

Dracula. When we first hear the name an image immediately springs forth: a Hungarian actor in a tuxedo and long flowing cape with powerful hypnotic eyes and a thirst for blood. In 1931, Bela Lugosi signed a contract that both made and destroyed his film career. He instilled in us the immortal image of the screen vampire. Such lines as: "I am ...Dracula", "Listen to them,[the wolves] the children of the night, what music they make", and "I never drink...wine" were to forever be a signature to the image of the movie vampire. Where did all of this come from? It was derived from a novel written in 1897. The author was an Irishman named Bram Stoker. Our culture has never been the same since. Once every decade Hollywood produces a new Dracula film, but how faithful are these films to the original novel?

For those who are not familiar with the novel, it comes as a small surprise considering that, for years, literary critics gave it mixed reviews. Some accused Stoker of being a hack with no sense of originality, while others praised the classic novel for its gothic horror tradition. In recent years Stoker's original notes for *Dracula* were found which caused previous critics to change their opinion of the novel and the author. As early as 1890, Stoker had begun the long and thorough research he needed to make his masterpiece as authentic in detail as possible. Scholars could now understand what influenced Stoker to create *Dracula*, and to trace it to its source. It should be stated here that since May of 1897, *Dracula* has never been out of print.

In the one hundred years since Stoker published *Dracula* there have been numerous attempts to bring the novel to both stage and screen. The two films which have contributed the most to the Dracula legend are Tod Browning's 1931 *Dracula* and Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. While the 1931 version of Dracula ignored most of the novel, it created the popular monster/vampire image that Universal Studios has banked on ever since. Anyone can imitate the infamous Bela Lugosi performance by donning a tuxedo, cape, and fangs. It was an image that Lugosi took to his grave in 1956. However, in 1992, Francis Ford Coppola would change the face of Dracula film making forever. Considered by critics to be the "most faithful" adaptation of the novel, Coppola gave Dracula a new romantic twist. The Count Dracula character was fused with the legend of Vlad the Impaler. Instead of a quest for more blood, the count is now on a hunt for his "lost love" from the year 1462 when she was killed by Turks.

The cast of characters shared by both versions of the film are as follows: Count Dracula, Dr. Van Helsing, Dr. Seward, Jonathan Harker, Renfield, and the Three Brides. However, Tod Browning made a few changes to the rest of the cast. Mina Murray became Dr. Seward's daughter, Lucy Westenra changed to Lucy Weston, and Dr. Seward was aged to be a father. Browning left out Arthur Holmwood and Quincey Morris all together, who in the novel, were suitors to Lucy. In Coppola's version the novel's cast only received two changes. Count Dracula was now the legendary Vlad Tepes and Mina Murray became the reincarnation of Elizabeth, his bride. It is because of these cast changes that the two films tell a completely different story of Dracula. Where Browning wanted to make a horror film intended to frighten his audience with a monster, Coppola wanted to tell the original story of Dracula and make him a tragic hero, which worked surprisingly well.

Works cited:

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