

Bram stoker`s dracula

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Bram Stoker's celebrated novel *Dracula* (1897) advocates love and faith as the greatest of life's virtues; however, the quest for these values and virtues is made through a labyrinth of sexual and misogynistic experiences and events which serve to enhance the moral ambiguities of Stoker's Gothic masterpiece. In the book, when values of faith and chastity are abandoned, the searing social critique of the relaxation of sexual mores shows us a clear picture of punishment.

Stoker portrayed sexual wantonness as a form of self-destruction: the catalyst of this moral underpinning is when Lucy remarks, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it" (57). A desire to see the destruction of Lucy is obviously seen as Dracula in a beastly form attacks the "mother form" of Lucy. This clearly reflects Stoker's anti-maternal attitude when early in the novel, Dracula feeds a baby to his three brides at the castle (43).

In the novel, the mother was torn apart by a pack of wolves under Dracula's command (48) as a callous woman portrayed by Lucy is read as "she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone" (Stoker 157-158). Plainly he intends to see Lucy in an animalistic level as an "old-blooded" and "callous" and she, like the other vampires, has virtually no love in her. The women in the novel actually served like whores starving for true affection (Stoker, 43).

In this way, Stoker extols essentially masculine and Patriarchal biases. John Allen Stevenson's assertion that "interracial sexual competition," comprises a central theme in the novel's sexual expressions, suggests that Dracula's

predatory instincts are Bram Stoker's Dracula Page -2- motivated by " an omnivorous appetite for difference, for novelty" (Stevenson, 139).

Dracula himself represents a monstrosity, an " other" who threatens the normalcy of established, socially acceptable sexuality: this extension of chauvinism is deeply intensified by the sexual connotations: Lucy and Mina experience sexuality that is " released in the wrong way, by a foreigner . . . who has achieved what the men fear they may be unable to accomplish" (Stevenson, 146). The threatening aspects of Dracula's sexuality are myriad.

In the " baptism of blood" scene, where Dracula forces Mina to drink from him, " What is going on? Fellatio? Lactation? It seems the vampire is sexually capable of everything" (Stevenson, 146). The " other" distorts common perceptions of the nature of sexuality, foremost among these perceptions is the assignation of gender roles; Dracula, however, frustrates established concepts of gender, stimulating fear— fear of " vampire sexuality, a phenomenon in which 'our' gender roles interpenetrate in a complicated way" (Stevenson, 146).

Men are subjected to " feminization" when they are pierced by the vampire's fangs, wanton women devour babies rather than nurturing them substituting a masculine aggression for feminine tenderness. Thus liberated, women become too sexual aggressors, taking on traditionally masculine roles. " The famous scene in which the book's hero, Jonathan Harker, is seduced by three vampirettes - only to have the count interrupt the ersatz orgy with the cry, " This man belongs to me! " - dramatizes Victorian men's fear of sexually aggressive women as well as their abysmal urge for manly love.

" (Roberts) Thus, Dracula's sexual crime are not specific to a single act of depravity, but a range of depravities wherein wanton female sexuality is viewed as both the instigating principle and the Bram Stoker`s Dracula Page -3- end-result of the ensuing predation. " His crime is not the hoarding of incest but a sexual threat, a sin we can term excessive exogamy" (Stevenson, 139).

Contemporary interpretations of Stoker's sexual themes as represented in Dracula have ranged from strictly Freudian views to complex explications involving symbolism, myth and even politics and economics. One homogenizing factor for most of these interpretations is an acceptance that the novels deals with repressed aspects of sexuality and sexual desire and that these repressions emerge primarily from patriarchal and masculine forms of oppression. The association of the products of imagination a sense of the rational hero that is often romanticized in literary piece however portrayed in horror as the sublime good.

The element of suspense being a temptation for all viewers gives out the tendency to fascinate the development of the plot that affirms the patriarchal social order. Clover has also associated horror as a struggle for recognition of all that society represses. Further she has equated that repression of female sexuality and other forms of bisexuality and homosexuality has ceased to continue in the tradition of new films that altered the role and characterized the feminine heroine and authority that contemporary horror upholds as a an acceptable critique of male authority.

Neale (1980) and Creed (1990) on the basis of their own contradictory evidenced has arrived at a conclusion that the horror film genre depicts a
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certain patriarchal fear of the female sexuality where men are often the villainous monsters and women are the primary object of its actions. Neale maintained that women's sexuality renders them desirable—but also threatening—to men, which constitutes the real problem that the horror film exists to explore.

“ Stoker's realization that his mother was indeed a sexual being who belonged to his father finds an outlet in his fiction when he intermingles Oedipal conflicts with sibling rivalry, patricide and Bram Stoker`s Dracula Page -4 infanticide,” she writes. She also suggests that Stoker's fascination with blood may flow from his mother's tales of a cholera epidemic (survivors fended off starvation by drinking blood from the family cow) or even a traumatic glimpse of afterbirth (he was one of seven children).

” (Roberts) Thus, the most terrifying aspect of the novel is not the vampire's lust for blood— but lust itself— as unleashed in wild-women who no longer adhere to the chauvinistic restraints placed on their sexuality: “ While Stoker's novel, *Dracula*, (2) portrays Mina Harker as a strong-minded but conventional Victorian woman, and as *Dracula's* victim, Francis Ford Coppola's film, *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, (3) reads between the lines of the novel and creates a Mina Harker who escapes the restraints of Victorian society through her relationship with the vampire.

” (Harbin)- Furthering the threat to conventional mores is the fact that *Dracula's* victims are willing participants in their own deviant behaviour. “ *Dracula* tells Jonathan Harker to “ enter freely and of your own will” (Stoker 22) and “ In folklore, vampires often require complicity from their prey.

Just as Jonathan cannot be coerced, but must 'enter freely,' no vampire can come into a home uninvited" (Harbin) Thus, Stoker leaves no doubt that the will to challenge the conventional mores of society is not impressed wholly from the "outsider" but is inherent in the hearts of many – who are given provocation and opportunity by the vampire — but the initial will toward deviance remains their own. Creed in her study postulates that where the monster is a maternal figure who threatens to devour males, this horror narrates the patriarchal fear of the mother.

Jancovich (1994) explains that the monster serves to punish the erring females where the women who agree with the male superiority survive. Further as a psychological lambaste against the Oedipus complex in the male child, the female monster is depicted to separate and repress the desires of the male child from Bram Stoker`s Dracula Page -5- his mother and thereby associate the positions of mastery and dominance associated with masculinity.

Despite Neale`s and Creed`s differences, Jancovich and other critics supported claims that neither is an expression of dominant or subordinate groups but rather a site of struggle between the two genders. Thus, in the interest of culture, groups challenge other groups and attempts to incorporate them to answer certain interests and aspirations within terms that do not challenge their own.

Where there is existing contradiction between one another in an unfixed structure, these concerns are forever addressed and develops within a certain period often presented in the dialogues and struggle contained in films to give out signs of their dynamism that is often addressed to a specific

vulnerable audience. Horror novels (and films) are often used to suggest the different positions of the differing sentiments of these groups to generate responses from its audience based on the assumption that certain representations have certain effects.

Horror novels like Dracula which have evolved through certain periods will concentrate as the basis of this analysis that discusses the certain views of certain gender groups in particular. Individualism and specifically individualism which threatens conventional perspectives about sexuality and gender roles and the distribution of power between the genders is portrayed in Dracula as the most ominous threat to established order; to depart from the accepted ways may bring the (momentary) illusion of freedom and strength; however, in the long run, deviation from the prescribed order leads to chaos and ruin.

Because Dracula seeks to transform rather than merely influence others, his will toward “ homogenous” individualism results in an eerie “ neither-or” result for his victims who, once bitten (initiated), become ostracised from society only to occupy another hierarchical and

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limiting society, one where the cohesive and nurturing aspects of traditional conformity are replaced by insatiable desires for blood and power, where one’s instincts are turned away from liberation toward the initiation of others into the restrictive world of the undead. The punishment for turning away from the established order of society is to see one’s very soul taken, one’s autonomy subverted, and one’s sexuality perverted beyond measure.

Stoker's conventional interpretation of morality reaches for a panacea to Dracula's malefic influences which is as socially conventional as his descriptions of degeneracy and depravity, for it is the social collective which is capable of defying and ultimately defeating Dracula, not an individual, but a group of individuals working together: Against Dracula's individualism, Van Helsing is able to muster enough information and people to destroy the count.

Van Helsing points to the greatest weapon that they have in their fight against Dracula when he states, " We have on our side power of combination--a power denied to the vampire kind . . . " (244). Every weapon that Van Helsing and his group use against Dracula is tied to the idea and power of combination. Shared information, knowledge, strength, and financial resources enable them to overcome Dracula. (Gutjahr 38)

Following through on the integrated themes of patriarchal power and order, Stoker concludes his novel by returning to the conventional disposition of society: when sexuality (and particularly feminine sexuality) is allowed to manifest without restraint, the result is a breakdown in the social order which results in a breakdown of the individual who depends on the ordered structures of society to defend them against the ever-present malefic influence of deviation or surrender to one's animalistic nature.

The misogynistic thrust of Stoker's theme is clear: that women comprise not only the greatest threat to the sanctity of established social mores, but that they are also the reason such social mores have been concocted. They are also the most easily led astray from these mores and Bram Stoker`s Dracula Page -7- the result of their deviation is the most profound.

Stoker, preoccupied with establishing a credible villainy for his antagonist relied upon the most plebian and well-established social stereotypes of his time regarding women and women's sexuality. Conclusion In analysis, the female characters in Stoker's Dracula reflect a role of minor non-importance and dependence to the male gender that later on evolves into an apparent attempt to endorse the evil results of female power. Tohill and Thomas (1994) adds that the literary background of the horror film genre originated with an attempt to deal with the dark subconscious confronting fiend, aware of the dangers that implicates the society.

Yet, the development of horror films contributes to the exploration of victimization and in particular men's perception of the woman in the society. In the 70's and 80's, Jancovich has stated that women were punished for being liberated or sexual because the era of free love and the feminist movement were so fresh in the minds of the people. It was now far enough away from these times that society could all accept and move on rather than judge women. The period was fraught more women being admitted into all male colleges for the first time and in many colleges, females made up the majority of the stud culture.

Significantly, the history of feminism has sought to study a new understanding and the relations of sexes. Contemporary novels and films have started portraying the acceptability of feminine power and acceptability that horror films likely aims to disintegrate. As Wood and Lippe would have it, there is no attempt to foil masculinity at all and that some films are used in an effort to masquerade pornography in horrific acts of rape that prevail the ideology of misogyny or the

Bram Stoker's Dracula Page -8- hatred of the female species. In older horror films, the feminine depiction is that of incompetent however contemporary films have discussed a more emotional motivation grounded on power relations between masculine and feminine. A character role that changes over time has repressed sexual energies and is apparently linked to the sexual revolution period where the horrific representations of society's fears have been confirmed.

Seemingly it is safe to conclude that the critic's summations of the period is often characterized by the character roles portrayed in horror novels and films and the director's own perceptions of roles in the interest of its viewers. Stoker's Dracula preserves none of the modern conceptions of individuality within gender groups but regards them as depravities from which each member of society seeks protection within societies laws, customs, and power-structures.

Though Stoker's blatant prejudices against women, against free-sexual expression, and against individualism are powerful thematic aspects of Dracula, the novel as a whole exceeds these limiting factors by reliance on perennially powerful archetypes, as well as being left wide-open for manifold interpretations, including such interpretations which would attempt to refute the aforementioned issues of chauvinism and misogyny.

Because of the novels' inherent brilliance and innovation, it is likely that "Stoker always will be of interest to the world. Unless, alas, we psychoanalyze the poor devil to death. Free to be titillated by the eroticism of Dracula we moderns have turned the vampire into the vamp. Exposing illicit pleasures to the light of day drives a stake through the heart of desire." (Roberts) That

acknowledged, it is also likely that Stoker;'s Dracula will continue to be critically evaluated in light of its dominant themes of chauvinism and misogyny.

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