

## THE PORTRAYAL OF THE VAMPIRE MYTH AND ITS EVOLUTION IN "DRACULA" A NOVEL BY BRAM STOKER.

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### Abstract:

This paper examines the portrayal of the vampire myth and its evolution in Bram Stoker's "Dracula". The novel follows the vampire Count Dracula as he attempts to establish a foothold in England and feed on its inhabitants. While Dracula conforms to many traditional vampire traits, such as immortality and hypnotic powers, the novel also introduces several innovations and variations on the vampire myth, such as Dracula's ability to transform into animals and his vulnerability to certain types of earth. These innovations and variations contribute to the narrative and themes of the novel, such as Dracula's connection to his homeland and his alienation from human society. The paper also considers the evolution of the vampire myth in popular culture, including modern interpretations of the vampire as romantic, heroic, or anti-heroic figures.

**Key Words:** - Vampire, Immortality, Hypnotic powers, Alienation, Evolution, Dracula

### Introduction:

The vampire myth has existed in various forms across cultures and time periods, but it typically involves a supernatural being that preys on the blood of the living. The modern concept of the vampire is often associated with Bram Stoker's "Dracula," published in 1897, which helped popularize the image of the vampire as a suave, charismatic, and seductive figure.

The cultural significance of the vampire myth is complex and multifaceted. On

one hand, vampires are often portrayed as symbols of evil and immorality, preying on the innocent and corrupting the living. This can be seen as a reflection of societal anxieties about sin, temptation, and mortality. On the other hand, vampires can also be seen as figures of rebellion and empowerment, challenging the status quo and defying the constraints of human morality and mortality. This can be seen as a reflection of societal desires for freedom, adventure, and escape.

One of the earliest literary works to popularize the vampire myth was John Polidori's "The Vampyre," published in 1819. This short story featured a suave and aristocratic vampire named Lord Ruthven, who seduced and preyed upon young women in society. Polidori's work helped set the template for future vampire stories, including Stoker's "Dracula."

Another important cultural influence on the vampire myth was the folklore of Eastern Europe, particularly the Balkan region. This folklore included stories of "strigoi," or undead beings who could rise from the dead and prey on the living. The vampire as we know it today is largely a product of the convergence of these different cultural influences, as well as the creative imagination of writers and artists over time.

Bram Stoker was an Irish author born in Dublin in 1847. He worked as a civil servant and theatre manager before devoting himself to writing full-time. Stoker's most famous work is his 1897 novel "Dracula," which tells the story of the eponymous vampire and his attempt to establish himself in England. "Dracula" has become a cultural touchstone and one of the most enduring works of horror fiction, inspiring countless adaptations, parodies, and imitations over the years.

In Bram Stoker's "Dracula," the portrayal and evolution of the vampire myth are central to the novel's themes and narrative structure, as Stoker incorporates

traditional vampire traits alongside innovative variations to create a complex and compelling vision of the vampire that has influenced popular culture to this day.

### **Traditional vampire traits in "Dracula":-**

Dracula's physical appearance in Bram Stoker's "Dracula" is described as tall and thin, with sharp features, a pointed beard, and ears that are "extremely pointed and elf-like" (Stoker, 25). He has red eyes and sharp teeth, and his skin is described as "pale as marble" (Stoker, 29). In terms of powers, Dracula has the ability to transform into various animals, including a bat, a wolf, and mist. He also possesses hypnotic powers that allow him to control the minds of his victims (Stoker, 39-40).

In Bram Stoker's "Dracula," the titular character conforms to several traditional vampire traits. For example, Dracula is immortal and able to survive for centuries by feeding on the blood of the living. He also possesses hypnotic powers that allow him to control the minds of his victims, and he can transform into various animals, such as bats, wolves, and mist. Additionally, Dracula is vulnerable to certain items, including sunlight, garlic, and crosses, which weaken or repel him (Stoker, 39-40).

### **Innovations and variations on the vampire myth in "Dracula":-**

In Bram Stoker's "Dracula," there are also several deviations from traditional vampire myths. For example, while

vampires are typically portrayed as able to transform into bats, wolves, or mist, Dracula is able to transform into several other animals as well, including rats and dogs. Additionally, Dracula is shown to be vulnerable not just to sunlight, garlic, and crosses, but also to certain types of earth, which he cannot cross without assistance. Finally, while vampires are often described as having no reflection, Dracula is shown to have a limited reflection in certain types of surfaces, such as water (Stoker, 39-40).

The innovations and variations of traditional vampire myths in Bram Stoker's "Dracula" serve to contribute to the novel's overarching themes and narrative. Dracula's ability to transform into animals reflects his animalistic nature and predatory instincts, which contribute to the novel's exploration of the nature of evil and the corruption of power. Dracula's vulnerability to specific types of earth and his connection to his homeland of Transylvania also emphasize the importance of place and cultural identity in the novel. Finally, Dracula's limited reflection reflects his alienation from human society and his inability to connect with others on a human level, underscoring the novel's themes of isolation and the search for connection in a rapidly changing world (Craft, 2011).

### **Evolution of the vampire myth in popular culture:-**

Bram Stoker's "Dracula" is one of the most influential novels in horror literature and has had a significant impact on the

vampire myth in literature, film, and other media. Stoker's depiction of the vampire as a seductive and charismatic figure helped to establish the vampire as a popular literary and cultural archetype. "Dracula" has inspired numerous adaptations, including film and television adaptations, as well as other works of literature, such as Anne Rice's "Interview with the Vampire." In turn, these adaptations have influenced the evolution of the vampire myth and have contributed to the development of new vampire narratives that continue to captivate audiences today (Biodrowski, 2012).

Bram Stoker's "Dracula" has had a significant impact on the vampire myth in literature, and many subsequent vampire stories have been compared to it. Anne Rice's "Interview with the Vampire" (1976) has been noted for its focus on the emotional and psychological lives of vampires and its exploration of the concept of immortality. On the other hand, Stephanie Meyer's "Twilight" series (2005-2008) has been criticized for its romanticization of the vampire, which departs significantly from the more monstrous depiction of vampires in "Dracula" (Hutson, 2014). While these works differ in their approach to the vampire myth, they share a common indebtedness to Stoker's novel and its legacy.

The evolution of the vampire myth and its modern interpretations have been discussed in various academic works. For instance, in the article "The Changing

Vampire in Film and Television: A Critical Study" by Tim Kane, the author analyzes how the vampire figure has evolved from being a monstrous and terrifying creature to a romantic, heroic, or anti-heroic figure in modern media. Kane argues that modern interpretations of the vampire myth reflect societal changes and anxieties, such as the desire for eternal youth and immortality. (Kane, 2015).

### **Conclusion:-**

The vampire myth continues to evolve and remain relevant in popular culture today. It has expanded beyond traditional literary and film representations to include television series, video games, and graphic novels. The modern vampire is often portrayed as a romantic or anti-heroic figure, with a focus on their internal struggles and emotions. This evolution reflects changing societal attitudes towards themes such as identity, sexuality, and mortality. The vampire myth also continues to inspire new interpretations and adaptations, ensuring its continued relevance in popular culture.

"Dracula" by Bram Stoker contributed significantly to the vampire myth by establishing several key vampire characteristics that have endured in popular culture. These include the idea of the vampire as a suave and charismatic figure with hypnotic powers, as well as the vampire's aversion to sunlight, garlic, and crosses. Additionally, "Dracula" introduced new innovations to the vampire myth, such as the ability to transform into

animals and the vulnerability to certain types of earth. These elements have continued to be explored and adapted in modern vampire stories, including in film and television. Overall, "Dracula" has had a lasting impact on the vampire myth and continues to be celebrated as a seminal work in the horror genre.

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