

Kilpatrick's narrative fleshes out the story of the musical and further develops the significant portion of the plot which centers around Lucy. Several chapters are devoted to her transformation, and this is the best part of the novel. It is a side of her character we do not get to see in Stoker's work. We are allowed a more in-depth view of her emotions, and since the reader likely is familiar with what will happen to her, her change is enthralling. Though Dracul's pursuit of Mina is supposed to be the highlight of the story, Lucy's portion of the tale is much more interesting. Mina's contest with evil brings out the stock plot of the musical, which results in a weak and disappointing vampire character. Gone from the musical and the novel are the more effective and powerful masculine elements of Arthur Holmwood and his stake (Seward gets that honor), Percy and his large knife and the supreme master of masculinity, Dracula himself.

In Kilpatrick's tale, Dracul is the Vlad Tepes of historical legend imprisoned in Turkey with his brother Radu, and Helene is his second wife who killed herself when his enemies falsely report his death (here one wonders if a movie has not played a role in influencing this plot as well, namely Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*). Mina is her reincarnation, and it is she who deals Dracul his death blow. The three heroes take a stab at the vampire, only to find they are stabbing an empty cape and that one of them has accidentally stabbed Jonathan in the process. Dracul dies as a result of an attack of conscience. He decides he cannot bear to damn Mina's soul by biting her a third time. He gives her his sword and helps her ram it into his heart. In the end, the men's blades are useless, and Dracul feels bad about using his fangs. Despite Coppola's ability to wither the vampire as a character, which seems to have had an influence on this story, vampire fans still expect more chutzpa from anything with fangs. Dracul is simply part of a stock romantic plot. Lucy emerges as the most attractive vampire in this novel, which Kilpatrick may hint at when, in the final scenes, Seward eagerly attends to a young former vampiric minion who strongly resembles his lost love.

The music CD is composed of 19 song tracks from the musical. Accompanying liner notes give a brief outline of the musical and are necessary at several points to determine which character is singing. As with opera, the musical is meant to be viewed at the theatre. With only the CD in hand, some information is always absent. Judging from the performance on the CD, the musical is typical; its basic themes from common stock. Its music score seems interchangeable with any other musical. The lyrics are uninspired and the singers unmemorable. Indeed, without the liner notes, the listener may find it hard to distinguish between the characters of Lucy and Mina.

Simply put, I can safely say that after the final chords of *Nosferatu* and *Dracul* are struck, after the fat lady has sung, audiences and readers alike will have no trouble recognizing the fact that the stage reputations of Bela Lugosi and Frank Langella, who both made their mark starring in stage adaptations of *Dracula*, are under no duress.

Necropsy: The Review of Horror Fiction, Volume III (Fall 2001)

Though the avid vampire fan will always entertain a pageant of blood-sucking characters upon reading any vampire fiction, her focus for this libretto is Murnau's screen classic. Dracula lurks always in a far corner of her mind, but Orlock can take on a life of his own in Gioia's work thanks to German cinema. Drawing on the contemporary reader's hyper vigilance to all things video, the author helps to reshape the term "nosferatu" from a synonym for Dracula and his ilk, to create a separate vampire mythos in its own right. How much can the librettist achieve for this emerging character? Gioia gives the reader hints of his limitations in his essay "Soto Voce." The music of the opera generally dominates the art, the libretto basically ignored. The composer brings out the drama and power that cannot be achieved by text on a page. He notes, "Opera demands immense narrative compression. It lacks the novel's ability to communicate the duration of time" (72). For the casual reader, the libretto as simple text is even more compressed. Gioia's fiction seems bare and dry without the elements which he considers the true test of a libretto's worth, its success when integrated with the music and staging of the opera itself. Perhaps due to its very nature as a literary form, Gioia's libretto is brief, sparse and plain. Without the visual input of the 1922 or 1979 *Nosferatu* films, the reader's imagination is left just as bare. Though technically the author's text furthers the separation of Orlock from his tether to Dracula, it makes for poor entertainment on paper. How it will fare on the stage remains to be seen.

Kilpatrick's *Dracul* has a very different inception. Adapted from an already staged musical, the novel has as its forbear a much more sensuous work. Given this and the relative liberty of novel as a literary form, Kilpatrick can afford to be more robust, more encompassing and more sensuous in her text. The preface of the novel advises the reader to listen to the CD first in order to become acquainted with the flavor and atmosphere of the story. The purpose of the novel and CD as a "musical novel" is to allow the reader to share at least a "morsel" of the theatre experience of the musical. This morsel is enough to show that the musical and its songs are average, and that Kilpatrick's work, though at times a clever addition to those vampire novels that draw from the Dracula legend, contains one of the more flaccid and disappointing creatures of the night.

Dracul, the novel, uses the same plot as the musical. Its chapters are divided according to the song tracks, and each chapter begins with the full lyrics of its accompanying song. These lyrics can be read as poetry before each chapter, or the reader may find it more enlightening to listen to the pertinent CD track at the beginning of each chapter and then read the narrative. One preface to the novel suggests the narrative can be read as an "extensive libretto," and this is quite the understatement since between the novel and libretto forms there can be little comparison. No libretto can depict thought and emotions as vividly as Kilpatrick can using the novel. As with any stage adaptation, there must be compression, and so the musical compresses Stoker's story as follows: Lucy Westenra's only suitor is Dr. Jack Seward and while their love for each other is mutual, it is unexpressed and unrequited. Mina Murray and Jonathan Harker are to marry until *Dracul* intercedes to use Lucy and seduce Mina to have as his own. Van Helsing is called in by Seward to try to save Lucy's life, but Lucy turns into a creature of the night. Renfield has gone mad as a result of his visit to Transylvania and resides in Seward's asylum. At this point, the musical veers from Stoker's course. Count Vlad de Dracul wants Mina because she is the spitting image of his long lost love Helene. And despite the efforts of the male hero triad, Dracul dies voluntarily at Mina's hands.

Gilbert and Sullivan on Blood: A Review of Dana Gioia's *Nosferatu: An Opera Libretto* and *Dracul: An Eternal Love Story*, A "Musical Novel" With Accompanying CD

by Stine Fletcher

Gioia, Dana. *Nosferatu: An Opera Libretto* (Based on the Film by F.W. Murnau. Graywolf Press, 2001. 85 p.

Kilpatrick, Nancy. *Dracul: An Eternal Love Story*. Lucard Publishing, 1998. 217 p.

Accompanying music CD: *Dracul: A New Musical*. DAT Records, 1996. (See also: www.dracul.com)

Nosferatu and *Dracul* each center around the vampire, but in a milieu rarely experienced by current fans of the genre--the stage. Though both works are intended to emphasize a musical score, *Dracul* emerges as the more attractive of the two. Gioia's text *Nosferatu* is a libretto for an opera based on F.W. Murnau's well-known silent film of the same name. Written for the neo-romantic composer Alva Henderson, the opera has yet to be widely performed, and so all that is available to the reader is simply the text, black and white upon the page. With this silence inherent in the lack of a score, and those constraints inherent in the libretto genre (very compressed texts), the reader must draw from Murnau's own silent, black and white, anemic portrayal of Count Orlock for inspiration. Kilpatrick's work, however, can be purchased with the accompanying CD of songs from the musical which inspired the novel, which by virtue of its literary form can be more encompassing and comprehensive. The reader thus has a more sensuous foundation on which to draw from for *Dracul*.

Gioia's libretto is framed by two essays: Anne Williams' "Listening to the Children of the Night: The Vampire and Romantic Mythology" and Gioia's own "Sotto Voce: Notes on the Libretto as a Literary Form." Both are well written and worth reading in their own right, and each provides an easily understood introduction to its subject matter. Williams' essay traces the vampire as Byronic hero, beginning with Byron's *Giaour* and also concentrating on "Cristobel" and "Carmilla." While the first three sections of the essay are an informative read, her final section wherein she attempts to connect Gioia's opera with the vampiric literary tradition seems to be quite a stretch. Williams makes quite a leap from the vampire's early literary roots to an early 21st century opera: she suddenly shifts from discussion of the vampire in literature through *Dracula* to the vampire in opera (or the lack thereof). Regarding the early German horror film genre, there is no mention, and this is more truly the birthplace of Gioia's libretto. Williams does note the obvious fact that, in using Murnau's film, Gioia liberates the vampire [or simply his libretto] from the paternity of Stoker's *Dracula*.