



Revisiting Stoker's *Dracula*: There are no Brave Good Villains Left!

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This article considers the implication of the main character, Count Dracula, the villain/anti-hero in Stoker's text, as a starting point to analysing the approaches deployed in the novel that introduce new stratagems to uncover the motives which allow the readers to find excuses to deny "pure" evilness. Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) introduced the plausibility—in the realm of the gothic horror novel—of finding heroes in modern day "villains". This paper will argue this influence by introducing connections with modern "pop" vampires: from the teenage vampires in the *Twilight* saga both the texts (2005, 2006, 2007, & 2008) and the film versions (2008, 2009, 2010, & 2012), to the grown-up fantasies of Charlaine Harris in the *True Blood* saga (both the 13 books published between 2001 and 2012 and the Home Box Office TV series that started in 2008 and, so far is in its 7th season in 2014) and Tim Burton's *Dark Shadows* (2012), the remake of the 70s American Broadcasting Company Gothic soap opera (which ran between June 1966 to April 1977). Bearing in mind the history of the vampire, through a brief account of its constant presence in the contemporary film and television industry, we will attempt to unveil the cultural reasons that bring light to the fact that modern society is out of brave good villains. The presentation will retrieve some theoretical support from Christopher Frayling's analysis of the vampire myth, David Punter's ideas on the modern gothic and Maggie Kilgour's assumptions on the rise of the gothic.

Keywords: *Dracula*, villains, pop-culture, postmodern gothic

Introduction

The theme of vampires has been addressed throughout centuries by literature and other art forms, at times with horror and repulsion, other times with attraction. The year of 2012 has marked the 100th anniversary of Bram Stoker's death and, as a tribute to the author of *Dracula*, this text revisits the notion of the villain, enumerating and considering the last two centuries of vampire literature and films, explaining the evolution of the notions of horror and fear, which have been altered by the introduction of elements of comedy, and by the transformation of the aesthetics of peril and blood in the post-modern youth culture that have rendered villains into modern heroes.

The Origins of Stoker's *Dracula*

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