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### Cover Page Footnote

Kristeen Cherney is a PhD student in Rhetoric and Composition at Georgia State University where she specializes in Disability Studies, Cultural Studies, and Literacy Studies. Her work has been published in the Digital Rhetoric Collaborative, Praxis: A Writing Center Journal, and Georgia State University's Guide to First-Year Writing. Cherney also teaches first-year composition courses with a focus on primary research techniques. Her dissertation will explore the intersections between autism rhetorics and literacies.

**The Coexistence of Faith and Rationality:  
An Examination of Agnostic Rhetorics  
in Bram Stoker's *Dracula***

*Kristeen E. Cherney*

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Bram Stoker's most famous (and infamous) novel *Dracula* has been analyzed as a representation of numerous anxieties held by Victorians in nineteenth-century England. One such anxiety is the idea of religion being disrupted by evil, hence the character of Count Dracula and the fear of the spread of vampirism across London and beyond. Furthermore, characters such as Dr. Van Helsing represent the "progress" based on science, which many Victorians were wary of. *Dracula* has previously been interpreted by scholars and readers alike for its many symbols of Christianity. While such symbols fit into the assertion that Stoker advocated for Christianity, the dichotomy that rose between science and religion during the Victorian Era and its representation in the novel suggest otherwise. Based on rising anxieties over doubt and uncertainty combined with increasing freethought, *Dracula* represents Victorian agnosticism in the disguise of a horror novel.

To date, much criticism of Stoker's *Dracula* has been conducted through a Christian lens. According to Patrick Keats, the novel "contains a remarkable number of biblical allusions" (50). Given the fact that there are numerous Christian-related symbols in the novel, such as the crucifix and sacred wafers to ward off the "evilness" of Count Dracula, many critics have taken a theistic interpretation of the novel. Ultimately, by positing *Dracula* as a pro-religion novel, such criticism often explores Victorian anxiety surrounding the loss of Christianity in a period in which science also gained popularity at the same time.

Such a theistic analysis is explored in Noelle Bowles' essay "Crucifix, Communion, and Convent: The Real Presence of Anglican Ritualism in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," which refutes the idea that Bram Stoker's novel is about Catholicism vs. Protestantism. Bowles argues that "Stoker advocates the existence and efficacy of the Real Presence, a highly controversial doctrine of High Church ritualism" (243). She points out the differences in religious affiliations in the novel, saying that Van Helsing is a Catholic, but "those battling the Count are Protestants" (243). This suggests an anxiety about rising tensions between the two major branches of Christianity at the time. As both industrialization and imperialism took shape in the nineteenth century, some Protestant Londoners welcomed change, while others experienced widespread anxiety over too much change in so little time.

Secularism—or the separation of church and state—was also taking shape within a generation of Londoners who were largely raised to believe that the Church influenced every facet of British life. Interestingly, Bowles goes on to note that Stoker incorporates rituals

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that were also present in secularism in the Victorian Era (248). This seems a direct contradiction to the notion that Stoker is promoting a more Christian Victorian society amid growing secularism. Still, Bowles continues to hold onto the argument that *Dracula* represents an inherent need to maintain religious faith. One key area of conflict is her analysis as follows: “To confront and vanquish Dracula successfully, Abraham Van Helsing tells Dr. Seward that he must ‘believe in things that you cannot’” (243). From Bowles’ standpoint, this indicates that Van Helsing is appealing to Seward to trust in his faith. However, throughout Stoker’s text, Van Helsing relies on his faith, or supposed Catholicism, and his background as a scientist interchangeably. Therefore, it is not clear whether Van Helsing is asking Seward, a surgeon, to trust in his religious knowledge or his scientific capabilities.

Amid all of these religious references in the novel, there were growing perceptions outside of the traditional Christian faith—regardless of a Catholic or Protestant sect. What is really at issue for Stoker’s characters is whether or not the traditional notion of Christian-taught evil really exists, and whether such evil can really be overcome through faith. Victorian scholar Christopher Herbert argues that Stoker was indeed driven by “religious motivation” (100) in authoring *Dracula*. He goes on to note: “It is expressed vividly, also, in the decisive role that ‘Dracula’ gives to the sacred devices like the crucifixes and communion water that Van Helsing relies on in the struggle against vampirism” (108). Indeed, Stoker uses Christianity to expose non-conformity, but the text itself does not indicate that Stoker is attempting to establish a different religion in its place. To understand the real meaning the author was conveying about religion in Victorian England, it

is important to first analyze the birth of agnosticism and the growing branch of science that prompted it.

Agnosticism is often regarded as the gray area that exists somewhere between theism and atheism. Such doubts about both religion and science entered mainstream Victorian society after British naturalist Charles Darwin published his works on the theories of evolution. Though Darwin was at first cautious about stating his support of evolution theories, these hypotheses certainly shook many of the conservative, religious Victorians to the core. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin first alluded to questions about Christianity. He writes: “The idea of a universal and beneficent Creator of the universe does not seem to arise in the mind of man, until he has been elevated by long-continued culture” (1280). Darwin asserts that creationism was actually a man-made creation, and that humans existed and thrived long before establishing any form of belief system. The ability to survive without faith is also a notion that Victorians were starting to grapple with.

Still, Darwin’s evolutionary discoveries were not welcomed into the growing rational Victorian society right away. According to Dennis O’Neill, “only a few people in British scientific circles” knew about Darwin’s findings on evolution, and that he did not officially publish anything for the public until 1859’s *On the Origin of Species*, nearly two decades after his journey to the South American islands (5). Darwin was likely apprehensive about the potential of public backlash. However, it may also be possible that he held off on publishing his theories because he did not know what to think of them. Growing up as a Christian, he even “rejected the concept of biological evolution” as a young man (O’Neill 1). It is very well possible, then, that Darwin had just as many anxieties about a changing worldview just like his fellow Victorians.

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The evolution of humans goes against everything taught in the Bible about creationism. If Darwin truly believed in scientific fact, he would have likely been an atheist. However, despite his discoveries, Darwin himself states in his autobiography: “The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us; and I for one must be content to remain an Agnostic” (1289). Interestingly, he cannot fully commit to the full lack of belief that is characterized by atheism. By identifying with agnosticism, Darwin leaves a window open for wonderment: while he stands by his work in South America, this suggests that he believes there is no way to know for sure about the truth behind the creation of the universe.

Not only is agnosticism reminiscent of the common struggle of new versus old within Victorian society, but it also reflects the struggle the characters of *Dracula* have about believing in vampires, particularly the Count. *Dracula* was officially published in 1897, towards the end of the Victorian Era. Throughout *Dracula*, Stoker’s characters constantly struggle with the unknown. The very nature of agnosticism is that it “has something to do with not knowing” (Flew 1). While Van Helsing thinks he knows how to get rid of the Count, and the other men think they have the strength to take on the vampires, there is quite a bit of unknown. The concept of suspense is certainly common in horror tales, and Stoker’s tale is no exception. Still, the context in which Stoker writes the novel suggests the anxiety of choosing between faith and science: a marker of agnosticism. There is also a prevalent idea of self-reliance on the part of Van Helsing and the other characters, suggesting that conquering evil may not be left up to God after all.

Unfortunately, little scholarship exists about whether Stoker identified as Christian or atheist. In fact, “Stoker left little personal material for scholars to parse

regarding his religious views or much of his personal life” (Bowles 246). Still, a few details do shed a little bit of light on Stoker and his possible religious influences on *Dracula*. For one, Stoker took an “interest in the supernatural and the occult” (Scarborough 1) as a result of a childhood illness. This may perhaps account for his interest in the “Un-Dead” (Stoker 196) and the rejuvenation the vampires experience despite the fact that are declared as no longer living.

A fascination with the Un-Dead is not the only inspiration for *Dracula*. As Stoker reached adulthood, he was particularly interested in “Irish folklore” and was even speculated to be part of a magicians’ society called the Order of the Golden Dawn (Scarborough 1). This would suggest a belief in the supernatural without committing to any particular religious sect. Such magic is even reminiscent of pagan societies, which were opposed by the Church. Thus, Stoker outlines this dichotomy between religion and science through many aspects of *Dracula*.

Throughout the novel, Stoker uncovers numerous dilemmas that question both religious faith and rationality. One of the key moments is the discovery of Lucy’s unwilling conversion to vampirism. Dr. Seward recalls the event:

There lay Lucy, seemingly just as we had seen her the night before her funeral. She was, if possible, more radiantly beautiful than ever; and I could not believe she was dead. The lips were red, nay redder than before; and on the cheeks was a delicate bloom.

“Is this a juggle?” I said to him.

“Are you convinced now?” said the Professor in response, and as he spoke he put over his hand, and in a way that made me shudder, pulled back



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the dead lips and showed the white teeth. (Stoker 193)

Before this event at the cemetery, Van Helsing tries to convince Seward that the taking of Lucy's blood meant more than her death—in fact, the exchange between her and Count Dracula ultimately spawned her conversion to vampirism. The key phrases “I could not believe she was dead” and “Are you convinced now” highlight the rhetoric of agnosticism because of a struggle with trying to believe in a circumstance that seems impossible. Here Seward has difficulties coming to terms with Lucy's vampirism because it goes against all rationality. An agnostic may concede, while an atheist might not.

The discovery of Lucy's conversion after her death also indicates more than problems with rationality. Stoker indeed relies on his fascination with magic and the supernatural here, as is demonstrated with Lucy seemingly coming back from the dead. This occurrence also goes against what Seward and Van Helsing were likely taught to believe as Christians: Lucy is a seemingly good person who was also devoutly Christian, so the fact she is “un-dead” goes against the conventional outlook within her religious customs. Not only is their faith tested with the discovery of Lucy, but the duo are also forced to struggle with their own doubts about the nature of human beings.

Doubt in nineteenth-century England would ultimately lead to a rise in freethought. The Victorian practice of freethought, according to Mullen, regarded individuals as significant, and was ultimately a “hybrid phenomenon typical of a society caught between accepted world views” (10). An introduction of the working class also heightened this practice where “religious faith was a solemn matter in Victorian

England: so was religious doubt” (Mullen 12). Both faith and doubt had to coexist in order to spawn freethought.

While the concept of agnosticism might seem freeing and rebellious, the fact is that it was indeed a most serious matter—the Victorians were not likely overjoyed with discovering that there may not be a God, and that the purpose of humans might be unknown. In the first chapter of *Dracula*, Stoker introduces readers to the solicitor Jonathan Harker, who is on his way to visit his client Count Dracula to assist him the purchase of a home. Harker must go to Transylvania, a fictional city that is described as far away from England. Aside from the distance, Harker is also made to feel as an outsider because he finds himself in a devoutly theistic society. It is a most serious occasion, and even Harker’s interactions with the religious folks in the rural areas he meets on his way are taken with seriousness. As he leaves a hotel, the benefactress expresses her concerns. Harker says that “she went down on her knees and implored me not to go...It was all very ridiculous but I did not feel comfortable” (Stoker 6).

Harker here seemingly *wants* to doubt the benefactress’s superstitions, but he is still weary that she might be right. According to Flew, agnosticism itself is “not a profession of total ignorance, nor even of total ignorance within one special but very large sphere” (1). Harker’s response to the seemingly over-zealous religious peasants is reflective of those who reside in the industrialized city, but he is not necessarily ignorant of the possibility of there being a higher being. Before leaving the woman, he recalls:

She then rose and dried her eyes, and taking a crucifix from her neck offered it to me. I did not know what to do, for, as an English Churchman, I have been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous, and yet it seemed so

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ungracious to refuse an old lady meaning so well and in such a state of mind. She saw, I suppose, the doubt in my face, for she put the rosary round my neck. (Stoker 7)

Harker does doubt the woman's beliefs, which seems to indicate a note of atheism. However, as his interactions with the Count demonstrate later in the story, Stoker reveals that he still carries the crucifix and later puts it to good use for protection. Harker captures a most frightening moment in his journal:

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 26)

Ironically, Harker is saved by the crucifix given to him by the country woman, a symbol that he did not believe in. Bowles rightly points out some of the problems many of the characters of *Dracula* had with religion, writing that: "Being neither Catholic nor High Church, the Protestant protagonists of *Dracula* at first fumble with the ornamental symbols of faith" (249). Indeed, it is luck that saves Harker from the Count in this scene. What is even more notable is the fact that Harker was still wearing the crucifix, despite finding such superstitions ridiculous. He is left wondering whether the Count's reaction to the religious symbol is a coincidence, or whether he should believe in the power of the crucifix.

The method in which Harker is able to ward off the Count and escape death is one matter. After his escape, the problem shifts to the fact that a great evil is threatening him and other Englishmen, disrupting their way of life. "The evil Count is above all an emanation of the world of superstition and an image of a terrible

menace posed by the superstitious mentality to decent Christian existence” (Herbert 101). Once there is a realization that the Count is more than just a reclusive foreigner, Stoker’s protagonists understand that there is a real evil on Earth. Mathias Clasen writes that “the vampire emerges from this conflict between an intuitive understanding of death as final and an intuitive tendency to over-attribute agency” (500). In having Dracula represent evil, there is reason to believe in the possibility of a higher being. Everett and Landow further explain:

Where the atheist says that God does not exist, the agnostic says that reason can never be used to prove the existence of a being who transcends reasons, and whether or not He exists, He does not intervene in human affairs, making speculation about His existence moot. We are on our own. (1)

Whether or not God exists is not the issue for the crew: even if there is a God, Van Helsing acknowledges that matters must be taken into their own hands. Instead of contacting authorities or seeking the help of a religious resource, they realize they are on their own in the task to get rid of the evil Dracula. Perhaps, as was the case in Victorian society, the characters decided on a mission of self-reliance. Also, it is evident that the natives of Transylvania knew of the Count, but were too afraid of him. Such differences creates the opposition of faith and realism in the novel.

Defeating the evil Dracula also requires an understanding of his circumstances. Darwin himself wrote: “The belief in God has often been advanced as not only the greatest, but the most complete of all the distinctions between man and the lower animals. It is however impossible, as we have seen, to maintain that this belief is innate or instinctive in man” (1279). Dracula is portrayed as the animal in the dichotomy

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between good and evil. The fact that the Count is really a man, however, adds to the confusion. The interpretation of *Dracula* as simply a triumph of clean Christians over the devil is too succinct. As the Count is a man by day and a vampire by night, readers can't help but empathize with him to some degree. Even Van Helsing admits "this Vampire is limited to the powers of man" (Stoker 291). Therefore, the Count is ultimately regarded as human, who is subject to mortality, rather than a higher being.

Indeed, the Count is just as vulnerable to death as the other characters in the novel, except that mortality for the vampire is a bit more complicated. "One facet, then, of 'Dracula's uncommon dual life' is its construct of an impossible, sane-insane subject—the subject of what we might call a *double occupancy*, compelled to occupy the positions of right and wrong, driven to do what must and must not be done" (Smaljc 59). While Van Helsing and the crew seek to rid of Count Dracula in an effort to preserve humankind as they know it, there is very little distinction between the methods of each party. All are competing for resources to survive, a method that is reminiscent of Darwin's philosophy of "survival of the fittest" (O'Neill 4). To survive above Dracula, the crew had to learn his weaknesses.

In Stoker's novel, this type of survival at first seems impossible. As Harker writes to Mina from his entrapment in the Count's castle:

With strained ears, I listened, and heard downstairs the grinding of the key in the great lock and the falling back of the heavy door. There must have been some other means of entry, or someone had a key for one of the locked doors...I turned to run down again towards the vault, where I might find the new entrance, but at the moment there seemed to

come a violent puff of wind, and the door to the winding stair blew to with a shock that set the dust from the lintels flying. When I ran to push it open, I found that it was hopelessly fast. I was again a prisoner, and the net of doom was closing round me more closely. (Stoker 52)

At this point, it would seem that a fight against Dracula seems futile. To the reader, it may even seem completely hopeless. The Count is much stronger and more agile compared with Harker, and he is also ever-present.

Ironically, however, the fact that the crew would later take on the Count and defeat him actually supports Darwin's evolutionary strategy. As O'Neill explains: "Many people assume that 'the fittest' refers to the strongest, biggest, or smartest and most cunning individuals...However, in a changing environment, it is often the versatile generalist who has the greatest success" (4). Such points prove that the inherent evil imposed by the Count does not automatically ensure his success in spreading vampirism. In fact, as the group researches and adapts to Dracula's movements, they are able to eventually conquer him. While theism often supports the idea of destiny, the motivation and perseverance exhibited by Stoker's protagonists may prove that these characters were not reliant on faith alone: rationalism also played a key part in their success.

There is indeed an inherent biological drive the crew relies on to get rid of the Count. It is also true that the protagonists in *Dracula* seek to protect themselves and others from a vampire takeover. At the same time, the men in the novel express an odd sense of "duty" in the novel, according to Smaljc (47). This duty is taken in both the religious and social context. Not only is their duty to save the human race, but the men also feel a

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sense to protect the women in their lives (first Lucy, then Mina). “Tugged this way and that by urges, impulses, and drives they are powerless to resist, they are nevertheless free to contemplate and disparage their well-deprived conditions, many of which cannot be blamed on vampirism” (Smaljic 47). Such discoveries about the self may be why Stoker chose to write the novel in narrative form from multiple character viewpoints. The exception, of course, is that readers do not get the chance to read the Count’s side of the story.

In fact, Dracula is seen very little in the novel, though the title is named after him. Instead, Stoker focuses on the internal narratives of the characters, with Harker, Van Helsing, Seward, and Mina being the primary characters. Through these accounts, readers can see the internal struggles the protagonists have with coming to terms with the existence of Dracula, as well as the struggle to fight him.

Aside from the duty to fight Dracula, there is great anxiety about how their mission will end. “The ‘end’ which Van Helsing predicts will be ‘bitter’ to the Crew’s moral palate, smacks of divine and human injustice even as it constitutes the consummation of their duty to God and to those ‘teeming millions’ whose salvation hinges on the Crew doing the right thing” (Smaljic 53). As Van Helsing writes in a letter to Seward in case he dies before the task is complete: “Take the papers that are with this, the diaries of Harker and the rest, and read them, and then find this great Un-Dead, and cut off his head and burn his heart or drive a stake through it, so that the world may rest from him” (Stoker 196). He later declares that he has “a duty to do, a duty to others” (199). Part of the anxiety here is also in line with Victorian doubts about religion: Van Helsing and the others do not know how their story will end, much like

many Victorians were unsure of what would happen after death.

Above group duty to save the human race, Keats asserts that Quincey Morris is a “Christ-figure” (50), and that Stoker decides that he should be sacrificed at the end of the novel in order to create balance with the array of “imagery relating him to the devil and the Antichrist” (51). One might even go so far as to conclude that Quincey is “reborn” to a degree in the son of Mina and Jonathan Harker, whom they name Quincey after their hero, “a gallant gentleman” (Stoker 363). The death of Quincey Morris, however, is abrupt. Nowhere does Stoker allude to him as a savior in the novel—in fact, he leads readers to assume that one of the other men might perish in the fight against Dracula because of less strength compared with their friend. Instead, it may be asserted that Quincey felt a strong sense of duty to protect his friends. In fact, he died for them without declaring his religious beliefs: instead, he had clear faith in the group’s cause.

Faith is certainly mentioned a great deal in the novel, and Van Helsing seems to possess both religious thought and scientific rationality. The question is which facet he relies upon the most. Due to his many references to God, Dr. Van Helsing is assumed to have a strong Christian faith. At first, it may seem unlikely that he is really the agnostic hero of Stoker’s novel. He asks his friend Dr. Seward a key question: “Will you not have faith in me?” (Stoker 160). This is a strong difference than telling Seward to have faith in God—instead, Van Helsing is advocating for trust in the individual, a concept that rose out of Victorian freethought.

Scientific aptitude is certainly another facet that makes Van Helsing so critical to the success of the team’s plans. In describing Van Helsing, Herbert says



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that he is “an advanced medical scientist,” as well as “the book’s main religious authority” (101). In considering Darwin and the basis of agnosticism, such coexisting characteristics might be considered contradictory. However, agnosticism, unlike skepticism, also “emphasizes the achievements and possibilities of natural and social science” (Flew 1), which makes sense why Van Helsing plays such a prominent role in determining what is happening in the novel. According to Everett and Landow: “before the Victorian period, most scientific data was collected by vicars with time on their hands” (1). The fact that Van Helsing is looked up to for his scientific knowledge, yet maintains the possibility of God’s existence, is an ultimate symbol of agnosticism in Stoker’s novel.

Duty is a drive for all of the main characters in the novel, but this sense of duty is perhaps strongest on the part of Van Helsing. Not only is he a trusted researcher and scientist, but he answers the call to his friend Seward to help others whom he has never even met. This is a demonstration of faith in others, and an expressed interest in helping fellow human beings.

Despite his knowledge in religious matters, mistakes are made along the way. For one, the scar on Mina’s forehead “was unwittingly caused by the good Dr. Van Helsing when he touched her head with the Holy Eucharist in what he mistakenly hoped would be a gesture of protection” (Keats 50). Van Helsing does not guarantee that the treatment would work, but does not know one way or the other—much like the existence of God. Also, in an effort to save Lucy’s life, Van Helsing tries different experiments to ward off the evil vampire from taking her blood, such as flowers. He tells her: “This is medicinal, but you do not know how. I put him in your window, I make pretty wreath, and hang him round your neck, so that you sleep well” (Stoker 126).

Here Van Helsing uses certain flowers to ward off the Count—something that is religious and superstitious, but he tries to pass the process off as being medicinal. Lucy is skeptical of the superstition, prompting the following exchange between the two, as recalled by Dr. Seward:

“Oh, Professor, I believe you are only putting up a joke on me. Why, these flowers are only common garlic.”

To my surprise, Van Helsing rose up and said with all his sternness, his iron jaw set and his busy eyebrows meeting:--

“No trifling with me! I never jest! There is grim purpose in all I do; and I warn you that you do not thwart me. Take care, for the sake of others if not for your own.” (Stoker 126)

As much as he wants to believe that Lucy will survive in a battle of good versus evil, Van Helsing does not know the outcome. Furthermore, he appeals to her to think of the experimental treatments as opportunities to save others, and not just herself.

Tragically, despite everything Van Helsing can do in his power to help save Lucy, Count Dracula proves ruthless, and the young woman eventually dies from severe anemia. When Van Helsing persuades Seward that an autopsy must be done on Lucy, Seward grows quite uncomfortable with the idea. The following exchange takes place, as recounted by Seward:

“Ah! You a surgeon, and so shocked! You, whom I have seen with no tremble of hand or heart, do operations of life and death that make the rest shudder...We shall unscrew the coffin-lid, and shall do our operation; and then replace all, so that none know, save we alone.”

“But why do it at all? The girl is dead? Why mutilate her poor body without need? And if

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there is no necessity for a post-mortem and nothing to gain by it—no good to her, to us, to science, to human knowledge—why do it? Without such it is monstrous.” (Stoker 159)

Here Seward poses questions that are reminiscent of the agnostic movement: if the outcome is not known, then it makes no sense to concern themselves with the matter. However, as readers learn more about Van Helsing’s mysterious efforts, there is a revolving theme of a need to trust him to do the right thing, rather than trusting that the matter will work itself out through faith. As Clement Dore points out: “People who are agnostics, rather than theists or atheists, frequently defend the claim that their position is more rational than either theism or atheism” (503). This explains Van Helsing’s reliance to rationalism.

There continues to be a fine line between faith and rationalism to the novel’s very end. Later, in an exchange between Van Helsing and Mina Harker, the former asks the young woman for faith in him:

“My thesis is this: I want you to believe.”

“To believe what?”

“To believe in things that you cannot. Let me illustrate. I heard once of an American who so defined faith: ‘that faculty which enables us to believe things which we know to be untrue.’ For one, I follow that man. He meant that we shall have an open mind, and not let a little bit of truth check the rush of a big truth.” (Stoker 185)

This is a key moment in the novel because it demonstrates the rhetorical dichotomies between faith and science. Mina Harker is indeed struggling with Van Helsing’s hypothesis about Count Dracula and vampirism because it goes against all reason and religious beliefs. Unlike atheism, which only goes on facts, agnosticism leaves a bit of room for mystery. Van

Helsing, then, encourages Mina and the others to trust that they will triumph, and to not focus on whether the details make sense or not.

Perhaps one of the most poignant moments comes at the end of the novel, when the group reflects on the abolishment of Dracula seven years earlier. Van Helsing declares: “We want no proofs; we ask none to believe us!” (Stoker 365). Their struggle against the Count is indeed a strange one, and one that is wrought with evils that seem out of this world. However, Van Helsing does not wish to seek confirmation of their tale, nor does he wish others to try to analyze it. Instead, the importance lies in the fact that the group survived.

Stoker, like many Victorian writers, focus their stories in England, which was the world’s leading country in the nineteenth century. Even Count Dracula has a fascination with this growing world power. He confides in Harker: “I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is” (Stoker 21). Here Stoker posits London as a sacred place, thereby propelling the team’s mission to keep Dracula out of it.

In the battle against Count Dracula, humans prove to win over the supernatural. The Count himself is arguably “the most well-known fictional villain of all time,” (Clasen 378), but is ironically not interested in the materialism that was growing among the Victorian populous of England. During his stay at the Count’s castle, Harker notices that his host has few material possessions, and that he even hoards money instead of spending it in modern-day capitalist fashion. Stoker perhaps may have wanted to bring to light the problems with Victorian materialism and its relation to religion.

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Just as the debate over religion will never cease, the scholarship surrounding the criticism of *Dracula* is unlikely to be resolved. As Clasen writes in his essay “Why *Dracula* Won’t Die,” Stoker’s novel is ultimately reflective of Victorian anxieties, such as “fears over degeneration, reverse colonization, homosexuality, the ‘New Woman,’ Darwinian materialism, and the dissolution of the soul” (398). Still, perhaps there is more to the Count above being the mere evil that humanity must overcome. Chris McWade asserts that Stoker addresses repression and hypocrisy through the character of Count Dracula, deeming him as “the novel’s tragic hero” (36). This is another potential area of debate outside of the realm of religion.

Perhaps one of the biggest obstacles to the theory of agnosticism in *Dracula* is Stoker’s constant religious references on the behalf of Van Helsing. Before the attack on Count Dracula, the renowned professor declares:

Thus we are ministers of God’s own wish: that the world, and men for whom His son die, will not be given over to monsters, whose very existence would defame Him. He have allowed us to redeem one soul already, and we go out as the old knights of the Cross to redeem more. Like them we shall travel towards the sunrise; and like them, if we fall, we fall in good cause. (Stoker 307)

It is indeed science that Van Helsing relies upon to rid vampirism. However, he still feels the need to make an appeal about faith and religion in order to convince his group to complete the mission. Such as it is, perhaps Stoker may have been making another statement about religion in the Victorian Era—should a duty towards saving humanity have a religious purpose? Or do we do it for the sake of caring for others without knowing

whether we will be saved in the end? These are questions that perhaps even Stoker himself was left unable to answer.

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