

# DRACULA'S TRUTH CLAIM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

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“Begin at the beginning,” the King said gravely, “and go on till you come to the end: then stop.”

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

Although its name suggests otherwise, the preface of a book is usually written when all of its content has been completed. It is the writer's platform to explain the genesis, the goal, the scope or the special significance of his creation and tell his readers under which angle it should be read. In a very condensed form, it defines the relationship between “work” and “world.” Despite this unique function, several editions of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* novel completely omit its author's foreword.<sup>1</sup> Stoker's preface to the abridged 1901 Icelandic translation resurfaced only in 1986, in *A Bram Stoker Omnibus* edited by Richard Dalby. And among the hundreds of books, essays and articles attempting to analyze the world's best-known piece of fiction I could not find a single one systematically dealing with these two prefaces.<sup>2</sup> Of course, many scholars point to the preface of the English edition to emphasize Stoker's pastiche technique borrowed from Wilkie Collins, and the preface to the Icelandic edition has often been quoted to propose a link between the Count's crimes and those committed by Jack the Ripper.<sup>3</sup> But a step-by-step analysis has not been accomplished yet. In my opinion, the preface is an important key to understanding Stoker's entire *Dracula* enterprise—a key the novelist has hidden in plain sight, like the Invisible Key to the Black Queen's Chamber of Dreams in Roger Vadim's *Barbarella* movie (1968). Maybe this is the reason why it has escaped the attention of *Dracula* experts discussing single aspects of the book, like Stoker's hints to Wallachian history, the geographical sites mentioned or the story's time frame. In this essay, I will try to demonstrate how the one thing fits to the other, and why the novel's tricky tail matches its noble head so well.

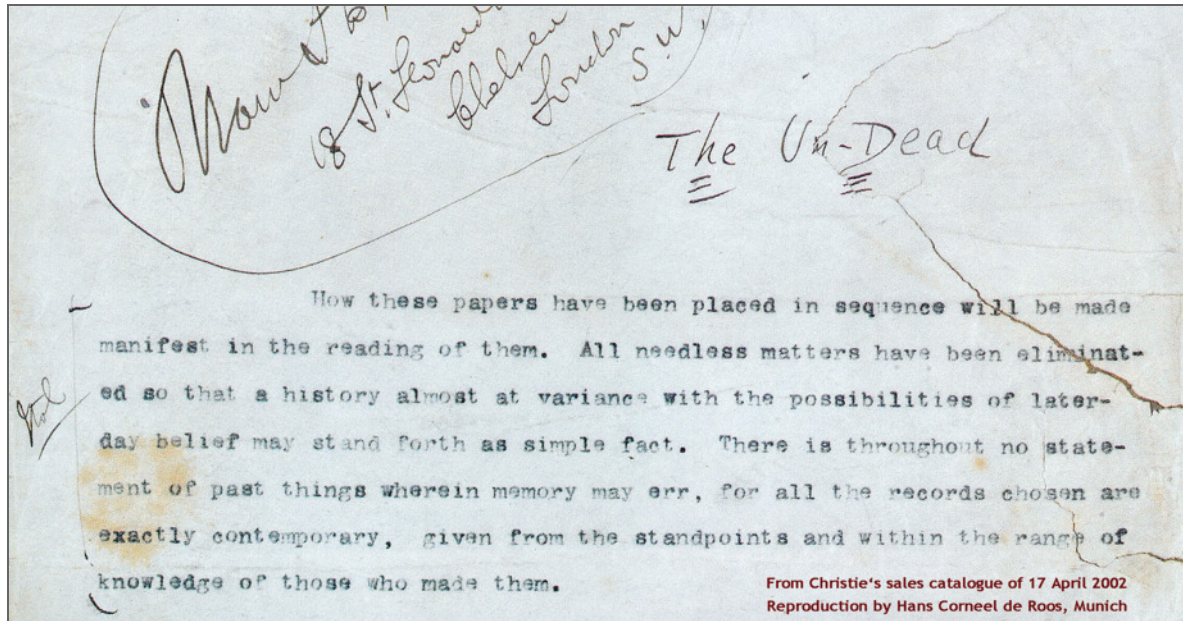


Barbarella (J. Fonda) receiving the Invisible Key from Dildano. Directed by Roger Vadim. © Paramount Pictures, 1968.

<sup>1</sup> For example the American Grosset & Dunlap edition (printed by the Country Life Press, Garden City, New York). A scanned version can be accessed online at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org).

<sup>2</sup> Maxime Leroy, 2006, makes some interesting remarks about Stoker's preface to the Icelandic edition, but does not discuss it as a whole, nor addresses the issues dealt with in this essay. Joel H. Emerson, *Deeper into the Rabbit Hole of Dracula*, dated 1 Febr. 2008 on [www.draculawasframed.blogspot.de](http://www.draculawasframed.blogspot.de), comes closest to a direct questioning.

<sup>3</sup> Most prominently by Robert Eighteen-Bisang, 2005, as mentioned further below.



The preface to the UK edition opens with a seemingly inconspicuous statement:

“How these papers have been placed in sequence will be made manifest in the reading of them.”

This conveys the impression that the author hesitates to mention his own role at all and merely acted as an editor – a notion picked up in the next line:

“All needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of later-day belief may stand forth as simple fact.”

Here it becomes manifest that the narrative to be presented here is at odds with modern views; the conflict between such an incredible story and its purported factual character is explicitly recognized.

The last line confirms the veracity of the single statements adding up to a more or less coherent report:

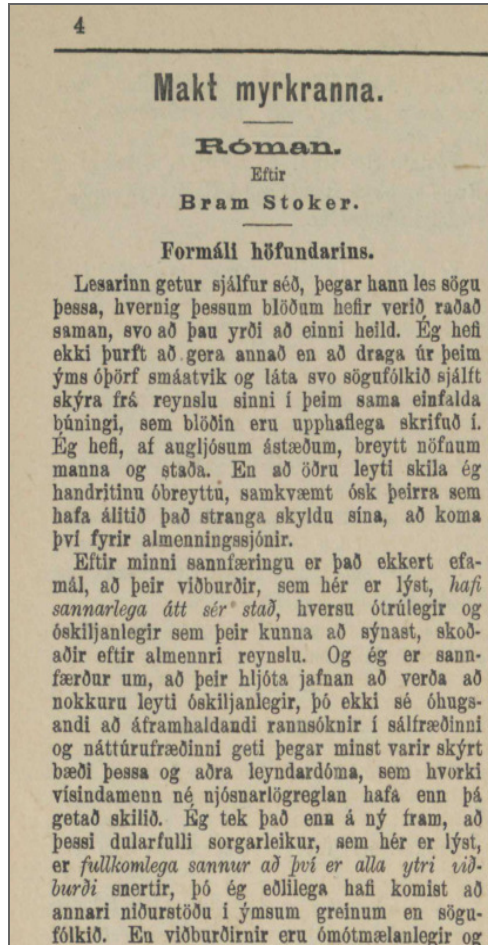
“There is throughout no statement of past things wherein memory may err, for all the records chosen are exactly contemporary, given from the standpoints and within range of knowledge of those who made them.”



Apparently, no omniscient narrator is at work to inform the reader beyond the notes contributed by “those who made them”—an expression which excludes Bram Stoker, since none of the documents that follow bears his name. Thus, the novel is placed in the tradition of the *manuscrit trouvé* – a stylistic device often employed since Cervantes epitomized it in his *Don Quichotte*. It is probably needless to remind *JDS* readers of Edgar A. Poe’s *MS. Found in a Bottle* (1833) or Joseph S. Le Fanu’s story collection *In a Glass Darkly* (1872), including the vampire novella *Carmilla*, which greatly influenced Stoker: all were written in this manner.

all were written in this manner.

Whereas most published novels equally present themselves as truthful stories, they do so without special introduction or truth claims. Only the *manuscrit trouvé*, by its very nature, requires a preface to define its originator as its mere “finder”:



« Le plus souvent, l’argument du manuscrit trouvé est exposé dans un texte liminaire, que ce texte soit appelé préface, ou avertissement, ou avis de l’éditeur – ou qu’il ne porte pas de nom du tout. »<sup>4</sup>

Many writers have used this method to step back from their narrative and entertain their readers with extraordinary and risqué plots. Implausible, gruesome or erotically provocative scenes can be embedded without assuming authorial responsibility for them. However, while writing his preface to the Icelandic version of *Dracula*, Stoker decided to personally warrant the report’s veracity.

This Icelandic adaptation, titled *Makt Myrkranna*, was published for the first time in the Reykjavik periodical *Fjallkonan* of 13 January 1900. *Fjallkonan*’s editor was Valdimar Ásmundsson, who also translated and edited Stoker’s novel. The background of Stoker’s cooperation or maybe friendship with Ásmundsson deserves further research. For an analysis of the Icelandic version, which radically deviates from Stoker’s original plot, I refer to my essay *Makt Myrkranna—Mother of all Dracula Modifications?* in the February 2014 issue of *Letter from Castle Dracula*.

The English-language original of the Icelandic preface, which Stoker must have sent or given to Ásmundsson, has not been found yet. I sent research requests to four different Icelandic archives, and in the Icelandic National and University Archive, an Ásmundsson family archive could actually be located. Unfortunately, I did not contain any letters or publishing contracts between Stoker and Ásmundsson, or an English version of the preface. For the sake of this essay I will quote from the preface as published by Ásmundsson, as re-translated by myself from the Icelandic.<sup>5</sup>

The first lines more or less repeat the shorter preface to the English edition:

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from Christian Angelet, 1990, p. 166. In Poe’s case, already the title provides this explanation.

<sup>5</sup> My translation slightly deviates from the translation published by R. Dalby in *Bram Stoker Journal* #5, 1993. With many thanks to Einar Björn Magnússon (Reykjavik City Library), Ásgeir Jónsson (Reykjavik), and my Icelandic friends Vildís Bo Sørensen, (Tønder, DK) and Hans Águstsson, Mallersdorf. **Update February 2015:** By now, I have made further edits to the translation, which are not appearing here. Moreover, the connection with two Swedish newspaper serializations of 1899-1900 have thrown an entire new light on Stoker’s and Ásmundsson’s role: *Makt myrkranna* turned out to be a (shortened) translation of the serialization of *Mörkrrets makter* in *Aftonbladets Halfvecko-upplaga*. See my recent reports on the matter in *Vampirisme.com*, *TisFris* and the *Philological Bulletin* of the Transilvania University of Braşov.

“Upon reading this story, the reader can see for himself how these pages have been put together to make a logical whole. I had to do no more than excise various superfluous minor events and let so the people involved relate their experiences in the same plain manner in which these papers were originally written. For obvious reasons, I have changed the names of the people and places concerned. But otherwise I leave the manuscript unaltered, in accordance with the wishes of those who have considered it their strict duty to present it to the eyes of the public.”

After this introduction, Stoker puts his own weight behind the story:

“I am convinced that there is no doubt whatever that the events here described *really took place*, however unbelievable and incomprehensible they might appear in the light of common experience.”

Despite an appeal to science, it is spelled out that some of these phenomena will remain inexplicable for ever; the reader is invited to enter the realm of the supernatural, where the rational mind is foredoomed to fail:

“And I am further convinced that they must always remain to some extent incomprehensible, although it is not inconceivable that continuing research in psychology and natural sciences may, in years to come, give logical explanations for such strange happenings which neither scientists nor the secret police have been able to understand yet. I state again that this mysterious tragedy which is here described is *completely true in all its external aspects*,<sup>6</sup> though naturally I have reached a different conclusion on certain points than the people who have put them down on paper.”<sup>7</sup>

For the tenability of the described affairs, it comes in handy that they appear to be part of a collective memory:

“But the events are incontrovertible, and so many people know of them that they cannot be denied. This series of crimes has not passed yet from the people’s memory, this series of crimes, which seem incomprehensible, but appeared to stem from the same root and created in their time as much horror with the public as the infamous murders by Jack the Ripper, which occurred a bit later. Some people still remember the remarkable foreigners who for many seasons<sup>8</sup> on end played a dazzling role in the life of the nobility here in London, and people remember that one of them<sup>9</sup>, at least, disappeared suddenly and in an inexplicable way, without leaving any trace.”

These lines have given rise to speculation if Stoker had incorporated elements of the Whitechapel murders into his vampire tale; I refer to Robert Eighteen-Bisang’s essay here.<sup>10</sup> The member who “disappeared suddenly,” cannot point to Lucy—she died in her bed and ended up in “the tomb of her kin.”

Could it point to the wealthy Texan Quincey Morris, intimate friend of the noble Arthur Holmwood, who vanished during a trip to Transylvania? But then, who are the other “foreigners who for many

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<sup>6</sup> Icelandic: “ytri viðburði,” lit. “outer events” or “external events,” pointing to the events really taking place “as such,” regardless of their interpretation.

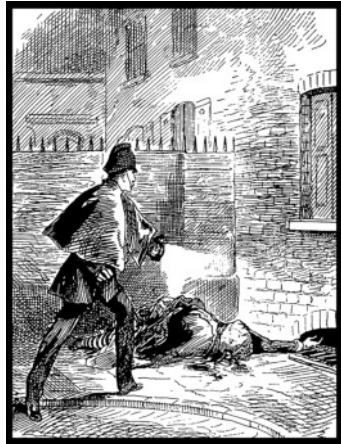
<sup>7</sup> Icelandic: “sögufólkið,” lit. “storytellers,” the people reporting the story.

<sup>8</sup> Icelandic “misseri” (seasons) here means periods of six months each: semesters.

<sup>9</sup> Literally, the Icelandic speaks of “the other” (of a pair): “annar þeirra.” Dalby initially mentions a “group” of foreigners, but the Icelandic text does not specify how many foreigners were involved.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Eighteen-Bisang, 2005.

seasons on end played a dazzling part in the life of the nobility here in London”? The Dutchman Van Helsing entered the stage only shortly before Lucy died and certainly spent no time on aristocratic parties before leading his team to Romania. And what is “this series of crimes” which spread so much horror? The fatalities of Lucy and her mother were covered up by tampering with



Whitechapel murders: “Double event,” discovery of the body of Catherine Eddowes. *The Pictorial News*, 1888.

their death certificates and the deaths of Mr. Swales and Renfield were not publicly connected with the Hillingham demises: Outsiders can hardly have been aware of the interrelations perceived by the “Crew of Light.” As already demonstrated in *Makt Myrkranna*—Mother of all *Dracula* Modifications?, the only logical explanation lies in the fact that the Icelandic preface points to plot elements newly added to the Icelandic narrative: Harker’s Journal hinting at the “Thames Torso Murders” of 1887-1889, commencing more than a year before the Ripper Murders, and to an elitist conspiracy headed by Count Dracula, involving a group of foreign aristocratic diplomats. During the years 1887-1888, the “Thames Mysteries” indeed triggered as much public unrest as the Ripper Murders did later on, and because one of the torso parts was found in Whitechapel, there was much speculation if maybe the murderer was identical in both series.

The public awareness which indeed can be assumed in the Icelandic story helps boost the credibility of the principal witnesses, introduced as Stoker’s personal friends – people of high moral standing:

“All the people who have willingly or unwillingly played a part in this remarkable story are known generally and well respected. Both Jonathan Harker and his wife (who is an extraordinary woman<sup>11</sup>) and Dr. Seward are my friends and have been so for many years, and I have never doubted that they were telling the truth; and the highly regarded scientist, who appears here under a pseudonym, is also too famous all over the educated world for his real name, which I have preferred not to mention, to be hidden, least of all from those<sup>12</sup> who from experience have learned to value and respect his genius and qualities, though they do not more adhere to his view on life than I do.”

As a conclusion, Stoker quotes Hamlet’s words to Horatio:

“But in our days it ought to be clear to all serious-thinking men that  
‘there are more things in heaven and earth  
than are dreamt of in your philosophy.’”

The preface closes with “London, \_\_\_\_ Street, August 1898” and Stoker’s initials B. S., indicating that he assumes authorial responsibility at least for these introductory lines.\*

<sup>11</sup> Icelandic: “valkvendi,” from “val” (choice) and “kvendi” (wife): “the best woman a man could wish for.”

<sup>12</sup> Meaning that the scientist is so famous that his real name cannot be hidden, especially not from those who...

\* **Update Febr. 2015:** Due to new insights about the links with the Swedish version of *Dracula*, the role of Bram Stoker cannot be guessed anymore from the signature used in the Icelandic text. See my recent reports on the issue.

The only backdoor left open is that Stoker maintains to have “reached a different conclusion on certain points than the people who have put them down on paper” and does not agree with Van Helsing’s “views on life”—although Van Helsing’s critique of Seward’s narrow opinions (Chapter 14, Seward’s Diary of 26 September) seems to be completely in tune with Stoker’s own words, that some events—despite the progress of science—must to some extent remain incomprehensible forever:

“Then tell me, for I am a student of the brain, how you accept hypnotism and reject the thought reading. Let me tell you, my friend, that there are things done today in electrical science which would have been deemed unholy by the very man who discovered electricity, who would themselves not so long before been burned as wizards. There are always mysteries in life. Why was it that Methuselah lived nine hundred years, and “Old Parr” one hundred and sixty-nine, and yet that poor Lucy, with four men’s blood in her poor veins, could not live even one day?”



Lucy as “Bloofer Lady,” from *The Ultimate Dracula*, 2012.

But Stoker merely claims the incidents to be true in their “external respects”—does this leave any room for an alternative interpretation of their inner nature? Would it be possible that Stoker’s heroes were victims of their own imagination and saw vampires where there were none? Jonathan Harker’s Journal in Chapters 1-3 indeed may have been the product of brain fever, as he later tends to believe himself.<sup>13</sup> But not later than in Chapter 16, when Van Helsing and three seasoned men see Lucy, properly buried before, walk around the graveyard, “the lips (...) crimson with fresh blood,” “growling over (the child) as a dog growls over a bone” and “pass through the interstice where scarce a knife blade could have gone,” the “external respects” of these events merge with their supernatural character as their only possible explanation.<sup>14</sup>

Not *three* but *four* times Stoker swears to the truthfulness of the announced story in this Icelandic preface. The italics shown in the quotes (“*really took place*” and “*is completely true in all its external aspects*”) stress the same point even more—they appeared in the original publication in *Fjallkonan* (see text fragment on p. 3 of this essay), but were not reproduced in the 1901 book. Having maneuvered himself in a position where the logically impossible must be explicated as a matter of fact, the author sees himself forced to add abundant detail to make the scenes look authentic. Again, this procedure is not unusual in fiction—we just have to look at the novels by Dan Brown and movies such as *Abraham Lincoln*, *Vampire Hunter* (2012), to name just a few examples, to see modern authors incorporate large amounts of historical information in their fantasy scenarios. But whereas Hollywood movies usually end with the disclaimer that any resemblance to persons and events is “purely coincidental and unintended,” Stoker’s Icelandic preface merely states:

“For obvious reasons, I have changed the names of the people and places concerned.”

<sup>13</sup> See Crişan, 2013, pp. 254ff, for a discussion of Harker’s inner conflicts and fears.

<sup>14</sup> Already in Chapter 15, Seward reported how Lucy must have escaped from a sealed and intact leaden case, but later voluntarily returned to it: A behavior ruling out the possibility of a “normal” premature burial.

Whatever these “obvious reasons” may be, the novelist clings to his claim of an authentic report, but renders it immune to the charge of inaccuracy by openly “admitting” his manipulations. This way, the entire novel becomes a hermetically closed construction, precluding the possibility of verification by its readers. Checking the Exeter telephone book or an Ordnance Survey map of Purfleet must remain fruitless. Only the names of the London inns and hotels have not been altered: Visiting *The Spaniards* or *Jack Straw's Castle* would not be helpful anyway in our search for an elderly Dutch physician with bulging forehead and his younger British colleague, who enjoyed a single meal there.



*The Spaniards* inn in Hampstead during Stoker's days. Courtesy Nigel, [www.hampsteadheath.net](http://www.hampsteadheath.net)

Stoker's *caveat* has not stopped his fans from trying to reconstruct the historical, geographical and biographical matrix behind *Dracula*, with many impressive results, like Art Ronnie's article in the *Los Angeles Times* (1973) about the location of Count de Ville's Piccadilly town house (later supplemented by Bernard Davies) or Philip Temple's article in the *Times Literary Supplement* (1983) about St. Mary's Churchyard in Hendon figuring as “Kingstead.” The more astonishing is the laxity with which Professors McNally and Florescu flatly equated Stoker's anti-hero with the historical Vlad III Dracula. They simply assumed that the writer, through Vambéry or other sources, had intimate knowledge about the Impaler's reputation as an exceptionally bloodthirsty tyrant. Since 1997, their negligence has been exposed by Elizabeth Miller's untiring pen, arguing that Stoker, as far as we can see from the sources he consulted, was largely uninformed about this particular Voivode. What started as “lone voice crying in the wilderness,” after fifteen years has become accepted wisdom among serious *Dracula* scholars.<sup>15</sup> By way of counterweight to the McNally & Florescu thesis, it has become fashionable to point out inconsistencies and lacunae in the novel's text, at the same time excusing them because Stoker was writing fiction after all, not a history textbook. This justified impulse to contradict the frivolous “Drac = Vlad” formula gradually has led to a new axiom which in turn blocks the sight to some of the finer subtleties of Stoker's penmanship: Some (but not all) of the gaps and obscurities in *Dracula* may better be explained from the author's premeditated strategy than from his lack of preparation. As shown in *The Ultimate Dracula*, this seems to apply in at least three central questions: The lifetime identity of the Count, the location of his Castle and the novel's time frame.

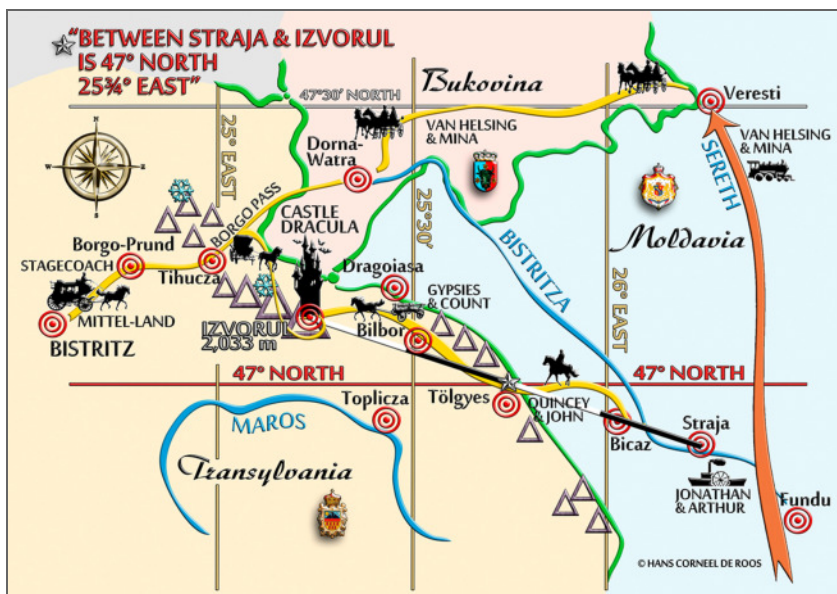
For readers not yet familiar with these findings, it may suffice to say here that the decisive clue about Count Dracula's personal past can be found in Chapter 25 of the novel. Here Van Helsing and Mina recognize the fiend as “that other” of the Dracula “race,” living “in a later age” than the first-mentioned Dracula ruler whom we, Wilkinson's book in hand, can easily identify as Vlad III—although Wilkinson does not use this name. After Vlad III only a few rulers from the Drăculești line

<sup>15</sup> “Interview with the Vampire Queen: Elizabeth Miller,” in *Frontline World*, October 2002, at [www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/romania/miller.html](http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/romania/miller.html) (Retrieved at 12 March 2012).

actually battled with the Turks and of these, only Michael the Brave (1558-1601) led a successful military campaign south of the Danube, reaching Adrianople in 1595. Stoker's research notes confirm that he had acknowledged Wilkinson's information about Michael. The third Voivode the writer took notes on, Constantine Brancovano, was not from the Drăculești family and never attacked the Ottomans.<sup>16</sup> This leaves us with Michael the Brave as the only plausible candidate Stoker may have had in mind for "that other," although he ostensibly chose not to introduce him to his readers by name.



Similarly, the route to Castle Dracula can almost completely be reconstructed from the descriptions in the novel, although the writer went to great lengths to obfuscate the footsteps of his characters by snow storms and "sleep traveling" periods. From the first chapters we know that Harker left the Borgo Pass in the Count's calèche around midnight in south-east direction and arrived well before dawn (5:30 a.m.), with enough time for a "hasty toilet," a meal of roasted chicken and some small talk with his host: Before arriving, there must have been, four hours of racing through the dark, with a few breaks for the driver to inspect the gold at the blue flames. This trip must have brought him well into the Călimani Mountains, near the border between Transylvania and Moldavia. Mina Harker's Journal of 6 November teaches us that from a vantage point near the Castle, she was able



to see the Bistrița River winding its way through the Moldavian plains: She and the Professor must have been standing on the eastern ridge of the Kelemen caldera, the remains of Europe's largest extinct volcano, marked by the peaks of the Rețișo, the Izvorul and the Cserbük. From Chapter 26, Harker's Journal of 30 October, we know that he and Arthur, following the Slovaks with the Count's box by steam launch, hoped to overhaul them before Straja because they

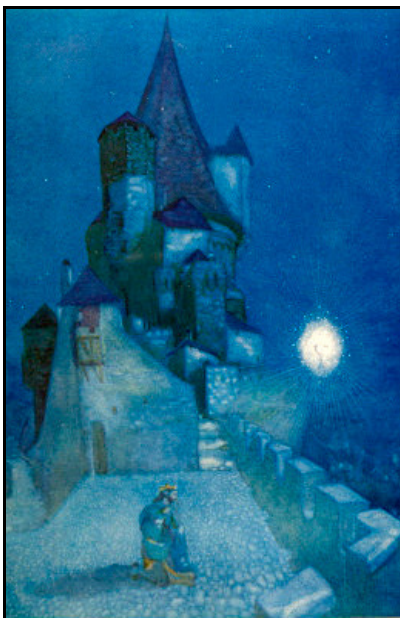
"took it, that somewhere about the 47<sup>th</sup> degree, north latitude, would be the place chosen for crossing the country between the river and the Carpathians." If we add that Mina and the Professor, after mainly travelling in south-east direction, finally reached the Castle via a loop leading them West again, the Izvorul peak stands out as the most suitable choice for the Castle's location. However, only Stoker's research notes provide final certainty. With regard to the chase along the Bistritza River through Moldavia Stoker noted: "Between Strasha [Strascha or Straja – HdR] and Isvorul is 47 E Long, 25 ¾ N Lat."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Eighteen Bisang/Miller, 2008, pp. 244ff, Rosenbach # 71 & 72 (EL3.S874d MS in Rosenbach Museum & Library).



After correcting Stoker's commutation of Longitude and Latitude, we find the Tulghe Pass (Hung. Tölgyes) as the point at the "47<sup>th</sup> degree, north latitude" where the Count's men, leaving the Bistritza River at Straja, would cross the Carpathians, obviously heading for... the Kelemen Izvorul.<sup>18</sup>

Obviously, the novelist knew both the name and the precise coordinates of the empty mountain top which he had picked as the location of the Vampire's fictitious residence. But just as evidently, he preferred not to divulge it to his readers; his research notes, of course, were never meant to be published. These circumstances led me to the conclusion that his descriptive vagueness in some instances is mere camouflage. In other cases, quite ironically, the author's very accuracy has been dismissed as imprecision by his annotators: Leonard Wolf, Clive Leatherdale and Leslie Klinger all fail to recognize that Harker's remark about the Szgany crossing over from the Bistritza River to the Count's homeland around the 47° Parallel was a conscientious reflection of the geographical framework Stoker had devised.<sup>19</sup>



Castle Dracula: Can only be found by guidance, like the Grail Castle.  
Drawing: William Pogány, 1912.

Similarly, none of the essayists trying to specify the Vampire's "Otherness" apparently realized that in Stoker's text the bloodsucker literally *is* "that other": a second member of the Dracula dynasty, to be distinguished from the first one mentioned by the Count in his talk with Harker. Though Van Helsing inflates his conversation with Mina about the habits of the Count's criminal mind by metaphorical remarks about his "duck thought" becoming "a big swan thought that sail nobly on big wings," it still is amazing that another "queer Dutchman" was needed to notice, 115 years after the fact, that Stoker disclosed—and at the same time concealed—the Count's lifetime identity in these very paragraphs. Technically speaking, there was no need at all to introduce a second Dracula family member to the story—within the Millerian paradigm, the fiction writer Stoker could simply have attributed the character qualities of the second warrior to the first one.<sup>20</sup> Thus we must assume that this duplexity, already laid out in Chapter 3, was willfully designed to create the mere *illusion* of a historical

reference, eluding us the very moment we try to pin it down. Stoker must have disliked the idea that his readers would look up the life of his "Vampire Voivode" in a book on Romanian history, just like the vision of one of his critics climbing all the way up to the top of the Izvorul, panting and sweating, only to castigate the absence of a castle there, must have displeased him.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Bram Stoker, *Dracula, Notes and Outline*, ca. 1890 - ca. 1896, p. 33b (detail), EL3.S874d MS Rosenbach Museum & Library, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>18</sup> In publications from Stoker's times, the spellings "Isvorul" and "Izvorul" were used interchangeably.

<sup>19</sup> Clive Leatherdale, 1998, p. 484, footnote 127; Leonard Wolf, 1993, p. 417, footnote 29; p. 420, footnote 35; p. 421, footnote 38, p. 423, footnote 41; Leslie Klinger, 2008, 471 and 475, route mark-ups on 1896 Baedeker map.

<sup>20</sup> "A fictional character can have any history his creator wishes to endow." Elizabeth Miller about the Count, 2006, p. 172.

<sup>21</sup> English books on Romanian history *did* exist in Stoker's days; James Samuelson's *Roumania – Past and Present* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co, 1882) would have been a logical choice. If we had any evidence that Stoker had



Dutch literary critic Professor Kees Fens. Photo: © Vincent Mentzel (NRC)

During my high school years in Amsterdam, now four decades ago, “close reading” was an important part of the languages curriculum; in Holland, the literary critic Kees Fens (1929-2008) was celebrated for his empathic analysis. The essence of his approach was that an author’s intentions must be understood from what he *writes*, not from general psychological assumptions or associations bubbling up in the reviewer’s mind. Taking Stoker serious as an author means to assume, that this man, with a Trinity College degree and a barrister’s title in his pocket, took conscious decisions which information to include in his novel, and which to omit. The Bram Stoker Centenary Symposium in London-Hampstead, April 2012, showed that the focus of academic *Dracula* research by now has shifted to sub-textual interpretation or modes of popular reception and imitation. But, before we concentrate on what others make of *Dracula* or what is written *between* the lines, we should at least understand what Stoker wrote *in* the lines. The Irishman was a wordsmith and from this perspective, his work should be approached in the first place—not from that of a psycho-analyst.

While the conceptual topics conferred here require an additional, abstract reflection of Stoker’s literary goals and methods, some old disputes can be resolved quite painlessly by looking at his actual sources, instead of any further facts he *might* have known and hinted at. Partly in reaction to McNally & Florescu, for example, several authors have hypothesized that the Count, when talking about the first ruler “who as Voïviode crossed the Danube and beat the Turk on his own ground” but was betrayed by “his own unworthy brother, (who) when he had fallen, sold his people to the Turk,” was pointing to János Hunyadi instead of Vlad III.<sup>22</sup> Comparing Stoker’s research notes and the novel’s text to William Wilkinson’s book (1820) quickly shows that such advances are completely pointless.<sup>23</sup> In this case, Stoker copied Wilkinson’s information almost word for word, while the latter without doubt referred to Vlad III, not to Hunyadi, whom he had discussed earlier. It makes no sense to replace McNally’s & Florescu’s speculations by even more far-fetched postulations when Stoker’s *modus operandi* is that clear and simple; the real cover-up took place somewhere else.




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read it, this would mean that he would have been better informed on Vlad III Dracula and especially Michael the Brave than hitherto assumed.

<sup>22</sup> Leslie Klinger, 2008, p. 69f, notes 26 and 27, presents us this theory again, originally advocated by Grigore Nandris (1966), Gabriel Ronay (1974), Leonard Wolf (1975) and Séan Manchester (1985).

<sup>23</sup> See also Miller’s critique of Manchester in her first edition of *Dracula – Sense & Nonsense*, 2000, p. 111. For a complete text comparison and historical background, see my essay *Stoker’s Vampire Trap*, LiUEP, 19 March 2012.

Likewise, in the case of the Scholomance, it is easier to trace Stoker's description back to Emily Gerard's writings than to conjecture that he may have heard of the "Solomonari" and their alleged ceremonial gatherings at Solomon's Rocks, which, in order to fit the (erroneous) argument, must be removed more than 100 km from Braşov to Bâlea Lac!<sup>24</sup> Instead of diving into the depths of Romanian folklore, it would have sufficed to read *The Land beyond the Forest* (1888), in which Gerard describes her excursion to "the Devil's cauldron" in agreeable detail—enough to re-enact her planned walk to the origins of the Cibin River and hear the myths she connected to the "Jäser See" from the mouth of a member of the regional Mountain Police who—speaking neither English nor German—surely never had heard of her book. Rather than double-checking Gerard's findings, Stoker tacitly relied on her article *Transylvanian Superstitions* in *The Nineteenth Century* (1885) and baptized the unnamed lake depicted there "Lake Hermanstadt."<sup>25</sup> Lucky for Stoker and for us, Gerard had done her homework well and even the warnings of the local people, portrayed as credulous, were—and still are—not far removed from to the truth: When I arrived at Iezerul Mare, the distant roll of thunder was heard and our guide urged us not to spend too much time on the Cindrel peak: three months earlier, a German tourist had been killed by lightning nearby.



Carfax complex with the medieval Saxon Tower in the town centre of Oxford, around 1890. On the left the Boffin's Bakery. Antique postcard, photographer and publisher unknown. Source: [www.oxfordhistory.org.uk](http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk)

A third example is the origin of the Carfax estate described by Jonathan Harker in his dealings with his uncanny patron, its buyer. Several authors have attempted to find a similar edifice in Purfleet.<sup>26</sup> In my opinion, though, Stoker imported the whole complex, medieval tower "with only a few windows high up," massive walls, church and a mismatched succession of architecture included, directly from Oxford. Since the late 1880's, his own son Noel was educated at an Oxford boarding school, so that we may safely assume that the writer was familiar with the town's landmark—the Carfax building at the city center's main crossroad.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Leslie Klinger, 2008, pp. 342f, note 45, referring to his communication with Nicolae Paduraru, co-founder of *The Transylvanian Society of Dracula*.

<sup>25</sup> Stoker even copied the spelling error "Hermanstadt" from Gerard's article: "A small lake, immeasurably deep, lying high up among the mountains to the south of Hermanstadt, is supposed to be the cauldron where is brewed the thunder, and in fair weather the dragon sleeps beneath the waters." For more details see the upcoming *Travel Guide*.

<sup>26</sup> See Elizabeth Miller, 2006, pp. 144ff.

<sup>27</sup> Information about Noel's boarding school derived from an unpublished manuscript by Dacre Stoker. Klinger, 2008, p. 55f, note 56, notes the correct etymological connection with "quadrafu[r]cus," but fails to recognize the similarity of

Simple and complex strategies of reference and dissimulation thus peacefully co-exist in *Dracula* and only profound research and concentrated reading can help us to tell one from the other.<sup>28</sup> All of these strategies, however, seem to fit in the larger pattern of Stoker's paradox ambitions as outlined in the discussed prefaces. Here the novelist, in his own words, addresses the fundamental conflict between fact and fiction, his persistent claim of truthfulness leading to an inevitable dilemma. Providing an elaborate backdrop, proper train time tables included, adds to the believability of an unlikely plot and thus enhances the dramatic appeal and commercial success of the book. Vital names and places, however, had to be encoded, blurred or simply left out, to avoid closer examination and verification. With his "factual supernatural story" Stoker attempted to create an oxymoron. Only in the light of this essentially impossible goal may we recognize some seemingly mindless "errors" as part of an intelligent scheme. The time frame of the novel, for instance, has controversially been debated, without satisfactory result. Elizabeth Miller maintains that Stoker intended the novel to take place in 1893, the year in which Charcot deceased, the *Westminster Gazette* was founded and the term "New Woman" was coined. Moreover, Stoker used a calendar book to plot his story; for 1893, the weekdays seamlessly correspond to the dates.<sup>29</sup> In Harker's addendum however, we find the remark: "Seven years ago, we all went through the flames." For a book published in 1897, the action thus must be set in 1890 or earlier. The typeset manuscript inspected by Leslie Klinger even states "Eleven years ago."<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, Klinger pleads for an early year of action—but has difficulties to explain the occurrence of technical gear appearing only after 1890, such as the portable typewriter. It makes no sense to choose between either Miller's or Klinger's position, because neither is completely compatible with the text. Instead, we may deduce that Stoker, skilled in mental arithmetic, was aware of these internal contradictions and intended to leave his readers in the dark. The very fact that "eleven" could easily be replaced by "seven" shortly before finalizing the manuscript, without completely rewriting it, implies that Stoker did not want to synchronize his plot with external events in an obvious way.



In the "Three Owls" *Dracula* edition we find the subhead *A Mystery Story*.<sup>31</sup> Although I could not establish yet whether this addition had been created by the publisher or by the author himself, it

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Stoker's fictitious Carfax to the Oxford model. See *The Ultimate Dracula*, 2012, p. 42, footnote 79.

<sup>28</sup> As I discovered, Arthur's surname "Holmwood" probably is derived from the village of Holmwood, near Godalming; the surname "Singleton" (occurring only in the Notes) from Mary Singleton (Mary Montgomerie Currie née Lamb, 1843–1905, pen name "Violet Fane"). But even the most meticulous research will sometimes fail to lead to definitive results, because we cannot read Stoker's mind. The true identity of Van Helsing, for example, to whom Stoker dedicates an extra line in his preface to the Icelandic edition, is extremely hard to establish. I refer to my article in the magazine *De Parelduiker* of Oct. 2012 about the possible role of the Dutch psychiatrists Drs. Albert W. Van Renterghem and Frederik van Eeden, who founded a celebrated clinic for hypnotic treatment in Amsterdam in 1887.

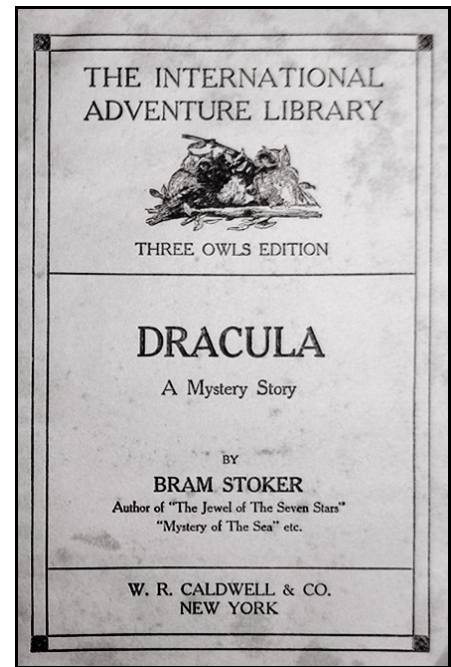
<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Miller, 2006, pp. 86ff.

<sup>30</sup> Leslie Klinger, 2008, p. 500, note 56 and Appendix 2, *The Dating of Dracula*, pp. 57 ff.

<sup>31</sup> W. R. Caldwell & Co, New York ca. 1909-1910, International Adventure Library. With many thanks to Paul S. McAlduff, Managing Editor of [www.bramstoker.org](http://www.bramstoker.org), for identifying this edition and providing pictures of it.

fittingly illustrates the nature of Stoker's endeavor.<sup>32</sup> In *The Forgotten Writings of Bram Stoker*, edited by John Edgar Browning, we find another, much shorter "mystery story," published in the Boston Sunday Herald in 1893: "Old Hoggen: A Mystery." In the tradition of Edgar A. Poe, an anonymous narrator reports about a wild adventure involving a pair of crabs and a corpse falling apart. Even after newspaper reports have confirmed that he has not been dreaming, in his epilogue the protagonist hesitates to accept his memories as real. In a likewise manner, the *Dracula* narrative oscillates between feverish imagination and written testimony, the objectivity of which collapses only at the very end—in *cauda venenum*—, in Harker's post-script note already mentioned:

"We were struck with the fact, that in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document. Nothing but a mass of typewriting, except the later notebooks of Mina and Seward and myself, and Van Helsing's memorandum. We could hardly ask any one, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story. Van Helsing summed it all up as he said, with our boy on his knee. "We want no proofs. We ask none to believe us!"



With this final disclaimer, Stoker skillfully closes his circle. What in the preface has been announced as solid and irrefutable fact and in the whole novel has been propped up by elaborate depictions of local traditions, costumes, sayings and even cooking recipes, in the epilogue suddenly volatilizes.<sup>33</sup> The reader is left with an unseizable phantom. Even if science proves that it cannot exist, it may come back to haunt us in our dreams...



<sup>32</sup> Paul S. McAlduff points to the fact that R. W. Caldwell published several other suspense novels with the very same tag line (email communication with Paul S. McAlduff of 27-28 December 2013). David J. Skal confirmed to me that the US copyright to *Dracula* was only questioned during negotiations between Florence Stoker and Universal Pictures for the sequel movie *Dracula's Daughter* in the 1930's, so that there is no reason to assume that Bram Stoker's communication with Caldwell was disrupted (email communication with David J. Skal of 29 December 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Already the *Washington Times* of 21 January 1900 commented: "One wonders if the characters themselves did not feel in after years as if the whole thing had been a miasmatic vision of delirium and the last chapter hints that they did." Quoted from [www.bramstokerestate.com/Dracula-Serial-Bram-Stoker-Estate-Washington-Times.html](http://www.bramstokerestate.com/Dracula-Serial-Bram-Stoker-Estate-Washington-Times.html). See also Andrew Elfenbein, *Dracula, A Longman Cultural Edition*, London: Pearson-Longman, 2010, p. 405.

### **My further publications:**

For interested readers, I refer to my following publications. PDF versions of my articles can be emailed on request. Please feel free to contact me at [deroos@dractravel.com](mailto:deroos@dractravel.com).

- “Castle Dracula – Its Exact Location reconstructed from Stoker’s Novel, his Research Notes and Contemporary Maps.” Published 7 February 2012 by Linköping University Electronic Press, Sweden.
- “Bram Stoker’s Vampire Trap – Vlad the Impaler and his Nameless Double.” Published 19 March 2012 by Linköping University Electronic Press, Sweden.
- *The Ultimate Dracula*. Munich: Moonlake Editions UG, April 2012, ISBN: 978-3943559002.
- “Heeft de Vampierbestrijder uit Bram Stoker’s Dracula echt bestaan? De Amsterdamse psychiater Albert van Renterghem en de hypnose.” Published in the Dutch literary magazine *De Parelduiker*, October 2012.
- “Fact & Fiction in Bram Stoker’s Dracula – Time for a New Paradigm.” Special 2013 Christmas issue of *Letter from Castle Dracula*, the official news bulletin of *The Transylvanian Society of Dracula*.
- “Makt Myrkranna – Mother of all Dracula Modifications?” Special Icelandic issue of *Letter from Castle Dracula*, the official news bulletin of *The Transylvanian Society of Dracula*, 4 February 2014.
- “Bram Stoker’s Original Preface to Dracula Revealed?” Special Easter issue of *Letter from Castle Dracula*, the official news bulletin of *The Transylvanian Society of Dracula*, 18 April 2014.
- *Dracula Bram Stoker Travel Guide* – planned travel book about locations related to the *Dracula* novel, together with Dacre Stoker. Project Website: [www.dractravel.com](http://www.dractravel.com).

### **Used Images:**

All images used in this essay are believed to be in the public domain, except for my screenshot from *Barbarella*, my photo of Lucy as “Bloofer Lady,” my diagram explaining the location of Castle Dracula, the portrait of Kees Fens by Vincent Mentzel and my mark-ups on the Habsburg map showing the location of the Scholomance. According to the US “Fair Use” Doctrine, the use of copyrighted images with proper indication of their sources is allowed for reasons of non-commercial scientific review, criticism and quotation.

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