

Court literature review example

Life



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When Blood is The Path

In every literary work, certain character has its place and role given by the author. Main characters are usually the easiest ones to read and understand their meaning for the narration and author's attitude to them. On the other hand, secondary characters serve a different purpose. They are often used to unravel depth of main heroes' characters and mode of actions. On the other hand, sometimes the meaning of secondary characters and the reason why author pays attention to them might be not evident at all. This is the case of Dr. Seward's patient Renfield in Bram Stoker's "Dracula".

"I used to fancy that life was a positive and perpetual entity, and that by consuming a

multitude of living things, no matter how low in scale of creation, one might indefinitely prolong life" (Stoker 278).

In order to continue living, a creature needs energy and strength from other creatures. In the life cycle, survival of one species depends on destruction and consumption of another one (Byron 91). In this regard, it can be argued that Renfield's words can be interpreted as a reference to the primeval survival instinct and laws of wild life. On the other hand, from psychoanalytical perspective, his statements refers to complete dominance of one creature over another one through consumption of one's identity or its complete annihilation (Byron 112). In this context, actual eating of living creatures can be viewed as satisfaction of one's ego through dominance over other individuals (Houston 69).

On the other hand, from the point of vampire matters, Renfield's hallucinations and eating of living creatures is of much more importance

than Van Helsing's discovery of vampires and knowledge of the ways of their destruction. Unlike all sane characters of the novel, Renfield is the only one capable to look inside of vampires and understand what they are and how they go through life/death continuum. He is the one to say: " I tried to kill him for the purpose of strengthening my vital powers by the assimilation with my own body of his life through the medium of his blood - relying, of course, upon the Scriptural phrase, 'For the blood is the life'" (Stoker 278). Other characters and even Dracula refer to consequences of vampire nature or its religious and human perception. They never look into depth from existential and philosophical perspective. While the whole world is in fear of Dracula and he does not care of explaining himself, he simply dwells further; Renfield is the one to give explanation and certain vitality to vampire blood consumption (Houston 65). In this context, one might view a vampire as a creature on top of the food chain, rather than a damned and forgotten creature. On the other hand, the message Stoker wanted to pass to his audience referred more to blood in its historical and existential meaning. Except for being a narrator of author's thoughts and perceptions, Renfield is also an example of existential priorities of human or any other existence. Irrespective of the fact that he wanted to become a vampire, his goodness was not a priority for him, just as later it was not a priority for Dracula. Both Dracula and Renfield gave up their eternity and blood path in order to protect and save one creature more important than anything else - Mina. Irrespective of his insanity and Mina's kindness, he wished he would never see her again, saying " I pray God I may never see your sweet face again" (Stoker 278). In this context, Stoker shows that, in one's struggle for eternal life, egoistic desires are suppressed by one motive preservation of beloved

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ones or continuation of living within them. In this regard, Renfield's betrayal of Dracula was conditioned by male, human instinct to protect the most important members of community - women who give birth, who continue life and bear knowledge of human civilisations in their blood (Byron 129). Until certain extent, it can be argued that Renfield was predicting Dracula's fate and meaning of his existence, which was to die for Mina's child: " later on he will understand how some men so loved her, that they did dare much for her sake" (Stoker 421).

Overall, it can be concluded that the main role of Renfield was to express the core ideas of the author and make them comprehensible for the audience. In this context, he served both an embodiment of humanity craving for eternal life and primeval men capable of self-sacrifice for the generation to live. In both cases, blood was the path to follow.

Works Cited

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