

Pettie Perkins

Mid-Term Article Review Essay

Dracula Structuralist Essay

English 333

Critical Theory

Prof. L Buccholz

## Dracula: Structuralism Essay

I am choosing the structuralist "The Narrative Method of Dracula" as my article to review for the mid-term assignment. What I see as the author's main argument is "This aloof dismissal seems to have established a consensus attitude toward the novel that has met with an almost complete critical silence. Only of recent years have critics begun to examine its methods, and even now all too little attention is paid to its formal complexities" (pg 61). I believe Seed is stating that everyone is paying attention to the sexual qualities of the novel and not paying attention to the meaning and symbolism behind the characters and the information conveyed. I believe his thesis is "While both of these approaches shed useful light on certain areas of the novel-particularly its repeated mating of sexuality with death and defilement, and its terminology of battle-neither pays adequate attention to the rigorous narrative method that Stoker uses." He goes on to write that when critics read over Dracula, they are more concerned with making the sexual hype, seduction and the defiling of the marriage bed (pg 61) the main points and no one reads the language that is used and or notices the transmission of the information in order to journey the narrative to defeat the character.

Seed uses deconstruction and with previous notes acquired through readings from the Rosenbach Foundation library in Philadelphia (pg 63) to see how the original structure of the story was to be written, but it was eventually dropped. Although the information in those notes provide background, it was dropped and the novels stands as

is. He also uses psychoanalytic criticism to show the language used helps the reader feel what the characters are thinking. Through Moretti's interpretations, Seed further concludes that he, Moretti, pointed out that the first-person narratives in this novel represents character's efforts to preserve their individual identities" (pg 65).

Seed goes on to show the structure in the story works with how the story is laid out. No one pays attention in the second section of the story that the story is written in only "two sequences of action (that of Dracula's and his opponents'). His principle of narration is that only Dracula's opponents are granted narrative voices and they can only record what in each case they have plausibly experienced" (pg 68). Seed writes to the logical reasons why he feels that the novel has been structurally downplayed. Seed uses philosophy and logic to convey a lot of what he wants to get across to the reader. He states that "Stoker is here creating a narrative in which the gap between narrating documents becomes as important as sections of narrative proper" (pg 68). Seed provided a little psychological insight to allow the reader to understand why Stoker may have written what he did and also to examine the language constructs of the time. There are some textual references as well.

On page 64, Seed begins to unravel his thought process behind the dramatization. He moves from the sexual connotations and goes for the mystery behind Dracula and the language used to move the story – switching between a narrator and the first-person identities. There is also small rhetoric in certain places to compare characters throughout the book. Page 69 begins to talk about Stoker exploiting the reader's memory by not having Dracula in the novel, but keeping him below the surface

of the text and that keeps Dracula from entering the modern times and allows the book to take on a historical shift. Page 70 allows us to understand that the text has provided individual accounts for each character to reflect the narrative in some way. Seed explains that the characters are “ceremonious, girlish and verbose and businesslike” (pg70). This information is needed because it is regarded as details that need to be available to read in the character that is needed to figure out the mystery of Dracula and that is Van Helsing. Since the information needed to be transported and maintained, there has to be something set up other than a love story or seduction to get the reader through the novel.

The novel provides a way for the reader to escape into a dark and imaginary place and Stoker uses his language to not only create a Gothic scene and tell a story that has to do with sexuality, he also gives the reader ideas about social class and the world around them if they are reading through the novel and not just picking up the sex and gore. The article does try to compare “Dracula” to “The Woman in White” (pg 67) in the narrative states, but also points out that the romance comes too easy in this novel and in Dracula there is a little more action, per se, for the pay off, but it is still not a lovelorn novel.

In Stoker’s 1908 “The Censorship of Fiction” (pages 483-484) he says that:

“But in the real world all things are finally relative. There is in reality, whose existence and progress must be based on cosmic laws, no such thing as absolute freedom. Stoker continues to talk about the “highest of all teachers and moralists, Christ Himself, did not disdain it as a method or

opportunity of carrying great truth. But He seemed to hold it as His chosen means of seeking to instil<sup>[PP1]</sup> truth. That is a parable but a novel in little? A parable may be true in historical fact—its ethical truth may be complete, but it so the truth is accidental and not essential. When those who listened to the Master were told that ‘a sower went forth to sow,’ or ‘a certain man made a great vineyard, and set an hedge about it,’ or ‘a certain man made a great supper, and bade many,’ or ‘two men went up into Temple to pray,’ did they believe, or were they intended to believe that they were being treated to a scrap of veracious history? No. The purpose of the Teacher was to win their hearts through the force of imagination.”

This article provides a different perspective on what the characters are supposed to stand for in this time period. Seed states that “Dracula’s opponents represent key areas of Victorian establishment: Seward and Harker are members of the medical and legal professions; Lord Arthur Godalming is the liberal aristocrat; Quincy Morris is a man of action and a protector of frontiers. Their collective action thus represents society, even civilization itself, turning defensive, and the first signs of the process are textual” (pg 72). This would posture that Stoker was not only writing a Gothic and imaginative novel, he was also speaking out against his government. It seems as though Stoker wanted more people to read and use their own imaginations instead of allowing people to tell you what to think.

## Works Cited

Seed, David. "The Narrative Method of Dracula." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 40, no. 1, 1985, pp. 61–75. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3044836](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3044836).

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