Interlocutor Journal, *Vol-2*, (December, 2023)
Peer-reviewed Journal of the Department of English
The Bhawanipur Education Society College
ISSN: 2583-7915 (Online), Page No: 31-41, Section: Article

"Kiss me with those Red lips": Duality of the female body and the new woman in Bram Stoker's '*Dracula*'

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Abstract: The female body has often been regarded as an 'object' of desire, of mystery and a trophy to be conquered. Authors across the globe have used the female body to depict certain values, ranging from god-like piety to the vices of a temptress. The woman, considered as a weaker, submissive sex has been constantly subjugated to the all-encompassing gaze of man and society, holding her in the highest of expectations and lowest of value. The paper explores the stereotyping of the female body and the creation of polar opposite tropes that lead to baseless discrimination. In Bram Stoker's '*Dracula*', Mina's desire for autonomy and Lucy's desire for intimacy and her sexual freedom are used to depict a detraction from the stereotyped concept of the pure Victorian woman and essentially reduce them to fallen women, the witch or the trickster figure, entrapping men into their vices of sexual perversion and evil. A woman's sexual freedom and her desire to experience freedom and self-satisfaction are villainized in Stoker's male gaze centric response to the new woman movement.

Keywords: body, autonomy, new woman, sexuality, Victorian society

The revered world of religion has some straight and direct ideas as to the role and power of women in society, depicting their role as equals in society and the household. On the land under the sky ruled by these deities, the constitutions specifically state that men and women are alike in all form and character and discrimination of any kind based on the sexes or sexuality of either genders is a criminal offense. Then, does it not raise the question of where this gender disparity arises from? Both religion and state clearly expound on the virtues of equality and the vices of discrimination. Yet, amidst the seemingly perfect rainbow and sunshine, the cloud of gender inequality steadily covers the sky, raining down stereotypes, ideas, restrictions and the creation of the 'other'. The discrimination and depiction of women as the inferior 'other' has been prevalent since language gave structure to it. Reference can be drawn to Aristotle's 'Poetics' where he clearly depicts the role of the woman as the inferior sex. While defining the characteristics of tragedy in a play, Aristotle wished for women to be subdued if they are to reflect goodness or good moral behaviour: "There is a type of manly valour: but valour in a woman, or unscrupulous cleverness, is inappropriate" (Aristotle 51). The discrimination against women stems from the social constructs of division of labour and of body politics present in every social era. The differences between men and women in society is the underlying cause of gender inequality. These come about as a consequence of socially constructed relationships, which in turn have their roots in sexual labour divisions that are based on biological differences between the sexes, such as the capacity for breastfeeding in women and the notion of superior strength and physical dominance in men. Economically speaking, women's positions are valued less, and they frequently have restricted mobility and are confined to the home. Women frequently face various forms of discrimination, such as social, institutionalised, communal, and domestic discrimination, which negatively impacts their well-being and maintains their inferior

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status to men in the patriarchal system. These power structures are present in every society that has a gendered structure. Feminist scholars have stated that the body is socially moulded as well as colonised and this gives rise to the insurmountable disparity between the two sexes. American writer and activist Andrea Dworkin in her celebrated work *Woman Hating* states that "In our culture not one part of a woman's body is left untouched, unaltered.… From head to toe, every feature of a woman's face, every section of her body, is subject to modification" (Dworkin 113-114). Social mores, customs and gender-imposed expectations end up shaping women physically as well as emotionally.

The role of women in society has undergone rapid change with the shifting times. Each era brought in new socio-political ideologies that shaped gender roles, especially the role of women in society. Before the advent of the 20th and 21st century, gender roles were anything but fluid and women were expected to conform to certain social, political and domestic roles and the failure to do so was heavily punished – in the eyes of society and God himself. The nineteenth century and the Victorian era were particularly harsh about gender roles and what was expected of a woman. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* explores the narrative based on the idea of the good and the bad woman through the female characters of Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker and this paper explores the body and its related sexuality as a crime in the eyes of patriarchy and male dominated social structures with respect to female autonomy, sexuality and expression of willful desire, fueled by the liberating concept of the new woman.

Before the 'crimes' of the female body are explored, it is essential to give a brief outline of the various ways in which women were relegated as the physical and social inferior and how they had to try their best to stand in comparison to the self-declared supremacy of their male counterparts. Franz Joseph Gall's phrenology opined that the inferiority of women in society was not a social but a biological 'flaw', stemming from their skulls and their cranium being five ounces lighter on average and having lesser bumps than the skulls of men, who were biologically superior. Simone De Beauvoir's '*The Second Sex*' points out how male scientists' preconceptions and biases have frequently influenced scientific study on sex differences. She observes that distinctions in female behaviour and physiology have been overlooked or disregarded and that male subjects have frequently been utilised as the standard for experimentation and research. In addition, she claims that the idea that sperm are active and aggressive, whilst eggs are docile and inert, is a cultural myth that has been utilised to support gender stereotypes. This concept of gametes, she contends, has been used to support male superiority over women since it is a consequence of a male-dominated culture that emphasises aggression and power. All of these subjugations and relegations to a lower or inferior position essentially throttled women to be in positions without any semblance of authority or power. This subjugation gradually led to the rise of female voices all across the globe who wanted equal authority and power for women to make their own decisions, to have financial and social security without the necessity of a man to provide the same. These voices united into what came to be known as the new woman movement.

The phrase "New Woman" was first used at the end of the nineteenth century to characterise women who resisted societal norms of what it meant to be a woman and questioned traditional moral and conduct standards. Although the term's origins are subject to debate, it is thought to have been coined

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by the Irish author Sarah Grand in an article[1] from 1894 that discussed the disparities between male and female sexual virtue that existed in Victorian marriages. Critic and author Gail Finney, in her analysis of the works of Henrik Ibsen gives an accurate description of what the new woman entails:

> "The New Woman typically values self-fulfillment and independence rather than the stereotypically feminine ideal of self-sacrifice; believes in legal and sexual equality; often remains single because of the difficulty of combining such equality with marriage; is more open about her sexuality than the 'Old Woman'; is well-educated and reads a great deal; has a job; is athletic or otherwise physically vigorous and, accordingly, prefers comfortable clothes (sometimes male attire) to traditional female garb."[2]

The new woman was a thought, a way of living that gave rise to a new and resilient generation of women who rejected conventional social mores and sought freedom and equality, applying for male-dominated jobs and positions and working towards causes such as female suffrage and the right to female inheritance of ancestral money. The new woman threatened to tumble the self-imposed superiority of men in the social hierarchy and led to reactionary works and depiction of women as evil and disobedient.

The new woman essentially created two groups of women – the angelic woman was the conventional woman who abided by the patriarchal mores and the rebellious woman represented the demonic or monstrous woman who protested against the social injustice and the repressive gender roles. It is here that Gilbert and Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic* throws light upon the central concept of the new woman in society.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's seminal work of feminist literary critique, *Madwoman in the Attic* was first published in 1979. Gilbert and Gubar examine how female authors have historically been either excluded from the canon of literature or relegated to the periphery by creating "madwomen" or "monstrous" figures in their book. They contend that these representations demonstrate patriarchy's attempts to stifle and silence women's voices as well as societal anxieties about the creative and intellectual abilities of women.

The notion of the "angel in the house" as opposed to the "madwoman in the attic" is one of the major ideas examined in '*Madwoman in the Attic*'. A stereotypical image of womanhood, the "angel in the house" is passive, submissive, and devoted to her domestic responsibilities. She embodies conventional gender roles and expectations and is viewed as a comforting presence who serves and cares for her family. On the other hand, the "madwoman in the attic" is a symbol of feminine creativity and rebellion who is frequently viewed as threatening or dangerous. She represents the worries and concerns of a patriarchal culture that attempts to stifle and silence the voices of women. Gilbert and Gubar contend that these two individuals stand for a dichotomy that has traditionally been employed to silence the opinions and experiences of women. The "madwoman in the attic" is a figure of rebellion

[1]An expression first used in an essay by British feminist Sarah Grand in 1894 to characterise an independent woman who strives for accomplishment and self-fulfilment outside of marriage and the family. Grand claims that the New Woman "proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman's-Sphere, and proscribed the remedy"

[2] Freud states that the Madonna-whore complex is "where such men love they have no desire and where they desire they cannot love"

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and creativity who is frequently depicted as monstrous or insane, whereas the "angel in the house" is an idealised figure who is frequently used to silence women's opinions and experiences.

Traditionally, *Dracula* has been interpreted as a reactionary work by conservatives to the emergence of new gender roles at the close of the nineteenth century. Critics contend that novels like *Dracula* reveal male novelists' fears about the sexual and social effects of feminism, fears mirrored in predatory and monstrous female characters. This paper will be divided into two halves – the angel figure turned into the monster and the monster figure or the "madwoman in the attic" in the novel. This essentially depicts that any woman who detracts from the conventional system is bound to end up with the same fate – as the fallen woman.

The first chapter of the novel introduces the readers to Jonathan and Mina Harker, the couple who come to Transylvania. It must be noted that just like Jonathan is a solicitor, Mina is a school teacher too – she is gainfully employed and has a semblance of financial freedom. Stoker's highlighting of Mina's employment throughout the novel essentially seems to depict that the gradual fate of Mina is partly due to her rebellion against the socially expected role of being a good, faithful wife and instead regarding herself as an equal or near equal partner. The communication between Mina and Lucy through their letter provides critical insight on the role of women, when Mina iterates that women are told that they must not interfere in men's work

This essentially depicts the expected role of the woman in Victorian society, the angel figure in the narrative which Mina seems to be a critical part of. It must be noticed that Mina also talks of the new woman in the eighth chapter:

> Some of the 'New Women' writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But I suppose the 'New Woman' won't condescend in future to accept. She will do the proposing herself (Stoker 84).

The concept of the new woman is critical in understanding the transition of Mina from the angel figure to the monstrous figure. One of the driving forces behind the social stature of women in the Victorian era was the concept of the new woman. The new woman represented the changing times by opposing gender norms and promoting women's rights and liberties. The new woman tirelessly fought to advance women's rights and freedoms and was a vocal supporter of women's suffrage. Virginia Woolf was among the most well-known representatives of the new woman. Woolf played a significant part in the Bloomsbury Group, a group of intellectuals, artists, and writers who questioned conventional gender roles and advanced novel conceptions of gender and sexuality. Some of the traits of the New Woman are embodied by Mina, including her desire to further her education and participate in intellectual activities. However, Mina is equally subject to the same forms of oppression and restrictions that other women in her period endured since she selectively chose to embrace the hallmarks of the new woman by being gainfully employed but not seeking complete autonomy or freedom from dependence on her male counterpart. She is frequently relegated to the domestic realm and is not permitted to participate in Jonathan's legal work. She must be modest, obedient, and respectful of the men around her. Mina is equally a victim of the oppressive social mores of her period. It is important to mention that Mina also demonstrates a sense of leadership and autonomy that goes against these expectations. Despite the social constraints, she is eager to learn and take part

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in her fiancé's job. She plays a significant role in the group's attempt to stop Count Dracula and makes use of her intelligence and creative thinking to assist them. As a result, Mina stands as an example of the New Woman and defies the expectations that were put on women during the Victorian era. It must be noted that since Mina contributes to the furthering of the 'patriarchal cause' of defeating a common enemy, her defiance and autonomy are praised and she is even called a man for it: "She has man's brain - a brain that a man should have were he much gifted - and woman's heart" (Stoker 221).

Many of the traits attributed to the "good woman" archetype are embodied by Mina's character in Dracula. She supports her fiancé Jonathan Harker in his inquiry into Dracula's activities and is intelligent, devoted, and caring. Mina is portrayed as a strong and resourceful character who uses her proficiency with shorthand and typing to assist the other characters in solving the riddle surrounding Dracula's whereabouts and agendas. She is a perfect example of the angel figure, abiding by the social duties expected of her, to an extent that Van Helsing states that she is:

one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth. So true, so sweet, so noble (Stoker 177).

Thus, many of the traits that were admired and anticipated of Victorian women are represented in Mina's character. She is modest and righteous, and she and Jonathan are shown to have a loving yet respectful relationship. Despite her abilities and intellect, Mina is never seen as a danger or a challenge to the male characters; rather, she is viewed as a crucial part of their investigations.

Another essential role that Mina serves in reinforcing her role as the angel figure in the narrative is her depiction as the chaste and pure woman – in tune with the values of a good and virgin Christian woman. Mina is portrayed as a lady of impeccable virtue in addition to her intellect. She is referred to as "pure" and "innocent," and the relationship she has with Jonathan is understood to be one of admiration and regard. Although Mina's sexuality is never brought up directly in the book, it is suggested that she is a virgin and that she and Jonathan are courting rather than pursuing each other for a baser, carnal desire. In contrast to the more sexually explicit and perilous female characters in the book, such as Lucy Westenra and the three brides of Dracula, Mina's modesty and purity stand out. Mina's character stands for a purer and conventional image of womanhood, while the other characters embody the darker and more transgressive sides of femininity which truly embrace the concept of the new woman rather than when it suited their purpose. Mina stays at home, taking care of the household and preparing for her upcoming marriage to Jonathan, while Lucy travels abroad and has romantic relationships with several different men. The conventional expectations of women in Victorian society are reflected in Mina's position as a housewife and caregiver. Mina's role can be perfectly described using Virginia Woolf's observation of the angel in the house in *A Room of One's Own*: "The Angel in the House is a perfect woman who has no flaws, no desires of her own, and who always puts others first" (Woolf 59).

Then, how and why does Mina become a prey of Dracula despite having an immaculate record in the department of faithful Victorian affairs? In the simplest of terms, Stoker uses Mina as a scapegoat, a dramatic flair that comes out of the perversion of the pure woman. Mina is a fallen woman not by her actions but by her association to Dracula. Much like Tess of the D'urberville, Mina is a fallen woman

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as a result of consequences. Mina's attraction, however fleeting to the Count opens a pathway for Stoker to ravage her, when she says she has a: "sort of fascination, not altogether unholy" (Stoker 242).

Mina feels ashamed and guilty about her desire for Dracula because she is aware of how inappropriate and perilous it is. But she cannot resist the allure of Dracula, and her attraction to him ultimately puts her in jeopardy and essentially 'compromises' with her position as an angelic figure. In Victorian literature, the story of the innocent woman being guided astray by a man is a frequent trope, and Mina's experiences with Dracula reinforce the result of giving in to temptations. Stoker uses this situation to show the audience what happens when a good Victorian woman strays the path of righteousness. Stoker essentially portrays female autonomy and control over their body as a sin and highlights that free thinking leads to eventual ruin. The experiences of Mina in the narrative are consistent with the trope of the fallen woman, which was frequently depicted as a woman who had been seduced or misled by a man. Additionally, Mina's connection to Dracula has real-world repercussions for her existence and her fate. Her interactions with the Count have an impact on her body and psyche, and she feels corrupted and damaged as a result. The fallen woman trope is known for this feeling of irreparable harm and shame because women who were driven out from society often have to live with the shame of their alleged immorality. Mina's association with this trope, however, highlights broader cultural concerns about women's sexuality and agency during the Victorian period. Mina's transformation to fit the role of the Monster is important since it speaks of the patriarchal idea of stereotypes against the sexual and sensual freedom of a woman. A mere attraction to another man is pitted as the way for the devil to weasel its way into her heart, subtly hinting at the fate of women who dared to explore or follow up on their desires instead of following orders like they were supposed to.

The second trope of the "madwoman in the attic" is portrayed explicitly by Lucy Westenra. She is portrayed as a youthful, vivacious woman who personifies the principles of the New Woman movement - women's desire for greater freedom and independence, as well as their desire to seek higher education and careers and have control over their own bodies and sexuality, all of which served to define this movement. Lucy's actions and views towards these concepts are used throughout the book as a reflection of how women's roles have changed in Victorian culture. The new woman was not just one person, but rather a broad spectrum of females who sought to liberate themselves from the confines of Victorian society and forge new pathways for themselves. She disagreed with the idea that women should only be involved in domestic affairs and rather pushed for the new woman to be independent. Although she is depicted as "a thoroughly good and sweet young lady", her flaw is that she is "very modern in some aspects". When Lucy agrees to marry Arthur Holmwood but demands a lengthy engagement so that she can continue to appreciate her freedom, it shows that she is independent and unafraid to speak her mind. This essentially speaks of Lucy's autonomy and freedom, something that the Victorian society was not so ready to cede to women. Her outward approach and interest in multiple partners depict the hollowness of character according to the patriarchal concept of purity and Stoker depicts that it is this shallowness that makes her an easy prey for Dracula. Stoker essentially punishes a woman who wishes to assert her own freedom by likening her to the devil, since Dracula was a common denotation of the antichrist figure in Christian faith.

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The new woman's embrace of style and attire was one of her most notable characteristics. She shunned the constricting and inconvenient clothing of the Victorian period and favoured more loose-fitting, practical attire that allowed for more freedom of movement. As it was viewed as a symbol of women's freedom and empowerment, this new style was frequently linked to the suffrage movement and the fight for women's rights. Stoker uses this concept and perverts it by depicting Lucy's free flowing attire: "Lucy was looking sweetly pretty in her white lawn frock; she has got a beautiful color since she has been here" (Stoker 60).

It is as if Lucy's rejection of constricting corsets and bodices and choosing free flowing frocks creates a gateway for her to be oppressed. This essentially highlights the topic of the commodification of the female body and the male gaze that perverts comfortable clothing and likens it to loose morality. Many men perceived the new woman as a danger to their established dominance, and some women thought she was unfeminine or even immoral. They felt threatened by the new woman, who they perceived as a danger to their traditional power and authority, as a result of the change in societal attitudes towards gender roles and expectations. One of the main concerns about the new woman was that her assertiveness and independence would cause the conventional family structure to fall apart. Many men worried that the new woman would undermine the conventional patriarchal power structure and pose a threat to their position as household heads. The reality that many new women were active in the suffrage and women's rights movements—at the time, seen by many as radical and dangerous—exacerbated this fear. The new woman was also considered as a fallen woman in society. This is exactly what fuels Stoker's narrative of Lucy's destruction.

Lucy gradually becomes more and more susceptible to Dracula's sway. The vampire visits her during her sleepwalking episodes, which are characterized in erotic terms, implying that their interactions have a sexual undertone. This implies that Lucy is being gradually seduced by Dracula. Stoker essentially depicts this sexual fallacy as the major contributing factor behind her transformation into a vampire. As Dracula's power over Lucy grows stronger, she starts to display characteristics of the "fallen woman." Her demeanour changes to one that is more sensual and provocative, and she is described as becoming more restless and disturbed. Her voracious hunger for blood, which can be seen as a metaphor for her sexual appetite, also begins to develop. The men around her view her as a deviant and a threat to their own sense of morality because they perceive her behaviour as threatening and dangerous.

Perhaps one of the most important depictions of how the bodies of women were used to regulate social conduct is through Stoker's transformation of Lucy's physical attributes. In the beginning she is depicted as "a thoroughly good and sweet young lady" but she gradually transforms into the devil incarnate: "Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed. The sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness" (Stoker 199).

Stoker essentially transforms Lucy and physically desecrates her when he describes her after her transformation:

> When Lucy, I call the thing that was before us Lucy because it bore her shape, saw us she drew back with an angry snarl, such as a cat gives when taken unawares, then her eyes ranged over us. Lucy's eyes in form and colour, but Lucy's eyes unclean and full of hell fire,

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> instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew. At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing. Had she then to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight. As she looked, her eyes blazed with unholy light, and the face became wreathed with a voluptuous smile. Oh, God, how it made me shudder to see it! With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone. The child gave a sharp cry, and lay there moaning. There was a cold-bloodedness in the act which wrung a groan from Arthur. When she advanced to him with outstretched arms and a wanton smile he fell back and hid his face in his hands.

She still advanced, however, and with a languorous, voluptuous grace, said, "Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!"

> There was something diabolically sweet in her tones, something of the tinkling of glass when struck, which rang through the brains even of us who heard the words addressed to another (Stoker 199).

Thus, the "sweet young lady" who was decked in her "white, with a gold crucifix around her neck" is transformed into a woman who is "unclean and full of hell fire" and wears a "white nightdress" which "was smeared with blood". According to the Victorian era, the good, lawful and faithful woman was to look weak, frail and pale – depicting a weakness and a need to be guarded. Instead, Stoker transforms Lucy into a temptress with a "voluptuous" body, eyes "full of hell fire" and her "lips were crimson with fresh blood". Stoker essentially employs the male gaze and patriarchal standards of beauty and shatters it to depict Lucy as a seductress with an alluring and sexually tempting body that had the power to lead men astray, almost like a siren. Her "look of voluptuousness" is considered as a characteristic of a fallen woman who uses her body to ensnare.

Her lips look "redder and fuller", and her skin is described as being "whiter than ever". Lucy no longer resembles the innocent and pure girl she once was due to her physical transformations and her escalating sexual behaviour. Ultimately, Lucy's transformation results in her demise. She is used as a pawn by Dracula in order to gain access to the men in her life, weakening and making them susceptible to his sway. In a terrifying scene, Dracula's influence causes Lucy's body to be twisted and deformed as she crawls on the roof of her bedroom. She transforms into a grotesque and terrifying figure, a far cry from the lovely and innocent child she once was. Stoker essentially lines Lucy right alongside the three brides of Dracula, implying that she got transformed to the dark side. Stoker's hypocrisy is evident from his depiction of the three brides when he states: "There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal" (Stoker 34).

Stoker calls the "voluptuousness" of the women both "thrilling" and "repulsive", essentially laying bare the double standards of the male authors when typecasting women who did not fit into the Victorian standards of the petite woman as the temptress figure or the fallen woman and this essentially speaks volumes about the hypocritical double standards of men in the Victorian society who arranged narratives to suit their patriarchal needs.

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Thus, the body plays a significant role in the narrative's concepts and symbolism - from the objectification and sexualisation of female bodies to the transformation of characters into supernatural entities. The objectification and sexualisation of female bodies is one of the most notable uses of the body by Stoker. Female characters, like Lucy and the three brides of Dracula, are frequently fetishized by male characters, who characterise them in highly sexualized terms.

Reference can be made to the 1988 essay "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power" by feminist Sandra Lee Bartky. She makes the point that women are frequently judged for their size and shape because their bodies mirror their personalities and nature by describing socially accepted "norms" for a woman's body and behaviour. She uses this information to support her argument that the "ideal body of femininity is constructed," and she claims that this ideal woman is a reflection of societal obsessions and preoccupations. According to Bartky, the ideal female body changes over time and is influenced by society. The ideal body, according to Stoker's Victorian ideal, is that of a newly pubescent girl or one that is "taut, small-breasted, narrow-hipped, and of a slimness bordering on emaciation." Women are able to project an image of weakness, obedience, and subservience to males due to their frail appearance and lack of muscular strength. With the help of these rules, Bartky claims that "femininity is something in which virtually every woman is required to participate," and that women who fail to adhere to this strict methodology and go against these norms are considered "loose women", which is essentially purported by Stoker's transformation of the women of the novel into fallen women. The construction of femininity led to the development of a "practiced and subjected body on which an inferior status has been inscribed" (Bartky 71) by society. Society's obsession with keeping women in check so that men can appear more powerful is reflected in all these standards for the ideal feminine figure.

This is especially clear in the scene where Harker is approached by Dracula's brides, who seduce him with their voluptuous bodies and pointed fangs. The focus on women's physical attributes and sexuality supports patriarchal norms and the notion that women's value is derived from their attractiveness. Lucy's transformation into a vampire also emphasises the peril of female sexuality and the dread of women who are unconstrained by conventional gender roles. As she is consumed by the vampire's spell and transformed into an undead demon, her body becomes a site of transformation and horror. The body not only plays a role in character transformation, but it also represents identification and power. The transformation of Dracula's body and his ability to manipulate others are symbols of his supremacy and power over those around him, perverting women and destroying their femininity to create the "madwoman in the attic": "There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (Stoker 34).

Thus, Stoker uses femininity and the autonomy and freedom of the female mind and body as a credible threat to the patriarchal rule of the Victorian era and transforms the new woman into a monster to curb female suffrage. Stoker all but fails since centuries later, in the present context, his central concept of the female body is nothing but a crumbling relic of a distant, dusty past. The way that female body types are portrayed in literature speaks to the societal mores, expectations, and prejudices of the time and place in which it was written. The depiction of female characters with various body types and shapes can send multiple signals about social norms for beauty, gender roles,

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and power relationships. The paper depicts how feminine body types influence society in literary works and influence the power and authority of characters in the text. Women's bodies have been fetishized, objectified, and used as representations of sexual desire, fertility, and appeal throughout history. This objectification of female characters in literature is frequently mirrored in the way they are physically described.

During the middle age, fair skin, and a curvy, voluptuous figure were regarded as ideal traits of female beauty. These traits were regarded as symbols of wealth and prestige. This can be seen by how women are portrayed in works like Boccaccio's '*The Decameron*' and Chaucer's '*The Canterbury Tales*'. The ideal feminine figure changed during the Renaissance to a slenderer and delicate form, which was regarded as a symbol of refinement and elegance. This is further demonstrated by how women are portrayed in Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" and Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus". The ideal female form was even more constrained in the 19th century, with an emphasis on a small waist and cinched hips. Characters like Emily Bronte's Catherine Earnshaw in "Wuthering Heights" and Jane Austen's Elizabeth Bennet in "Pride and Prejudice" serve as literary examples of this ideal. The ideal female body grew even more elusive in the 20th century, with an emphasis on extreme thinness and a "boyish" figure. Characters like Daisy Buchanan from "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Holly Golightly from "Breakfast at Tiffany's" by Truman Capote serve as literary examples of this standard. This ideal was also connected to the development of the fashion industry and the celebrity cult, which led to the development of a new standard of attractiveness that was out of reach for the majority of women and continues to be a site of alienation and detachment from the social milieu for millions of women globally.

The paper essentially explores the duality of the female body in the Stoker's '*Dracula*' and how the sexuality of a woman is weaponised to fight against the rise of the new woman movement. The red lips and the voluptuous bodies of these women in Stoker's novel represent the threat of women embracing their sexuality, a duality which is both "thrilling" and "repulsive" for the men in the novel. A woman's attraction and her freedom of choice in her emotional/sexual/sensual decisions is depicted as an agent of corruption and Lucy's desire to enjoy her youth and embrace her sexual desires makes her the ideal scapegoat to take upon the role of the fallen woman. Just like anti-sentimental comedy was a reaction to the grim and emotional plays of the age, Stoker's work is essentially a reaction to the looming 'threat' of the new woman. The two sides of femininity also essential echo the old dichotomy of the Madonna-whore complex[3] where men see women as either saintly like Madonna or as fallen as a prostitute. This complex is deeply rooted in literature, film and art, echoing in canons of literary works such as Joyce's '*A portrait of the artist as a young man*' where Stephen Daedalus sees women as either the religious and virtuous "ivory-tower" or the fallen prostitute and even in Martin Scorcese's '*Taxi Driver*' where the Madonna-like Betsy is a stark contrast to the debased prostitute Iris. Thus, male authors like Stoker have historically upheld patriarchal norms by shaming women, promoting gender stereotypes, and enabling men to seize power and

[3] Gail Finney, 1995. 'Ibsen and Femininity' in The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen, edited by James McFarlane, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 95

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Interlocutor Journal, *Vol-2*, (December, 2023)
Peer-reviewed Journal of the Department of English
The Bhawanipur Education Society College
ISSN: 2583-7915 (Online), Page No: 31-41, Section: Article

dictate women's sexual autonomy in order to rest the hollow crown of superiority upon their hypocritical heads.

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