

Letter from Castle Dracula

- the newsbulletin of The Transylvanian Society of Dracula

ROMANIA SPECIAL



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A GREETING WORD FROM OUR VICE-PRESIDENT

Bucharest, 2 April 2015

Dear TSD members all around,

Time flies and years are short – especially for those who deal with the eternal life of the vampire! It has been twelve months already since we published our last *Letter from Castle Dracula* – also an Easter Issue. This is not because there would be nothing to report about, quite the contrary: Many things are happening here in old Europe and we cannot catch up :-)

Another reason for the delay is that the future of the Borgo Pass has become the subject of political planning last year and we wanted to wait if the decision processes that have been set in motion by the Bistrița-Năsăud County Council with their ideas for a stronger touristic development of the region would lead to any concrete proposals. Alas – or maybe luckily – a feasibility study (which would have to be financed with European funds) is still outstanding, so that there still is time enough to contribute our own ideas and word our opinion. Traditionally, the TSD is a non-political organisation; on the other hand, the situation in the most important location featured in *Dracula* cannot leave us completely indifferent. Together with Hans de Roos from Munich, I travelled there last year August to take part in the opening of the restored Via Maria Teresia, which – according to Hans’s research – largely coincides with Jonathan Harker’s route from the Borgo Pass to Castle Dracula. Given the name of our magazine, an illustrated report is overdue.



Another issue that would need attention is the planned international congress of the TSD. Last year we were in touch with Trinity College, Dublin, to see if we could organise this congress together and use facilities of Trinity College to host the event. Our speaking partner in Dublin, Professor Jarlath Killeen, did not dislike the idea, but was not in the position yet to deal with the request – from our side, we will follow up now.

In the meantime, our member Marius Crișan of West University in Timișoara is hosting a congress from 25-27 June that also will deal with the *Dracula* issue; see the announcement by Marius in this issue.

Until now, this magazine has been created in Microsoft Word, which is known for its problems with positioning pictures. Starting with this issue, the *Letter from Castle Dracula* is professionally created in InDesign, allowing us to switch to a two-column layout and be more flexible with graphics. Contributions, however, can still be submitted in MS Word, Open Office or by email – they will be fitted in seamlessly. Again, we encourage all members to send in texts, photos or information about relevant research and events.

My thanks go to the authors of this issue and to Hans de Roos, who has taken over the practical task of producing the newsletter as our Acting Editor.

Thank you for reading and for your feedback,

Daniela Diaconescu
Co-Founder and Vice-President of the TSD

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DOES THE COUNT NEED A ROLLER-COASTER?

Protecting the natural balance of the Borgo Pass

By Hans de Roos, Munich

The Borgo Pass is the single most important region in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, where the story starts and ends. It therefore only seems logical that the international community of vampire aficionados should have a watchful eye on the area and, if needed, help protect its natural landscape. Although the mountains and forests seem deserted, forces are already at work that threaten their ecological balance: We talk about the massive theft of timber and the plans to build a Dracula roller coaster park. On the other side, the inhabitants of the Pass are already organising to put up resistance against the destruction of the woods in their county. This article will explain the situation.

As known to *Dracula* readers, the Borgo Pass connects the north-east corner of Transylvania with Bukovina. For the Habsburg empire, it was an important strategic route, especially after it annexed Bukovina in 1775. Between 1764 and 1787, Emperor Joseph II, the son of Maria Theresia, had all land in his empire surveyed for taxation; he also had the road to Bukovina improved. To provide the frontier posts at the border with Moldavia with food and ammunition, a secondary path through the Borgo (Bârgău) and Kelemen (Călimani) Mountains was established, about four meters broad, so that horse carriages could pass. This rough road, more than 40 km long, became known as the **Via Maria Theresia** and we can see it indicated on the maps of the Josephinian Land Survey (see map next page, bright green line).

As described in Stoker's novel, this mountain area is very sparsely populated: Between Piatra Fântânele and Dornişoara in the north, and Drăgoisa, Bilbor and Toplița in the south, there are no human settlements. Instead, there is a significant population of deer, wolves, brown bears and lynxes and the Călimani area is a protected natural reserve (Parcul National Călimani). This has not stopped criminals from illegally harvesting the timber – a major problem in the whole of Romania. Every year, 5,000 Million Euro worth of timber is stolen from the Romanian forests and because of their isolated situation, the Bârgău and Călimani Mountains are especially vulnerable. Over time, the local people have seen their woods grow thinner.

Just 4 km removed from Hotel Castel Dracula, a local initiative, *Asociația Tășuleasa Social*, has taken up the fight against this illegal deforestation and started to

plant new trees with the help of young volunteers. The regular staff of six social workers is aided by students, mostly from Germany, who leave their universities for a couple of months to live in *Tășuleasa's* simple campus.



Tășuleasa Social and its marathon event sponsors

The association was founded in the year 2000 and named after the mountain where it built its meeting point. Website (also in English & German): www.tasuleasasocial.ro.

The 2014 project of *Tășuleasa Social* – the restoration of this historical Via Maria Theresia – caught my attention because it coincided with one of the goals of the *Dracula Travel Guide* project I have created together with Dacre Stoker: to show a safe hiking path between the Borgo Pass and the true location of the (fictitious) Castle Dracula on top of Mount Izvorul Călimanului. Since Spring 2014, *Tășuleasa Social*, with the help of 150 volunteers, has cleaned up the track of the former road and put up new signs. The completion of this task was successfully celebrated by a marathon, mountain biking and hiking event on Saturday 16 August 2014, with approximately 400 participants.



One of the seven points where the runners received water and fruits



1844 VIA MARIA THERESIA

1876

CASTLE DRACULA

Route from Borgo Pass: appr. 45-50 km

BORGO PASS
Platara Pantanele
HOTEL CASTEL DRACULA



TURN PAGE 90° CLOCKWISE

MAP RESEARCH: H. DE ROOS

After contacting *Tășuleasa* spokeswoman Ana Szekeley and organiser Tiberiu Useriu, I decided to take part in this re-opening. Together with Daniela Diaconescu, our Vice-President, and Petre Tutunea, a graphic artist from Bucharest, I walked along the restored pathway and interviewed *Tășuleasa* staff and volunteers.



Our group of hikers at the sources of the Dorna River

With the re-opening of the Via Maria Theresia, the organisation hopes to gain public awareness regarding the timber theft issue and attract more “green tourists” and athletes to the forests, thus scaring the thieves away, who prefer to operate unnoticed in the deserted woods. With a small budget of 45,000 Euros, sponsored by the local Raiffeisenbank, and further sponsoring from interested enterprises, all the costs of the restoration and the event could be covered. The result is a well-signalled “thematic path,” with attractive resting places and information boards about the road’s history and how to better care for the environment. You can read more about this important project on www.via-maria-theresia.ro and see many photos on the *Tășuleasa* Facebook page.

Daniela, Petre and I enjoyed a splendid outdoor day together with the many enthusiastic runners, bikers, hikers and helpers. It was this atmosphere of unbroken idealism and cordial cooperation which convinced me that this good work deserves the international support of the *Transylvanian Society of Dracula*: the road which Jonathan Harker, Count Dracula, Professor Van Helsing and Mina took from the Borgo Pass to Castel Dracula must, in part or in whole, have been *identical* with this very Via Maria Theresia. Although there are a few different pathways from Piatra Fântânele to the ridge of the Ciungetul, Gruii and Pietrosul (see map), no other viable path leads east of the snowy peaks of the Pietrosul (2,100 m) and the Negoii Unguresc (2,081 m) towards the edge of the gigantic volcanic caldera (10 km diameter), which includes the Izvorul peak (2,031 m).

To Dacre Stoker, Daniela Diaconescu and me, the initiative of the *Tășuleasa Social* seems to make more

sense than the plans for a “Dracula Roller Coaster” and a fake “Dracula Castle” presented by the Bistrița-Năsăud County Council in a working paper we received last year, with the request to comment it (see next page). Although details still have to be filled in, this proposal seems to have little to do with Bram Stoker’s epoch-making story, the true economic and ecological problems of the region and the concerns of its population. Similar plans to erect a *Dracula*-themed adventure park based on such thrills have been stopped in Sighișoara and Snagov already, by protest of the local people and initiative of the *Mihail Eminescu Trust*, one of the partners in our Travel Guide Project. The Trust was supported by Prince Charles – who outed himself as a descendant of Vlad II Dracul and declared to have “a special stake” (pun intended) in the protection of the Transylvanian woods. Subsequently, many national and international newspapers reported about the Prince “setting his teeth” in the Romanian deforestation problem. Recently, plans for a Canadian gold mining enterprise in the Roșia Montana area were also cancelled because of public protests.



The well-known Romanian actor Marcel Iureș presented the event.

I therefore see good chances for the international community of *Dracula* fans and experts, together with local partners like *Hotel Castel Dracula* and *Tășuleasa Social*, to take some influence in this planning process and submit alternative ideas – or at least support *Tășuleasa’s* initiative to make the Bârgău and Călimani Mountains more accessible for hikers and bikers, at the same time educating visitors about the region’s history and how to protect its nature.

Our newsletter will inform you about new developments as soon as the Bistrița-Năsăud County Council contacts us again or other events deserve our attention.

A full photo report of the Via-Maria-Theresia marathon can be viewed at www.dractravel.com/vmt14/index.html.

My report about the Via Maria Theresia as indicated on the Josephinian maps is available on request.

2. Adventure Park "Dracula"



Colibita – Tihuta Area is widely known as being the place where Count Dracula lived, as 150 years ago Bram Stoker came here in search of vampires. What he found instead was an ancestral world filled with legends and wrote the famous gothic novel "Dracula".

In order to give life to the local legends and make them fun we propose a Dracula themed Adventure Park with the following activities:

- Alpine Coaster
- Dracula themed Roller Coaster
- Dracula "Castle"
- Climbing Area
- Zip line System
- Jumping Area
- Arch Shooting Gallery

The adventures of the park are suitable for all ages and offer a wide range of games that can be played either individually or in teams.



Consiliul Județean
Blaj

PRIMAVERA
design

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON DRACULA: TIMIȘOARA, JUNE 2015



By Marius-Mircea Crișan, Timișoara

This summer, several *Dracula* researchers will meet in Romania, in order to participate in a workshop entitled *Where's the place of Dracula: (De)Constructing stereotypes in the study of the mythical space in literature and the arts*. This event, organized by Dr. Marius-Mircea Crișan, is part of the *International Conference Beliefs and Behaviours in Education and Culture* held at the West University of Timișoara (25-27 June 2015).

Starting from the example of the Dracula myth, with the variety of its forms of manifestation (literature, film, visual arts, etc.) and the representations of Transylvania in Western imagination, the workshop will extend the debate to other spaces which are “transformed” by literary perception. Among other topics, the themes which will be discussed include debates on the importance of the Gothic in contemporary media representations, the relationship between literature and film in the representation of the mythical space, the attraction of the audience to horror and violence, the association of myths (such as the Dracula myth or other myths revived in contemporary times) with real locations, the contemporary uses of the Dracula myth.

The interdisciplinary conference *Beliefs and Behaviours in Education and Culture* is organised by the Teacher Training Department, West University of Timișoara, and the keynote speakers are prestigious academics: Distinguished Professor Craig Anderson (Iowa State

University and Director of the *Center of the Study of Violence*), Professor Donatella Abbate Badin (University of Turin), Professor Brad J. Bushman (Ohio State University), Professor William Hughes (Bath Spa University), Dr. Duncan Light (Manchester Metropolitan University), Professor Tullio Scrimali (University of Catania), Dr. Andre Krauss (Institute of Sociology, Romanian Academy, Bucharest).

Some members of the TSD will bring new insights in the field of *Dracula* studies: Mark Benecke and Ines Fischer will present *A Large Subculture Study into a Central European Contemporary Vampyre Group* and accordingly will discuss some statistical details concerning central European real-life vampyre identity groups, and Hans de Roos will tell us more details about his discoveries about Count Dracula's Address.

The conference will be followed by a one day tour entitled *Legends and Castles of Transylvania*, led by Dr. Marius-Mircea Crișan and Dr. Duncan Light. The main objectives are Hunedoara Castle and Alba Iulia Fortress.

Contact:

Dr. Marius-Mircea Crișan, West University of Timișoara, Romania (Organiser of the International Conference Beliefs and Behaviours in Education and Culture /section Humanities)
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The screenshot shows a website for the BBEC conference. At the top left is the BBEC logo. The main header contains the text: "BBEC - THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOURS IN EDUCATION AND CULTURE 25-27 June 2015 | Teacher Training Department | West University of Timișoara". Below this is a navigation menu with links for HOME, PROGRAM, WORKSHOPS (which is highlighted), REGISTRATION, VENUE, and CONTACT. The main content area features the title "(DE)CONSTRUCTING STEREOTYPES" and a sub-heading "WHERE'S THE PLACE OF DRACULA: (DE)CONSTRUCTING STEREOTYPES IN THE STUDY OF THE MYTHICAL SPACE IN LITERATURE AND THE ARTS". The text describes the workshop's focus on the relationship between literary texts and stereotypes, and mentions the Dracula myth as an example. To the right of the text is a painting of a castle on a hill, likely representing a Transylvanian castle.

Screenshot of the conference website www.dppd.uvt.ro/bbec/workshop-humanities.html

THREE MEETINGS WITH SENIOR TSD-MEMBERS IN BUCHAREST

By Hans de Roos, Munich

For newer members or for those who simply are not familiar with Professor Bălăceanu, Professor Ispas or Professor Rezachevici, participating in TSD activities from the first hour, this is a chance to read about them. Last year August, when I visited Romania for the Via-Maria-Theresia-event (see article on p. 3), Daniela Diaconescu kindly introduced me and accompanied me to three short, informal visits.

Professor Constantin Bălăceanu-Stolnici

Professor Bălăceanu was born in 1923 and had already celebrated his 91st birthday when we met him in a shadowy room in his house in Bucharest – with blazing sunshine outside. He has made himself a name as a neurologist and neuro-physiologist, dealing, among others, with the nervous organism as a cybernetic system. He is one of the few older Romanian intellectuals who managed to continue his career in democratic times; despite his age, he is still functioning as the Director of the Anthropological Institute of the University of Bucharest.

The Professor offered us iced water and we talked about the backgrounds of the *Dracula* novel and about Romanian history – in German, which our host speaks fluently. After I introduced my findings about the obscured identity of Stoker's vampire Count as "that other" of the Dracula race, Professor Bălăceanu compared Vlad III "the Impaler" to Michael the Brave, the other Wallachian Voivode who fought against the Turks and was mentioned by Stoker in his notes for the novel. While the Professor believed Michael to have been a *conquistador* representing the interests of Emperor Rudolph, he maintained that Vlad must have been a true patriot, who fought for Wallachia and was an extremely harsh ruler in extremely harsh times; during this time period of European history, torture was common practice everywhere, as can be seen from the Iron Maid of Nuremberg (also featured in Bram Stoker's short story *The Black Cat*), a hellish machine that crushed its victims with sharp iron spikes when its door was closed. An example of this instrument can still be seen at Bran Castle. We agreed, however, that Bran Castle hardly has any relationship to the life of Vlad III Dracula, although the Wallachian leader may have used the Bran Pass to travel from Târgoviște to Brașov with his men.

We also had a conversation about the Professor's own family history, which goes a very long way back. One of his ancestors was a Bishop of Utrecht in Holland, and it is a curious coincidence, how this Dutch branch of the

family finally joined with a line of Romanian nobles; the Professor is married to Elena Cantacuzino, from the Wallachian Parvu branch of this old aristocratic family, and the couple lives in the house in Orlando Street left to Elena by Grigore C. Cantacuzino.

Our host showed us his family tree which was elaborately painted on a large table; after some further private conversation we made portrait photos and stepped into the bright daylight again.

Professor Sabina Ispas

Professor Ispas welcomed us in the meeting room of the Ethnographical Institute of the University of Bucharest, where she is a specialist for Folklore. Daniela and I were accompanied by two young students from Târgoviște and a lively conversation about the roots of the vampire myth developed. While the vampire character in West-European and American fiction has gradually been styled as an erotic seducer, in the original Romanian tradition he is not considered as attractive; in Stoker's *Dracula*, we can recognise the monster by his unhealthy skin colour, rank breath, pointed fingernails and hairy hands. In Romanian folklore, it is not the vampire, but the Zburător who exerts a seductive power when he visits virginal or freshly married maidens in their bedrooms at night. The name means „flying figure“, and he has certain similarities to the Greek Eros character, who can induce passion in the souls of mortals. Already Demetrius Cantemir mentioned the myth of the Zburător as an *incubus* in his *Descriptio Moldaviae* (1716) and some of the best Romanian poets have eternalised him in their poetry; somewhat further in this issue, a translation of Part IV of *Călin* by Mihai Eminescu is published.

According to Professor Ispas, the Zburător is not a corpse that has survived Death, but an immaterial force that can, at occasions, take a bodily form and enter the world of humans; normally, the Zburător lives in another world, which is different from the world of the vampire.



Hans de Roos, with Professor Constantin Bălăceanu-Stolnici



Daniela Diaconescu, with Professor Constantin Rezachevici

But like the vampire, this embodiment of passion would usually be invited by its victim: a girl who was prepared to break the social laws and experience sexuality outside of marriage. Of course, folklore also reckoned that such behaviour would be punished: The “infected” girls would slowly die of passion and love – as described in the poem *Zburătorul* by Ion Heliade-Radulescu. Counter-magic could provide a cure: A special fat or ointment smeared on the body by a wise woman or a local sorcerer would heal the girl and free her from the influence of her nightly mythical visitor.

Our conversation continued with a discussion of another (unfinished) work by Mihail Eminescu dealing with the Zburător: the story of *Miron and the Beauty without Body* (*Miron și frumoasa fără corp* – original text on Wikisource). A mother asks the Fairies who are coming to witness the birth of her baby to give the boy something that is not granted to any other mortal. According to tradition, the Fairies only predict some of the special qualities or potentials a mortal will have in Life (compare the tale of Sleeping Beauty); they are not used to fulfill special wishes. This ambitious mother thus breaks the rules and this fatally influences the life of her son. When he is a young adult, he meets a blind fiddler who tells him about the Lake of Milk; here he sees the surface ripple, but he cannot see a body. The boy falls in love with this invisible force he cannot reach and dies of love – indeed an experience which is unique. Like his mother, the boy transgresses the border of normality and like in any other heroic tale, he has to face the consequences.

We further talked about how the character of the vampire has changed in modern literary fiction and movies. Professor Ispas noted that in the 20th century, moving pictures have become the central form of learning, whereas in medieval times, artists would copy their Byzantine icons from sample books, that passed down fixed characters over centuries, from one artist generation to the next. Simultaneously, society has seen a process of individualisation and differentiation, allowing the vampire character to “acquire” human qualities like a conscience or even an ability to love. As eroticism can be attached to all kind of human activities, it is no wonder that even a dangerous bloodsucker over time could be associated with romantic behaviour, resulting in stories of the “good vampire” – now culminating in the *Twilight* saga by Stephenie Meyer.

After this fascinating discussion, we took a look at the collection of antique musical instruments and phonographs (the voice recording instrument used by Dr. Seward in *Dracula*) exhibited in the meeting room and took leave of our charming host.

Professor Constantin Rezachevici

We met Professor Rezachevici in a park near his home in Bucharest; it was still warm enough to enjoy the evening sun. Rezachevici is a historian, specialised in the medieval period, and has done numerous studies about the political rulers of that period; he wrote, among others, *The History of the Neighbouring Countries and the Romanian People in the Middle Ages* (1998). He is chief researcher at the *Nicolae Iorga National Institute of History* and Professor with the Faculty of History at the University of Bucharest. Like Professor Bălăceanu and Professor Ispas, he is a member of the *Romanian Academy*.

We talked about the question, why Bram Stoker let Count Dracula call himself a Szekler, although the Draculas were a Wallachian family and ruled over the southern part of what later became Romania; the Szekler spoke Hungarian and lived in the East of Transylvania. My research had shown that the mountain where Stoker imagined Castle Dracula to be located, Izvorul Călimanului, nearer to the city of Toplița than to the Borgo Pass, actually was in a district with a majority of Szeklers in its population. Professor Rezachevici came up with some other information, that might explain why Stoker chose to give the Count a Szekler background. He told us that descendants of Vlad III “the Impaler” had moved to Timiș County in the Banat, in the southwest of present-day Romania. According to a study by the historian Dr. Paul Binder, these descendants would later have moved to the Szekler region in Transylvania, to be out of the reach of the Turks. In their new homeland, they would have acquired new property, so that the name of Dracula became well-known in this Szekler area. The Professor believed that Stoker knew about these facts. Although it is not clear which source Bram Stoker would have used, this would add an interesting aspect to the Count’s claimed Szekler identity.

After discussing the various pros and cons of this thesis, we made a portrait photo, thanked the Professor for his time and explanations, and said our goodbyes.

Further reading:

Binder, Paul. *Une famille noble roumaine de Transylvanie: les Drakula de Sintesti*, in *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, XXVII (1988), nr. 4, p. 301-314.

Hasan, Mihai-Florin. *Aspects of the Hungarian-Wallachian matrimonial relations of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries*. Cluj-Napoca: Acta Musei Napocensis, 49/2, 2012, pp. 47-91.

Hughes, David. *The British Chronicles*, Vol. 2. Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, 2007. Especially Table 74B, p. 599 (Vlad III Dracula).

Kovács, András W. *The History of the Wäss de Czege Family*. Hamburg: Edm. Siemers Stiftung, 2005. Especially p. 31 about László Drakulya.

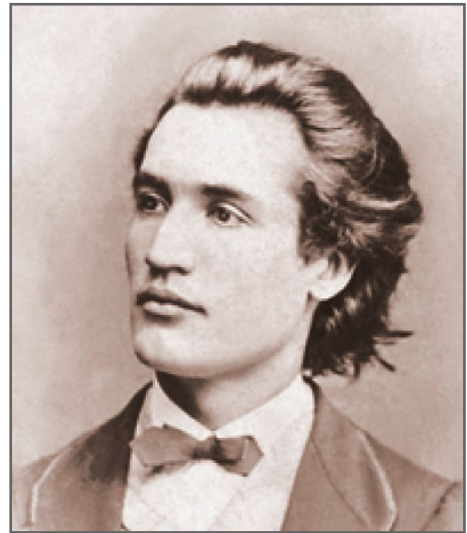
Rezachevici, Constantin. *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova a. 1324-1881*, volume I, secolele XIV-XVI, Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2001, pp. 53-59.

MIHAI EMINESCU (1850-1839)

CĂLIN (FILE DIN POVESTE)

CĂLIN (PAGES FROM A TALE)

PART IV



Mihai Eminescu

Astfel vine-n toată noaptea zbutător la al ei pat.
Se trezi sin somn deodată de sărutu-i fermecat ;
Si atuncea când spre usă el se-ntoarse ca să fugă,
Ea-l opreste-n loc cu ochii si c-o mult smerită rugă :
- "O rămâi, rămâi la mine, tu cu viers duios de foc,
Zburător cu plete negre, umbră fără de noroc
Si nu crede că în lume, singurel si rătăcit,
Nu-i găsi un suflet tânăr ce de tine-i îndrăgit.
O, tu umbră pieritoare, cu adâncii tristi ochi,
Dulci-s ochii umvrei tale -- nu le fie de diochi !"
El s-asează lângă dânsa si o prinde de mijloc,
Ea sopteste vorbe arse de al buzelor ei foc :
- "O sopteste-mi -- zice dânsul -- tu cu ochi plini d-eres
Dulci cuvinte nentelse, însă pline de-nteles.
Al vietii vis de aur ca un fulger, ca o clipă-i,
Si-l visez, când cu-a mea mână al tău brat rotund îl pipăi,
Când pui capul tu pe pieptu-mi si bătaile îi numeri,
Când sărut cu-mpătımire ai tăi albi si netezi umeri
Si când sorb al tău răsuflet în suflarea vietii mele
Si când inima ne creste de un dor, de-o dulce jele ;
Când pierdută razimi fruntea de-arzătorul meu obraz,
Părul tău bălai si moale de mi-l legi după grumaz,
Ochii tăi pe jumătate de-i închizi, mi-ntinzi o gură,
Fericit mă simt atuncea cu asupra de măsură.
Tu ! !... nu vezi... nu-ti aflu nume... Limba-n gură mi se leagă
Si nu pot sa-ti spun odată, cât -- ah ! cât îmi esti de dragă !"
Ei soptesc, multe si-ar spune si nu stiu de-unde să-nceapă,
Căci pe rând si-astupă gura, când cu gura se adapă ;
Unu-n bratele altuia, tremurând ei se sărută,
Numai ochiul e vorbaret, iară limba lor e mută,
Ea-si acopere cu mâna fata rosă de sfială,
Ochii-n lacrimi si-i ascunde într-un păr ca de peteală.

So every night the Zburător into her bedroom breaks
And by his otherwordly kiss the girl from sleep awakes
And when he turns towards the door to flee from her again
She stops him with her longing eyes and begs him to remain:
- Oh stay, please stay with me tonight, your lover's verse has stuck
My black-locked flying lover-ghost, my spectre without luck
And don't believe that in this world, abandoned and alone,
You'll find a finer soul than mine to love your heart forlorn.
Oh you, my doleful dying shade, with eyes distressed and deep
May Fate your circumshadowed look away from curses keep.
He's sitting next to her in bed and takes her by the hips
She whispers fiery words to him burnt by her blazing lips.
- Oh, breathe to me, he gently says, your secret so intense
And speak those silly words to me, that just to me make sense.
The golden dream of our short life like lightning's moment fleets
I'm dreaming it when with my hand your round hand gently meets
When rests your head upon my breast and counts my heart's quick beat
When passionately do I kiss your shoulders white and sweet
And when I drink from your pure mouth the essence of my life
And when our love grows in our hearts, from wishes sad and bleak
And when your joyful brow finds rest upon my burning cheek
Your lovely hair so blonde and soft you tie around my neck
You halfway close your mellow eyes, and part your perfect lips
I'm thrilled, euphoric, overjoyed, so that my hartbeat trips.
Oh you!! I'm blind ... your name unknown... I cannot use my tongue
I cannot tell you once how much – how much! – for you I long.
They whisper and have much to say, their love is growing wings
Because her lips are on his mouth and from her mouth he drinks
They hold each other in their arms and shivering they kiss
And only with their eyes they speak, and silent is their bliss
She coyly covers with her hand her blushing face so shy
In angel's hair she tries to hide her weeping, tearful eye.

Translation from the Romanian: © 2014 Hans C. de Roos, with many thanks to Petre Tutunea.

BOOK NEWS



Marius Crişan: *The Birth of the Dracula Myth – Bram Stoker’s Transylvania*

Already last year, Marius sent me his new book (in English) for review. Although it has taken some time until this article appears, the merits of *The Birth of the Dracula Myth* were and are significant: With more precision than any *Dracula* scholar before, Marius follows the text of Stoker’s novel where it applies to Transylvanian landscape and culture, and traces individual statements back to the sources Bram Stoker had at hand. With extensive quotes from Boner, Crosse, Johnson, Mazuchelli and other British visitors reporting on Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia (these three regions were united only in the 20th century to form modern Romania), Marius demonstrates how Stoker transformed countless bits of information into a mythical image – that is, an image that is stripped of its concrete, historical content and becomes timeless. In the terminology of Roland Barthes: an “empty signifier.”

Picking up topics such as “the forest in Stoker’s sources” or juxtaposing the “Devil’s Den” with “God’s Seat,” Marius forms an elaborate mosaic illustrating this transformation process. Most interesting I found the final chapter, *A Place of Horror*, in which the author compares the description of Castle Dracula and the events taking place there to the Christian views of Hell; the number and the quality of the parallels is striking.

The book is a must for everyone seriously studying the writing of *Dracula*; as a Romanian and a Senior Lecturer at West University, Timișoara, Marius is in the unique position to consult many sources in Romanian language and compare the descriptions in English writings to his own historical and literary knowledge about his country – a comparison he has worked on over many years (see for example his article *The Models for Castle Dracula in Stoker’s Sources on Transylvania* in the *Journal of Dracula Studies*, 2008). The book is fluently and convincingly written and contains illustrations from Stoker’s source books.

Hans de Roos, Munich

Crişan, Marius-Mircea: *The Birth of the Dracula Myth – Bram Stoker’s Transylvania*, Bucharest: Pro Universitaria, 2013, 286 pages, ill. in B/W

To visit the website of Marius-Mircea Crişan:
www.themythoftransylvania.ro/home_en.htm.

The Traveller and His Dream: In the Footsteps of the Voivode, by Mathew L. Burr

When humanity discovered that written word transmits knowledge, history and travel became favourite topics for many. Personal thoughts and observations turned into written words, and having your travel experiences read by all sorts of readers, from academics to school children, became the dream and task of many authors. Travel accounts are not mere descriptions of landscapes, monuments or people, no matter how divine, deceptive or mysterious these may be. Such writings bring forward all that is personal, all the efforts made to understand the places seen, the people met, the stories read or heard. *Dracula* might have never been such a good written and mysterious novel without the travel accounts carefully read by Bram Stoker.

When I met Mathew, years ago, he was carefully planning to go in all the places where the historical Vlad the Impaler Dracula set foot. Mathew realised these plans and he put everything in this book. He wrote about Vlad’s life and deeds, starting with his birth in Sighișoara and the exiles in Suceava or Budapest; later he visited Vlad’s courts in Târgoviște and Bucharest; he documented the escape from Aref and Vlad’s presumptive tomb on the Snagov Island. It cannot be emphasised enough that this book is not a simple collection of stories, images and facts related to Vlad Dracula, the voivode, and Count Dracula, the vampire. The book tells the story of Mathew Burr’s travels in the footsteps of Vlad Dracula. While some may see it as (another) biography of the mediaeval prince, I recommend reading it as the story of a personal discovery. The rich illustrations (many by the author’s hand) are a good proof. It is a book of great sincerity and by far one of the most complete collections of sources and places personally visited by a Vlad Țepeș / *Dracula* enthusiast.

This book is a dream come true, a piece of virtual reality turned, magically, into reality. When you read it, you will discover Mathew’s world, dreams, and achievements.

Bogdan Popa, Bucharest

Burr, Mathew. *In the Footsteps of the Voivode – An Illustrated History of Vlad Tepeș and The True Story of My Knighting in Transylvania and Travels Throughout Moldavia and Wallachia*. Sand Springs: Grapetree Books, 2014. To order from Mathew directly, you can email him at: matgeuse@yahoo.com.

THE 20 YEARS ANNIVERSARY OF THE TSD CANADA CHAPTER

When the Transylvanian Society of Dracula was founded in 1991, in a country still ravished by dictatorship, having chapters abroad seemed almost like a utopia. As the years went by, this thought came to life, thanks to people who shared our vision and enthusiasm about *Dracula*. Dr. Elisabeth Miller, professor emerita, Memorial University of Newfoundland, was the driving force behind this chapter. Elizabeth Miller, the leading scholar on *Dracula* studies in the world, is also the creator of *The Borgo Post* and of the *Journal of Dracula Studies*, a point of reference for all the enthusiasts and scholars of *Dracula*, vampire studies (history, literature, folklore), and tourism related studies.

At this round anniversary, we would like to thank the TSD Canada chapter (established June 1995!) for its wonderful work – be it newsletters, meetings, academic work, shows and, most of all, for the constant watch on all the *Dracula* related events in the world.

Many thanks! Many happy returns!

For the TSD: Bogdan Popa, Bucharest

MIXED NEWS

HdR

Update about the Dracula Travel Guide

The manuscript has been completed last year, so that it now includes a detailed chapter about Stoker's Dublin; other chapters have been extended or updated as well. John Edgar Browning, editor of *The Forgotten Writings of Bram Stoker* and *Dracula in Visual Media*, among others, has proofread the text. We already have a publishing offer from an American publisher of specialty books, but before accepting the contract, we wanted to probe the market for chances to take this book project out of the specialty niche and reach a broader audience. Project website: www.dractravel.com.

Update about Makt Myrkranna

This manuscript has been completed as well, including the essays. Bloomsbury Publishing (known from the Harry Potter books) showed a strong interest already last year October; today (31 March 2015) I learned that the Editorial Board in London has principally approved of the project, with some budget questions still to be settled. See our website www.powersofdarkness.com to read more about the translation project and see some sample paragraphs.



Elizabeth Miller during a visit to Whitby

How to find The Journal of Dracula Studies?

As some may have noticed, the JDS section on Elizabeth Miller's website has been down due to unforeseen technical problems: The webmaster is making a trip around the world! In near future, Kutztown University will take over the web-hosting. As a provisorium, a mirror index of all articles is available at www.dractravel.com/drc.

The TSD Logo restored as a vector image file

The TSD logo with the sword and dragon is well-known, but alas, Daniela and I were unable to find the original art work. In order to preserve the authorised appearance of the logo, I have restored it as a scalable vector image file (PSD with path, 800 kb), that can be requested from Daniela if needed for TSD activities or publications.