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**Making Sense of Mina:
Stoker's Vampirization of the Victorian Woman in *Dracula*
Kathryn Boyd**

A departmental senior thesis submitted to the Department of English at
Trinity University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation
with departmental honors.

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Despite its gothic trappings and origin in sensationalist fiction, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, written in 1897, is a novel that looks forward. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Britons found themselves in a world of new possibilities and new perils –in a society rapidly advancing through imperialist explorations and scientific discoveries while attempting to cling to traditional institutions, men and woman struggled to make sense of the new cultural order. The genre of invasion literature, speaking to the fear of Victorian society becoming tainted by the influence of some creeping foreign Other, proliferated at the turn of the century, and Stoker's threatening depictions of the Transylvanian Count Dracula resonated with his readers. Stoker's text has continued to resonate with readers, as further social and scientific developments in our modern world allow more and more opportunities to read allegories into the text. *Dracula* has had a pervasive and lasting legacy, with so many film adaptations that the count himself is the most portrayed literary character in film.¹ Within the past year and a half alone, an adaptation of *Dracula* aired on mainstream American television network NBC, a new ballet interpretation of the story premiered in Turkey, and a BBC radio adaptation aired in the UK. A recent spate of post-modern academic criticism has found *Dracula* to be Freudian, latently homosexual, feminist, anti-feminist, xenophobic, contagionist, and anti-capitalist. Certainly, Stoker's supernatural novel touches on many themes, including immigration, infection, and sexual conventions, and has spoken to the social concerns of many different generations. Of all the popular attention and differing academic interpretations *Dracula* has received, though, it is the novel's subtly revolutionary treatment of the changing role of women in a culture and society that was quickly becoming less and less Victorian that is truly noteworthy. In this paper, I plan to examine Stoker's portrayal of Mina as evolved from the Victorian woman typified in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*.

¹ As of 2012, according to *Guinness World Records*' "World Record London."

The subject of women and femininity in *Dracula* has received a lot of critical attention, with academics undecided whether the novel is a tale of female empowerment or female subjugation to the patriarchy. Mina's status as a true New Woman is debated as well, and the issue is divisive in the academic community. To offer some context, Mary Wollstonecraft began to question the power disparities—social, economic, sexual, educational, etc.—between women and men in her 1792 work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. As the nineteenth century began to draw to a close, society seemed finally to be responding to Wollstonecraft's calls for action. In the last decades of the century, women gained the rights to divorce, to retain their own assets if they married, to own their own property, and to pursue a university degree. Literary depictions of the New Woman, and the use of the term New Woman itself, were popularized during this time in response to the male-dominated Victorian society and the apparent lack of equality between men and women. Meanwhile, however, Queen Victoria (whose Diamond Jubilee occurred in the same year that *Dracula* was published)² wrote, “The Queen is most anxious to enlist everyone... in checking this mad, wicked folly of ‘Woman’s Rights,’ with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety” (in Altick 58).³ If the New Woman was autonomous, with personal, social, and economic control over her own life, she was also something to be feared. The New Woman was uninterested in “propriety” and the expectations to marry young and submit to her husband’s will, and this position in particular took on enormous social significance. Women failing to marry had the potential to radically alter social institutions and the cultural balance of Victorian England as there were really no established alternate social roles for large groups of single, powerful women.

² Date of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee discussed in Stephen Arata’s “1897,” pg 51.

³ From an 1870 letter to Sir Theodore Martin, a Scottish writer, discussing women’s suffrage. Cited in Richard Altick’s *Victorian People and Ideas*.

This focus on the New Woman's potential to reject completely the patriarchal system leads some critics, like Carol Senf, to focus incorrectly on sexual freedom to categorize the novel's characters. Senf suggests that Lucy and the hyper-sexualized wives of Count Dracula are more accurately New Women, while Mina, who becomes a wife and mother, should be precluded from the title (40). However, differences between Lucy and Mina are much more significant than Senf suggests in painting Lucy as progressive and Mina as traditional, particularly as sexual promiscuity does not seem to be the most accurate barometer of the New Woman character. Mina has a professional job, writes in shorthand, and is responsible for collating the recovered texts that materially form the novel. Lucy, by contrast, has no job, and her writings are primarily occupied with discussions of the suitability of her proposed suitors. While both girls are at some point infected with vampire blood, Lucy's lack of autonomy leads her to succumb to the vampiric curse of the male Count Dracula. Completely reliant on the men in her life, Lucy is, ironically, ultimately killed by the very same group of men who proposed to her. Mina, much more self-reliant than Lucy, is instead able to turn her infection into the biggest advantage our characters have in fighting Dracula.

Keridiana Chez goes even further than Senf when she argues that because the female vampires represent the New Woman through their rampant sexuality, the patriarchy seeks to destroy them. Certainly, neither Lucy nor the vampire wives make it through the novel without being finally laid to rest. Chez suggests the metaphor of Mina and Lucy as little lap dogs—much as women of Mina and Lucy's class might have owned—who, once they show signs of becoming rabid or of developing their own sexuality, must be put down (Chez 88). Really, suggesting that Lucy's character had to be killed because of her sexual appeal to men (she attracts three proposals in one day) ignores Lucy's vapidness; she asks, in her first letter in the

book, “Do you ever try to read your own face? *I do*, and I can tell you it is not a bad study... I know that from my glass” (Stoker 62). Lucy comes across as vain, giggly, girly, and not much else. She appeals to men because she represents the traditional fair, submissive wife, and she is susceptible to male infection because she lacks her own power. She literally becomes an inverted vampiric version of the angel in the house⁴ when, ethereal and resplendent in a white dress—“the white garments of the angel”— she tries to amass her own brood of children by luring them away from their homes (Stoker 190). Indeed, the only character who is described as “angelic” in the novel is Lucy, and her “angelic beauty” is only mentioned as she dies and thus completes the transformation into a vampire (Stoker 174). In this scene, she also parodies the idea of the submissive wife when she tries to seduce her fiancé, calling in “soft, voluptuous” tones for him to come closer for a “kiss” when actually meaning to lure him in so she can drink his blood (Stoker 175). Lucy ultimately dies because there is no place for such a woman in the new modern world. Her overreliance on men is incompatible with a world where the working woman's professional skills (like Mina's) are required to successfully combat evil.

Mina may be a working woman, but Chez seizes upon any signs of domestic behavior that Mina does show in order to suggest that she is merely a pet for the group of men fighting Dracula. For example, Chez points to the scene where the men lay their heads on Mina's breast in search of comfort after having to kill the vampire Lucy. This laying down of their heads is literally physical prostration, though, which seems to indicate that the men are much more submitting themselves to Mina than they are domesticating or dominating her. Mina acts as a source of relief for the male characters who find themselves in tears after Lucy's death, suggesting Mina as a mother figure, as a nurturing leader and cohesive force. It's true that Mina

⁴ The Victorian feminine ideal of a submissive wife and devoted mother, popularized by Coventry Patmore in his 1854 narrative poem of the same name. Cited in James Eli Adam's *Victorian Sexuality*, pg 129

is re-integrated into the patriarchal system at the end of the novel, and that Senf and others have used this ending to support the belief that Mina is not a New Woman, but it's not entirely true to claim that her marriage negates her empowerment (Senf 48). Far from being simply relegated to the domestic realm and written off as a wife and mother, Mina becomes the harbinger of a new enlightened generation. In her marriage, yes, she does emphasize her desire "to be able to be useful to Jonathon," but significantly she aims to do so through learning modern skills like shorthand, stenography, and typewriting—through "keeping up with Jonathon's studies" instead of through the traditional means of cooking or cleaning (Stoker 61). She produces a male heir and, together with her husband, they teach him the story of Count Dracula so that little Quincey "will someday know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is" (Stoker 400). Defining Mina's femininity as "gallant" is significant because gallant is a typically masculine adjective, associated with acts of noble daring and capable knights in shining armor. The only other character who is described as being "gallant" in the novel is Quincey Morris (the namesake of Mina's son) and this description is earned as he lay dying, having pushed through a mortal injury to stab Dracula in the heart and rid the world of an ancient evil (Stoker 399). Being a "mother" does not marginalize Mina because even after her child is born she still "is" a "gallant woman," and she achieves such a rank without becoming a martyr, giving her significant power. The fact that Mina's sexual behavior fits in with traditional societal norms does not negate the fact that Mina is intelligent, brave, and "gallant." Given that her bravery and intelligence are far more integral to Mina's overall agency and, specifically, to her ability to find Count Dracula when the men cannot than her sexual behavior is, I would argue that Mina's "gallantry" is a more significant indicator of New Womanhood than her marriage status.

Still other academics point to Mina's offhand distancing of herself from the New Woman as evidence that Mina is truly Victorian. Significantly, though, Mina isn't really distancing herself from the New Woman trope but from the pejorative and stereotypical New Woman who threatened the male patriarchy. While joking about the New Woman with Lucy, Mina thinks that the New Woman "won't condescend in future to accept [a proposal]; she will do the proposing herself...and a nice job she will make of it too! There is some consolation in that" (Stoker 101). Mina distances herself from the New Woman in her own thinking, and while perhaps she is being sarcastic in suggesting that those crazy New Women wouldn't do too bad a job at proposing, there's a distinct tonal gap between what the text says and what Mina means. Perhaps, instead, Stoker is earnestly suggesting that women would do a nice job if gender roles were inverted, even if Mina is not permitted to go quite that far. Such distancing is required in order to avoid Mina's character explicitly being taken as a threat to the social ordering of gender, but the text is not exactly disparaging of this extreme New Woman, with "some consolation" to be found in their evolving sexual politics. While she may have been joking about it, Mina is still able to see changes in the power balance between the genders as a very real future. Mina is a moderate New Woman, lacking the extremism that would have led many readers at the turn of the century to reject and vilify her. Best explained by Brooke Allen, "It is Mina who laughs at the New Woman, and yet she herself could hardly be more of a New Woman if she tried: a self-supporting career woman, capable, accomplished, an equal (and to tell the truth more than equal) partner to her mate. She, the New Woman—also, by the way, married and sexually experienced—is able to defeat the vampire, while the pure, sweet, and still virginal Lucy is not" (xxvii).

While I find myself agreeing more with Allen than with Chez and Senf , I do understand some of the criticism leveled against Mina. Representations of the New Woman were typically much more extreme than what Stoker gives us in Mina, who is, after all, a schoolmistress in a loving and happy marriage. Bram Stoker is, admittedly, not recognized as one of the seminal New Woman novelists (like Thomas Hardy, Grant Allen, or George Gissing) whose novels dealt with the victimization of women in traditional marriages or portrayed a sexually liberated single woman. These men and many other contemporary female writers certainly produced much more pointedly feminist and New Woman literature than Stoker did. But, while these other writers had their female characters eschew men and the patriarchal order in general in order to prove their point, Stoker's Mina works within the fin-de- siècle social order.

How, then, are we to reconcile the competing interpretations of Mina's status, of her relative tameness compared to contemporary New Woman in literature? Is she the ultimate Victorian woman, embodying the virtues of her age, or is she a subversive female character representative of growing female empowerment? Emerging from a literary tradition in which women were typically portrayed as caricatures of angels or monsters—and female agency was vilified more often than not—the character of Mina Murray in *Dracula* offers a middle ground between angel and monster (quite literally so towards the end of the novel when, infected by the vampiric curse, she is burned by a sacred wafer), and between the old and the new (Gilbert and Gubar 17). Going back not only to *Dracula's* literary predecessors, specifically to the 1860 sensation novel that appears to have directly inspired *Dracula*, offers clear evidence of the robust development of female social roles. Book reviews written just after *Dracula* was published accuse Stoker of attempting to “go, as it were, ‘one better’ than others in the same field” and expressly to “‘go one better’ than Wilkie Collins (whose method of narration he has closely

followed)” (“*Dracula*. By Bram Stoker” 835 and “Recent Novels” 150-151). Stoker does indeed “go one better” than Wilkie Collins by vampirizing Wilkie Collins's well known novel *The Woman in White*. In that novel, the Italian Count Fosco and Sir Percival Glyde conspire to steal Laura Fairlie’s inheritance by first marrying her and then faking her death by committing her to an insane asylum under the name of her lookalike secret half-sister. Another half-sister, Marian Halcombe, and drawing instructor turned investigator Walter Hartright work together to uncover the nefarious plot and save Laura.

While Stoker adds vampires to Collins's basic story of two girls bothered by a foreign count and aided by a romantic-interest character of good heart (Hartright, even, in Collins's text), I don't mean “vampirization” in quite such a literal way. Stoker sinks his teeth into Collins's tale, appropriating the epistolarity, plot, and character structures to portray the evolution of the socially acceptable female role in society, in much the same way that becoming a vampire energizes and sexualizes normal human traits. Stoker literally draws in the old and revamps it to show how much women’s agency has shifted while other sources of social fear have remained the same. All puns aside, while the foreign Other remains a universal threat, Stoker seems to suggest that an empowered woman is something society no longer has to fear, marginalize, or attempt to masculinize. The similarities between Collins's *Woman in White* and Stoker’s *Dracula* reveal Mina as an adapted and empowered version of Collins's Marian, while her counterpart Lucy is as much a damsel in distress as Collins's Laura. Our heroes and romantic interests (Jonathon Harker and Walter Hartright, respectively), fight against a foreign evil count with a strange affinity for animals (Count Dracula and Count Fosco) with the help of a different foreign helper (Van Helsing and Pesca). Both stories are also told in the form of assembled recovered texts (with Stoker allowing his female writers far more narrative agency than Collins) and are set

around London, the hub of modern England. Stoker himself was intimately aware of dramatic adaptations, having worked as a theater reviewer and manager of the Lyceum Theater before penning *Dracula*, and he had previously reviewed Collins's own adaptation of *The Woman in White* for the stage (Wynne 29-35). With *Dracula*, Stoker gives us an adaptation of *The Woman in White* that is supernatural, sexier, more theatrical, and ultimately much more progressive in terms of the proscribed gender roles it seems to support.

I would argue that Stoker's Miss Mina Murray, an educated career woman who joins in with the men's derring-do adventures, is a socially acceptable and non-threatening version of the New Woman. Men could (and, in *Dracula*, they emphatically do) recognize her abilities without feeling the need to change her or destroy her. Mina remains a progressive character while managing to avoid the conservative criticism leveled by males trying not to lose sight of their own cultural identity amidst extreme social changes that so many other New Woman attracted; Stoker proved that empowered women did not have to attract such ire. In creating *Dracula*, Stoker appropriated and adapted earlier sensation literature that was used to emphasize the place of women solely in the domestic sphere. The real significance of *Dracula* can perhaps best be seen when held in harsh relief to its literary inspiration: Mina is far from being the passive and traditional angel in the house that is so clearly shown in Collins's *The Woman in White* and hinted at with the character of Lucy in *Dracula*.

Ultimately, this motley cast of female characters has much to reveal about the development of gender roles in Victorian society. Stoker's Mina is an evolved form of Collins's Marian, with the same drive to investigate evil but with much more socially sanctioned, and subtextually approved, agency. The relationship between Mina and Lucy—close friends and confidants since they were children—is similar to the relationship between half-sisters Marian

and Laura. Marian and Mina are dark brunettes while Laura and Lucy are pale, fair blondes; Marian and Mina fall just short of challenging social boundaries while Laura and Lucy are both “sweet,” “lovely,” and ultimately ineffectual (Collins 52, 53 and Stoker 70). While *Dracula* itself sets up Mina and Lucy as very different types of women, one who triumphantly survives in the new world and one who must be killed, Stoker also plays Mina off her literary progenitress, Collins's Marian. Marian and Mina are intelligent and capable, where their counterparts are reliant on men to shape and to save them. Even further than that, Mina becomes the true cohesive force behind the men fighting Dracula and has ultimate narrative authority over the whole story, since she is solely responsible for compiling the text of the story. When she falls ill after spying on Fosco, Marian must ultimately step down and wait around for Hartright to resolve the problems caused by the evil count. In contrast, Mina steps up and leads the men around her to Dracula's doorstep, using the illness inflicted on her by the foreign count to her advantage instead.

As both *The Woman in White* and *Dracula* end with a happy marriage and the creation of a male heir, the real difference between the female characters of the two novels is not to do with their sexual, corporal bodies but to do with their minds. Critics like Chez and Senf fall into the Victorian belief that our bodies are accurate manifestations of our identity when determining the progressiveness of female character based primarily on her bodily engagement in a heteronormative relationship (Michie 410). Wollstonecraft even railed against such thinking in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, claiming “I cannot discover why... females should always be degraded by being made subservient to love or lust” (Wollstonecraft 26). And, indeed, defining the measure of a woman simply through her body does make her “subservient” to her sexuality even if she is otherwise sexually liberated. The true focus should be whether a woman

will “have sufficient native energy to look into herself for comfort, and cultivate her faculties” if she does marry, and not whether or not she marries (Wollstonecraft 27). In making sense of Mina, then, critical attention must be given to her “native energy”—to her mind, her resolve, her interiority, her narrative agency—and to her ability to “cultivate faculties” not limited to those deemed appropriately feminine.

Dracula itself also seems to support this approach, as reading diary entries is put forward multiple times in the text as the ultimate way of getting to know, and thus trust, the writer. Protesting that Van Helsing does not know her, Van Helsing replies that since he had “read [her] diary... which breathes out truth in every line,” he definitively understands and “knows” her (Stoker 198). The scene is later echoed when Mina hands her journal over to Dr. Seward, telling him “when you have read those papers... you will know me better”(Stoker 237). Like Van Helsing and Steward, we as readers can only really “know” the true Mina through her personal journal entries—through the way she plans, reacts, and acts throughout the novel. It is again her interiority that matters . The men can meet Mina, and talk with her without “knowing” her; the act of “knowing” who Mina really is comes only once the men have been inside her mind. Similarly, we cannot “know” Mina if we as readers focus only on the bodily exterior.

Mina's body is important only insofar as she is able to seem outwardly Victorian and non-threatening while effectively proving herself superior to the men around her . Collins's lovely Laura Fairlie is startlingly two-dimensional and powerless in her marriage, and Marion's intelligence and frankness comes at the cost of such complete isolation from society that she is seemingly asexual and relegated to be the spinster caretaker of her beautiful half-sister. Mina, however, manages to combine the two while moving even further towards equality – she is the autonomous, achievable ideal of the new century, able to balance a love (as an equal romantic

partner) with her intelligence and profession, and with the norms of Victorian society. Mina's importance lies in her ability to appear domesticated while achieving significant autonomy. In doing so, she appropriates aspects of the vampire herself, on her terms. Mina's socially normative exterior belies her cunning and her significant agency, just as Dracula's human appearance allowed him to move around uninhibited on the streets of London. According to Richard Altick, "there was something unpleasant, even alarming, about strong-willed woman who insisted on using their mind" (54). Mina manages to be this "strong-willed woman" without the unpleasantness—she is revered throughout the novel by her companions, despite the fact that it is only the use of her "mind" that allows their quest to be successful. In Victorian trappings, Mina is nevertheless a challenging, smart, strong woman.

At this point in my paper, I turn to analysis of the vastly intertwined manifestations of Mina's mental acuity (in contrast to the characters that Stoker vampirizes from Collins's text), aiming in doing so to underscore the progressive importance of Mina's interiority and the gap between her mind and her innocuous outward appearance. To better understand Mina herself, I will examine her mental resolve in situations where others succumb, and her inherent intelligence and desire to learn as opposed to the primarily domestic education of the girls in Collins's novel. Mina's career as a schoolmistress is significant as well, as her profession places her in the social role of leader and teacher. Instructing her students in decorum, she identifies herself with the Victorian tradition while displaying her ability to rise above it. Her capabilities and intelligence are combined with a good character, leaving her with a masculine brain and a feminine heart (as Stoker terms it). Marian, too, had these same qualities, but there are significant differences in the portrayals of her and Mina's characters. Then, I will look at Mina's role as creator and curator of the text itself. Mina not only functions as an instructor teaching

girls etiquette and teaching us the story of Dracula, she mentors the male characters, enabling them to kill the count. She achieves dual dominance in the female and male worlds, and the traditional and progressive worlds, cementing her place as a force to be reckoned with in both arena through physical action. Mina emerges as an empowered woman cloaked as a Victorian, challenging both Dracula himself and Victorian sensibilities.

Starting generally, both novels deal with the idea of mental weakness and even insanity. Laura, the dutiful wife in Collins's text, is falsely imprisoned in an insane asylum, the experience causing her to acquire “weakened, shaken faculties” and a “mind.... evidently unfit to bear” reminders of her time there (Collins 426, 420). Faced with a hard situation, Laura becomes significantly mentally incapacitated and must rely on Marian and her love-interest, Walter, to nurse her back to health through “simple means,” so as not to overtax her simple mind (Collins 427). Interestingly, it is a male character in *Dracula* that most closely parallels Laura's mental incapacitation after a fright, and in a role reversal it is the female Mina who nurses him back to health. After encountering Dracula, Harker develops “violent brain fever” for “nearly six weeks,” and wishes only that Mina “share his ignorance” and not talk about his experiences as they are also too much for him to handle without relapse (Stoker 111, 117). Both characters suffer lasting mental trauma, must be nursed back to health, and cannot be reminded of their experiences without quickly devolving.

Mina, instead, takes the knowledge of an undead oppressor calmly in stride despite Jonathon's worry that the story of Dracula “would shock and frighten her to death,” showing her supremacy not only over the traditional Victorian woman but the professional Victorian man as well (Stoker 48). She may be initially so “upset” by the “terrible record” that she “hadn't the heart to write” again that night after she had read it, but the very next morning she resumes her

journaling and resolves to “get her typewriter this very hour and begin transcribing” (Stoker 193). In direct opposition to Laura and Harker, Mina realizes that the information must be shared and made public, even retaining the memory to incorporate verbatim quotes from an unrecorded conversation that had occurred a month earlier between herself and a sick Jonathon (Stoker 117, 193). It is Harker himself who comes dangerously close to dying of fright, not Mina, and the woman whose constitution he was so worried about assumes the role of protector. Jonathon is actually made infirm by knowledge of the hellish count, while Mina's first thought is to be prepared to share the story with others, an act of practicality and forethought, as at this point she has yet to meet Van Helsing or the group of Lucy's suitors. Mina assumes the masculine role of *The Woman in White*, caring for Harker and publicizing his story just as Walter cared for and collected Laura's tale, showing not only the difference in the “constitutions” and mental fortitude of the Victorian woman and Mina but the beginnings of a serious shift in gender dynamics. In novels rife with mental asylums, nefarious villains, and “brain fever,” it is significant that Mina keeps her wits about her while others could not.

Indeed, in addition to her clarity of mind, Mina's intelligence separates her from Collins's women. Simultaneously knowledgeable and curious about the world around her, Mina's diary entries are peppered with historical and literary references, legal terms, and applications of contemporary scientific theory. For example, upon first arriving at Whitby, she references the Abbey as being “sacked by the Danes,” which is in no means recent history for Mina (Stoker 70). The Danish raids were actually directed at the very first monastery on the site, which was still called Streoneshalh instead of Whitby, and occurred between 867 and 870. In the same sentence Mina also references the epic poem Marmion, written by Sir Walter Scott in 1808. Both allusions occur in the first paragraph of the very first of Mina's diary entries in the novel,

meaning our first insight into Mina's character is that she has a wide range of knowledge. Within the span of a few pages she further resolves to educate herself about such diverse topics as “whale-fishing in the old days” and watching storms to “learn the weather signs” (Stoker 72,82). Mina seems to display a genuine thirst for knowledge.

Comparatively, the only things that the women in *The Woman in White* “learn” are drawing techniques, “civilized accomplishments” in general, and how “to love [men]... after marriage... without being greatly attracted to them”(Collins 54, 55, 73). Laura’s and Marian's lessons are concretely connected to the domestic sphere, and seem to only be concerned with how to make a good woman and wife. They learn ornamental “accomplishments” instead of useful knowledge and, in particular, they learn the importance of submitting to “marriage.” The differences in subjects learnt by the women reveal a vast social divide between Collins’s era and Stoker’s. While the men of *Dracula* represent a wide-breadth of academic achievement (as doctors, lawyers, and in Van Helsing's case a perhaps slightly excessive collection of “M.D., D.PH., D.LIT., ETC., ETC”), Thomas Heyck notes that several universities still wouldn't award degrees to women until well into the twentieth century (Stoker 125 and Heyck 199). Regardless, Mina studies law with John, keeps up with modern scientific discovers and psychoanalytical theories, specifically referencing “Nordau” and “Lombroso,” who wrote of the deterioration of the human race and the physiognomy of criminals, respectively (Stoker 362). This accumulation of collegiate knowledge actually becomes Mina’s means of becoming a good woman and wife, as her studies are admittedly motivated by a desire to help Harker. Put simply, being a good wife for Collins meant learning to draw while being a good wife for Stoker meant learning the law. While she may not have a degree, Mina teaches herself law in order to keep up with Jonathon's

studies, takes it upon herself to keep up with recent scientific philosophy, and (like Van Helsing) professionally works as a teacher.

Significantly, Mina's profession is even given pride of place over her personal relationships, as we learn that she is “an assistant schoolmistress” and “overwhelmed with work” before mention is made of her impending nuptials to Jonathon (Stoker 61). This introduction, in terms of her occupation instead of her social position in the patriarchy, seems to push Mina towards the realm of the New Woman. Mina's being “overwhelmed” by her work speaks to the amount of effort and time she puts in to her professional career, likening it to a serious form of labor. A woman might more traditionally be “overwhelmed” with emotion, and Stoker plays on this gendered trope by replacing female emotion with the strictly professional to suggest Mina's simultaneous femininity and autonomy. The significance of Mina's job as a schoolmistress has been downplayed by Nancy Rosenberg as merely an “accepted occupation for women of the time period,” but while the idea of women in the workforce may have been grudgingly “accepted,” true Victorian standards would never allow a women to leave the domestic sphere for a professional position (9). Her job may not have been revolutionary, but Mina still worked and earned her own money. To compare, Lucy does not work, and neither Marian or Laura have jobs; Laura is allowed to “earn” some money when Hartright fools her into thinking people are buying her “poor, faint, valueless sketches,” when he instead hides her work around the house and gives her bits of his own earnings (Collins 470). Not only is Laura not truly working, her product is “poor” and “valueless,” at least monetarily, and she is being ultimately misled by a male attempt to shelter her. The only truly working female characters in Collins's text are maids, certainly below the social status of Mina. Mina is more empowered than these women (and not

just because of the mobility granted by her higher class status) even if she is in a post that is socially acceptable instead of radical.

Mina's post as a schoolmistress might admittedly be undermined by the fact that she has spent "some years teaching etiquette and decorum to other girls," and this clearly affects her behavior and sensibilities in the novel (Stoker 186). For example, in the midst of rescuing Lucy from a sleepwalking adventure, and having given away her shoes, Mina dips her feet into a puddle of mud so that "no one, in case we should meet anyone, should notice my bare feet" (Stoker 103). Certainly, a New Woman character would not be so concerned that anyone out wandering the streets after midnight might see her bare feet. But, while Mina demonstrates a desire to follow the social principles of decorum, the way she does so is significant because she forges her own means to abide by social norms. She clearly has traditional values, as she is worried about her feet "being bare," and later she worries about being seen on the streets of London arm-in-arm with her husband. However, Mina does choose to take John's arm, despite, in her own words, the "pedantry" of the decorum that she teaches "biting into [her]" (Stoker 186). This seeming allusion to vampires deserves specific attention, particularly as it seems to connect Victorianism with vampirism. The image of personified Victorian decorum "biting into" Mina is particularly suggestive when compared to Dracula's actions, "biting into" both Lucy and Mina literally. Like a vampire bite, the influence of Victorian etiquette has the capability to change behaviors and desires, with a lust perhaps for virtue instead of blood. Restrictive decorum and vampire hypersexuality are connected—not as equals but as opposites, as two sides of the same coin. Infection (if it leads to transformation) of either influence is disastrous, leading either to rebirth as a vampire or return to repressive Victorian ways. But the fact that Mina is able to use her own vampiric infection as a weapon for defeating historical evil without succumbing to it

suggests that the same can be true for Victorian propriety. Elements of decorum can be appropriated by Mina, as they are more broadly by Stoker, to create the image of an outwardly acceptable and inwardly subversively powerful woman. Yes, Mina teaches girls the proper way to behave, and a focus on traditional etiquette may seem at odds with a New Woman character; however, she also recognizes that such rules are often “pedantic” and chooses not to obey some of the rules. Further, she doesn't care if people in the modern city see her forsaking Victorian sensibilities with her husband in the streets. She is able to fight her vampiric contamination, using it instead as an asset, and likewise Mina defies the “pedantry” of her decorum while using it as a means to achieve social acceptance. Mina's adherence to, or at least recognition of, the rules of proper behavior for girls does seem to suggest that she is not really a progressive character, but Mina's importance lies in her ability to appear domesticated while achieving significant autonomy, just like the vampire.

I do think that the term “assistant schoolmistress” deserves unpacking; while “schoolmistress” can be used synonymously with “teacher,” it can also indicate the female version of “schoolmaster” (Heyck 203).⁵ The application of “assistant” before “schoolmistress” seems to suggest that Mina is not just a teacher at her school, but an assistant schoolmaster—a vice principal. Such a position would obviously indicate female authority and power, setting Mina up as a leader in the traditional female community and making her later position as assumed leader among the men all the more interesting. Van Helsing even later refers to “dear Madam Mina” as “once more our teacher. Her eyes have seen where we were blinded” (Stoker 374). Mina's dominance in both the male and female spheres is given, then, in explicitly educational terms, as a teacher. She is presented as a figure that we—and the characters of the

⁵ The inspiration for this analysis comes from Thomas Heyck's use of “schoolmistress” to alternately indicate a female teacher and a headmistress at different points in his article “Educational.”

novel—can learn from, and Mina certainly stands as an example of how to blend the male and female (and traditional and progressive) worlds. She uses her virtue to reign in the female traditional realm and her intelligence to emerge as an unprecedented leader among men, a seer when they are “blinded.”

Mina achieves this dual dominance by both appealing to and resisting the gender binary perhaps best elucidated by the King in Tennyson's 1847 epic poem *The Princess*:

Man for the field and she for the hearth:

Man for the sword and for the needle she:

Man with the head and woman with the heart:

Man to command and woman to obey:

All else confusion. (in Altick 53)

Van Helsing makes the division explicit when he attributes Mina a “man's brain—a brain that a man should have were he much gifted—and a woman's heart,” but the text itself seems, on some level, to challenge such rigid gender division (Stoker 251). Certainly, the idea of male superiority is implicit in the suggestion that Mina has a “man's brain,” but often Mina proves herself to be much smarter than her fellow men. Male intellectual dominance reads more like a pretense than an actual fact of the times. By the end of the novel, it is Mina who is “commanding” and the men who are “obeying,” confusing the seemingly strict binary system. Dividing Mina into male and female parts would seemingly fracture Mina's identity, but it paradoxically allows her to retain her femininity while being recognized as intelligent. It is significant that Van Helsing is the character who praises Mina through a male lens because he is so closely aligned with traditional beliefs (that ultimately prove ineffectual against Dracula). Yes, Van Helsing the lawyer / doctor / vampire hunter is very knowledgeable about the ancient

evil of vampires and can suggest many folklore remedies for vampirism, but throughout the novel his classical knowledge is not enough to defeat Dracula. In fact, it is Mina's brain that must be relied upon more often than not in finding and fighting the vampire. Van Helsing's reliance on rigid patriarchal assumptions of feminine weakness also cause trouble for the group because his outdated belief system is what allows Mina to be bitten—she is significantly only imperiled when the men try to leave her out of their plans or treat her delicately. Because of Van Helsing's shortcomings, and his eventual reliance on Mina's "brain" and instruction, the text itself doesn't seem to support the idea of the man with the "head" and the "sword" and the woman safe at home.

Collins's Marian is also given a man's "brain," but uncommon female intelligence is explained by the attribution of physically male features. Marian has "dark down on her upper lip [that is] almost a mustache... a large, firm, masculine mouth and jaw" and is "altogether wanting in those feminine attractions" (Collins 35). Marian is quite literally given a man's head, complete with strong jawline and mustache, in order to compensate for her uncommon intelligence. Hartright also describes the "rare beauty of her form," with Marian's ugly head responsible for ruining her appearance (Collins 34). In Collins's time, it was too much for a woman to be both beautiful (like Laura) and intelligent (like Marian), and to compensate Marian must be stripped of her beauty and thus marginalized. Mina, by comparison, is allowed to keep her outwardly feminine appearance, remaining a "sweet-faced, dainty-looking girl" (Stoker 235). Interestingly, Stoker terms Mina not "dainty" but "dainty-looking," reinforcing the idea that Mina's outward self does not so neatly align with her identity as her both her mental resolve and physical gun-toting later in the novel prove that Mina is anything but "dainty." Stoker quite literally clothes Mina in a quaint Victorian shell, allowing her to keep her feminine appearance despite the

attribution of male characteristics. Van Helsing may call it a “man's brain” and “woman's heart” but what he means is that Mina is a strong, intelligent, and kind woman who finds herself a leader among men not only for the support she can provide them but for her tactical ideas and knowledgeable suggestions. She becomes literally a representation of the mind, the cold and insensate “brain” tempered with the emotion and feeling of the “heart.” With her “heart” and “brain” Mina represents a graceful unification of traits typically gendered either male or female, as opposed to the discordant combination that Collins allows us, and again suggests the incredible importance of the mind in *Dracula*. Mina's intelligence and actions challenge the gendered notion of a divide between logic and emotion, and through her character she transcends the gender binary to form a complete identity of personhood. Neither male nor female (just as she is neither Victorian nor vampire) Mina is both at the same time. Both Marian and Mina are attributed male logic and female emotion, but Stoker allows the union to further empower and add to his character, while the combination in *The Woman in White* detracts from Marian, removing both her beauty and her place in society.

Having thus examined Mina's intelligence and capability within the novel, and identified her status as a symbol of development and empowerment in contrast to the image of the Victorian woman portrayed in *The Woman in White*, it is not surprising that Mina takes ownership of the entire narrative. Transcribing Harker's record of his time in Dracula's Castle, in addition to standing as testament to her mental resolve, is the first step in Mina's collection of the epistolary narrative. Mina realizes the necessity of creating a codified text of encounters with Dracula; she collects diary entries and newspaper clippings, and she transcribes an audio diary recorded on a phonograph. Using a typewriter, she “knit[s] together in chronological order every scrap of evidence they have” (Stoker 241). There is an interesting blend of the modern and the

female in this, the very creation of the *Dracula* text. The typewriter was invented in the 1860s, and the phonograph was not introduced until 1877, only twenty years before *Dracula* was published. Knowing how to use these technologies indicates that Mina is very much a part of the emerging modern world, but significantly, she doesn't have to forsake her own femininity. By her own account, she "knits" the story together, placing the creative creation of the text firmly in the domestic realm.

Mina even keeps a "typewritten copy" of the transcribed text in her "workbasket," further combining the images of the domestic and the technological (Stoker 198). Hand-knitting was a traditional task for women and young daughters at home, and the domestic ties to knitting were already established in Collins's *The Woman In White*, in which a "little knitting-basket" is seen in the lap of the "elderly" mother Mrs. Catherick as she sits in her home (Collins 474). Instead of keeping knitting in her basket though, as Mrs. Catherick does, Mina keeps the creative product of her words. She "knits" the story using narrative agency rather than yarn, and does so in terms of a task she was specifically taught as a domestic female. Certainly, Mina's knitted product has a far more lasting legacy and social importance than the knitting of Mrs. Catherick, but both are domestic tasks. Mina demonstrates how those domestic tasks can be a sign of empowerment (and an expression of the often silenced female voice) in and of themselves. Bringing together the different threads of a narrative story can also itself be seen as a domestic task, due to the close association of woman as storytellers in the ancient oral tradition.

In a striking image, Mina knits together the disparate strains of her own story, and those of the men around her, using modern creations as her needles, as it were. Mina dictates the narrative, and is explicitly given ultimate creative control of the story. While a small section of Marian Halcombe's first-person diary is included in *The Woman in White*, her diary is read by

Count Fosco against her wishes, and he ultimately re-asserts male narrative control by writing his own words into her personal diary. Marian then becomes unable to write, her diary entries “ceas[ing] to be legible” and containing “fragments of words only, mingled with blots and scratches of the pen” before being replaced by “a man's handwriting, large, bold, and firmly regular” (Collins 329, 330). Reduced merely to “blots and scratches,” Marian's narrative is completely overtaken by the men around her. Her narrative power diminishes until it is in “fragments,” and then it disappears completely. While Fosco praises her, Marian's writing is literally replaced by Fosco's own words, and she is effectively silenced. It is not only man's “handwriting” that is “large, bold, and firmly regular,” but man himself as he excises female input in the narrative and asserts final control. Marian's silencing is commonly recognized by critics to be punishment for shedding her female clothing and eavesdropping on a conversation between two men, or “acting in a manner which contradicted normative feminine behavior” (Gaylin 315). Certainly, the image of Marian removing “the white and cumbersome parts of [her] underclothing” seems to indicate a necessary abandonment of femininity as part of her transgression against the men she listens to, and her ensuing infirmity registers as a punishment for this transgression (Collins 314).

By contrast, in *Dracula*, Mina's contradiction of feminine subjugation is sanctioned within the text. Mina specifically asks the male leader Van Helsing whether a certain record should go into the collected texts, to which he replies, “It need not go in if you do not wish it” (Stoker 252). Stoker's text is literally Mina's text—we as readers get what she “wished” to include and are at the mercy of her collation and organization. Giving complete narrative control to Mina goes a long way to cover the gap between her sometimes self-deprecating diary entries (in which she needlessly questions her resolve) and the usually more self-assured entries by

many of the men. In *Dracula*, Mina (not the evil count) puts the final narrative gloss on the story. As proposed by Alison Case, there may be “unique and complex gender dynamics of the narration,” but ultimately the text that we get as a whole is, in fact, a feminine narrative assembled intelligently and painstakingly by Mina (10). Stoker also highlights the importance of Mina's female-created narrative within the text when Dracula attempts to burn the manuscript, throwing it and Seward's phonograph diaries “on the fire” (Stoker 303). The manuscript, created by Mina, was enough of a threat to Count Dracula that he sought actively to destroy it; it is also through Mina's actions that the manuscript is preserved, as Mina typed in “manifold, and so took three copies” of all that she transcribed (Stoker 240). Even taking three copies serves to connect Mina to a larger epic story telling tradition, as repetition and the use of “three” abound in fairy tales and is symbolic in many religions. Words, and female creation, are powerful in *Dracula*, allowing us to “know” our villain just as we get to “know” Mina.

Mina's codification of the text is not the only idea that she has that ultimately leads to the capture of Count Dracula. Indeed, Mina is singularly responsible for several intelligent ideas in locating Dracula, and she becomes the only character mentally capable of doing so after he flees London. Mina—and not Van Helsing—realizes that Dracula's infection of her with his blood can be turned towards her own purposes. In harsh contrast to Lucy, who unknowingly moves closer and closer towards her vampiric transformation, Mina refuses to succumb and thus weaponizes Dracula's curse. She discovers the psychic link between herself and Dracula, and calls Van Helsing in, ordering him, “I want you to hypnotize me! ... Be quick, for the time is short!” (Stoker 331). As a result, the men are able to discover through Mina that Dracula is on a boat at anchor in the Port of London. Mina again proves useful when she is able to provide detailed train schedules from memory in response to a necessary change of plans. Knowing the

departure time of even foreign trains, in this case from Varna to Galatz, Mina recites, “6:30 tomorrow morning!... I always used to make up the timetables, so as to be helpful to my husband. I found it so useful sometimes, that I always make a study of the timetables now” (Stoker 358). While such devotion and thoughtfulness for her husband is perhaps not a stereotypical New Woman trait, she uses the knowledge to lead the men, for the second time, straight to Dracula. Again, Stoker combines elements of both the traditional Victorian woman and the new socially empowered female in Mina. She is a New Woman within the constraints of social understandings at Stoker’s time, bowing to Victorian sensibilities while infected with the vampiric curse. Mina can be, at once, a good wife and an integral part of a dangerous mission to rid the world of an evil supernatural force.

Mina even completely assumes the role of the strategist, writing up a memorandum examining all possibilities for how Dracula might be travelling, “by road... by rail... by water” (Stoker 372). Logically assessing the pros and cons of each option, and applying all knowledge that they have of Dracula. Mina determines which route he is most likely to take. Mina concludes, correctly, that Dracula has taken the Sereth River back to his Castle, ironically explaining her method as an “attempt to follow the Professor's example, and think without prejudice on the facts before me” (Stoker 371). Supremely logical, Mina leads the group to Dracula for the third and final time. Her deduction of Dracula's path is truly spectacular, and yet Mina seeks to try and attribute some of her glory to Van Helsing. All of the discoveries so far in pursuing Dracula have been made by Mina, so it seems odd here that she would be so deferent to Van Helsing. But Van Helsing himself seems to refute this deference, as he exclaims Mina is a woman he is “proud to obey” (Stoker 367). Mina seems to consistently project the image of a traditional woman, quiet in her confidence and even humble, despite the sheer magnitude of her

achievements. Mina as a modern woman gives commands instead of following them, her assumed deference and nature allowing men to be “proud” to follow her. She is well respected, proves herself more than capable in the face of attempts to patronize her, and establishes her authority in a way that can be socially justified.

Finally, Mina furthermore becomes a serious physical threat to her enemies when, near the end of the novel (her weakest point due to the effects of the vampiric infection, when night begins to fall, in the middle of a raging snow storm), she “got out [her] revolver ready to hand” and proceeded to hold several of Dracula’s gypsy helpers at gunpoint (Stoker 397). This moment of the group’s physical attack significantly comes from Mina’s own narrative, allowing her narratively to lead the charge. Miss Mina Murray is no docile, submissive housewife. She faces the growing threat of vampirism with resolve and uses it as a weapon against Dracula, leading the men behind her to Dracula’s castle, and participating in the men’s charge on Dracula’s coffin. Mina’s involvement in the attack suggests the use of her body as a means to destroy, just as her body later bears a child and creates life. This destruction/creation paradox speaks again to Mina’s combination of male/female and progressive/traditional attributes. She fights like a man before fulfilling the traditional role of housewife and having a child, alternately existing both in the wide world and the familial homestead. She combines aspects of both vampire and Victorian, and has the ability to choose which traits to favor at any given time.

It is when the men overlook her physical duality that Mina’s body is endangered. Indeed, the only times when Mina herself is imperiled is when the men insist on treating her like a delicate Victorian creature. Attempting to control and coddle Mina is actually detrimental to her health. Van Helsing tells Mina that she cannot come and play with the boys by assuring her that she is “too precious to us to have such a risk... We shall tell you all in good time. We are men,

and are able to bear” (Stoker 258). Of course, when Mina stays behind alone while they go out on their daring mission, Dracula creeps into the now unprotected house in order to attack Mina. Harker’s assertion—on the night that Mina is first bitten by Dracula—that he “is so glad that she consented to hold back and let us men do the work” seems in retrospect to be rather hubristic, especially in contrast to Mina’s humility (Stoker 265). When finally allowed to be daring with the men, Mina stands her ground just as well as the men around her. When they insist on treating her according to Queen Victoria’s outdated rules of domesticity, her life is seriously imperiled. Mina represents an empowered woman tempered with some traditional values, emerging as more intelligent and more capable than all the other men combined. This bitter pill for the still male-dominated, empowered-female-fearing society in which Stoker published is made sweeter by Mina’s domestic exterior, her ability to transition from gun-slinger to mother.

And perhaps Mina’s ability to challenge Dracula seriously should not come as too much of a surprise. From her first encounters with Dracula, there are suggestions that Mina is a true threat to him. Hearing a noise at Lucy’s window in the middle of the night, Mina investigates to find a “great bat” that “was, I suppose, frightened at seeing me, and flitted away across the harbor” (Stoker 105). We later learn that this bat was Dracula, attempting to attack Lucy. An account of Dracula as “frightened” is potentially unreliable; we know how dangerous the count is and we are only getting Mina’s interpretation of events. Regardless, the suggestion in this instance that Mina “frightens” Dracula is still textually present, and Mina definitely did cause his physical retreat from his planned attack in this instance. Certainly, Mina’s narrative accounts in the rest of the novel are completely accurate and reliable, lending credence to her understanding of the situation here. And, we know that just the mere presence of another person is not enough to deter Dracula, as he later feeds on Mina while she lies in bed with Harker (Stoker 300). There

must be something significant, then, about Mina that threatens Dracula specifically and spurs him in to retreat. Collins's Marian is certainly no equal of the evil villain in her tale as Mina appears to be to Dracula. Yes, Marian is "sharp enough to suspect something, and bold enough" to do something about it, but she is ultimately narratively ineffectual in a way that Mina is not (Collins 312). Both women are "sharp" and "bold," but Mina is allowed to remain a part of Victorian society, is instrumental in finding Dracula, and participates in the physical battle that ends in his destruction; on the other hand, Marian is ostracized for her appearance and must wait until Hartright returns so that he can track down Count Fosco, anything that she might be "bold" enough to do ultimately proving to have little effect on her enemy. Mina is the vampirized version of Marian, just as smart and daring but far sexier and with more agency.

To return, in my conclusion, to the notion that Count Dracula is most the re-interpreted literary character in film, it is interesting to note what happens to Mina in these modern reworkings of the novel. As women's rights became more and more a standard part of society, Mina is relegated in adaptation after adaptation to being Dracula's romantic interest, a participant (either willing or while hypnotized) in a forbidden romance. For example, in John Badham's 1979 film "Dracula," in Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 film "Bram Stoker's Dracula," in NBC's 2013 television series "Dracula," and perhaps most egregiously in novels like Syrie James's 2010 work *Dracula My Love: The Secret Journals of Mina Harker*, Mina is presented as love interest for Dracula. Whether the re-incarnation of a former love interest or a woman won over by Dracula's oozing sexual appeal, Mina keeps getting re-written as the object of undead erotica. Our society is trying to impose on Mina the qualities that Senf and Chez noted as lacking in Mina—voracious sexual appetite and willingness—but definitely not with the effect of making her as an emancipated New Woman. Indeed, applying a romantic interest between Mina and

Dracula goes further towards reducing her to fodder for romance novels than it does to make her stand out as an emancipated woman. In light of this trend, I think the true literary Mina deserves serious attention and scrutiny – she remains significant for her brains, her agency, her blending of the old Victorian tradition with a new technological age, and her vampiric tendency to seem innocuous while challenging patriarchal notions of society and emerging as a leader among both fellow men and women. We cannot allow modern imaginations of Mina as a sexualized vampire wife to overshadow the Mina who used her wits to lead the men “right into the heart of the enemy’s country,” who wielded weapons against Dracula while calling for the men to remember that Dracula, “that poor soul who has wrought all this misery, is the saddest case of all” (Stoker 375, 327).

In truth, these adaptations where Mina is merely an illicit lover vampirize her, just as Stoker vampirizes the Victorian woman to create Mina. However, instead of imparting subversive agency to a disenfranchised character, eroticized interpretations of the *Dracula* story metaphorically suck the life blood out of Mina, draining her of any vitality, meaning, or significance. The literary Mina is a far cry from the desiccated and depraved Mina of recent adaptations. The Mina of Stoker’s novel is strong and capable yet empathetic, taking pity on Dracula even as the “misery” he brings kills her closest friend and threatens her with death herself. She is a mix of intellectual and emotional understanding, the “brain” and the “heart,” the most complex character in the novel, and a subversive part of the “mad, wicked folly” of the movement for female empowerment. All this, and Mina is cheerfully accepted by both men and women, over whom she exercises her leadership.

Overall, Mina proves herself to be a self-sufficient and autonomous young woman. Mina has, for her whole life, worked for her own survival and has been the primary earner of her

household, as she explains that she “never knew either father or mother” (Stoker 171). The fact that Mina had no parents (and therefore no providers) would have been socially and economically significant in her time, and it also allows her to fit neatly into the trope of the archetypal orphaned hero. Her forced independence from a young age makes her a stronger character, as she had to learn how to survive autonomously. She is professional, creative, willing to act, and her vast memory for seemingly small details coupled with her analytic mind proves vastly more useful in the fight against Dracula than anything the men have to offer. Mina’s significance does not lie in the definitive determination of her New Womanhood. She is significant because she represents a strong, intelligent, and kind female character. She becomes the real hero and driving force behind Stoker’s story, and she does so in a way that was socially acceptable and non-threatening to a society scared by its own social revolutions. On the surface, Mina Murray can certainly be read as an affirmation of the domesticated female and of complete social propriety. It is the fact that Mina is able to appear to be so dutiful while actually embodying significant challenges to the patriarchal structure that makes her character stand out from the wealth of fin-de-siècle literature.

Mina straddles the boundaries of the male and the female, the mind and the heart, and the old and the new. Even the name she goes by is indicative of her vampirization and combination of different worlds; she truncates her old-fashioned given name of “Wilhelmina” to the shorter, more modern “Mina” (Stoker 194).⁶ Wilhelmina means “willing to protect,”⁷ and this certainly carries over to her self-chosen identity as Mina as well, as Mina comes to stand as both strategic leader and mother figure for the men in their fight against Dracula. Mina’s portrayal is that of an

⁶ This observation is inspired by ideas raised in Dr. Fisher’s Spring 2012 class “Science and the New Mythology” on nineteenth century British literature.

⁷ According to www.behindthename.com, from the Germanic elements *wil* meaning “will, desire” and *helm* meaning “helmet, protection.”

authentic, believable woman, and not an ideal. Mina is able to bring the two disparate parts of the past and the future together by appropriating traits of the socially masculine and the socially feminine, paradoxically emerging as stronger and more in keeping with the spirit of the true New Woman through her liminality. Mina may not have been a textbook New Woman, but her contribution to our literary history as a strong, empowered woman is noteworthy. Like the vampire itself, Mina is able to seem one thing and be another, as Stoker feeds on Collins's Victorian woman and reanimates her as Mina. She is both at once, reaping the benefits of both social extremes—vampire and Victorian—in order to become the empowered woman of the twentieth century, a woman that her society was able to accept.

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