

Sexuality in bram stokers dracula

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In this article we will examine the role of sexuality in Bram Stokers Dracula and how major a role it plays in the book. Because of certain aspects in the writers life and because of certain symbolisms a great deal of sexual meaning has been given to every aspect of the book. The character and physical description of Dracula in the novel are very sensual in nature. The other female vampires appear to the reader to be even more sexual and the male characters are strongly attracted to them despite the ever-present realization that the vampires are foul beings.

Sexuality in the novel There are many scenes in the novel which despite Bram Stokers denial to admit it appear to have many sexual connotations. These suggest that enhanced sexuality almost a by-product of vampirism. One of which occurs with Jonathan Harker while trapped in Draculas castle gives very physical descriptions of the vampire one of which I have quoted below:

‘ There he lay looking as if youth had been half-renewed, for the white hair and moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran over the chin and neck’ (Stoker- Chap 13)

Other scenes involving Lucy are also intensely physical. Lucy even as a human an unstable woman who is attracted to three different men between whom she cannot decide.

When she becomes a vampire it seems that she has cast aside any sexual inhibitions. The following description shows the intensely sexual desire she is creating ‘... her breast heaved softly ... And then insensibly there came the

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strange change which I had noticed in the night ... the mouth opened, and the pale gums, drawn back, made the teeth look longer and sharper than ever ... and said in a soft voluptuous voice, such as I had never heard from her lips: 'Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come! Kiss me! '(Stoker-Chap 16, 4)

When the sexual aspect of the book is admitted to then it can be seen as symbolic of a breaking out of the repressed environment of the Victorian ages. Indeed after the novel was explored it was seen as full of all forms of sexual symbolism. Professor Miller complains repeatedly in her article that the book is being over examined for sexual references. Although as she states that the book has probably been over analyzed for sexual references there are many sexual references in the book. A quote from Eric Kwan-Wai Yu's article

' Whatever shapes of fear vampirism might evoke elsewhere, in this novel the dominant form has to do with sexual menace or the dreadful perception of sexual perversity. In fact, even the most erotic scene ends with utter revulsion and the chilling recognition of demonic threats posed by the Other' shows that his interpretation indicates a great deal of sexual connotation and the confusion created by the use of language between blood-letting and the sexual act. ' Lucy is described as seductive, demonic, and bestial at the same time, and there is again the deliberate confusion of sex with cannibalism'

However Professor Miller states that there is no conclusive proof within Bram Stoker's life or the novel which would justify the kind of interpretations that have been made. However there are many indications that repressed sexuality is a powerful undercurrent in the book which both repulses and

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attracts. Jonathan Harker is unwillingly attracted to the three vampiric women and is sickened by himself. The scene in which Dracula subdues Mina is interpreted as such by Eric Kwan-Wai Yu explains that Stoker 'subverts gender definitions and behavioral expectations which keep the imperial subject in place.

' He suggests that there is the feeling of something missing as he compares the time when Harker lies by when Dracula comes to Mina and when Dracula first comes to Mina. He draws similarity in their behaviour. Feminist interpretation Another important aspect of the sexuality in Dracula is that it is associated with evil and corruption and in contradiction with the divinity of God. There is a distinctive clash of good and evil in the book although these lines get blurred when Mina is bitten.

The two characters of Van Helsing and Dr. Seward are specifically very aware of their duty towards God. ' Thus are we, ministers of God's own wish: that the world, and men for whom His Son die, will not be given over to monsters, whose very existence would defame Him. He have allowed us to redeem one soul already [i. e. , Lucy's], and we go out as the old knights of the Cross to redeem more. Like them we shall travel towards the sunrise; and like them, if we fall, we fall in good cause. (Stoker, 278 ,)'(qtd by Yu)

The sacrifice of Lucy is an example of how far they are willing to go to fulfill this duty. How sexuality is associated with the evil and corruption of vampirism is associated with is made clear in Eric Kwan-Wai Yu's essay when he talks about how Lucy's "voluptuousness," is a projection of men's suppressed desires and how this guilt of desiring her is turned into shameful brutal aggression and the act of destroying the vampire Lucy can be

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interpreted as destroying what is sexual in her and 'murdering the "devil temptress" can be further rationalized as an honorable duty'

Here they are destroying Lucy the vampire but it can be interpreted as suppression of her sexuality if we read the description of Lucy after the stake has been driven. 'but Lucy as we had seen her in life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity ,.... One and all we felt that the holy calm that lay like sunshine over the wasted face and form was only an earthly token and symbol of the calm that was to reign for ever'. The association of sex with evil is an extremely common one.

Many visual interpretations of the devil show him a creature with over-sized genitals so the symbolism of vampirism with sex does make sense. This if interpreted as a suppression of women's sexuality can be seen as a suppression of women. Judith Weissman states the fight against vampirism and the fight to reclaim Mina is to keep women from knowing what men and women all of the ages have known that women's sexual appetites are greater than men's. (qtd in Miller)

It is also interesting to note that Mina after the destruction of the vampire Mina goes back home to be a wife and a mother but when she is infected and Dracula is alive she is an intelligent woman who is an integral member of the group who destroys Dracula. She shows mental fortitude by going to mental contact with Dracula while struggling to maintain her own identity and not be overwhelmed by him. Perhaps the interpretation can be extended further than sexuality over here it could be seen as an effort and a fight to keep women on the same roles as they have been performing and to avoid change.

The scene in which Dracula cuts his breast and forces Mina to drink from it drink from it as mentioned in earlier seems to have 'subverted gender definitions'. Protestant Work ethic An important point in Eric Kwan-Wai Yu's analysis is that this sexual fear and repression creates a powerful Puritan work ethic in the 'Crew of Light'. Mina's vampirism and her deep fear of turning into the 'Undead' is what pushes her to work hard and use her intellectual capacities to their fullest.

Yu states 'The main thrust of my argument is that fear aroused by the paranoiac perception of sexual perversity begets a curious kind of work ethic in the imperial subject, reaffirming Enlightenment reason and scientific progressivism while, at the same time, betraying the very unreason in reason and the profound anxieties underneath the confidence in progress' Yu also sees Dracula as a highly educated man who is thirst for more knowledge. The sexual aspect can lead us to forget this.

He also states that one can see Van Helsing as representative of objectiveness of all the qualities of rationality that the Enlightenment extols and vampirism is representative of everything that violates reason. Vampirism explains what is uncanny and 'unplaceable' in the enlightened age and the violence of reason itself. This violence of reason is the brutal way in which Lucy has to be killed so that her soul is reclaimed and she is saved.

Van Helsing is the voice of this reason who remains calm even when planning in what way to finish Lucy. The fear of this group from vampirism which pushes them toward hard work is shown as being symbolic of the sexual fears that created the Puritan work ethic. This theme again connects vampirism and sexuality. Symbolism Also a part of the book are the sexual

symbols. For example the stake being symbolic of the phallus. However Professor Miller believes that perhaps at times a wooden stake is just a wooden stake.

Even William Myers despite his assertion that the book is erotic in content also states that it is important to note that our interpretation depends on the time we live and all the movies depicting Bram Stoker's Dracula as intensely sexual are bound to do this because today's movies require that they do and not necessarily because the book itself is that sexual. (For the Purity of Our) Conclusion In conclusion it can be said that book does allow for sexual connotations and despite Bram Stoker's denial it can be said that repressed sexuality is a part of the book.

This allows for an interesting conclusion by Yu which states that the book is symbolic of the fear of sexuality resulting in the Puritan Work ethic. The feminist perspective states that it can be linked to suppression of specifically female sexuality. A scene considered representative of this is the staking of Lucy who is so sensual and voluptuous before the staking and is purified and redeemed after it. There is of course the sexual symbolism in the book.

However it is important not to over-interpret or read into works simply because it suits the age in which we live. Work Cited Stoker, Bram. Dracula Bibliomania Online Yu, Eric Kwan-Wai 'Productive fear: labor, sexuality, and mimicry in Bram Stoker's Dracula. (Critical essay)' Texas Studies in Literature and Language. 06/22/2006 Miller, Elizabeth 'Coitus Interruptus: Sex, Bram Stoker, and Dracula' Romanticism on the Net Issue 44, November 2006 Meyer William 'For the Purity of Our Precious Bodily Fluids: an Essay on Eroticism in Vampire Films' Latent Image Spring 2000

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