

Mise en scene, dracula essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

(i) Elements needed by the camera to create meaning, e. g. costume, lighting, acting etc. (ii) the above elements and also the mise-en-shot, i. e. the type of shot used, camera techniques, and camera movements. The purpose of Mise-en-scene is to add to the narrative in creating meaning, it allows artist expression through the planning of each scene. In the opening scene up until Vladimir turns against God, the film has a lot of significant Mise-en-scene. The film begins with strong religious symbolism, an Islamic crescent as a shadow on a map, approaching Europe, and a crucifix falling to the ground.

The music is very dramatic, building up to a crescendo when the battle breaks out. While this is playing there is a voiceover by Anthony Hopkins, who is most associated with his character Hannibal Lecter. Audience expectation grows. This is a connotation, that Anthony Hopkins will play a similar role or will star in the same type of film. Then the battle erupts, Vlad kisses the Cross (more religious symbolism) and it begins. Shown in silhouettes with fire in the background, the battle resembles a kind of puppet show. The battle is shown in this way to emphasise the Mythical element, it is an ancient story being told.

When Vladimir returns victorious from the battle, he is in armour like that of an insect - exoskeleton. This is relevant later on in the film. He finds out his wife has killed herself, and the priests tell him she has gone to the devil, (all in subtitles). Vlad cannot take this, after he had defended God's Holy church, so he turns from God. He throws his sword into the cross and blood pours out from the cross. This is Binary opposition, the Good of the cross vs. the Evil blood pouring from it. The blood proceeds to cover the ground. Then we see

big Ben and the cold streets of London, a stark contrast to the previous scene.

It then tells us the date and situation. This emphasises that we are now in the present, the legendary sense has gone and this is not a story anymore. Meaning is created almost entirely by mise-en-scene in the sequence I described. The dialogue is very thin and without the mise-en-scene it would be far less meaningful. The narration by Anthony Hopkins without such things as the Crescent's shadow or the cross falling, and the whereabouts being shown on the map would obscure the meaning and we would not recognise who was fighting, and which side we were supposed to be faithful to.

Without the puppet like battle the mythical story element would be lost, because we would not know whether to take the narration as a serious bloody battle, or a kind of legend, for this Vampire to emerge from. The meaning is created through a blend of dialogue and mise- en-scene, both are necessary for the true meaning to be conveyed. However mise-en-scene is more effective in this case, as much of the meaning does not involve any speech at all. The narrative of the film is quite different to what the mise-en-scene would indicate.

Dracula comes to England to seduce Jonathan Harker's fiance and inflict havoc on England. From the mise-en-scene you could detect that Dracula was to inflict havoc, (the evil looking eye in the sky) but it is the dialogue we rely on to show the love that Dracula feels for his lost wife. We see this love when Dracula comes to England and talks to Mina, and when he looks at her

picture longingly from his castle. The mise-en-scene only furthers certain aspects of the narrative, it conveys a gothic and evil atmosphere, but does not show the love story that is hidden in all this evil, the dialogue does this.

The Genre of Bram Stokers Dracula is Horror, but it is edged with romance. Bram Stokers Dracula could even be under the sub-genre of Vampire. The typical mise-en-scene for horror is blood, fire, demons/vampires, dark lighting/red evil lighting, jumpy camera, vermin, insects, graves, skeletons and nearly anything related to death. In Dracula Coppola uses Blood to great effect, when it pours from the cross. Fire is apparent throughout the film, but especially at the beginning when the battle is fought. Obviously Vampires are in the film, but the mise-en-scene is specifically the typical fangs and cloak.

The lighting is dark in parts and red like blood in other parts - when Jonathan Harker visits Dracula. The camera uses the genre's typical jumpy feature when Dracula is moving through the graveyard (another typical mise-en-scene). Insects are a main feature in the film, Vladimír's armour was insect looking, and the crazy man in the cell ate insects. All of that mise-en-scene is determined by the horror genre; however there is some unique mise-en-scene too. The religious symbolism of the Crescent and the Crucifix is not typified in horror films. It is more used in medieval war/crusade films, not horror.

The way the story is told at the beginning, like a fairytale, is not determined by the horror genre. It is more used in the fantasy genre. Much of the mise-en-scene is determined by the genre (horror) but some fundamental elements are not - religion and the sense of legend. Dracula is "about film"

in that it follows the generic convention of the many vampire films that have gone before. Blood, fire, crosses etc.

The film defines the sub-genre of Vampire, within the horror genre. The outline of Coppola's film is familiar, but rarely is there any influence from older source material. There are a couple of instances where particular scenes could have easily been ripped off from the likes of Carl Dreyer's "Vampyr"). Dracula has been made so many times that the original story has become lost in the multitude of transitions. Bram Stoker's Dracula makes inter-textual reference to all Dracula films before and after it, is the most faithful and emotional of them all. It shows that an excellent film can be made even without much tampering of the original texts. There is a parody in the way the Dracula is filmed and acts during the film.

It imitates the traditional ideas of Dracula and makes them seem quite funny. Dracula's cape is ridiculously long, his hair-style is very imaginative, and his evil cackling laughter when he does something nasty is overly typical, also " I never drink..... wine" (suggesting he drinks blood) these things are parody of the whole idea of Dracula. The elements I have discussed added to the film. There is a backdrop of many Dracula films that this one had to live up to, and I enjoyed seeing the familiar story come to life through all the different pieces of mise-en-scene.

Often it goes unnoticed during the film, but a small piece of scenery or a prop can change the whole meaning of a scene and this is the case with Big Ben (although they told us it was London after a few moments). Without the mise-en-scene that I discussed, the film would have been more like a love

story, without any horrible imagery to keep you watching. Thus it would have made for a much less enjoyable film. However, having fragmented and took apart the film, I feel like I would have enjoyed it more if I had just watched it and not tried to understand every little thing.

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