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FROM DARWIN TO DRACULA: A STUDY OF LITERARY EVOLUTION

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English

by
Erin Alice Lamborn

March 2005

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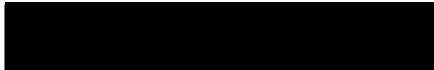
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Abstract

The period 1858-1900 was a time of great confusion in biology; the natural selection hypothesis was in retreat before its acute critics, and no extension of evolutionary theory to human affairs was too bizarre to attract its quota of enthusiasts. Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde produced specific texts, Dracula (1897) and The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890) respectively, by using these scientific uncertainties; align themselves quite clearly to question both biology and sexuality. It is fair to say, that without the publishing of Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species (1858), the texts on which this thesis will focus would not have been written with their distinct styles and themes, as evolution clashes with degeneration and female power (and the sexuality derived from that power) clashes with new science.

I would like to argue that with The Origin of Species, Darwin immediately opened a doorway ... even into the unexpected area of female sexuality. Stoker and Wilde, in their respective texts, are able to combine the science of their era with the characters from their imaginations. Count Dracula and Dorian Gray are seemingly representative of male power and controlled sexuality. Their need to

survive, to live extraordinary lives, conflicts with a seemingly overwhelming man-made mandate that change is unacceptable and frightening. These characters, I think, challenge the very nature of what is normal, acceptable behavior. The mixture of sexuality, science, and power all combine to formulate what is now known in literature circles as Victorian Sexology.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The second half of the nineteenth century was a time of great change in all walks of life. Advancements in science and innovations in art, along with the loosening of the straitjacket of Victorian sexual mores, all contributed to an accelerating upheaval in society. In biology, the new theory of evolution was slowly taking hold in the face of staunch opposition. The changes in biology and sexuality, two disciplines closely connected in some ways and far apart in others, were two of the most important events of the late nineteenth century, and those changes are still touching nerves and causing cultural flare-ups even today.

Like other artists of the time, writers capitalized on this prevailing uncertainty, using it to their own artistic ends. Two novels written close to the turn of the twentieth century, Dracula (1897) and The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890) by Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde respectively, both clearly ride upon the waves of uncertainty, questioning accepted ideas of both biology and sexuality. Stoker's ability to weave together sexual dysfunction with female power and evolution show the complexity of Darwin's theory

itself. Dorian Gray's intense themes concerning decadence, degeneration, and de-evolution give credence to the flexibility of natural selection. Their distinct styles and themes develop from the epoch in which the scientific liberation caused by the theory of evolution clashes with the simultaneous beginnings of the liberation of female sexuality and power from patriarchal repression and domination.

Various cultural trends in England during the late 19th century are important to consider, as these provide the background for the transition -- between the high Victorian eras of scientific discovery, imperial conquest, officially established values, and the 20th-century upheavals and revolutions in style, expression and social order. It is simultaneously a period of progress and a period of decadence: of turning inward and toward a fascination with the bizarre, in such art forms as symbolist writing and painting.

On all levels of society men and women are classified and put into clearly defined roles. Victorian medical thought lent its weight and prestige to the proposition that the physical distinctions between men and women were absolute and thus absolutely determinate. I shall argue

that with The Origin of Species, Darwin immediately opened a doorway -- even into the unexpected area of female sexuality. Oddly enough, Darwin himself set something of a precedent for his underestimating his impact on unexpected concerns, for at the end of The Origin of Species, where he gave a list of those disciplines he thought most likely to be affected by his theory; he failed to mention the humanities. While Darwin does believe "psychology will be based on a new foundation, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation" (448). I do not think his findings gave any hint to the literary license authors will take with their respective texts.

It must be noted that the subsequent discussion of racism, sexism, and the "Other" is an attempt to examine the pair in the light of Darwin and evolution of a different species for the sake of survival (Dracula) and the possibilities of "devolution" (Dorian Gray). It is my intention to give both a deepening and further interpretation of the respected critics, whom I cite in this text, as well as illustrate how Darwin sparked the literary imagination of Stoker and Wilde. The importance of these texts, the ensuing critical discussions spawned by

their publications, and the overall depth of the science embedded in the literature are compelling grounds for analysis and commentary.

CHAPTER TWO

CHARLES DARWIN

Charles Darwin, with his theory of evolution first published in 1858, was one of the main catalysts of a chain reaction of cultural changes that reached into all forms of art and literature, and that still reverberate today. Darwin, oddly enough, given his life's work and scientific achievement, began his formal education in the field of religion, and was awarded his bachelor's degree in theology by Cambridge University in 1831. In his heart Darwin was mainly a theist. However, was this absolutely true, even this amount of conventionality would be at variance with the Darwin family style. For two generations, the Darwin family had been atheists and anti-religious. Charles' grandfather Erasmus Darwin believed that religion was the cause of much of the psychological suffering he witnessed as a physician. Robert Darwin, Charles's father, was a devout atheist and raised his son to place no confidence in faith or religion.

The family had a history of rejecting not simply the natural theology preached by William Paley, but also Paley's conservative politics, which the radical Darwins

strongly opposed. Therefore, it is clear that Charles was not sent to Cambridge to be a minister, but rather to be trained for a different vocation and career. No evidence suggests that Charles did not share the family's beliefs on man's existence before taking his life-altering Beagle voyage. The notebook Darwin kept during his time in London is a testament to a young, nonreligious intellectual (F. Burkhardt and S. Smith, 491). Following the family's iconoclastic tradition, Darwin always assumed men (and fellow creatures) are completely biological. Aboard the Beagle, he circled the globe in a five-year period, and thus was afforded the opportunity to study a vast array of various and diverse organisms as well as their habitats.

His time on the ship presented plenty of opportunity for him to meditate on his many observations and construct a vision, which he would later use in his publications. Darwin did not actually discover the concept of evolution, because that had been introduced and suggested as early as classical Greece (F. Burkhardt and S. Smith, 492). What Darwin begins to formulate was based on his convictions in what he called the "mechanism," which he attributed as the catalyst for "species" to begin evolving. He eventually

applied the name "natural selection" to his theory and described the specific mechanism in more detail.

The publication of Darwin's Origin of Species in 1858, besides turning the scientific world upside down, also had an unexpectedly strong effect on writers of the time, who incorporated Darwin's themes into their books. Although literature is where Darwin's theories find a home to create and shape characters, themes and plots, Darwin was not, of course, thinking of literary breakthroughs when he wrote Origin of Species. His two main purposes in writing the book were:

1. To demonstrate that organisms have descended with modification.
2. To suggest that the most plausible means to explain descent with modification is by a unifying mechanism, which Darwin called Natural Selection.

Darwin argues convincingly that nature has no economic, moral or practical reasons for selecting poorly adapted individuals. Nature works slowly and subtly. Most important, Darwin argues that evolution takes place mainly out of pressure from the environment. In his book Passion of the Western Mind (1995), Richard Tarnas comments on the

effect that Darwin had, globally, on areas of science and society:

Darwinian Theory established the new structure and extent of nature's temporal dimension with its great duration and its being the stage for qualitative transformations of nature, with Darwin biological evolution was seen as sustained by random variation and defined by natural selection. As the Earth had been removed from the center of creation to become another planet, so now was man removed from the center of creation to become another animal. For evolutionary theory provoked a fundamental shift away from the regular, orderly, predictable harmony of the Cartesian-Newtonian world in recognition of nature's ceaseless and indeterminate change, struggle, and development. (Passion of the Western Mind, 288)

Hence, Darwin's work threw the world into a different worldview. Man was no longer the center of anything. If anything, man was simply another formulation of biology that had developed and continued to develop. I am sure that for Victorians, the most difficult concept with which

to come to terms is that based on Darwin's theory: man has no higher purpose. Humankind is simply here, with the only true purpose being to procreate in order to keep the species going. This conflicted greatly with the Christian view of a perfect God who made man in his own image, with the specter of eternal damnation hanging over every soul.

Darwin's work was among the most significant scientific influences on the reification of a theory of sexual dimorphism in the nineteenth century. Sexual selection is a key part of his theory of the origin of species. Inherited traits that foster mating obviously boost certain gene variant frequencies in the next generation, and therefore drive micro evolutionary change. Darwin knew nothing of genes, but he described the ins and outs of sexual selection in a veritable zoo of alligators, salmon, stag-beetles, lions, and various birds. He wrote, "This form of selection depends on a struggle between the individuals of one sex, generally the males, for the possession of the other sex (Darwin, Origin of Species, 41). By the end of the nineteenth century, male and female came to be seen as "innate structures in all forms of life... and heterosexuality as the teleological necessary and highest form of sexual evolution" (Martin, 301).

The organism best endowed to get food and shelter lives to procreate young that will tend to inherit these favorable variations. The variations in structure that assist the organism are slight, but they are cumulative after many generations; finally an organism so different from the long-distant ancestor is produced that we can speak of a new species. The new species has "evolved." It has evolved by the working of "natural" selection. For man himself, according to Darwin's system, natural selection alone has been at work. Humanity has not yet learned to breed, as he breeds his domestic plants and animals. The isolation within the natural world in which natural selection works on man, rather than in the social world of humanity manipulating natural selection, is the foundation for Stoker and Wilde to begin contemplating characters.

Darwin's theory was not fully expounded until The Descent of Man appeared in 1871. First popularized by T.H. Huxley, the theory was met by an immediate gust of religious hostility and moral objection. The theory, indeed, seemed to minimize the importance of individual choice and moral values. It depicted the absence of change in homosapiens as the result of an impersonal process, the blind product of the struggle of species, of survival by a

very-long adaptation to environment. The theory of Natural Selection was intellectual dynamite, containing an explosive compound of several ingredients, each of which could be interpreted differently.

If material environment was the determining factor, then people's spiritual qualities were challenged, degrading humans to the level of mere pawns in a blind, age-long process. As John Dewey remarks in his essay, "The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy,"

In laying hands upon the sacred ark of absolute permanency, in treating the forms that had been regarded as types of fixity and perfection as originating and passing away, the "Origin of the Species" introduced a mode of thinking that in the end was bound to transform the logic of knowledge, and hence the treatment of morals, politics, and religion (Martin, 305).

Alas, Darwin and his writings turned reserved British security into insecurity and uncertainty.

Although the first reactions to Darwinism were mostly uncertainty and worry, the long-range reactions were diverse and versatile (Punter, The Literature of Terror, 7). The onset of female sexual agency was quite worrisome

for the learned, male dominated societal structure in place at the time. Female sexual desire was believed to be particularly dangerous to the social order. Women were more easily overwhelmed by the power of their sexual passion because they were closer to nature and thus more volatile and irrational than men. Women's potential for explosive sexuality jeopardized the self-discipline and control of desire that the Victorian middle class asserted were the mainstays of civilization. Throughout these discussions, women were presented not only as metaphorically dangerous -- to the family, to the moral order, to civilization itself -- but physically dangerous as well. Some doctors argued that nymphomaniacs went beyond mere seduction, actually overpowering a male, forcing him to satisfy her sexual desires. Female sexuality was thus understood in terms of the male sexual act, a kind of reverse rape fantasy. Physicians (mostly male) had their own sexual anxieties, as well as those of their patients, brought into sharp focus in these debates (Barreca, Ed. Desire and Imagination, 87).

Stoker and Wilde, in my view, placed a subversive undercurrent in their respective texts. Both *Dracula* and *Dorian Gray* challenge our notions of what is normal and acceptable, both in the frightening ways that are obvious

in the story plotlines, and in more subtle ways that are not so obvious. They are able to combine the science of their era with characters from their imaginations. Count Dracula and Dorian Gray only seemingly represent male power and controlled sexuality. Their inner selves possess, however, an unsettling ability to both evolve (Dracula) and devolve (Dorian Gray) that contradicts their outer representations. These texts, I think, challenge the very nature of what is normal, acceptable behavior not because of mere power fluctuation in society. Rather, these texts push the boundaries of where power really lies, not within, but without. Is it unnatural to mutate in order to survive? I believe that these authors say no -- if biology will allow immortality, it is not amoral or abhorrent, but neutral. But what are the boundaries between the natural world and the unknown, the undefined parts of ourselves? These texts ask the ultimate questions: what price are men and women who have these desires willing to pay to get what they want?

The biology examined in Dracula and The Picture of Dorian Gray is key in this thesis, as they lay the foundation for observations and the assumptions that guided Darwin's work, which lead to the conclusions I will make in

my thesis. Where does sexuality originate? Is it an innate part of humanity, over which one has no control? Or can sexuality be manipulated, to the point where it becomes whatever the manipulator desires? By looking at the works of Havelock Ellis, Herbert Spencer, and others who use their own scientific expertise to relate the study of female sexuality, it is possible to link Darwin's ideas of sexual selection and sexual survival. Issues of hysteria, degeneracy, sexual disease, female agency and male power will be analyzed, attempting to pinpoint how Darwin influenced the literary world. Stoker and Wilde, in this instance, offer two texts that are extremely relevant, as they intertwine sexuality, science, and power to formulate what is now known in literature circles as studies in Victorian Sexology.

Science is said to be that which can be observed, and can be defined as information gained by using our senses. Therefore, when something is seen, heard, smelled, touched or tasted, it is considered reliable data that can be verified and recorded. Such data are said to be the foundational support for successful experiments; those that can be repeated with predictable results. It is then through experience and predictability that we realize a

thing to be true and fact. It is the "experiment" with which Lord Henry in The Picture of Dorian Gray is most fond, but one with which he must use the very emotions and senses he rebukes so adamantly in order to test and prove.

Faith is said to be something believed without empirical evidence and upon which no human sense is required for its existence. What have faith and science to do with one another? This question will also be discovered in this thesis and will certainly aid us in our journey from Darwin to Dracula. In relating to Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species, and its subsequent influences on such works as Dorian Gray, and Stoker's Dracula, we must first walk through some elemental issues surrounding Darwin's encounters on the Canary Islands, his motivations for writing The Origin of Species, some of the arguments against his theories and how it was interpreted by those like Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde. For it is with this view clearly in the forefront of our minds and our analytical abilities that we can understand the connections between evolution theories and those ideas that have led to literature, doctrine, belief and actions shaping humankind for over 140 years.

Does humanity evolve? Do humans devolve? Does life go from chaos to order, or is the reverse true? As we look specifically at Darwin's theory of evolution and how it impacted the years 1858-1900, we will see that questions which arose about how humans came to affect how humans think they *ought* to be, and what will become of them as they progress. In two contrasting views, put forth in Bram Stoker's Dracula and Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, we can indeed see that if life is simply an accumulation of random happenings, life needs to be considered incidental and quite an accident. We have no choice but to do our best to live it as we see fit. However, if it is a purposed existence, with an intentional outcome, then certain things are within our control and indeed have been meted out to us by design.

CHAPTER THREE
SCIENCE, SEXUALITY AND LITERATURE

Darwin's theories of natural selection had radically altered the scope of society and the popular imagination since the Origin of Species was released. By the end of the century, however, scientific criticism of the theory had combined with an increased popular paranoia regarding its logical (and less than logical) consequences. Specifically, the idea that humans had evolved from the animals began to develop into a fear that we might retrace our steps and descend once more into bestiality (Dr. B. Tarnowsky, Essays in Sexuality, 336). Fear of intrinsic degeneration and a symbolic merger with imperial self-doubt heightened the beast within, as poets and prophets of the era increasingly foresaw coming changes to the British Empire and a waning of national power. The basic foundations of the British world were crumbling, although they still appeared outwardly bulwarked. The empire brought foreign races and nationalities once construed as "Other" into increasingly forced contact with the consciousness of the people, even while the native women of Britain became increasingly estranged from their traditional gender

relationships. Sex and power tangled together with issues of racial fear, evolutionary misgivings, and increasingly guilty self-loathing on the part of the conquerors and upper classes.

Within this specific historical atmosphere, informed by the digestion of Darwinian Theory, Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde produced two of the great psychological horror studies of the century: Dracula (1897) and The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890). In these works themes of sexual dysfunction and degradation wove together with racial paranoia, gender tension, and the de-evolution of humanity into the shadow-self. Social Darwinism's assiduous influence on the peculiar blend of racism escalating into sexual terror seen in Dracula and Dorian Gray is a catalyst for the origin of both texts.

Neither Dracula nor The Picture of Dorian Gray would have been written if not for the historical and direct influence of Darwin and post-Darwinism. Three distinct themes or influences from Darwin can be seen to have shaped the course of these works. The first is a definite ambivalence towards religion, or at least a sort of cultural recognition of the shaky ground on which religion is set. Dorian Gray, which features an anti-hero most

prominently, is understandably more overt in this matter. In it the characters openly discuss the need for a new religion to shape humankind, and go so far as to suggest a decadent religion of the senses and experiences. Dorian himself is deeply drawn to religion, but sees it as an art form akin to music rather than as a sort of divine establishment or spiritual wellspring of truth:

It was rumored of him once that he was about to join the Roman Catholic communion, and certainly the Roman ritual had always a great attraction for him. The daily sacrifice, more awful really than the sacrifices of the antique world, stirred him as much by its superb rejection of the evidence of the senses as by the primitive simplicity of its elements and the eternal pathos of the human tragedy that it sought to symbolize.

(Dorian Gray, 146)

However, even as the characters espouse godlessness and the dominance of nature and experience over religion, the narrative very obviously takes a Faustian form in which a young innocent enters into a pact with the devil for his soul, is guided by that devil throughout and is eventually claimed by him.

Stoker's novel, on the other hand, is almost the opposite. In Dracula, religion (specifically Catholicism) is seen as a real and active force in the universe. Rosaries and holy wafers become weapons in spiritual warfare against a vampire whose very name is reported to mean "devil." However, the structure of the narrative and the focus of events in this novel are above all scientific in nature. Scientists and doctors are using religion as a tool, not by saints as an object of veneration. Despite the religious content, the worldview of this piece is decidedly humanistic in spirit, as the brave hunters overcome the devil less through divine inspiration than through romantic devotion, and less through divine agency than through academic acumen. Even the most rabid atheist will not deny that the emblems and religious iconography, not the substance, of faith that features so strongly in Dracula and ritual serves an important part in maintaining the structures of civilization and normality. It is only this purpose, and no other, that they serve in Stoker's novel. Thus, Dorian Gray presents atheistic or humanistic elements in an extremely religious fashion, while Dracula presents extremely religious elements in a humanistic fashion. This paradox displays this age's deep ambivalence the juncture

of religion and science, and largely Darwin initiates that ambivalence.

Of course, Darwin was not the first to question the line between religion and science. Roman Catholicism, as far back as the seventeenth century, had already been scandalized by the challenge that Galileo posed to its worldview. Darwin was unique, however, in that his work openly suggested that the entire creation story was at best a metaphor and at worst an outright lie. In suggesting (and many would say proving) that life evolved from simpler life forms and that humanity evolved from animal origins by way of the apes, Darwin overthrew for many the rule of God established by His rights as Creator and Progenitor. If the Bible was wrong on this account, how could it be trusted on others? The fear brought on by religious uncertainty, shown cleverly in the subverted religious forms in these two texts, would rage for years to come, and continues in the United States even today.

The second influence from Darwinism is the overwhelming fear of monsters hidden within our own genetic code. In his 1871 work, The Descent of Man, Darwin writes, "With all these exalted powers, man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin"

(250). It is common knowledge today that one's heritage can significantly influence one's actions, impulses, and personality. A belief in such inheritance is only made stronger within more patriarchal societies such as that of the Victorians. As Richard Dawkins explains, "I suppose that Darwin dealt a blow to human vanity when he showed that we are close cousins of apes and slightly more distant cousins of monkeys, and that's what really got to the Victorians" (Morton, 35).

Almost overnight, Western culture was forced to go from seeing itself as only slightly lower than the angels to only slightly higher than the monkeys. The animal nature within became an obsession to many, who scoured their souls and the souls of their fellow men for telltale beast traits. "Traces of the attempt to disclose the animal in the man show up in visual documents that startle as much as the horror stories themselves. In one collection of drawings, a man's face morphs from that of dog, pig, and monkey. Another print shows a carefully etched human ear that reveals the animal point notched into the upper curve of the ear (Bryan, 32). The idea of an animal nature within only waiting to be released is visible in both Dracula and The Picture of Dorian Gray, though it is more

obvious in the former. This idea also found its voice in other novels of the same era, such as Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. The human brain has sections that are little changed from early pre-historic times, and I believe that the evidence is clearly all around us, seen in all areas of life and not just literature, that under the right circumstances, people will automatically revert to more primitive states. Part of the cultural changes of the late nineteenth century was that logic and rationality became supreme; but this did not eliminate our animal instincts, but simply pushed them further down out of conscious sight. But these forces cannot be obliterated, and if they are repressed, they will eventually emerge in some perverted and frightening form.

Throughout Stoker's work, vampires are consistently portrayed as feral and animalistic creatures driven by base sexual and instinctual needs. Despite his obvious education and intelligence that seems to surpass that of many of the heroes, Count Dracula is described as having a child's mind or the mind of an animal, he is a "Dark figure . . . wet man or beast" (71). Of course the physical descriptions also lend themselves to the goal of portraying the vampires as animals, as do the close alignment between animal forces

(bats, rats, and wolves) and the vampires. When Dracula attempts to make Mina a vampire, he says to her, "I give you eternal life . . . the power of the storm and the beasts of the earth" (134). This implies the impetuous, hedonistic, violent, sexually charged world of the vampire is one of primal feelings that embrace humans as "animalistic," driven by the wild, perhaps even uncontrollable desires found in animals. What is ironic, is that Dracula can control his urges and desires in order to further his ultimate goal of survival. When Dracula is with Mina, he strives to take on the form of a "polite, handsome gentleman" (144). He does not want to act like an animal when he is with her, as that would defeat his larger purpose, therefore, he does not.

Of course there is a potential vampire within every character, only waiting for an ancient stimulus to bring it out -- and this is precisely a Darwinian (or perhaps more accurately post-Darwinian) fear of the inner animal self. In The Picture of Dorian Gray, on the other hand, the fear of the animal self is more restrained and becomes evident, primarily in the character's fears of the physical and biological self and the physical degeneration of the individual. The contagious bestial nature is definitely an

issue in this novel, but in a more psychological than physical way.

This topic leads directly into the third influence of Darwin on these works, by way of post-Darwinian fears of degeneration and entropy. It stood to reason that if humanity had evolved from the beasts, and if humans had an inner beast still, then it was entirely possible that humans would be capable of de-evolving and returning to the primordial self.

As the nineteenth century wore on, earlier attempts to reconcile evolutionary theory with Victorian ideas of progress (such as Herbert Spencer's "Law of Evolution") had begun to be undermined by evidence that biological degeneration was as much a part of the natural order as elaboration. Indeed, organisms such as sea-squirts were observed to devolve even in the course of their own short lifespan. ... During this period, then, it seemed difficult to discount the terrifying possibility that human beings might mutate into lower-order beasts, or devolve even further down into the foundational slime. (Ruddick, "The Aesthetics of Descent", 18)

It was precisely this idea of de-evolution that fascinated and terrorized both Stoker and Wilde. In many

ways Wilde seemed to embrace it, even as Dorian consistently goes back to rejoice in the damage done to his painted self in his portrait. However, the ending of Wilde's novel definitely rejects such a willing degeneration. Wilde is a complicated case, because he simultaneously seems to invite self-destruction and to dread it. Richard Ellmann points out in his introduction to Wilde's work, "While pretending to arrogance, [he] seeks with a humility that is easily overlooked to please us" (viii).

Stoker, on the other hand, is unequivocal in his rejection of degeneration, and though later generations have perversely insisted on preferring his vampires to his normative human characters, he himself is obviously turned against them. If one were to choose a single central theme in Stoker to discuss, it could be that of degeneration of body, soul, and power structure. Of course, the flip-side of de-evolution is the equally frightening idea of further evolution. If humankind is only one step in a long evolutionary process in which each subsequent generation devours those that came before it after some fashion, what shall we say of the next step in the chain? If humanity should fear lest it devolve, perhaps it should also fear

lest it evolve to become somehow immoral and evil yet superior in strength. "Dracula the vampire is at the top of our own food chain, he feeds off humans and has evolved beyond the constraints of mortality. We also see his ability to 'devolve' as he freely can turn himself from man to wolf to bat and even to a fine ethereal mist" (Mauri, "Dracula - Bram Stoker", 20). The character of Dracula, in my view, is a psychological projection of the Victorian Shadow, unleashed by the loosening of the tight binds of Christian moral thought brought about by Darwin, among others. The fear of the psychological "other" was what made these two novels so scary and effective, much the same way that Conrad used Africa and the African natives as a representation of the inferior, primitive impulses in Heart of Darkness.

The idea of degeneration leads naturally to one of the more unfortunate manifestations of Darwinism rampant throughout the century following Darwin's first publication: racism and physiognomy justified to promote Imperialism and slavery and culminating in genocide. "Physiognomists—pseudo-scientists who matched body and facial features with personality traits—identified perceived non-Anglo characteristics as indicators of

everything from a murderous tendency to an impulse to steal" (Bryan, 10). Principles of physiognomy are expressed explicitly and repeatedly in Dracula, as when Mina comments on Dr. Helsing's strong eyebrows ("He seemed pleased, and laughed as he said, 'So! You are a physiognomist.' " [Stoker]), and in discussion of the Count's features. In The Picture of Dorian Gray physiognomy is never discussed explicitly, but it is of course a central implicit theme as the entire plot revolves around the way physical appearance changes in relationship to the sins of the spirit and flesh. Basil, for example, claims to be able to read the map of a human's soul, the way he stands or the look of his hands.

Physiognomy was but the milder cousin of a vicious racism that informed imperial Britain. Whereas previously justification for slavery and imperial conquest had hinged uneasily on religious terms (such as the idea that people of darker color were a race cursed by Cain or by Ham), it now took a firm evolutionary ground. Other races were alternately seen either as de-evolved forms of the ideal white man, or as sub-human predecessors and "missing links" between civilized man and the apes (Mauri, "Dracula - Bram Stoker", 25).

The issue of the human nature of evil becomes almost an obsession in late Victorian times due, among other factors, to the overwhelming impact of Darwinism on religious beliefs. Social Darwinism eased the anxieties of many by convincing them that western man – that is, British man – was the summit of creation and that all the “others” were inferior: objects of the curious gaze attuned to the charms of exoticism, of xenophobic hatred, of colonization. Upholders of the British Empire subscribed to this view while hypocritically presenting it as the white man’s civilizing mission to save the Other from degradation. Crucial to an understanding of this obsession is the notion of degeneration, the fear that contact with “inferior races” would reverse the evolutionary path of the white man, but also the fear that individual men losing their vitality to the attractions of unbridled sexuality would revert to a previous evolutionary stage, as seems to happen to Dr. Jekyll or Dorian Gray (Martin, 19).

Although I believe that Martin has a good point, the character of Dorian Gray is clearly a perpetrator of barbarianism, as he does not lose his vitality because of unbridled sexuality. Rather, Dorian loses his vitality (and ultimately his will to live) as he sinks further and

further into the trap of aesthetics, and the mirage of beauty. While the barbaric ape-like coloring of Africans, as Europe perceived it, was synonymous with a variety of "degraded" or "primitive" behaviors and physiognomies, Dorian fits in quite well with the posh upper class of Victorian aristocrats. His ability to fit in, separates and protects others from knowing his true nature, his "otherness," if you will.

According to an extremely common "scientific" understanding, women of sub-human African origin were also physically different in terms of their sexual organs and propensities:

Hottentot woman her physiology and her physiognomy, her hideous form and her horribly flattened nose, so-called proof is a discussion of the anatomical structure of the Hottentot female's sexual parts. The African female was widely perceived as possessing not only a primitive sexual appetite but also the external signs of this of this temperament--primitive genitalia" (Rashad, 29).

African women were dissected physically, and examined in great deal throughout this period, and shown to have "elongated" clitorises, larger than expected vulva, particular breasts, and various other aspects that set them apart physically on the evolutionary scale from European women. These physical differences were taken both as proof and explanation for their "lascivious, apelike appetites" (Rashad, 31) that led them to such extreme sexual behaviors as copulating with apes, sadism, and nymphomania. The idea of a sexually aggressive African female was required to some degree, of course, to excuse the element of sexual violation implicit in slavery and colonial enslavement and abuse. "There was societal pressure for reports about hot ladies who possessed a temper and lascivious nature, who made no scruple to prostitute themselves...Thus blackness and sexual lust as blackness and inferiority complimented each other" (Rashad, 34).

However, the degree to which these two ideas -- aggressive sexuality and non-white race-- are linked in the Victorian mind is important for interpreting both novels. A third aspect of the race/sex dialogue, important at least for Dracula, is the relationship of cannibalism to the race issue. Cannibalism, like dark skin color and the shape of

the skull, came to be regarded as a signifier inscribed on the body itself of a degenerate race. Cannibalism thus acquires the status of an inherent racial characteristic, rather than simply being a savage or barbaric practice, and one that is associated not just with Africans but also with the Irish and the lower classes (Kitson, "The Eucharist of Hell", 8).

I agree with Kitson that cannibalism can be seen both as an act of animal savagery and as a sort of perverse sexual fulfillment in which the lover's body is not just handled but quite literally devoured altogether. In the popular mind of the time race, sex, and cannibalism were all intertwined. It is this ball of string, so to speak, that Dracula plays with when it brings a devolved over-sexed vampire to the crowded city of London.

The shadow of imperialism lay across all of Great Britain at the turn of the century, and indeed across most of Europe. Imperialism was justified by appeals to God and to survival of the fittest, but it nonetheless left certain uneasiness in the minds of the people that combined with and was inseparable from their Darwinist paranoia (Pick, 76). The exposure to foreign "inferior" races might expose British society to the degeneracy of these lower races

weakness. Though the myth of Eve, the apple, and the snake had been largely effaced, the idea remained that women might somehow be a tool of degeneration:

Social Darwinians... saw the genteel Victorian lady as the acme of civilization, the product of a long evolutionary process. Her primary characteristics are reproductivity and abstinence from sex for pleasure. Working class women, who were relatively independent economically and freer in their sexuality, were seen as an evolutionary anomaly, a throwback to barbarism...

(Friedman, et. al, 13)

Perhaps not all women cause degeneration, but the independent and sexualized women do. Sex itself, as mentioned above, is a form of degeneration and a yielding to "base" animal instincts that still exist within humankind. Inasmuch as woman is seen as a source of sexuality she is a force of de-evolution. This principle is much less true in The Picture of Dorian Gray to the extent that Wilde's novel focuses more on the (sometimes homosexual) relationships between men and presents men themselves as the vessels in which sexuality is generally contained and doled out to others.

Thomas Laqueur writes,

Finally, from a different philosophical perspective, Foucault has even further rendered problematic the nature of human sexuality in relation to the body. Sexuality is not, he argues, an inherent quality of the flesh that various societies extol or repress ... It is instead a way of fashioning the self 'in the experience of the flesh,' which itself is 'constituted from and around certain forms of behavior' (12).

In other words, the complete lack of free will enters the equation. Both Count Dracula and Dorian Gray are simply engaging in behavior to which their flesh directs them, not of their own free will. This is quite different from the theory that as human agents, of one sort or another, their choice as they exercise their free will directs the behavior of their flesh; biology becomes the agent in control in this instance. This makes Count Dracula look less like a sexual deviant with impotence issues, and more like a passenger in a car over which he has no control. His appetite for blood, to kill, is then a direct relation to his being, to his existence, not to his selfish desire.

Dorian Gray becomes less of a narcissistic egomaniac, and more like a man being driven by rich opportunity to grasp life eternal. The point being that it is their conception of science, not human passion, not mere desire or whim, not even free will, supplied the theoretical ground upon which Stoker and Wilde chose to develop these characters.

With a general overview of the primary themes of post-Darwin Victorian racism and sexology formed, it is possible to explore in more detail the workings of these themes within the two works at hand. Dracula and The Picture of Dorian Gray have much in common in terms of themes and culture. However, they differ somewhat radically in their approach and even to their final statement regarding sexuality and science. While both texts deal with the fears and ambiguities of social Darwinism, the British response to imperialism, and fears of social and personal ambivalence and degeneration, the resemblance is only within the genre they share. In terms of discourse, they differ drastically. Stoker leans towards a tremendously dry journalistic approach while Wilde tends towards a florid and brilliant literary *tour de force*. This distinction fits the basic difference in their work. Stoker is writing a isolationist and hard-nosed piece of

fiction dealing with major issues of social degeneration and restructuring, while Wilde writes a decadent, almost romantic and deeply impassioned bit of fiction dealing not with social but with personal degeneracy and redemption.

CHAPTER FOUR

DRACULA

Though many historians of the modern era and critics of the time considered the mores of Victorian England overly oppressive, I find that Stoker found them absolutely necessary for preserving society. "Stoker's novel Dracula is actually a searing social critique of the relaxation of sexual mores..." (Fry, "Fictional Conventions and Sexuality in Dracula," 35). It is a polemic against any sort of positive reading of Darwinism. As Leonard Woolf points out, since its publication in 1897, Stoker's novel has "managed to interject into the culture of the West the image of a creature of such symbolic force that he has become something like a culture hero whom our first duty is to hate even while we have for him a certain weird admiration" (Wolf, *Annotated Dracula*, p. ix). In short, I believe that Dracula is really a very conservative novel despite its horrific elements, and this is true as well in terms of its views on racism, feminism, and imperialism.

One of the primary themes in Dracula is de-evolution, the movement from civilized human to bestial human.

Darwinian ideas of the food chain parallel the visual representation of degeneration evident in Dracula and his brood. Renfield's obsession with devouring as many lives as possible by working his way up the food chain from flies to spiders to sparrows (and eventually to cats and dogs, and even humans) is an obvious sort of rumination on the theories of Darwin. If humankind is indeed descended from animals, then to eat as many animal lives as possible is, after a fashion, to devour as many of our own ancestors as possible. There is a certain barbarism inherent in this, if one buys the idea that cannibalism is a racial trait. My argument is not that cannibalism is genetically linked to Count Dracula, but rather that is an explanation for the way in which Stoker develops his character. If they are inherently linked, then free will becomes less and less of a factor and the Count's actions are more biologically driven than anything else.

The need for order and control drive this novel, not the Freudian science on which so much is written, although those elements are certainly present and much can be gained from their analysis. Everything that happens in the text reflects that theory. One of the most striking confirmations of this is Kathleen Spencer's observation,

"The most crucial event in Dracula occurs when Mina types up all the documents from the case and assembles them in chronological order - the order in which we read them. Only with chronology does a narrative emerge; only then does a collection of data turn into a hypothesis. And, as in science, hypothesis is a prelude to action" (220). Thus, Mina's own work, which Stoker uses to originate the narrative, is analogous to the gathering of scientific data. All these people in the novel have a theory that Dracula is a vampire, and they run various experiments to determine the validity of their theory. More to the point, there are scientific technologies all over the text, from blood transfusions, to Van Helsing's phonograph diary, to typewriters and telegraph machines. More evolution, in other words, as the evolution from using a pen and a paper to using a board with keys on it that picks up the ink for you. Carol Senf writes:

The characters (two of them physicians themselves) reveal their familiarity with and enthusiasm for technological developments, including the phonograph, the portable typewriter, the Winchester rifle, and the Kodak camera. Even more important, Dr. Van Helsing uses

blood transfusions to attempt to save Lucy Westenra's life, and Dracula's opponents are able to trap and destroy him because they take advantage of the discoveries of modern science and technology, most particularly telegrams, modern methods of transportation, and hypnosis (220).

The duality here is fascinating; as Dracula evolves and uses tools of science to survive, his foes use the technology of the time to outlast, and eventually kill, perhaps a superior biological being. Senf's point is well taken, as she points at that Dracula may be able to morph into a wolf, but cannot escape the ink on a piece of paper that gives away his location. Thus, Dracula cannot escape because he lacks the knowledge to operate this technology, and seemingly has no desire to learn how to do so. These actions on his part lend credence to my argument that he is biologically driven, an animal, who uses only the biological skills at his disposal to deal with his circumstances.

Scarcely a single description is given of the monsters in which they are not likened in one way or another to animals. The moment when the Count is first conceptualized as a monster he is seen with his cloak spread out like wings, moving "just as a lizard" (Stoker, 76) -- symbolically passing from mammal to bird to reptile in the course of his descent. One of Harker's first reports to the reader is of his account of watching Dracula crawl like a bat on the walls of his castle,

But my very feelings changed to repulsion and terror when I saw the whole man slowly emerge from the window and begin to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss, face down with his cloak spreading out around him like great wings" (Stoker, 36).

The Count is consistently seen metaphorically, and literally, as inhuman, envisioned as a bat or a wolf or a moth or even a primordial slime-like shadow. This is true of Lucy as well after she becomes vampyric, as all the sweetness goes out of her face and she is seen "growling ...as a dog growls over a bone" (Stoker, 92). Dracula is so thoroughly conceived of as animalistic that he is thought to have lost his native intelligence in the

transformation. As Helsing says of him, "This criminal has not a full man brain. He is clever and cunning and resourceful but he be not of man stature as to brain... [like] the little bird, the little fish, the little animal learn not by principle, but empirically" (Stoker, 105). Of course, this whole speech also illuminates the degree to which Stoker and Van Helsing buy into the Victorian myths regarding innate degeneracy and typology in the criminal "class." Stephen J. Gould makes the further connection between Dracula and primitivism in The Mismeasure of Man, and quotes Professor Van Helsing on Count Dracula as "...a persistent child (and therefore a primitive and a criminal as well)" (156). As a primitive, he is a throwback to times when animal predatory, not looks and charm, allowed something or someone to survive.

Dracula's raw animalism is threatening not just in the violence it inspires in him, but also in that it is highly contagious. Obviously, it is passed through his bite and his blood to his victims. (There seems to be some confusion in the text as to how precisely vampirism is passed on. Many children are bitten throughout the novel and do not become vampires, and Harker himself may have been bitten by the three sisters. Also, there were no plagues of vampires

in the Slavic countries despite the Count's long-time residence. So perhaps it is not just a bite that is determinate, but something more such as the mutual blood sharing evidenced between Mina and the Count.) A more modern reading might also point out that his animalistic nature leads even the "uninfected" to become more barbaric and animalistic. After all, is not Arthur so driven mad by Dracula that he is willing to drive a stake through the heart of the woman he loves, and aid others in beheading and defiling her corpse? Certainly, the "uninfected" becoming more animalistic is suggested in the text, but is it justified morally? Lucy is explicitly stated to have killed no one, and to have only stolen a little blood from children who later returned safely home, speaking well of her as a beautiful (bloofer) lady. Yet she is savagely murdered in her bed. As Helsing points out, Dracula's desires have symbolically turned several good Englishmen into "barbaric" polygamists, turning them into murderers. As the Count creates more of his own kind, the seemingly good, honest free will of those men disappears and is replaced with a biological drive, not to protect, not to hunt the mysterious Other who has invaded their world, but to hunt, to kill, to survive.

It is worth analyzing what kind of agent Dracula is represented as being. He is extremely pale which may at first put aside suspicion of racist undertones. However, one should not put aside such suspicion so easily. Dracula may be whiter than white Britain, but his skin tone is nonetheless made a subject of frequent note and difference between himself and the others. Moreover, whenever he feeds, he is referred to as "ruddy" (a dark or reddish color) of tone and coloration. Additionally, he is explicitly not English or Aryan in any fashion. He is born and bred a Rumanian.

The evil in the novel comes from Eastern Europe and that Dracula is helped by gypsies, of course gypsies then were a derogatory description of any dodgy looking foreigner from that part of Europe. The fact that Dracula is eventually chased away from England might encapsulate the general solution adopted at the time to the perceived problem of too much immigration (Mauri, 22).

While Dracula is foreign and able to stand-in for all the fears and misgivings, which colonial Britain had about foreigners, yet he is also, to a degree, the epitome of an imperialist corrupted by exposure to the subjugated

cultures of its colonies. He was once civilized, one is assured, before his castle fell to ruins and left as a master over nothing but the superstitious and exotic people beneath him. The fluidity with which Dracula represents both the colonist and the colonized is important because he can be seen to represent both a devolving of humankind and the frightening next-step forward. According to Martin, much of Victorian Gothic literature deals not only with a Darwinian sort of fear of de-evolution into an animal state or of racial degeneration in face of these new cultures, but also a "secret fear that evolution may bring about a successful mixture of the civilized and the barbarian, that progress may prove to be in alliance with Kurtz's amoral, barbarian 'degradation' rather than halted by it" (Martin, 20.)

The horrific is closely associated with fears of masculine degradation brought about by contact with a foreign culture and is associated with a situation of invasion and of "natural" or supernatural colonial conquest on different sides of the barrier. The effects of degradation are epitomised by a mythical man – such as Kurtz or Count Dracula – who cannot tell his civilized self from his barbaric persona. His problematic and foreign

patriarchal masculinity is presented as a model threatening the stability of a younger Englishman, a representative of modern business, sent to meet him in his domain: the primal central African jungle or Transylvania, the land beyond the forest in the centro-European heart of darkness (Martin, 18).

The idea that Dracula might quietly conquer England by turning its people into a superior but soulless race of pale white vampires shows a fear that evolution and de-evolution might somehow be synonymous and that humanity will be degraded as it is transcended. This fear makes a greater degree of sense, of course, as one understands that linkage between Otherness in culture and race and Otherness in sex and gender.

Dracula was written at a time in which the "New Woman" was a definite threat to the old establishment. Many if not most contemporaries hailed a loosening of sexual mores and of the strictures for women as forward-looking social evolution. Greater freedoms for women and minorities was a step forward, but the fear expressed here by Stoker in perfect metaphorical sense is that such a step "evolves" society into a less moral and less perfect even if more advanced state. The example of the evolution of Lucy from a

passive and sweetly moral girl to an independent and immoral "monster" can be seen as a metaphor for the change in the "New Women" from their traditional passive roles to much stronger sexual and social roles.

The vampyric disease is being used here as a metaphor for the disasters that would befall society in general if women were allowed to discover and freely express their sexuality and generally empower themselves. The actual act of drawing the blood from its victims is akin to the vampire seducing the victim and engaging in a sexual act. The result is the corruption both moral and physical of the victim (Mauri, 26).

Vampirism as portrayed in Dracula has several basic characteristics, "Frozen at the threshold between Victorian evolutionism and psychoanalysis" (Pick, 72). First, vampirism causes the vampire to be immortal and to have a number of astonishing powers. Perhaps that element would be viewed more positively were it the sum of the change, but of course this is how vampires may be taken as a "next step" in the evolutionary process. Secondly, the vampires become deeply animalistic and even savage, driven by instinct and losing touch with their "human brain." This shows a degeneration of the intellect and soul, and

expresses a specific Darwinian fear of de-evolution and the inner beast, the loss of free will and the ability to do be moral and right fades, and the compulsion to kill deepens. The immortality aspect means that most of these vampires are very old, and thus one can additionally see this savagery as a regressive sort of primitivism, or stepping backwards to older forms of being. Thirdly, vampires feed on human blood in the form of a "kiss" (an obvious sexual reference), which passes on their curse in a ritualistic and cannibalistic mockery of the Holy Communion. It is this aspect, the eroticism of eating and drinking, combined with descriptions of the vampires as "wanton" and "lascivious" that have inspired the sexual interpretations of Dracula. Finally, and perhaps less importantly to the modern mind, vampires are "unholy" and damned by God -- that is, they are outside the old religious teachings and set against them. The disassociation with the church shows paganism associated with foreign cultures which along with the new atheistic Darwinism and its inclusion gives the entire book a religiously charged paranoia focused on objectionable religious groups.

Although bestial and evolutionary aspects have already been discussed, more attention should be paid to the

cannibalistic sexual aspect. Dracula and The Picture of Dorian Gray suggest a tight intermingling of sexual and racial tensions. This is particularly clear in the eroticism of the character of Dracula. Critically, much attention has always been paid to the "suddenly sexual" nature of Stoker's vampirism. It is almost universally believed that the vampire's bloodsucking (an exchange of bodily fluids) is a metaphor for sex. It seems likely that because of the reluctance in the culture of openly discussing sexuality and sexual issues, the subject was sublimated into a story about monsters. Interestingly, Robert Mighall puts forward a case that suggests that, on the contrary, sexuality was traditionally used in the psychoanalysis of the day to explain and understand monsters, rather than vice versa. Mighall explains that all the contemporary case studies, which would have influenced Stoker or the medical characters of his books, discussed cases of sadism and vampirism by couching them in sexual terms because their actual implications were too difficult to deal with. So, Mighall suggests, maybe the characters in the book treated the vampires as sexual objects because their sexuality was more easily accepted, explained, and understood than was their actual supernatural aspect. This

makes a great deal of sense, and leads back into the intertwining of (racial) "Otherness" and perceptions of sexual perversion. Even if the vampires were not actually perverted, they were interpreted as such by the other characters, based on preconceptions related to their behavior and their outsider identities. When we have seen Dracula in this light, we can grasp the double irony of his statement to Harker in the castle that, "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" (105). This poignant feeling, that masks his desire to be among these people to prey on them, also masks his defeat. Though he has retained and evolved some human characteristics, he cannot share the people's "whirl and rush"; his is a life of the outsider, his otherness a direct result of his biological and primal desires.

All the same, there is a great deal of sexuality evident in Stoker's vampires. For example, one notices the change in Lucy from woman to vampire as being primarily a sexual change. She is of course healthier looking and more beautiful, but in the past such a change in health had inspired joy in her suitors. This time, however, her health

is tinged with sexuality: "The sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty and the purity to voluptuous wantonness" (Stoker, 86). When faced with her old friends she recognizes them, but she has transformed from a proper Victorian lady to a whorish and lustful vampire who voluptuously cries out, "My arms are hungry for you..." (Stoker, 92). Similar rabid sexuality is seen in the three Transylvanian concubines, and increasingly in Mina as well as she falls under the Count's spell. In short, these women are being transformed from the demure Victorian standards into what popular racism would consider an Africanized woman, with hot and bestial animal drives and a predatory interest in men.

Whether or not one wishes to accept them as sexual beings, which it seems logical to do; one must at least accept these vampires as cannibalistic. Although still human themselves most of the time and in most ways, they feast on human blood. According to Richard Sartore, author of Humans Eating Humans, there are several traditionally espoused reasons for cannibalism. The first is survival, as in the case of seamen and downed airship crews, as well as, notoriously, the Donner party. Of course one might put Dracula and his brides in this category, and it is

generally a category understood and misrepresented by a British readership that feared to admit that it was not uncommon among white people. The other reasons are for revenge (as in warfare), for religious purpose (as in the Aztec rituals and symbolically in the Eucharist), and because of affection (particularly in the mortuary sense where one wishes to fully take in the body of a deceased family member). Stoker's vampires suck their victims' blood for all of these reasons, it seems (Sartore, 59). The interesting thing about cannibalism is that to this day debate continues as to whether it ever really happens for purposes other than survival or among scattered individuals or groups of maniacs (Sartore, 85). It seems that wherever group and ethnic tensions have arisen, charges of cannibalism have also been brought up -- as against the Jews, the early Christians, most African tribes at one point or another, and even against fellow Europeans on both sides during the world wars. In the Victorian era at least, as mentioned earlier, cannibalism was intrinsically linked in the popular mind to the "savages" of black color in Africa, and seen as one of an assortment of "degenerations" of an animal nature. Hegel, one of the great philosophers of the era, once wrote: "The eating of human flesh is

quite compatible with the African principle; to the sensuous Negro, human flesh is purely an object of the senses, like all other flesh" (Kitson, 47). The lustful principle of vampyric cannibalism is one of the primary themes surrounding *Dracula*, and its definite association in the Victorian mind with dark-skinned savage races tightens the association between sex and race in this novel.

Martin claims that this is a tale of a "feminized Britain vulnerable to unconventional penetration" (Martin, 29) by the Vampire whose barbarism and foreign nature may so degenerate this feminized nation that it becomes as "black" and corrupt as it perceives its colonies to be. This is one way to look at it, but anything that constitutes the personal or national psychological shadow could be the backdrop for projection of deep fears. The men who arrange themselves to protect their women are seeking to win back their evolved masculine identity as Englishmen, by overcoming both the sexual savagery and temptation of the Africanized vampyric women and the subtly corrupted patriarchy of a super-evolved Master Dracula. "The journey works as a test of manhood for them in which they must prove that faced with the forces of demonic Otherness they can still retain the values of British civilisation"

(Martin, 30). More to the point, Dracula, as a novel, both as a polemic against degeneration into foreign lasciviousness and internal feminization, while questioning the theories of Darwinism and suggesting that social and physical (de)evolution may be inherently inferior to a moral stasis.

CHAPTER FIVE

DORIAN GRAY

. The Picture of Dorian Gray, on the other hand, has a slightly more direct discussion of degeneration. This novel suggests that the empire and the individual ought to be careful what is wished and what is acted, as personal desire may corrupt the soul, mind and body. Sexuality and civilization transmit degeneracy and in the end, when one faces one's self, all prior acts must be accounted. Yet for all the Christian sentiment of penance and forgiveness, there is still a very definite decadent and Darwinist message. There is a sense that Dorian is not so much an anti-hero, as a rebel tamed by the society of the era in which he was written.

In terms of Darwinism, I find this book suggests that natural selection is a force not for the betterment of a species but for its downfall:

There is a fatality about all physical and intellectual distinction, the sort of fatality that seems to dog through history the faltering steps of kings. It is better not to be different

from one's fellows. The ugly and the stupid have the best of it in this world. They can sit quietly and gape at the play (Wilde 4-5).

Yet for most of the novel, the characters seem to hold out hope that despite this natural force of aging and entropy, fearlessness and lust for life can overcome to create a better and new thing. In a way, this is a very Darwinist tendency, exulting the instinct for survival.

Don't squander the gold of your days, listening to the tedious, trying to improve the hopeless failure, or giving away your life to the ignorant, the common, and the vulgar, which are the aims, the false ideals, of our age. Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you... A new hedonism, --that is what our century wants. You might be its visible symbol (Wilde, 12).

Yet because such selfishness is in the end destructive to a human being, it is certain that such hedonism will in fact become degeneration.

In a sense this novel deals with the same racism and imperialism as Dracula, although in a more open and realistic way. The general plot of the novel deals with the way beauty is translated into terrible physical ugliness by

moral and spiritual degeneration. So the fact that throughout the novel certain races are referred to as paragons of physical ugliness (especially about the telling face) is worth noticing. In particular, Jewish people are described as "fat" and "oily" and even as "monstrous." As in Dracula, degenerates are likened to animals: "Drunkards had reeled by cursing and chattering to themselves like monstrous apes" (Wilde, 41). Yet in general, racism is not the central explicit theme.

However, racism does feed into the central premise of the story, which is the accuracy of physiognomy as a way of interpreting the world. Dorian is able to be as evil as he likes because he has supernaturally circumvented those laws that write one's sins on one's face and form. However, for the rest of the world it is apparently obvious whether one is a criminal or a saint depending on physical features. Considering the especially sexual nature of Dorian's indiscretions, this seems to be buying into theories of physical representations of lustful nature in the body proper. In short, the premises upon which Wilde builds his story are the same as those that suggest measuring the morality of African women by the length of their clitorises.

As in Dracula, Dorian's story is one of degeneration coming from without and slowly spoiling the physical, spiritual, and sexual nature within. As degeneracy increases, the individual becomes increasingly animal-like, in a personal experience of the forces of de-evolution. In the painting of Dorian, for instance, his image becomes increasingly satyr-like, indicating that Dorian is becoming more and more bestial as his actions become more perverse. "The mad passions of a hunted animal stirred within him..." Wilde writes at the end (84). Earlier, he states, "I wonder who it was defined man as a rational animal. It was the most premature definition ever given. Man is many things, but he is not rational" (Wilde, 20).

Like Dracula, this degeneration becomes an infectious agent. Dorian "catches" his disaffection from another, though by different means. He, in turn, manages to destroy all those around him by spreading his degeneracy and ruin to men and women alike. Even more so than in Dracula, in Dorian Gray, sexuality is seen as the tool and mode of degeneration. One is reminded of the prevailing eighteenth-century beliefs regarding a link between the penis and the brain, "A model that insisted upon the semen as being the primary component of nervous fluid, [to] make persuasive

connections between sexuality and consciousness, so much so that Emanuel Swedenborg thought that the soul/intellect descended into the body and clothed itself into man's seed" (Sha, 7). It seems the more that an individual indulges in sexual desires, the more he loses his mind and soul, descending to an animal plane, frighteningly alone. Thomas Laqueur comments on this in Making Sex: "The real trouble with masturbation is not that it robs the body of precious fluids, but that it violates Aristotle's dictum ... that man is a social animal" (229). In fact, popular medicine of the day seemed to suggest that disease and physical symptoms of sexual degeneracy (apart from STDs) would exhibit visible evidence through signs in the body and face of the practitioner. A body that appeared effeminate was one that failed to attain its full vigor, or looked rounded and pendulant, and the existence of nervous disease were all to be linked to masturbation and unusual sexual practices (Lacquer, 231). The Swiss physician S. A. Tissot "...went so far as to make masturbators recognizable when he called attention to how loss of semen stunted growth, how pimples on the face were a symptom of masturbation" (Sha, 10).

Sexuality is not the only mode by which degeneracy is reached, however. Civilization itself can be a form for passing on degeneracy. Dorian, throughout the story, blames his devolution on two forces -- the painting that allowed it to go unchecked, and an unnamed little yellow book that inspired it all. This book, of course, is a product of civilization itself and as a somewhat foreign book (having a Parisian as the main character), so it can to some small degree be seen as an outside cultural influence on the English mind. Art and text become modes of destruction. "The very act of reading and discovering becomes perilous in these stories: Dorian's death is plotted in his portrait, a 'text' he 'reads' obsessively, locked up in his boyhood playroom" (Bryan, 18). Dorian is also corrupted by civilization outside his own, as when he brings in exotic artifacts, reads their literature and travels to their soil in search of jewels and philosophies. Roger Platizky makes this point:

Dorian's compulsion to collect compromises his freedom to do so, for his "treasures and everything that he collected in his lovely house, were to be for him means of forgetfulness, modes by which he could escape . . . from the fear that

seemed to him at times to be almost too great to be borne" (112).

Dorian feels elated and horrified by the "terrible portrait whose changing features showed him the real degradation of life'" (122). The dissolution over time of both the painting and the artifacts implies a connection between the darker side of his portrait and Dorian's urge to collect.

Much as the once-handsome features on Basil Hallward's canvas become bloated and bloodied, by the end of chapter 11, Dorian's acquisitions deteriorate from rare gems -- garnet, white stone, and bezoar -- that cast out demons, poisons, and plagues (Wilde, 118) to a pantheon of historical tyrants and Renaissance revenge figures that poison their victims or nations (127). The Picture of Dorian Gray deals with both sides of de-evolution, even as does Dracula, viewing devolution both as a possible step forward in a frighteningly immortal direction and as a step backwards. Animalism may not necessarily be a bad thing, after a fashion.

Dorian Gray thought that the true nature of the senses had never been understood -- they had remained savage and animal merely because the world had sought to starve them into submission or to kill them by pain, instead of aiming

at making them elements of a new spirituality, of which a fine instinct for beauty was to be the dominant characteristic (Wilde, 67).

Nonetheless, in the end that degeneration is determined against, and as in Dracula means must be taken to destroy the degenerate agent before he is able to infect others again. At the end even Dorian no longer sees himself as worthy of life and the chance to continue on -- his degeneration has gone too far. As David Punter puts it, this novel and others like it, which deal so heavily in degeneration and decadence, ask a

Question appropriate to an age of imperial decline: how much, they ask, can one lose -- individually, socially, and nationally-- and still remain a "man"? One could put the question much more brutally: to what extent can one be "infected" and still remain British?" (1)

Therefore, Dorian Gray, with its latent homosexuality, effeminately beautiful boy protagonist, and warnings of devolution and self-destruction deals more directly with the sexual and personal side of degeneration than Dracula, which deals with the social and racial ramifications of such a change. The Picture of Dorian Gray shows:

...a view of masculinity split between the respectable man on the one hand and his dark twin, or shade, the barbarian who must be rejected on the other... suggesting that corruption is not in the Other but, specifically, in the respectable Victorian man. ...Dracula, on his side, forces the men of England out of their complacency (Martin, 108).

The process of degeneration hinted at by Darwin's optimistic theories of new generation are in these two works caught up with the turn-of-the-century racial and sexual fears, and made to do service to subversive causes both defending and turning against conventional morality.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The depth and magnitude these texts had on literature, and yes, the scientific world, has hopefully become clear through this textual and cultural analysis. Between the sometimes frivolously casual attention that is paid to Origin of Species and the views that Dracula is nothing more than a horror film with a killer at the helm lays true depth, discovery and discussion. These two texts raised questions of racism, sexism, and the "Other". Darwin literally sparked the literary imagination of Stoker and Wilde through his curiosity and need to question and discover his surroundings. Stoker and Wilde exploit Darwin's finding in their respective texts. This curiosity is evident in both lead characters in Dracula and Dorian Gray, two men driven by need, by desire and done in by those very same traits. The irony is part of the depth and complexity of these texts, as pursuit of their desires ultimately causes them the ultimate pain and suffering.

The universe of these two novels is dualistic. In both cases, characters that are obviously extreme outsiders

(Count Dracula, Dorian Gray) arrive, bringing some kind of evil and spreading it throughout the town like an infectious disease. The place they have infected spends all its energy to purge the unwelcome evil. It would be easy to merely look at these novels as an exploration of Stoker's knowledge and the fictionalization of blood for entertainment, or Wilde's interest in the relationship between art and culture. Or, as many people are prone to do, to look at these texts and immediately come away with the conclusion that Count Dracula and Dorian Gray represent an archetypal form of evil or the other, something that should not exist at all. There never seems to be any recognition that evil cannot ever be purged; it only exists as the other side of the coin from good, and it can only be recognized in the contrast. That is why the novels are essentially conservative; they encourage the one-sided, absolutist dogma of the traditional Christian churches, even if they clothe the dogma in modern, scientific clothing.

My argument is that natural and sexual selection plays a part in these characters' core development: Without the research and construction of Darwin's theories imbedded in these texts, both of these characters become merely

caricatures of evil or inappropriate Christian behavior. There are reasons for their seemingly peculiar, self-absorbed, violent behavior far beyond that of anger, selfishness or lack of self-control. In point of fact, Darwin's scientific developments show Dracula kills not for pleasure, or out of sheer evil impulse, but out of necessity and in order to survive. Dorian lives not because he is a biological terror, but to explore the opportunity of being undead. Darwin writes in Origin of Species,

As more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must be in every case a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individual of a distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life (32).

Darwin also makes the point that,

Varieties of the same species, and species of the same genus or of related genera, - which, from having nearly the same structure, constitution, and habits, generally come into the severest competition with each other; consequently, each new variety or species, during the progress of

its formation, will generally press hardest on its nearest kindred, and tend to exterminate them (109).

Yet, Darwin recognized that species form from other species, and that mutations are a natural occurrence in biology. Animals and people evolve, learn, and develop traits that will help them ensure their survival. Dracula and Dorian are examples of such mutations. They can be out in the sun; they can be amongst the living during the day. However, they are outsiders, attempting to place themselves within the normal, the everyday having taken biology and manipulated the results. Stoker and Wilde took these characters, used the science of their time to rig the game, if you will, taking dead men and allowing them to live by giving them traits which make them superior (temporarily, at least) to ordinary people.

Critics and scientists alike will argue that civilized men control their appetites, that they are not led by what they want, but by what are right and moral and good? What is so obviously apparent is that the men who kill Dracula, who cannot stand for him to exist, fear they have the same desires and needs as he. And they do. Historically and scientifically, Dracula is an example of animal living,

survival of the fittest; he kills out of necessity, just as animals do. Men may kill out of emotion: fear, hate, anger, and jealousy, all which is found lacking in Dracula (but surprisingly enough, not in Dorian). Dracula is simply filled with biological desire, not emotion; this biology inevitably leads him to kill, as it does in all animals trying to survive. Dorian is human, and still contains within him human emotion, including fear, which coupled with his vanity, helps bring about his demise. In the end, science fails neither of these characters: their inevitable paths of destruction are caused by something as frighteningly simply as the desire to live.

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