***Bram Stoker and the Gothic: Formations to Transformations,* ed. by Catherine Wynne**
(Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

There's nothing quite like a centenary to revitalise a subject, even if that subject never really went out of fashion in the first place. Catherine Wynne's 2016 edited collection, *Bram Stoker and the Gothic: Formations to Transformations*, is one of many volumes that have emerged over the past five years, following the centenary of Stoker's death in 1912. The collection is the latest offering from Palgrave's 'gothic books' series, a series that proclaims itself 'the first to treat the genre in its many inter-related global and "extended" cultural aspects', according to series editor Clive Bloom.[1] Indeed, the series has produced some seminal studies on a wide range of topics under the gothic umbrella, including regional specialities such as Timothy C. Baker's *Contemporary Scottish Gothic* (2014), and genre-defining studies such as Dara Downey's *American Women's Ghost Stories in the Gilded Age* (2014). This latest addition is not the first to deal with the pervasive subjects of Stoker and *Dracula* however, with David J. Jones' *Sexuality and the Gothic Magic Lantern: Desire, Eroticism, and Literary Visibilities from Byron to Bram Stoker* also appearing in 2014, as well as Wynne's previous monograph, *Bram Stoker, Dracula, and the Victorian Stage* (2013). Although the Palgrave series has gone some way to stimulate the field of gothic studies, the combination of Stoker and *Dracula* is nearing exhaustion at this stage, and there exists a significant amount of untapped gothic resources — beyond *Dracula* — deserving of a revival.

It is to be celebrated, then, that *Bram Stoker and the Gothic* offers up a number of non-*Dracula*-related essays, eschewing the virulent vampire for once and contributing some intriguing analyses of Stoker's other fiction, as well as of his engagement with the gothic genre more broadly (as the title suggests). The collection is a result of a Stoker centenary conference held in 2012, and hosted by Wynne at the University of Hull (where Wynne is a Senior Lecturer) and nearby Whitby. In recent years, Hull has become a bastion of gothic scholarship. Rivalling their northern colleagues in Stirling University, and their Lancashire counterparts in Lancaster and Manchester Universities, Hull boasts among its academic staff many of the major contributors to this collection. The centenary year saw a number of Stoker conferences, one of which, 'Bram Stoker: Life and Writing', was held in Trinity College Dublin in July 2012 and resulted in the publication of another volume of work, *Bram Stoker: Centenary Essays*, edited by Jarlath Killeen (2014). Additionally, 2012 was also the year of

[1] *The Palgrave Gothic Series*, ed. by Clive Bloom, inside cover of *Bram Stoker and the Gothic: Formations to Transformations*, ed. by Catherine Wynne (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

the inaugural — and now annual — Bram Stoker Festival in Dublin, which appears to be going from strength to strength each year. Killeen has written numerous articles on *Dracula* and Stoker, many of which ruminate on the continued mass appeal of the novel and its vampire archetype at the expense of other, arguably more talented Irish gothic writers.[2] The expansion of the Stoker festival into an all-encompassing 'Irish Gothic Writers' festival would certainly be a step in the right direction. However, the freight of the Stoker name appears to be unassailable where tourist opportunities and book sales are concerned.

As with any good conference-cum-collection, Wynne's edition features contributions from both emerging scholars and venerable gothicists, including Carol A. Senf, Luke Gibbons, and William Hughes. This cross section of established theoreticians offering broad assessments of author and genre is invigorated by new approaches to, and readings of, Stoker's work. Kevin Corstorphine and Sara Williams both offer analyses of Stoker's short story 'The Squaw' (1893), with Corstorphine examining Stoker's personal interest in America, highlighting the various ways in which this connection manifests in Stoker's fiction, including the Yankee Quincy Morris from *Dracula*. Moreover, Corstorphine considers Stoker's personal 'indebtedness' to writers such as Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe, and goes further to trace aspects of American gothic — such as themes of race, violence, and nationhood — in 'The Squaw' and across Stoker's fiction more broadly (p. 61). Sara Williams offers a feminist approach to 'The Squaw' and Stoker's 1903 novel, *The Jewel of the Seven Stars*, wherein she considers the idea of the 'devouring mother' and the theme of maternal biological inheritance, in this case through physical marking or 'maternal imprinting' (p. 118). Williams usefully considers these themes within the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and situates them amid theories of racial supremacy and eugenics.

Indeed, there is a definite strain of postcolonial theory evident in numerous essays in the collection — racial theory, degeneration, disease, and various manifestations of colonisation emerge repeatedly. In particular, Senf's essay considers the prevalence of 'invasion narratives' in Stoker's fiction, positing that 'even those that are not Gothic, are usually dominated by references to invasions', both fictional and historical (p. 92). Senf argues convincingly that 'invasion as a trope' is a defining feature of Stoker's fiction as a whole (p. 93). One reason for this, she argues, is '[b]ecause Stoker was thinking of a complicated world where people travel easily from one culture to another and where people

[2] See Jarlath Killeen, Introduction, *Inspiring a Mysterious Terror: 200 Years of J. S. Le Fanu*, ed. by Killeen and Valeria Cavalli (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), pp. 1-28 (pp. 6-7).

are acutely aware of cultural differences' (pp. 93-94). Senf revives an established theory that *Dracula* is, at its heart, a colonial text, an allegory for Ireland's colonial subjugation; but by tracing the invasion theme throughout Stoker's oeuvre, Senf presents an entirely new perspective on Stoker, figuring him as a writer responding to 'what he saw going on in his own world' (p. 103).

Almost all of the essays point to an idea of cosmopolitanism — in one form or another — in ways that reflect on Stoker's lived experience in an increasingly globalised world. The collection concludes with artist Jef Murray's visual contribution, 'Gallants, Ghosts, and Gargoyles: Illustrating the Gothic Tale', which further underscores the cosmopolitan theme of physical place and dis-placement that runs throughout the book. In particular, Murray's image of the ruined abbey at Whitby, which also features on the cover of the book, is particularly striking given its relevance to *Dracula* and the location of the conference (p. 224).[3] Stoker is an author deeply concerned with place and property — as noted by Corstorphine, Senf, and Abby Bardi — an author who is rooted in place and yet is also a cosmopolitan, transnational figure: a migrant, an Irishman living in England who draws on American, European, and Oriental influences. Bardi's intriguing treatise on soil/land, race, and infection in *Dracula* points out the symbolic use of soil in the novel, and foregrounds the Count's concern with legal property ownership. Unfortunately, however, Bardi stops short of drawing out the potential connections between these themes and Stoker's biographical context, where issues relating to land and ownership are surely noteworthy. In fact, Stoker's Irish provenance is a subject noticeably absent across the board, an omission which seems particularly remiss considering the recurring themes of urban and rural environments, travel, and international influences.

However, Wynne's volume is a welcome addition to the considerable body of critical writing on the relationships between Stoker, *Dracula*, and the gothic, and is certainly essential reading for anyone keen to stay up to date in the field of Stoker studies. Indeed, the collection ought to be required reading for anybody interested in Bram, *Dracula*, or looking for an introduction to gothic studies more broadly. The volume is fittingly described by Palgrave as 'readable by an intelligent student or a knowledgeable general reader', although Stoker scholars may struggle to find room on their already overcrowded bookshelf.[4] Overall,

[3] The conference keynote was given by the wonderful Christopher Frayling, who unfortunately doesn't feature in this collection, although he does appear in Killeen's collection.
[4] Bloom, inside cover, *The Palgrave Gothic Series*.

the move away from Stoker's *magnum opus* — however slight — is certainly a welcome development.

Aoife Dempsey