

## “HANS CORNEEL DE ROOS BY HANS CORNEEL DE ROOS”

Interview with [Andreas Axikerzus Sahjaza](#) for *Strigoi Rede Vampyrica Magazine*, Primavera 2021

**Please, noble friend, present yourself and tell us how *Dracula* and Vampires entered your life and led you to realize such great discoveries in the academics field as you did!**

I saw Francis Coppola's movie *Bram Stoker's Dracula* in Munich in 1993 and I was very impressed with it. I did not follow up with this fascination until 2010 though, when I met a young model from Sweden during an exhibition in Austria. She wanted to do a photo project about a Gothic-romantic subject from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, so we talked about *The Swan Princess* and about *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Finally, we turned to *Dracula*, with the idea to photograph her in the role of Mina Harker. Initially, only ten scenes or so were planned. But she proved to be so talented and we had so much fun in realizing these scenes, that the project was expanded to create a complete photo story version of *Dracula*. With my studio team, we realized more than 40 scenes in the end, with young actors and models from all over Europe. Of course, I wanted to publish the series, and negotiated with art publishers such as Taschen in Cologne – they were very interested, but did not follow through, alas. I then decided to establish my own publishing company, Moonlake Editions, and create the book myself. First I wrote an introduction, then I wanted to add some extra pictures, such as a map showing the location of Castle Dracula. But it turned out that there hardly was any serious research into this question, and that the few articles about it contained some obvious mistakes. So, I tried to find out the exact place myself and spent three months at the big computer screen with digitized maps of Transylvania from the Habsburg era. Step by step, I was able to reconstruct the location from the text of the novel. And as a big surprise, I found my findings confirmed by Bram Stoker's own notes. That was my entrance ticket to the world of *Dracula* Studies. I joined the Bram Stoker Centenary Conference in London in April 2012 with a stack of my books in my suitcase, and met with Elizabeth Miller, Dacre Stoker, Clive Leatherdale, William Hughes from Bath Spa University, and Marius Crişan from Timișoara. The rest is history, more or less.

**What are the Power of Darkness? You created the Iceland translation to English, did you realize this all alone or did you have some support? Tell us a bit more about this amazing topic.**

*Powers of Darkness* was first presented to the international community of *Dracula* fans in 1986 by Richard Dalby, as the first translation of *Dracula* into a foreign language, Icelandic. Dalby published the Icelandic preface in a translation by Joel Emerson. This preface caused a lot of excitement among scholars, because it mentioned the crimes of Jack the Ripper, and announced that these crimes would show up in the novel “a little later.” Thus, people started to think that these murders must also be described in Stoker's original English publication of *Dracula*, perhaps in an encoded form. Some authors even believed that Stoker must have possessed confidential information about the Ripper's true identity. Alas, Dalby did not have the rest of the Icelandic text translated, and the translation of the preface by Emerson contained some errors: The Icelandic text did not say that the Ripper crimes would **appear in the novel** some time later, but that they had **happened** some time later than another series of unsolved crimes – probably, the Thames Torso Murders were meant, that started in 1887 already. I stumbled over this when I was preparing an article about Stoker's “truth claim” as worded in this Icelandic preface. Because I wanted to check if the Dalby/Emerson translation was correct, I started looking for the original Icelandic text, and in January 2014 discovered that *Powers of Darkness* had been serialized in an Icelandic newspaper in 1900-1901, *before* it was published as a book in August 1901. Studying the complete Icelandic text, I noticed that it was no “abridged translation” of *Dracula* 1897 at all, but a completely new story, with new characters and another ending. For translating and learning Icelandic “on the fly,” I had fantastic help from 25 native Icelandic speakers whom I found through Facebook. The final decisions remained mine, however. Only after the publication of *Powers of Darkness* (New York: Overlook/Abrams, February 2017), I learned that the Icelandic text in fact was a translation from a Swedish version that had been published in 1899 already.

**What are the principal differences between the Icelandic version and the Swedish versions? And how did *Power of Darkness* remain hidden to the great world?**

The Swedish serializations appeared somewhat earlier than the Icelandic one. One is double as long as the Icelandic version, but still shorter than *Dracula*. The other version is even longer than *Dracula*, with ca. 270,000 words. This means that both versions contain more details than the Icelandic text. Only in the Icelandic version, however, we find references to the Icelandic sagas, instead of to European romantic operas and fairy tales. The longest of the Swedish versions also uses the diary style of *Dracula* throughout the novel, while the shorter variant switches to a conventional narrative style after Harker's adventures in Transylvania. This first (Transylvanian) part is completely identical for both Swedish variants.

The Icelandic version remained hidden from the big world because no *Dracula* scholar outside Iceland except Dalby ever found the complete text – and Dalby did not take the trouble to have it translated, because he thought it was only an abridged translation. And no one outside Sweden ever heard of the Swedish variants, while the few Swedish scholars who were familiar with it did not think it special enough to write about it. Only after the publication of my book *Powers of Darkness*, a Swedish fantasy specialist, Rickard Berghorn, jumped the bandwagon.

**You are referenced as the discover of the true locations of the Scholomance and also of Castle Dracula from Stoker's novel. Please tell us more about these two amazing places of dark literary imagination!**

In short, you can find these locations on old military maps of the Habsburg Empire, if you follow the descriptions given by Emily Gerard in *The Land Beyond the Forest* (1888) and by Bram Stoker in *Dracula* (1897). Gerard made a trip in the direction of a hidden mountain lake in the Cindrel Mountains near Hermannstadt – I later visited that lake, and the local people gave me exactly the same warnings as quoted by her: not to throw stones into the lake, because a dragon would sleep under the surface, that would be responsible for storms, flashes and thunder. The decisive clue for me was that Gerard used the name “Jäeser See,” as if it were the proper name of the lake. I could not find it on any map, but then I found out that “Jezer” or “Iezer” is the Romanian word for any glacier lake high up in the mountains. The proper name of the lake turned out to be “Iezerul Mare” (Big Lake), just underneath the top of Mount Cindrel. I will describe the precise route in my upcoming *Dracula Travel Guide*. As for Castle Dracula, it cost me many sleepless nights to find the exact area, based on the clues left by Harker and Van Helsing. Finally, I found an obscure scribble in Stoker's own notes for *Dracula*, that confirmed that he had Mount Izvorul in the Călimani Mountains in mind. You can find all the details in an essay that you can download for free from the ARCHIVE page of my website [www.vampvault.jimdofree.com](http://www.vampvault.jimdofree.com). Here you also find all my other research.

**You realized the amazing Children of the Night Dracula Congress, please tell us a bit more of this amazing online event! Which of your favorite topics were discussed and presented at the meetings? And I heard through the grapevine that many Brazilian researchers took part in the event of April 2021, may you talk a bit more about this?**

The basis for this congress series was laid by organizing the Fourth World Dracula Congress in Dublin in October 2016, together with Magda Grabias from Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland. Here we already had Marcia Helosia Amarante Gonçalves as a speaker from Brazil.

After the Dublin Congress, the Transylvanian Society of *Dracula* withdrew from organizing further conferences in Europe, so Magda and I teamed up with Florin Nechita from Transilvania University of Braşov in Romania. In October 2018, we had Yuri Garcia as a speaker. In April 2021, Yuri joined us again; Ana Resende from Rio de Janeiro and Roberto Cavalcante Rodrigues from São Paulo participated as speakers as well. All three had very interesting contributions, about the transposition of *Dracula* to other media, about a “bloody” short story by Júlia Lopes de Almeida, and about the costumes made by Eiko Ishioka for Coppola's *Dracula* 1992 movie. Roberto even won the Golden Bat Award for “Most Original Research.” You can find more information about these events on our congress platform [www.dracongress.jimdofree.com](http://www.dracongress.jimdofree.com).