***The Cambridge Companion to Dracula*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst**
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)

The enduring appeal of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) continues to exert itself in contemporary society in myriad ways. In Ireland, a number of recent academic and creative endeavours draw attention to Stoker's Irish roots while exploring the now mythic status of *Dracula* and its iconic vampire-villain. The annual Bram Stoker Festival, for instance, held on Halloween weekend, is a joyous celebration of *Dracula* and its legacy, featuring, among other things, radio and dramatic adaptations, film screenings, and vampire-themed gigs, tours, talks, and interviews, all captured on social media with the evocative hashtag #BiteMeDublin. Even in the midst of a global pandemic, the Stoker Festival 2020 promises fans a satisfying selection of virtual and in-person events, testifying to the cultural significance invested in Stoker and his most famous novel. Adopting a more academic perspective, the recent 'Bram Stoker and the Haunting of Marsh's Library' exhibition attempts to provide a scholarly context for Stoker's eventual authorship of *Dracula*, exploring the works that he read at Marsh's Library as a teenager. These seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century texts, including an eclectic range of atlases, encyclopaedias, treatises, pamphlets, and literary works, may not have directly inspired *Dracula*, but, as curator Jason McElligott argues, they may help explain why the date 5 November plays such an important role in the novel.[1] Elsewhere, *Dracula*'s influence on Irish literature and its continued exertion of a peculiar fascination for contemporary writers is clear in Joseph O'Connor's latest novel, *Shadowplay* (2019), which reimagines Stoker's troubled relationship with Henry Irving; his attempts to manage the Lyceum Theatre effectually while progressing his own writing career; and the troubled composition process of *Dracula*.

O'Connor's novel, like the exhibition at Marsh's Library and the annual Stoker Festival, reminds us of *Dracula*'s unlikely but nevertheless ineluctable ascent, from its positive if rather lukewarm reception amongst late-nineteenth-century critics, to the stuff of literary and cultural legend. This journey, and the contexts for it, forms the central focus of *The Cambridge Companion to* Dracula, edited by Roger Luckhurst. In the Introduction to the collection, Luckhurst argues that, to truly appreciate *Dracula* and its legacy, what is required is 'a number of long perspectives, from before and after its publication in 1897' (p. 3). The *Companion* is thus divided into a number of sections that consider *Dracula*'s place within the

[1] Jason McElligott, 'Bram Stoker and the Undead History of the Seventeenth Century', in *Bram Stoker and the Haunting of Marsh's Library* (Dublin: Marsh's Library, 2019), pp. 55-83. See also the online exhibition: <https://www.marshlibrary.ie/digi/exhibits/show/haunting> [accessed 29 September 2020].

gothic literary traditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; its relationship to a number of key contextual issues, including mass migration, Victorian spiritualism, and gender politics; its place within new critical paradigms, such as transnationalism and 'New Horror'; and its post-publication transformations on stage, TV, and film. These groupings and the individual essays within them aim, in Luckhurst's terms, 'to provide a series of routes through the text', in the full knowledge that these are only some of the possible contexts and readings with which to approach the novel (p. 6).

The *Companion*'s fifteen chapters admirably sketch the critical landscape, pointing to what the already-considerable body of work on *Dracula* has previously established, while also providing a number of useful new ways to look at Stoker's novel. The first section of the book does an excellent job of situating *Dracula* amongst its literary and cultural forebears. Of special interest is the way in which William Hughes and Alexandra Warwick depict *Dracula* as not just a product of its late-Victorian contexts but also of a much longer lineage of gothic literature. Hughes, for instance, convincingly traces tell-tale similarities between *Dracula* and the 'first-wave' gothic fictions of Ann Radcliffe. Warwick, for her part, provides a suggestive glimpse into the *fin-de-siècle* re-articulation of critical debates surrounding the development of gothic fiction in the latter half of the eighteenth century. In attending to the differences between late-nineteenth-century gothic and its earlier incarnations, it can sometimes be tempting to view Victorian gothic as essentially unique from, rather than a more or less organic development and extension of, previous forms and practices. However, Warwick demonstrates the suggestive continuities between gothic fictions at the close of both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, paying particular attention to critical concerns about these works' privileging of romance over reason and their conflation of past and present, and archaic and modern.

Elsewhere in the volume, contributors provide salutary cautions against over-determined readings of *Dracula* that see it principally as a product of emerging psychoanalytic theory or an allegorical expression of Victorian repressed sexuality. In his chapter on '*Dracula* and Psychology', for example, Luckhurst pushes back against typical Freudian interpretations of the text, arguing that 'it is a mistake to see psychoanalysis anywhere in the composition of the text *itself*' (p. 67). To do so is both 'inaccurate' and misleading, confusing the novel's enactment of 'the very clash of distinct psychological paradigms at the end of the Victorian era' (p. 68). Later, Xavier Aldana Reyes, in his chapter on 'Dracula Queered', urges an understanding of Count Dracula – and the vampire more

generally – as more than a symbolic cipher of sexual or erotic energies, claiming that the insistence on metaphoric analysis risks obscuring the nuances and richness of both the novel itself and the period's 'fluid conceptions of sexuality' (p. 129).

The probing of received readings of *Dracula* offered by Luckhurst and Reyes is a particularly welcome component of the *Companion*, though it is by no means consistent throughout the volume. Indeed, in many of its chapters, the collection reads as a useful undergraduate primer, offering the student new to *Dracula* – in the form of Stoker's original text – a number of tried and tested ways of framing and understanding it. A notable omission here, of course, is an examination of *Dracula* as Irish Gothic, a subject that is briefly mentioned in a handful of essays but that is passed over in the Introduction as the victim of 'lack of space' (p. 8). The reader is instead directed to alternative works that have considered Stoker's Irish heritage, its influence on *Dracula*, and the novel's particular relationship to the body of work often, if problematically, referred to in Irish literary criticism as 'the Irish Gothic' or 'Anglo-Irish Gothic'. Given the active and energetic nature of scholarship on *Dracula* in the past thirty to forty years, the rationale for excluding a consideration of this particular aspect of the novel while privileging other topics that have garnered as much, if not more, previous scholarly attention is unclear. But, as Luckhurst suggests in his Introduction to the collection, any attempt to be all-inclusive when it comes to *Dracula* is bound to prove both frustrating and fruitless, given 'the seeming inexhaustibility of the contexts it requires and the readings it might generate' (p. 8).

Despite the apparent interpretive boundlessness of Stoker's novel, the *Companion* falls curiously flat on a number of occasions. Several of the essays read less as analyses of *Dracula* itself than considerations of the broader theme of vampires in literature, film, and TV. While intriguing in its emphasis on the continued urgency and agency of the vampire as a cultural icon, and indicative of the Count's status as ur-vampire, this scholarship approaches *Dracula*'s influence on contemporary literature and culture only tangentially. Ken Gelder's chapter on 'Transnational Draculas', for instance, holds out the promise of a revealing post-publication history of the novel as it was circulated, adapted, and transformed by later writers. What the essay actually provides is a more general – if still fascinating – account of the appearance of vampires in twenty-first century Southern gothic, Japanese fiction and film, and Swedish writer John Ajvide Lindqvist's novel, *Let the Right One In* (2014).

The oblique approach adopted by several of the *Companion*'s considerations of *Dracula* simultaneously underlines the rich and abundant scholarship that exists on the novel and implies that, despite our cultural fascination with Stoker's text and its famous vampire, we may have reached satiety. More fruitful ground may have been afforded by readings of *Dracula* that contextualised it within Stoker's larger, varied, and now mostly overlooked oeuvre, rather than broader cultural and literary paradigms. The *Companion*, tellingly, is one of a select handful of *Cambridge Companions* devoted to a single primary text; others include *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein* and *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Notably, both Mary Shelley and Jane Austen are also the subjects of author-centred *Cambridge Companions* that offer considerations of the authors' lives and careers, and which go beyond the titles for which they may now be most famous. Stoker has yet to warrant such attention, and the appearance of a *Cambridge Companion to Dracula* seems to confirm his status as a literary one-hit wonder, despite his publication of a considerable, multi-generic body of work, much of which still awaits serious scholarly consideration. A *Companion* that re-situates *Dracula* within the broader framework of Stoker's literary career while providing sustained critical engagement with his less well-known works would be most welcome, yielding fertile new avenues of research and generative lines of enquiry, while also probing the reduction of Stoker and his output to just one curiously compelling novel.

Christina Morin