

How do literary works both reflect and challenge the spirit of the times in which they were written?

While Stoker's 'Dracula' and Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber' were written in contexts nearly a century apart, it is interesting that many of the societal issues that are portrayed and challenged in each text overlap. Two central ideas discussed are gender roles and the idea of social class and its importance at the time, and these works reflect and challenge the manifestations of these overarching themes in their respective contexts through the use of characters and language employed. A bit vague.

Dracula, written in 1897, was published in a ~~seemingly~~ rapidly changing society - one facet being the challenge to traditional gender ideology through the birth of the women's ~~movement~~ ~~movement~~ suffrage movement in 1872. The concept of the 'New Woman', who was independent and educated, was beginning to emerge. Stoker presents this idea through Mina Murray; through the text she undergoes a transformation, breaking from the role of an archetypal housewife and adopting new responsibilities. In chapter 5, Mina writes to Lucy, "A woman ought to tell her husband everything. Don't you think so, dear?" Readers are aware that Lucy is a close friend of Mina's, and therefore, Mina's ~~perspective~~ narrative perspective gives us a good insight into her true thoughts. The simple sentence clearly suggests that she is rigid and sure of her role/duties as a wife. The word "ought" ~~could~~ emphasizes that it is an imperative and women must be compelled to give up a ~~kind of~~ sense of independence by sharing "everything." However, as the plot progresses^{in ch. 18}, Van Helsing remarks, "Ah, that wonderful Madam Mina! She has a man's brain - a brain that a man should have were he much gifted - and a woman's heart." While he

exalts Mina's characteristics, he does so by blurring strict gender boundaries; Mina has taken on the characteristics of a "man's brain". Stoker almost reaffirms gender stereotypes, but uses this as a tool to portray Mina as superior to the common man, in that she possesses a combination of virtues otherwise unheard of. This brings out some ambiguity however, on Van Helsing's part; the subordinate clause and the em-dashes breaking the two ideas of the "man's brain" and a "woman's heart", highlighting the view ~~that~~ that for men, the concept of the 'New Woman' was still disjointed and "different."

of
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Stoker also reflects the rise of ^{power in women} ~~feminism~~ in the 19th century when, through Mina's diary entry, he writes, "with a sob, [Jonathan] laid his head on my shoulder, and cried like a weaned child, whilst he shook with emotion". The imagery employed through the simile comparing ~~Jonathan~~ Hartner to a child suggests his dependence on Mina. ~~and~~ Gender stereotypes are also turned on ~~their~~ heads ~~when~~ by portraying Jonathan as overwhelmed with emotion and Mina as resolute. However, it is interesting to note the use of ~~the~~ ^{her} ~~captives~~ in Mina's entry, which could perhaps indicate that she needs to persevere to acclimatize and become accustomed to her ~~new~~ newly defined role in society.

Is this the best point you could have chosen?

While ~~presenting~~ Stoker reflects the spirit of the times, he also challenges the idea of the powerful woman through the use of the vampiresses. Glennis Byron writes, "The conventional opposition of good women/evil women is frequently produced by 1890, Gothic suggesting an attempt to stabilise the notion of proper femininity by identifying the sexually aggressive female who usurps male strength as something alien and monstrous." The vampiresses, ~~who~~ ^{who} attain their power over Hartner through their sexuality, leave him

"soul to struggle". In his encounter with them, Herbert writes, "There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal." He categorizes ~~them~~^{her} as an 'animal' through the simile, blurring the lines between the human and animalistic and therefore establishing her position as 'alien'. The monstrous quality is brought out through the word "repulsive" and in juxtaposition with the carnal imagery of the position the vampiress adopts. However, I would argue that Stoker does not present the vampiresses to ~~reaffirm~~ "stabilise the notion of proper femininity", but rather to point out that power in any form is corruptible, and ~~in the wrong hands~~^{that while women such as} Mina use their power for 'good' and are described as "pearls among women", society must be wary of the threat that ~~these~~ women like the vampiresses pose with newfound power.

~~In 'The Bloody Chamber', Stoker reflects Carter, or the other~~
~~hand, is writing 'The Bloody Chamber' in a year~~
~~where Margaret Thatcher conversely, 'The Bloody~~
~~Chamber' was written in a time~~^{which saw} Margaret
Thatcher ~~rise~~^{rise} to power, becoming ~~the~~^{the} UK's first female
prime minister, embodying the significant rise in social
and political presence for women, in ~~contrast to the~~
~~the~~ western cultures. ~~especially~~ Carter reflects this
through the character of the narrator's mother in
the title story by ~~strikingly~~ twisting the plot of the
original 'Bluebeard' upon which it is based. ~~It~~
Instead of the brothers of the victims being the
saviors, the "eagle-featured, indomitable" mother of
the victim triumphs over the Marquis, symbolizing
not only a reversal of the gender roles many
have grown up with through fairy tales, but also

ability of women to topple even the most powerful ~~men~~ (hence re-emphasizing their ability to take control at the ~~very~~ very highest level.) However, it is interesting that in order to triumph like the narrator's mother, women need to break from the ~~norms of gender~~ ~~stereotypes~~ social shackles of gender stereotypes and adopt 'manly' characteristics, just as Mina did in Dracula ~~when~~ by having a "man's brain." The Marquis is described in the story as having a "dark mane" metaphorically likening him to a lion, symbolic of ^{the} masculine power and dominance he holds as the richest man in France. However, in his final confrontation with the mother, the mother is described as having a "white mane", similarly compared to a ~~lion~~ lion but with the hint of a starkly opposing colour to that of the Marquis. The white could represent a quality of purity in the power of the mother, that springs from her will to protect her daughter, while the Marquis gains his power from wealth, force, and ~~violence~~ ~~power~~. Given that Margaret Thatcher was known as "The Iron Lady", taking on characteristics of masculine determination and nerve to succeed in a male-dominated world of politics, just as the mother triumphs in the male-dominated world of the castle, and both achieve success by breaking from what is traditionally ^{associated} ~~connected~~ with women. This is how Carter reflects the spirit of her context in her text.

while presenting the idea of women seizing power in society, Carter challenges ~~this idea~~ it with ~~the~~ the story 'The Snow Child'. While the Countess ~~and the Snow Child~~ is portrayed to

• "rein in her stamping mare and watch [the count] narrowly as he rapes the child, suggesting superiority in that she ~~is~~ remains high on her horse and watches with disgust condescendingly as he weeps and performs an act of an abhorrent nature, she is still controlled by him. According to critic Mary Kiefer, the countess is a pornographic image in relation to the count, as he has the ability to undress her at will. ("The bus sprang ~~off~~ off the countess's shoulders"). The word "sprang" suggest that it was sudden and she has no control. This could ~~also~~ portray how men still retain power in society through their sexual endeavor. However, an alternative ~~way of looking~~ ^{perspective} ~~the story~~ could infer that through her refusal of the count's rape at the end, The countess asserts the final show of power by rejecting the romantic initiative from the count, ~~is~~ suggesting a yet another gender role reversal. Be specific.

Another facet of significant social change in the context ~~of~~ of Dracula apart from gender roles is the idea of shifting attitudes towards social class and hierarchy. ~~Until~~ ~~the 19th century~~ until the 19th century, capitalism had been the primary paradigm, with a majority of the power, privileges and wealth accumulated ~~at~~ ~~the~~ at the top of ~~the~~ the social pyramid (nobles like Dracula). However, new schools of thought such as communism and socialism were born in the 19th century (The Communist Manifesto being published in 1848) in a push for greater social equity and equality; this brought about education ~~for~~ and proper healthcare for the masses. This spirit of ~~status~~ ~~power~~ newer ideologies of equality

is reflected in Stoker's writing when ~~Dracula~~ Van Helsing ~~says~~ ^{says}, "leaving ~~the~~ ^(Dracula) own barren land - barren of people and coming to a new land where life of man seems till they are like the multitude of standing corn." ~~The simile~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~multitude~~ ~~of~~ ~~standing~~ ~~corn~~ ~~hints~~ ~~at~~ ~~uniformity~~, and that at face value every man is the same. This is in ~~contrast~~ conjunction with the use of the adjective 'new', ~~to~~ which could suggest that these are 'new' styles of thought in terms of the way we ~~think~~ would normally ~~view~~ ^{view} the 'life of man'. In addition, the entire plot of the novel itself could be viewed as metaphorically reflecting the spirit of the late 19th century. A ~~group~~ ^{diverse} group of people from varying socioeconomic backgrounds (Harker the solicitor, Holmwood the Lord, Van Helsing the scientist, and Quincey Morris the foreigner) working together ~~is~~ to track down and destroy Dracula, who is representative of nobility and ~~the~~ strives to maintain class hierarchy ("Bah! what good are peasants without a leader?"); this ~~could~~ be viewed as symbolic of ~~secret~~ ^{secret} forces (each individual ~~in~~ the group has to relinquish their ~~own~~ inhibitions about other social groups and work in harmony) posing a challenge, and ultimately defeating capitalist forces.

However, ~~Stoker~~ ^{Stoker} does challenge this idea in his writing as well, ~~but~~ through the introduction of group dynamics within the supposedly ~~egalitarian~~ group, Van Helsing and Seward, being the scientists, ~~the~~ assume leadership (this is interesting given that traditionally one might expect Lord Godalming to take up leadership). ~~They~~ ~~are~~ ~~secretive~~, and this leads Harker to be frustrated

However, they are secretive when it comes to new knowledge; Van Helsing says, "Later, we may have to take the others into our confidence." The use of "have to" suggests it is an imposition and they are forced to reveal information rather than willingly passing it on; this perhaps ~~the~~ highlights their reluctance to give up their 'power'. Power, that in the changing face of the 19th century, was increasingly coming from knowledge and not aristocracy. ~~Hester~~ Hurler, the average solicitor, is upset when he hears of the scientists' secrecy; "we agreed that there was to be no more concealment of anything among us." ~~The majority of the sentence is monosyllabic~~ A majority of the sentence is monosyllabic, highlighting his anger. Through this idea Stokes could be implying that even when a group are seemingly equal and working together towards a common goal, there will always be a struggle for power and clear-cut leadership.

In The Bloody Chamber, Carter ~~the~~ mirrors the rising ~~social inequality~~ income inequality in society and the general of exorbitant wealth by ~~select~~ individuals through the presentation of ~~the Marquis and the narrator~~ the Marquis and the narrator in the title story (two characters of starkly opposing social ~~status~~ status, in order to highlight the gulf between them). ~~The~~ Carter, towards the beginning of the story, writes from the narrator's perspective, "That she might ~~be~~ at last banish the spectre of poverty from its habitual place at our meagre table." By personifying poverty she is perhaps re-emphasizing that it is very 'real' and not merely an idea to them. The lexical choice of "meagre" is interesting because it contrasts ~~it~~ with the excessive,

overopulent lifestyle that we are presented with through the Marquis. The narrator writes, "A Mexican dish of pheasant with hazelnuts and chocolate salad; white, voluptuous cheese; a sorbet of muscat grapes and Asti spumante." Looking at the same ~~idea~~ idea of a meal as in the castle, there is a list. ~~The~~ The list in conjunction with the use of cursive and semicolon emphasizes each item, elongating the list and adding to the feeling of excess. This is soon followed by the imagery of the "purple velvet curtaining", the colour purple being traditionally symbolic of luxury. This is in comparison with the "white", dull, bland colour of her mother's apartment, re-emphasizing the significant gap between the Marquis' lifestyle and that of the narrator and her mother.

Carter challenges this idea of inequality and extreme wealth however, by using the carnal, animalistic core of the Marquis as a leveler. The wealth is presented as merely a facade, when at heart, the Marquis is ~~not~~ uncivilized, barbaric, and animalistic, bringing him down from his social pedestal and acting as a leveler, since even the mother of the narrator is presented in animalistic fashion ("the white mare", as mentioned previously). The fact that the Marquis says, "Play with anything you find, jewels, silver plate; make toy boats of my shoe certificates", the very certificates that are described as ~~not being~~ being "worth infinitely more", but during her ~~entry~~ entry to his Bloody Chamber, shows that he values his ~~sexual~~ sexual violent, carnal nature over the wealth, ~~and~~ ^{and} nobility, which ~~is~~ is disposable. ✓

Both 'Dracula' and 'The Bloody Chamber' clearly attempt to give readers a glimpse of society and its state ~~at~~ at the times they were written; however, they do so in order to pass ~~comment on~~ judgement on or challenge the very ideas they reflect. Very rarely do these texts merely reflect the status quo in society and not present it in a manner that says something unique about the ideas. This is usually done through the characters and their ~~interrelationships~~ interrelationships, while opinions are voiced and established through the use of tone, ~~large~~ lexical choice, and foreshadowing of the plot.

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