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Power and Vulnerability: How We Can Be Influenced

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Power and Vulnerability: How We Can Be Influenced

Writing Process

I watched the ballet and started thinking of parallels I could connect with historical events.

Editor's note: This paper received third prize (\$25).

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Power and Vulnerability: How We Can Be Influenced

Christopher Fohl

This essay received third-place honors and a prize of \$25 in the Dracula: Bloodlines First-Year Arts Immersion essay contest sponsored by the Humanities Commons and the Dean's Office of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Most of the time the struggle between those in power and the vulnerable shows itself in the form of the powerful taking advantage of the conditions of the vulnerable to fulfill their own desires. This struggle is on display in the ballet, *Dracula: Bloodlines* and in World War Two Nazi Germany. (*Dracula: Bloodlines* is an original ballet directed and choreographed by Karen Russo Burke and this essay is based on the version performed by the Dayton Ballet in October of 2018.) The first act of the ballet shows strong parallels between Nazi Germany in World War Two and the main characters of the ballet. In it, a character known as Vlad the Impaler receives an injury in a war. His father, the king, and his two brothers are killed in this war in front of him prior to his injury. He then stumbles into the woods and meets the Vampire Queen, Lilith. Lilith corrupts Vlad's mind and changes him from a human into a monster that feasts on blood -- a vampire. He then returns to the battlefield and destroys the enemy army, feasting on their blood, ending act one.

To understand this analogy, let us call to mind World War One- and World War Two-era Germany. Germany had gone to war in World War One with its allies being the Austria-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. When they were defeated at the end of the war, the colonies that they controlled were stripped

from them, their allies were torn apart and they were forced to pay high reparations to the victors and dismantle their military. A brief time after, Adolf Hitler is placed into power under the promise that he can restore the German Empire to its former glory. The rest, as they say, is history.

The first connection seen is the fact that the other two powers, the allies of Germany in World War One, are dismantled after the war. Similar to how the brothers of Vlad are killed in battle, so too are the Austria-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. The next connection is what happened to Germany and Vlad. At the Treaty of Versailles, the German empire was made to give up the colonies they owned and disband their military. In the ballet, Vlad is stabbed in the side and is severely wounded, clutching his side as he limps off the battlefield. Unlike the other empires in the Central Powers, Germany was the only one to be allowed to remain a country. The Ottoman and the Austria-Hungarian empires' both had to be dismantled and new governments were installed into smaller regions. They no longer existed as countries, so they died, while Germany was merely wounded.

Lilith in the ballet was an interesting character. She could have easily destroyed Vlad but instead of doing so, she decided to use him for her own purposes. In doing so, she heals the wounds that were given to him in the battle and then makes him even stronger by changing him into a vampire, a bloodthirsty monster. Hitler and Lilith share almost every aspect of that plan. German factories and production were decimated after World War One, so Hitler pumped millions of dollars into updating the factories and increasing production. That was the wounds healing, Lilith patching up the hole in Vlad's side. This only leaves the strength aspect and the insatiable bloodlust.

Hitler's next step was to increase the military might of this new Germany. He mobilized a huge fighting force and funded research and development of military equipment, new guns and tanks. All these efforts increased to military might of the nation exponentially, creating a fighting force that was unparalleled. Similar to that, Lilith gave Vlad superhuman strength allowing him to rip his enemies limb from limb and bite into their necks and drain their blood. Both Vlad and the German people both fell for the enticement of power and became vulnerable to those who seek to control them.

The way that Hitler convinced the German people to join his side is by scapegoating. He found an enemy that the Germans could hate and whose presence could unite the people in hatred against them. These were the Jews. The Holocaust was a killing off of the undesirables in society and the Jews, being

targeted by hateful rhetoric and fear tactics, were the prime victims of the slaughter. In the same vain, Vlad, once he received the power to, wiped out the opposing army.

By studying World War I and World War II within the context of *Dracula: Bloodlines*, people can realize that anyone can become like Vlad -- vulnerable. They seek something, most often power, and when they do, they will become desperate for it. This desperation leads to these people to act in ways they normally would not. And these actions are used by those with power to influence the people and take advantage of their vulnerability. People in our modern world must be aware of the influence that the individuals in power have over them, the ability they have to influence their decisions and participate in behavior that they otherwise would not. We all have the ability to fall for Lilith's and Hitler's trap -- we all have the ability to become Dracula.