

Dracula

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Dracula

Background

Bram Stoker (1847 – 1912)



Vampires before Dracula

- The first vampire story in English was written by Dr John Polidori in 1819. It was entitled “The Vampyre: A Tale”. Other works that preceded *Dracula* include James Malcom Rymer’s “Penny Dreadful” *Varney the Vampire, or, the Feast of the Blood* (published in instalments between 1845 and 1847) and J. Sheridan Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” (1872).

Varney the Vampire



Dracula: Meaning of the word

- ‘Dracul’ means dragon and ‘Dracula’ refers to the son of a dragon. Interestingly Vlad II of Wallachia, on whose descendant Vlad III, the character of Dracula is based, belonged to the “Order of The Dragon”, a chivalric order founded in 1408.

The Original Dracula

- There is a general consensus that Stoker's Dracula was inspired by Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia, who was also known as Vlad Draculea. Like many rulers of the Middle Ages, Vlad III was cruel towards his enemies. His favourite practice was to impale his victims. Hence he earned the nickname "Vlad the Impaler". The sharp stakes used to impale his victims calls in mind the fangs of a Vampire.

Vlad the Impaler : Vlad III of Wallachia
(1431 – 1476/77)



The Novel

- Bram Stoker's novel was published in 1897. The original title Stoker thought of was *The Dead Un-Dead*. Dracula was originally named "Count Wampyr". But later Stoker changed the title as well as the name of the Central character.

The First Movie

- The first movie to be made on *Dracula* is *Nosferatu* (1922), directed by F. W. Murnau. This was an unauthorized adaptation of the novel. Hence the name “Count Dracula” was changed to “Count Orlok”.

Count Orlok



The Hollywood Superhit

- It was the 1931 American production that made Count Dracula a cult figure on screen. In this film Dracula was played by Bela Lugosi, who became a legend for his stunning performance. Interestingly, this film was not based on the novel itself, but on the 1924 stage adaptation by Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston.

Bela Lugosi as Dracula



Symbolic Significance

- In popular consciousness, the image of Dracula is that of a sexual predator, who feeds on beautiful women. Most films stress on this aspect of Dracula's character – portraying him both as a seducer as well as a ravisher. In Freudian terms, he represents the Father who takes away the Mother from the Child.

Dracula as a popular villain: a still from
Bandh Darwaza



Reception of Dracula

- Dracula has become one of the most popular monsters today, rivalling only Frankenstein monster, Wolfman, and Mr Hyde in fame. Scores of scholarly works on Dracula are emerging every year, proving his everlasting appeal. An entire scholarly journal is dedicated to Dracula studies.

Reading List

- 1. Carol A Senf. "" 'Dracula': The Unseen Face in the Mirror". *The Journal of Narrative Technique* vol. 9, no. 3 (Fall 1979): 160 – 170.
- 2. Carol A Senf. " 'Dracula': Stoker's Response to the New Woman". *Victorian Studies*, vol. 26, no.1 (Autumn 1982): 33 – 49.
- 3. Carol A. Senf. "Brides of Dracula: From Novel to Film". *Studies in Popular Culture*, vol. 7 (1984): 64 – 71.
- 4. John Allen Stevenson. "A Vampire in the Mirror: The Sexuality of Dracula". *PMLA* vol. 103, no. 2 (March 1988): 139 -149.

- **Text**
- Bram Stoker. *Dracula: A Norton Critical Edition*. Edited by Nina Auerbach. And David J. Skal. New York: Norton, 1997.

The End



