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# DRACULA



**BRAM STOKER**

Introduction and Notes by  
**James Hynes**

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To  
My Dear Friend  
**HOMMY-BEG**

## INTRODUCTION

EVERYBODY KNOWS DRACULA. JUST AS BRAM STOKER'S NOVEL IS ARGUABLY the most famous horror tale ever written, its title character is not only the most famous character in all of horror fiction, but one of the most famous characters in literature, period. Even people who have never read the book, or don't even know that Count Dracula originally comes from a book, can instantly picture the Prince of the Un-Dead, usually in the image of the actor Bela Lugosi, who played him in an early film version: the cape, the widow's peak, the mesmeric gaze, the accent, and most of all, the fangs. Among all the characters of popular fiction, probably only Sherlock Holmes and, more recently, Harry Potter, have an equally iconic status. Today, he not only permeates the culture like no other character, appearing in every medium imaginable—Google "Dracula" and you come up with over ten million hits—but both Dracula and *Dracula* are the direct progenitors of a vast, diverse, and constantly expanding lineage of vampire fiction, movies, TV shows, comic books, and computer games that currently dominates popular culture. Like Dracula himself in Stoker's novel, the iconic status of the vampire is immensely strong, powerfully charismatic, and virtually impossible to kill.

Bram Stoker was born in 1847 in Clontarf, a suburb of Dublin, to a middle-class family. His father was an Irish civil servant, and his mother was a social reformer who campaigned on behalf of the Irish poor. The third of seven children, Stoker was a sickly child who eventually grew into a robust and athletic young man. He studied at Trinity College in Dublin and, after graduating, reluctantly accepted a civil service job that was

arranged by his father. His real loves, however, were the theater and literature. While still an undergraduate, he saw a performance by the famous Victorian actor Henry Irving, who made an indelible impression on the young man. When Stoker finally met Irving in 1876, the two started an intense lifelong friendship that led to Stoker's quitting his job in 1878, moving to London with his new wife, Florence, and going to work as the manager of Irving's Lyceum Theatre and its company of actors.

For the next quarter of a century, Stoker lived an astonishingly busy life. Not only did he manage Irving and his company and oversee several tours to America, he found himself at the center of London society. At the Lyceum, on tour with Irving, and at his own home in the fashionable neighborhood of Chelsea, Stoker became acquainted with such celebrities of the day as Arthur Conan Doyle, James McNeil Whistler, Henry Morton Stanley, W. S. Gilbert, Walt Whitman, and Mark Twain. And on top of it all, he pursued a successful career as a writer of popular fiction. In 1872, he had published a short story, "The Crystal Cup," and by 1895, he was also the author of four novels and a collection of fairy tales for children. In the meantime, he had begun to think about what would eventually be his best and most famous book, *Dracula*.

Vampires had long been a part of the folklore of many ancient cultures around the world, in the form of such demonic creatures as the Malaysian *pontianak*, the Greek *lamiai*, the Roman *strix*, and the Aztec *chivateteo*, all of whom were said to feast on the blood of the living. These folkloric vampires, however, tended to be barely sentient killing machines, more like the modern-day flesh-eating zombie than a silkily seductive minor nobleman in a cape. One of the first aristocratic vampires was Lord Ruthven in "The Vampyre," by John Polidori, who is reputed to have based the character on his friend the notorious poet Lord Byron. Published in 1819, the story was hugely popular and spawned a multitude of vampire narratives, including stage plays in France and England and an opera in Germany. Another story called simply "The Vampire," published in 1841 by Alexei Tolstoy, a distant cousin of the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, opens with an entire ballroom full of titled vampires, and in the 1840s, James Malcolm Rymer's potboiling serialized novel, *Varney the Vampire, or The Feast of Blood*, featured a blood-sucking fiend whose alter ego was an English knight, Sir Francis Varney.

Apart from giving vampires nicer manners and posh accents, the nineteenth-century vampire narrative introduced something else to the mythology, something that is by now virtually its defining characteristic: sex. Polidori's erotically charismatic Lord Ruthven seduces and kills the sister of the story's protagonist, while *Varney the Vampire* features lurid scenes of sexualized violence that border on the pornographic. The nineteenth century also saw the introduction of female, and often lesbian, vampires. The poem *Christabel* (1816) by the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge features a vampiric woman who seduces the title character, and half a century later, in 1872, the Irish writer J. Sheridan Le Fanu used essentially the same plot for his classic novella, *Carmilla*. Even before *Dracula* was born, the vampire had already changed from a mindless revenant to a sort of sinister sex symbol.

Still, the most influential work in a genre is not always the first one, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* brought all of these elements together in a way that continues to overshadow its predecessors. Stoker's first notes for the novel date from 1890, during a holiday with his family in the picturesque North Sea fishing village of Whitby. Not only did Stoker make Whitby one of the settings for *Dracula*, he incorporated into the story a famous shipwreck in Whitby harbor, that of the *Dmitry*, which Stoker renamed the *Demeter*. And in a book from the Whitby library, Stoker first came across an account of an actual fifteenth-century prince of the Walachia region of Romania, the Voivode Dracula, also known as Vlad Dracula, who was famous for his vigorous military resistance to the Ottoman empire. His title, *voivode*, is a Slavic honorific that is sometimes translated as "count," and since Vlad's father was known as Vlad Dracul, or "Vlad the Dragon," the younger Vlad was known as "the son of the dragon," or Dracula. Although Stoker does not mention this fact in the novel, Vlad Dracula was also known as Vlad Țepeș, or Vlad the Impaler, for his startlingly cruel practice of impaling his captured enemies alive on stakes.

Stoker also drew from a memoir called *The Land Beyond the Forest*, published in 1888, in which Emily Gerard wrote of living with her husband, an officer in the Austrian army, in the rugged Transylvania region of Romania. One of the bits of Romanian folklore she wrote about was the legend of the *nosferatu*, or vampire, and in her pages Stoker found many of the rules of vampirism he went on to use in *Dracula*: that a vampire sucks blood from a victim's neck, that its victims become

vampires themselves, that a vampire can be kept away with garlic, and that it can be killed by driving a stake through its heart or cutting off its head. To this, Stoker added some rules of his own, some of which are still used in vampire narratives today: a vampire cannot be seen in a mirror, cannot enter a residence without an invitation, and cannot cross a body of water while the tide is running. One of the rules that does *not* appear in Stoker, however, is the modern vampire's complete aversion to the sun. Contemporary vampires tend to burst into flames in direct sunlight, but in Stoker's *Dracula*, the vampire can actually walk about in daylight, though his powers are diminished.

And so Stoker had the villain of his book: a nearly five-hundred-year-old Romanian aristocrat known for his ruthlessness and cunning, who had survived death by becoming a soulless but still highly intelligent demon. Arrayed against him are a trio of earnest, stalwart Englishmen: the hardworking junior solicitor Jonathan Harker, who travels to Transylvania in the book's opening chapters to help the mysterious Count Dracula manage his move to London, and Harker's friends back in England: Dr. John Seward, the head of an insane asylum, and a rather stiff nobleman, Arthur Holmwood, also known as Lord Godalming. Holmwood is betrothed to the beautiful Lucy Westenra, who is also the object of the affections of Dr. Seward and Quincey Morris, a folksy Texan who is stereotypically adept with a knife and a Winchester rifle. All of these characters are standard types from Victorian melodrama: unfailingly polite, impossibly virtuous, fundamentally humorless, and mortified at any suggestion of impropriety. A slightly more interesting character is Lucy's best friend, and Harker's fiancée, Mina Murray (later Mina Harker), who is what was known in the 1890s as a "New Woman," a sort of early feminist who formed her own opinions and was capable of supporting herself financially (in Mina's case, as a typist). After Dracula arrives in England during that shipwreck in Whitby, it is first Lucy and then Mina who are most at risk from his attacks, and the men band together to protect the virtue of their women. Meanwhile, Dracula is assisted by the lunatic Renfield, one of the patients in Dr. Seward's asylum, whose madness manifests itself as a revolting passion for eating flies and spiders. When Dracula's threat eventually becomes too much for the Englishmen and the Texan to handle, Dr. Seward brings in the final important member of the cast, Dr. Abraham Van Helsing, a colorfully eccentric Dutch medical professor, who is also, conveniently, an expert in the occult.

Published in 1897 after three years of writing, *Dracula* is constructed as an epistolary novel, meaning that the story is told by the participants themselves in a series of journal entries, letters, telegrams, transcriptions of phonograph recordings, and even a shipping invoice. Sometimes the effect of this technique isn't entirely believable. Throughout the novel, for example, Dr. Van Helsing's speech is rendered in a comically stilted dialect meant to reflect the fractured syntax of a Dutchman speaking English, and somehow the journals of Harker, Mina, and Dr. Seward all reproduce this dialect, at length, in exactly the same way. And the uncomplicated and uninflected goodness of the characters can be a bit of a trial for a modern reader who is used to more irony and wisecracking on the part of even the good guys in a story, as both the men and women in *Dracula* endlessly swear eternal devotion to each other and incessantly extol each other's decency. Still, the epistolary technique lends the story a terrific immediacy, as the reader experiences the events almost as they are happening. Furthermore, it builds suspense, since from day to day, indeed from hour to hour, none of the participants (and, by extension, the first-time reader) has any idea how things will turn out, ratcheting up the anxiety of both the characters and the reader.

Even all that florid kindness, courtesy, and devotion work mainly to the advantage of the novel, since they throw into sharp relief the more exciting, titillating, and terrifying parts. The effect of a novel like *Dracula* depends as much on mood as it does on action, and *Dracula* is full of wonderfully creepy set pieces. Jonathan Harker's description of his nighttime coach ride through the Borgo Pass in chapter one is a masterpiece of gothic atmosphere, as his trip takes him through packs of howling wolves and past strange blue flames in the forest, ending with his arrival at a setting that is no less creepy for having been endlessly imitated ever since: "a vast ruined castle, from whose tall black windows came no ray of light, and whose broken battlements showed a jagged line against the moonlit sky." Less than twenty pages in, the novel is already scary, and nothing overtly supernatural has even happened yet.

And when things do start to get strange, the novel gets even scarier, pretty quickly. In chapter two, Harker cannot see Dracula in his shaving mirror, and in chapter three, he watches the count crawl down the castle's exterior wall, head down, like a giant lizard. Later in the book, we learn that Dracula can change himself into a wolf or a bat or, even more disturbingly, into a mist out of which he can congeal like a shadow in a victim's bedroom. And, as in many horror stories, both in Stoker's time

and our own, much of the reader's terror comes from simple disgust at physical grossness: a sleeping vampire suffused with blood, Renfield's constant feasting on insects, a seething sea of rats, the overpowering stench of one of Dracula's lairs in London. Just as unsettling are the scenes of overt violence; late in the book, Van Helsing, the Englishmen, and the Texan try to trap Dracula in an abandoned house in London, and the count's supernatural quickness and physical strength are made even more frightening by his utter contempt for his adversaries: "My revenge is just begun! I spread it over centuries, and time is on my side." The count's escape is crafted with a brisk efficiency and a vivid specificity that any modern thriller writer would envy:

The next instant, with a sinuous dive he swept under Harker's arm ere his blow could fall, and, grasping a handful of money from the floor, dashed across the room, and threw himself at the window. Amid the crash and glitter of the falling glass, he tumbled into the flagged area below. Through the sound of the shivering glass I could hear the 'ting' of the gold, as some of the sovereigns fell on the flagging.

Finally, though, it's the novel's barely repressed undercurrent of eroticism and the sexual allure of the vampire in general, and of Dracula in particular, that are the chief reasons for the novel's enduring appeal. It's a commonplace by now that Victorian writers and readers were conflicted about sex, finding it simultaneously appalling and thrilling, but most of all, terrifying in its power over the will and the imagination. Dracula would not linger in the popular subconscious a century after his creation if he were only repulsive and violent. The truth is that he is as seductive as he is menacing—indeed, not to put too fine a point on it, he's seductive *because* he is menacing. Stoker was not a reflective writer, so there's no way of knowing if he truly understood the full effect of his own book, but it's hard to imagine that he didn't have at least an inkling of what he was really writing about. One of his innovations to the mythology was to change the way that vampires make other vampires: In traditional folklore, anybody who is killed by a vampire becomes a vampire him- or herself, but in *Dracula*, getting turned into a vampire requires that the vampire first drink from his victim, and then that the victim drink from one of the vampire's open veins. No doubt even a proper Victorian gent like Bram Stoker (and most of his adult readers) knew what he was

writing about here, involving as it did a kind of penetration and an exchange of bodily fluids.

And yet Stoker didn't stop there. Taking his cue from the poet Coleridge and his countryman Sheridan Le Fanu, Stoker also introduced rapacious female vampires. Again, though it's hard to know just how conscious Stoker was of what he was doing, certainly he understood that if there was anything more terrifying to a Victorian reader than Dracula's male sexuality, it was the wanton, shameless, gleeful sexuality of a female vamp. In a book where the chief female characters are regularly (and extensively) praised for their delicacy and moral purity, the eruptions of female desire are especially shocking. In chapter three, when Jonathan Harker is still being held prisoner in Dracula's castle in Transylvania, he is nearly assaulted by three female vampires, and the scene is as steamy as anything a modern novelist could come up with:

The fair girl went on her knees and bent over me, fairly gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the sharp white teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips, and could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one's flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer—nearer. I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the supersensitive skin on my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited—waited with beating heart.

Of course, what was once a powerful subtext is subtext no more; indeed, sex of nearly every flavor and variety is now more or less the point in most modern vampire narratives, from the androgynous vampires in Anne Rice's *Lestat* novels, to the lesbian vampires in Jewelle Gomez's *The Gilda Stories*, to the lusty Southern vamps of the Sookie Stackhouse series and its HBO adaptation, *True Blood*. Even Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series, with its chaste teen vampire, Edward Cullen, is

fundamentally about physical desire, even when the sex is withheld. And Dracula himself has gotten much sexier over the years, especially in the movies. Bela Lugosi may have been the iconic Dracula for a couple of decades, but starting in the late 1950s, the character stopped being a campy Hungarian actor with a funny accent and turned into a succession of handsome leading men. The first was Christopher Lee, a tall British actor with a deep, commanding voice who leered over creamy, heaving bosoms and punctured virginal throats in a series of films made by the British studio Hammer Films. In director John Badham's 1979 *Dracula*, Frank Langella's count, with his bedroom eyes, plummy voice, and fabulous head of hair, not only seduces Lucy, he gets her to fall in love with him. Thirteen years later, in Francis Ford Coppola's lushly romantic version, Mina Harker not only falls in love with the count, she turns out to be the reincarnation of his dead wife. Even Buffy Summers, who is nothing less than Stoker's avuncular vampire hunter, Abraham Van Helsing, reimagined as a sexy, teenage American high school girl, falls in love with not one, but two vampires during the course of Joss Whedon's brilliant television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Stoker himself never witnessed the enormous effect of his creation on popular culture. *Dracula* was a success during his lifetime, but not a life-changing one. Stoker continued to work as Henry Irving's manager until Irving's death in 1905, and after that, he wrote to support himself and his family, producing a memoir of his life with Irving and a few more novels, including another couple of horror tales, *The Lady of the Shroud* and *The Lair of the White Worm*. None of them achieved the critical or commercial success of *Dracula*, however.

After a long period of declining health, Stoker died on April 20, 1912. Perhaps it's fitting that the success of both *Dracula* and *Dracula* came only after their author's death, and that, like his creation, Stoker is vastly more influential in his afterlife than he ever was when he was drawing breath. Today, the vampire tale is more than just a genre unto itself: It's a huge industry with its own subgenres and spin-offs. There are now heroic vampires, teen vampires, gay vampires, vampire detectives, vampires as oppressed minority, Eurotrash vampires, working-class vampires, apocalyptic vampires, and satirical vampires. It's possible that all of this would have come to pass anyway, without Bram Stoker, but as it stands, the brainstorm of a consummate Victorian showman with a lurid imagination and boundless energy continues to haunt the nightmares of readers all over the world. In the century since the novel was published, countless

writers and filmmakers, many of them better artists than Bram Stoker, have created an astonishing variety of creatures of the night, but still, towering above them all, bestriding the twilight world of the Un-Dead like a fanged colossus, stands Count Dracula.

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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 latter-day belief may stand forth as simple fact. There is throughout no statement of past events 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.

## CHAPTER I

## JONATHAN HARKER'S JOURNAL

*(Kept in shorthand)*

3 May. *Bistritz*.—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. Buda-Pesth seems a wonderful place, from the glimpse which I got of it from the train and the little I could walk through the streets. I feared to go very far from the station, as we had arrived late and would start as near the correct time as possible. The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East; the most Western of splendid bridges over the Danube, which is here of noble width and depth, took us among the traditions of Turkish rule.

We left in pretty good time, and came after nightfall to Klausenburgh.<sup>1</sup> Here I stopped for the night at the Hôtel Royale. I had for dinner, or rather supper, a chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was very good but thirsty. (*Mem.*, get recipe for Mina.) I asked the waiter, and he said it was called "paprika hendl," and that, as it was a national dish, I should be able to get it anywhere along the Carpathians. I found my smattering of German very useful here; indeed, I don't know how I should be able to get on without it.

Having some time at my disposal when in London, I had visited the British Museum, and made search among the books and maps of the library regarding Transylvania; it had struck me that

some foreknowledge of the country could hardly fail to have some importance in dealing with a noble of that country. I find that the district he named is in the extreme east of the country, just on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia, and Bukovina, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe. I was not able to light on any map or work giving the exact locality of the Castle Dracula, as there are no maps of this country as yet to compare with our own Ordnance Survey maps; but I found that Bistritz,<sup>2</sup> the post town named by Count Dracula, is a fairly well-known place. I shall enter here some of my notes, as they may refresh my memory when I talk over my travels with Mina.

In the population of Transylvania there are four distinct nationalities: Saxons in the south, and mixed with them the Wallachs, who are the descendants of the Dacians; Magyars in the west; and Szekelys in the east and north. I am going among the latter, who claim to be descended from Attila and the Huns. This may be so, for when the Magyars conquered the country in the eleventh century they found the Huns settled in it. I read that every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool; if so my stay may be very interesting. (*Mem.*, I must ask the Count all about them.)

I did not sleep well, though my bed was comfortable enough, for I had all sorts of queer dreams. There was a dog howling all night long under my window, which may have had something to do with it; or it may have been the paprika, for I had to drink up all the water in my carafe, and was still thirsty. Towards morning I slept and was wakened by the continuous knocking at my door, so I guess I must have been sleeping soundly then. I had for breakfast more paprika, and a sort of porridge of maize flour which they said was "mamaliga," and egg-plant stuffed with force-meat, a very excellent dish, which they call "impletata." (*Mem.*, get recipe for this also.) I had to hurry breakfast, for the train started a little before eight, or rather it ought to have done so, for after rushing to the station at 7:30 I had to sit in the carriage

for more than an hour before we began to move. It seems to me that the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains. What ought they to be in China?

All day long we seemed to dawdle through a country which was full of beauty of every kind. Sometimes we saw little towns or castles on the top of steep hills such as we see in old missals; sometimes we ran by rivers and streams which seemed from the wide stony margin on each side of them to be subject to great floods. It takes a lot of water, and running strong, to sweep the outside edge of a river clear. At every station there were groups of people, sometimes crowds, and in all sorts of attire. Some of them were just like peasants at home or those I saw coming through France and Germany, with short jackets and round hats and home-made trousers; but others were very picturesque. The women looked pretty, except when you got near them, but they were all very clumsy about the waist. They had all full white sleeves of some kind or other, and most of them had big belts with a lot of strips of something fluttering from them like the dresses in a ballet, but of course petticoats under them. The strangest figures we saw were the Slovaks, who were more barbarian than the rest, with their big cowboy hats, great baggy dirty-white trousers, white linen shirts, and enormous heavy leather belts, nearly a foot wide, all studded over with brass nails. They wore high boots, with their trousers tucked into them, and had long black hair and heavy black moustaches. They are very picturesque, but do not look prepossessing. On the stage they would be set down at once as some old Oriental band of brigands. They are, however, I am told, very harmless and rather wanting in natural self-assertion.

It was on the dark side of twilight when we got to Bistritz, which is a very interesting old place. Being practically on the frontier—for the Borgo Pass leads from it into Bukovina—it has had a very stormy existence, and it certainly shows marks of it. Fifty years ago a series of great fires took place, which made terrible havoc on five separate occasions. At the very beginning of the seventeenth century it underwent a siege of three weeks and lost 13,000 people, the casualties of war proper being assisted by famine and disease.