

## Cultural Diversity and the Alternate History in Kim Newman's Novel *Anno Dracula*

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### Abstract

The paper offers a new insight into the global perception of vampirism as cultural diversity tradition lens in the British writer Kim Newman's novel *Anno Dracula*, published in 1992. The historical allusions throughout the novel presents the discourse of intercultural concepts that does not only speak to the Western Dracula tradition and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century English historical setting but also to our own 21<sup>st</sup> Century with its multicultural emerging societal relations. In a politically charged destruction of a fictional setting, the writer shows a kind of prevailing evil that defies the existence of mankind. The paper presents different points of view to interpret the role of both historical and fictional characters drawn by the novelist to create an image of horror. The paper also traces the cultural encounters with the Dracula tradition and how far this has contributed to build a political rebellion in a police state that might exist anywhere in the world.

**Keywords:** Vampires, Newman, horror, fiction, Dracula

### Introduction

Kim Newman's novels are mostly about horror, sci-fi and fantasy. His Dracula sequence, namely: *Anno Dracula* and *The Bloody Red Baron* portrays an alternate world in which Dracula conquers Victorian Britain. Dracula tradition has been interpreted as the evil that prevails along history to seize the power of mankind. Spreading his vampiric nature throughout Europe and the world, Dracula has become a universal figure that travels through centuries and contents. Dracula represents a Romanesque vampire with an abnormal mentality. He is the "new version of vampires" according to Bram Stoker's novel. He is the son of a Roman ruler who was tortured by the Turks and was given the son of dragon which is Dracula.

Since the 1930s, Count Dracula has been part of the world's cultural heritage in every aspect as in comic books, Halloween costumes, some children food boxes, video games, musicals and ballet performances. But it was not until the 1970s that Dracula becomes the topic of academic scholarship. Dracula was no more a folklore and popular culture topic but it shapes most of the Gothic mainstream scholarship. According to S. T. Joshi:

The tradition of Dracula replays the ancient struggle between good and evil...it is both a Gothic romance and a morality tale, resembling medieval chivalric stories of knights in shining armor saving damsels in distress from fire-breathing dragons. Given the preponderance of biblical and Christian discourse in the text, Dracula can be read as a reaffirmation of Christian teachings in the face of nineteenth-century skepticism. But Dracula is much more than a hackneyed replay of the morality tale... Dracula is linked with a wide range of academic disciplines such as anthropology, biology, history, law, literature, medicine, political sciences, psychology, religion, and sociology provide many paths for the scholar to follow. (Eric, 2011, p.83)

Newman in his *Anno Dracula* (1992), takes the story to a more cosmopolitan setting. The whole world has submitted to the authority of *Anno Dracula*, the Count who married Queen Victoria and seized the English throne. Dracula himself is now the ruler of Great Britain, the Commonwealth, and the colonized world. He destroyed all those who opposed him. Dracula has become the leader of the entire world Bloodsuckers. But he is also the dominant figure of mankind's intellectual history as literary figures enter that world of *Anno Dracula*. Oscar Wild and Fu Manchu participate in the story line without destructing the narrative. Cultural diversity becomes a reality in that fictional world. Jack the Ripper, the serial killer, starts hunting vampires. Charles Beauregard, an English spy is set to capture the Ripper. The centuries old vampire Genevieve Dieudonne also appears in the darker districts of London to take part in political conspiracies. The battle continues against vampires and also the political maneuverings of the opponents. Kim Newman shows the darkest depths of a reinvented London in a Victorian setting.

*Anno Dracula* is a rich and panoramic novel, combining horror, politics, mystery and romance to create a unique and forceful alternate history. I believe that the novelist's main concern is to create a worldwide image of horror with cultural diversity to bring about a contemporary story of vampires traditions.

In *Anno Dracula*, Kim Norman describes the world of the novel to be that of:

Quite a few vampires, especially the elders, regarded those who creep through graveyard shadows in batwing capes and fingerless black gloves as an Edinburgh gentleman might look upon a Yankee with a single Scots grandparent who swathes himself in kilts and tartan sashes, prefaces every remark with quotes from Burns or Scott and affects a fondness for bagpipes and haggi. (Newman, 1992)

This image reflects a gripping vampire yarn for conspiracies in a cosmopolitan reality where evil exists as a political force that prevails in racial discriminations and that can only be overcome through a political rebellion in a police state that might exist anywhere in the world. Victorian times and Newman's dialogues helped to show the essence of Dracula himself.

In *Anno Dracula*, Count Dracula killed lots of people including Van Helsing, Quency Morris and Jonathan Harker, before escaping with Mina. Then he turned Mina into a vampire to add her to his collection of brides. He turns thousands into vampires throughout England and marries Queen Victoria. Dracula becomes the ruler of a world dominated by British vampire Empire.

Scotland Yard and Dr. Jekyll set in the pursuit of Jack the Ripper but in each in his different political agenda. More fictional characters engage in the plot as Dieudonne has come down the world to treat sick vampires in a clinic run by a doctor who was interrogated by the police for the murder of a vampire prostitute that comes from the direct bloodline of Dracula. The issue of blood and race comes into focus as more fictional as well as historical characters appear with the dark world of the novel. That is a world of political satire, melodramatic intrigue, gothic horror, and alternative history. The historical people mentioned or appeared in *Anno Dracula* are: Frederick Abberline, Edward Aveling, Barbara of Ceije, Elizabeth Bathory, Billy the Kid, Alessandro Cagliostro, Antonie Augustin Calmet, Catherine II of Russia, Count of St. Germain, Annie Cjhapman, Marie Corelli, Montague Druitt, Cathrine Eddowes, Edward VII, Robert Cunninghame, W.S. Gilbert, Frank Harris, John Henry Holliday, Mary Jane Kelly, Eleanor Marx, Henry Mathews, Joseph Merrick, William Morris, Arthur Morrison, Mary Ann Nichols, Beatrice Potter, George Bernard Shaw, Emma Elizabeth Smith, William Thomas Stead, Bram Stoker, Florence Stoker, Elizabeth Stride, Arther Sullivan, Algernon Charles, Swinburne, Martha Tabram, Alfred Tennyson, Arnold Toynbee, Vlad Tepes, Queen Victoria, Charles Warren, Theodore Watts- Dunton, Orson Welles, James McNeil Whistler and Oscar Wilde. Such a very long list suggest the diversity of cultural standpoints presented throughout the novel.

Anti- Vampire Christian groups take part in riots while some intimates of Dracula attempt to takeover of the government and also set their own man to find Jack the Ripper. Riots escalates, London streets have been covered with rebellion signs. People are treated ruthlessly and imprisoned. Among the prisoners are George Bernard Shaw and Lewis Carroll. Inside this chaotic state with its public hysteria, a new born vampire sees the light.

The vampire story gets out of the historical and geographical context of Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), European identity has always been part of Dracula character due to the cultural construction of Europe and all its Eastern politics. The East in Europe has been very much represented in Dracula's story itself. Jason Dittmer has observed that there is a "possible reading in which Dracula represents not just the Ottoman influence and threat, but instead all of Eastern Europe, more extensive than the former Turkish areas. The important issue is less the Eastern Question than it is the cultural construction of Europe itself". (Dittmer, 2003)

According to this cultural diversity goes beyond the gothic setting of castles, convents, the caverns, and the dark forests at midnight. The cognitive boundaries that have been defining the binary opposition of East and West zones are representing the very cultural construction of Europe. According to William H. McNeill, the boundary line between the West and the East is commonly apparent in Europe. (McNeill, 1997).

*Anno Dracula* shows the intellectual heritage of both Eastern and Western European cultures through the wide range of intellectuals mentioned throughout the novel. Some scholars believe that the Cold War and its image of the “Iron Curtain” has been reflected in Europe’s regions. Dracula’s marriage to Queen Victoria made him the ruler of an Empire that its borders extend over Eastern Europe, the Byzantine cultural constructions in Eastern Europe and the colonized world overseas.

Professor Coundouriotis points out that the original story of Dracula shows that East and West cultural heritage as he writes:

I want to argue that Stoker is setting in motion a delegitimation of the Ottoman history of Eastern Europe through the figure of the vampire, whose hybrid identification as both Christian and Ottoman, makes him monstrous and ultimately incoherent, a source of history that “logically” needs to be silenced. (Miller, 2000, p.182)

Dracula story line shows the geographic dimensions of both Eastern European states and the dynamic New Europe with London at its heart. *Anno Dracula* published in 1992 shows the cultural history of Europe but also the world. Count Dracula himself is an aristocracy, a symbol of Europe’s socio- economic past but the novel shows social changes and the intellectual atmosphere of modern Europe. Enlightenment philosophy and the Gothic horror novel present a political and cultural platform for cultural transformational reality.

*Anno Dracula* is a counterfactual historical narrative. Such history is also referred to as virtual history. It is a form of historiography that attempts to answer "what if" questions known as counterfactuals. Black and MacRaild provide this definition: "It is, at the very root, the idea of conjecturing on what did not happen, or what might have happened, in order to understand what did happen." (Black, 2007, p.125) The narrative seeks to explore history and historical incidents by means of disturbing a timeline in which certain historical events did not happen. It has produced a literary genre which is called alternative history, speculative history, or hypothetical history. While an alternate history writer, is interested precisely in the hypothetical picture that flows from the negated event. The fiction writer is free to invent very specific events and characters in the imagined history.

*Anno Dracula* shows an imagined historical version in which Queen Victoria is killed in order to destroy Dracula who symbolizes all political and historical evil representations. Jack the Ripper is caught and killed at the end. One of the leading characters, Beauregard, tosses a silver knife to Queen Victoria to kill herself and deprive Dracula of the right to legally rule Britain.

Recent studies of humanistic anthropology show a trend towards addressing study of the realm of literature, perhaps because imaginative literature is seen to offer more insight about the human condition. The contemporary influence of imaginative literature as a source for understanding the cultural and social dimension of environmental knowledge has proved to be useful to historians as well as geographers. Douglas Pocock remarks:

Literature then is both a source for new insights and a testing ground for hypotheses in exploring ‘the experimental foundation of our world’. Key concepts to emerge are those which focus on insidedness- outsideness, ‘our lived reciprocity’, or the dialectic between rest and movement. At-homeness and rootedness on one hand, exile and restlessness on the other, are important polar foci for study in a society increasingly mobile and a world of increasing homogenisation. The role of physical, earthy objects in our environmental experience also warrants study”. ( Pocock, 2014, p.15)

Kim Newman’s vampirism shows an alternative reality rendering. Victoria’s suicide is the only way to get Dracula’s expulsion from England.

The attraction between vampires and ordinary mortals is the essence of that long established Dracula heritage. The cultural concept of the “Other” becomes the humanity whom vampires believe to be fascinating. This predator- prey relationship. Much of the literary critical reception of the novel lies within Freudian, feminist explorations, and the recent socio political theories. Dracula’s character remains at the heart of all these analyses. Hence Anno Dracula takes Dracula character sketch to broader cultural domains. Vampirism becomes the naturalised monsters while humans become the alienated, estranged and isolated creatures. According to Leonard G. Heldreth, Newman’s work marks a “fundamental shift in the textual presentation of the vampire, who shifts from Stoker’s generic “Other” to Newman’s individualized ourselves expanded”. ( Heldreth & Pharr ,1999, p.179)

The concept of the “other” in the novel is very much coincides with two types of the sociological concepts of the “other”. The first is the “significant other”, that is someone about whom we have some degree of specific knowledge and thus we pay attention to what we perceive to be his or her personal thoughts, feelings or expectations.

The second type of the “other” is the “generalized other,” which we experience primarily as an abstract social status and the role that goes with it. It was developed by George Herbert Mead as a core concept in his discussion of the social genesis of the self. According to Mead, the lives in an individual's ability to account for himself as a social being. This generalized other represents the compilation of roles and attitudes that people use as a reference to patterns of behaviour. As Mead remarks:

Selves develop in social contexts as people learn to take the roles of their consociates such that they can with a fair degree of accuracy predict how one set of actions is likely to generate fairly predictable responses. People develop these capacities in the process of interacting with one another,

sharing meaningful symbols, and developing and using language to create, refine, and assign meanings to social objects (including themselves). (Blumar, 2004, p.61)

For people to engage in complex and intricate social processes, they have to develop a sense of expectations about the rules, roles, norms, and understanding that make responses predictable and understandable. Generalised others constitute the vital group roles that individuals take in the guidance of their conduct instead of prescribed social roles. To apply this social context to *Anno Dracula*, humans fit the generalised others. Therefore, they represent the core of the societal construction of that dark world of the novel. Anno Dracula fictional world reveals a reverse colonization experience as Dracula, the “other” the foreigner who brings pollution and death to England becomes the representative of England as the imperialist power. Victorian setting is only to emphasize that political imperial domination. It is the romantic demon that shapes the map of a world coloured with racial as well as misogynistic realities.

On the other hand, killing is a behavioral pattern that applied to the above rhetoric. Jack the Ripper crimes are hate crimes targeting “innocent vampire women”. It is the crime of one who belongs to the “other” community. But vampirism is the normal individualised us. This shifting of hunting the other as significant social roles takes the novel to the 1990s clash of civilisations cultural critique.

By Broadening *Anno Dracula* world with great number of the members of Florence Stoker’s inner circle both fictional and historical, Kim Newman pictures the world cultural history and its Western bounds. This definitely changes our perception of vampire tradition and Gothicism. How the demon is created and naturalised is a main cultural rather than a literary form issue. According to Eric S. Rabkin: “Once Gothicism does come to represent a whole world, that world can itself be an object of longing, for a literary world is implicitly a world controlled by an artist. To that extent every literary world represents a fantastic escape from the contingencies of extra- literary reality.” (Rabkin, 2015, p.186) We need Dracula to overcome our fears and naturalise the fearful supernatural forces. To escape from mortal decaying humans to immortal beings conquer death like Dracula himself. This is very much achieved through placing Dracula as the Count who married the Queen and set to rule the world.

There is a compulsion of political evil that emerges in that fictional subtext which makes the vampire myth relevant to our own literary and cultural course of events. Hence the destructive sexuality and vampirism is one of the symbolically main patterns that touched the reality of not only the fictional Victorian setting but human kind course of history. It is the world’s every day story. Dracula is the grotesquely romantic outsider foreigner but also the power- mad politician who rules England and has made it safe to vampires.

Newman challenges our conception of female sexuality and power as he tries not to violate the historical Victorian context of the novel setting. Feminist critical analyses depict Lucy, one of Dracula’s tradition main female character, as a

sacrificial victim to male sexual domination. She becomes danger not only to her fiancé and friends but also to children since in her transformed state becomes the vampire who cannibalize children. In Stoker's *Dracula* world version, Lucy is caught by a band of men who are staking her heart in order that her soul may be saved. This Freudian "gang rape" reveals the Victorian social reality of oppressing women through male domination. Mina, the other remarkable strong female character is given the role of leading the band to Dracula's castle. She also gives birth and attains that elevated status of motherhood. In *Anno Dracula*, Newman revises a reading of Lucy's fate by stating her death at the hands of the "gallant" band of men who become all dead. They are: Van Helsing, Jonathan Harker, and Quincy Morris. Only Dr. Seward remains the active vampire killer to kill vampire women. Mina is the unlucky who is the recipient of Dracula's "polluted" blood. Accordingly, Newman subsumes the vampirism of his heroines into the restrictive social structure of Victorian culture.

Fact and fiction intermingle throughout *Anno Dracula* by bringing biographical issues of Barm Stoker himself as one of the characters together with his wife Florence, to appear besides all celebrated literary figures in European literature and culture. This is only to build socio-political scenery of vampirism that extends from personal vengeance to governmental coup. Leonard G. Heldrith observes that Stoker's character has been implicated as a conspirator in the Van Helsing affair and probably gets missing in prison. Also Including Oscar Wild as the gay character brings a homoerotic context to make an implied statement of Stoker's sexuality. (Heldreth, 1999, p.179) Newman twisted Dracula's story and creates out of Dracula an aggressively homophobic: [Dracula] wants to crack the whip on what he refers to as 'unnatural vice,' and has decreed that the punishment for sodomy shall henceforth be summary execution. The method will, of course, be his old reliable, the stake" (57). The vampire English Prime Minister, Ruthven, informs Prince Dracula that there are few members "of either house" that have not "buggered a telegraph boy" (58) Such textual examples brings vampires and men into Newman's image of facing political prejudice. Such incidents from the world of the novel enhance the duality of the "Self" and the "Other" in order to depict a world of what is legal and illegal. Dracula behaves like a "tsar" and an English ruler at the same time. Dracula is the future king of all of vampires and humans.

Humanity has been on the stake to be valued in comparison to government or other political power- based entities. *Anno Dracula* becomes a political and social hypothetical rendering of what it is like to lose humanity in our very cultural structures. Vampires and humans are connected to seek a darker ambiguous concept of "ourselves". The title of the novel *Anno Dracula* means "in the Year of Dracula" which creates an allusion to the Christian terminology (in the Year of the Lord). This indicates a human historical setting that depicts humanity in the very struggle of life and what becomes of death. It also shows an ironic reflection of Dracula and Christ to create the Victorian setting where Victorian protagonist struggle to believe in science and God. That historical depiction of the fictional

world aims at showing the struggle between the demon and the self that lies at the core of mankind record of history.

According to Joan Gordon one of the significant metamorphoses in vampire tradition is its “domestication”. Vampire brings the inside “the consciousness of the horrors that inhabit them” (Gordon& Hollinger 1997, p.2). It is a shift from human to the other and this is portrayed with an empathy with the monster outside. Social contradictions revolve at the core of vampire- human relationship. Dracula can be a reflection of human experience of power, alienation and sexuality. Dracula carries human collective psyches and survives across times and cultures.

Dracula is also the vampire as the outsider creature used in superstition for social control. According to Tobin Siebers’s theory of superstition as “a symbolic activity, in which individuals of the same group mark one another as different” and it becomes “a form of accusation that effects social differentiation”. (Gordon& Hollinger, 1997, p.27) Dracula by travelling from East to West was a Crusader in the service of the unspeakable evil. By this Dracula has become more humanized while he violates human bonds. The identification of Dracula with the alien and the supernatural motif puts him on the Romantic path to be the fantastic supernatural being that refuse to follow the social standards. Dracula gains authority by rebelling against authority. Such status could change the cultural attitude on Dracula toward a more sympathetic relationship. The game to achieve power is another space where vampirism meets human ambition.

Newman draws on every historical connection between reality and fiction by showing a rebellion against repressive regimes and reactionary politics.

While, as the ‘Afterword’ to the novel explains, the roots of *Anno Dracula* lay in a 1978 Sussex University module called ‘Late Victorian Revolt’ and an interest in the invasion of that period, Newman also admits a desire to overlay the actual 1980s on the imaginary.. He wanted to juxtapose Government sloganizing about Victorian values ‘with the real and imagined 1880s, when blood was flowing in the fog and there was widespread social unrest. One example of this is Dracula’s decision to outlaw ‘unnatural vice’ and punish sodomy by the stake, which functions a correlative to Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act which banned local authorities from promoting homosexuality or representing it as a form of family relationship. (Hubble, Tew, & Wilson, 2015, p173)

With such historical allusions, the novel presents a social critique that is directed against the dominated culture of self- interest. Killing on the part of the Ripper becomes politically motivated as Newman states in his *Anno Dracula*, “the murders were mere sparks, but Great Britain was a tinderbox” (Newman, 1999, p.109)

Vampirism has become an important phase of worldwide cultural evolutions. Accordingly the image of Vampires have become the core of elite culture, popular culture and folklore. (Wilcox & Lavery, 2000). It has become a phenomenon in constructing ideologies in the background of any ethical struggles.



Drinking blood and non- human vampires become individuals fighting through psychic means. Humanity with its dark psyche is the core of cultural vampirism. Monsters live among us showing multiple selves in variety of historical contexts. Such reality can be vividly drawn on fictional vampirism. The concept of ethical struggle within the course of human history has given rise to what can be called the virtuous vampire that has certain heroic traits within the fantasy and folklore. From anthropological standpoint this means vampires are applied to cultural ethical standards. Hence the virtuous, good vampire interacts positively with the human characters according to ethical behavioural patterns. Leonard G. Hedreth has pointed out that there is the “good” vampire “who avoids killing people except for nourishment or feeling guilty about it” (Heldreth & Pharr, 1995, p. 168). This tradition of creating the heroic vampire shapes our contemporary vision of human and non- human identity. In other words, the way we perceive monsters to be human or humans to be monsters.

The state, England, British Empire, Europe and the world, is nothing but a place for rooming vampires who are not alive but also not really dead. The world becomes an unreal state. It is the humankind agony of carrying their vampirism and destruction is the subtext of *Anno Dracula* vision of our world.

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## التنوع الثقافي والتاريخ البديل في رواية كيم نيومان أنودراكولا

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### الملخص

تقدم هذه الورقة نظرة جديدة حول التصور العالمي لمفهوم مصاصي الدماء في الادب العالمي باعتبارها عدسة تقليدية للتنوع الثقافي في رواية أنو دراكولا للكاتب البريطاني كيم نيومان ، التي نشرت في عام 1992. تقدم التلميحات التاريخية في جميع أنحاء الرواية خطاب مفاهيم الثقافات التي لا تتحدث فقط مع الغرب كما يجسده تقليد دراكولا والخلفية الثقافية لدراكولا في التاريخ الإنجليزي في القرن التاسع عشر وإنما تخاطب العالم اجمع في القرن الحادي والعشرين من خلال العلاقات الاجتماعية الناشئة في المجتمعات المتعددة الثقافات وذلك في تدمير مشحون سياسيا لبيئة خيالية ، يظهر الكاتب نوعا من الشر السائد الذي يتحدى وجود البشرية. تقدم الورقة وجهات نظر مختلفة لتفسير دور كل من الشخصيات التاريخية والخيالية التي رسمها الروائي لخلق صورة من الرعب. تتعقب الورقة أيضًا المواجهات الثقافية مع تقليد دراكولا وإلى أي مدى ساهم هذا في بناء تمرد سياسي في دولة بوليسية قد توجد في أي مكان في العالم.

الكلمات المفتاحية : مصاصي الدماء , نيومن, الرعب, الرواية, دراكولا