

# Deconstruction of dracula: allusions in gothic literature



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Vampires are loved by the public and are often used a great deal in our society, whether it is through literature, shows, or cinema. One example of how vampires are used in literature is the Gothic novel *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. Regardless if one has or has not read the leading Gothic novel, *Dracula*, it is safe to assume that the name will sound familiar.

The entire obsession with vampires is a continued tradition, with origins dating back to a hundred years ago. While there has been many famous vampire stories over the ages, which have had a big impact on the Gothic genre, none have been as prominent as Bram Stokers *Dracula*. In this story, Jonathan Harker one of the many main characters, comes across a nobleman who calls himself Count Dracula; Jonathan Harker is a young lawyer who travels to Transylvania to complete property transactions with this man. When he enters Draculas castle to complete the property transactions, Dracula traps Harker in one of his many rooms.

Harker and his friends back in London discover that Count Dracula is a vampire; they then attempt to capture and kill him. This novel contains many remote and mysterious settings, such as Draculas castle. It also contains innocent young women pursued by older men who are finally saved by virtuous young men, and numerous dramatic coincidences. *Dracula* is dependent greatly on the Gothic form which is shown quite often in the theme, atmosphere, and character types in the story, all adding to the essence of this work as a horror classic. This leads to the understanding that Bram Stoker incorporates the elements of Gothic literature in his book *Dracula* through mysterious settings, symbolism within the characters, and incorporating intense emotions. The Gothic tradition prominently appears in <https://assignbuster.com/deconstruction-of-dracula-allusions-in-gothic-literature/>

Draculas setting, and many stereotypical elements of Gothic literature can be found in the novel that adds to the development of this composition for example, remote mysterious settings, dramatic coincidences, gloomy and decaying settings, haunted houses, castles with secret passages, mysterious architecture, supernatural beings, curses and prophecies, damsels in distress, heroes and romance.

The study of such texts shows a repeated application of the threshold principle on the levels of motif and theme, plot, character, narrative structure or genre, and warrants the hypothesis that Gothic displays a fractal structure (Aguirre par. 32). Dracula has a variety of different settings, though most of them are traditionally Gothic or have some traditional Gothic elements contained within them. For example, Draculas castle, The castle is on the very edge of a terrible precipice. A stone falling from the window would fall a thousand feet without touching anything! As far as the eye can reach is the sea of green tree tops, with occasionally a deep rift where there is a chasm. Here and there are silver threads where the rivers wind in deep gorges through the forests. But I am not in heart to describe beauty, for when I had seen the view I explored further; doors, doors, doors everywhere, and all locked and bottled. In no place save from the windows in the castle walls is there an available exit. The castle is a veritable prison, and I am a prisoner! (Stoker 10) This Gothic setting is depicted as dramatically isolated, secluded from any neighboring towns, tall and dark, eerie and barren, having locked doors and empty rooms. One can close their eyes and see this Gothic setting in their head. However, it is not just the setting that proves as Gothic, but the actual location as well.

The castle is located in a secluded area in Eastern Europe, an incredibly Gothic and mystifying place to live for a native British citizen, where normal understanding and logic do not apply, as noted even by the Count who says Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you many strange things (Stoker 26). The castle is only one Gothic setting, and though they are not portrayed in such clear depictions as the castle, there are other settings like the Swards Asylum, Carfax, and Whitby Abbey, all greatly featured as stereotypical Gothic settings in Dracula. Also regarding setting is the period of time in which the novel is written. Moreover, Stoker, creates these settings during the Victorian Era, in hopes of instituting culture within the narrative.

Dealing with the conflict of good and evil within the world, Dracula thrives on the question of morality. In this story, a malevolent being threatens these noble characters, but in having faith, wisdom, and undying motivation, they manage to victoriously triumph against it. This malicious being, Count Dracula, intimidates Jonathan Harker and his friends, not just directly, but as a society altogether. This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and everwinding circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. The very thought drove me mad. (Stoker 57) Jonathan imagines Dracula invading England and feasting on the blood of English people. Dracula's goal is to populate his evil and Harker feels powerless in stopping him. He imagines that the English will be likewise "helpless" against the vampire as well. In this novel, the battle between good and evil is anything but easy; instead, it is made even more difficult by

the human imperfections found within the narrative among the supporters of evil and the warriors of good. Draculas control over Lucy Westenra, who is the symbol of innocence in this story, represents womens vulnerability when left completely defenseless.

A brave mans blood is the best thing on this earth when a woman is in trouble. Youre a man, and no mistake. (Stoker 189) This not only shows gender roles and male superiority but also the theme of blood. Throughout the novel, there is a morally upstanding quality to the blood that the men donate to Lucy. The pure and wholesome blood of these men stands in contrast to the tainted, death dealing blood of the Count, who infects his victims with the curse of vampirism. Jonathan Harker gives another example of human weakness with his attempts to forget his experiences in Transylvania; however, he quickly recognizes his ignorance. This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and everwinding circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. The very thought drove me mad. (Stoker 57) Harker later admits that the only way to defeat the Count is sharing his knowledge about him. It is evident in Stokers novel that for virtue to combat against evil, there needs to be an aid of wisdom and knowledge. Dracula also deals with other common themes to the Gothic genre, including captivity, exile, and dictatorship. After some investigation, Harker discovers that Dracula sleeps in a coffin in a crypt beneath the castle during the day and spends his nights stealing babies from the nearby town. He attempts to escape the castle, where he has become a hostage. (Witalec par. 2)

Harker is captured and imprisoned in Draculas Gothic castle and terrorized by him. Later on in the course of the events in this story, both Mina and Lucy are hunted down by Dracula as he sucks away at their life force, depleting them of their blood so that he can rejuvenate himself. Dracula manipulates, deceives, and imprisons just like Satan from the Bible. Another important character in the novel is R. M Renfield, a gentle, eloquent, yet insane asylum patient driven to danger from his curiosity. Discovered in a pool of blood on the verge of losing consciousness, dies from the one thing he admired most: Draculas corruption and soul. He is one of various good examples of how Draculas ruthlessness can affect the reader as much as it does the characters themselves, respectably. When the count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat. I drew away, and his hand touched the string of beads which held the crucifix. It made an instant change in him, for the fury passed so quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there. (Stoker 31) Fear is a common ground for the protagonists in Dracula, and in literature altogether. It depicts and discerns what has happened and what is to happen, particularly in a place as broken and desperate like Transylvania where vampires lurk the streets unrelentlessly.

The stereotypical themes are not simply underlying parts of Dracula, but rather inspirations from the novel. With this innate fear comes confusion and anxiety, only amplified by the various characters eccentricities and vigilance, such as Helsing or Harker. An iconic event heightened in anxiety and distress, and known for its symbolism is Van Helsing's confrontation with Dracula in attempts to capture him. In this scene Dracula tries to seduce

Helsing so that he can lure him in and attack, but does not manage to succeed. All because of Helsing's faith in the power of the cross which is a very big symbol of good vs. evil. When all other reason fails, religion and religious symbols win against the forces of darkness and ignorance. I shall cut off her head and fill her mouth with garlic, and I shall drive a stake through her body. (Stoker 221) Van Helsing was Buffy the vampire slayer he dictates the course of action needed to be taken in these situations, Helsing is determined to stop this evil plague.

Vampires have mesmerized the public for centuries, and will likely continue to captivate people's interest for many more. Stoker's *Dracula* is the definitive vampire novel, and many of the later vampire works draw on the story and characteristics defined by Stoker. In Stoker's decisive work the Gothic tradition is on full display, as Stoker draws on those literary traditions to define critical aspects, such as the theme, setting, atmosphere, and characters of his story. The development of these aspects is crucial in the overall effect of the novel as a Gothic horror story. Such a faint narrative with limited detail can so beautifully be expressed in so little context. The popularity of such a genre whose reputatory leader is *Dracula* proves that it is humanity's innate nature to be attracted to the practices of the underworld, whether admitted or not. *Dracula* reminds us that things may not be how they seem. Without evil there can be no good, and without good there can be no evil. Evil is a necessary component of good. If one ceases to exist the other ceases to exist.