Corruption Of Christianity: Dracula

In Dracula, Christian values are always present and portrayed by the protagonists. Therefore, the fact that the Count is constantly corrupting and acting against the protagonists, just as any antagonist would do, is very significant because it is a direct attack to the beliefs of Christianity. He represents all what is considered evil by Christian standards. What is more, he turns people evil by drinking their blood and injecting his own vile, malevolent essence. 'The novel’s religious analogy is obvious: in the most basic of his many perversions of Catholic lore, Count Dracula is the figurative anti-Christ who promises eternal life through the ingestion not of sacramental wine representing the blood of Christ, but of actual human blood.' (Starrs, 2004: 1). That is the reason why it is so important to defeat him. He poses a threat to the known Victorian world and his life must come to an end. Otherwise, order cannot be restored, and it can only be accomplished with catholic faith. In this essay, I am going to assess the importance of Christian symbolism in the novel and show how the character of the Count is built in opposition to anything Christian.

First of all, there are dozens of ways in which religion is corrupted in the novel. The first signs of perversion appear when Jonathan's landlord and his wife, who run the Golden Krone Hotel, are asked about Count Dracula and his castle. They realize that Jonathan is planning to visit him there and they react by crossing themselves, because they believe that Christianity is the only thing that can protect Jonathan from Dracula's power. She is so worried about his welfare that she dares to go down on her knees and implore him not to go (Stoker, 1897: 7). Moreover, she ends up giving him the catholic crucifix that she was wearing on her neck. Again, this is clearly hinting that the Count is devilish and that he will need to have faith in catholic symbols if he wants to survive within Dracula's castle. However, Jonathan is not superstitious at all and does not realize that he is in danger until later on. Once in the castle, Jonathan eventually needs to get a shave, but he cuts himself unintentionally while doing so. At that moment, Count Dracula cannot contain himself: whenever he sees human blood, the urge to drink it is amplified because of his vampiric condition. However, Dracula ends up touching Jonathan's crucifix and therefore he is saved, for his demoniac soul cannot stand being near Christian symbolism. As the novel describes it:

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: 38).

After this scene, it is already as clear as crystal for the readers that the Count is as dark as the night and as evil as the devil. Only the light, the power of God can get rid of him. The survival of humanity will depend on their Christian faith. Later in the novel, all this is confirmed: Van Helsing will always carry a golden crucifix around to beat the vampires, because 'devotion to the cross enables the hero or heroine to survive and/or transcend dark Gothic landscape.' (Purves, 2004: 148). He also uses a Christian symbol to prevent the Count from entering his coffin once. What is more, the vampires had tried to take Mina away by biting her. During that incident, 'Mina's Christian spirit faces a progressive undermining by that of the vampire, who has, like Christ, purchased her through his blood. Van Helsing's depiction of the incident as a 'baptism of

blood' is, similarly, a point of intersection with the religious script.' (Hughes, 2000: 175). In order to save her, when Mina is about to become one of them, Van Helsing uses some water and a holy fire circle, like a Christian circle that keeps her safe within it.

In other words, the narrative depends entirely on how the Count subverts and corrupts Christianity. The more he does it, the less chance the human race has of surviving the vampire attack. It keeps pushing them, forcing them to defend themselves. His willpower opposes the Christian one and the story is driven by this antagonism between Christianity and the anti-Christ, which is the Count Dracula in this case. He must have made a pact with Satan to obtain his new powers. Without the fear that Dracula produces, the story would not be as interesting as it is. It brings this terror right to the United Kingdom and places it near the readers so that they cannot ignore it. Finally, the ending also aligns with Christianity as Mina aligns herself with Christ: she sacrifices what is left of her in order to guarantee the continuity of the Christian structure and maintain order in her Victorian society. The struggle against Dracula's will was spiritual all along, and his way of life cannot prevail.

In conclusion, Christian symbolism is always present in the novel and reveals how the society of the time was organized according to Christian morality. Therefore, the fact that Count Dracula constantly attacks these values and tries to corrupt others is very significant, it forces the characters to counter his attempts. Not only is he malevolent, but he also tries to turn others evil as well. All he does poses a direct threat towards Christianity. Moreover, the plot is based on this struggle between the Count and Christian people, and without their fighting, the novel would not be as good as it is considered now. The whole writing depends on Count Dracula and his constant and repetitive attempts of subversion and corruption of Christianity, as well as diminishing people's faith in all what is good.

Bibliography

1. Gibson, Matthew. Dracula and the Eastern Question, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
2. Hughes, William. Beyond Dracula, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.
3. Purves, Maria Lisa. The Significance of Catholicism in Gothic Novels, University of York: Department of English and Related Literature, 2004.
4. Starrs, D. Bruno. 'Keeping the Faith: Catholicism in Dracula and its Adaptations' Journal of Dracula Studies, 6, 2004.
5. Stoker, Bram. Dracula, UK: Archibald Constable and Company, 1897.