

Dracula: metaphor for human evil



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In Bram Stokers gothic novel Dracula, there is a strong distinction between characters of good and characters of evil. The human group of Jonathan, Mina, Van Helsing, and Dr. Seward relentlessly attempt to destroy the evil monster Dracula through the need of survival and revenge throughout the novel, solidifying the unremitting conflict between good and evil taking place in Dracula.

By analyzing Dracula through the formalist lens, and hence analyzing the relationship between form and meaning in the novel, several themes and messages relating to the idea of good against evil are made evident throughout Dracula. Therefore, through various contrasts in character elements, point of view, setting, and symbols, Stoker is able to reinforce Draculas central theme of good against evil.

Character elements are essential in Dracula for establishing the personalities and motives of characters and are furthermore essential in exhibiting the role that characters play in the battle of good against evil throughout the novel. One character element that helps establish Draculas role as an evil figure in Dracula is his horrifying appearance. Mina Marker, upon seeing Dracula bite Lucy in front of an Abbey in Whitby, describes Draculas countenance in shock, exclaiming, What it was, whether man or beast, I could not tell I could see a white face and red, gleaming eyes (Stoker 92). Not only does Mina describe Dracula as being physically horrifying by emphasizing the look of his gleaming red eyes and pale white face, but she also associates him with words such as beast and monster as the novel progresses. Draculas terrorizing appearance, combined with his association with evil creatures and terrible beasts, characterizes him as an evil figure

himself, establishing his role as an evil entity in the battle of good against evil in Dracula (Roth 110).

While Dracula's character elements establish him as the epitome of evil in Dracula, Mina's character elements establish her as a symbol of pure good. Mina is loved by all her human counterparts, and is described by characters such as Van Helsing and her husband Jonathan as being the beautiful, level-headed mother-figure that keeps the group motivated and able to continue their fight against Dracula (Senf 28). Mina, being loved by all for all her noble and sweet qualities, is thus the prize for which the men battle Dracula and a symbol for the Good for which everyone fought (Senf 29). Therefore, is it through Mina's nurturing, mother-like care for the men that the human group is able to persist in their fight against Dracula and solidify their role as figures of good in the constant fight between good and evil taking place throughout Dracula.

Dracula is told through multiple different points of view throughout the novel, with characters such as Jonathan, Mina, Dr. Seward, and Van Helsing recording their experiences through letters, diary entries, recordings, and journals. The human group, sharing their experiences and emotions in the forms of writings and recordings, are therefore able to translate the unity expressed in their recordings to action when they finally come together to defeat Dracula at the end of the novel (Senf 33). The overall teamwork and unity that allows the human group to triumph over Dracula, is therefore reinforced by a narrative strategy that emphasizes the need for unity and teamwork (Senf 33). The combined, unified efforts of the humans that are

expressed through multiple different point of views exemplify the necessity of teamwork and unity that is vital in goods attempt to defeat evil.

Dracula, unlike the human group whose every thoughts and emotions are expressed through multiple modes of communication, is not given a voice at any point throughout the entire novel. While the humans are all allowed individual voices in which they are able to express their emotions of fear, love, and anger, Dracula must never be allowed a voice, a discourse, a point of view: he must remain the unknowable all the presented discourses are those of the good and novel (Wood 179). Similarly, while characters such as Jonathan and Mina are allowed to express their point of views and are able to appeal to the audience through thoughts and actions of courage and selflessness, Dracula is never given a chance to appeal to the audience or is allowed to express his motives. Henceforth, through only allowing characters of good to have a voice in Dracula, Stoker emphasizes the humanity and relatability in characters of good while leaving Dracula, a character of evil, in complete silence and isolation (Wood 179).

The human group, unlike Dracula, are allowed to express their point of views through their individual methods of communication. By expressing their personal emotions and reactions to horrid events by recording their feelings and thoughts, the audience is able to fully empathize with the humans and thus empathize with good in the overall battle between good and evil.

Jonathan, writing in his journal after being warned by the Count not to fall asleep outside of his room at night, exclaims, Great God! Merciful God!...The Counts mysterious warning frightened me for in the future he has a fearful hold upon me! (Stoker 37). Jonathan, by candidly expressing his fear and

vulnerability while being held captive in Draculas castle, is able to extract feelings of empathy from the audience, thus solidifying the idea of good being favored whilst struggling against evil.

Throughout the entirety of Dracula, Stoker represents the manifestation of evil and the physical conflict between good and evil through vivid descriptions of contrasting settings. Stoker, by representing the presence of evil through the illustration of horrid settings, allows the audience to witness the physical battle between good and evil taking place in Dracula, such as when Jonathan first lays eyes upon Draculas castle. Jonathan, upon first arriving at Draculas massive castle, records in his journal, the driver was in the act of pulling up horses in the courtyard of a vast ruined castle whose tall black windows came no ray of light, and whose broken battlements showed a jagged line against the moonlit sky (Stoker 14). As Jonathan notes in his journal, Draculas castle is overwhelmingly dark, jagged, and ruined, images that are all associated with corruption and evil. Shortly after, as Jonathan fearfully enters Draculas terrifying, eerie castle, evil is quite literally attempting to consume good, therefore representing the one of the many physical clashes between good and evil in Dracula (Wood 179).

While Draculas castle is corrupted by evil throughout the entire novel, the once peaceful town of Whitby is contrastingly attacked by evil upon Draculas arrival. The tranquil, serene town of Whitby, where Mina and Lucy would often spend their days contentedly overlooking the bordering sea, is suddenly turned sour and dark upon the sudden arrival of the beast Dracula. According to a cut out from THE DALIGRAPH that Mina Market pasted in her journal, a terrifying tempest had overtaken the town and sea, as the waves

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rose in growing fury the wind roared like thunder and the whole sky overhead seemed trembling under the shock of the footsteps of the storm (Stoker 78). Dracula, who was on board the ship arriving at Whitby during the horrible storm, had thus infested the once tranquil town of Whitby with his infectious horridness (Senf 22). Therefore, through the rapid change in state of Whitby, nature is reflecting Draculas evilness invading a setting of peacefulness and good.

Draculas evilness is furthermore reflected in the setting of Dr. Seward's asylum. Dr. Seward often notes the horrid state of his asylum, recording in his diary, It was a shock to me to realize the grim sternness of my own cold stone building, with its wealth of breathing misery (Stoker 117). Dr. Seward's asylum, after being invaded by the monster Dracula, is the place in which Mina is bitten by Dracula and marked impure. Mina, being loved by all her human peers for being humble and pure, is thus taken advantage of in her vulnerable state by being corrupted by Dracula in this horrid asylum, thus marking the asylum as the arena for a psychomachia in which the madman is simultaneously the locus of the edifices vulnerability (Roth 108). Dracula's evil actions of preying on Mina's state of vulnerability and innocence are reflected in the overall appearance of Dr. Seward's asylum, the setting in which Dracula's vicious actions took place, solidifying the setting's role in reflecting the actions of evil corrupting good.

In *Dracula*, physical objects are repeatedly mentioned and vividly described to symbolize several contrasting elements between good and evil. The crucifix, being repeatedly utilized and mentioned throughout the novel, symbolizes the idea of goodness and purity itself, as the crucifix literally

repels Dracula and all forms of evil away from it. Jonathan, recalling Dracula's peculiar encounter with a crucifix, remembers that the crucifix made an instant change in him, for the fury passed so quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there (Stoker 26). Dracula, worshipping his ego and taste for blood and chaos above all else, cannot stand to bear the sight or touch of the crucifix, as it represents the purity and cleanliness that he does not have within himself (Herbert 65). The crucifix, with its power to repel all forces of evil in Dracula, symbolizes the idea that purity and goodness will always triumph against evil, as the sacred crucifix acts as a barrier against the evil creature Dracula.

Alike the symbol of the crucifix in Dracula, mirrors similarly represent the rejection of evil by an object of good. When Jonathan peers into his mirror he sees a reflection of himself, as he is a character of pure good, but when Dracula looks into the mirror he is met with a blank reflection. Jonathan recalls Dracula's lack of reflection upon peering into the mirror in his journal, writing, there was no reflection of him in the mirror...There was no sign of a man in it, except myself (Stoker 26). Henceforth, the mirror in Dracula symbolizes the idea of truthfulness and sincerity, as when Jonathan, a man of truthfulness, peers into the mirror he is able to see his reflection, while when Dracula looks into the mirror he finds himself unable to reflect in the mirror of Truth (Herbert 63). The mirror in Dracula therefore symbolizes the rejection of evil and acceptance of good, as the mirror's reflection of Jonathan, a character of good, contrasts with its immediate rejection of Dracula, a character of evil.

The symbol of blood in Dracula contrastingly represents the physical and psychological transition from good to evil. Mina, while being in a vulnerable dream-like state in Dr. Seward's asylum, is forced to drink Dracula's tainted blood, as she shakily describes to her fellow humans, recalling, he seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound, so that I must either suffocate or swallow some of the-Oh, my god! (Stoker 295). As soon as Mina's mouth touched Dracula's impure blood, Mina began her transition from good to evil, as when she is seduced by Dracula, she is unclean, tainted, and stained (Roth 121). Mina's newfound impurity is later reflected in her appearance as her forehead becomes stained in the shape of a crucifix as her body, now filled with Dracula's impure blood, cannot handle the touch of the pure, holy crucifix. Mina's mind is similarly corrupted as she becomes continually disassociated from reality by forming a mind link with the creature Dracula, thus exemplifying the symbol of blood in transitioning Mina from a woman of good to a woman corrupted by evil.

By examining Dracula through the formalist lens, and by henceforth connecting Dracula's theme to the form of the novel, it is evident that Stoker is able to reinforce the theme of good against evil by placing extreme emphasis on particular literary devices. Stoker, through the contrast and reliance upon character elements, point of view, setting, and symbols, is able to connect the form of Dracula to the perpetual fight between good and evil taking place between the resilient, good human group and the evil beast Dracula. Stoker's emphasis on literary techniques perpetuates the contrast between good and evil taking place throughout the novel, and furthermore exemplify the central theme of Dracula, the fight between good and evil.

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