Dracula

by Bram Stoker

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Introduction

Dracula, by Abraham Stoker—who generally published under the abbreviated first name Bram—was first published in Great Britain in 1897. Although myths and legends about vampires had existed since ancient times, Stoker's novel synthesized much of this lore and gave it a palpable feeling in the character of Count Dracula. In fact, the character of Dracula has since become so popular that many people who were first exposed to the famous vampire through film or television do not even know who Stoker is. While films, most notably the 1931 film *Dracula*, starring Bela Lugosi, have overshadowed the book, they have also helped to keep the story alive. In the last half of the twentieth century, the onslaught of *Dracula* films has added even more mystery to the legend of Count Dracula.

Stoker's inspirations for Count Dracula are heavily debated. However, most critics agree that Dracula was based in part on a historical figure, Vlad the Impaler, a fifteenth-century Romanian ruler known for his indiscriminate brutality, which included a taste for impaling people alive on wooden spikes and watching them die in slow agony. Other inspirations suggested by scholars include John Polidori's story "The Vampyre" (1819), Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Carmilla* (1872), and Emily Gerard's Transylvanian travel book *The Land beyond the Forest: Facts, Figures, and Fancies from Transylvania*, which was published in the late 1880s, right before Stoker wrote his novel. However, while these and other sources have been named as potential inspirations, most modern critics agree that Stoker put his own spin on the vampire myth. In fact, Stoker worked longer and harder on this novel than any of his other works, taking seven years to research and write *Dracula*.

While the character of Count Dracula was important for establishing the conventions of what would become an entire genre of horror tales, the book's plot was also very timely. In their exposure to Dracula and their attempts to catch him and destroy him, the various vampire hunters underscore the Victorian attitudes that were present at this time. The Victorian Age took place in England during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). Victorian moral and religious beliefs included the expected roles of men and women. This is most notable in the book's discussion of sexual matters, which are portrayed in both literal and symbolic ways. The student who wishes to dig deep into the historical and cultural context of the novel should check out *The Annotated Dracula* (1975), by Leonard Wolf. This edition, which is currently out of print, is available in many libraries. The edition includes extensive footnotes to the text, as well as maps, photographs, and captivating illustrations that underscore the Gothic aspects of the novel.

Bram Stoker Biography

Bram Stoker was born Abraham Stoker on November 8, 1847, in Clontarf, north of Dublin, Ireland. Stoker was the third of seven children, and he was violently ill as a child. When he was sick, Stoker read many books and listened to the horror tales his mother told him. These led Stoker to start writing ghost stories, even as a child. After graduating from Trinity College, Dublin in 1868 with honors in mathematics, Stoker took a civil service position, but he most enjoyed going to the theater in his free time. In 1871, when local critics did not comment on a performance of Henry Irving— Stoker's favorite actor—Stoker offered to write an unpaid review of the performance for the *Dublin Mail*. Stoker continued to write unpaid reviews for the newspaper for several years. When Irving returned to Dublin to perform in 1876, Irving read Stoker's celebratory review of the actor's performance and invited Stoker to dinner. The two men struck up a friendship, and, in 1878, Irving leased the Lyceum Theatre in London and appointed Stoker as manager. Stoker married his neighbor, Florence Balcombe, and the two moved to England where Stoker worked both as the theater manager and as Irving's acting manager from 1878 to 1905.

Bram Stoker

At the same time, Stoker began to publish his own works. In 1882, Stoker published his first book, *Under the Sunset*, a book of twisted children's stories. Eight years later, he published his first novel, *The Snake's Pass* (1890). However, it was not until the 1897 publication of *Dracula* that Stoker received real attention from the critics, and even then it was mixed. However, although the critics were hesitant to endorse Stoker's horror novel, it was a popular success. Despite Stoker's good fortune, he remained loyal to Irving, whose bad business practices and failing career eventually led the two men to abandon the Lyceum Theatre. Following Irving's death in 1905, Stoker—who had always been in the actor's shadow—was distraught. Stoker had a stroke shortly after Irving's death, which incapacitated him somewhat. At the end of his life, Stoker and his wife became increasingly poor, and he looked to others for assistance. At the same time, he continued to write. His works in this late stage include *Lady Athlyne* (1908), *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909), and *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911). Stoker died of syphilis on April 20, 1912, in London. However, Stoker's*Dracula* has lived on and has since overshadowed its author.

Summary

Chapters 1-4 Summary

Dracula starts out with several entries in Jonathan Harker's journal, which comprise the first four chapters. These entries set the structure for the rest of the novel, which is also told mainly through journal entries and letters. This first section introduces Harker, who is a recently promoted English solicitor (a type of attorney). Harker travels eastward across Europe from London to Transylvania, where he is going to meet Count Dracula and explain to the count the particulars of his London real estate purchase. As he travels across the country to the castle, he notices the reaction of various area residents who are frightened by Dracula's name. At Harker's last checkpoint, a coach from Dracula's castle arrives for him. Harker notes the strength of the driver. When he arrives at Dracula's castle, the count, an older gentleman, opens the door, and Harker notes that Dracula is also very strong. Over the next several days, Harker notes that Dracula is never around during the daytime, there are no mirrors in the castle, Dracula has no reflection in Harker's shaving mirror, and Dracula appears to be alone in the castle. Harker realizes that he is a prisoner.

At Dracula's request, Harker writes to his supervisor and to his fiancée, Mina Murray, letting them know the count wishes him to stay for a month. Dracula warns Harker that it is unsafe to wander the castle, and especially to fall asleep in any part of the castle other than his room. Harker ignores Dracula's advice and goes exploring. On two occasions, he sees Dracula scaling the castle wall at night, like a lizard. Harker is almost bitten by three women but is saved by Dracula, who warns them to keep their hands off Harker, saying that the solicitor belongs to him. Dracula gives them a baby to eat instead. Harker watches several days later as the baby's mother stands outside the castle, demanding that Dracula give her back her child. Dracula says a few commands, and a pack of wolves comes and eats the woman. Desperate, Harker climbs down the wall of the castle and discovers Dracula in his coffin. Harker realizes that the count has no heartbeat and appears to be dead. In the evening, Dracula reappears, and Harker demands that the count let him go. However, when Dracula obliges and opens the door, a pack of wolves appears. Harker, disheartened, realizes that Dracula is not really going to let him go. Harker overhears Dracula telling the three women that they can have Harker the next night. In the morning, Harker tries to escape but finds every way locked. Ultimately, he decides to climb down the castle wall and try to reach a train back to England.

Chapters 5-16 Summary

Lucy and Mina write back and forth to each other several times, discussing Lucy's engagement to Arthur Holmwood and her denial of two other suitors, Dr. John Seward and Quincey Morris. Se-ward works with his patient, Renfield, who has a penchant for trying to eat bugs in an attempt to suck the life out of them. Mina goes to Whitby with Lucy and her mother to vacation while waiting for Jonathan. She sees a mysterious ship arrive, which lost most of its crew at sea. The ship is carrying fifty boxes. Lucy begins sleepwalking and starts having nightmares. Dracula bites her, but Mina mistakes the holes on Lucy's neck for something else. Lucy starts to get weak and pale, and Mina assumes she is getting sick. Renfield is restless over the presence of his master. Mina receives word that Jonathan is in a hospital in Budapest, and she travels there to join him. They are married. Mina also writes several letters to Lucy, telling her about Jonathan's journal from Castle Dracula, which she has promised not to read since she does not wish to know the cause of her husband's madness.

Meanwhile, in Whitby, Lucy gets weaker. Holmwood asks Dr. Seward to look at Lucy. Seward does, but in turn sends for his old mentor, Professor Van Helsing, who is alarmed at Lucy's anemic state. He performs a blood transfusion, transferring some of Holmwood's blood into Lucy. Although this temporarily helps Lucy, she keeps getting worse and gets transfusions from three other men: Seward, Morris, and Van Helsing. Van Helsing also insists on making Lucy wear garlic around her neck, but her ill mother removes it. A wolf breaks

through the bedroom window that night, giving Lucy's weak mother a fatal heart attack. Lucy dies two days later. Jonathan and Mina return home, and Jonathan sees Count Dracula on a street. Jonathan and Mina hear of Lucy's death from Van Helsing. They also hear of an attractive lady who has been snatching children from near the cemetery. Van Helsing speaks with Mina, who lets him read Jonathan's journal. He assures Jonathan that his experiences at Castle Dracula actually happened. Van Helsing hears about the woman in the cemetery and realizes that this is Lucy, now a vampire. He takes Seward to the cemetery at night and shows him Lucy's empty tomb. The next night, Seward, Van Helsing, Morris, and Holmwood return to the cemetery, where they encounter the vampire Lucy. She tries to attack but is driven back by Van Helsing's cross. The following day, the four men enter Lucy's tomb, and Holmwood drives a stake through her heart.

Chapters 17-24 Summary

Seward reads Jonathan's diary, while Mina listens to Seward's account of how they killed the vampire Lucy. Mina collects all of the notes she can on Dracula from Seward's diary, Jonathan's diary, and various other sources. She and Jonathan weave it into a chronological account of the past couple of months, which they present to Van Helsing and the rest of the group. Mina visits Renfield, then the group assembles to discuss Dracula. Van Helsing gives them all some historical background on vampires, and they ultimately decide to join forces to try to find Dracula's various resting places, the boxes of earth that came over on the ship, and consecrate them so that he cannot use them. Renfield, afraid of losing his soul, makes a desperate plea to Dr. Seward to be set free. Harker leads the men to Dracula's house, Carfax, which is right next door to the asylum. They discover a little more than half of the boxes of earth. Dracula, who can only gain access to a home if he is invited, gets Renfield to let him in. He starts sucking blood from Mina every night, although she mistakes his visits for nightmares. Mina starts to get noticeably weaker and paler.

While the men hunt down the rest of Dracula's coffins, Mina rests more and more. One night, Seward is called to attend to Renfield, who has been fatally injured in an inexplicable way. By talking to him, Seward and the other men, minus Harker, find out that Dracula visited Renfield, who realized that the count had been sucking blood from Mina. Renfield tries to prevent the count from attacking Mina anymore, but Dracula overpowers him, throwing him to the floor. The men rush upstairs to Mina's room, where they see Dracula forcing her to suck his blood, while Jonathan is in a stupor. Van Helsing drives Dracula away with a eucharist wafer, but later, when he presses a wafer on Mina's forehead as a protection, it burns her. Everybody realizes that Mina is half-transformed into a vampire. The men return to Carfax to consecrate the boxes of earth. They find Dracula's other houses and split up to consecrate the other boxes. However, they only find forty-nine out of the fifty boxes and realize that Dracula still has one left. They assemble at one of Dracula's houses, waiting for the count to arrive. When he does, he tries to attack them, but Jonathan counters with his knife. Likewise, the other men help to drive the count off with their crucifixes.

As Mina's condition worsens, they realize that she has a psychic link to Dracula. As a result, Van Helsing starts hypnotizing her during sunrise and sunset when this link is activated, and through Mina they realize that Dracula is going to try to escape back to his castle by ship. The men plan to chase Dracula and, after some discussion, Mina goes along, too.

Chapters 25-27 Summary

The group splits up to chase Dracula in three ways. While Van Helsing and Mina travel to Castle Dracula, Seward and Morris chase the count over land, and Harker and Holmwood hire a river steamer. Although the three unnamed vampire women from Dracula's castle try to coax Mina away from Van Helsing, he thwarts them with holy items, then travels to the castle in the daytime to kill the three female vampires. Meanwhile, the two groups of men quickly catch up with Dracula, who is being transported by a group of gypsies. When Dracula is close to his castle, the group of vampire hunters arrives on the scene at the same time. In the

ensuing fight, the gypsies are driven off, but not before they give Quincey Morris a fatal wound. Still, he and Jonathan are able to kill Dracula, just moments before Dracula is about to transform himself into an ethereal shape. As Jonathan's knife decapitates the count and Quincey's knife stabs him, the vampire turns into dust. Mina notes in an epilogue that she and Jonathan have named their son Quincey and that their story would seem very farfetched to others.

Themes

Salvation and Damnation
As several characters note in the novel, a person's physical life is of secondary importance to the person's eternal life, which can be jeopardized if the person is made evil by a vampire like Dracula. Professor Van Helsing says, when he is explaining why they must kill the vampire Lucy, "But of the most blessed of all, when this now Un-Dead be made to rest as true dead, then the soul of the poor lady whom we love shall again be free." Even characters that are of questionable goodness, such as the mental patient, R. M. Renfield, realize that, although they can find immortality by being a vampire, they cannot find salvation. Renfield says, when he is begging Dr. Seward to let him go, not explaining that he is afraid of his master, Dracula: "Don't you know that I am sane and earnest now; that I am no lunatic in a mad fit, but a sane man fighting for his soul?" When Mina is distraught after realizing that Dracula has started to turn her into a vampire, Van Helsing warns her to stay alive if she wants to achieve her salvation. "Until the other, who has fouled your sweet life, is true dead you must not die; for if he is still with the quick Un-dead, your death would make you even as he is."

Roles of Men and Women
The novel underscores the expected roles of men and women in Victorian times. Women were expected to be gentle and ladylike and, most of all, subservient to men. For example, in one of her letters, Lucy notes, "My dear Mina, why are men so noble when we women are so little worthy of them?" Lucy is frustrated that she has to choose between her three suitors and does not wish to hurt any one of them by saying no. Lucy says, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it." Women are expected to live for their husbands, so much so that Mina practices her shorthand while Jonathan is away so that she can assist him when he gets back. Mina says, "When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan."

Even more important than a woman's devotion to her husband was the idea that women, at least gentlewomen, should be pure. As part of this, men were expected to respect a woman's privacy and never burst in on her when they might catch her in an undressed state. Quincey notes this when Professor Van Helsing says they need to break down the door to Mina's room. Quincey states, "It is unusual to break into a lady's room!" However, as Van Helsing notes, in situations where the woman might be in mortal danger, this rule should be broken. Van Helsing is worried, rightly so, that Dracula might be attacking Mina. So he replies to Quincey, "You are always right; but this is life and death."

In fact, the role of men as saviors of their women, which is underscored again and again in the novel, was another aspect of Victorian life. When it came to danger, especially physical danger, women were expected to act like damsels in distress. Mina fulfills this role after she is bitten and looks to Jonathan for support. Notes Mina of Jonathan's hand, "it was life to me to feel its touch—so strong, so self-reliant, so resolute."

Reason and Madness
The novel also explores the ideas of reason and madness. In the beginning, Jonathan believes that he is going mad when he sees the three women vampires appear out of thin air. Later, he thinks that all of his experiences were the result of hallucinations brought on by madness. Seward works at an insane asylum, so he is exposed to madness every day. As a result, Seward tends to always follow his scientific reasoning, a fact that Van Helsing notes, "You are a clever man, friend John; you reason well, and your wit is bold; but you are too prejudiced. You do not let your eyes see nor your ears hear." Because of this, Seward does not believe in the vampire Lucy, even after seeing her the first time. His mind is unable to reconcile the supernatural things that he has seen, and so it simply blocks them out, at least temporarily. He is the type of man who would rather base his life on hard facts and hard science and who likes to use the newest technologies like the phonograph. His mentor, Van Helsing, is also an accomplished scientist, but he realizes that sometimes it is necessary to forget what one has been taught and believe in something else, even if it seems mad or heretical. Van Helsing

says "it is the fault of our science that it wants to explain all; and if it explain not, then it says there is nothing to explain."

Style

Gothic Novel
Dracula is a Gothic novel, which is also sometimes known as a Gothic romance. Many scholars consider Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) to be the first Gothic novel. Like *Dracula*, Walpole's novel was wildly popular. Gothic novels generally focus on mystery and horror, and they usually have some supernatural elements. In*Dracula*, the supernatural elements are many, starting with the use of a vampire as the title character. In addition, the specific attributes given to the vampire underscore his inhumanity. Jonathan says, after witnessing Dracula scale the castle wall like a lizard, "What manner of man is this, or what manner of creature is it in the semblance of man?" Jonathan's plight in the beginning, when he is trapped in Dracula's castle, is also typical of Gothic novels, which often place their heroes in seemingly inescapable situations. Finally, the various settings—including Dracula's imposing castle, the ghostly landscape of Transylvania, and the graveyard and Lucy's tomb in London—are all settings that are found in Gothic fiction.

Epistolary Novel
In addition to being a Gothic novel, *Dracula* is also an epistolary novel, meaning that it is told through a series of letters instead of a single, connected narrative. Actually, although letters like these compose some of the plot, particularly the exchanges between Mina Murray and Lucy Westenra, the book also relies on journal entries and news articles to tell the tale. In fact, the book begins with an entry in Jonathan Harker's journal: "Left Munich at 8:35 p.m. on 1st May, arriving at Vienna early next morning." Some of these entries, like the one referenced above, contain mundane details about Harker's journey. These specific details about Harker's journey give the book a feel of realism, which is consistent with the naturalistic movement that became popular at the turn of the nineteenth century. It also helps to counterbalance the supernatural aspects of the novel by making it seem as if the book is true.

In epistolary novels like this one, the narration is all in the first person. However, in *Dracula*, which bounces around from character to character, readers receive several first-person accounts. This disjointed approach helps to disorient the reader, who must try to figure out what is going on based on several separate accounts.

Suspense
The use of multiple first-person narrators helps to increase the suspense in the book, since Stoker jumps around from character to character, building tension in a certain situation and then moving on to the next one. In this way, the reader is left to wonder what is going to happen in a specific situation or to a specific character. The best example of this is the anticipated fate of Jonathan Harker. In the first four chapters, Stoker builds suspense, starting on Harker's journey. After hearing enough warnings from the local residents, Harker starts to be concerned for his safety and notes, "I am not feeling nearly as easy in my mind as usual. If this book should ever reach Mina before I do, let it bring my goodbye." Although Jonathan later thinks he was overreacting, at least when he first meets the count, the seed of doubt and suspense is planted in the reader's mind. This seed continues to grow as Jonathan notices certain things about Dracula: "The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth." As he stays at the castle, Jonathan gives readers even more information about Dracula's vampiric qualities, which help to heighten the suspense.

However, at the end of the fourth chapter, Stoker adds the most suspense of all, when he has Jonathan announce his intention to try to leave the castle, "I shall try to scale the castle wall farther than I have yet attempted.... And then away for home! away to the quickest and nearest train!" While readers root for Jonathan, they must wait several chapters to find out whether or not he is successful in his attempt, since the novel switches gears and starts to talk about the experiences of Mina and Lucy. The novel continues to build suspense, which culminates in the massive chase to kill Dracula and save Mina.

Historical Context

Organized Religion in the Victorian Age
The Victorian Age witnessed both a rising and falling in the popularity of organized religion. When religious activity was at its peak, it was pervasive. Morality and religion—especially the Christian religion—infused all aspects of life. Stoker's use of Christian elements such as a cross and a eucharist wafer as weapons against the evil Dracula underscores this idea. However, by the end of the century, when Stoker wrote *Dracula*, the moral compass was not as clear, and many people experienced a crisis in their religious faith. This was due in large part to the publication of several scientific works that challenged conventional notions of religion. One of the most famous of these was Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859).

Sexuality in the Victorian Age
In many ways, the Victorian Age was paradoxical. On the outside, men and women strove to appear pure and conservative. They observed proper courtship rituals, adopted an uninterested attitude towards sex, and at all times tried to act with decorum—at least in public. In private, however, it was a different story. The same time period that saw all of these restrictive rules also witnessed a booming prostitution industry. While this was generally accepted, there was one form of sex that was considered deviant and criminal: homosexuality. Through part of the Victorian Age, homosexuality was a capital offense. However, by the 1890s, the sentence had been reduced to prison time, which was the fate of noted author Oscar Wilde.

During the Victorian Age, pornography found a huge audience. In 1890, an anonymous author published *My Secret Life*, a massive autobiography that detailed the author's sexual experiences and gave an accurate portrayal of the darker side of Victorian society. While some people wrote about sex in an academic sense, studying the sociological and psychological aspects of human sexuality, some people found it hard to make a distinction between these scholarly studies and pornography that was meant only to arouse. One of people's fears about pornography was that it might lead to sexually criminal behavior, such as rape.

Jack the Ripper
In the late 1880s, when Stoker was getting ready to write his novel, London's East End was terrorized by an anonymous serial murderer known simply as Jack the Ripper. Although these crimes did not include sexually deviant acts like rape, most of the Ripper's victims were prostitutes, which has led some to believe that the murderer's motivation may have been sexual in nature, perhaps a consequence of sexual repression.

Health and Medicine in the Victorian Age
Victorians were extremely worried about their health, especially in London, where crowded and unsanitary city conditions often led to widespread disease. Medicine in the nineteenth century was largely undeveloped, and medical education was not yet regulated. As a result, many doctors were inexperienced and did their patients more harm than good. In the novel, the characters' health is referred to often. Lucy requires many blood transfusions in an attempt to keep her alive; other characters fall ill throughout the novel; when Jonathan escapes from Dracula's castle, he makes it to a hospital and eventually gets nursed back to health by Mina. However, even after he is healthy, Mina is very careful to keep an eye on Jonathan, concerned that he might have a relapse. Both Lucy's mother and Arthur Holmwood' s father suffer from illnesses during the novel. In addition, after giving Lucy their transfusions, the male characters have to rest up to save their strength and avoid getting sick.

Critical Overview

When *Dracula* was first published, critics found little literary merit in the novel. A reviewer for the *Athenaeum* wrote in 1897, "*Dracula* is highly sensational, but it is wanting in the constructive art as well as in the higher literary sense." However, even those critics who did not believe that the novel was literary acknowledged it as a horror work that would appeal to its audience. The *Athenaeum* reviewer says, "Isolated scenes and touches are probably quite uncanny enough to please those for whom they are designed." In fact, some reviewers admitted that, although their Victorian sensibilities instructed them to reject the base qualities of the novel, they were drawn to it. For example, the *Bookman* reviewer notes, "we must own that, though here and there in the course of the tale we hurried over things with repulsion, we read nearly the whole with rapt attention." This mixed attitude—praising the horror aspects while denying the work's literary merit—continued throughout most of the twentieth century. For example, in his 1918 book *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*, Montague Summers notes this dubious distinction. Summers explains, "the reason why, in spite of obvious faults it is read and re-read—lies in the choice of subject and for this the author deserves all praise." So, despite its widespread popular appeal, *Dracula* did not share the literary distinction of other Gothic novels like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Helen Chandler as Mina Seward and Bela Lugosi as Count Dracula, in the 1931 film adaptation of Dracula
However, as was also true of Shelley's novel, Stoker's novel exploded onto the screen in the twentieth century and has enjoyed more than one hundred adaptations in several languages. Partly due to this attention, critics began to review the novel once again in the latter half of the twentieth century. Royce MacGillivray says, in his 1972 essay in *Queen's Quarterly*, "Certainly without the films it is hard to believe that *Dracula* would be one of the few proper names from novels to have become a household word." Many of these reviewers focused on the sexual aspects of Dracula. For example, in his 1959 essay "The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories," Maurice Richardson notes that the novel "provides really striking confirmation of the Freudian interpretation." In fact, Richardson is so enamored of this idea that he says the story does not make sense

unless it is viewed as Freudian. Richardson says, "it is seen as a kind of incestuous, necrophilous, oral-anal-sadistic all-in wrestling match." Other reviewers agree, although most note that Stoker, who was very moral himself, probably did not realize that he was embedding sexual symbolism in his work. C. F. Bentley says, in his 1972 essay in *Literature and Psychology*, "In common with almost all respectable Victorian novelists, Stoker avoids any overt treatment of the sexuality of his characters."

This was one of many essays in the 1970s, a time when critics experienced renewed interest in the novel. As Stephanie Moss notes in her 1997 entry on Stoker for *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, "The critical revival of *Dracula* in the early 1970s turned a trickle of literary criticism into a deluge." As Moss notes about modern critics, "The most frequently mentioned psychological aspect is the madonna/whore schism within Victorian perceptions of women, seen most clearly in Lucy's transformation from aristocratic female to vampire." This trend has continued to the present day.

Character Analysis

Count Dracula

Count Dracula is an old vampire who keeps Jonathan Harker prisoner in his castle and who ultimately tries to relocate to London and create a race of vampires. The character of Dracula was derived from many sources, including vampire lore and the historical figure Vlad the Impaler. Even before Jonathan meets the count, Dracula's reputation precedes him, and many locals try to warn Jonathan and give him items like crosses to ward off Dracula. Jonathan notes the inhuman strength of Dracula, the first of many strange traits. As Jonathan and others learn throughout the novel, Dracula has limited motion during the day, consumes only human blood, must pass over water in certain ways, has no reflection, must sleep on soil from his own land, has power over certain animals and weather, and has the power to turn others into vampires. This last trait causes considerable concern for the group of vampire hunters that assembles to fight him since Dracula bites two women—Lucy Westenra and Mina Murray—who are dear to many of the hunters. Dracula is successful in transforming Lucy into a vampire, although the vampire Lucy is killed by her own bridegroom, Arthur Holmwood, in her coffin.

Mina, on the other hand, has a better chance at survival. Because of this, the fight against Dracula becomes two-pronged. First, the group of hunters slowly gather evidence to show where Dracula's many coffins containing his native soil are located, so that they can consecrate them with a eucharistic wafer and deny Dracula all of his resting places. By doing this, they hope to pin the count in a corner and kill him before he can create a new race of vampires in London. At the same time, the group is fighting against time because Mina is slowly transforming into a vampire. These two fights culminate in a spectacular chase sequence, where Dracula realizes that most of his London resting places have been destroyed. The count flees eastward to his castle, believing that he has duped the vampire hunters. However, through the psychic link that Dracula shares with the half-transformed Mina, the group is able to predict Dracula's movements. The group overtakes Dracula before he can reach his castle, and Jonathan cuts off Dracula's head while Quincey Morris stabs the count, turning him to dust.

Other Characters

Lord Godalming
See Arthur Holmwood

Jonathan Harker
Jonathan Harker is the fiancé of Mina Murray and a solicitor who travels to Transylvania to assist Count Dracula with the count's purchase of a London property. Once in the castle, Jonathan notices some odd things about Dracula, including his inhuman strength, his ability to scale walls like a lizard, the lack of his reflection in mirrors, his tendency to be gone during the day, and the fact that Jonathan has never seen him eat food. As Jonathan spends more time in the castle, he realizes that he is Dracula's prisoner. After three mysterious women in the castle try to bite Jonathan when he is half-asleep, he realizes even more that Dracula and his companions are probably not human. One morning, Jonathan explores the castle and finds Dracula in his coffin, with no heartbeat. When Dracula appears that evening, Jonathan demands to be let go but is stopped by wolves that suddenly appear at the castle's front door. The next morning, after he witnesses Dracula's coffin being transported outside the castle on its way to England, Jonathan escapes the castle by climbing down the wall.

He ends up in a foreign hospital, and everybody—including Jonathan himself—assumes that he is mad. However, when he returns to London and hears about the strange happenings with Lucy Westenra and others,

he realizes that the count is real and sets about trying to destroy him. When Mina is bitten by Dracula and half-transformed into a vampire herself, Jonathan is even more desperate to kill the count, which he almost does on one occasion when he surprises Dracula. However, it is not until they have chased Dracula from London to Transylvania that Jonathan gets his chance. He decapitates Dracula with a knife.

Arthur Holmwood
Arthur Holmwood is the fiancé of Lucy Westenra and is forced to kill the vampire version of Lucy. Arthur is known as Lord Godalming after his father dies and he inherits the title. In the beginning, Arthur is Lucy's chosen suitor, winning her hand in marriage over his two friends, Dr. Seward and Quincey Morris. However, this victory is bittersweet when Lucy begins to get ill. Arthur, like the other men present, donates his blood in a transfusion to Lucy after Professor Van Helsing says that she is anemic and needs it. However, the repeated transfusions are not enough, and Lucy ultimately dies. Although Arthur does not believe it at first, he is eventually shown that Lucy has become a vampire. He assumes the responsibility of killing her in her coffin. After this, although he is distraught over her death, Godalming uses his title and influence in several ways to help the group of vampire hunters find and destroy Dracula's various coffins in London. He also uses his influence to try to detain Dracula during his escape back to his castle. Godalming and Dr. Seward help fight off the gypsies who try to prevent Jonathan and Quincey from killing Dracula.

Mina
See Wilhelmina Murray

Quincey P. Morris
Quincey Morris is the only American character in the book; he stabs Dracula but receives a fatal wound himself from gypsies. In the beginning, Quincey is one of the three suitors of Lucy Westenra. Although she denies him, he still cares for her and becomes one of several men to give her a blood transfusion when she is anemic from being bitten by Dracula. After his death, Mina and Jonathan name their son after him.

Wilhelmina Murray
Wilhelmina Murray is the fiancée of Jonathan Harker, and she is almost turned into a vampire by Count Dracula. Throughout the story, Wilhelmina is referred to mostly by the shortened name Mina. In addition, before she and Jonathan are married, she is Mina Murray. After they are married, she is Mina Harker. Mina is worried when she does not hear from Jonathan for a long time, and she helps nurse him back to health when he is released from the foreign hospital. Mina is confused at the strange condition of her friend Lucy Westenra, whose health starts to decline after Lucy sleepwalks and encounters a strange man. As various characters start to compare notes, and Mina reads Jonathan's journal of his horrifying experiences in Dracula's castle, she realizes that the strange man was Dracula. As part of the team of vampire hunters, Mina assumes the role of secretary, taking and organizing all of their notes to try to figure out the best way to find and kill Dracula.

However, when Dracula bites Mina and makes her drink some of his blood, she starts to turn into a vampire herself. The rest of the team is initially optimistic that they can save Mina. But when a holy object burns her forehead, they all realize that she is cursed and will become a vampire if they do not kill Dracula soon. It is through Mina and her psychic link to Dracula that they are able to determine the route he is taking back to his castle. When the group of vampire hunters breaks into smaller groups to try to overtake Dracula by land or by water, Mina travels with Professor Van Helsing. When they are nearing Dracula's castle, the three female vampires try to coax Mina into joining them, but Van Helsing restrains Mina from going. When Dracula has been destroyed, the mark disappears from Mina's head, a sign that she has been cleansed of evil and is no longer in danger of becoming a vampire.

R. M. Renfield
R. M. Renfield is a mental patient in Dr. Seward's asylum; he is also the servant of Dracula. Like Dracula,

Renfield has superior strength, a fact noted by Dr. Seward in his phonographic journal entries. He also has the odd habit of eating bugs in the same way that Dracula drinks blood. When Dracula arrives in England, Renfield becomes noticeably more excited and is sometimes hard to restrain. It is Renfield's escape to Dracula's London estate, which is right next door to the asylum, that ultimately leads the vampire hunters to Dracula's new home. At one point, Renfield begs to be let go, for his own salvation, but Seward refuses. When Dracula enters Renfield's cell, Renfield realizes that Dracula has been drinking Mina's blood. Renfield tries to save Mina by restraining Dracula from leaving, but Dracula overpowers Renfield, cracking his skull in the process. It is Renfield's account of all of this that makes the vampire hunters realize Mina has been bitten.

Dr. John Seward
Dr. Seward is the director of an insane asylum who realizes that one of his patients is connected to Dracula. Dr. Seward is one of Lucy Westenra's three suitors. When she turns his marriage proposal down, he is distraught but buries himself in work. When he does this, he notices the strange behavior of R. M. Renfield, a patient who eats bugs and talks about his master. When Lucy falls ill, Seward calls his friend and mentor, Professor Van Helsing, to come into town. After they try in vain to save Lucy's life by giving her blood transfusions, Van Helsing shows Dr. Seward that Lucy has turned into a vampire. Although Seward does not believe it at first, he quickly resolves to do what he can to help stop Dracula. Unlike the other characters who keep paper journals to record their thoughts, Dr. Seward uses a modern phonograph. His reliance on modern technology like this is one of the reasons why he has a hard time believing in the supernatural at first. As the story progresses, Seward realizes that Renfield's master is Dracula, and Seward joins the group of vampire hunters in seeking out and destroying Dracula's London sanctuaries. After the chase sequence at the end of the novel, Seward arrives in time to help fight off the gypsies while Jonathan Harker and Quincey Morris kill Dracula.

The Three Female Vampires
The three unnamed vampire women first appear during Jonathan Harker's stay at Castle Dracula. When they first arrive, Jonathan is not sure if he is dreaming or mad, since they materialize out of thin air. They try to bite Jonathan but are stopped by Dracula, who gives them a baby to eat instead. Near the end of the novel, they leave the castle to try to coax Mina into joining them. However, Professor Van Helsing drives them away and goes to the castle the next day, where he kills all three vampires.

Professor Abraham Van Helsing
Dr. Abraham Van Helsing is the lead vampire hunter, and the one who knows the most about Dracula. Van Helsing has heard about Dracula before and is able to let the others know about the vampire's past, strengths, and weaknesses. Van Helsing was Dr. Seward's mentor and as such taught Dr. Seward his scientific methods. However, Van Helsing, who speaks with a thick Dutch accent, is just as versed in the supernatural. When he first sees the anemic Lucy, he realizes that she has been bitten by Dracula but keeps his suspicions to himself while he gathers evidence. He does, however, coordinate several transfusions of blood from himself and others to Lucy in an attempt to save her life. When his other methods, including making Lucy wear garlic to bed and placing a crucifix over her dead body, are thwarted by Lucy's mother and a greedy servant, respectively, Van Helsing realizes they must kill Lucy. He stakes out Lucy's tomb day and night, first with Dr. Seward and then with the other male vampire hunters, so that they can see she has been turned into a vampire and that she must be killed.

Professor Van Helsing is very fond of Mina and, like the others, is distraught when she is bitten. He is also very fond of Renfield, who reacts very warmly to Van Helsing. Van Helsing leads the group in the chase to destroy Dracula's London sanctuaries and chase him back to his castle in Transylvania. He also saves Mina's soul by preventing her from joining the three vampire women. In the end, he is one of the men who helps to fight off the gypsies when they try to prevent the group from destroying Dracula.

Lucy Westenra

Lucy Westenra is an Englishwoman who dies and becomes a vampire after she is bitten by Dracula. In the beginning, Lucy is distraught because she must choose between three suitors: Dr. Seward, Quincey Morris, and Arthur Holmwood. She chooses the latter, but her engagement is thwarted by Dracula, who bites Lucy one night while she is sleepwalking. After this first experience, Lucy has many bad dreams and is repeatedly bitten by Dracula. Although Professor Van Helsing and others try to save her by giving her blood transfusions to relieve her anemic state, she ultimately dies from Dracula's bites. After she is dead, she turns into a vampire and starts to prey on little children around London. The children are mesmerized by Lucy, who drains some of their blood before leaving them to wander back home. The newspapers pick up the story, and Professor Van Helsing realizes that it must be the vampire Lucy. He leads Dr. Seward to stake out Lucy's tomb, convincing him that Lucy is a vampire. Finally, he leads Arthur Holmwood to see the same thing, and Holmwood drives a wooden stake through his intended bride, at which point her vampiric features return to normal and her soul is saved.

Essays and Criticism

Stroker's use of Time in Dracula

In this essay, Poquette discusses Stoker's use of time in *Dracula*.

Right from the start, *Dracula* is a novel obsessed with time. Jonathan Harker's first journal entry notes, "Left Munich at 8:35 p.m. on 1st May, arriving at Vienna early next morning; should have arrived at 6:46, but train was an hour late." From this rather plain beginning, the reader is drawn into a suspenseful tale in which the clock starts to tick faster and faster as the fates of the characters are determined. However, Stoker is subtle in his use of time, so that the reader does not even realize that it, while not a main theme, gives the story its structure. This structure is organized in a way that increases the suspense and disorientation of the reader as the novel progresses.

Although Jonathan's diary starts out mundane, it quickly becomes terrifying. As he travels across the country to the castle, he notices the reaction of various area residents, who are frightened by the name of Dracula, and one woman even begs Harker not to go to Dracula's castle and gives Harker a cross. Harker is unnerved by these warnings but pushes on. Harker translates some of the language of the villagers, including *Satan*, *hell*, and other words that denote evil. These evil signs, which grow to include the inhuman activities of the count himself, help to polarize the plot, turning the story into a classic fight between good and evil. Both sides offer immortality, or timelessness, but there are strong differences between the two. The Christian version of immortality is endless time lived in spirit form. This eternal salvation is the goal of Christian religion, and good Christians will sacrifice anything to preserve this, even their lives, as the men risk their lives to try to save Mina's soul.

By chasing Dracula, the men risk being sentenced to an immortal life as a vampire. This immortality is endless time lived in physical form. Unlike Christian immortality, which is based upon the soul, eternal life as a vampire means living in a soulless body. When the men are called upon to kill the vampire Lucy, Van Helsing notes that they have saved her soul and released her from endless damnation. Van Helsing says, "For she is not a grinning devil now—not any more a foul Thing for all eternity. No longer is she the devil's Un-Dead. She is God's true dead, whose soul is with Him!"

Besides large-scale versions of time like heavenly immortality and eternal damnation as a vampire, Stoker also uses smaller, more contained images in his novel. For example, from the beginning, the story quickly organizes itself around a day-night pattern. Jonathan arrives at Castle Dracula during the night. However, while he was used to knowing the time down to the minute as he was traveling, times seems to float once he gets to Castle Dracula, where he only knows roughly what time it is. This sense of disorientation is increased by the fact that Dracula keeps Jonathan up all night talking, so that Jonathan will sleep during the day when Dracula sleeps. Jonathan says, "I had finished my meal—I do not know whether to call it breakfast or dinner, for it was between five and six o'clock when I had it." These inexact times are a far cry from the ultra precise times that Jonathan was used to on his trip and which he has come to rely on in his daily job as a solicitor, which requires a precise attention to details like time.

Because of this "strange night-existence," as Jonathan calls it, he starts to think that he might be losing his mind or hallucinating. Jonathan soon learns that Dracula leaves the castle on many nights, scaling the castle walls in the process. This makes Jonathan realize that he can use the daytimes to explore the castle for a way out. However, while exploring one afternoon, he becomes tired and falls asleep in a different part of the castle. When he wakes up, it is nighttime, a dangerous time for him in Dracula's castle. In fact, as one of the female vampires gets ready to bite him, Jonathan sits waiting, "with beating heart." However, Dracula saves Jonathan

from the women, at least temporarily, and Jonathan realizes that if he is going to plan an escape, it must be at a certain time, preferably in the morning when he has a whole day to climb down the castle wall and try to reach a city.

Just as the day and night system of time poses serious issues for Jonathan's safety while at Castle Dracula, time quickly becomes an issue for the others as soon as Dracula arrives in London. When Dracula starts to feed off Lucy, she becomes increasingly more weak and pale. Although Van Helsing and Seward try to ward off Dracula's advances, their efforts are thwarted. Finally, Van Helsing says that they are running out of time. "There is no time to be lost. She will die for sheer want of blood to keep the heart's action as it should be." Although it takes two more transfusions to help Lucy, she appears to be getting better. Lucy notes that she has gone several days without incident, which makes her think that she is in the clear: "Four days and nights of peace. I'm getting so strong again that I hardly know myself." However, despite all of these efforts, a telegram from Van Helsing telling Seward to watch after Lucy arrives late. This mistake proves to be nearly fatal, as Dracula sends a big wolf to break Lucy's window, which gives Lucy's mother a fatal heart attack and greatly weakens Lucy. As Seward notes, Van Helsing works frantically, trying to beat the clock and save Lucy's life: "I never saw in all my experience the Professor work in such deadly earnest. I knew—as he knew—that it was a stand-up fight with death."

However, Stoker's most spectacular use of time is the revelation that Mina has been half-transformed into a vampire, which sets off the final chain of events. Once they realize this, the men, who have already been rushing around to try to stop Dracula from converting London into a town full of vampires, realize that the stakes are even higher and the timeline is even shorter. The realization comes not when they burst in upon Mina, being forced to suck the vampire's blood but when Van Helsing's eucharist wafer burns Mina's forehead: "it had seared it.... My poor darling's brain told her the significance of the fact as quickly as her nerves received pain of it." Up until now, the men did not realize the severity of Mina's having been bitten and having the chance to turn into a vampire. However, since the holy symbol is burning her flesh, this is a sign that they are all running out of time. If Mina is not to become one of the immortal undead, they need to find Dracula and kill him. Van Helsing says of Dracula, "he can live for centuries, and you are but mortal woman. Time is now to be dreaded—since once he put that mark upon your throat."

This fact gives the men the motivation they need to chase Dracula from London to Transylvania, risking their own lives and salvation. However, they are aided in their quest, ironically, by time. Although Dracula has the power of immortality, he is limited in his movement during the day and must rely on the help of other, mortal men. Because of this fact, Dracula panics and takes the surest and safest way of passage out of London, by boat. However, this gives the vampire hunters a timely advantage, since they can reach their destination much faster by land and cut Dracula off before he reaches his castle. In addition, since Mina has always been obsessed with time in an effort to help Jonathan in his business, she has learned how to memorize train timetables, which comes in handy when trying to thwart Dracula. Mina says, "I knew that if anything were to take us to Castle Dracula we should go by Galatz, or at any rate through Bucharest, so I learned the times very carefully."

In the end, the battle between good and evil, spiritual immortality and eternal physical damnation, the vampire hunters and Dracula comes down to just a few moments of time. Mina notes that the capture of Dracula takes place near the end of the day, right before Dracula is about to be free of his daytime prison: "As I looked, the eyes saw the sinking sun, and the look of hate in them turned to triumph." However, time is ultimately on the hunters' side, since Jonathan lunges at Dracula just in time, his "great knife" decapitating Dracula. As Mina continues, she realizes that even Dracula was human once. With Jonathan's act, the human part of Dracula—which has lived an immortal physical damnation for hundreds of years—finally finds peace as his soul is delivered into spiritual eternity: "there was in the face a look of peace, such as I never could have imagined might have rested there."

Source: Ryan D. Poquette, Critical Essay on *Dracula*, in *Novels for Students*, Gale, 2003.
Poquette has a bachelor's degree in English and specializes in writing about literature.

Stoker, Bram

In the following essay, novelist and sociologist Stableford examines the history behind Stoker's novel.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* completed the set of three 19th-century horror stories which were to create modern myths in alliance with Hollywood. Like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* it owed its origin to a nightmare, but it took Stoker many years of research and forethought to get himself to the point of beginning an actual draft. Even then he encountered difficulties, eventually dropping the opening sequence that was later published separately as "Dracula's Guest." What remains is untidy, although the presentation of the story as a patchwork of documents helps to sustain the pretence that the untidiness is merely superficial. In fact, it could hardly be more deep-seated; the novel is shot through with loose ends, unsettled questions, inept transitions and dramatic changes of emphasis. Such conundrums and confusions are part of the book's very essence. Had Dracula not been such a changeable and paradoxical character he could not have been half so fascinating; nor could he have been qualified to become the central monster of 20th-century folklore, celebrated as much by humour as by horror schlock, and as often redeemed—at least in recent times—as re-damned.

Stoker borrowed some of the inspiration for *Dracula* from John Polidori's "The Vampyre" and J. Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla"—Stoker and Le Fanu were both graduates of Trinity College, Dublin—but when he went in search of an aristocratic model for the "king-vampire" of his nightmare he found a new one, as different from its predecessors as Carmilla Karnstein was from Lord Byron. This was the 15th-century Voivode Vlad Tepes, "the Impaler," who was also nicknamed Dragul ("Dragon" or "Devil"; Dracul in the Latinized version) but whose scribes often signed him Dragulya, meaning "son of Dragul," to distinguish him from his similarly-nicknamed father. In re-characterizing Dracula Stoker borrowed extensively but selectively from the rich Eastern European vampire folklore popularized by Dom Augustine Calmet. It was this carefully-processed research which produced the archetype of all modern literary vampires, determining their appearance, their abilities and their limitations (especially, of course, the fatal flaws which permit their destruction). Every modern vampire which violates this template does so consciously and deliberately; it cannot simply be ignored. No other novel of any kind has ever stamped out an image so firmly and so decisively.

Stoker's Dracula is supposed to be an incarnation of pure evil, but this role is confused even in the original text—a confusion which has paved the way for a vast range of calculated variations. In the dream which provided the seed from which the story grew the "king-vampire" appeared only at the end, interrupting the female vampires who posed a more immediate threat to the dreamer—as they do, in the text, to Jonathan Harker. Harker therefore owes his life to the creature he subsequently determines to destroy. The main threat which Dracula subsequently poses is that of conferring extraordinary sexual attractiveness and a kind of immortality on the novel's two main female characters, Lucy and Mina. Stoker dutifully declared such a fate to be far worse than death, but he must have known that it had already been viewed in a more ambiguous light in works by John Keats Théophile Gautier and others.

Like "Carmilla," *Dracula* is among the most strikingly erotic works published in Britain during the Victorian era, but if its conscientious representation of female "voluptuousness" and sexual appetite as a manifest disgrace is not consciously hypocritical it must surely be reckoned severely neurotic. Had such hypocrisies and neuroses died with Victoria Dracula would not have become so astonishingly promiscuous in his more recent seductions, but they did not—and all the heroic Draculas of the 20th-century *fin de siècle* have not yet succeeded in staking the unnaturally-beating hearts of those hypocrisies and neuroses, nor in reducing them to

ashen dust with bright Enlightenment.

Vlad Tepes, also known as Vlad the Impaler, *a fifteenth century Romanian ruler who was one of the inspirations for Stoker's Count Dracula*

Stoker had always suffered the effects of a morbid imagination and had made earlier efforts to turn its produce to useful effect. His collection of allegorical fairy tales *Under the Sunset*—which does not seem to the modern eye to be very suitable for children—includes such dark pieces as "The Invisible Giant," about the ravages of plague, and "How 7 Went Mad." When *Dracula* became a runaway bestseller Stoker tried to follow it up with something similar but he had no idea how he had worked the trick and his attempts to copy it ranged from the feeble to the fatuous. There is an element of supernatural horror in the treasure-hunt story *The Mystery of the Sea*, but it remains fugitive and the story itself fizzles out. *The Jewel of Seven Stars* employs the then-fashionable motif of a revivifiable mummy of a lovely but accursed Egyptian queen, but the action comes to an abrupt conclusion just as the story proper seems to be about to begin. The original ending was, in fact, so brutally opaque that another (perhaps by another hand) was substituted in later editions, but the revamped version fails dismally to save the plot from cringing self-destruction. *The Lady of the Shroud* is an old-fashioned political Gothic in which vampirism plays a very peripheral (and probably illusory) role.

The Lair of the White Worm is one of the most spectacularly incoherent novels ever to reach print; the only excuse for its existence one can suggest is that it must have been based on another actual nightmare, which the aging and ailing Stoker had not time to gather into an organized plot. On the other hand, its lurid portrayal of the *femme fatale's* doppelgänger as a great White Worm has offered intriguing fuel for thought to critics interested in sexual symbolism. The other short pieces collected in *Dracula's Guest* are not handicapped by Stoker's incapacity for organizing novel-length texts but they are mostly very weak. "The Judge's House" is a tolerable pastiche of Le Fanu and "The Secret of the Growing Gold" is effective even though the gold in question is only blonde hair, but the remainder are trivial. Attempts by Peter Haining and others to locate "lost" Stoker stories that had not been previously reprinted have produced nothing of any real interest.

At the end of the day, it seems as if the inspiration that led Bram Stoker to write *Dracula* was an unrepeatable accident of fate owing more to luck than judgment—but that should not detract from the credit due to its author. Nobody else ever wrote a book like *Dracula*, and it certainly has not been for want of trying.

Source: Brian Stableford, "Stoker, Bram," in *St. James Guide to Horror, Ghost & Gothic Writers,* edited by David Pringle, St. James Press, 1998, pp. 573-75.

Dracula: Novel by Bram Stoker, 1897

In the following essay, Stott discusses the decadent gothic genre and how the qualities of *Dracula* place the novel in that genre.

When Bram Stoker wrote *Dracula* in 1897 he was able to draw upon a century-long tradition of interest in vampirism, firmly associated with the exotic fantasies of romanticism and with the theme of seduction and evil. By 1913 the book was in its 10th edition. After its first stage production in 1930 the sales of the book doubled and by the 1930's the first vampire films began to emerge. With the extraordinary number of subsequent films produced this century, Dracula has become a 20th-century myth of unparalleled resonance.

Stoker's text has been the focus of renewed critical interest in the last few decades, as the subject of a plethora of critical readings and interpretations: Marxist, Freudian, feminist, and Darwinian. As fantasy, drawing on one of the most ancient Eastern European superstitions, it invites and stimulates such diverse and interesting speculations.

Those familiar with the film myth of Dracula are often surprised by the density and literary quality of Stoker's text. Film versions are rarely loyal to it to any degree. It insists, like so many fantastic texts, on its own authenticity. In the tradition of Wilkie Collins it claims authenticity by narrating events through the diaries and letters of the characters involved. But Stoker goes much further than Collins by mobilising almost any form of information: ship's logs translated from the original Russian, newspaper cuttings, doctors' reports, telegrams, memoranda, even transcribed verbal accounts from a phonograph.

The text needs contemporary testimony to provide a scientific account of the movements, habits, and history of the central threat of the novel— Dracula—and it relies on the constant production of such information. Van Helsing (a Dutch Catholic "scientist"), the principle vampire hunter, supported by his team of assistants—Seward (a medical man specialising in the treatment of the insane), Godalming (an aristocrat), Harker (a lawyer), and Quincey Morris (an American), insist on a flow of information within the band of hunters. "Good women tell all their lives," Van Helsing tells Mina. *Dracula* is a confessional novel: without confession there would be no text.

The central action of the novel is defensive. Dracula is planning to invade England, to create an empire of "semi-demons." Harker travels to Transylvania as lawyer to the Count and it is in this opening "gothic" section of the novel that we are first introduced to the vampire superstition and its Eastern European origins. The second section of the novel jolts us back to England and the domestic complacency of the central characters. In the background, unseen, Dracula is invading the country. Invasion stories of many kinds were reaching a peak around the turn of the century, exacerbated by real fears of political instability in Europe. *Dracula*, for all its gothic and fantastic characteristics, dramatises this fear.

Lucy Westenra, the innocent and beautiful young heroine, is the first victim of the invading Count. Van Helsing is brought in to study the strangely anaemic state of the fading heroine. With Mina Harker, the heroine with a "man's brain," the defenders band together to protect England from the advancing threat, now identified by Van Helsing as vampirism. They are too late to save Lucy despite a series of major blood transfusions from four men. Now dead, but Undead, she stalks Highgate cemetery preying on young children, and she must be staked in a violent and ritualistic ceremony which critics have identified as a kind of gang rape. The novel is packed with scenes of erotic power which have invited sexual readings in the late 20th century, but which went apparently unnoticed by the novel's 19th-century audience.

It has been observed that the vampire hunters not only doubt their own sanity (much of the novel takes place in a lunatic asylum) but actually mirror the sadism and violence of Dracula. The instability of narrators and

the problematising of vision are characteristics of fantastic literature from Poe onwards, as is the compulsion to exorcise the demonic "other": the Not-I. The band of vampire hunters enact many sadistic rituals, such as the staking of Lucy, in the name of the protection of the Empire.

Dracula is a novel which insists on protecting (and patrolling) women as much as it insists on patrolling the Empire. The men are forever placing protective circles of Holy Wafer and garlic flowers around the women. Dracula will invade through any gap. It is a novel which expresses fears of Dracula's effect upon women—their sexualisation. While the central threat of the novel is the seducing Dracula, the novel is populated with *female* vampires—four of the five central female characters are vampires. Dracula attacks only women.

The novel forms part of a late 19th-century genre which David Punter has identified as decadent gothic. The four great novels of this genre are Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Stoker's *Dracula* and Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. All these novels enact fears of regression and degeneration stimulated by the discoveries of evolutionary theory. All are concerned in some ways with "the liberation of repressed desires." Dracula can be seen as the beast within, so precariously contained. He must be tracked down and eliminated. While the novel moves towards his final elimination—he crumbles into dust once staked—the hunters do not observe the elaborate rituals of staking. The ending is ambiguous: Mina (who has herself sucked Dracula's blood) gives birth to a child on the anniversary of Dracula's death—a male child who bears the names of all the band of men involved in the tracking of Dracula. Moreover, the hunters are thrown back again on their own uncertainty. They are left with their only record of the dramatic events as a "mass of typewriting."

Source: Rebecca Stott, "*Dracula*: Novel by Bram Stoker, 1897," in *Reference Guide to English Literature*, 2d ed., edited by D. L. Kirkpatrick, Vol. 3, St. James Press, 1991, pp. 1554-55.

Dracula: The Unseen Face in the Mirror

In the following essay, Senf steps outside of the usual readings of *Dracula* as a battle between Good and Evil to explore the unreliability of the story's narrators and the moral ambiguity hidden in the tale.

> The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves, that we are underlings.
> *Julius Caesar*, I, ii, 134—135

Published in 1896, *Dracula* is an immensely popular novel which has never been out of print, has been translated into at least a dozen languages, and has been the subject of more films than any other novel. Only recently, however, have students of literature begun to take it seriously, partially because of the burgeoning interest in popular culture and partially because *Dracula* is a work which raises a number of troubling questions about ourselves and our society. Despite this growing interest in Bram Stoker's best-known novel, the majority of literary critics read *Dracula* as a popular myth about the opposition of Good and Evil without bothering to address more specifically literary matters such as style, characterization, and method of narration. This article, on the other hand, focuses on Stoker's narrative technique in general and specifically on his choice of unreliable narrators. As a result, my reading of *Dracula* is a departure from most standard interpretations in that it revolves, not around the conquest of Evil by Good, but on the similarities between the two.

More familiar with the numerous film interpretations than with Stoker's novel, most modern readers are likely to be surprised by *Dracula* and its intensely topical themes; and both the setting and the method of narration which Stoker chose contribute to this sense of immediacy. Instead of taking place in a remote Transylvanian castle or a timeless and dreamlike "anywhere," most of the action occurs in nineteenth-century London. Furthermore, Stoker de-emphasizes the novel's mythic qualities by telling the story through a series of journal

extracts, personal letters, and newspaper clippings—the very written record of everyday life. The narrative technique resembles a vast jigsaw puzzle of isolated and frequently trivial facts; and it is only when the novel is more than half over that the central characters piece these fragments together and, having concluded that Dracula is a threat to themselves and their society, band together to destroy him.

On the surface, the novel appears to be a mythic re-enactment of the opposition between Good and Evil because the narrators attribute their pursuit and ultimate defeat of Dracula to a high moral purpose. However, although his method of narration doesn't enable him to comment directly on his characters' failures in judgment or lack of self-knowledge, Stoker provides several clues to their unreliability and encourages the reader to see the frequent discrepancies between their professed beliefs and their actions. The first clue is an anonymous preface (unfortunately omitted in many modern editions) which gives the reader a distinct warning:

> How these papers have been placed in sequence will be made manifest in the reading of them. All needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of later-day belief may stand forth as simple fact. There is throughout no statement of past things wherein memory may err, for all the records chosen are exactly contemporary, *given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them.*

Writers of Victorian popular fiction frequently rely on the convention of the anonymous editor to introduce their tales and to provide additional comments throughout the text; and Stoker uses this convention to stress the subjective nature of the story which his narrators relate. The narrators themselves occasionally question the validity of their perceptions, but Stoker provides numerous additional clues to their unreliability. For example, at the conclusion, Jonathan Harker questions their interpretation of the events:

> We were stuck with the fact, that in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document; nothing but a mass of typewriting, except the later notebooks of Mina and Seward and myself, and Van Helsing's memorandum. We could hardly ask any one, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story.

The conclusion reinforces the subjective nature of their tale and casts doubts on everything that had preceded; however, because Stoker does not use an obvious framing device like Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* or James in *The Turn of the Screw* or employ an intrusive editor as Haggard does in *She* and because all the narrators come to similar conclusions about the nature of their opponent, the reader is likely to forget that these documents are subjective records, interpretations which are "given within the range of knowledge of those who made them."

While Stoker's choice of narrative technique does not permit him to comment directly on his characters, he suggests that they are particularly ill-equipped to judge the extraordinary events with which they are faced. The three central narrators are perfectly ordinary nineteenth-century Englishmen: the young lawyer Jonathan Harker, his wife Mina, and a youthful psychiatrist Dr. John Seward. Other characters who sometimes function as narrators include Dr. Van Helsing, Seward's former teacher; Quincy Morris, an American adventurer; Arthur Holmwood, a young English nobleman; and Lucy Westenra, Holmwood's fiancée. With the exception of Dr. Van Helsing, all the central characters are youthful and inexperienced—two dimensional characters whose only distinguishing characteristics are their names and their professions; and by maintaining a constancy of style throughout and emphasizing the beliefs which they hold in common, Stoker further diminishes any individualizing traits. The narrators appear to speak with one voice; and Stoker suggests that their opinions are perfectly acceptable so long as they remain within their limited fields of expertise. The problem, however, is that these perfectly ordinary people are confronted with the extraordinary character of Dracula.

Although Stoker did model Dracula on the historical Vlad V of Wallachia and the East European superstition of the vampire, he adds a number of humanizing touches to make Dracula appear noble and vulnerable as well as demonic and threatening; and it becomes difficult to determine whether he is a hideous bloodsucker whose touch breeds death or a lonely and silent figure who is hunted and persecuted. The difficulty in interpreting Dracula's character is compounded by the narrative technique, for the reader quickly recognizes that Dracula is *never* seen objectively and never permitted to speak for himself while his actions are recorded by people who have determined to destroy him and who, moreover, repeatedly question the sanity of their quest.

The question of sanity, which is so important in *Dracula*, provides another clue to the narrators' unreliability. More than half the novel takes place in or near Dr. Seward's London mental institution; and several of the characters are shown to be emotionally unstable: Renfield, one of Dr. Seward's patients, is an incarcerated madman who believes that he can achieve immortality by drinking the blood of insects and other small creatures; Jonathan Harker suffers a nervous breakdown after he escapes from Dracula's castle; and Lucy Westenra exhibits signs of schizophrenia, being a model of sweetness and conformity while she is awake but becoming sexually aggressive and demanding during her sleepwalking periods. More introspective than most of the other narrators, Dr. Seward occasionally refers to the questionable sanity of their mission, his diary entries mentioning his fears that they will all wake up in straitjackets. Furthermore, his entries on Renfield's condition indicate that he recognizes the narrow margin which separates sanity from insanity: "It is wonderful, however, what intellectual recuperative power lunatics have, for within a few minutes he stood up quite calmly and looked about him."

However, even if the reader chooses to ignore the question of the narrators' sanity, it is important to understand their reasons for wishing to destroy Dracula. They accuse him of murdering the crew of the *Demeter*, of killing Lucy Westenra and transforming her into a vampire, and of trying to do the same thing to Mina Harker. However, the log found on the dead body of the *Demeter*'s captain, which makes only a few ambiguous allusions to a fiend or monster, is hysterical and inconclusive. Recording this "evidence," Mina's journal asserts that the verdict of the inquest was open-ended: "There is no evidence to adduce; and whether or not the man [the ship's captain] committed the murders there is now none to say." Lucy's death might just as easily be attributed to the blood transfusions (still a dangerous procedure at the time Stoker wrote *Dracula*) to which Dr. Van Helsing subjects her; and Mina acknowledges her complicity in the affair with Dracula by admitting that she did not want to prevent his advances. Finally, even if Dracula is responsible for all the Evil of which he is accused, he is tried, convicted, and sentenced by men (including two lawyers) who give him no opportunity to explain his actions and who repeatedly violate the laws which they profess to be defending: they avoid an inquest of Lucy's death, break into her tomb and desecrate her body, break into Dracula's houses, frequently resort to bribery and coercion to avoid legal involvement, and openly admit that they are responsible for the deaths of five alleged vampires. While it can be argued that *Dracula* is a fantasy and therefore not subject to the laws of verisimilitude, Stoker uses the flimsiness of such "evidence" to focus on the contrast between the narrators' rigorous moral arguments and their all-too-pragmatic methods.

In fact, Stoker reveals that what condemns Dracula are the English characters' subjective responses to his character and to the way of life which he represents. The reader is introduced to Dracula by Jonathan Harker's journal. His first realization that Dracula is different from himself occurs when he looks into the mirror and discovers that Dracula casts no reflection:

> This time there could be no error, for the man was close to me, and I could see him over my shoulder. But there was no reflection of him in the mirror! The whole room behind me was displayed; but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself. This was startling, and, coming on the top of so many strange things, was beginning to increase that vague sense of uneasiness which I always have when the Count is near.

The fact that vampires cast no reflection is part of the iconography of the vampire in East European folklore, but Stoker translates the superstitious belief that creatures without souls have no reflection into a metaphor by which he can illustrate his characters' lack of moral vision. Harker's inability to "see" Dracula is a manifestation of moral blindness which reveals his insensitivity to others and (as will become evident later) his inability to perceive certain traits within himself.

Even before Harker begins to suspect that Dracula is a being totally unlike himself, Stoker reveals that he is troubled by everything that Dracula represents. While journeying from London to Transylvania, Harker muses on the quaint customs which he encounters; and he notes in his journal that he must question his host about them. Stoker uses Harker's perplexity to establish his character as a very parochial Englishman whose apparent curiosity is not a desire for understanding, but a need to have his preconceptions confirmed. However, instead of finding someone like himself at the end of his journey, a person who can provide a rational explanation for these examples of non-English behavior, Harker discovers a ruined castle, itself a memento of bygone ages, and a man who, reminding him that Transylvania is not England, prides himself on being an integral part of his nation's heroic past:

> . . . the Szekleys—and the Dracula as their heart's blood, their brains and their swords—can boast a record that mushroom growths like the Hapsburgs and the Romanoffs can never reach. The warlike days are over. Blood is too precious a thing in these days of dishonourable peace; and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told.

To Harker, Dracula initially appears to be an anachronism—an embodiment of the feudal past—rather than an innately evil being; and his journal entries at the beginning merely reproduce Dracula's pride and rugged individualism:

> Here I am noble; I am *boyar*; the common people know me, and I am master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not—and to know not is to care not for ... I have been so long master that I would be master still—or at least that none other should be master of me.

It is only when Harker realizes that he is assisting to take this anachronism to England that he becomes frightened.

Harker's later response indicates that he fears a kind of reverse imperialism, the threat of the primitive trying to colonize the civilized world, while the reader sees in his response a profound resemblance between Harker and Dracula:

> This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where perhaps for centuries to come he might . . . satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. The very thought drove me mad. A terrible desire came upon me to rid the world of such a monster. There was no lethal weapon at hand, but I seized a shovel which the workmen had been using to fill the cases, and lifting it high, struck, with the edge downward, at the hateful face.

This scene reinforces Harker's earlier inability to see Dracula in the mirror. Taken out of context, it would be difficult to distinguish the man from the monster. Behavior generally attributed to the vampire—the habit of attacking a sleeping victim, violence, and irrational behavior—is revealed to be the behavior of the civilized Englishman also. The sole difference is that Stoker's narrative technique does not permit the reader to enter Dracula's thoughts as he stands over his victims. The reversal of roles here is important because it establishes the subjective nature of the narrators' beliefs, suggests their lack of self-knowledge, and serves to focus on the similarities between the narrators and their opponent. Later in the novel, Mina Harker provides the following

analysis of Dracula which ironically also describes the single-mindedness of his pursuers:

> The Count is a criminal and of criminal type ... and *qua* criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind. Thus, in a difficulty he has to seek resource in habit . . . Then, as he is criminal he is selfish; and as his intellect is small and his action is based on selfishness, he confines himself to one purpose.

Both Mina and Jonathan can justify their pursuit of Dracula by labeling him a murderer; and Mina adds intellectual frailty to his alleged sins. However, the narrators show themselves to be equally bound by habit and equally incapable of evaluating situations which are beyond their limited spheres of expertise. In fact, Stoker implies that the only difference between Dracula and his opponents is the narrators' ability to state individual desire in terms of what they believe is a common good. For example, the above scene shows that Harker can justify his violent attack on Dracula because he pictures himself as the protector of helpless millions; and the narrators insist on the duty to defend the innocents.

The necessity of protecting the innocent is called into question, however, when Dr. Van Helsing informs the other characters about the vampire's nature. While most of his discussion concerns the vampire's susceptibility to garlic, silver bullets, and religious artifacts, Van Helsing also admits that the vampire cannot enter a dwelling unless he is first invited by one of the inhabitants. In other words, a vampire cannot influence a human being without that person's consent. Dracula's behavior confirms that he is an internal, not an external, threat. Although perfectly capable of using superior strength when he must defend himself, he usually employs seduction, relying on the others' desires to emulate his freedom from external constraints: Renfield's desire for immortality, Lucy's wish to escape the repressive existence of an upper-class woman, and the desires of all the characters to overcome the restraints placed on them by their religion and their law. As the spokesman for civilization, Van Helsing appears to understand that the others might be tempted by their desires to become like Dracula and he warns them against the temptation:

> But to fail here, is not mere life or death. It is that we become as him; that we henceforward become foul things of the night like him—without heart or conscience, preying on the bodies and the souls of those we love best.

Becoming like Dracula, they too would be laws unto themselves—primitive, violent, irrational—with nothing to justify their actions except the force of their desires. No longer would they need to rationalize their "preying on the bodies and souls of their loved ones" by concealing their lust for power under the rubric of religion, their love of violence under the names of imperialism and progress, their sexual desires within an elaborate courtship ritual.

The narrators attribute their hatred of Dracula to a variety of causes. Harker's journal introduces a being whose way of life is antithetical to theirs—a warlord, a representative of the feudal past and the leader of a primitive cult who he fears will attempt to establish a vampire colony in England. Mina Harker views him as a criminal and as the murderer of her best friend; and Van Helsing sees him as a moral threat, a kind of Anti-Christ. Yet, in spite of the narrators' moral and political language, Stoker reveals that Dracula is primarily a sexual threat, a missionary of desire whose only true kingdom will be the human body. Although he flaunts his independence of social restraints and proclaims himself a master over all he sees, Dracula adheres more closely to English law than his opponents in every area except his sexual behavior. (In fact, Dracula admits to Harker that he invited him to Transylvania so he could learn the subtle nuances of English law and business.) Neither a thief, rapist, nor an overtly political threat, Dracula is dangerous because he expresses his contempt for authority in the most individualistic of ways—through his sexuality. In fact, his thirst for blood and the manner in which he satisfies this thirst can be interpreted as sexual desire which fails to observe any of society's attempts to control it—prohibitions against polygamy, promiscuity, and homosexuality. Furthermore, Stoker suggests that it is generally through sexuality that the vampire gains

control over human beings. Van Helsing recognizes this temptation when he prevents Arthur from kissing Lucy right before her death; and even the staid and morally upright Harker momentarily succumbs to the sensuality of the three vampire-women in Dracula's castle:

> I felt in my heart a wicked burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. It is not good to note this down, lest some day it should meet Mina's eyes and cause her pain; but it is the truth.

For one brief moment, Harker does appear to recognize the truth about sexual desire; it is totally irrational and has nothing to do with monogamy, love, or even respect for the beloved. It is Dracula, however, who clearly articulates the characters' most intense fears of sexuality: "Your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine—my creatures, to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed." Implicit in Dracula's warning is the similarity between vampire and opponents. Despite rare moments of comprehension, however, the narrators generally choose to ignore this similarity; and their lack of self-knowledge permits them to hunt down and kill not only Dracula and the three women in his castle, but their friend Lucy Westenra as well.

The scene in which Arthur drives the stake through Lucy's body while the other men watch thoughtfully is filled with a violent sexuality which again connects vampire and opponents:

> But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it. His face was set, and high duty seemed to shine through it; the sight of it gave us courage so that our voices seemed to ring through the vault ... There in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing that we had dreaded and grown to hate that the work of her destruction was yielded as a privilege to the one best entitled to it, but Lucy as we had seen her in life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity.

Despite Seward's elevated moral language, the scene resembles nothing so much as the combined group rape and murder of an unconscious woman; and this kind of violent attack on a helpless victim is precisely the kind of behavior which condemns Dracula in the narrators' eyes. Moreover, Lucy is not the only woman to be subjected to this violence. At the conclusion, in a scene which is only slightly less explicit, Dr. Van Helsing destroys the three women in Dracula's castle. Again Dr. Van Helsing admits that he is fascinated by the beautiful visages of the "wanton Un-Dead" but he never acknowledges that his violent attack is simply a role reversal or that he becomes the vampire as he stands over their unconscious bodies.

By the conclusion of the novel, all the characters who have been accused of expressing individual desire have been appropriately punished: Dracula, Lucy Westenra, and the three vampire-women have been killed; and even Mina Harker is ostracized for her momentary indiscretion. All that remains after the primitive, the passionate, and the individualistic qualities that were associated with the vampire have been destroyed is a small group of wealthy men who return after a period of one year to the site of their victory over the vampire. The surviving characters remain unchanged by the events in their lives and never come to the realization that their commitment to social values merely masks their violence and their sexuality; and the only significant difference in their condition is the birth of the Harkers' son who is appropriately named for all the men who had participated in the conquest of Dracula. Individual sexual desire has apparently been so absolutely effaced that the narrators see this child as the result of their social union rather than the product of a sexual union between one man and one woman.

The narrators insist that they are agents of God and are able to ignore their similarity to the vampire because their commitment to social values such as monogamy, proper English behavior, and the will of the majority enables them to conceal their violence and their sexual desires from each other and even from themselves.

Stoker, however, reveals that these characteristics are merely masked by social convention. Instead of being eliminated, violence and sexuality emerge in particularly perverted forms.

Recently uncovered evidence suggests that Bram Stoker may have had very personal reasons for his preoccupation with repression and sexuality. In his biography of his great-uncle, Daniel Farson explains that, while the cause of Stoker's death is usually given as exhaustion, Stoker actually died of tertiary syphillis, exhaustion being one of the final stages of that disease. Farson also adds that Stoker's problematic relationship with his wife may have been responsible:

> When his wife's frigidity drove him to other women, probably prostitutes among them, Bram's writing showed signs of guilt and sexual frustration ... He probably caught syphilis around the turn of the century, possibly as early as the year of Dracula, 1896. (It usually takes ten to fifteen years before it kills.) By 1897 it seems that he had been celibate for more than twenty years, as far as Florence [his wife] was concerned.

Poignantly aware from his own experience that the face of the vampire is the hidden side of the human character, Stoker creates unreliable narrators to tell a tale, not of the overcoming of Evil by Good, but of the similarities between the two. *Dracula* reveals the unseen face in the mirror; and Stoker's message is similar to the passage from *Julius Caesar* which prefaces this article and might be paraphrased in the following manner: "The fault, dear reader, is not in our external enemies, but in ourselves."

Source: Carol A. Senf, "*Dracula*: The Unseen Face in the Mirror," in *Journal of Narrative Technique*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Fall 1979, pp. 160-70.

Dracula: Bram Stoker's Spoiled Masterpiece

In the following essay, MacGillivray exposes weakness in Stoker's characterization in *Dracula* but maintains nevertheless that the work has serious literary merit.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* has never been much praised for its literary merits. Yet this horror novel, first published in May 1897, survives today, after more than seventy years of popularity, as one of the little group of English language books from the nineties still read by more than scholars. Because of the succession of horror films based on it, whether *Dracula* would have achieved this success solely through its intrinsic merits is uncertain. Certainly without the films it is hard to believe that Dracula would be one of the few proper names from novels to have become a household word, known even to people who have never heard of the novel. Stoker created a myth comparable in vitality to that of the Wandering Jew, Faust, or Don Juan. This myth has not, so far, been crowned with respectability by its use in great literature, yet is it too much to suggest that in time even that may be achieved? Such a myth lives not merely because it has been skillfully marketed by entrepreneurs but because it expresses something that large numbers of people feel to be true about their own lives.

In the following pages I want to examine *Dracula* with more attention than is usually given to it. Since the novel will probably have readers for many years to come, it is best that it be read with understanding. This understanding can be best achieved by scholarly debate, to which the following is a contribution. While the idea of scholarly study of a horror novel may initially seem ridiculous, I think I can show that *Dracula* is substantial enough to deserve the attention of scholars. Even if the novel should seem to most others less impressive than it has seemed to me after a number of readings, I suggest that the historian and sociologist will find it worthwhile to pay attention to the contents of a novel that has been so influential in our century.

As the original Dracula story of Stoker's novel has been distorted by the Dracula films deriving from it and is known in variant forms to readers who have never read the novel, it is perhaps useful to establish common ground by giving an outline of the plot.

As the novel opens, Jonathan Harker, a young English lawyer, is travelling in Transylvania and enjoying himself as the scenes about him grow ever wilder and stranger. His destination is the castle where Count Dracula, who is the client of Harker's superior, has requested his attendance on matters of business. When Harker reaches the castle, the count, a tall old man, welcomes him warmly, but Harker soon finds that he is a prisoner and that the count is a vampire or an evil spirit of some undefined kind. Stoker is very painstaking in instructing his readers about vampires, which were not as familiar to Victorian readers as they became to later generations, and it is not clear whether Harker as yet knew enough about them to identify the count as one. We only know that he manages, through horrified observation, to put together a reasonably complete picture of Dracula's way of life. Dracula is planning to emigrate to England and needs Harker to improve his knowledge of the life and language of England. At last Dracula sets off for England with fifty large boxes of earth from the castle chapel; these will serve as the graves which he needs for his resting places. Harker is left behind in the castle to be the victim of three female vampires. We are not told precisely how Harker escapes—Stoker has a sure sense of the advantages of *not* telling his readers everything they want to know—but apparently he carries out his intention of climbing down the castle wall. After a spell of hospitalization in Budapest for brain fever, the result of his ordeal, he arrives safely back to England.

There the threat posed by Dracula calls into existence a band determined to outwit him: Harker and his newly married wife; Dr. Seward, a psychiatrist and head of a private lunatic asylum; Arthur Holm-wood who becomes Lord Godalming in the course of the novel; Quincey Morris, an adventuresome American of the Teddy Roosevelt sort; and a celebrated Dutch scientist and physician, Seward's old teacher Abraham Van Helsing. Under the guidance of Van Helsing, they track down as many as they can find of Dracula's lairs, the boxes of earth, and make them uninhabitable for him by placing in them pieces of the consecrated wafer of the Eucharist. Reduced at last to the refuge of a single box, Dracula flees back to the continent. The pursuers follow, and in a dramatic scene on the snow before the castle, just as the sun is about to set and so give the vampire the supernatural powers that will enable him to kill or elude his pursuers, he is destroyed in the prescribed manner, by the piercing of his heart and the severing of his head.

Stoker, who sets his narrative uncompromisingly in the framework of the technologically advanced and modern-minded Victorian civilization, weaves into it the commonplace details of everyday life precisely where we expect them least. It is absurd, and yet convincing, to find that Dracula has a sizeable library in his vampire castle, from which he has been quarrying information about the customs, laws, and so forth of England. Coming into the room one evening, Harker finds him lying on a sofa reading Bradshaw's railway guide. In the castle, where no servants are ever seen, Harker glimpses Dracula making Harker's bed and setting his table. As we read of the meals which Harker was served ("an excellent roast chicken," "an excellent supper") we wonder, as Stoker probably intends we should, whether Dracula also did the cooking. It is touching that when the pursuers break into the house Dracula has bought in Piccadilly they find his clothes brush and brush and comb there—necessary implements, it seems, even for someone who lives in a coffin. While they wait at his house, Mrs. Harker, with pleasing impudence, sends them a telegram there to warn them that Dracula may be approaching. When Dracula, intent upon fleeing from England, meets a sea captain to commission him to ship his one remaining box of earth out of the country—the captain of course does not know that the stranger who is addressing him is a vampire and will be hiding in the box—Dracula is seen to be wearing a straw hat, which, as Van Helsing remarks in his imperfect English, "suit not him or the time." Perhaps this element of the incongruous in the novel is intended only as a gentle form of self-parody, or of mockery at tales of the supernatural. I think, however, that it plays a rather more important role than this. We live daily, Stoker seems to say, with the incongruous, with the ironies, contradictions, and wild absurdities of life. We have no reason then to be surprised if the most preposterous events should come upon us at the very moment when life seems most sober, rational, and humdrum.

Stoker created in Dracula a towering figure who dominates the novel and appears utterly convincing. It was unfortunate for Stoker that he did not live early enough to write his novel at the beginning rather than the end of the nineteenth century. Had Dracula come to literary life in the age of Romanticism and the Gothic novel, one imagines that he would have been received rapturously into the literary tradition of western Europe instead of being sternly restricted, as he has been, to the popular imagination. In view of the extraordinary pains Stoker took to make the geographical and social background of the novel as accurate as possible—his description of Whitby, where Dracula landed in England in the midst of an immense storm, is a reliable guide for tourists today—it is not surprising to find that he selected for his vampire a real historical figure, Vlad the Impaler, also known as Dracula, who was voivode or prince of Wallachia from 1456 to 1462, and again in 1476. In real life Dracula was known for his horrifying cruelty, but Stoker, who wanted a monster that his readers could both shudder at and identify with, omits all mention of the dark side of his reputation and emphasizes his greatness as a warrior chieftain. As Dracula entertains young Harker in his castle, he cannot refrain from reminiscing about the campaigns in which he took part. Though he pretends to be merely talking about the history of his part of Europe and conceals all personal involvement, a telltale sign appears: "In his speaking of things and people, and especially of battles," Harker notes, "he spoke as if he had been present at them all." When Van Helsing has had a Budapest correspondent make enquiries into the identity of the historical figure whose living corpse they are pursuing, he is able to report:

> He must, indeed, have been that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk, over the great river on the very frontier of Turkey-land. If it be so, then was he no common man; for in that time, and for centuries after, he was spoken of as the cleverest and the most cunning, as well as the bravest of the sons of the "land beyond the forest." That mighty brain and that iron resolution went with him to his grave, and are even now arrayed against us. The Draculas were ... a great and noble race, though now and again [there] were scions who were held by their coevals to have had dealings with the Evil One. They learned his secrets in the Scholomance, amongst the mountains over Lake Hermanstadt, where the devil claims the tenth scholar as his due. In the records are such words as "stregoica"—witch, "ordog," and "pokol"—Satan and hell; and in one manuscript this very Dracula is spoken of as "wampyr," which we all understand too well. There have been from the loins of this very one great men and good women, and their graves make sacred the earth where alone this foulness can dwell. For it is not the least of its terrors that this evil thing is rooted deep in all good; in soil barren of holy memories it cannot rest.

Fixing himself on this biographical basis, Stoker gives his vampire story an unexpected and, in view of later exploitations of the Dracula theme in films, a remarkably sophisticated psychological interest, and even a degree of pathos. Anyone who compares Stoker's portrait of Dracula with the lore that Montague Summers has collected in his two volumes on vampires will find that Dracula, a polished and eloquent gentleman as well as a wily antagonist, is untypical. In their non-fictional existence, as described by tradition, vampires tend, it seems, to be squalid and animal-like. But for the superiority of Dracula there is a reason beyond that of his superiority in life. Dracula, we are led to believe, has been slowly recovering his faculties since the time of his death, when they were partly destroyed. While the execution of his elaborate project for transferring himself to England, where multitudes exist to be his prey, is the highest achievement that his process of self-development has yet yielded, there are possibilities that if he survives he will become more dangerous still. "What more may he not do," Van Helsing asks, "when the greater world of thought is open to him?" Dracula's power to grow intellectually is, however, barren. No matter what he grows into, he must remain painfully and utterly separated from the surrounding world of men and all its values.

Dracula, though at a lower level of literary achievement, is—like *Steppenwolf*, *L'Etranger*, and *La Chute*, a novel of alienation. The depiction of Dracula as an alienated figure derives from the traditional vampire legends, the Gothic novels, and the idea of the romantic hero, as well as from Stoker's psychological acumen. 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." This touching sentimentality, which masks the fact that he wants to be among these people to prey on them, also masks his defeat. Though he has retained and recovered some human characteristics, he can no more share the people's "whirl and rush" and life and change than he can ever see again the armies he commanded so long ago. Dracula's disastrous expedition to England can even be seen as unconsciously suicidal, as his attempt to extinguish his anguish in a lasting death.

Besides being an alienated figure, Dracula is, as Maurice Richardson has said in his remarks on the novel, "a father-figure." The theme of Dracula as a father figure is less overt than the theme of alienation, and one feels that in inserting it in the novel Stoker was not fully conscious of his own feelings. Dracula is the patriarch of his castle, for as a little sifting of the evidence will show, the three female vampires who share it with him are his wife and two daughters, perhaps by another marriage, or his wife and two sisters. Rather more importantly for the emotional undercurrents of the novel, Dracula even aspires to be, in a sense, the father of the band that is pursuing him. Because he intends, as he tells them, to turn them all into vampires, he will be their creator and therefore "father."

This only means that they will become a different kind of "family": as a little examination will show, they are already a "family." They even participate in a kind of group marriage—one is tempted to say a kind of group sex—when four of them give blood by transfusion from their own veins to Dracula' s victim Lucy Westenra. The significance of the blood transfusion is pointed out for any reader who might have missed it when Arthur, who mistakenly supposes that he alone has given blood to Lucy, speculates that the blood transfusion has made Lucy his wife in the sight of God. Somewhat ludicrously, no fewer than three of them had previously proposed to Lucy all in one day. At the end of the novel this closely knit band of pursuers even manages to produce a baby in the form of the Harkers' child Quincey, whose "bundles of names" we are told, "links all our little band of men together." Van Helsing, the guide of this family, is, Richardson says, a good father figure. While Van Helsing actually seems more a kindly elder brother than a father, his nearness to the father role is one of the things that make him faintly resemble Dracula and thus tinge him slightly with moral ambiguity. (Perhaps the reason why he is so thin as a character is that too much of him consists of materials left over from creating the vast figure of Dracula.)

The theme of Dracula as father figure gains psychological interest from the framework of references to the death or murder of parents in which it is inserted. One of Dracula's earliest victims in the novel is a mother who comes to the castle to demand the return of her abducted child. In a horrifying scene which Harker watches from a castle window she is torn to pieces by the wolves who are at Dracula's call. An old man, another father figure, is found dead with a broken neck in the churchyard at Whitby shortly after Dracula's landing at that port. Then there are the deaths from natural causes of Arthur Holmwood's father; of Harker's employer and patron, who had been a father to him and to Mrs. Harker; and of the mother of Lucy Westenra. It is suggestive of the emotional significance the patricide theme seems to have had for Stoker that the last three of these deaths are incidental to his narrative, which would be improved by their omission. Even Quincey Morris, who is killed at the end of the novel in the final struggle against the vampire, becomes a retrospective father when the Harkers' baby, Quincey, is born on the anniversary of his death and perpetuates his name.

The counterpart to this theme of parricide is the theme of the murder of children by their parents. Stoker introduces anecdotally the story of a hunchbacked son who committed suicide in revenge for his mother's hatred. We are led to believe that the mother of Lucy Westenra was partly responsible for her daughter's death by failing to follow the instructions laid down by Van Helsing for Lucy's protection from the vampire. Dracula himself appears in the role of murderous parent: to turn people into vampires, in effect to make them his children, he must first kill them. In a dialogue with overtones of incest, it is hinted that Dracula, in accordance with the rule that vampires begin their careers by preying first on their nearest kin, has made his

daughters or sisters into vampires. The sequence of birth and infanticide is represented by the scene in the castle in which Dracula, who has been out hunting, produces a child from a sack and hands it over to the female vampires to be their victim.

The theme of parent-child conflict reaches its culmination at the end of the novel with the destruction of Dracula himself at the hands of his intended children, his pursuers. As Richardson reminds us, what Stoker has described is similar to the destruction of the father of the primal horde by his offspring as imagined by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*.

A recent biography of Stoker is called *A Biography of Dracula: The Life Story of Bram Stoker*, but the book does not try to substantiate the claim of its title about the connection between Stoker and Dracula. When I suggest that there is indeed reason to suppose that Dracula was partly based on Stoker, I am not attacking Stoker's character. The popularity of the Dracula myth in this century suggests that many persons find a resemblance between themselves and Dracula and between themselves and vampires in general. It is hard not to suggest that vampire stories, including *Dracula*, reflect, in a sensationalized but recognizable form, the truth that the close association of any two persons is almost certain to involve, however faintly, some "vampirish" exploitation, be it economic, intellectual, or emotional, of one of them by the other.

Who was Bram Stoker? He was born in Ireland in 1847, and began his career by following his father into the Irish civil service. Some years later he gave up his civil service employment to migrate to England as the acting-manager of the great actor, Henry (later Sir Henry) Irving. Meanwhile, he had dabbled in journalism and unpaid dramatic criticism and laboured on his first book, a legal manual on the duties of clerks of petty sessions in Ireland. For well over a quarter of a century he served Irving diligently. Besides managing the actor's London theatre, he accompanied him on a number of American tours. He also found time, despite the heavy duties of his position, to write novels and short stories and to qualify as a barrister. Though hampered by ill-health, he wrote industriously in the years after Irving's death, urged on now by the need to earn a living by his pen. His two volume *Personal Reminiscences of Irving*, a product of this period, is still well known. When he died in 1912, six years after Irving, it was an indication of his extraordinary exertions that the word "Exhaustion" appeared on his death certificate.

Described in *A Biography of Dracula* as a "genial, red-bearded giant," Stoker seems to have been the very reverse of sinister or exotic. At least one of the writers on Stoker has suggested that there is a surprising contrast between this paragon of Victorian manhood and normality and *Dracula*, with its concentration on morbid subjects. One can see, however, certain parallels between Stoker's life and the fictional Dracula's which must have assisted him in creating his hero-villain. After a sickly childhood in which he was unable to leave his bed and stand on his own feet until he was in his eighth year, Stoker became a champion athlete at Trinity College, Dublin, and grew to the size that made his biographer call him a "giant." In his own development Stoker must have found clues for his depiction of Dracula as someone who developed in the tomb, slowly groping his way toward the full mastery of the possibilities open to him. Similarly, Stoker's migration from Dublin, where he must have felt isolated with his youthful literary ambitions, to London, the intellectual capital of the British Isles and the hub of a vast empire, parallels Dracula's migration from his thinly populated Transylvanian feeding-grounds to the same city and its teeming human life. In his isolation in Dublin and in his later role as an Irishman in England, Stoker must have picked up clues for his depiction of Dracula as an alienated figure. Even the cumbersome train of baggage that Irving and his acting company carried with them as they toured the provinces and America may have been in his mind when he described Dracula's movements with his boxes of earth.

One of the defects of the novel is the Victorian emotionalism which occasionally makes the modern reader wince. A far graver defect, however, is its weakness of characterization, a rule whose only exception is the magnificent and convincing figure of Dracula. This weakness is especially evident in all six of the little band of heroes pursuing Dracula. Harker is the most convincing, principally because Stoker has not tried to give

him a distinct character but has been content to let him be a transparent object through which events are viewed. Part of the reason why the first fifty or sixty pages of the novel, which deal with Harker's experiences in Transylvania, are so much better than the remainder of the work is that no characters but the superior Dracula and Harker appear in them, except briefly. After these first pages, in which he is introduced in great detail, Dracula is removed almost completely from the direct view of the reader. In this way Stoker maintains in the reader a sense of the ominous—not, be it noted, a sense of the mysterious, which is little awakened because the approach which the heroes of the novel take to the reemergence of vampires in modern society is severely practical and rationalistic—but he deprives himself of the full use of his strongest creation.

The only character in the novel who comes close to being boring is, oddly enough, slightly better developed than most of Stoker's characters. This is Renfield, the zoophagous patient in Dr. Seward's lunatic asylum. Renfield's repulsive desire to eat flies, birds, and other small living creatures, and all the other details of his malady and daily life are described with surprising relentlessness. Eventually he is allowed to play a feeble part in the action by admitting Dracula into the asylum when his prospective victim, Mrs. Harker, is visiting there; according to the rules which tradition tells us govern a vampire's actions, he cannot enter a house until one of its occupants has admitted him, but thereafter he can come and go as he pleases. As Stoker is a story teller par excellence, it is strange that he does not enliven the sections which deal with Renfield by including more action, perhaps in the form of a subplot based on Renfield's past life. But if the treatment of Renfield is unsuccessful, that is not because he is irrelevant to the novel. I suggest we should regard him as a good idea which does not quite succeed. His simplest function is to tie together disparate parts of the narrative through his presence. Stoker may also have felt the need of a sluggishly unfolding account of Renfield to contrast with the usual swift pace of his narrative. But most importantly, Renfield joins Dracula and his pursuers in a triangular relationship in which he heightens our awareness of their character and position.

As we seek to define the most important role he plays in this relationship, it becomes evident that he is the sad anti-Dracula of the novel. Along with his desire to feed on living things, he has dim hopes of becoming a vampire. Meanwhile, his madness and his prison walls confine him as much as Dracula is confined by his alienation and the rules that restrict the actions of a vampire. We are constantly aware of Renfield's exclusion from the band of pursuers and thus see in him an echo of Dracula's alienation. In the same way, it may be mentioned in passing, Dracula's alienation is mocked by the clubbiness and family feeling of the pursuers. The anti-Dracula may at the same time be seen as a participant in a parent-son conflict of unusual sterility. He plays the role of son and Dr. Seward of father, but the age relationship of father and son is reversed, with the doctor being younger than his "son." In this way, just as Dracula is a kind of super-father, Renfield is a father broken and made harmless—so much reduced from his rightful fatherhood that when he is murdered by Dracula it is hard to be sure whether we are even entitled to count him as another of Stoker's murdered parents. Since the quest of the vampires for blood seems often to be in some undefined way a sexual quest, it is tempting to see Renfield, the would-be vampire, as suffering from sexual frustration, and it is not only tempting but plausible to suggest that sexual frustration was one of the elements that Stoker drew on in creating him.

Dracula is a thoroughly unpolitical novel. This statement is true both in the sense that Dracula ignores the party issues of the day and in the more general sense that it ignores the strains of the class society of late Victorian England. To the historically minded, however, it is interesting for its expression of certain attitudes belonging to Stoker's part of the Victorian period, and for its anticipations of the intellectual climate of our century. The alienation theme in the novel is especially relevant to the twentieth century—indeed, is brought out in the novel with a sharpness which seems almost anachronistic and which deserves close examination by the historians of the development of the English novel—but the novel expresses also the disquiet of many Victorian intellectuals about the atomizing and dehumanizing effects of their own time. While the novel's parent-child conflicts are presumably rooted in Stoker's private feelings, one can see interesting parallels with the twentieth-century revolt against the Victorian father and the whole Victorian heritage as expressed, for instance, in Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* and Gosse's *Father and Son*. The novel also reflects the foreboding

with which some Victorians faced the new century. Surely some ill-fortune would take away the good things which had been so unstintingly poured upon Victorian England? Dracula may have partially symbolized for contemporaries this nameless threat. The vampire theme has special relevance, too, to the Victorian problem of loss of faith. The abandonment of traditional Christianity reopened the whole question of what becomes of a person after death. In our time *Dracula* probably gains part of its impact from the intense fears which have clustered, more in this century than in any other, about the problem of growing old, a problem which vampires, who are capable of living forever, have solved.

But of all that is historically interesting in *Dracula*, nothing is more curious than its combination of the Victorian preoccupation with death and an almost twentieth-century preoccupation with sex. This combination is found, for example, in the hunting activities of the vampires, who belong to the dead but pursue the living in what often seems to be a spirit of blatant sexuality, and in the destruction of beautiful female vampires by driving stakes through their hearts as they sleep in their tombs.

I must not allow my remarks on the faults of this novel to conceal the remarkable skill with which it is written. It is hard to believe that anyone who has observed the power Stoker shows in *Dracula* of setting a scene and developing its action with a maximum of conciseness and vividness could dismiss him as a mere writer of thrillers. It is even harder to believe that anyone who has examined this novel's extraordinary richness of detail and Stoker's ability to subordinate this richness to a severely disciplined plot could regard him as deficient in inventiveness, intellectual power, or a sense of literary design. The long passage I quoted earlier shows that his language rises at times to a kind of poetry. Had stoker been able to overcome the single problem of his weakness in characterization, there is no reason why *Dracula* should not have been one of the minor masterpieces of English fiction. Even in its imperfect form it deserves to be known to scholars as more than a source of sensational films.

Source: Royce MacGillivray, "*Dracula*: Bram Stoker's Spoiled Masterpiece," in *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. 79, No. 4, Winter 1972, pp. 518-27.

Compare and Contrast

1890s: In the Victorian Age in England, attitudes towards sex are extremely repressed and private. However, in reality, the Victorian era is teeming with pornography, prostitution, and other illicit activities—signs that human sexual desires are not fully repressed. With the advent of photography, pornography enters a new phase.

Today: In most Western nations today, sex is a very public issue. Sex has become an integral part of many ad campaigns, television shows, and films. However, some groups, such as conservative Christian groups, still advocate the repression of sexual images and content in media.

1890s: In England Oscar Wilde is sentenced to prison for his homosexuality.

Today: Although United States President Bill Clinton promises to champion gay rights during his presidency, many members of the gay and lesbian community are disappointed by his infamous "don't ask, don't tell" policy for the United States military. This policy allows homosexuals to remain active in the military as long as nobody knows they are homosexual.

1890s: Stoker taps into the fear of damnation and unholiness with his novel *Dracula*, in which several characters' souls are put in jeopardy. If Dracula succeeds in his quest, he will convert several others into soulless humans.

Today: The moral and ethical issues surrounding cloning come to a head when an independent company announces that it has cloned the first human. Some worry about a homogenous race of humans that is engineered to look a certain way.

1890s: Citizens of London are still reeling from the crimes of Jack the Ripper, an unnamed murderer who killed at least five women in London's East End in 1888.

Today: For more than a century, the case of Jack the Ripper has remained unsolved. However, in 2002, popular mystery author Patricia Cornwell claims that the murderer was the well-known artist Walter Sickert.

Topics for Further Study

Read several British newspaper articles circa 1897 to get a feel for how they are written. Imagine that you are a contemporary reporter in Victorian London and that you have found all of the notes that Mina Murray and the others kept about their vampire hunting. Write an article exposing their adventures, keeping it in the style of the newspapers of the time.

Research the vampire lore of eastern Europe and other regions that Stoker drew upon to write *Dracula*. Find at least five other "rules" about vampires—things they can do, things they cannot—that Stoker did not include in his novel, and write a detailed description about each one. For each rule, try to find one literary work, film, or other form of media that has incorporated this rule.

Research the medical science that Stoker incorporates in the novel, and discuss how it related to contemporary medicine in Stoker's time. Now compare the medical methods that Van Helsing and others use to try to heal Lucy and Mina to current medical methods used to treat blood-related conditions like anemia.

Compare the courting process described in the novel with modern dating methods in England. Imagine that you are one of the characters from the novel who has been transported to modern-day England. Write a journal entry describing your perceptions of modern dating methods while remaining true to Victorian attitudes and the specific traits of the character you choose.

Media Adaptations

Dracula has been adapted into countless films. However, the film that helped define the cinematic image of the count was the classic 1931 version titled *Dracula*, which starred Bela Lugosi in the title role. The film, which was produced by Universal Studios and directed by Tod Browning, is available on VHS and DVD from Universal Home Video.

In 1992, *Dracula* was adapted into a film titled *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, one of the few titles to mention the original author. Francis Ford Coppola directed the film, which was released by Columbia Pictures. The film also featured a star-studded cast, including Gary Oldman as Dracula, Keanu Reeves as Jonathan Harker, Winona Ryder as Mina Murray, Anthony Hopkins as Professor Van Helsing, and Cary Elwes as Arthur Holmwood. It is available on VHS and DVD from Columbia/Tristar Home Video.

Dracula has been adapted into several spoof films. One of these is *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (1995), released by Columbia Pictures and directed by Mel Brooks, who also played the part of Professor Van Helsing. Other actors include Leslie Nielsen as Count Dracula, Steven Weber as Jonathan Harker, and Amy Yasbeck as Mina Murray. The film is available on VHS from Castle Rock Home Video.

Dracula was adapted as an unabridged audiobook in 2002. It is available from Brilliance Audio.

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> This highly informative reader's companion is ideal for those who wish to learn more about the language, culture, and customs of nineteenth-century England, including courtship rituals and Victorian attitudes towards sex. As such, it serves as an indispensable guide to Stoker's

novel.