

**Christopher Craft, “Kiss Me with Those Red Lips”, *Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, in Elaine Showalter, *Speaking of Gender* (NY & London: Routledge 1989), pp.216-42.**

‘Luring at first with an inviting orifice, a promise of red softness, but delivering instead a piercing bone, the vampire mouth fuses and confuses what Dracula’s civilised nemesis Van Helsing and his Crew of Light works so hard to separate - the gender-based categories of the penetrating and receptive, or, to use Van Helsing’s language, the complementary categories of ‘brave men’ and ‘good women’. [218]

‘To save Lucy from the mobilisation of desire, Van Helsing and the Crew of Light counteract Dracula’s subversive series of penetrations with a more conventional series of their own, that sequence of transfusions intended to provide Lucy with the ‘brave man’s blood’ which is ‘the best thing on earth when a woman is in trouble. [229]

Craft argues that ‘desire may not be gendered intrinsically as the body is, and that desire seeks its objects according to a complicated set of conventions that are culturally and institutionally determined [...]. Unable or unwilling to deconstruct the heterosexual norm, English accounts of sexual inversion instead repeat it’ desire remains, despite appearances, essentially and irrevocably heterosexual.’ [221]. He points out that the ‘interposition of a feminine soul between erotically associated males’ involves a submerged acknowledgement of the sexually independent woman’ [223]

[On the staking of Lucy:] ‘Here is the novel’s real - and the woman’s only - climax, its most violent and misogynistic moment, displaced roughly to the middle of the book, so that the sexual threat may be repeated but its ultimate success denied [...] The murderous phallicism of this passage clearly punishes Lucy for her transgression of Van Helsing’s gender code, as she finally received a penetration adequate to ensure her future quiescence. Violence against the sexual woman here is intense, sensually imagined, ferocious in its detail. [...] masking murder as ‘high duty’ [231]