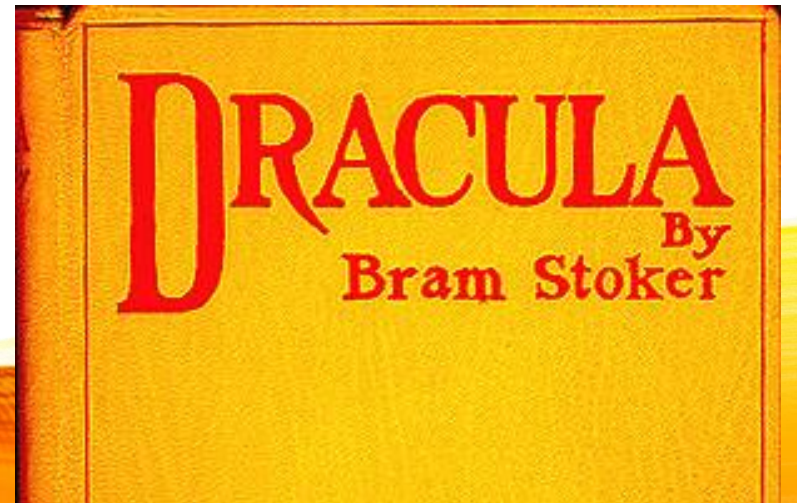


HORROR I

CURSE OF THE DEMON: THE VAMPIRE

DRACULA
BRAM STOKER (1897)



ADDITIONAL STORIES FOR DISCUSSION POSTING:

- "The Dissection." 1913. Georg Heym. *The Weird*, pp. 75-77.
- "White Rabbits." 1941 Leonora Carrington. *The Weird*, pp. 277-279.
- "The Brood." 1980. Ramsey Campbell. *The Weird*, pp. 553-559.
- "Feeders and Eaters." 2002. Neil Gaiman. *The Weird*, pp. 938-942.

CONTENTS: DRACULA

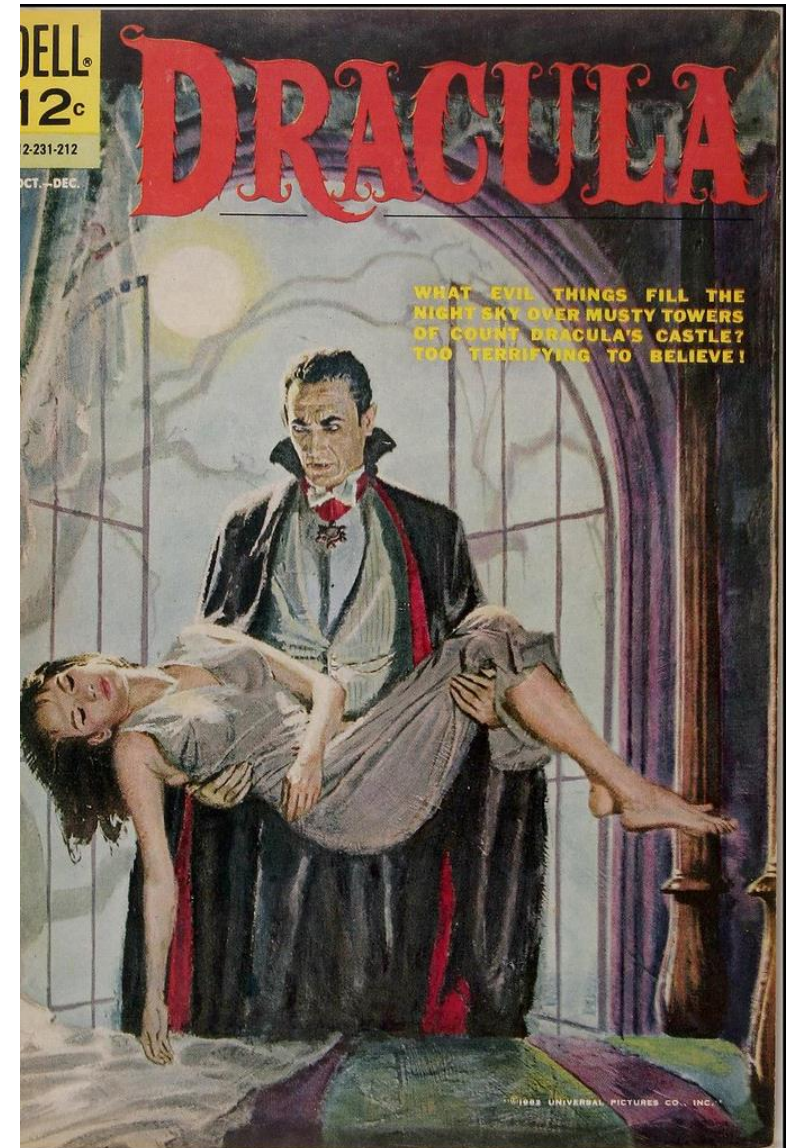
- Plot, characters, setting
- Motifs (recurring element that has symbolic significance)
- Themes: What is the vampire?
- Influence on Horror Fiction
- Key terms
- Other Stories



PLOT AND CHARACTERS

- **Dracula** is an 1897 Gothic horror novel by Irish author Bram Stoker. It introduced the character of Count Dracula and established many conventions of subsequent vampire fantasy. The novel tells the story of Dracula's attempt to move from Transylvania to England so that he may find new blood and spread the undead curse, and of the battle between Dracula and a small group of people led by Professor Abraham Van Helsing.
- The story is told in an epistolary format, as a series of letters, diary entries, newspaper articles, and ships' log entries, whose narrators are the novel's protagonists, and occasionally supplemented with newspaper clippings relating events not directly witnessed. The events portrayed in the novel take place chronologically and largely in England and Transylvania within the same year between 3 May and 6 November. A short note at the end of the final chapter is written 7 years after the events outlined in the novel.

- Source: Wikipedia. Dracula. Retrieved June 15, 2020.



MOTIF: THE GOTHIC

Merriam-Webster defines Gothic as: adj., "of or relating to a style of writing that describes strange or frightening events that take place in mysterious places."

Frankenstein and Dracula are the great examples. The genre itself was named after the architecture that inspired it: the medieval castles and ruins in which much of Gothic literature takes place, and which often play a vital role in the narrative's plot. Think of Dracula's castle in Transylvania.

Gothic tradition continues today in the works of such writers as Joyce Carol Oates and Julia Elliott.

They play off the emotions of terror and horror.



TERROR AND HORROR

“Terror is the feeling of dread and apprehension at the possibility of something frightening, while horror is the shock and repulsion of seeing the frightening thing...

“Terror is the sounds of unknown creatures scratching at the door; horror is seeing your roommate eaten alive by giant rats. Terror is the feeling a stranger may be hiding behind the door; horror is the squirt of blood as the stranger’s knife sinks in.”

-source: -Mastersreview.com. (2017 Jan.19)





"Dracula" contrasts technology with the implications of darwinism. The vampire's power, even his supernatural power, is linked to the natural world in that he can turn into a wolf, climb cliffs, control weather, etc. He threatens to exterminate the human species.

Quotation:

"then I stopped and looked at the count. There was a mocking smile on the bloated face which seemed to drive me mad. This was the being I was helping to transfer to london, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. (Stoker 57)"

The Modern Monster

NATURE AS DEMONIC

- Christian heritage taught that man should live “above his natural instincts, products of the body which are associated with earth and not salvation.
- Charles Darwin (1809–1882) discovered the theory of biological evolution; this theory seemed to support the idea that man was a natural beast, thought of in its most negative sense.
- The 19th century was obsessed with the idea that man was descended from the ape—and therefore vicious at heart.
- Dracula embodied this demonic view of mankind at its worst.



THE DEMONIC AND THE SUBLIME

- The demonic is related to the sublime, to that mix of emotions when we feel both desire and fear. Example: we seek out “awe-inspiring” landscapes to make us feel wonder.
- In painting, the Romantics focused on storms, terrible mountainous terrains, the “awe-inspiring”.
- Dread, Terror– these words signify a “negative lust”, a daemonic dread, a negative pleasure, and were seen the source of the sublime. In the Christian tradition, God made the “beautiful, but when man leaves the Garden, he experiences the negative beautiful, the daemonic, the “aweful”—the sublime.

"François Biard (1798 - 1882).

Magdalena Bay, Spitzbergen Island. Northern lights." by Medieval Karl is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



THE UNCANNY

Freud, in his essay, “The Uncanny” (1919), defines it as “the return of the repressed”. In other words, emotional truths that we do not want to know about exist in our minds and work themselves out in our dreams and behavior whether we like it or not. We experience this return of the repressed in ordinary life when:

- people make slips of the tongue
- people tell jokes that are revealing in a situation

Freud tries to explain our experience of when the ordinary suddenly seeming eerie or strange.

- One of his important examples is how dolls have an eerie life-like quality. We can think of horror films such as *Dead Silence* (2007) or *Child's Play* (2019).

Promotional image of *Child's Play*





DEFINITION OF UNCANNY: STRANGE IN THE FAMILIAR

According to this theory, we all inherit, both from our individual and collective pasts, certain beliefs in the supernatural—such as belief in the existence of spirits—which most of us, Freud thought, have largely, but not totally, surmounted. Freud wrote that “As soon as something *actually happens* in our lives” which seems to confirm a primitive belief, we get a feeling of the uncanny.

- When the experience brings about an uncertainty about what is real, that is when the experience is UNCANNY.
- In other words, it is *an experience of breakdown between the imagination and the real*.

Freud's concept of the Uncanny helps explain the “eerie” effects of the modern “weird” in horror, sci-fi, and fantasy.

For instance, Stoker describes Dracula as “Undead”, neither dead nor alive. Why did it resonate so much with audiences? Like zombies today, one can speculate about psychological and social meanings for this popularity.

THE GROTESQUE

The grotesque in literature focuses on the human body, and all the ways that it can be distorted or exaggerated: its aim is to simultaneously elicit our empathy and disgust.

Very much like the uncanny, the grotesque draws its power from the combination of the familiar and the unfamiliar, or the familiar distorted. Gothic fiction often has elements of the grotesque, such as Mary Shelley's monster in *Frankenstein* or the off-kilter characters in Flannery O'Connor's stories.

In its earlier iterations, the term "grotesque" was used in a way that overlapped more with "the uncanny," referring to works that blurred the line between the real and the fantastic, such as Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," in which the human protagonist is transformed into an insect. It is interesting to see the ways in which these terms overlap, and it's important to note that their exact "definitions" can be hard to nail down because of the way they have changed over time.



THE DEMONIC: SEXUALITY



After reading the excerpt from Dracula provided in the module, the connection to sexuality should be evident. Dracula is a powerful force of uncontrolled sexuality, or what psychologists might call “the beast within”. Fear of the sexual beast within is a theme Freud and psychoanalysis explore in their theories of sexuality as the basis for human behavior.

- *“He pulled open his shirt, and with his long sharp nails opened a vein in his breast. When the blood began to spurt out, he ... seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound, so that I must either suffocate or swallow some of the—Oh, my God!”*

Clearly, this is grotesque. The experience of the body's fears and desires are here all mixed into one experience. This is a monstrous combination.

FEAR OF THE NEIGHBOUR

- In the Mark Gaddis Dracula released in 2020 on Netflix, Dracula must be invited into the Van Helsing's convent or he cannot come in. The demon must be welcomed in.
- In the novel, Dracula is essentially a really bad host. He terrorizes Jonathan.
- He goes to London, and is essentially a really bad guest, a foreigner terrorizing the local woman (Mina).
- What is a neighbor? We pretend to like them to keep them at a distance. We all know the story of the psycho next door. We've seen the people on television saying, "He was such a nice man. So quiet. Always kept to himself. No troubles." Good fences make good neighbours.

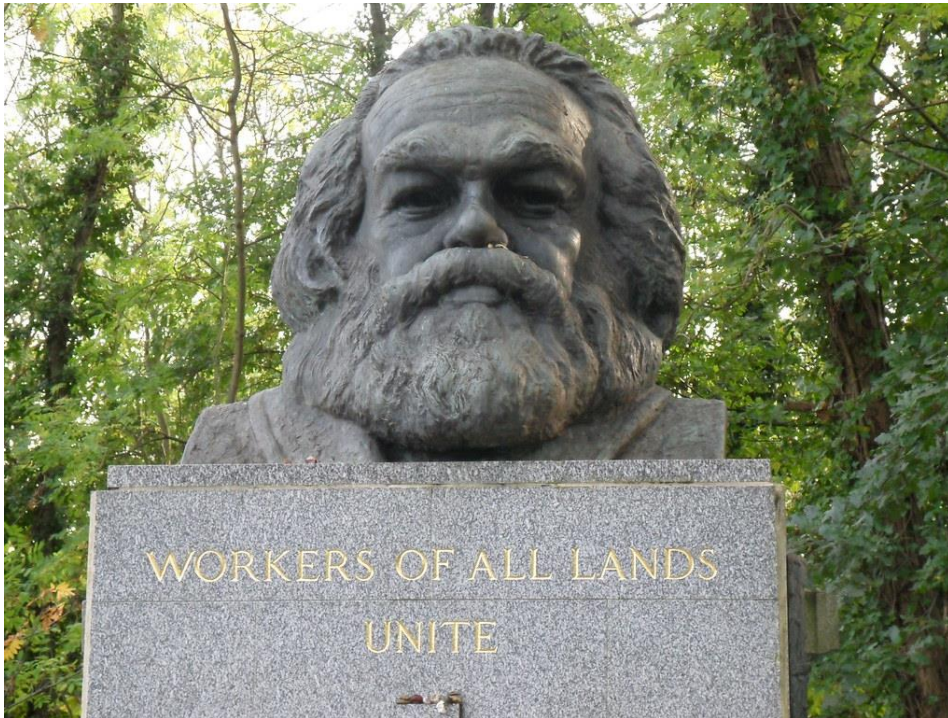


THEME: FEAR OF THE NEIGHBOUR

- For Slavoj Žižek, one of today's leading philosophers, the neighbor as a concept that indicates the "traumatic intruder - someone whose different way of life disturbs us, throws the balance of our way of life off the rails." --Slavoj Žižek, Violence
- We might see Dracula as our uncertain emotional status about neighbours, about our fears and desires relating to foreigners.
- On the one hand, we are attracted to their exotic ways, on the other, we suspect we don't really know what they are thinking, and we are afraid they will destroy our way of life. For this reason, we want to keep them at a distance.
- Is Dracula an immigrant of our imagination? He pretends to be trustworthy and from decent society—a nobleman—but turns out to be the neighbour from hell. He comes to London and breaks all the rules of hospitality for a guest—going about harassing local woman and breaking all the unspoken rules of society...immigration was a relatively new phenomenon...are there parallels with today's fear of the neighbor?



VAMPIRES AND CAPITALISM



In the documentary on Dracula in this week's module, we learn that Freud thought of the vampire when developing his ideas about the return of the repressed and the uncanny; and we also learn that the vampire was an often used metaphor by Karl Marx in his great work Capital: A Critique of Political Economy.

In the story, Dracula is a wealthy "ancient" medieval lord in a Gothic castle who takes to international shipping to come to England because he is buying up property in Britain.

We might ask ourselves whether the novel is partly a critique of capital, the mysterious process by which owners obtain wealth (capital) mysteriously through the hard work of other people (workers).

DRACULA AND CAPITALISM

The vampire's continual need for possession and consumption resembles the ravenous thirst of capital, and the thirst it conjures up in those under its spell. Count Dracula, like a capitalist, grows in strength through his predation—a strength increasing in inverse proportion to his bite-victim's weakening. Similarly, Marx pointed out, "the capitalist gets rich, not like the miser, in proportion to his personal labor and restricted consumption, but at the same rate as he squeezes out labor-power from others, and compels the worker to renounce all the enjoyments of life."

-Tyler Malone. Lithub. (10 31, 2018) *The Zombies of Karl Marx: Horror in Capitalism's Wake*. Retrieved from <https://lithub.com/the-zombies-of-karl-marx-horror-in-capitalisms-wake/>



Child labour in the industrial revolution

THE POPULARITY OF A VAMPIRE

"More than 140 Dracula movies. Roman Polanski, Andy Warhol, Werner Herzog, and Francis Ford Coppola all made films about the Count. There are subgenres of Dracula movies: comedy, pornography, blaxploitation, anime. After film, television, of course, took on vampires. Dark Shadows in the 1960s and Buffy the Vampire Slayer in the '90s were both big hits. Meanwhile, the undead have had a long life in fiction. The most important entrant in the late twentieth century was Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire (1976), with its numerous sequels. Rice's heir was Stephanie Meyer, with her series of four Twilight novels, which, born in 2005, have sold an astonishing 85 million copies and generated a number of even more profitable movies. A runner-up was Charlaine Harris's collection of Sookie Stackhouse novels (Dead Until Dark and its sequels), about the passion of a Louisiana barmaid for a handsome revenant named Bill, and what she wore on each of their dates. This series, too, sold in the millions, and it spawned a television series called True Blood, with copious blood. In 2009 Dutton published Dracula: The Un-dead, co-authored by the fragrantly named Dacre Stoker (reportedly a great-grandnephew of Bram). It made the New York Times's extended best-seller list."

-Joan Acocella, Introduction to Dracula, Penguin/Random House Canada. (see excerpt in module)

BBC Dracula. 2020. Available on Netflix



TERMS AND CONCEPTS FOR HORROR 1 MODULE

Gothic

Vampire

Grotesque

Terror

Horror

Uncanny

Fear of Neighbour

