

The background of the cover is a deep red color with a glossy, wavy texture that creates a sense of movement and depth. The waves are curved and flow from the top right towards the bottom left.

Bram Stoker
Dracula

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS



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BRAM STOKER

Dracula



Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

ROGER LUCKHURST

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DRACULA

BRAM STOKER was born in Dublin in 1847, a middle-class member of the small Protestant elite. He was a notable fixture in the social life of Trinity College Dublin, and followed his father into the civil service of the colonial government. In his spare time, he wrote theatre reviews and short stories. In 1878 he completely transformed his life, accepting the offer of the famous actor Henry Irving to become the manager of the Lyceum Theatre in London. Over the next twenty years, Stoker was at the heart of political and cultural life of the era. He published his first novel in 1890. *Dracula* appeared in 1897; the novel was favourably reviewed yet hardly marked out as the influential and enduring success it has since become. After Irving lost control of the Lyceum in 1898, Stoker increased his production of novels, including the successful *Jewel of the Seven Stars* (1903) and his notoriously deranged final work, *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911). His last years were marked by poverty and illness. He died in 1912. Within ten years, the film *Nosferatu* would launch Dracula's second life in the cinema and secure the modern obsession with vampires.

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INTRODUCTION

Readers who do not wish to learn details of the plot may prefer to treat the Introduction as an Epilogue

Very few modern stories exceed their origins to become full-scale myths, freely adapted into a myriad different forms. In the nineteenth century, it was the monsters, it seems, that had the demonic energy to climb free of texts and wreak havoc across the wider culture. There were brief sensational seasons around the figure of the vampire Lord Ruthven in 1819 or the evil mesmerist Svengali in 1894, but we could point to more enduring figures that have continued into the present day: Victor Frankenstein's creature, Mr Edward Hyde and, at the end of the century, Count Dracula. The vampire myth predated Bram Stoker's Gothic romance, yet the book crystallized an image, dramatized a certain predatory menace in Queen Victoria's jubilee year, and evoked an authentic sense of Christian dread, embodying in one elusive figure everything that shiny modernity was at risk of forgetting about its blood-soaked history. After the first cinematic appearances of the Count in the early 1920s, versions of *Dracula* have proliferated uncontrollably. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* might have reduced the Count to a cameo, casually dispatched in one episode as an unworthy enemy, but in the era of vampire franchises like *Buffy*, *Angel*, *Blade*, *Underworld*, or the *Twilight* and *True Blood* series, one could sometimes be forgiven for thinking Stoker's *Dracula* has effectively colonized the West's cultural imagination.

It wasn't always like this. In 1980, the Gothic scholar David Punter considered *Dracula* an 'underrated' novel that deserved more attention. In 1985, David Seed noted an 'almost complete critical silence' on the book.¹ When Oxford World's Classics decided to add *Dracula* as the one hundredth book on its list in 1983, there was some press concern that the notion of the literary classic was being undermined. The editor, A. N. Wilson, did not seem

entirely comfortable with introducing such a potboiler either. Stoker's other novels, needless to say, were considered ghastly, beneath contempt. The Gothic has since become a respectable genre to study, although Stoker is still often regarded as a dubious figure. Nina Auerbach's fine study of the perpetually mobile metaphor of the vampire, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, works hard to dismiss Stoker as the least interesting and most conservative element in a long and sinuous history. The achievement of *Dracula* is all in spite of its author, whose cack-handed attempts at literature only accidentally unleashed the primal force of myth.

There might be some truth to the sense that Stoker was merely a vehicle for the cultural energies of the late Victorian period, currents that he did not necessarily fully control. Stoker, as *Dracula* evidences, was fascinated by the subliminal or unconscious processes of the mind, and as an Irishman he would have imbibed the view that Celts had uncanny psychic sensitivities. Yet it was Stoker's remarkable position in late Victorian cultural life that allowed him to end up as the writer who could so effectively condense an era's principal concerns into one breathless flight of melodrama.

Bram Stoker

Documenting Bram Stoker's life is not hard. Interpreting key aspects of it, however, has proved controversial and the author remains rather enigmatic, tempting many to speculate about the inner meaning of an outwardly respectable career. Bram Stoker was born in 1847 in Dublin into a middle-class Protestant family. His father was a lowly functionary in the Civil Service of the British Government in Ireland, which in the 1840s was steadfastly doing nothing to alleviate the appalling starvation conditions of the Catholic peasant majority. The small social circle of the Protestant elite in Dublin resulted in many connections. Stoker knew the family of Sir William and Lady Wilde very well (their son Oscar was born in 1854). Both were fascinated by Celtic mythology and were sympathetic to Irish demands for self-determination; both took an interest in Bram. Their neighbour in Merrion Square was the Gothic novelist Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, whose influence on

Dracula was extensive. Le Fanu part-owned the *Dublin Evening Mail*, a conservative, anti-nationalist newspaper for which Stoker wrote theatre reviews from 1871. Such political differences and debates were woven into the heart of cultural life in Dublin. Stoker came to know every significant Irish writer to emerge from this sphere in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

After a sickly childhood, Stoker grew into an athletic giant of a man, famed for his sporting prowess in racing and rugby. In 1864, he began to study mathematics at Trinity College Dublin and threw himself into the debating worlds of both the Historical and Philosophical societies, where he won awards for his oratory. He met many distinguished visiting speakers and debated literary and cultural matters energetically. In 1868, for instance, a controversy erupted over alleged improprieties of the poetry of Walt Whitman. After reading *Leaves of Grass*, Stoker became an advocate of the poet and wrote to Whitman a number of times before eventually meeting him in the 1880s. Stoker eventually graduated in 1870, largely because he followed his father into the Civil Service in 1866, working full-time as clerk in the department of the Registrar of Petty Sessions, part of the legal system's Byzantine structure. This was an era of modernizing ancient systems, and Stoker was part of this professionalization, a matter not unconnected with the bright young professionals and their newly minted office systems we meet in *Dracula*. His first book was a handbook with the enticing title *Duties of Clerks of Petty Sessions*. By the time this book was published, however, Stoker had resigned his post and utterly transformed his life.

Henry Irving (1838–1905) was considered one of the greatest Shakespearean actors of the day. Stoker had first seen him perform in *The Rivals* in Dublin in 1867 and was star-struck. By the 1870s, Stoker's role as theatre critic allowed him to meet the great thespian. The critic was invited to a meal to celebrate another Dublin performance in 1876, and was treated to Irving's party trick: a dramatic recitation of the poem 'The Dream of Eugene Aram' by Thomas Hood. Irving would act out the morbid guilt that saturated the poem with extraordinary physicality. Stoker was entirely overwhelmed:

That experience I shall never—can never—forget. The recitation was different, both in kind and in degree, from anything I had ever heard ... Such was Irving's commanding force, so great was the magnetism of his genius, so profound was the sense of his dominance that I sat spellbound. Outwardly I was as of stone; nought in me but receptivity and imagination ... As to its effect I had no adequate words. I can only say that after a few seconds of stony silence following his collapse I burst out into something like a violent fit of hysterics.²

Stoker's reminiscence insists that he was 'a very strong man' yet proudly and disarmingly confesses that he was utterly unmanned in this encounter. Two years later, Henry Irving offered Stoker the chance to become his business manager at the Lyceum Theatre in London. The salary was three times that of his Civil Service post, yet without much security or prospects. Stoker agreed, despite anxiety expressed by his parents for stepping into the déclassé world of the theatre. He hastily married the Dublin beauty Florence Balcombe, who had recently refused an offer of marriage from a love-struck Oscar Wilde, and travelled to London, where he was to manage the Lyceum for twenty years, between 1878 and 1898, continuing to work for Irving until the actor died in 1905. Stoker tirelessly managed the actor's chaotic personal and financial worlds, often in the face of Irving's irksome and quixotic decisions. He paid actors and backstage staff, organized set-design, read over a thousand submitted scripts, and organized several tours of America (which raised money to keep the London theatre working). He worked as a press agent, advertising copywriter, wrote hundreds of thousands of letters on Irving's behalf, and helped smooth the way to Irving's knighthood in 1895, the first for an actor, by arranging private royal performances. Stoker also helped manage the careers of two leading actresses who worked with Irving, Ellen Terry (who called him 'Ma') and Geneviève Ward. Both were much admired, but on the margins of respectability, yet were unequivocally supported by Stoker. So legendary were Stoker's management skills that the bankrupt painter James Whistler begged Stoker to take on his finances. He

became Mark Twain's London agent, dabbled in publishing ventures, and had a hand in engineering the astounding literary success of his close friend Thomas Hall Caine, negotiating contracts, reading and rewriting manuscripts, ensuring reviews.

Stoker adjusted his clock to Irving's nocturnal habits, regularly dining with eminent visitors to the Lyceum after performances into the early hours. It was at this 'Beefsteak Club' that Stoker befriended political figures like William Gladstone (Liberal prime minister in the 1880s, controversially advocating Home Rule for Ireland), and literary figures such as Sir Richard Burton and Arthur Conan Doyle. Somehow, in his spare time, Stoker studied and took the exams to become a qualified barrister in 1890. He also published his first collection of stories in 1882 and four novels between 1890 and 1897. When *Dracula* appeared in May 1897, it was a modest critical success as one of those fashionably 'weird' tales, yet no one grasped how long it would endure. Stoker's output increased with the financial insecurities that lost Irving control of the Lyceum in 1898. When Irving died in 1905, Stoker promptly composed an adoring two-volume biography. This work rate led to a stroke in 1906, Stoker's last years being marked by ill health, poverty, and diminishing returns for his literary efforts. His last books, such as the notorious *Lair of the White Worm* (1911), with its unconstrained phallic imagery and hysterical tone, were deeply disordered and strange. He died in 1912.

These bare bones already hint at some intriguing ambiguities. Stoker married Florence Balcombe and had one child in 1879. Yet Stoker's life was dominated by intense friendships with men, a fraternal bond celebrated by Whitman's poetry. Some have speculated that Stoker's sexual relationship with Florence ended with the birth of their son, and that he led a double life, perhaps with actresses or prostitutes. He often toured for months with Irving, leaving Florence, one of the great beauties of the age, to the flirtatious attentions of society figures like the librettist W. S. Gilbert. In 1975, the biography of Stoker by his grand-nephew Daniel Farson alleged that Stoker had contracted syphilis, the then incurable and degenerative sexually transmitted infection, as a result of these adventures, his long decline

resulting from the tertiary stage of the disease, when spirochaetes eat away at the nervous system in gruesome ways. Had Florence barred him from the marriage bed, leaving him to sublimate his desires in fiction? This remains entirely speculative, as do interpretations of the nature of Stoker's relationship with Irving. The writer happily confessed his adoration of the actor, yet he also daily experienced Irving's demonic control. Surely knowing it would evoke Count Dracula, Stoker recalled that Irving in the play *Vanderdecken* 'gave one a wonderful impression of a dead man fictitiously alive', his eyes 'seemed to shine like cinders of glowing red'.³ Did Stoker play the hapless functionary Jonathan Harker to Irving's Dracula, a weak man from the provinces unmanned by an overpowering personality?

If Stoker remains a private enigma, it is perhaps because the 1890s provided enough lessons in the dangers of exposure. Oscar Wilde, Florence's one-time suitor, was arrested and prosecuted in 1895 for acts of gross indecency with young men in hotels barely a stone's throw from the Lyceum Theatre. He was broken down in prison, then exiled and dead by 1900. The majority of *Dracula* was composed whilst Wilde was incarcerated. Wilde's double life was mercilessly exposed by Stoker's Trinity College contemporary, the barrister Edward Carson. Meanwhile, feminist campaigners were openly declaring that the sexual incontinence of syphilitic men was a national scandal, exposing the hypocrisy of respectable pillars of society. A contrasting model of obsessive vigilance over the private life was provided by the novelist Henry James, about whom we are left guessing so many things despite his vast published output and surviving letters. Stoker is a similar figure of ambiguity, a man of contradictions, a public fixture in London life yet somehow unknowable, a political Liberal but cultural Conservative, someone who could write in favour of the censorship of 'emotions ... arising from sex impulses' in literature, and yet produce a text in *Dracula* dripping with all manner of perversity.⁴ It is these tensions and contradictions, ultimately, which work in *Dracula's* favour, frustrating much chance of a narrow reduction to biographical explanation. But this is also because *Dracula* derives much of its power not from an individual's imagination but by plugging so

directly into the history of Gothic literature and two centuries of folklore about the vampire.

Gothic Romances and Vampire Reports

The Gothic is a thoroughly modern genre, emerging in the eighteenth century, often considered to have been inaugurated by Horace Walpole's eccentric tale, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Whilst this was declared the Age of Enlightenment, its sceptical philosophers celebrating progress, knowledge, and liberty, the Gothic was a repository for everything modernity hoped it had left behind. The genre offered a phantasmagorical pre-modern world—a place of feudal tyrants, arbitrary rule, cruel punishment, corrupt monks, menaced virgins, and peasants cowering in superstition. Early Gothic novels were often set in a medieval past and in southern Europe, places of peasant serfdom and Catholic power. In central ways, Gothic literature helped define a rational modern Protestant England by luridly imagining its other: feudal, fanatical, Catholic, European. Yet this was not always a comforting genre, for the terrors associated with the Gothic often derived from the sense that these superseded tyrannies might return at any moment. Throughout its existence, these Gothic imaginings have crept closer to the shores of England and nearer to the present day. Sceptical commentators strongly disapproved of the artificial stimulation of excessive emotion and superstitious belief in Gothic literature and lectured the reading public on its dangers, yet it became an important literary genre by the 1790s, an era of political instability and revolution. A literary tradition of the Gothic sputtered fitfully through the Victorian age of Realism, yet there was a major revival of the form in the late Victorian period, to which Stoker became a significant contributor.

What did Stoker take from the genre? The plot of *Dracula* neatly enacts the trajectory of the Gothic, starting amongst the tyrannical feudal lords and superstitious peasants on the southern edge of Europe only to bring this monstrous medieval survival into the heart of modern London, with Dracula's town house on Piccadilly very close to Buckingham Palace, the seat of Empire. What Dracula's implacable enemy Professor Van Helsing teaches is

that the confidence of modern empirical science and rational scepticism is misplaced, that Victorian naturalism has blinded itself to the continuing terrible powers of the supernal and the supernatural worlds. Beliefs dismissed as primitive superstitions carry vital truths we have forgotten, and this is a core element of the Gothic's constantly restated criticism of complacent modernity. Similarly, Stoker's book explores extreme emotions, sleepwalking, brain fever, madness, hysteria, and peculiar dreamy trance states. The Gothic began, so Horace Walpole claimed, with a nightmare, and has always been associated with disordered reason and excess sensibility. Indeed, for many critics, the phantasmagoric imagination of the Gothic actually begins to provide many of the meta phors for how we conceive of our modern subjectivity, mysterious to itself, labyrinthine, haunted by half-glimpsed spectres of memory and desire, never quite successfully burying its dead, fearful that all the skeletons in the closet will one day return.⁵ Stoker was strikingly attuned to modern psychology, as we shall see, and this interest in mental states is intrinsic to the success of *Dracula*.

Importantly, too, Stoker borrowed some of the formal innovations of the Gothic genre. *The Castle of Otranto* had been passed off on its first publication as a rediscovered anonymous medieval manuscript, at once letting the tale be told but allowing the editor to disown any responsibility for its crude and credulous contents. Gothic excesses are often given fictitious framings as manuscripts or a mass of fragmentary evidence carefully collated by increasingly terrified editors. Although Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), a mass of letters, witness statements, diaries, and news reports, was Stoker's obvious model for *Dracula*, he also admired Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1885), where multiple manuscripts are pulled together to tell an impossible tale, a trick taken even further into fragmentary form by Arthur Machen in *The Great God Pan* (1894). *Dracula* actually narrates its own construction, as Mina transcribes documents and shuffles them into chronological sequence, anxiously rushing to be as contemporary as possible, the reports trying and always failing to become identical with the very events they describe. All of these Gothic texts

foreground their own constructedness, and are often awkward and discontinuous. They offended neoclassical taste for the beautiful and harmonious in the eighteenth century and the formal and rhetorical devices of Realism in the nineteenth century. They are not ‘good’ novels on the measure of the art of fiction determined by Henry James, but they were never meant to be, and to judge them on this criterion is absurd. What *Dracula* achieved was a fusion of the fake rediscovered manuscript of Gothic conventions with the absolutely contemporary world of technological transcription by shorthand, typewriter, telegram, and phonograph. The text rattles along at the same speed as the *Orient Express*, chasing not only the ancient beast but its own modernity.

The textual ploy of fiction feigning to be true leaves the reader in a slightly hesitant space, perhaps just a little more prepared to dally with the notion that what they are reading might, after all, be a documentary record. The last page of *Dracula* plays on this uncertainty, Harker noting 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’ (p. 351). This textual hesitancy is generic, but it also worked in *Dracula* because the figure of a vampire had always hovered in an uncertain zone between fictional fabrication and folkloric truth.

Although occultists like the antiquarian Montague Summers would like to claim that the belief in vampires is global and trans-historical (and therefore probably true), the vampire is a thoroughly modern being.⁶ Like the Gothic, stories of vampires emerge in the Age of Enlightenment, as instances of primitive superstition that help define the rational scepticism of northern, Protestant Europe. ‘Vampyre’ first appeared in English in the *London Journal* in 1732, adopting the Magyar word *vampyre* or the Russian *upir*. The journal was scoffing at accounts of panics amongst the peasantry of remote parts of Hungary and the Balkans. Territories like Serbia and Wallachia had recently come under Austrian imperial control. Soldiers, judges, and surgeons of the new administration were being confronted with social unrest and the desecration of graves in villages where the population held unshakeable

beliefs that the dead could return to prey on family and neighbours, killing them in turn. Administrative documents on these fringe frontier disturbances returned to Vienna and thus began to circulate more widely. In 1725, Peter Plojojowitz had been dead and buried for ten weeks but was blamed by villagers for nine subsequent deaths in the village. To avoid a riot, the new Imperial Provisor agreed to open the grave. The body had not decomposed; hair and nails had continued to grow; new white skin was growing; there was fresh blood in the mouth of the corpse. According to tradition, the villagers demanded that the body of the vampire be pinned to the ground with a wooden stake, to stop the creature wandering. Officials agreed, 'whereupon, as he was pierced, not only did much blood, completely fresh, flow also through his ears and mouth, but still other wild signs (which I pass by out of high respect) took place'.⁷ Another notorious case was published in 1732, relating to Arnold Paole. Paole, who lived in the territory between Tokay and Transylvania, had been killed in an accident, but was seen returning to menace his relatives, who recalled Paole's story of having been 'tormented' by a Turkish vampire. After thirty days, the grave was opened and the body was found bloated with the blood of his victims. Paole was staked, emitting a shriek, his head was cut off, and the body was burnt. Even so, seventeen further villagers died because, it was said, they had eaten meat from oxen that Paole had vampirized. In 1746, the Jesuit monk and antiquarian Dom Augustin Calmet collected these and other tales for his vast *Treatise on the Apparitions of Angels, Demons and Spirits, and on the Revenants and Vampires of Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia*. The volume included a chapter entitled 'Dead Persons in Hungary who Suck the Blood of the Living'. Calmet included the traveller Joseph Pitton de Tournefort's account of a panic about a *vroucolacas* on a Greek island in 1702, which followed the same pattern of a dead man accused, an exhumation, and a ritual re-killing of the corpse. Calmet, a great biblical scholar, was caught somewhere between belief and disbelief: 'Thanks to God, we are by no means so credulous. We avow that all the light which science can throw on this fact discovers none of the causes of it. Nevertheless, we cannot refuse to believe that to be true which is judicially

attested and by persons of probity.’⁸

In England and France, these stories were occasions to reassert the virtues of rationalism and freedom from the tyranny of superstition. The commentary in the London press was dismissive yet already fairly sophisticated at reading the accounts otherwise. *The Craftsman* observed that these tales came ‘from the Eastern Part of the World, always remarkable for the *Allegorical Style*. The States of *Hungary* are in *Subjection* to the *Turks* and *Germans*, and govern’d by a pretty hard Hand; which obliges them to couch all their complaints under Figures.’⁹ The vampire thus has potential as a political allegory from its earliest arrival in English. Voltaire’s *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764) included a short chapter on vampires, ridiculing the circulation of tales by the credulous priest Calmet in keeping with his war on religious fanaticism and superstition. He, too, considered the only vampires were to be found in London and Paris, ‘stock-jobbers, brokers, and men of business, who sucked the blood of the people in broad daylight’.¹⁰ When in 1867 Karl Marx declared that ‘Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks’, this was already a firmly established metaphor, the vampire retooled from a feudal world for modern times.¹¹

These ‘true’ accounts appeared in obscure reports and foreign journals, were translated and retranslated, details merging or morphing as they disappeared into the half-light of rumour. They became the hobby of antiquarians and archivists, chasing footnote trails to obscure texts. Stoker picked up a number of details from one of these antiquarian syntheses of curious stories, *The Book of Were-Wolves*, published in 1865 by the odd-ball priest and novelist Sabine Baring-Gould. In this respect, the form of *Dracula* again bows to the tradition, for the vampire, one might say, is nothing more than an emanation of sifted documents, a conjuration of the archive.

Anthropologists worked to demystify this belief. Edward Tylor, the first academic anthropologist in England, included belief in vampires in his tome *Primitive Culture* (1871) as more evidence of ‘primaeval monuments of barbaric thought and life’ in our midst.¹² He viewed his task as any vampire-