

The analysis of stokers dracula as an epistolary novel essay examples

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In his iconic novel *Dracula*, Bram Stoker moves away from the traditionally accepted notion of an ordinary narrative, and in an effort to obscure the narrator's own voice, resorts to a technique referred to as an epistolary narrative, where the plot is unfolded before the reader in a succession of personal letters exchanged between characters, diary entries, ship logs, newspaper reports, and similar. By utilizing this technique, the author distances himself from the position of an all-knowing, all-powerful, omniscient narrator, and allows every single character to divulge as much information as he or she possesses as an individual. Consequently, it is up to the reader to merge their accounts into a coherent unity of meaning. This technique provides the reader with a greater insight into the characters' viewpoints and personal experiences, constructing a more complex narrative of events as perceived by certain characters from the viewpoint of their own affected minds.

The novel commences with the diary of Jonathan Harker, a Londoner on his way towards the infamous castle amidst the wilderness of the Carpathians, where superstition and belief in all things unholy reign. Despite the fact that he refers to himself as a person of composed and calm character, this ambiance affects him nonetheless, and he cannot escape the dreadful feeling of the oncoming evil. For instance, on being offered a crucifix, something he as "an English Churchman" was taught to regard as "idolatrous," he still succumbs to an uncertain feeling inside his mind which told him that it "seemed so ungracious to refuse an old lady meaning so well and in such a state of mind" (Stoker 5). Later, this apparent superstition will save him from the Count and prove that the old lady had every reason to

give him this Christian emblem, as Harker's journal will eventually reveal the unholy events taking place in Dracula's castle, which will have a traumatic effect on his mind as well as his body. He is inquisitive to an extraordinary level as to what the true motives of his host are and he shows a genuine mastery of fearlessness in his daring escape from the castle. Thus, the reader can, under no other circumstances, bear witness to these dreadful events from such a personal perspective as from Harker's journal itself.

In addition to exposing the Count as an antichrist, a demon from hell bent on preying upon all Londoners, his letters also render him a thoughtful and loving future husband to his fiancée, Mina. Their letters offer numerous instances of evident love that exists between them. The letters are full of affection, in accordance with the Victorian times, naturally, and in concordance with the appropriate behavior of two people about to be married. This serves as a buttressing fact to the notion that Mina represents all the virtues of Victorian society. She is the angel of the house, whose main wish is to help her husband and be the best wife possible. She is the model Victorian wife, "one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth. So true, so sweet, so noble" (Stoker 188). For instance, Harker is reminding himself to get special recipes of dishes he liked during his ominous travels, "Mem. get recipe for Mina" while Mina's apparent anxiety regarding his absence is ubiquitous in her letters (Stoker 1). Their letters give the reader a glimpse into the true state of their relationship and the true nature of their feelings for each other; as if the reader is a close friend of the couple and thus, privy to all their most private

thoughts and correspondences during their time apart.

In addition to this personal level of storytelling, epistolary technique can also be perceived as a documentary, especially taking into account Dr. Seward's almost clinical account of the events that take place before his very eyes. His telegrams, as well as letters show a great amount of love and care for his patients, one in particular, Lucy Westenra, whom he remains devoted to, despite the fact that she rejected him for her suitor, which sometimes makes him react as a man in love rather than as a physician. However, his phonographic records offer yet another instance of his professionalism in regard to solving this unholy disease that has overtaken his beloved's body, mind and most importantly, soul. His medical point of view professes a kind of rational stability among the general personal descriptions and evocations of events, all of which aids the reader into figuring out the pieces of Stoker's puzzle.

Consequently, Stoker's utilization of the epistolary technique offers a plot structure of personal entries, actions and climaxes from different points of view, all in order to build up the suspense leading to the very end, when the hand of justice finally deals its final, deadly blow and as it happens in most stories, the antagonist dies at the end of the righteous protagonist, led by Divine Providence. The action in the novel is of a progressive kind, with all characters adding a bit to the overall sum of events and the final culmination. This modus operandi of a more powerful impact on the reader, making him take into account multiple viewpoints and forcing him to choose which people to believe, creates a novel with an action on an almost breathless level. The reader is utterly consumed up in the story as it

becomes more and more complex, urging him to participate in it, until it finally unravels before his eyes, in a blaze of glory. It is exactly this, along with a careful selection of themes and symbols, that has made Stoker's Dracula a timeless novel.

Works Cited:

Stoker, Bram. Dracula. New York: Signet Classics, 1986. Print.