
Dracula: The Themes Of Morality And Sexuality

Within the supernatural world of Dracula, the opposing realities of traditional values and morals are evident, such as security, moral and sexual propriety. Through the exploration of the gothic genre, an unspoken topic within the Victorian Era, Dracula is able to reveal and expose the fears and anxieties that Victorian society had as the traditional values are broken in the plot summary and themes. Dracula compiles a series of diary entries, letters, and telegrams written by the main characters, mainly Jonathan Harker. Harker travels through Transylvania, to assist Count Dracula with his real estate endeavours, but in his travels, is faced with a supernatural counter-reality of Vampirism feared by society. His recent fiancé, Mina notices of Jonathan's disappearance and grows more worried as her close friend Lucy died of uncommon and unique symptoms. Mina proposes an inquisition which she then investigates by searching for Jonathan.

A novel of the gothic genre often depicted a fallen society and has allowed for exploration, in an indirect way, of themes that are not necessarily acceptable in respectable late-Victorian society. The late-Victorian society highly valued tradition, but the gothic genre was evolving as it took on new and unknown customs and characteristics. It was a form and style of writing that allowed authors to address contemporary or imaginary issues in a creative way. Dracula in many ways is an attempt to address issues Stoker saw of high importance through concepts and values within the book. The character - Count Dracula has the ability to move through the crowds of London, unnoticed; allowing him to prey on whoever, whenever. This can be related and reflects fear and anxiety of Late-Victorian foreign immigrants moving through and hiding in London untouched and unnoticed. An undercover society with opposing traditions and cultures taking over the traditional culture of London itself can be the degeneration of late-Victorian civilisation. Gothic fiction, through targeting certain fears and intensifying them, was able to wreak havoc and terror within the imaginations of traditional society.

Within late-Victorian society, security was highly valued as it acted as a form of protection against evil superstitions that circulated around society at the time. The degeneration theory was composed of the fear of the decline of civilisation, which is caused by biological changes. The degeneration theory could be seen as a part of the late-Victorian culture, as it was an idea shared by the community that impacted their behaviour, actions and decisions. Stoker explores a path of degeneration through the character of Count Dracula. Stoker's inhumane adaptation of the human nature within Dracula depicts the animalism that would put society in a backwards spiral, back to the beginning of time, and would result in the decline of civilisation. Within the early stages of the novel, Dracula is described as a cruel man with unusual and unique features: "The mouth, so far as I could see under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking with peculiarly sharp white teeth. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed. The general effect was one of the extraordinary pallors." A clear fear and anxiety of the alterations of the natural human nature into supernatural animalistic beings is being explored by Stoker through the spread of Vampirism of Dracula through women, the reproducers. Vampirism can correspond to a linked idea of the birthing of biracial children, of which would infect pure Victorian family lines, often considered bastards.

Victorian standards for women were rigid as they had a reputation for purity, vulnerability, weakness and naïve innocence; which is why, within the novel *Dracula*, Count Dracula preyed on women. These morals and characteristics were classified as the 'traditional women' within late-Victorian society. The fear of sexual proprietary and moral ownership rising for women, potentially having more power than men, is reflected through the character of Mina, and is an example of a fear within late-Victorian society. Stoker implements masculine traits within Mina's character such as bravery, and high intelligence (her ability to write in shorthand) to show her progression of power. This is related to the fear and anxiety that women were more sexually and mentally manipulative and allowed themselves to have control over men. Katherine Boyd discusses, in an article written about *Dracula*, 'New Woman' through the autonomy of Mina and her characteristics. In late-Victorian society, women were seen as frigid, insatiable and weak, whereas men represented strength and dominance. Boyd also discusses how men represented fallen, sinful creatures whom wrongly took advantage of women, but in the late-Victorian era, the tables turned, and women were held accountable for sexual activities. Boyd's statements do argue that the character Mina contradicts the shift in accountability with having traits of new woman, but also reflects a fear of the time. The responsibility and accountability for sexual actions shifted from men to women, leading to the fear that women would take advantage of this power and control men.