

***Emails From Our Good Friend Jonathan Harker:***

Dracula Daily's Effect on The Reader Experience of Dracula  
and the Dynamics of Fandom on Tumblr

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Dracula Daily is a Substack newsletter created in 2021 that delivers Bram Stoker's epistolary novel *Dracula* (1897) in chronological order and in a serialised format to its subscribers through email over the span of six months. The newsletter gained popularity during its 2022 edition, gathering over 200.000 subscribers reading along. Dracula Daily became a phenomenon on social media, particularly on the microblogging platform Tumblr, where a dynamic online fan community was born. This dissertation aims to examine the role of Dracula Daily in shaping the reader and online fan experience of Dracula, identify the elements that affect the reader engagement with the novel, and further the research in online fandom and present-day Tumblr fan culture.

This dissertation uses the May-November 2022 period of activity of the Dracula Daily fandom on Tumblr as its case study. Over the course of six months, Tumblr posts found in the Dracula Daily tag page were collected in a private Tumblr blog. A total of 543 posts served as research material. The research methods used to treat and analyse the data are a mixed methodology based on participant observation and qualitative content analysis.

The findings of this research point that Dracula Daily positively influenced the way fans collectively produced new meanings out of the novel. The six-month period of activity showed a thriving virtual community of readers that engaged in lively conversations, discussions, and analyses, and in the production of transformative works. Based on the qualitative analysis of the data and in reference to the participant knowledge gained, this study determines that there are three main elements that affected the reader experience of the novel: the change in chronology, the serialisation of the text, and modern fan culture. Each of these elements has a unique influence in the way the novel is presented and, therefore, interpreted by the readers. This dissertation concludes that the digital storytelling format implemented by Dracula Daily helps bridge the gap between classic literature and modern audiences.

**Keywords:** dracula daily, fandom, dracula, fan culture, tumblr, participatory culture, digital storytelling

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## Introduction

The novel *Dracula* is the most popular work of Gothic horror and an acclaimed literary classic worldwide. Written by Irish author Bram Stoker and published in 1897, the novel introduces one of the best-known antagonists in the history of classic literature: the vampire Count Dracula (Browning & Picart, 2010, p. 215). The story follows English solicitor Jonathan Harker's trip to Transylvania to assess the Count in purchasing an estate in England, and is followed by the tragic events that unfold once the Count's true vampire nature is revealed. While *Dracula* is arguably the most influential piece of vampire fiction (Aygun, 2020, p. 651), it is also considered an exemplary work of epistolary narrative as most of the story is narrated through journal entries and letters written by the main characters of the story (Seed, 1985, p. 65).

*Dracula* was not the first Gothic horror story published in the 19th century to feature vampires. Earlier known works include John Polidri's *The Vampyre* (1819), J. M. Rymer and T. P. Prest's *Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood* (1845), and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). Provided that, Stoker redefined the portrayal of vampires in Gothic literature and the horror genre overall (Ermida, 2015, pp. 11-12). In fact, the popularity of both the novel and its picturesque antagonist extends well beyond the field of literature. For instance, *Dracula* has been the subject of hundreds of adaptations and reimaginings across a wide range of media, including theatre, film, television, radio, video games, and new technologies. Stoker's depiction of vampirism and its related lore has shaped the standard image of vampires in media for over a century, thus making Count Dracula the quintessential vampire across multiple storytelling platforms.

Emerging technologies have assisted in the development of new ways to narrate stories. Today, the art of digital storytelling combines traditional storytelling with computer technology (Cueva et al., 2013, p. 1). The *Dracula Daily* project is a good example of such. First started in 2021 by Studio Kirkland, *Dracula Daily* is a Substack newsletter that shares the entire *Dracula* novel through email in chronological order and in a serialised format. In other words, as opposed to the plethora of adaptations that hardly include most details about the novel (Browning & Picart, 2010, p. 16), *Dracula Daily* shares the authentic story of *Dracula* in small pieces through email updates. Keeping its epistolary form of narration, and because the events take place from May to November of the same calendar year, *Dracula Daily* sends an email on the day an entry has been written. The nature of this innovative

format makes the lengths of the update vary in size: some updates can contain entire chapters, while others include just a couple of sentences.

Although *Dracula Daily* only had around 1600 subscribers reading along in its first year of circulation, its online presence became increasingly visible. The 2022 edition of the newsletter had over 200.000 subscribers reading along, and gained a lot of popularity on social media (Martinelli, 2022). In that regard, the microblogging platform Tumblr stands out. Starting from May 2022 onwards, a vibrant community of *Dracula Daily* readers formed on Tumblr and quickly became a pseudo-online book club on the platform. What's more, *Dracula Daily* became a medium for thousands of people to experience and engage with literary classic similarly to how modern media is enjoyed.

Social media platforms have accommodated media fan communities for decades now, offering online spaces with innovate features that align with the needs of the communities, which are also known as fandoms. The microblogging and social networking site Tumblr has been considered to be the home of fandom for nearly fifteen years at the time of writing (Click & Scott, 2017, p. 86). Founded by David Karp in 2007, Tumblr offers a particular posting system that encourages participatory culture among its userbase. All registered users have a primary blog where to post textual and visual content, and are free to follow, like, and reblog from other blogs (Brett & Maslen, 2021 p. 1).

Fandom is participatory by nature, and is rapidly becoming a permanent culture in digital spaces. As Henry Jenkins (2006) highlights, to be in a fandom is “to transform personal reaction into social interaction” (p. 41). In other words, fandom allows media fans to share their own thoughts and feelings with others over a common interest and produce new meanings of media through collaboration. Participatory culture among fans often leads to the creation, curation, and sharing of transformative works; reimaginings of already existing media. In fact, the fan culture found on Tumblr very much revolves around transformative works. The site's textual and audiovisual features are used to post and share fanart and illustrations, fanfiction, and GIFs among other fan-made content. On this matter, the *Dracula Daily* fandom also took advantage of the fast exchange between a mix of textual and visual imagery on Tumblr to discuss the 19<sup>th</sup> century novel, adapting to the existing fan culture of the site.

The legacy of *Dracula* as a classic of Gothic literature has been the focus of academic interest for decades. For example, titles like *Bram Stoker's Dracula: Sucking Through the Century*,

*1897-1997* (1999) by C. M. Davison (Ed.) and *Critical Insights: Dracula* (2009) by Jack Lynch (Ed.) offer compilations of academic essays that approach the novel from different standpoints. Other scholarly research on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* can be found e.g., in academic journals like *The Journal of Dracula Studies*, published by the Department of English at Kutztown University, and *The Gothic Studies* of the International Gothic Association. Thus, scholarly interest in *Dracula* has been everything but little.

In this same vein, adaptations and other vampiric media inspired by the novel have also caught the interest of scholars since the late 20th century. Famous film adaptations such as F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) and Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1994) are among the most researched in regard to *Dracula*. Three great example of academic works that thoroughly examine *Dracula*'s legacy in vampire media include Browning & Picart's *Dracula in Visual Media: Film, Television, Comic Book and Electronic Game Appearances, 1921-2010* (2010), Leavenworth & Isaksson's *Fanged Fan Fiction: Variations on Twilight, True Blood and The Vampire Diaries* (2013), and Isabel Erminda (Ed.)'s *Dracula and the Gothic in Literature, Pop Culture and the Arts* (2015).

When it comes to participatory culture and fan studies, the works of American scholar Henry Jenkins, who I referenced earlier, cover and broaden the subjects. Jenkins has researched fan culture in online communities as an example of participatory culture in works like *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006) and *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (originally from 1992, revised in 2012). Adding to Jenkins' work, Mark Duffett's *Understanding fandom : an introduction to the study of media fan culture* (2013) and Click & Scott's *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom* (2017) offers an overview of fan practices of the 2010s. In terms of studies on fandoms and subcultures that are specific to Tumblr, *a tumblr book: platform and cultures* (2020) by McCracken et al. stands out. It offers a comprehensible overview of the history of Tumblr and the subcultures it has hosted for over a decade, while also presenting guidelines on how to research subcultures and phenomena on the platform.

This master's thesis focuses on the effects the *Dracula Daily* newsletter has on the reader and fan experience of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). More attentively, this text aims to expand the understanding of how an emerging format of digital storytelling can impact the ways a reader engages with the text, while boosting fannish interest in *Dracula* at the same time. The dissertation I hereby present aims to answer the following research questions: how does the

Dracula Daily newsletter shape the reading and the online fan experience of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897)? What are the elements that affect the reader's engagement with the novel? And, lastly, what is the nature of Tumblr's fan culture during the 2022 edition of the newsletter?

To answer these questions, I use the May-November 2022 activity of the Dracula Daily community on Tumblr as my case study. In doing so, I attempt to bridge the gap between previous studies on Dracula and fan culture. Additionally, this master's thesis hopes to expand the existing research of Tumblr culture of the decade by presenting the case study of an emerging subgroup, and, at the same time, introduce ways to use Tumblr's own search and archival features in the research process.

I conducted the current dissertation from May 2022 to April 2024. The research methods used were qualitative content analysis (treatment of the data) and participant observation (immersing oneself in the group to be studied). A period of six months was spent observing the behaviour of the Dracula Daily fandom on Tumblr and collecting the data to gather a total sample size of 543, hosted in a private Tumblr blog. The posts that make the research material, as well as the observations made while studying the fandom, were analysed from an objective perspective and by using guidelines on the research of digital environments. In addition, I must emphasise that this research does not focus on the individual behaviour of readers. Rather, the goal is to examine patterns of repeated behaviours and practices of an online community that are characteristic of a lively cultural and social phenomenon online.

The structure of this thesis is the following: Chapter 1 offers an overview of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and its legacy. After discussing the author's background and the origins of the novel, as well as offering a brief summary of the plot and main characters of the story, this section highlights the impact it has had in popular culture due to the hundreds of adaptations and reimagining of the story, including the roots of Dracula Daily. Chapter 2 introduces the topics of Tumblr and fan culture. The text examines the history and evolution of Tumblr as a fandom platform and its userbase, and explains the emergence and phenomena related to online fan communities. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodological approach that was used for the study. The section is divided in two, with one part covering the data collection process of the post samples and the other one detailing how the sample was analysed. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research, first by offering an overview of the Dracula Daily phenomenon on Tumblr in 2022, and subsequently by determining the five most blogged topics in the

aforementioned period. These findings are further examined and reviewed in the Discussion chapter, where three elements that change how a reader engages with the novel are identified. Lastly, the thesis ends with a conclusion of the key topics and findings that have been discussed throughout the text, bringing forth their relevance and any considerations for future research on the topic.



## Chapter 1: Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897)

To say that *Dracula* (1897) has left an inerasable imprint in the genres of fantasy and vampire media is an understatement. The impact of the novel extends far beyond a single category or genre, and is not limited to the world of literature. From film to comic books, from music to even tourism, traces of *Dracula* can be found everywhere. The novel has unequivocally shaped the portrayal of vampirism across several forms of media, deeming its main character and antagonist of the story Count Dracula the quintessential vampire. Academia and popular culture would agree: *Dracula* has had a lasting impact on both.

*Dracula* is the work of Irish author Abraham (Bram) Stoker (1847-1912). Before his career in the arts, Stoker worked as a civil servant after graduating from the Trinity College in 1870 (Lynch, 2009, p. 13). His first novel, *The Primrose Path*, a tale of the perils of alcohol consumption, was published in 1875. Stoker moved to London a year afterwards and began working in 1878 as Acting Manager at actor Sir Henry Irving's *Lyceum Theatre* until 1904. In his personal life, Stoker married Florence Balcombe in 1878, with whom he had a child a year later. As an author, Stoker wrote a total of thirteen novels, including his last, *The Lair of the White Worm*, a horror novel published in 1911. Stoker passed away on April 20, 1912. Despite his career as a novelist, *Dracula* is, unquestionably, Stoker's magnum opus. Stoker might not have witnessed the undisputed legacy he left behind with *Dracula*, but over a century later, his bloodthirsty vampire is part of our shared popular cultural heritage.

In today's day and age, one can hardly engage with a form of vampire media that has not drawn inspiration from or has not been influenced by the vampiric canon that has been created around *Dracula*, and more specifically, the Count. From classic portrayals of vampirism in 20<sup>th</sup> century literary media, such as Stephen King's *Salem Lot* (1975), which has been adapted to film and television, all the way to the evolution of the modern vampire character as seen in Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* (2009–2012), also having film adaptations, the construction and mythos of the vampire character have *Dracula* at their very core. In fact, the entire plot of *Salem's Lot* does not exist without King taking an interest in *Dracula* (cf. King's afterword, *Salem's Lot* 2005 Illustrated Edition). Whether consciously or not, vampire fiction authors often borrow vampire tropes that have been popularised by popular depictions of *Dracula* in media (Ermida, 2015, pp. 12). Without a shadow of a doubt, *Dracula* has left an everlasting mark on vampire literature and popular culture like no other Gothic work has done before.

To bring these examples into a broader context, one can find several references to its characters like the aforementioned vampire Count Dracula, or secondary characters like Professor Abraham Van Helsing when encountering vampire lore in modern media. Whether these references are a distinct allusion to the novel's canon (e.g., FX's *What We Do In The Shadows* [2019–2024] character Guillermo de la Cruz being a descendant of “vampire hunter” Van Helsing) or a more subtle manifestation to the vampire elements present in Dracula (e.g., literary works centred around vampirism and romance that draw inspiration from the Count, yet develop their own mythos around vampires, as seen in Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* [1976–2018]), Dracula is largely regarded as the traditional source of inspiration for the construction of the vampire character across most forms of media.

Certainly, legends of vampires and vampirism predate Stoker's Dracula. Vampire folklore can actually be traced back many centuries significantly back to ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt and Eastern Europe (Beresford, 2008, p. 19). Along these lines, vampires and vampire-like creatures are mythological beings who feed on the life essence (generally thought to be blood) of the living. Although the representation of these mythological beings varies from culture to culture, some of their characteristics are widely shared among them. For example, in Rome, Babylonia, Ghana, and the Philippines, vampire-like creatures who return from the dead to pray and feed on young children are present in their folklore in the form of the lamia, the labartu, the obayifo, and the aswang respectively (Beresford, 2008, p. 19). In mediaeval Europe, superstitions regarding vampire-like entities prevailed among peasants and pagan folk. The rise of Christianity did, however, change the perception of vampires as a mere folk myth among peasants and adapted it to fit their own views. In other words, while the Church recognised the existence of vampire-like creatures, it turned a pagan myth into “a creature of the Devil” (Beresford, 2008, p. 50). This is also present in Stoker's writing, with characters often referring to vampires as “devils” or the “Devil's” un-dead.

When it comes to Eastern Europe, or most specifically, the case of Romanian folklore, there are several mythological creatures with vampire-like qualities. Early folkloric tales across the Carpathian Mountains present examples of vampires as mischievous entities (Beresford, 2008, p. 55). Rather than draining the life essence of humans, it was believed that these tricksters chased and scared horses, stole the goods of people, and created disturbances on the water of rivers. Although their actions were malicious in character, they were not murderous. Now, vampires also show in Romanian folklore in the form of two mythological creatures: the *strigoi* and the *moroi*. In *The Vampire in Roumania*, folklorist Agnes Murgoci explains

that the most common type of vampire found in Romanian folklore is as a reanimated corpse, which she calls a “dead-vampire type” (Dundes, 1998, pp. 13-14). The strigoi (fem. *strigoaica*) and the moroi (fem. *moroaica*) both fall under this category of vampire, often thought to be reanimated creatures or spirits that pray and feed on the energy of the living (Dundes, 1998, pp. 40-41). These two entities are the most common types of vampires found in Romanian folklore, though others such as *varcolaci*, a type of mythological werewolf, have also been used to refer to these creatures.

The legends tied to these mythological vampires and vampire-like creatures, especially those found in Romanian folklore, are reflected in Stoker’s writing. As noted in Bram Stoker’s own *Notes for Dracula* (also known as *Notes*), Stoker built his own Romanian vampire lore for the novel by drawing inspiration from works on superstitions and supernatural creatures, such as Emily Gerard’s *Transylvanian Superstitions* (1885), Sabine Baring-Gould’s *The Book of Were-Wolves* (1865), and Herbert Mayo’s *On the Truths contained in Popular Superstitions* (1851) (Miller, 2000, pp. 28-29). To this end, one can find similarities between the aforementioned mythological legends such as the Roman lamia and, for example, Stoker’s portrayal of female vampires (cf. Lucy Westenra as “the Bloofer Lady”; Stoker, (1983), pp. 190-191).

In *Dracula: Sense & Nonsense* (2000), Canadian scholar Elizabeth Miller (1939-2022) expertly examines, debunks, and answers to the most popular claims on Dracula and Bram Stoker. Miller, who had been acclaimed internationally for her profound knowledge on Dracula, bases several of her assertions on Stoker’s own *Notes*, which had been acquired by Rosenbach Museum & Library in Philadelphia, USA, during the 1970s (Miller, 2000, p. 19). Prior to the ‘70s, the vast majority of Dracula researchers and scholars had not had any access to the *Notes*; in fact, not many of them were aware of their existence. Because of this, Miller explains that there have been several assumptions and claims in relation to Stoker’s Dracula made during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that hold little to no credibility. Miller goes into detail to address claims that, although have been popular among academics and Dracula fans alike, such as Stoker basing Count Dracula on historical figures like Vlad Tepes (Vlad the Impaler) or Elizabeth Bathory, are today proven to be based on strong misinformation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In Chapter 5, *Vlad the Impaler*, Miller thoroughly examines and disproves the widely discussed speculation on Vlad Tepes being the inspiration for Stoker’s vampire, Count Dracula. Famous adaptations in which the two are merged, like Francis Ford Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992), have reinforced this belief.

In order to establish the relevance of *Dracula* as a literary classic and its impact on popular culture, it is also important to note that it was not the first work of 19<sup>th</sup> century fiction focusing on or featuring vampirism. In fact, Miller (2000) asserts that Stoker based as much of his vampire lore on folklore as he did on existing vampire fiction of the 1890s (p. 32). These earlier works include John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), James Malcolm Rymer's *Varney the Vampyre* (1847), and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). Although these vampire stories are lesser known than *Dracula* in our current times, they remain an important part of the history of Stoker's *Dracula*, as well as key figures in early vampire literature. In terms of popular culture, Le Fanu's *Carmilla* has had several adaptations throughout the years: from television series to graphic novels.

Bram Stoker did extensive research prior and while working on *Dracula*. Among the several works on Eastern European customs, traditions, and superstitions, as well as vampirism and the supernatural, books on sealife, the ocean, fishery, and maritime history are also listed in his source-texts (Miller, 2000, p. 24). These topics, although not the most significant in terms of the horror narrative, are brought up at different points of the novel, for example, during the log of the *Demeter*.

Through the years, there had been several claims as of where and when Stoker began working on *Dracula* (Miller, 2000, pp. 77-79). In terms of the "where," cities in England, Scotland, and America have been suggested as Stoker's place of residency while writing. The "when" has been subject of discussion among *Dracula* scholars and researchers, especially before Stoker's *Notes* were made accessible to the public. Miller (2000) sheds a light on both questions. Supported by Stoker's earliest annotations found in his *Notes*, she suggests that Stoker began working on *Dracula* in March of 1890, though it is noted that he could have started at an earlier date (p. 77). By then, Stoker was living in London, England, while working at the Lyceum Theatre. He did, however, travel with his family later that year to Whitby, a coastal town in the shores of North Yorkshire. Whitby left an impression on Stoker. Inspired by its rich cultural and maritime heritage, the Irish writer chose Whitby as one of the main locations featured in his novel (Wynne, 2021).

As I have established, the presence of vampirism in folklore and the presence of vampirism in literature both precede *Dracula*. Vampires, and the mythology around them, had existed for centuries prior to the publication of the novel. With this in mind, it is fascinating to think of

the impact and legacy that Dracula continues to leave all over the world and through so many media. To discuss this further, it is imperative that I explain more about the story.

## 1.1 Plot Summary, Characters, and Recurrent Themes

*“These may be the last words I ever write in this diary. I slept till just before the dawn, and when I woke threw myself on my knees, for I determined that if Death came he should find me ready.”*

– Jonathan Harker’s Journal, 30 June (Stoker, 1983, 55)

Through the years, Dracula has become a staple of Gothic literature and horror classic, cementing its place as the most notorious and acclaimed universal piece of vampire literature. The first edition of the epistolary novel is believed to have been published on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1897, although Dracula scholars like Peter Haining and Peter Tremayne suggest that the actual issuing date was June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1897 (McAlduff, 2012, pp. 42-43). Regardless of possible delays in its publication, what is for certain is that by the summer of 1897, Dracula had come out.

The origins of Gothic literature can be traced back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the publication of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Narrative events that take place in an old castle or mansion, a feeling of fear and mystery driven by the unknown, female characters in distress, as well as supernatural elements and/or characters are listed by writer Robert Harris (2020) as classic elements of Gothic literature. In England, this genre of fiction prevailed for over a century, with titles like Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1859), Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) becoming staples of Victorian Gothic literature. Among these, Dracula stands out as one of the greatest Victorian Gothic novels to feature supernatural elements in the history of English literature.

Now, to say Dracula tells the story of an ancient Transylvanian vampire is not wrong, yet not entirely right. It is, indeed, a tale of good versus evil, humanity versus monstrosity; but stating that it is a tale *about* a vampire does not feel like an accurate representation of the plot of the novel. Rather, Dracula tells the story of the many horrors *caused* by vampire Count Dracula, which affect a group of allies whose bond strengthens as they fight together against the evildoings of the Count. In other words, the main focus of the narrative is not the vampire per se, but rather the ramifications of his actions and the relationships forged along the way.

Stoker tells the story in 27 chapters and a brief epilogue, which is set seven years after the concluding events in the final chapter of the novel. The fictional events narrated in chapters 1 to 27 take place through the course of a calendar year, starting from May to November.

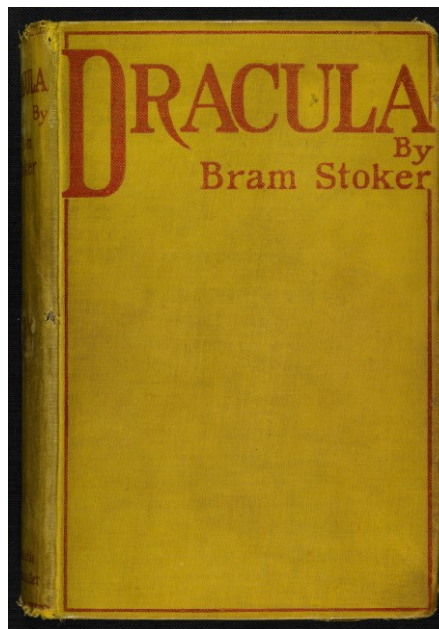
In addition to the Gothic elements present in the novel, other distinct characteristics that sets *Dracula* apart from other Victorian Gothic novels of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century are the narrative methods that Stoker employs.

Firstly, the text is presented in epistolary form: the events are narrated through journal entries, letters, telegrams, among others, with dates attached. These are mostly written or recorded by the main characters, particularly by Jonathan Harker, his fiancée Mina Murray, and Dr John “Jack” Seward. Moreover, the point of view of the novel frequently shifts between first-person journal entries, letters, or telegram recordings of the characters throughout the novel.

Secondly, the novel follows a non-linear timeline.

Whereas fictional stories commonly follow a linear path of beginning to end, the events in *Dracula* are not always told in chronological order. For instance, one might learn about something that happened in a journal entry written by one character, but rather than going forward in the story, the next entry might jump backwards in time and give more context or explain past events in further detail.

The novel begins with Jonathan Harker, a young English solicitor who goes on a business trip to the Carpathian Mountains in Eastern Europe to assess Count Dracula,<sup>2</sup> an old and strange Transylvanian nobleman, in purchasing an estate in England. In Transylvania, the local folk react in horror upon learning Harker’s intentions to go to Castle Dracula. Despite this, Harker travels to the Castle to meet the Count. During his stay, Harker gradually becomes aware of the horrors around him: the Count tries to attack him, forbids him from sending letters to his fiancée, Mina Murray, and is seduced by three sisters who, unbeknownst to him, are female vampires. So is the Count. As the dreadful situations continue to transpire at Castle Dracula,



*Figure 1.* First edition of *Dracula*, Westminster: A. Constable & Co, 1897. (Source: British Library)

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<sup>2</sup> In notes from 1890, Stoker had referred to his bloodsucking antagonist as “Count \_ Styria” and “Count Wampyr” (Miller, 2000, p. 138).

Harker becomes aware that he is not a guest, but a prisoner. After nearly two months captive at the hands of the Count, Harker manages to escape along with his journal.

Back in England, Harker's fiancée, Mina visits her close friend Lucy Westenra, with whom she had been exchanging correspondence. Lucy, who had recently gotten engaged to Arthur Holmwood after declining two other suitors, falls ill after sleepwalking near a graveyard. Dr John Seward, who was one of Lucy's suitors, attempts to care for Lucy, but once he cannot find the reason behind Lucy's illness, he summons Dr Abraham Van Helsing from Amsterdam. Lucy's health progressively declines, and when Van Helsing and Dr Seward determine she is losing blood at night, they give Lucy several blood transfusions to keep her alive. Despite this, and other attempts by Van Helsing to help her, Lucy ultimately dies.

Upon hearing that her fiancé, Jonathan Harker, is in Budapest, Mina travels there to see him and care for him, and later get married. Mina learns about some of the horrors Jonathan experienced at Castle Dracula, yet she does not think they are real. The pair return to England to meet with Dr Seward, Van Helsing, Holmwood, and Lucy's third suitor, an American man named Quincy Morris. After learning that a mysterious woman known as the *Bloofer Lady* has been attacking children, Van Helsing reveals to the group that after her passing, Lucy has become an *Un-Dead*. He also confirms that Jonathan's experiences at Castle Dracula were not a product of hallucination, but reality. The group, led by Van Helsing, soon discover that the cause of Lucy's illness was vampirism, and to stop her terrorising children, they "kill" her in vampire form by putting a stake through her head and beheading her.

After Lucy's "true" death, the group realise that Count Dracula was the reason behind her vampirism and shift their focus to him. The group prepare to track the Count down and put an end to his horrors, when Mina begins to fall ill. Subsequently, they discover the Count inside Mina's bedroom, having bitten her and forced her to drink his blood. This exchange of blood ensures that Mina will turn into a vampire after she dies. Shortly after, the Count returns to Transylvania, and the group follows after him. Because Mina now shares a blood link with the Count, Van Helsing hypnotises her and is able to make her disclose Count Dracula's true location. In Romania, the group find him and struggle with his minions before finally killing him by stabbing him in the heart and cutting his head off. In the struggle, Quincey Morris is wounded and passes away shortly afterwards. The novel ends with a short note (epilogue) written by Jonathan Harker seven years afterwards. In it, Harker says that he and Mina have a son, Quincey, who they named after their late friend Quincey Morris.

At its core, Stoker tells a classic story of good versus evil. Count Dracula, a vampire, and the main antagonist of the story, is a clear representation of evil. Conversely, the group of self-taught vampire hunters depict goodness and integrity, all the positive faces of humanity when facing the supernatural. The character Van Helsing is often considered the foil of Count Dracula, for they stand on opposite sides of the fight between good and evil. Seed (1985) expands on the purpose of Van Helsing to the story by suggesting Stoker combined the “roles of detective, psychic investigator, philosopher, and scientist” into this character (p. 71). Van Helsing, along with other protagonists Jonathan and Mina Harker, Dr Seward, Holmwood, and Morris, not only represent good: the strong relationship they forged throughout the story is one of love and loyalty, and which has been the focus of study for many Dracula scholars (cf. Marjorie Howes’ *The Mediation of the Feminine: Bisexuality, Homoerotic Desire, and Self-Expression in Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, 1988; Talia Schaffer’s *“A Wilde Desire Took Me”*: *The Homoerotic History of Dracula*, 1994; Elizabeth Macaluso’s *“I Love You with All the Moods and Tenses of the Verb”*: *Lucy and Mina’s Love in Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, 2019).

## 1.2 Adaptations, Interpretations, and Legacy

Bram Stoker’s legacy has a permanent place in popular culture with Dracula. In fact, the Gothic genre as a whole has been “Draculised” (Ermida, 2015, p. 6). Nowadays, Count Dracula’s name has become so synonymous with the word *vampire* and the Gothic imagery surrounding this bloodsucking creature that it is nearly impossible to come across media that has not been influenced by Stoker’s work. Naturally, the inspiration Stoker drew from Eastern European folklore and past vampire literature is palpable in the novel. Nevertheless, it is the fictional mythos and canon Stoker created in his novel that have made Count Dracula the most influential vampire of all time.

As noted previously, the introduction of Dracula into popular culture has been cemented by the several adaptations across different media platforms. These adaptations include but are not limited to graphic novels, stage, film, television, radio, and video games. Nonetheless, Dracula adaptations rarely stay one hundred percent faithful to the plot of the novel. This is especially true when it comes to film and television. In fact, authors Caroline Joan S. Picart and John Edgar Browning (2010) believe that “the real story behind Dracula has yet to be seen on screen” (p. 16). That said, adaptations can be quite successful despite their deviations from the source material. A case in point is F. W. Murnau’s silent film *Nosferatu* (1922). The



film has been dubbed today as one of the most influential horror titles of our times, despite being an unofficial and unauthorised<sup>3</sup> adaptation of the novel (Corrigan, 2022). Even though the characters in *Nosferatu* have been renamed (e.g., Count Dracula as *Count Orlok*, Jonathan Harker as *Thomas Hutter*) and the plot strongly diverges from the novel, its name and history will always be tied to Dracula.



Figure 2. Béla Lugosi as Count Dracula in *Dracula*. (Source: Universal Studios, 1931)

In *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen* (1990), horror historian David J. Skal emphasises the impact of Dracula in popular culture by pointing out the many faces the famous and evil vampire has adopted through the years, including “a literary Victorian sex nightmare, a stock figure of theatrical melodrama, a movie icon, a trademark, cuddle toy, swizzle stick, and breakfast cereal” (p. 4). Indeed, the famous vampire image of Count Dracula (tall, aquiline nose, wearing a cape, and having sharp fangs) has been recreated time and time again, bringing Dracula back to life in a continuous loop that keeps his presence alive in popular culture. Along

these lines, it is likely thanks to Hungarian actor Béla Lugosi’s iconic portrayal of the Count in Tod Browning’s *Dracula* (1931) that this image of Dracula continues to be emulated in popular culture (Ermida, 2015, pp. 7-8; Browning & Picart, 2010, p. 263).

On the subject of the discrepancy between adaptations and the original novel, Browning’s *Dracula* (1931) is another good example of how, despite the popularity and cultural impact of the adaptation, the story is not faithful to that of the source material. Browning’s film is one of the first two sound adaptations of the novel, alongside with George Melford’s homonymous Spanish version, which was shot on the same set shortly after. This illustrious adaptation is based on Irish playwright Hamilton Deane’s stage play from 1924, and while it

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<sup>3</sup> As per copyright laws in the UK, *Dracula* entered public domain in 1962, fifty years after Stoker’s death.

is widely considered to be one of the greatest and most influential Dracula films to date (Lynch, 2009, p. 143), many of the original plots from the novel have been either altered, combined, or completely removed. For example, in *Dracula* (1931), Mina Murray is reimagined as Mina Seward, Dr Seward's daughter, and is engaged to John Harker. The character Lucy Weston is based on Lucy Westenra, but her other two suitors, Arthur Holmwood and Quincey Morris were left out from the story.

Much like Lugosi, renowned actors like Christopher Lee (in several adaptations from 1950s to 1970s), Frank Langella (*Dracula*, 1978, dir. John Badham) and more recently Nicolas Cage (*Renfield*, 2023, dir. Chris McKay) have crafted their own personal and recognisable impersonations of the Count. Furthermore, among other influential adaptations is the critically acclaimed 1992 horror film *Bram Stoker's Dracula* by American film director Francis Ford Coppola. The ensemble cast includes renowned Hollywood stars like Gary Oldman as Count Dracula, Keanu Reeves as Jonathan Harker, Winona Ryder as Mina Harker, and Anthony Hopkins as Van Helsing. Although the film also diverges in several aspects from the original plot of the novel and presents a more "sensual, romanticised and psychologically intense" story than the original (Ermida, 2015, pp. 7-8), Coppola's adaptation is often regarded as one of the best vampire films of all times (Hughes, 2013). Consider as an illustration of the main differences Coppola's depiction of a romantic relationship between Count Dracula and Mina Murray, which is not present in the novel (Lynch, 2009, p. 34). In Stoker's text, the narrative indicates in multiple stances that Mina feels strongly repelled by the Count. This is one of the elements in Coppola's adaptation that has influenced the way some casual viewers perceive the nature of their relationship and the story of Dracula itself.

The number of Dracula titles included in the International Movie Database website (IMDB) is a good indicator of the prevalence of Dracula in film and television (Aygun, 2020, p. 651). As of April 2024, there are over 400 Dracula titles in the database.

As I mentioned before, the presence of Dracula in popular culture is not limited to the big and small screens. As the archetypical vampire villain within the usual narrative of good vs evil, Count Dracula has become a popular antagonist in the world of video games. The *Castlevania* franchise (1986–) is likely the most famous title in terms of video games based on Dracula. The dark fantasy video game mainly takes place in Count Dracula's castle, who is the principal antagonist of the story. Conversely, the protagonists of the story are the Belmonts, a clan of vampire hunters who try to stop Dracula. The gameplay includes what Browning &

Picart (2010) describe as “horror cliché obstacles” in the form of bats, rats, and wolves (p. 215). These elements have indeed been adapted from the original novel into a new setting, perhaps overly exaggerated, but helping cement their place in popular culture as part of Dracula lore.

The popularity and appeal of Dracula has inspired tourism in Romania. Tourism is a form of fan practice that allows fans to connect with worlds and environments that oftentimes are entirely fictional, yet that allow them to “construct self-narratives that link their fandom with their own identities and important places and spaces” (Click & Scott, 2017, p. 105). Fans are particularly interested in Transylvania because of its association with the novel, often regarded as Dracula’s land. On this subject, the disputed connection between Count Dracula and Vlad the Impaler, prince of Wallachia,<sup>4</sup> has further reinforced the volume of fans visiting the region (Skal, 1990, p. 197). While tourism was not always possible in communist Romania, it has been since the 1960s onwards (Lupu et al. 2017, p. 757). Among the most popular attractions, Bran Castle stands out. Although it is an official landmark in Transylvania and a national monument, the castle is popularly known as Dracula’s Castle by fans and the common public as well.

As I have demonstrated, the legacy of Dracula is ample and rich. And as such, it has been the focus of academic interest for decades. The aforementioned Canadian author Elizabeth Miller (1939-2022) was well-known internationally for her Dracula knowledge and expertise. In life, she released a total of seven books on Dracula and Bram Stoker, including *Dracula: Sense & Nonsense* (2000), *The Lost Journal of Bram Stoker* (2012), and several articles on the same topics. Her contributions have helped broaden the understanding of Stoker’s life and how Dracula came to be. Likewise, books like *Bram Stoker's Dracula: Sucking Through the Century, 1897-1997* by C. M. Davison (Ed., 1999) and *Critical Insights: Dracula* by Jack Lynch (Ed., 2009) offer compilations of academic essays of the novel and introduce new approaches to carry out literary analyses of the text. Other scholarly research can be found e.g., in academic journals like *The Journal of Dracula Studies*, published by the Department of English at Kutztown University, and *The Gothic Studies of the International Gothic Association*. Thus, the existing studies and academic approaches to Dracula are as dynamic and multifaceted as its history and legacy.

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<sup>4</sup> A historical region that is now in Romania.

### 1.3 Dracula Daily

“*Get the classic novel Dracula delivered to your email inbox, as it happens,*” reads the main title on Dracula Daily’s introductory page. At its core, this is fundamentally what Dracula Daily consists of: signing up to a newsletter to receive the entire Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) in a digitally serialised and linear form directly into your email inbox.

Dracula Daily is an annual project run by Web designer and co-founder Matt Kirkland from Studio Kirkland. The project was created in 2021 as a free subscription newsletter via the newsletter service Substack, where the subscribers would be able to follow the entire novel in chronological order on the same day the events occur, in favour of the novel’s epistolary form. In other words, the Dracula Daily newsletter sends out an email to all subscribers with all diary entries, letters, telegram recordings, and newsletter clippings on the date of their entry. Because these events take place within May to November of the same calendar year, the newsletter runs yearly in this same lapse of time.<sup>5</sup>

The newsletter only had a little over 1600 subscribers in its first year, and it was not until it ran for the second time in 2022 that it achieved momentum on social media and rose to popularity among fan and reading circles, with over 200.000 people reading along. The digital serialisation of the novel easily allows people to subscribe to the newsletter at any given time. That is to say, even though the newsletter would have been active for weeks or months, anyone can subscribe and will be delivered future email updates. Additionally, for those who have missed previous updates, Dracula Daily archives all email contents on their official website and are available for anyone to read and catch up with the rest of the readers. This thus allows further participation and engagement from those who are interested in joining the Dracula read along.

While discussing the rapid success of the newsletter with Gavia Baker-Whitelaw amidst the its climb to popularity in 2022, Matt Kirkland disclosed how the first ideas of Dracula Daily came to be:

I think everybody loves vampires, but the relationship with Dracula really came from the format of the novel itself. I was reading it in 2020, and as I was reading

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<sup>5</sup> As mentioned before, the only exception is the short epilogue set seven years in the future. Dracula Daily includes Jonathan Harker’s *Note* in its service, sharing it on November 7.

it, I was talking about it with my daughter. (...) We realized how close the calendar dates were to the dates in the novel because it all happens over a six-month span. And then we just realized like, “*Oh, it would be great if you could read it all on the actual dates when everything happened.*” Of course, it would be a lot of work and you’d have to use a lot of bookmarks to track through the book. And then like a bolt of lightning we realized, what would be great is if someone just had a Substack where it could just email me the actual passages from the book that day. (Barker-Whitelaw, 2022)

Certainly, the evidence proves it was great.

Despite its success, Dracula Daily is not the first project to serialise Dracula. In fact, the serialisation of the novel can be traced back to late 19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers. In America, the earliest serialisation of the novel was discovered by Dracula scholar Hans Corneel de Roos in 2017, which was entitled “*The Strange Story of Dracula: A Tale of Thrilling Adventures, Mystery, and Romance,*” and published in Chicago’s *Inter Ocean* newspaper from May 7 to June 4, 1899 (Hogg, 2017). In terms of the digital serialisation of Dracula, *Dracula Feeds*, a blogspot ran by Whitney Sorrow in 2009 is perhaps the closest predecessor of Dracula Daily. As Dracula Daily, it shared the entire novel in chronological order, but rather than emails, Sorrow chose the format of blog posts. Readers were encouraged to check the blog to read updates on the corresponding entry dates.

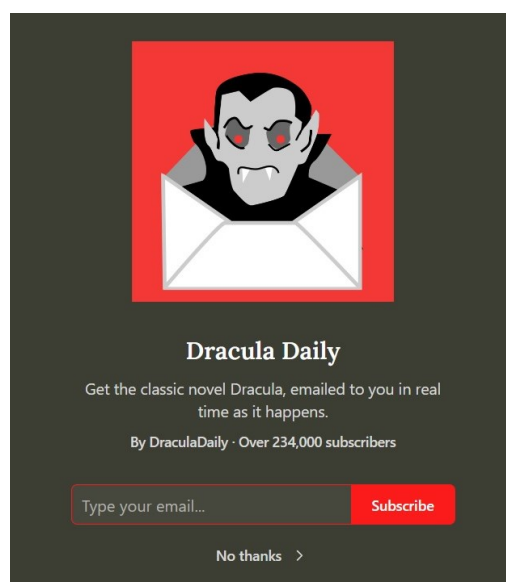


Figure 3. Dracula Daily. (Source: Dracula Daily, n.d.-a)

Based on the evolution of digital platforms and new technologies, I would argue that one of the reasons why Sorrow’s project did not gain as much online popularity as Dracula Daily has is mostly because, whereas Dracula Feed requires the reader to actively seek each update by going to the blog, Substack takes care of delivering updates to the email inboxes of each subscriber. In this sense, Dracula Daily becomes more personal.

Yet, by viewing Dracula Daily as a social and cultural phenomenon in digital spaces, one could also argue that it is everything but an individual experience. Because thousands of readers receive the same epistolary excerpts with every update, they often seek to comment and discuss the novel with others. These interactions often happen on social media. From this

perspective, *Dracula Daily* transforms the individual experience into a collective one. As a matter of fact, this is one of the main goals of digital storytelling (Cueva et al., 2013, p. 5).

Certainly, Stoker's epistolary writing seems to be the perfect candidate to be shared as digital correspondence. Its epistolary serialisation allows subscribers to collectively engage with a specific part of the novel. In this regard, *Dracula Daily* has become a pseudo-book club on social media like TikTok, X (formerly known as Twitter), and specifically on Tumblr.

According to Tumblr's 2022 *Year in Review*, an analysis of the most popular tags, searches, and discussions of the year based on the platform's Fandometrics database, *Dracula Daily* was listed as the fourth most popular Web Series (fandom, 2022d). It also appeared in the lists of most popular memes and featured topics on the dashboard. Additionally, *Dracula* was the second book most blogged about in 2022, a position above *The Harry Potter* series (fandom, 2022a).

The overall success of *Dracula Daily* since 2022 has paved the way for the creation of new novel newsletters via Substack. For example, 19<sup>th</sup> century literary classics such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1853) have since 2022 been shared through the newsletters *Pride and Prejudice Weekly*, *Frankenstein Weekly*, and *Whale Weekly* respectively. The latter particularly stands out for its lengthy running period: *Whale Weekly* began serialising the novel on November 21, 2022, and is intended to continue all the way through September

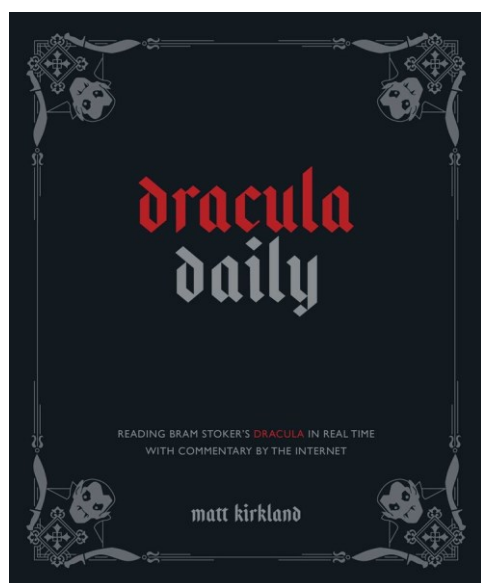


Figure 4. Cover of the *Dracula Daily* book by Mark Kirkland, 2023. (Source: <https://www.simonandschuster.com/>, n.d.)

2024. Even though it is not an epistolary novel, the 135 *Moby-Dick* chapters allow weekly updates for almost two years' time. Besides newsletters, another project that was inspired by *Dracula Daily* is *RE: Dracula*, a podcast that follows the same serialised and linear format of the newsletter, but in audio form.

At the time of my writing, *Dracula Daily* is about to start its fourth-year run. While the newsletter has kept the same format from the start, a *Dracula Daily* book was released in September 2023. This hardcover edition of the project includes the original text from the novel arranged in

chronological order, as in the newsletter, but the serialisation element is lost. In addition to the novel, Kirkland also includes fan commentary and fanart created by Dracula Daily subscribers. In 2023, Kirkland also organised several in-person events to celebrate the launch of the book, which had good reception from readers of the newsletter. These live events are to take place across several American cities during September and October 2023 (Dracula Daily, n.d.-b).

Four years after its inception, Dracula Daily has had quite the accomplishments in terms of sparking people's interest in classic literature. While popular culture continues to introduce audiences to Dracula through a myriad of reincarnations of the Count, Dracula Daily has done a terrific job at introducing many of its subscribers to the original novel by Bram Stoker through a modern and innovative digital format.

## Chapter 2: *Fandom, Art, Chaos* — Tumblr and Fan Culture

Welcome home.

Tumblr: home to your new favorite artist. Come for the effervescent digital paintings in every flavor of fandom. Stay for the breathtaking original offerings of those same artists. And, in between all the art: Old internet energy. All the fandoms you could wish for. Enough memes to knock out a moderately-sized mammal. Add to it or simply scroll through and soak it up.

– Tumblr, Inc. (App Store, 2024; Google Play, 2024)

The preceding quote is the opening statement of Tumblr’s advertisement for its mobile apps for both Apple and Android devices. The first iOS app was released in 2009, two years after the website was launched, and was followed by release of an Android app shortly afterwards. The mobile app has gone through a series of name changes throughout the years, the most recent ones including *Tumblr – Home of Fandom* (Novak, 2021) and *Tumblr – Fandom, Art, Chaos* (Novak, 2022). In both of these, the iteration of the words “Tumblr” and “fandom” stands out. Tumblr greets media fans with *welcome home*, thus implying that the platform is, or has been, a permanent fixture in the lives of its users. And indeed, for many of those who joined Tumblr over a decade ago, the website has become part of our social media routine. As one of these users myself, I can attest to that statement.

As its “Home of Fandom” tagline indicates, the platform has given media fans a fixed place where to congregate and carry out their fannish activities on the internet. From the early 2010s onwards, Tumblr has been the most dominant online space for media fan agency and authorship (Click & Scott, 2017, p. 86). The balance between having an individual space where to explore and express one’s creativity, and a place where to connect with others has been an attractive mix of individuality and togetherness to fans from the start.

Tumblr is a microblogging and social media platform created by American Web developer David Karp and launched in February 2007. The site grew exponentially within the first two weeks after its release, gaining over 75,000 users. Since then, Tumblr has offered an approach to microblogging based on a quick exchange of both textual and visual imagery (Click & Scott, 2017, p. 87). All registered users have a primary blog where to publish their posts. The creation of secondary blogs<sup>6</sup> is also supported by the platform. Users can opt to follow other blogs to view their posts, as well as to follow tag pages to view theme-specific posts by

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<sup>6</sup> Commonly known as *sideblogs*.



several blogs. Tag pages only show public posts that include the tag in question (e.g., the Star Wars tag page includes posts tagged as *#star wars*), and can be sorted by popularity (“top posts”) or chronology (“latest”). Notably, the platform supports a wide variety of media, including text, images, GIFs, video, audio, links, among other embedded content, making Tumblr rich in content (McCracken et al., 2020, p. 25). Posts and blogs are commonly accessed through the dashboard, often shortened to *dash* by its users; a personalised, reverse-chronological live feed of all the posts from the blogs a user follows (Brett & Maslen, 2021 p. 1). The dashboard also features users’ own posts and reblogs, making it the website’s main interface.

Karp has credited the inception of Tumblr to his early interest in tumblelogs, an emerging blogging format at the turn of the century (Young, 2010). The term *tumblelog* can be traced back to 2005, with bloggers Marcus Vorwaller and Jason Kottke describing it as “a blog with quick posts consisting of pictures, quotes, links and whatever else is on the mind of the author” and “a quick and dirty stream of consciousness, a bit like a remaindered links style linklog but with more than just links” respectively (Vorwaller, 2005; Kottke, 2005). In other words, whereas traditional blogging formats saw longer posts consisting of one paragraph or more, tumblelogs introduced a new, shorter way to blog about one’s thoughts and opinions. Karp’s intention was to create the “first and best platform for tumblelogs” at the time (Young, 2010). Today, the term *tumblelog* has gone out of fashion, replaced by the much more straightforward word *microblogging*. Despite this, tumblelogs are still a substantial part of Tumblr’s inception, and are very present in the platform’s name.

Back in 2005, Vorwaller speculated tumblelogs would gain popularity within the blogging community, foreseeing an exponential growth of tumblelogs in the near future (Vorwaller, 2005). Based on facts, Vorwaller’s belief was proven right. The abridged blogging format became popular thanks to newly launched platforms like Tumblr and also *X*,<sup>7</sup> launched a year prior in 2006. Today, *X* is one of the most popular social media platforms at a global scale, with over 550 million monthly active users as of last year (Kolodny, 2023), making it the most well-known microblogging platform worldwide. Although *X* is recognised for its immediacy in delivering updates in the form of concise text posts that can be reposted by others, Tumblr is actually to be credited for “being the first major social media platform to

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<sup>7</sup> Formerly known as *Twitter*. Prior to its rebranching, *X* posts were called tweets, and reposts were called retweets.

offer a reblog function” (McCracken et al., 2020, p. 30). Tumblr’s feature to reblog posts has been part of the design since its launch, whereas X only offered the option to repost two years afterwards.

On this matter, there is a key distinction between both platform’s post sharing mechanisms. X’s reposts allow the sharing of another user’s unedited post, meaning that if the post is deleted, so is the repost. In contrast, Tumblr’s reblogs are copies of an original post, published onto a different blog, which will continue to exist even if the original post is deleted. In essence, reblogs are their own separate posts, distinct from the original post. Hence, it is common for older posts to keep circulating on Tumblr, even years after the originals have been deleted or the blog has been deactivated. In addition to this attribute, users can add their own comments, hashtags, and other media additions to reblogs if they wish to (Bourlai, 2018, p. 47). Therefore, reblogs can be highly transformative.

Unlike X, Tumblr does not publicly share the number of followers or followed blogs by a user. And although some blogs gain popularity on the platform, the concept of social influencer is lost.

According to Tumblr’s official statistics, as of April 2024, the platform hosts over 500 million different blogs and has over 135 million monthly active users creating over 8 million posts per day (Tumblr, n.d.). High levels of activity translate to constant influx of content on the platform. In other words, when users are not creating their own posts, they are reblogging posts created by others; reblogs remain a vital part of the Tumblr ecosystem almost twenty years after their introduction. Hence, Tumblr runs on creation as much as it does on curation. McCracken et al. (2020), consider the dashboard “the heart of Tumblr” (p. 26), and if so, reblogs are the blood

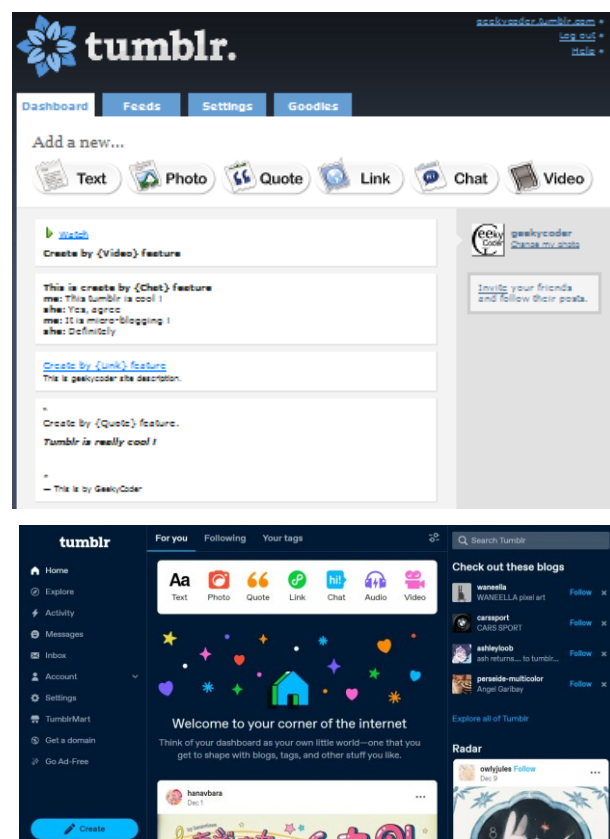


Figure 5. Two images depicting the evolution of the Tumblr dashboard on web browser. Above, the original 2007 dashboard. (Source: <https://davidville.wordpress.com/>, 2007) Below, the modern look of the dashboard in 2023. (Source: <https://www.meersworld.net/>, 2023)

flow that have kept the microblogging platform running for nearly two decades. It is the blend of all the aforementioned features that have made Tumblr an attractive platform for media fans throughout the years, fostering a strong participatory culture on the site.

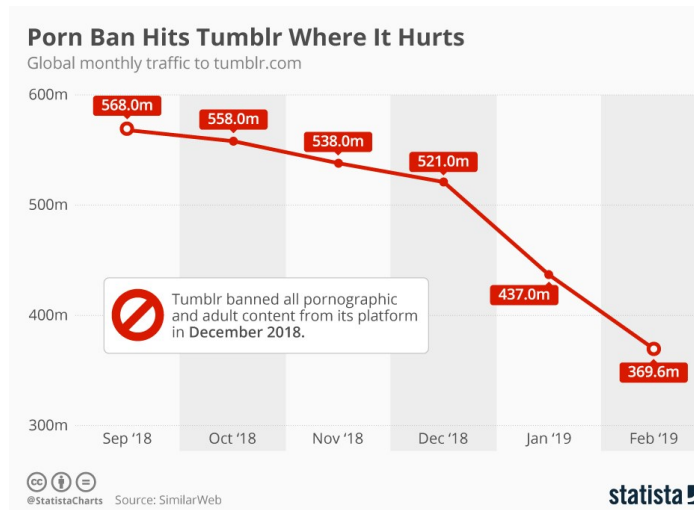
The Tumblr interface has gone through a series of changes during the past decade and a half, both on Web browser and on the mobile app. For instance, Figure 5. shows the differences between the original Tumblr dashboard and its most recent update in 2023, which has sparked backlash among users for its resemblance to X's current layout (changes, 2023). Given the importance of the dashboard for the user experience of the site, this kind of negative reaction seems justified. After all, the dashboard is not only the main way to view and engage with posts, but also a way to discover new interests. To further illustrate, a user can start following a blog due to a shared interest in sports; they soon discover that the blog does not only post about sports, but also about television series, and slowly, the user starts to show interest in the television series as well. This cross-pollination effect is very common across most communities on Tumblr and turns the dashboard into a de facto recommendation engine (Hillman et al., 2014, p. 5).

Aside from its layout, Tumblr has also seen changes in ownership and, consequently, in its policies. While touching the topic of ownership, though, it is vital to understand the growth of Tumblr during the so-called *Golden Age* of social media (2002-2012 [Currier, 2020]). Tumblr quickly rose as a popular social network in 2010 both in America and on an international scale. By 2011, only four years after its inception, Tumblr already had over 17 million blogs and hosted over 5 billion posts (Dixon, 2022a; Dixon, 2022b). Numbers continued to rapidly inflate in the following years, and by 2013, with already over 101 million registered users and 44 billion posts, Tumblr was acquired by Yahoo! for \$1.1 billion cash.

In 2017, Yahoo! was acquired by Verizon, thus acquiring Tumblr as well. 2017 also marked the exit of Karp from Tumblr, who had remained CEO of the company under Yahoo! ownership. From this point onwards, Tumblr began to decline in growth and user-engagement. The struggles only strengthened when Verizon introduced a much harsher content policy on December 17, 2018, banning adult content off Tumblr. This decision was reached after the iOS app was pulled from the Apple Store a month prior, over findings of illegal material on the platform. Former guidelines on posting adult content on Tumblr, which read "We have no problem with that kind of stuff. Go nuts. Show nuts. Whatever," were replaced by a strict ban on all NSFW content, including "photos, videos, or GIFs that show

real-life human genitals or female-presenting nipples, and any content—including photos, videos, GIFs, and illustrations—that depicts sex acts” (Locker, 2018). Tumblr, often regarded as a safe haven for young and marginalised adults to explore their sexuality, was strongly

impacted by this change.



*Figure 6.* Graphic depicting the fall in global traffic on Tumblr following the NSFW ban. (Source: Statista, 2019)

Initially, the prompt decision to ban adult content caused thousands of users to express their discontent and announce their intent not to use the platform any further. As noted by data journalist Martin Armstrong (2019), there was a decrease of 21.2 percent of monthly visitors from December 2018 to February 2019 (see Figure 6.). During this time, Tumblr implemented new

algorithms to automatically detect NSFW content and ban it off the platform. This led to a myriad of posts being incorrectly flagged as adult content, and added to the collective discontent of the already decreasing userbase.

Following the NSFW ban, Tumblr changed ownership once again. In August 2019, the platform was acquired by WordPress owner Automattic for less than \$3 million. Since then, Tumblr has seen more changes to its interface, yet some of them have had a favourable reception from its userbase. For instance, the ban on all adult content was partially lifted in November 2022, with the introduction of community labels that allow the posting of “nudity, mature subject matter, or sexual themes” as long as they are not pornographic in nature (staff, 2022). While Tumblr has had options to filter unwanted content and block other users for years, community labels are used to flag any kind of mature content.

From 2019 onwards, the struggles of Tumblr have only increased. Despite its million monthly active users that continue to create and post content on the platform, the site has been unprofitable for years. In fact, CEO Matt Mullenweg has revealed that the company is losing \$30 million each year (Silberling, 2023). In attempts to change its fate, Automattic has introduced paid features such as custom badges that appear next to a user’s handle on the dashboard and on their blogs in May 2023, and an Add-Free subscription to remove all

advertisement from the site. This subscription can be purchased for one's own account or gifted to other users. Furthermore, Automattic has also sought new ways to allow users to monetise their blogs, which at the moment is available through the features of *Tipping* (giving money to other users) and *Blaze* (paying to promote their own or someone else's posts) in certain countries (Tumblr Help Center, n.d.-b).

## 2.1 Fandom, Participatory Culture, and Fandom Migration

The internet has facilitated the experience of media fandom at a global scale. Traditionally, offline fan clubs and communities worked on the basis of in-person meetings, trading of memorabilia, creating and distributing fanzines, among others. Media fans were fast to adapt to the fast changes in technology, allowing their fan practices to change and evolve thanks to the world wide web. Bulletin boards, forums, fan pages, blogs, wikis, and social media have all been embraced by fan communities to connect among themselves and make it a collective public practice, rather than an individual one (Duffett 2013, p. 410). Nowadays, it is not uncommon to spot passionate *Swifties* or members of the *BTS ARMY* in the comment section of their artists' music videos on YouTube, or finding fan-made video edits of celebrities and fictional characters on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Once considered nerdish behaviours and looked down upon, fan practices are becoming part of an already evolving pop culture more and more each year (Cavicchi, 2014, p. 52).

In *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (2023), American media scholar and fandom expert Henry Jenkins coined the term "textual poacher" in regard to media fans. The term is based on the use of Michel de Certeau (1984)'s "poaching" to describe active readers, who "move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write" (Jenkins, 2013, p. 24). By adopting this analogy, media fans are popular readers that "lack direct access to the means of commercial cultural production and have only the most limited resources with which to influence entertainment industry's decisions" (Jenkins, 2013, p. 27). Indeed, most fans have no ownership of the media they show interest in. To exemplify, a *Star Wars* fan does not own the franchise, Disney does. Likewise, *Star Wars* fans have virtually no influence on the stories told, nor on the fate of the characters, nor how the franchise is to be presented to the broader option.

This lack of ownership is what often drives media fans to remix existing source material into fanworks. The word fanwork is an umbrella term to cover several forms of transformative works created by fans. Fanworks can be text-based, as is the case with fanfiction and meta texts, or a mix of visual and auditory elements, like fan edits, fancams, GIFs, among others. Fanworks are not only an expression of fans' creativity and knowledge. By viewing them through critical lenses, they can be considered free labour (Leavenworth & Isaksson, 2013, p. 8). In other words, they serve as free advertising for a specific media on digital platforms. For instance, sharing fancams of Taylor Swift on platforms like Instagram and TikTok promotes the artist's music to others. The same can be said for fanart and fan edits shared on social media channels. All of these are created by amateur fans as a hobby, yet are a passive way to promote media to others.

Nonetheless, fanworks are an important part of fan culture, making it transformative by nature. Brett & Maslen (2021) argue that fan-made content is one of the key elements that draw fans together into a *fandom* (p. 6). In this context, the word fandom has been used from the 2000s onwards to talk about a specific fan community, as, for instance, the Star Wars fandom. Nowadays, "belonging to a fandom" is the preferred term used to describe oneself as a member of a specific fan community. Jenkins (2006b) explains that fandoms often form around shared interests while "their members work together to forge new knowledge often in realms where no traditional expertise exists" (p. 20). This speaks to the highly participatory nature of these groups of fans. Even if not all the members of a fandom create content, they still translate media consumption into a cultural activity by interacting with other members.

In view of this, Jenkins (2013) considers fandom a participatory culture (p. 47). This claim is supported by the transformative and collaborative processes adopted by fan communities through the years, which allow them to combine their individual knowledge, experience, and skills in relation to a shared interest, and make meanings of them together. This participatory culture can be seen not only in the creation of fanworks as I mentioned before, but also in the history of fandom through the creation and curation of fan sites and archives, and even with the building of fan-wikis, online encyclopaedias focusing on specific media and franchises. Click & Scott (2017) sustain Jenkins' argument by stating that "fandom runs on fan labour" (p. 78). In other words, the collective transformation and reconfiguration of the source material shape fandoms and, thus, fan culture itself.

Most fan practices evolve through time, but at their core, they are configured to meet fandom-specific needs and interests. Similarly, platforms serve specific purposes in the development of online fandoms. When a platform is chosen by fans to carry out their fannish activities, it “develops and maintains its own community norms, expectations, and limits of code and culture” (Click & Scott, 2017, p. 86). In other words, a platform-specific fan culture is born. Although fandoms can emerge in social media, other platforms are entirely fan-created and fan-run. The nonprofit open-source site Archive of Our Own (AO3) is a good example of this. Created in 2008 by the Organization for Transformative Works, AO3 acts as a fan-run repository for fanfiction and fanworks from hundreds of different fandoms. It has become one of the most used platforms by media fans (*see* Figure 7.), and continues to be the preferred Web fanfiction site well into the 2020s.

As I already emphasised, Tumblr has been granted the unofficial title of *home of fandom* for its years, due to its status as the preferred social network for fan activity. Earlier in this chapter, I alluded to the growth in popularity and hike in the number of registered users taking place during the early 2010s. This is a direct result of a cultural phenomenon known as fandom migration.

Lee (1966) defines migration as a change in residence that can either be permanent or semi-permanent (p. 49). In fan culture, the term fandom migration specifically refers to the mass movement of fan communities across different digital platforms. While migrating from one platform to another might be part of the natural cycle of digital life (e.g., being allured by emerging technologies offered by another platform), the key characteristic of fandom migration is that it happens *en masse*. Several theories on its causes have been proposed. Among these, the work of scholars Casey Fiesler and Brianna Dym (2020) stands out. They were able to identify two major causes for fan migration by analysing 28 interviews with media fans and nearly 2000 survey responses. Their findings indicate the reasons can be platform-based, often dealing with issues related to the platform’s values, policies, features, layout, or content, or user-based, an individual decision to leave the platform, among which joining a new fandom stands out (Fiesler & Dym, 2020, pp. 9-12). Based on this, and my experience of nearly 15 years in active media fandoms, I hold that platform-based reasons are the most common cause of fandom migration.

I have previously researched the topic of fandom migration by studying the history and movement of the Twin Peaks fandom on the net (Martinez Ziegler, 2021). With now over 30 years of activity and counting, this community is a perfect example of platform-based migration. The origins of the Twin Peaks fandom go back to 1990 with the *alt.tv.twin-peak*

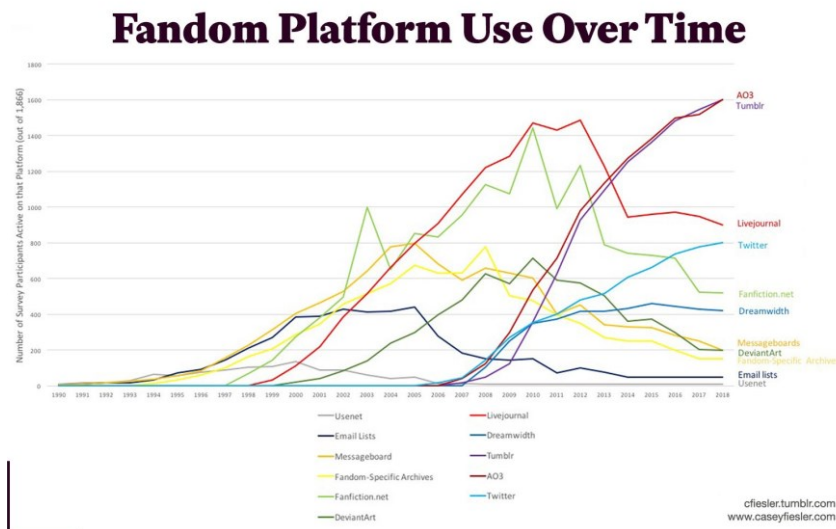


Figure 7. Chart depicting the popularity of fandom platforms from 1990 to 2018. (Source: Casey Fiesler, 2018)

newsgroup on Usenet, an electronic networked discussion system. The emerging world wide web saw fans moving their activity from Usenet to web sites, online forums, and dedicated fan club pages, where communication and participation was more accessible and faster than before. By the early 2000s, the Twin Peaks fandom could be found on LiveJournal, and during the 2010s, most discussions took place on Reddit, especially on the Twin Peaks subreddit (/r/TwinPeaks). While the subreddit is still active during the 2020s, it is worth noting that a Twin Peaks Discord server also exists, thus exemplifying how the fandom continues to evolve with each emerging digital platform.

In regard to the history of platform-based fandom migration, the social networking site LiveJournal was at the top of the preferred digital platforms from the mid-2000s until the early 2010s (see Figure 7.). Founded in 1999, LiveJournal became an appealing site for fan communities to migrate to thanks to its “threaded comments, friends list feature, and self-expression in the form of icons and interests lists” (Fanlore, n.d.-a). However, the acquisition of LiveJournal by a Russian-owned company in 2008 introduced new changes to the site, primarily in the form of layout changes and establishing new guidelines. After the mass deletion of blogs that violated the new policies, fans decided to flee the platform in the following years. By 2012, Tumblr had “supplanted LiveJournal as a, if not the, key hub of multimedia online fandom activity” (Morimoto & Stein, 2018). From this point onwards,



Tumblr has hosted thousands of different fandoms, some of which have made the platform their home for over a decade.

## 2.2 Hellsite (Affectionate) – Understanding Tumblr and its Userbase

“I like your shoelaces” is a phrase that gained popularity on Tumblr in the early 2010s. The simple sentence was shared in a text post, followed by the proposal of using this phrase in order to detect other Tumblr users offline. Afterwards, another user suggested the appropriate response would be “I stole them from the president,” and it was widely accepted by others. This post has gained the title of *Tumblr Code*, and became well known within the Tumblr userbase. Instead of serving its purpose to recognise other Tumblr users in offline environments, it has become a widespread joke throughout the platform. As of April 2024, the original “I like your shoelaces” post has over four million notes (see Figure 8.).



Figure 8. Screenshot the original “I like your shoelaces” post. (Source: @aru, Tumblr blog, 2012)

A well-known fact about Tumblr is that it hosts communities just about everything, from mainstream media to the very niche subcultures. From sports to crafts, from media to aesthetics, users have been using the multiplicity of the platform’s interface to show their interest in a specific topic, and in hopes to connect with others. Although Tumblr had first branded itself as a “home for artists” (Click & Scott, 2017, p. 91), it is more about offering artists and other creators a blank canvas where to freely express their creativity. This creativity expands beyond the fields of illustration; the creation and sharing of memes, GIFs, and fanfiction are some transformative works that are part of the ever-growing fan culture on Tumblr (Marimoto, 2018).

Tumblr’s fandom dynamics are as varied as fans themselves. However, though some fan behaviours and practices might seem unique to specific communities, the networked nature of the platform makes fandoms adopt patterns from one another. For instance, the trend of editing flower crowns onto celebrities and fictional characters was popular on Tumblr during the early 2010s. The practice is often thought to have started in the One Direction fandom,



*Figure 9.* Icon of NBC Hannibal's Will Graham with a Photoshopped flower crown on his head. (Source: @naarts [Tumblr blog], 2013)

which spread to the Hannibal fandom two years afterwards, and, surprisingly, became an instant trend across hundreds of active fandoms at the time. Users shared transparent PNG images of the flower crowns and wrote easy-to-follow editing tutorials to encourage other fans to join the trend. I was actively participating in Tumblr fandoms back then, and remember seeing how quick my fandoms were to adopt this trend.

In that regard, fandom is highly participative. Even though there is not a clear hierarchy or assigned tasks that are given to people upon joining a fandom, fans

themselves take on different roles in their respective communities; some choose to be writers, some editors and GIFmakers, others organise events, and so on (Click & Scott, 2017, p. 78). This often happens organically, allowing people to use their own learned set of skills and apply them to their fannish activities. At the same time, blogs can solely build upon reblogs, meaning that the creation of fanworks is not expected nor required to join a fandom. However, the importance of fan creators must be stressed; it is their free transformative works that feed the fandom.

Discussing how fan content moves across the platform, Tumblr's internet librarian Amanda Brennan (McCracken et al., 2020) stated:

(...) you'll be introduced to Tumblr by someone else in your fandom or a friend. You'll end up finding a network of blogs, and you'll start to see people who reblog the same usernames all the time and follow them. And because so many blogs are multifandom, you might follow someone because you like Marvel but then this person starts liking a new TV show so you end up "going down the rabbit hole": you'll start at point A and end up at Point C and three hours will have passed and you're like "how did I even get here?" (p. 39)

The birth of the hybrid fandom *SuperWhoLock* in 2011 is a perfect example of how multifandom exchanges can lead to the creation of an entire new community. Albeit its brief existence, conversations about SuperWhoLock still take place today. I observed this phenomenon closely and, for a brief period of time, as a member of the community. Hence, I have first-hand experience with the rise and fall of this fandom and its significance to the history of fan communities on Tumblr.

The name SuperWhoLock is an amalgamation of three of the most popular media fandoms of Tumblr of the 2010s; television series CW's *Supernatural* (2005-2020), and BBC's *Doctor Who* (1963-1989, 2005-) and *Sherlock* (2010-2017). The shows' plots bear little resemblance to one another: *Supernatural* was an American television drama that follows the lives of two brothers hunting supernatural creatures in the United States. *Doctor Who* is a sci-fi series about the Doctor, an alien who can travel through time and space while saving planets from evil. Lastly, *Sherlock* was a modern-day adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle's *Stories of Sherlock Holmes*.

All of these fandoms coexisted on Tumblr at the same time, and created strong communities where fanworks would constantly be moving through blogs. From GIFs and edits to memes and lengthy meta texts analysing the shows, it was nearly impossible to be a part of media fandoms in the early 2010s and not to stumble across any of these three fandoms. True to form, having multifandom blogs pollinating other fans' dashboards with these three franchises created a much larger phenomenon on the platform: SuperWhoLock.

The concept of SuperWhoLock was simple: a manufactured crossover fandom where people could merge all of their interests in one. This innovative way of reimagining and reconfiguring media gained popularity across the entire platform, and soon more blogs were joining the phenomenon. Fans quickly adopted the label of "superwholockians," oftentimes using it in the description of their blogs to attract others with whom to connect with. Thoughts of characters from one of the franchises appearing into the universe of another (e.g., the Doctor joining the Winchester in their hunt for demons and monsters), or how the aesthetic of a show could be applied to another prompted lengthy discussions that went on to become part of the unofficial fanon of the fandom (Duffett 2013, p. 354). Subsequently, these prompted fan creators to share illustrations, GIFs, and fanfiction based on the shared ideas of the community.

Despite its popularity during the early 2010s, SuperWhoLock fell to obscurity during the latter half of that decade. Whereas there is not one specific reason why fans lost interest in the hybrid phenomenon,<sup>8</sup> the death of a fandom is as natural as its birth. Curiously enough, the end of a fandom does not necessarily mean media fans stop being fans altogether. In fact, in

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<sup>8</sup> It has been suggested that *Sherlock*'s years-long hiatus contributed to the collective disinterest in anything related with the show whatsoever. However, the collective effort to raise awareness of all three shows' misogynistic undertones in 2014 could as well have influenced the death of the fandom as well.

contrast to platform-based fandom migration, Fiesler & Dym (2020) use the term *community-based migration* to talk about this specific form of digital migration seen in fan spaces (p. 2). User-based migration can occur within a single platform or involve several sites as well.

Jenkins (2013) considers this ability of media fans to drift from their original fandom and immerse themselves in a new one an entry into a larger cultural community, “linking to an intertextual network composed of many programs, films, books, comics, and other popular materials” (p. 41). If we bring back the textual poachers analogy, media fans are not only able to travel through a fictional realm created by someone else; rather, they can move across several realms, adopt new practices and behaviours, or even introduce some from their old fandom into the new one.



**Figure 10.** Two screenshots of Tumblr posts. On the left, a conversation between two users discussing how hard it is to leave the platform. (Source: @femmetay, Tumblr blog, 2018) On the right, a user expresses their reasons why they choose to stay on Tumblr. (Source: @ffairycosmos, Tumblr blog, 2022)

In addition to the platform’s features, I would propose that this community-based migration is one of the reasons Tumblr is still the home of fandom in 2024. For example, the end of a television series can cause its fans to lose interest in continuing to blog about it, which is the main cause for a fandom to go dormant. Since these fans are already on Tumblr, they can find and join other well-established communities on the platform. This creates a continuous flow of users that joined during the early 2010s migrating from one corner of the platform to the other. While Tumblr users colloquially talk about “*being stuck in this Hellsite [Tumblr],*” and often make humorous comparisons between the platform and the Eagles’ *Hotel California* (1977), it is one of the reasons that it remains the preferred platform for fan activities today.

### Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This dissertation aims to assess how the format of Dracula Daily shapes the reader and online fan experience of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) by using the Dracula Daily fan activity from May to November of 2022 as its case study. A reading experience refers to the impressions, thoughts, and feelings evoked in the reader when engaging with written or printed text, while making meanings of it (Crosman, 1982, pp. 7-8). In regard to online fan experience, the term is coined to refer to the experience of being a fan in a digital environment, often within a community. Furthermore, this study aims to determine the elements particular to the newsletter affect the way readers engage with the novel, while also giving a thorough look at the fan culture dynamics on Tumblr by using the Dracula Daily fandom as means of illustration. To achieve this, I carried out a qualitative content analysis of 543 Tumblr posts that I collected from May to November 2022 as a participant observer of the fandom.

My research formally began in May 2022, just a few days after the first Dracula Daily email updates were posted. I became interested in the subject upon seeing posts referencing Dracula on my Tumblr dashboard. Being on the platform for over ten years, and because of my studies in Digital Culture, the Dracula Daily phenomenon drew my attention from both a personal and academic perspective. As earlier noted, my previous experiences with fan studies include researching the history and evolution of the Twin Peaks fandom on the net. My publication was part of the 2021 David Lynch Special Issue from the Finnish academic journal *WiderScreen* (Martinez Ziegler, 2021). Östman & Turtiainen (2016) highlight the importance of the researcher to be familiar with the online environment, its userbase and its content prior to the research, for all of these elements affect the site-specific discourse (p. 71). On that note, having witnessed the rapid raise to popularity of several fandoms and trends that are particular to Tumblr (e.g., the aforementioned SuperWhoLock fandom), I have had over a decade of first-hand insights in viewing how emerging communities can become extremely popular and leave a permanent mark on the history of Tumblr.

Admittedly, my academic knowledge of Bram Stoker and *Dracula* was not equal to that of fan studies and digital culture at the start of my research. However, I began to familiarise myself with different approaches through titles like *Critical Insights: "Dracula"* (2009, Ed. Jack Lynch) and Elizabeth Miller's *Dracula: Sense & Nonsense* (2000), as well as several articles from *The Journal of Dracula Studies*. These were part of my introduction to common scholarly analyses and discussions of *Dracula* and its lore. This pertained not only to the

literary analysis of Dracula (e.g., discussions over the portrayal of female sexuality) and Stoker's motives for writing the novel, but also the study of Dracula as part of pop culture. By getting acquainted with these topics, I was able to quickly understand several themes and narratives that arose within the Dracula Daily community during this six-month period.

In the tenth chapter of *a tumblr book* (McCracken, 2020), Kanai et al. discuss the empirical challenges faced by researchers investigating subcultures on Tumblr. Through explaining the research methodology of their own case studies, these authors offer scholarly advice on how to perform a mixed methodology that consists of qualitative content analysis while being a participant observation (McCracken, 2020, p. 120). Although their study included Tumblr subcultures outside media fandom, their methodological approach was particularly helpful for my research. Borrowing from their experience and advice, I kept the following in mind:

1. The nature of the Dracula Daily fandom; how accessible is this community? Is the jargon used easy to understand? Which of their fan practices stand out?
2. The extent of the database; how often did users post, and in what volume? Did the length of the email updates influence the influx of posts in the Dracula Daily tag? Did it not?
3. Lastly, my own ability to use Tumblr and immerse myself in this fandom; how well can I keep up with collecting the posts while the newsletter runs in 2022? Am I able to read all the updates?

In having these additional questions as a guide, the participant observation part of my research felt more grounded and better structured. They became the base to know what characteristics to look for when observing how the fandom evolved and grew with every email update, and also had a conscious understanding of my role as a researcher (e.g., how my personal knowledge of Tumblr came into play when analysing the fan practices of the fandom).

### 3.1 Data Collection

The data collection process of my research already began on May 8, 2022, when I created a private Tumblr blog<sup>9</sup> with the intention of collecting posts related to the growing community

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<sup>9</sup> The blog can be found at <https://draculadailylog.tumblr.com> (password: dracula2022).

of Dracula Daily readers on the platform. The creation of Tumblr accounts is common among researchers who intend to research a community or subculture in the platform, because it facilitates the data research (Attu & Terras, 2017, p. 541). To find these posts, I used Tumblr's search engine to browse the Dracula Daily tag page, focusing on the category of "top posts." I waited for some hours after the newsletter update was posted to collect the sample posts. Given that the length of the updates varied in size from very short to pages-long, some generated more user activity, while others did no. For this reason, I decided not to have a minimum or maximum number of daily posts to collect.

Researchers are expected to consider case-specific research ethics when embarking on a new study, and even more so when focusing on social media and digital spaces (Östman & Turtiainen, 2016, p. 69). In my case, I had to keep my research ethics in line with the policies of Tumblr. According to the platform's updated privacy policy, "you can keep yourself fairly anonymous on Tumblr, but remember that your posts, blogs, pages, and username are all visible to the public by default" (Tumblr, 2024). Put differently, users are aware that the content posted onto their blogs is fairly visible and accessible to those with an account in the platform, especially when posts are tagged, as already discussed in Chapter 2. Conversely, users have the option to hide the content posted onto their blogs if desired (McCracken et al., 2020, p. 29). This can be achieved by making their blogs private and accessible only through passwords, and/or by excluding their blogs from the Tumblr search engine and recommendations. Hence, it can be assumed that posts in the Dracula Daily tag page are public online data and fit for research.

Along these lines, I kept in mind ethical questions in relation to the collection of Tumblr posts for research purposes, such as how to approach posts with personal information and whether or not to include these as part of the research data if encountered. While some social media channels such as Facebook encourage to build profiles based on one's own personal information, Tumblr differs in this, with the platform rather encouraging the curation of one's blog based on personal interests (McCracken et al., 2020, p. 109). However, users have the freedom to choose whether or not to share their names, ages, and pictures of themselves on the platform. Fortunately for my research, the nature of the posts I was interested in (i.e., posts about Dracula Daily) did not disclose personal nor sensitive information about the bloggers. To further take ethical values into account, all of the collected posts were found in the Dracula Daily tag page. In other words, I did not search for content from specific blogs, nor did I check other posts than those in the public tag.

With the view to know when to collect data, and understand the nature of the same, I subscribed and read along to the 2022 edition of the newsletter. This not only allowed me to know what days to browse the Dracula Daily tag page on Tumblr, but also led me into becoming a participant observer of the fan culture that emerged on the platform. Professor Craig Calhoun (2002) defines participant observation as a research method in ethnography and anthropology “that involves extended immersion in a culture and participation in its day-to-day activities.” The information a researcher can gain from this method is what Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) consider “participant knowledge” (p. 98).

In this vein, I immersed myself in the Dracula Daily community on Tumblr for a period of six months. I made a conscious decision not to create any original posts in my observation period; rather, I used my private blog as an archive to collect the most popular posts of the day. Nonetheless, I liked and reblogged all of the collected posts, leaving two notes in the process. Next to reading the newsletter along with the community, this interaction also translates into participation. In other words, I was a *passive* participant observer.

As I explained in the second chapter, Tumblr’s reblog function allows users to publish a post by another user into their own blog. In doing so, users can also add tags to the post, which can then be browsed through tag pages in their own blog. These blogging features were the main reason I chose to create a private Tumblr blog to collect the data. Having a Tumblr blog allowed me to freely browse and collect data from the public Dracula Daily tag page, thus not encountering any information gatekeepers (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 4), and also allowed me to classify the data by adding tags as I saw fit. The importance of data classification when doing qualitative analysis is explained by Dey (1993), emphasising that “it lays the conceptual foundations upon which interpretation and explanation are based” (p. 41). Indeed, classifying posts as I collected them allowed for an efficient and clear qualitative content analysis.

During the process of data classification, the researcher is often expected to move back and forth between the data and the categories (Dey, 1993, p. 105). In other words, the data itself influences the development of the categories. In my case, the creation of categories occurred organically. I decided to create my own taxonomy to organise the data: three main tags to describe the nature of the posts (*#posted on*, *#format*, and *#topic*) plus an additional tag (*#other*) to include some of the recurring themes present in the data. During September 2022, four months into my research, I decided to create a fourth main tag/category for my data,



*#character*. I reviewed all previously collected posts and correctly included a character tag whenever a post focused on a specific character. The reason behind this category was the continuous interest Dracula Daily readers showed towards several of the characters and the large number of posts that only focused on one character. Therefore, I deemed that having a characters category would allow me to analyse the thoughts of the community towards characters and relationships (as well as establishing comparisons etc). This will be thoroughly discussed in 4.2.

The table and image below illustrate the taxonomy I created to categorise posts.

Table 1. Taxonomy

Summary of the tags utilised in the data collection and classification process.

Tag	Tag examples	Number of posts
<b>#posted on:</b> + date of origin of the reblogged post	#posted on: may 8 2022	14
<b>#format:</b> + one of the seven different formats a Tumblr post can be	#format: text	383
<b>#topic:</b> + the topic or context of the post content	#topic: liveblog	303
<b>#character:</b> + character(s) referred in the post	#character: jonathan harker	134
<b>#other:</b> + recurrent topics that do not fall under any of the previous categories	#other: logs of the demeter	24

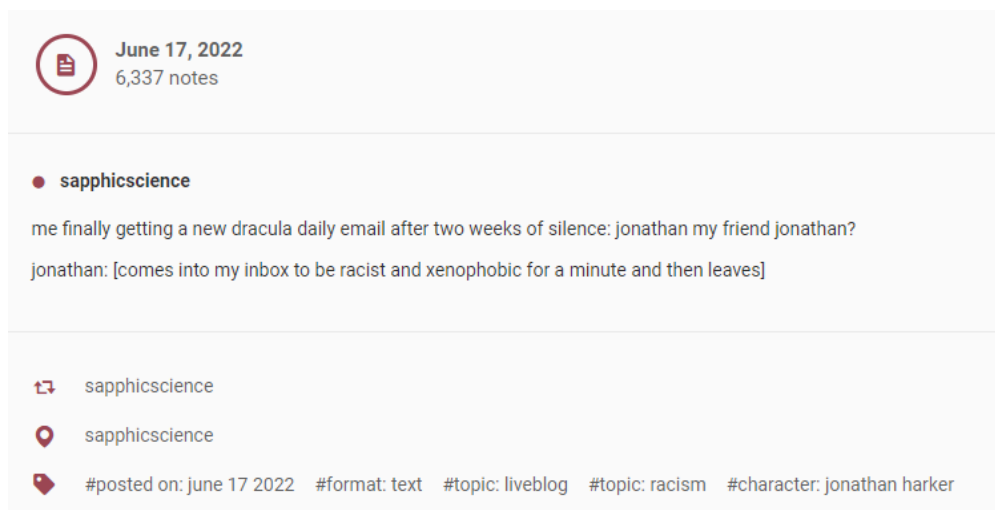


Figure 11. Example of a collected text post that has been reblogged and classified by using the aforementioned taxonomy. (Source: Research material [@draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

Lastly, another step I took was installing a custom HTML Tumblr theme in my Dracula Daily blog. This allowed me to easily view information about the posts (*see* Figure 12.). In this sense, when browsing a tag page, this theme indicates the number of posts that have been tagged as such. This played a key role in the data analysis process, for I was able to have an additional quantitative element when establishing similarities and differences in the data.

During the last months of my data collection process, I received advice from my thesis supervisors regarding the appropriate number of posts to collect for the purpose of my research. We concluded that ~500 posts would suffice. In the end, the sample size consisted of 543 Tumblr posts. The collection process ended on November 12, 2022, five days after the last 2022 email update was sent.

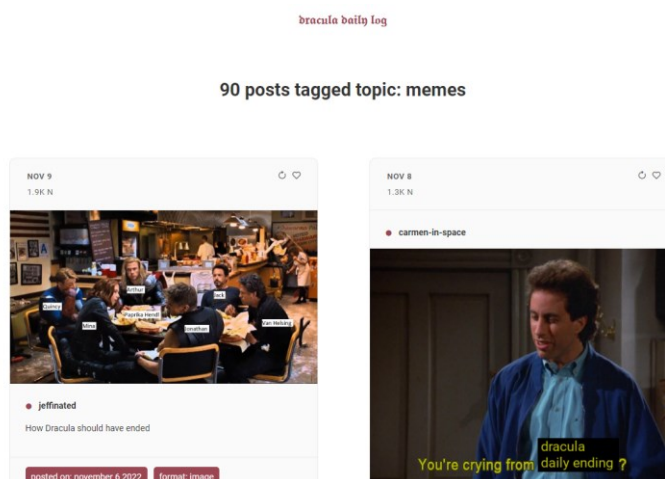


Figure 12. Screenshot of the Dracula Daily blog as seen when browsing #topic: memes. (Source: Research material [@draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

### 3.2 Data Analysis

From the early stages of my research onwards, I approached the data from a qualitative content analysis perspective. Elo & Kyngäs (2009) describe it as a method of analysis of any written, verbal, or visual message with the intention of describing phenomena and enhancing the understanding of the collected data (pp. 107-108). In other words, qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to interpret phenomena by analysing its content and presenting knowledge, facts, and new insights based on their findings.

In *Qualitative data analysis : a user-friendly guide for social scientists* (1993), Ian Dey (1993) describes the qualities of qualitative analysis in action:

Through analysis, we can obtain a fresh view of our data. We can progress from initial description, through the process of breaking data down into bits, and seeing how these bits interconnect, to a new account based on our reconceptualization of the data. We break down the data in order to classify it, and the concepts we

create or employ in classifying the data, and the connections we make between these concepts, provide the basis of a fresh description. (p. 31)

Furthermore, for Dey (1993), the qualitative analysis begins when the researcher develops a comprehensive description and understanding of the phenomenon that is to be studied (p. 32). In my research, whereas the Dracula Daily community was an emerging phenomenon on Tumblr, my previous experience in modern media fandom circles allowed me to have a preliminary understanding of the community as it formed. Moreover, my knowledge of Tumblr as a user of over ten years also facilitated my quick comprehension of the phenomenon. Furthermore, establishing qualitative content analysis as my methodological approach allowed me to have a clear, concise goal from the start: to collect and interpret non-numerical data (Tumblr posts) to explain the phenomenon I had interest in.

With that in mind, becoming a participant observer further allowed me to understand the specific fan behaviours of the community. May (2002) explains that in order to be a participant observer, the researcher must be clear of their substantive interests prior to immersing themselves in a site that allows them to observe groups of people or organisations (p. 180). In my case, I decided from early on to examine the specific fan activities and fan behaviour of this community prior to my immersion. At the same time, while a specific interest may guide the research at first, it is also common for more to emerge as the study continues (May, 2002, p. 181). Not only did I pay close attention to the fan practices of the community and developed specific observation protocols as described in the previous section, but I also paid close attention to how the readers engaged with the novel from the start. Ultimately, the effect of the newsletter in the reader experience became particularly focal to my research, which is reflected in my research question and aforementioned objectives.

As I discussed in the previous section, both qualitative analysis and participant observation call for the creation of categories in which to allocate the collected data (Dey, 1993, p. 45; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 108; May, 2002, p. 186). More than a step done before or after the analysis, the classification of data is part of the analysis (Dey, 1993, p. 41). In order to place data into different categories, the researcher must already interpret its contents, from where a preliminary explanation of the phenomenon can be built upon. That is to say, the researcher is constantly analysing the data, even before the collection process is over.

All of the statements described above were true for my investigation. Through the course of six months, my understanding of the Dracula Daily fandom expanded to the point I could

make preliminary predictions that were proven correct. For example, when reading email updates by October 2022, there would be certain events that I would anticipate the community to be interested in. And, correspondingly so, when collecting that day's data, my expectations were met. This allowed me to establish certain behavioural patterns from the community, which will be discussed further in depth in the next chapter.

At the same time, analysing during the collection process also allowed me to determine what external factors influenced the behaviours of the fandom. The platform-specific fan culture of Tumblr plays a big role here. Understanding the nature surrounding fannish activities and transformative works on the platform as explained in Chapter 2.3, it is expected that practices will travel across several fan communities. Along these lines, the Dracula Daily community was influenced by behaviours and practices that originated in other fandoms on Tumblr. An example of this is the use of fan jargon to discuss Dracula. Essentially, fan communities on Tumblr have created their own language to talk about their interests. When one fandom starts using specific jargon, it quickly spreads to adjacent fandoms. Hillman et al. (2014) have expanded on the issue by discussing the jargon used at the time of their writing, such as *having feels*, a dated term to describe a fan's high emotion and excitement towards any topic related to their fandom (p. 7). In this vein, I must emphasise that fan jargon is constantly evolving. Terms can and will be deemed obsolete by fan communities, and new expressions will be adopted in their place. Because of this, it is not only crucial for the researcher to know the context of fan conversations, but be familiar with the terminology and phrases used by the community in order to fully understand the data.

Content analysis goes beyond just interpretation (Dey, 1993, p. 100). While interpretation refers to the process of explaining and determining patterns found throughout the investigation, analysing deals with the process of classification and conceptualisation as much as questioning the meaning of the findings. In other words, content analysis encourages the researcher to ask why the collected data shows certain patterns, and thus, explain their meanings. Elo & Kyngäs (2008) expand on this by stating that such explanations must be presented thoroughly in order for the readers to understand the purpose of the research (p. 112). Such results are visible in Chapter 4, where I offer a close examination of the data. Subsequently, Chapter 5 presents a more in-depth analysis of my findings, their meaning, significance, and relevance to the field of digital culture studies.

### 3.3 Methodological Limitations of Studies

I only encountered one major obstacle during my research, specifically during the collection data process. Limitations are not only to be recognised by the researcher, but also accepted as part of every research process (Dey, 1993, p. 268). In my case, Tumblr, despite having a large influx of users using the platform every day, often presents glitches that affect the user experience. In Chapter 2, I described one of these glitches, with the incorrectly flagged posts during the NSFW ban. Moreover, the search engine and tag pages are infamously known for presenting inconsistencies throughout the years. Posts are often shadow-banned from public tag pages for no reason, meaning that they are invisible to all users (Tumblr Help Center, n.d.-a). These lingering issues impact the entire userbase, and because the only inconvenience I encountered.

Starting on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, the platform's search engine presented issues. No new posts created within the last twenty-four hours would show in the recent or top sections of the tag pages. The site-wide bug persisted until September 7<sup>th</sup>, when the search engine worked normally once again. Five email updates were posted within this timeframe. As a result, I was not able to collect many criteria-fit posts from the aforementioned time, unless they would remain in the "top posts" section later due to constant user engagement. Aside from this issue, no other external agents affected my research at any stage.

## Chapter 4: Dracula Daily on Tumblr (May - November 2022)

“Somehow, in 2022, Tumblr University finally exists, but the only offering is a semester long English course about Dracula and everyone is enrolled,” reads a text post originally published on May 7, 2022, a few days after the Dracula Daily newsletter started posting updates via email (applejuiz, 2022). The text post has almost 100.000 notes, and references a decade-old meme that spread through Tumblr with the high influx of users during the early 2010s. Tumblr University was the abstract concept of a fictional institution dedicated to the teaching of the most popular Tumblr fandoms at the time. Its origins can be explained through participatory culture, or, as I have been discussing before in the context of fandom, the fans’ ability to transform personal reaction into social interaction. Driven by a shared desire to discuss media with other members of the community, users collectively deliberated over issues such as the school’s dressing code, particular courses to attend, what the installations would look like, and its fictional codes and values. All of these were highly influenced by the top media fandoms found on the platform at the time, such as Harry Potter, Doctor Who, Supernatural, and One Direction.

Although Tumblr University is often looked back as an embarrassing memory from the fannish behaviour that governed the platform in the early 2010s (heritageposts, 2020), its reference in the post referenced above is, in my opinion, very fitting given the context. The collective reading and discussion of Bram Stoker’s 1897 Gothic novel *Dracula* through the course of six months thanks to the Dracula Daily newsletter in 2022 resembled the concept laid out by others a decade earlier.

The spread of Dracula Daily on Tumblr started as early as April 22, 2022, with a text post promoting the speedy start of the newsletter and offering a link for people to subscribe (trupowieszcz, 2022). At the time of writing, nearly half of the post’s notes are reblogs, meaning that it has crossed different dashboards and blogs over 30.000 times. As it has been previously stated, reblogs improve user visibility and engagement across the platform (McCracken et al., 2020, p. 30). Put simply, the more users reblog a post, the more exposure it will get.

Granted, the meaning of promotional posts is bringing awareness to the advertised topic. However, the popularity of Dracula Daily on Tumblr increased after the newsletter started posting updates in May, when users began to actively blog about the novel. The first events

shared through chronological fragments are written by character Jonathan Harker in his personal journal as he ventures into Transylvania to meet nobleman Count Dracula. Although not many of the novel's major events take place at the very start, Tumblr users took particular interest in the early entries of Harker and his first encounters with the Count at Castle Dracula. The interactions between these two characters sparked the first creations of original fanworks, such as fanart and memes. The active participation between members of the community were those that as I previously described in terms of Tumblr fan culture and other online fandom, where media consumption leads to production (Jenkins, 2013, pp. 46-47). In this particular case, reading along to the newsletter inspired fans to reimagine the story and express their own creative and transformative fanworks.

The popularity of Dracula Daily became more visible as posts referencing the novel began to be reblogged by those already subscribed to the newsletter, thus exposing these posts to their followers. Rather than directly encouraging others to subscribe via promotional posts, people's interest in Dracula Daily emerged almost organically; these early posts were humorous in nature, and they paid attention to aspects of the novel that are often missed or overlooked by adaptations. In other words, the attitude of these posts made the prospect of reading Dracula appealing to the modern media fan.

For example, the first emailed excerpt on May 3<sup>rd</sup> consists of a journal entry written by Jonathan Harker detailing his trip to Castle Dracula. In it, Harker tries *paprika hendl*, a traditional Hungarian dish. Harker expresses his wishes to have the paprika hendl recipe to share with his fiancée in England, Mina Murray. This scene became a very dissectible topic for readers on Tumblr (also known as *the paprika discourse*, which will be further discussed in section 4.4.). Despite this early interest, when the subject was brought up again in August and September, as Mina finally learns about Harker's trip, the fascination with paprika hendl resurfaced and new conversations around this topic were born. The idea of Mina finally learning about the dish was meaningful for the readers, who expressed their opinions through text posts and the creation of several memes.

Because Tumblr's interface allows users to have control over the content they wish to see on their dashboards (e.g., by choosing what blogs to follow, blocking other users, using community labels), it is easy for communities to live in their own bubble. Members of large media fandoms commonly choose to follow blogs that post about their common interests in order to then reblog this content to their own blogs. However, being a multifandom blog is

also very popular on Tumblr. Multifandom blogs usually have one primary interest they post about, but also include other media in their blogging routines. In doing so, they passively expose other fandoms to members of their primary fandom. This phenomenon can be viewed as “going down the [multifandom] rabbit hole,” where users are constantly introduced to new media and franchises by members of their own group (McCracken et al., 2020, p. 39). To illustrate, members of the Star Wars fandom on Tumblr often reblog content related to the franchise, whether it is in the form of GIF sets, graphics, texts, or videos. Hence, when a Star Wars-centric blog starts reblogging posts about Dracula, it stands out, making it more noticeable. This refers to the cross-pollination effect I discussed in Chapter 2. that is common across the entire platform, but viewed in a fandom-specific context.

Naturally, the heavy flow of Dracula-related posts appearing on people’s dashboards generated a lot of confusion at the start. The first posts I myself observed included very subtle mentions about “Jonathan,” without giving any further explanation on the context. During these first couple of days, it seemed as if many people had suddenly acquired an interest in Dracula overnight. In a manner of speaking, that is exactly what happened. However, after the newsletter continued to update, the community of readers progressively increased and the Substack newsletter gained more visibility. By mid-May, Dracula Daily was well-known on Tumblr. If posts discussing Dracula were on the dashboard, it became abundantly clear that it was thanks to the newsletter.

When looking back at Tumblr in the near and distant future, the year 2022 will surely be synonymous with Dracula Daily. The collective reading, discussing, and analysing of Dracula will forever be a part of the history and culture of the site. In fact, according to the platform’s own Fandometrics database, which analyses the most popular tags, searches, and discussions on Tumblr, Dracula Daily was listed as most featured on the dashboard and most popular memes in Tumblr’s 2022 Year in Review (fandom, 2022b; fandom, 2022c). Under the category of Web Series, the newsletter ranked fourth in popularity (fandom, 2022d). Additionally, Dracula was the second book most blogged about in 2022, above literary favourites like The Harry Potter series and A Song of Ice and Fire (fandom, 2022a).

As earlier explained, this research was carried out by collecting and analysing a sample of 543 Tumblr posts found in the top post section of the Dracula Daily tag page from May 8 through November 12, 2022. These posts were collected in a private Tumblr blog that allowed me to develop a special taxonomy to classify each post according to their textual and visual content.



The following sections (4.1-4.5) aim to present a clear understanding of the blogging patterns and fan culture developed within the Dracula Daily fandom through its entire period of activity in 2022.

#### 4.1 Liveblogging

The serialisation format offered by Dracula Daily allowed readers to be updated with the events of the novel “in real-time.” Since epistolary updates were sent directly to one’s email, it is not wrong to assume that the consumption of the novel happened at an individual level: a subscriber received an update to their email, and they proceeded to read it at their own pace. Notwithstanding, once readers began to use social media to comment on the contents of every update with others, what started as an individual practice became a collective one. As a microblogging platform that encourages visual and textual conversation in order to foster the sense of community among media fans (Click & Scott, 2017, p. 87), Tumblr allowed readers to form a pseudo-book club to comment and discuss Dracula as shared in the format of Dracula Daily. More specifically, this community of readers liveblogged every update they received to offer their own commentary, opinions, and reactions.

The term liveblog (also stylised as *live-blog* or *live blog*) refers to live commentary, annotations, or reactions posted by a blog on an event that is taking place at the time of the writing. In digital journalism, liveblogs are used to provide short updates on a live event such as sports games, ceremonies, and political conflicts, often presented in chronological order (Avinesh et al. 2021, p. 31). However, liveblogging has become a common practice across microblogging platforms like X and Tumblr, which enable the live collective commenting and discussion of broadcasted media by a large group of people. Equally, the use of media-related hashtags allows users to specify what the contents of their post refers to. For instance, the second season of HBO’s television series *Euphoria* was broadcasted on Sunday nights during from January to February 2022. Viewers posted their live commenting of every new episode as it aired, sometimes followed by the hashtag #Euphoria. According to X (via Variety), *Euphoria* was the most posted show of the decade with over 30 million posts sent in relation to its second season (Spangler, 2022). Hashtags were used to measure the number of *Euphoria*-related posts. In this sense, hashtags can be crucial to understand the context of the post (cf. a post reading “oh my god” versus “oh my god #Euphoria”).

As is the case with X, liveblogging is one of the most common practices shared across several media fan communities on Tumblr. The habit of adding one's own observations and reactions to events as they are experienced often grants an opportunity to engage with other blogs. Tumblr's reblog and reply features ease the means of communication between users. This kind of participation frequently enhances the feeling of belonging to a fandom (Hillman et al., 2014, p. 4).

Tags and tagging are important issues when it comes to liveblogging on Tumblr, especially due to potential unwanted spoilers being shared to a media's main tag page. In most fandoms, the term main tag refers to the tag with the media's name, e.g., #supernatural, #euphoria, #football, #nhl. Because there are official rules of Tumblr fandom etiquette to follow, users have long debated on whether it is correct or not to tag spoilers while the event is still being broadcasted (McCracken et al., 2020, p. 34). Consequently, a common liveblogging tag that has been adopted to avoid spoilers is *name of show/event* + *lb*<sup>10</sup>. This allows liveblogging content to be filtered out of the main tag page, thus avoiding the risk of potentially spoiling the show for others.

To illustrate this tagging practice, some of the most popular liveblogging tags for current television series are #911 lb (ABC's *9-1-1*, 2018-), #tlof lb (*The Last of Us*, 2023-), and #wwdits lb (*What We Do in The Shadows*, 2019-). Notwithstanding, this tagging practice includes more than television shows. For example, the liveblog of spectacles like Eurovision (#esc lb, #eurovision lb) and sport games (#football lb, #nhl lb, #wwe lb) also share the same tagging format. Moreover, the concept of liveblogging on Tumblr extends beyond the act of covering live events. Rather, these can also be live commentary offered by a user as they consume a form of media. It is not uncommon to find liveblogs of older television series, films, books, among others. What the hashtag signifies is that the blogger is reacting to something they are consuming at the time of posting.

Understanding thus liveblogging as a common fan practice on Tumblr, and in view of the Dracula Daily fandom as a community of readers who offered commentary of every email update, it is not hard to see how hundreds of liveblogs were posted after every update of the newsletter. Liveblogging posts were, by a large margin, the most common post types found in the collected sample of Tumblr posts. In my developed taxonomy, these posts were tagged as

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<sup>10</sup> Here *lb* is an abbreviation of liveblog.

“topic: liveblog.” Out of 543, 303 were Dracula Daily liveblog posts. While the majority of these posts were text posts, some of them also include attached images below, such as reaction images and memes to further stress a specific emotion evoked by the text.

Liveblogs covered every major and minor plot point of the novel. For example, most of the May newsletter updates share the arc of Jonathan Harker arriving in Transylvania and becoming the Count’s prisoner at the Castle. Liveblogs were posted about classic scenes during this act, such as Harker failing to see the Count’s reflection in the mirror (“*he’s like. “Haha. That was weird. Fuck this*

*mirror” AND THROWS IT OUT THE WINDOW AND THEN LEAVES”*) or the first times that he sees the Count climbing down the walls of the castle (“*“Once more have I seen the Count go out in his lizard fashion” is the FUNNIEST opening for an entry Jonathan I love you so”*). At the same time, since readers receive every journal

entry formatted as an email, readers created a running joke or textual meme about Harker writing emails as he was a prisoner inside the Castle. “*Dracula may have robbed Jonathan of any scrap of paper to his name but at least he overlooked his foldable chromebook laptop, upon which he writes us his little emails,*” reads a liveblog after the May 31 update, which sees Harker write his last entry as a prisoner before his next entry on June 17.

The Dracula Daily format not only allowed users to collectively liveblog Dracula, but it also changed some of the narrative flow. Offering the novel in chronological order allowed the reader to learn about some events beforehand, whereas they would be revealed in a different order in the original novel. That is the case of the log of the Demeter, a sailing vessel transporting Count Dracula’s boxes of earth to Whitby. Unbeknownst to the ship captain and his crew, the Count was on board. One by one, members of the crew started to mysteriously disappear. As a liveblog post summarises the event by writing, “*Sea shanty about a crew disappearing at sea but as it’s sung fewer and fewer people are singing until it’s just one person left.*” The log of the Demeter is told from the captain’s perspective through several short newsletter updates from July to August. In Stoker’s original novel, this is later presented as a series of clippings found by Mina Murray, whilst Dracula Daily shares each update on the



Figure 13. Screenshot of a Tumblr text post liveblogging a Dracula Daily update. (Source: Research material [ @draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

day the logs were entered. A user writes about the change in focus brought in reading the novel in chronological order, stating that “*since we’ve already read the captain’s log, we immediately recognize the ship for what it is, and it adds to the horror as we know exactly what that ship brings.*”

In order to understand the content of liveblog posts, it was necessary to be up-to-date with the latest Dracula Daily updates. For instance, a post collected on November 4 simply reads “*Uh. Did Mina eat someone?*” This question is related to a scene in the novel that alludes that Mina, affected by vampirism, could have been feeding on Van Helsing unbeknownst to him, as the following passage describes; “I go to help her; but she smile, [sic] and tell me that she

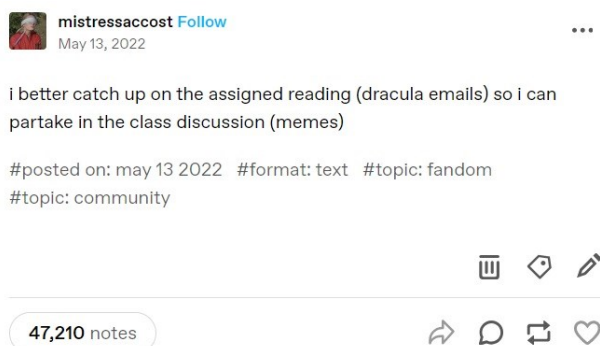


Figure 14. Screenshot of a Tumblr text post discussing the need to be up-to-date with the newsletter. (Source: Research material [@draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

have eat already—that she was so hungry that she would not wait” (Stoker, 1983, p. 396). Those who had not caught up with the latest email would not be able to understand the question, nor participate in discussions about this topic. In that regard, users felt motivated to read the novel in order to take part in the activities of the fandom (see Figure 14.).

## 4.2 Characters and their Relationships

Media fans often develop especial attachment to their favourite characters and favourite relationships. In fact, members of online media fan communities are oftentimes brought together by their interest in individual characters or relationships alone, choosing not to engage with the entirety of the media canon (Leavenworth & Isaksson, 2013, p. 45). As Tumblr established itself as a fandom platform in the 2010s, specific characters of popular media at the time stood out as fan-favourites in their fandoms. Marvel’s trickster god *Loki*, Supernatural’s angel *Castiel*, and Hannibal’s detective *Will Graham* are all examples of well-liked media characters that fans blog a lot about.

At first glance, one could think that the Dracula Daily community on Tumblr showed interest in the most popular character of the story: Count Dracula. After all, it is likely that the

majority of the readers were familiar with the character prior to subscribing to Dracula Daily. And how not to; some version of Count Dracula has made its presence across hundreds of different media, including TV, films, video games, graphic novels, among others (Browning & Picart, 2010, p. 215). However, Tumblr users were considerably less interested by the original presentation of the Count in the novel as the story progressed and other amicable characters such as Quincey Morris and Abraham Van Helsing were introduced. In the same vein, a user writes that despite Tumblr's affinity to like and emphasise with villainous characters, "[users] took one look at the canonical Dracula and went, no."

The collected sample offers a comprehensive look at the most blogged-about characters of the novel. As seen in the table below, Jonathan Harker was the most popular character in the fandom for the duration of the newsletter. While the Count came in third place, it must be noted that interest in the vampire decreased with the passage of time. The opposite can be said about Harker, being a fan-favourite through the six months of fandom activity.

Table 2. Posts about characters

Summary of the most blogged Dracula characters as seen in the collected sample

Characters	Number of posts
Abraham Van Helsing	48
Arthur Holmwood	8
Count Dracula	75
Dr John Seward	28
Jonathan Harker	134
Lucy Westenra	52
Mina Murray	81
Renfield	3
Quincey Morris	42

"*jonathan harker 2022's most unexpected blorbo*," is one of six different instances that this phrase appeared in the collected data. Hillman et al. (2014) point out that Tumblr fan communities frequently create their own jargon or language based on their activities and practices (p. 7). The slang phrase "blorbo from my shows" became popular on Tumblr at the end of 2021 to refer to any fan's beloved character from any source of media. It was widely used in fandom circles throughout 2022, but it has decreased in popularity as of 2024. Still, the word blorbo in this context translates into a character that people are fond of.

Certainly so, Jonathan Harker became Tumblr's favourite Dracula character to blog about, and he was addressed as such. The fandom collectively decided to call Jonathan as *our good*

*friend*, thus remarking the connection they felt towards Harker. While some of these feelings stem from the thorough reading of Harker’s journal entries during the entire month of May, there was a lot of praise and surprise on how well the character was written, as per the readers’ views. A common agreement among bloggers was that Stoker managed to brilliantly capture and describe Jonathan’s post-traumatic stress disorder after being imprisoned and escaping Castle Dracula. As evidence, a user writes how “*Jonathan’s PTSD attack scene is so realistic. He’s not manfully and stoically just enduring flashbacks. He rages, he screams, he starts detailing every single thing that traumatised him (even things he never wrote about!) then collapses, violently shivers all over, and sobs.*” The scene in question belongs to the October 30 update of the newsletter.



Figure 15. Screenshot of a Tumblr text post about Jonathan Harker. (Source: Research material [ @draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

As I have mentioned earlier, despite its several TV and film adaptations, the authentic story of Dracula is yet to appear in the media. Most adaptations either leave out important plots and characters, or simply reconfigure the entire story to fit the standards of the industry. Although still taking some liberties, the 1977 British film *Count Dracula* is often regarded as the most faithful adaptation by fans and Dracula scholars alike (Skal, 2004). Nevertheless, this film does not have the same popular culture presence as more popular adaptations like Francis Ford Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, or the PlayStation’s 2004 video game *Van Helsing*. To reiterate, popular adaptations often influence the way fans understand and interpret media and, in this case, the characters (García-Rapp, 2021, p. 221). Thus, for the majority of readers who only knew of Dracula via adaptations, following Dracula Daily was the first time they were introduced to Stoker’s authentic vampire story.

For example, many were surprised at the sweet and devoted representation of the relationship between Jonathan Harker and his fiancée (later wife) Mina Murray in the novel. Some readers were aware that many Dracula adaptations have chosen to present the Count as Mina’s love interest, which does not occur in the novel. This realisation led many to write posts about the importance of the relationship between Jonathan and Mina, highlighting how “*Jonathan’s unabashed devotion to Mina to the point of explicit blasphemy,*” and “*nothing in Coppola’s*

*Dracula that will ever be more romantic than Jonathan Harker holding Mina close despite her thinking she's dangerous and tainted,*" once Mina becomes infected by vampirism.

The interest in the fictional (and sometime real-life) relationships is also important within fan practices. In fandom slang, the term *shipping* refers to the act of liking and supporting a romantic relationship between two or more characters (a pairing). Pairings are often referred to a *ship*, shortened from the word relationship, and they can be part of the canon (official, as described in the source media) or fanon (accepted by fans, not canonical). Similarly, the term *OTP* (one true pairing) is an older concept to indicate a "set of characters that fan(s) pair together" (Hillman et al., 2014, p. 7). Although originally the acronym OTP was used in the context of slash, namely same-sex relationships (Jenkins, 2013, p. 193), the concept has evolved to describe someone's top relationship above any other, regardless of gender or sexuality. Fans often give ships a portmanteau couple name by combining the character's names together (e.g., *Hannigram* for Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter), or in other cases by simply adding an "x" between the name of two characters (e.g., *Will x Hannibal*).

Although many fans addressed the group of vampire hunters led by Van Helsing as "the polycule," this seemed to be in a rather humorous context. The fan practice of shipping was observed in other stances. For example, the ship name *Jonmina* was coined to share thoughts and discuss the canonical relationship between Jonathan and Mina (see Table 3.). As the novel progresses towards its end and the focus shifts to the attempts by Van Helsing and the rest of the group to cure Mina of her "impurity," readers paid close attention to how the relationship is written about, especially from Mina and Jonathan's perspectives.<sup>11</sup> "*He's right there, full of fury and rage, ready to cut Dracula in half and drag him to hell himself. All for Mina. He's ready to become a vampire for Mina,*" a reader writes about Jonathan's feelings for Mina as she begins to show signs of vampirism.

Table 3. Posts about relationships

Summary of the most blogged (canon and fanon) relationships as seen in the collected sample

Relationship	Ship name	Number of posts
Dr Seward and Arthur	Holmward	5
Jonathan and Dracula	-	1
Jonathan and Mina	Jonmina	22
Lucy and Mina	-	9

<sup>11</sup> Both Jonathan and Mina Harker are point of view characters in the novel.

Although queer representation is not explicitly present in Stoker's writing through canonical queer characters, there is lengthy academic research done on the underlying homosexual inclinations of the novel. The early research of Christopher Craft's *"Kiss Me with those Red Lips": Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1984) and Stephan Schaffrath's *Order-versus-chaos dichotomy in Bram Stoker's Dracula* (2002) have offered an analysis of the Count's vampirism as the representation of his otherness; namely, his queerness. Eszter Muskovits (2010) expands on these ideas by emphasising that "the character of the vampire definitely carries in itself the anxiety in respect to homosexuality." To prove this element of queerness, Muskovits uses the example of the Count exclaiming "This man belongs to me!" in reference to Jonathan Harker (Stoker, 1993, p. 39). Muskovits views this as an expression of the Count's homosexual desire for Harker.

Because fan communities on Tumblr are often queer diverse, one can deduce that Dracula Daily readers were able to spot these homosexual undertones. The evidence can perhaps be found in Archive of Our Own (AO3), a website that hosts and archives fanfiction. At the time of my writing, over half of the 610 written works depicting a romantic relationship between Count Dracula and Jonathan Harker were posted after May 2022. While the relationship between the Count and Jonathan was rarely blogged about from a romantic perspective, the queer undertones of two other relationships were brought up by users.

The friendship between Mina Murray and her best friend Lucy Westenra was the only female relationship read through queer lenses. During the first months of the newsletter, readers were introduced to their friendship as the two exchanged correspondence. A text post claims that Lucy "*writes some of the most homoerotic sentences i've ever read to mina*" in reference to the following letter excerpt from May 11: "I wish I were with you, dear, sitting by the fire undressing" (Stoker, 1983, p. 55) The explicitness of the text is what perhaps drew readers into the queer reading of Mina and Lucy's relationship at the start.

In a similar manner, the shipping of Dr John Seward and Arthur Holmwood, also known as *Holmward*, occurred as the newsletter posted the novel's epilogue, which takes place seven years after the end of the events of the novel and is written by Jonathan Harker. The third paragraph of the update reads that "Godalming [Holmwood] and Seward are both happily married" (Stoker, 1983, p. 378). Some readers chose to interpret the text as if the two men had married each other, rather than the more canonically accurate interpretation of each of them finding a wife. With humorous text posts like "*I can't believe Jonathan Harker legalized gay*



*marriage in Victorian England for his friends,”* and others choosing to offer a little more historical context on the history of same-sex couples in 19<sup>th</sup> century England, holding that “*were marrying their same-sex partners long before the state agreed to recognise it.*”

### 4.3 Fanworks

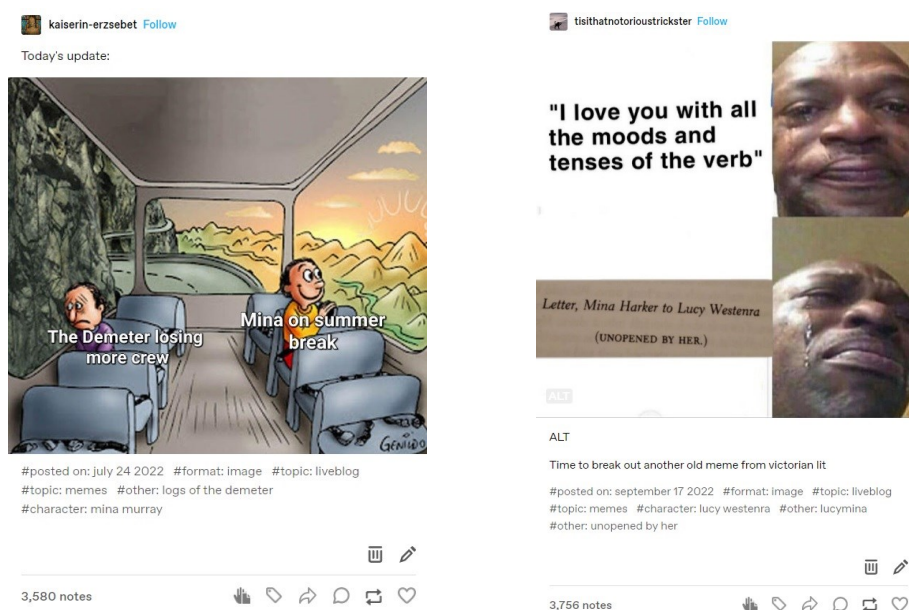
Creation has always been a common practice in fannish communities. To restate Jenkins’s (2006a) words, media consumption naturally translates into production (p. 41). In other words, fans are inspired by the media they consume to produce their own transformative fanworks. Commonly, these fan-produced works include fanfiction (written works), fanart and memes (visual works), fanvids fancams (audiovisual works), among others. Jenkins (2013) expanded on this concept by explaining that fanworks are also heavily influenced by social norms, aesthetics, and resources present within a specific fandom itself (p. 50). In this sense, despite similarities in tropes and trends, each fan community develops fanworks that are unique to their media of choice. For example, an artist that draws cowboy-themed fanart of their favourite characters from the television series *Supernatural* would theoretically be different than the work of an artist that would follow the same thematic with characters from the *Star Wars* franchise. Stylistic choices and skills, current trends, and influences from the source material all impact the way a fanartist chooses to illustrate the media they consume.

Tumblr hosts a large amount of fanworks from hundreds of different fandoms. As a microblogging platform, Tumblr relies heavily on visual imagery, which enables fans to use all of its available tools to develop new ways to create and share fanworks (Marimoto, 2018). Influenced by its predecessor fan platform LiveJournal, Tumblr helps artists to push the boundaries on what fanart is. Illustrations, graphics, photo edits, manips, GIFs, and memes (image macros) all fall under this category. Click & Scott (2017) indicate that the Tumblr’s gifsets, a combination of two to ten GIFs in the same post, allows fans to offer character studies and analysis similar to those in fan remix videos (p. 94). While gifmaking as a fan practice extends beyond several social media platforms, gifmaking culture is strong on Tumblr.

Based on the research material, the two most common forms of visual fanworks were memes and fanarts, with 90 and 60 posts collected respectively. In *The Language of Internet Memes*, Patrick Davison offers an academic definition of meme, explaining they are “a piece of

culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission” (Davidson, 2012, p. 122). According to McCracken et al. (2020), Tumblr memes “are sophisticated inside jokes, relying on intimate knowledge of both texts” (p. 182). That is to say, in order for people to understand the nature of fannish memes shared on Tumblr, they must be familiar with the fandom, characters, and references the meme alludes to, otherwise, the humour is lost.

In the context of *Dracula Daily*, in addition to the point raised by McCracken et al. (2020), it was necessary for the reader to be up to date with the newsletter and to understand the memes created and shared by the community. Most of these memes were posted as images with a caption in reference to the novel and its characters (macro images), but sometimes were also included under text posts. As it was the case with liveblog posts, the majority of these memes addressed parts of the latest update in a highly specific manner, focusing on the narrative and the role the novel’s characters played in it. For example, some of the memes in the collected sample are reinterpretations of popular internet memes captioned with the names of characters to illustrate their doings in the most recent update. On the other hand, another recurring theme found was the use of memes as reaction images to express the readers’ reception to the update. In both of these cases, the use of memes is complementary to reading the newsletter and interpreting its content (*see* Figure 16.). In this regard, memes could act as spoilers for anyone who had fallen behind in their reading.



**Figure 16.** Screenshots of two meme posts. On the left, a meme illustrating the events that took place on the July 24 update of the newsletter. On the right, a meme is used to exhibit a reader’s reaction to Mina’s unopened letter to Lucy. (Source: Research material [ @draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

Given that most memes are built upon pre-existing images, the creation-to-posting timeframe of a meme can be relatively short. This allowed Dracula Daily memes to be published almost as soon, or even before readers had finished going through an update. On another hand, the creation and later sharing of fan illustrations of the novel took longer; unlike memes, fanart depicting specific scenes from the updates were usually shared days after said update was posted. Traditionally, fanart has been a big part of fan culture (Jenkins, 2013, p. 47; Marimoto, 2018). In the context of media fandom, the origins of fanart can be traced back to science fiction *fanzines* (also known as *zines*; amateur magazines created and often distributed by fans) that were published in the 1960s and 1970s (Fanlore, n.d.-d). The move of media fandom to the internet has made the circulation of fanart in fandom more accessible; fanartists do not have to rely on the printing and shipping of their illustrations for them to reach fellow fans, but rather, these illustrations can be shared within fan communities through different channels, such as social media, online portfolios, file sharing, and online fanzines.

The illustrations of the novel drawn by fanartists focused on two major topics present throughout the novel: death and love. In terms of death, or rather, becoming an “Un-Dead,” the turning of Lucy Westenra inspired as many as 10 out of the 60 fanart posts collected in the sample (see Figure 17.). The abundance of fanart based on Lucy’s death may be thanks to the format of Dracula Daily; once again, because of the serialisation format of the newsletter, Lucy’s illness, her death, and staking took place in email updates spanning from August to October. In other words, Lucy’s fate developed gradually through the course of several months, whereas these events can be read fast by following the novel’s original order. As a user puts it, “*rereading Dracula as it happens has really recontextualised just how tragic Lucy's death really is. A sequence you might read in an hour or so going through the novel now becomes an agonising two week wait for the inevitable.*”



Figure 17. Screenshot of a fanart post by user crepuscol depicting Lucy Westenra as a recently turned vampire. (Source: Research material [@draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

While elements of sorrow, trauma, and dread prevailed in fan illustrations, themes of love, romance, and companionship found in *Dracula* were equally represented in fanart. Despite the several readings of *Dracula* in terms of sexuality and eroticism (c.f. Lynch, 2009; Craft, 1984), these illustrations reflect the platonic and (non-sexual) romantic relationships forged in the novel. As described in the previous section, the canon relationship between Jonathan and Mina was particularly popular among readers. This translated into illustrations as well. However, other platonic relationships such as Dr John Seward and Abraham Van Helsing, or between Mina and Lucy were also featured.

Fandom can provide spaces for fans to approach a wide array of topics and concerns in relation to gender, sexuality, race, and politics, which are often reflected and discussed through fanworks (Jenkins, 2013, p. 289). For example, the reimagination of a character's race or ethnicity in fanart, known as *racebending*, is a common fan practice that often makes visible the lack of racial minorities in popular Western media. Asst. Prof. Rukmini Pande highlights the popularity of racebending on Tumblr, suggesting that non-white fans have become aware of the whiteness of fandom, and have created spaces in their community to



*Figure 18.* Two racebent illustrations by fanartist marghen. On the left, Mina Murray sits on a chair reading Jonathan Harker's journal. On the right, an illustration based on the novel's prologue including Mina, Jonathan, and their son. (Source: Research material [@draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

explore their racial identity (McCracken et al., 2020, p. 171). Furthermore, seeing that the topic of race and whiteness has been reflected in the fear of "otherness" present in several readings of *Dracula* (Lynch, 2009; Gammello, 2018), the reasons behind the racial reconceptualization of traditionally white characters from the novel in the *Dracula Daily* community become clear. As seen in Figure 18., the depiction of Mina Murray as a Black character is, in detail, a clear example of racebending shown in the community.

#### 4.4 Discourse and Analysis

As discussed in Chapter 1, the legacy of *Dracula* as a classic of Gothic literature has been the focus of academic interest for decades. Scholars often seek to examine Stoker's text in hopes

to offer new theories and readings of the novel, or expand on existing ones. In addition to aforementioned academic articles that offer insights into issues such as gender and sexuality in *Dracula* (Craft, 1984; Schaffrath, 2002; Muskovits, 2010), other academic works like *Bram Stoker's Dracula: Sucking Through the Century, 1897-1997* by C. M. Davison (Ed., 1999) and *Critical Insights: Dracula* by Jack Lynch (Ed., 2009) compile articles and essays that cover several academic approaches to the novel. Ermida (2015) argues that the effect *Dracula* had on latter Gothic expressions is due to Stoker's approach to depicting several social and moral issues in the story, such as "the perils of a contagious, sexualized body, the risks of crossing strange new places, and approaching new types of knowledge, scientific and subjective alike" (p. 6). Even though many of these moral and societal issues are explored through late-19<sup>th</sup> century Western societal lenses, the narrative allows for further interpretation and analysis even today (cf. Ismael & Jassim, 2020).

Such interpretations and theoretical approaches were carried out by members of the *Dracula* Daily community. Granted, the collective reading of *Dracula* sparked inner jokes and humorous remarks by its readers on Tumblr as I highlighted in the previous sections, but more serious discussions regarding serious topics like racism, xenophobia, and sexism included in Stoker's writing also took place. Most of these analyses were shared as text posts, often including lengthy paragraphs that opened up subjects and commonly offered other sources for reference. For example, the portrayal of Romani people early in the novel as Jonathan Harker encounters the Szgany was broadly discussed on Tumblr. Beyond the use of ethnic slurs and bold racial stereotypes, readers pointed out Stoker's racist depiction of the Szgany ("*they are 'without religion, save superstition,' i.e. Godless heathens, i.e. their religion isn't a version of Christianity so it isn't a legitimate religion*"). The analysis of Victorian anxieties about otherness (foreigners) in Stoker's writing has been covered extensively in works like Matthew J. Bolton's *Dracula and Victorian Anxieties* and Allan Johnson's *Modernity and Anxiety in Bram Stoker's Dracula* (In *Critical Insights: Dracula*, 2009).

Likewise, some of the textual analysis was offered as commentary, or rather criticism of known academic interpretations of the novel. The literary reading of Lucy Westenra becoming a sexual being and acting on repressed desires as result of vampirism has been one of the focal points of analysis by *Dracula* scholars. This approach is based on the core thoughts that vampirism is a form of Victorian anxiety that "represents the dangerous return of repressed sexual desire" (Lynch, 2009, p. 59), and "vampirism for men is about power, whereas for women it is about sexuality and desire" (Lynch, 2009, p. 64). In this regard, a

reader offers another perspective to Lucy's change post-infection; "*I personally think this is a misreading. I think we are supposed to read the sudden sensuality as a kind of perverse inversion of Lucy's pure love for Arthur and the suitors. It is showing us how big the change is from who she was, and that is supposed to be horrifying.*" This approach refutes the claim that vampirism allows women to act on their own repressed sexual desires, which in turn "frees" them from these restraints, but suggests that Lucy's sexual behaviour is rather a symptom of changing into a monstrous creature that is no longer herself.

As I have been establishing, fan culture is dialogic and collaborative by nature. According to Jenkins (2006b), the scrutinization of information centred around media text is generally done collectively and shared among members of the community (p. 28). The sharing of information is albeit not always mutual: older or more experienced fans with access to deeper information the fandom and its media source are often viewed as "fan curators" (Click & Scott, 2017, p. 107), a role that is often associated with using their expertise to help new or more casual fans. This role was also present in the Dracula Daily community as those who had already read

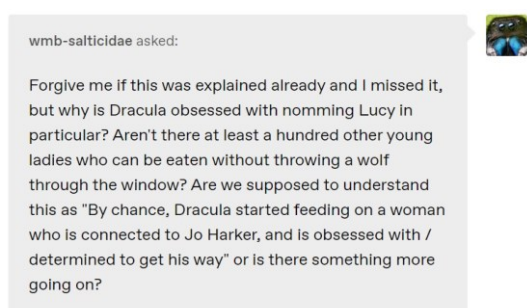


Figure 19. Screenshot of an ask sent to a blog once it became apparent that Count Dracula has been feeding on Lucy. (Source: Research material [@draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)



Dracula multiple times in the past and/or studied Stoker's writing before. A good example of how these interactions occurred in the community is one of the four asks<sup>12</sup> collected in the sample, where a user questions the reason why Count Dracula chose to feed on Lucy (see Figure 19.).

The message is answered by offering two perspectives that are regularly brought up when

engaging in online fandom discussions: the *Doylist* and *Watsonian*. It is believed that the terms originated in the Sherlock Holmes fandom, but it applies to most ways a fan can view and interpret media text (Helford et al., 2016, p. 58). Shortly, a Watsonian reading of a text is done from the perspective of the text itself (Fanlore, n.d.-c). In other words, explanations are drawn from the elements present in the fictional world in question. On the other hand, a Doylist reading takes the author and other real external influences into account. "*If the Count moved on and preyed on someone else, we would have to shift to some other set of characters*

<sup>12</sup> Tumblr asks allow users to send a message to another blog. Asks can be answered privately or publicly. When answered publicly, these messages become a post that can be reblogged and replied to by other others, thus enabling dialogue between several users.

*somewhere else in London. Which would understandably make the narrative bigger. So Stoker chooses to keep it limited,*” is the Doyleist perspective given in the answer. This is followed by a second, longer interpretation, the Watsonian reading of the text, where the user thinks that the Count’s motives are driven by his unwillingness to give up on Lucy “*he has laid claim to someone and he refuses to be defeated or told no. (...) So no matter how much easier it would be to find someone else, he will not let anyone keep him from what he thinks is his.*” In this particular case, even though the analysis of *Dracula* arguably presents a more academic approach than the analysis of other media sources, say, a television series, the open discussion of media texts is part of a larger participatory culture that is regularly present in fandom.

In addition to these analyses, *Dracula Daily* readers also initiated long discussions on peculiar issues found in the novel. The word *discourse* is used in fandom, particularly on Tumblr, in reference to ongoing and popular debates, conversations, and sometimes arguments related to a specific topic. These debates often involve several people with opposing perspectives who engage in public or private conversation to prove a point. I mentioned at the start of the chapter the origins of the paprika discourse, which at its core is a long debate discussing whether the Hungarian dish eaten by Jonathan Harker, *paprika hendl*, is truly sweet or spicy.

Although much of the paprika discourse enabled the creation of memes (see Figure 20.), the readers’ opinion was highly divided in the nature of paprika hendl. For example, a Hungarian user proposes that “*paprika hendl is simply german for our national dish paprikás csirke and it is Not made with spicy paprika,*” while a contradicting argument is expressed by stating that “*sweet peppers actually were first bred in the 1920s, paprika couldn't have been sweet before then.*”



Figure 20. A meme depicting the paprika discourse originated on Tumblr. The original post has over 50.000 notes. (Source: Research material [@draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

Regardless of what the flavour profile of paprika hendl was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, what is of interest here is the way the topic was debated by readers. It is an example of what Jenkins (2013) calls an organised fandom: a semi structured space that enables the continuous theory, interpretation, and criticism of text by its fans (p. 88).

#### 4.5 Community

Fandoms rely on the participatory culture of their members; it is their collaborative efforts to create, share, discuss, and analyse media while establishing connections with others that create a fandom in the first place. As Click & Scott (2017) highlight, “fan work creates fan community — fandom itself” (p. 78). With that in mind, it seemed appropriate to include a section to discuss the lingering self-reflexivity of the Dracula Daily fandom.

The term self-reflexivity refers to how people evaluate and “evaluate and observe the effects of their own practice” (Mohamund, 2021). In the context of fan studies, self-reflexivity is applied to describe how fans reflect upon their own attitudes and behaviours. Already within the first weeks of newsletter updates, Dracula Daily readers made posts to talk about the quick growth of the community on the platform. Not only was there a lot of interest towards learning more about Dracula Daily, but in the interest shown *towards* the novel by other Tumblr users. For example, on a May 6 post, a user writes “*the new mcu movie came out or whatever and were [sic] all on here blogging about bram stokers hit 1897 novel dracula i love this website.*” This is in reference to *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* (2022), a heavily anticipated Marvel film that premiered in theatres in May 2022. While the Marvel fandom has been one of the largest and most popular on Tumblr for years, the emerging fandom of Dracula Daily eclipsed the interest in the film in fan spaces. Moreover, this user sees this in a positive light; “*i love this website*” very much translates to familiarity with fan culture on Tumblr, and interest in the emerging Dracula Daily community.

Curiously, even in these early posts, readers talked about the community as a “we,” not “them,” thus identifying themselves as members of the fandom. This further supports the claim by Hillman et al. (2014) on Tumblr users not needing to be accepted into any fan culture spaces, but rather, becoming part of a fandom “when they feel they are” (p. 4). To put it differently, whereas forums or fan sites usually have moderators that allow people to join closed fan communities, Tumblr fosters a more relaxed approach to building connections



between fans. Although a certain hierarchy will always be inherent to fan culture (e.g. non-fans versus casual fans versus hardcore fans versus *stans* [Fanlore, n.d.-b]), viewing the community as “we” suggests a level of sameness between all readers.

The symbiotic nature of Tumblr and its userbase has allowed for participation to happen organically. Unlike platforms like X and Instagram, where official accounts oftentimes assume the role of authorised agents to encourage dialogue between fans (e.g., the use of the phrase “drop your favourite [something] below” and polls for fans to vote), Tumblr users start conversations and discourse by their own merit. As I briefly explained in Chapter 2, the concept of social media influencer does not have a place in Tumblr culture, especially in fandom spaces. Fans establish connections due to their shared interest or, oftentimes, shared aesthetics. Adding to this perspective, Click & Scott (2017) consider that the visual and textual features of Tumblr encourage conversation between its users (p. 87). In turn, this active dialogue between users helps in fostering a feeling of community.

As I have established through my text, participation is the backbone of fandom. While I have been making emphasis on the creation of sharing of fanworks, this also includes *dialogic* participation. However, unlike X or the social media forum Reddit, conversation threads are not that common on Tumblr. While reblogs allow users to add visible comments on posts, the use of Tumblr’s tagging system to communicate stands out. Tags are commonly preferred by users as a form of “silent communication” on the platform, i.e., a passive way to add their own commentary to posts without having to add text under the original post. What is colloquially referred to as “talking in the tags” has become a big part of Tumblr culture and the communication practices of its user base almost since its inception (Bourlai, 2018, p. 51). More specifically, talking in the tags is part of modern fan culture on the platform, and its use is encouraged after offering few conversation starters.



*Figure 21.* Screenshot of a text post asking for members of the Dracula Daily fandom to discuss prior knowledge of Dracula-related media. Polls had not been introduced on Tumblr until January 2023. (Source: Research material [@draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

This was also the case for the Dracula Daily fandom. There was a lot of interest in learning what others thought of the novel throughout the entire run of the newsletter. These posts commonly included the phrase “*reblog and say in the tags...*” followed by the topic of dialogue (see Figure 21. above). In turn, other Dracula Daily readers would reblog the post and add the tags to talk about their experiences, thoughts, and/or give as much information as desired.

Throughout my text, I have referred to the Dracula Daily fandom as a pseudo book-club; admittedly, the term was coined by the readers themselves. But rather than simply discussing the novel, Tumblr gave readers the platform to transform the consumption of Dracula into social and fannish activities. This became a focal point in terms of the self-reflexivity I mentioned earlier. To illustrate this point, readers often blogged about loving the memes the entire community were posting, or enjoying a particular interpretation of the novel that gained popularity in the fandom. Simply put, Dracula Daily fans were not only posting about the novel, but about themselves.



Figure 22. Screenshot of a text post where a user describes their experience as a newsletter reader and fandom member. (Source: Research material [@draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

couple of months of newsletter activity. Users made several posts reminiscing on how each big event of the novel was discussed, on the memes created, and the livid conversations about very trivial topics as the previously mentioned paprika discourse. As another user puts it, “We

Click & Scott (2017) attest that fan-reflexivity is commonly addressed in relation to the multiplicity of Tumblr’s interface (p. 95). Fans analyse their own participation in fandom, and use Tumblr posts to express them via text, images, GIFs, and tags. They offer an insight into a community by talking about their own perceived experience from within, and, thanks to Tumblr’s multidirectional flow, is often expanded on by other fans.

This ongoing self-reflexivity became even more visible towards the last

*developed strong attachments to the characters, became deeply invested in the story, and stuck to reading it for a whole year.”*

The majority of posts dealing with the self-reflexivity of the fandom do conclude by stating how the feeling of community will be missed once Dracula Daily comes to an end. With messages of *“it’s been a pleasure,”* users proceed to thank others for making their fan experience a rather positive one. At the same time, one post in the collected sample directly addresses the emotional messages (and goodbyes) posted by others by assuring that *“dracula has been around for over a century guys it’s not going anywhere any time soon.”* This user is not wrong, yet I suggest that the post fails to address the sentiment that fellow fans kept expressing: it is not following Dracula Daily the only thing that will be missed, but rather, fandom itself, the shared experience readers got from reading Dracula with others.

Based on the self-reflexivity of the community, especially towards the end of the newsletter, I strongly suggest that fan culture of Tumblr influenced the reading experience of Dracula, as the evidence shows that being part of the community was nearly as special as reading the novel.

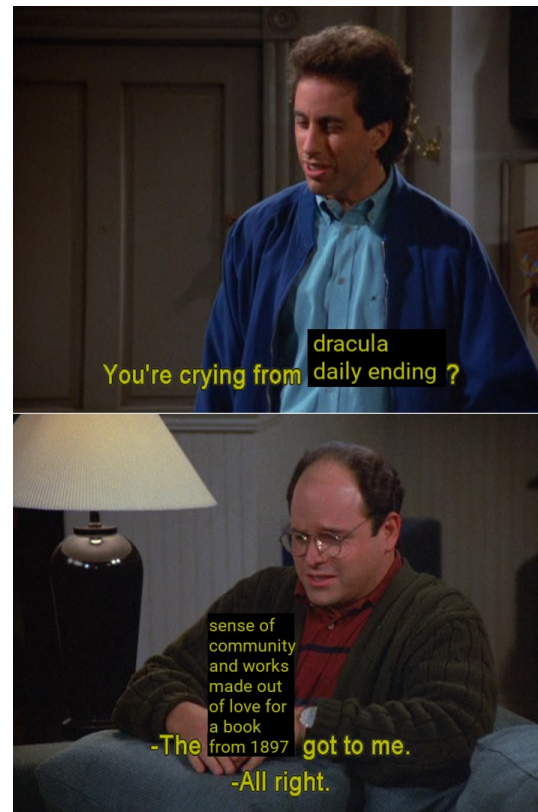


Figure 23. A meme depicting the collective thoughts on Dracula Daily ending. (Source: Research material [@draculadailylog archive blog, Tumblr], 2022)

## Discussion

This dissertation examined the effects of *Dracula Daily* in the reader and fan experience of *Dracula* by researching the 2022 activity of its fandom on Tumblr. The case of *Dracula Daily* is fairly new in the field of digital culture and, more specifically, for fan studies. While earlier research on Tumblr has explored its subcultures and fan communities, they are yet to examine a new phenomenon like *Dracula Daily* from my proposed perspective and objectives. In other words, my research stands out by thoroughly examining the role of digital storytelling in bridging the gap between a literary classic and modern fan culture, and in doing so, influencing the way readers engage with the text.

In performing a qualitative content analysis of over 500 Tumblr posts collected over the course of six months during the 2022 edition of the newsletter, my research was able to establish several blogging patterns and behaviours.

Firstly, liveblogging each newsletter update was by far the most common fan practice observed in the community. This speaks towards the need for discussion and dissemination of the material alongside media consumption, an attribute of fan cultures that has changed from individual to communal thanks to new technologies (Duffett 2013, p. 389). Based on the presented evidence, a microblogging platform has proven to be an ideal place for liveblogs to take place. Tumblr gave users a digital environment where to express their immediate thoughts and reactions with fellow readers. At the same time, my study demonstrates that readers also took time to develop more complex thoughts and arguments surrounding the novel. From starting a fandom-wide discourse on something as trivial as Stoker's writings on paprika, or offering detailed analysis of literary plots that require close reading, fans showed a lot of interest in doing close readings of the epistolary excerpts of the novel received.

Liveblogs and other text posts had a lot of user engagement. As noted by Schirra et al. (2014) this often indicates that fans are interested in reading the opinions of others rather than expressing their own (p. 2449). The option to reblog posts gives users who are not comfortable with writing their own posts a way to share like-minded thoughts and opinions on certain topics. That said, my observations indicate that readers were quite dutiful in expressing themselves in relation to the development of the novel, regardless of the length of their posts. Liveblogs were popular throughout the entire course of the newsletter.

Next, my study shows that the Dracula Daily fandom took special interest in creating content pertaining to the novel. The community thrived in creativity, with hundreds of people sharing memes, fanart, and fanfiction. This flow of creative works that reimagine existing media also allowed fans to create or reinforce new narratives (Fiesler & Dym, 2020, p. 2). For instance, a few active fanartists reimaged the ethnicity of characters Mina and Jonathan Harker through their illustrations, thus creating a different narrative than that of the book. Memes were also part of this creative process, and as pointed out by several users, it was one of the fan activities they enjoyed and were looking for the most after every update.

All of the fan practices described above were noticed and celebrated by the community itself. My investigation points out patterns and signs of self-reflexivity from readers, especially towards the final months of the newsletter. Fandoms can and should be viewed as social and cultural communities (Jenkins, 2013, p. 77), fostering a sense of being part of something, of belonging to a specific tribe (Click & Scott, 2017, p. 102). Following this train of thought, it is common for fans to develop emotional connections to members of their community and attachment to the consumed media. In that regard, fans developed a peculiar attachment to character Jonathan Harker. The title of “our good friend” was bestowed upon him from the start, and carried all the way through the last updates in November. He became the most blogged-about character, and the loving nature of his relationship with Mina became the central focus of the shipping activities of the fandom.

By interpreting all of these findings and based on the theoretical framework of this dissertation, I propose that there are three key elements that affect how Dracula Daily readers engage with the novel: the newsletters’ chronology, its serialisation, and modern fan culture.

Presenting the events of Dracula in chronological order had a big impact on when, how, and what the newsletter subscribers were reading. The chronology of Dracula Daily allowed for the events to progress in a linear form; A leads to B leads to C leads to D, whereas in the authentic text by Stoker it is presented in a non-linear matter: A leads to D leads to B leads to C. In this case, Stoker’s intentions to reveal future events earlier in the text or vice versa is removed from the narrative. Thus, Dracula Daily creates a new narrative that influences the textual interpretation of the novel, producing new meaning.

One of the clearest examples of how chronology affects the reader experience of Dracula is found by briefly revisiting the topic of the log of the Demeter. This section of the novel

centres on the captain's log of the ship that unknowingly transports Count Dracula to England. The linear chronology affects the narration in such level that even the newsletter editor, Matt Kirkland, included the following note in the first captain's log on July 18:

A note from the editor!

This is perhaps the weirdest part of our chronological reading of Dracula. In Stoker's original text, this passage comes on August 8 - and is included in a newspaper article that Mina will paste into her journal. The article is an account of a ship arriving in Whitby under mysterious circumstances, and then the journalist includes the 'Log of the Demeter' in the article as a kind of long flashback covering the entire journey.

However! I've chosen instead to present them ~almost~ as they happen, starting now. Today, the captain starts his special log entries on July 18, and creates a mini-flashback covering the journey so far. Further entries from the log will appear on the days they were written by the captain.

If Mr. Stoker has a problem with this he is cordially invited to rise from his mouldering grave and take it up with me personally.

Thanks, Matt. (Dracula Daily, 2022)

While Kirkland addresses this timeline alteration with humour, I sustain that it is one of the major changes that take the reader in a different direction than in the original version. By reading the log of the Demeter earlier than intended, readers already know an important turn of events that is not revealed until later on: the Count is aboard the ship and headed to Whitby, England, preying on the crew and captain until they all disappear. At the same time, learning this fact earlier inspired fans to have active discussions and create content, namely fanart and memes, on the subject. This exemplifies how the serialisation not only impacts the reader experience, but how fan experience as well.

In a similar manner, serialising Dracula had a strong impact on how the users interpreted and recontextualised many events of the novel. The turning of Lucy Westenra stands out. An avid book reader might pick up the novel and read the entire arc of Lucy's illness (vampirism) and subsequent death (both living and as an un-dead) in one sitting. It is fast, imminent, an obvious and unavoidable fate. However, when read in real-time, her death is everything but fast. Readers spend weeks reading updates on Lucy's condition. Sometimes these updates are a couple of sentences, yet sometimes can span many paragraphs. Through this serialised version, the progression of her illness is slow, oftentimes hopeful, but ultimately devastating.

Fans were able to pick on this fact, as I briefly mentioned in Chapter 4.3., and reacted favourably to this change in reader experience.

The Substack newsletter promotes itself as “the email newsletter that sends you Bram Stoker’s classic *Dracula* - in bite-sized pieces” (Dracula Daily, n.d.-a). And, indeed, serialising the novel may make it easier to consume for new readers. However, the serialisation of *Dracula* is everything but new. As it was established at the start of this research, the earliest serialised version of the novel dates back to 19<sup>th</sup> century America. The *Inter Ocean* newspaper from Chicago shared a serialised version of the novel between May-June 1899, entitled *The Strange Story of Dracula: A Tale of Thrilling Adventures, Mystery, and Romance*. Similarly, the *Charlotte Daily Observer* published another version by the name of *Dracula: A Strong Story of the Vampire* between July-December 1899 (Hogg, 2017). But it is, I argue, the intersection between old materials (a century-old Gothic novel) and new technologies (digital storytelling) created by the Dracula Daily that makes this new form of serialisation so influential.

As I have already mentioned, albeit its name, Dracula Daily does not share updates on a daily basis. Rather, emails are posted on each day of activity in the novel. Through the course of the first four weeks, the majority of the updates are Jonathan Harker’s journal entries. This had a big impact on the reader’s perception and overall attachment to the character: the start of the story is narrated from Harker’s perspective, and although fragmentary, “his journal gives the reader a *memory*” (Seed, 1985, p. 65). By serialising said memory, the connection between fan and character progresses at a slower pace, but it also becomes more personal. Colloquially speaking, getting to know someone takes time. In comparison to Jonathan Harker’s depiction in Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992), these readers do not regard Harker as a dull or boring character; rather, fans developed a special attachment to Harker. He became *our good friend, sending us email updates of his trip to Transylvania*.

Which brings me to the last element: modern fan culture. Although some might not recognise fan culture as an element of Dracula Daily, I argue that it is the driving force behind the much larger phenomenon surrounding the success of the novel. If it were not for fan communities, media consumption would highly remain an individual practice. In the particular case of Dracula Daily, an individual reading of the text without any form of outside fannish behaviour to influence it would hardly lead to the same level of content creation and conversations as

there were on Tumblr in 2022. Thus, reading *Dracula* as a modern media fan changes the way the text is interpreted, and curiously so, this too influences fandom performance.

Fandom transforms, shapes, and reinforces individual interpretations through joint discussion (Jenkins, 2013, pp. 46-47). In doing so, fans produce newfound meanings out of their source media together. Within this framework, fans act as agents to help fellow fans deepen or broaden their knowledge on the shared subject of interest. This was a recurrent incident in my research. Those who had previously read *Dracula* often passed their knowledge onto new fans, either by answering questions or by writing multiple paragraphs of information related to the novel.

It is worth noting that some of the information presented was well-sourced, and some literary discussions echo some of the academic readings of *Dracula* (which I discussed in Chapter 1). Fans were not only able to summarise those topics for newer fans, but also make them considerably more accessible and comprehensible. While academia can be viewed as a gatekeeper of information rather than a facilitator (e.g., in terms of terminology and theories utilised, lack of open-access to articles and materials), knowledgeable fans show interest in sharing their expertise with other members of the community. The presence of these fans impacts on both the reader and fan experience, yet I would argue that it is a rather positive impact. To reiterate, *Dracula* is a 19<sup>th</sup> century novel and very much depicts the Victorian era it was written on. If we consider that fan communities include people from different social and ethnic backgrounds, many whose native language is not English, the impact fandom has in the overall engagement with the novel is even major.

The popularity Jonathan Harker had in the fandom can also be viewed as the result of modern fan culture and, more specifically, of Tumblr fan culture. The strong interest in Harker shows how a collective fan interpretation can also, as Jenkins (2013) attests, feed the individual experience (pp. 46-47). Fans shared their interpretations of the character, and highlighted his perseverance through hardship and loving nature, particularly in relation to the devotion for his wife-to-be-, Mina. The more fans talked about Jonathan Harker, the more it sparked new conversations and fanworks. And subsequently, this made the reader become more attached to Harker, eagerly waiting for new updates to learn about his fate.

At last, modern fan culture further allowed the readers to read *Dracula* for leisure, as opposed to reading it strictly through scholarly approaches. While this claim directly juxtaposes the



observations I made before on how fans had literary approaches to their analysis of the text, I consider both claims to exist within the large spectrum of fan culture. Many readers were vocal on their previous thoughts about *Dracula*, a novel they either avoided completely or were forced to read in high-school and, thus, were not able to appreciate it. Modern fan culture changes this; readers are allowed to be fans, and are allowed to read the novel *as* fans. They can show affinity towards certain characters, or reimagine their characteristics through fanfiction, or even choose not to further analyse the text as it is done in academia. Fans can read for the pure joy of reading. In this context, Jonathan Harker was not a side character; he was our friend. The Count feeding on female characters was not an allegory for sex; it is but an evil doing by the villain of the story. Arthur Holmwood and Dr Seward were happily married at the end of the novel; yes, why, to each other. Although not part of the novel's canon, these interpretations are valid forms of *fanon*. They exist within the realm of fandom, and are achieved by engaging with the novel for pure enjoyment.

These elements, along with the entirety of my research, show a comprehensive understanding of the *Dracula Daily* fandom and their engagement with *Dracula*. However, this study is limited to the practices and behaviours observed in the fandom on Tumblr in 2022, at the peak of its popularity. Long-term studies of the evolution of the fandom may be needed to observe whether the elements I presented are still relevant or not, especially as the fourth edition of the newsletter will soon be taking place in 2024. That said, I believe my study, Tumblr expertise, and research suggestions can serve as a base for future studies on *Dracula Daily* and fan culture on Tumblr. Moreover, my research approaches this subject from the perspective of digital culture, and encourages further exploration done from this viewpoint.

One of the biggest future limitations to consider is the uncertainty of Tumblr as a fandom platform in the near future. The site has generated no profits after its acquisition by Automattic, and since 2023 is being run by a skeleton crew. This means that less updates will be available in the future. Thus, it is hard to say whether the platform will be able to meet the ever-changing needs of fan communities in the upcoming decade.

## Conclusion

The 1897 Gothic novel *Dracula* is a literary classic and a world-renown piece of media. It has influenced the fields of horror and vampire fiction for over a century, while cementing a place in popular culture since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the words vampire and Dracula are almost interchangeable; the idea of vampire and vampirism can hardly be discussed without mentioning Stoker's acclaimed antagonist, Count Dracula. From academia to video games, from pen and paper to digital screens, Dracula has left its impact everywhere, building a legacy that continues to be carried on. With a cornucopia of existing adaptations and reconfigurations that date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is hard for new Dracula-related media to gain mainstream popularity. Surprisingly, it was Dracula Daily, a project to shares the original text of the novel, that sparked new interest in Dracula in the 2020s.

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the Dracula Daily newsletter poses a new form to engage with classic literature. Emerging technologies play a big role in influencing media consumption, interpretation, and production, which heavily reflects in how we experience said media. In this vein, Dracula Daily implements a new form of digital storytelling: a free Substack that rearranges the novel in chronological order and delivers it in a serialised form directly to the subscriber's email inbox. The project gained popularity in 2022, and had over 200.000 active subscribers reading along to the newsletter. Its success inspired similar Substack projects to be launched, such as Whale Weekly and Frankenstein Daily, both of which implement the same digital storytelling format.

However, it was the online Dracula Daily community that formed during the span of May to November 2022 that truly turned a project to read Dracula into a much larger online phenomenon. While readers used several social media platforms to talk about Dracula, the fandom that emerged on the microblogging and social networking site Tumblr stood out. For over a decade, Tumblr has been the home of fandom, namely, a platform that offers tools and spaces for online subcultures to exist.

I studied this community for a period of six months, time that corresponded to the activity of the newsletter. My goal was to analyse the practices and behaviours of the fandom in order to establish how the Dracula Daily newsletter affects the reading and fan experience of the novel. In other words, I aimed to determine whether or not presenting the novel in this format had any impact on the readers and how they engaged with the text. To do so, I immersed

myself in the fandom as a passive participant observer, creating a private Tumblr blog at the start of May 2022 to collect Tumblr posts that served as my research material. I used the platform's own features to archive all of the collected data, developing my own taxonomy to allocate posts into categories. In the end, a qualitative content analysis of all 543 collected posts was carried out.

Throughout my research, I established a connection between the use of digital storytelling and old media in an emerging fan culture. I focused on the blogging patterns and fan practices of the community to determine the different forms of engagement between the modern fan and a literary classic. In essence, the Dracula Daily fandom approached the media by mixing fan practices of old and new. Through several stances of transformation, creation, and recontextualization, fans exhibited behaviours found throughout the history of media fandom. Ongoing discussions about the source material, the reconfiguration of canon into fanon, and the act of liveblogging are all examples of such. However, some of these behaviours were less related to the media itself and more platform-inclined. In this regard, the ongoing fondness shown by the fandom towards the character Jonathan Harker, along with adapting Tumblr-specific language to discuss the text are two cases that stand out. But clearly, it is the sum of all of these factors that has made the Dracula Daily fandom so special and the online phenomenon so unique.

This dissertation focused on a digital sociocultural phenomenon that took place in a certain place (Tumblr) at a certain time (May-November 2022). All the fan behaviours, practices, and even popular jargon that I closely examined are not only representative of a very specific fan community of readers, but serves to exemplify a larger fan culture that was observed on the microblogging platform during that year.

For decades, online platforms have accommodated a myriad of fan communities, and in doing so, these platforms develop their unique fan cultures and values. These cultures develop their own conducts and attitudes that spread across other subgroups in the same platforms, making fandom a perfect example of participatory culture. At the same time, fandom is not static. It is in its nature to change. As a cultural and social community, it evolves thanks to internal and external factors, and even more so in specific digital environments.

The Dracula Daily will forever be a part of Tumblr and its history. The phenomenon is located in the convergence of digital storytelling and modern fan culture; it cannot be

discussed without recognising the influence both agents have in the creation and development of the same. Within this framework, I determined Dracula Daily's chronology, serialisation, and modern fan culture as the three big elements that fruitfully affect the reader and fan experience of Dracula. Each of them influences the reader-to-text engagement in its own way, and are fundamental to the success of the newsletter. In doing so, not only did I reach the intended goal of this study, but I laid the foundation upon which to further analyse the Dracula Daily fandom, and fan-related phenomena.

Further research on the Dracula Daily fandom on Tumblr should focus on the development of the community on the platform since its inception in 2022. I have previously stated that the emergence, longevity, and popularity of fandoms on Tumblr is hard to predict, which is why I consider that a long-term study on the activity of this fandom would offer an insight into the lifespan of communities on Tumblr. The recommended perspective for such study is digital culture and a mixed methodological approach of qualitative content analysis and participant observation, as proven by this research. An adjacent topic to consider in terms of Dracula Daily would be fandom dormancy during the six-month hiatus of the newsletter.

Furthermore, I hope that the aforementioned research methodology, especially in terms of data collection, can influence the way to research Tumblr and its subcultures. I strongly suggest using Tumblr's own features to gather and archive digital materials that can later be used as research data. In addition, I encourage future researchers to use Tumblr's tagging feature to create their own taxonomy, which will ease the browsing through a potentially large portion of data. It is vital, though, to thoroughly familiarise oneself with Tumblr features and its policies prior to the research. Moreover, the researcher must be conscious about the risks: if the Tumblr account gets deleted, the data will be lost. Yet, if implemented appropriately, Tumblr not only serves as a digital hub of digital resources, but a research tool as well.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Suomenkielinen lyhennelmä (Summary of Thesis in Finnish)

Pro gradu -tutkielma

**Digitaalisen kulttuurin, maiseman ja kulttuuriperinnön tutkinto-ohjelma, Digitaalinen kulttuuri**

**Samantha Martinez Ziegler**

***Emails From Our Good Friend Jonathan Harker: Dracula Daily's Effect on The Reader Experience of Dracula and the Dynamics of Fandom on Tumblr***

**Sivumäärät: 80, 2 liitettä**

#### Johdanto

Dracula Daily on ilmaiseksi tilattava uutiskirje, joka jakaa tilaajilleen Bram Stokerin kirjeromaanin<sup>13</sup> *Draculan* (1897) sähköpostiviestien välityksellä. Alkuperäisestä romaanista poiketen Dracula Daily -uutiskirje esittää vampyyritarinan kronologisessa järjestyksessä. Pro gradu -tutkielmani keskittyy esittämään Dracula Dailyn vaikutuksia Dracula-romaanin luku- ja fanikokemukseen uutiskirjeen digitaalisen tarinankerronnan (engl. *digital storytelling*) kautta. Tutkimukseni tavoitteena oli lisäksi laajentaa ymmärrystä siitä, kuinka kasvava ja kehittyvä ilmiö, digitaalinen tarinankerronta, voi vaikuttaa siihen, miten lukija on vuorovaikutuksessa tekstin kanssa ja tulkitsee sitä. Käsittelin myös sitä, miten digitaalinen tarinankerronta voi puolestaan lisätä lukijan kiinnostusta klassista kirjallisuutta kohtaan ja tuo kirjaklassikot osaksi modernia fanikulttuuria.

Aloitin tämä pro gradu -tutkielman toukokuussa 2022 aineistonkeruulla ja sain sen valmiiksi huhtikuussa 2024. Tutkimukseni oli tapaustutkimus, jossa tapauksenani oli Tumblr -verkkopalvelun Dracula Daily -uutiskirjeen ympärille syntynyt fanikunta. Aineistonani käytin fanien Tumblr-palveluun tekemiä julkaisuja ja tutkimusmenetelminä laadullista sisällönanalyysia (aineiston käsittelyssä) sekä osallistuvaa havainnointia (tutkittavaa faniryhmää tarkasteltaessa).

Tutkimuskysymykseni olivat seuraavia: miten Dracula Daily -uutiskirje muokkaa Bram Stokerin *Draculan* (1897) luku- ja fanikokemusta verkossa? Mitkä ovat ne tekijät, jotka

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<sup>13</sup> Kirjeromaani on romaanin muoto, jossa nimen mukaisesti romaanin tarinankerronta rakentuu kirjeistä ja/tai kirjeenvaihdosta.

vaikuttavat lukijan vuorovaikutukseen romaanin kanssa? Ja lopuksi, mikä on Tumblrin fanikulttuurin luonne vuoden 2022 uutiskirjeen aikana?

Vastatessani näihin kysymyksiin suorittamalla analyysillä yritin kuroa umpeen aiempien Dracula-tutkimusten ja fanikulttuurin välistä kuilua. Pysin myös tällä pro gradu -tutkielmalla laajentamaan jo olemassa olevaa tutkimusta Tumblriin liittyvästä käyttäjä- ja fanikulttuurista esittämällä tapaustutkimukseni kasvavasta Dracula-fanien ryhmästä. Samalla esittelin, miten olen hyödyntänyt Tumblrin omia haku- ja arkistointiominaisuuksia työkaluina tutkimusprosessissa.

## Tausta

Dracula (ensimmäinen suomenkielinen käännös *Kammoittava kreivi* [1952], myöhemmin *Dracula* [1977]) on goottilainen kauhuromaani, jonka on kirjoittanut irlantilainen kirjailija Bram Stoker ja joka julkaistiin (ensi kerran) vuonna 1897. Romaanissaan Stoker esitteli yhden klassisen kirjallisuuden tunnetuimmista antagonisteista, kreivi Draculan, vanhan transilvanialaisen vampyyrin, joka imee uhriensa verta. Romaani tunnustetaan kirjallisuuden klassikoksi laajalti kaikkialla ja se on inspiroinut satoja eri sovituksia ja päällekirjoituksia lukuisissa eri medioissa. Näin Dracula on vakiintunut merkittäväksi osaksi populaarikulttuuria. Tämän seurauksena kreivi Draculasta on tullut myös fiktion prototyyppinen vampyyrihahmo ja Stokerin romaani on jättänyt pysyvän jäljen vampyyrikirjallisuuteen.

Draculaa on tutkittu useista eri näkökulmista. Näitä erilaisia lähestymistapoja on usein koottu kirjoihin, kuten Jack Lynchin (toim.) *Critical Insights: Dracula* (2009) ja Isabel Ermindan (toim.) *Dracula and the Gothic in Literature, Pop Culture and the Arts* (2015). Näissä teoksissa useat kirjoittajat tarjoavat tapaustutkimuksia ja lähilukuja Stokerin romaanista ja muista Draculaan liittyvistä mediailmiöistä. Akateeminen kiinnostus Draculaa kohtaan on laajentunut niin, että on olemassa jopa lehti, jossa Draculaan liittyvää tutkimusta voidaan julkaista (Kutztownin yliopiston *The Journal of Dracula Studies*). Erityisesti kanadalaisen tutkijan ja Dracula-asiantuntijan Elizabeth Millerin (1939–2022) teokset erottuvat joukosta. Miller julkaisi aiheesta useita kirjoja, mukaan lukien *Dracula: Sense & Nonsense* (2000), jossa hän tutkii, kumoaa ja vastaa asiantuntevasti Draculaa ja Bram Stokeria koskeviin tyypillisiin väitteisiin.

Draculalla on siis yhä vahva läsnäolo niin mediassa kuin akateemisissa piireissä. Samalla kehittyvät teknologiat luovat mahdollisuuksia kehittää uusia tapoja kertoa uusia tarinoita tai kertoa vanhoja tarinoita uudella tavalla. Dracula Daily -projekti käyttää uutta digitaalista tarinankerrontaa apunaan herättäessään vanhan klassikkoteoksen uudelleen eloon. Dracula Dailyn taustalla toimii Studio Kirkland ja uutiskirje julkaistiin ensimmäisen kerran vuonna 2021. Ilmaisen uutiskirjeen ideana on jakaa Dracula-romaani kokonaisuudessaan tilaajille kronologisessa järjestyksessä. Romaanissa tarina etenee saman kalenterivuoden touko-marraskuussa ja se kerrotaan pääosin päiväkirjamerkintöjen ja kirjeiden kautta. Dracula Dailyn sähköposti lähetetään aina samana päivämääränä kuin kirjan fiktiiviset tapahtumat on kirjoitettu tapahtuvan.

Dracula Daily -uutiskirjeellä oli ensimmäisenä vuonna noin 1 600 tilaajaa, mutta vuoden 2022 toimituksen aikana mukana oli jo jopa yli 200 000 lukijaa. Vuonna 2022 Dracula Dailysta löysi suosion myös sosiaalisessa mediassa, etenkin mikroblogipalvelu Tumblrissa. Saman vuoden toukokuun alusta monet Dracula Dailyn lukijat kokoontuivat yhteen ja muodostivat palveluun oman virtuaalisen faniyhteisönsä.

Tumblrin omaleimainen fanikulttuuri on kehittynyt ja muuttunut paljon 2010-luvun alusta lähtien. Joka vuosi ilmaantuu uusia fanikäytäntöjä ja käyttäytymismalleja, jotka tekevät tästä mikroblogipalvelusta rikkaan tutkimusalustan tutkittaessa tiettyjä faniyhteisöjä verkossa. Esimerkiksi McCracken ym. kirjoittama teos *a tumblr book: platform and cultures* (2020) tarjoaa kattavan yleiskatsauksen Tumblrin ja sen isännöimien alakulttuurien historiasta yli vuosikymmenen ajalta. Samalla teos ohjeistaa alakulttuurien ja ilmiöiden tutkimiseen kyseisellä alustalla. Fanikulttuurin tutkimuksessa yleisemmällä tasolla erottuvat yhdysvaltalaisen mediatutkijan Henry Jenkinsin teokset. Hän on ollut edelläkävijä fani- ja mediatutkimuksen alalla teoksillaan *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006) ja *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992, uudistettu vuonna 2012). Jenkinsin teoria osallistavasta kulttuurista (engl. *participatory culture*) sekä hänen kehittämänsä termi *textual poacher* ovat jo vuosikymmeniä toimineet mediafanien ja fanikulttuurin tutkimuksen perustana.

andom on luonteeltaan osallistava (engl. *participative*) ja muuntava (engl. *transformative*). Sen kautta mediafanit voivat jakaa omia ajatuksiaan ja tunteitaan muiden kanssa, joilla on sama, yhteinen kiinnostuksen kohde. Faniuteen kuuluu vahvasti osallistava kulttuuri (engl. *participatory culture*), joka johtaa fanien tekemän sisällön luomiseen, kuratointiin ja

jakamiseen, usein jo olemassa olevaa mediaa uudelleen kuvittelemalla. Tumbldrissa faniyhteisöt käyttävät kaikkia sivuston ominaisuuksia julkaistakseen ja jakaakseen fanitaidetta ja piirroksia, fanifiktiota ja GIF-animaatioita muun fanien tekemän sisällön joukossa. Vuonna 2022 myös Dracula Daily -yhteisö hyödynsi Tumbldrिन nopeita tekstin ja visuaalisen kuvan julkaisumahdollisuuksia keskustellakseen 1800-luvun romaanista.

### **Aineisto ja menetelmät**

Kuten jo mainitsin, tämä pro gradu -tutkimus alkoi toukokuussa 2022 ja päättyi huhtikuussa 2024. Tutkimukseni oli tapaustutkimus, jossa tutkimuksen kohteena oli Dracula Daily -faniyhteisö Tumbldrissa. Olen itse käyttänyt Tumbldria lähes 15 vuoden ajan, joten minulla oli paljon aiempaa kokemusta kyseisestä sosiaalisen median palvelusta ja sen käyttäjä- ja fanikulttuurista. Osasin siis käyttää Tumbldria ja tiesin, miten navigoida sivustolla. Minulla oli myös aikaisempaa kokemusta fanikulttuurin tutkimuksesta, sillä olin tutkinut Twin Peaks -faniyhteisön historiaa digitaalisissa ympäristöissä 1990-luvulta tähän päivään. Oma aikaisempi tietämykseni fanikulttuurista ja Tumbldrista sekä edellä esittämäni teoreettinen viitekehys auttoivat minua aloittamaan tutkimusprosessini.

Tutkimusaineistoni keruu alkoi toukokuun 8. päivä, jolloin loin uuden, yksityisen Tumblr-blogin. Ajatuksenani oli kerätä sinne julkaisuja, jotka liittyivät Dracula Daily -uutiskirjeeseen ja Tumbldrissa sen ympärille syntyneeseen faniyhteisöön. Aloitin heti julkaisujen jäsentelyn blogiini valitsemieni hashtagien avulla, luoden näin blogilleni oman taksonomian (ks. pro graduni sivu 38, taulukko 1). Käyttämäni tagit auttoivat minua organisoimaan ja kategorisoimaan tutkimusaineistoni. Asensin myös blogilleni oman tutkimukseni kannalta sopivan HTML-koodi-pohjaisen teeman, joka mahdollisti luomani tagien kanssa aineiston vaivattoman läpikäymisen. Samaan aikaan tilasin myös itse Dracula Daily -uutiskirjeen omaan sähköpostiini ja luin päivitykset samaan aikaan muiden faniyhteisön jäsenten kanssa. Tällä tavoin minusta tuli Tumbldrin Dracula Daily -yhteisön osallistuva tarkkailija (engl. *participant observer*) yhteensä kuuden kuukauden ajan. Tämä aineistonkeruumenetelmä antoi minulle mahdollisuuden kerätä tietoa faniyhteisön jokapäiväisestä käyttäytymisestä ja käytännöistä. Käytin Tumbldrin hakutyökalua apunani, jotta löysin Dracula Daily -hashtagilla merkityt suosituimmat julkaisut ja keräsin näitä julkaisuja jokaisen uutiskirjeen päivityksen yhteydessä. Päädyin keräämään yhteensä 543 Tumblr-julkaisua, joista tuli lopullinen tutkimusaineistoni.

Aineistonkeruuni aikana pidin mielessä myös verkkoyhteisöjen ja virtuaaliympäristöjen tutkimuksen etiikkaa. Eettiset ongelmat liittyvät yleensä tutkittavana olevaan tapaukseen eli sekä yhteisöön että alustaan. Omassa tapauksessani noudatin Tumblrin virallisia käyttöehtoja. Tumblrin mukaan julkisten blogien sisältö on julkista. Käyttäjillä on aina halutessaan mahdollisuus piilottaa bloginsa ja niiden sisältö. Näin ollen voin olettaa, että Dracula Daily -hashtagilla merkityt viestit olivat julkista aineistoa ja ne kelpasivat tutkimukseen. Tämän lisäksi mikään kerätystä datasta ei sisältänyt arkaluonteisia eikä yksityiskohtaisia bloggaajiin liittyviä tietoja. En etsinyt julkaisuja suoraan mistään tietyistä blogeista, vaan kävin läpi julkisesta hashtagista löytyviä julkaisuja. Lopuksi mainittakoon vielä, että en tutkimuksessani ollut kiinnostunut yksityishenkilöiden yksilöllisestä käyttäytymisestä, vaan Dracula Dailyn faniyhteisön kollektiivisesta käyttäytymisestä ja käytännöistä.

Omaksuin laadullisen sisällönanalyysin tutkimusaineistoni analyysimenetelmäksi jo alkuvaiheessa. Sisällönanalyysi menetelmänä tutkii mitä tahansa kirjoitettua, sanallista tai visuaalista viestiä tarkoituksena kuvata ilmiöitä ja parantaa kerätyn tiedon ymmärtämistä. Ian Deyn teos *Qualitative data analysis : a user-friendly guide for social scientists* (1993) esittelee teoriaa tästä tutkimusmenetelmästä. Dey korostaa, että tutkimusaineiston analysointiprosessi ei tapahdu ainoastaan aineiston keräämisen jälkeen, vaan myös jo itse keräysprosessin aikana. Myös esimerkiksi aineiston luokittelu on osa analyysiä, koska tutkija tulkitsee kerättyä tietoa jo tässäkin vaiheessa. Sovelsin tätä omassa tutkimuksessani; aineiston, eli Tumblr-postausten sijoittaminen luokkiin hashtagien avulla alusta alkaen antoi minulle selkeämmän käsityksen tutkimastani ilmiöstä jo kauan ennen kuin aineistonkeruuni päättyi.

Käyttämällä tätä laadullista sisällönanalyysiä ja yhdistämällä sen havainnoinnin kautta keräämääni tietoon, jota sain puoli vuotta kestäneen faniyhteisön seuraamisen aikana, pystyin tulkitsemaan ilmiötä ja esittämään uusia faktoja ja oivalluksia.

## **Tulokset**

Dracula Daily alkoi levitä Tumbldrissa jo aikaisin, huhtikuun 22. päivä vuonna 2022. Kyseessä oli tekstipohjainen julkaisu, joka mainosti pian alkavaa uutiskirjettä ja tarjosi kiinnostuneille linkin, jonka kautta kyseisen uutiskirjeen voisi tilata. Tämä postaus levisi Tumblrin eri



alaryhmiin ja se oli yksi syy siihen, miksi Dracula Daily sai suosiota alusta alkaen. Uutiskirjeen suosio kasvoi lähes yhdessä yössä toukokuun ensimmäisellä viikolla kiitos lukijoiden, jotka käyttivät Tumblria alustanaan blogatessaan uutiskirjeestä. Mitä enemmän käyttäjät julkaisivat postauksia Dracula Dailysta, sitä enemmän se sai näkyvyyttä ja sitä enemmän uusia lukijoita liittyi tähän bloggaajien yhteisöön.

Dracula Daily -yhteisö luki alkuperäisen Draculan kokonaisuudessaan kuuden kuukauden aikana. Vaikka romaanin tekstin alkuperäinen järjestys oli muutettu kronologiseksi, teoksen koko teksti jaettiin uutiskirjeen sähköposteissa lyhentämättömänä. Monille käyttäjille tämä oli ensimmäinen kerta, kun he lukivat alkuperäisen romaanin. Ennen Dracula Dailyä he olivat tienneet Draculasta mahdollisesti muiden sovitusten tai yleistietoisesti populaarikulttuurin kautta. Toisin sanoen Dracula Daily -uutiskirje täytti kuilun uuden lukijasukupolven ja klassikkoromaanin välillä.

Analysoidessani tutkimusaineistoani ja havainnoimalla keräämääni tietoa pystyin määrittämään viisi merkityksellisintä bloggaustyyppiä. Nämä tavat kuvastavat sitä, miten lukijat olivat faneina vuorovaikutuksessa romaanin ja sen sisällön kanssa.

Ensimmäinen tyyppi oli uutiskirjeen päivitysten tapahtumien *livebloggaaminen* heti sen julkaisun jälkeen. Livebloggaaminen tarkoittaa reaaliaikaista kommentointia, huomautuksia tai käyttäjän lähettämiä reaktioita tapahtumasta, joka tapahtuu postauksen kirjoitushetkellä. Livebloggaaminen on yleinen käytäntö mikroblogialustoilla, kuten X:ssä ja Tumblrissa. Nämä alustat mahdollistavat suuren ihmisjoukon suoran kollektiivisen kommentoinnin ja keskustelun lähetetystä mediasta. Dracula Daily -yhteisön tarjoama livekommentointi osoitti ne aiheet, joihin he keskittyivät lukemisen aikana. Joskus he olivat kiinnostuneita romaanin merkittävimmistä juonenkäänteistä, kuten romaanin alusta, jossa Jonathan Harker jää vangiksi kreivi Draculan linnaan, mutta myös muita pienempiä juonen yksityiskohtia käsiteltiin lukijoiden livebloggauksissa. Tällaisia olivat esimerkiksi hahmojen lyhyetkin vuorosanat ja lausahdukset. Tutkimusaineistoni 543 postauksesta yhteensä 303 oli romaanin liveblogeja, joten se oli yleisin aineistostani tunnistamani fanikäyttäytymisen tyyppi.

Mediafanit osoittavat usein tietynlaista kiintymystä omaa lempihahmoaan ja tämän fiktiivisiä ihmissuhteita kohtaan. Fanit voi saattaa yhteen heidän erityinen kiinnostuksensa yhteen tai useampaan hahmoon itse koko median sijaan. Havaitsin tätä käyttäytymistä myös Dracula Daily -faniyhteisössä. Tumblrissa käyttäjät osoittivat erityistä kiinnostusta Jonathan Harkeria kohtaan. Tämä johtui uskoakseni siitä, että neljän ensimmäisen viikon aikana ilmestyneet

uutiskirjeet koostuivat enimmäkseen hänen päiväkirjamerkinnöistään. Koska romaani jaetaan uutiskirjeen muodossa suoraan sähköpostiin, käyttäjät alkoivat kutsua päivityksiä “sähköposteiksi hyvältä ystävältämme Jonathan Harkerilta”, ja suurin osa yhteisöstä kiintyiikin hahmoon nopeasti. Tutkimusaineistoani varten kehittämäni taksonomia sisälsi osion romaanin hahmoista ja Jonathan Harker oli näistä eniten blogattu hahmo (ks. pro graduni sivu 50, taulukko 2). Tässä yhteydessä myös romanttinen suhde Jonathanin ja hänen kumppaninsa Mina Harkerin (os. Murray) välillä oli suosittu bloggausaihe. Fandomin sisäisessä kielessä *shipping*-termillä tarkoitetaan kahden tai useamman hahmon välisen romanttisen suhteen tukemista ja/tai toivomista. Jakaessaan ajatuksiaan ja keskustellessaan Harkereista Dracula Dailyn lukijat kutsuivat Jonathanin ja Minan välistä suhdetta nimellä *Jonmina*. Tätä keskustelua käytiin useimmiten positiivisessa mielessä.

Erilaiset faniteokset (engl. *fanworks*) olivat myös iso osa Dracula Dailyn faniyhteisöä. Fanit saavat inspiraation omien tuotostensa tekemiseen mediasta, jota kuluttavat. Yleisesti englannin kielen sana fanwork on sateenvarjotermi, joka kattaa niin fanifiktio (kirjoitetut tekstit), fanitaiteen, fanivideot kuin muutkin fanien tuottamat sisällöt. Kaksi yleisintä visuaalisen faniteosten muotoa Dracula Daily -faniyhteisössä olivat fanitaide ja meemit, joita keräsin yhteensä 60 (fanitaide) ja 90 (meemi) kappaletta. Romaaniin liittyvän fanitaiteen tuottaminen ja myöhempi jakaminen keskittyi usein tiettyyn hahmoon tai ihmissuhteisiin korostaen joko kuoleman tai rakkauden teemaa. Tämä sopi hyvin Draculan goottilaiseen genreen.

Tumblrin fanipiireissä meemit ovat yleensä fiksuja sisäpiirivitsejä, jotka vaativat kyseessä olevan median tarkkaa ja läheistä tuntemista. Dracula Dailyn tapauksessa oli myös välttämätöntä olla ajan tasalla uutiskirjeestä ja ymmärtää näin meemien tarkoitettu huumori. Meemit keskittyivät yleensä tarinankerrontaan ja romaanin hahmojen rooliin. Samaan aikaan lukijat käyttivät meemejä reaktiokuvina ilmaisemaan reaktioitaan uutiskirjeen päivityksiin.

Fanit keskustelivat romaanista perusteellisesti keskittyen pienimpiinkin yksityiskohtiin, jotka muuten voitaisiin usein hylätä merkityksettöminä. Tunnistin tutkimusaineistostani kaksi erityistä keskustelun muotoa. Ensimmäinen oli romaanin tarinankerronnan analysointi. Fanit analysoivat kollektiivisesti romaanin juonta, joskus jopa käyttämällä akateemisia lähteitä väitteidensä tukena. He arvostelivat vahvasti esimerkiksi Bram Stokerin tapaa esittää romaniväestöä tekstissään. Fanit kritisoivat myös romaanin akateemisia tulkintoja ja aloittivat keskustelun suosituista väitteistä tarjoamalla kattaviin lähteisiin pohjautuneita vasta-

argumentteja. Toinen tunnistamistani keskustelun muodoista oli fanien käymä diskurssi. Käytin diskurssi-termiä puhuessani meneillään olevista ja suosituista keskusteluista ja väittelyistä, jotka liittyivät usein johonkin romaanin tiettyyn aiheeseen. Esimerkiksi paprika hendl, Jonathan Harkerin syövä unkarilainen ruokalaji, aiheutti faniyhteisössä jatkuvaa keskustelua kuukausien ajan, kun fanit pohtivat oliko ruoassa käytetty paprika-mauste makea vai mausteinen.

Lopuksi, viimeisin bloggaustyyppi, jonka toin esiin, oli se, miten faniyhteisö usein bloggasi itse omasta yhteisöstään. Jo ensimmäisen kuukauden aikana fanit reagoivat positiivisesti Draculan ja Dracula Dailyn fanituksen nopeaan kasvuun. He vertasivat uutiskirjeen tilaamista kirjakerhoon, joka käsittelee yksinomaan yhtä kirjaa: Draculaa. Samaan aikaan lukijat kirjoittivat blogeihinsa usein siitä, miten he rakastivat yhteisön julkaisemia meemejä tai pitivät tietystä romaanin tulkinnasta, joka sai suosiota faniyhteisössä. Yksinkertaistettuna Dracula Daily -fanit eivät bloganneet ainoastaan romaanista ja uutiskirjeestä vaan myös itsestään ja omista tunteistaan faniyhteisöä kohtaan. Tämä kävi selkeämmin ilmi uutiskirjeen loppupuolella, jolloin fanit ilmaisivat surunsa menettäessään muodostamansa yhteisön, kun uutiskirjeen päivitykset loppuisivat. Yhteisön aktiivisuuden hiipuminen ja päättyminen ovat yleinen ja normaali osa fanikulttuuria. Fandom on sosiaalinen ja kulttuurinen yhteisö, jossa ihmiset kiintyvät paitsi kuluttamaansa mediaan, myös yhteisöön, johon he kuuluvat.

## **Keskustelu**

Analysoituani ja tulkittuani tutkimusaineistoani sekä tämän pro gradu -tutkimuksen teoreettisen viitekehyksen pohjalta ehdotin, että Dracula Dailyn lukijoiden suhtautumiseen romaaniin vaikuttivat kolme avaintekijää: uutiskirjeen kronologia, sen sarjoittaminen ja moderni fanikulttuuri.

- **Kronologia:** Draculan tapahtumien kronologisella esitysjärjestyksellä oli suuri vaikutus siihen milloin, miten ja mitä uutiskirjeen tilaajat lukivat. Alkuperäisessä romaanissa Stoker käyttää epälineaarista kerrontaa paljastaakseen tulevaisuuden tapahtumat aiemmin tekstissä tai päinvastoin poistaakseen ne kertomuksesta. Totean, että kronologisuus, siis Stokerin rakentaman epälineaarisen kerronnan poistaminen, on yksi suurimmista muutoksista, jotka vievät Dracula Dailyn lukijan eri suuntaan kuin alkuperäinen romaani.

- Sarjoittaminen: vaikka Draculan varhaisimmat sarjaversiot juontavat juurensa vuoteen 1899, Dracula Dailyn sarjoittamisella oli suuri vaikutus siihen, miten lukijat käsittelivät romaanin tapahtumia. Hyvin havaittava esimerkki tapauksesta oli Lucy Westenran sairastuminen ja kuolema. Uutiskirjeen kautta hänen sairautensa etenee hitaasti, sillä se kerrotaan useiden viikkojen ajan pienemmissä tekstipaloissa. Alkuperäisessä romaanissa lukijalla kesti vain päivä lukea koko juonenkaari. Tämä sai Dracula Dailyn lukijat tuntemaan myötätuntoa ja surua Lucya kohtaan, mutta samalla he ilmaisivat myös positiivisia reaktioita tähän uutiskirjeen esittämään, hitaammin etenevään tarinaan.
- Moderni fanikulttuuri: fandom muuttaa, muotoilee ja vahvistaa yksilöllisiä tulkintoja muiden fanien välisen keskustelun kautta. Samalla fanit tuottavat yhdessä uusia merkityksiä. Tutkimustulokseni osoittivat, että Dracula Daily -yhteisössä ne, joilla oli aikaisempaa tietoa romaanista, jakoivat sen uudempien fanien kanssa. Tämä oli erityisen tärkeää faniyhteisölle, koska Dracula on vanha kirjallisuuden klassikko ja sen sisältöä voi joskus olla vaikea ymmärtää. Samalla moderni fanikulttuuri tarjosi lukijoille mahdollisuuden lukea Dracula vain hovin vuoksi. Monet lukijoista kertoivat aiemmista ajatuksistaan Draculaa kohtaan romaanina, jota he joko välttelivät tai joutuivat lukemaan lukiossa eivätkä siksi kyenneet arvostamaan sitä. Nykyaikainen fanikulttuuri muutti tämän: se antoi lukijoille mahdollisuuden olla faneja. Dracula ei ollutkaan enää pakkopullaa, vaan lukijat päättivät itse lukea teoksen ja päätyivät näin samalla osaksi Tumblrin fanikulttuuria. Nämä elementit yhdessä koko tutkimukseni kanssa osoittivat kattavan ymmärryksen Dracula Daily -faneista Tumblrissa ja heidän vuorovaikutuksestaan niin toistensa kuin romaaninkin kanssa.

Tutkimukseni korosti digitaalisen tarinankerronnan merkitystä siinä, miten kuroa kirjallisuuden klassikoiden ja modernin fanikulttuurin välinen kuilu.



## Appendix 2: Research Material

Archive view of the research material, draculadailylog, 2022 [Tumblr blog].

The screenshot displays the Tumblr blog 'draculadailylog' in its archive view for the year 2022. A dark blue header contains the blog name and navigation options for 'Month' and 'Post type'. A dropdown menu is open, showing the months from January to December. The main content area is a grid of posts. Each post typically includes a title, a date, and a body of text, often accompanied by an image or a meme. The posts cover a wide range of topics related to the Dracula franchise, including character analysis, fan art, and humorous observations. For example, one post discusses Van Helsing's role as a doctor, while another humorously compares Arthur from Game of Thrones to Dracula. The grid layout is partially obscured by the date filter menu.