

Dracula: the victorian vampire and fallout from repressive english culture



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In the novel Dracula, Bram Stoker describes his vision of the fallout from repressive English culture concerning sexuality and sexual acts of vampires and Dracula. Stokers vision of what the English society was and would become is represented by Dracula and his vampires. In the Victorian 19th century, gender and sexuality played a huge roll in the everyday life of English societies - especially for women.

As much as this book focuses on supernatural creatures, I believe that it also entertains the Victorian male imagination, specifically on the topic of female sexuality. This time was extremely difficult for the Victorian women because not only did they not have many legal rights but their sexual behavior was mandated by the society's extremely harsh expectations. If a woman was in between those two options she was most likely considered a whore in the excessive society of the English. Through the examples of Lucy, Mina, Dracula, vampires, and the overall exaggeration of sex in this novel, I will explore and come to a conclusion about how Stoker Describes his vision of Sexuality in the Victorian era.

The Ideal woman in the Victorian era was characterized to be pure, chaste, and god- serving. Women were expected to wait till marriage to have sex and it was supposed to be purely for the purpose of having kids and to promote and strengthen the bond between husband and wife. The nature of marriages in the 19th Century were often not love based. Apparently marriage among many couples was as much a product of the heart as of contract or logic. Furthermore, the Victorian sense of romantic love placed considerable emphasis on the spiritual nature of the marital Bond, and sex was seen as a way of enhancing spiritual closeness (Ideology and Sexuality <https://assignbuster.com/dracula-the-victorian-vampire-and-fallout-from-repressive-english-culture/>)

among Victorian Women, 149). The idea of sex became a huge part of the culture in England and it was used as a tool in different scenarios: Degler Believes that women were using the rate of sex as a tool for power bargaining and the household. By withholding sex from their husbands (who presumably desire to high rate of it) woman could exert control over other household decisions...Furthermore love and necessity were frequently cited as rationalizations in conjunction with or in the absence of reports concerning pleasure from sex (Ideology and Sexuality among Victorian Women, 150). With this evidence, I believe it is clear that sex was rarely used for pleasure and if it was it was the product of a role of a women or weak willpower from the man and woman.

Lucy Westenra and Mina Murray are the epitome of the Victorian Ideal woman in Stokers Dracula. Both women are pure and innocent of the worlds evils, and devoted to their men. The two women - who are best friends - are very important to showing Stokers vision for multiple reasons, including showing how they were originally complete opposites of Dracula's wives and to show how a womens sexual behavior can socially make or break her. Lucy is the first of the Ideal woman to be turned into a vampire, and Dracula knows how woman can control men through sexual desires Your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine my creatures, to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed (Dracula, Ch. 23). In the story he is turning them into monsters but Stoker is subtly saying that this woman has lost her respectable nature and is welcoming the voluptuousness life. This part of the novel is very important because it shows how easy it is for men to corrupt and control women in the

19th century and how quickly a woman's reputation can be ruined because of her sexual life. Lucy is the stepping stone for Dracula to walk on and continue his corruption of men and women. Once Lucy is a vampire, she becomes Stokers example of what would arise from the fallout of the repressive English culture. She becomes a sex craved representing the exact opposite of the culture of their time She still advanced, however, and with a languorous, voluptuous grace, said Come to me Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!" (Dracula, Ch. 16).

Mina is another example of the perfect Victorian woman who is attacked by Dracula. Stoker changes the script with how he describes Minas encounter with Dracula and how corrupts her. Unlike Lucy, Mina was the victim of a direct attack from Dracula himself and in this case Dracula represents a rapist With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast which was shown by his torn-open dress (Dracula, Ch. 21). When vampires feed on humans, male or female, it is considered a sexual act, so when Dracula forces Mina to drink his own blood it is meant to be him raping her. Mina is described as in this novel as an immensely intelligent and understanding character. Her Intellect and aspirations to do more than the average Victorian women leads us to believe she is an example of the New Woman. She is the first woman in Stokers novel to show masculine qualities which is dangerous to the Victorian men, Dracula likewise recognizes

something wayward in Mina. While he does not make the connection explicit, Dracula suggests that Mina has always harbored some resentment against the men who would exclude her from their trust, evoking the chivalric ideal of masculinity in order to withhold access to information and power. To Mina, Dracula offers retribution in exchange for her allegiance (Your Girls That You All Love Are Mine Already, 22).

Draculas three wives that reside in his castle in Transylvania are meant to represent the exact opposite of the ideal Victorian women. Stoker describes them as everything a Victorian woman shouldn't be in their society I am alone in the castle with those awful women. Faugh! Mina is a woman, and there is nought in common. They are devils of the Pit! (Dracula, Ch. 4). The three women are impure, sexual aggressive monsters as described by Jonathan Harker. These three vampires are Stokers examples of unconventional women in the 19th century who seduce men, and in this novel their seductions powers are heightened making it almost impossible to resist I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes. The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck, she actually licked her lips like an animal .. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited waited with beating heart. (Dracula, Ch. 16). The three vampires here voluptuous and highly sexualized in this part of the novel, playing with Harkers head.

The position that these women put him in and the display of female sexual aggression from these vampires both attracts and repulses Harker. The fact that Harker had to close his eyes indicates his weakness to handle open sexuality. In the Victorian society that prioritizes and rewards virginity, the extremely sexual situation that he is put in with three women sparks fantasies and puts him in a state of ecstasy. This is Stokers idea of what would happen eventually in the repressive culture in which he resided; Everything would be highly sexualized and virginity and domesticity would be less important. Dracula is the vocal point of sexualization in this novel and he has many different roles in what Stoker is trying to say about the Victorian era. Dracula represents the many sexual desires both man and women had in the 19th century, and the majority of his power (as character and narrative figure) rests in his mutability, for in Dracula multiple (even contradictory) narratives collide. (Your Girls That You All Love Are Mine Already, 30). His many narratives allow him to take the variation of every desire there is to be explored, whether it is heterosexual, homosexual or even bisexual. Dracula exhibits interest with Jonathan but never acts upon it which withheld a deep desire he had so he looks to find enjoyment with other genders Dracula is essentially homoerotic and is rooted in Draculas unfulfilled sexual ambition to fuse with a male [Jonathan].

Always postponed and never directly enacted, this desire finds evasive fulfillment in an important series of heterosexual displacements (Coitus Interruptus: Sex, Bram Stoker, and Dracula, 6). Dracula also exploits the male fears in their society that women would no longer be controlled and expected to do what men wanted. Stoker creates this threat which causes

immense anxiety to the men of the Victorian era because Dracula vivifies the threat of the female vampire by activating a cluster of anxious social narratives. Stoker naturalizes patterns of association which equate female sexuality with criminality, forces which threaten both British masculinity and the empire as a whole (Your Girls That You All Love Are Mine Already, 29-30). Bram Stokers vision of the fallout from the repressive English culture concerning sexuality and sexual acts motivates him to write Dracula and deliver his message to the readers. The Exaggeration of sex in this novel combined with the Victorian conception of sexuality introduces new ideas to the that would be an outrage to their current society. This novel used monsters to talk about unpopular topics of the 19th century, and I believe that Stokers message and vision was clear: He was not a fan of what would soon change about the world regarding sex and gender.