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1ENG321 First draft assignment on *Dracula*.

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In the Victorian times, women did not have rights on their name compared to men. They were only awaited to be household carriers, who mothers their children and provide a warm household for their husbands. Being a housewife was the only thing women of these times lived for, they need not to worry of finding work and being independent as they were reckoned as vulnerable for physical labour.

Women who worked to provide for their families were negatively viewed by the society and shamed. They were treated as secondary citizens compared to men, whom everything seemed to go along with them oppressing the women. Men were regarded as the powerful group in the society because of their masculinity. Gender inequality was at its peak during this time and the women had to suffer the oppression from the masses and the society. They were not allowed to voice out their concerns or have opinions on the living conditions, if one had attempted anything going against the expectations of the society they were taken to prison and to reformations.

They were deprived of rights to vote, sue or if married to own property on their names. With their rights being extremely limited, they lost ownership of their wages, property and all they had in their position once married. It was unacceptable for a woman to own large assets more than a man or that were regarded to be owned by men like land, property and firms. Women were seen useless here only good for making babies and caring for egoistic men.

In the book *Dracula* the text focuses on gender and sexuality where we get the insight of the female sexuality and the power it holds on the society.

The seductive behaviour by the female vampires threatened the gender expectations of the Victorian era as it shows feminine power taking over masculinity. There was never a moment a woman had to overpower a man, what the vampires did became an insult to the masculine society. Women's sexual behaviour was restricted by the society. To be valued as a woman there you had to be a virgin or wife otherwise you were regarded as a whore. The moment these vampires seduces Jonathan Harker it displays immorality of women expressing their sexual desires over a man and weakening him to commit adultery.

The vampirine spirit awakened the femininity that had been long enclosed, Lucy had the nerves to ask for a kiss from Arthur her fiancé. That was said to be immoral of a woman to ask for sexual attention from a man, a woman was not to express her sexual desires or even satisfy herself to fulfil those needs unless led on by a man. These acts were against the Victorian values and it presented immorality of the female society. This ideal was represented by two main characters of *Dracula* Mina and Lucy. They were both women who dependant on their husbands and carried different character traits which some of them were not who they truly were but because of the society they lived in they had to live a false life.

When Dracula had succeeded on transforming these women to vampires it awakened their sexuality and its expressions. A woman embracing her sexuality had obtained power, meaning they also had greater power in their femininity. The 'rape' of Harker by the three weird sisters shows the women taking over a role that a Victorian man was supposed to possess. When he was raped, Harker became submissive and was easily overpowered by the vampires' seduction and his temptation. He got aroused even though he was also disgusted by the weird sisters however this represented how his masculine ego was battling with his identity. His lusty side wanted to satisfy his 'burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips', it challenged his position as a respectable Victorian man who should repulse and consider his wife 'let some day it should meet Mina's eyes and cause her pain'. It also indicated how men enjoyed the aspect of women yet only to satisfy themselves.

Dracula brings out many fears however the most notable are the male fear of being feminine and fear of women in general (feminaphobia and gynephobia). This was represented by the vampire bite which gave gender ambiguity that could be interpreted as a sexual symbol for both men and women. For men the act of plunging teeth is equivalent to penile penetration and for women the act of sucking blood is the taking of 'life fluid'. Ambiguity was also displayed when Dracula as a male created a vagina out of his chest by cutting it open for Mina to drink.

Looking at Lucy's character even before becoming a vampire she had an aura of subtle sexuality and flirtatiousness. "why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as she want". This represented that she had always had a hidden desire to go against the Victorian social expectations. Her desire to be satisfied by men was as strong as her wanting to satisfy men herself. This was a threat to masculinity as women seemed to have possessed greater power over men.

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