In the 1897 novel which first introduced him to the world, Count Dracula warns his enemies, ‘I spread over centuries and time is on my side’. He appears to have been right. Not only is Dracula the best-known vampire of them all, he is one of the most recognisable characters in literary history.

What is not as well-known, however, is that he was the creation of a middle-class, Irish Protestant, Trinity graduate, who lived in Dublin for half of his life. Moreover, if Bram Stoker provided the world with the best example of the male vampire, his fellow Dubliner, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, gave the world the most significant female vampire ever in Carmilla, the eponymous anti- heroine of his 1870 novella. An ‘unholy trilogy’ of Trinity College-educated Gothic writers is rounded-off by Charles Maturin, the author of Melmoth the Wanderer (1820), now almost completely forgotten except by scholars of horror fiction and the students they continue to require to read his enormous and labyrinthine masterpiece. Why (and how) did middle-class Irish Anglicans from nineteenth-century Dublin generate such extraordinary influential monsters? More generally, why has Ireland produced such a long and distinguished line of Gothic, horror and ‘weird fiction’ writers?

**Irish Gothic** — Much of my own research has focused on answering questions like this. I have demonstrated that the Gothic in Ireland has a history that stretches back into the 17th and 18th centuries, and has had a major impact on shaping ideas about what Ireland is like, and what it means to claim particular kinds of Irish identity.

My published work argues that what Frank O’Connor once termed “submerged population groups” may well be attracted to and gravitate towards forms and genres that speak to their in-between status, their religious, social, political and personal liminality, and provide fantasy solutions to the real world difficulties with which they are struggling. Through monographs such as Gothic Ireland (2005), The Emergence of Irish Gothic Fiction (2013), essay collections on Bram Stoker (2014) and Sheridan Le Fanu (2017), and the organisation of international conferences on the major Irish Gothic in Trinity College, my aim has been to generate more scholarly interest in ‘Irish Gothic’ literature, and also suggest possible explanations about the wider implications of a genre which has such mesmeric attraction for readers and audiences around the world.

The Gothic, which is packed full of ‘in-between’ monsters, like vampires (who are living and dead), may well be irresistible to hyphenated figures and groups. As Ireland continues to grapple with its own in-between status, between tradition and post-modernity, Berlin and Boston, Britain and Europe, the Gothic will most likely continue to occupy a central place in its literary scene. I am currently co-editing a collection of essays on Irish Gothic literature for Edinburgh University Press with Christina Morin of the University of Limerick.
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