



RESEARCH PAPER**Bram Stoker's Dracula: A Representation of the Catholic Churches
Corruption and the Protestant Revolt Through Different Class Systems**

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to delve into the religious perspective of the novelist Bram Stoker and how he depicted the religious propaganda during the Victorian era through his characters, utilizing the framework of New Historicism as developed by Stephen Greenblatt. Additionally, the study aims to examine how the religious-political system led its followers to blind allegiance. The research employs a theoretical framework that includes an examination of the historical context of religious corruption during the Victorian era, an exploration of elements drawn from the life of the historical figure Vlad the Impaler, an analysis of the gothic aspects of the novel, and an investigation into the role of religion in different class systems. The Victorian culture and religious practices are scrutinized through the portrayal of characters in the novel, each representing a nuanced reflection of Catholicism and Protestantism, depending on their social backgrounds resulting in a collective analysis based on both perspectives. Furthermore, this study considers the adaptations of Stoker's novel, focusing solely on key elements relevant to the research objectives. It harmonizes religious and historical events related to Vlad the Impaler and Bram Stoker's fictional Dracula to facilitate a comprehensive analysis allowing the further researchers to apply Greenblatts theory with a new perspective.

KEYWORDS Catholic, Class, Protestant, Religion, Theoretical Framework, Victorian

Introduction

When it came to the religious practices, the dominancy of the Catholic realm is shown throughout the novel Dracula, as the Protestants seem to give into the beliefs of the Catholic Churches. Bram Stoker authored this novel when the Catholic influences clashed with the Protestant influences based on morality, religious teachings, and religious corruption. This study is conducted to divide the characters of the novel according to their class systems and the way they followed their religious beliefs, when it came to the antagonist of the novel, Dracula, to drive them to sin, and act the way the original Catholic churches drove their believers to their ways. This novel also shows how the people of different classes are portrayed by Bram Stoker to show the weak beliefs turn to copper and gold as certain events occur.

During the Victorian Era, when Bram Stoker authored this novel, an eruption of fear and desires erupted from the society. These fears and desires were considered and then shaped into certain events to show, how this novel had functioned as a vessel to conduct the experiment for the sake of the religious beliefs of the people. Catholicism provided the idea, "One needs not to be a believer in order to follow God" (Dahlig, 2004). This research not only clarifies the idea of the political scenario that Dracula's character

played religiously, but also how his attributes caused the emergence of the fact that a business was running by the churches of those times.

The entire system belief system begins when the first crucifix is offered to a protestant character, and the flat explanation is given that this crucifix is far more dependable than the plain Christian cross the character believed in. Usually, the outcomes are all sinful as they are the wishes that cannot be fulfilled or either discussed (D. Bruno 2004).

The novel consists of two different timelines, and the text is all journal based, so an enthusiastically realistic approach will be brought out which can be considered relatable at many places. The main purpose of this study is to open the boundary of the dos and don'ts that Bram Stoker tried breaking, as he loved being exceptionally transparent with his work. The portrayal of the churches and the religious people like the nuns and the catholic believers are done in a way which always provides with a medium of escape from evil because it promotes the denying of your own religious belief and accept a few changes to your life. The concept of rebirth is shown as something evil, that only rises to take someone's life, and hence this novel shows itself as a challenge to the time it was written in.

Stephen Greenblatts theory of New Historicism relies always on the events surrounding the characters and the people who contributed to the shaping of the story line. Thus, this is one of the reasons why Dracula's character is shaped as a parasite, representing the historical figure of Vlad the Impaler. However, Dracula's figure is reflected as the influence of the corrupted catholic churches, that were responsible for bringing up the twisted beliefs of their followers.

Upon recent researches, no one has exactly addressed the character of Dracula, representing the parasitical times of the Victorian era. The different gender roles, foreigners and locals, atheists and believers, all are kept forth to clarify the metaphorical belief of the characters of the novels, and the literal beliefs of the people of the Victorian Era.

Literature Review

Stoker (1897) mentions a certain piece of text in the novel, which reflects the idea of the sinful acts in the Victorian society, which was said to be highly conservative during that time, "The fair girl went on her knees and bent over me, fairly gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck, she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white, sharp, teeth" (Stoker 50).

Amanda (2010) mentions that "the desire and urge of Dracula to suck the blood of men is all linked to homosexuality". All this links us back to the original concept of Vlad the impaler, who would cut out the sexual organs of an unfaithful wife (Bohn, p.14). Stoker (1897) constructed Dracula's character for the sake of the not so good and pure standards of the Victorian Society, by making his character "Vile and Unholy".

Stoker (1897) wrote in his novel reflecting the amount of disbelief a character announced, when he was unable to get the same outcome regarding Dracula's Castle, "The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East."

These religious superstitions the people here use is highly unsettling to Jonathan and for a white middle classed young man, this entire scenario is nothing more than a colonized state (Alexis, 2019). Plus, the Victorian people also caused the eruption of fear for being colonized due to the war's prior, and their fear their women to be taken in by The Other (Alexis, 2019). Another indirect symbol of claim is done by the signature of blood transfusion in Lucy's character is a sign on unholy matrimony due to the class system she possessed and had that will power to choose the best men for herself, something that Mina lacked (Alexis, 2019).

Stoker (1897) uses the characters of the primitive villagers to portray the influence of the religious hierarchies. The belief regarding something wrong is about to happen, Johnathan is handed over with the crucifix to keep the unknown and the known away for his safety (Erica, 2015). Frederickson and Erik (2015) narrow down the religious persona to the point where they express their specified point of view, "anxieties regarding racial purities are mentioned in Dracula and it represents the complete perversion of faith. The characters of Vampires, Dracula's brides, and Dracula himself represent false belief."

The revolt of the protestants took place as a modern medium of protection, and somehow the characters are driven to switch to the ancient practices for the sake of safety. "Dracula calls forth a union of protestant word and catholic sacrament taken together as ancient and modern modes of communications" (Bruno, 2004). Jonathan Harker was taken care of in a Catholic church and was later married to Mina under the guidelines of the missionary church. Not only does it show the influence of the catholic teachings, but it is also a method to syncretize the protestant and the catholic faiths (Bruno 2004). The crisis of faith fell during the Victorian Era when the people started questioning the written pages of genesis and started doubting its authenticity (Flynn, 2017).

The surface of the novel is a battle between the good and evil, but on the inner side, it is known as a battle of the class systems of the Victorian Society. He is a vampire belonging to an elite class bloodline, and the people who kill him are of assorted nationalities and ethnicities too. "In our veins flows the blood of many brave races" (p. 33).

Stoker (1897) made the characters prone to the sinning attributes of the Victorian society. Thus, Dracula's character is in with his brides to look after the wrath his blood carries, and the gluttonic thirst for blood his wives carry, some of the attributes that were not discussed openly at church.

Taro (2014) mentions, the beliefs and practices of the Victorian Society was not balanced at all. One side of the people focused only of the gospel teachings of the bible rather than the rituals. Thus, they were all indulged so much more into preaching, rather than focusing on what was needed. Stoker (1897) kept this thing in mind while reflecting the religious practices in Dracula by making the elite church men of his novel to revive specific rituals to take down Dracula and his Brides.

The teachings of the catholic churches instead of the protestants during the 14th century was highly influential and corrupted at the same time, as the clergy members were supposed to be socially sophisticated and highly educated, but they lacked the ability to perform the regular basics (Taro, 2014). "The word of God proves the truth of religion; the corruption of man, its necessity; government, its advantages" (Stanislaw Leszczy ski, 2018).

Certain Catholic Church holders needed ways to identify the sins to help those who wanted to confess. A rule was formed that if a person repented to a major sin, then his minor ones could be ignored, only if he promises to never commit the crime again. The

churches cashed the idea of repentance by influencing their ways regarding the concept of forgiveness from God. To save oneself from eternal damnation, this was essential that one must confess about his doings at least once a year (Florence, 2020).

Stoker (1857) mentioned that his wife had an influence of the catholic teachings on her, thus, allowing her to convert to the catholic teachings of that time, from being a protestant. Bruno (2004) said, Florence, "Found security in Catholicism", and she converted to its religious teachings 80 years before her husband's death.

The flesh and the spirit are usually conflicting, but in *Dracula*, the crucifix symbolizes the spirit taking over the flesh to achieve eternal salvation (Landix, 2017). Certain marks and symbols in the novel, Mina's forehead, show that there is no medium of salvation or redemption, unless one faces the evil, Dracula himself (Tadlock, 2006). Hence, the characterization leads us to one point, that Jonathan Harker's travel to Dracula's Castel was no coincidence (Bowles 247). Certain religious mockeries are diminished under Bram Stoker's writing, as he mentioned that Mina drinking Dracula's blood is an act of participation is which a communist drink from a chalice (Stoker, p. 339).

Count Dracula preys on the victims who usually lack social mobility in a way, where he can diverge their thoughts through internal and external influences (Stiles, p. 133). Bram Stoker used his novel to signify the religious turmoil during the end of the 19th century, through the symbolism of Christianity and the evolutionary concept of the claiming of souls through Sins and entities who raced against God (Landix, 2017). Stoker's characters, hence, are known to be debatable to fit in the Christianity society and the scientific society in modern times even now (Landix, 2017).

Material and Methods

For this research, theories presented by certain researchers and critiques were kept forth based on their perspectives regarding the idea of the novel, *Dracula*, and certain events and contexts for the class system hierarchy, religious infestation and the novels antagonist, *Dracula*, are considered under the literary theory of New Historicism. The theories and timelines taken for the basics are from the cultural structure of the Victorian Times when Stoker authored the novel *Dracula*. The extraction of the relevant data is done from the scattered concept of religion, history, politics and Gothic Literature and it is narrowed down to a theoretical framework and further analyzed which finally fulfilled the need of the thesis statement. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* shows the deterioration of faith and the fluctuations of belief once a God like entity is introduced to the characters. It seems as if the worshipping rules being followed by the characters needed a switch once a monster challenged them (Kline, 2016). The point of expanding this theory is done specifically with the method of systematic literature review.

Results and Discussion

The novel *Dracula* had come into being by the help of the Irish Folklore. During the Victorian times, the art of soldiers learning to survive by hunting down animals and drinking their bloods was practiced. Although the belief of people in blood sucking monsters was present so many people were highly influenced by the relevant teachings regarding the protestant and Catholic Church. Prince Vlad III of Wallachia was a real person was very well known to be a bloodthirsty impaler. Certain wars that he won would end up having his victims and their leaders having their bodies impaled on spear sticks upright and left there for the predatory birds to feed on. Bram Stoker was fascinated by the

sadistic nature of this ruler who resided in Transylvania, hence happily causing him to form the character of Dracula, which also meant, "The blood thirsty."

Vlad the Impaler was the follower of the Eastern Orthodox Roman Catholic churches, yet he was someone who was least bothered regarding the political difference during his rule. Keeping the Catholic and Protestant stature in mind, we must remember that nowhere in the novel had Stoker mentioned the characters being Protestants or Catholics. The only symbol of the difference is given out through the crucifix that Johnathan Harker is handed over by the lady before his trip to Dracula's castle. Jonathan states that he was taught by his elders not to refuse such gifts and piece offerings as we never know what might come forth (Stoker, *Dracula* 9). Here, we see certain social and religious tolerances being questioned as Harker reluctantly took the crucifix, which showed that he was an Angelic Protestant and not a Catholic.

Their religion is being questioned as Jonathan Harker's character questions the power of God, upon noticing Dracula crawling down the wall of his castle. So somehow, he indulges into a form of a conditional belief system of his surroundings. The crucifix in his neck is more like a symbol of God's help that can be used to repel the things that might cause us harm. Jonathan Harker is a religious man who believes in doing the right thing at the right time, but we see him questioning himself in his journal that if whatever he saw was real or was it just a dream.

Dracula's desire for Jonathan gives us a romantic notion of how proceedingly lusty his words were upon their first meeting. Dracula jokingly mentioned that he wished he could drink Jonathan's blood as his veins were all remarkably visible through his young body. The heavy number of influences begin right after when Dracula mentions Jonathan not to leave his castle and stay for a few more days as his guest. The medieval aspects that Dracula and his brides carry are all based on the royalty that Vlad III possessed. The symbol of royalty is seen upon the welcome given to Jonathan Harker at the castle gates and the carriage that brought him there. Bram Stoker picked the characteristics of the brutal side of Vlad III and left out the victimized part of Vlad's life in his novel. Vlad had lost his children to the Ottoman Empire, thus, Bram Stoker kept this in mind when portraying Dracula to be unmarried and infertile. However, in the adaptation *Van Helsing* 2004, it is shown that Dracula does have children who are supposed to hatch by a certain amount of electricity. However, their demise at the hands of their enemy shows the exact thing that happened to Vlad III's children. According to the theory of Alexis (2019), related to the unholy matrimony of the female characters of the novel, *Dracula*, the element of infertility and the idea of mixing of semen and blood together gives a brief segment towards the corrupted part of the religious teachings. It seems that the novel arises with hidden elements related to the challenges humanity faces when it comes to Christ.

Dracula had been a count in his time and his brides are beautiful medieval women who worship him out of love. His characteristic of claiming the souls of his victims is what adds the religious part to his character. Dracula is a doomed entity which claims the souls of his victims, which causes them not to ascend to heaven unless slaughtered as vampires. Dracula had the rank of a Count when he was still human, but his denial of something far supreme than him shows the least amount of belief the people of his class must have had (p.33). The unorthodox tools used to kill Dracula makes his character an example of something you can relate with a Christian Allegory. Hence, his character is more like a barrier that increases with the progression of the events between the protestant and Catholic belief system.

Dracula's character in the novel and in the movie, adaptations is clearly known to be the allegory and a symbol of indirect Religious Corruption. Count Dracula is a medieval reborn creature who is anti-Christ in nature and promises eternal life through the ingestion of human blood (D. Bruno, 2004). The sinful remarks at Dracula's Castle and the scene of the mirror causes Jonathan to oblige the lady's gift (crucifix) as a medium for his safety. This shows how the belief system of the Protestants was taken over by the teachings of the Catholics, as if it were shown as a boundary line from all the things that might cause the people harm. "Bless that good woman who hung the crucifix around my neck!" (38).

The claim of having a sense of comfort and safety every time a protestant touches a crucifix show how the catholic teachings allow a character to save themselves from the advances a sinful antagonist makes. Dracula's character influences a person to make hasty decisions of giving into the teachings with the promise of living a blissful life forever. Renfield's character fluctuates when a metaphorical significance of his character arises with Catholic resonance. He turns from blood-eating to bloodletting and attempts to kill Dracula when he comes after Mina.

Renfield is more like a mindless henchman who is influenced under the practices of a vampire and represents the repressed slave like class who must fear the wrath of their masters. So, he is more like a tragic overshadowed man who swings back and forth between the fine line of good and evil. Upon the tragic end of Renfield, we can assume that Dracula is also more like a character who profits over the deaths and loss of others. As he was the counts most loyal follower, he was not granted the same well wishes that his service deserved. Plus, it also arises the stigma of a homoerotic relationship between Dracula and Renfield which was abusive and one sided.

The Victorian times were known to be highly conservative and male oriented, as mentioned by Amanda M. Pondonsky in her article (2020). When it came to lustful discussions of the Victorian society including the religious corruption being practiced by the catholic churches underground, the idea of tasting the "forbidden fruit" was kept at its lowest and kept hidden. The novel Dracula certifies this context openly mentioning all the lustful criteria of the Victorian times, notifying that the religious concepts being followed were all responsible for this mess. Dracula's brides are highly lustful towards Jonathan Harker, as they are mentioned to be unloved by Dracula. These brides present the counts medieval times which shows how obliged they were not to ask for what they wished openly, during the times when they were still unchanged and alive. Lucy is a modern timed elite class woman whose desires arise to its peak when she is infected with Dracula's curse. Her volatile and explicit remarks regarding every man present around her shows, how

Dracula's influence reflects the teachings of the religious entities in the Victorian times, and how it allowed people to unveil their deepest selves. Mina is a middle-class woman who fluctuates in the middle. She wishes to be with Dracula, but the moment Dracula feels she is of no more use, he lets his influence off her. Hence, it's up to her soul whether to repent or carry on with the pathway given to her when her deepest desires were poked by Dracula's influence as said by Florence (2020).

This entire form of mentality evokes the idea that the female sex drive was of no use. And we can assume that women would be unchaste for being "unnatural," and the most "unnatural" workings of the Victorian society can only be explained by the works of "Evil." Dracula's brides represent how women were not supposed to be like, sexually aggressive and Volatile (Pektas, p. 1). The brides were looking forward to their gluttonic

hunger for their night's meal when Dracula screamed at them for not obeying his commands (Stoker, p. 51).

During the time when Dracula was published, it was the peak time of the Victorian trade. A new theory named as "Sanguine Economy" came into being when the people of the Victorian times feared their scientific discoveries to adjust with their societal norms (Alexis, 2019). The link between the depletion of sperm and the loss of blood was openly expected when the readers started reading the novel Dracula when it first got out. For those who were welcomed to all the discoveries got the entire privilege to adapt to the new customs, and for those who had no idea what the discoveries were up to relied on the upper hierarchy. Hence, it was signified that this entire fear of not adjusting arose after the British Colonization, and Bram Stoker took the advantage of this event to portray his character to the eastern side of Transylvania (Alexis, 2019).

Dracula not only represents the sinful ornaments of the Victorian society but also shows himself as someone who threatens racial purity (Erik, 2011). Count Dracula is an entity who infiltrates England and starts corrupting the faiths and the beliefs of the people there. Nobody recognizes him until Dr Abraham van Helsing intervenes and alarms every one of the ideas that the society and all the people are damned if they are not purified or helped. He lashes out of the fact that this society was moving away from God and things could worsen if the courses were not changed. Dracula can be argued to represent the reawakening of the superstitious thoughts and his vampirish character can be seen as a cult phenomenon. In the movie Van Helsing (2004), Dracula kidnaps Anna and she awakens to a ballroom of the medieval class. But to her surprise, she had no idea that all of them were vampires except her. The announcement of Abraham van Helsing's name by Dracula, to his guests in the ballroom also shows how to followers of the corrupted faith during the Victorian times were usually reluctant to change, and how they feared retaliation from an outsider.

In the beginning of the novel, Dracula brags about the prideful side of his bloodline and heritage and reinforces the idea of the social concept of the class system-based dominancy during the Victorian times (Dracula novel, p33). The characters other than Dracula, are not as rich as Dracula claims himself to be, but they are surely Protestants in nature and educated. Therefore, Bruno (2004) implied in his religious theory, that Catholicism was a mode of security for the people of the Victorian Times. The characters are bound to change their beliefs to save themselves.

We know during the time when Dracula was written, certain practices of the sins being forgiven were initiated at the churches, and anyone who had their sins forgiven were issued with certificates. This was more like a conspiracy-based approach inaugurated by the priests and nuns of those times, who felt ok with giving their followers the right to enjoy committing crimes and unforgivable acts with the promise that God would forgive them. Other churchmen applied the idea that indulgences could be purchased for the sake of the salvation of those members of the families who had died already (Corruption in medieval churches, 2003).

However, every moment commemorated by the practices and fellow followers were taken as a shadow of excuse, which caused the concept to be a mode of earning for the priests and nuns of that time. Thus, the confessions of the sins of the people came into being and later came into a praise way of practice among the people. Collaborating it with the character of Dracula, we would keep in mind the seven salvation techniques that were listed out, in case if one wanted to be clarified from these sins. To feed the hungry, to give water to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to visit the sick, to free the

imprisoned and to bury the dead. Jonathan Harker took shelter in the Catholic lady's house and that is where he was granted with his first protection weapon and given food and water along with shelter. Renfield being the most devoted follower of the Dracula was left imprisoned and metaphorically naked by his master, in the hopes that one day he will be rescued and loved. The outcome of both, Jonathan's and Renfield's character differs because one of them were attended by people who had cleansed themselves to offer the same perception of protection to the others, while the others were left alone much to their utter dismay. Yates Thompson (MS.31) mentions in his journal, kept in the British library, *The spiritual works of mercy*, something that we can rely on when it comes to the comparison of it with the novel, *Dracula*. The sinful attributes of the churches were although a magnificent work of art when it came to faith, but Bram Stoker has managed to pair this with the concept of moralities.

Taking the Egoistic side of the novel and its main antagonist in view, Herbert (65) says, that the crucifix symbolizes the surrender of ego to spirit, so necessary to achieve wholeness. This powerful archetype embodies the message that the lower nature of man must die, for a higher nature to take birth or be resurrected. This disillusionment of the Victorian times causes us to brainstorm regarding the medieval perspectives of the religious hypocrisy in those times. Hence, each character represents a unique way of falling victim and applying the methods of self-defense mechanism differently when it comes to *Dracula*. *Dracula* is also shown to be an Anti-Christ dilemma as he shows his bastardization of the Holy Sacraments. He drinks the blood of his victims to gain power which can be associated with communion, and he also threatens the sanctity of marriage in the novel (Stoker, p. 339). Van Helsing's character seemed religiously agnostic as he was more like a nun than a priest, and for the matter of fact he was an atheist. So, this was also an element of belief effected by people that showed that no matter what they relied on for their safety, it itself required a fine line for safety first boxes.

Other than this, Linda Kay Kline (2016) implies that gender expectations are based on strict binary stereotypes, as these are the things that manage to run along with the concept of our class system hierarchy. Men are taught that their brains and thoughts are evil, while women are taught that their bodies are evil. Thus, desires are magnified to be dangerous and monstrous, something that promotes the idea of implementing the seven deadly sins unknowingly. The adaptation of *Dracula* in 1992, the introductory scene not only shows the political side of Vlad the Impaler, but also shows the monstrous vow of *Dracula* with Christ. Plus, the priests who promised the security of his wife seem to possess the same traits that the Victorian times religiously corrupt priests used to possess. In *Dracula*'s concept a natural death was more like a mercy compared to a diabolical mockery of life. Many of the aspects his character carries are more like an arising question to the birth and fall of Adam and Eve.finished doing his job with them. The blood sucking ritual *Dracula* applies, seems to be the sucking of morality, pioussness, Godly beliefs, humanity, and good will for others.

Lucy and Renfield are the two main characters who are seen to have been influenced by *Dracula*. After being converted, Lucy has no mode of turning back, and she finds no guilt in hunting down little children, just like the blind followers of the Catholic churches who found no harm in applying every order with which they were given. The essence of blind faith during the Victorian times is also one of the reasons why Stoker created the character of Count *Dracula* (Kline, 2016). However, at some points this concept was forced on the characters. Lucy was a woman of freewill who had the option of choosing who she wanted to marry, whereas Renfield was bound to stay loyal, due to the fear of his master who had no chances of freeing him from the asylum. Lucy was badly infected by *Dracula* and slowly steadily she changed into the version of her suppressed

desires. This not only shows the forced side of the sinful corruptions of the Victorian era, but it also implies the idea of forced matrimonial marriages. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* shows the deterioration of faith and the fluctuations of belief once a God like entity is introduced to the characters. It seems as if the worshipping rules being followed by the characters needed a switch once a monster (Kline, 2016) challenged them.

Conclusion

The character of Vladimir Dracula not only works as a driving force for a person to commit a sin, but also acts as a God like creature to evaluate oneself to also repent from it. Each character wanted nothing to do with Dracula, but very victim of him did not want a separation to occur. Hence, these fictitious perceptions depict the games the religious community played to keep the people indulged for the sake of their own satisfaction. The dark element also symbolized, how the community kept all their works hidden under the noses of their followers and how happily people still wandered to follow them, despite seeing the outcomes of others.

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