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## **‘Love never dies’- Vampire Myth, Dracula’s Pastness in Future and Future Past**

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### **Abstract-**

*This paper aims to explore the folklore of the vampire and the superstitions of the Transylvanian (known earlier as Wallachia) people whose imaginative ignorance enabled Bram Stoker to utilize his artistic abilities and create the famous and fearful Count Dracula. I shall attempt to define vampirism or the vampire myth first using Stoker’s research sources and then use a medical journal to demystify the myth. After having formed a clear conception two cinematic adaptations would be utilized, the first being Coppola’s all time classic Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1992), and the second a more recent VFX movie directed by the Irish-American Director Gary Shore Dracula Untold (2014) to clearly establish the latter as being a fitting sequel (unofficial) to Coppola’s masterpiece. The cycle of continuity of Dracula’s deaths and rebirths are asserted most strongly through both the films. Love is depicted as the ulterior motif in each of these films and Dracula Untold succeeds (as a sequel) in establishing and confirming Dracula’s pursuit of his beloved Mina, time and again through innumerable deaths and rebirths, transcending the realm of time and space and reinforcing the subtitle Coppola attaches to his Bram Stoker’s Dracula- “Love Never Dies”.*

**Key words-** *Sequel, Death, Rebirth, Transcending, Love.*

## Introduction

Folklore can be defined as the demonstrative corpus of culture shared by a particular section of people. It borders on the traditions common to that section, subculture or group. The folklore of the 'vampire' was in all actuality the Greek mythology featuring Ambrogio, Selene, Artemis, Hades and Apollo. The motifs of sunlight and silver burning the skin of the nocturnal *nosferatu* (Gerard, 1885), with all the other popular attributes and characteristics of the vampire are adapted from the ancient Greeks. With time, cultures evolved and the genesis of the daemon became distorted with diverse perspectives, perception, interpretations and re-interpretations. Stoker merely borrowed the surname of the celebrated Count Vlad Dracula most popularly known as Vlad the Impaler in his most celebrated gothic novel of all times *Dracula*, and his work brought about (and is still bringing about), a plethora of film and television adaptations including the 1992 movie with the similar coinage as his novel. The aim of my paper is precisely to examine Stoker's sources for the creation of his character Count Dracula, (which would also include bringing in the medical perspective to the folklore of the vampire) and taking two cinematic adaptations (*Bram Stoker's Dracula*, 1992, directed by Francis Ford Coppola) starring Gary Oldman as Count Dracula and *Dracula Untold*, a 2014 film directed by American director Gary Shore) to show how the folklore of the vampire evolved to give birth to a new species of vampires in the film media.

## Literature Review

The paper "Transylvanian superstitions" published by Emily Gerard in the July 1885 issue of *The Nineteenth Century* is the primary source for vampire folklore extensively used by Bram Stoker during his composition of *Dracula*. In her work, Gerard calls Transylvania "The land of superstition" (Gerard, 1885), where, "delusion flourish as persistently and in such bewildering variety" (Gerard, 1885). Emily categorizes, "three separate sources of superstition" (Gerard, 1885)- 'indigenous superstition', 'imported superstition' and 'the wondering superstition' (Gerard, 1885). Most importantly she posits that the background and the "scenery... is peculiarly adapted to provide a framework to all sorts of supernatural beings and monsters" (Gerard, 1885), along with the several decades old Germanic customs and beliefs which folks in Transylvania "preserved...in great perfection" (Gerard, 1885) and also the superstitions deeply rooted in the gypsy tribes- "a race of fortune tellers and witches, whose ambulating caravans covered the country as with a network." (Gerard, 1885)

Out of sum total of the superstitions which includes ridiculous invocation of the devil himself and establishing contracts with him, Gerard says that, the "more decidedly evil, however is the vampire, or the nosferatu, in whom every Roumenian peasant believes as firmly as he does in heaven or hell" (Gerard, 1885). Gerard subcategorizes vampires into two sorts- living and dead, the former being the "illegitimate offspring of two illegitimate persons" (Gerard, 1885), and the dead vampire after being killed by a living vampire "becomes likewise a vampire after death and will continue to suck the blood of other innocent people till the spirit has been exorcised" (Gerard, 1885). The ways in which the 'nosferatu' can be killed is being "stab[bed] through the corpse", "pistol shot", decapitation and filling its mouth with garlic or burning the heart, "strewing the ashes over the grave" (Gerard, 1885).

"The long exploded" (Gerard, 1885), first cousin of the vampire, were-wolf or the Germanic *Prikolitsch* (Gerard, 1885) is also extensively reported by Emily. She cites a few local legends revolving around people who have claimed to have seen or even had been one. This 'fanciful' web of superstition influences the way these "naturally imaginative and poetically inclined" Roumenians lead their lives and "adhere [to it] as closely as to religion itself" (Gerard, 1885).

This paper is important as it has been used as an important source of research by Stoker during the composition of *Dracula* and he explicitly uses most of the Roumenian

superstitions as it is discussed by Gerard in her paper.

In this particular paper “Journal of the Royal society of Medicine” (Hampi & Hampi, 1997), Jeffrey S Hampi and William S Hampi take on the vampire folklore from the standpoint of a medical practitioner explicitly stating that, “Blood Drinking tyrants are an unlikely basis for the European vampire folklore” (Hampi & Hampi, 1997). They argue that “aspects of magic” (Hampi & Hampi, 1997) was an integral part of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century villagers and their understanding of medicine, therefore it is “more likely” that the vampire folklore developed out of their nosophobia which was a daily occurrence back then (Hampi & Hampi, 1997). It is this belief to which they gave a literary and imaginative dimension and developed the theory to form fables. According to the Hampis, various diseases “ravaged” sections of European continent at this juncture but there exists a discongruity between the cause of the ailment and the clarifications of the villagers about it who fussed of a “supernatural cause” to any and every lingering disease labelling the first victim to be a vampire (Barber, 1988). Hampi states that the notion of contagion comes from the legend of the *nosferatu* which is the antiquated term procured from the Greek *Nosophurus*, meaning plague carrier (Melton, 1994). Several diseases like Tuberculosis (Sledzik & Bellantoni, 1994) and Rabies (Heick, 1992) have been associated to the outset of the vampire folklore. But Hampi states that pellagra, which is basically a dietary deficiency of Niacin and Trypophan can be traced to originate the myth of vampirism (Hampi & Hampi, 1997). As a result, of the consumption of corn which was a staple crop, corn meal was the primary provenance of energy for the poor people in Europe and Pellagra was sure to follow where corn went. Hampi says that due to lack of medical knowledge, the condition was kept from being diagnosed till 1858 and pellagra can be identified by the four “Ds”- Dermatitis, Dementia, Diarrhoea and Death (Hampi & Hampi, 1997). Hampi states that Bram Stoker artistically and carefully blends all the European folkloric beliefs into one persona- Count Dracula. Hampi has elaborately defined the four dimensions of Pellagra- Dermatitis is the hypersensitivity of Pellagrins to sunlight (Hampi & Hampi, 1997). Dementia having clinical syndromes which includes insomnia, unjustified aggression. Depression and anxiety. Hampi goes on justifying the “sanguine temperament, morbidly excitable” (Stoker, 1993)

personality traits of R.N. Renfield who was a patient of Dr Seward in the novel *Dracula* and attributes him with Pica, “a pathological craving for normal foods or for substances not usually regarded as food” (Hampi & Hampi, 1997). Diarrhoea, a condition “common among pellagrins because of the mucous membranes lesions particularly in the oesophagus, stomach and colon” (Hendricks, 1991-Dumitescu & Lichiardopol, 1993). Hampi suggests that this is probably why the count declines to join his guests for supper- “You will, I trust, excuse me that I do not join you; but I have dined already, and I do not sup” (Stoker, 1993), while there was also a notion among villagers that those who died having left unfinished business with their relatives, friends and family would return for retribution and their own development of pellagra would have been interpreted as “the dead returning for revenge” (Hampi & Hampi, 1997). The paper cites many examples attributing Pellagra to have been misidentified to breed ridiculous notions of vampirism and related superstitions. Therefore, it is a matter of conjecture as to whether pellagra is responsible for instigating the vampire myth says Hampi. This paper is important as it elucidates into the medical and scientific perspective to the folklore of the vampire and helps in understanding the common misperceptions and lack of scientific advancement during the era, consequently leading to the general ignorance about various diseases and superstitions discussed by Gerard in the previous paper.

### **Motifs of Stoker’s Count Dracula**

In this particular paper “Count Dracula and the Folkloric Vampire- Thirteen Comparisons” (Johnson, 2001), Patrick Johnson gives us thirteen major motifs of Stoker’s Count Dracula

and those of Folkloric vampires excluding the Count's ability to cast a reflection in a mirror as there is no counterpart in recorded folklore. The primary motif being those of blood-drinking, vampire victims turning into vampires, consuming the ichor of a vampire, his ability to shape shift, ability to affect the weather, ways to destroy the vampire, aversion to garlic, inability to cross running water, power ceasing during the day- Sensitivity to sunlight, casting no reflections, vampire intellect and social sophistication, vampires of noble birth and vampire cadet school.

Johnson posits that no single vampire in folklore has all the characteristics of Count Dracula. Stoker's Prototypical Count is an amalgamation of all the characteristic attributes of vampires in recorded folklore save the inability of the Count to cast a reflection in the mirror which seems to be an invention of the artist himself.

In chapter 5 of his book, *From Demons to Dracula Creation of the Modern Vampire Myth*, Matthew Beresford posits that the "truth behind the real Dracula in a complex one, and this evil image portrayed for so long is not necessarily the whole picture" (Beresford, 2008).

What is interesting to note in this chapter is, "Bram Stoker's use of Vlad's nickname 'Dracula' for his famous Vampire count" Dragon is what Vlad Dracul means since Vlad's father was a member of the 'Order of the Dragon' which is supposedly, "A chivalric society set up by king Sigismund of Hungary to defend Christendom against the Turks" (Beresford, 2008). Matthew further adds that the suffix 'Ulya' simply means 'son of' in Wallachia which is Modern day Romania. Dracula or 'Draculya' would therefore mean 'son of the dragon'. Dracul also means 'devil' in Romania, so some think Dracula means 'Son of the Devil', something which is explicitly utilized in the concluding scene of 'Dracula Untold' where Vlad proclaims before impaling the Turkish sultan that he had transformed into the 'son of the devil' from representing the elite dragon order in the Sultan's Army. This along with other intricate details as stated in the book is going to be dealt with while drawing between the folkloric representation of the vampire and the pictorial, cinematic adaptation of the same. The paper is important in the sense that it highlights into the possible exploration of the dragon-devil ambiguity in the nickname 'Dracula' and how Gary Shore uses this to intermingle the binaries in his film adaptation *Dracula Untold*.

In the introduction of her book *Celluloid Vampires "Life after Death in the Modern World"*, Stacey states that the vampire, "Drawn as it was from folklore and mythology, came to represent the barbaric and archaic world that resists the civilised and the modern." (Abbott, 2007) Even in the American series, Buffy the vampire slayer, the difference between the ancient and modern world vampires is demonstrated as, "violent transfer of power across generations" (Abbott, 2007) through the character of Punk rock vampire named Spike. Stacey argues that vampires in film and television are no longer ruled by past traditions but rather embrace the current scenario and its vast array of experience.

In the Introduction to her Book, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, Nina states that Mortals had vampires as their 'popular confederates' (Auerbach, 1997) from the beginning of the nineteenth century England through the close of twentieth century America. She asserts that: "No fear is only personal; it must steep itself, in its political and its ideological ambience, without which our solitary terrors have no contagious resonance." (Auerbach, 1997) She further states that Vampires, immortal as they are, have the freedom to change incessantly and "Embody not fear of death, but fear of life...infecting readers with fears of their own interminable lives". (Auerbach, 1997)

### **Defining-redefining Gothic and "Vampire" Myth**

The primary element that approaches the mind of readers upon utterance of the word "Gothic" is 'ghost'. However, does the genre of 'gothic' only encompass 'ghost' stories? Maggie Kilgour in her book, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* opines that the Gothic novel is the, "...resurrection of the need for the sacred and transcendent in a modern enlightened

secular world which denies the existence of supernatural forces...” (Kilgour, 1995)

*“One of the powerful images conjured up by the words 'gothic novel' is that of a shadowy form rising from a mysterious place: Frankenstein's monster rising from the laboratory table, Dracula creeping from his coffin, or, more generally, the slow opening of*

*crypt to reveal a dark and obscure figure. This iconography has haunted various critical representations of the rise of the genre. The imagery supports psychoanalytical critics' contention that the gothic reflects the return of the repressed, in which subconscious psychic energy bursts out from the restraints of the conscious ego.”* (Kilgour, 1995)

Merriam Webster (Webster, 1828) defines gothic as, “relating to, or resembling the Goths, their civilization, or their language” and also as, ‘Teutonic’, ‘Germanic’, ‘Uncouth’ and ‘Barbarous’.

Merriam Webster (Webster, 1828) defines Folklore as, “traditional customs, tales, sayings, dances, or art forms preserved among a people”. Paul Barber in his paper claims that, “The folklore [of vampires] is about cantankerous peasants who come back as spirits to torment their nearest and dearest, and this simply doesn't translate into a glamorous lifestyle (Barber, 1996). So, who is a Vampire? What is this supposed folklore all about? Before we go into answering these questions, it is important for us to analyse and examine some of the myths associated with blood sucking ‘un-dead’ creatures around the world. Throughout history there are literally thousands of vampire legends. Stories about these bloodthirsty creatures that relate back to vampire mythology originate in almost every single culture on the face of the earth

The word “vampire” did not appear in English until 1734. In the Anglo-Saxon poem titled “The Vampyre of the Fens” the word “vampire” was first used. One of the earliest accounts of vampires are predominant in Sumerian and Babylonian myth dating to 4000 B.C. The myth relates ekimmu, a type of uruku or utukku (a spirit or demon). This type of demon was not incinerated properly and has reinstated as a vindictive spirit to guzzle the life out of the living, or edimmu (one who is seized away). John Polidori’s “The Vampyre”, was the first full work of fiction in English produced incorrectly under Lord Byron’s name. Polidori, Byron’s doctor, based his vampire on Byron. In vampire folklore, a vampire initially appears as a soft hazy and boneless shaped creature. He was “bags of blood” with red, shiny eyes and, instead of a nose, had a sharp muzzle with which he sucked blood. If he could sustain for 40 days, he would then develop bones and a body and become much more minacious and onerous to kill. (Barnes, 2014)

In 2009, near the remains of plague victims, a sixteenth-century female skull with a rock wedged in its mouth was discovered. To shove a rock or brick in the mouth of a suspected vampire to prevent it from feeding on the bodies of other plague victims or attacking the living was not unusual during that time period. Female vampires were also often held responsible for the outspread of the bubonic plague throughout Europe. The legend of the vampire also features in “Scriptures of Delphi” where the Italian adventurer Ambrogio after having being cursed by the Sun- God Apollo along with his sister Artemis is forced to live out his days in caves. Legend has it that the children of Ambrogio and Selene- the newly created vampires, carries the blood of Ambrogio and Selene, together.

Vampires are fictional entities from the folklore. The Collins Concise Dictionary offers ‘1. (in European Folklore) a corpse that rises nightly from its grave to drink the blood of living people (Collins, 1979), 2. A person who preys mercilessly upon others’ (Collins, 1979); whereas the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* suggests that ‘the persons who turn vampires are generally wizards, suicides, and those who come to a violent end or have been cursed by their parents or by the Church’:

Although vampires are unreal, imaginary beings lurking in the dark corners of the human mind, there are some 'real' creatures around various cultures whose sinister presence (or absence) paints a vivid and resplendent image of the modern vampire. Reports of a creature that goes around by the name, 'Chupacabra' or "goat-sucker"; (from *chupar*, "to suck", and *cabra*, "goat"), attacking and sucking the life force (blood) of livestock (mostly goats), with its purported sightings reported in Puerto Rico, is a legendary creature in the folklore originating in the Southern part of Americas is one out of the many thousand legendary creatures. Hollywood and literary depictions of vampires are strikingly divergent from historical myths. Modern Vampires are "...old, tall, attractive, intelligent and aristocratic, sleep-in coffins on native ground, have an insatiable thirst for blood, and who must be staked through the heart to be killed. In contrast, folkloric vampires (before Bram Stoker) are usually peasants of low intelligence, recently dead, do not need their native soil, and are often cremated with or without being staked. By the end of the twentieth century, over 300 motion pictures were made about vampires, and over 100 of them featured Dracula. Over 1,000 vampire novels were published, most within the past 25 years..." (Barnes, 2014)

### **Inception of Count Dracula**

In this paper, we are about to closely associate ourselves with two modern cinema adaptations of Stoker's Dracula, the first being the most popular and iconic *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Dracula Untold*, the latter being based on Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. This paper strives to draw a connection between the two movies and establish *Dracula Untold* as a possible sequel to Coppola's *Dracula*. But before embarking on our journey to the enchanting (and imaginary) Castle Dracula along the picturesque valleys and hills in Transylvania, it is important to trace the inception of Count Dracula. What were Stoker's sources for composing the character of the Count? Stoker's primary source was an paper by Emily Gerard named "Transylvanian Superstitions"

In her paper, Emily Gerard calls Transylvania, "the land of superstition" (Gerard, 1885) where, "...the whole species of demons, pixies, witches, and hobgoblins, driven from the rest of Europe by the wand of science, had taken refuge...whence they might defy their persecutors yet a while" (Gerard, 1885). Gerard's insightful take on the Transylvanian vampire folklore is what

Stoker explored extensively in his novel. Out of the sum total of the superstitions which includes ridiculous invocation of the devil himself and establishing contracts with him, Gerard says that, the "more decidedly evil, however is the vampire, or the *Nosferatu*, in whom every Roumenian peasant believes as firmly as he does in heaven or hell" (Gerard, 1885). Gerard subcategorizes vampires into two sorts- living and dead, the former being the "illegitimate offspring of two illegitimate persons" (Gerard, 1885), and the dead vampire after being killed by a living vampire "becomes likewise a vampire after death and will continue to suck the blood of other innocent people till the spirit has been exorcised" (Gerard, 1885). The ways in which the "Nosferatu" can be killed is being "stab[bed] through the corpse", "pistol shot", decapitation and filling its mouth with garlic or burning the heart, "strewing the ashes over the grave" (Gerard, 1885).

"The long exploded" (Gerard, 1885), first cousin of the vampire, were-wolf or the Germanic *Prikolitsch* (Gerard, 1885) is also extensively reported by Gerard. She cites a few local legends revolving around people who have claimed to have seen or even had been one. This "fanciful" web of superstition influence the way these "naturally imaginative and poetically inclined" Roumenians lead their lives and "adhere [to it] as closely as to religion itself" (Gerard, 1885).

For the better or for worse, Romania shall be etched in the pages of history primarily with the legend of Count Vlad Dracula and the existence of vampires. With his Gothic novel the Irish writer Bram Stoker gave life to a fictional character so inspiring for the public, it still keeps

appearing as a timeless theme in art, cinema, and literature. As Emily Gerard discussed in her essay, the folktale and beliefs about vampires and other mysterious creatures are an integral and substantial part of the Romanian Folklore. Their original folk have the potential to throw some light in the way we perceive the myth of Dracula. The most in demand and widespread perspective about Vampires has been completely Westernized, but the earlier portraiture of vampires in Romanian Folklore is entirely non-identical from the ones we read about or see on screen.

The early notions about vampires differ from faintly newer mythology in a religious way. Ancient beliefs about vampires perceive them as demons or spirits without any human attributes. However, the Romanian myths are Slavic myths, an aged couple of hundred years, imagining the vampires as living creatures-witches, or revenants (Johnson, 2001) as is discussed by Patrick Johnson in his essay (Johnson, 2001) – who came back from the dead:

*“In Romanian folklore, which is non- Slavic, the common names for corporeal revenants include strigoi, moroi, pricolic and varcolac. Occasionally, one of these words applies to a certain set of origins or attributes of the revenant. For example, moroi might specifically refer to those revenants who died in their infancy without having been baptised. But in general there are no hard and fast rules for connecting a set of motifs with a certain name. As Agnes Murgoci notes, “We find also strigoi, moroi, and varcolaci, and strigoi and pricolici, used as if they were all birds of the same feather” (Johnson, 2001)*

For instance, in Romania, Demons or Witches, nicknamed “Strigoi Vii” are said to be living male/ female witches, who are believed to turn into vampires after their death. Often enough, children born with physical deformities are said to be designed to turn into vampires. The people in Romania believe that these Strigois are soulless, having the power to dispose of or do away with their souls. Another such legend is that of dead corpses being reanimated to become “Strigoi Mort” or Dead Strigoi. These creatures are believed to attack their families and livestock and suck their body fluids and blood with the ability to attack only at night. They do not consume garlic, dread sunlight and do not dare to come out in broad daylight and do not cast a shadow in the mirror.

These characteristics can be traced in numerous other mythological characters in Slavic folklore, but thanks to the popularity of Dracula, they’ve become a symbol of vampirism. People used to open graves some years after the death, to check for any suspicious marks on the body for vampirism.

It seems that Stoker made use of every available resource offered by Gerard in her paper, to make a fine sketch of Count Dracula, also investing a few of his own innovations to enrich his character. But before discussing the motifs used by Stoker in his characterisation of the Notorious Count, it’s important to also make note of the medical and scientific perspective that the Hampi brothers have to offer on vampires.

Hampi says that due to lack of medical knowledge, the condition was kept from being diagnosed till 1858 and pellagra can be identified by the four “Ds”- Dermatitis, Dementia, Diarrhoea and Death (Johnson, 2001). Hampi states that Bram Stoker artistically and carefully blends all the European folkloric beliefs into one persona- Count Dracula. Hampi has elaborately defined the four dimensions of Pellagra- Dermatitis is the hypersensitivity of Pellagrins to sunlight (Johnson, 2001). Dementia has clinical syndromes which includes insomnia, unjustified aggression, Depression and anxiety. Hampi goes on justifying the “sanguine temperament, morbidly excitable” (Stoker, 1993) personality traits of R.N. Renfield who was a patient of Dr Seward in the novel *Dracula* and attributes him with Pica, “a pathological craving for normal foods or for substances not usually regarded as food”

(Hampi & Hampi, 1997). Diarrhoea was a condition “common among pellagrins because of the mucous membranes lesions particularly in the oesophagus, stomach and colon” (Hendricks, 1991, Dumitescu & Lichiardopol, 1994). Hampi suggests that this is probably why the count declines to join his guests for supper- ’

The paper cites many examples attributing Pellagra to have been misidentified to breed ridiculous notions of vampirism and related superstitions. Therefore, it is a matter of conjecture as to whether pellagra is responsible for instigating the vampire myth says Hampi.

### **Mythical Representation of Literature through Cinematic Lens**

This paper provides us with the medical and scientific perspective to the folklore of the vampire and is thus helpful in understanding the common misperceptions and consequently the general ignorance of diseases.

So, what are these much talked about motifs or characteristics that Stoker invests into his Count? In the paper “Count Dracula and the Folkloric Vampire- Thirteen Comparisons” (Johnson, 2001), Patrick Johnson gives us thirteen major motifs of Stoker’s Count Dracula and those of Folkloric vampires excluding the Count’s inability to cast a reflection in a mirror as there is no counterpart in recorded folklore. The primary motifs being blood-drinking, vampire victims turning into vampires, taking the blood of a vampire, his ability to shapeshift, ability to affect the weather, ways to destroy the vampire, aversion to garlic, inability to cross running water, power ceasing during the day- Sensitivity to sunlight, casting no reflections, vampire intellect and social sophistication, vampires of noble birth and vampire cadet school.

Prior to our discussion on the debate as to whether Coppola’s Dracula is a Christian Crusader or Romantic Hero, it is important to consider what Matthew Beresford has to say about Vlad ‘Dracula’:

*“The view of many historians on the character and deeds of Vlad III (known as Tepes, The Impaler or Dracula) is of a cruel and bloodthirsty tyrant who tortured and murdered thousands of his enemies and fellow countrymen alike. Yet the truth behind the real Dracula is a complex one, and this evil image portrayed for so long is not necessarily the whole picture... Bram Stoker’s use of Vlad’s nickname ‘Dracula’ for his famous vampire count. Vlad’s father was known as Vlad Dracul, meaning dragon. He was a member of the ‘Order of the Dragon’, a chivalric society set up by King Sigismund of Hungary to defend Christendom against the Turks. The suffix ‘ulya’ simply means ‘son of’ in Wallachia (now in modern-day Romania). Dracula, or Drakulya, would therefore mean ‘son of the dragon’. Dracul also means ‘devil’ in Romanian, so some think Dracula means ‘son of the Devil’.” (Beresford, 2008)*

Beresford says that the realisation that there existed a flesh and blood ‘Dracula’, “a person as bloodthirsty as his fictional counterpart” (Beresford, 2008) who existed doesn’t dawn upon most people. This ‘Real’ Dracula was not a Vampire by far. This as Matthew puts it, creates what he calls a, “Split Personality” (Beresford, 2008) for Vlad:

*...in the West he is seen as a cruel and bloodthirsty tyrant with strong vampire connections (recently depicted in Francis Ford Coppola’s film adaptation of Bram Stoker’s Dracula and Elizabeth Kostova’s novel, The Historian, wherein the vampire Dracula and Vlad Dracula are one and the same), while in the East he is regarded as a national hero who defended his country from Turkish oppressors and who has no vampire connections whatsoever.*

Coppola’s Dracula (*Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, 1992) is portrayed as a character devoid of the



finer feelings of humanity such as pity, sympathy, forgiveness, empathy and most importantly love, although one might argue that the love he has for his wife Mina - the Romantic love transcended beyond the barriers of time is the only human aspect about him and it was the driving force behind his journey to London after realizing that his lost wife was reincarnated as his lawyer, Jonathan Harker's fiancée, Mina. Coppola endeavoured to stay true to Stoker's novel and moulded Dracula accordingly. Vlad Dracula is the primary antagonist in Coppola's film adaptation: The story unfolds in the year 1462, as Vlad Dracula, Prince of Wallachia returns home victorious after defeating the Turks and impaling them. Upon his return, however he finds his beloved wife Elisabeta dead after committing suicide having received false news of her husband's death. The priest proceeds to inform Vlad that redemption did not exist for Mina for her actions and both enraged and heart broken in having lost his beloved, Dracula renounces his faith and swears to rise from his grave to avenge Elisabeta with all the powers of darkness. He then stabs the chapel's stone with his sword and drinks the blood that pours out of it.

The year is 1897, almost five hundred years having been passed. Jonathan Harker goes to Castle Dracula as the Count's solicitor to settle his Estates both there and Carfax Abbey in London. Dracula discovers Harker's Fiancé, Mina's photograph and believes her to be the reincarnation of his wife Elisabeta. He imprisons Harker in his Castle to be fed to his brides and immediately leaves for London to pursue his lost love. Meanwhile, Harker escapes from Castle Dracula and sends for Mina to tie the knot with him in the abbey where Harker was undergoing treatment and restoration by the sisters of the abbey. Enraged at the news of Mina and Harker's Marriage, Dracula turns Lucy Westerna, Mina's Best Friend into a vampire, after having seduced her and then biting her. Dr Van Helsing is immediately summoned to identify Lucy's mad Bloodlust and he immediately identifies her to be infected by Dracula. He gives up on her condemning her as the "devil's concubine". Meanwhile Harker and Mina return as husband and wife to London and Dracula manages to seduce Mina and she remembers her past life as Dracula's wife and urges him to change her into a vampire when the entire band of vampire hunters lead by Van Helsing and including Harker and Quincey find him out and force him to escape. The band destroy the boxes containing the soil from Transylvania and pursues Dracula who swiftly controls the weather and is on the run to his Castle in Transylvania.

In their battle against Dracula, Morris is stabbed and dies. Dracula is also mortally wounded, his throat being slashed. As Dracula staggers, Mina rushes to his defense. Holmwood tries to attack but Van Helsing and Harker allow her to retreat with the Count. Morris dies of his wound, surrounded by his friends.

In the chapel where he renounced his faith, Dracula lies dying in an ancient demonic form. Mina and Dracula share a kiss as the candles adorning the chapel light up and the cross repairs itself. Dracula turns back to his younger self and asks Mina to give him peace. Mina thrusts the knife through his heart and as he finally dies, the mark on her forehead disappears as Dracula's curse is lifted. She decapitates him and gazes up at the fresco of Vlad and Elisabeta ascending to Heaven together, reunited at long last.

It is important to note that Vlad Dracula renounces his catholic faith only after he learns that his beloved Mina has committed suicide and her soul has been condemned. By striking the stone cross in the chapel, he defies and wages war not just on God, but on himself. As Matthew Beresford asserts in his Book *from Demons to Dracula Creation of the Modern Vampire Myth* (Beresford, 2008):

*"...In the film, Dracula renounces God (rather than converting to Catholicism) because of his apparent betrayal by him; he suggests that he is doing God's work by protecting his land against the Infidel, but God's thanks is to take his wife from him. In reality, Dracula*

*converted to Catholicism, most likely for purely political reasons: 'Dracula' was raised probably as a Catholic, who converted to Islam, reconverted to the Orthodox Church and finally to Catholicism again . . . [this was] most likely seen to be taking realpolitik a little too far'. (Trow, 2003) Dracula played an extremely dangerous juggling game with his religion and his politics during his lifetime, but the focus of his final switch to Catholicism, and suggested vampirism as a consequence, does not take into account his earlier adoption of the Muslim faith while a political prisoner of the Turks. Surely this was more of a defiance of the Christian God. The accusation of vampirism because of his switch of faith seems a touch desperate, and is most likely another attempt to slur the name of Dracula by his enemies... ”*

Dracula belonged to ‘the order of the dragon’ which had the sole purpose of eradicating the Turks (Infidels) from Transylvania establishing Christendom. In many ways then, Vlad was a war hero with a religious inclination towards the Church of Christ. It may not be too far-fetched to assume the role of Dracula to be that of a Christian Crusader, crusading against the Ottoman Empire. The crusades were a series of Medieval war (religious) Sanctioned by the Roman Catholic church under the Pope’s Leadership.

### **Conclusion**

All his life, Vlad sought to defend and establish Christendom, and in return lost his beloved to a treacherous plot designed by the Turks. His anger and grief became one in his defiance and denial of the God he once worshipped and protected. Now he no longer cared about the God who had Elisabeta removed from him. He drove his sword through the stone cross and drank the blood which came gushing forth it and pledged to avenge the death of Elisabeta with all the powers of darkness. We see a transformation in the man who once held God sovereign to his very existence, who faced the light and never allowed darkness to engulf him, turn rogue and become one with evil. Here is where the ‘dragon-devil’ wordplay becomes ironic- when Dracula fights off the Turks, he represents the order of the ‘Dragon’, an order one with the spirit of a Christian Crusader, against the Diabolic Turks. With the death of Elisabeta, he switches his allegiance and goes over to the side of darkness. The death of Elisabeta thus brings about Vlad’s moral death and corruption. He makes a bold proclamation, “I renounce God!” (*Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, 1992) and immediately from a Christian crusader, he becomes an adversary of God and an agent of evil. He goes on to also proclaim that, “Blood is the life and I will have all of it!” it is a voluntary perversion of the Transubstantiation of the Body and Blood of Christ. He drinks the Blood of Christ from the Chalice. This is clearly a paradox as on one hand, he renounces God and goes on to Drink the blood of Christ in an act of defiance and additionally, he strengthens his faith by partaking in the Last supper of Christ with his disciples (Common English Bible). Later on, when Dracula’s lawyer Harker comes to Castle Dracula and Dracula discovers the fact that Elisabeta has reincarnated as Harker’s fiancée through her picture in Harker’s possession, he immediately devises means to imprison Harker in his Castle and sets to travel to England in order to pursue his lost wife. So, we see Dracula in the role of a Romantic Hero in pursuit of his lost love. In the series of atrocities committed by Dracula including killing Quincey Morris, Renfield and the rest and seducing Lucy converting her into a vampire, he is established as a soulless, demonic entity except for his love for Mina, which was perhaps the only redeeming quality about him. It is his everlasting love for Mina that he allows her to kill him. The saga begins with Vlad renouncing God with the Quest to unite with Mina, “with all the powers of Darkness” (*Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, 1992) and ends with Vlad’s ‘release’ and reunion with God. It was love which made him chose evil over good and it was that same

love which redeemed him and lifted him from the curse.

If we were to consider *Dracula Untold* as a possible (and perhaps the more fitting) sequel to *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, it wouldn't be wrong to assume that the Count is redeemed from that of an antagonist to a protagonist and national hero and given a second chance to wipe out the curse of the vampire, and also to prevent his beloved Mina from taking her own life. He is given a clean slate to start over again and restore peace and harmony in his province. But it seems that history repeats itself one way or the other as the plot is constructed in a way where Vlad barter his soul for victory over the Turks to the Master Dracula and becomes his pawn: He has the ability to transform into a cloud of bats. When he returns to Castle Dracula, the Ottoman army attacks, but Vlad single-handedly kills them all. He then sends most of the castle's subjects to Cozia Monastery for safety. (*Dracula Untold*, 2014)

It is also significant to observe that the climax occurs on the day of Easter Feast when Mehmed's Ambassador comes in demanding for a thousand boys along with Vlad's son Ingeras. Easter symbolises Christ's victory over death. Vlad too, conquers death after having been killed and released by Mina in Coppola's *Dracula* only to be resurrected and redeemed through Gary Shore's efforts in *Dracula Untold*. Vlad defeats Mehmed's army but fails to save Mirena (Mina) who falls to her death. He commits suicide but is eventually brought back to life. Following the same pattern of events Vlad comes to modern day London, where he meets the reincarnated Mirena who is obviously oblivious to his identity. As the couple walks away the Master Vampire follows proclaiming the words, "Let the games begin!" (*Dracula Untold*, 2014)

Through the depiction of the two movies, the cycle of continuity of Vlad's Deaths and Rebirths are asserted most strongly. Love is depicted as the ulterior motif in each of these films and *Dracula Untold* succeeds (as a sequel) in establishing and confirming Vlad's pursuit of his beloved Mina, time and again through innumerable deaths and rebirths. Both the directors establish the timelessness of Dracula's love for Mina (Mirena/ Elisabeta). Therefore in all the ages Dracula shall be reborn, Mirena shall too be reincarnated. Dracula will continue selling his soul to the devil and this cyclicity of life and death too shall not be able to keep one from another apart. Dracula may have various interpretations in history, but the undying love between Dracula and his beloved cannot be destroyed. As Coppola's subtitle to his movie asserts- *Love Never Dies*.

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