

Marius – Mircea CRIȘAN

# Impactul unui mit: Dracula și reprezentarea ficțională a spațiului românesc



Copyright © 2013, **Editura Pro Universitaria**

Toate drepturile asupra prezentei ediții aparțin  
**Editurii Pro Universitaria**

Nicio parte din acest volum nu poate fi copiată fără acordul scris al  
**Editurii Pro Universitaria**

**Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României**

**CRIȘAN, MARIUS MIRCEA**

**Impactul unui mit : Dracula și reprezentarea  
ficțională a spațiului românesc / Marius-Mircea**

Crișan. - București : Pro Universitaria, 2013

Bibliogr.

ISBN 978-606-647-834-2

398.4(498.4) Dracula

94(498.1)"14" Vlad III Țepeș

929 Dracula

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-RU-PD-2011-3-0194.

*The Impact of a Myth: Dracula and the Fictional Representation of the Romanian Space.*

Abstract in English

## Abstract

The volume *Impactul unui mit: Dracula și reprezentarea ficțională a spațiului românesc* (“The Impact of a Myth: Dracula and the Fictional representation of the Romanian space”) is an interdisciplinary study that combines an imagological perspective with an approach based on Dracula Studies. This book continues the research presented in my previous volume, published in English: *The Birth of the Dracula Myth: Bram Stoker’s Transylvania* (București: Pro Universitaria, 2013). *The Birth of the Dracula Myth* analysed the image of Transylvania in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, drawing a parallel between the novel and the sources consulted by Stoker on Transylvania, and focusing on what Stoker read and what he wrote about this region of contemporary Romania.

*Impactul unui mit: Dracula și reprezentarea ficțională a spațiului românesc* („The Impact of a Myth: Dracula and the Fictional representation of the Romanian space”) discusses the complexity of the Dracula myth and its impact on the reflection of Romania in British and American literary representations. This volume also analyses some literary responses of several Romanian writers to the vampiric myth invented by Bram Stoker.

The first chapters discuss the image of Romania as a land of vampires in some literary texts, including novels which depict Transylvania as a fantastic space, such as Raymond Rudorff, *The Dracula Archives* (1971), Fred Saberhagen, *The Dracula Tape* (1975), Donald F. Glut, *Frankenstein meets Dracula* (1977), and C. Dean Andersson, *I am Dracula* (1993).

Besides presenting the fantastic character, some of these novels are constructed on the basis of an ideological vision and are marked by the political stereotype which divided Europe into “Western democracy” and “Eastern Communist Totalitarianism”. For instance, in the novel *Children of the Night* (1992) by Dan Simmons, the whole of Romania is “vampirised”. The political and economic conditions immediately after the 1989 revolution are severely criticised, and the situation of children in orphanages, mediated by the press at the time, is the starting point of a

science-fiction novel, in which the whole country is described as a negative alternative to Occidental values.

The stereotypical association between Romania and the vampire Dracula seems to be the key of the commercial success of novels based on this cliché, such as Elizabeth Kostova's *The Historian* 2005 (translated into Romanian in 2006). The reader of *The Historian* discovers a stereotyped Transylvania, where the inhabitants live in fear of vampires, rub doors, windows, chimneys and even keyholes with garlic, and entertain a number of beliefs and legends about vampires.

My volume also offers a synthetic analysis of the representation of Transylvania in some films inspired from *Dracula* which carry on the stereotype of the land of vampires, such as *Nosferatu* (Prana Films, 1922), *Dracula* (Universal, 1931), *Dracula* (Hammer Films, 1958), *The Brides of Dracula* (Hammer Films, 1960), *Love at First Bite* (Melvin Simon Productions Studios, 1979) and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Columbia Pictures, 1992). My opinion is that several vampire novels have also drawn inspiration from films, as well as from Stoker's novel.

Besides the analysis of sequels, the book discusses the relationship between the Occidental vampire and the Romanian *strigoi*. One of the main differences is that the act of transferring energy (usually blood) remains, in Romanian mythology, a mystery<sup>1</sup>, whereas this act is described in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and in its sequels.

Another section attempts a synthesis of the accounts of the Wallachian Voivode Vlad Țepeș in Romanian and international historic studies. The conclusion of historians is that Țepeș was a man of his times, a great warrior who fought against the Ottoman invasion, and who tried to establish a moral climate in his country. Cruel punishment was a frequent practice of medieval times and the consensus of both Romanian historians and of historians outside Romania is that Vlad Țepeș's cruelty was exaggerated by his political enemies.

Examining the literary texts which deconstruct the stereotype created by Bram Stoker is another feature of the current volume. Several works represent Transylvania as a space of rediscovering the Self in dialogue with the Other and present Romania as a charming and fascinating country. The difference does not have negative connotations, and the encounter with the

---

<sup>1</sup> Otilia Hedeșan, "Romanian Vampiric Complex. Mythology and Geography", *The International Microconference of the Research Project: The Impact of a Myth: Dracula and the Image of Romanian in British and American Literatures*, Timișoara, 18 July 2013. [http://www.themythoftransylvania.ro/events\\_en.htm#events2013](http://www.themythoftransylvania.ro/events_en.htm#events2013).

Other is a way to discover the self and the world. I analyse, from this perspective, works of travel literature such as Walter Starkie, *Raggle - Taggle* (1933), Sir Sacheverell Sitwell, *Roumanian Journey* (1938), Patrick Leigh Fermor, *Between the Woods and the Water* (1986), Dervla Murphy, *Transylvania and Beyond* (1992), Alan Ogden, *Romania Revisited* (2000) and *Winds of Sorrow: Travels in and Around Transylvania* (2004), Caroline Juler, *Searching for Sarmizegetusa* (2003), Bronwen Riley, *Transylvania* (2007) etc. I also refer to some ideas in the novels *Long Shadows* by Alan Brownjohn (1996), and *Kitty & Virgil* (1998) by Paul Bailey, which deconstruct the prejudices derived from the association between the vampire space and Romania.

In addition to analysing how travel writers present Romania, this volume also examines the response of Romanian writers to the stereotypes of the Dracula myth. In the introduction to the play *A treia țepă*, translated into English as *Vlad Dracula the Impaler*, Marin Sorescu explains that he tried to see Voivode Dracula “rather differently, more in keeping with the historical truth, with an astonishment but also with an understanding that tragic destinies always awake in us”. Sorescu states that “from this point of view the play can also have a polemical character, casting another light on the famous legend”<sup>2</sup>. In the introduction to this volume, the translator of the play, Dennis Deletant, who is a historian specialised in the history of Romania, states: “The only connection between Vlad Dracula the Impaler, Prince of the Romanian principality of Wallachia, and Bram Stoker’s Dracula is in the choice of the novel’s name. Nothing in Stoker’s fictional work bears a historical relationship to the deeds of Vlad or to the events of his reign. Vlad did not practise vampirism...”<sup>3</sup>.

Dennis Deletant extends his explanation and writes: “By contrast, Marin Sorescu’s drama *A treia țepă* (The Third Stake) has a strong factual basis. The historical Dracula, Vlad the Impaler, emerges from it as a victim of his time, an almost tragic figure who was in turn abandoned and imprisoned by his relative through marriage, Matthew Corvin, King of Hungary (1458-1490), betrayed by his brother Radu, and finally murdered by the Turks with the collusion of the Wallachian boyars at the close of 1476. The turbulence of the age is reflected in the fact that Vlad was ruling prince on three separate occasions: autumn 1448, 1456-1462, and November to

---

<sup>2</sup> Marin Sorescu. *Vlad Dracula the Impaler*. Translated by Dennis Deletant, Forest Books, Londra și Boston, 1987, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Dennis Deletant, în Marin Sorescu. *Vlad Dracula the Impaler*. Translated by Dennis Deletant, Forest Books, Londra și Boston, 1987, p. 13.

December 1476; and that during the intervening periods he was held hostage by the Turks (1442-1448), was a fugitive in neighbouring Moldavia and Transylvania (1448-1456), and was imprisoned at Buda (1462-1474)”<sup>4</sup>.

I have quoted extensively from Marin Sorescu and Dennis Deletant because their words express a perspective shared by other works of Romanian literature on this topic. The Romanian writers observe that the history of his time did not allow Vlad Țepeș to present his point of view. His negative image was consolidated by the success of the printing press, but his voice could not be heard, because he was imprisoned at Visegrád. In the novel *Jurnalul lui Dracula* (“The Diary of Dracula”) Marin Mincu depicts Vlad as an intellectual prince who has many connections with the scholars of the Renaissance and who has an important role in the defence of Europe against the Ottoman invasion. The novel represents the period of detention at Visegrád, and Marin Mincu uses the literary convention of the found journal. “The real journal of Prince Dracula”, found and edited by the narrator, is written in the first person, and Vlad Țepeș tells the story of his life, presenting himself as a victim of history. Marin Mincu’s novel was initially published in Italian (*Il Diario di Dracula* 1992), and had great success in Italy.

A common theme of Romanian dramaturgy based on the image of Voivode Vlad Țepeș is the voivode’s judgment. Vlad is depicted as a just but cruel judge, who is in search of absolute justice. This image is developed in Marin Sorescu’s play *A treia țeapă* and in Mircea Bradu’s *Vlad Țepeș în ianuarie* („Vlad Țepeș in January”). In Mircea Bradu’s play, Voivode Vlad is judged by history; the political detractors of his time, the chroniclers who denigrated him, admit that they were not fair in their chronicles, but were determined by the political perspective of their masters. The writer Mircea Bradu also published a novel in 2006, *Dracula Land – Dracula Park*, which satirises the artificial connections between the vampiric aspect of the Dracula myth and the Romanian space.

D. R. Popescu’s play *Bram Stoker și Contele Dracula...* (“Bram Stoker and Count Dracula”, 1992) focuses on the process of writing *Dracula*. The main character is Bram Stoker, who is depicted as a writer devoured by his own work. In my interpretation, the main idea of the play is that the vampire is the work of art which sucks all the energy from its author.

*Blândul Dracula* (“The Gentle Dracula”, 2002) by Victor Iancu is a parodic novel which tells the story of two Americans (father and daughter) who

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

come to Romania, in order to discover the truth about the Dracula myth. The novel refers to the tourism based on the myth and to the main attractions in Romania associated with it. It also contains some echoes of Romanian mythology, which are subtly included in the narration. The dialogues about the historic personality of Vlad Țepeș are very interesting: there are whole pages of Socratic conversations between characters who blame the voivode and the interlocutors who praise him.

The recent novel *Nepotul lui Dracula* (“The Nephew of Dracula”) published in 2012 by the late postmodern writer Alexandru Mușina is, in my opinion, a masterpiece of Romanian contemporary comical literature. This absolute parody tells the story of a boring junior lecturer from a Romanian university who discovers that he is the direct inheritor of Voivode Vlad Țepeș, and the novel ends with his dream that he is crowned as King of Romania. The novel parodies the vampiric literature based on the association of the Romanian space with the vampire Dracula, as well as the contemporary fantastic literature which depicts the vampire as a domestic and sympathetic character. At the same time, Alexandru Mușina’s novel is a parody of the Romanian classic literature based on the glorification of history.

In addition to the analyses illustrated above the volume also includes some didactic perspectives and three interviews on the Dracula myth with Dr. Farkas Jenő from University Eötvös Lóránd Budapest (the expert who discovered the first film adaptation of the novel *Dracula* produced by Károly Lajthay: *Drakula halála* – “Dracula’s Death”, 1921) and with two contemporary Romanian writers: Mircea Bradu and D. R. Popescu.

## Mulțumiri

Îi mulțumesc doamnei Prof. univ. dr. Otilia Hedeșan, Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara, mentorul proiectului de cercetare *Impactul unui mit: Dracula și imaginea României în literaturile britanică și americană*, pentru sprijinul acordat în derularea acestei cercetări. Le sunt recunoscător, de asemenea, colegilor mei de la Departamentul pentru Pregătirea Personalului Didactic, Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara, pentru că mi-au fost mereu alături și m-au sprijinit ori de câte ori a fost nevoie: le mulțumesc tuturor și, în mod special, doamnei director, Prof. univ. dr. Poesis Petrescu.

Adresez mulțumiri către UEFISCDI, în special domnului Valentin Tihan. Îi sunt recunoscător, pentru susținerea pe care mi-a acordat-o, doamnei Prof. univ. dr. Donatella Abbate Badin, de la Universitatea din Torino, cea care m-a încurajat, cu mai mulți ani în urmă, să abordez studiile imagologice. Îi mulțumesc doamnei Dr. Carmen Andraș, de la Institutul de Cercetări Socio-Umane “Gheorghe Șincai” al Academiei Române pentru sugestiile oferite. Mulțumirile mele se îndreaptă și către domnul Dr. Farkas Jenő (Universitatea Eötvös Lóránd din Budapesta) pentru interesul manifestat față de această cercetare, pentru recomandări și pentru interviul inclus în acest volum.

Mulțumiri speciale doamnei Prof. univ. dr. Elizabeth Miller (Profesor Emerit, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada), de la cărțile căreia am pornit itinerariul cercetării pe tema Dracula. Îi mulțumesc pentru sprijinul constant pe care mi l-a oferit și pentru că m-a ajutat să găsesc multe răspunsuri adecvate la încuietorele întrebări ale lui Dracula. Doamna Prof. univ. dr. Carol Senf (Georgia Institute of Technology SUA) a privit mereu cu interes cercetarea mea și mi-a oferit numeroase sugestii utile, motiv pentru care îi adresez calde mulțumiri.

Îi sunt recunoscător doamnei Academician Prof. univ. dr. Sabina Ispas pentru discuția despre mitologia românească, pe care am avut-o la Institutul de Etnografie și Folclor din București și pentru materialul bibliografic oferit. Îi mulțumesc domnului Prof. univ. dr. Sorin Alexandrescu (Universitatea din Amsterdam, Universitatea din București),

pentru că, deși au trecut mulți ani de când a coordonat lucrarea mea de licență, privește, în continuare, activitatea mea, cu același interes.

Schimbul de idei pe care l-am avut cu câțiva scriitori români sau britanici mi-a fost de mare folos. Îi sunt recunoscător scriitorului Mircea Bradu pentru îndelungile convorbiri în care mi-a povestit despre contextul literar al textelor dramatice pe care le analizez în acest volum și mi-a arătat că literatura înseamnă și o formă de manifestare a prieteniei. Îi mulțumesc pentru interviul pe care mi l-a acordat. Îi mulțumesc scriitorului Academician D. R. Popescu pentru că mi-a împărtășit părerea sa despre mitul Dracula și pentru că mi-a acordat interviul inclus în acest volum. Întâlnirea cu scriitoarea Caroline Juler și schimburile de mesaje derulate de-a lungul timpului au fost de asemenea utile în realizarea acestui volum. Sugestiile bibliografice din partea scriitorului Alan Ogden au fost de un real folos.

În timpul documentării pentru acest volum, am discutat cu cercetători și profesori din țară și din străinătate, cărora aș dori să le mulțumesc pentru interesul lor și pentru recomandări: Prof. univ. dr. Sir Christopher Frayling (Royal College of Art, Londra), Prof. univ. dr. Vesna Goldsworthy (Kingston University, Londra), Prof. univ. dr. Clive Bloom (Middlesex University), Prof. univ. dr. Mihaela Irimia (Universitatea din București), Dr. James Brown (Universitatea din București), Prof. univ. dr. Silviu Angelescu (Universitatea din București), Prof. univ. dr. David Punter (University of Bristol), Dr. Catherine Wynne (University of Hull), Prof. univ. dr. Ken Gelder (University of Melbourne), Prof. univ. dr. William Hughes (Bath Spa University), Conf. univ. dr. Smaranda Vultur (Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara), Conf. univ. dr. Gheorghe Clitan (Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara), Prof. univ. dr. Alexandru Ruja (Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara), Lect. univ. dr. Claudiu Mesaroș (Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara), Prof. univ. dr. Adriana Babeți (Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara), Prof. univ. dr. Victor Neumann (Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara), Prof. univ. dr. Georgiana Lungu Badea (Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara), Lect. univ. dr. Andreea Gheorghiu (Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara), Conf. univ. dr. Hamsavahini Singh (Banasthali University, India), Dr. Jack Fennell (University of Limerick), Elisabete Lopes (Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal, Portugalia), Conf. univ. dr. Dorota Babilas (Universitatea din Varșovia). Îi mulțumesc, de asemenea, domnului Dr. Duncan Light (Manchester Metropolitan University) pentru sugestiile bibliografice.

Folositoare au fost și întâlnirile cu membrii Familiei Stoker, la Hull și apoi la Londra, în 2012. Le mulțumesc lui Dacre Stoker (stră-strănepotul lui George Stoker, fratele lui Bram Stoker) și soției sale, Jenne Stoker, precum și domnilor Robin MacCaw și Noel Dobbs (stră-strănepoții lui Bram Stoker).

Chiar dacă, de câțiva ani, președintele *Societății Transilvane Dracula*, Nicolae Păduraru, trăiește doar în amintirea noastră, i-am rămas recunoscător pentru că am redescoperit, prin turul Dracula pe care l-a organizat, câteva dintre locurile cel mai frecvent asociate cu acest mit. Îi mulțumesc, pe această cale, doamnei Daniela Diaconescu, care merge mai departe pe drumul început de regretatul călăuzitor.

Mulțumesc Editurii Pro Universitaria pentru sprijinul oferit în publicarea volumului, în special domnului Marian Bârgău, doamnei Andreea Ion și doamnei Carmen Lucaci.

Cel mai mult sunt îndatorat, pentru rândurile ce vor urma în acest volum, familiei mele, care mi-a fost alături mereu, în zilele când nu dezlipeam ochii de pe monitor, în nopțile petrecute printre cărți, în clipele în care căutam adevăruri despre legendă în locuri îndepărtate, la conferințe pline de lume sau în biblioteci care au învins timpul. Mulțumesc soției Manuela pentru răbdarea fără margini și încurajările fără sfârșit, fiului Alexandru, care ardea de nerăbdare să-mi vină în ajutor: „Andu vrea să scrie cu tati!”, mamei, Maria – Elena, care a sprijinit constat acest efort și m-a ajutat mereu, cu nelimitată disponibilitate și mult drag, socrilor, Gabi și Rică, care uneori au venit de departe ca să îmi susțină străduința. Dedic această carte Familiei.