

Is there any xenophobia in *Dracula*?

Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* has many obvious themes. But this poster aims to look at any xenophobic references the work may offer. Can it be a coincidence that the anti-hero himself is a foreigner? After all, Count Dracula arrives in England with only one objective: He wants to expand his power and infect England with Vampirism. True Englishmen and –women (!) set out to defy the strange man. Does this stranger represent the typical foreigner of whom danger and misfortune for all England is expected?

Dracula – a stranger on English soil



Courtesy: Wikipedia (Christopher Lee as Count Dracula in 1958).

Although the novel commences in Transylvania, it soon turns its focus to England. The book's hero Jonathan Harker learns very early of the Count's dream to wander around London, and against his will, Jonathan assists the Count to make his dream come true. The Count travels to England on a Russian ship (the crew gradually disappears and the ship ends a wreck), his first stop is Whitby.

The Novel – popular themes

Vampirism	Christianity	Sexuality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Undeniably the most obvious theme ➤ Count Dracula = the impersonation of a vampire ➤ 'vampire' = blood-sucking creature (Slavic origin: 'vapir' & 'upuir') ➤ Sucking blood in order to spread vampirism / the disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Christian themes: the power of blood, crucifixes, the after life, ... ➤ Dracula – the Anti-Christ: Christ offers life, Dracula takes life; blood of Christ gives hope to his followers, Dracula drinks their blood to take hope; questionable resurrection & immortality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Repressed sexuality ➤ The Count's homoerotic desire for Jonathan ➤ Female characters (Mina & Lucy) are bitten & given blood in a sexual way ➤ Jonathan's erotic encounter with 'The Weird Sisters': <i>"I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the supersensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching, pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited – waited with beating heart."</i> (Dracula, 34)

The legend – the real Count Dracula



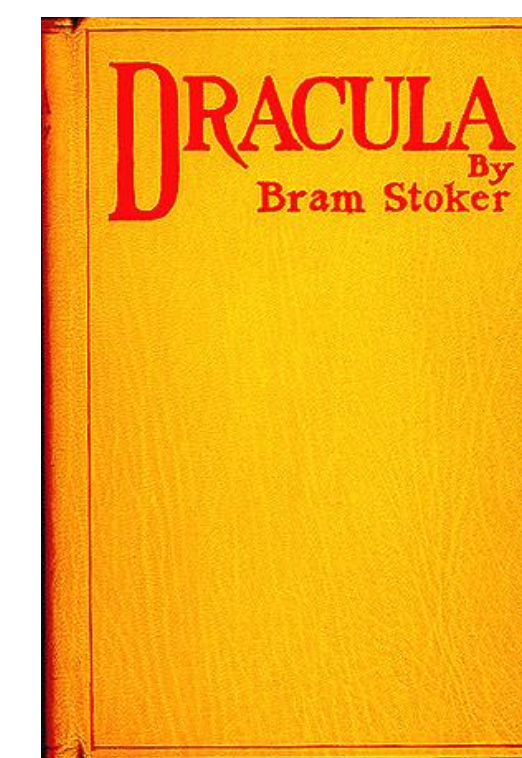
Source: Anonymous - <http://neurmagazine.com/dracula-triennale-dimilano/> / image, Gemeinfrei, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4626141>.

- Prince Vlad V of Wallachia (Romania), 1431-1476
- Known as Vlad Tepes, Vlad the Impaler, Dracula ('son of the devil/dragon')
- Bloodthirsty, sadist: forced mothers to eat their own babies, allegedly impaled his enemies on tall stakes, so that their weight would slowly force them downwards, eventually dying from their bodies being split apart

Dracula in Whitby – Xenophobia?

Eva-Maria Kilian

The Author & The Novel



The first edition. Courtesy: Wikipedia.

The Irishman **Bram Stoker** is the author of the most successful gothic horror novel, *Dracula*. It was published in 1897 and has never been out of print since. It is written in epistolary form which means that it only consists of letters and journal entries. The main characters are Count Dracula on the one side and his adversaries Jonathan Harker, Dr Seward, Van Helsing, and Mina Harker on the other. Together they try to defy the powerful Count who came to England to expand his power. Interestingly, the reader never encounters the Count's perspective on the events, although there is insight given of every other character's mind.

Xenophobia as a theme

Count Dracula	Other foreign characters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Transylvanian roots ➤ Names: "monster", "Satan", "fiend", "devil", "were-wolf", "vampire" ➤ Characteristics: controlling the wolves, able to turn into a bat / wolf (dog) / grey mist, red eyes, rank breath, long & sharp fingernails, ice-cold hands, incredible strength, no reflection, sleeps in a coffin, malevolent, evil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Quincey Morris, American: rejected by Lucy, seems inferior to Lucy's other suitors, dies a martyr ➤ Professor Van Helsing, Dutch: old-fashioned, Catholic, experienced, knowledgeable, helps slay the vampires ➤ The gypsies, living in Transylvania: break into the castle, rob Jonathan, help Dracula to reach England

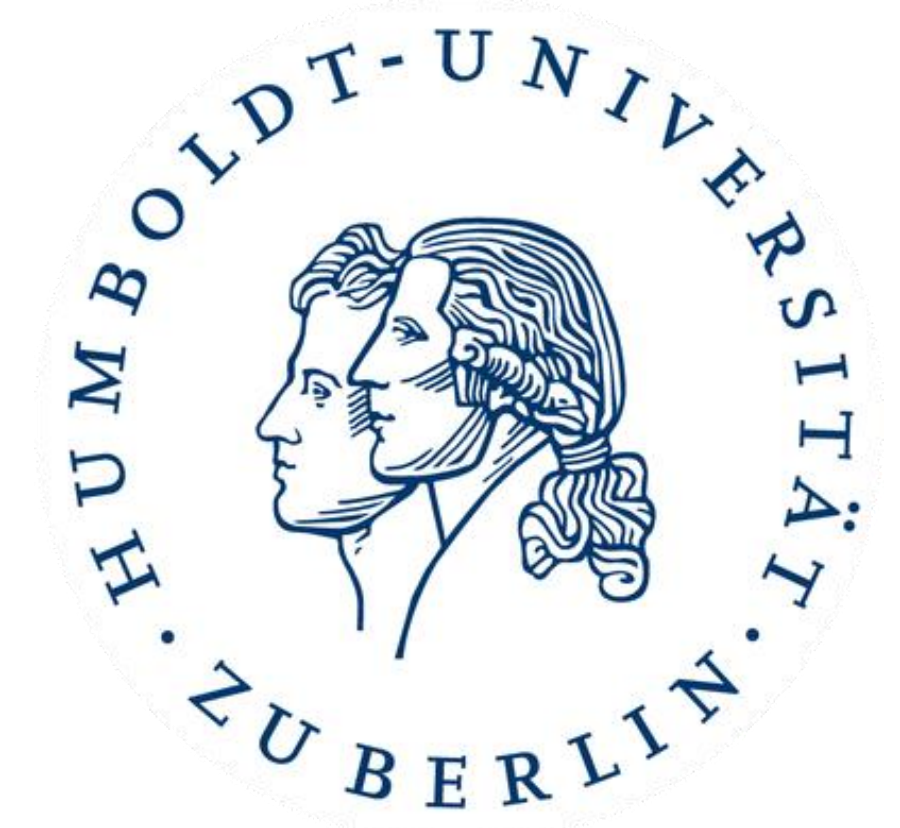
Remarkable Quotes

"Denn die Todten reiten schnell." (Dracula, 10)

"I have not yet seen the Count in the daylight. Can it be that he sleeps when others wake, that he may be awake whilst they sleep?" (Jonathan Harker's journal; Dracula, 40)

"[Dracula] is experimenting, and doing it well; and if it had not been that we have crossed his path he would be yet [...] the father or furtherer of a new order of beings, whose road must lead through Death, not Life." (Van Helsing's thoughts; Dracula, 251)

The language	Criminal behaviour
<p>German is <i>the</i> spoken language by the foreigners the reader encounters through J. Harker's descriptions. The Count's neighbours speak it and Jonathan communicates thus with them. It is striking, however, that the Count himself seems to know perfect English which he claims to have learned through extensive reading and studying. Van Helsing, the other foreigner, only speaks broken English. Language difficulties certainly add to suspicion towards those who do not fully master English.</p>	<p>Many critics understandably seem to comprehend Count Dracula as the criminal of the book. But Clive Leatherdale makes a strong case for the opposite: For although it is the Count who repeatedly attacks people, he never gets the chance to give his account of events. He might not have a choice in the matter. The heroes and heroines of the book, however, break all existing laws in the process of destroying Dracula and his children. Thus Leatherdale calls the vampires "the victims of a lynch mob" (229).</p>



Whitby

Whitby is a small seaside town in the North East of England with a population of around 13,200. Stoker probably had the first inspiring thought of writing the novel when he stayed there in 1890. He also visited Whitby Abbey which Mina describes as "a most noble ruin" (Dracula 53).

Stoker may have come across the name of Vlad Tepes, the real Dracula, in Whitby. Seven years later, the novel appeared. The first English shore Dracula sets foot on is Whitby's, though in the appearance of a dog: *"an immense dog sprang upon deck from below, [...] and running forward, jumped from the bow on to the sand"* (Dracula 67). Thereon disaster is threatening the whole of England.

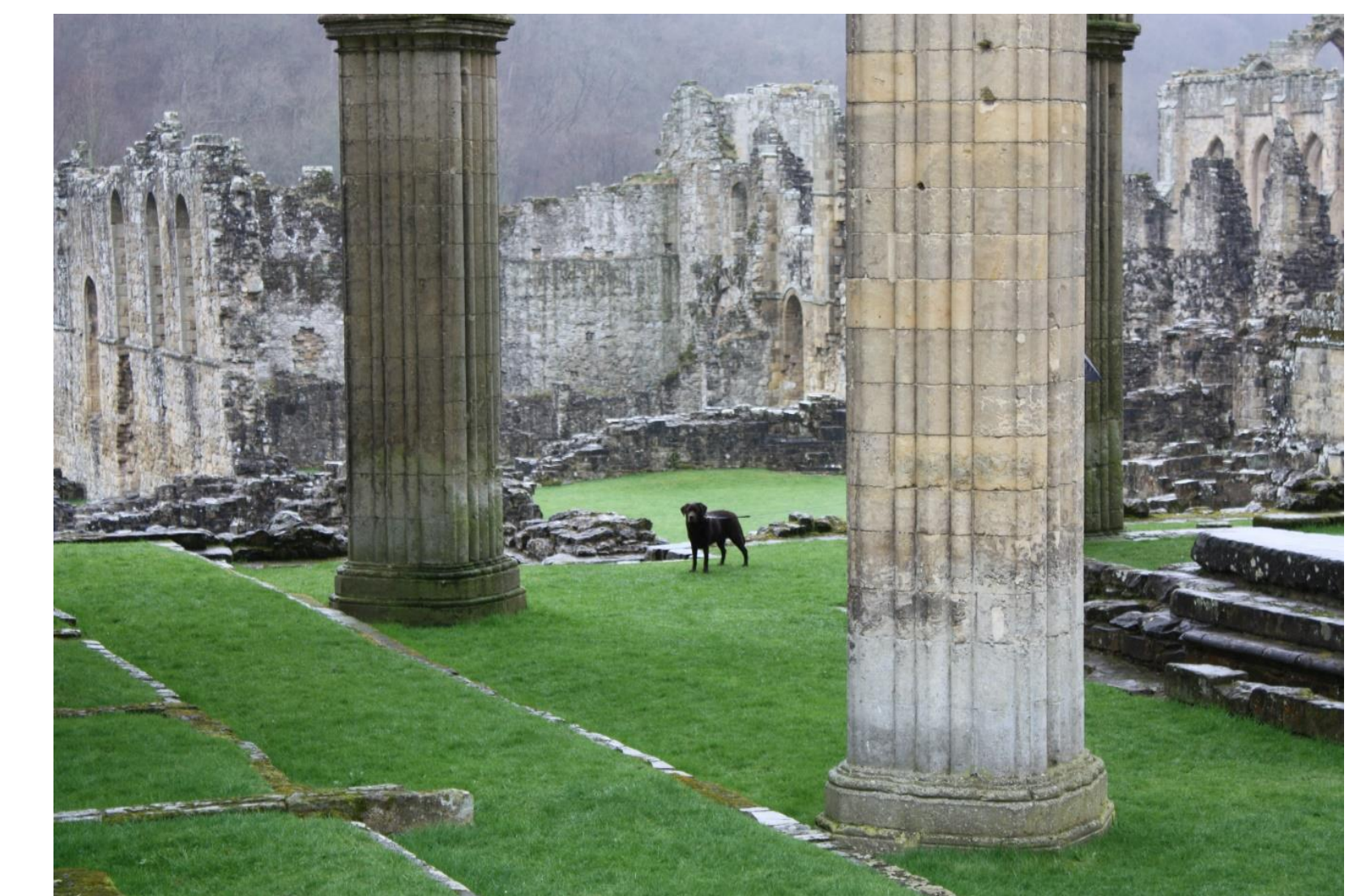


Photo taken in 2012, Whitby Abbey.

Conclusions

- **Count Dracula is both the impersonation of the alien and the evil.**
- **Dracula knows the English language well and studies English culture before travelling to England, but does not attempt to assimilate upon arrival. Instead he causes trouble and brings danger to the whole English people when he threatens to infect them with vampirism.**
- **Van Helsing is one of Dracula's main adversaries, but is himself a foreigner on English soil. It is his experience and knowledge that help slay the Count.**
- **England is saved from being invaded by a strange creature who threatens England with a terrible fate.**
- **The novel *Dracula* indeed shows xenophobic aspects, when the main danger springs from the Eastern man who does not want to integrate.**

Literature

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