

OBSESSION, REPRESSION, AND THE MEN BEHIND *DRACULA*

by

BENJAMIN A. KUKAINIS

A thesis submitted to the

Graduate School-Camden

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts

Graduate Program in

English

Written under the direction of

Dr. Ellen Ledoux

and approved by

Dr. Ellen Ledoux

Dr. Chris Fitter

Camden, New Jersey [January, 2014]

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Thesis Director:

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The style, characters and action of Bram Stoker's 1897 Gothic horror novel, *Dracula*—including the relationships among male characters—can be attributed to the author's close relationship and bond with famed Victorian actor, Henry Irving. Irving's demeanor, personality and acting talent highlighted Stoker's affinity for Irving, and this essay's primary objective is to determine how Bram Stoker's social and professional relationship with Irving, influenced and shaped *Dracula*. The essay will review the lives of both Irving and Stoker individually and separately, but also delve into their personal relationship, symbolic and representative of male bonding and the role that gender plays in Stoker's novel. Themes of homoeroticism, whether on the conscious or unconscious level, and gender boundaries will be examined for they both are apparent in Stoker's life as well as the cast of characters in *Dracula*.

This essay will examine any and all nuances or specific methods that Irving used both as an actor and as a producer. Noteworthy chapters, excerpts and moments from *Dracula*, such as Jonathan Harker's stay in Castle Dracula and the excavation of Lucy's

tomb by the four men can be indicators of a continuous desire for male bonding on Stoker's part. He often struggled with the concept of bachelorhood and marriage. The novel does not praise either, but provides an attractive alternative: a socially intimate and sexually ambiguous cast of males.

Ranging from the personal to the public to the professional spheres of Stoker and Irving, this essay intends to provide a comprehensive evaluation of *Dracula's* style and characters while simultaneously demonstrating the power of social, professional and personal relations in a literary and theatrical world. Even after Irving overlooked Stoker when he passed on his management rights, Stoker was continually drawn to him. Even after Irving left Stoker nothing after his death, Stoker continued to praise him. It is evident in almost all places that, to Stoker, Henry Irving was not just a man but also a source of pleasure, similar to the way that the males in *Dracula* perceive each other.

Before Francis Ford Coppola and Gary Oldman, before Christopher Lee, before Bela Lugosi, and before *Nosferatu*, there was Abraham Stoker; and before Stoker published *Dracula*, even before his father died and chose to be called “Bram,” he witnessed a production of *The Rivals* at the Theatre Royal in Dublin on Wednesday, August 28, 1867; but more importantly, he witnessed Henry Irving. A minute detail, but with titanic implications, for Mr. Irving—and everything that came with him—was forever branded into Bram’s intellect, memory, and heart. For in his novel, *Dracula* (1897), one that has withstood the test of time and criticism, it can be argued that he modeled his sinister villain, Count Dracula, as well as the noble yet eccentric Professor Van Helsing, partially after his long-time idol and friend. The characters and themes of Bram Stoker’s Gothic horror novel—including the relationships among male characters—can be partially attributed to the author’s close relationship and bond with Irving. Irving’s demeanor, personality and acting talent highlighted Stoker’s affinity for Irving. Themes of homoeroticism, whether on the conscious or unconscious level, and gender boundaries can also be found in the text, for they both were apparent in Stoker’s life. Noteworthy chapters, excerpts and moments from *Dracula*, such as Jonathan Harker’s stay in Castle Dracula and the excavation of Lucy’s tomb by the four men can be indicators of a continuous desire for male bonding on Stoker’s part. He often struggled with the concept of bachelorhood and marriage. The novel does not praise either, but provides an attractive alternative: a socially intimate and sexually ambiguous cast of males. Even after Irving overlooked Stoker when he passed on his management rights, Stoker was continually drawn to him. Even after Irving left Stoker nothing after his death, Stoker continued to praise him. It is evident in almost all places that, to Stoker,

Henry Irving was not just a man but also a source of pleasure and camaraderie, similar to the way that the males in *Dracula* perceive each other. This paper argues that Stoker's life-long relationship with Henry Irving provided important inspiration for the characters of *Dracula*, including Irving's behavioral pattern, his singular dedication to his profession, and his tendency to drain the lives of those around him. Stoker's relationship with Irving also shaped important thematic elements of the text, including the representation of the male homosocial world, and its apparent ambivalence regarding gender roles and sexuality.

Henry Irving exhibited very peculiar characteristics in his physique and on-stage presence than can be seen in the character of the Count, such as his speech and his movement. In Edward Gordon Craig's *Henry Irving*, he outlines meticulously the various characteristics and attributes that made Irving appealing, memorable, and a formidable force in the acting world and the bachelor world. Central to Irving's powerful essence was his voice, and although Irving often came under scrutiny for his inability to speak the "English tongue," and as Irving was receptive to criticism, he adapted a manner of speaking that highlighted the importance of each word, rather than preoccupying his efforts with sounding "English." According to Craig, a great strength of Irving's speech was that, "his tendency was to enrich the sounds of words—to make them expressive rather than refined" (Craig 63). Craig notes a moment when, in a production of *The Bells*, Irving pronounced the word "howl" with such emphasis and peculiarity, that "it can be only once said so, and by one man only, and in this very scene" (Craig 63). An assertion such as this holds strong validity since Craig was well-educated in the phonation and articulation history of English tongue, so it is remarkable that he attributed such a unique

quality to Irving. Though a minor comparison, Jonathan Harker describes the Count in *Dracula* as having “the smoothest voice,” and early in the novel, Stoker sets up a conversation between Harker and the Count regarding the Count’s speech. The Count remarks that he knows “the grammar and the words” but “not how to speak them,” and Harker replies that the Count speaks “excellently” (Stoker 27). While a “smooth” voice and one that is “expressive” are not exact parallels, I assert that Irving’s voice had at least enough an impression on Stoker to warrant such a conversation, for the conversation itself adds little to the plot or Harker, but centers solely on the Count and an attribute that would seem otherwise mundane. Furthermore, when the Count first introduces himself to Harker upon his arrival, Harker notes that although the Count spoke in excellent English, he used “a strange intonation” (Stoker 22). This strange intonation but “excellent English” could be a reflection on Irving’s tongue and articulation, as Craig uses disparagers and detractors of Irving’s speech to illustrate how ridiculous any criticisms of such a man were and how Irving’s phonetics were conclusively captivating.

Ever since I can remember, theorists have said that Irving mutilated the rhythm whenever he came to speak verse. When asked how Irving might have improved, these theorists would either begin to caterwaul unctuously...or they would mutter as paterfamilias does at evening prayers, and there seemed to be no health in them. In short, they were unable to utter six words beautifully, yet would be instructing one of the best verse speakers of the age (Craig 67).

One of these hypocrites that Craig mentions is Professor Gilbert Murray, a translator of Greek plays who asserted that Henry Irving was responsible for an acting style in which the actor purposefully “mutilated and wrecked the rhythm.” In response to Murray, Craig cites French philosopher and moralist Jean de La Bruyère’s assertion that “diamonds and pearls are the rarest things in the world,” which Craig equates to Irving himself, in that, “if something rare be worth the having, it is well to wait a long time before asserting that

an Irving cannot speak English, a Shakespeare cannot write plays, a Rossini cannot compose an opera, and a Blake cannot draw” (Craig 68). Irving rests alongside good company in this statement by Craig, who even draws upon his mother’s memoirs to further his support of Irving’s powerful voice and articulation. While on tour with Irving in America, Craig’s mother recounts his sense of humor regarding the criticism of not just his voice, but his style and his looks: “For an actor who can’t walk, can’t talk, and has no face to speak of, I’ve done pretty well” (Craig 69). It is remarkable to even fathom that Irving came under that much scrutiny for his unconventional pronunciation; but this unconventionality, according to Craig, was mistaken for erroneous and flawed ways. “To sum up, Irving was a great actor, speaking perfectly, moving faultlessly, amongst people who for the most part spoke sloppily and moved without grace” (Craig). Irving’s excellent speech and his graceful movement undoubtedly had a part to play in the construction of the Count, who is presented as a figure that can enter and exit rooms quietly and swiftly, which I believe implies a graceful, smooth or swift nature of movement. When Jonathan is first at the doors of Castle Dracula, the Count is said to move “impulsively forward” and when Jonathan is ready to sup for the first time, the Count makes “a graceful wave of his hand” (Stoker 23). Additionally, the Count is said to have a “panther-like” movement, who is able to “leap back” at the threat of the Kukri knife late in the novel. The Count also makes a “sinuous dive” at Harker in that same scene. This, of course, is quite contrary to the Count’s “lizard-like” movements when crawling out the window of his castle, but it’s clear the Dracula has a stylized way of moving, just as Mr. Irving evidently had his own variety of movement, peculiar enough

to garner attention both positive and negative from critics. Perhaps the movements of the two are not direct parallels, but they are both noteworthy for their respective audiences.

Craig, in the chapter, “The Actor: His Movement and His Face,” explains that the walk of Henry Irving was not only natural and precise, but also conscious—an added element that discerned him from all other actors. Critic William Archer, when allowed to come into the theater for a few hours, noticed that Irving’s walking wasn’t walking at all. Gordon supports Archer’s assertion by labeling Irving’s movement as dancing.

Actors as a rule walk with precision and grace, and all who saw him will tell you that Irving walked perfectly naturally—but only in his private life. As he stepped upon the boards of his theatre, at rehearsal, something was added to the walk—a consciousness. And this was right. He became aware of the boards; the ordinary life was being put away; something was coming into his blood; he could not feel the same as when on the paving stones of Bond Street (Craig 73).

Craig’s use of the word “blood” is well appropriate for the matter at hand, as Dracula’s consciousness revolved around the retrieval and supply of blood. In fact, one could argue that his walk while in the presence of Harker had a “conscious” element, as he was aware and meticulous, at first, of displaying a false sense of trust and careful not to give away his true nature. What “came into his blood” on certain occasions with Harker was a primal instinct that he needed to suppress, and did not always successfully do. When Harker shaves in the mirror, he notices that the Count’s reflection did not appear, and accidentally cut himself on the razor, a demonic and terrible rush came into the Count’s blood. “When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and his hand touched the string of beads which held the crucifix. It made an instant change in him, for the fury passed so quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there” (Stoker 33). The Count regains his conscious awareness of what is natural to Harker versus what is natural to him, and he reverts to acting as normal as he is capable. His

private life, however, displayed an element that was not “natural” to humans, but natural to the Count, and he certainly moved about with “precision.” One could argue that even the Count’s private movements displayed a sense of consciousness as well; his lizard-like movement down the side of Castle Dracula is a form of conscious walking, aware of not the boards, but the brick walls of the castle, as his façade to Harker was being withdrawn and his true nature was emerging. For the Count even addresses the disconnect between the two men’s different perspectives on “natural.” “We are in Transylvania; and Transylvania is not England. Out ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you many strange things” (Stoker 28). While the Count is not directly referring to “his ways” as a vampire, he is indeed hinting that Harker is in a completely different world, a stage in which the occupants and players are far from the English norms.

I mentioned that the Count regained his conscious awareness of what is natural to Harker versus what is natural to him, and that he once again acted as simply an incredibly old man with odd qualities. This calls for an expansion of explanation, for when the Count is in Harker’s presence, he is, in fact, an actor like Henry Irving, with “peculiar” ways, as Harker notes, and something of an unnatural disposition. Though Jonathan Harker eventually realizes that he is a prisoner in the Castle Dracula, he does not know of the Count’s true form or being until seeing him crawl out of the window. Harker is the audience for the Count’s performance, and just as a theatergoer may peek behind the curtains, so Harker does by exploring the cavernous extensions of the Castle. Harker even acknowledges how similar his experience is to a drama when he acknowledges that his diary seems to replicate the beginning of *Arabian Nights* or *Hamlet*, in which everything “has to break off at cock-crow” (Stoker 37). If the Count is an effective actor

upon Harker's arrival to Castle Dracula, he is unsuccessful, however, at masking his nature when he stumbles upon the female vampires enjoying the company of Harker. Upon the Count's arrival, his "blue eyes transformed with fury," they "were positively blazing," and "the red light in them was lurid, as if the flames of hell-fire blazed behind him" (Stoker 46). It can be argued that despite Harker's previous suspicions and voyeurism of the Count crawling down the castle walls, this is the moment in which Harker truly realizes the peril he is in, since he is overcome with horror and sinks down unconscious. It is as if the Count stepped out of character and in that moment of his own terrible "naturalness," he exposed himself—though Harker still does not quite know fully the Count's complete entity. Craig mentions that, "From the first to the last moment that Irving stood on the stage each moment was significant...every sound, each movement, was intentional" (Craig 77-78). The Count is very intentional in all of his actions while at the castle with Jonathan, from his planned out reasons for not supping with him and his retreating at the break of dawn to his convincing reasons of why Harker should write out 3 specific letters addressed for 3 specific dates; and so, when he breaks character, his mask was undone in that moment with the female vampires and he exposes himself.

The concept of a "mask" was essential for Irving and acting is his day. Craig notes that, "a mask never fidgets; it endures, and at the slightest touch it becomes expressive, it lights up and speaks" (Craig 78). The slightest touches that Craig refers to can be seen in Harker's inquiries to the Count regarding his speech, his plans and his overall knowledge of the English landscape. The sequence in which Jonathan attempts to examine the plethora of books around him while the Count is gone indicates how intentional the Count is in almost every moment. As Harker begins to notice peculiar

details on the atlas and map of England, the Count returns with a perfect reason for Jonathan to leave his investigating, saying that he “must not work always” and was informed that supper is ready. The fact that the Count said he was “informed” hints that there are, in fact, others occupying the castle—something which Harker later finds to be untrue. The Count is also clever to disguise wish for information with cordialness and amicability. “The Count stayed with me, chatting and asking questions on every conceivable subject, hour after hour. I felt that it was getting very late indeed, but I did not say anything, for I felt under obligation to meet my host’s wishes in every way” (Stoker 31). Almost like a psychic, the Count plays directly into Harker’s feelings as the sun comes up, by exclaiming how remiss he was to let Harker stay up so long. It is successful, too, for when Jonathan returns to his room, and notes that there is nothing else to write about for the day. Jonathan’s arrival at Castle Dracula is a “slight touch” that makes the Count’s mask “light up and speak.” Since Jonathan arrives feeling uneasy, the Count’s manner in which he welcomes Jonathan tricks him into a false sense of security. “The light and warmth and the Count’s courteous welcome seemed to have dissipated all my doubts and fears,” and Harker then reaches his “normal state” (Stoker 23). It must be noted, however, that the Count is not always as excellent as keeping his mask consistent, for Jonathan, from time to time, notes that the Count’s face and his words are not always in sync or do not necessarily match correctly. “Somehow his words and his look did not seem to accord, or else it was that his cast of face made his smile look malignant and saturnine” (Stoker 31). Henry Irving was a phenomenal actor, however, as all actors do; he received criticism, as we have seen already in this essay. Therefore, it is only appropriate that Stoker insert flaws into the Count’s “acting” abilities. I argue that it

makes it a stronger and more realistic interpretation of an actor of Irving's stature and quality.

Of Irving, Craig adds that he “was skillful neither in understatement nor in overstatement. He stated with precision—neither too much nor too little—he hovered between the two” (Craig 83). This can be applied to the Count's response to Harker's assertion regarding his speech and his wish to be immersed in English. I believe that when the Count refers to his books as his “friends” and elaborates on his dreams—which are essentially his intents—one can visualize as an actor delivering a soliloquy.

Through them I have come to know your great England; and to know her is to love her. I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is. But alas! as yet I only know your tongue through books. To you, my friend, I look that I know it to speak... True I know the grammar and the words, but yet I know not how to speak them... You shall, I trust, rest here with me a while, so that by our talking I may learn the English intonation; and I would that you tell me when I make error, even of the smallest, in my speaking (Stoker 27).

Though we do not know Jonathan as an extreme patriot of England, the Count's praise certainly denotes a positively friendly and honest sense. The phrase “whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death” are so meticulous and precise, just how Craig labels Irving. In this speech, the Count touches on his manner of speaking, which can be seen as a parallel to the criticism and praise Irving received by his manner of speaking and his intonation. The Count includes the word “friend” so as to continue the illusion that he means well with Harker. Additionally, his request for a correction at even the smallest error does not seem so peculiar or odd since the Count has prefaced his wish with kind words and honest—with hidden agendas, that is—exclamations. Finally, the Count concludes his speech, which is interrupted by a moment of praise from Jonathan, with a request for an apology, so to keep up his cordial demeanor. In this soliloquy we

find almost all mannerisms of Irving's speech, as well as the "mask" that Craig defined, as crucial to the actor's role.

As we have seen, Irving had both a particular way of moving and a strongly felt presence wherever he roamed; and this manifested itself in his direction of numerous Shakespearean plays and his entire career as an actor-manager¹. While producing *Macbeth*, Irving demonstrated the particular music he wanted through his body alone, as he "managed by sway of body and movements of arms and hands, by changing times and undulating tones, and by vowel sounds without words to convey his inchoate thought, instinctive rather than of reason" (Stoker 112). Irving had a strong sense of dramatic direction and was very articulate to Stoker about how actors should channel their character, an aspect that can be seen in *Dracula*. Irving once stated to Stoker that, "If you do not pass a character through your own mind it can never be sincere" (Stoker 1) and that, "Sincerity, which is the very touchstone of Art, is instinctively recognised by all" (Stoker 14).² I believe that all characters in *Dracula*, but especially the Count and Van Helsing, passed through Stoker's mind very thoroughly, for he is meticulous, sincere and careful in the players. Of drama, Irving once stated to Stoker that, "It is necessary to this art that the mind should have, as it were, a double consciousness, in which all the motions proper to the occasion may have full swing, while the actor is all the time on the alert for

¹ *Hamlet* was perhaps Irving's greatest production and when Harker takes note in his journal of the cold, grim surroundings at Castle Dracula and how a sudden fear leapt into his heart while on the road to the dreaded place, it seems as if Stoker is drawing directly upon Hamlet's soliloquy on "the very witching time of night, / When churchyards yawn, and hill itself breathes out / Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood / And do such bitter business as the day / Would quake to look on." (Act 3, Scene 2)

² Irving was also a master at expressing his various desires for production by means of inaudible and peculiar methods. While producing *Macbeth*, Irving demonstrated the music he wanted simply "by sway of body and movement of arms and hands, by changing times and undulating tones, and by vowel sounds without words" (Stoker 112).

every detail of his method” (Stoker 20). This “double consciousness” that Irving refers to entails acting with one’s emotion and seeming natural but also being cognizant of surroundings and the science that constructs one’s identity. For Van Helsing, this means expressing his discontent for Lucy’s demise and his rigorous enthusiasm for the imperativeness of the trip to her tomb. Additionally, Van Helsing is a man of science, and of scientific process—something Irving noted as a requirement for “passing a character through one’s mind. Van Helsing is aware of what he and the must do in attempts to keep Lucy a human, he is thorough in his plan for “killing” the vampire Lucy, and he is well aware of the steps that must be taken to arrive at Castle Dracula before the Count. Additionally, before she becomes a vampire, Stoker describes the lengths to which Van Helsing goes in detail.

The Professor’s actions were certainly odd and not to be found in any pharmacopoeia that I ever heard of. First he fastened up the windows and latched them securely; next, taking a handful of the flowers, he rubbed them all over the sashes, as though to ensure that every whiff of air that might get in would be laden with the garlic smell. Then with the wisp he rubbed all over the jamb of the door, above, below, and at each side, and round the fireplace in the same way (Stoker 141).

Here is a man that takes complete control over the operation, similar to how Irving oversaw all aspects of production. Before opening Lucy’s tomb, Seward notes that Van Helsing went about his work “systematically.” For the Count, this “scientific awareness” as put forth by Irving includes the steps in which he controls Jonathan—for he does not reveal his intentions right away, an even when Jonathan understands his role as a prisoner, the Count is still careful as to not fully reveal his objectives—his meticulous planning and visiting of Lucy at night, and his attempts to control Mina for his own advantage. Of his plans with Lucy, he is successful. Of his attempts with Jonathan, he does expose himself when he crawls out of the castle window and Harker notices, but this action is his

nature in “full swing,” as Irving defines; so in actuality, he is still successful in fulfilling Irving’s requirements of an authentic character. And of his plans with Mina, he is unsuccessful due to systematic and rigorous approach from Van Helsing (and Mina). As an artist, Irving always was adamant about looking at details and leaving no stone unturned³. Richard states that Irving promoted “detailed study of the text, recommending the aspiring actor to pay great attention to elocution and pronunciation that should be ‘simple and unaffected,’ to train the body and cultivate ‘suppleness, elasticity and grace’” (Richards 6-7). Presented here is a man that takes a scientific approach to art, much like the scientific approach taken by Van Helsing. And as Van Helsing’s work in the novel is very taxing, so too did Irving ever step back for his own mental or physical health. He “never spared himself” as he supervised every facet and aspect of his production. When Lucy starts to turn to a vampire, Van Helsing supervises every aspect of her care. Upon her completed transformation, Van Helsing supervises the task to free her soul. And for the diary transcribed by Mina, Van Helsing truly employs a “detailed study of the text.”

Irving’s qualities as seen through his acting are not the only manifestations of the man himself in *Dracula*. His endorsement and representation of chivalry and gentlemanliness can also be seen in the Count during Harker’s stay at Castle Dracula as well as Van Helsing’s noble and gentlemanly disposition. Jeffrey Richards’ *Sir Henry Irving: A Victorian Actor and His World* gives a comprehensive look at Irving’s values, lifestyle, career and relationships; through this book, one can find a myriad of reasons

³ During his dinners with Irving, Stoker once called him the “father of modern stage lighting” because of his mastery of colored filters and frequent lighting experiments. Irving was such a master and force in portraying imagination that Stoker must have adapted at least a portion of this into *Dracula*. For instance, Jonathan viewing the castle on the edge of a cliff, Seward noting the “wonderful smoky beauty of a sunset over London” and Mina observing how her face was “bathed in rosy light.”

and evidence for why male characters in *Dracula*—primarily the Count—were sculpted after the famed actor. For Irving, as well as the Victorian era, the concept of chivalry was at the center of a real gentleman. In Richards’ text, he notes that Samuel Coleridge stressed the importance of moral strength in the construction of a chivalrous man and Mark Girouard defined a chivalrous gentleman as “brave, straightforward and honourable...a natural leader of men, and others unhesitatingly followed his lead” (Girouard 260). As we will come to find in this essay, Bram Stoker, as well as many others did follow Irving’s lead “unhesitatingly” similar to how Harker, Holmwood, Seward and Morris almost always unhesitatingly follow the lead of Van Helsing. When Irving agreed to become president of an Actors’ Association in 1891, his presence “meant that all the leading actor-managers joined” (Richards 68). In *Dracula*, we see that the band of men often follow Van Helsing’s lead with little opposition. Irving was strongly committed to the idea of gentlemanliness and his productions and performances were often praised for their gentlemanliness. While the Count’s true nature is of a ghastly and demonic variety, he exhibits many qualities of gentlemanliness and chivalry while playing host to Harker in Castle Dracula. Harker says that the Count gives him a courteous welcome that quenched his fears. Additionally, the Count insists on carrying Jonathan’s luggage for him. He is polite, prepares meals for Harker and ensures that his bed is made. His actions are, of course, a mask over his sinister intentions, but it cannot be ignored that *Dracula* displays many elements of gentlemanliness in the opening pages. But as the Count’s hostility becomes increasingly evident, so does Irving’s. He often wished to play the roles of King Arthur and Don Quixote. According to Richard, “The fact that Irving long cherished the desire to play King Arthur and Don Quixote bespeaks

a strong sense of identification with the roles. They are linked by a powerful commitment to the chivalric vision but also one that is doomed to end in failure” (Richards 30). When Richard states the chivalric visions are “doomed to end in failure,” I believe he implies that chivalry and gentlemanliness are powerful, but cannot endure in the face of opposition. At times in Irving’s life, his chivalric nature vanished as hundreds lent their lives and souls to them and he stood above them with power, instead of putting the needs of others before him and ensuring the comfort of his comrades. One possible reason for this is that Irving’s status contributed to the development of the “celebrity,” while another is that Irving gradually embodied the single man, whose only obligation was to himself and to work. Of Samuel Phelps, whose theatrical reign ended when Irving was 22, Irving said that he was the greatest actor to have ever lived. Yet Irving’s character allowed him to transcend the status of actor and into one of celebrity and famed bachelor. Richard notes that “Irving was a master of publicity,” and that he “was a clubman and socializer until the early hours, his separation from his wife allowing him to lead a more bohemian bachelor existence than Phelps, with his loving wife and six children, either could or wanted to” (Richards 71). In fact, Irving was surrounded by men for the majority of the time, notably Bram Stoker, but not because Stoker became his publicist or assistant. It was because these night-time gatherings allowed Irving to assert some element of power over the other men. In Stoker’s novel, the Count and Harker stay up late discussing English customs and geography while Harker smokes, and I believe this mirrors the gatherings led by Irving and frequently attended to by Stoker. These gatherings will be looked at in more detail later in this thesis.

As stated, the band of men followed Van Helsing in his noble quest, but he also exhibited characteristics of a gentleman such as Irving. In the simplest of ways of speech and gesture, Van Helsing often established a calming presence in the midst of a strenuous occurrence. When instructing Miss Lucy to take her medicine before the blood transfusion, he states to her: “Now, little miss, here is your medicine. Drink it off, like a good child. See, I lift you so that to swallow is easy” (Stoker 132). Additionally, after the second transfusion, he offers to sit up with her himself—though for reasons of nobility *as well as* “grave.”

As stated, Irving was much more than just an actor-manager, he was a Victorian celebrity, and one can see the Count’s “celebrity” in his status as *boyar*. “Here I am noble; I am *boyar*; the common people know me, and I am master” (Stoker 47). This assertion by the Count is solidified later when the natives of his land assist him in assembling for his trip to London. In fact, Maurice Hindle states that, “Bram Stoker’s fascination with the image of nobility seems to be derived from his admiration for Henry Irving” (Hindle xxv). Thus, the image of celebrity found in the novel should not be completely surprising. In his chapter “Celebrity Culture,” Richards suggest that there are three objections of admiration: “The celebrity, the hero and the star” (Richards 263). While Richards states that the “hero” dates back to ancient times, the words “star” and “celebrity” may be seen as interchangeable. Richard notes that the word “celebrity” was first used in 1600, meaning “the condition of being talked about” (Richards 263), but “*a* celebrity” wasn’t first used until 1849 when there was a popular mass readership for newspapers. “Star,” on the other hand, referred originally to a standout individual in the theatrical or artistic sphere. Yet as journalism grew, and editor and writer Edmund Yates’

World developed a growing readership, the term “celebrity” became more recognized as having a higher distinction. And Irving made the cut right away. According to Richards, and with much proof, “Henry Irving’s celebrity is amply attested by the contemporary press” (Richards 272). He was number 5 in *The World’s Celebrities at Home* series; in the comic magazine, *Moonshine*, which ran a series titled *Days with Celebrities*, Irving was number 8. Additionally, (but not finally), he appeared in Dan Leno’s comic journal, *The Big Budget*, in 1898, which Richards argues is the most definitive piece of evidence for Irving’s celebrity. Irving attended many dining occasions in the company of royalty, was guest at exclusive gatherings and even drew praise from Lord Chief Justice Lord Coleridge in 1883 for his artistic success and his moral influence. He was “a celebrity by appearance, publicity, media exposure and hobnobbing with other celebrities. But he used his celebrity not just to advance himself but to advance the cause of his profession” (Richards 81). It is because of Irving that the profession of acting, once seen as only for “rogues and vagabonds” gained notoriety and acclamation. Upon Irving’s death in 1905, Charles Forshaw, an honorary official of the Actors Association, collected and edited more than 100 poems in tribute to Irving. The recurrent themes in these poems verbalize his position as a great actor, a man of chivalry and camaraderie, and a celebrity and a hero. From the *Stockport Advertiser*: “He is to sleep, to find a resting place, / Among the great, the noble and the good” (ll. 2-3). From *East Cumberland News*: “His influence was thus immense / Throughout the land with old and young” (ll. 3-4). From *The Liverpool Courier*: “Mourn! England, for the knightly son whose life / Rung, link by link, the chain that binds thy race / In the firm bonds of human brotherhood” (ll. 1-3). From citizen Laura Halliday: “The actor’s world he lifted up / From base report and evil sway /

Into purer light of day / Where art and beauty rule the play” (ll. 1-4). Finally, again from the *Stockport Advertiser*: “We mourn a great redeemer of our stage / The long to be remembered Irving age; / Here gentleman and actor were combined, / With stage-craft mingled intellect refined” (ll. 1-4). Irving’s status as a “hero,” or “celebrity,” can also be seen in Van Helsing, who is arguably the primary hero in the conquest against Dracula. He heads the operation to attempt to save Lucy and then to destroy her vampiric existence, and he instructs all other characters in their roles to locating and destroying the Count.

The two roles played by Irving and Stoker in real life were those of superiority and inferiority, and Stoker’s overwhelming subservience to Irving can be seen in the power exhibited by both Dracula and Van Helsing. Maurice Hindle states that *Dracula* is “such a unique horror masterpiece—it works on us from the *inside*, taking over our bodies, ‘infecting’ our deepest desires with the lust for power and domination” (Hindle xvii). Very telling of both Irving’s demeanor and secret impulses and wishes found in men, Hindle is asserting that while other pieces of literature may elicit emotions, *Dracula* forces the reader to draw upon emotions already existing deep within him, perhaps some that he does not wish to make known. Bram Stoker, though he authored the novel, may have drawn upon the homosocial desires evident in his own life and the “power” and “domination” exhibited by Irving. But in order to fully understand the magnitude of which Stoker devoted his life to—in addition to exactly *why* he became devoted to the man—, and obsessed over Henry Irving, questions that need answering can be found in his two-volume *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*. Here, Stoker expresses some key moments in their relationship as well as how Irving captivated him so deeply and so

easily and how he, in a way, “infected him,” as Hindle notes of *Dracula*. The easy parallel regarding Irving and the Count in the word “infected” is that the Count “infects” his victims by turning them into vampires, but there are various times when both Lucy and Mina are “infected” by Dracula through their mind. While Henry Irving certainly had no literal mind control abilities like the Count, Stoker’s lifelong commitment to the man that started with his recital of “The Dream of Eugene Aram” must have arisen from a type of attachment in the mind. A wonderful illustration of this is, according to Barbara Belford in her biography of Bram Stoker, “when Stoker made his Faustian pact with Irving to be acting manager, when he married in haste, had one child, and left his wife to make her own society, he knew Irving was his master, as he had once called Whitman his master” (Belford 144). I will discuss the significance of Mr. Walt Whitman shortly, but this analysis articulates that Irving held more significance in Stoker than his own wife and child; furthermore, Belford’s use of the word “master” resonates with the text of *Dracula*, for as Count Dracula became a “master” over his concubines and his victims, Irving served as master to Stoker.

Early in his recollections, Stoker wonderfully articulates a fairly comprehensive summation of his time spent with Irving as his companion and manager. “For twenty-seven years I worked with Henry Irving, helping him in all honest ways in which one man may aid another—and there were no ways with Irving other than honourable. Looking back I cannot honestly find any moment in my life when I failed him, or when I put myself forward in any way when the most scrupulous good taste could have enjoined or even suggested a larger measure of reticence” (Stoker 34). Also early in *Personal Reminiscences*, Stoker praises the “awakened emotion” that is needed to qualify someone

as an excellent actor, for in his earliest recollections, he saw only *good* actors, not excellent actors⁴. This, however, was all changed when he saw Irving bring to life the character of Captain Absolute in a script of *The Rivals*.⁵ This was Stoker's first exposure to Irving and one that led to a long admiration and devotion. His initial impression was that Irving had amazing energy, physique and ability. Stoker notes that, "The acting of Henry Irving is, after nearly forty years, so vivid in my memory that I can recall his movements, his expression, and the tones of his voice" (Stoker 3). This reinforces the notion examined earlier that Irving's movements and his speech were encapsulating. "Thus it was that on this particular night my host's heart was from the beginning something toward me, as mine had been toward him" (Stoker 18). Irving recited for Stoker "The Dream of Eugene Aram," and while this will be looked at later, it is critical to note that from this recitation, Stoker burst out into "something like a violent fit of hysterics" (Stoker 20). Stoker elaborates on the significance of Irving's recitation by bringing up the "mutual emotion" that both men had found, and that "From that hour began a friendship as profound, as close, as lasting as can be between two men" (Stoker 21). And while their relationship started off with mutual expressions of emotions, it slowly grew into one of power, in which Irving held power over Stoker, and Stoker knew his role as the subordinate in the relationship, very similar to how the men in *Dracula* are each aware of their own roles within the band of men. Whenever Irving was conferencing with dramatists or authors, he often used Stoker as a backing for any idea—

⁴ Stoker's father was a theatergoer all his life, was a strong admirer of Barry Sullivan, a traditional actor of the old school, and these notions helped Stoker develop a standard of judgment of the old school by seeing Sullivan and other actors.

⁵ Interestingly, the show initially got bad reviews, referring to Irving as a "painstaking and respectable artist."

not by verbal persuasion or matter of elegance, but by a convincing and resounding look. “All at once Irving got hold of an idea. I could see it in his face; and he could see that I saw he had something. He glanced at me in a way which I knew well to be to back him up...I knew my cue and joined in” (Stoker 135). Almost like a child whose parent needs to only glare at him/her to get their point across, Stoker was often treated like a personal attendant and yes-man. However, although Irving did not need any verbal persuasion to cue Stoker, his speech, his movements and his demeanor were constantly the topic of consideration by critics and followers. Van Helsing, too, exhibits characteristics of a man commanding loyalty and compliance from other men. He is firm and unwavering in his instructions to the other men when excavating the tomb of Lucy and tolerates no opposition against his plans.

While we can see Henry Irving’s traits and tendencies manifested in the likes of Count Dracula and Van Helsing, an equally vital analysis of *Dracula* through the lens of Stoker and Irving’s relationship entails the homosocial sphere between the two men and how this world of male-bonding is evident in the novel. Stoker, though married and a father, spent endless time in social settings occupied exclusively by bachelors; and the notion of comradeship in Stoker’s life is no more evident than the “Beefsteak Room,” a gathering that was formed in 1735 at Covent Garden and then at the Lyceum in 1808 after Covent Garden burned down. The “Beefsteakers,” as they were called, were a group of men from Irving’s inner-circle who “dined in Gothic splendor” (Belford 124). Irving and Stoker were prime hosts for this exclusive club, because they knew it was more important to promote pleasantries and affinities among guests than to spend lavishly but unwisely. In other words, the two men were very conscious of their interactions and

thought very highly of this bonding. “With this hearty male bonding the Beefsteakers created a ‘homosocial’ world of masculine privilege in which women were used as pawns” (Belford 127).

In her article, “Libidinal Life: Bram Stoker, Homosocial Desire and the Stokerian Biographical Project,” Brigitte Boudreau also writes of the recital by Irving and also draws upon Stoker’s *Personal Reminiscences*, pointing out that Stoker revealed “the evening of the poetry recital marked the beginning of a deeply spiritual bond between Irving and himself, one that seemingly elevated him to a higher plane of existence” (Boudreau 47). This spiritual bond, according to Stoker, came from Irving’s “incarnate power, incarnate passion, so close to one that one could meet it eye to eye” (Stoker 30). In *Personal Reminiscences*, Stoker recalls that “soul had looked into soul” and that their friendship was as intimate as could be between two men (Stoker 33). There is certainly an overtone of homosociality, and perhaps homosexuality, here, one that can be echoed by Van Helsing’s address to Dr. Seward before the excavation of Lucy’s tomb. Van Helsing states, “Let us not be two, but one, that so we work to a good end” (Stoker 177). Shortly after this, Dr. Seward attempts to comfort Arthur Holmwood in a fashion that epitomizes the comradeship Stoker valued. “I comforted him as well as I could. In such cases men do not need much expression. A grip of the hand, the tightening of an arm over the shoulder, a sob in unison, are expressions of sympathy dear to a man’s heart” (Stoker 180). The phrase “dear to a man’s heart,” I argue, mirrors Stoker’s account of his soul looking into Irving’s and vice versa. Additionally, the physical contact here, though very minimal, is highly evident of male partnership, both physical and emotional. Additional examples of how Stoker and Irving’s ideals of male bonding and comradeship

are manifested in *Dracula* are sprinkled all throughout the novel, one of which occurs in a letter from Arthur to Dr. Seward regarding the state of Lucy. Arthur states, "I shall come in for tea, and we can go away together; I am filled with anxiety and want to consult with you alone as soon as I can after you have seen her" (Stoker 120). In this short blurb, one can detect a homosocial desire to be alone with a man, to "go away together." Perhaps this is Stoker's desire to be alone with Irving, to travel the world with him and share experiences with him, and him only. Boudreau continues to say, of Stoker's admiration of Irving, that, "Instead of suffering from male hysteria, biographers posit that it is much more plausible that Stoker's emotional turbulence reflected deep-seeded feelings of homosocial/homoerotic desire" (Boudreau 47). As seen, there is absolutely emotional turbulence that occurs in the minds of Harker, Arthur, Quincy Morris, Dr. Seward and Van Helsing throughout the novel, especially at the hands of Lucy. Immediately before Lucy's death, she asks for Arthur to kiss her one more time, but Van Helsing prevents Arthur from doing this. Though it is for Arthur's safety, he is still a man close to him from performing a sexual act with a woman. Van Helsing addresses this matter in a way that speaks to Stoker's societal thoughts on homoeroticism, when asks if Dr. Seward was "horrified" when he would not let Arthur kiss Lucy. I believe that this query by Van Helsing is an example of how Stoker needed to keep his homosocial, and perhaps homoerotic, desires within him, lest the public find it "horrifying." Similarly, Boudreau categorizes Stoker's momentary mental breakdown while hearing Irving's recital as demonstrating "the Victorian taboo against a male's outward expression of passionate sentiments" (Boudreau). Therefore, the taboo found in *Dracula* is not simply homoeroticism, but sensitivity and compassion found in males. In

a letter from Quincey Morris to Arthur Holmwood, he states, “We’ve told yarns by the camp-fire in the prairies; and dressed one another’s wounds after trying a landing at the Marquesas...There are more yarns to be told, and other wounds to be healed” (Stoker 69).

I do not believe Stoker is inserting any homosexual or homoerotic tendencies into this statement, but it serves as an example of the homosocial world in which Stoker occupied.

Interestingly enough, and perhaps contradictory to what many would posit based on the quality of time spent with the Beefsteakers, Irving was actually quite somber over the idea of bachelorhood, perhaps a reason he assumed the role as the alpha male with most other men with whom he had a relationship. “Irving’s Posterity,” article by Michael Warner that describes this lamentation of bachelorhood, provides insight into the realm of Irving’s life as a bachelor and how his role as a single yet powerful man drove him to love nothing else but his work. As a young bachelor, “he wrote with unusual passion about his abandonment. He then came to regard his writing career as an alternative to marriage” (Warner 773). Continuing his lamentation, Irving said in 1820 that “matrimony was indispensable to happiness,” and over twenty years later added that, “I have often repined at my single state and have looked forward with doubt and solicitude to the possibility of an old age solitary, uncherished, and unloved” (Warner 773). It is peculiar that Irving should be such an admirer and enthusiast of marriage while Stoker was not. Nevertheless, Stoker inserted into *Dracula* not the lonely Henry Irving that feared suffering old age alone, but the domineering man who was so passionate about power and his work. Warner sees his work as a mode of asexual production and argues that his bachelor consciousness accounted for a good amount of his cultural power. In *Dracula*, the character of Van Helsing can mirror the lonely side of Irving, for Van

Helsing is a widower and obsessed with his work. He tells Mina that his life is “a barren and lonely one, and so full of work that I have not had much time for friendships” (Stoker 197). Additionally, he often assumes the role of the alpha male and sees his work as the means of his legacy. He does not pine over his single state as Irving did, but rather focuses his entire being as assuming power within the male circle of Harker, Holmwood, Seward, Morris, and himself. During the blood transfusion from Seward to Lucy, Seward is very obedient to Van Helsing. “I followed out his orders, for I knew how right and wise they were” (Stoker 139). Shortly after, upon seeing Lucy, her mother and her maids lain out on the floor, Van Helsing immediately goes to work, and Seward wonderfully notes his dedication and his intensity, qualities that many have said to be possessed by Irving. “I never saw in all my experience the Professor work in such deadly earnest. I know – as he knew – that it was a stand-up fight with death, and in a pause told him so. He answered me in a way that I did not understand, but with the sternest look that his face could wear” (Stoker 158). So while Van Helsing takes his work more seriously than anything, so too does Irving believe his work to be worth priceless amounts because of his status of a bachelor. As Irving became more of a writer and director, as opposed to merely an actor, he viewed his reproduction of literature, mainly Shakespeare, as indispensable to his life. “Literary reproduction is, for Irving, the ultimate form of surrogacy: a mode of cultural reproduction in which bachelors are, at last, fully at home” (Warner 792). More proof that Irving lamented his solitary status and obsessed over his work; Warner is saying that the only way for bachelors to feel comfortable among a society of men that marry is to pour their souls into literary production.

Pouring one's soul onto paper is something that Stoker experienced from a very early age and was a pre-cursor to his idolization for Henry Irving. "Stoker was prone to hero-worship," (Allen Introduction) and while there are a myriad of reasons for this, it's interesting to note that Stoker's "hero-worship" first began with Walt Whitman, who excessively praised comradeship and love between men. Additionally, Whitman's "Calamus" poems found in *Leaves of Grass*, which Stoker first read in 1867, were riddled with references to homosexuality, and Brooke Allen even states in her introduction to *Dracula* that these poems "came close to being specifically homosexual manifestos" (Allen Introduction). Stoker was very fond of these poems, and so it possibly was that his disposition of celebrity worship and his tendency towards homosocial preference was born. According to Meredith Hindley in her article "When Bram Met Walt," Stoker wrote a letter to Whitman totaling nearly two thousand words, in which he declared Whitman to be a "true man" and confessing that he wanted to be one himself. In his lengthy dispatch, Stoker wrote, "If I were before your face I would like to shake hands with you, for I feel that I would like you. I would like to call you Comrade and to talk to you as men who are not poets do not often talk" (Hindley 25). There is a strong aura of homosociality in this statement, as the phrase, "talk to you as men who are not poets do not often talk," suggests an intimate setting between two men only, closed to the outside world. It is this yearning of Stoker's that translated over to, and vastly grew during, his relationship with Henry Irving from the very beginning. Hindley draws upon Stoker's own memoirs as a buttress to the assertion that Stoker fell under Irving's spell almost automatically. "Writing of the night forty years later, Stoker could still recall Irving's movements, expression, and tone of voice. 'What I saw, to my amazement and delight,

was a patrician figure as real as the persons of one's dreams, and endowed with the same poetic grace. A young soldier, handsome, distinguished, self-dependent, compact of grace and slumberous energy" (Hindley 28). It must be noted that the word "grace" is used here, something that Craig emphasized; and with all these swirling descriptions of Irving's character and manner, perhaps author Barbara Belford could not be truer when she stated in her biography of Bram Stoker, that "Irving was a chameleon: at once strange and magnetic, graceful and awkward, often melancholy, sometimes impish. He defied description" (Belford 70). If Irving defied description, it is no wonder that so many have attempted to capture his voice, his movements, his grace and his looks, for defying description truly opens the door for attempts from all angles.

Brook Allen posits that although the characters are not highly developed, "their web of mutual interactions allows Stoker to explore many sorts of relationships, sexual and otherwise, that troubled his society and himself" (Allen). Using this as a basis for a homosocial reading of the novel, we can begin to see a glimpse of exactly how often in *Dracula* one can see manifestations of Stoker's suppressed feelings. Boudreau beautifully sums up a persistent theme found in Stoker's *Personal Reminiscences*. From the outset of her article, she notes that the memoirs of Stoker shed light on his preoccupation, and borderline obsession, with men of power, one of whom was Henry Irving. We can see this obsession with power manifested in Jonathan's retraction of his will to leave Castle Dracula, when he states: "The Count saw his victory in my bow, and his mastery in the trouble of my face" (Stoker 39). Many autobiographical works, she points out, have displayed how Stoker's life and works are "inescapably linked to the world of forbidden fantasies" (Boudreau 42). Stoker's novel is riddled with the idea of

the “forbidden:” from the hallways and crevices forbidden for Jonathan Harker to explore, to the Count’s accusation towards the female vampires that he had “forbidden” them to interact with Harker. In essence, Boudreau’s primary purpose echoes mine, in that, “the man behind Count Dracula has ultimately been merged with Irving, and that an understanding of one is incomplete without the other” (Boudreau 42). In other words, in order to fully understand the Count, one must look at Irving, and if one wants to gain a more valuable understanding of Irving’s influence, one must look at Count Dracula. I agree with Boudreau in that it is incomplete and irresponsible to look at the character of the Count without looking at both Irving. And Boudreau is not alone in his assertion:

Biographers claim that Irving was the main inspiration for Count Dracula, and that any understanding of this masterpiece is incomplete without recognizing the immeasurable extent of the actor’s impact upon Stoker’s literary career. Many have described the friendship as one where Irving—like the notorious Count—depleted Stoker both physically and emotionally, from the moment they met until Irving’s last breath (Boudreau 44).

We have already seen how one may see reflections of Irving’s mannerism in the Count’s, but this assertion of physical and emotional depleting is far deeper, and can incorporate more than just the Count. Perhaps the most appropriate application of this concept is to the transfusion sequences, in which many men are depleted physically and emotionally from attempting to keep Lucy Westenra alive. Upon waking after a transfusion, she notes that all four men “lay helpless on the floor, breathing heavily” (Stoker 155). While it is clear to see the physical depletion from this quote, the emotional toll taken on the men, especially Arthur, is gradual, but continuous and evident. During the first blood transfusion, Dr. Seward notes, “the loss of blood was telling on Arthur, strong man as he was” (Stoker 133). The second half of this note is crucial, for not only does Seward identify that the transfusion was difficult, but that it was draining life from a “strong”

man, not just any man⁶. This strength does not necessarily refer to physical strength, but mental and emotional strength. Perhaps more telling than any excerpt in *Dracula* regarding the transfusion of blood and depletion of one's strength and soul is Seward's assertion that, "No man knows till he experiences, what it is to feel his own life-blood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves" (Stoker 138). The fact that no man can know the feeling without experiencing it lends itself to something intangible, something more than merely physical weakness. Perhaps Professor Van Helsing epitomizes this perfectly when he exclaims "God! God! God!" after seeing the garlic removed from Lucy's neck and the window open. He had put forth much effort to attempt and cure Lucy, that when seeing part of his work undone, he "sat down on a chair, and putting his hands before his face, began to sob, with loud, dry sobs that seemed to come from the very racking of his heart" (Stoker 144). Here, we can clearly see the emotional and mental toll that Lucy's sickness is taking upon the men, for Van Helsing's outbreak is one of an emotional breakdown, not one caused by loss of blood or physical exertion. Van Helsing is also said to have an "iron nerve" which is destroyed by the sight of Lucy as a vampire carrying a child. Additionally, in a diary entry of Dr. Seward upon the passing of Lucy, he laments over the emotional condition of Arthur. "Poor fellow! He looked desperately sad and broken; even his stalwart manhood seemed to have shrunk somewhat under the strain of his much-tried emotions" (Stoker 179). The phrase "much-tried emotions" is proof enough that there is a serious emotional depletion occurring. An

⁶ In 1909, just 3 years after suffering a paralytic stroke, Stoker suffered a further illness, which he "explained as the consequence of overwork" (Hughes 9). It is therefore, evident, that Stoker felt the "physical depletion" of his friendship with Irving at the same time as attempting to manage with emotions that came with the territory of essentially being "an appendage of Irving...rather than as an individual – or as an author – in his own right" (Hughes 1).

additional example of an emotional or mental depletion is seen in Dr. Seward, when he is contemplating the present state of affairs concerning Lucy: “I am beginning to wonder if my long habit of life amongst the insane is beginning to tell upon my own brain” (Stoker 145). Dr. Seward is a key character in this discussion, for an attack by one of his patient’s shows that the draining of blood does not always mean both physical and mental depletion. As Dr. Seward is bleeding from his wrist, he states that he cannot afford to lose any more blood, not just because of the physical toll, but also of the mental toll. “I have lost too much of late for my physical good, and then the prolonged strain of Lucy’s illness and its horrible phases is telling on me” (Stoker 152). Here, when Dr. Seward uses the word “telling,” he is referring the emotional and mental exhaustion that he, along with his comrades, is suffering. In this same sequence, Seward’s patient, Renfield, shouts, “The blood is the life! The blood is the life!” I believe that Renfield is not equating blood simply to survival, but to power as well. So as the men give their blood to Lucy, despite being physically and emotionally exhausted, they are maintaining power over her soul; and therefore, their power is lost when she no longer consists of their blood. Power is a crucial facet in the dichotomy between Stoker and Irving, as Stoker devoted himself completely to Irving and therefore, allowed Irving to maintain complete power over him. Many have argued, Boudreau points out, that Stoker’s unwavering devotion began upon their first meeting, and while the argument has its merits, I believe that Stoker’s devotion to Irving ultimately came to fruition while at a dinner party when Irving recited Thomas Hood’s poem, “The Dream of Eugene Aram.” In her biography of Stoker, Barbara Belford draws upon Stoker’s *Personal Reminiscences*, in which he remained in complete awe of Irving after hearing the recitation. Stoker stated, “So great was the magnetism of

his genius, so profound was the sense of his dominancy that I sat spellbound... Outwardly I was as of stone; nought quick in me but receptivity and imagination. That I knew the story and was even familiar with its unalterable words was nothing. The whole thing was new, re-created by a force of passion which was like a new power” (Belford 73). It is clear that Stoker was in an absolute state of submission to Irving at this point, for he could be captivated by something he knew very well. While this speaks to Irving’s ability as an actor, it hints more at the establishment of Stoker and Irving’s one-sided relationship. Belford notes that in the novel, “the count’s main interest in Jonathan Harker is his knowledge of English law, custom and language, paralleling how Irving drained Stoker intellectually and emotionally” (Belford 99). Dracula cares not for Harker as an individual but merely for the information he possesses. That is not to say that Irving did not care for Stoker as a person, but history tells us that he was often more interested in the services Stoker could provide, rather than Stoker’s sincere company. Even famed Victorian actress Ellen Terry observed how Irving used Stoker like a servant, so there must be some credibility in the notion that Stoker completely worshipped Irving. It must be noted, however that “Stoker was not alone in succumbing to Irving’s power. As the actor built his empire, others surrendered their lives and careers to him” (Belford 74). Just as many men performed the transfusion for Lucy, not just Arthur, so did many individuals surrender themselves to the hypnotic charm of Irving, not just Stoker. One cannot help but compare the notion of power between Irving over Stoker and Dracula over his victims. I also believe that the nature of the poem that Irving recited plays a small part in the construction of *Dracula*. Phrases such as “One hurried gash with a hasty knife, -- / And then the deed was done,” and “Nothing but lifeless flesh and bone, / That

could not do me ill,” speak directly to the terrible nature of the Count and vampires. The presence of the knife in the poem and the “deed” finished could parallel the freeing of Lucy from her vampire state and the word “lifeless” is repeated in the poem, something so applicable to the image of Lucy and the Count lying in his coffin. Finally, the line in the poem that states, “There was a manhood in his look” is also relevant to Stoker’s feelings of male power and domination, for “manhood” can imply a robustness found in powerful and well-suited men.

Dr. Seward posits a critical question while with Van Helsing, staring at the vampire Lucy in her tomb for the first time. Though he deeply loved Lucy, he notes that he is not so taken aback at the thought of mutilating her body, now in a horrific Un-Dead state, and so he asks himself: “Is it possible that love is all subjective, or all objective?” (Stoker 215). This question renders itself useful on a plethora of levels, and Stoker seems to provide an answer to this, indirectly, in his *Personal Reminiscences*. “Irving and I were so much together that after a few years we could almost read a thought of the other; we could certainly read a glance or an expression. I have sometimes seen the same capacity in a husband and wife who have lived together for long and who are good friends, accustomed to work together and to understand each other” (Stoker 364). Much of what Stoker says here is self-evident: he compares his relationship to Irving as one of a marital foundation, and after reading *Dracula*, it is difficult to ignore the phrase “good friends,” as Stoker presents all the men involved as “good friends.” It seems as if for Stoker, love is very capable of being purely subjective. For the Victorian values would not endorse such a relationship, yet Stoker insists on its glamour. According to Boudreau, biographers describe the relationship between Irving and Stoker as “beset by inequality”

(Boudreau). If this holds true, then Stoker's role in his "marriage" to Irving leaned more towards that of a subservient wife. Although he wanted nothing more than mutual respect and honor, biographers portray him as the inferior component in the relationship. Boudreau draws upon Belford to further his discussion of the inferior Stoker when he discusses Belford's assertion that "Irving not only controlled Stoker in a work environment, but also compromised the relationships with his kith and kin" (Boudreau 49). According to both authors, Irving stole away any family life that Stoker had, but also that Stoker was a more than willing victim to Irving, as "he much preferred Irving's company to an evening in front of the fire with Florence cradling their newborn" (Belford 121). At a certain point in their relationship, "infatuation" no longer was strong enough, for "obsession" then replaced it. And in this obsession was an unwavering loyalty to a man who frequently did not validate Stoker's affections or efforts. Yet Stoker persisted, "forever cast as Irving's subordinate" (Boudreau 54).

Barry McCrea, in his article "Heterosexual Horror: *Dracula*, the Closet, and the Marriage Plot," makes an interesting suggestion on the notion of homosexuality and heterosexuality found in the novel to the extent that the novel actually represents *heterosexuality* but from a *homosexual* standpoint. He suggests that *Dracula* "is a novel about heterosexuality as it is viewed from inside the gay closet—as an exotic foreign world, at once alluring and frightening" (McCrea 253). While I do not wholly agree with McCrea's assertion, I believe that the credence of it lies in its incorporation of marriage. For Stoker had described his relationship with Irving as a marriage, out of 2 marriages found in *Dracula*, only one is allowed to persevere, and the primary men in the novel all work together towards a common end and with a common bond. McCrea notes that the

relationship between Harker and the Count during his stay at Castle Dracula is “clearly a highly eroticized one,” and that if one looks at the two simultaneous starting points of the novel—Jonathan and the Count’s time together, and the exchange of letters between Mina and Lucy regarding plans of marriage—one can find a power struggle between “secret homosexuality (in the cohabitation of Dracula and Jonathan) versus public heterosexuality (in the letters of Mina and Lucy)” (McCrea 255). I propose that a close reading on both of these beginnings reveals triumph in the secret homosexuality. Lucy is far more engrossed with the idea of marriage than Mina is, and Lucy’s marriage ultimately never comes to fruition. And not only is her marriage prevented in the novel, the relationship itself between her and Holmwood, as well as her and Dr. Seward is morphed into one of repugnance and repulsiveness, while the two men grow closer. Mina’s role as wife to Jonathan takes a backseat to her role as a pawn and psychic in stopping the Count. In simpler terms, both women’s marriages do not pan out to the heterosexual norm. Mina also expresses her concern about Jonathan’s whereabouts in her letters to Lucy, and since the reader knows of Jonathan’s location, it is almost as if Mina’s fear is one not of Jonathan’s safety, but of his sexuality, as McCrea characterizes Jonathan in his article as “Bride of Dracula.” He clarifies this label through a geographic interpretation, noting the importance of Harker’s movement from the West to the East. “As the novel moves into the east of the imagination and into the east of Europe, it moves out of the “West,” the realm of domestic, bourgeois plots, where erotic energies are channeled safely into suitable matches, where individual expression and development find their outlet in work, professions, and institutions” (McCrea 258-59). In other words, Jonathan’s move East signifies his entering a realm where the suppressed comes into the

foreground and the exotic becomes active. The Count is absolutely exotic, and the horrors that Jonathan encounters are exotic as well. Harker is well aware of the geographical and physical change. "It seemed as though the mountain range had separated two atmospheres, and that now we had got into the thunderous one" (Stoker 16). There is also something to be found in the thunderous, dark atmosphere. "Each moment I expected to see the glare of lamps through the blackness; but all was dark" (Stoker 16). Reading through the lens of McCrea's thesis, the blackness and darkness could signify one's presence inside the closet of sexuality, and Jonathan is writing in his journal from "inside the closet." This notion of the closet is crucial in McCrea's argument about Harker and the Count's marriage, for he states that, "The closet, this is to say, reverses the usual sexual sense of what is normal, known 'at home,' and what is unknown, exotic, and distant, what is 'east' and what is 'west'" (McCrea 259). Therefore, as Jonathan writes from the East, he is writing from a standpoint where hetero norms are disregarded and the exotic and the suppressed are brought to light. In John Seward's Diary, he writes of a question asked by Van Helsing before deciding on their trek to Lucy's tomb: "Do you not think that there are things which you cannot understand, and yet which are; that some people see things that others cannot? But there are things old and new which must not be contemplate by mens eyes" (Stoker 204). As readers, we must throw aside our knowledge that Van Helsing is referring to vampires, and instead focus on the deeper meaning intrinsic in such a query. I believe that a question such as this is an outlet for Stoker to release frustration over his inability to have more intimate relationship with Irving. What he sees in Irving is not what everyone else sees; others see a celebrity and a hero of the stage, Stoker sees a lover.

While Stoker illustrated the marital capacity in a kind light, one that hints at equality and mutual respect, Belford also brings up the marital theme, but presents it more one-sided, and perhaps more accurately:

As for Stoker, his true marriage was to Henry Irving, a selfish, devouring man who soaked up the talent, time, and devotion of his acolytes, of whom Stoker was the foremost; many readers have found an echo of Irving and Stoker in the relationship between the parasitical Dracula and his hapless victims. Except for an early sweetheart who died young, Irving had no important woman in his personal life. His work was all that mattered; as George Bernard Shaw once quipped nastily, Irving ‘would not have left the stage for a night to spend it with Helen of Troy (Belford 101).

Since Irving’s work was all that mattered, Stoker was lucky to be enmeshed so deeply in that aspect of Irving’s life. It is critical to my reading of *Dracula* that Irving had no important women in his personal life and that he concentrated solely on his work because the men in the novel far outweigh the females and they become obsessed with their work of stopping the Count. The female vampires in Castle Dracula accuse the Count of never loving, or never been able to love. This exclamation from the females comes directly after the Count asserts that Harker belongs to him, signifying a twisted type of marriage borne out of power. Essentially, male bonding is what helps exterminate the Count, and one could argue that the existence of a female (Miss Lucy) only got in the way of that comradeship. In *Dracula*, the two primary women were absolutely used as pawns for the men. Van Helsing uses Lucy to learn more about the Count, while Mina is used as a pawn to detect the route and arrival of the Count towards the conclusion of the novel. When Mina applauds the men for their bravery and notes their strengths in numbers, one can see a parallel to the Beefsteak Room, in that no man stood alone. “You men are brave and strong. You are strong in your numbers, for you can defy that which would break down the human endurance of one who had to guard alone” (Stoker 348). The idea

of a “guarding” something is critical here, for men such as Stoker may have felt they needed to guard their innermost feelings toward other men. Additionally, Oscar Wilde, a noted homosexual, was a frequenter of the Beefsteak Room. This is not to say that such gatherings promoted any type of homoeroticism, but they seemed to serve as a haven for suppressed affinities towards other men, either sexual or social. A final way in which the homosocial world is evident in *Dracula* is through the blood transfusion. For while Lucy is at the center of the transfusions, it is significant that her beloved Arthur is not the only one to give her blood. In fact, Lucy serves as a median between the four men and Dracula so that the consumption of the men’s blood by Dracula is more socially acceptable. She is an object of desire from three of the men, but also a vessel through which Dracula can retain the men’s fluids. In John Allen Stevenson’s article, “A Vampire in the Mirror: The Sexuality of Dracula,” he attempts to apply the Freudian model of the “primal horde” to the novel, in that the Count attempts to hoard all available women, leaving the “sons,” the other men, no other option but to exterminate him. While there is merit in this assertion, since Mina and Lucy are the objects of attention from the Count and the men make it their duty to free the women from his spell, the fact that the men must do it together relates more to Stoker’s affinity for comradeship than Freud’s theory. Moreover, he explores the sexuality of the Count and vampires in general, which I believe applies more to *Dracula* than his application of the “primal horde.” Stevenson notes that the reproduction process for vampires is different than humans, but “the ironic thing about vampire sexuality is that, for all its overt peculiarity, it is in many ways very like human sexuality, but human sexuality in which the psychological or metaphoric becomes physical or literal” (Stevenson 142). The “physical or literal” that Stevenson

refers to can be seen in Bram Stoker's obsession, fascination and ultimate devotion to Henry Irving. Since many have argued that Stoker had strong homosocial and even homosexual feelings towards Irving, it is not known whether he physically acted on those feelings. What is known, however, is that Stoker dedicated his entire life to Irving; in fact, Brooke Allen asserts that "Stoker felt it a personal mission to boost Irving's work and defend him from hostile reviews in other papers" (Allen Kindle). Similarly, Van Helsing made it his "life's" work to obliterate the Count.

While the homosocial world was represented in *Dracula* through the camaraderie of the men, they also serve as part of a sexually ambiguous cast of characters that retain characteristics of both genders. At certain times, they are portrayed as brave, strong and charismatic, and at others they can be seen as timid, passive and needing assistance from females. Perhaps most representative of the masculine aspect in the novel is when Quincey Morris first arrives in the midst of poor Lucy's suffering. Van Helsing states to him: "A brave man's blood is the best thing on this earth when a woman is in trouble. You're a man, and no mistake" (Stoker 160). After Dr. Seward gives blood in hopes to cure Lucy, he is drained and has not the energy to stay up another night. He calls it "cerebral exhaustion" and when Lucy notices this, she assumes a caretaker role, one previously held by men. "No sitting up tonight for you. You are worn out. I am quite well again; indeed, I am; and if there is to be any sitting up, it is I who will sit up with you" (Stoker 136). Seward notes that her presence is "charming," and her delivery of this statement seems as if she is fully aware that the normal role of "watching over" is held by men. She continues this role by leading Seward upstairs and instructing him to rest in a room near hers, yet paradoxically, she adds that if *she* needs anything, then she will call

out. Thus, she is assisting Seward so that he may rest and assuming a more active role, but leads him to a destination where he may reassume that role if she needs him. Arthur Holmwood perhaps epitomizes the fluctuation of gender roles the most out of the cast of males, as he is the ideal husband and a man willing to give the last drop of blood for the one he loves, but is also capable of shrinking down to a man with little backbone so easily destroyed by the loss of his loved one. Of Arthur, Seward notes: "Poor fellow! He looked desperately sad and broken; even his stalwart manhood seemed to have shrunk somewhat under the strain of his much-tried emotions" (Stoker 179). Additionally, when Van Helsing initially describes his plan to decapitate the vampire Lucy, Arthur dramatically laments and lacks the emotional and mental strength the other men have, yet when he is ultimately performing the deed, the scene is one of illustrious manhood that resonates within the entire band of men. "He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it. His face was set, and high duty seemed to shine through it; the sight of it gave us courage, so that our voices seemed to ring through the little vault" (Stoker 230). The vision here is one who has retained his "stalwart" manhood, and so Arthur, amidst the emotional toils of losing Lucy, ever remains as an example of ambiguity. He also has conflicting feelings about performing the horrible deed, which displays his ambiguity as a loyal married man who is does not know what to think at the sight of his beloved in the coffin. "It made me shudder to think of so mutilating the body of the woman whom I had loved. And yet the feeling was not so strong as I had expected. I was, in fact, beginning to shudder at the presence of this being, this Un-Dead" (Stoker 214-15). Arthur is at once weak with love

and yet motivated by hate. Jonathan Harker also exemplifies sexual ambiguity in the novel, for he fulfills the role of a dissatisfied husband while at Castle Dracula, a happily married husband with Mina, an active protector of Mina, and a passive player in the quest to stop the Count in relation to the rest of the men. During his stay at Castle Dracula, Jonathan has his meals prepared and his room ready, similar to that of a married man, yet he is still “repulsed” by the Count. When he is finally returned home, he assumes the role of a fortunate husband to Mina, though it is short lived. It is interesting to note that upon his return home, the reader learns information primarily from the journals and diaries of other men up until the Count’s appearance in Harker and Mina’s bedroom, displaying Harker as a more passive husband. This culminates when Mina is forced to drink Dracula’s blood, as he lies on the bed beside her in a stupor, unable to do anything. Later in the novel, however, he is assigned to “guard” Mina, and that this task is his “best and most holiest office” (Stoker 335). He even states at one point that he is glad that Mina “consented to hold back and let us men do the work” (Stoker 264). Yet he is referred to by Mina as a “poor dear” in the same way the men refer to Lucy while she is suffering. He is certainly a character that vacillates between roles as a male. Even Van Helsing, who, throughout the novel, is sympathetic toward the plight of Lucy but never loses sight of his goal, suffers a fit of weakness at the hands of a woman—one that is not caused by loss of blood, but by sight alone. At the conclusion of the book, when attempting to destroy the Count’s 3 concubines, Van Helsing notes that man can often be powerless under the gaze of a beautiful woman. “Then the beautiful eyes of the fair woman open and look love, and the voluptuous mouth present to a kiss – and man is weak” (Stoker 393). Van Helsing admits that he is fascinated by such an occurrence, for

while the case of poor Lucy caused him much heartache that emotion transpired after days of effort and pints of blood lost. Here, he acknowledges that he was greatly affected by the simple look of the woman. “Yes, I was moved – I, Van Helsing, with all my purpose and with my motive for hate – I was moved to a yearning for delay which seemed to paralyse my faculties and to clog my very soul” (Stoker 393). This weakness experienced by Van Helsing was, at one point, experienced by all men, simultaneously. Dr. Seward notes in his diary that after an encounter with Dracula and the understanding that failing their task would mean the death of Madam Mina, the men break down. “We men were all in tears now. There was no resisting them, and we wept openly. She wept too, to see that her sweeter counsels had prevailed. Her husband flung himself on his knees beside her, and putting his arms round her, hid his face in the folds of her dress” (Stoker 329). This sight is in complete contrary from when the men set off to destroy the vampire Lucy. They were once brave and steadfast, but are reduced to tears now. Jonathan hiding in the folds of Mina’s dress is more cowardly than brave, and because Mina wept too, there is no distinction here between male and female.

It is clear that the band of men in the novel exhibit traits of both an active male player and a timid female player, but the females in the novel, Lucy and Mina, flash these characteristics as well. Homosocial desire, for Eve Sedgwick, in her book *Between Men*, was an “emerging pattern of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homosexuality” that “was in an intimate and shifting relation to class” and that it cannot be understood “outside of its relation to women and the gender system as a whole” (Sedgwick 1). Thus, in order to ascertain the ambivalent roles in the males, one must look at the females through the same lens. Lucy’s role in this analysis is confined to

her bedside manner, her letters to Mina and her existence as a vampire, but Mina's role is far more expansive, as she is a key ingredient in locating the Count and, at certain times, the center of men's world—not just Jonathan.

Lucy actually states that women are not worthy of men, a very telling sign that Stoker inserted his admiration for Irving's nobility and grace. "My dear Mina, why are men so noble when we women are so little worthy of them?" (Stoker 67). Because this is written in a personal letter, there is a sense of truth and sincerity, and this harkens back to an earlier point of Stoker's fascination with the image of nobility. I do not believe that Stoker uses Lucy as a vessel to explain that women are *not* worthy, for Mina, at times, can be seen as the noblest of all, but since Lucy's statement is written in a letter, and Stoker often wrote letters to his first idol, Walt Whitman, there is a correlation between her assertion and Stoker's feelings. Lucy continues to say that she wishes it were possible for a woman to marry "three men, or as many as want her," (Stoker 67) yet she seems so very happily married to just one, so her ambiguity is also rested in her sweetness against her scandalous desires. Additionally, though these three men all wanted to wed her, they all band up together to destroy her. She was once a vision of innocence and beauty, but her existence is dramatically altered. "Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed. The sweetness was turned to adamant, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness" (Stoker 225). Before entering the vampiric state, she was graceful and innocent, but now moves draws back with "an angry snarl." "Lucy's eyes in form and colour; but Lucy's eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew" (Stoker 225). It is clear that Lucy's ambiguity rests in her transformation from an innocent, beautiful and passive wife, to an overtly sexual and active concubine

of Dracula. As for Dracula's other concubines, they also represent sexual ambiguity, for they have power over Jonathan, yet none over Count Dracula. They are seductive and appealing, yet Harker is taken aback at the atrocity of their consumption of the child provided by the Count.

Lucy and Dracula's three concubines are not the only expression of ambivalence towards sexuality and gender roles in the novel, for Madam Mina's multi-dimensionality spans the entire novel, from the moment Jonathan returns from Castle Dracula, to the culmination of Dracula's destruction. When Jonathan returns, he is still sick and so Mina becomes a more active player, pitying Jonathan and type-writing her own journal. Yet at the same time, she speaks in the way of a domestic housewife, fortunate to be wed to man of noble stature. "And now, married to Jonathan, Jonathan a solicitor, a partner, rich, master of his business" (Stoker 182-3). Van Helsing explicitly states to Jonathan his thoughts regarding Mina that transcend the boundaries of the male-female dichotomy as outlined in the Victorian era. "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" (Stoker 201). Later in the novel, she acquiesces to the not being drawn further into the capture of the Count—though that changes drastically upon her encounter with the Count. Van Helsing even explicitly commends Mina for being "noble", something that was earlier said by Lucy to be a trait purely for men. And while Miss Lucy was the object being "saved" earlier in the novel, Mina is represented as the "savior" for Jonathan even after she has drunk the blood from Dracula's bosom. "His wife, through her terror and horror and distress, saw some sure danger to him; instantly forgetting her own grief, she seized hold of him and cried out" (Stoker 302). Further

proof of the ambivalence towards gender roles in the novel is when the band of men return to Harker's house from their unsuccessful encounter with Dracula. Jonathan articulates how Mina's role and disposition served as a backbone for the men who were distraught and almost stripped of their bravery and courage. "With sad hearts we came back to my house, where we found Mrs. Harker waiting us, with an appearance of cheerfulness which did honour to her bravery and unselfishness" (Stoker 327). Stoker applies the word "bravery" to Mina, signifying that her role is no longer of the domestic housewife, but of an active participant that displays qualities of the men who once regarded her as simply "Jonathan's wife." Mina's Memorandum entered in her journal regarding the best route for which to overtake the Count is perhaps the most compelling source of gender ambiguity, for her entry resembles a scientific analysis might have been drawn up by Van Helsing. She lists the necessities and solutions for Dracula's capture and destruction, as well as anticipates the various methods by which the Count will attempt to elude them. Of her efforts, Jonathan exclaims: "Our dear Madam Mina is once more our teacher. Her eyes have seen where we were blinded. Now we are on the track once again, and this time we may succeed" (Stoker 376). It is remarkable that Mina, who once took instructions from Van Helsing and the men, is now their teacher. She is no longer passive, but an active player who has become a part of the band of men. In fact, since she is referred to as "noble" and "brave," she can be seen as more masculine than others. She, along with Arthur and Jonathan, are the epitome of the ambivalence towards gender roles expressed by Stoker.

Stoker's obsession with Henry Irving is more than evident throughout *Dracula*. In the Count, in Van Helsing and in the fluctuation of gender roles can the reader see

glimpses of Stoker's social sphere and devotion to Irving. Additionally, Irving's demeanor in life, his characteristics on stage, and his singular devotion to the profession of acting are evident in both the Count and Van Helsing. Since Irving and Stoker were so close both personally and professionally, it is interesting Stoker never asked Irving to play the role of the Count, but "it is impossible to believe that he did not have a stage version, with Irving in the lead in mind⁷, when he wrote *Dracula*. As many critics have noted, the role of the Count would have been a natural one for Irving, and echoes of Irving's great roles are to be found in *Dracula's* text" (Allen Kindle). But Irving never wanted to play a role "that would set the standard for any future interpretation" (Belford 270). And so, upon Irving's passing, Stoker turned his attention to *Personal Reminiscences*, had two strokes—the first shortly after Irving's passing and the second four years later—attempted to continue his career as a manager but was generally unsuccessful, and passed away six years after Irving, ironically with his wife and son by his side, despite his constant preference to spend time with Irving and other bachelors. Of the man who shaped his career and his life, "Stoker wistfully recalled 'the old long meetings when occasion was full of chances for self-development, for self-illumination,' the nights when they talked until daybreak, sharing 'the secret chambers of the soul'" (Belford 280). The evidence of homosociality in Stoker's world is abundant in the text, and the band of men represent the world in which Stoker was enmeshed. It is perhaps most fitting that the novel concludes with a statement regarding the nobility of a man, as Stoker's obsession with nobility was prevalent throughout his life and especially his time

⁷ Irving actually rarely played the role of the lead in his many Shakespearean productions. He was Cassio in *Othello*, Laertes in *Hamlet*, Curan in *King Lear*, and Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet*, which was also, according to Stoker, the first "great Shakespearean production which Irving made under his own management" (Stoker 93).

with Irving. Though it is Quincey Morris who perishes in the final line, and not Count Dracula or Van Helsing—whom I have argued serve as manifestations of the great Victorian actor, the lines themselves characterize, and may even symbolize, the nation's thoughts on the loss of Irving. "And, to our bitter grief, with a smile and in silence, he died, a gallant gentleman" (Stoker 401).

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