

Do you find the
rendition of dracula's
pursuit of love
through the centuries
sent...



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What is your view? Do you find the rendition of Dracula's pursuit of love through the centuries sentimental? He is Romeo, whose young wife, believing him dead, kills herself. He is Lucifer, vowing revenge on the God who has betrayed him. He is Don Juan, sucking the innocence out of his conquests. He is the Flying Dutchman, sailing the centuries for an incarnation of the woman he loved. He is Death, transmitting a venereal plague in his blood, in his kiss.

He is even Jesus, speaking Jesus' last words as he dies, a martyr whose mission is to redeem womankind. Husband, seducer, widower, murderer, Christ and Antichrist, Dracula contains multitudes. He is every mortal man and every mortality with which man threatens women (Corliss, 1992). But is he " Bram Stoker's Dracula"? No, he is not. He is Coppola's Bram Stoker's Dracula - humanized, redeemable, romantic, and tragic figure searching for his long lost love who has " come across oceans and time" to find it.

And only Mina, the avatar of his dead wife, can provide it. Over the years Bram Stoker's Dracula has been reworked to films many times.

Even though Coppola's film adaptation of the novel is considered as an essentially faithful rendition, the director made one far-reaching alteration to Stoker's original: the inclusion of the romance between Mina and Dracula. According to some film critics this is the greatest flaw of the film. Originally Stoker's Dracula is satanic figure, a force of pure evil while Coppola's Dracula is romanticized hero. The film begins with a pre-credits sequence which tells us that Dracula is the historic Vlad the Impaler (making a factual mistake in saying that he ruled Transylvania).

The real Vlad ruled Wallachia, a region of Romania). In this sequence we see that Vlad became a vampire when his beloved wife killed herself after reading a false note of her husband's death. Later in the film, Dracula believes that Mina is his wife reborn, and he seeks to rekindle that love and make her his beloved again (Miller, 2007). For many film critics this is incredibly unnecessary , and completely cliched, and there is no valid artistic reason to add this subplot. To Fred Botting, Bram Stoker's Dracula is ' The End of Gothic', the final metamorphosis of a faltering convention into some strange and alien form that destroys all of Gothic's power. Harry Benshoff writes, Most of Hollywood's recent big- budgeted remakes of the classical horror movies have all refashioned their monsters with romanticized narratives and sexy star appeal; for example, Francis Ford Coppola's Bram Stoker's Dracula was called by some critics ' sentimental, not scary, ' precisely because it grafted a romantic reincarnation love story (not present in the Stoker's original, but since the late 1960s an increasingly popular trope) to the story of bloodsucking aristocrat.

But why Coppola and screenwriter of the movie Hart go easy on Dracula this time around, why they don't let him pour out the venom and ferocious sadism that might magnetize the audience, why they've played up a romantic-victim side that isn't present in the novel they've otherwise adapted so faithfully. Perhaps Coppola felt that this addition might blunt the horrors of the film for a larger audience, but for many film critics the effect is to complicate an already intricate story, weakening an otherwise superior film.

However, may be it is not appropriate to say that Stoker's Dracula is better than Coppola's Dracula simply because they are different. The thing that Coppola really should be blamed is to name his version Bram Stoker's Dracula because in Stoker's novel, Dracula is almost entirely a "monster", in the sense that he has little or no perceptible motives other than to stalk and feed upon (subsequently horrifying and killing) his victims. He acts more as an animal, concerned only with his primal urges to survive (though he deals with these urges in sly, pre-meditated, human-like ways).

In Coppola's take, however, there is an alternate sub-plot which has Dracula as a passionate lover with almost super-human emotions. He is still a monster in the sense that he can transform into horrible beasts and kill people with no regret, but he does so to satisfy his longing for love. The viewer can almost sympathize with him as he cries over the loss of his lover, or claims that "the luckiest man who walks on this earth is the one who finds... true love". He is a man trapped inside a monster's body.

This is much different than in the book, where he is hated and feared without a doubt of his monstrosity. In fact, the mask of a human form that he hides behind in the book can even be seen to add to his sinister traits; that he would take a human form to deceive his victims just makes him that much more dangerous and downright creepy. He is a monster hiding in a man's body while Coppola's Dracula, on the other hand, looks much more like a human being who has been trapped in the body of a monster.

In the late twentieth century, monstrosity becomes acceptable in popular culture when there are reasons behind it that surpass the purely one-dimensional evil of Victorian texts. In effect, Coppola's postmodern vision

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delineates Dracula as a complex, multi-dimensional entity; a deeply emotional persona perched on the delicate boundary between man and beast, struggling between the incessantly carnal needs of the predator and the longing of an unrealized and possibly redeeming love (Sahay, p.) Hence, utilizing the popular myths of true love and reinforcing it with “ new age” beliefs in reincarnation, Coppola’s film represents Count Dracula as a redeemable soul whose humanized Otherness dispels much of his monstrosity. The vampire as an icon of evil exists side by side with its postmodernist counterpart. That the vampire created by Stoker has adapted so well without losing connection with its roots is a tribute to the power of the archetype, and of the novel (Carter, “ Has Dracula Lost His Fangs? ”).

Sympathetic vampires, like Coppola are more appealing to some contemporary readers, but this attraction has a price — the loss of some of the power, grandeur and intensity that comes from a confrontation with something utterly diabolical. Count Dracula is appealing and interesting not in spite of the fact that he is evil, but because he is evil. Take that away and you weaken that ritual encounter with evil which is at the core of the best horror fiction. Yet, on the other hand, would the appeal of the vampire be as great were it not for the wave of sympathetic vampires?