

From Monster to Man: The Transformation of the Vampire and the Gothic Heroine in *Dracula* and *Vampire Diaries*

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Abstract

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and L. J. Smith's *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening*, separated by a century, both feature the iconic vampire. This study explores how the characterization of the vampire, and its impact on female characters, has transformed within the gothic genre. Utilizing Jungian Archetype theory and textual analysis, this study examines the evolving portrayal of the vampire figure and its connection to the representation of women's horror and madness in the gothic narratives. The analysis reveals a shift in the vampire archetype from *Dracula*'s monstrous and predatory figure to a more romanticized and conflicted one in *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening*. Additionally, the analysis demonstrates how female characters' experiences of horror and madness transition from fear of the vampire in *Dracula* to a more complex interplay of fear and desire in *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening*.

Keywords: Gothic; Archetype; Vampire Characteristics; Horror and Madness of women.

1. Introduction

The appeal of mystery has remained an integral part of human life over the past few decades. Historically, people have been drawn to superstitious beliefs, often rooted in their experiences. Today, while many have abandoned these ancient superstitions, the fascination with the illogical and the extraordinary remains. This is evident in the enduring popularity of Gothic literature, which satisfies the enduring human hunger for mystery. Despite this popularity, literary critics have historically overlooked Gothic literature. Hume, for example, argued that Gothic novels should be studied alongside other classical literary forms, noting that these works are more than just collections of ghostly devices and possess significant literary merit (1969).

One crucial element of Gothic literature is the presence of monster characters. Unlike real threats such as serial killers or natural disasters, monsters in Gothic stories often embody supernatural fears, that reflect deep-seated human anxieties. Tales of monstrous figures such as vampires have fascinated audiences for centuries, often serving as cautionary tales for children.

The vampire has been a prominent figure in Gothic literature for almost two centuries. While Count Dracula of Bram Stoker's famous novel is a widely recognized character, the concept of the vampire predates *Dracula*. John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) were pioneering works that inspired Stoker's creation. Foust's analysis of *Carmilla* shows that Le Fanu established many of the conventions that would later appear in *Dracula*, highlighting the direct influence of *Carmilla* on Stoker's work (1981). Both novels share similarities in characterization and setting, and their portrayal of vampires has influenced many subsequent literary works.

Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is often considered a seminal work of Gothic literature, setting a trend for future stories. Its lasting influence can be seen in contemporary novels such as Elizabeth Kostova's *The Historian*, Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula*, Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series, Ellen Schrieber's *Vampire Kisses* series, and L.J. Smith's *Vampire Diaries*. These modern works reimagine the vampire, moving away from the archetypal figure of Count Dracula.



L.J. Smith's *Vampire Diaries* series exemplifies this transformation, presenting vampires in a contemporary context while retaining the gothic essence. Smith's series has gained widespread popularity, and has been adapted into a successful TV show. The series portrayal of vampire-human interactions and its Gothic settings, such as old graveyards, contribute to its overall Gothic feel.

This study uses comparative literature to examine how the atmosphere and characterization of vampires in Gothic literature has evolved from classic to contemporary works. Remark defines comparative literature as the study of literature across national boundaries and its relationship to other fields such as the arts, philosophy, history, and social sciences (1949). This approach allows for the comparison of literature across cultures and time periods, revealing shared themes and motifs.

Dracula and *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening* serve as the primary texts for this analysis. *Dracula* is chosen for its status as a literary classic that defined the vampire archetype, while *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening* represents contemporary literature influenced by *Dracula* but introduces new elements and characterizations.

Previous studies have explored various aspects of Gothic literature. Kayla Marie Lindsey's "The Pull of Dark Depths" examines female monsters in 19th-century Gothic literature, highlighting cultural anxieties about women who defy societal norms. Najwa Yousif El Inglizi's dissertation "Negotiating the Gothic in the Fiction of Thomas Hardy" analyzes Hardy's engagement with Gothic themes and how they are integrated into his work. Alexandra Maria Reuber's dissertation "Haunted by the Uncanny" traces the development of the Gothic genre and its enduring appeal.

This study differs from previous research by focusing on the evolution of Gothic characterization in vampire literature across time periods. It aims to uncover how the portrayal of vampire characters and the depiction of female horror and madness have changed from *Dracula* to *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening*.

The research questions that guide this study are:

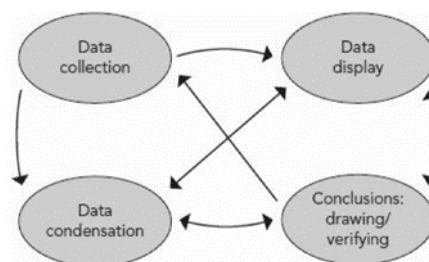
1. How do gothic characterizations of vampire characters change as depicted in Stoker's *Dracula* and Smith's *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening*?
2. How does the horror and madness of the female characters change as a means of Gothic characterization as depicted in Stoker's *Dracula* and Smith's *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening*?

2. Method

This study examines the characteristics of vampires in classic and contemporary novels, focusing specifically focusing on two research questions. To answer these questions, the study uses a descriptive qualitative research design. This approach is appropriate because it aims to describe, interpret, and clarify the phenomena observed in the novels, without manipulating variables as in experimental studies (Ary, 1979). The goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the existing literary elements.

The data for this study consists of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that exemplify Gothic characterization in the selected texts. The primary sources are two Gothic novels: Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and L.J. Smith's *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening* (2007). According to Ary (1979), textual analysis involves content or documentary analysis, which can be applied to a variety of documents, including novels, newspapers, speeches, and more.

Data collection in this study is conducted using the documentary technique with the researcher as the main instrument. This involves close reading of the texts and meticulous note-taking to identify relevant data. The role of the researcher is crucial, as her insights and interpretations drive the analysis process.



3. Findings and Discussion

This study examines the evolution of vampire characteristics and the portrayal of horror and madness in female characters from Stoker's *Dracula* to Smith's *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening*. The analysis reveals significant changes in how vampires are portrayed and how female characters experience horror and madness in these Gothic novels.

Beginning in the 1980s, vampire fiction began to target younger audiences, including children and teenagers, rather than the adult audiences it primarily addressed prior to 1980. This shift has been accompanied by a new portrayal of vampires, making them more human-like in appearance and behavior. Melton notes that contemporary vampires of the 1980s and 1990s tend to have a typical appearance that allows them to fit seamlessly into human society, as opposed to the folkloric vampire, who was frightening because of his semi-decayed nature (1999).

In *Dracula*, Count Dracula's monstrous appearance—with his fangs, rough and hairy hands, long sharp nails, and bloodied visage—immediately marks him as a creature of horror (Stoker, 1987). Similarly, Lucy Westenra, after becoming the "Bloofer Lady," loses her innocence and beauty, replaced by red eyes, pointed teeth, and an unclean appearance (Stoker, 1987). These features emphasize their otherness and the innate fear they inspire.

In contrast, the vampires in *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening* are portrayed as alluring and human-like. Stefan and Damon Salvatore possess beauty, grace, and sensuality that attract women (Smith, 2007). Katherine, who turns the Salvatore brothers into vampires, is portrayed as pale, pretty, and delicate, with a soft voice—a far cry from the terrifying figures of Dracula and Lucy (Smith, 2007). This shift highlights a modern interpretation of the vampire myth, in which vampires integrate undetected into human society and are often seen as attractive rather than monstrous.

As for their supernatural abilities, Count Dracula can move during the day but with reduced strength, and is repelled by garlic and sacred symbols such as the crucifix (Stoker, 1987). Conversely, Stefan Salvatore is vulnerable to sunlight, which can burn and kill him unless he wears a special lapis lazuli ring that allows him to withstand sunlight without harm (Smith 68). Modern vampires, like Stefan, strive to retain their humanity, and often avoid killing humans in order to survive. For example, Stefan feeds on animals, which weakens him but allows him to live among humans, unlike his brother Damon, who feeds on human blood.

Stefan's character retains many human traits such as kindness, empathy, and nobility, which persist even after he becomes a vampire. These qualities make him relatable and compassionate, in sharp contrast to Lucy, who becomes cruel and wanton after her transformation (Stoker, 1987).

The portrayal of the horror and madness of female characters also changes significantly. In *Dracula*, Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker experience extreme fear and horror in the presence of Count Dracula. Lucy's transformation into the "Bloofer Lady" strips her of her sweetness and innocence, and replaces it with cruelty and a lust for blood (Stoker, 1987).

In *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening*, Elena Gilbert's reaction to vampires Stefan and Damon Salvatore is markedly different. Instead of feeling extreme horror, Elena is attracted to them. Her fear of Stefan when he is angry is mixed with fascination and desire: "she was afraid of what she saw, afraid of what Stefan might do. And most of all, she was afraid of Stefan's voice, the cold voice that danced like a rapier, beautiful and deadly and utterly merciless" (Smith 2007). Elena's fear is not paralyzing; she remains in control of her actions, unlike Lucy and Mina, who are overwhelmed by Dracula's presence. Elena's curiosity about Damon reflects a modern reinterpretation of horror in which the vampire intriguing and seductive rather than purely terrifying (Smith, 2007).

Elena's obsession with Stefan, driven by love and passion, contrasts with the madness experienced by Lucy and Mina, which stems from terror and helplessness. Elena's madness is rooted in a need for intimacy and connection, highlighting a shift from fear-based horror to an exploration of complex emotional landscapes.

These findings illustrate the transformation of vampire characters from monstrous to human and the evolution of female characters' experiences of horror and madness, reflecting broader changes in Gothic literature from the classical to the contemporary era.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results, it is evident that the characteristics of the vampires in Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Smith's *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening* (2007), despite some similarities, have shifted significantly. Both Count Dracula and the Salvatore brothers, Stefan and Damon, are driven by their need for blood. However, the modern vampires show remarkable changes in their abilities and moral standing.

Unlike the classic vampire portrayed in *Dracula*, modern vampires like Stefan and Damon do not always kill or feed on human blood. Some characteristics of the vampire have evolved: modern vampires may lose certain powers if they abstain from human blood. For example, Stefan becomes weaker without human blood, unlike Damon or Count

Dracula, who maintain their strength. In addition, modern vampires are less affected by sacred items such as crucifixes, holy wafers, and garlic.

Vampires in *Dracula* possess various supernatural qualities and powers. They are potentially immortal, can feed on blood, have the strength of twenty men, can transform into wolves or bats, appear as mist or elemental dust, do not reflect in mirrors, do not cast shadows, have hypnotic powers, and can turn their victims into vampires. They also have limitations, such as needing an invitation to enter a household and losing their supernatural powers during daylight hours. In contrast, the vampires in *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening* are immortal, eternally youthful, and have the ability to control and manipulate the body, mind, and soul of animals and humans. They can control the weather, manipulate elements, heal quickly, have enhanced senses, strength, and speed, shape-shift into animals like crows or hawks, create illusions, and communicate telepathically with other vampires. However, even they have limitations: they need an invitation to enter a house, cannot cross running water, are vulnerable to sunlight without protection, and can be killed by a wooden stake.

There is a clear progression in the depiction of female horror and madness. In *Dracula*, Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker are powerless against Count Dracula's control, succumbing to his influence and giving their blood involuntarily. In contrast, Elena Gilbert in *Vampire Diaries: The Awakening* experiences a different kind of fear—one mixed with curiosity and attraction. Although Stefan and Damon have the power to control others, Elena retains some autonomy and is drawn to them by their charm and attractiveness rather than sheer terror.

Overall, while the archetype of the vampire as an inhuman creature that feeds on human blood remains, modern interpretations have shifted toward making vampires more human-like, complex, and integrated into society. This shift reflects broader changes in Gothic literature, which emphasize the evolution of supernatural beings and their interactions with human characters.

5. References

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