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## ***Drink and Dracula – or the other way round?***

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David J. Skal's recent biography of Bram Stoker notes some striking similarities between Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and his friend Hall Caine's *Drink* (1906). Skal claims that Caine's story was actually first published in 1890, around the time Stoker started to write *Dracula*, and can therefore be considered as a possible source for Stoker's narrative. This essay examines archival and bibliographical evidence relating to this claim and concludes that the story cannot be dated earlier than 1894-5, meaning it must have been Caine's response to reading a draft of *Dracula* rather than a source for it. Another text by Caine from the same period, *The Demon Lover*, also contains echoes of *Dracula*. Both texts, though derivative, are of interest for what they reveal of Caine's very different sensibility.

Keywords:

David J. Skal; Bram Stoker; Hall Caine; *Dracula*; *Drink*; *The Demon Lover*; Hypnotism

During the last sixty years there have been at least seven full-length biographies of Bram Stoker, the author of *Dracula*. This is an impressive tally compared to the number of biographies during the same period of Sir Henry Irving, the great actor to whom Stoker dedicated most of his working life (two biographies); and Sir Hall Caine, the popular novelist to whom he dedicated *Dracula* (just one).<sup>1</sup> The most recent Stoker biography, David J. Skal's *Something in the Blood: The Untold Story of Bram Stoker, The Man Who Wrote Dracula*, attracted a respectable amount of attention from weekly reviewers when it appeared in 2016. But there is little sign that in the longer term Stoker scholarship will regard it as pre-eminent over the other six or endorse its claim to present the “*untold story*”; many of Skal's stories

have been told before. Several reviewers did note a relatively new emphasis on Hall Caine as a person of interest; unlike most Stoker biographers, Skal devotes a whole chapter to Caine and his potential significance. Again, this story is far from untold, and most of the topics explored - including speculation about Caine's sexuality, and about his early entanglement with Francis Tumblety, later a Ripper suspect – are predictable.<sup>2</sup> Hidden away towards the end of the chapter, however, there is a less sensational but genuinely new discovery about a possible connection between Caine and Stoker, which certainly merits further attention and for which Skal deserves credit. This is the observation that there are a “striking number of similarities” (294) between *Dracula* and Hall Caine's *Drink: A Love Story on a Great Question*. Although this book was not published until 1906, nine years after the first edition of *Dracula*, Skal asserts that the story it contains was actually first published in serial form around 1890, making it a possible source for Stoker, who started writing *Dracula* around the same time.<sup>3</sup>

*Dracula*, of course, does not lack known sources. Stoker's research for the novel is well documented; and almost every aspect of his life, career, and interests have been mined for intertextual clues to where particular features of this remarkable book may have come from. Nevertheless, Skal is quite right to flag up the possible connection with *Drink*, not previously noted, as certain features of Caine's narrative correspond in such detail to Stoker's that it is difficult to believe there was not some sort of relationship between the two compositions. Skal notes first that the names of Caine's two main characters, Harcourt the young lawyer, and Lucy the newly-engaged young woman, correspond closely to Harker (also a lawyer) and Lucy in *Dracula*. He then retells the part of Caine's story which evokes other resemblances: Lucy is found to be suffering from a mysterious illness, which makes her leave her home at night, climb out of a window, and generally act like someone possessed by, in her own

words, a “fiend” (21). To try to cure her, her anxious fiancé engages the services of an unconventional medical practitioner with a non-English name (in *Drink* La Mothe, in *Dracula* Van Helsing) who uses hypnotism to put Lucy in a trance – an action carried out numerous times on Mina in *Dracula*. Before he engages the hypnotist, Harcourt attends a public demonstration of hypnotism, in which the subject, a man, is first discovered apparently asleep in a coffin-like casket – a scenario reminiscent of that in *Dracula* in which Harker discovers the Count lying unconscious in a coffin. To these details noted by Skal one or two others can be noted from elsewhere in Caine’s narrative. Just as in the blood transfusion and staking scenes in *Dracula*, Lucy’s treatment in *Drink* is carried out in front of a group of interested men, each with a distinctive social profile (in *Drink* a doctor, a clergyman and a lawyer - in *Dracula* a doctor, an aristocrat and an American). After the first treatment, Harcourt and La Mothe are initially euphoric, but Harcourt quickly realizes that the treatment will have to be repeated at intervals (like the blood transfusion in *Dracula*) and may ultimately have a negative outcome. Later in the novel, Harcourt makes several statements to Lucy which oddly recall memorable phrasing from *Dracula*: he attempts to seduce her by referring to “the kiss of your lips” (Caine originally wrote “red lips”) and declaring “I have set my stake on your love” (51). As if to acknowledge what might be going through the mind of any reader of *Drink* who had previously read *Dracula*, Caine even refers, in another part of the book, to a certain kind of London drinking club as a “vampire enterprise” (66).

Unlike in *Dracula*, of course, in *Drink* the evil force to be overcome is only metaphorically a vampire: literally it is alcoholism – a disease which Lucy has inherited as a family curse. Even this detail can be seen as resonating with *Dracula*, since in Victorian terms the curse, just like vampirism, is “in the blood”. But Skal does not marshal the evidence of a link with Caine’s story in order to accuse Stoker of plagiarism. His aim is rather to use the connection

to develop his more general reading of Stoker's life and work in terms of sexuality:

“everything about *Dracula* leads us inexorably to sex” (xv). He suggests that Caine used the idea of curing alcoholism through hypnotism as an indirect way of referring to sexuality - in effect confessing to other desires that were also being discussed at the time as treatable by hypnotism. This, Skal implies, encouraged Stoker to use hypnotism and vampirism in a similar way in *Dracula*, and this is why the link between *Drink* and *Dracula* is worth noting.

Here it is important to note that Skal only recounts the first part of Caine's narrative, and there are some significant developments later in the story, *after* the hypnotism episode, which do not fit his reading so well and which show the two texts diverging in ethos despite their shared content. In Caine's narrative hypnotism does *not* actually cure Lucy. La Mothe only succeeds in making her sleep through her period of craving. Harcourt himself confesses to feeling 'horror' (31) at the treatment he witnesses and the idea of Lucy surrendering her will to the hypnotist's control, and he later dismisses La Mothe as only interested in making money from his fashionable treatment. Lucy meanwhile is thinking of entering an Anglican religious order as a way of coping with her condition (an idea that Caine explored further in his 1897 novel *The Christian*) but her cure ultimately comes in a different form: Harcourt “liberates” her by persuading her to believe in a vision of her future as a happy wife and mother. Hope in such an ending, Caine insists, ultimately works better than hypnotism as a cure for Lucy's condition. The story ends with a short reflection on hope, which again introduces an image that oddly recalls details from *Dracula*: “No man is utterly lost who has not lost his hope. No ship is a derelict, though abandoned by the body of her crew, while one living soul remains on board” (51). The metaphor of the deserted ship surely owes something to the chilling narrative of the *Demeter* in *Dracula*, but Caine seems to pointedly ignore the premise of Stoker's narrative, that there is something on board the doomed ship which is

mysteriously neither dead *nor* a “living soul”. Caine’s focus is entirely social: his narrative simply has no use for such a mystery.

Caine acknowledged in *Drink* that his story had been published in serial form before, but did not specify a date, mentioning only that he had received letters in response to it “lately” (53). So can David J. Skal’s claim that in fact the story was first published in 1890, around the time Stoker started work on *Dracula*, be verified? Caine himself certainly does not refer back so far. His reference to the story being published before can be explained by its publication in *The Windsor Magazine* in 1901-2, where it appeared under a different title: “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation”. Shortly after this Caine also published an essay on “The Great Hypnotist: Drink, Hypnotism and Free Will” (later reprinted in *Drink*), in which he can again be found referring to receiving letters about “a little novel recently published which described an attempt to cure intemperance by means of hypnotism” (73). Caine can certainly be accused of some minor misrepresentation here (what he said he had “lately” received in 1906 he had in fact received in 1901) but there is nothing in this slippage to justify pushing the date of first publication back a further eleven years to 1890. Nor does Skal himself actually provide any evidence to support his claim, or details of the earlier publication. He only states that “Stoker could not have been unaware of a magazine serial his friend published around 1890, called *Drink: A Love Story on a Great Question*. Sixteen years later, it would be published as a slim illustrated book, the story unchanged’ (294). Skal implies here that he has actually examined the 1890 publication to verify that it was the same story with the same title. But there is no endnote to support this, though the biography is quite heavily endnoted otherwise, and the text he cites for quotations is a digital transcript of the 1906 publication. The absence of the documentation he usually provides suggests that Skal is silently relying here on the main modern source for biographical information about Caine, Vivien Allen’s

*Hall Caine: Portrait of a Victorian Romancer* (1997). Allen briefly mentions *Drink* being published in 1906, and describes it as “based on a magazine story Caine had written about seventeen years before” (313). Unfortunately she does not provide any notes identifying her sources for specific information in her biography, so there is no way of knowing whether (as Skal seems to have assumed) she had found a publication of the story in 1890 or whether she had simply misunderstood Caine’s references to the story being published earlier. Her reference to “about seventeen years before” seems oddly specific. But neither she nor Skal seem to think it necessary to mention that at one time the story had a completely different title. This suggests they may have been unaware of this, which in turn suggests they may not have actually traced the earlier publication. Certainly, if they did, they have artfully concealed its hiding place from other scholars, leaving all the work to be done again.

Fortunately, much of the groundwork for further investigation into the origins of Caine’s story has already been done in the Manx Museum on the Isle of Man, where an early bibliography of Caine’s writings was compiled and where more recently his extensive personal archive has been sorted and made available to researchers. William Cubbon’s bibliography (2.1125) has an entry for “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation” being published in *Munsey’s Magazine*, an American publication, in three monthly instalments in June-August 1895. Caine’s personal archive contains a complete manuscript of the story in his handwriting, and also a partial set of printed proofs of the story, corrected in the same handwriting. There is no date on either document but on one page of the manuscript Caine has scribbled a note implying he was composing quite fast: “Please get this into type-writing. Hope to send similar batch tonight or in the morning early. Hall Caine. 4 Belsize Road NW”. According to Allen’s biography (238), Belsize Road was the Caine family’s temporary address in North West London at the turn of the year 1894-1895. It seems fairly clear then

that the manuscript dates from this time, and the proofs are for publication in *Munsey's Magazine* a few months later. As Caine was a relatively wealthy man by this time, it is implausible that he would go to the trouble of writing out a complete manuscript copy of a story that had already been published. The archival evidence suggests that the story was composed no earlier than the end of 1894; and was first published, in *Munsey's*, in 1895 - not 1890.

David J. Skal thus turns out to be partly right in his claims about Caine's story, but wrong in the most important detail. He is right that, except for the title which changed completely, and one or two words, the text of the story remained unchanged from its first publication to its appearance in *Drink* in 1906. He is also right that the first publication of the story predated publication of *Dracula*. He is wrong, however, in his unsupported assertion that the story was first published as early as 1890 and could therefore predate composition of *Dracula*. As the story was not written until 1894 at the earliest, and it is well established that Stoker's earliest notes for *Dracula*, which included the name Lucy for the vampire's victim, were made in 1890, it seems clear that Caine's story was a response to Stoker's novel, read in an unpublished draft, rather than a source for it.<sup>3</sup> It is well attested that Stoker shared manuscript drafts with several readers; and according to archival research by David Glover (155), Caine wrote to Stoker about such a manuscript on 12 July 1894; a date which fits with the subsequent composition and publication of the *Drink* story in 1894-1895.

About sixty letters from Stoker to Caine have been found in Caine's personal archive, but there is an intriguing gap in the collection for almost the entire period of composition of *Dracula*, from 1890 to 1896. So we do not know if Stoker was aware of Caine's rapid and rather blatant recycling of elements from his work in progress in 1894-5. We do know from



Stoker's *Personal Reminiscences* (2.123-4), however, that he was aware of two other works by Caine, which Stoker quite precisely dates to this period, which resemble *Dracula* in certain details. These are the unpublished play scripts *The Demon Lover* (1895) and *Home Sweet Home* (1896); melodramas which, according to Stoker, Caine developed as vehicles for Irving, although in both cases Irving found reasons to decline them.<sup>5</sup> *Home Sweet Home* is notable mainly for the two main female characters, mother and daughter, both being called Lucy; and for the linking of this name, at one point in the dialogue (11), with a reference to Whitby, the location so memorably used in *Dracula*. The play is essentially a domestic morality tale, however, and does not really attempt any kind of gothic effect. The same cannot be said for the earlier play, *The Demon Lover*, which turns on the central character, the mysterious Lars, seeming to possess supernatural powers which, Dracula-like, he exercises over a vulnerable young woman, Thyra, even after his apparent death and despite her engagement to another man. The resonances of this text with *Dracula* are noted by Kristan Tetens in her study of Caine's plays:

Its plot and uncanny atmosphere bring to mind the stories of sailors lost at sea told to Mina Murray by the old Greenland whaler "Mr Swales" as they sit surrounded by tombstones in the cliff-side graveyard of Whitby parish church in Stoker's *Dracula*. Furthermore, the return of Lars's malevolent ghost to Reykjavik is heralded by a sudden and terrible sea storm in a scene highly reminiscent of Dracula's arrival at Whitby. In 1895 Stoker had been working on *Dracula* for several years, sharing his drafts with Caine. Which came first: Stoker's story or Caine's play? It is fascinating to speculate. (69)

Tetens has here arrived at almost the same starting point for speculation as Skal, but by a different route: where he noted similarities between *Drink* and *Dracula*, she has noted them between *The Demon Lover* and *Dracula*. In fact the two Caine texts, “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation” (later *Drink*) and *The Demon Lover*, share more than just their obvious borrowings from *Dracula*; they are also bound by the fact that Caine reused some key passages from his story in his play, as if reworking his initial response to Stoker’s draft. In the story, before La Mothe is allowed to hypnotize Lucy, Harcourt has to face down criticism from the local clergyman, who objects to the treatment as a violation of Lucy’s free will. Harcourt argues that the notion of universal free will is no help to Lucy:

To ninety nine out of a hundred there is no such thing. Only the hundredth has a will that is free, and, for good or evil, he makes slaves of the wills of the ninety and nine. The orator swaying an assembly, the statesman directing affairs, the king controlling an empire . . . the young bride winning to her own way the husband who loves her – what are they all doing but imposing the free will on the will that is not free? Every great man is great in degree as he dictates the wills of other men, and he is the greatest man whom the greatest men are doomed to obey. (26)

After the clergyman has left, Harcourt then has to deal with the pompous local doctor who objects to hypnosis as dangerous charlatanism. Harcourt accuses the medical profession of rejecting ‘everything and everybody that has done any great work in the interests of humanity’, but the doctor has the last word before he too withdraws:

“It is such men as you, and - and this *person*” – pointing with his hat to the hypnotist – “who are the disturbers of society, making with a little burning straw and dirty

smoke the scarecrow superstitions which fill the world with weakness and melancholy . . .” (29)

Both these speeches are reproduced *verbatim* in *The Demon Lover*, but in an interestingly different context. In the play it is the sinister Lars who scoffs at free will, and subsequently humiliates the local pastor who is challenging him by briefly hypnotizing him (*Demon Lover* 21-23). It is the local sheriff, the good man who loves Thyra, who directs the “disturbers of society” speech at Lars (*Demon Lover* 26). Caine has used the same words but shifted the moral ground: words which seemed to acquire some moral authority when uttered by Harcourt, intent on saving Lucy, seem more ambiguous in implication when uttered by Lars, intent on subverting community values and stealing Thyra away. This shift is even more unsettling in the later example of text recycled from “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation” into *The Demon Lover*, as in this case the duplicated text also carries noticeable traces of *Dracula*. At the climax of Caine’s story, Harcourt endeavors to persuade Lucy not to enter an Anglican convent but to marry him instead. To do so he uses some physical force (“in spite of her resistance, I put my arms about her neck and drew her back to her chair”) but his main method is a kind of erotic incantation:

I love you - you know that. With all my heart and soul and strength I love you. I will not think of losing you. Love is stronger than any curse. I don't want to think of you as one who is dead. I want your living heart to answer my heart. I have set my stake on your love, and I mean to keep it. Lucy, my dear Lucy, you are mine. I have been waiting for you all these years ; you have been waiting for me. You shall not bury yourself in a convent. I want you, my darling-you, you, you! I want the breath of your

hair, the light of your eyes, the kiss of your red lips. Come to me, come to me, come to me! (51)

When Lucy responds, Harcourt notes with satisfaction that he has “liberated” her (51). This is the moment which secures the happy ending of the story and Lucy’s happier future life of submission to hope rather than alcoholism. In *The Demon Lover*, however, Lars uses almost exactly the same words to Thyra, who admits she is frightened of him, with such hypnotic effect that eventually she finds herself saying “Take me then . . . my will is your will. If you bid me I will obey” (32). Lars then departs on a doomed Arctic expedition, and returns as a specter on Thyra’s wedding day to take her life by kissing her. The heroic lover Harcourt thus uncannily metamorphoses into the demon lover Lars, and phrases from *Dracula* echo through the words of both. “Come to me, come to me, come to me”, for example, echoes the vampire Lucy’s attempt to seduce Arthur in Highgate Cemetery (197); and ‘the kiss of those red lips’ echoes Harker’s desire that the vampire women in the castle would “kiss me with those red lips” (38). As if uncomfortable with this particular echo, in 1906 Caine removed the word ‘red’ from Harcourt’s speech, though it had been in the manuscript and previous versions.

It is certainly fascinating, as Kristan Tetens observes, to speculate about the order in which a group of texts with obvious similarities came to be written. But when evidence is available to resolve such speculations, it is perhaps more productive to move on from questions of dating to explore other questions raised by the similarities between the texts. All the available evidence suggests that “Unto the Third and Fourth Generation” and *The Demon Lover* were written *after* Caine had read a draft of *Dracula*. So the more interesting question in this case becomes: what did Caine *see* in *Dracula* that stimulated him, perhaps without realizing, to write his own two reworkings of it? Can we use analysis of these two derivative texts to

glimpse a different perspective on Stoker's famous narrative? It clearly was not vampire lore, or Transylvania, or even the idea that "everything leads us . . . to sex" that interested Caine. Rather, he seems to have responded to the notion of the vulnerability of the self to a more powerful influence – particularly as represented by Lucy's fatal subjection. His texts experiment with a succession of different competing forces, good and bad, which stand in for the vampire: alcoholism, hypnotism, eroticism, imagination, hope. Despite the old-fashioned texture of his melodramatic narratives, Caine's treatment of this theme is actually in some ways more modern than Stoker's. In *Dracula*, the power which threatens the self is resisted, isolated, driven abroad and neutralized – and that is (for most readers) the reassuring end of the story. In "Unto the Third and Fourth Generation" and *The Demon Lover* there is no such security for the self - as indeed there may not be, in real life, for the recovering alcoholic. Even Lucy's happy ending is contingent, as Harcourt notes at the end of the story: "It all happened thirty-five years ago, and assuredly the blessing has *thus far* got the better of the curse" (51; my italics). When we consider the strange doubling of Harcourt and Lars, we might speculate further that for the narcissistic Caine the idea of power being exerted over the will and personality of another held few terrors. The thrill of *Dracula* may derive from horror at the thought of being the vampire's victim, but Caine's alternative versions experiment with the thrill of *being* the vampire - not imagined in Transylvanian guise perhaps but rather as the successful writer with unlimited power over popular opinion and taste: as Harcourt puts it, "the greatest man whom the greatest men are doomed to obey".

## NOTES

- 1 The seven biographies of Stoker are: Ludlam (1962), Farson (1975), Belford (1996), Murray (2004), Hopkins (2007), Storey (2012), Skal (2016). The two biographies of

Irving I am thinking of are Richards (2005) and Holroyd (2009). The only modern biography of Caine is Allen (1997).

2 For a review of interpretations of the Stoker-Caine relationship before Skal, see Storer 173-5.

3 It is important to distinguish between the book, *Drink: A Love Story on a Great Question*, and the story, simply headed “Drink”, which the book contains, and which Skal asserts was first published sixteen years earlier. Although *Drink* is sometimes listed as one of Caine’s novels, it is really more like a special number of a periodical, with pages of advertisements as well as illustrations occasionally interrupting the text. After the 50-page story the second half of the book consists of Appendices in which Caine and others discuss social problems associated with alcohol; and Caine added more material to these Appendices for the 1907 American edition. A copy of the now rare 1906 edition is in the Manx National Heritage Library but in this essay all quotations are from the 1907 edition.

4 For Stoker’s early notes, including references to Lucy, see Eighteen-Bisang and Miller 28-29.

5 The dating of the plays is by Stoker. Quotations, courtesy of Manx National Heritage, are from the paginated typescripts of both plays in the Hall Caine Archive, MNH MS 09542, Manx National Heritage Library. Material relating to *Home Sweet Home* exists in a number of different forms, including manuscript, typescript, and “lecture story”, and the play had two alternative titles, *Yan the Icelander* and *The Unwritten Law*.

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