Dracula: Sexualizing The Vampire Image

Bram Stoker's novel, Dracula, continues in the same way as Carmilla – a novel shows the power and the sexuality of a vampire. Vampires were created to "invoke horror and terror because of its power to allure and provoke one's repressed desires" (Hasanat Lecture 2). Stoker creates a story that represents many of the issues of this time involving sexuality and the roles of gender. The thoughts of a person's sexuality have always been such a controversial topic. This topic is something that can be somewhat complicated, but it always questioned. The question of sexuality of this Victoria era is found through Stoker's novel.

The roles of Mina and Lucy are very important characters to the plot of this novel, who narrate quite a few chapters throughout. The idea of their roles was to show two different types of women during this Victorian era. During this era, the ideal woman was suppressed sexually, because they had to follow the roles that society had created and assigned for them. Women were supposed to submit to the ideas of being pure and innocent. For most women, their goal was to marry even though in marriage they lost their rights and become property of the husband. This is seen in chapter nine, in one of Mina's letters Lucy, "I must stop, for Jonathan is waking. I must attend my husband!" (Stoker 92).

Then the other type of woman was the rebellious woman, who disregarded any of the traditional ideas of what a woman was during this era. A few times through the journals of Mina, she talks about "new woman", and how some they are switching the roles of gender. Some of the 'New Women' writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But I suppose the 'New Woman' won't condescend in future to accept. She will do the proposing herself. And a nice job she will make of it too!" (Stoker 77). Mina almost seems to be making fun of the idea of this "new woman", and how propstrous the idea changing the roles of women would actually be. Through this novel though, Mina actually takes the role of both genders. While she is seen as a motherly character, but also becomes the protector of Johnathan as well. Mina continues to help the men through this journey and Van Helsing even remarks on her playing both roles, "'Ah, that wonderful Madam Mina! She has man's brain, a brain that a man should have were he much gifted, and a woman's heart" (Stoker 201). Unfortunately, after making this comment, Van Helsing makes her stay behind when the men go to find and kill Dracula, almost taking away her masculinity.

Sexuality was another common theme in Dracula. Especially involving female sexuality. Much of the novel, it seemed that one of the main issues was trying to suppress these sexual tendencies that the women were dealing with. During this novel, Lucy becomes a vampire after Dracula gets a hold of her and turns her into a vampire, who in the process becomes very sexual. Her characteristics are described in chapter sixteen after she was turne, "the sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness" (Stoker 180). After she Dracula transforms her, Lucy's has a sexual awakening, and is now free to act on her sexual desires. While dealing with Lucy's new sexuality, the men do their best at keeping a close eye on Mina, so that she does not fall under the same temptation by Dracula that Lucy did. This really shows the how men really perceived women. Even though Dracula was the main cause of this "awakening", it was Lucy who was blamed for the faults of Dracula.

Not only does the sexual contreversories involve just women, but men as well. Early in the novel, we can see some sexual undertones between Jonathan Harker and Dracula, “And to refuse would be to excite his suspicion and to arouse his anger” (Stoker 34). Later on, at the end of chapter three, Harker was caught being seduced by the women vampires, Dracula comes in to rescue him and scolds the women and yells “This man belongs to me!” (Stoker 33). It seems that in this novel, Dracula is in a competition with these three women as to whom can have Harker, both in blood lust and sexual desires.

The ideas of Bram Stoker in his novel, Dracula, was to show the good vs evil and to look at sin and redemption. Along with these themes, Stoker explores the ideas of gender and sexuality in the Victorian era. He creates quite the contreversy with pushing these ideas of homosexuality and the ideas of women owning their sexuality. By the end of the book, any of these characteristics are demolished: the gender roles of Mina have been subdued, Lucy’s death ends her sexual desires her buried with her, and the wickedness of Dracula are eliminated. Everyone goes back to the ways of the Victorian era and are free to live their life the way it before Dracula.