforded sympathy.

The ending of the novel further emphasizes the connection between horses and the heroes of the text. The Crew of Light, as Christopher Craft calls Dracula's hunters, all travel to Dracula's castle with the help of horses (Mina and Van Helsing travel first by train and then by carriage, Jonathan Harker and Lord Godalming by boat and then horseback, and Dr. Seward and Quincy Morris by horseback). Both Mina and Van Helsing record their admiration of the horses, with Mina noting in her journal that, "The horses seem to know that they are being kindly treated, for they go willingly their full stage at best speed," and "The dear horses are patient and good, and they give us no trouble" (312 – 313). Mina's remark that the horses are cognizant of their treatment reflects not only an empathic outlook, but

also a notion that they are in the quest for Dracula together. In his memorandum Van Helsing notes that the horses knew the roads to take when they were indistinguishable due to snow, and that they proceeded with patience. Once Mina, Van Helsing, and the horses camp for the night the three vampire women that Jonathan encountered at the beginning of the novel appear to try to entice Mina into their corps. For Van Helsing and the horses the experience is terrifying and the horses die of fright. Van Helsing reports, “The horses had ceased to moan, and lay still on the ground; the snow fell on them softly, and they grew whiter. I knew that there was for the poor beasts no more of terror” (317). The horses’ death of fright is reminiscent of the first chapter when wolves surround Jonathan. Of the experience Jonathan wrote, “For myself, I felt sort of a paralysis of fear. It is only when a man feels himself face to face with such horrors that he can understand their true import” (20). The parallel experiences of Jonathan and the horses position them on one side of a binary, with un-dead humans and un-tamed animals on the other.

The link between the Crew of Light and horses is heightened as it is briefly contrasted with the relationship between the gypsies and their horses. As Van Helsing observes the “mounted men” bearing Dracula in the “great square chest” he tells Mina, “[T]hey come quickly; they are flogging the horses, and galloping as hard as they can” (322). The “flogging” of the horses is contrasted with Jonathan Harker and Lord Godalming “riding at a break-neck speed” because the gypsies have to rely

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on physically beating their horses while the hero's horses run at "break-neck" speed without coercion (as seen in previous examples, the animals appear to willingly work hard for their "masters"). The Crew of Light are presented all the more sympathetically because they are kind to animals, but specifically animals deemed worthy of kindness.

The empathy and respect shown for the horses in *Dracula* is similar to Stoker's presentation of dogs in the novel. Despite being closely related to wolves, who exist in the book as terrorizing creatures, dogs are given sympathy by Mina and Lucy (who were "fill[ed] with pity" when a man kicks his dog during the funeral for the ship's captain), and valued by Arthur, Jonathan, Seward, and Quincy (85). Also similar to horses, dogs are animals that humans have successfully domesticated and bred for specific purposes. As Leslie Klinger notes in his annotated edition of *Dracula*, the Manchester Terrier was bred in the Victorian period specifically to combat rats in their namesake city (355). Klinger speculates that it is most likely Manchester Terriers whom Lord Godalming summoned to hunt the hundreds of Dracula-controlled rats in chapter XIX. After they fight off the rats, Jonathan recalls, "We all seemed to find out spirits rise" (222). It becomes evident that the "we" Jonathan refers to includes the dogs, as they "frisked about as though they had been rabbit-hunting in a summer wood" (223). Again, the connection established between humans and domesticated animals helps overcome the untamed beasts (*Dracula* and the rats).

The Victorian period saw the end of the supposedly natural split between man and beast, and as is often the case when a boundary is destabilized, anxieties surfaced about the relationship between each side of the binary. Through the character of Dracula present day readers can see how Darwinian evolution, combined with the beginning of animal welfare activism, created an atmosphere where the hierarchy between man and beast was no longer quite so evident. Stoker's text can be read as an effort to reinscribe the hierarchy in order to counteract the notion that what was once the Other, the beast, is not so distant from the self.

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