

THE THRILL OF DRACULA



TWO LIFETIMES OF PLAYING WITH THE DRACULA STORY

BY KENNETH HITE

NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS

**THE
THRILL OF
DRACULA**

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THE THRILL OF DRACULA

"For me, genre means an intensive, almost dreamlike stylization on screen, and I feel the vampire genre is one of the richest and most fertile cinema has to offer. There is fantasy, hallucination, dreams and nightmares, visions, fear, and of course, mythology."

—Werner Herzog

INTRODUCTION

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“You fools! Do you think with your crosses and your wafers you can destroy me? Me! You do not know how many men have come against me. I am the king of my kind! You have accomplished nothing, Van Helsing. Time is on my side.”

—Dracula (Frank Langella), in *Dracula* (1979)

Be welcome! This book is aimed at creators who want to play with the story, or myth, of Dracula. Such creators might include directors, authors, cartoonists, or especially roleplaying game masters (GMs), even more especially GMs of *The Dracula Dossier*, a campaign for the vampire spy thriller roleplaying game (RPG) *Night’s Black Agents*.

But anyone interested in the way the Dracula story has changed over the last century — or centuries — can find something to play with here, too. *The Thrill of Dracula* looks at forty versions of the Dracula myth — some direct adaptations of Stoker’s novel, and some seemingly completely irrelevant to it — and presents the changes those writers, directors, and such have rung on the story for their own purposes. Even a bad film can highlight an interesting change — it’s often easier to use something from a bad source well, if only because the bar is so much lower! Use all these changes, the good and the ill, as examples of and encouragements for the changes you will make to the Dracula story, and even to Dracula.

WHAT I INCLUDED

This book primarily deals with singular works about Dracula, especially those based on Bram Stoker’s novel *Dracula* (1897). Its criteria follow a pattern of expanding, concentric circles. From “inside out”:

- Cinematic adaptations of Stoker’s novel.
- Films featuring Dracula and at least one other character in common with Stoker’s novel, usually Van Helsing.
- Films in the two major studio Dracula cycles: the Universal Dracula series (1931-1948; 2004, 2014) and the Hammer Dracula series (1958-1974). Time and space constraints prevented me from including the two straight-to-video sequels in the Dimension Films “*Dracula 2000*” series, *Dracula II: Ascension* (Patrick Lussier, 2003) and *Dracula III: Legacy* (Patrick Lussier, 2005).
- Films incorporating or using Dracula interestingly, or introducing him into gameable genres. Also in this category, films that insert Dracula into pre-existing vampire mythologies or backstories. I tried to include only one of each general type, as hundreds of films loosely fit this standard.

My selection criteria among similar choices remain fundamentally arbitrary, but by and large the higher on that list a film can rank, the more likely it was to be included. For example, Mel Brooks' deliberate sendup of Stoker adaptations *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (p. 70) thus makes the cut to represent the category of Dracula parodies over the far superior but only loosely Stokerish *Love at First Bite* (Stan Dragoti, 1979), which includes only Dracula, Renfield, and half a Van Helsing.

Except for the Universal prequel *Dracula Untold* (p. 88), which makes it in under criterion 3, I did not include films about Vlad the Impaler. That eliminates such works as *Dark Prince: The True Story of Dracula* (Joe Chappelle, 2000), *Saint Dracula* (Rupesh Paul, 2012), *Dracula: The Dark Prince* (Perry Reginald Teo, 2013), all of which occur in medieval times.

Time constraints prevented me from including the wave of recent low- and micro-budget Dracula adaptations, such as *Vulture's Eye* (Frank Sciurba, 2004), *Bram Stoker's Dracula's Guest* (Michael Feifer, 2008), *Dracula* (George Anton, 2009), and *Dracula Reborn* (Patrick McManus, 2012). If you want to watch a "best of breed" example, try *Terror of Dracula* (Anthony D.P. Mann, 2012), shot in Kingston, Ontario on a \$15,000 budget.

Early in the project, I also realized I just wouldn't have time to incorporate any of the Dracula TV series in any useful fashion. Perhaps if this book does really well, I'll write *The Continuing Thrill of Dracula*, and discuss *Cliffhangers* (NBC, 1979), *Dracula: The Series* (RHI, 1990-1991), *Dracula* (NBC/Sky, 2013-2014), and *Penny Dreadful* (Showtime/Sky, 2014-), along with the best serial-format Dracula ever, Marv Wolfman and Gene Colan's *Tomb of Dracula* (Marvel, 1972-1979) comic.

In chronological order, then, here are the top ten films I most regret not being able to include:

- *Return of the Vampire* (Lew Landers, 1943): An unauthorized sequel to the 1931 Universal *Dracula* (p. 20), starring Bela Lugosi as "Armand Tesla," a vampire awakened during the London Blitz when workmen unknowingly remove the decades-old stake through his heart.
- Zinda Laash (*The Living Corpse*; a.k.a. *Dracula in Pakistan*) (Khwaja Sarfraz, 1967): Pakistan's first X-rated (for horror and shock, although one of the dance numbers is fairly provocative) horror film. Not actually about Dracula, as its vampire is clearly one Professor Tabani (Rehan) who invents a (fatal) elixir of immortality. After that opening, however, it becomes a close remake (without crosses, of course) of Hammer's *Horror of Dracula* (p. 40).
- *Santo en el Tesoro de Dracula* (*Santo and the Treasure of Dracula*) (René Cardona, 1969): Heroic luchador El Santo invents a time machine to loot Dracula's gold, but winds up having to defeat Dracula and his brides in the present. This movie (and its sequel, *Santo y Blue Demon contra Dracula y el Hombre Lobo* (Miguel M. Delgado, 1973)) would actually qualify for inclusion under my criteria, but I just didn't get to it.
- *Jonathan* (Hans W. Geissendörfer, 1970): Dreamlike re-imagining of the tale as a resistance to fascism story in which the 17th-century German peasantry, oppressed by daywalking vampires, selects a man named Jonathan to kill Count Dracula in his castle.

- *Count Yorga, Vampire* (Bob Kelljan, 1970): If American International Pictures had made *Nosferatu* (p. 17), this is what it might have looked like. An attempt to update the Dracula story without using the classic names, moving the action to Los Angeles.
- *Noroi no Yakata: Chi o sū me* (a.k.a. *Lake of Dracula*, The Bloodthirsty Eyes, etc.) (Michio Yamamoto, 1971): The golden-eyed white-painted vampire (Shin Kishida) in this atmospheric Japanese horror film (incorporating some Stoker elements) is the grandson of Transylvanian immigrants, cursed with vampirism.
- *Dracula* (Jack Nixon-Browne, 1973): This hour-long Canadian TV version of the story features Norman Welsh as a melodrama Dracula and Nehemiah Persoff as Van Helsing. It's not available on DVD or YouTube, so I couldn't watch it.
- *Dracula III: Legacy* (Patrick Lussier, 2005): This film moves into post-apocalyptic territory, as Dracula (Rutger Hauer) has plunged Romania into civil war and vampire insurgency.
- *The Librarian: Curse of the Judas Chalice* (Jonathan Frakes, 2008): Adds Dracula (Bruce Davison) to the hyperactive and hyper-gameable *Librarian* franchise. In one of many neat touches, his cover name is "Professor Lazlo," the name of the vampire hunter from *Son of Dracula* (p. 27).
- *Dracula 2012* (Vinayan, 2013): A Malayalam film in which Dracula incarnates into honeymooning Roy (Sudheer Sukumaran) and then wanders around in a cowboy hat with his shirt off. Also, it's partially in 3D.

THE GOOD STUFF

And finally, what I know you really want, an answer to the question: absent some compelling need for my game, which of these films should I see?

The ten best Dracula films in this book (not necessarily the ten best examples of cinematic art) are:

- *The Horror of Dracula* (p. 40)
- *Nosferatu* (p. 17)
- *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin's Diary* (p. 76)
- *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (p. 63)
- The first act only of *Dracula* (1931) (p. 20)
- *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1973) (p. 56)
- *Dracula, Prince of Darkness* (p. 43)
- *Dracula* (1979) (p. 64)
- *Count Dracula* (1977) (p. 61)
- *Son of Dracula* (p. 27)

The Orson Welles radio play (p. 26) is well worth a listen on its own merits, too. It should go without saying that everyone interested in Dracula should read the novel (p. 11), as well.



THE BEGINNINGS

"I have studied, over and over again since they came into my hands, all the papers relating to this monster; and the more I have studied, the greater seems the necessity to utterly stamp him out. . . . He was in life a most wonderful man. Soldier, statesman, and alchemist — which latter was the highest development of the science-knowledge of his time. He had a mighty brain, a learning beyond compare, and a heart that knew no fear and no remorse. . . . He is experimenting, and doing it well; and if it had not been that we have crossed his path he would be yet — he may be yet if we fail — the father or furtherer of a new order of beings, whose road must lead through Death, not Life."

—Van Helsing, in *Dracula* by Bram Stoker

Bram Stoker knew almost nothing about the historical voivode of Wallachia, Vlad III Dracula (1431-1476), a.k.a. Vlad Tepes, or Vlad the Impaler, when he wrote his novel, taking the name from two paragraphs and a footnote in William Wilkinson's *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (1820). Stoker discovered that sloppy, confused history book in the Whitby library in 1890 and seized on Wilkinson's footnote:

"Dracula in the Wallachian language means Devil. The Wallachians ... give this as a surname to any person who rendered himself conspicuous either by courage, cruel actions, or cunning."

This gave him the name of his villain, who his outline referred to as "Count Wampyr." He took one or two other details from Wilkinson, and invented the rest. Stoker's Dracula is not Vlad Dracula, for all that they share a name, a traitorous brother, and victorious military campaigns against the Ottoman Turks. Unlike Vlad, Stoker's Count is an alchemist of Hungarian descent who ruled Transylvania rather than Wallachia, and for all his cruelties is more impaled than impaler.

However, Dracula's later mythographers, beginning with the Turkish novelist Ali Riza Seyfi in 1928, incorporated the legends of Vlad the Impaler into the Dracula mythos. Although popular historians Radu Florescu and Raymond McNally have since backed off their 1972 claim that Vlad Tepes was "the original Count Dracula," the connection has transfused Dracula stories ever since.

MYTHEMES AND MOTIFS

This section lays out the "building blocks," so to speak, of the Dracula narrative in two piles: the early modern legends of Vlad the Impaler, and the novel by Bram Stoker. Every later director, writer, game master, or choreographer selects those blocks that fit with their design and discards others.

Most of the blocks come from the second pile, but increasingly pieces from the first pile find their way into later works.

The technical term for these building blocks is *mythemes*, which are to myths (or stories of any kind; in ancient Greek, *mythos* simply means "story") as phonemes are to words: minimal units from which the whole is built. Other folklorists use the term *motifs*, carrying connotations of theme and image along with structure and function.

THE DRACULA ATROCITY LITERATURE (1462-1568) —

Vlad Tepes' impalements, persecutions, and purges gave rise to a whole cycle of "black legends" — atrocity literature and political propaganda retailed by his enemies or by artists in their pay. Separating the lurid exaggeration from the only slightly less lurid historical fact lies outside the scope of this book; rather, this atrocity literature can be considered the first horror stories of Dracula.

Vlad took his sobriquet from his father, Vlad II, a member of the crusading Order of the Dragon, *dracul* in Wallachian -- *dracula* means "son of the dragon." However, since *dracul* also means "devil" (thanks to the Biblical association of the dragon and Satan) the authors of the atrocity literature referred to Vlad as "Dracula" throughout, making his name literally a byword for terror.

Among the tales and mythemes included in the German chronicles and ballads (most notably Michael Beheim's *Story of the Wrathful Dracula of Wallachia* (1463)) are the following:

- Dracula impales the citizens of Brasov, and dines beneath a forest of dying victims on pikes.
- Dracula boils men alive in a specially constructed pot covered by a trap door.

- Dracula impales nursing babies on their mothers' breasts.
- When his mistress falsely claims pregnancy, Dracula cuts her open from crotch to chest to "let the world see where my fruit lays."
- Dracula claims to enjoy the "dancing" of the writhing impaled.
- When Romany refuse to hang a thief, one of their own, Dracula orders the thief boiled and forces the Romany to eat him.
- Dracula meets one of his subjects with a ragged (or short) shirt, and has the man's wife impaled for not sewing him a better garment. He provides the man with a new wife.
- To end poverty and illness in his kingdom, Dracula invites all the sick and poor to a feast then burns down the hall with them inside.
- Dracula invites the rich and noble boyars to a feast, then strips and chains them and forces them to build him a new castle with their own hands.
- Ambassadors refuse to remove their hats before Dracula, so he nails the hats to their heads. (Told of both German and Turkish ambassadors.)
- Dracula impales a Catholic monk who informs the tyrant that he is destined for Hell.

The Turkish chroniclers (who named him "Vlad the Impaler") added at least one evocative tale:

- He surrounds his castle with a "garden" of impaled victims. Around this garden grows a forest in which he hangs thousands; by the Impaler's order anyone who takes down a hanged man will be hanged on the same tree in his place.

The Russian *Tale of Warlord Dracula* (1481) and its later variants include many of the above stories, and add one or two of their own:

- While imprisoned by Matthias Corvinus, Dracula so missed his impaling days that he constructed tiny stakes to impale mice and birds.
- For the convenience of travelers, Dracula placed a solid gold cup in a cooling stream on a busy highway. Because of the severity of his justice, the cup remained there unmolested throughout his reign.

Relatively few of these in their day bestselling horror stories have (as yet) made it into later Dracula movies, although strong and specific impaling imagery appears in Dan Curtis' *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (p. 56) and Guy Maddin's *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin's Diary* (p. 76).

One other mytheme from Vlad Tepes' past has penetrated popular culture: the fate of his first wife. In 1462, during the final Turkish onslaught that would topple him from his throne, Dracula's wife (her name unknown to history) threw herself from the battlements of Poenari Castle, committing suicide. The sources disagree about whether this was due to a clear-eyed understanding of her likely fate or to a wartime trick message: the latter version becomes the inciting incident of Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (p. 69).

DRACULA (1897)

Bram Stoker wrote the novel *Dracula* over a seven-year period, from a first burst of outlining and creativity in 1890 to a literal last-minute excision of a volcanic eruption (and some earthquake foreshadowing) from the final proof copy in 1897. Its title was also just such a last-minute change; Stoker headed the novel *The Un-Dead* in the manuscript he submitted to his publishers in May 1897; it was published as *Dracula* the next month.

Rather than merely summarizing the novel (there will be plenty of that in later sections, don't you worry) I'm going to look at its ingredients: character, plot, and setting. These are the building blocks you can use, rotate, or discard; the notes for all later (including your own) creative riffs on *Dracula*.

CHARACTERS

Each of Stoker's characters not only serves a narrative purpose, but also carries a symbolic weight. Altering, weakening, or emphasizing the weights, roles, and motives of the characters allows dramatists to "retune" *Dracula* to their own purposes—in some cases, to deliberately undermine the original novel. At the game table, the GM should see which of these types the players have left unrepresented, and see whether she can introduce strong, compelling NPCs to fill in the gaps.

Stoker, being a product of his times, strongly genders his characters, as noted in their descriptions. In the 21st century, creators are less compelled to identify story role or virtue with any gender: Mina, for example, often joins the hunters in modern adaptations of the story, while Jonathan occasionally becomes feminized.

Jonathan Harker: Lawyer, representing the petit bourgeois professional class. Like all the heroes (except Van Helsing)

he is quite young. His ethos is masculine service, his virtue is courage.

Dracula: Vampire count, representing all that is evil about the aristocracy, the past, age, and (depending on one's reading) Russia or the "East." His ethos is cruelty, his virtue is cunning, his vice is rapacity.

Wilhelmina "Mina" Murray: Former schoolmistress soon to become a lawyer's wife and secretary. She is a perfected duality: the "New Woman" of independent opinion and intelligence, combined with the "domestic goddess" wife-and-mother. Stoker emphasizes both her purity and her intellect. Her ethos is empathy (she even pities Dracula), her virtue is love.

Lucy Westenra: Socialite, and a figure of desirability to both upstanding Victorian manhood and monstrous foreign vampirism. She represents an adventurous exaggeration of Mina's duality: her opinions are more "shocking" and her "wifeability" is both more iconic and more sexualized. Her ethos is friendship (to Mina, and as a "horrid flirt," to the men), her virtue is kindness, her vice (exposed by her vampiric turning) is appetite.

Arthur Holmwood: Aristocrat, the future Lord Godalming. He counters Dracula as the good (British) aristocracy, existing to support the heroic bourgeoisie. His hunting dogs, for example, trump Dracula's rats. Like Seward and Van Helsing, he is a technophile. His ethos is that of the British gentleman, his virtue is loyalty.

John Seward: Doctor and asylum-keeper, another bourgeois professional hero. However, he suffers frustration (with Renfield and Lucy's illness) and inner wounding (by Lucy's rejection and death). His ethos is medicine, his virtues are patience and diligence.

Quincey P. Morris: Adventurer, representing America as the future of the Anglo-Saxon race, and (for Stoker) pure masculinity. He is wealthy, but a “natural aristocrat” rather than a man of breeding. His ethos is friendship, his virtue is charity – both generosity and self-sacrifice.

Abraham Van Helsing: Scholar, physician, and philosopher. He is the other great duality in the novel, unifying religious faith (he is a Catholic, unlike the Anglican Harkers and Holmwood) and scientific reason (even his arguments for vampirism are based on evidence). His ethos is resolution, his virtues are temperance (by Stoker’s description, the “temper of the ice-brook”) and faith approaching single-mindedness.

R.M. Renfield: Madman, representing unreason and bestiality, Dracula’s natural allies. His ethos is animalistic: fearful, hungry, desperate, both cravenly worshipping Dracula and cravenly seeking understanding from Mina and Seward. His virtue is humanity, revealed when he rejects Dracula and dies for it.

Mrs. Westenra: Lucy’s mother, representing sickly motherhood (which harms Lucy) as opposed to Mina.

Mr. Swales: Old-timer and seaman. Represents folk wisdom and British pertinacity; Dracula’s first victim in England.

Stoker also created a handful of characters in his outline that he removed from the final novel: Mina’s friend and “tale-teller” Kate Reed, the psychic investigator Alfred Singleton, the painter Francis Aytown, and detective Inspector Cotford. They appear in our own *Dracula Unredacted*; Kim Newman’s *Anno Dracula* novels make Kate into a journalist and vampire, and Bill Eagles’ *Dracula* (2006) uses Singleton to great effect. But they’re otherwise virgin territory for you to exploit or explore.

MYTHEMES

Stoker constructs *Dracula* from a myriad of overlapping plot threads, character viewpoints, and uncanny actions. Separating out the fundamental mythemes of the story for your own purposes, and adapting them to your own dramatic necessities or desires, is the responsibility (and the fun) of GMs working with *Dracula*. Evoke or invoke any of these mythemes in any key or setting and your game or story becomes more *Dracula*-like: e.g., the mysterious 767 filled with dead passengers in *The Strain* pilot (Guillermo del Toro, 2014) echoes the fate of the *Demeter*.

Chapter I: A wolf howls all night under Harker’s window in Klausenburg • Innkeeper’s wife in Bistritz begs Harker not to go to Castle Dracula, gives him a crucifix • Sign against the evil eye • Coach travels fast to the Borgo Pass but Dracula’s caleche still meets Harker there • Wolves surround both coach and caleche • Blue flames by the road • Dracula silences the wolves

Chapter II: Harker left alone at Castle Dracula • “Enter freely, and of your own free will.” • Dracula departs at sunrise • Harker discovers Dracula’s library • Dracula tells Harker not to enter any locked rooms (a classic fairy-tale motif) • Dracula signs the papers to purchase Carfax • Dracula casts no reflection in Harker’s mirror • Harker cuts himself, Dracula stopped by crucifix • Dracula destroys mirror • Harker discovers himself a prisoner

Chapter III: Harker sees Dracula climb head-first down the castle wall • *Brides of Dracula* seduce Harker • Dracula thwarts his Brides’ approaches to Harker, feeds them an infant

Chapter IV: Dracula orders Harker to write postdated letters • Harker tries to smuggle letters out by the Romany but

they betray him to Dracula • Dracula steals Harker's clothing • Bereaved mother berates Dracula; he unleashes the wolves on her • Harker climbs down the wall; discovers gold, fifty boxes of earth, and the daysleeping Dracula • Harker demands to leave, Dracula summons wolves to keep him inside • Harker attacks Dracula with a shovel, defeated by Dracula's gaze • Romany and Slovaks remove Dracula and his boxes of earth • Harker climbs out and escapes on foot

Chapter V: Seward, Quincey, and Holmwood propose marriage to Lucy; she accepts Holmwood • In despair, Seward examines Renfield

Chapter VI: Mina joins Lucy in Whitby; Swales reveals that the girls' seat rests on a suicide's grave • Seward discovers Renfield's zoöphagy • Lucy begins sleepwalking again • Swales predicts his death

Chapter VII: Dracula kills the crew of the *Demeter* one by one • The wreck of the *Demeter* in a great storm; the captain found dead, tied to the wheel with a rosary • Swales found killed • Dog fears the vampire's resting place, the suicide's grave

Chapter VIII: Mina sees Dracula feeding on Lucy at the suicide's grave • Dracula feeds on Lucy at the windowsill • Dracula ships his boxes to Carfax • Jonathan finds sanctuary at a Catholic hospital in Budapest; Mina goes to him • Seward discovers Renfield's religious mania • Renfield escapes the asylum, makes pilgrimage to Carfax

Chapter IX: Mina promises not to read Harker's diary (another fairy-tale motif); marries him • Renfield's second pilgrimage to Carfax; Dracula in bat form calms Renfield • Dracula feeds on Lucy at Hillingham in London • Seward examines Lucy, calls in Van Helsing

Chapter X: Seward transfuses Holmwood's blood and his own into Lucy • Van Helsing surrounds Lucy with garlic

Chapter XI: Mrs. Westenra removes the garlic from Lucy • Seward transfuses Van Helsing's blood into Lucy • Dracula breaks the wolf Berserker out of the zoo • Renfield attacks Seward with a knife, laps up his blood • Berserker breaks into Lucy's room, killing Mrs. Westenra and opening the way for Dracula

Chapter XII: Seward transfuses Quincey's blood into Lucy • A vampire bat kills a horse (Quincey describes this) • Renfield's third pilgrimage to Carfax; he attacks the carters removing boxes • Mr. Hawkins dies suddenly • Arthur's father dies • Lucy turns, Van Helsing prevents her kissing Holmwood, she dies

Chapter XIII: Crucifix stolen from Lucy's body; she rises as a vampire • Harker sees Dracula in London, grown young • As "Bloofer Lady," Lucy preys on children

Chapter XIV: Mina reads Harker's diary without permission, shares it with Van Helsing

Chapter XV: Van Helsing and Seward find Lucy's coffin empty

Chapter XVI: Van Helsing, Seward, Arthur, and Quincey confront Lucy; Arthur stakes her

Chapter XVII: Harker tracks the boxes shipped from Whitby to Carfax

Chapter XVIII: Renfield attempts sanity to escape the asylum, so that Dracula cannot use him against Mina

Chapter XIX: The hunters enter Carfax; Arthur's dogs drive off Dracula's rats • Dracula tempts Renfield with a vision of lives (described in XXI) • Dracula feeds on Mina

Chapter XX: Harker traces the boxes across London • Renfield obliquely warns Seward that Mina's soul is in danger

Chapter XXI: Dracula breaks Renfield's back for his betrayal • Dracula burns the hunters' notes • Dracula dazes Harker and feeds on Mina, then feeds her his blood • Van Helsing drives Dracula away with the Host

Chapter XXII: Van Helsing burns Mina's forehead with the Host • The hunters sterilize the boxes in Carfax • The hunters break into Dracula's Piccadilly house and sterilize its boxes

Chapter XXIII: Quincey and Arthur sterilize two more safe houses • The hunters ambush Dracula in Piccadilly; Dracula bleeds money when stabbed; Dracula escapes • Mina asks Van Helsing to hypnotize her

Chapter XXIV: Dracula takes passage on the *Czarina Catherine*, calling a fog to keep her docked until high tide when he can board

Chapter XXV: The hunters follow on the Orient Express • Dracula summons favorable winds to speed his ship; slips past Varna to Galatz

Chapter XXVI: Dracula kills Skinsky, his go-between at Galatz • Mina deduces Dracula's route; the hunters split up • An accident at the rapids delays Harker and Arthur's steam launch

Chapter XXVII: Mina leads Van Helsing to Castle Dracula • Van Helsing draws a magic circle around Mina with the Host • Brides attempt to call Mina out of the circle; Van Helsing holds them off with the Host; they kill the horses • Van Helsing enters Castle Dracula, stakes the Brides, and sterilizes Dracula's tomb • Harker, Seward, Quincey, and Arthur confront then battle Dracula's Romany escorts • At the moment of sunset, Harker beheads Dracula as Quincey stabs the Count through the heart with his Bowie knife; Dracula crumbles to dust • Mina's scar disappears • Quincey dies • Mina gives birth to a son named Quincey

SETTINGS

Stoker's settings provide much of the thematic and dramatic power for his novel. Most film adaptations, driven by budgets or misguided allegiance to the stage play, collapse the locations to two or even one. Roleplaying games, like novels, can custom-build a setting for each scene.

Transylvania: Represents the Orientalist "East," in all its dangerous and seductive atavism: "every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians."

Bistritz: As Budapest is the border between East and West, and Transylvania the border between Europe and Hell, Bistritz lies on the border between domesticity and danger. The locals know Dracula enough to fear him, but dare not oppose him. This dynamic plays out repeatedly in the Hammer cycle.

Castle Dracula: The literal "ruined castle" of the Gothic, a place where the poisonous ancient ways extrude into the waking world, and where supernature overrules nature. Wolves, blue hellfire, snow and mist, everything that rings the Castle marks it as a fairy-tale (or archetypal) Dark Tower.

Whitby: A similarly Gothic "airlock" or entry point into England, with its ruined abbey, sublime cliffs, and sunken bells.

London: "The midst of the whirl and rush of humanity," the beating heart of civilization. Dracula threatens it from all sides, with safehouses in industrial Bermondsey, aristocratic Piccadilly, lower-class Mile End, and nautical Purfleet.

Carfax, Seward's Asylum, Hillingham: The three houses Dracula invades form a sort of continuum matching the Transylvania-Whitby-London triad. The first is his by right, the second falls to betrayal from within, the third he only takes by invasion.

THE FIRST LIFETIME

*"The world I see
is far away.
Yet very near.
A strange and beautiful world ...
in which one
may be dead ...
and yet alive."*

—Rita Hussman (Anne Gwynne) in *The House of Frankenstein*

This first section carries the Dracula story through its first sixty years—its first lifetime after Stoker's novel. In this period, Dracula made two deep marks in the history of film, and two versions of a stage play left their own stake in the story's heart.

THE DRAMAS

Each of the essays in the next two sections follows the same format, as much as possible.

I provide dates of films based on their year of first release, not their year of production. This diverges from serious film-historical practice, but it's at least a metric consistent across all eras of cinema. For example, *Van Helsing* (p. 79) finished principal photography in 2003, but spent over a year in post-production, with cinematographer Allen Daviau on hand to manipulate the "camera" and sweeten shots in CGI. Given that movie's deliberate blending of CGI and film, where do you draw the line?

Director: The credited director of the film. In cases where some doubt could be cast on the credit, I try to note it in the Criticism section.

Dracula: The actor who portrays Dracula, or the leading vampire in the rare case it's not Dracula himself.

Additional Cast: This header only refers to main characters drawn from Stoker's novel; if the only such character is Dracula, it's absent. Other main characters in the storyline are called out in the Synopsis. This method allows the reader to rapidly see how high the possible "Stoker quotient" might be, in a glancing and superficial fashion at least. If the character has a different name in the film, I indicate their "true Stoker name" with initials. (See the Key box.) Secondary characters, such as the captain of the *Demeter*, or the innkeeper at Bistritz,

I neglect. The Brides, while present in almost all versions (or even cameos) of Dracula, are seldom differentiated enough to become characters, so I generally leave them out of this entry as well.

ADDITIONAL CAST KEY

AH: Arthur Holmwood

JH: Jonathan Harker

JS: John Seward

LW: Lucy Westenra

MM: Mina Murray

PH: Peter Hawkins

RR: R.M. Renfield

VH: Abraham Van Helsing

Synopsis: This entry provides a brief descriptive summary or paraphrase of the plot. Paraphrase necessarily incurs banality, and furthermore in adaptations of the novel, I focus on notable differences from Stoker. Likewise, I concentrate on Dracula's role in the film, not on the story as a whole, where providing a full plot synopsis risks distracting us from the Count's activity or portrayal.

Criticism: A brief critical response to the work in question, covering broader questions of theme and narrower cavils about representation of the Dracula myth alongside standard film-discussion talk.

At the Table: Bits, elements, and tricks you can take from this rebuild of the Dracula story and perhaps use in your own rebuild at the game table. Drop them in as nods to the past or as hooks to bring in a whole cycle of drama: it's up to you. Throwaway business in a film can add flavor or expand into hugely interesting NPCs, subplots, or backstories in a game. This is also where I mention newly added mythemes, attempt to establish internal dates, and drop weird factoids that don't fit anywhere else.

NOSFERATU (1922)

Director: F.W. Murnau**Orlok:** Max Schreck**Additional Cast:** Gustav von Wangenheim (Thomas Hutter [JH]), Greta Schroeder (Ellen Hutter [MM]), Alexander Granach (Knock [PH/RR]), John Gottowt (Professor Bulwer [VH]), Gustav Botz (Professor Sievers [JS])

Synopsis: Upon receipt of an occult letter, the mysterious, simian estate agent Knock sends Hutter to Transylvania to complete a real estate transaction for Count Orlok, who is buying the dilapidated house opposite Hutter's in Wisborg, Germany. Hutter leaves his devoted wife Ellen and travels to Orlok's castle, where the vampire bites him and fixates on Ellen's picture. Reading a book he took from the inn, Hutter begins to suspect he is the prisoner of a vampire. Ellen, while sleepwalking, has a vision of Orlok's second attack on Hutter and cries out his name: her love apparently prevents Orlok from murdering him. Wandering the castle the next day, Hutter sees Orlok in his coffin but flees back to his own room in panic, to be imprisoned once more.

Looking down from his window that night, he sees Orlok loading coffins onto a cart, climbing into the final coffin, and leaving the castle. Hutter tries to climb down the castle wall, but falls and knocks himself unconscious, waking up in a hospital much later. Bargemen sail Orlok's coffins down the river to the schooner *Empusa*, where the sailors open one coffin and find it full of rats. Despite this ill omen, they carry the shipment to Wisborg, dying of plague (and eventually of direct Orlok attacks) along the voyage. During Orlok's journey, Knock has gone mad and been institutionalized. While in the asylum, he reads of a plague outbreak in Transylvania, Varna, and Galaz (following Orlok's route)

and thrills to know his master approaches. Orlok leaves the ship when it arrives, carrying one of his coffins to his newly purchased house.

The plague now strikes Wisborg, and the burghesses impose a quarantine. When Knock escapes the asylum, a mob blames him for the plague and hunts him fruitlessly. Ellen (against Hutter's instructions) reads his book and discovers the way to defeat a vampire: a pure maiden must sacrifice her blood to distract the monster from the first cock crow. She flings open the windows to invite a lurking Orlok inside and faints. When she awakens, she sends Hutter for Professor Bulwer, and lies back to await the vampire. Orlok arrives and feeds on her, and the morning sun disintegrates him. Ellen dies in Hutter's arms, and the last shot shows Orlok's castle now fallen into ruins.

Criticism: To sum up: F.W. Murnau illegally adapted *Dracula*, changing the names and location (1890s London becomes 1838 Wisborg, Germany) while adding an apocalyptic plague element missing entirely from the novel. Galeen and Murnau also charged Stoker's subtext of an impotent Harker vs. an omnipotent Dracula by infusing Ellen's sacrifice with notes of erotic longing and eagerness missing from the novel's Mina. This fooled nobody, and Florence Stoker sued him into bankruptcy. The court ordered all prints of the film destroyed, which fortunately didn't happen. The Murnau-Stiftung restored version from Kino Lorber is on Amazon streaming, and is in better shape than many other silent films of the era.

Critically, what else is there to say? It's a masterpiece, plain and simple. Only its court-enforced obscurity allowed the Lugosi-Browning version (p. 20) to become the default cinematic *Dracula*, and with its return from legal un-death it has

infused not only Werner Herzog's direct remake (p. 63) and the satire *Shadow of the Vampire* (E. Elias Merhige, 2000) but Coppola's free-roaming shadows, Maddin's Freudian interiors, Argento's insectile atmosphere, and Tim Burton's fever-dream Gotham City. Max Schreck's ratlike, pestilential Orlok serves as a skulking anima to the dominant seducer-Dracula, remaining always in the shadows of the archetype to become the Other to even the vampiric Other.

Scriptwriter Henrik Galeen was Jewish and production designer Albin Grau a Crowleyite, but when you create a cinematic Other in the Weimar 1920s, you wind up with a hook-nosed Easterner spreading poison into the pure heart of Germany. (Bram Stoker was a lifelong philosemite, and even he sipped from that anti-Semitic well for the novel.) The end result is nonetheless, as I said, a masterpiece. As Roger Ebert wrote, *Nosferatu* "doesn't scare us, it haunts us."

At the Table: The book of lore Hutter finds is called *The Book of Vampires, Monstrous Ghosts, Sorcery, and the Seven Deadly Sins*.

Wisborg is a fortress on the Swedish island of Gotland; the town is a fictional blend of Wismar and Lübeck, where Murnau filmed *Nosferatu*. Other prints of the film substitute the actual town of Bremen.

Murnau filmed the Transylvania sequences in Slovakia. The exterior of the castle is Castle Orava, which was owned by Matthias Corvinus (who imprisoned Vlad Tepes, though probably not at Orava) and György Thruzo (who prosecuted the "Blood Countess" Elizabeth Báthory). See DH, p. 212, for more.

Stoker took the word *nosferatu* from an article by Emily Gerard, but its origins remain obscure. In the film, it has a taboo quality: "Beware you never say it." Perhaps it contains a kabbalistic or memetic payload?

Orlok sends Knock a document written in Enochian sigils, likely courtesy of production designer Albin Grau. Grau was a Crowleyite occultist, sacred geometer, member of the Pansophical Lodge, and associate of the "left-hand path" order Fraternitas Saturnii.

Bulwer is "a Paracelsian investigating the secrets of Nature and its unifying principles," in other words, a scientific (or theosophical) alchemist.

The wolf in the film is a jackal (sacred animal of Anubis) or hyena (in medieval Egyptian and Greek lore, a vampire animal).

Orlok can sleep in a plague pit. He must sleep on unhallowed soil, not "native earth."

The first use of mosquitoes as vampire spoor; Dario Argento (p. 86) picks up on this.

Empusa refers to a classical Greek vampire demigoddess, the daughter of Hekate.

Orlok uses his rats to foil inspection of his boxes; vampires can use rats to make their nests uninviting to casual (or even official) visitors.

DRACULA: THE VAMPIRE PLAY (1924, 1927)

Author: Hamilton Deane (1924), John L. Balderston (1927)

Dracula: Edmund Blake (first in UK), Raymond Huntley (first in London), Bela Lugosi (first in US), others

Synopsis (Deane, 1924): Deane's play occurs in the home of Jonathan Harker, on Hampstead Heath in London. It begins after Lucy Westenra's death, during a similar mysterious illness suffered by Harker's wife Mina. Quincey Morris is a female character, an American friend of Mina's. After mesmerizing the maid, Count Dracula presents himself as an aristocratic neighbor with a gentlemanly interest in Mina's peculiar anemia. Eventually, Dr.

Seward (who also runs the nearby insane asylum) calls in Professor Van Helsing, who deduces that Mina's illness is the work of a vampire! Van Helsing meets the Count and determines his nature with the wall mirror, and drives him away with garlic.

Van Helsing recruits the others to his purpose, although Renfield spies on his conversation. Torn between fear of Dracula and concern for Mina, Renfield fails to convince or warn the hunters. Van Helsing provides Mina with garlic, but her maid removes it and opens the window. Offstage, Harker traces Dracula's other boxes and the hunters sterilize them, reducing him to one box at Carfax they leave undisturbed. Lucy begins her depredations as the "Bu-ful Lady" and Van Helsing convinces Godalming that she must be destroyed. Van Helsing uncovers the maid's hypnosis, Mina deduces her attacker is Dracula. Renfield warns Seward that Dracula has entered the house, then Dracula kills him as a traitor. The hunters corner Dracula but he escapes in a flash of light. At sunset, Van Helsing, Seward, Harker, and Godalming enter Carfax and slay Dracula.

Synopsis (Deane & Balderston, 1927): Dr. John Seward lives with his daughter Lucy in his insane asylum in the English countryside. One of his patients, Renfield, keeps escaping and launching into rants about his "Master's" approach. But Seward has bigger problems; his daughter suffers from a mysterious anemia. Even the kindly visits of Seward's new neighbor Count Dracula of Transylvania are of no avail. Lucy's fiancé Jonathan Harker moves into the asylum to help care for her; Seward summons his old mentor Professor Van Helsing, an authority in mysterious diseases.

After attending Lucy, Van Helsing meets the Count and deduces that he is a vampire, and that Lucy suffers from his bite. Van Helsing explains that a vampire

must sleep by day in a coffin on his native soil; Harker soon discovers that the Count brought six coffins full of earth with him from Transylvania. Meanwhile, Dracula has mesmerized not just Lucy but her maid, ensuring him constant access to Lucy despite all Van Helsing's precautions. Harker, Seward, and Van Helsing find five coffins in Dracula's house (offstage) but cannot discover the whereabouts of the sixth. Eventually, they realize that Renfield's "Master" is the Count. The hunters trick the madman into revealing the Count's final coffin—hidden in the basement of Seward's asylum! The Count has been using a secret passage to come and go in the madhouse. Van Helsing and company follow the passage to the vampire's resting place, and Harker stakes Dracula, freeing Lucy, the maid, and Renfield from his malign power.

Criticism: Although the play remains hugely popular, it isn't very good—too talky by far, and too dependent on Renfield's metronomic escapes and infodumps. It does add a wonderful direct confrontation between Dracula and Van Helsing, which most of the movies adopt in one form or another. Its compression of story and setting were necessary to economically perform it on stage in the 1920s, but have had a baleful influence on almost all later film adaptations of the novel.

At the Table: Along with the drawing-room confrontation between Van Helsing and Dracula, the play adds the mythemes of the mesmerized maid, opera cape, wolfsbane, and the coffin hidden inside the victim's house.

Dracula's ability to immediately mesmerize and flip servants, lackeys, functionaries, etc. makes him extra threatening to the upper or official class, in the 1920s and today. It's fair to say that no building with human security is safe from Dracula.

The 1924 playscript includes Renfield's weird line from the novel regarding the fly: "its wings are typical of the aerial powers of the psychic faculties." Can Renfield gain psychic powers by eating flies, as well as extra life?

The "wolfsbane" Van Helsing describes in the 1927 play as a desert plant that grows only in Central Asia is apparently not the more usual wolfsbane *Aconitum*, or aconite, which grows in mountain meadows across Europe and Asia. It may be related to the rare moonlight-blooming *Mariphasa lupina lumina*, which grows only in Tibet according to Universal's *Werewolf of London* (Stuart Walker, 1935).

The hunters in 1924 sterilize Dracula's boxes with garlic, in 1927 with holy water; in neither case do they use the Host as in the novel.

DRACULA (1931)

Director: Tod Browning

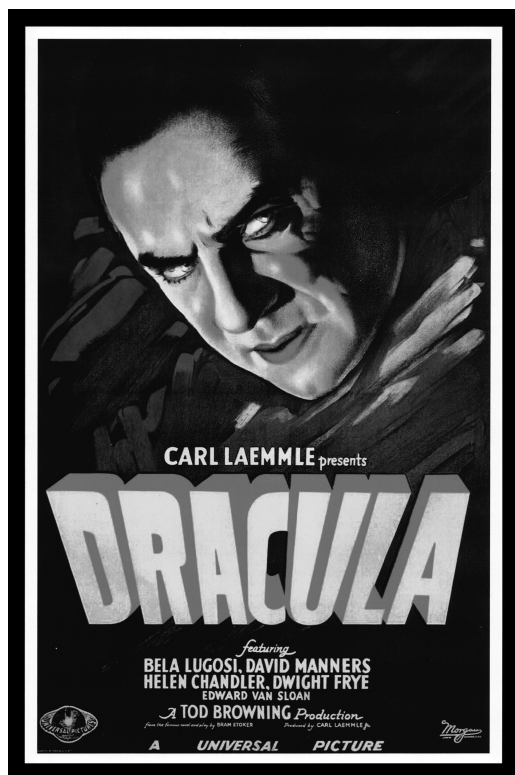
Dracula: Bela Lugosi

Additional Cast: Helen Chandler (Mina Seward), David Manners (John Harker), Dwight Frye (Renfield), Edward van Sloan (Van Helsing), Herbert Bunston (Doctor Seward), Frances Dade (Lucy Weston)

Synopsis: Renfield, a solicitor traveling in Transylvania on business, arrives at Borgo Pass to meet the coach of his client, Count Dracula. At one point, he sees a bat seeming to guide it in its reckless travel to Dracula's castle. The Count welcomes him: "I am Dracula — I bid you welcome." While Renfield and Dracula discuss the Count's purchase of Carfax Abbey in England, Dracula offers his guest a glass of wine. Either mesmerized or drugged, Renfield opens the window to escape, but finds a

huge bat blocking his path. Renfield faints and Dracula's three brides close in, but the Count waves them aside and attacks his guest himself. Renfield, now enslaved by Dracula, accompanies his coffin on board the ship *Vesta* bound for London. Lashed by storms, when it arrives Renfield is the only living soul on board, a giggling madman. He is committed to Dr. Seward's asylum, across the park from Carfax Abbey.

On his way to the London Opera House, Dracula kills a flower girl. To the strains of *Die Meistersinger* he approaches a box, mesmerizing the attendant to deliver a message to Dr. Seward within. He takes advantage of the opportunity to introduce himself to Seward, his daughter Mina, and her friend Lucy Weston and fiancé John Harker. That night, he kills Lucy and Dr. Van Helsing, examining the body, declares it the work of the Un-Dead. Van Helsing discovers that Renfield



fears wolfsbane; Dracula begins to prey upon Mina, mesmerizing the servants to clear his path. Dracula comes to pay his respects, and meets Van Helsing, whose name he recognizes. Van Helsing, likewise, notices that the Count casts no reflection in a mirror-topped cigarette case. The Count exits abruptly and leaves the grounds in (offstage) wolf form, then later uses Lucy to lure Mina outside to meet him.

After more byplay with Renfield, Dracula appears and announces that Mina belongs to him. Van Helsing resists his mesmerism, then drives him away with a crucifix. Dracula once more attacks Mina, and in her newly manic vampirized state she tries to bite Harker. Van Helsing and Harker deploy the crucifix to reveal her condition to Mina and her father. Again Dracula's mesmerism defeats Van Helsing's precautions, and he carries Mina away with him this time. Renfield escapes again, this time heading for Carfax Abbey. Van Helsing and Harker follow him, and when Harker sees Mina and shouts, Dracula believes Renfield has betrayed him. Dracula hurls Renfield down the stairs and disappears into the crypt with Mina. Harker and Van Helsing break in, and as Van Helsing stakes the vampire offstage, Harker sees Mina suffer the attack then recover. Mina and Harker climb the stairs into the new dawn, leaving Van Helsing alone in the dark crypt.

Criticism: Is it possible for a film to be simultaneously iconic and bad? Not "iconic for being bad" but plain old iconic — establishing the rules for cinematic Draculas to respond to or rebel against for the next century. In the first act of *Dracula*, Browning (and cinematographer Karl Freund) and Bela Lugosi combine their talents to present a Dracula inextricably tied to the past, to the Gothic, to aristocracy and queasy seduction, to brutality, to unnatural sex

and inverted Christianity. All of these things (except maybe the seduction) come straight out of Stoker, but Lugosi dials down the novel's animalism and plays up the mesmerism (following the path of the stage play he'd performed the lead in for years) and scriptwriter Garrett Fort introduces the — iconic — line "I never drink ... wine." Even after decades of camp and detournement, Lugosi's authentically Transylvanian accent still sells that line along with Stoker's classic "children of the night" and the play's "For one who has not lived even a single lifetime ..." cut at Van Helsing. The play provided the evening clothes and opera cape, but it was Lugosi's decision on stage and in film to code Dracula as a mentalist or magician, and to play him as a "Valentino gone slightly rancid" in *Dracula* scholar David Skal's memorable phrase. Even Christopher Lee and Gary Oldman bow to Lugosi's performance in their own, and Frank Langella purely updated Lugosi's seducer to the 1970s.

The lesser parts have also felt the Browning chill: Dwight Frye's unhinged Renfield has almost completely erased the novel's genteel madman; David Manners' bland Harker has likewise nearly expunged the novel's heroic lover. And here's where we must take notice of the second half of the question, because *Dracula* is a bad movie despite its legendarily perfect first act. Browning wrested control from Freund but didn't care enough to use it: shots become static and stagy, the actors are lost or falling back on instinct, whole plot lines ignored (Lucy isn't staked in the film) or stepped on (Dracula is staked off screen). Why the movie drops dead 20 minutes in remains an open question: was Browning drunk, a silent-film director out of his element, attempting a dreamlike feel (as Carl Dreyer successfully established

in his contemporaneously filmed *Vampyr* (1932)), pining for his dead muse Lon Chaney, Sr. (who would have played Dracula had he not died of cancer in 1930), or sabotaged by a junky script based on the stage play and by Universal's Depression-era penny pinching? The end result is a film as incompatible with itself as its famous armadillos are with Dracula's castle, a film trapped between terrifying life and stultifying death.

At the Table: Because viewers have likely gone to sleep by that point, the single most badass thing ever said on screen by Van Helsing doesn't get its proper respect:

HELSING: Should you escape us, Dracula, we know how to save Miss Mina's soul if not her life.

DRÁCULA: If she dies by day. But I shall see that she dies by night.

HELSING: And I will have Carfax Abbey torn down stone by stone, excavated a mile around. I will find your earth box and drive that stake through your heart.

I criticize Garret Fort a good deal, but this is just perfect.

Dracula walking through the spider web is both visually creepy and startling and a neat idea for misdirection: "Nobody could have come through here, there are thick spiderwebs across the whole corridor."

The Jerusalem cricket emerging from the tiny coffin in the bizarre opening montage may have been test footage or merely intended to suggest metamorphosis; Dario Argento borrows the insectile imagery in his own version (p. 86).

The armadillos in that same sequence come from Browning's notion of the weird. One excellent Internet explanation holds that fastidious vampires keep armadillos around to eat the worms and beetles that would otherwise infest their grave earth.

This film is when Stoker's Carfax became "Carfax Abbey." It also introduces

the "Dracula meets Mina at the opera" mytheme.

In Universal continuity, Dracula's Brides remain un-staked and Un-Dead in Transylvania.

Browning filmed the Borgo Pass exteriors at Vasquez Rocks, where Captain Kirk would decades (or centuries) later defeat the Gorn.

DRÁCULA (1931)

Director: George Melford

Dracula: Carlos Villarias

Additional Cast: Lupita Tovar (Eva Seward [MM]), Barry Norton (Juan Harker), Pablo Alvarez Rubio (Renfield), Eduardo Arozamena (Van Helsing), José Soriano Viosca (Dr. Seward), Carmen Guerrero (Lucía Weston)

Synopsis: Once silent films went the way of the stereopticon, Hollywood studios had to make foreign-language films for foreign markets. In 1930, during pre-production of the Tod Browning-Bela Lugosi *Dracula* (p. 20), Universal hired (non-Spanish-speaker) George Melford to shoot a Spanish-language *Dracula* simultaneously, from the same script and on the same sets as the Browning production.

As a result, *Dracula* follows the scenario of its English-language counterpart nearly exactly. The differences are almost entirely those of casting, direction, cinematography, and lighting. Although it contains more cuts and edits than Browning's version, *Dracula* is almost 20 minutes longer, allowing more character expansion in dialogue and incident. The most significant addition is a scene in which Van Helsing and company track Lucy to her crypt and stake her, tying off a loose end left dangling by Browning. Rather than shoving Renfield down the stairs as in Browning's version, Melford has Dracula hurl Renfield off the sheer edge of the staircase to plummet to his death.

Criticism: The key to Melford's *Dracula* is that he and the crew got to see the rushes of the Browning version and think up better, more effective ways to shoot and block the same material, and punch up Garrett Fort's script. And indeed they did; in almost every critical respect this version beats Browning's. Almost. Sadly the lead actor, Carlos Villarías, also got to see Lugosi's performance, and apparently adapted only the campiest and stagiest aspects of it. When combined with his "fierce and threatening" eye-popping bit, it badly weakens his suave, predatory Dracula. It's a shame, because Eva (teasing, then drained, then manic), Van Helsing (pugnacious, almost cruel), and especially Dr. Seward (showing real paternal concern throughout) all receive far superior performances in better-written roles. Agree to disagree, perhaps, about Pablo Alvarez Rubio's weirdly oracular, schizophrenic Renfield.

At the Table: Melford had to shoot his movie after Browning had finished his own shots. Which meant filming at night. That right there is enough to get the blood pumping. What a great setting for a one-shot horror scenario! And indeed, the lovely Lupita Tovar says because she was nervous about her work she used to get to the set early, while it was still black and deserted, and it was just as scary as you'd think. Melford filmed from October 10 to November 8, 1930 — they were shooting on Halloween.

Renfield's choking fits remind me of the Satanic "Ritual of the Stifling Air" promulgated by Anton LaVey, especially in light of what Stoker says about Dracula's foul breath and the air of Carfax: "as though corruption had become itself corrupt." Eva feels a "tightening" in her lungs, Lucy wheezes and pants; her choking out at the end comes from Stoker and perhaps from *Carmilla* (1872) by J. Sheridan LeFanu.



Especially in this version, Renfield acts as the divine fool, providing truth and exposition much as Hamlet does in his madness.

Melford's Van Helsing appears to be Swiss, a potentially interesting connection with the Genevan citizen Frankenstein.

Melford frames the final shot clearly depicting Harker and Eva going up out of Carfax to marriage and symbolic Heaven, and Van Helsing remaining below in symbolic Hell with his victim.



DRACULA'S DAUGHTER (1936) —

Director: Lambert Hillyer

Daughter: Gloria Holden (Countess Marya Zaleska)

Additional Cast: Edward van Sloan (Van Helsing)

Synopsis: The film opens just minutes after the end of Browning's *Dracula* (p. 20), as two policemen enter Carfax Abbey and discover Renfield's body. They

soon stumble over Van Helsing, dusting himself off after staking Dracula, and take him into custody for the murder—although Van Helsing points out that his victim had already been dead for five hundred years. At Scotland Yard, Sir Basil Humphrey (Gilbert Emery) hears Van Helsing out but advises him to change his story to avoid execution or the madhouse. Instead, Van Helsing asks his former pupil, the psychiatrist Dr. Jeffrey Garth (Otto Kruger), to assist in his defense.

Meanwhile, Dracula's daughter and her manservant Sandor (Irving Pichel) steal Dracula's body from the police station and burn it; Countess Zaleska hopes this will free her from her father's curse of vampirism. Sandor, however, insists that she still thirsts for blood; he accompanies her as she stalks, mesmerizes (with her ring), and kills a toff outside the theatre. Zaleska meets Garth at a society function and asks him for advice with her condition; he recommends she face her compulsion and actively resist it. She obtains Lili (Nan Grey) to model for her paintings, but gives in to her cravings and attacks her. In the hospital, Garth attempts to hypnotize Lili to discover who attacked her, but the strain of recall kills her.

Garth and his jealous girlfriend-secretary, Baroness Janet Blake (Marguerite Churchill) slowly realize the truth about Zaleska, even as she resigns herself to her appetites and her fate. Now her only desire is to make Garth a vampire, hoping perhaps to imbibe his willpower. To this end, she kidnaps Janet and hijacks an airplane for her escape to her ancestral castle in Transylvania. Garth follows with Van Helsing and agrees to trade his life for Janet's, but a jealous Sandor (who craved vampiric immortality) shoots Zaleska through the heart with an arrow. She dies, and the Transylvanian gendarmes kill Sandor.

Criticism: This weird, weird movie begins in the cellars of Carfax — or more accurately, it began as a bit of dirty pool by MGM mogul David O. Selznick, who bought the rights to the short story “Dracula’s Guest” and the title *Dracula’s Daughter* (among others) from Florence Stoker solely to gum up Universal’s attempt to make a sequel to its film. While he squatted on the property, Selznick hired John Balderston to write a script never intended to be shot: Balderston obliged with a paean to sado-masochism.

When Universal finally bought Selznick’s interest in the sequel (at a tidy profit for him) they tried to get James Whale, auteur of *Bride of Frankenstein*, to direct it. More interested in making *Show Boat* than another horror film, but not wanting to bite Universal’s hand directly, Whale turned in a series of script drafts, each less filmable than the last, mostly to troll the Production Code Administration. Finally, Universal once more cheaped out on a Dracula production, axing a 15th-century opening act and bringing back from the original only Edward Van Sloan as Van Helsing (much better with good direction, but given a second-banana part). Instead, Universal got the image rights from Lugosi to make a wax dummy of him, and never quite figured out what to do with it or with the rest of the script.

How does Zaleska know Dracula was dead? Is she his blood daughter, his vampiric get, or some other thing? Nothing is ever made clear in this movie — from Zaleska’s powers (she never shows any except mesmerism, which she does by means of a ring, not her eyes) to her sexuality. Is she even a vampire? She burns Dracula’s body while holding a cross at arm’s length, for instance. The movie has two of the greatest sublimated lesbian scenes in early film, but Zaleska also dines on a male toff and wants to share eternity (for reasons opaque to the viewer)

with Dr. Garth, a bland nonentity unworthy of both the Countess and of the captivating human Janet. These ambiguities, George Robinson’s deep, intent cinematography, and Gloria Holden’s imperious, self-hating performance (she didn’t want to see her career ruined like Lugosi’s) give the film its uncanny strength. Not only the first lesbian vampire film, it’s also — maybe — the first vampire psychosis film, paving the way for *Martin* (George Romero, 1978) and *Vampire’s Kiss* (Robert Bierman, 1989).

At the Table: The film states that Countess Zaleska died 100 years ago, compared to Dracula’s death 500 years ago.

Balderston’s 1933 draft script names her Countess Szekelsky (from the novel’s Szekely background for Dracula), and introduces Lord Wadhurst and “Chester” Morris. It introduces Dracula’s daughter as another loose end left over from the 1931 movie, along with the Brides. It also incorporates the “magic circle” mytheme from the novel, along with gender-reversing the Dracula-Mina dyad.

R. C. Sherriff wrote a draft for James Whale in 1935 in which the daughter — a peasant girl debauched and then vampirized by Dracula in the 15th century -- goes by the name of Countess Szelenksi. In the opening act, the wizard Talifer turns the cruel and degenerate Dracula into a vampire.

In 1939, the occultist Manly P. Hall, a friend of Lugosi’s, wrote a treatment for Universal for a true sequel to Dracula set in the 1930s. In it, Dracula fakes his death and then outlives his old foes. (“Master, Van Helsing is dead. It is safe to come out now.”) Only Mina remains, living in Argentina under the name Martinez; Dracula arrives on the yacht *Nemesis III*. Lord Godalming hunts Dracula with Mina’s son Quincey, and in a bravura sequence, Mina provides her original notes and a signed copy of *Dracula* as proof of the vampire’s existence!

DRACULA (1938)

Director: Orson Welles

Dracula: Orson Welles

Additional Cast: Orson Welles (Dr. Arthur Seward), Elizabeth Fuller (Lucy Westenra), George Coulouris (Jonathan Harker), Agnes Moorehead (Mina Harker), Martin Gabel (Dr. Van Helsing)

Synopsis: Arthur Seward opens the radio play, attesting to the truth of what you are about to hear. Each character narrates their own record, with Dracula's voice entering all of their scenes from outside the written word. Jonathan Harker travels to Transylvania, meets Dracula to transfer the deed to Carfax, and discovers himself a prisoner. Dracula mockingly offers to let him depart, but surrounds the castle doorway with wolves; Harker remains. He hears Dracula depart for London. Seward narrates the wreck of the *Demeter* in Whitby, and in a flashback the ship's captain recounts the log describing the hellish voyage.

Seward summons Van Helsing to attend the ailing Lucy Westenra, his fiancée. Van Helsing orders Seward to remain awake with her all night and keep the window closed. This works the first night, but when Seward is called away to London on a medical emergency, Dracula has a wolf

break the window and enters the room. Van Helsing reads of child predation by a "beautiful lady" and convinces Seward to stake Lucy as he offers the Service for the dead. Discovered raving in Transylvania, Harker is transferred to Seward's hospital for observation. His fiancée Mina shows Harker's diary to Seward and Van Helsing, who realize that Dracula was the vampire who turned Lucy. They track his boxes of earth to Carfax and cleanse 38 of them, but while they are in his crypt, Dracula attacks Mina.

Seward, Harker, and Van Helsing destroy 11 more boxes in Piccadilly and escape Dracula, but cannot find the last box. At sunset, Mina enters a trance and quotes Dracula; realizing what she has done, she asks Van Helsing to hypnotize her as a means of tracking the Count. They follow Dracula to Transylvania, always one step behind, and split up to try and block the vampire from his castle. Fleeing Harker and Seward, Dracula's Slovaks wreck his cart and run, spilling the vampire out of his coffin in the fading sunlight. Harker positions himself to stake the fiend, but Dracula calls to all his servants: "Elements of darkness, rain ... evil wind, mist and mold and tempests ... Claw, wing, tooth, scale, tissue of flesh, Death of my death. Dead and undead." With animal strength, Mina snatches the stake and hammer from Harker — all is lost — but at the moment of sunset, she drives the fatal blow home. Her bite wound fades, and Dracula crumbles to dust.

Criticism: This premiere performance of Welles' Mercury Theatre on the Air came about thanks to a re-release of the Browning-Lugosi *Dracula* in 1938. Seeing a seven-year-old film smash box office records, Welles rushed into writer John Houseman's hotel room with only three days to go before their debut and told him "We're doing Dracula!" To avoid trouble



with Universal, Welles and Houseman went back to the novel and rescued plenty of material including (of course) stuff considered too racy for film by the Hollywood censors. Welles' Dracula intoning "flesh of my flesh" when he preys upon Lucy, then Mina, out-lurids Lugosi, and the "splorch" of the final staking sequence (Welles used a watermelon) contrasts dramatically with the off-screen death of Dracula in the film.

Welles and Houseman combined Seward and Holmwood into "Arthur Seward," whose narrator role became so central that Welles took it for himself, adopting a mid-Atlantic accent, as well as playing Dracula, using more weird intonations than accent there. The accent prize goes to Martin Gabel, whose Van Helsing sounds more like Lugosi than it does a Dutchman! Unusually for adaptations, Welles and Houseman use the changes to drive the story — the question of Mina's loyalty to Dracula becomes far more central in this version, for example. In only an hour, driven by Bernard Herrmann's score and Welles' frantic narrations, the radio performance covers more of the novel more faithfully than almost any cinematic version.

At the Table: Radio let Welles and Houseman recreate the multiple narrators of the novel, creating a hybrid of narration and drama that became a Mercury Theatre hallmark. One that furthermore feels very similar to what we do at the game table, where sound is our greatest (and sometimes only) device for building story. Not for nothing does game designer Greg Stafford describe roleplaying games as "improvisational radio plays."

Try introducing similarly fast-paced narration as the GM, and encourage it in your players — especially players who might otherwise spend an hour over-planning the insertion into Carfax.

Even more than the films, this adaptation compresses Dracula's attacks on Lucy and Mina from weeks to a few days, a useful pacing technique to keep on hand.

This is the first adaptation of Dracula to introduce the "Mina stakes Dracula" mytheme, although Ellen sacrifices herself to kill Orlok in *Nosferatu* (p. 17).

Harker travels to Transylvania in the wintertime, contrary to the May date in the published novel, but eerily similar to the November date in *Dracula Unredacted*. On an obviously unrelated note, John Houseman was born in Bucharest.

SON OF DRACULA (1943)

Director: Robert Siodmak

Alucard: Lon Chaney, Jr.

Synopsis: Katherine ("Kay") Caldwell (Louise Albritton) has invited Count Alucard to visit her father's plantation "Dark Oaks" in Louisiana, but only his coffin-sized luggage arrives on the train to be met by Katherine's fiancé Frank Stanley (Robert Paige) and his friend Dr. Harry Brewster (Frank Craven). Kay can't be there, as she has a rendezvous in the bayou with a Roma witch, Queen Zimba (Adeline De Walt Reynolds), who predicts her marriage to a corpse and then dies, frightened by an enormous bat. After nightfall, Alucard enters Dark Oaks as a bat and murders Kay's father, then finally appears as the party in his honor has disintegrated in shock.

At the reading of the will, Kay's sister Claire (Evelyn Ankers) receives the money and Kay the plantation, a stratagem arranged by Kay to ensure a safe home for Alucard — whom she marries immediately. Enraged, Frank shoots Alucard, but the bullets pass through the vampire and kill Kay; Frank confesses and is jailed. Although Dr. Brewster sees Katherine alive after her killing, he cannot convince the police to

release Frank. He has deduced that "Alucard" is "Dracula" spelled backwards, and calls in authority on vampires Professor Lazlo (J. Edward Bromberg) who confirms that "Alucard" is a phony title and recounts the story of Dracula. The last Count Dracula lived in medieval times, but according to rumor became a vampire and died in the 19th century. Alucard materializes from mist and attacks Brewster and Lazlo, only to be driven back by Lazlo's cross.

Katherine appears in Frank's cell in bat form and drinks from him, then in human form awakens him and explains her plan. She knew Alucard was a vampire, and invited him to America and married him solely so she could become one herself. Now she has turned Frank, and all he has to do is kill Alucard (actually Count Dracula) by burning his coffin while he sleeps in the daytime and they can be together forever! Frank now has an excellent insanity defense, but Kay breaks him out of jail and he surprises Alucard returning to his coffin in an old drainage pipe. Frank burns the coffin, trapping Alucard outside it at sunrise. Shortly afterward Lazlo and Brewster discover the ashy remains, but Frank has gone to find Katherine in her childhood playroom. They arrive to find him alone with her burning coffin.

Criticism: Robert Siodmak went on to make some of the all-time great films noirs, such as *The Killers* (1946) and *Criss Cross* (1949), and this movie blends Southern Gothic, vampirism, and proto-noir surprisingly well. I'd even go so far as to call it the first vampire noir, complete with a femme fatale, a dark family secret, a good man enmeshed in a conspiracy by love, and looming shadows and fog everywhere. Although neither Chaney nor Albritton bring any real heat to their performances, Siodmak uses this weird, stilted, artificial tone to reflect the sterile insanity of Kay's

plan. Throughout the film he unleashes masterful emotional moments, from the savagery of Frank's shooting of Alucard to the domesticity the Count shows when lining a coffin with Kay's native soil. The final agony of Frank's choice feels real, and earned, in a way that many other Dracula films never manage.

At the Table: Alucard casts a reflection, so he may not be the "Lugosi Dracula" but instead some other vampire. However, Katherine identifies him as Count Dracula: perhaps, as with Countess Zaleska in *Dracula's Daughter* (p. 24), the original Count somehow sired "Alucard", even in his Un-Dead state. Neither Universal nor the censors encouraged exploration of the topic, but if during an eclipse or exhausting ritual a vampire can beget children, that seems to be ... pregnant ... with story possibilities.

If Alucard is Dracula, this is the first mustached Dracula on screen.

"Don't use that word. We don't like it." Katherine prefers "Un-Dead" to "vampire." Is this her monomaniacal confabulation at work, or do vampires resent the term? Perhaps Hungarian vampires like Alucard and their assigns resent the Slavic word, much as Hungarian folklorists resent the identification of their nation with a Slavic superstition.

In the best scene in the film, Alucard's coffin floats to the surface of the bayou as the vampire flows into the mist and fog on its surface. A coffin that sinks to the bottom of still (not running) water like the bayou is a nearly perfect retreat. Dracula might swim down to it as a rat, or perhaps it only sinks when he's inside it in material form; turning to mist creates buoyancy and floats it to the surface.

Foolishly, he gives up this perfect retreat, allowing Frank to burn his coffin. Burning coffins is exciting, dangerous, and attractive; all excellent reasons for vampire hunters to use that technique.

Vampires might copy Alucard's initial tactic against Frank: he magically topples a tree onto his car, then mesmerically confuses his memory of the whole night. Only the moonlight shining through a cemetery cross protects the fainted Frank.

Katherine and Alucard share telepathic communication (possibly between Louisiana and Budapest) even before she becomes a vampire, an interesting conflation of psychic powers and the supernatural.

Professor Lazlo of Fairfield University in Memphis has endless potential as a 1940s American Van Helsing type.

In a very neat touch, Dr. Brewster paints iodine crosses over young Tommy's bite marks.

THE HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1944)

Director: Erle C. Kenton

Dracula: John Carradine

Synopsis: Mad scientist and disciple of Frankenstein's work Dr. Gustav Niemann (Boris Karloff) escapes Neustadt Prison with the hunchback Daniel (J. Carrol Naish). They kill Professor Bruno Lampini (George Zucco), and take over his identity and his traveling "Chamber of Horrors," which includes the actual skeleton of Count Dracula, complete with stake in its rib cage. Niemann plans to take revenge on Burgomaster Hussman (Sig Ruman) of Reigelberg, one of the men who sent him to Neustadt; when he unthinkingly removes the stake in anger, Dracula's body re-forms. Niemann obliquely threatens Dracula by promising to "protect the earth on which you lie," and Dracula agrees to serve Niemann.

Using the alias "Baron Latos," Dracula ingratiates himself with the Hussmans, especially charming the burgomaster's granddaughter-in-law Rita (Anne Gwynne)

with the aid of his magical hypnotic ring. After giving her the ring to link her to him, he transforms into a bat, mesmerizes Hussman, and drains him. Rita's husband Carl (Peter Coe) recognizes Dracula's crest from Lampini's exhibit on the ring she wears. The discovery of the burgomaster's death distracts Carl from this line of questioning, and from Dracula's abduction of Rita in his coach. Recovering rapidly, Carl mounts a pursuit along with the police. To avoid police attention to his own affairs, Niemann throws Dracula's coffin from his wagon; simultaneously, Dracula loses control of the horses and wrecks his coach. In a desperate race against sunrise, Dracula hurls himself up the hillside to his coffin and reaches it — only for the sunlight to sap his strength. While he piteously scrabbles to open his coffin's lid, the sun burns him back to skeletal form (about 27 minutes into the film).

Niemann later discovers the bodies of Frankenstein's Monster (Glenn Strange)



and the Wolf Man (Lon Chaney, Jr.) frozen in ice beneath Frankenstein's burnt-out sanitarium and revives them, bringing them back to his own laboratory in Visaria. A complicated agenda of body switching goes predictably awry when the bestial Wolf Man kills Daniel's inamorata Ilonka (Elena Verdugo), she shoots him with two silver bullets, Daniel strangles Niemann, and the Monster kills Daniel. The Monster then cradles the dying Niemann and flees, carrying him into the swamp, where both of them disappear in quicksand.

Criticism: John Carradine's first appearance as Dracula (of at least five) is unprepossessing to say the least. He never gets screen time with Frankenstein's Monster (Glenn Strange) or the Wolf Man (Lon Chaney, Jr.), so the picture isn't a true monster rally so much as a picaresque freak show. It's fun to see Karloff actually get to ham it up in a proper mustache-twirling speaking role for a change, and at the end Strange's Monster cradles the dying Karloff in his arms — a great bit, and very meta for 1944.

Carradine has to take Dracula a lot of places in his 10 minutes or so of screen time: he knuckles under to Niemann, is by turns suave and seductive to the Hussmans, gets a bravura mesmeric vision scene with Rita (Anne Gwynne plays her up as an all-American girl in Backlot Gothic-land), and in a shadow-play expertly shot by Kenton drains Hussman in silhouette as a bat. Then he gets into a coach chase and a wreck before dying feebly crawling to his coffin. That's more action than Dracula gets in some full-length features, and Carradine is mostly up to the job. He's best as the seducer, of course; his menace is either animated (in bat-shadow form) or understated. His Dracula is ruled by his passions: fear, lust, hunger, and fear again. That could have been interesting in a more

full-fledged *Dracula*, especially with the Shakespearean Carradine in the title role.

At the Table: The effect of Dracula's re-forming from his skeleton -- first the circulatory system, then muscles, then flesh -- would be even more unutterably creepy described in an RPG session. Although it's a great shot for 1944, it's not scary now.

Dracula's coffin appears in an itinerant freak show, a great story hook and one that could potentially build a much stronger drama. Perhaps combine this notion with Tod Browning's actual masterpiece *Freaks* (1932) and see what comes out.

Even more than in *Dracula's Daughter* (p. 24) this film highlights Dracula's ring:

DRACULA: Wear it. It will drive away your fears.

RITA: It's too large.

DRACULA: It will become smaller.

RITA: No. I'm afraid. Take it back.

DRACULA: It is the bond that links us together.

RITA: I see your world more clearly now. I'm no longer afraid.

Consider the ring as not just mesmeric device but as an actual link to the nightmare world of Dracula. This "world" might be a state of mind as in this film, a past-life experience as in Coppola (p. 69), a gateway for psychic (or physical) time travel as in the *I ... Vampire!* comics, or an actual alternate dimension as in *Van Helsing* (p. 79).

THE HOUSE OF DRACULA (1945) —

Director: Erle C. Kenton

Dracula: John Carradine

Synopsis: Dracula, in bat form, looks through the window of a castle in Visaria and sees a nurse named Milizia Morelle (Martha O'Driscoll) asleep. Transforming to human and using the *nom du sang* "Baron Latos," he enters the castle (and angers its cat) an hour before sunrise and introduces

himself to its owner, famed surgeon Dr. Franz Edelmann (Onslow Stevens). He shows Edelmann his coffin, already hidden in the castle's basement for some reason, and claims to have tired of vampirism. He urges Edelmann to take samples of his blood and analyze it to develop a cure for his curse. Edelmann is already busy cultivating a rare fungus, *Clavaria formosa*, which he can use to soften and reshape bone, and thus cure his hunchbacked other nurse Nina (Jane Adams). However, he agrees and Nina prepares a slide of Dracula's blood. Under the microscope, it appears infested by strange wormlike parasites with branched tails.

Dracula returns the next night, reveals that he has already made Milizia's acquaintance, and learns of Edelmann's discovery. Edelmann agrees to a long course of treatments beginning with a transfusion from his own veins that night. During this procedure, Lawrence Talbot (Lon Chaney, Jr.) arrives at the castle demanding a cure for lycanthropy. Told that Edelmann is otherwise engaged, he runs off and turns himself in to the police. Called in to consult on this madman by Inspector Holtz (Lionel Atwill), Edelmann witnesses Talbot's transformation into the Wolf Man. After examining Talbot at the castle Edelmann decides an irregularly shaped skull pressing on Talbot's brain, combined with his lycanthropic fixation, causes his transformations.

A melodramatic suicide attempt by Talbot uncovers the resting place of Frankenstein's Monster (Glenn Strange) and the skeleton of Dr. Niemann from *House of Frankenstein* (p. 29), and Edelmann adds another item to his crowded docket. Dracula mesmerizes Milizia while she plays the Moonlight Sonata and then the "music of his world," but her crucifix prevents him from sealing the deal. Nina notices Milizia's debility and

"Baron Latos'" lack of reflection and warns Edelmann of Dracula's true intentions. Edelmann arranges a second transfusion, but Dracula switches the flow direction, infusing Edelmann with his own vampiric blood. Edelmann recovers in time to save Milizia with a cross, and then opens Dracula's coffin to the rising sun.

Infused with Dracula's blood, Edelmann now becomes a split personality: good by day, evil by night. His reflection in the mirror fades, and the cat now hates him. He cures Talbot, murders his own gardener, revives the Monster, and kills Nina. Talbot shoots Edelmann, pulls furniture onto the still-weak Monster, and dies with it in the burning castle.

Criticism: Once more Carradine shows why he was cast as Dracula, managing both charm and menace; Chaney remains strong as the unwilling Wolf-Man, his alcoholic degeneration standing in well for Larry Talbot's moral desperation. Onslow Stevens chews the scenery as Edelmann, but at least his "Jekyll" self isn't a bland nonentity. Even Kenton's direction isn't all bad: a genuinely elegiac tone suffuses, and the musical set-piece anchors, the barely 65 minutes of film. But the story reflects a studio, and a writer, that just doesn't care about the property, and even in 1945 Dracula could seem camp or ridiculous if the film doesn't commit to selling him. The "scientific" explanations of vampirism and lycanthropy didn't even play in 1945, and seem ridiculously tacked-on now. Dracula's change of mind about seeking a cure, combined with his ridiculous naïvete in trusting Edelmann with the whereabouts of his coffin, undermine Carradine's good work in the part, and as in *House of Frankenstein* (p. 29) the Count dies too early for his or the story's good.

At the Table: The supertitle sets the film "circa 1880," making it technically a

prequel to *Dracula*, and incidentally making complete hash of any attempt to construct a consistent chronology for the Universal monster cycle. Its 1880 also features X-ray machines and *Newsweek* magazine.

Cats hate Dracula, prefiguring their role as anti-vampire guardians in *Let the Right One In* (Tomas Alfredson, 2008).

Something very interesting could be done with the movies' vampire parasites, not least the movie's notion of a cure for vampirism: "A pure culture of a parasite introduced into the parent bloodstream will destroy not only its own kind, but themselves as well."

Clavaria formosa is a real fungus species now classified as *Ramaria formosa*. To combine the movie's pseudosciences, the fungus' reshaping of bones might explain vampiric transformation abilities.

Consider, then, vampires as symbiotic congeries of species: human, bat, wolf, rat, parasite, fungus. The parasite infects the blood, the fungus reshapes the body and transmits nervous impulses, the human provides shelter and direction for the animals, the rat and wolf provide animal power and cunning for the human.

ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN (1948)

Director: Charles Barton

Dracula: Bela Lugosi

Synopsis: Brilliant surgeon (is there any other kind?) Dr. Sandra Mornay (Lenore Aubert) has been conspiring with Dracula to replace the unpredictable brain of Frankenstein's Monster (Glenn Strange) with the simple, pliable brain of her dupe Wilbur Grey (Lou Costello). Somehow she arranges for the McDougal House of Horrors to import the actual coffin of Dracula and corpse of the Monster to Florida, where she works in her island castle. Her machinations attract the attention

of Lawrence Talbot (Lon Chaney, Jr.), who has been tracking the two monsters across Europe in hopes of destroying them forever. Meanwhile, McDougal (Frank Ferguson) blames the disappearance of his prize exhibits on baggage clerks Wilbur and his partner Chick Young (Bud Abbott); his insurance claim then attracts investigator Joan Raymond (Jane Randolph) who romances Wilbur to get him to lead her to the missing exhibits.

Using the identity of "Dr. Lajos," Dracula attempts to derail the various searchers and investigators, now including Dr. Mornay's suspicious assistant Professor Stevens (Chuck Bradstreet). Dr. Mornay gets cold feet about the plan, forcing Dracula to bite and enslave her. He mesmerizes Joan and Wilbur at a masquerade ball, bringing them to Mornay's castle. Dracula revives the Monster but after more comic business flees the lab, the Wolf Man in pursuit. The Monster kills Sandra and chases Chuck and Wilbur out onto the pier. Dracula turns into a bat to escape, but the Wolf Man grabs him out of the air, and both topple into the sea below. Joan and Stevens set the pier on fire, the burning Monster falls through it, and Chuck and Wilbur huddle in a small boat offshore ... until the Invisible Man announces himself.

Criticism: Weirdly enough, this cynical cash-in stakes a worthy claim to be the best film overall of the Universal Dracula cycle: Barton's direction is assured, giving us a much smoother and less stagy Lugosi this time around. Dracula's confidence and verve drive the story throughout, unlike the Count in the weak Carradine outings. There is no single moment of genius to match the extended Castle Dracula sequence in the 1931 film (or to match the "Who's On First" bit from *The Naughty Nineties* (Jean Yarbrough, 1945)), but the escalating byplay of Abbott and Costello

builds to near-screwball heights. Best of all, the script gives all the monsters sensible motives and never makes Dracula the butt of the joke. (Poor Talbot, however, is the perfect straight man.) Finally, at nearly \$800,000, it had by far the biggest budget of all the Universal series, and the quality shows in the production. Its only real weakness is a thin score and a dearth of true horror, but that might be said of most of the Universal output.

At the Table: Talbot's search for Dracula and Frankenstein's Monster makes a great campaign frame, with Talbot as a mysterious NPC patron giving orders and instructions to investigators slowly closing in on these ultimate prizes.

Dr. Mornay is perhaps the first of Dracula's pawns to actually bring significant skills of her own to the table. A Dracula who mesmerizes the finest medical, scientific, and military minds of the day becomes quite formidable.

Dracula as "Lajos" denies his identity when questioned ("My costume, perhaps?"), and the film treats Dracula as a legend throughout.

CHICK: *I know there's no such person as Dracula. You know there's no such person as Dracula.*

WILBUR: *But does Dracula know it?*

Playing with the ill-defined space between truth-in-fiction and legend-in-fiction becomes high-stakes gaming when a wrong answer can kill you.

Dracula's ring now has the power to recharge Frankenstein's Monster, prefiguring Dracula's monster-reanimating cane in *Monster Squad* (p. 66).

DRAKULA ISTANBUL'DA (1953) —

Director: Mehmet Muhtar

Dracula: Atif Kaptan

Additional Cast: Bulent Oran (Azmi Bugrun [JH]), Annie Ball (Güzin Arsoy



[MM]), Kemal Amin Bara (Dr. Nuri Eren [VH]), Ayfer Feray (Sadan [LW]), Cahit Irgat (Turan [AH]), Munir Ceyhan (Dr. Afif [JS])

Synopsis: Set in 1953, the film's opening act remains remarkably faithful to Stoker's novel. Solicitor Azmi arrives in Bistric, Romania and dickers over hiring a car to take him to Bukovina Pass. A coach collects him and delivers him to Dracula's castle, where a hunchbacked manservant ushers him inside. During their conversation about Dracula's purchase of a number of kiosks in Istanbul, Dracula mentions his ancestor, the Voivode Dracula... the Impaler. Exploring the castle, Azmi finds a book on vampires written by Dr. Nuri, but the section explaining how to kill them has been torn out! He gives a cigarette case to the hunchback, who warns him not to sleep in the castle. Unfortunately, gas piped into the room through the eyes of a portrait knocks him out, and only Dracula's return stops a Bride's attempt to make a meal of him. He gives her a baby and claims Azmi as his. Again, gas incapacitates

Azmi. Only the hunchback's intervention, opening the window and returning his amulet, saves Azmi and Drakula kills his servant for such disobedience. Azmi tries to kill Drakula in his coffin with a shovel, and with several gunshots, then flees. Drakula of course survives and sails to Istanbul in a ship from Varna.

In Istanbul Azmi's wife Güzin, who works as a nightclub dancer, rejects an oily suitor and returns to her cousin Sadan's house. Sadan confesses to sleepwalking down to a suicide's grave on the Bosphorus. Her story proceeds as in *Stoker*; her husband Turan calls in Dr. Afif, who calls in Dr. Nuri. He is too late: in the form of a bat, Drakula frightens Sadan's mother to death and drains Sadan, who begins killing children. Azmi and Nuri convince Turan that Sadan has become a vampire; they stake her as Drakula moves on to Güzin. Although a month pregnant, she keeps taking night work for Red Crescent benefits, and Drakula beats up a stagehand and corners her in the empty nightclub. He forces her to change clothes and dance for him; Azmi surprises them and tears off Drakula's cape. Unable to shapeshift to a bat, Drakula flees into the Istanbul streets. Azmi follows him to a graveyard and stakes the vampire lord, then returns home to remove all the garlic from his doors and windows with Güzin.

Criticism: The first direct identification of Bram Stoker's Dracula with Vlad the Impaler came (unsurprisingly, in retrospect) from the Turks, who after all were on the receiving end of Vlad's hobby. In 1928, Ali Riza Seyfi wrote a novel called *Kazikli Voyvoda*, or *Impaler Voivode*, xeroxing Stoker's novel with Turkish characters and moving the action to Istanbul rather than London. *Drakula Istanbul'da* ("Dracula in Istanbul") adapts that book, and it is — modulo the terrible YouTube transfer, haphazard subtitles, and

other unavoidable artifacts of time — not a bad flick, although it seldom rises to true horror. It uses its Istanbul locations quite well, and takes every advantage it can of Güzin's nightclub dances as provocative item numbers. The best performances are Irgat's tempestuous Turan and Annie Ball's vivacious Güzin, although Bulent Oran's earnest curiosity carries Harker through the long Castle sequence. As a lens through which to examine Dracula, however, it's vitally interesting.

Filed at the height of Turkish secularism, it doesn't code Dracula as a Christian menace (unless that's why he only has one Bride) or invoke anything more sacred than garlic bulbs (not crosses, of course) and folk wisdom to defeat him. Güzin may dance seductively, but she virtuously rejects untoward advances, and she dances exclusively for charity (the Red Crescent) in the last act. Atif Kapitan's politely menacing Dracula has a nice line in appearing and disappearing, and is convincingly cruel in his castle. But he steps on his menace pretty thoroughly in the last act wherein he punches a stagehand, demands Güzin dance for him instead of biting her, loses his bat-shifting cape in a struggle with Azmi thus setting up a not remotely tense foot chase, and then hides in his coffin rather than using the "strength of twenty men" to finish off the sole vampire slayer in sight. Dracula movies — even Dracula movies — live and die by the strength of their vampire, not of their garlic.

At the Table: Azmi travels to Transylvania on "the 14th of the month, when evil souls are let loose."

This is the first movie to show Dracula climbing down the castle wall and the first Dracula with visible canine fangs, although Dracula's fangs point sideways rather than downward, almost like tusks.

This film introduces the mytheme of Dracula's manservant to the mix. Stoker had initially outlined a deaf-mute couple as Dracula's silent servants in London, and *Dracula's Daughter* (p. 24) has her manservant Sandor, but the unnamed hunchback here (who likely enters via the Frankenstein films) marks another first for this flick.

The opening sequence foregrounds the logistics of car rental in Bistric, which seems odd to modern viewers. But in a pre-wealth society, controlling the vehicles allows Dracula to control the town.

The notion that Dracula's cape is what grants him shapeshifting power echoes the classical legend of the magical wolf skin used by lycanthropes.

The gas nozzle in the portrait is an effective touch, and a possible delivery system for vampire mist in your game.

THE RETURN OF DRACULA (1958) —

Director: Paul Landres

Dracula: Francis Lederer

Synopsis: In Romania (or Hungary), a group of men including a supposed government agent named Meiermann (John Wengraf) and a priest drive up to a cemetery, which (the voiceover informs us) Dracula may inhabit. The team surrounds a mausoleum and at the first crack of sunrise, opens the selected coffin — and it's empty! Meanwhile, on the train out of the country, Dracula kills and assumes the identity of Bellac (or Belak, if his name is intended to be Slovenian rather than French) Gordal, an artist emigrating to America for creative freedom. Gordal had planned to stay with his cousin Cora Mayberry (Greta Grandstedt) in small-town Carleton, California — and so Dracula moves in. Cora's daughter Rachel (Norma Eberhardt) has long hero-worshipped "Cousin Bellac" as a symbol of European sophistication and escape from her constraints, although her boyfriend Tim (Ray Stricklyn) is less smitten with the prickly, nocturnal stranger in her house.

Dracula first feeds on the family cat, then on Rachel's blind friend Jenny Blake (Virginia Vincent) and finally turns his attentions to Rachel. Meanwhile Meiermann has come to America with credentials from the "European Police Authority," and although vampire Jenny in wolf form kills his fellow agent, he recruits Sheriff Bicknell (John McNamara), county medico Dr. Beecher (Robert Lynn), and Reverend Whitfield (Gage Clark) to his ad hoc hunter crew. Developing a covert photograph taken by his dead partner, Meiermann discovers that Gordal doesn't appear on film — he must be Dracula! While Meiermann



and his slayers track Jenny to the mortuary, Tim follows Rachel to the abandoned mine outside town where Dracula has made his lair. Tim shakes her out of her mesmeric state as Meiermann stakes Jenny, which weakens Dracula enough that he falls into a pit shaft and onto a wooden piling.

Criticism: Screenwriter Pat Fielder, in addition to riffing on Stoker and Val Lewton, borrows the plot of Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) — a murderous stranger presumes on family identity to continue his predation in a small California town. She even uses the “covert photograph” bit from that film. She blends it with touches of re-vamped atomic-age paranoia — Dracula lures Rachel to the abandoned mine to “survive this dying world” -- but subverts period anti-Communism. There is indeed a wicked foreigner among us, but he fled Communism for “freedom to live” in soft, welcoming America. All the acting is at least good 1950s TV level, and the score is by *Star Trek* composer Gerald Fried. Lederer's Czech accent (and disgust at playing a vampire of all things) infuse his foreign, disdainful Dracula, who just barely holds on to Old World civility while yearning to kill these simpering dolts around him. His slouch hat and overcoat update the opera cloak effectively, too. The special effects wisely don't reach beyond their grasp: good mist and optical matte shots (and better camera work in long shots) and a bat we only hear convey menace about as well as the budget allows.

At the Table: Again, as science fiction pervades popular culture, Dracula displays telepathic powers, and perhaps even awakens them in sympathetic targets. He tells Jenny she “can see me with your mind.”

This film hints that Dracula is actually a kind of ghost or specter, but one more real than mere humans. “The flesh is only an illusion ...”

With each risen victim, Dracula's powers increase, an excellent way to build tension and danger over time. Similarly, staking Dracula's get weakens him, a new mytheme introduced here.

Dracula can mesmerically command someone to drop a cross they're using to hold him back.

In a nice touch, the vampire Jenny becomes a white wolf, to match her white dress.

Just who are these badass 1958 vampire slayers led by Meiermann? His American-accented partner “Mack Bryant” holds U.S. Immigration credentials: forged or real? His European Police Authority credentials must check out, unless Sheriff Bicknell is just very trusting of weird foreigners. Communist secret police are unlikely to be working with a priest, at least officially. Is there a multi-national vampire-hunting old-boys' network at work?

Dracula's “Gordal” paintings reveal his plan, an interesting possibility for artistic investigation in a game.

BILLY THE KID VS. DRACULA (1966) —

Director: William Beaudine

Dracula: John Carradine

Synopsis: Transforming from a bat, Dracula attacks the daughter of an immigrant couple, Franz (Walter Janovitz) and Eva (Virginia Christine) Oster, sleeping out during a wagon train ride, but the cross in her hand drives him away. He next appears on a stagecoach, where he sees a locket with a picture of Betty Bentley (Melinda Plowman) and becomes obsessed with her. At the next stop, he kills an Indian girl and incites them to attack the stagecoach, killing everyone on it. He takes the picture of Betty and the wallet (and identity) of her uncle, James Underhill, the better to assume control of the Double-Bar B ranch she owns.

Betty, meanwhile, has fallen in love with Billy the Kid (Chuck Courtney),

now reformed from his outlaw ways and working as her ranch foreman. Billy goes to town to meet the stage, but instead meets the Osters and “Mr. Underhill,” and gets an earful about vampires. After Dracula finishes killing their daughter, the Osters get jobs at the ranch house, and attempt to protect Betty with wolfsbane. Billy tangles with Dan Thorpe (Bing Russell), a romantic and professional rival, gets beaten up, and goes to Dr. Henrietta Hull (Olive Carey), who tells him more vampire lore. “Underhill” having established his role at the ranch, he begins to make changes: firing Billy, sending the Osters to live in the stables, and mesmerically dominating Betty. Billy kills Thorpe in a gunfight, then returns to the ranch and takes Betty to Dr. Hull. Sheriff Griffin (Roy Barcroft) arrests Billy for murder, but after using a mirror to prove to herself that Dracula is a vampire, Dr. Hull breaks him out of jail. Billy (and later Hull and Griffin) tracks Dracula and Betty to the abandoned silver mine and

ineffectually shoots the vampire. He throws his gun at Dracula’s head (!) and knocks him out (!!), then stakes him with a “scalpel” that looks more like a railroad spike.

Criticism: While chronologically this film falls well into the “second lifetime” I posit for Dracula in this book, stylistically and culturally it’s a throwback to the old Hollywood, for good or (mostly) ill. John Carradine, of course, was Universal’s go-to Dracula in the 1940s, and William “One Shot” Beaudine began as an assistant director under D.W. Griffith! Ruined during the Depression, he reinvented himself as a speedy director of low-budget films, including *The Ape Man* (1943) and *Bela Lugosi Meets a Brooklyn Gorilla* (1952) with Bela Lugosi. Chuck Courtney had played Billy the Kid on the TV show *Buffalo Bill, Jr.* (1955) when he was much closer to Billy’s actual age; he was most famous for playing Dan Reid, the Lone Ranger’s cousin, on that series.

This perfunctory, sleepwalking movie should not be as terrible as it is. Indeed, the premise and even the plot are sound: Dracula is in the Old West, and a recently reformed Billy the Kid, jealous of the interloper, returns to his criminal ways to gun down the Count. Slavoj Žižek says something about the act of paraphrase creating banality, but in this case, the paraphrase creates potential. It’s the execution that’s banal; Carradine at least has the excuse of having been drunk the entire time. Filmed in four days (or three, sources vary) by the legendarily past caring Beaudine, any flicker of potential was well and truly quashed.

A few surreal moments aside such as Dracula in top hat, floppy red cravat, and cape, announcing himself as “Mr. Underhill” from Boston, or the goth *avant la lettre* marital bed in the mineshaft, it just plods along from bad to worse, and



not even “so bad it’s good” bad. I added this movie to the book for two reasons. First, I wanted to look at Dracula in the context of the Western, and I had entirely misremembered this flick from my misspent UHF-monster-movie youth. The movie I thought this was is the considerably more interesting *Curse of the Undead* (Edward Dein, 1959), which probably counts as the first vampire Western, a subgenre that encompasses not just *Sundown: The Vampire in Retreat* (p. 68) but the Iranian-American low-fi rebel flick *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (Ana Lily Amirpour, 2014), John Carpenter’s 1998 *Vampires* (an homage to Howard Hawks’ 1959 *Rio Bravo*), and Kathryn Bigelow’s 1987 *Near Dark* (the best vampire film of the 1980s, a very good decade for vampire films). Watch those instead of this one. The second reason I included this movie is that it is, after all, still John Carradine as Dracula and that has to count for something. Thankfully, this grease trap would not be Carradine’s final outing as the Count. Pretending for the moment that his brief cameos in softcore disco flick *Nocturna: Granddaughter of Dracula* (Harry Hurwitz, 1979) don’t, er, count, Carradine fans can take satisfaction in TV workhorse Glen Larson’s surprisingly decent “McCloud Meets Dracula” episode. Aired in April 1977, it was the last episode in *McCloud*’s run; Carradine kills delightfully as the senile-actor-or-real-vampire villain. And given its cowboy-cop premise, it’s even sort of kind of (not really) a Western, to boot.

At the Table: The Osters’ German accents merely identify them as Romanian Germans (“Saxons”), probably part of the Romanian immigration to the U.S. Although most Romanians came to America after 1890, several Romanian families homesteaded the West before then.

Dracula instigates an Indian attack to destroy witnesses; in a modern setting, what other tensions might he set off? Protestors, angry mobs, thugs, ethnic gangs — consider Dracula as social poison of another kind.

Dracula instinctively recognizes Dan Thorpe as an evil, resentful jerk: everybody is on Team Evil together. Every setting has a scumbag; that scumbag is Dracula’s natural ally.

This is the first film to explicitly code Dracula as a melodrama mesmerist-mentalizer; his costume is almost a caricature of that staple of the itinerant stage. Dracula’s connection to the “traveling show” as a motif goes back to *House of Frankenstein* (p. 29) but fits nicely into the Old West.

THE SECOND LIFETIME

"His name was Count Dracula. An old and distinguished family. That is the coat of arms over the fireplace."

"Does no one hold the title now?"

"My master died without issue, sir . . . in the accepted sense of the term."

—Klove (Philip Latham) and Charles Kent (Francis Matthews), in *Dracula, Prince of Darkness*

Dracula's second lifetime began sixty years after Stoker, with the rebirth of the horror genre in Hammer Studios' blood-spattered oeuvre. Once Hammer demonstrated the continuing attraction of the myth, other studios and directors have transfused new life into the Count.

THE HORROR OF DRACULA (1958) —

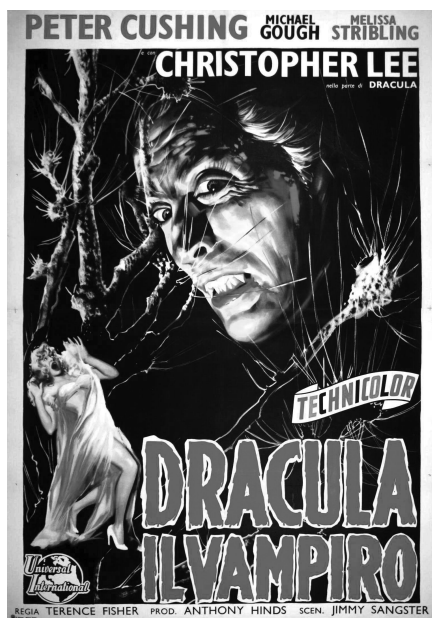
Director: Terence Fisher

Dracula: Christopher Lee

Additional Cast: Peter Cushing (Van Helsing), Michael Gough (Arthur Holmwood), Melissa Stribling (Mina Holmwood), Carol Marsh (Lucy Holmwood), John Van Eyssen (Jonathan Harker), Valerie Gaunt (Bride)

Synopsis: In 1885, librarian Jonathan Harker arrives in Klausenburg on his way to Castle Dracula, where he is to catalogue the Count's books. At the Castle, a mysterious woman approaches him claiming to be a prisoner, but flees before Dracula makes his appearance. From his diary entries, we learn that Harker is actually a vampire hunter, here to kill Dracula. That night while exploring the Castle, he meets the girl again and promises to help her, only to discover that she too is a vampire. Dracula enters and drags her away from Harker, then attacks him. Harker awakens bitten and hides his diary in a roadside shrine before returning to the Castle to stake the Bride. Her death throes awaken Dracula, who traps Harker in the dark crypt as night falls.

Searching for his missing colleague, Dr. Van Helsing arrives in Klausenberg. A serving girl passes him Harker's diary, but when he gets to the Castle, Dracula is leaving in a hearse. Van Helsing can only stake Harker and swear revenge. Dracula seeks his own revenge on Harker's fiancée Lucy, and Van Helsing finds persuading her brother Arthur of the danger difficult. He finally gives Arthur Jonathan's diary; after



seeing the vampiric Lucy, Arthur becomes a reluctant recruit but insists on staking her rather than using her to find Dracula. Arthur and Van Helsing visit the border post between Klausenburg and Karlstadt (where the Holmwoods live) to discover Dracula's destination, an undertaker's parlor in Karlstadt. Dracula meanwhile has seduced Mina and moved his coffin into the Holmwood house. Van Helsing and Arthur discover it too late; Dracula has taken Mina back to his Castle under the cover of night. He buries her in the ground to delay pursuit, and only Van Helsing follows him into the fortress as the sun rises. Cornering Dracula in the study, Van Helsing tears down the curtains and uses crossed candlesticks to force the Count into the beams of sunlight and disintegration.

Criticism: Consider this film (just called *Dracula* in the UK) the anti-Coppola *Dracula*. Relentlessly modern (it was the first Technicolor vampire film) and breathlessly paced yet luridly Gothic to the core, carving to the heart of Stoker's novel while discarding its plot almost entirely,

it would be a great Dracula movie for those reasons alone. But it has in addition three advantages that no production has had before or since: Christopher Lee as Dracula, Peter Cushing as Van Helsing, and Terence Fisher's sure, bold direction. Fisher's sincere Christian vision, of *Dracula* as a fundamental story of good vs. evil, permeates the film. Lee's Dracula both tempts and terrifies, fully animal and entirely demonic — all in only seven minutes of screen time. Cushing brings Stoker's multi-dimensional Van Helsing more than alive as well: pious scientist and plague-fighting philosopher, faith and reason joined. Cushing also depicts Van Helsing's human tenderness and innate leadership qualities with economy and confidence, throwing into stark contrast his more-than-surgical strain of violence. To Fisher, the best of men can still be a beast; the worst of demons is all too attractive. But throughout, Van Helsing and Dracula remain almost polar opposites and their war is a war — is *the* War — for all humanity.

The film is not perfect, of course. The now-primitive day-for-night shots make exteriors chancy, the comic relief at the border hangs an unfortunate lantern on the claustrophobic setting (instead of countries across a continent from each other, civilization and Hell are in neighboring postal codes), and Hammer's idiosyncratic love-hate relationship with the British class system mars the narrative of middle-class heroes reducing an undead aristocrat to dust. The third-act turn (taken from the cursed 1927 play (p. 18)), in which Dracula's hiding place turns out to be the Holmwoods' cellar, works thematically but not narratively. But across all that, Fisher shoots a realistic nightmare, building shots from parallel rising action, and filling the frames with color and natural motion —

the wind effects in this movie alone should be mandatory viewing. Like Cushing's Van Helsing, Fisher's lens combines realism and even irony with faith and violence, that latter quality incidentally unleashing Christopher Lee to become a great actor and a generation's dream of Dracula. *Horror of Dracula*, I submit to you, is the greatest Dracula movie ever made.

At the Table: Harker as Van Helsing's covert operative tightens the story tremendously while opening up lots of unexplored avenues: Does Van Helsing have other agents hunting other vampires? How did Van Helsing learn of Dracula's nature and location? From the jump, this movie assumes it takes place in a whole universe of vampires, one chapter in an ongoing story.

Dracula's motto, according to his arms: *Fidelis et mortem*, "Faithful even with respect to death." The red-and-white striped shield resembles the (red-and-gold) arms of the Draculesti, the family of Vlad Tepes. Dracula's coat of arms changes from film to film, even within the Hammer cycle.

Using a *troita*, or Romanian roadside shrine, as a vampire-proof dead drop beautifully and effortlessly blends of realism, espionage, and the Gothic.

Van Helsing's go-to move when fighting a vampire is to play dead. This works on Dracula and on Baron Meinster (p. 42).

The Hammer Castle Dracula (a magnificent set constructed by Bernard Robinson) always sits most of one day's travel from town, and is thus always reached at sundown. Unless you travel through the forest at night, which has its own dangers ...

THE BRIDES OF DRACULA (1960) —

Director: Terence Fisher

Baron Meinster: David Peel

Additional Cast: Peter Cushing (Van Helsing)

Synopsis: Young French schoolteacher Marianne Danielle (Yvonne Monlaur), on her way to a teaching position in Badstein in Transylvania, has her coach delayed and then diverted by a mysterious man in black who never appears again in the movie. (The credits name him Latour.) Baroness Meinster (Martita Hunt) appears and offers her the hospitality of her chateau, where she describes the sad fate of her mad son the Baron. Marianne sees the Baron from her chamber window, and after finding his rooms and hearing a tear-jerking tale of his suffering, she frees him from a silver shackle chained to the wall. At which point, of course, he kills his mother and escapes, leaving Marianne to cower before the ranting of his nursemaid Greta (Freda Jackson). She runs into the night, to be found the next morning by Van Helsing, who escorts her to the school and overawes its headmaster Dr. Lang (Henry Oscar) with his credentials.

The local curé Father Stepnik (Fred Johnson) has called Van Helsing in to investigate local vampirism, and indeed the Baron has killed a girl (Marie Devereaux). Thanks to Greta's interference, the girl rises as a vampire and escapes to Castle Meinster. Van Helsing tracks her there, and after a set-to with the Baron meets the now-turned Baroness and hears her son's story from her: how he was utterly debauched and became a vampire, and she fed him girls while keeping him chained up. Van Helsing stakes the Baroness. Meanwhile, Meinster has found Marianne at the school and convinced her to marry him; her friend Gina (Andree Melly) is envious, then killed by the Baron. Van

Helsing orders Gina's body guarded in the stable, but while Marianne is on guard Gina rises and tries to seduce and bite her. Van Helsing saves her at the last minute, but Gina escapes.

Marianne, finally shaken out of her love or mesmerism or both, tells Van Helsing where Gina said Meinster is hiding, an old windmill. At the mill, Van Helsing fights both of Meinster's Brides as well as Greta, losing his cross in the same hole Greta falls through. Meinster subdues Van Helsing, then bites him and leaves him to suffer the agony of becoming Un-Dead, but Van Helsing cauterizes the wound with a hot iron and purifies it with holy water. Meinster kidnaps Marianne and brings her back to the mill, where Van Helsing splashes holy water in his face and rescues Marianne once more. Meinster sets the mill on fire and leaves, but Van Helsing has fled into the mill tower with Marianne. He moves the sails of the windmill to cast an enormous cross-shaped shadow in the firelight, trapping and killing Meinster in the courtyard.

Criticism: *Brides* is a two-legged stool. Fisher and Cushing return in top form, but without Christopher Lee the film doesn't quite catch fire. Peel is silkier and less feral than Lee, and Meinster never really recovers from the indignity of being chained up by his mother. The committee-written screenplay lurches about, Marianne changes motivation repeatedly, and Miles Malleon's comic relief is neither. Hunt and Jackson, however, are marvelous in their roles as literal and moral mothers to the vampire, deepening the story's Oedipal color effectively. And two scenes are absolute masterpieces. Greta awakens the farm girl from the grave like some weird vampire midwife: "Push!" she rasps. Cushing has never outdone the Van Helsing cauterization scene, moving from despair

to agony to resolve through purifying fire and holy water.

At the Table: The padlocks fall off Gina's coffin latches without opening, possibly a lift from M.R. James' story "Count Magnus," featuring a horrific revenant. Perhaps a vampire's dead hand acts as a Hand of Glory, removing locks and opening the way?

"Count Dracula, monarch of all vampires, is dead. But his disciples live on, to spread the cult and corrupt the world ..." *Brides* introduces the mytheme of a cult of Dracula (the Baron's "bad companions"), which the Hammer cycle returns to repeatedly and fully explores in *Satanic Rites of Dracula* (p. 58). Stoker introduced a similar concept in the Icelandic version of his novel, *Makt Myrkanna* (1901), but it's unlikely that Hammer's writers knew this.

In an earlier draft of the script, Van Helsing uses black magic to summon a horde of bats from Hell to devour Meinster. Cushing (and the budget) objected, and Hammer used the concept in *The Kiss of the Vampire* (Don Sharp, 1963), also about a vampire cult.

Marianne's carriage lists its route as Ingolstadt, Abensburg, and Regensburg; implying a setting in Bavaria, not Transylvania.

Like many towns in Hammer's Transylvania, Badstein has eerily acquiesced to its vampire predators. Hammer's constant return to "the town below the castle" paints a layered, almost impasto, tension into this arrangement.

Van Helsing attended Leiden University, receiving Ph.D.s in philosophy, theology, and metaphysics. As Fisher emphasizes the religious aspect of the myth, his Van Helsing ceases to be a medical man.

In *Brides*, Van Helsing has come to accept that vampires transform into bats. He also explains that vampires are a "survival of

ancient pagan religion," reinforcing the cult motif. This film also introduces a new mytheme, based loosely on Balkan lore: horses hate vampires.

DRACULA, PRINCE OF DARKNESS (1966)

Director: Terence Fisher

Dracula: Christopher Lee

Synopsis: After a prologue recalling the end of *Horror of Dracula* (p. 40), we open on a girl's funeral in Transylvania. Father Sandor (Andrew Keir) stops the priest at gunpoint from staking the corpse, denouncing his superstitious ignorance. Moving on to the village inn, Sandor meets four English tourists: Alan Kent (Charles Tingwell) and his wife Helen (Barbara Shelley), and Alan's brother Charles Kent (Francis Matthews) and his wife Diana (Suzan Farmer). He invites them to visit his abbey in Kleinberg, but warns them against visiting Karlsbad. They push on anyway, only to be abandoned by their driver in the woods. They board a driverless carriage, which carries them not to Karlsbad but to Castle Dracula.

Dracula's servant Klove (Philip Latham) serves them dinner, sees them to their rooms, and then murders a wandering Alan Kent in the crypt. Draining Kent's blood onto Dracula's ashes, he revives the Count. Looking for Alan, Helen allows Klove to escort her into Dracula's embrace. Charles and Diana leave the Castle in fear, but Charles returns to search for Alan and Helen, and Klove tricks Diana into returning to meet Charles. Charles discovers Alan's mutilated body; Diana discovers Helen, who attacks her until Dracula intervenes. Charles appears and escapes with Diana, using her crucifix and an improvised cross to hold Dracula back. Charles and Diana crash their carriage in the forest, but Father

Sandor rescues them. Sandor and Charles compare notes at the abbey.

Klove arrives at the abbey with Dracula and Helen in coffins, but cannot enter. Ludwig (Thorley Walters), a bug-eating madman kept at the abbey since being found near Castle Dracula 12 years previously, invites Dracula inside while Helen convinces Diana to open a window to her. Helen bites Diana on the wrist, Dracula again pulls her away, and Charles and Sandor drive the vampires away with crosses. Sandor cauterizes Diana's bite with a hot lamp, captures Helen and stakes her with his monks holding her down. With Ludwig's help, Dracula once more takes control of Diana, mesmerically convincing her to remove her crucifix then opening a vein on his chest for her to drink from. Charles stops this blasphemy and drives Dracula (carrying an unconscious Diana) out of the abbey. Charles and Sandor give chase back to Castle Dracula, shooting Klove and wrecking the wagon with

Dracula and Diana's coffins aboard. Diana's coffin lands near the men, who rescue her; Dracula's slides onto the frozen moat of his castle. Charles tries to stake Dracula, who bursts out of the coffin and counterattacks. Sandor and Diana, however, fire their rifles at the icy surface of the moat: it breaks, and Dracula falls through the ice to die in the running water beneath.

Criticism: Oh Hammer how you vex us. Terence Fisher takes on another story of good and evil, of God and Satan, of art and budgeting, and lights it in primary watercolors. Unable to afford both Lee and Cushing, Hammer recruited Andrew Keir (the future definitive Professor Quatermass) and Jimmy Sangster wrote him an almost Van-Helsing-level part in Father Sandor, an earthy abbot who fights both superstition and the Un-Dead. Then, just to make sure the movie wouldn't quite work, Hammer cut Lee's part down to less than ten minutes, all of it non-speaking! (Lee claims he wouldn't speak Sangster's lines; Sangster



claims he didn't write any — again, one assumes, to save expensive filming-Lee time.) Lee makes the best of what he gets, with his most savage, animalistic portrayal of Dracula, all hissing and snarling. He even snaps a sword blade in half, nearly quivering with ravenous fury. Critics (both cultural and thespian) are right to single out Barbara Shelley's performance as the straitlaced Helen turned sexually voracious vampiress — only to be held down by a squad of monks (!) and staked by Father Sandor. *Someone* had been reading their Gothics, and I suspect it was Jimmy Sangster.

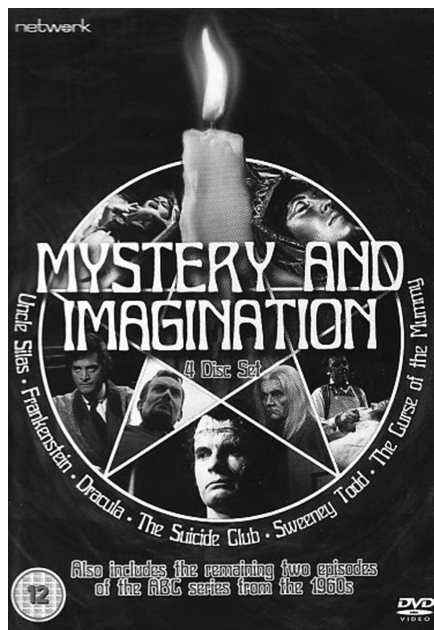
Sangster's lurid and knowing screenplay, by the way, is why I believe Hammer's budget not Lee's sensibilities dictated a wordless Dracula. The script amazingly manages to sustain momentum in the nearly 45 minutes before Dracula's wonderfully gruesome resurrection, and the four innocents sojourning in Castle Dracula bicker and posture believably but not (quite) annoyingly. The castle's attempts to draw in travelers are creepy enough even before we meet the vermicious Klove. And what a line this is: "He has seen and touched her — he considers her his." The "final Brits" go back to the Castle a little too readily, but the final chase is another doozy. The finale, featuring Father Sandor and Diana blazing away with rifles not at Dracula but at the frozen river under his feet, is the best one in the Hammer cycle.

At the Table: Father Sandor repeats Van Helsing's cauterization trick without the holy water. Does holy oil from the lamp work as well?

The script dates the action "ten years after" Dracula's destruction, or 1895.

Dracula's coat of arms changes again, this time featuring a prominent cross!

Father Sandor refers to the "obscene cult of vampirism," continuing this Hammer motif.



DRACULA (1968)

Director: Patrick Dromgoole

Dracula: Denholm Elliott

Additional Cast: Bernard Archard (Van Helsing), Susan George (Lucy Weston), Joan Hickson (Mrs. Weston), James Maxwell (Dr. John Seward), Suzanne Neve (Mina Harker), Corin Redgrave (Jonathan Harker), Hedley Goodall (Mr. Swales).

Synopsis: An escaped bug-eating madman, known only as No. 34, interrupts Dr. Seward's dinner party in Whitby, calling the guest of honor "Master." Count Dracula commands him back to his cell, but denies knowing the man, a claim the madman implausibly alibis. Seward politely questions this, pointing out that the madman came off the derelict ship *Demeter*, a ship on which Dracula himself took passage, but the Count maintains that he remained in his cabin the entire time due to his sensitivity to light. The next day, the specialist Van Helsing hypnotizes No. 34, revealing his harrowing experiences with three hags or succubi in Transylvania.

Dracula, meanwhile, seduces Lucy Weston in her house with his romantic talk of Szekely warrior heritage — until her fiancé Seward shows up with news of Mrs. Weston's worsening illness. Mina arrives and recognizes Dracula's name as that of her missing husband's client; Dracula claims Harker left him in good health and wrote from Prague.

Seward confesses his jealousy of the Count to Mina, but Mina interrupts their *tete a tete* by recognizing No. 34 as her missing husband Jonathan! He embraces her by day, then denies he knows her after sundown. Lucy pays an indecorous but fruitless solo visit to the Count's empty house next door, Glebe House. She then walks with Mina in the Whitby cemetery, and hears of George Cannon's suicide's grave from Mr. Swales. They depart, and Dracula rises from it, enters Lucy's room as a bat, and feeds on her as she writhes orgasmically. Van Helsing spots the bite marks and over Seward's objections performs a transfusion; he also leaves a rosary on her pillow. The next night, Dracula compels Lucy to drop it off the bed before resuming his attack. Van Helsing now escalates to garlic garlands strung along every opening, but Dracula mesmerizes Lucy's mother into opening the door and breaking the chain. Van Helsing convinces Seward of Dracula's true nature and tries to hypnotize Harker, but Dracula boasts of his victory to them, using Harker as a puppet.

Lucy dies after urging Seward to kiss her, but rises and seduces Mina. Once primed, Mina throws herself at Dracula in lust and disgust. Seward and Van Helsing stake Lucy, interrogate Harker again, and learn that Mina is Dracula's new victim. They follow Harker and Mina to Dracula's resting place, which Van Helsing purifies with holy water. When Dracula returns, he

attempts to mesmerize his attackers into lowering their crosses, then offers them knowledge and power, then tries a physical attack that fails against the combined power of the cross and the rising sun. He turns to dust, leaving only his ring behind — a ring Mina salvages, gazing at Seward's throat speculatively.

Criticism: Man, if every episode of the Thames TV series *Mystery and Imagination* mounted this kind of creative response to low budgets and primitive facilities, I'm really bummed that three seasons are lost. But I'm glad this fourth-season episode (90 minutes, divided into three Acts) survived on YouTube. Although it shows much of the spoor of the hated Deane-Balderston play (p. 18), writer Charles Graham seems to have been solving the same problems — limited ability to change scenes, small cast, short running time — with some originality. Shooting Harker's visit to Castle Dracula in almost silent-movieola flashback must have saved money and it definitely pumps up the atmosphere while recalling *Nosferatu* (p. 17) and even moreso Carl Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932). Graham keeps as much of the book as he can: Swales' discursus on the suicide's grave (more important in this version) and Dracula's monologue on Transylvanian history, for example. And in some places, his changes — Dracula tele-operates Renfield to threaten Van Helsing! Lucy bites Mina! — rock you back on your heels with their implications.

But right now, you're all tugging my sleeve and saying "But, but, but ... Marcus Brody as Dracula?" Denholm Elliott is nobody's Christopher Lee, but his Dracula — in goatee and smoked glasses at first, later in an Inverness cape of all things — has more than a little odious charm to him. It's not Elliott's fault that there's no budget for effects or even a fight scene;

his social menace and Orlok-style rat-fangs both work. Corin Redgrave's Renfield is refreshingly upper-class, so it's kind of a shame he turns out to be Jonathan Harker. (Whom Seward weirdly doesn't recognize.) Bernard Archard's careful, worried Van Helsing and James Maxwell's angry, skeptical Seward play off each other superbly — if you must mount a stagy, talky *Dracula*, casting it with British theatricals is for the best, really. But the real standout is Susan George as the giddy, vivacious "Lucy Weston," drinking in Dracula's attention while alive and then drinking from Mina in Un-Death.

At the Table: As in the play, and in the Hammer cycle, Dracula and Van Helsing have a past. This backstory can create or drive endless narrative twists and surprises.

Dromgoole dresses the Brides in grave cloths or shrouds, a very effective memento mori amidst the sexualized story.

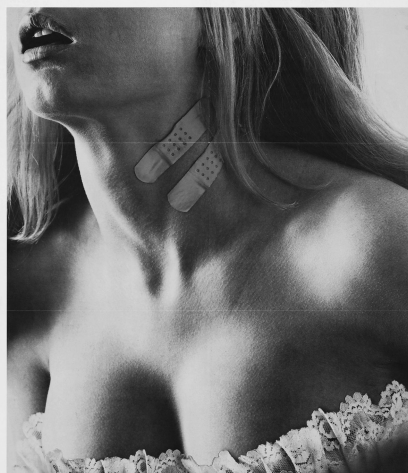
In a refreshing period touch, this film depicts blood transfusions as the truly radical and dangerous procedures they were in 1897.

Although in the novel, Van Helsing rubs garlic all along the doorways and window frames, this film goes one better: the garlic chains, like a modern electrical alarm system, must remain unbroken.

Van Helsing adduces case studies of the vampire from Lithuania and Sicily, expanding the geographical ambit of the novel a bit.

Dracula's mesmerism manifests by giving voice to subconscious desires — Mrs. Weston wants to control her daughter's care — effectively blending telepathy and diabolical temptation.

Dracula turning Renfield/Harker into a puppet and speaking through his mouth is incredibly effective and creepy.



"DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE"
(OBVIOUSLY)

A WARNER BROS. PRESENTATION
"CHRISTOPHER LEE, RUPERT DAVIES Produced by MARK ROSS, Directed by FREDDIE FRANCIS
Based on the Character Created by Bram Stoker. "TECHNICOLOR" FROM WARNER BROS.-SEVEN ARTS
WARNER BROS. PICTURES
© 1968

DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE (1968)

Director: Freddie Francis

Dracula: Christopher Lee

Synopsis: In a prologue, an altar boy (Norman Bacon) and a priest (Ewan Hooper) find a girl's exsanguinated body stuffed into the bell of the town church.

A year later, circuit-riding Monsignor Ernst Muller (Rupert Davies) arrives in town, and discovers the church desolate and the priest on the verge of losing his faith. The locals insist that despite Dracula's destruction a year ago, they cannot attend a church touched by the shadow of Castle Dracula. Muller bullies and cajoles the priest into guiding him to Castle Dracula to exorcise the site once and for all. During the trek, the priest loses heart and remains behind while Muller pronounces the exorcism and blocks the doors of the Castle with a metal cross. A tempest drives the priest downhill and he falls, cracking

his head and bleeding into the frozen river ... and into Dracula's mouth, reviving him. Dracula immediately breaks the weakling priest to his service, and they set out to get revenge on the Monsignor.

Muller returns to Kleinenburg, where he lives with his sister-in-law Anna (Marion Mathie) and her daughter Maria (Veronica Carlson). Her beloved, Paul (Barry Andrews) makes a bad impression by declaring his atheism at dinner, and gets self-pityingly drunk with barmaid Zena (Barbara Ewing). On her walk home, Dracula mesmerizes Zena, who then establishes the priest at Paul's café. Dracula moves his coffin to the nearby sewer and orders Zena to bring him Maria; when she escapes with Paul, the Count kills Zena. The priest locates Maria for Dracula, who clammers across the rooftops to enter her room and bite her.

Muller recognizes Maria's symptoms. When Dracula returns the next night, Muller steps out with a cross and chases him out of the house and out onto the roofs — where the priest ambushes him with a blunt instrument. Now crippled, the Monsignor recruits Paul to fight Dracula, but Paul brings the priest in and the sight of his attacker kills Muller. The priest helps Paul protect Maria, then bludgeons Paul with a candlestick and removes the garlic — but cannot bring himself to touch the crucifix. Paul forces the priest to lead him to Dracula's sewer lair and stakes the vampire, but neither he nor the priest can recite the prayer needed to give the Count final rest. Dracula rises up, pulls out the stake, and escapes, abducting Maria and bringing her to the Castle. Maria removes the cross and hurls it down the mountainside, but Paul arrives and fights Dracula for her. Dracula loses his balance and falls, impaling himself on the cross. The priest now recites the Lord's Prayer,

and Dracula melts into dust as Paul crosses himself.

Criticism: A peculiar blend of apathy and attention makes this perhaps the most frustrating of the Hammer Draculas. Anthony Hinds (writing as "John Elder") cares so little about the script that he doesn't even bother to name Ewan Hooper's weak Renfielded priest, and he allows that same priest to undercut the real inner conflict (between atheism and Christianity) of the hero Paul (Barry Andrews). But Father No-Name is such a weakling that his return to Jesus (to say the needed prayer over a staked Dracula, to make sure it takes this time) plays as pure opportunism, not as redemption. As against that, Freddie Francis brings all his cinematographic energies to the problem of making yet another Dracula movie stand out. We get a cool red-amber-gold gel effect whenever Dracula uses his powers, and the lighting (except for the standard-awful day-for-night shots) is great throughout. Better still, Francis shoots many major scenes — including a Dracula chase! — on and over the rooftops of Kleinenburg, something far more original in 1968 than now. The opening shot of the corpse in the bell, Hooper casually and brutally emptying a coffin for Dracula's use, and the shot of Maria shoving her doll off the bed as Dracula takes her, perfectly embody Hammer's patent combination of gore, blasphemy, and sexuality respectively.

Lee, of course, is excellent, channeling his surly attitude about Hammer into a sneering, contemptuous performance lashed by emphatic cruelty and predation. Sadly, his main dinner course, Veronica Carlson, is as bland and uninteresting as her uncle the terrific Rupert Davies is layered. Embodying both the smugness and the righteousness of the Faith (as opposed to Father No-Name's opportunism and

impotence), Monsignor Muller makes a great foil for Dracula. His death is genuinely shocking, as if Van Helsing had succumbed at the third-act turn. Is God truly dead? Can the atheist-but-handsome-and-true Paul defeat Dracula while alone in the universe? If anyone had cared enough to hammer down that last act, this might have been the best one in the series.

At the Table: In the novel, the hunters recite the prayer for the dead (not the Lord's Prayer) over the staked Lucy, though not over the beheaded Dracula. Perhaps this is why Dracula keeps coming back?

The date on the coffin sets the film in 1906, and the prologue scene in 1905, conflicting with the 1895 internal date for the previous Hammer installment.

Kleinenburg here might be the same town as Kleinberg in *Dracula, Prince of Darkness* (p. 43), or perhaps Castle Dracula lies in the center of a Transylvanian district with many similarly named towns. Geography aside, symbolically the Hammer Carpathians have three locations: the Castle, the shadowed town nearby usually small and suspicious of outsiders, and the larger "safe" town farther away (across the border in *Horror of Dracula* (p. 40)), that Dracula attacks.

The nearby town is almost codependent with Dracula in this film, suffering communal Stockholm Syndrome and driving off strangers not out of pity but out of xenophobia.

Dracula uses Father Renfield tactically throughout: to channelize his prey into an ambush, to cover Dracula's line of retreat with an ambush of the pursuer, to infiltrate the enemy camp and gather intel. He also neatly accretes his Renfields around Paul; suborning NPC contacts should be a standard go-to for your vampire.

Francis' optical effect makes for effective Dracula spoor. A sudden "your

vision tunnels, glowing gold at the center with blood red shadows at the edges -- adrenaline shock, perhaps?" should creep any player out.

In a secular age, what does the modern "useless priest" look like? A cop who doesn't believe in justice? An FBI or MI5 agent who doesn't believe in her country?

COUNT DRACULA (1970)

Director: Jesús Franco

Dracula: Christopher Lee

Additional Cast: Herbert Lom (Van Helsing), Klaus Kinski (Renfield), Soledad Miranda (Lucy Westenra), Maria Rohm (Mina Murray), Fred Williams (Jonathan Harker), Paul Mueller (Dr. Seward), Jack Taylor (Quincey Morris)

Synopsis: As in the novel, Harker travels to Castle Dracula to seal a real estate deal, and hears the Count's conversation. Dracula casts no reflection in his own mirror, but doesn't bother smashing it. Harker eventually survives the attack by



CAST: MARIA ROHM • HERBERT LOM • FRED WILLIAMS • SOLEDAD MIRANDA
JACK TAYLOR • PAUL MUELLER
UN FILM DI JESÚS FRANCO
AS AN LO - PARAVISION

three Brides, climbs out his window and enters Dracula's crypt, and flees in a panic from the gluttoned Count in repose. He awakens in Van Helsing's private clinic near London, under the care of Dr. Seward. He describes his pursuit by gigantic, bloody-fanged bats while Renfield (driven mad by the loss of his daughter in Transylvania some time ago) shrieks nearby. Harker's fiancée Mina arrives at the asylum with her friend Lucy, who sleepwalks into the power of the Count.

Lucy's fiancé Quincey arrives to give a transfusion, but it is too little too late. Renfield hurls himself from a window in agitation, and Van Helsing finally identifies Dracula as the Devil, the pinnacle of the demonic on earth. Lucy rises and kills a child; Quincey, Seward, and Van Helsing stake and behead her. As Mina questions the mute Renfield, the hunters enter Carfax and find it empty save for taxidermy animals. Renfield attacks Mina, and the animals reanimate and approach the hunters, but when Harker holds up the cross both threats end. Harker and Quincey sanctify Carfax, Dracula lures Mina out to the opera, and Harker spots Dracula in the street grown younger. Van Helsing (suddenly in a wheelchair as the result of a stroke), Quincey, and Harker meet with the Home Secretary (Jesús Puente) to arrange a watch on the ports for Dracula and coordinate the hunt for his remaining coffins.

Dracula attacks Mina at the opera, then arranges passage on the *Czarina Catherine*. Seward gets the destination (Varna) out of Renfield. Dracula confronts Van Helsing and attempts to kidnap Mina, but Van Helsing burns a cross into the wooden floor with a fireplace poker and Dracula retreats. We cut to Transylvania, where a procession of Roma carry Dracula's last box toward the Castle. Quincey and Harker

have beaten Dracula there, however; they stake the Brides, sanctify Dracula's crypt, and then drop rocks on Dracula's guards until they flee. Harker opens Dracula's crate, sets it alight, and dumps it over the castle wall.

Criticism: In between refusals to ever wear the cape again for Hammer and wearing the cape again for Hammer, Christopher Lee occasionally tried to get other studios' adaptations of *Dracula* off the ground. Often, like Lucy (Van Pelt not Westenra) pulling away the scarlet, dripping football he would insist that *this* time, the film truly followed Stoker's story only to reveal that, for example, Van Helsing has a sideline in necromancy, Holmwood has become Quincey or Renfield has become mute (in what I have to admit is a pretty compelling if wildly misguided performance by Klaus Kinski). Also, if the words "Jesús Franco" haven't warned you, the movie rapidly runs out of cash — the "wolves" are clearly German shepherds, and Lom and Lee confront each other in two different cameras throughout because Franco couldn't afford to have both actors on the same set at the same time.

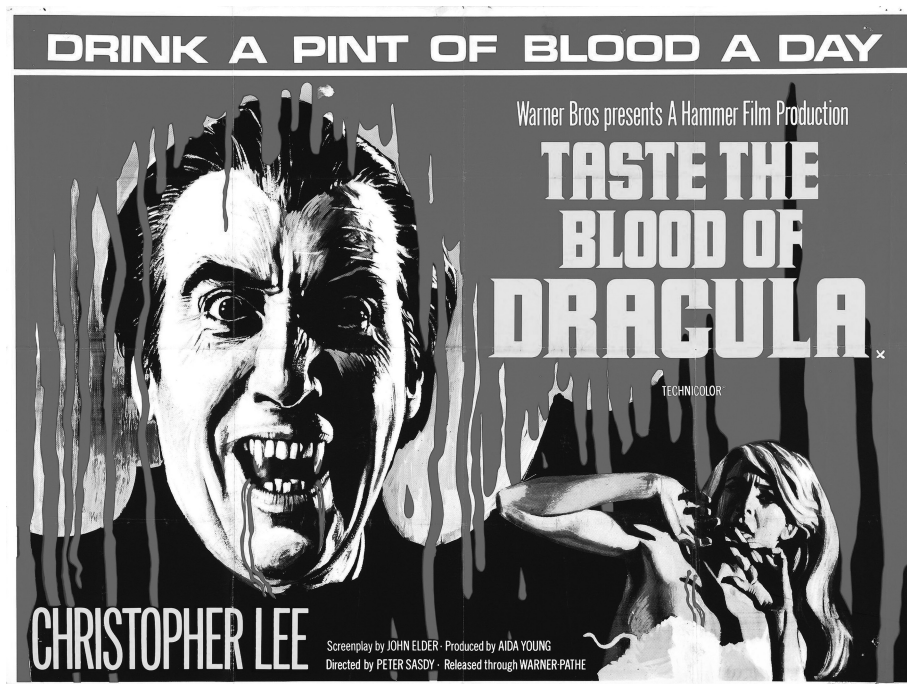
That said, there are a number of very neat touches. As in the novel (and for the first time in film) Dracula grows younger as he drinks from Lucy. (Against that, the film reverses Stoker's coding with a blonde Mina and brunette Lucy.) The taxidermied soulless animals that guard Carfax somehow seem creepy as much as they do cheap; the "dream Brides" that bite (or do they?) Harker likewise. How much worse is a threat you can't fight because it's not even nominally alive, or not completely there? Harker re-consecrates Carfax by praying there, the purification of Dracula's crypt gets screen time (which it doesn't even get in the novel), and Dracula's Roma carry the Count's coffin home in what reads

more as a pilgrimage or religious festival rather than a frenzied escape — all part of the undercurrent of Catholic religiosity that Franco draws from the finely balanced (Anglican) novel.

At the Table: Is Dracula's control over the taxidermy animals (boar, badger, kestrel, stoat, fox) in Carfax even more direct than over "the meaner things"

because they are parodies of life, like himself?

Making Van Helsing a "scholar of the black arts" darkens his character noticeably. Indeed, Quincey speculates that Van Helsing, with his dark glasses and occult knowledge, may be the vampire, a very interesting head-fake.



TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA (1970)

Director: Peter Sasdy

Dracula: Christopher Lee

Synopsis: Traveling salesman Weller (Roy Kinnear) is thrown out of a coach in Transylvania for his bumptious behavior and winds up staring at a dying Dracula, impaled on the cross from *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave* (p. 47). When the vampire's blood turns to dust, Weller

gathers it up, along with Dracula's ring, brooch, and cloak.

In London, stern father William Hargood (Geoffrey Keen) disapproves of his daughter Alice (Linda Hayden) seeing her boyfriend Paul Paxton (Anthony Higgins) but refuses to explain himself. The reason? Hargood and Paxton's father Samuel (Peter Sallis) along with Jonathan Secker (John Carson) spend the last Sunday of every month whoring in the East End, and Hargood presumes the apple doesn't fall far from the debauched tree.

Their pursuit of decadence stalls out when Lord Courtley (Ralph Bates) commandeers Hargood's whore; investigating, they find that Courtley is irresistible to women — and that his father disinherited him for performing a Black Mass. The trio seek Courtley's guidance for truly revelatory decadence; he agrees, if they will buy the blood of Dracula and sell their souls for ultimate pleasure. Meeting them in an abandoned church, Courtley conducts a Black Mass and reliquifies the blood with his own, but only he drinks; the other three falter at the last hurdle. As the unbalanced sorcerous energies tear at him, the three decadents beat him to death and flee. Courtley's body transforms into that of Dracula, who swears revenge: "They have destroyed my servant. They will be destroyed."

At the Hargood home, Dracula intervenes before Hargood can beat Alice for seeing Paul. He mesmerizes the fleeing Alice, and she gladly kills her father with a shovel then lures Lucy Paxton (Isla Blair) to the chapel to be vampirized by Dracula. Paxton and Secker, fearing that Courtley survived, enter the chapel to find his body but instead find Lucy in a coffin. Secker's decadent ways include occult research, and he wants to stake Lucy but Paxton shoots him. Lucy awakens and stakes him with Alice. Lucy then lures her boyfriend Jeremy Secker (Martin Jarvis) into a vampiric embrace, and he stabs his father with a kukri. Dracula drains Lucy and dumps her body in a river. Secker left a letter for Paul explaining about vampires; Paul goes to the chapel and reconsecrates it, blocking the door with a cross. Dracula and Alice appear, Paul confronts Dracula with a second cross, and Alice grabs it from him. Dracula then refuses to turn Alice, so she throws the cross at him, blocking his retreat. He climbs into the lofts and hurls stonework at Paul but backs

into a stained-glass window featuring yet another enormous cross. Suddenly the reconsecration "takes" and Dracula experiences a full Mass, topples onto the altar, and smashes to dust.

Criticism: For reasons unknown to me, film critics enjoy belittling the later Hammer Dracula series. While it's true that no later Hammer film approaches the artistic or emotional impact of Fisher's 1958 original (p. 40), it's also true that by expanding their "Dracula Mythos" Hammer created a cinematic universe that exceeds even the Universal "backlot Gothic" world of the 1940s.

Taste is admittedly uneven. One of many failed Hammer efforts to replace Lee brought Ralph Bates into consideration, but his Lord Courtley comes across as a young Colin Firth playing a snotty Aleister Crowley. Solid character actor Roy Kinnear is believably bumptious and terrified by turns, Linda Hayden (then notorious for her controversial sexpot role in *Baby Love* (Alastair Reed, 1968), a sort of Carnaby-era *Poison Ivy* (Katt Shea, 1992)) lights up the screen as Alice, and even Anthony Higgins as the "youth appeal" Paul is only somewhat whiny. While I'm calling out supporting roles, I have to give props to Russell Hunter, whose maitre de brothel Felix makes Joel Grey in *Cabaret* look like Walter Mondale. As opposed to the wonderful dolly-cam brothel scene, and the powerful black mass where Courtley blood-shames the wannabe decadents, Dracula's final death in this one is an unconvincingly literal *deus ex machina*. Also, Alice isn't so much saved by the love of a good man as she is ticked off by Dracula dumping her not quite far enough (as it turns out) from the altar.

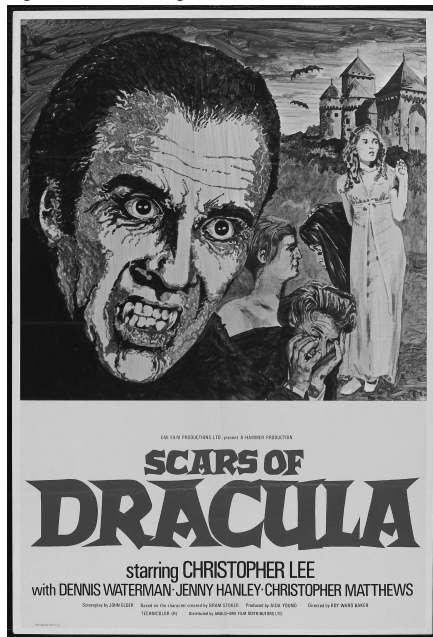
At the Table: So the script, yes, never lives up to that insane first act, but any GM who doesn't get inspired by a world where

aristocratic but bankrupt Satanists know a sweaty guy who'll sell you the blood of Dracula for a thousand guineas is just not paying attention.

It was filmed at St. Andrew's Church Totteridge Lane in London, and at Highgate Cemetery, where a series of "vampire sightings" made headlines in 1970. Filming stopped on December 5, 1969, before the sighting flap, but the kernel of another "vampire on the set of *Dracula*" story (along with the 1931 *Dracula* night shoot, p. 22) is here.

Along with the burgeoning occult trade in vampire relics (another aspect of Hammer's "cult of Dracula" setting), this film offers excellent examples of hunter-on-hunter conflict, even violence. Dracula's effortless suborning of their families is another great narrative tool worth borrowing.

Re-sacralizing a church generally requires more than a white cloth and a noble heart, but it can be a powerful ambush tactic if your slayer team includes a priest or the equivalent.



SCARS OF DRACULA (1970)

Director: Roy Ward Baker

Dracula: Christopher Lee

Synopsis: A bat appears and drools blood onto the dust of Dracula resting atop an altar. Once more, Dracula is resurrected.

The angry villagers finally rise up and burn down Castle Dracula, but Dracula survives in his tower crypt. They return to find that an army of bats has killed all their loved ones, hidden in the supposed safety of the church. Fleeing the jealous daughter and angry burgomaster of Kleinenburg, Paul Carson (Christopher Matthews) boards two driverless coaches and eventually arrives at Castle Dracula. Tania (Anoushka Hempel), one of Dracula's Brides, invites him in; he meets Dracula who insists he stay the night. Tania comes to Paul's room and claims to be a prisoner then asks him to make love to her. Dracula interrupts her post-coital feeding and stabs her to death in a fit of jealousy then leaves at cock-crow. Paul climbs out his window on a bedsheet rope, but it only reaches the window below: Dracula's crypt, which has no other exit. Dracula's servant Klove (Patrick Troughton) hauls up the rope and Paul is trapped. In the bedroom, Klove finds Paul's picture of another inamorata, Sarah (Jenny Hanley) and falls in love with it.

Paul's brother Simon (Dennis Waterman) and Sarah now begin looking for Paul, following his traces to Castle Dracula. Dracula denies seeing Paul but invites them to spend the night; he drugs Simon and approaches Sarah but her crucifix repels him. Klove refuses to remove it, and warns them to leave the next morning. They escape, Dracula kills the barmaid Julie (Wendy Hamilton), Simon leaves Sarah with the weak village priest (Michael Gwynn) and returns to the Castle. Klove tricks Simon into climbing down the wall into Dracula's

crypt just like his brother, and Dracula's mesmerism knocks Simon out even by day. He awakens to find Paul on a meathook as Dracula climbs out the window and up the wall. Dracula's bat having killed the priest, Sarah heads back to Castle Dracula where her appearance once more changes Klove's allegiance. He lowers a new rope to Simon and warns Sarah, who holds off Dracula with her cross until a bat steals it. Klove attacks Dracula, who throws him off the battlements as a thunderstorm rages. Simon hurls an iron spike at Dracula but misses the heart; when Dracula pulls it out to hurl at Simon, a lightning bolt strikes it and sets the vampire on fire. He topples off the castle wall and burns to ash.

Criticism: Let us resolutely ignore the dead pacing (probably from Anthony Hinds' screenplay), the insane overlighting that washes out Christopher Lee's makeup unforgivably, and the damp-even-for-a-Hammer-romantic-male-lead dampness of the "romantic male lead" Simon. Let us ignore the comically ineffective "set fire to the castle" bit up front and the ineffectively comic cod-Benny Hill skit that sets up the action, such as it is. Let us ignore the fact that the "somewhat good fake bat" apparently broke down or went missing and Hammer pushed on with the "not at all good fake bat" in this most bat-centric of the Hammer Draculas. Let us ignore the undignified ending, in which Dracula is set on fire by lightning. Let us, in short, ignore all the reasons people say this is the worst of the Hammer Draculas and concentrate on the reasons to watch and take note of it.

First and foremost: Christopher Lee gets more lines and screen time in this one than in all the others combined. Even with this terrible material, he just plain owns, and the script does show us a properly sadistic side of Dracula missing in most versions. Also, the notion of re-doing *Psycho* (Alfred

Hitchcock, 1960) as a Dracula period picture has a sort of bizarre charm: rogue vanishes in weird lodging, rogue's sibling follows up with similarly dangerous results. Patrick Troughton brings real pathos to the role of Klove, Dracula's manservant and remover-of-crucifixes-from-sleeping-bosoms who falls in love with a picture of Jenny Hanley, as well he might. She is indeed delightful, although sadly washed out next to saucy tavern wench/clue dispenser Wendy Hamilton and Anouska Hempel as Dracula's disobedient Bride. Finally, Dracula does his best Hammer wall climb in this one, up to his very clever tower crypt with only one window and no doors.

At the Table: Did the cult of Dracula send the bat to revive him, or has Dracula left standing orders by now with the bat population?

Dracula really uses the bats well in this picture, as scouts and guardians and (best of all) as a death squad when people he wants to kill inconsiderately hide in a church. An army of bats that massacres the team's Solaces makes an infuriating inciting incident, to be sure.

Dracula's ability to stompede horses makes total sense, and also gives him a perhaps underappreciated tactical advantage.

Julie almost appears to be Dracula's roper, bringing in new rubes to feed on, in a further evolution of the town-Dracula political economy. Sure, he kills her, but he kills his Bride Tania (with a kukri!) for basically the same offense: interest in another man. Sexual jealousy belittles Dracula, although one could read it into the novel's initial Brides sequence.

DRACULA A.D. 1972 (1972) —————

Director: Alan Gibson

Dracula: Christopher Lee

Additional Cast: Peter Cushing
(Lawrence/Lorrimer Van Helsing),

Stephanie Beacham (Jessica Van Helsing), Michael Coles (Inspector Murray)

Synopsis: In 1872, Lawrence Van Helsing battles Dracula atop a coach in London's Hyde Park. When the coach crashes, a dying Van Helsing drives the broken wooden wheel spoke through the Count. An acolyte of Dracula collects the vampire's ring and ashes and buries half the ashes near Van Helsing's headstone at St. Botolph's Church.

Exactly a hundred years later, having inherited the ring of Dracula (and the other half of the ashes) from his ancestor, the young occultist Johnny Alucard (Christopher Neame) convinces a swinging teen group including Jessica Van Helsing to join him in a Black Mass at the now desolate, deconsecrated St. Botolph's. He mixes ashes with blood and baptizes Laura (Caroline Munro) instead of Jessica, reanimating Dracula in a cloud of mist from the burial site. Dracula drains Laura and sends Johnny to get Jessica, his real target, but Johnny returns with another girl instead. Inspector Murray consults anthropologist Lorrimer Van Helsing (Jessica's grandfather) about Laura's murder, believing it to be the work of a cult, but dismisses Van Helsing's warning of vampires. Upon learning of her friend's murder, Jessica tells her grandfather about Johnny and Van Helsing works out his alias and likely servitude to Dracula.

Dracula turns Johnny into a vampire after killing another girl, and Johnny's sloppy kill convinces Murray that vampires are involved. Van Helsing loads up with holy water and warns Murray that silver bullets and garlic are too chancy. Jessica's boyfriend Bob finds Johnny and gets turned, then lures Jessica into a closed coffee shop to get captured by Johnny. Van Helsing tracks Johnny to his flat, fights him, and uses a mirror to corner him in the

bathroom where he falls against the shower and turns it on, dying under the running water. He then proceeds to St. Botolph's, finds Bob dead (of sunlight?) and then discovers Jessica in a mesmeric trance. He places a cross around her neck and digs a punji pit filled with stakes and covered with grass. When Dracula awakens and pulls the cross off Jessica, Van Helsing stabs the Count with a silver knife but Jessica pulls it out. Van Helsing then blinds Dracula with thrown holy water, and the vampire topples into the pit to die on the stakes.

Criticism: The greatest flaw of this film is cowardice: having dared to bring Dracula into the (then) present, the movie keeps him bottled up in a Gothic ruin. Medieval Dracula in modern London was, after all, the horrific core of Stoker's novel; it's proven technology. We are thus robbed of a sequence in which a caped Dracula walks through Soho or down Carnaby Street, attracting no attention whatsoever. Outside that great gap, it's surprisingly watchable. Cushing and Lee can't help but raise the material, and Cushing especially navigates Van Helsing's new century with aplomb. The refreshing lack of idiocy from the police, the jazzier score, and the more naturalistic lighting (except for the psychedelic club sequence) are all worthy ventures in breaking out of the Hammer rut. The film's ludicrous lurches toward hipness now seem no more ludicrous than do the actually hip products of 1972, and the Manson-lite Johnny Alucard is a much better villain than Lord Courtley in *Taste* (p. 51). His death in the shower (!) is pretty silly, as is much of the dialogue. Caroline Munro's Laura sadly doesn't rise again; giving Dracula a wannabe Bride partner worked so well in *Taste* that it's a shame Hammer didn't revisit that conceit this time around. The film lacks a true rival for Jessica, forcing Cushing to carry the entire emotional weight of the

story for the last two acts. Fortunately, he's more than capable of it. But all in all, this missed opportunity remains more than worth a screening.

At the Table: Dracula stalking around an abandoned Gothic cemetery recalls again the Highgate Vampire sightings of 1970.

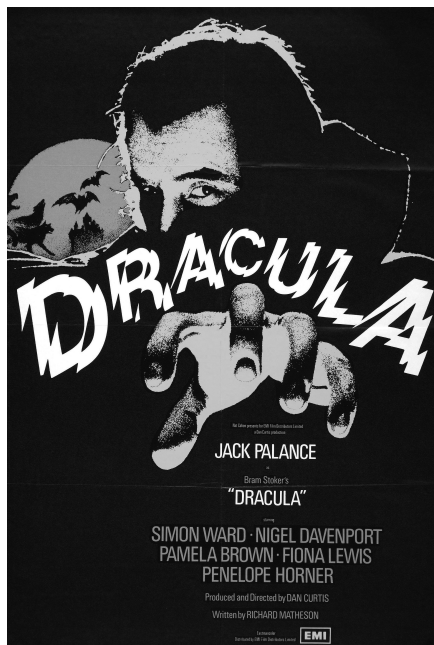
The film identifies the original Van Helsing as Lawrence Van Helsing, and dates the original Dracula hunt to 1872 with an entirely different ending (most importantly, Van Helsing's death) than any of the earlier films.

In *Brides* (p. 42), Van Helsing's initial is J not L. A somewhat unified Hammer timeline is thus barely possible:

- 1872 — Lawrence Van Helsing dies killing Dracula
- 1885 — Lawrence's son J[acob?] Van Helsing kills Dracula
- 1887 — Jacob Van Helsing kills Baron Meinster
- 1895 — Father Sandor kills Dracula
- 1896 — *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave* (assuming the prologue refers to Dracula's outrages in *Prince of Darkness*, and ignoring the internal date in the film)
- 1898? — *Taste the Blood of Dracula*
- 1900? — Castle Dracula burnt down; *Scars of Dracula*
- 1904 — Jacob and his son Leland Van Helsing kill Dracula in China
- 1972, 1974 — Leland's son Lorrimer Van Helsing kills Dracula twice
Jessica calls Lawrence her great-grandfather, although he'd be her great-great-grandfather, but that might be a slip of the tongue.

This was not the last retcon of the Dracula-Van Helsing battle. In 1970 Anthony Hinds wrote a script set in 1930s India called *The Unquenchable Thirst of Dracula* (in which Dracula is devoured alive by holy corpse-eating vultures) later revised by writer

Chris Wicking in 1975 as *Kali, Devil-Bride of Dracula*. In Wicking's treatment, while serving with the Bengal Lancers, a young Van Helsing meets Dracula for the first time in the 1850s!



BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA (1973) —

Director: Dan Curtis

Dracula: Jack Palance

Additional Cast: Simon Ward (Arthur Holmwood), Nigel Davenport (Van Helsing), Fiona Lewis (Lucy Westenra), Murray Brown (Jonathan Harker), Penelope Horner (Mina Murray), Pamela Brown (Mrs. Westenra)

Synopsis: While in Castle Dracula, Harker discovers a photograph of Lucy and Mina with Lucy's face circled; Dracula has recognized her as the reincarnation of his lost love Maria. Eventually Harker manages to climb down the wall, but one of Dracula's Roma servants knocks him out and dumps him in the castle cellars for

the Brides. We cut to the beach at Whitby and the wreckage of the *Demeter*, then hear that Lucy's fiancé Arthur Holmwood has called in a specialist, Van Helsing, for her sleepwalking. (The Westenra house Hillingham is in Whitby for this version.) Dracula puts both men to sleep mesmerically and lures Lucy to him. After Van Helsing leaves, Dracula breaks a wolf out of Scarborough Zoo and sends it to attack Arthur in the house as a distraction while he finishes off Lucy. Arthur shoots the wolf, but too late.

The Un-Dead Lucy returns home, but Van Helsing saves Arthur with a cross and they stake Lucy in her tomb. Dracula tracks the men as they move Mina and Mrs. Westenra to the George Hotel, and smashes his way through the entire hotel staff looking for the women, who escape in the ruckus. Meanwhile, Arthur and Van Helsing have found Carfax and destroyed nine of Dracula's ten coffins. They return to Hillingham to find Dracula with Mina; he threatens to break her neck unless they drop their crosses, then boastfully forces her to feed on his blood and departs. Hypnotizing Mina, Van Helsing learns Dracula has taken ship for home. The three follow the Count, leave Mina behind at Bistritz, and ride to Castle Dracula. Here they destroy the Brides and discover a vampirized Harker, who falls into a pit full of stakes. Arthur and Van Helsing corner Dracula in his great hall, and pull down the curtains to weaken him with sunlight. Van Helsing grabs a spear off the wall and stakes Dracula, pinning him to his own table. The last shot shows a painting of Vlad III Dracula accompanied by his love Maria.

Criticism: If you had always wondered where the mytheme "Dracula falls in love with Mina because she resembles his centuries-dead true love" originated, well, it came from two places. First, *The*

Mummy (Karl Freund, 1932), but Dan Curtis moved it from mummies to vampires for the Barnabas Collins storyline in his TV soap opera *Dark Shadows*. And from there, to this TV movie — although in Curtis' version, Dracula falls in love with a photograph of Lucy Westenra (a fairly dull Fiona Lewis) instead. Curtis (or perhaps screenwriter Richard Matheson) also borrowed Florescu and McNally's 1972 identification of Stoker's Dracula with Vlad Tepes for this film — this Dracula is Vlad. Francis Ford Coppola re-used more than the title of this version, in other words.

If you were paying attention, you noticed me say "screenwriter Richard Matheson" and indeed you are right: this is a *Dracula* where the script really works, and is surprisingly faithful to Stoker's novel despite eliminating not just poor un-loved Quincey Morris but Seward and Renfield, too. It's just a Van-Dyck-bearded Van Helsing (Nigel Davenport, dashing and weirdly secretive) and blond, inbred-looking Holmwood (Simon Ward, petulant and ineffective) guarding Lucy in a suspiciously bucolic Whitby — the cool location work in a Yugoslavian castle probably meant no budget for London. Jack Palance's Dracula, while driven by love and then revenge, is superbly feral, even animalistic. (Method-actor Palance apparently scared himself so much he turned down repeated offers to reprise the role.) The film reinforces that bestial force throughout: the first shot is a pack of wolves running along a road in the Borgo Pass, eager to follow Dracula to meet Harker; and Curtis stages the Brides' attack more like zombie ravaging than anything sexy or even lustful — an approach you might want to consider if your player characters are loading up on Binaca and Axe body spray instead of garlic and holy water when the Brides come by.

At the Table: Circa 1970, Matheson scripted *Dracula Walks the Night* for Hammer, a more faithful treatment of the novel that also found room to team Van Helsing up with Sherlock Holmes in Victorian London.

In an effective scene, we see Lucy at the window after her death. Distant sightings of known dead folk always work at the table.

Sunlight weakens but does not kill Dracula, as in the novel.

SATANIC RITES OF DRACULA (1974) —

Director: Alan Gibson

Dracula: Christopher Lee

Additional Cast: Peter Cushing (Lorrimer Van Helsing), Joanna Lumley (Jessica Van Helsing), Michael Coles (Inspector Murray)

Synopsis: Agent Hanson (Maurice O'Connell) of SI7 escapes Pelham House, where Chin Yang (Barbara Yu Ling) is leading a black-magic ceremony for a group of robed men. Hanson's dying words and his surveillance photos implicate four influential figures: an MP and government Minister, John Porter; a peer, Lord Carradine; General Sir Arthur Freeborne; and Julian Keeley (Freddie Jones), a prominent bacteriologist. His fifth photo shows only an empty doorway. Given the sensitivities of the case, SI7 puts Inspector Murray in charge of the investigation, along with SI7 agent Peter Torrance (William Franklyn). Murray suggests bringing in a specialist, Van Helsing. The cult kidnaps the SI7 secretary, Jane (Valerie Van Ost) and Dracula vampirizes her.

Van Helsing interviews Keeley and discovers the scientist has developed a new strain of bubonic plague, but before he can break Keeley down a cult gunman shoots him, steals the virus, and hangs Keeley. Murray and Torrance bring Jessica Van Helsing (now the professor's assistant)

with them to Pelham House and after discovering a basement full of chained Brides and staking Jane, they escape. Van Helsing recovers from being shot and finds papers tying Keeley's research funding to the reclusive billionaire D.D. Denham, whose office building rises from the former site of St. Botolph's church. Van Helsing melts down a cross to mold a silver bullet and brings it to Denham's office where he reveals Denham as Dracula but gets captured by the cult before he can fire. Meanwhile, a cult sniper herds Murray and Jessica, staking out Pelham House, into a trap and capture.

Murray awakens in the cellar and manages to stake Chin Yang, then melts the Brides with the sprinkler system. Dracula has Jessica entranced on the altar and brags that Van Helsing and his three high acolytes shall be the new "Four Horsemen," spreading plague to the world while Dracula rules the ruins with the undying Jessica. The acolytes like this plan not at all, but Dracula mesmerizes Porter into smashing the plague vial. Murray picks this moment to attack a guard who short-circuits the computer and sets Pelham House on fire. Murray rescues Jessica, and Van Helsing escapes the flames with Dracula in pursuit. Van Helsing lures the Count into a handy hawthorn hedge and as the holy plants hold the vampire, Van Helsing stakes him with a fence post.

Criticism: The final Lee-Cushing outing feels more like an overlong episode of *The Avengers* than it does a vampire movie, given the spy-fi hugger-mugger, weird afghan-jacketed mooks, ad hoc plotting, arbitrary exploding computers, and Joanna Lumley. Gibson's direction is intermittently interesting, but ultimately drowned by the arbitrary script. Cushing spends most of his time listening to exposition, although the scene in which he

casts a silver bullet has a nice technothriller *Day of the Jackal* (Fred Zinnemann, 1973) vibe. Sadly, it's as anticlimactic as both his confrontations with Lee's Dracula, and as a whole basement full of Brides dissolving under the running water of the sprinkler system. *Satanic Rites* winds up wasting both its original ideas: Dracula as modern business magnate infiltrating and seducing government circles, and Dracula as Antichrist with a subconscious death wish.

At the Table: Lee paid a "personal tribute" to Bela Lugosi with Denham's accent in the office confrontation scene, delivering lines in his version of Lugosi's Hungarian accent.

This is the first movie in which silver harms Dracula, although silver bullets as anti-vampire weapons appear in Bulgarian folklore and in Montague Summers' *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*. In Stoker, Dracula actually *holds* a silver lamp; Van Helsing refers to the "sacred bullet fired into the coffin."

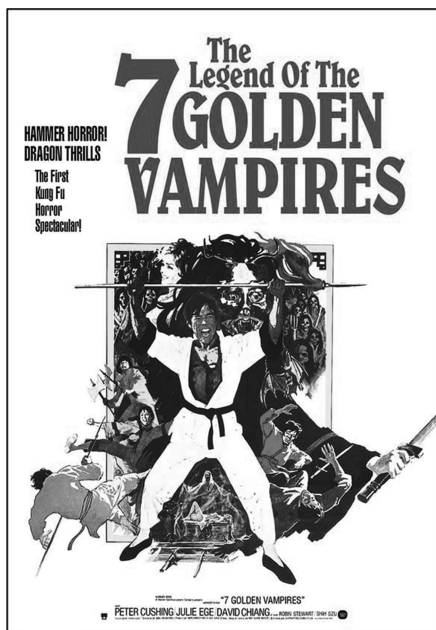
The "Sabbath of the Un-Dead" on "the 23rd of the month" likely refers to June 23: St. John's Eve, Midsummer Night, a traditional fire festival in medieval Europe and a holy day in Louisiana Voodoo.

Given the vampire's long folkloric association with disease, Dracula's plague plot seems eminently borrowable. Whether he intends to simply destroy his hated British enemies once and for all, or rule the world after a global pandemic, the plague story is another under-utilized aspect of the film.

Perhaps appropriately, *Satanic Rites* is the apotheosis of the Hammer "Dracula cult" mythos. As Van Helsing says: "But the strongest cults were those that worshipped the most mystical substance of all: the Fountainhead of Life itself. The glorification of blood. ... And more often than not, human blood."

Although Murray still knows the truth, nobody from SI7 who sees a vampire survives.

Something for the *Dracula Dossier* crowd: Christopher Lee officially joined the SOE in 1941 after washing out of RAF flight school in conveniently distant and hard-to-check South Africa. But we don't officially know what he was doing between leaving Finland in 1939 (!) and going into the RAF in 1941. A patriot, son of a soldier, and total badass like Christopher Lee wouldn't just sit around, would he? No. He'd join a secret unit within a secret unit, he'd parachute into Romania in 1940 to save it from the Nazis, and he'd be the only survivor of that operation, emerging with an almost supernatural understanding of ... Count Dracula. And he'd stay in touch, a helpful tip here, a nod there, as he kept up the perfect cover of movie star — jet-setting around the world, lots of unaccountable free time and money, hob-nobbing with the rich and famous, not like a spy (or his fellow SOE comrade Ian Fleming) at all. There'd be no reason to suspect that Christopher Lee was once "Van Sloan," the Man Who Lived — and less than no reason to suspect him of being "D" ... the enigmatic head of Operation Edom until his 2015 death unstuck everything, perhaps including a certain Dossier



THE LEGEND OF THE 7 GOLDEN VAMPIRES (1974)

Director: Roy Ward Baker

Dracula: John Forbes-Robertson, Sheng Chan (Kah), David de Keyser (voice of Dracula)

Additional Cast: Peter Cushing (Van Helsing), Robin Stewart (Leyland Van Helsing)

Synopsis: The evil Chinese monk Kah travels to Transylvania in 1804, seeking the power of Dracula to restore the might of the Seven Golden Vampires of Ping Kwei. Instead, Dracula possesses Kah and returns to China in his form. A century later in 1904, Van Helsing delivers a lecture on vampires at Chungking University, telling the story of a Golden Vampire destroyed by the power of the Buddha. Only one student, Hsi Ching (David Chiang) believes him, because he is a native of Ping Kwei and indeed the grandson of the farmer who defeated the Golden Vampire. Hsi Ching shows a bat-medallion as proof, and asks Van

Helsing to travel to Ping Kwei and destroy the six remaining Golden Vampires. When the rich Scandinavian widow Vanessa Buren (Julie Ege) agrees to fund the expedition on the condition she can accompany it, Van Helsing reluctantly agrees. He, his son Leyland, Hsi Ching, and Vanessa set out for Ping Kwei accompanied by Hsi Ching's six weapon-master kung fu brothers and similarly puissant sister Mai Kwei (Shih Szu) after a couple of fights with a local tong leader Leung Han (Wong Han Chan).

On the road, romance blooms between Vanessa and Hsi Ching, and between Leyland and Mai Kwei. The vampires raid Ping Kwei again, then attack the expedition while it rests in a cave. The vampires bring an army of zombies with them, and only with great effort do our heroes drive them off, killing three more Golden Vampires in the process. At Ping Kwei, Van Helsing directs the fortification of the village with a flaming moat and stake defenses, but the overwhelming vampire attack that night slaughters most of the townsfolk. A vampire bites Vanessa, who bites Hsi Ching; he kills her and himself by falling onto a stake. More brothers fall, as do two more Golden Vampires; the final Golden Vampire kidnaps Mai Kwei, and both Van Helsing's ride to her rescue. Leyland frees Mai Kwei but gets trapped himself until Van Helsing shows up and spears the final Golden Vampire, knocking it into a pit of boiling blood. The rest of the adventurers free the sacrifices and leave, but Van Helsing senses Dracula's presence and calls him out. Dracula returns to his true form and the two have one last fight; Van Helsing spears him, of course, and the Count disintegrates.

Criticism: In 1973, both Hammer Films and the Hong Kong action studio Shaw Brothers were desperate. *Enter the Dragon* (Robert Clouse, 1973), from rival studio Golden Harvest, had made kung-

fu fighting a global filmic fad. Meanwhile, American distributors ignored Hammer's outing that year, *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (p. 58). But Hammer had always done well in British colony Hong Kong and its cinematic hinterlands, as its visual style translated even when its scripts didn't (and perhaps shouldn't). And so the notion of a team-up was born. Hammer contributed Peter Cushing (and, under protest, Dracula) and the script; Shaw Brothers contributed their own star David Chiang (in an attempt to make him "the next Bruce Lee"), action director Chang Cheh, and the production facilities, such as they were, in Hong Kong.

The story, such as it is, seems made for seeing accidentally late at night and trying to explain that this thing really existed. The Golden Vampires are unmistakably vivid, looking nothing like any previous Hammer monster; their horseback attack is genuinely scary. Hong Kong pay scales allowed an army of zombies, some of whom can be seen hopping just a bit, and I imagine Baker uselessly shouting "Stop hopping, you're vampires!" during filming, which was a nightmare by all accounts. The last act swerves into homaging *The Magnificent Seven* (John Sturges, 1960) of all things as Van Helsing and the remaining warriors make one final stand to defend Ping Kwei; the result is one of the few Hammer films to actually convey the danger and damage of vampire hunting. We are left with the nagging questions: was it worth the cost? and hey hold on if Dracula was inside a Chinese monk from 1804 to 1904, who was that Christopher Lee-looking guy Van Helsing hunted through the latter half of the 19th century?

At the Table: In real history, Ping Kwei, assuming it's the one in Guangxi province, was one of the centers of the extraordinarily bloodthirsty Taiping Rebellion.

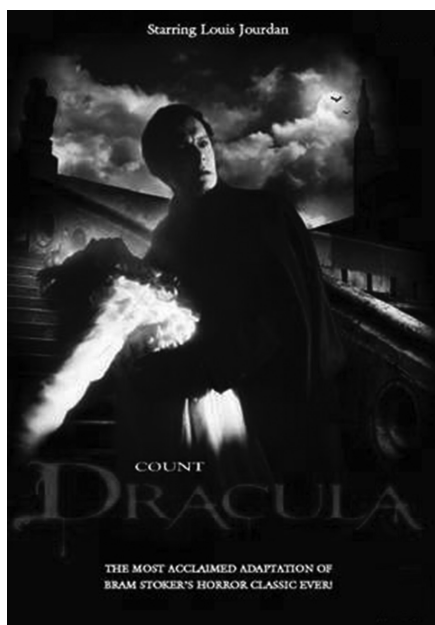
Dracula's full title: "I am Dracula, Lord of Darkness, Master of the Vampires, Prince of the Undead, Ruler of the Damned!"

Three bats drop down from the roof of the cave into the hunters' midst and transform into Golden Vampires — an excellent tactic, if they have surprise. Or a horde of zombies to rush in, which they do.

Buddha also repels vampires, just like Christ.

Requiring a certain number of vampires to conduct specific rituals restrains the villains in an interesting way, and one the player characters can directly affect.

Dracula's power over storms extends to sandstorms, again to excellent tactical effect.



COUNT DRACULA (1977)

Director: Philip Savile

Dracula: Louis Jourdan

Additional Cast: Frank Finlay (Van Helsing), Susan Penhaligon (Lucy Westenra), Judi Bowker (Mina Westenra), Jack Shepherd (Renfield), Mark Burns

(Dr. John Seward), Bosco Hogan (Jonathan Harker), Richard Barnes (Quincey P. Holmwood), George Malpas (Mr. Swales)

Synopsis: In 1902 Whitby, Harker leaves his fiancée, Mina Westenra, to travel to Transylvania and meet with Count Dracula, identified by a stained glass window as Vlad the Impaler. The Count is urbane if firm, and Harker discounts the sight of hair on his palms. At Purfleet Asylum in Whitby, the madman Renfield announces to Dr. Seward that he will be recompensed for saving up his flies. Mina's sister Lucy has received proposals of marriage from Dr. Seward and the American consular official Quincey P. Holmwood; she accepts the latter. Mr. Swales discusses the Whitby graveyard with Lucy and Mina, highlighting the suicide's grave in his ramblings. Later, the sisters witness the wreck of the *Demeter*; Dracula rips Swales' throat out in the graveyard. Mina follows a sleepwalking Lucy out to the graveyard, sees Dracula feeding on her, and returns her to bed. Quincey visits, discovers Lucy's ailment, and promises to use his diplomatic contacts to locate Harker for Mina. Dr. Seward watches boxes unload at Carfax and refuses Renfield a cat; Quincey finds Harker in Budapest and pays for Mina's passage to recover him.

Van Helsing arrives and begins transfusions and smearing garlic over the windows; Dracula offers Renfield lives, and Renfield drinks the blood spilled by an orderly. Dracula smashes through the garlicked windows in wolf form, and drains Lucy, who ceases to appear in the mirror before "dying." The returning Harker sees Dracula driving the carriage he and Mina have just stepped out of; they compare notes with Van Helsing, Seward, and Quincey, who have staked Lucy and placed garlic flowers in her mouth before beheading her. While the men visit Carfax

and sanctify 29 boxes of earth, Dracula visits Mina uninvited. She then pays a call on Renfield, but when he sees her throat wounds he throws a fit and dismisses her. Dracula asks why Renfield has refused his gift of Mina, and kills him for his defiance; Renfield survives long enough to warn Van Helsing that Mina has been bitten. Dracula makes Mina feed on him before Van Helsing can arrive; he touches a Host to her head and it scars her. The men find Dracula's other lair in Mayfair; the Count explodes a window and escapes in mist form.

Mina then tells the men that Dracula has returned to Transylvania (no hypnosis needed) and urges a pursuit with mercy. Quincey, Seward, and Harker ride horses to the Castle; Mina and Van Helsing take a shortcut (Mina claims to remember it from Jonathan's diary) on a cart. When the Brides appear, Van Helsing draws a magic circle of consecrated Host and imprisons Mina in it. The next morning, Van Helsing reaches the Castle and stakes the Brides, then the two reach the hillside just as Harker's party confronts shotgun-wielding Slovaks guarding Dracula's final box. Van Helsing loads a rifle, gives it to Mina, and she fires the decisive shot to save Harker. The five open the box just at sunset, and Van Helsing stakes Dracula, who dissolves into mist. Mina's scar heals and all that remains of the Count is a burned suit of clothes.

Criticism: Generally (and correctly) hailed as the most textually accurate of the major *Dracula* adaptations, this BBC TV production has the advantage of time (three TV episodes, 160 minutes) to stretch out in.

Every character has a recognizable motive and occasionally even an arc, and the human moments are well-written by Gerald Savory and well-acted almost without exception (I'm looking at you, Bosco Hogan as Pouty Shouty Harker).

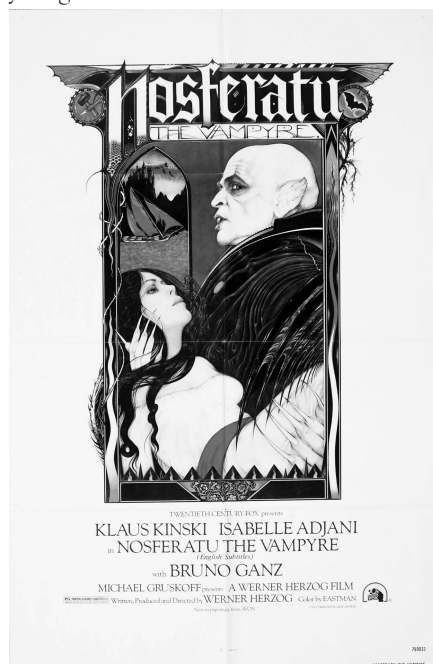
The script's worst crime is the seemingly sensible shift to making Mina (strong, noble Judi Bowker) and Lucy (sexy, giddy Susan Penhaligon) sisters. Although it sets up some great character bits between the two, since Mina doesn't need to stay in the asylum now (she can stay in her own house next door) the story has to invent a weird reason for Renfield's sacrifice. And since Jack Shepherd's Renfield is perhaps the best ever cast, it's a shame he has to play his noble scene senselessly.

But you didn't tune in for Renfield, and neither did anybody in 1977, either. Louis Jourdan and Frank Finlay as Dracula and Van Helsing have the best on-screen chemistry of any pair except Lee and Cushing. Jourdan and Finlay both play their roles as ironic gamesters, manipulating and maneuvering their way through the world of mortals and simpletons — but Jourdan's Dracula is an inhumanly arrogant sociopath (chucking his Brides under the chin, no less), and Finlay's Van Helsing is a lonely hero. The trippy 1970s visual and animation effects are what they are (dated), the budget-driven alternation of film and video sadly breaks the mood, and the less said about the thin and over-obvious Kenyon Emrys-Roberts score the better. But this *Dracula* gives us both Dracula and Harker climbing down the castle wall, a great location shoot in Whitby, a real live bat and wolf, and a rambunctious gunfight with the "Slovaks" at the castle. Most of all, it gives us superb incarnations of the three main roles, and that is more than close enough for British government work.

At the Table: Does Mina lure Van Helsing into the Brides' ambush? As in *Stoker*, it's ambiguous, but it looks like it.

This *Dracula* actually shows the gold in the basement; it also uses the Host and not crosses, possibly to avoid the "any two sticks" bloat of the *Hammerverse*.

In this version, Dracula needs more vampires, as only vampire blood keeps him young and immortal.



NOSFERATU THE VAMPIRE (1979) —

Director: Werner Herzog

Dracula: Klaus Kinski

Additional Cast: Isabelle Adjani (Lucy Harker [MM]), Bruno Ganz (Jonathan Harker), Roland Topor (Renfield), Walter Ladengast (Van Helsing), Martje Grohmann (Mina Schrader [LW])

Synopsis: The plot of Herzog's version of *Nosferatu* is almost exactly that of Murnau's (p. 17) with a few critical differences:

- Herzog vastly extends Harker's travel to Castle Dracula.
- Dracula hates and fears the crucifix throughout.
- Although he escapes the Castle, Harker has fallen under Dracula's sway. He fails to recognize Lucy and the sun pains him.

- Dracula sends Renfield north to Riga to await him.
- Lucy actively tries to convince the bourgeois of Wismar to act against Dracula. When they ignore her, she briefly investigates Dracula's lair and even crumbles a Host into his coffin before wandering through a town transformed into a medieval plague folly.
- Lucy surrounds Harker's chair with the crumbled Host before luring Dracula to his death.
- Dracula does not disintegrate in the sunlight, but merely dies.
- After Dracula and Lucy die, Van Helsing arrives to stake the Count's body. Harker has a maid sweep up the Host, freeing him. Now fully vampiric, he denounces Van Helsing to the authorities as a murderer and rides north.

Criticism: "This is not a remake," insisted Werner Herzog, who seemed to consider it first and foremost an exorcism of the "greatest of German films," Murnau's *Nosferatu* (p. 17). It was also, I suspect, an exorcism of Klaus Kinski, his "best fiend" collaborator, as much as it was a vehicle for that actor, who may have been the best ever for the part both physically and emotionally. Isabelle Adjani's Lucy deserves as much appreciation as Kinski's Dracula; her iconic purity precisely equals his iconic poison. The combination of epochal director and ideal actors gives this film a claim to be the best ever Dracula film, and it may in fact be the best ever film to be made of *Dracula*, which is not quite the same thing.

First and foremost, Kinski's Dracula is motivated not by greed and rapacity but by inertia: he is cursed with immortality, and exists to spread death. His presence in Wismar sets off not an orgy of biting

— although he does fang Mina she doesn't become a vampire — but the plague, spread by a horde of ... ineffectually-dyed white rats. (Herzog's inability to obtain proper gray rats just cripples the horror, it has to be admitted.) Herzog restores the original names Murnau couldn't use for fear of lawsuit, but keeps Murnau's plot mostly intact, with an extra Herzogian note of existential bleakness. As against that, Harker works much harder to damn himself than in any other version, a Catholic interpolation along with the crucifixes and holy wafers Herzog re-introduces to the story after the irreligious Murnau excised them. The cross is not enough to turn Orlok into Dracula, however — Kinski apparently fought to keep the original Murnau names, but (sadly) lost. Indeed, by getting past fidelity to Stoker's myth Herzog opens up a world of sound and vision, creating and re-creating a documentary of a nightmare.

At the Table: Does Van Helsing's staking of Dracula free the vampire soul from its love prison, and allow it to transmigrate into Harker?

The rats in Dracula's coffin surely eat the crumbs of Host that Lucy leaves to consecrate the soil, which seems very much like re-desecration to my mind.

In an archetypically Herzogian touch, Dracula brings the doldrums instead of the storm to his vessel.

Dracula's shadow appears in the mirror, which is somehow even weirder than the Stoker default.

DRACULA (1979)

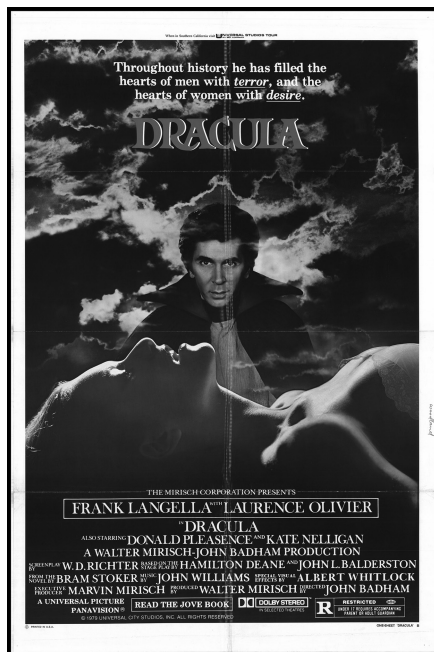
Director: John Badham

Dracula: Frank Langella

Additional Cast: Laurence Olivier (Van Helsing), Donald Pleasance (Dr. Jack Seward), Kate Nelligan (Lucy Seward [MM]), Trevor Eve (Jonathan Harker),

Tony Haygarth (Milo Renfield), Jan Francis (Mina Van Helsing [LW])

Synopsis: It is 1913. On board the storm-tossed *Demeter*, sailors throw boxes overboard until Dracula emerges from one in werewolf form and kills them all. Mina Van Helsing sees the wreck from Dr. Seward's sanatorium and goes down to the beach, where a survivor of the *Demeter* lies. Harker arrives to discover his client, Dracula, is the survivor recuperating at the asylum; tramp Milo Renfield rages that Harker has sold the Count the dilapidated Carfax Abbey, where he sleeps. Dracula enslaves Renfield, then at dinner mesmerizes Mina and dances with Lucy. That night, he climbs down the wall to drain Mina. Lucy dines with Dracula in gothic splendor as Van Helsing arrives to investigate his daughter's death; her specter has murdered a baby in the asylum, and the professor uses a white horse to prove she is a vampire. Lucy removes her cross, the better to make vampiric love with Dracula.



Seward and Van Helsing open Mina's coffin to find a hole clawed in it leading down, into the mine shafts beneath Whitby. They follow, and Van Helsing stakes his vampirized daughter. Van Helsing garlicks Lucy's room and confronts a visiting Dracula with garlic and willpower; the Count escapes in wolf form. While Van Helsing and Seward are cutting Mina's heart out, Lucy escapes. Harker and the doctors chase her down in his car; Harker and Van Helsing then proceed to Carfax and beard Dracula in his den. He attacks Harker in bat form but flees when Van Helsing knocks out a beam and opens the crypt to sunlight. Imprisoned in the asylum, Lucy tries to bite Harker; Dracula arrives by night, kills Renfield, and breaks her out. Harker's car wrecks during the chase, so the hunters must commandeering a steam launch to catch and board the *Czarina Catherine*. Here Lucy warns the Count, and he wakes and impales Van Helsing on his own stake. Distracted by Harker's ineffectual gunplay, Dracula gets impaled in turn on a boat hook swung by a dying Van Helsing. Harker pulls a rope sending the hook into the sunlight, where Dracula burns to ash. Or does he? We see his cloak flutter away, and it looks pretty batlike ... Lucy's smile reveals nothing.

Criticism: Now *this* is how to get Dracula wrong. John Badham's feminist (well, feminist-for-1979) deconstruction of the stage play and Stoker's novel creates a gothic fantasy in which "Lucy Seward" (Kate Nelligan, actually playing Mina) yearns for the liberating touch of Frank Langella's catlike, genteel Dracula. And if you were due to marry Trevor Eve's adenoidal, blustery Jonathan Harker, you too might seek the pleasures of the night even if it means going alone to the most over-the-top cobweb-and-chandelier dinner date outside Anne Rice's fever dreams. Peter Murton's grotesque

Carfax set is the best Dracula lair since 1931's Castle, and the horribly authentic Victorian asylum architecture gives *Trail of Cthulhu* Keepers a reason to watch. Other fabulist virtues of the film include John Williams' brassy score and Albert Whitlock's phantasmic matte paintings.

Never mind that Dracula murdered a zillion Russian sailors in the best *Demeter* wreck scene ever filmed, or that he also murdered the duly consumptive "Mina," Jan Francis. (Indeed, she dies twice, in a sloppy bit of editing.) Frank Langella makes his Dracula so confident, so comfortable in his own shapeshifting skin, that you almost don't mind those details any more than Lucy does. The incompetent Dr. Seward (Donald Pleasence as a distractible, absent father) and superstitious Dr. Van Helsing (a tired, broken Laurence Olivier) offer an unappetizing (especially so, given Pleasence's constant chewing of both food and scenery in every shot) alternative in patriarchal science. Religion comes in for its own hits: Dracula hisses "Sacrilege!" as Van Helsing holds him off with a Host, and Van Helsing nearly dies on his reanimated daughter's fangs while scrabbling in the mud for his dropped crucifix. No, this is the church of "You go for it, girl" with a vengeance. If things get too sexyweird for you, just drink ... wine ... whenever Dracula says "Good evening" and you'll come out toasty and ahead regardless.

At the Table: Dracula uses his powers cleverly throughout, from storms to mind control to climbing down (and smashing through) walls. He turns his mesmerism into a seeming parlor trick, a nice echo of the "Dracula as mentalist" motif from *House of Frankenstein* (p. 29) and *Billy the Kid vs. Dracula* (p. 36).

The notion of a hole in Mina's coffin leading down into mines and tunnels under "Whitby" has more scope than the film

could use. The film beautifully alienates the hunters' own backyard (although its weird Yorkshire is actually Cornwall), a neat subversion of Stoker's original.

Even Stoker couldn't shoehorn in the white horse used to find the vampire's grave, but it's authentic Serbian folklore.

Badham compromises between Stoker and Hammer: the vampire doesn't have to sleep in his coffin all day, just stay out of the direct sunlight.

The wolf-fur trim on Dracula's coat is a nice touch, again recalling the ancient legend of the lycanthrope's magic wolfskin.

This film adds the motif of Dracula setting a cross on fire just by looking at it.

Badham's No-Prize explanation for reflection of Mina in the water: Van Helsing's cross had dropped into the water, making it holy water, which can show a vampire's reflection.

MONSTER SQUAD (1987)

Director: Fred Dekker

Dracula: Duncan Regehr

Additional Cast: Jack Gwillim (Van Helsing)

Synopsis: Van Helsing and a mob of peasants blow open Dracula's crypt in 1887 to banish him forever into Limbo using an amulet containing the concentrated essence of Good. Unfortunately, the ritual goes wrong and Van Helsing gets sucked into Limbo instead.

In the present day, a club of pre-teen monster fans led by Sean (Andre Gower) attempts to decipher Van Helsing's diary, which his mom (Mary Ellen Trainor) found at an estate sale. Since it's in German, they ask the neighborhood Scary German Guy (Leonardo Cimino) to translate it. (As a Holocaust survivor, he knows from monsters.) The diary explains that the amulet is vulnerable to destruction one night per century, but on that night if a

virgin reads a ritual incantation all evil things will be sucked into Limbo forever. Dracula hasn't been idle: he has discovered where Van Helsing's associates hid the amulet in Sean's town, and bought that house, and as "Mr. Alucard," he offers to buy back the diary. He also summons the Gill-Man (Tom Woodruff, Jr.), a Mummy (Michael McKay), and a lunatic who turns out to be the Wolf Man (Carl Thibault), hijacks a converted bomber shipping Frankenstein's Monster (Tom Noonan), and even finds time to convert three high school girls into Brides. The Monster wanders away, however, and befriends Sean's little sister Phoebe (Ashley Bank).

Sean and his friends manage to find the amulet (guarded by crosses and garlic) and steal it, escaping Dracula thanks to a tactical use of cold pizza and the Monster's seemingly fatal intervention. They head for a downtown cathedral to perform the ritual, and Dracula sets out to hunt them down, tossing dynamite hither and yon for good measure. After a first reading with one kid's older sister goes wrong (not a virgin, it turns out), Scary German Guy helps Phoebe recite the ritual and open the gate to Limbo. Dracula nearly kills Phoebe, but the Monster returns to rescue her. Dracula tries to drag Sean with him to Limbo, but Sean stakes him and Van Helsing emerges from the gate to finally destroy his foe as the portal closes, carrying all the monsters (including the Monster) away.

Criticism: The only Dracula movie in the vampire-obsessed 1980s vanished without a trace at the box office. (Dracula does not appear in *Dracula's Widow* (Christopher Coppola, 1988), although a descendant of Van Helsing and a character named Jenny Harker do.) Its style can best be described as Hughes-Spielbergian, although the script (co-written by Shane Black) is snappier and fuller than most of the kid films from

the era. The camp elements give way to genuine character moments, actual humor, or wonder of wonders suspense. Despite top-notch makeup and Stan Winston effects, the almost-Universal monsters are more familiar than frightening. That said, Duncan Regehr brings an almost psychopathic disregard to his Dracula — he beat out an unknown Liam Neeson for the part, as it happens — crashing planes, snapping mortals, and hurling dynamite like someone who knows he's invulnerable.

At the Table: Lightning reveals Dracula's skull; in Stoker's notes, he speculates that attempts to photograph Dracula only show a skull.

As in the Universal cycle, possession of the Monster is somehow crucial to the villainous plan, although the movie doesn't explain how Dracula finds the plane or why it's flying over the town right before the century anniversary.

Dracula's scepter magically commands the Mummy and Wolf-Man, and summons the Gill Man. It also acts as a gadgety lightning rod to magico-electrically awaken the Monster.

The armadillos in the 1887 sequence are a tribute to Browning's *Dracula* (p. 20).

One of Dracula's schoolgirl Brides survives the film un-staked.

The cellar full of crosses surrounding the amulet works amazingly well as spectacle, given how simple the concept is. Try it at the table.

Dracula's hearse is a ghost car, for some reason. This might be considered both an update and a supernaturalization of the "Dracula's caleche" mytheme.

Dracula is, as you might expect, very effective at hand-to-hand combat, the best since Palance (p. 56).

SUNDOWN: THE VAMPIRE IN RETREAT (1991)

Director: Anthony Hickox

Dracula: David Carradine

Additional Cast: Bruce Campbell (Robert Van Helsing)

Synopsis: Count Mardulak (David Carradine) has bought up the ghost town of Purgatory as a sanctuary for vampires, who survive the desert with sun block and floppy hats. He has invested in a plant making artificial blood hoping to use it to bring about harmony between vampires and humans, but the machinery isn't working. Plant engineer Shane (Maxwell Caulfield) recommends hiring the system's human designer David Harrison (Jim Metzler) to get it running at full production. Shane covets David's wife Sarah (Morgan Brittany), and conspires with Mardulak's vampire enforcer Ethan Jefferson (John Ireland) to overthrow Mardulak with wooden bullet-firing guns smuggled in from outside. Meanwhile, Robert Van Helsing trails his great-grandfather's foe Mardulak to Purgatory, but falls in with new vampire Sandy White (Deborah Foreman) who wants him for herself and turns him with Mardulak's permission.

When the civil war erupts, after numerous gun battles Mardulak defeats Ethan in a quick-draw contest, and reveals himself to be Dracula. Harrison raises an enormous wooden cross on the roof that crumples the rebel vampires but spares Mardulak's allies, whom God has forgiven. With Shane and Ethan defeated, Mardulak's vision can come true.

Criticism: Filmed in 1988 and finally ejected straight to VHS as Vestron Pictures self-destructed, this horror-Western-comedy-drama tries to cover a lot of ground on not a lot of budget. The script can't actually accommodate the tonal shifts,

nor can the stilted dialogue, although the actors pitch in gamely for the most part. M. Emmet Walsh is grumbly greatness as Mort, a vampire with a temper, Bruce Campbell provides his reliable mix of bullheaded good nature, and John Ireland chews the scenery with relish as the Puritan-garbed enforcer Ethan. When David Carradine allows himself to spread out into his vampire patriarch role, he almost sells the Western-vampire combination his father so badly missed in 1965 (p. 40), and his condemnation of his own kind is the strongest line in the film: "the tapeworm, the flea, the fungus, that's how special vampires are." Mardulak's showdown with Ethan is shot in claustrophobic medium and close-up, though, and once more the limitations come crashing in until the arbitrary ending.

At the Table: David Carradine's top hat and cravat almost have to be a tribute to his father John Carradine's Dracula costume in *House of Frankenstein* (p. 29).

Even a benevolent Dracula can only have one rule for human interlopers: Kill 'em or turn 'em. *Sundown* undoes the moral gravity of this threat by denaturing vampirism.

Like Langella's Dracula (p. 64), these vampires smash through walls to open up tactical space.

GMs will almost certainly want to make something out of the "fortified wood" bullets Shane develops for the vampire coup attempt. Compare the "carbon bullets" used by the UK anti-vampire death squad in the TV series *Ultraviolet*.

Vampire speed and power increases with age; Mardulak (actually the 15th-century Dracula) pretends to be a 19th-century cowboy to lull the 17th-century Ethan into false security.

Juliet, the little girl dhampir, sees vampiric Shane in his human form, even when he has "transformed" into a monstrous bat.

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA (1992) —

Director: Francis Ford Coppola**Dracula:** Gary Oldman**Additional Cast:** Winona Ryder (Mina Murray/Elisabeta), Anthony Hopkins (Van Helsing), Keanu Reeves (Jonathan Harker), Richard E. Grant (Jack Seward), Cary Elwes (Sir Arthur Holmwood), Billy Campbell (Quincey P. Morris), Sadie Frost (Lucy Westenra), Tom Waits (R. M. Renfield), Monica Bellucci (Bride), Jay Robinson (Mr. Hawkins)**Synopsis:** In 1462, Vlad Dracula returns to Transylvania from crusade against the Turks to find his wife Elisabeta has committed suicide upon hearing he was killed. Angry that the church damns her for her sin, he renounces God and declares he will avenge her from beyond the grave.

In 1897, Harker travels to Castle Dracula (replacing his insane colleague Renfield) and meets the Count, now a withered lich. Dracula discovers that Harker's fiancée Mina is Elisabeta reincarnate and, leaving Harker as food for his Brides, travels to London. Here, he mesmerizes the wanton Lucy Westenra, raping her in both wolf and human form. While her suitors and Van Helsing attempt to save her, Dracula now grown young stalks Mina in London, then courts her with absinthe and motion pictures. When Mina leaves London to marry Harker in Budapest, Dracula becomes enraged and murders Lucy.

Van Helsing recognizes the handiwork of his lifelong foe Vlad Tepes, and organizes the hunters to stake Lucy and smash Dracula's boxes in Carfax. Dracula meanwhile kills Renfield and seduces Mina, who willingly drinks his blood. The hunters burst in and attack; he transforms into a horde of rats and scurries away. Van Helsing hypnotizes Mina, who reveals Dracula's return to Transylvania. Dracula escapes them at Varna by reading Mina's

mind, and the hunters split up. Van Helsing guards Mina from the Brides with a fiery magic circle, keeping Mina's vampire self in check with the Host, then beholds them by day. Communing with Dracula, Mina commands the storms to rise, but the other hunters arrive on horseback in a running gun battle against Dracula's Roma servitors. Although mortally wounded, Quincey stabs Dracula in the heart with a Bowie knife just as Harker slits the Count's throat with a kukri. Mina rushes to the vampire's embrace and Van Helsing allows her to carry him into the chapel. Her love reconsecrates the chapel, Dracula returns to human form and a crying Mina finishes his decapitation.

Criticism: Whatever happened to Francis Ford Coppola? It beggars the imagination that the director who made five masterpieces in ten years (*Patton*, *The Conversation*, *Godfather I and II*, *Apocalypse Now*) also made this chemical fire of a film. Even the uneven Eighties Coppola was better than this, at least sometimes (*The Outsiders*, *Tucker*). Watching it again for this project I realized that what Coppola had made was a live-action cartoon of Dracula: Lucy's vomited blood spraying in Van Helsing's face, Dracula's stalking/meet-cute of Mina in London, the ludicrous muscle-armor, the rare roast beef, perhaps even Keanu Reeves' "Whoa, I am totally British" accent as Harker — all these things are just *bits*, like Daffy Duck getting his bill blown off before resuming the story unharmed. They are, however, bits that don't work at all.

And sadly, they outweigh the bits that do. Coppola's insistence on using only in-camera and practical effects (all developed before 1931) gives the film a dreamlike atmosphere in its best moments, a great gunfight in the final chase features a properly Texan Quincey using his

Winchester to deadly effect, Eiko Ishioka's costumes are ridiculous as clothing but wonderful as expressionist artifacts, and Monica Bellucci is the best of Brides. Some bits might have worked or partially worked but wound up overplayed or overused or just crowded into each other: the ceaseless homages to every other *Dracula* movie, the crucified wolf, the BeastCam wolf-o-vision, Tom Waits' full-throated Renfield, Anthony Hopkins' authentically bipolar Van Helsing ("King Laugh"), the zoomy independent shadow as Dracula's id.

And worst of all, the ultimate travesty of a Mina in love with — not mesmerized by (as in the movies by and large), much less raped by (as in the novel), but in pure, redemptive, fulfilling love with — Dracula. For this above all reasons, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* is famously no such thing despite giving us the London Zoo wolf, the full Crew of Light, Van Helsing holding off the Brides with a charmed circle, and a daywalking Dracula. Which brings us to Gary Oldman. As I've said before, in the final analysis Dracula films stand or fall on their Dracula. Oldman is a superb actor, but his "menacing" Dracula is too campy (*Fifth Element* (Luc Besson, 1997)) or too psychotic (*The Professional* (Luc Besson, 1994)) and his proto-hipster, curly-locked "Prince Vlad" is no Cary Elwes. More to the point, when the whole cinematic world is clearly psycho, a psycho Dracula just doesn't stand out. He doesn't threaten the green-lit, peacock-spangled, model-train, ruff-bedecked, morphine-shooting, Richard-Burton-porno "Victorian" world of the film any more than Tom threatens Jerry.

At the Table: The film's morphine-addicted Seward comes from the novel Seward's apparent occasional habit of using chloral hydrate as a sleep aid.

This is the first Dracula film to actually foreground a possible lesbian relationship between Mina and Lucy.

In a very effective bit, Coppola shows Dracula transformed into a swarm of rats; in the novel, Dracula commands rats but does not transform into them.

This is the first film to show the Brides killing Van Helsing and Mina's horses.

As Mina falls under Dracula's spell, she develops his powers over the storms and blue flames.

DRACULA: DEAD AND LOVING IT (1995)

Director: Mel Brooks

Dracula: Leslie Nielsen

Additional Cast: Mel Brooks (Dr. Abraham Van Helsing), Peter MacNichol (Thomas Renfield), Steven Weber (Jonathan Harker), Amy Yasbeck (Mina Seward), Lysette Anthony (Lucy Westenra), Harvey Korman (Dr. Seward)

Synopsis: Set in 1893, this parody closely follows the plot of the Browning-Lugosi 1931 *Dracula* (p. 20), with a different ending and a few additions:

- Dracula and Van Helsing trade insults in Moldavian at their first meeting.
- Brooks inserts a Carfax Abbey dance number parodying Badham's 1979 *Dracula* into the story when Mina goes to meet Dracula.
- Brooks inserts another dance number at a formal ball Van Helsing devises as a trap to expose the vampire with an enormous wall-length mirror.

At the end, rather than retreat to Carfax, Dracula carries Mina off to an old windmill reminiscent of *Brides of Dracula* (p. 42). Harker, Seward, and Van Helsing track Renfield there and discover Dracula. Van Helsing opens the blinds to let the deadly sunlight in, and Dracula turns into a bat, fleeing into the dark rafters — until the helpful idiot Renfield opens the skylight to provide his Master with a fatal escape

route. Renfield brushes Dracula's ashes into his coffin, instantly becomes Seward's slave, and Van Helsing gets the last word in Moldavian.

Criticism: Toothless and unfunny, *Dead and Loving It* is no *Young Frankenstein* (Mel Brooks, 1974). Where that film drew dramatic and comic energy from Frederick Frankenstein's reluctant disappearance into his ancestor, here Brooks is content to play Van Helsing as a Borscht Belt ham. Leslie Nielsen's Dracula is too airy to be tragic or scary, and thus can't provide anything except comic timing for the too-infrequent jokes. Only Peter MacNichol brings any energy at all, with an inspired, almost simian take on Dwight Frye's Renfield. The plot clones Browning (and actually closes his plot holes) but the film's look and feel (thanks to cinematographer Michael D. O'Shea and production designer Roy Forge Smith) apes the brighter Hammer films amidst a James Bernard-clone score. Brooks knocks off some other film Draculas – the hair and shadow from Coppola (p. 69), the gluttonous Seward from Badham (p. 64), the coffin-rise from Murnau (p. 17) – but only really scores with the film's one good and original scene, an ornate dance number (referencing Roman Polanski's similarly unfunny *Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967)) opposite an enormous wall mirror.

At the Table: Dracula's "daymare" actually opens up a number of interesting philosophical questions, along with providing yet another connection between Dracula and the world of dreams.

The enormous wall mirror trap is actually kind of clever, and might fit in well in a drawing-room Dracula story.

Brooks designed his bits to evoke the core of the characters and mythemes in *Dracula*. You may get some mileage out of them even (or especially) in a non-comic context.

- Omnipresence of blood
- Dracula is stagy, always acting a part. This is even true in Stoker, especially at first.
- Harker and Renfield are both clueless, empty masculinity without intellect.
- The Brides are voluptuous and unearthly.
- Lucy's thanatomania becomes erotomania, and vice versa.
- Garlands of garlic are just silly – NPCs should respond appropriately.

DRACULA 2000 (2000)

Director: Patrick Lussier

Dracula: Gerard Butler

Additional Cast: Christopher Plummer (Matthew/Abraham Van Helsing), Justine Waddell (Mary Heller [MM]), Colleen Ann Fitzpatrick (Lucy Westerman)

Synopsis: After an 1897 prologue on board the *Demeter*, we cut to the sleek glass Carfax Antiques building in 2000, where "Matthew Van Helsing" and his protégé Simon Sheppard (Jonny Lee Miller) discuss an antique crossbow Van Helsing wants for his private collection. Later, Van Helsing's assistant Solina (Jennifer Esposito) helps her boyfriend Marcus (Omar Epps) and a gang of high-tech thieves break into the immense vault at the center of Carfax's original Gothic structure. Given the insane amount of security around the silver coffin it holds, they deduce the coffin must conceal a priceless object and steal it. While on their escape plane, one thief manages to open the coffin and release Dracula, who vampirizes the thieves, survives the plane crash, and turns local news reporter Valerie (Jeri Ryan).

Van Helsing follows the news reports to New Orleans, where his estranged, hallucinating daughter Mary lives with her roommate Lucy. Simon follows Van

Helsing and helps him kill the vampirized thieves; Van Helsing reveals that he is the original Dutch doctor, and has kept himself immortal with Dracula's blood to guard the coffin until he can find a way to destroy Dracula forever. Since Mary was born after Van Helsing began injecting, she shares a psychic link with Dracula, explaining her waking nightmare visions. Dracula turns Lucy, and the three Brides kill Van Helsing. Dracula captures Simon and Mary, and believing her his, he reveals his secret to her: he is actually Judas Iscariot, which is why he hates the Cross and silver. Mary only pretends to bite Simon, and they kill the Brides. Dracula tries to hurl Mary from the rooftop, but Mary wraps a cable from a neon cross around his neck and he hangs just as Judas did. The rising sun burns Dracula to ash, and Mary decides to keep her father's watch over the remains.

Criticism: *Dracula 2000* is a mishmash of crazily original ideas and crazily unoriginal quips and fight choreography. Patrick Lussier wrote, shot, and edited it at a breakneck pace to make a firm 2000 release date, and didn't even cast Gerard Butler until the week before shooting started. That haste shows in the final product, sadly, although no amount of extra time would likely have saved Justine Waddell's performance. Colleen "Vitamin C" Fitzpatrick is just out of her depth, and (except the veteran Plummer) most of the actors have blank or pointless moments. When he's on, however, Butler keeps his Dracula cruel and callous in the proper Stoker tradition: even his search for his "daughter" is entirely selfish. Only his revelatory moment recalling Christ's "betrayal" of him shows immortal pain or regret, which is as it should be. The heist sequence is such a strong, propulsive opening that the rest of the film seems aimless and arbitrary, a weird combination of relaxed

and frenetic that the New Orleans setting could have usefully flavored but doesn't. All that said, the ideas and the intermittent spectacle make it worth a watch, as long as you expect a movie as instantly dated in its way as *Dracula A.D. 1972* (p. 54).

At the Table: The abandoned Carfax Tube Station beneath the Abbey is a neat touch.

Van Helsing covering Dracula's body with leeches, then removing them and injecting himself with the blood they take from Dracula, is an even neater (and creepier) touch.

The opening heist makes an excellent "universal adaptor" to turn almost any RPG into a vampire campaign, whether as a "cold open" or a sudden plot shift.

In a flashback, Van Helsing fools Dracula into attacking his image in a mirror – since Dracula casts no reflection, he can't tell which side is the mirror and which is the real Van Helsing. This is a neat trick, although Dracula should be able to smell the real Van Helsing's blood or hear his heartbeat.

Dracula can be killed by no bane; the heroes must track down his single true death. In a game, this probably takes longer than the two days it takes Simon and Mary.

Threatening graffiti in a dead language (Aramaic, in the film) is an excellent way to bring the past into the present.

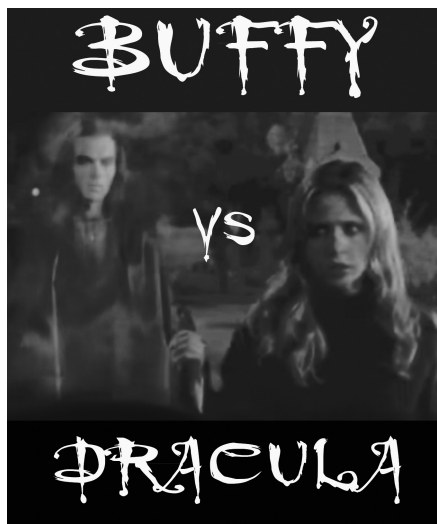
So who was the vampire Ramirez that Van Helsing apparently killed in La Coruña, Spain, in 1913?

BUFFY VS. DRACULA (2000) —

Director: David Solomon

Dracula: Rudolf Martin

Synopsis: A sudden storm hits the beach. Two men are killed carrying crates into an empty mansion. Dracula has come to Sunnydale to meet Buffy Summers (Sarah Michelle Gellar), the legendary Slayer.



BUFFY: "Do you know what a Slayer is?"

DRACULA: "Do you?"

They meet in the graveyard, where Dracula's turn-to-mist ability keeps him immune from a star-struck Buffy's stake. Dracula mesmerizes Xander (Nicholas Brendon), and then slips into Buffy's bedroom to bite her. Buffy's boyfriend Riley (Marc Blucas) interrogates area vampire Spike (James Marsters) about Dracula's habits and learns he favors high-end accommodations. When Buffy and her team meet up at Giles' (Anthony Stewart Head) house, Xander eats bugs and titters like Renfield while trying to discourage an attack. He volunteers to keep Buffy safe at his house (her mother accidentally invited Dracula inside earlier) and then takes the increasingly mesmerized Buffy to "the Master." Giles and Riley discover Dracula's mansion and Giles falls victim to three Brides while Dracula tells Buffy his blood will reveal her true potential. Unfortunately for him, he's correct: when she drinks it, the powerful primeval Slayer re-enters her memories and she breaks his mesmerism. Buffy and Dracula have a big fight while Riley rescues Giles. Buffy repeatedly stakes Dracula until he wisps away in mist form.

Criticism: Television being a writer's medium, it's probably best if writer Marti Noxon takes the credit and the blame for this, the premiere episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s fifth season. Following series creator Joss Whedon's idea to use the actual Dracula instead of "some cool vampire on a horse" (Langella alert!) Noxon had to cram the entire Dracula plot, plus jokes, plus Giles' (Van Helsing-Harker) return-to-Watcher arc, plus the debut of Dawn, into 42 minutes. Something had to give, and it's essentially the story balance; the episode see-saws tonally even more than the normal *Buffy* run. That said, it winds up pretty economical, if not elegant: Noxon works Dracula into the Buffyverse mythology and Buffy into his via a celebrity crush that slowly becomes scary mesmerism ... and an insight into Buffy's darkness that paid off for the rest of the season and series. How the cast all react to Dracula allows moments of personality to emerge and crystallize even if, like Xander (giggly Renfield butt-monkey), they reject what they find.

This episode is another strong confirmation that the casting of Dracula makes or breaks the piece, be it movie or TV episode. German actor Rudolf Martin had played a romantic lead (and later enemy) opposite Sarah Michelle Gellar on *All My Children*, and later played Vlad the Impaler in a cable movie, so he would seem to be the perfect choice. Let the record show that I did not find him so, although plenty of *Buffy* fans, like Anya and Willow, considered him dreamy. He's too lanky (Dracula should be tall, but not skinny), and his pale makeup looks like something Buffy would normally mock. As goofy as his cape looks in modern Sunnydale, his "waistcoat and shirtsleeves" look is even worse. His final fight scene is more ferally effective than most Buffyboxing, and

Gellar acts genuinely tempted by his offer of knowledge — but all ends with quips and dust and in the final analysis, he's just a “Eurotrashed” monster of the week who “wafts in here with his music video wind.” Buffy's words, not mine.

At the Table: This episode showcases Dracula as a source of temptation, as in the 1966 *Dracula* (p. 43) and *Dracula's Kiss* (p. 74).

The stress of Dracula forces individual responses; spy shows usually do this in the usually tiresome polygraph episode. Consider this revelatory “clarity through stress” story beat when Dracula guest-stars (or suddenly appears for the first time ...) in your campaign.

DRACULA'S CURSE (2002)

Director: Roger Young

Dracula: Patrick Bergin

Additional Cast: Giancarlo Giannini (Dr. Enrico Valenzi [VH]), Hardy Krüger, Jr. (Jonathan Harker), Stefania Rocca (Mina), Muriel Baumeister (Lucy), Kai

Weisinger (Dr. Johann Seward), Alessio Boni (Quincy), Conrad Hornby (Arthur Holmwood), Brett Forest (Roenfield)

Synopsis: In a prologue, a vampire bat drains a white stallion dry in Argentina.

At a charity ball in modern-day Budapest, American broker expat Harker proposes to his girlfriend Mina, but is called away to a late-night meeting with a new client, Vlad Tepes (actually, of course, Dracula in youthful form). Tepes wants Harker to purchase Carfax House and inventory the wealth of his “uncle Vladislav” in Transylvania and move it illegally for a large commission. Harker offers pieces of the scheme to his friends Arthur (with the British Embassy) and Quincy (an importer-exporter); his friend Seward is busy meeting Dr. Valenzi for consultation on a problem patient, Roenfield. (Sleepwalking Lucy serially dates all three of Harker's friends.) At dinner with the group, Tepes suggests that freedom from conscience is the ultimate good, which angers do-gooder Mina. Harker drives his Porsche to Romania past angry border guards but wrecks it in the rain; suspicious peasants attack him but he escapes in Dracula's coach past a blue flame.

Now in old-Vladislav form Dracula caresses Harker's wound, dresses him in 19th century garb, rants about the battle at the end of the world, tempts him with his treasures, and locks him in. After the Count drives off the Brides, he offers to let Harker leave: of course the storms and wolves keep him from going. Dracula tells Jonathan that he must choose to give Dracula his blood. Instead, Harker climbs through a secret passage, tries to kill the sleeping Count with a shovel, and escapes only to wreck his car again. Dracula ships his crates to Budapest down the river, killing too-curious boatmen and returning to his younger self. He lures Lucy into



the rain and bites her; Mina deserts her to go rescue Jonathan from a convent and marry him. After another vampire attack, a terrified Lucy asks Arthur to marry her; jealous of Seward's past with Lucy, he refuses Valenti's advice about vampires. When the Harkers return, the group goes to the Opera, where Dracula invites Lucy to meet his "uncle." She does, and the next morning dies; Valenti recognizes her work in news of an attacked child and convinces the friends to search out Lucy's hiding place. She reveals herself to Arthur, who stakes her in shock.

The team then enters Carfax and begins destroying coffins. Dracula appears as a horde of rats, kills Quincy, and flees in bat form. With Harker in pursuit, Dracula mesmerizes Mina into drinking his blood; Seward douses him with holy water and he flees in mist form. The next night, Mina sneaks out of the house; the men follow. She meets Dracula and runs to his arms. As he leans over to bite her, she impales him with a stake hidden in her sleeve; only she could get close enough to strike, she explains after Dracula disintegrates. After Quincy's funeral, Jonathan and Mina leave Budapest: her bite marks are unhealed.

Criticism: This production began on Italian TV (shot on video) as *Il Bacio di Dracula* (*The Kiss of Dracula*); I watched the Artisan DVD version entitled *Dracula's Curse*, which cuts about an hour out of the run time because I just said Artisan. (Some of it shows up in the "deleted scenes," which is even more maddening.) So I can't speak to the pacing, which I think depends on how much you enjoy seeing the novel spool out; I didn't find it a problem, certainly not compared to the always awful effects shots (they're really, really awful) and the intermittently flat acting, not improved by terrible dubbing and looping. Probably the worst offender is Hardy

Krüger Jr's shouty-mannequin delivery, which is a special shame because this is the first Harker (possibly ever) to actually be written as an interesting character, desperate to score big so he can live up to his own nouveau-riche class consciousness and Mina's Davos-class expectations.

The updated story and modern setting are actually the best things about this version, that and Muriel Baumeister's party-girl Lucy. Sadly, Patrick Bergin's lumbering Dracula (who ludicrously calls himself "Vladislav Tepes") is not. Dracula tells the Brides that Jonathan must love him to be set free, a weird riff on the *Nosferatu* wish to be set free by Ellen/Lucy's love. The homoerotic element (which can also be found in the novel) is not too badly handled, and Lucy's post-Dracula regret in the bathroom at least hints at Dracula's true roofie-rapist self. There's no reason that a vampire can't be sort of pouchy looking, but you have to really bring the menace; Bergin instead underplays his smug, mustached younger Dracula. As older Dracula, Bergin looks appropriately Satanic and menacing, but overplays to compensate. Since he's mostly acting against the world's prettiest piece of wood Hardy Krüger Jr. it comes off as ridiculous, not scary. If I haven't mentioned Giancarlo Giannini's Enrico Valenzi it's because the movie also treats him as an afterthought, and like many good Continental actors, Giannini's response to a bad role is to quietly wait it out. Director Young made a lot of Bible movies, and may be the source of the Dracula-as-Nietzsche element — this Dracula seduces the striving youngsters with the promise of a life without a conscience, which is another good idea in this frustrating mix.

The *Demeter* recast as a Danube barge is fresh, Quincy as an Argentinian makes good cosmopolitan sense, and Lucy's daylight bloofer lady scene plays with current child-

abduction panics. The “impaling” tree trunk in Harker’s car crash plays well with stakes and Dracula both; the fade to black during the defibrillation of Lucy offers interesting interactions between high-tech and vampiric resurrection; in Budapest, Mina and Lucy try to track Tepes but the slum address attached to his phone number is registered to Roenfield. See *Dracula’s Curse* as an arsenal of modernized Dracula tropes first and a movie second, and you’ll be happier — and from all evidence, closer to the filmmakers’ intent.

At the Table: Dracula can change age without feeding, apparently.

This is the first film to use Quincey’s Pampas anecdote of a vampire bat killing a horse.

Dracula’s explicit temptations expand him almost into a literal Antichrist, especially given old Vlad’s ongoing Armageddon fixation. Stoker used the same symbolism, as did Hammer in *Satanic Rites of Dracula* (p. 58).

The film borrows a number of shots, scenes, and sequences from Coppola (p. 69), especially the swarm-of-rats transformation and the Eliot-Ness-like busting of Dracula’s boxes of earth.

DRACULA: PAGES FROM A VIRGIN'S DIARY (2002)

Director: Guy Maddin

Dracula: Zhang Wei-Qiang

Additional Cast: Tara Birtwhistle (Lucy Westenra), David Moroni (Van Helsing), CindyMarieSmall (Mina), Johnny Wright (Jonathan Harker), Stephane Leonard (Arthur Holmwood), Matthew Johnson (Jack Seward), Keir Knight (Quincy Morris), Brent Neale (Renfield), Stephanie Ballard (Mrs. Westenra)

Synopsis: Dracula, a visitor from the East, comes to Whitby and bites Lucy.



When she bites Arthur, her suitors call in Van Helsing who protects her from her “polluted blood” with garlic. Renfield escapes from next door and gargoyles break into the Westenra house, leading the invalid (in a glass coffin!) Mrs. Westenra to invite Dracula to return. She dies and he kills Lucy. When the Bloofer Lady strikes, Renfield points the hunters to the graveyard where they see Lucy and Dracula feeding on each other. They stake Lucy and behead her with a shovel, then torture Renfield into revealing Dracula’s next target: Mina.

She is in a convent on the Continent nursing her fiancé, Harker, unmanned by his experiences at Castle Dracula (shown in flashback). She reads his diary, and upon learning of his dalliance with the Brides becomes sexually aroused herself. Harker, frightened by this New Woman, flees with his diary; the pursuing Mina runs into the Count, who takes her to Castle Dracula. Dracula bites her as the hunters enter the Castle and stake his Brides. When they confront him, he threatens Mina and forces

them to drop their crosses and cover the windows, then defeats them. Mina grabs a cross, forces Dracula back, and uncovers the window herself; the hunters revive, and impale a sun-weakened Dracula on an immense pike.

Criticism: This Guy Maddin film, originally intended for Canadian TV but given a theatrical release thanks to its rapturous critical reception, is simultaneously by far the most audacious and nearly the most textually faithful adaptation of Stoker's novel. Foregrounding the novel's subtexts of immigration panic, absentee landlordship, and "the Eastern Question" along with its more often cited wellsprings of female sexuality unleashed, it also takes the opportunity to incorporate little-used novelistic elements such as Mrs. Westenra's role in her daughter's death, Quincey Morris, and Dracula "bleeding money" when stabbed ("Money! Stolen from England!"). Oh, and it's a silent, expressionist ballet with a Mahler soundtrack (First and Second Symphonies) and lightning-fast neo-Eisensteinian editing (by deco dawson, also credited as "associate director"). But then I said "Guy Maddin film" up front.

If you haven't seen any Maddin films, this may not be the place to start. (Try *Careful* (1992) or *The Saddest Music in the World* (2003) first.) But there's something to be said for just diving right in, the way Maddin does with this project. Given Mark Godden's pre-existing adaptation of Dracula for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Maddin made the decision to make a "silent film that just happens to have dancing" rather than a dance movie, and to re-adapt the source material to suit his own idiosyncratic filming and visual styles. Maddin sends his cameras into the midst of the ballet, blending the dancers' language of gesture and motion with silent

film's language of blocking and emotion into a rollercoaster of expressionism-squared. Zhang's Dracula is emotion incarnate, mirroring the newfound lusts of his victims and then overmastering and devouring them. Color tints or washes, stark intertitles (often taken directly from the novel's text), and sudden changes in lighting and resolution create discrete cinematic moments that nonetheless flash by like images in a zoopraxiscope. Maddin claimed to have only read the first half of the novel, and to not even like ballet, and yet he creates a dreamlike tour de force worthy of consideration alongside Murnau or Herzog while exceeding them textually and perhaps even poetically.

At the Table: This film foregrounds Dracula's role as the incarnation of the "Eastern Question" encompassing imperialism and xenophobia driven by Ottoman Turkey's lingering death (undeath?) throes from 1774 to 1918. Almost no other film (except possibly Murnau (p. 17) and perhaps Browning (p. 20)) makes the same effort to literally alienate Dracula from England.

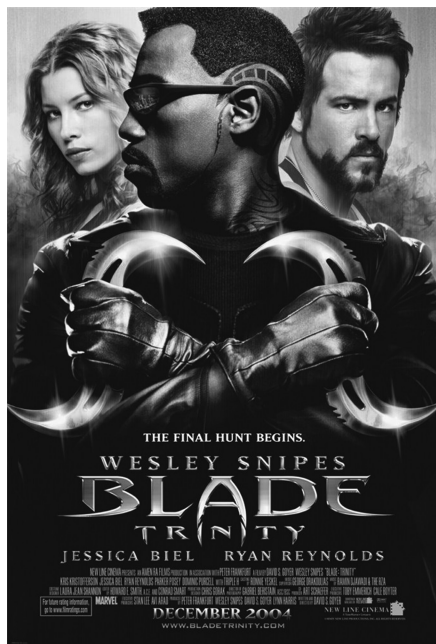
Mina secretly chooses Dracula in marriage, with Renfield as her proxy, reversing the novel's pattern in which Dracula expects Renfield to "give Mina away" to him.

If Lucy inherits her sleepwalking, perhaps susceptibility to vampirism (or at least to vampiric predation) has a genetic component.

Her connection with Dracula grants Lucy precognition, an interesting twist on the novel's Mina-Dracula link.

The maze of caverns and chambers beneath Castle Dracula recalls a beehive or chamber tomb such as the Neolithic-era (9000-7500 BCE) death-cult center Göbekli Tepe, or one of the Cappadocian medieval underground cities.

The film casts Harker as an explicit Christ figure in the finale, and directly references Impaler imagery in Dracula's death.



BLADE: TRINITY (2004)

Director: David S. Goyer

Dracula: Dominic Purcell

Synopsis: A squad of combat-armored vampires led by Danica Talos (Parker Posey) enters a ziggurat in the Syrian desert looking for “Drake,” the genetic source of vampirism. When they uncover him, Drake kills one of them.

The vampire conspiracy manipulates the “daywalker” vampire-hunter Blade (Wesley Snipes) into killing a human disguised as a vampire, and sic the cops and FBI on him. In an FBI raid, Blade’s friend and tech-guy Whistler (Kris Kristofferson) blows himself and the Bladecave up, and Blade is arrested. Interrogated and drugged by Renfielded (“familiar”) cops and doctors, Blade is rescued by Whistler’s daughter Abigail (Jessica Biel) and her fellow “Night

Stalker” (there aren’t enough air quotes in the world) Hannibal King (Ryan Reynolds), a former familiar. He learns that Drake is actually Dracula, and that Danica Talos wants to use Dracula’s blood to make all vampires daywalkers; the Nightstalkers want to use it to perfect their anti-vampire bioweapon Daystar. Daystar, of course, might kill Blade, too.

Dracula crosses swords with Blade and recognizes a fellow honorable warrior (he said with a straight face while holding a baby hostage), explaining that he has equal contempt for humans and lesser vampires. Blade and Abigail go shut down a vampire blood-bank and return to find their friends dead or kidnapped. They head to conspiracy HQ and wade in, Abigail’s bow loaded with the last sample of Daystar: if she can shoot Dracula with it, it will perfect and release the virus. When she shoots, Dracula catches the arrow in midair while swordfighting Blade, but Blade rams the viral arrowhead home in close combat. All the vampires die except Blade. Dying, Dracula offers Blade a “parting gift” that depends on which ending of the DVD you watch. Either the FBI recovers Blade’s body, which shapeshifts into Dracula’s body on the morgue table – Dracula’s parting gift was Blade’s freedom! Or the FBI recovers Blade’s body, and he awakens with an uncontrollable vampire thirst – Dracula’s parting gift was full vampirism!

Criticism: Well, they can’t all be gems. Aside from the midriiffs of Ryan Reynolds and Jessica Biel, and the bumping score by Ramin Djawadi and The RZA, there’s not a lot to say for this festival of pain. Blade himself began as part of the Dracula-hunting team in Marv Wolfman and Gene Colan’s classic, wonderful *Tomb of Dracula* comic from Marvel, but it took until the third film in the inexplicably successful *Blade* series for Dracula to show

up. Here, he's called "Drake," but a helpful exposition by Patton Oswalt assures us he is Dracula, and that he began as Dagon (!! in Sumerian times, secretly controlled history for centuries, then dropped out of sight. Drake himself refers to "Stoker's fable" in the better of his two monologues (any dialogue with Wesley Snipes is a monologue), explaining why he's a daywalker unlike the rest of the franchise's Eurotrash vampires. Dracula is explicitly compared to a shark, a perfect predator, although Purcell plays him as (or maybe plays Dracula playing himself as, although that's almost certainly reading too much into it) a cross between medieval knight and Mafioso, both social predators.

At the Table: Mediocre movies often make for the best gaming fuel, from the tactical possibilities for vampires in modern all-concealing combat rig, to the vertiginous delights of the Syrian ziggurat and its office-building echoes, to the gambit of vampires framing their slayers for murder.

All the *Blade* films are apopheniac exercises in spotting the literal concealed writing: the "familiars" and vampire clans have characteristic tattoos that show up in advertisements, graffiti, fashion, and other places; in this movie Goyer inexplicably decided to spangle the sets with Esperanto. Vampires as linguistic-symbolic viruses (to be battled by the laconic-to-a-fault Snipes?) pop to mind after a sufficiently open-minded viewing. This film embodies Dracula as a literal infection, for example, a la *Nosferatu* (p. 17).

Dracula is a battleground or a trophy, not a protagonist. The vampires crave his blood for their own purposes, and his presence for their own empty gratification.

The vampires don't know their own history any better than anyone else, and believe their own mythic hype.

Confront Dracula with his own over-signification, his meta-image, the hatred of his absent reflection. Dracula enters a Goth shop and, disgusted by all the vampire and Dracula kitsch, kills one clerk and bites the other.

Dracula can shapeshift into the form of other people.

Abigail's cutting laser is just ridiculous, but the UV high-beam headlights are a great idea.

VAN HELSING (2004)

Director: Stephen Sommers

Dracula: Richard Roxburgh

Additional Cast: Hugh Jackman (Gabriel Van Helsing)

Synopsis: In a gorgeous black-and-white 1887 prologue, Victor Frankenstein (Samuel West) completes his Monster (Shuler Hensley) in a windmill as a horde of torch-wielding peasants break in. Frankenstein's sponsor Dracula demands the Monster for his own foul purposes; the doctor refuses, Igor (Kevin J. O'Connor) reveals his true loyalties to Dracula, Frankenstein threatens Dracula with a sword, and the vampire walks into the blade to bite Frankenstein. The Monster now hurls machinery at Dracula and escapes with Frankenstein's body; Dracula emerges from the flaming laboratory, regenerating as he walks. Dracula and his Brides then attack the mob from the air as bat-monsters.

In 1888, Gabriel Van Helsing kills Mr. Hyde at the behest of the Church. Miffed at his body count, they send him to Transylvania to safeguard Anna Valerious (Kate Beckinsale) and her brother Velkan (Will Kemp), the last scions of a Roma royal line sworn to kill Dracula or forswear Heaven forever. Van Helsing and Anna kill one of Dracula's bat-monster Brides, Marishka (Josie Maran), but Velkan gets

bitten by a werewolf. Anna and Van Helsing track Dracula to Castle Frankenstein and discover that he is attempting to use Frankenstein's process to awaken his thousands of stillborn progeny. Dracula channels the energy through werewolf Velkan, but he's not a powerful enough transformer. Velkan and Anna escape, and Dracula offers Van Helsing his lost memories back; Van Helsing refuses.

Van Helsing and Anna next visit Frankenstein's burned-out mill and find the Monster, then discover a magic painting depicting a vampire and werewolf locked in combat. A baroque multiple-carriage chase-switcheroo gets Van Helsing bitten by Velkan but kills another Bride, Verona (Silvia Colloca). Dracula captures Anna and offers to trade her for the Monster at a public ball, which turns out to be a trap: the entire company is vampires. Only an alchemical sun-bomb invented by Van Helsing's sidekick Friar Carl (David Wenham) gets them out. Dracula now retreats with the Monster to his inaccessible inter-dimensional island Castle (!) to try his experiment once more. Carl and Van Helsing open a dimensional portal from the Valerious mansion to Castle Dracula and learn that Dracula has a cure for lycanthropy. Why? Because Dracula can only die from a werewolf's bite! Carl and Anna go find the cure, Van Helsing goes to free the Monster. Anna kills the final Bride, Aleera (Elena Anaya) as werewolf Van Helsing bites Dracula and kills him. Anna gives Van Helsing the cure, but not before he kills her in his werewolf madness. Van Helsing grieves at her funeral, but sees the Valerious family all ascend into Heaven.

Criticism: *Van Helsing* is better than the reviews made it sound, but then it would almost have to be. Every criticism of the film is correct: the CGI is too overbearing, the score is too loud, the plot is a groaning

high-speed shambles, the various Valerious subplots can't support their own cheesy weight, Jackman and Beckinsale are wooden. To that I would add the worst offender: David Wenham, who mugs and whines throughout his tiresome, padded part draining the life out of every scene he's in. But all that said, there is something to be said for the epic joy on display, as Sommers tries to redeem the even more sloppy and cynical last run of Universal monster rally pictures with an attempt to explain why Dracula needs Frankenstein's Monster and why a wolfman (not the Wolf-Man) might stop it. The fight scenes are rickety and ridiculous, but often in a good way. The opening black-and-white sequence is note perfect, and the freaks' ball in Budapest almost as good. Richard Roxburgh actually manages to leave an impression by underplaying Dracula as a bored, sadistic immortal. (The Brides, interestingly, act as a Greek chorus for his unexpressed emotions.) Admittedly that take contradicts the character's supposed motive, but why worry about consistency at this late stage?

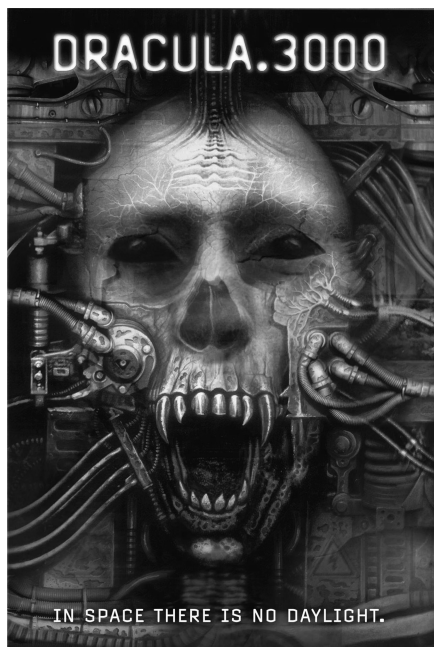
At the Table: Dracula's island castle evokes Snagov Monastery, the supposed last resting place of Vlad Tepes.

The Brides' harpy forms are good monsters, Dracula's Jawas less so. When the Brides "blow out" fires and torches we get another hit of the (deoxygenated?) "stifling air" motif (p. 22).

Dracula is not bound by gravity; he walks on walls, ceilings, or anywhere else he wants. Even in a CGI-fest like *Van Helsing*, the alienness works.

Dracula can literally smell weakness, both moral and physical.

Dracula owns Budapest society: the ball is a brilliant social ambush on a grand-tactical scale.



DRACULA 3000 (2004)

Director: Darrell James Roodt

Dracula: Langley Kirkwood (Orlock)

Additional Cast: Casper Van Dien (Captain Van Helsing), Alexandra Kamp (Mina Murray), Grant Swanby (Arthur "the Professor" Holmwood)

Synopsis: We open on Captain Varna (Udo Kier) narrating the log of the starship *Demeter* while clutching a cross. He activates the self-destruct, and ... nothing happens.

Fifty years later, the salvage ship *Mother III* happens on the *Demeter* and her crew board it, looking for loot. They find Varna tied to the captain's chair holding what they eventually decide is a cross. Captain Van Helsing overrules his executive officer Aurora Ash (Erika Eleniak) and his intern Mina, and decides to take *Demeter* in tow. Unfortunately, the *Demeter* decouples from the *Mother III* and traps them on board. Wheelchair-bound engineer Holmwood tries to restart the *Demeter's* engines as deckhands 187 (Coolio) and Humvee (Tiny Lister) go looking for drugs. 187

breaks open a coffin in his search and finds it full of sand. Of course he bleeds on it, and awakens Orlock. His crewmates rescue 187 and take him to a rec room where his broken leg heals, he reveals neck wounds, and vamps out. Orlock vampirizes Mina. Aurora flees 187 and stumbles on Orlock; she returns to the rec room and reveals Orlock's destination: Earth. The crew demand to know how she escaped and while staking 187 with a pool cue worry she is a vampire; under duress, she reveals she is an android undercover cop.

Holmwood researches vampires and discovers that Orlock is actually Dracula, that Van Helsing had a vampire-slaying ancestor, and that sunlight kills the undead. He pilots the *Demeter* toward a binary star system as Van Helsing and Aurora head to the cargo hold to destroy Dracula's coffins. Dracula vampirizes Van Helsing, and Aurora stakes the captain with another pool cue. Humvee stakes Mina; Dracula escapes to offer Holmwood vampiric healing in exchange for redirecting the ship to Earth. Aurora stakes Holmwood before he can change course, but now nobody can pilot the ship, headed straight into the binary stars. Aurora and Humvee lock Dracula out of the bridge, severing his arm in the hatch. To Humvee's slaving delight, Aurora reveals that before becoming a cop, she was a pleasurebot. Thankfully, the *Demeter* blows up before we see any more.

Criticism: A Warning to the Curious: This is the worst film I have watched for this project. By far. Compared to this movie, *Billy the Kid* vs. *Dracula* is *Unforgiven*. IMDB users have rated it the 37th worst film of all time. It is not "so bad it's good." The cheese promised by a film "starring" Casper Van Dien, Erika Eleniak, and Coolio (a holy trinity of terrible cable) is rancid and stale. Nobody cares at all. Even with two robots and a chunky

Midwesterner making fun of it in the corner, it would be nearly unwatchable. Filmed on what may well have been a derelict freighter or abandoned factory or both (do spacecraft in the year 3000 have concrete floors? 1960s radio equipment? VCRs?) weirdly bedecked every so often with Soviet imagery, its lighting and sound convey no menace. The script is outright insulting, although it does convey a certain sweaty, herbed-up feel of junior-high *D&D* games complete with a discussion of the planet "Comptonia," full of hos and weed.

Don't worry, the rest of the references aren't that subtle, or that well handled. For example, ship's knowitall Arthur Holmwood (Grant Swanby, determined to lose the acting contest to Van Dien) discovers that Captain Van Helsing (Van Dien, determined to remember his next line) is descended from the vampire hunter who killed Dracula a thousand years ago. They agree the chances of such a meeting at random are astronomical; it must be a setup or a plan! But when Van Helsing confronts Dracula with his identity, Dracula doesn't care any more than the audience does. So you're saying the script intends to indicate divine action in bringing them together to destroy Dracula? Of course not, because that might be interesting. Despite a very odd insistence that nobody in the film recognizes a cross ("religion was banned 200 years ago" they unsplain to each other) the whole topic is dropped unceremoniously, along with the whole hunt for Dracula, once Van Helsing-Dien is vampirized.

At the Table: Dracula can override self-destruct systems and jam comms. Does his command of "meaner things" include expert-systems and AI?

187's exaggerated lust is typical of Serbian vampire reports.

The boxes of sand imply that vampires are silicon-based: they have tough (silicon polymer) skin, their muscles are reinforced with silicon fibers, their reactions are piezoelectrically fast, they process sensory information with immensely sensitive crystalline micro-structures, and as J.B. Haldane suggested, they require oxidized iron — in blood — for energy. Also, silicon vampires might sparkle in direct sunlight.

Androids can use crosses?

The film wastes so many opportunities for vampire action on a spaceship: vampire mist in the life support system, Dracula walking around outside the ship immune to vacuum, the division of a ship rotating for artificial gravity into "day side" and "night side" setting up rapidly shifting chases.

There are almost no vampire-in-space movies; even the excellent *Planet of the Vampires* (Mario Bava, 1965), one of the sources for Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979), sets the action on the surface of a world. *Lifeforce* (Tobe Hooper, 1985) is about space vampires on Earth, also not the same thing.

THE BATMAN VS. DRACULA (2005) —

Director: Michael Goguen; sequence directors Sam Liu, Brandon Vietti, Seung Eun Kim

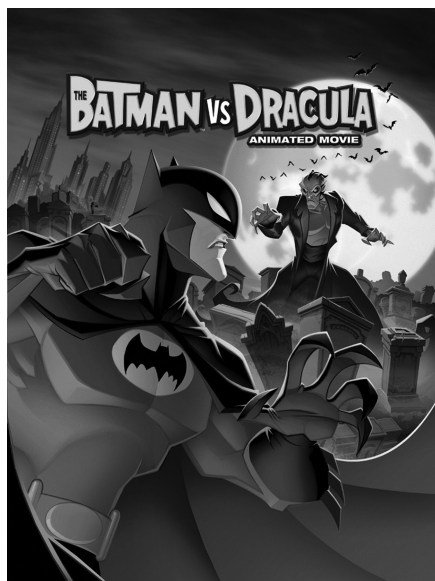
Dracula: Peter Stormare

Synopsis: In Arkham Asylum, both Joker (Kevin Michael Richardson) and Penguin (Tom Kenny) hear of a stash of cash hidden in Arkham Cemetery and break out. Joker falls in the river fighting Batman (Rino Romano) and his joy-buzzers electrocute him, leaving Penguin to find a giant coffin and bleed on the heart of the corpse inside. Having accidentally revived Dracula, Penguin becomes his Renfield. Dracula begins turning Gothamites into vampires, hiding these "Lost Ones" in the city sewers. Batman fights some Lost Ones, then heads to Wayne Manor to host an alternative

energy gala: its centerpiece, a solar super-battery. His would-be girlfriend Vicki Vale (Tara Strong) attends, as does Dracula posing as a cultural anthropologist (“here to study your city’s bat man”) named Dr. Alucard. Batman tries to develop a vaccine for the Lost Ones while the Gotham PD blame him for the disappearances. Gotham SWAT attacks Batman while he scouts the cemetery, but Dracula picks them all off, then offers Batman a place at his side. Batman refuses, and they fight: only the sunrise saves the Caped Crusader.

Joker turns up the next day and opens the coffin, also thinking it’s the treasure: Dracula vampirizes him and he runs off into the city, even worse than normal. Batman tosses a garlic bomb at him in a blood bank and takes him back to the Batcave to be his guinea pig. Alfred (Alastair Duncan) discovers Dracula had a wife, Carmilla Karnstein (!) and Dracula kidnaps Vicki after Batman stands her up. Using Joker’s antibodies, Batman sciences up a cure for vampirism; the cured Joker babbles out the location of Dracula’s hideout. Batman loads up with vaccine and heads into the sewers where Dracula plans to transfer Vicki’s soul into the corpse of Carmilla and revive her. Batman tag-cures the Lost Ones and disrupts the ritual with a garlic bomb. Dracula once more brutally beats Batman, who retreats to the Batcave where Alfred hits the Count with the vaccine — which does nothing, because Dracula isn’t infected, he’s a natural-born vampire. So instead, Batman cranks up the solar battery and fries Dracula to ashes with its stored sunlight. De-Renfielded, the Penguin finds the cash just in time to be blamed for Dracula’s crimes and clear Batman’s name.

Criticism: A few truths: Doug Moench’s graphic novel *Batman & Dracula: Red Rain* (1991) is a superior Batman vs. Dracula story. It could not have been made



into a children’s animated cartoon. Which (despite a good bit of blood and a shocking — heh — death scene for the Joker) this film very much is. Also in the truth department: yes, we all wish Paul Dini’s *Batman: Animated Series* shop had done this story instead, and yes, Marv Wolfman and Gene Colan’s *Tomb of Dracula* series for Marvel is the best four-color Dracula of all time end of story. Enough about things that aren’t this.

This is an anime-inflected superhero story that imports elements of the Dracula mythos. It indeed keeps some of the original novel’s detective-hunt feel as Batman tries vainly to track down Dracula’s tomb somewhere in Gotham Cemetery (“it must have been moved after I died” speculates the child-brain of Dracula, or of writer Duane Capizzi). It also keeps the original novel’s science-vs.-Satan edge, as the World’s Greatest Detective-Biochemist develops a cure for vampirism after only a few nights of ditching the fetching Vicki Vale. Tom Kenny’s wiseacre Penguin makes an acceptable Renfield, mostly to keep the Joker (Kevin Michael Richardson, properly manic with a good threatening baritone)

around as a somewhat-independent threat until he becomes a lab monkey.

Sadly, Batman and vampire Joker's mid-movie fight (in a blood bank!) seriously outclasses either of Batman's fights with Dracula, although the first one does establish Dracula's menace (Stormare does what he can, too). It's just that in a world with Killer Croc and Clayface — and Batman! — Dracula has a harder time standing out. This highlights the difficulty involved in monster-rallies and super-universes alike — and one we saw earlier on *Buffy* — Dracula needs to be a singular threat, or at least the King of Threats, to properly bring the awe and terror. Dracula as Just Another Villain suffers from his very familiarity; this version doesn't bring enough originality despite a last-minute turn to Carmilla as the MacGuffin, and the kids' cartoon format prevents him from bringing enough horror. In a game, at least, you can amp up the second.

At the Table: Alucard implies that other bat men exist in other cities, an interesting premise. Borrow elements of the Batman myth for your Dracula myth: the cave, the secret identity, striking fear into the city's lower elements, the hand-to-hand prowess.

A superhero Dracula fought crime for three issues (November 1966-March 1967) of Dell Comics' *Dracula*. A scientist named Dracula, a direct descendant of the original Count, experiments with a vampire bat-blood serum to cure brain damage and ingests it with predictable results.

The opening crime story parallels *Dracula 2000* (p. 71).



DRACULA (2006)

Director: Bill Eagles

Dracula: Marc Warren

Additional Cast: David Suchet (Van Helsing), Dan Stevens (Lord Arthur Holmwood), Sophia Myles (Lucy Westenra), Tom Burke (Dr. John Seward), Stephanie Leonidas (Mina Murray), Rafe Spall (Jonathan Harker), Donald Sumpter (Alfred Singleton), Ian Redford (Hawkins), Tanveer Ghani (Cotford)

Synopsis: A prologue reveals Van Helsing researching something, possibly in a remote castle. A vampire swoops down on him but his crucifix preserves his life, if not his sanity.

Discovering the death sentence that is his congenital syphilis, in 1899 Lord Holmwood contacts the psychic Alfred Singleton of the Brotherhood of the Undead in Chelsea for a solution. He seeks to postpone his marriage to Lucy, but she won't hear of it. Mr. Hawkins sends Harker to Transylvania to convey deeds of sale from Singleton to Count Dracula; after Harker

departs, Singleton murders Hawkins. Harker arrives at Castle Dracula and meets the withered, lich-like Count, passing him an envelope with one return ticket in it made out to "Jonathan Harker." Dracula also discovers Mina's picture, sniffing a lock of her hair to get the scent of his next prey. Holmwood confronts Singleton, who admits to the murder and tasks Holmwood with his own callous sacrifice of Harker; Holmwood demands the blood ritual that will cure his syphilis, and Singleton replies that he must be initiated and pay still more money. Dracula drains Harker, becoming Byronically youthful, and sets off for England.

Holmwood leaves Lucy at their wedding reception to get inducted into Singleton's Brotherhood; Seward follows them to Chelsea and sees occult hugger-mugger afoot. Back in Whitby on their honeymoon, Holmwood avoids his wife's advances. Dracula double-crosses the Brotherhood by sending the *Demeter* to Whitby, not London. Mina investigates the wreck, seeking news of Harker (listed as the only passenger), and mistakes Dracula for him near the suicide's grave. She and Lucy invite Dracula to dine with them at Castle Holmwood; when Arthur sees him, he berates the vampire like a servant. Dracula physically humiliates Arthur, telling him he will take what he wants. And indeed, Dracula seduces and shares blood with the sexually frustrated Lucy while Arthur sleeps next to her. The next morning, Holmwood orders Seward at gunpoint to transfuse his own blood into Lucy; Seward recognizes Singleton lurking around. Dracula kills Lucy, then travels to Chelsea, snaps the neck of a disciple named Cotford, and orders Singleton to kill himself.

Seward arrives, finds the bodies, and explores the basement where he discovers

Van Helsing held prisoner surrounded by makeshift crosses. Seward rescues Van Helsing and brings him back home, where he tells Mina his story: he is a folklorist hired by the Brotherhood to find a real vampire. When he found Dracula, his cross protected him and Dracula let him live as a go-between. Eventually Arthur reveals his syphilis to Seward and Van Helsing and the three agree to hunt down Lucy and Dracula. Dracula meanwhile has found Mina; she drops her crucifix and he leads her into a dark alley. The three stake Lucy, weakening Dracula just in time for Mina to escape. Mina joins the hunters and they return to Chelsea, finding Singleton half-buried in the basement — a suicide's grave! Dracula emerges and tears off Holmwood's head when he intervenes to save Mina. Van Helsing holds Dracula off with a cross while Seward stakes the vampire from behind. Van Helsing asks if Seward hit the heart; Seward says he did as Dracula disintegrates.

As she and Seward walk into the sunlight the next day, a wrinkled beggar watches them — Dracula.

Criticism: When you give me a secret history behind the story of *Dracula*, it makes it very hard for me to hate on your movie's flaws, even your ITV-WGBH TV movie's flaws. The production is top-notch television fare, well shot and aware of its limitations. Marc Warren almost makes you forget his Edward-Cullen-ish petulant smolder when he goes wild in the Holmwood library or cold in the Cheyne Walk sanctum. The eeriest moments are saved for Van Helsing, locked away in the Brotherhood's cellar, surrounded by twig-and-twine crosses out of some *Blair Vampire Project* prop room. The tag scene is unnecessary except to set up a putative sequel that I will totally watch, because Cheyne Walk, people. Cheyne Walk.

At the Table: Bram Stoker lived at 27 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea from 1881 to 1886. William Hope Hodgson's ghost-breaking occult detective Thomas Carnacki lived at 472 Cheyne Walk.

This movie, with its satanic cults and secret agendas, inspires from the jump. Any vampire can draw power from Dracula's psychometric-animalistic hunt for Mina (by sniffing a lock of her hair in Transylvania), his mind-controlled suicide sentence on Singleton, and his teleporting during the final fight.

As Dracula acculturates himself, he "will learn of London's unholy ground, where its suicides are buried, and he will draw a great strength from them." Taste the Telluric Psychogeography of Dracula!

It's possible, although I couldn't tell on one viewing, that the sacrificed Cotford was also one of the policemen who accused Mina of murdering Hawkins and thus concealed the Brotherhood's Transylvanian dealings. If so, that's another Easter egg.

"Faith is everything. Future generations will laugh, yes laugh, at our science but not at our faith." This line, and Mina's Catholicism, tilt the production out of Stoker's balance, perhaps necessary in a more secular era.

This film incorporates the motif of Mina and Harker's psychic tie from *Nosferatu* (p. 17).

DRACULA 3D (2012)

Director: Dario Argento

Dracula: Thomas Kretschmann

Additional Cast: Rutger Hauer (Van Helsing), Marta Gastini (Mina Harker), Asia Argento (Lucy Kisslinger), Unax Ugalde (Jonathan Harker), Giovanni Franzoni (Renfield)

Synopsis: In the Carpathian village of Passburg, Tania (Miriam Giovanelli) sneaks out on Walpurgisnacht to meet her lover Milos (Christian Burruano). He refuses

to walk her home, and an owl chases her, transforms into Dracula, and attacks. The next day, Harker arrives in town in a cloud of mosquitoes to catalog the library of Count Dracula. That night, three locals dig up Tania's corpse to stake it, but the town taxidermist Renfield attacks them, killing Milo. In the confusion, her body vanishes; Dracula feeds her his blood in a chalice. Harker goes to visit Mina's friend Lucy, the mayor's daughter, then escapes being strangled by Renfield and fetches up at the Castle where Tania makes eyes at him. Dracula appears and explains she is his niece, Harker discovers a portrait of Vlad III in the library, and Tania resumes her advances until the Count hurls her away and bites Harker himself. Harker escapes, but Dracula hunts him down as a wolf and kills him.

Mina arrives looking for her husband and stays with Lucy, who may have conspired with Dracula to bring her here but definitely gets bitten and turned regardless. When she arrives at the Castle, Dracula mesmerizes her and wipes her memory: she is the spitting image of his beloved Countess Dolingen de Gratz, dead 400 years. The town leaders, seeing the bodies piling up, begin to question their blood-for-gold pact with Dracula, but he appears as a swarm of flies and slaughters the would-be rebels. Van Helsing (the former director of Carfax Asylum, who has hunted Dracula since the vampire killed one of his patients) arrives to investigate Lucy's death and sets her newly vampire self on fire; at the castle he impales Tania with a cruciform sword. In the form of a giant mantis, Dracula kills Mayor Kisslinger and abducts Mina. Having poured a silver bullet, Van Helsing confronts Dracula and a mesmerized Mina at the Dolingen gravesite; Dracula smashes the gun out of his hand, but Mina comes out of her trance and shoots the Count. Dracula falls to ashes and Mina leaves with a battered

Van Helsing, Dracula's ashes reform into a wolf and leap at the camera, because 3D.

Criticism: It may seem like special pleading that I give the universally-panned Argento *Dracula* a pass while kicking the box-office-smash Coppola *Dracula* in the fangs. The differences, however, are significant. First and foremost, of course, Argento subverts Coppola by having his Mina's love for Dracula be the result of a trance he casts upon her: his Dracula is both more pathetic and more dangerous because his hunger is greater than sanity. And while Argento's film can be accused of being just as cartoony as Coppola's, in his vision the insanity always springs from Dracula, preserving the novel's irruptive fear. Sure, the human world is weirdly lit and strangely affected, but unlike Coppola, Argento has been using those techniques for decades now. People who slate this movie because it looks like it was filmed through a succession of jujubes (and scripted on a succession of shrooms) simply out themselves as never having really seen an Argento film — they all do, from *Suspiria* (1977) on down.

Yes, it is disappointing that Argento went to the crummy CGI well when he had perfectly good practical effects that could have done the job in some cases — blood gushing from Italian ladies should not have been untrodden ground for our Dario. (At least he filmed the movie in native 3D instead of post-producing it in.) Rutger Hauer's Van Helsing is visibly exhausted throughout, as against Kretschmann's sense of banked power and wolfish violence as Dracula. And yes, Dracula turning into an enormous grasshopper more than squanders in tone and seriousness what it gains in jaw-dropping shock value. (Although one Balkan vampire, the ala, inhabits grasshoppers...) The plot and incidents are indeed a mishmash of previous *Dracula* films, including Coppola's (Marta



Gastini's dress even evokes Winona Ryder's in the final scene), but that said, Argento seized not only on the plots of the Hammer cycle but (thanks to DP Luciano Tovoli) their color and lighting schemes as well, deepening the homage considerably. And somehow Argento's film is the only one to follow Hammer's lead further, and actually interrogate the town's relationship with its murderous — but economically beneficial — vampire lord. There's truth, and much of wisdom, in them thar jujubes.

At the Table: The roadside troita shrine with a beheaded Virgin Mary in it is a wonderfully grotesque callback to Fisher's *Dracula* (p. 40).

Draculaasa (silent, all-seeing, predatory) owl is new, although the mosquitoes go back to the 1922 *Nosferatu* (p. 17).

Does *Dracula* have a Hand of Glory in his castle?

The vampire bite on the back of Lucy's knee is outré, and new.

The Bride being jealous of Mina is not particularly original, but a Renfield in erotomanic thrall to the Bride and not to *Dracula* surprisingly is.



DRACULA UNTOLD (2014)

Director: Gary Shore

Dracula: Luke Evans

Synopsis: A voiceover informs us that Prince Vlad of Wallachia and Transylvania was a child hostage of the Turks. Trained as a Janissary warrior, he killed so many people in battle that the Turks nicknamed him "the Impaler." Tired of war, he returned to his land to rule it in peace with his wife Mirena (Sara Gadon) and son Ingeras (Art Parkinson). While out riding, Vlad and his companions discover a Turkish helmet in the river; Vlad realizes that a whole Turkish patrol has somehow been wiped out somewhere near Broken-Tooth Mountain. Exploring, he discovers a cave: the thing inside it (Charles Dance) kills his men but Vlad escapes into the sunlight. The monk Brother Lucian (Paul Kaye) explains that the thing is a vampire, trapped in the cave forever until someone drinks its blood, gains its power, and frees it.

At the Easter feast, the Ottoman ambassador arrives to demand not just the normal tribute but 1,000 young boys for the Janissary corps. Vlad appeals to his childhood buddy Mehmed II the Conqueror (Dominic Cooper) for a reprieve only to learn that the tribute is now 1,001 boys — Ingeras definitely included. Rather than turn over his son, Vlad kills the Turkish emissaries and invites war with the Ottoman Empire. He climbs up to Broken-Tooth Mountain to gain vampire powers. The vampire offers Vlad his blood and powers and a bargain; if Vlad can resist drinking human blood for three days, the curse will leave him. Otherwise, the vampire can escape the cave and Vlad will be damned forever. Vlad takes the bargain and uses his powers to slaughter the Turkish armies, hoping to win the war in three days. Mirena figures out the situation, as does a Roma chief named Shkelgim (Zach McGowan) who offers Vlad his blood and servitude. Vlad removes most of his people to the fortified Cozia Monastery. After a mandatory session with angry monks and torch-bearing villagers, Vlad goes after the Ottoman forces one last time. Mehmed has blindfolded his armies to keep them from seeing Vlad's terrifying bat horde, but Vlad makes a FIST OF BATS and smooshes them. But the Turks somehow sneak into Cozia, kidnap Ingeras and toss Mirena off the rooftop. Just before she (and his powers) expires, she tells Vlad to drink her blood to save their son.

Now a full vampire, he turns the dying soldiers, monks, and peasants, creating an army of vampires that massacres the Turks. Vlad goes after Mehmed who has Ingeras; Mehmed has lined his tent with silver and hung bags of the stuff around to weaken Vlad. While Mehmed stakes him, Vlad turns into a flock of bats and gains the advantage, impaling Mehmed and drinking

his blood. Vlad renames himself “Dracula, Son of the Devil” then rescues Ingeras. His vampire followers demand Ingeras’ blood but a handy monk drives them back with a cross; Vlad gives his son to the monk for safe-keeping. Dracula parts the clouds, destroying all his vampires with sunlight, but Shkelgim drags Vlad’s burned body into a tent and revives him with blood.

In the tag, a present-day Dracula sees a girl who looks just like Mirena. She says her name is Mina and they walk off together. The vampire from the cave has seen their meet-cute; he says “Let the games begin,” and follows them.

Criticism: Look! Up in the sky! It’s a bird! It’s a shooting star! It’s a FIST OF BATS! This latest effort by Universal to revitalize their once-glorious monster universe franchise casts a cape-bedecked Vlad the Impaler as half combat-god Batman (“sometimes the world doesn’t need a hero ... sometimes it needs a monster”) complete with silly post-Coppola rubber armor in a closet, and half death-from-above Superman complete with a Kryptonite-like weakness for silver. And let’s be honest with each other: the Supervlad parts of this movie are pretty bat-tastic. Considered solely as cut scenes, the forest-hunting bits and battle footage work well, the big impaling scene is Hammer Gothic (but too short), the FIST OF BATS redefines “out there”, and the final fight between Vlad and Mehmed the Conqueror (avert your eyes, history majors and/or people who can use Wikipedia) in a veritable Scrooge McDuck tentful of silver coins manages to be both spectacular and original. As a *Dracula: Year One* effort it also checks some boxes while performing the vital service of adding a completely screwy new turn to the mythos, in this case Charles Dance as Vlad’s nosferatu sire (intriguingly named “Caligula” in the script) trapped

in a Carpathian cave literally lined with crushed human bones.

The actual script, not so much. Leaving aside the “brilliant warlord who never bothered to raise an army or teach anyone to guard a perimeter” problems perhaps necessary for proper superheroics, there’s at least one major scene missing (how do the Turks get into the monastery? how does Mehmed learn Vlad’s weakness?) and a crippling laziness at the story’s *Braveheart* heart. Turning epochal psychopath Vlad Tepes into Batman is bad enough, but making him William Wallace to boot is a bridge too far (and too well-trodden) even for a comic book movie. These decisions obviously weaken any pretense that Vlad is actually history’s (or legend’s) Vlad the Impaler, but they also weaken Universal’s notion that this pretty-boy superdad ever turns out to be, y’know, Dracula. In fairness to Evans, he’s never asked to play Dracula by the film, which walks back the one truly awful thing he does — raise an army of vampires from his Wallachian followers to gut the Turkish army — almost immediately. This is supposed to be the Faustian story of an evil warlord who finds even worse evil waiting, or failing that, of a good man who becomes a monster. Instead, it’s the story of a good father who gets a FIST OF BATS and somehow it doesn’t cheer him up. Although it makes me pretty happy.

At the Table: Caligula’s long, prehensile vampire tongue is new to Dracula, though not to film vampires.

Mehmed the Conqueror died in 1481, five years after Vlad Dracula’s death in 1476. His predecessor Murad II did die on campaign in the Balkans in 1451, while Vlad Dracula was not a ruling voivode but *was* in Transylvania serving under the Hungarian warlord Janos Hunyadi (1406-1456).

This film really emphasizes the storm-demon side of Dracula, worth exploring even (or even especially) in an age of jet travel and climate change.

Perhaps Dracula's silver kryptonite isn't all silver, just one isotope of radioactive meteoric silver that fell to Earth eons ago. That alien silver got mixed into some alloys and artifacts, but not all of them; the PCs have to assay and trace provenance for proven vampire-killing silver.

FIST OF BATS _____

To use the FIST OF BATS power in **Night's Black Agents**, a vampire who possesses this gift must spend at least 2 Aberrance pool points and direct a sufficient cloud of bats into a close formation of mooks. The number of mooks broken and demoralized by the fist depends on the spend:

Aberrance Spend	Mooks Mashed
2	10
4	20
6	40
8	80

Double the mooks mashed for each additional 2 points.

To target a named character such as an Agent, the vampire must be able to see the target, who must be outside, or at least in a non-reinforced structure like a tent or hut, and beat her Hit Threshold with a Hand-to-Hand test. Such characters caught in the FIST OF BATS take damage as an explosion (**NBA**, p. 67) with a Class equal to one-third the vampire's spend (rounded up). A miss on the Hand-to-Hand test reduces damage to Debris range.

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DRACULA IS REAL.

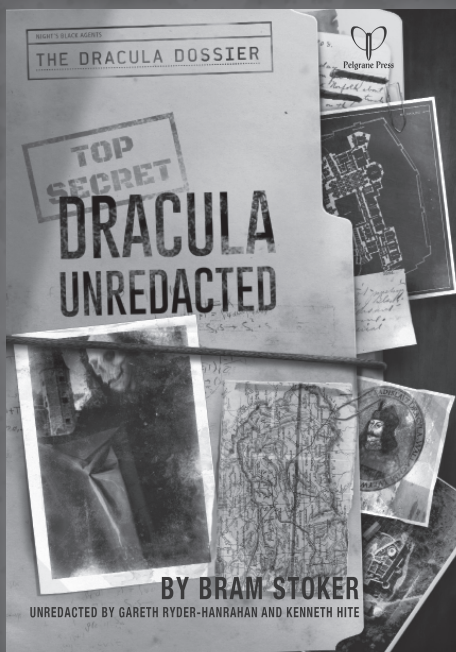
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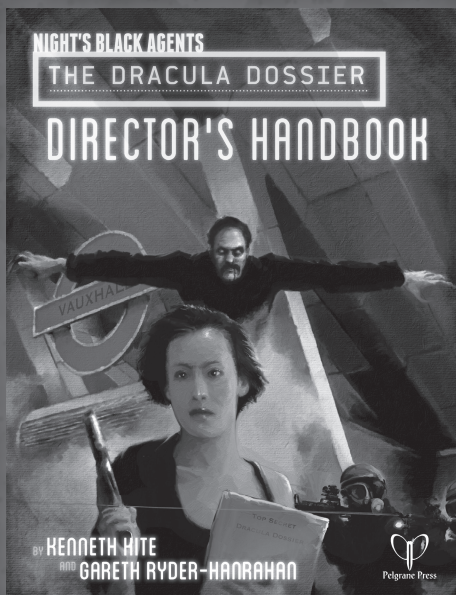
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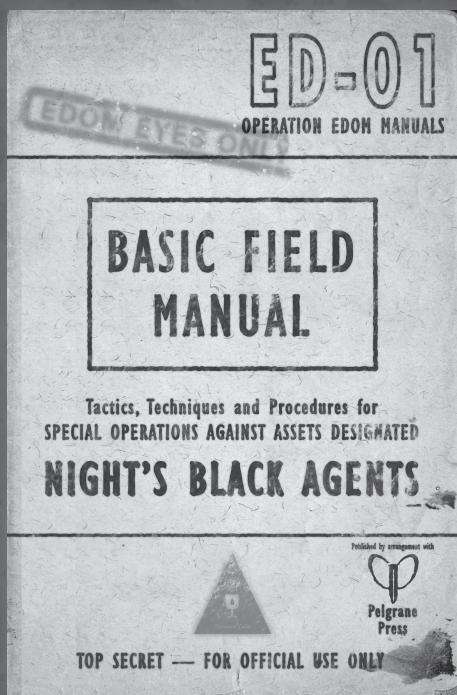
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its shadowy present in vivid detail. Advice and campaign options help you bring the operation to a thrilling conclusion — or a bloody catastrophe. So watch for the cup-and-blaze mark and the hand signal. Keep your kukri close, and remember your training. Four generations of agents have passed the cup on to you — do not falter at the last! The Edom Field Manual stands alone as a guide to a vampire hunting program. Combine it with the other books in the Dracula Dossier series for insight into Edom its machinations.



EIGHT DESPERATE MISSIONS AGAINST THE UN-DEAD!

From the mountains of Bulgaria to the streets of Berlin

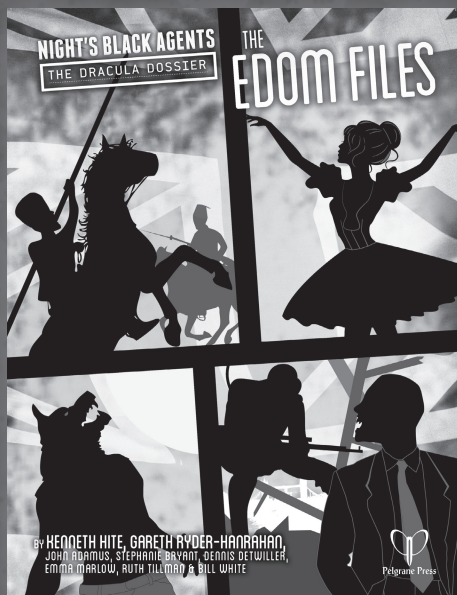
From the Russo-Turkish war to the War on Terror

From 1877 to the present day

For the Dead travel fast

Operation Edom is the top-secret section of MI6 dedicated to thwarting and, ultimately, controlling the Un-Dead. Open the Edom archives and read the sealed files to learn the true shape of the 20th century.

- **Stoker: First Blood (1877):** In this prequel to *Dracula*, British adventurers exploring the Balkans thwart a vampiric horror.
- **The Carmilla Sanction (1948):** As the Soviets seal off Vienna, an Edom hit team hunt the notorious vampire Carmilla — but can they find her among all the decoys she's created?
- **Blood Coda (1971):** A Romanian ballet company defects to the West, but there's a vampire hidden among the dancers. Hunt her down before the curtain rises.
- **Day of the Wehrwolf (1981):** A prisoner exchange for a captured Edom officer leads the Agents into a race against time to stop the bombing of Radio Free Europe.
- **The Slayer Elite (1980):** A mysterious employer hires a team of elite mercenaries to carry out an operation in England. Their target: Edom.
- **Four Days of the Bat (1989):** Edom investigates an attack on



one of their hidden stations, while outside the Berlin Wall falls and the Soviet Union collapses.

- **The Moldavian Candidate (2005):** A long-cold Edom case file is the key to thwarting a Conspiracy plan to assassinate the American vice president and escalate the war on terror.
- **The Harker Intrusion (201-):** An entry vector to the main *Dracula* Dossier campaign, giving one way for a team of Agents to acquire the stolen Dossier.

The Edom Files is part of the *Dracula Dossier* series. It stands alone as a compendium of one-shot adventures, but combine it with the *Director's Handbook* to flash back into Edom's history, or play through it all as a century-spanning epic!

