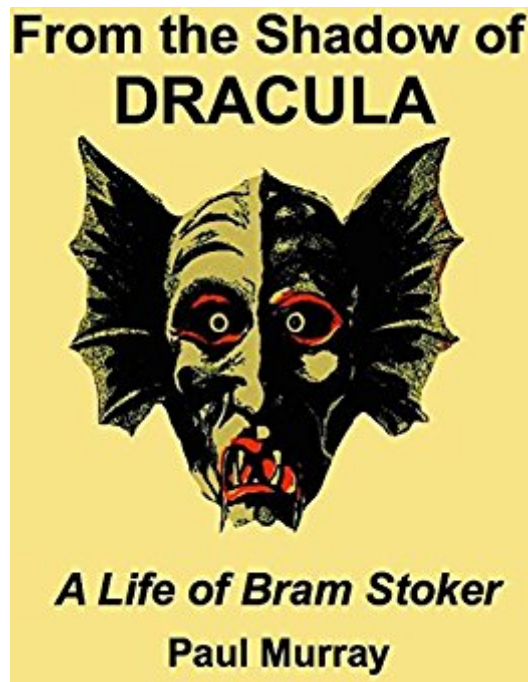


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From The Shadow Of Dracula: A Life Of Bram Stoker



Synopsis

In his lifetime, Bram Stoker (1847-1912) lived in the shadow of the man he served, the Victorian actor, Sir Henry Irving. In death, he was overshadowed by his most famous creation, the undead Count who continues to permeate our consciousness. Yet Stoker was a larger-than-life individual, one of the more remarkable characters of the Victorian era, an age he both personified and transcended. At Trinity College Dublin, Stoker was a contemporary of key Irish literary and political figures and later launched himself on a career as a writer, while juggling the demands of a civil service job with journalism. He married the great love of Oscar Wilde's youth, Florence Balcombe, and devoted the best years of his adult life to Henry Irving's Lyceum Theatre in London. This ground-breaking, meticulously researched biography illuminates a multi-faceted man of extraordinary creativity. Now, for the first time, Dracula is presented in the context of Stoker's life and entire fictional output. Rooted in his upbringing and active engagement with Victorian concerns, his dark masterpiece emerges as an imaginative tour de force which both mirrored and judged his era. 'Impressive' Lucasta Miller, Daily Telegraph 'Engaging.' Manchester Evening News 'The Stoker story is a curious one, and even if it's been told before, Murray has a sure touch when it comes to handling facts and interpretations.' Humphrey Carpenter, Sunday Times 'From the Shadow of Dracula will be regarded as the definitive life of Stoker, a measured, well-written work.' Ian Thomson, Observer 'Excellent. . . No small part of the merits of Paul Murray's new biography is that its author is not an academic with a particular axe or theory to grind.' Dermot Bolger, Sunday Tribune 'Murray has tracked down first-hand reportage that brings the man glaringly to life.' Colin Donald, Scotsman Paul Murray has served his subject well, drawing Abraham Stoker from the shadow of his best-known creation, and providing a rounded portrait of an intelligent and hard-working Irishman who has claimed a special place in our literary history. . . Bram Stoker may rest in peace.' Malcolm Barker, Yorkshire Post 'An impressively detailed study of Stoker's life, as sturdy a work of historical excavation as any I've seen. . . Brilliant.' Hugh Tynan, Irish Examiner 'Paul Murray's extensive scrutiny of the influences on Dracula, makes capital reading.' Patricia Craig, Irish Times 'A considered and extremely detailed account of the life of Bram Stoker.' Evening Herald 'A thorough appreciation of Stoker's life and literary work. . . a solemn and comprehensive appraisal of the man behind the world's most famous Vampire.' Chris Pillow, Sunday Business Post

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Customer Reviews

Murray covers Stoker's time in Dublin in the civil service before eventually moving to London to become actor Henry Irvings' assistant at the Lyceum Theatre. Stoker's interaction with artists like James O. Whistler and literary figures like Wilde & Tennyson are written about at length. All in all this is an exhaustive study of an extraordinary stage manager & author of the last two decades of the 19th century, who, among other things--organized several of the most successful theatrical tours of America by a European theatrical group. Stoker's complicated relationship with Irving is discussed at length & serves to show the foundation of the career of the man who penned Dracula. The authors citations are good jumping off points for researchers of late Victorian theatre & art.

I was surprised at the style of this bio -- not purely chronological, that's for sure! Murray takes us through Bram's life, but shows us so many "links" and connections to well-known people of the time that I wish more could be uncovered about this surprising writer. As a young man he and his family were friends of the Wilde's, and growing up with Oscar Wilde had to be a trip in itself. And yet Bram was also raised in conservatively Christian values, and as he matured he was extremely opposed to various forms of indecency, even to the point of favoring censorship. He and his wife had one child,

apparently did not care for the 'baby experience,' and thereafter his wife supposedly was frigid as well. So what's a healthy guy to do, especially if he manages a popular London theatre (working around all those actors all day!) and is acquainted with an enormous number of society people of the day? Friend of Walt Whitman when he was a young man, friend of Mark Twain in mid-life, and friend of Winston Churchill near the end of his life. Writer, of course, of Dracula, but also several other gothic novels and stories. Oh yes, and Bram died from the effects of what was most probably syphilis. Stoker is a complex character in his own right, and my only dissatisfaction with the book is that Murray could not tell us more.

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