

# **TRANSFORMATION OF THE VAMPIRE AS A CULTURAL METAPHOR: A STUDY OF *CARMILLA*, *DRACULA*, *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE* AND *THE VAMPIRE LESTAT***

## **SUMMARY**

The primary objective of the thesis has been to investigate and examine the ways and manner in which the myth of the vampire has been altered in the literary paradigm, the reasons for this change and the shift that the varied facets of the myth have caused in the perception of the vampire; the focus has been on the quintessential Dracula archetype having grown beyond being a metaphor for birth defects, hysteria, insanity, ailment, calamity, disease, death, alienation and repressed sexuality and having come to represent a desire to subsist as a separate identity and the capability to be morally introspective instead. I have tried to contextualize the selected works within the framework of ‘de-mystification’ and ‘reinventing’ of the vampire leading to its subsequent conversion from a folklore demonic presence to an empathetic, aesthetic ‘other’ (emphasis is mine) and sought to study how this entire process of approval (which in some cases has even reached levels of adulation) has affected the position, relevance and importance of the vampire in the contemporary times and cultures.

An examination of the vampire myth not only as a social phenomenon but also as a literary feature has been a crucial element of this thesis. Being taken to be a representation of the of the ‘foreign’ or ‘unassimilated’, the vampire has been made to generate meanings and urges somehow generated “beyond culture” but at the same time, it can also be determined to stand for a range of positions and meanings in culture too. It is by a combination of these that it achieves self- definition.

I have investigated and compared the selected vampire fictions panning over a century, concentrating on the nature of evil, postmodern identity, gender politics and concerns regarding sexuality, to show that over the years the ‘vampire’ continues to be reinvented as a cultural icon/metaphor.

Through this thesis, I have tried to explore the consequences of the vampire’s monstrosity being as a potent mode of cultural discourse. This examination has essentially revolved

around the question of how the manifold boundaries (chronological, topographical, corporeal, technological) that are supposed to be constitutive of 'culture' become imbricated in the construction of the vampire—a category that in itself has been a kind of an extreme version of marginalization, deviance construction and identity formation.

The thesis has dwelled on the necessity for the writers to transform the monstrous and ostracized images of the vampire from mainstream horror into figures of empowerment and freedom while purging the audience of the baggage of cultural hatred and evil that they have been conditioned to carry against the vampire as well as the other it represents. Having now analytically looked at the chosen texts, I can see the ways in which Rice conceptualizes her vampires seeking to reassess the established notions, reconfigure difference and rewrite otherness of the vampire as a subject position of strength. Society in general relies heavily on labels and people seem to be dependent on locating things based upon how clearly are they defined or categorized. The vampire has evolved into being neither a victim, nor something which needs to be romanticized to nullify the quotient of dread – it's just been rendered more identifiable; flitting in and out of a homogenous society, it keeps deconstructing and reconstructing it in the process thereby diverting the system without leaving it.