

HemlockFilm



BRITISH CULT CINEMA:

THE
HÄMMER
VAMPIRE



Bruce G Hallenbeck

THE HAMMER VAMPIRE is an in-depth examination of how a tiny film studio on the banks of the River Thames changed a genre forever. Hammer may not have invented the vampire film, but its technicians and actors certainly perfected it. The screen vampire as we know—and love—it today, from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to *Twilight* and *True Blood*, would not have existed in its present form but for a series of sixteen Gothic horror films produced by Hammer between 1958 and 1974. In this lively analysis of the phenomenon, author Bruce Hallenbeck takes you behind the scenes of the Hammer classics and shows how the vampire myth was reinvented for the modern audience, taking the archetype that was established by Bram Stoker's *Dracula* into a realm that was darker, more graphic and, most importantly, more sexual than had ever been depicted before.

Hammer's greatest contribution to the vampire film may have been in its evolution of the female of the species—the seductive vampire woman, who ultimately proved to be far more deadly than the male...

BRITISH CULT CINEMA:
1960s
HAMMER
VAMPIRE

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To my Aunt Barbara, for always being there;
and, as always, to Rosa, for being.

IN all the darkest pages of the malign supernatural there is no more terrible tradition than that of the Vampire, a pariah even among demons. Foul are his ravages; gruesome and seemingly barbaric are the ancient and approved methods by which he

must rid themselves of this hideous pest. Even today in certain quarters of the world, in remoter districts of Europe itself, in Transylvania, Slavonia, the isles and mountains of Greece, the peasant will take the law into his own hands and utterly destroy the carrion who—as it is yet firmly believed—at night will issue from his unhallowed grave to spread the infection of vampirism throughout the countryside.

—Montague Summers, *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin* (1928)

BRITISH CULT CINEMA: 1980 HAMMER VAMPIRE



Introduction

I have been haunted since I was five years old.

It was at that tender age that my sainted grandmother and my older cousin Russell took me to see *Dracula* (US title: *Horror of Dracula*) at the Valatie Theatre in my hometown of Valatie, New York. Film fans in Great Britain might be shocked to learn that, in 1958, when they had to be sixteen to see a horror film, we in the US had no such restrictions. I am not sure what that says about our cultural differences, but there it is.

Mind you, I was already a veteran of the Universal classics, even at age five. They had debuted on American television in November of 1957 under the umbrella title of *Shock Theatre*. I had seen James Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein* and Tod Browning's

1931 *Dracula* and had loved them both. Surely seeing Dracula on the big screen, whether or not he was played by Bela Lugosi would simply be more of the same?

And so it was, on a fine August afternoon, that I was exposed to the horror of *Dracula*, in blazing Eastman colour. To say that stayed with me is a gross understatement; it did indeed haunt me for years to come, its images burned into my young, developing brain. Through the eyes of a child, I seemed to interpret those images in a very dreamlike, irrational way.

For example: the opening shot of the stone eagle behind the credits impressed me at the time as overwhelming, as though the eagle were somehow moving of its own accord. Of course, it is the camera that is actually moving in the shot, but I did not realize that until I saw the film for a second time, aged twelve.

Then there was the opening of the film proper, with the coach arriving near the castle amidst beautiful autumn foliage. Autumn has always been my favourite time of year, but this was the first occasion on which I had seen it represented on the big screen. Bear in mind that most American films in those days were shot in southern California, where there are no distinct seasons to speak of.

Of course, the castle and the count within it both appeared to be quite different from what I had experienced in the Lugosi film even at that age. I am sure I had no idea at the time as to who the actor was, but it seemed to me as though his hair was blue. This was a side-effect of Jack Asher's brilliant and moody lighting but, again, these childhood impressions remained with me over the years.

Needless to say, the film's climax was unforgettable. But to my five-year-old sense of logic, it was as though the 'good guys' caused Dracula to turn to ash by holding up candles. Any kind of light would destroy a vampire, right?

However, the scene that really haunted me, and does to this day, was the one that involved the newly-minted vampire, Lucy (Carol Marsh), and the little girl, Tania (Janina Faye). Again, my child's mind tended to fill the blanks in what I could not understand. Was Lucy sitting in a tree waiting for the little girl, or did she merely push aside a tree branch? And then she smiled, exposing those long, canine teeth. It was not a smile; it was a grin—a bit like those I had seen on the death's heads in Disney's classic 1929 cartoon *The Skeleton Dance*, when it was broadcast on television a couple of years before. There was something extraordinarily frightening about that expression. I could not get it out of my mind.

(I do recall seeing at least one little boy run screaming from the theatre into the sunlight of that long-ago afternoon. But not me; I was enthralled, enchanted; yet it was not the gore or the dramatic action that impressed me that day. It was Lucy. It was that grin.)

Ultimately, that was what Hammer brought to the vampire film: that grin.. both sensual and terrifying—especially from the female of the species. Whereas Universal's vampire films had concentrated on the count and paid scant attention to his female victims once they became vampires, Hammer's did the opposite. Many, many frames of film were devoted to the activities of his full-bodied 'brides', who epitomised both sex and death. As we shall see, Hammer brought out the sexual element inherent in the vampire literature, whether it be by Bram Stoker or Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, and forever put to rest the idea of a florid, fangless vampire in a tuxedo, transforming the count into an attractive, autocratic seducer—'The terrifying lover who died yet lived!' screamed the position—and turning his brides into predatory, wanton women of the night, who were just as likely to sink their fangs into female flesh—even the flesh of a child—as into the throat of a red-blooded male.

And so the clichés of old were replaced, at a single stroke, by a new approach—which in turn was to become a cliché in itself.

Hammer made sixteen vampire films in all, many of them iconic. Without them, we would likely not have had *Dark Shadows*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Interview with the Vampire*, *Twilight* or just about any other vampire film, television series, comic book or video game since 1958, at least not in the forms in which they are now recognisable. Hammer did not invent the vampire film, but he perfected it. It crafted the rules that all of its imitators followed. We are still seeing their influence in the media of today.

For those of you who might believe it to be a form of abuse to expose a young child to Hammer's original *Dracula* (which, of course, I begged to see at the time), I would point out that it never gave me nightmares but it did furnish me with a lifetime of inspiration. That August afternoon, lost to time, inspired me to learn all that I could about films and filmmaking, eventually leading me to make my own; it inspired me to read Stoker's novel when I was eleven and to begin writing when I was twelve, which led eventually to books and screenplays, and to a life devoted to artistic creativity. It inspired the volume that you hold in your hands.

Let us now explore what it was that made the Hammer vampire so special.







London After Midnight (Marceline Day, Lon Chaney)

Prologue:
The Vampire Film before Hammer

‘The guardians hastened to protect Miss Aubrey; but when they arrived, it was too late. Lord Ruthven had disappeared and Aubrey’s sister had glutted the thirst of a VAMPYRE!’

—John Polidori, *The Vampyre: A Tale* (1819)

He drags her head to the bed’s edge. He forces it back by the long hair still entwined in his grasp. With a plunge he seizes her neck in his fang-like teeth—a gush of blood, and a hideous sucking noise follows. The girl has swooned, and the vampyre is at his hideous repast!

—James Malcolm Rymer, *Varney the Vampyre; or, The Feast of Blood* (1845-7)

IT took the vampire a while to enter the dark realms of the cinema—surprising, in view of the fact that the undead had been a mainstay of both fiction and drama for nearly a century before film was invented. There were a number of false starts; the pioneer Georges Méliès’s 1896 short, *Le manoir du diable* (US: *The Haunted Castle*), is sometimes referred to as the first vampire film, but in fact it merely features the first example of what later would become a staple of vampire films: a man transforming into a man—in this case, Mephistopheles. There was no actual vampirism involved in this two-minute short.

Nor were any supernatural bloodsuckers to be seen in Louis Feuillade’s ground-breaking serial *Les vampires* (1915-16). The vampires in question were merely a gang of criminals, one of them a woman called Irma Vep (Musidora), whose name was an anagram of ‘vampire’. Indeed, early vampires of the screen were most often ‘vamps’, such as Theda Bara (real name Theodosia Goodman), whose screen name was also an anagram, of ‘Arab Death’. In her most famous film, *A Fool There Was* (1916), Bara was the epitome of the man-eating vamp, hissing ‘Kiss me, you fool!’ to her leading man. An outrageous personality both on and off the screen, she was often photographed surrounded by snakes and skulls. By the early 1920s, that fashion for vamps had faded and sweet, innocent types like Mary Pickford found public favour instead.

One of the last examples of ‘vampish’ cinema was Robert Wiene’s *Genuine* (1920; aka *Genuine: A Tale of a Vampire*), a dream-like follow-up to the same director’s seminal *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919). Fern Andra plays Genuine, a *femme fatale* who also happens to be the high priestess of an ancient cult. She ends up enslaving the hero to her will, but again, there is no genuine bloodsucking in sight.

Although the record shows a Hungarian production of 1921 called *Drakula halála* (aka *The Death of Drakula*), produced by one Károly Lajthay, this early version of the Stoker novel would appear to be a ‘lost’ film about which little is known. Recent research in Hungary has revealed that the film opened in Vienna in February 1921, but contemporary journals make it sound more like an adaptation of Gaston Leroux’s *The Phantom of the Opera* than Stoker’s *Dracula*. The few photos that survive show a sinister-looking, caped ‘Drakula’ played by Paul Askonas, but it seems to be the case that the name was ‘borrowed’ from Stoker, rather than the plot, which, according to the IMDb (Internet Movie Database), had to do with a girl (Margit Lutz) experiencing ‘frightening visions after visiting an insane asylum where one of the inmates claims to be Drakula; she cannot be sure whether they [the visions] were a nightmare or real’. No mention is made of vampires, real or imagined. It was left to master German filmmaker Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau to create the first (albeit unauthorised) screen version of Bram Stoker’s tale, *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (*Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror*; 1922).



Nosferatu (Max Schreck)

Many critics deem *Nosferatu* a masterpiece, not just of the horror film, but of cinema as a whole. It is the earliest ‘true’ vampire film to have survived—a miracle in itself, given that Stoker’s widow Florence, on discovering that it was in effect a pirated version of her late husband’s book, arranged for all copies to be destroyed. Fortunately, several copies escaped the reach of her legal facilitators.

While the basic plot of *Nosferatu* follows Stoker’s novel fairly closely, the devil is in Murnau’s detailing. The brooding Count Dracula is transformed into the balding, rat-headed Count Orlock (Max Schreck), who carries the plague to the German city of Bremen by exchanging his mouldering castle for an equally mouldering house across the way from that of pretty young Nina Hutter (Greta Schroeder). In the film’s emblematic climax, it is she, not Stoker’s Professor Van Helsing, who destroys the vampire by keeping him by her side until sunrise. At dawn, Orlock dissolves in the purifying rays of the morning sun, a metaphorical method of vampiric destruction that was entirely absent from Stoker’s novel. It has since become a convention in vampire films.

Now considered to be one of the greatest of all silents, *Nosferatu* did not exactly set the world on fire in 1922. To the contrary, the film itself was almost burned out of existence by legal writ. But mere breach of copyright could not keep a good vampire down for long; Florence Stoker’s order to destroy all prints was unenforceable in Germany, although the lawsuit did force Murnau’s production company, Prana Film, out of business. But all of the material relating to *Nosferatu*, including outtakes, was sold to Deutsche Film Produktion. A somewhat altered version, called *Die Zwölfte Stunde* (*The Twelfth Hour*), was eventually released, and this was altered again before the film debuted in the United States in 1929.

This bowdlerised version, titled *Nosferatu the Vampire*, was reviewed in *The New York Times* on June 4, 1929. The critic Mordaunt Hall, was singularly unimpressed by Murnau’s epic, which surprisingly was still being sold as an adaptation of Stoker’s *Dracula*. He wrote: ‘Because of its age and also the extravagant ideas, *Nosferatu the Vampire*, a film supposed to have been inspired by the blood-curdling *Dracula*, is not especially stirring. It is the sort of thing one could watch at midnight without its having much effect upon one’s slumbering hours. In fact yesterday at the Film Guild Cinema, where this production

is now on view, there was at least one man who dozed audibly and another who was either terrified or was enjoying a forty more winks. Hall, who would later favourably review director Tod Browning's own adaptation of the novel, continued: 'It is a production that is rather more of a soporific than a thriller. Max Schreck's movements as Nosferatu are too deliberate to be lifelike.' Talk about missing the point!

The next vampire film of importance, and one that is often cited as the first American vampire feature, was Tod Browning's 1927 *London after Midnight* (UK title: *The Hypnotist*). In reality, however, this was just another *faux* vampire movie, which was actually a mystery with horror overtones. The great Lon Chaney played two roles, those of a London police detective and an alleged 'vampire', who turns out in the end to be the detective in disguise. But what a disguise it is!—Chaney's make-up being only slightly less grotesque than that of Max Schreck in *Nosferatu*. Chaney's vampire is all bulging eyes and teeth filed to points, adorned in top hat and opera cape as he prowls the foggy streets of London town. Again, not exactly the kind of vampire popularised in literature by John Polidori in his 1819 short story 'The Vampyre', in which the character of Lord Ruthven, a womanising, blood-drinking fiend, was largely modelled on Polidori's one-time employer and mentor, George Gordon, Lord Byron—from whom the kernel of the tale had also been pilfered.

Perhaps the most famous 'lost film' of all time, *London after Midnight* was very successful in 1927, despite the fact that it was one of the very last silent films to come out of Hollywood. Unfortunately, the last-known print of the film was destroyed in a fire in the M-G-M studio vaults in 1967, although rumours persist that another print (under its British title) still survives somewhere in Hollywood. Whatever the case, enough stills from the film existed to enable restoration specialist Rick Schmidlin to 'reconstruct' it from its original script for broadcast on American cable television channel Turner Classic Movies in 2002.

The extant photographs suggest that Chaney crept around like a spider when playing the vampire, with a hideous rictus grin on his face that was enhanced by the light from the antique lantern that he carried. This visage was so frightening to audiences at the time that it was actually used as part of the defence in a murder case: Robert Williams, who stood accused of slitting the throat of Julia Mangan in London's Hyde Park on October 23, 1928, attempted to convince the jury that he had acted out the deed in a state of 'epileptic automatism' brought on by a vision of Lon Chaney, whose bizarre countenance and performance he had just seen in *The Hypnotist*. The jury in the case was not that credulous and Williams was convicted of the crime regardless.

(Another interesting fact about the M-G-M film is that Browning regular Edna Tichenor, who played Lon Chaney's nocturnal accomplice Luna, set the pattern for vampire women for years to come. With her pale face, piercing eyes and long dark hair, she inaugurated the image of the female of the species that pertained right up to that of American television horror hostess Vampira in the 1950s.)

London after Midnight may not have been a 'true' vampire film, but it was directed by the man who was instrumental in bringing the real thing to cinema audiences around the world. Kentucky-born Charles Albert 'Tod' Browning's sound version of *Dracula* (1931) not only established the benchmark for all that followed but, along with James Whale's *Frankenstein* in the same year, virtually created the genre of the 'horror film' as we know it today.

The fact that Universal and Tod Browning chose to base their film version of *Dracula* on the Hamilton Deane/John Balfour stage play, rather than Bram Stoker's novel, is at once its greatest strength and also its most obvious weakness. The play had enjoyed much success on Broadway in 1927 and had firmly established the haughty character of Count Dracula and, by extension, that of most male vampires—in the mould of the Byronic villain that Polidori had originally created. As portrayed on stage and later on-screen by Hungarian-born Bela Lugosi (Browning's first choice for the role, Lon Chaney, had died before the film was made), Dracula was no longer the elderly aristocratic gentleman of the novel, who became younger as events progressed through the ingesting of blood; he was instead an attractive and seductive figure, immaculately-attired in top hat, tails and opera cape.

In many respects, the Browning version set the stage for vampire films—indeed, all horror films—to come. Unlike *London after Midnight*, there was no 'trick' ending in *Dracula* to explain it all away as a plot to catch a killer; the vampires in the film were supernatural beings, through and through. Universal was so unsure of the efficacy of this new approach that they advertised *Dracula* as 'The strangest love story of all!' before its initial opening. Once audiences started to show up in droves, however, the ad lines became bolder: 'The human vampire is out! The dreaded terror of the undead is abroad in the land! He is here! Count Dracula—dead 500 years—comes to life after sundown and returns to his grave before sunrise, after feasting on the blood of the living!—in the most sensational and amazing motion picture of all time!'

It certainly impressed *The New York Times*'s critic Mordaunt Hall more than *Nosferatu* had. In the February 13, 1931 edition, Hall wrote: 'It is a production that evidently had the desired effect upon many in the audience yesterday afternoon, for there was a general outburst of applause when Dr Van Helsing produced a little cross that caused the dreaded Dracula to fling his cloak over his head and make himself scarce.' In an aside, Hall noted of actor Dwight Frye that he 'does fairly well as Renfield'; Frye was to become as identified with that role as Lugosi would be with Count Dracula.



Dracula (Bela Lugosi)

To accommodate the demands of the burgeoning South American film market, a second version of *Dracula* was produced at Universal concurrent with that of Browning; the English-speaking version shot during the day, and George Melford's Spanish-language version shot at night on the same sets as Browning's and utilising most of the same costumes. Melford's film is superior to Browning's in almost every respect; there is more *décolletage* on display, the camerawork is more fluid and the film on the whole is a more polished affair. The Spanish crew had the advantage of being allowed to view the 'dailies' of the

bigger-budgeted Browning film before labouring on their own version throughout the night. As a result, they attempted to the official studio version by coming up with more imaginative camera angles, more overt hints of sexuality and more textured lighting.

Whereas much of Browning's *Dracula* is a case of staginess and missed opportunities, Melford's film fills in the blanks, runs some twenty minutes longer and the direction is far more cinematic. Carlos Villarias is no Lugosi, and he tends to leer his way through the role of the count, but everything else about the production is first-rate. In accentuating the sexual element of the myth, it also pointed to the future—unlike Browning's film, which seemed to be afflicted by a certain prudishness in that respect.

The vampire film was finally beginning to make its mark, but the next past the post was a very different concoction. Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Vampyr* (aka *The Strange Adventure of David Gray*; 1932) is a free-wheeling, almost unrecognisable adaptation of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1871 novella, 'Carmilla'. Dreyer was one of the finest filmmakers of his time; his silent 1928 film *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (US: *The Passion of Joan of Arc*) is widely regarded as a masterpiece. Known curiously in the US as *Not Against the Flesh*, Dreyer's only vampire film is suffused with surrealism. Made independently by Dreyer with the help of friends, and with his chief financial backer, Julian West, in the leading role, *Vampyr* is an exercise in atmosphere and impression—a mood piece that attempts, and invariably succeeds, in creating the sensation of a very curious dream.

Dreyer turned the tale of 'Carmilla' on its head. Le Fanu's Carmilla was a beautiful young woman who happened to be a vampire; Dreyer's version transformed the character (renamed Marguerite [Henriette Gérard]) into a white-haired, withered old crone—more or less the clichéd depiction of a witch. This drained the film of the adolescent sexual tension inherent in Le Fanu's story, but then that was not what Dreyer was looking for. Nevertheless, *Vampyr* does contain one sensually-striking scene, in which virginal innkeeper's daughter Gisèle (Rena Mandel), confined to her bed, suddenly becomes aware of her vampiric nature; her features gradually contort into a devilish grin, like that of Lucy in Hammer's later *Dracula*, which seems to promise both the torrid and the terrifying in equal measure.

Apparently, subtlety was not what audiences of the time were looking for. As with *Nosferatu*, some vampire films which are now considered masterpieces were overlooked in their day, and *Vampyr* was another victim of audience expectation. *The New York Times* of January 15, 1933, under the headline 'Paris views new films and theatres', an anonymous writer noted 'It is a hallucinating film, "dubbed" from the German, which either held the spectators spellbound as in a long nightmare or else moved them to hysterical laughter, thus entirely counteracting the truly weird effects of the photography and story.'

Other Hollywood studios soon began to cash in on the success of Universal's *Dracula*. 1933 also saw the release of Majestic's *The Vampire Bat*, starring Lionel Atwill and Fay Wray, which, like the Spanish *Dracula* before it, was shot cheaply at night on Universal's *Frankenstein* village set. However, the 'vampire' in the tale was a mad scientist (Atwill) who had created an artificial life-form that needs blood to survive. Invincible's *Condemned to Live* (1935) featured a mad doctor (Ralph Morgan) whose mother had been bitten by a vampire bat during pregnancy, which produces the predictable result in his unfortunate offspring.

Tod Browning's third and final vampire film, *Mark of the Vampire* (1935), is one of the most frustrating films of its kind ever made. Bela Lugosi was back in his *Dracula* cloak as 'Count Mora'—the surname culled from Dreyer's *Vampyr*—complete with a screen daughter named Luna who was portrayed by the hauntingly-beautiful Carol Borland. The original story by George Endore had an incestuous undertone which presaged many of the Hammer 'vampers' of later years, but censorship assured that all such references would be struck out of the final film. What is left is one of the most visually atmospheric vampire films of all time, stunningly photographed by James Wong Howe—and with one of the most disappointing endings in the history of horror. *Mark of the Vampire* is actually a thinly-disguised remake of *London after Midnight*, in which everything eerie is explained away at the climax when a detective (Lionel Barrymore) succeeds in exposing a murderer with the help of actors portraying supernatural creatures! Too bad; there is a moment in the film when Borland *hisses* at one of her victims, something that Hammer's vampires would specialise in. But the fact that Borland sprouts bat wings at one point in the proceedings is never explained—how could an actress out to trap a murderer achieve such a feat?

More often than not, female vampires were given short shrift in early films of the genre; they were either old hags, as in Dreyer's *Vampyr*, or angst-ridden, sexually-repressed young women, as in Lambert Hillyer's *Dracula's Daughter* (1935), Universal's belated sequel to *Dracula*. Supposedly based on 'Dracula's Guest', a discarded chapter of Bram Stoker's novel which was omitted for reasons of length and published as a stand-alone short story in 1914, *Dracula's Daughter* has nothing to do with Stoker beyond the fact that its protagonist is female. The original tale had to do with the haunted tomb of a Countess Dolingen of Gratz; the film features the enigmatic Gloria Holden as Countess Marya Zaleska, in reality the daughter of Count Dracula but herself a somewhat reluctant vampire. A clever and rather sophisticated film for the era, *Dracula's Daughter* is mainly remembered today for its implicit lesbianism, specifically in the scene where Zaleska attempts to put the bite on a streetwalker whom she has picked up (Nan Grey). It was the first vampire film to touch on the inherently-androgynous nature of its supernatural fiend, but there would be many more when censorship went the way of the wind in the late 1960s.

It is the brothers Siodmak's often-maligned *Son of Dracula* (1943), however, that may well be Universal's most interesting vampire movie from a thematic standpoint. Although some critics found fault with the casting of Lon Chaney Jr as Count Alucard, who is either Dracula's son or the Count himself (take your pick; it is never satisfactorily explained), *Son of Dracula* foreshadows the Hammer approach in many ways. Directed with considerable style by Robert Siodmak from a story by his brother Curt, *Son of Dracula* is one of the few vampire movies of any era to explore the notion that someone might actually

choose to become a vampire. Katherine Caldwell (Louise Albritton) is decorously described as ‘a woman with a taste for the morbid’, and she is drawn to Count Alucard, whom she ‘marries’ in a midnight ceremony. She willingly submits to Alucard becomes a vampire herself, and proceeds to attack her former lover (Robert Paige). Laden with surrealist imagery and heavy hints of deviant sexual behaviour (Caldwell *marries* the count, after all—so vampires are inferred to have a sex-life), and with a downbeat ending unprecedented in horror films of the period, *Son of Dracula* was also the first film to graphically depict the physical power of Stoker’s ‘Un-dead’, thanks to Chaney’s imposing presence. Robert Siodmak would go from here to the more aberrant psychological territory of *The Spiral Staircase* (1945).

Lew Landers’s more conventional *The Return of the Vampire* (1943) is usually referred to as a 1944 release, but in fact played in America’s hinterlands as early as November 1943 before opening in New York in January 1944. Lugosi predictably plays Armand Tesla, who acts the innocent but looks suspiciously like Dracula. Instead of a gibbering Renfield, Tesla allotted a werewolf named Andreas (Matt Willis) for an assistant, who has a change of heart at the end of the film and drives a stake through his master—whose waxen face then melts to bone in a close-up that was removed from British prints. A serviceable and entertaining Columbia B-movie, *The Return of the Vampire* was stylishly directed by Landers and novel in that it was set contemporaneously in war-time (Nazi bombers actually help in defeating the monster!), but it added little new to the genre.

By the mid-1940s, the Universal horrors had begun to run out of steam and its series of ‘monster rallies’, which pitted all the studio’s monsters—Dracula, Frankenstein, The Wolf Man and more—against one another in the same films, kicked off with *House of Frankenstein* (1944). John Carradine played Dracula for the first of several times in his career, and a very suave and sophisticated count he was, too. Reduced to a pile of bones at sunrise in *House of Frankenstein*, he somehow managed to turn up unscathed in the following year’s *House of Dracula*, in which vampirism was treated for the first time as a physical ‘disease’—another theme which would resurface at Hammer. Attempts to cure him of his affliction fail, however, and he succumbs to skeletal mode once more.



House of Dracula (John Carradine)

A minor gem of the genre came in the form of Republic's *The Vampire's Ghost*, in which John Abbott played bar-owner and centuries-old vampire Webb Fallon in the unlikely setting of darkest Africa. One scene has Fallon survive a potential fatal spear-thrust by regenerating himself in the light of the moon, and screenwriter Leigh Brackett cited Polidori's 'The Vampyre', in which Lord Ruthven employs the same means to survive a gunshot wound, as the main influence on the film.

Bela Lugosi reprised the role of Dracula in *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (UK: *..Meet the Ghosts*, 1948) and somehow managed to retain his dignity in the process. One of the great comedy-horror films of all time, *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*

Meet Frankenstein was also the final nail in the coffin of Universal horror. In his sixties at the time of its production and already addicted to drugs, the ailing Lugosi was no longer regarded as a sex symbol. The whole Universal horror cycle died with this and succeeding Abbot and Costello pastiches, and Lugosi's career died along with them. One of his last appearances was as the now-stereotypical vampire count in 1952's *Old Mother Riley Meets the Vampire*—a minor programme-filler that was not exactly the highlight of anyone's career, including that of writer-director John Gilling, who would go on from there to helm many a Hammer horror.

One of the more unusual adaptations of Stoker's novel, *Drakula Istanbul'da* (1953) was a Turkish take on the story. Rarely seen by Western audiences, it is a relatively faithful version of the book, with Atif Kaptan making an imposing figure of the count and sporting bat-like teeth, similar to those of *Nosferatu*. The Christian icons of the traditional vampire myth were replaced by those of Islam; this vampire did not fear the cross but copies of the holy *Quran*. It offered a unique slant on the tale, but it was one which ultimately had no influence on the genre outside of its native country.

Early in 1953, a rechristened Universal-International (derived from the old Universal Pictures) touted its plan to produce a 3-D film of Le Fanu's 'Carmilla', no doubt spurred by the box-office success of Warners' *House of Wax*. *The New York Times* of February 3 reported on the proposed feature under the headline, 'U-I plots movie about a vampire'. Thomas M. Pryor's article read, in part: 'Universal-International is in the market for an actress who would like to play a vampire, perhaps in three dimensions. The studio has a suitable story property in *Carmilla*, a novel by Sheridan Le Fanu, in which the heroine, if such she may be called, comes out of her grave in the dark of night, kills a couple of unsuspecting persons and then sets out to get revenge on a few of her one-time lovers. DeWitt Bodeen is writing the screen play, and Ross Hunter, producer, is on the hunt for an actress to take over where Bela Lugosi left off some time ago in the Dracula-type high jinks..' Think about it: a 3-D version of 'Carmilla', written by the screenwriter of *Cat People* (1942) and produced by a man who was soon to be famous for lightweight romantic comedies featuring Doris Day and Rock Hudson? Needless to say, the project died on the vine, doomed to exist only in what *Famous Monsters of Filmland* editor Forrest Ackerman used to call 'The Realm of Unwrought Things'.

Bela Lugosi died in August 1956, at a time when the fortunes of Hollywood vampires were at their lowest ebb (his last role had been in Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space*). When he was buried in his Dracula cloak, it was the end of an era: science fiction had replaced horror, and vampires and ghosts had been sidelined by atomic mutations and blobs from outer space. The image of the vampire on screen, which had prevailed for more than a quarter of a century, was the image of Lugosi, and it seemed for a while that the book on Gothic bloodsuckers was now closed. But that was about to change: the king-vampire must have been laid to his final rest, but a new king was waiting to ascend the throne.

Quietly, the first stirrings of a Gothic revival were beginning to be felt in some surprising parts of the world. In the year of Lugosi's death, Italian director Riccardo Freda—with a little help from cinematographer, Mario Bava—made *I vampiri* (*The Devil's Commandment*), the first horror film to have been made in Italy since the war. The 'vampires' in *I vampiri* were of the scientific kind, experimenting in the rejuvenation of corpses through the use of blood drained from female victims, but the film was redolent with Gothic atmosphere and its plot was plundered from Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 1896 short story 'Gothic Lady Duayne', as well as the real-life escapades of historical 'vampire' Elisabeth Bathory, who reputedly bathed in the blood of virgins to preserve her youthful looks. The legend of the 'Bloody Countess' was one to which Hammer would also turn some years further down the line.



I vampiri (Gianna Maria Canale)

In 1957, a Mexican director by the name of Fernando Méndez devised an old-fashioned, non-science fictional vampire film called, simply, *El vampiro*. Although styled largely after the old Universal classics and elegantly photographed in glowing monochrome, its vampire Count Karol de Lavud (Germán Robles) briefly sported for the first time what has since become the cinematic norm: fangs. Not the jagged rat-teeth of Schreck or Kaptan, but the elongated canines of Stoker's count ('*..the sharp canine teeth lying over the red under-lip..*') that have graced the maws of these creatures of the night in nearly every vampire film since.

In the wake of 3-D and the sc-fi 'boom' that followed it, American studios of the late 1950s remained in thrall to the mutant possibilities of science: Herbert L Strock's generically-titled *Blood of Dracula* (UK: *Blood Is My Heritage*) from American International produced only a hybrid 'vampire' in pretty Sandra Harrison, after she fell foul of a nutty chemistry teacher intent on saving the world from atomic armageddon by subjecting her to bouts of hypnotic regression. (AIP's B-movies were more than usually populated by such scientific 'pioneers'.)

But one American vampire film from that era presaged of things to come. 1958's *The Return of Dracula* (UK: *The Fantastic Disappearing Man*) from director Paul Landres may still have featured a fangless vampire in former matinee idol Francis Lederer, but alerted by the imminent release of a new and gorier version of Stoker's novel, the mainly black-and-white film was distinguished by a single colour 'insert' of a phallic stake being driven into the chest of a buxom vampire woman (Virginia Vincent), bright red blood welling up around the wooden shaft. (A previous Landres effort, called simply *The Vampire*, had featured the creature in name only, when an experimental scientist [John Beal] accidentally ingested bat-blood and transformed himself into a Jekyll-and-Hyde monster with an uncontrollable urge to kill.)

However, the real revival in popularity of the Un-dead came from England that same year. The cultural *zeitgeist* seemed

be moving in the direction of an injection of new blood into the horror film as a whole and the vampire legend in particular. The cinema audience hungered for it. And it came, finally, from a small production company based at the tiny Bray Studios complex on the banks of the River Thames, near Windsor.

A company called Hammer Film Productions.





Dracula (Peter Cushing)

Chapter 1: The Terrifying Lover

‘With a mocking smile, he placed one hand upon my shoulder and, holding me tight, bared my throat with the other, saying as he did so: “First, a little refreshment to reward my exertions. You may as well be quiet; it is not the first time, or the second, that your veins have appeased my thirst!” I was bewildered, and, strangely enough, I did not

want to hinder him. I suppose it is a part of the horrible curse that this happens when his touch is on his victim. Ah, my God, my God, pity me! He placed his reeking lips upon my throat!

—Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897)

HAMMER Film Productions had hit it big in May 1957, when Warner Brothers released its first colour Gothic horror film, *The Curse of Frankenstein*, upon an unsuspecting public. After years of making low-budget but highly efficient B-movies for release on the bottom half of double-bills, Hammer had tested the waters of the horror/sci-fi genres with *The Quatermass Experiment* (1955), based on Nigel Kneale's famous BBC Television serial. But that had been made in Hammer's usual B-movie style, featuring a fading American star (Brian Donlevy), and filmed in black and white. *The Curse of Frankenstein*, on the other hand, was in lavish Eastman colour (courtesy of brilliant lighting cameraman Jack Asher) and featured an entirely British cast, headed by Peter Cushing as Baron Frankenstein, Christopher Lee as the creature and Hazel Court as the damsel-in-distress, heaving her ample bosom in a variety of low-cut gowns. It was a formula that clicked with audiences from the off.

Just how much it clicked is evident in Hammer managing director James Carreras's breathless letter to his production partner Eliot Hyman on July 7, 1957: 'I enclose a new batch of figures which are quite fantastic. England is sweltering in a heat wave and NOTHING is taking any money except *The Curse of Frankenstein*.. Tony Hinds and Michael are busy on *Blood of Frankenstein* and I feel sure that we have another terrific winner on our hands.. Reply before July 22nd please. IS DRACULA???'

It made perfect sense; Hammer had revived the Gothic horror movie with its own version of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The Universal horrors of the thirties and forties had often put Dracula and Frankenstein features together on double bills, and sometimes even paired the characters in the same movies. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was the other great classic of Gothic literature, after *Frankenstein*; to re-do *Dracula* was the next logical step.

The rights to the book, however, were confusing. Jimmy Sangster, a former production manager for Hammer who had written the screenplay for *The Curse of Frankenstein*, was naturally assigned to pen its version of *Dracula*. As he later pointed out in his book, *Inside Hammer*, there was a lot of legal wrangling to be done first: 'It very nearly didn't get made at all. An author's work doesn't reach public domain until fifty years after his death. Bram Stoker had died in 1912, meaning that it would be 1962 before his novel *Dracula* would become public property. In other words, Hammer had to search around to see who owned the rights. It was a long and arduous business. There had been at least half-a-dozen dramatisations based on *Dracula*, both on screen and on stage. Hammer went to Universal, who had bought the rights in 1930 from Stoker's widow, to make sure they hadn't sold them on. Apparently they hadn't and, after long negotiations, Hammer bought the rights with one of the conditions that Universal acquired worldwide distribution.'

Hammer was not interested in basing its version on Hamilton Deane's stage play, as Universal had done. Company chairman and house producer Tony Hinds wanted to go back to the novel. Hammer lawyer Edwin Davis drew up an 80-page contract granting Universal-International the distribution rights in exchange for granting Hammer permission to produce the property. U-I would retitle the film *Horror of Dracula* in the States so that it would not be confused with the Lugosi version which they had re-issued several times. In the UK, however, the film was known simply as *Dracula*.

An article in the July 29, 1957, issue of *Today's Cinema* announced the upcoming feature: 'James Carreras [said] on Friday that Exclusive, who have the rights on *Dracula*, are planning a big-scale remake of the famous thriller. To be made in colour, *Dracula* will go on the floor at an early date. *The Curse of Frankenstein*, by the way, is now the sixth highest grosser in America—this picture can't go wrong!'

Sangster had received a mere £500 to write *The Curse of Frankenstein*. In his book, he told of his reaction to the request from Hinds that he now write the screenplay for *Dracula*: 'Do I get paid?' he asked. The answer was yes, but not very much. Sangster continued: 'Hell, I'd only been writing about eighteen months. What did I know about what writers were supposed to be paid?'

Sangster was given his orders regarding his adaptation of Stoker's novel, in which solicitor's clerk Jonathan Harker famously travels to Castle Dracula in the Carpathian mountains to finalise the count's purchase of an estate near Whitby, only to discover that his host is in fact a centuries-old vampire intent on relocating to England and feeding off the populace of his chosen domicile: 'Once again, aspects of the script were controlled by the budget restrictions that Hammer worked under. I truly believe that one of the reasons Tony Hinds employed me as much as he did at the off was because he knew I was aware of Hammer's way of working and I wasn't going to write anything into my scripts that they couldn't afford to shoot. Therefore—no night-time voyage in a stormy sea. Better to keep the whole piece in Ruritania/Transylvania land.'

Aside from those instructions, however, Sangster was given a free rein. Hammer had encountered some censorship problems over *The Curse of Frankenstein*, but it was exactly those controversial elements that had made the film such a success. There was blood, there were intimations of illicit sex in those heaving bosoms, and it was all set in a heightened and highly-coloured atmosphere of Gothic grotesquery. Why tamper with a winning formula?

No sooner was *Dracula* sanctioned for the Hammer 'treatment' than Hinds thought to extend the company's incursion into the world of vampires by optioning the rights to author Richard Matheson's 1954 novel, *I Am Legend*. The novel told of a world overrun by vampires, and of one man's struggle to survive in a fortified home against nightly assaults by hordes of the blood-sucking beasts. Hinds signed *Quatermass's* Val Guest to direct and the author himself to provide the screenplay, but the project was not to stay on Hammer's schedule for long; censors on both sides of the pond immediately took fright at Matheson's mix of violence and profane language and the proposed film version of his book, under its new title of *Night*

Creatures, was given an unequivocal thumbs down. The screen was not yet ready for a full-on onslaught of fanged fiends, the graphic means by which they had traditionally to be destroyed. *Night Creatures* was sold off to second-feature producer (and former Hammer partner) Robert Lippert, and Hinds was forced to be a little more cautious over bringing folklore's most fearsome monster bang up to date for a modern audience.



Dracula (Christopher Lee)

And so *Dracula* alone went into production on November 11, 1957, with the same team behind the scenes who had created *The Curse of Frankenstein*: director Terence Fisher, producer Hinds, lighting cameraman Asher and art director Bernard Robinson. Once again, Peter Cushing was the star (in this case vampire-hunter Van Helsing) and Christopher Lee was the 'creature' (Dracula). Valerie Gaunt, who had played ill-fated maid Justine in *The Curse of Frankenstein*, returned as the count's vampire 'bride' (whom Hammer economies had pared down to a mere one from Stoker and Universal's original three!) Other cast members included Michael Gough as Arthur Holmwood—another expedient combination of Stoker's several stalwart antagonists—and Melissa Stribling as his wife, Mina.

Sangster had completely streamlined the novel. The action of Stoker's sprawling Gothic epic was now confined to Jonathan

Harker's ill-fated visit to Castle Dracula, followed by the count's pursuit of Harker's fiancée and others in her immediate family before Van Helsing settles his hash at the climax. Many of its more famous characters were missing altogether in the revision as he noted in *Inside Hammer*: 'I've been asked on numerous occasions whether or not I omitted the character of the fly-eating Renfield for budgetary reasons. The answer to this is no. The character in the book spends most of his time in a cell and would have cost very little to shoot. If I'd thought he added to the plot, I would have kept him in. But when making decisions like this, as well as the budget, one has to bear in mind the running time of the finished movie. Remember, way back then, the programme consisted of two features, along with news and trailers, so the idea was to keep 'em short. The final running time was eighty-two minutes.'

Sangster may have kept it short, but what he did include was more interesting than what he chose to leave out. This time the Victorian women upon whom Dracula preyed were all too willing to give in to his advances. Instead of being mesmerised into submission by the count's hypnotic gaze, they lay in wait for him in their beds in a state of sexual tension, as though anticipating a midnight visit from a secret love. Sangster, along with Fisher and Hinds, was intent on remaking the image of the predatory vampire into much more of a 'demon lover' than Lugosi had ever been: 'The terrifying lover who died—yet lived' as the ads were to proclaim. Helped enormously by Lee's characterisation of the count, Dracula was no longer to be feared simply because he was a monster; now he was to be feared twice over because he was also devilishly attractive—he still brought terror and death to his victims, but he was to promise them a sexual thrill-ride along the way.

Just as importantly, Hammer's *Dracula* wasted no time in revealing to the audience how deadly the female of the species could be. Gaunt's vampire woman gets to show her fangs before Dracula does when she bites the unwitting Jonathan Harker (John Van Eyssen) on the neck before the count bursts onto the scene, eyes blazing, mouth caked with blood. It is one of the watershed scenes of the British horror film—indeed, of horror cinema as a whole. The 'library scene', as it has come to be called, established the iconography of Hammer Horror perfectly, and Fisher's theories about the 'attraction of evil' were never more graphically illustrated: the vampire woman is full-bodied, her voluptuous lips intimating not only a lust for blood but a lust for the flesh, while Dracula, who previously has been presented as an urbane, well-mannered aristocrat, suddenly shows himself to be a demon from Hell. Masterfully staged by Fisher, complete with well-timed shock-cuts, it is an extraordinary scene that perfectly captures the tone of Stoker's book: '*I was conscious of the presence of the Count, and of his being assailed in a storm of fury. As my eyes opened involuntarily I saw his strong hand grasp the slender neck of the fair woman and with giant's power draw it back, the blue eyes transformed with fury, the white teeth champing with rage, and the fair cheeks blazing red with passion. But the Count! Never did I imagine such wrath and fury, even to the demons of the pit. His eyes were positively blazing. The red light in them was lurid, as if the flames of hell-fire blazed behind them. His face was deathly pale and the lines of it were hard like drawn wires.. With a fierce sweep of his arm, he hurled the woman from him.*'

The scene that follows takes place in Dracula's crypt beneath the castle and deviates slightly from Sangster's screenplay. Sangster wrote the staking of the vampire woman to be filmed quite explicitly; Fisher chose to have the camera cut from Harker raising the hammer to a shot of his shadow when he drives the stake into her body. Then there are a series of shock cuts: Dracula lying in his coffin, his eyes jerking open when the woman screams; then back to a medium close-up of Harker as he drives the stake in again until the woman is still. By that time, however, Dracula has seen the sun setting outside the window of the crypt, and he smiles grimly at Harker's poor timing—not to mention the fact that Harker, who in Sangster's script is usually of Van Helsing out to destroy vampirism forever, has made the fatal mistake of staking Dracula's bride *before* proceeding to the count.

Fisher then cuts to the woman in the coffin; she has been transformed into a wrinkled crone and is now played by another actress, an old lady on whom no special make-up was required. As Fisher later pointed out: 'She suggested that she remove her false teeth to draw in her face. The only thing she didn't like one little bit was getting into the coffin. She was very upset about that, so I gave her a kiss, which reassured her it was all in fun.'

Fisher departs from Sangster's script again at the end of this sequence. Page 25 of the screenplay has Harker turn from the woman's coffin to discover that Dracula's coffin is now empty. As written, the script reads:

EYELINE TO DOOR

The door of the mausoleum is just swinging shut. Even as we see it, it slams hard with a solid clunk and practically all light is cut off.

After a moment there is a shuffle of feet, a small gasp, then there is silence again.

The silence stretches and stretches for as long as it can be held.

Then there is a scream, a wild, pain-filled scream, that pierces the silence like a knife. On the high point of the scream we

DISSOLVE

In *Inside Hammer*, Sangster finds a problem with this scene as Fisher filmed it: 'The film has Harker turn from the empty coffin of Dracula towards the doorway at the top of the stairs, where Dracula makes an entrance. Fine, but it raises the question, where has he been? At least, it does with me.'

It is safe to say that few audiences at the time had this concern; they were too busy screaming their heads off. When I first saw the film as a child, I recall one particular smart-aleck of a teenager making a comment when the camera finally settled on Valerie Gaunt's voluptuous body lying in the sarcophagus. 'She's faking!' he sniggered—'You can see her

breathe!’ But the youngster shut his mouth quickly when the stake came down and I distinctly remember a boy probably about my own age, running down the aisle of the theatre at this point. He never came back.

The censors had done what they could to prevent scenes such as this from reaching the screen, however. Hinds had submitted Sangster’s second draft of the script to John Nicholls, Secretary of the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) on October 8. Reader Audrey Field was outraged, as she wrote on October 14: ‘The uncouth, uneducated, disgusting and vulgar style of Mr Jimmy Sangster cannot quite obscure the remnants of a good horror story, though they do give one the gravest misgivings about treatment. I never read the original story, and do not remember the first film, though I know it had a great effect on me when I saw it at the age of sixteen or thereabouts. It seems to me that there is nothing censorable in the story as a whole but a good deal to complain of in details. The curse of the thing is Technicolor blood—why need vampires be messier feeders than anyone else? Certainly strong cautions will be necessary on shots of blood. And, of course, some of the stake-work is prohibitive.’

Nicholls went into further detail in his letter to Hinds dated October 21: ‘It is important that the women in the film should be decently clad, not seen in transparent nightgowns or with bared breasts, or in unduly suggestive garments. It would add that anything which cross-emphasises the sex aspect of the story is likely, in a horror subject of this kind, to involve cuts in the completed film.’

Although the budget for *Dracula* was relatively modest (£81,412), as was usual for Hammer, the production values were lavish, thanks in large part to Bernard Robinson’s magnificent sets and Jack Asher’s splendid colour photography. To ensure the film of a certain freshness, Sangster, Hinds and Fisher had decided that this *Dracula* would avoid the clichés which the Universal canon had established; in Sangster’s script, Van Helsing is quick to dismiss the idea that vampires can transform themselves into bats and wolves: ‘A common fallacy,’ he announces dismissively. As Denis Meikle points out in his book *A History of Horrors: The Rise and Fall of the House of Hammer*: ‘This *Dracula* was a creature of flesh and blood—warm flesh and blood, at that. His potency lay in his *charm*—no need of “hypnosis” to subdue his victims. From a female perspective, he was an idol of *desire*.’ In an interview for the BBC-TV documentary *The Studio that Dripped Blood*, Hinds remarked, ‘I didn’t want the old florid, puffy-faced *Dracula* of Lugosi. Christopher Lee was sexually attractive.’

Quoted by Wayne Kinsey in his *Hammer Films: The Bray Studios Years*, Fisher said that he held definite views from the outset as to how he intended to approach the character of the count: ‘Even when I came to shoot the *Dracula* films I still did not consult Bram Stoker’s novel or the Transylvanian vampire legends. I think my greatest contribution to the *Dracula* myth was to bring out the underlying sexual element in the story. I also believe that the first *Dracula* film is just about the best thing I ever did for Hammer and it still looks a very successful film; everything seemed to hang together for once during the shooting.’

But more elements than the count were given a fresh lick of paint in Hammer’s adaptation. In the film, *Dracula*’s castle appears relatively new and well-kept, unlike Lugosi’s mouldering ruin. This was all thanks to Bernard Robinson’s magnificent sets, as his widow Margaret explained to Kinsey: ‘When he designed the first *Dracula* sets, he found out later that there had been a discussion as to whether or not to pay him off and get another art director, because those sets were so different from what they expected. They were scared of them. And then, I suppose, thrift got the better of them and they decided to risk it and go ahead and keep the sets he designed. I must say, I found those sets a bit puzzling myself. I said, “Bernard, there were no cobwebs. Who did the cleaning?” I told Bernard that it didn’t seem very logical. “Of course it is,” he said. “Magic!”’

(I mentioned in the prologue to this book how much *Dracula* had affected me as a child. Much of that effect, odd as it may seem, had to do with Robinson’s sets. Near the house where I grew up was an old ‘root’ cellar. This became *Dracula*’s crypt to my childish mind. A barn just down the road was the castle, and its silos were turrets. And there were the ruins of a previous house on the property, including a six-foot-long portion of stone wall. This, of course, became *Dracula*’s stone sarcophagus.. and so on.)

Robinson’s sets might well have been wasted had they not been photographed by someone of Jack Asher’s talent. Years later, Asher told Kinsey: ‘*The Curse of Frankenstein* was a try-out, a debut of my ideas for photographing colour. In retrospect, just to realise that it worked so well is really great. When we started *Dracula*, I felt a settling-down, a maturing of style. I began to feel that we had something special, perhaps transcending all previous versions.’ As Meikle writes in *A History of Horrors*, ‘It is the lush Technicolor photography that endows the whole with the breath of life. In *Dracula*, the shadows deepen; the velvet shades of mortuary drape mask the festering aura of death and decay that always lies just beyond the pinpoint pools of light in which the principals play.’

And what principals they are. Like Lugosi before him, Christopher Lee came to look upon *Dracula* as both a curse and a blessing to his career but, in 1958, he had his (fatal) moment in the sun. Cushing, fresh from playing the amoral Baron Frankenstein, is the epitome of good as Van Helsing, despite the fact that he drives in those stakes in with surprising purposeful ferocity. The little medical bag containing his vampire-killing accoutrements quickly became *de rigueur* for all vampire films that followed—the kit-bag of a doctor of metaphysics, containing at least one hammer, several stakes, some garlic, a phial of holy water and the obligatory crucifix or two.

But while Lee and Cushing are iconic in the film (and they are), it is the ladies who represent the biggest break from previous excursions in the genre. Carol Marsh as Lucy is a revelation. The young actress was already well-known for playing Pinkie Brown’s put-upon girlfriend in John Boulting’s film of Graham Greene’s *Brighton Rock* (1947), as well

as for essaying the role of Lewis Carroll's daydreaming heroine opposite a cast composed almost entirely of puppets in the 1949 live-action version of *Alice in Wonderland*. Possessed of a delicate, haunting, child-like beauty, Marsh was perfect for the role of the doomed Lucy. As Fisher explained in later years, 'Dracula preyed upon the sexual frustrations of his woman victims.' The scene in which she is 'seduced' by Dracula as she lies tremulously in her virgin's bed is a masterpiece of sexual suggestion. Fisher once told Ronald V Borst, former publisher of *Photon* magazine: 'Both female characters in *Dracula* were so loosely written that it didn't mean a thing. I had to emphasise that these two women who were involved with Dracula were under a special influence. I think what I dragged out from between the lines was a little more than possibly was ever implied within the script. That may be pompous, but I believe it's true.'

Indeed, when one compares Sangster's screenplay to the finished film, there are numerous differences—not so much in structure, but in directorial interpretation. Sangster's script outlines the basics of the scene, but it is in the detail that Fisher excels. Lucy unlatches the French windows in her bedroom and returns to her bed in anticipation of Dracula's arrival. The autumn leaves blow in the chill wind of the courtyard as James Bernard's ominous music swells on the soundtrack; there is the hint of an enigmatic 'Mona Lisa' smile on her face as she awaits her fate, breathlessly, and in the darkness, like a bride on her wedding night.

As Fisher later commented: 'It's almost ballet the way she opens the doors, goes back and lies down again, her eyes focused, waiting for him to appear. You know, it's a distortion of the so-called true love, and this is the power of evil working from a distance. Dracula could cause himself to appear there right at the moment when he realised that a woman's resistance to him she might have had was gone.'

The only sequence that seems to have been totally cut from the film is the opening of Sangster's screenplay, in which several minor characters are in the coach with Harker en route to the castle. All of the actors concerned were contracted: Stedwell Fulcher as a fellow-traveller, Judith Nelmes as his wife, Humphrey Kent as a portly merchant and William Sherwood a priest. Whether this scene was actually shot or not is unknown, but if one looks closely at the opening scene in the film itself, there do appear to be other people in the coach besides Harker. Ultimately, a voice-over from Harker was used in place of this planned establishing scene, in which sundry locals were to have warned Harker about the nature of his destination, as it smacked too much of all those Universal clichés that Hammer was trying to avoid. Even Sangster admits this in his book: 'I certainly don't object to VO's and in this case it works quite well. I wasn't around at the time, but I imagine this change was made for budgetary reasons. A coach, possibly with back projection, five actors, half a day to shoot it.. lotsa money. I see from an original cast list that all these parts were cast, so it was possibly the schedule that forced them to cut it. One of the rare occasions when budgetary restrictions actually improve on the original.'

Principal photography on *Dracula* was completed on Christmas Eve, 1957, with inserts and pickup shots scheduled for after the break. The film had been shot on a six-week schedule, something which soon became the Hammer norm and from which it rarely varied—not much time there to shoot the so-called 'Japanese' versions which have so often been rumoured to exist in film vaults somewhere. These stories apparently arose as a result of publicity stills that circulated in magazines and journals but did not feature in the finished film. *Dracula* producer Tony Hinds helped inspire such rumours by telling *Picturegoer* in 1957: 'The Japanese want more blood so we're making them a special version.'

But are tales of these special versions merely apocryphal? In the case of *Dracula*, the rumours swirled around three key scenes: Jonathan Harker's demise, Lucy's staking and Dracula's destruction. According to Meikle again: 'In the case of Harker, an emaciated corpse was constructed but was abandoned during production on advice from Soho Square (although after its inclusion in promotional material)'—3 Soho Square was the headquarters of the BBFC. As for the other two scenes, they were indeed shot, but not as gory editions for the Japanese market; they were shot because they were in the script and if they had to be cut, they would be. As it turned out, the American market was more liberal in terms of the amount of blood which could be shown on screen, so we yanks were allowed the full sequence of Lucy's staking, including close-ups of blood spurting from her chest as the stake is driven home. British audiences had to settle for cutaways of her husband leaning against the wall of the crypt for support, even at the 'X' certificate age of sixteen and over.

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