Daniel Latini

Horror Literature 203

Professor Eiland

June 5, 2020

Dracula Final.

*Dracula* demonstrates a fight of good against evil through the life of a vampire in the late nineteenth century, as well as the social hierarchy of the British people in London, England. It’s set in a Transylvanian society, which is now modern day Romania. We see a glimpse into their lives and value systems through the writings of a British man named Bram Stoker. This is shown in different translations of the story that all tie into the overarching theme of right versus wrong.

Within a Historical Perspective, we can see the way people lived their lives in the nineteenth century. There was class distinction between the rich and poor. The haves and have-nots had different roles during that time period. The upper class treated the mentally ill badly. Also, there is a difference in the treatment of men versus women. The class distinction between nobles and peasants is revealed through the status of Dracula as a nobleman living in a huge castle that’s been there for generations. Dracula lived in a castle in the outskirts of Transylvania, while peasants begged in the streets. The castle itself is a motif of an evil living thing. He owned piles of gold, while peasants begged in the streets. This is telling of his wealth and position as a nobleman. Jonathan Harker, an English solicitor, enters town and tells us about daily life. “We are in Transylvania; and Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you many strange things” (Stoker 42). This statement foreshadows that Transylvania is different than England in its ways and attitudes. Especially, through the folklore and strangeness that follows. An additional class distinction is indicated by the way the mentally ill and minority groups were treated. Renfield was deemed a lunatic. This was a common name for someone sent to a sanatorium. He was clearly a peasant, because he sought out wealthy noblemen to serve and get paid for his services. “I am here to do your bidding, Master. I am Your slave, and You will reward me, for I shall be faithful. I have worshiped You long and afar off. Now that You are near, I await Your commands, and You will not pass me by, will You, dear Master, in Your distribution of good things?” (Stoker 98) This statement by Renfield shows the way noble class citizens paid peasants and the mentally ill, to work for them, essentially, as paid slaves. The treatment between men and women show additional class distinctions. An uprising of women’s rights began, as women were told to find an educated and well-mannered man to marry. It was customary for a woman to groom herself to be a good wife and wait for the prospect of marriage. The forward thinking women in society were taking steps towards equality and independence. This is revealed in Mina Murray’s Journal entry. “If Mr. Holmwood fell in love with her seeing her only in the drawing-room, I wonder what he would say if he saw her now. Some of the ‘New Women’ writers will someday start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But I suppose the New Woman won’t condescend in future to accept; she will do the proposing herself” (Stoker 80). This shows how women were thinking differently and more independently in their view on marriage. It was a male driven society, but was in the midst of change by women’s ideas and writings. Besides the roles of men and women in the nineteenth century, we can see how people’s views on technology was just starting to advance. Technological advancements changed from ideas about magic to laws of science. “Let me tell you, my friend, that there are things done to-day in electrical science which would have been deemed unholy by the very men who discovered electricity—who would themselves not so long before have been burned as wizards” (Stoker 163). Dr. Seward’s Diary revealed the way people viewed science. This can be seen by forms of communication throughout the story. A telegram sends urgent communication between towns. A telegraph is their form of long distance communication. “Telegram, Van Helsing, Antwerp, to Seward, Carfax. ‘17 September. –Do not fail to be at Hillingham to-night. If not watching all the time...Shall be with you as soon as possible after arrival’” (Stoker 123). The telegram is an example of London’s old communication system. These class distinctions, roles for men versus women, and technology gives us insight into the way of life at the time this was written. Society viewed things differently, based on the cultural class they were in. Their treatment of others was an agreed upon social norm. Women’s views and technological advances shaped the characters in the story.

From a Marxist Perspective, we can see the way the Author distinguishes right from wrong. He used religion as a literary device, and used a legend to create a fiction. Dr. Van Helsing portrayed a religious figure. He empowered himself with medical techniques and religious beliefs to pursue Dracula. This paints a picture of good versus evil and right versus wrong. This shows the way the Author would think about faith, while living in London in the nineteenth century. Dr. Van Helsing firmly believed he was doing an act of good, by taking justice into his own hands. On the flip side, it is clear Dracula is carrying out crimes and would be punished for them. Dr. Van Helsing justifies this battle against an evil force. “‘Oh, how we are beset! How are all the powers of the devils against us!’ Suddenly he jumped to his feet. ‘Come, he said, come, we must see and act. Devils or no devils, or all the devils at once, it matters not; we fight him all the same’” (Stoker 117). The Author used religion in the story, as a vehicle to put out his message. Dr. Van Helsings passion was in fighting for good against an evil invader. Dr. Van Helsings faith and a higher calling motivates him to find Dracula. He risks his life to fulfill his duty and follow his faith. The Author is showing us the way Dr. Van Helsing is passionate about this value system. It shows the Author thinks it is right to use religion, as a battle cry to go up against Dracula. “It is the appeal to high duty that helps strengthen the professor's belief— the existence of vampires and the necessity to exterminate them. Van Helsing's ‘iron nerves’ and cold rationality have already been highlighted in the earlier part of the episode, with the emphasis on his systematic, methodical work procedures and sober mind” (Kwan-Wai Yu 153). This excerpt shows Van Helsing’s commitment and inspiration for Dracula’s extermination. The Author used the faith of Van Helsing to ignite the flame within him. Dracula was meant to be feared by adults and children. He changed Lucy into a vampire and made her into an un-dead, to go out and capture children. Van Helsing introduces us to The Crew of Light. “With *Dracula*, it is as though calling had been returned to an old religious context, pitting against the pagan and the occult, yet it might actually be as profane and irrational, as we shall see, as the spirit of capitalism itself. ‘Calling’ in the Crew of Light originates from a certain (mis-)recognition of self-identity, involving the revulsion against perceived sexual menace, and the deepest fear of the demonized” (Kwan-Wai Yu 153). The religious battle of good versus evil is related to their views on the occult. Dr Van Helsing and his team debate her garlic treatment. This leads them to question their own faith and morals by it seeming extreme to some. Ultimately, it is done for the greater good of stopping the spread of more vampires in the community. Dracula was also an outsider, coming into their town to do harm. He looked menacing, despite being refined by Jonathan Harker. The Author used this method to lower Dracula’s social status from a nobleman to a monster. “’My dear Dr. Van Helsing,-- ‘A thousand thanks for your kind letter, which has taken a great weight off my mind. And yet, if it be true, what terrible things there are in the world, and what an awful thing if that man, that monster, be really in London!’” (Stoker 141) He left Transylvania to visit England. His intensions were revealed and he posed a threat to their people. This is a message the Author wanted his local readers to identify with. The religious context gets clearer, as we see Van Helsing’s use of old religious text. This shows the depth of the Author’s research into the Christian God. These ideas would align with the majority in that geographical region he wanted to reach.

After Harker and his wife have joined the Crew of Light, Van Helsing reverts to the old religious language of Protestantism, appealing directly to divine vocatio and alluding to the notion of the elect. He warns Mina that she was affected by Dracula, so the mission to destroy the count is vital, because if they fail, Mina will join the Un-Dead. Besides, the task is not only motivated by the men's desire to save their beloved woman, but is also (mis-)recognized as something divine, a crusade to save all mankind” (Kwan-Wai Yu 154).

This shows the way the Author is pandering to a Christian audience. His views and value system would be similar to those living in that era. The Author uses Lucy as an attack on the idea of New Women in society. They were getting more education by attending universities and taking bolder stances against the traditional society. “Some critics have argued that Stoker uses the character of Lucy to attack the concept of the New Woman” (Buzwell 64). The Author used Lucy to illustrate forward thinking women. This view agreed with a male driven society as the norm. Bram Stoker used the facts about Vlad the Impaler to make the fictional character of Dracula. This depicts the Authors opinion on good and evil, by using a person from history with a reputation for evil deeds. Dracula is loosely based on this person that helped in the founding of the country. “The real Vlad Dracula was neither a descendant of Attila nor a Transylvanian. He was an opportunistic Walachian prince whom 19th-century nationalists later transformed into a founding father of the Romanian nation. Because of Dracula's reputation for cruelty --particularly his penchant for impaling his enemies on stakes -- Stoker made him into a vampire” (Marks 60-64). The fictional figure of Dracula, is used by the Author to turn historical fact into literary fantasy. It ties in the idea that this fictional person was fundamentally evil. The character he created was a reflection of that person. “A decade in the works, the adventure tale centers around a young woman who searches Europe for her missing father, who took on the challenge of locating the grave of Vlad the Impaler (the bloodthirsty feudal lord who inspired Bram Stoker's "Draeula"). Along the way, she comes across a slew of bloodsuckers who try to stop her” (Fleming 16-25). This fictionalization was recognized by many. The Author used religious righteousness as a literary device to progress the story. We see this by the way The Crew of Light was driven to save Mina. Attempting to destroy Dracula, so she would fall out of her spell. A great incentive for The Crew to go on their crusade against him. This crusade of good versus evil by way of religious righteousness, was a key to their motivation. There is no doubt the character of Dracula shows us an evil force. “He assumed the name Dracula, variously interpreted as ‘son of the dragon’ and ‘son of the devil,’ as a further reminder of his powers” (Marocchino 110-113). The Author nails the hammer into the coffin, if you will, that Dracula is defined as evil. This is an external battle of good versus evil and internal one of light and darkness within them.

From a Psychoanalytical Perspective, we find out Dracula wanted to get killed by Van Helsing. Throughout the story it is clear that Dracula was trying to get the attention of a vampire hunter, so that he could end his miserable way of life. Dracula subtly revealed himself to Harker in the castle. He wasn’t trying too hard to hide the fact that he was a vampire. He disappeared to do important business during the day, while sleeping in his coffin. He climbed down the castle wall at night, with full view from Harker’s window. Then, he approached Harker in the bathroom. “Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder, and heard the Count’s voice saying to me, ‘Good-morning.’ … but there was no reflection of him in the mirror!” (Stoker 25). He knew his reflection didn’t appear in mirrors, so let himself be revealed. He did everything but spell it out for Harker. He wanted to subtly reveal his true nature. Dracula went after Lucy, to get to Van Helsings by making it personal and get his attention. He could have gone anywhere in the world, but went to London. This was the most dangerous place to go, because Van Helsing was there. “Professor Van Helsing, of Amsterdam, who knows as much about obscure diseases as anyone in the world” (Stoker 98). He wanted to put an end to his drab lifestyle of hunting and being hunted. He was growing tired of mourning the dead. “I am no longer young; and my heart, through weary years of mourning over the dead, is not attuned to mire” (Stoker 24). He was tired of the lifestyle and was growing old and jaded. He went out of his way to get caught. Furthermore, we can see that Van Helsing understands the vampire curse. “When they become such, there comes with the change the curse of immortality; they cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world” (Stoker 183). If Dracula thought being un-dead for hundreds of years was a curse, surely he would grow weary of it. Dracula left bread crumbs that led to his ultimate demise. He went to visit Lucy at night, by turning into a bat at her window. He must have known that Van Helsing was there and would be spotted. He made Mina into an un-dead. She led Van Helsing to his location on the ship. “Then you are on a ship?’ We all looked at each other, trying to glean something each from the other. We were afraid to think. The answer came quick:--‘Oh, yes!” (Stocker 265). She led Van Helsing to his location on the ship. He went home in a coffin during the day in public, so that he was easy to find. Essentially, he left them a map and address. There were clues that Lucy wanted to become a vampire in the way she refused garlic and treatment. She really wanted to be with Dracula and be with the undead. “It was certainly odd that whenever she got into that lethargic state, with the stertorous breathing, she put the flowers (garlic) from her; but that when she waked she clutched them close.” (Stoker 137) This shows her desire to stay cursed, while in that state. However, when she awoke, she wanted to be cured. She had an internal conflict, and in her dream state, she wanted to be a vampire. She wanted to escape her personal life and become a vampire. She wanted to break away from the repressive sexual culture. She was a forward thinking Victorian woman and had modern views of love and marriage. She explored that promiscuousness by having more than one partner prior to Dracula’s arrival. “Lucy’s moral weakness allows Dracula to prey repeatedly upon her during the night, and only a series of desperate blood transfusions from each of her former suitors – a sickly symbolic echo of Lucy’s desire for three husbands (and thus three lovers)“ (Buzwell 75). It was her desire to have multiple partners, and it is this openness that led her into Dracula’s arms, or bite as it were. Her desire was ultimately met when she went into the undead world. She fed on children at night, indicating how she felt about motherhood. “’You think then that those so small holes in the children’s throats were made by the same that made the hole in Miss Lucy?’ ‘I suppose so.’ He stood up and said solemnly:--‘Then you are wrong.’ … ’They were made by Miss Lucy!’” (Stoker 165) It is clear that Lucy was doing the same work as Dracula. However, it was her dark side that we see in the story. There are two sides to her, and she satisfied that subconscious desire while she is undead. Un-dead is like a dream state and reveals what she really wants. This is not something she could do in normal life, but as an un-dead person, she acts out her wish.

From a Cultural Perspective, it’s a tale against evils of lust and non-Christian behavior. England was a Christian country in the nineteenth century. We can see that Christians would have liked the way good triumphed over evil and Dracula faced the consequences of his actions. This was appropriate for this group, because a person that commits a wrongful act would be punished. A Christian group would chase Dracula out of town. They would like the way Dr. Van Helsing punished Dracula for his sins. Their views would align with the consequences Dracula faced, by going against their value system. A strong Christian role model like Van Helsing would be a relatable role model. He represented a Christian majority in Britain. They would like that he used the Bible as a moral compass. Many times as Van Helsing has moral doubts he references the Bible to help guide his choices. A Christian in Victorian England always referenced the Bible. A Bible was easily found anywhere in London. He would be seen as a role model for serving on the side of good. They believed in an afterlife, so killing Dracula would save his soul. Besides, it would release the others from their curse. “I have here the book, and the others shall follow—strike in God’s name, that so all may be well with the dead that we love and that the Un-Dead pass away” (Stoker 184). They would support his choices from the bible. “Many Victorians believed that the Bible was the best, indeed in many cases the only guide to a moral life” (Evans 14). A Christian in the Victorian Era, would support the way Van Helsing used the bible to guide his moral choices. Dracula is promiscuous and goes against Victorian-Christian behavior. They would want young adults to read it, because it would show the way good triumphs over evil. It warned them about not doing bad deeds, and taught them right from wrong. It is unlikely that this would be a book children would read, unless to scare them. This would be read by a younger audience, and something that would be supported, to warn of the evils of lust before marriage. This would surely be something a Christian family would support, to show teenagers and young adults the dangers out in the world. Christians would likely see Lucy as a victim to warn other girls of his kind. Lucy had three marriage proposals, which subtly indicated she shared her bed with these men. If we can see this as her sleeping around, and the sharing blood with others was analogous to sex with multiple partners, then Christians would disapprove of these acts. The results of these actions would be a strong warning to others. Bloodsucking would be a real concern to everyone. Cases of syphilis were on the rise and it was believed this was caused by exchanging bodily fluids such as blood and intercourse. A conservative Christian would view this as an act lust and counter to family values. These actions by a modern women would be opposed by a Christian group. This would serve as a warning for younger people reading the content during the nineteenth century.

These different aspects and dynamics of good versus evil show us an overall theme connecting these perspectives. It is clear these opposing forces are revealed throughout the novel. The vampire is still a figure of horror in society, and Dracula’s behavior was nothing but bad from the start. The internal struggles they faced is surely something we all wrestle with. It is those choices that make us either good or bad in the eyes of society. It is clear that Bram Stoker’s story is one that exposes the inner heros and monsters in all of us.

Works Cited

Fleming, Michael. “Sinking Their Teeth In.” *Daily Variety,* vol. 287, no. 32, May 2005, p. 5. EBSCOhost.

Evans, Richard, Professor. “The Victorians: Religion and Science.” *Gresham Lecture, Monday 14 March 2011*

Kwan-Wai Yu, Eric. “Productive Fear: Labor, Sexuality, and Mimicry in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula.” Texas Studies in Literature & Language*, vol. 48, no. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 145-170. EBSCOhost

Marks, John. “Dracula’s New Lease on Life.” *U.S. News & World Report*, vol. 118, no. 21, May 1995, p. 45. EBSCOhost

Marocchino, Kathryn Dorothy. “Dracula.” *Masterplots, Fourth Edition*, Nov. 2010, pp. 1–3. EBSCOhost

Stoker, Bram, “*Dracula*” (Illustrated) Kindle Edition. First published in 1897, Enhanced Media 2014