

*Interrogation Subversion and Reassertion of Heteronormative
Codes of Sexuality in Anglo-American Vampire Narrative*

SYNOPSIS

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This dissertation endeavours a study of the interrogative and subversive roles played by nineteenth century vampire narratives in the realm of heteronormative sexuality of Victorian England, as well as the redefinition of masculinity in the vampire narratives of the United State of America in the late twentieth century. My argument is that the vampire narratives of the nineteenth century England not only posed a challenge to the heteronormative codes of sexuality stipulated by and celebrated in Victorian England, but also contributed in the process of the formation of a redefined metrosexual masculinity in the United States of America in the late twentieth century. I have tried to analyze how the vampire narratives resurged in the late nineteenth century England as a consequence of the effort of the capitalist state to determine heteronormativity as the only sanctioned and stipulated sexual paradigm. This implies an initiative to discipline all forms of deviation by categorizing them as aberrant, unnatural, and putting them under state surveillance and control. There is also an effort to examine and assess the process of transformation of masculinity in the late twentieth century United States and the role of the vampire narratives in this process of transformation.

The Anglo-American vampire narratives form a curious case of reassertion of the heteronormative codes of sexuality. The role of the vampire narratives is twofold. Firstly, they pose a subversive counter-narrative constituting multiple forms of ‘aberrant sexualities’ constituting homosexuality, lesbianism, and incest, necrophilia and role reversal to resist the dominant discourses of heteronormativity. Secondly, they construct the desired metrosexual male vampire icons to compel masculinity to redefine and reassert itself. My dissertation studies a collection of selected Anglo-American vampire fictions constituting novels, short stories, films and television series. I include in the present study images, sculptures, scenes from films and television series, textual and documentary evidences to substantiate my critical arguments.

Methods

This dissertation focusses on the shifting paradigms of the vampire narratives, which render a journey from interrogation and subversion to reassertion of the heteronormative codes of sexuality. Moreover, the dissertation explores the origin of the European vampire narratives in their Asian counterparts. The methodology of research therefore, consists primarily of the reading of the vampire narratives from the perspectives of theories of gender, class and race. It also endeavours to study Indian archaeological evidences through field studies.

Chapters

I have divided my dissertation into four chapters with an introduction and conclusion.

Introduction

Chapter I: Origin of Vampire Myths in Eurasian Narratives

Chapter II: Formation of Heteronormativity in Nineteenth Century Britain

Chapter III: Sexual Subversion in Nineteenth Century Vampire Narratives of Great Britain

Chapter IV: Construction of Metrosexual Males in Twentieth Century Vampire Narratives of the United States of America

Conclusion

In the introduction, I have attempted to provide the relevance of my research in context of the growing critical interest in vampire narratives and their reading from the perspective of the gender studies. The introduction provides an overview of the chapters in the thesis along with the arguments behind the chronology followed in the sequence of chapters. The introduction refers to the critical works done in the past on the study of vampire narratives from the perspective of gender studies and attempted to render the critical focus of this thesis.

In chapter I of my dissertation, I endeavor to explore the origin of the vampire legend. I begin with the hypothesis that the vampire legend of Europe is a cultural import from Asia. I make an extensive intertextual study of the Indian, Tibetan, Turkish and Romanian vampire legends along with a historical study of the cultural encounter during the trade via the Silk Route in the medieval age to validate my argument.

Historically, the Silk Route is the oldest and longest transport route to connect Asia with Europe. The route from China to Turkey passing through India, Tibet, and Persia was not only significant for trading of silk, but also for religious and cultural exchange. Buddhism was transported to Central Asia through the Silk Route. European travellers also came to China and India through this route. The cultural encounter seems to comprise an export of the Indian ideas in the regions through which the Silk Route passed. It is significant to note that not only the Classical Sanskrit texts of Indian literature, philosophy and religion got translated into the languages of the regions through which the Silk Route passed; the themes of such texts get manifested in the texts written by the writers of other languages. Such a curious case of intertextuality appears in case of *Kathasaritsagara*.

Following such wide popularity of *Kathasaritsagara* in the Central Asia and Eastern Europe, I discern that it would not be far-fetched to assume that the myth of the vampire seems to have been influenced by this popular Indian legend of the Vetala and the traders travelling on the Silk Route may have transported the myth. The travellers have always an inclination towards story telling as we gather from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. No wonder that the stories of *Kathasaritsagara* would gain popularity among them. However, I think it important to note that the myth of the vampire initially created mass hysteria because of its association with disease and death.

It is relevant to note that Slavic Vampire myths flourished in the late medieval period, that is, from the fourteenth to the fifteenth centuries. Hence, we could say that the vampire myth in Europe is probably an import from Asia.

The intertextual study of the vampire narratives of Asia and Europe leads to two critical assumptions. The first one of them is the theory of migration following the trade routes. If the Chronology of the India texts with the vampiric legends are taken into consideration, then the period of the development of the cult would appear to parallel the development of the Tantric tradition in the Indian theological milieu. *Vetala Panchvingshati*, a fictional discourse on the vampirism and Tantra, seems to have composed in the eighth century while *Sadhanamala*, one of the sacred texts of the Vajrayana cult of Buddhism seems to have been composed from the third to the tenth century, although most of the deities conceived over there achieved aesthetic shape not before the tenth century. The Buddhist scholar Atisa Dipankara took many texts of Buddhist Tantra to Tibet in the twelfth century immediately before the Islamic invasion in India. Since the twelfth century, a rich tradition of Tantric Buddhism flourished in Tibet as well as in China. These traditions include blood rituals for eternal life, magic to control elements of Nature and above all, subversion of heterosexual codes and acknowledgement of alternative sexuality. No wonder that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* contains all the traits evident in the Indian texts. What could be the reason? Did the medieval Arabic and European merchants and travellers carry the myth to the Slavic region? The chronological study of the vampiric myths across the line does not deny the possibility. The second assumption would be following the Jungian line: manifestation of the primary archetypes in different nations in different forms even without any evidence of migration. I encompassed both of the possibilities in my critical assumptions.

Chapter II renders how the Victorian age in Great Britain renders a paradigmatic shift in terms of its endeavour in the formation of the codes of sexuality and the preferences associated with them. The transformation of capitalism into imperialism, as Lenin has observed in his *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* requires concentration of monopoly market and rapid growth in production. Such a desired boom in production, in turn, depends on uninterrupted supply of raw materials and availability of cheap yet efficient labour force. It was therefore necessary to monitor and regulate the human resource indispensable for production. The regulation of sexuality thus became crucial to accomplish the task bestowed by the monopoly market. The Victorian society had taken up the responsibility to structure and discipline sexuality as part of the process to revise the notion of family and human relationships. Such structural endeavour entails codification of sexual behaviour and norms necessary for procreation as well as careful elimination of acts and preferences indulged for the sake of bodily pleasure. The formation of the Victorian standardized codes of sexuality therefore depended on observation, stipulation, surveillance and elimination conducted and monitored by the state itself. Such institutionalization of sexuality not only constricted the arena of sexuality itself, but also formed the specifications required to perform gender roles. In this chapter, I have tried to examine the nuances of Victorian standardization of sexuality and the process of its transformation into the system of heteronormativity.

The gradual development of a network between economic, social and political institutions resulted in the effort to monitor and regulate the growth and distribution of population, an essential component for the easy functioning of production and proliferation of finance capital. In his 1798 treatise on population, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Thomas Malthus stresses on the need to regulate the growth of population by monitoring the shifts in the nature of the passion of the sexes and their participation in the institution of marriage and the formation of family.

Such observation renders the endeavour of capitalism to systematize norms and customs concerning marriage. In fact, capitalism as a socio-economic system has conceived marriage as the celebration of heterosexual monogamy indispensable to carry on the serious business of legitimate and well-regulated reproduction to construct a potentially trained and intelligent labour force in order to propel the growth and standard of production in a budding industrial capitalism flourishing in the eighteenth century. In fact, eighteenth century capitalism in Britain applied twofold strategies to ensure economic and industrial growth. For the leadership and the strategic part, it depended upon the trained labour force originated in England, while for physical labour; it relied upon the import of slaves as the cheapest labour force from colonies. In this chapter, I have relied upon the works of the classical economic theories of Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, Friedrich Engels as well as the socio-historical analysis of Eric Hobsbawm to show the relationship between the production systems and the sexuality.

In this chapter, I have discussed some of the medical treatises and the laws passed in Victorian England concerning sexuality of the soldiers, sex workers and the people having alternative sexual orientations. I have followed primarily Foucaultian assumptions to develop my ideas of Victorian sexuality. I have also looked into the colonial laws to develop the anxiety concerning the sexual encounter with Asia.

Chapter III has made an extensive study of the vampire fictions written by Bram Stoker and other minor writers. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* seems to embody the Victorian anxiety about prevailing threats of pandemics of venereal and dermatological diseases in Britain as well as in colonies supposedly originated by the colonial encounter with the non-normative sexuality of the orient. The novel seems to have been alluded to the threats posed by non-normative sexuality and the imperial strategies to neutralize them. The strategy adopted by Victorian society to deal with aggressive female sexuality visible in the sex workers and the polygamous

pleasure-loving women was to bring them under surveillance and clinical trial in order to neutralize them and if a deviant goes too far eliminate them. In this chapter, I have extensively focussed on vampire narratives of nineteenth century England and analyzed in detail the subversive elements that unsettle gender normativity of Victorian society. With theoretical assumptions of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Fred Botting and other gender theorists, an analytical survey of the thematic as well as structural pattern of the texts have been provided. This chapter has explored resurgence of the vampire narratives in the late Victorian period. Beginning with the vampire narratives by John William Polidori, Sheridan Le Fanu, and others, this chapter has focussed on the elements of sexual subversion in the vampire narratives by Bram Stoker. The primary research focus of this chapter is to show the Victorian anxiety concerning sexuality following the encounter with Asia. In this chapter, I have tried to locate the traces of non-normative sexuality encoded in the vampire narratives and the endeavour of the Victorian society to discipline and eliminate them. I have extensively referred to the history of Medieval and early modern Europe, medical treatises of Victorian England to substantiate my hypotheses.

Chapter IV has studied the representation of the metrosexual males in the vampire narratives of the late twentieth century in the United States of America. In this chapter, I have analysed the reconstruction of masculinity in the American vampire narratives of the late twentieth century with the theoretical assumptions of R.W. Connell concerning the reconstruction of masculinity in the twentieth century. I have referred to the literary texts as well as the forms of contemporary popular media such as films, and the television shows.

This chapter explores the shifting paradigm of masculinity in late twentieth century by drawing upon the critical assumptions of R. W. Connell. The critical survey has been followed by the discussion on the cultural nuances behind the emergence of ‘candygothic’ in the twentieth

century. I have tried to look at the vampire narratives of the United States of America in the late twentieth century from the perspective of the theory of 'candygothic' by Fred Botting.

The critical assumption of this chapter is to look at the popular vampire icons of the films and the television series of the United States of America from the perspective of the metrosexual masculinities theorized by Matthew Hall.

In the conclusion of the dissertation, I have tried to establish the connection between the transformations of the vampire and the shifting paradigms of masculinity. The journey of the vampire from the monstrous, sexually aggressive male to a polished, urbane metrosexual man has been connected to the reconstruction of masculinity in the late twentieth century. However, the elements of the subversion of heteronormativity present in the nineteenth century vampire narratives of England reshape themselves in their twentieth century American counterparts. I have tried to connect it with the strategies of consumerism employed by late capitalism by drawing upon the theoretical assumptions of Frederick Jameson and Terry Eagleton. The dissertation has attempted a comprehensive study of the shifting terrains of the Anglo-American vampire narratives from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries.

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