

WARMBLOODS IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY:  
A VAMPIRE TOUR OF HUMAN ART

BRAM STOKER FESTIVAL  
2020

By  
UNDERTHINGS

ANNE:

Bram Stoker was a writer, a civil servant, a man of the theatre and, I assure you, a very enthusiastic mover on the dance floor and even though he wasn't the first person to write a vampire novel, he certainly popularized an arresting image of the undead. Well, this year, the Bram Stoker Festival thought that it would be fitting to allow some members of Dublin's undead community to participate in the memorial frolics for the man who has been our main Public Relations agency for quite some time now. My name is Anne...

WINIFRED:

And my name is Winifred.

ANNE:

Although there were other suggestions from the community such as 'Abattoir Rave' or 'Chasing in the Maze at Midnight', our slightly more sedate submission was chosen. The current pestilence has meant that we can't gather you together like morsels in a picnic basket for a tour in the gallery, but we can still whisper in your ear, and show you some of our favourite things and the places where we like to skulk.

WINIFRED:

We love a lot of things about the gallery..

ANNE:

The hidden corners!

WINIFRED:

Yes, the corners are nice...

ANNE:

The tortured saints!

WINIFRED:

Yes, I think we agree that we love a good martyr...

ANNE:

All the nudity!

WINIFRED:

Anne! I was going to say the controlled lighting! We agreed, we'd concentrate on the lighting aspect, not the, ahem, unclothed-ness of it all! And then I'd make a little joke about how we're archival too, and people would smirk to themselves, and feel very superior, and you've ruined it now!

ANNE:

Sorry.

WINIFRED:

You're not sorry though, are you?

ANNE:

No.

WINIFRED:

The Milltown Wing, as you enter from the Merrion Square side of the gallery, takes you through rooms 14-19. Think of it as a bit of a time machine, letting you travel back to when Bram Stoker was born, and my dear friend Anne here was unborn...unborn? Reborn? How should we phrase this?

ANNE:

When I became a sexy undead inhabitant of eternal darkness.

WINIFRED:

Ugh. How pretentious. Essentially true, but pretentious nonetheless. Anyway. Stoker's childhood was marked by famine and illness, poverty, disease, mortality.. You know how they make the Victorian era look on television? Nothing like that at all.

ANNE:

Yeah. I miss it. Whatever about the scabs, urchins really were very thirst-quenching... Anyway, we're walking towards room 19, and do keep up, we have all the time in the world, but you definitely don't.

**CALISTO - RICHARD ROTHWELL, (1840)**

ANNE:

Here's a supine young lady, Richard Rothwell's Calisto. And I know what you're thinking. That's vampirism for you. Lying about all day, looking smashing. But this painting is far more interesting and dark...

WINIFRED:

This lovely piece was painted in 1840. Rothwell very much considered it his finest work.

ANNE:

And yes, she does look delicious. Although if we might comment...

WINIFRED:

Humans have put a very determined spin on being 'wanted' by vampires, when really you ought to consider how much you sometimes 'want' pizza, but are of course not 'in love' with pizza. We're sure you're perfectly nice and everything, but you're dinner, not a friend.

ANNE:

For instance, hardly any of you want to marry pizza.

WINIFRED: But we digress. This painting depicts a classical subject, Calisto, who was of course a nymph in the service of Artemis, Goddess of the Hunt. Calisto had an unfortunate encounter with Zeus, King of the Gods. She then became pregnant, thus enraging Hera, Zeus' wife.

ANNE:

Did any woman ever have a fortunate encounter with Zeus? Or with Hera, for that matter?

WINIFRED:

No, not really. I'm sure the classical scholars amongst our audience are now smugly nodding, whispering 'Transfiguration! How fitting for a vampire tour!' She was of course, turned from a great beauty into a bear, a wild creature of tooth and claw, hiding forever from humankind.

ANNE:

And after an unfortunate death she was placed as Ursa Major, a constellation in our night skies. After misery, immortality..

WINIFRED:

Richard Rothwell was born in Athlone in 1800 and initially showed great promise as a portrait painter, working with Thomas Lawrence and showing a definite gift for the painting of..

ANNE:

Flesh!

WINIFRED:

Yes dear. Now, poor Richard never achieved the career that he felt he deserved, and moved between England, Ireland, Italy and America in a restless attempt to improve his craft and deal more in paintings of mythological subjects than portraiture of wealthy sitters.

ANNE:

*This* painting was his fiercest grasp at immortality. Calisto means 'most beautiful', and Rothwell felt that this work was indeed the best that he could offer. His painting of Calisto was hung high on a wall at the International Exhibition. This made her a bit difficult to see, and Rothwell thought this was insufficiently respectful of his art. He became angry enough to publish a pamphlet berating Lord Granville, the President of the International Exhibition, and the Royal Academy.

WINIFRED:

I believe it's called 'putting them on blast', dear. He wrote to the gallery you're standing in about his Calisto, in July 1860, stating 'I think it a work carried as far as modern art has gone, and I should like it to be preserved in your National Gallery'. It was not purchased at the time.

ANNE:

It was eventually bought by the gallery in 1901. Richard Rothwell had been taken by a fever in 1868. First misery, then immortality. If he were still here, I hope that he would find the placement of this piece to be a respectful one.

**THE HOUSELESS WANDERER - JOHN HENRY FOLEY,**

**(1858)**

WINIFRED:

Just to the left of Rothwell's Calisto, we have a freestanding sculpture. A marble-draped figure, John Henry Foley's Houseless Wanderer gives a more realistic idea of how comfortable you'd be sleeping without a nightie in all weathers.

ANNE:

And while his place of birth, Montgomery Street in Dublin, is euphemistically referred to as an 'Artist's Quarter', as someone who ruined several good dresses there in the 1840s, I can assure you that it was in fact a Red Light district.

WINIFRED:

Ahem! That's not a necessary avenue for discussion.

ANNE:

I'm just saying, he was an excellent figure sculptor, but he didn't exactly have to work hard to study the unclothed human form.

WINIFRED:

Well we all have to grow up somewhere. I still get excited by plumbed-in washing machines! And Mr Foley did awfully well. Such a popular sculptor! If you wanted a dignitary on horseback, he was the man to go to!

ANNE:

Yes, but throw in a revolution or 3 and you'd be hard-pressed to find any of his sculptures on a nightly perambulation around town. If only Richard Rothwell had known that posterity doesn't last as long you

think it does. Now vampirism on the other hand...

WINIFRED:

Shush! Not yet!

**FIGURES BY A COFFIN - DANIEL MACDONALD,  
(1840)**

WINIFRED:

Our next stop is a close neighbour, Figures by a Coffin, painted by Daniel Macdonald in 1840. Bram Stoker was born in the midst of the Irish Famine, and Daniel Macdonald is the only Irish painter to produce a contemporary depiction of that pestilence. But don't let that convince you that Ireland before the Famine was a bucolic pastoral wonderland. If you were a beautiful peasant girl, it wasn't looking good for you at all.

ANNE:

And I am sure you, dear human friend, are looking at this painting and saying 'Well, is this not fitting for a *Tour Au Vampires*? The open coffin, the grinning skulls, the kneeling gentleman with an appearance not quite human?

WINIFRED:

We also have a cloaked girl with a look of great knowing upon her pretty face...A wispily handsome gentleman who is *clearly* devoid of moral fibre hovers in the background...

ANNE:

'Ah yes!', you say, 'here we have vampire business!'

WINIFRED:



Well apologies, this painting speaks of a horror that we vampires cannot claim. This work is possibly based on the book 'The Collegians', by Gerald Griffin, but doesn't depict a specific scene. Dion Boucicault would later base his play 'The Colleen Bawn' on Griffin's work. 'The Collegians' was a retelling of the notorious murder of Ellen Hanley, a motherless 15 year old who had been raised by her uncle, a ropemaker.

ANNE: A *Ropemaker!*

WINIFRED: Anne! Why are you saying Ropemaker like that? And pausing for effect?

ANNE:

Look, it'll be important later. So, Ellen was murdered at the behest of her husband, John Scanlan of Ballicahane Castle, when their secret marriage made it difficult for him to, *ahem*, get married to someone of his own social milieu. Given the tendency of the minor aristocracy to avoid doing work, we should not be surprised that he persuaded his manservant Stephen Sullivan to shoot Ellen, and leave her in the embrace of the River Shannon.

WINIFRED:

Ellen washed ashore. Public outrage and due process ended with both men meeting their maker at the end of a rope.

ANNE: The *Ropemaker* is not recorded.

WINIFRED: Oh. Right. An allusion to some sort of justice if Ellen's uncle somehow made the rope.

ANNE:

Winifred, stop explaining everything. We're meant to be mysterious and subtle. Indeed, vampires are also dangerous. We will drink your blood. We might even turn you into a creature of the night. But when one looks at history properly, we are considerably less dangerous than the average member of the minor gentry with something to hide.

### **HARRY CLARKE ROOM**

ANNE:

Let us go now into the dark of Room 20, where surely beauty we shall find.

WINIFRED:

Is that a quote, Anne?

ANNE:

No. I mean, if you say it later to someone, you'll be quoting *me*. Every sentence uttered by all the mouthed fools teeming upon this planet has the potential to become a quote eventually, I imagine.

WINIFRED:

Having experienced Social Media, that makes an odd sort of sense. Now. Our next work, the Mother of Sorrows by Mr Harry Clarke. This is a piece that he worked on in London, despite ill health. The more observant among you will notice that this is a cross. And despite the cross-fearing depictions of Vampires in the work of Mr Stoker, neither Anne nor I have ever found it to be a particularly bothersome symbol.

ANNE:

But even if we did find crosses abhorrent, this particular cross would of course be

softened somewhat by the fact that it has been helpfully draped with some very attractive figures.

WINIFRED:

Yes, thematically a Pieta, showing the body of Christ in his mother's lap, always brings a burden of great sorrow and grief to a piece, but despite that, there is also Mr Clarke's traditional rich and stylised sensuality.

ANNE:

It would be flippant of me, Winifred, to say that Harry Clarke had a habit of sneaking filth into churches, so I shan't say that.

WINIFRED:

Well yes, that *would* be flippant, and I dare say disrespectful, Anne, so I'm glad that you didn't say it! This piece was commissioned by Sr Wilfrid of Dowanhill Training College in Glasgow to memorialise those who had died in the Great War, later known as World War 1. She died before it was completed, so instead it memorialised her.

ANNE:

Well at least her memorial was to her taste. There was an overabundance of cherubim on my crypt, which really misrepresented my essence, and I will be honest, I was hard-pressed not to go and drain my brother of all his blood after I awoke and saw it.

WINIFRED:

You were always a model of self-control. Calm yourself now with the beautiful colours of Mr Clarke's genius. And you, kind listener, perhaps you might let yourself be taken for a moment by this perfect merger of

art, glass, reverence and light!

ANNE:

Here you stand, in the darkest room in the National Gallery. You have been placed and herded here by us. The gallery is quiet. Look now at the tiny organisms at the core of the piece...perhaps Mr Clarke meant to make reference to the beginnings of life. Perhaps you might like to consider how it will end. St Catherine of Genoa is on your right - look into her eyes and consider that she knew how things would end for the Messiah. The artist who made this piece, and the woman who commissioned it are long dead. You are dying too, my friend, because that is the human condition. Now, imagine you turn around and we are standing behind you...we have an offer that we would like to make...

WINIFRED:

Anne has some rather, ha! pointed feelings regarding the boring administrative bits of being a member of the living. But on the other hand, have you ever found yourself sitting, while balling socks, or responding to an electronic mail, and wondered 'Why amn't I lurking somewhere, waiting to jump out at someone?' Do you ever wish, while exchanging a polite greeting with a neighbour, that you could make a cryptic statement, and disappear instead?

ANNE:

'Yes Deirdre, I know the bins aren't supposed to go out the night before, but have you ever thought that perhaps it's not safe for you to be out in the cul-de-sac at night?'

WINIFRED:

If you feel like you could use a little time for yourself, and turn a lifelong love of black-pudding into a vocation, this might be the direction for you!

ANNE:

You'll probably find us lurking in here, gazing at the sad eyes, and lovely long hands of the Mad Prince to your left. No appointment is necessary.

WINIFRED:

But basic hygiene is appreciated!

**THE OPENING OF THE SIXTH SEAL - FRANCIS DANBY**

ANNE: We're always sad to leave the Harry Clarke room, but the second painting on the right in the next room is worth it! The Opening of the Sixth Seal, by Francis Danby...

WINIFRED:

Like a lot of immensely beautiful religious paintings, the artist, in this case, was thinking about something else at the time. Danby's depicted shackles on one of the figures in the foreground, which may be related to debates about slavery at the time.

ANNE:

It's the kind of scene that makes you feel so cosy, doesn't it Winifred? Fires, fissures in the earth, howling winds, thunder and...

WINIFRED:

...the sense of impending doom? Anne, you

truly are a product of your time. These old Victorians, a little bit in love with storms and lightning, using weather as a metaphor for heightened emotional states, and everything else. It takes some getting used to. And for your own safety, I'd avoid jokes about 'having a bit of wind', she doesn't take them well.

ANNE:

Danby shows the Opening of the Sixth Seal here, as described by the Book of Revelation.

WINIFRED:

It should go without saying that this is Anne's favourite book of the bible.

ANNE:

Yes, well, it's got everything, hasn't it? And Apocalypse means 'revealing of divine mysteries' and I flatter myself as quite the truth-teller. Without my wise counsel, you would have kept wearing that hat. And it was an awful hat, Winifred. An awful, awful hat.

WINIFRED:

Well, setting it on fire while I was wearing it was an excessive way to get your point across. Anyway, like Bram Stoker, Danby swam in the waters of the Romantic & Gothic movements, using weather as a character in itself. Gothic and Romantic art and literature is full to the brim with stormy skies, torn earth, crashing waves...

ANNE:

Everything that you can possibly paint or write to avoid telling your father how you really felt about him selling mummy's jewelry. It's a lovely bit of gusty evasion!

WINIFRED:

And while we're on the subject of days of judgement, and high-minded symbolism, if you wouldn't mind turning right around, and walking towards:

**THE TEMPTATION OF ADAM - JAMES BARRY**

**&**

**CUPID & PSYCHE IN THEIR NUPTIAL BOWER - HUGH DOUGLAS HAMILTON**

WINIFRED:

This is The Temptation of Adam, by James Barry. He's a burly fellow, isn't he? When I was alive, I took an art appreciation course, in the local church hall, and I couldn't for the life of me remember who was who in the paintings. And the man who taught the course, who had a lovely beard, and always smelled like clove cigarettes, he told me 'Winnie, when they're naked and miserable, it's Christian art, and when they're naked and having a grand old time, it's the Greeks or the Romans'. And then he made a very interesting offer about exploring the difference that I didn't quite understand until a long time later.

ANNE:

Shame. And shame is what Adam is suddenly discovering here. He's also about to invent the concept of 'Blame'.

WINIFRED:

James Barry depicts Adam & Eve, and their fall from grace in the garden of Eden, based on Milton's Paradise Lost. In Milton's version, Adam knowingly eats the apple, after Eve is tricked into sinning. His rationale is that if she must fall from

grace, and become mortal, then he will too.  
Lovely, isn't it?

ANNE:

Except by the look on his face, you can tell that he's going to bring this up every time they disagree. For the rest of her blessedly shorter mortal existence. That's the face of a man gearing up to martyr himself. 'Eve, I can't sweep the hut. It just reminds me that we're not in Eden.' Or 'Don't complain to *me* about the wear and tear on my loincloths. It's *your* fault I have a sense of shame in the first place!'

WINIFRED:

Or, or 'Maybe I wouldn't spend so much time at the golf club if you were half the housewife my mother was!!!'

ANNE:

That's possibly a little off-topic, Winifred, but a well-made point nonetheless. Adam's frown is the look of a man who has lost paradise, but found a loophole that will allow people to blame women for everything for a very long time indeed.

WINIFRED:

I should have asked my art teacher for that demonstration of the different types of nudes, shouldn't I? I did rather rush into marriage. Oh well.

ANNE:

And sitting opposite, with a rather different demeanour, we have a mythological subject. Cupid and Psyche in the Nuptial Bower by Hugh Douglas Hamilton. Cupid was the God of Erotic Love & Desire, and Psyche was his unfortunate mortal wife. As we



consider these two paintings, we shall also consider love.

WINIFRED:  
Must we?

ANNE:  
Well it ties them to their mortal state almost as much as their pathetic search for status.

WINIFRED:  
Alrighty then. Let's start with the most objectively miserable painting, The Temptation of Adam. A depiction of that 'oh dear' post-forbidden fruit moment, these two now know they are banished from paradise. James Barry travelled to Italy, and made a very extensive study of the exquisite statuary that he found there.

ANNE:  
This is reflected in the rather smooth and marble-ish quality of Adam and Eve in this representation. And on Adam's face, I think, is the archetypal expression that I personally associate with the deeply unfulfilling world of the human heart.

WINIFRED:  
As my husband Eunan said to me, 'I know what I said, but my feelings have...changed'

ANNE:  
Poor Winifred...

WINIFRED:  
Poor Eve!

ANNE:  
Speaking of being banished from paradise, Mr

Barry was the first academician to be expelled from the Royal Academy of Arts. This did not happen again until 2005. He was a man who was described as belligerent, but we must remember that statues are so much easier to understand than humans. Poor James.

WINIFRED:

Hugh Douglas Hamilton was a very prolific portraitist who made his name initially in portraits using chalks and pastels. They were of course, a smaller investment in terms of time and money, and he became terribly popular using this medium. This, however, is one of his beautiful works in oil.

ANNE:

I got chalked by Hamilton, Winifred.

WINIFRED:

Did you?

ANNE:

Of course. Everyone who was anyone did. And I was once...somebody. But that does not matter. Now, unlike our belligerent and frustrated Mr Barry, Mr Hamilton was held in very high esteem and seems to have lived a happy and fulfilled life. And indeed his painting looks like a happy and fulfilled classical couple, beautifully captured. Wings. Arboreal loveliness. Forest tents.

WINIFRED:

Of course they look happy, Anne, but we understand that the course of true love never does run smooth.

ANNE:

Yes, I suppose humans have been conditioned by their mythologies to accept all kinds of social and sexual dysfunction in the name of romance. I certainly did. But I will say that the vampirism is really wonderful for perspective. Post-change, one of the first realisations I had with regard to romance was 'Goodness me, what was all that about?'

WINIFRED:

Well yes, and looking at this allegedly happy image, Anne, should we accept that the course of true love will involve extremely creepy sexual deception?

ANNE:

Valid point. Vampires are vilified for approaching in the dark, but full darkness was a key component of Cupid's...shall I say...wooing of Psyche.

WINIFRED:

Indeed, and in Aphrodite she gained the mother-in-law to end all mother-in-laws. Aphrodite, Cupid's mother, was the Goddess of Love, and to say she had issues with her son's marriage wouldn't quite do the matter justice. There were enchanted arrows, people falling off promontories, needing to gain grain-sorting assistance from ants, murderous sheep, fetching beauty treatments from the underworld and almost dying before having to be made immortal in order to be in a relationship? And I haven't included everything Anne, because our lovely listeners don't have all the time in the world, yet. But should all of that be overlooked because someone is a winged dish who makes good forest tents?

ANNE:

The short answer is, despite the delicacy and beauty of this painting, and the artistry of Mr Hamilton, no, Winifred, no, this should not be overlooked. Just to explain, Winifred was a 1970s housewife, with a simply awful husband, Eunan. She attained immortality ahead of attaining feminism, and has one or two regrets over not getting a chance to redress the 'unfairnesses' in her marriage. Apparently Eunan was low on hygiene, high on golf clubs, and thought dentistry was a 'fad'. I said she should eat him and get it out of her system, but she told me several stories about washing his shirt collars and I found I quite lost my own appetite.

WINIFRED:

So there you have it. Cupids to the left of you, Adams to the right, here you are, stuck in the middle with us!

ANNE:

Obviously, if you have oriented yourself differently, that will not be the case. But we are still very much in the middle.

WINIFRED:

Look. We're just two vampires standing in the art gallery, asking you if you wouldn't like to just leave that love stuff behind, get really good at French knots and bridge, and yes, drink the blood of humans.

ANNE:

Would that be so bad? Immortality will let you enjoy your achievements, you still won't be as murderous as a lot of humans...your beauty will shine in the dark, nature will lose its terrors for you, and love? Love will not drag you around like a tragic

little dog.

WINIFRED:

Have a little think. And you know where to  
find us.