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A Milestone in the Field of Dracula Studies: Elizabeth Miller and the Perception of History in Bram Stoker's Vampire Novel

Abstract

This paper starts with a short overview of the critical reception of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* and focuses its investigation on the role of the Canadian professor Elizabeth Russell Miller (16 February 1939 — 2 January 2022) to the development of *Dracula* studies. The importance of the investigation of Bram Stoker's notes for *Dracula* is also discussed. The paper also investigates the connection between Count *Dracula* and Vlad the Impaler, presenting a synopsis of Miller's perspective (in 1990s and 2000s) versus the hypotheses proposed by Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu in 1972. The article concludes with some personal reminiscences of Elizabeth Miller. Although her opinions were sometimes based on the rigorous criticism of previous studies in this domain, in the field of *Dracula* studies, Elizabeth Miller was a symbol of cohesion, and cohesion may be one of the strongest characteristics of an international community. This paper will also refer to the role of the Canadian professor in the analysis of the connection between Transylvania and the *Dracula* myth.

Dracula; Bram Stoker; Vlad the Impaler; Elizabeth Miller (1939–2022); *Dracula* criticism



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A Milestone in the Field of Dracula Studies: Elizabeth Miller and the Perception of History in Bram Stoker's Vampire Novel

The polyphonic character of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* has stimulated many ways of approaching this novel, and, of the critics who have influenced the directions in the field of Dracula studies, I think that Elizabeth Miller (Professor Emerita at Memorial University of Newfoundland February 26, 1939 — January 2, 2022) can be distinguished as one of the most prominent voices.

In my paper, I intend to refer to the role of the Canadian professor in the development of this research field, and to share some personal reminiscences of Elizabeth Miller. Although her opinions were sometimes based on the rigorous criticism of previous studies in this domain, I think that in the field of Dracula studies, Elizabeth Miller was a symbol of cohesion, and cohesion may be one the strongest characteristics of an international community. My paper will also refer to the role of the Canadian professor in the analysis of the connection between Transylvania and the Dracula myth.

Although upon its release in 1897, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* received reviews from various British newspapers and periodicals, (such as *Athenaeum*, the *Bookman*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Punch*, and the *Spectator*, *Telegraph*, *British Weekly*, *Observer* etc.), in the first half of the 20th century, Bram Stoker's novel received little critical attention, as literary analyses were rather sporadic.

For instance, the author of *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917), Dorothy Scarborough, introduces *Dracula* to her readers as "the tensest, most dreadful modern story of vampirism", but she considers that "the book loses in effect toward the last, for the mind cannot endure four hundred pages of vampiric outrage and respond to fresh impressions of horror" (1917: 164–165). Montague Summers, in *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin* (1928), also describes *Dracula*, as a popular novel, but, in his opinion it is too prolix. H. P. Lovecraft mentions the novel in "Supernatural Horror in Literature" (1939) affirming that Dracula "has become almost the standard modern exploitation of the frightful vampire myth."

However, the public success surpassed the attention of literary criticism. A few months after its publication, Bram Stoker's novel was already translated into Hungarian (probably by Rákosi Jenő), and the daily newspaper *Budapesti Hírlap* began publishing *Dracula* on January 1st, 1898 (Crişan 2013a: 259). But the vampire novel

also stimulated the creativity of its readers, since the following translations, the Swedish and the Icelandic versions published at the end of the 19th century were actually adaptations of Stoker's novel, which included considerable changes in the plot and the structure of the text (Crișan 2019).

The cinematic success of the novel was remarkable, and the debut belongs to Hungarian culture as well. The first film based on Stoker's *Dracula* was the Hungarian production *Drakula halála*, "Dracula's Death" (1921) (Crișan 2013a: 259). The following films inspired from the novel, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) and Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), had a great influence on an endless series of Dracula cinematic sequels.

The low critical attention to the Dracula myth in the first part of the 20th century may be associated with the reduced interest that literary criticism used to pay to Gothic literature in general. In a lecture to the students of the West University of Timișoara on "How to get published in English" (April 2022), Clive Bloom explains that, as a reader of horror fiction, he was disappointed to see that 1970s criticism paid no attention to crime fiction, the occult or horror literature, and he took that shortage as an opportunity to set out a new direction of studies focused on these genres. "I started to write books on the Gothic, a field which Christopher Frayling, David Punter and myself pioneered in British universities, as a recognized academic subject with its own discipline and methods of approach." As a result of this novel direction of research, "new voices started to emerge, and a new English literary history started to emerge with different traditions and energies" (Bloom 2022).

The three critics mentioned by Clive Bloom contributed considerably to the development of the Gothic through important books such as *The Literature of Terror* by David Punter (1980; revised, expanded edition 1996), *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula* by Sir Christopher Frayling (1978, revised 1991), *Gothic histories: the taste for terror, 1764 to the present* by Clive Bloom (2010). The perspectives of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in the works of these British critics have considerably influenced the forthcoming criticism. In *The Literature of Terror*, David Punter synthesizes, in a memorable phrase, a Freudian reading of the narrative, by stating that Dracula is the "passion which never dies, endless desire of the unconscious for gratification" (1996: 19).

If, in the first half of the 20th century, the critics who doubted the aesthetic achievement of Stoker's book, saw its ambiguity as a flaw, since the 1970s, literary critics began to perceive the openness of *Dracula* as a modern feature which increases the value of the work. In the USA, Carol Senf was one of the critics who opened new perspectives on the interpretation of Stoker's novel. In the essay "Dracula: The Unseen Face in the Mirror" (1979), Senf points to the unreliability of the vampire hunters, and suggests that, beyond the differences, the resemblances between Dracula and his hunters also need deep analysis.

The ambiguities in the novel and the complexity of the narrative perspectives led to several interpretations from different angles. Since the 1970s, the number of critical studies dedicated to Stoker's *Dracula* has considerably increased. Crișan and Senf identify several directions in the field of Dracula studies, such as genetic criticism — which focuses on Stoker's sources for Dracula (Clive Leatherdale, 1987, Sir Christopher Frayling, 1991, Elizabeth Miller and Robert Eighteen-Bisang, 2008, Marius-Mircea Crișan,

2013b, Hans de Roos, 2017, etc.), tourism (Duncan Light 2012, Candrea, Ispas, Untaru, Nechita, 2016, Crișan and Light, 2023), anthropological perspectives (Gail Kligman, 1998, Sabina Ispas, 2010, Otilia Hedeșan, 2011), Irish roots (Elizabeth Miller and Dacre Stoker, 2012, Peter Haining and Peter Tremayne, 1997, Joseph Valente, 2002, William Hughes, 2017), the influence of the theatre (Catherine Wynne, 2013), gender issues (Nina Auerbach, 1995, Phyllis A. Roth, 1977, Talia Schaffer, 1994, Carol Senf, 1982, Christopher Craft, 1984, etc.), imagological perspective (Vesna Goldsworthy, 1998, Carmen Andraș, 1999, Matthew Gibson, 2004, etc.).

As William Hughes puts it, “Dracula criticism defies time and chronology: it is simultaneously anachronistic and contemporary, in the sense that new interpretations of Stoker’s novel tend to explicitly parallel, supplement or commentate upon their predecessors while never enforcing a satisfactory closure upon the influence of those earlier critics” (2009: 28).

One of the main directions which have been vividly discussed in the field of Dracula studies is the relationship between the historical Voivode Dracula and the fictional vampire count who “borrowed” his name. The first study which drew attention on the connection between Stoker’s vampire and the historical figure of Vlad, “Dracula: The Monastic Chronicles and Slavic Folklore”, was published by Bacil Kirtley in 1956. In addition to linking Dracula with Vlad, Kirtley also suggests that Arminius Vambery, a renowned Hungarian linguist and Orientalist whom Stoker encountered in London, served as the inspiration for the main vampire hunter of the novel, Professor Van Helsing. The correlation between Dracula and Vlad was also discussed in Grigore Nandriș’s essay “The Historical Dracula. The Theme of His Legend in the Western and in the Eastern Literatures of Europe” (1966).

The most comprehensive study of Vlad in connection to Count Dracula comes from two university professors at Boston College, Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu, who published a very successful book based on this linking, *In Search of Dracula* (1972). This work builds upon many of Kirtley’s and Nandriș’s theories, but also introduces several hypotheses, such as the idea of a female prototype for the vampire count, the infamous Countess Elizabeth Báthory.

In the late 1960s, McNally and Florescu performed research on the historical Dracula in Romania, together with Romanian historians Constantin Giurescu and Matei Cazacu (Melton 2021: 93), and some of their findings were put into light by the association between the vampire and the count. One of the main results of *In Search of Dracula* was that it drew the attention of the world to Vlad the Impaler. *In Search of Dracula* won quickly the attention of a wide audience, and had a great influence in popular culture, where the connection between the vampire and the voivode began to flourish. Consequently, in numerous books and movies, the figures of Count Dracula and Vlad the Impaler were depicted as one and the same character. The fact that Christopher Lee featured in the documentary film *In Search of Dracula* (1974) based on the homonymous book also contributed to the success of this thesis.

The film *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992) directed by Francis Ford Coppola highlighted the connection between the vampire count and the historical Romanian prince. Several novels in the 1990s and 2000s such as Dan Simmons’s *Children of the Night* or Elizabeth Kostova’s *The Historian* built their narratives around this connection.

In an analysis of McNally and Florescu's influence of Dracula studies, John Gordon Melton states that "in their 1972 book *In Search of Dracula*, which ignited modern Dracula and vampire studies, set off a heated debate on the role of Vlad in the creation of Dracula, and injected Vlad the Impaler into popular culture" (Melton 2021: 58). Besides the public success, *In Search of Dracula* (1972) also provided a vivid subject of discussion for scholars interested in this topic, as well as in the connection between history, folklore and fantastic fiction. The historical association supported by McNally and Florescu had a great impact on the worldwide public. *In Search of Dracula* was a bestseller followed by other works by the same authors, and their contributions played a significant role in fostering interest in Dracula studies.

In Search of Dracula was published before the discovery of Stoker's working notes for *Dracula*, which offer detailed information about the novelist's documentation. Kept by Rosenbach Museum in Philadelphia, the notes were found in the mid-1970s by Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu (Miller 2006: 15).

The study of the documents in Rosenbach Museum has proven that several suppositions in McNally and Florescu's book could not be supported by evidence in Bram Stoker's notes. Elizabeth Miller may be distinguished as one of the strongest voices who contested the thesis that Bram Stoker based his vampire on the model of Vlad the Impaler. There is no doubt that the inherent ambiguity of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* offers ample room for interpretation. However, in McNally and Florescu's works and in several studies rooted in their approach, speculative discussions have also delved into topics such as Stoker's life, the creation of *Dracula*, and the historical inspirations behind the vampire count. Focusing her analysis on Stoker's working notes, Elizabeth Miller pleads for the necessity to replace intuitive and speculative interpretation by a precise analysis of the novel's genesis.

Since the late 1970s, several critics took Stoker's notes into account in their investigations. McNally made the first reference to the notes in 1975, in *A Clutch of Vampires* and two years later Joseph Bierman provided a short description of the material (Miller 2006: 153). In 1987, Clive Leatherdale published the volume *The Origins of Dracula*, which includes several extracts from Stoker's sources. Leatherdale also edited the volume *Dracula Unearthed* (1998, 2006), based on a thorough research of Stoker's notes. In the book *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula* (1991), Sir Christopher Frayling also pays attention to the sources of Dracula. The chapter titled "The Genesis of Dracula" includes a selection of source material. Frayling's significant contribution to the advancement of Dracula studies is notable, and his media productions, particularly the documentary film *Nightmare: The Birth of Horror* (1996), have wielded considerable influence.

Since 2008, Bram Stoker's notes for *Dracula* have been available to the wider public, published in a facsimile edition, edited by Robert Eighteen-Bisang and Elizabeth Miller. *Bram Stokers Notes for Dracula: A Facsimile Edition* received the Lord Ruthven Award as the best nonfiction title in vampire studies in 2009 (Melton 2021: 98).

According to John Gordon Melton, Elizabeth Miller "emerged in the 1990s as one of the most widely hailed Dracula scholars" (2021: 98), and contributed to some important scholarly events on this topic, such as *the First World Dracula Congress*, organised by Transylvanian Society of Dracula, held in Romania in 1995, and the conference

Dracula '97: *A Centennial Celebration*, organised along with Jeanne Youngson and J. Gordon Melton (2021: 98).

Miller's research refuted the common belief that Vlad served as the inspiration for Stoker's character, Count Dracula. While other scholars proposed various models for Dracula, Miller asserted that there was no definitive evidence to suggest that Stoker had a specific individual in mind. The notes may help to authenticate the precise sources of several historical events referenced in the novel. Miller demonstrates that Stoker encountered the name "Dracula" in William Wilkinson's *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (published in 1820) during his visit at the Public Library in Whitby in the summer of 1890. What caught Stoker's particular interest on this page of history was not the historical intricacy, but rather a footnote in Wilkinson's book. This footnote states that "Dracula in the Wallachian language means Devil. The Wallachians were, at that time, as they are at present, used to give this as a surname to any person who rendered himself conspicuous either by courage, cruel actions, or cunning" (Wilkinson 1820: 19). This footnote holds crucial significance in the writing of the novel, as it leads to the change of the main character's name, and likely the relocation from Styria to Transylvania. The notes prove that initially, Stoker's preferred name for his vampire was "Count Wampyr." However, Stoker abandoned this choice upon discovering the name of the Wallachian prince and its *significance* in Romanian.

The novelist's meticulous attention to this footnote is evidenced by his act of transcribing it into his notes. "DRACULA in Wallachian language means DEVIL" (Eighteen-Bisang and Miller 2008: 245). While in the original text only the first letter is capitalized, in Stoker's notes, both "Dracula" and "Devil" are written with all letters capitalized. This indicates the crucial role of these two words in shaping the novel, suggesting that the vampire count embodies the Devil or is as a symbol of malevolent forces.

If Stoker's knowledge about Voivode Dracula was limited to the information from Wilkinson as mentioned earlier, it means that he was unaware of the prince's actual name and his historical nickname Țepeș ("the Impaler"). There is no evidence to suggest that Stoker knew about Vlad's atrocities or had read the medieval German pamphlets that described and exaggerated his cruelty.

The analysis of the notes for the novel prove that the only information Stoker had about the historical Dracula comes from Wilkinson's volume (Eighteen-Bisang, Miller 2008: 245).

In the essay "Filing for Divorce: Count Dracula vs Vlad Tepes" published in the book *Dracula: The Shade and the Shadow*, Miller advocates for a distinct separation between the two Draculas. She demonstrates that any links between the two characters are speculative, as "the three references to 'Dracula' in Wilkinson's text, along with the footnote, are the only occurrences of the name in all of the sources that we know that Stoker consulted" (Miller 1998).

In the same essay, Miller claims that Stoker should not be criticized for inaccurately portraying a page of Romanian history, as the historical Dracula and the fictional character are entirely distinct entities: "Why, some ask, did he make Dracula a Transylvanian Count rather than a Wallachian Voivode? Why was his castle situated in the Borgo Pass instead of Poenari? Why is Count Dracula a 'boyar,' a member of the nobility

which Vlad continuously struggled with? Why does Stoker make Dracula a “Szekely,” descended from Attila the Hun, when the real Dracula was a Wallachian of the Basarab family? There is a very simple answer to these questions: Vlad Țepeș is Vlad Țepeș, while Count Dracula is Count Dracula” (Miller 1998).

In this context, I think that it is necessary to pay attention to Raymond McNally’s answer to Miller’s symbolic suggestion of divorce between the vampire and the count, expressed in the essay *Separation Granted; Divorce Denied; Annulment Unlikely*, published in the journal edited by Miller (“Journal of Dracula Studies”, McNally 1999). Starting from Stoker’s assumption that Stoker stated that “unlike historians, writers of fiction were only obliged to create what the French called the “*vraisemblable*” (meaning “like the truth” or “believable”), McNally affirms that “the fiction writer must strive to tell a plausible story, and Stoker was very good at that” (1999: 1). The American professor reaffirms his previous theses that “Stoker’s vampire count is indeed a composite creature, in the end the product of Stoker’s imagination, his reading and the result of his life experiences”, and “Dracula belongs to history as well as to myth” (1999: 1).

McNally’s conclusion is that the “separation of Vlad from the Count is granted, divorce is denied, and any annulment is unlikely. The two Draculas are related because of the relevant passages in Stoker’s novel. Bram Stoker linked authentic Transylvanian vampire folklore and elements of the Gothic tradition with the historical Dracula. But, as Miller implies, it was no real functioning marriage — at best a liaison needing no divorce” (1999: 2). McNally also admits that “It is unlikely that Stoker could have read the 1491 Bamberg pamphlet about the historical Dracula”, although he might have had access to that book.

The question whether Stoker knew more about Voivode Dracula is still open to Dracula research. There are some new hypotheses that Stoker might have consulted other works containing references to the Wallachian Prince as well. During the Transylvanian Society of Dracula Congress in Dublin, the organizers provided a visit to Marsh’s Library, where some antique books containing such references were available to Bram Stoker, such as Peter Heylyn, *Cosmographie in foure Books Contayning the Chorographie & Historie of the whole World* (London, 1682). New insights regarding Stoker’s research on Prince Dracula were also discussed in Dacre Stoker’s keynote speech at *Children Of The Night Dracula Congress 2022*, who referred to Bram Stoker’s research in Marsh’s Library and The London Library.

Elizabeth Miller had an important role in the analysis of the connection between the Dracula myth and Transylvania. In *Reflections on Dracula*, Miller demonstrates that the portrayal of Transylvania, juxtaposed with England, originates from the condescending British attitude prevalent in 19th-century travel literature. In Chapter 4 of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 304 (2005), Elizabeth Miller convincingly demonstrates the origins of certain historical events in the novel. Stoker drew information about the history of the Szeklers and Hungarians, as well as their descent from the Huns, from Johnson, Crosse, and Mazuchelli. Additionally, from Wilkinson, Stoker derived other historical events, including details about the defeat of the united Christian army at Kosovo and the unworthy brother of Dracula’s enthronement by the Turks.

Following Miller’s rationale, I would say that in Stoker’s novel, there is not a singular national perspective on history, as the events are intertwined. Despite the vampire

count expressing pride in his Hungarian/Szekler heritage, Stoker presents him as a “transnational character” (Crișan 2010). His historical accomplishments are drawn from both Romanian and Hungarian history; he is depicted as both a boyar — a title specific to Romanian aristocracy in Wallachia and Moldavia — and a count — a common title among Hungarian aristocracy in Transylvania.

In a paper presented in the *Dracula Colloquium*, organized by the Transylvanian Society of Dracula in May 2002 at Sinaia, Miller emphasizes the role of MacNally and Florescu in increasing the world interest in Vlad the Impaler. Her paper, also published in the *Journal of Dracula Studies*, concludes as such: “And while we rightfully challenge some of the findings of Florescu and McNally, it is their work which brought Vlad to international prominence, allowing him to join the Count who shares his nickname among the rank of immortals” (Miller 2002: 5).

In an interview about Radu Florescu, Miller explains the main motivation which lies at the basis of Florescu’s research on *Dracula*: his love towards his native Romania. Miller says that “it bothered him that Romania was just being presented as Transylvania, vampires and so on”, and “when he discovered this connection with the real Dracula... it kind of validated something for him about his country. [He] could tell people now it was much more than a land where Bram Stoker happened to stick Count Dracula.” The interview concludes with the ideas that “through his work, Professor Radu Florescu built a bridge between Romania and the United States”, and the interest in Dracula arisen by his work attracted “a whole new clientele in tourism to Romania.”

As Magdalena Grabias observes, Miller’s perspective on the connection between the vampire and the voivode Dracula was largely embraced in the international academic world, and “Anna Gemra, author of a monumental Polish book on Gothic literature, supports Miller’s conclusion” (Grabias 2021: 240).

At the same time, Magdalena Grabias notices that “nevertheless, a vast number of films and other texts of popular culture keep cultivating McNally’s and Florescu’s theory and refuse to part with the idea of merging the character of Stoker’s Dracula with Vlad the Impaler” (Grabias 2021: 240).

As J.P. Riquelme puts it, “Miller contributes to the reevaluation of Stoker’s accomplishment by challenging a range of misunderstandings and misrepresentations, especially concerning Stoker’s sources and his life” (*A Critical History of Dracula*, quoted in DLB 304: 361). Besides many articles on Dracula, Elizabeth Miller has published and edited several books on this theme: *Reflections on Dracula* (1997), *Dracula: The Shade and the Shadow* (1998), *Dracula: Sense & Nonsense* (2000, 2006), *Dracula (a coffee-table book)* (2000), a volume on Dracula for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (2005) and *A Dracula Handbook* (2005), *Bram Stoker’s Dracula: a documentary journey into vampire country and the Dracula phenomenon*, Pegasus Books, New York., 2009, *The Lost Journal of Bram Stoker* (2012), edited by Elizabeth Miller and Dacre Stoker, Robert Eighteen-Bisang and Elizabeth Miller (Editor), *Drafts of Dracula*, 2019, Elizabeth Miller, *Dracula* (Parkstone 2019).

Elizabeth Miller initiated her editorial work for the “Journal of Dracula Studies” in 1999. The volume *Dictionary of Literary Biography 304* stands as one of the most comprehensive works on Dracula, encompassing approximately 400 pages and offering significant insights into Stoker and his renowned novel.

The book *Dracula: Sense & Nonsense* is an essential resource for Dracula scholars, serving as a critical tool in navigating the field's abundance of conjectures and speculations. It may be very useful for newcomers in the field of Dracula studies as well, in order to identify trustworthy sources. With nearly 200 pages, Miller meticulously exposes numerous errors, misunderstandings, and false stereotypes surrounding Stoker's novel, emphasizing the importance of careful scrutiny in Dracula studies. According to John Gordon Melton, *Dracula: Sense and Nonsense* "became a watershed volume in Dracula studies by compiling information from two decades of scholarly research and providing a new plateau from which further scholarly discourse could proceed" (Melton 2021: 98).

Besides her publications, Elizabeth Miller also gave lectures on Dracula at numerous locations throughout North America and Europe. She was interviewed for several documentaries, both for independent producers or prestigious channels such as the *National Geographic Channel* or the *Discovery Channel*, and was frequently cited in top publications such as "The New York Times" or "The Wall Street Journal".

Miller also maintained two websites on Dracula research.¹ I started my approach to the field of the Dracula studies in 2004, as a PhD student at the University of Turin, by consulting *Dracula's Homepage* and the useful materials Miller posted online. Since I wrote a PhD thesis focused on Bram Stoker's sources on Transylvania, I had a useful correspondence with Professor Miller, who used to come to my help every time I needed, offering me answers to my questions and even useful materials.

I met Professor Miller for the first time in 2007, at the Dracula Symposium organised by Transylvania Society of Dracula at Sighișoara (Nicolae Păduraru and Daniela Diaconescu were the main organisers), entitled *Dracula — Blurring the Boundaries between Truth and Fiction*. One of the main topics discussed in the event was Elizabeth Kostova's novel, *The Historian*. Miller delivered the first paper at the event, entitled *Blurring the Boundaries: Vlad the Impaler, Dracula, and The Historian*.

Carol Senf, Leslie S. Klinger, Jason Nolan, and Mark Benecke were among the internationally acclaimed Dracula scholars who delivered papers. Additionally, the symposium featured esteemed voices from Romanian academia, including academicians Sabina Ispas and Sorin Comoroșan, as well as Professor Silviu Angelescu. Film producer Michael Bayley Hughes, who also presented a paper at the symposium, was concurrently working on a documentary titled *Dracula: The Vampire and the Voivode*. After listening to the paper I presented in the symposium, Michael Bayley Hughes interviewed me on the representation of Gypsies in Bram Stoker's novel, which was later included in his documentary.

During the symposium, I was very excited to show Elizabeth Miller my work on Bram Stoker's sources on Transylvania. I cannot forget her very encouraging reaction: "wonderful stuff" — she said, and she invited me to publish a subchapter of my future PhD thesis in "Journal of Dracula Studies". It was a paper on Stoker's models for Castle Dracula, in which I suggested new Transylvanian models for the famous vampire castle, and argued that Castle Bran could have influenced Bram Stoker as well, since two images of that fortress were included in the books consulted by the Irish author on that region.

¹ See: www.blooferland.com; www.ucs.mun.ca/~emiller.

The symposium in Sighişoara was followed by a Dracula tour in Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia, organised by Nicolae Păduraru and Daniela Diaconescu. It was great that my PhD coordinator, Professor Donatella Abbate Badin, from the University of Turin, came to Sighişoara and participated in this tour for several days. It was a wonderful experience to visit Transylvania in this TSD trip, together with several Dracula scholars and other fans of the vampire myth. Of course, the trip included one night in *Hotel Castel Dracula*, located in the Bărgău Pass (Borgo Pass in *Dracula*) and built as a replica of the castle imagined by Bram Stoker. It was an unforgettable experience to have dinner with the Dracula scholars and enthusiasts, under a rainbow after the storm. Besides Elizabeth Miller, *Hotel Castel Dracula* also hosted her replica: the painting of the Canadian professor exposed in the hall. Together with the same colleagues, I visited other places on the Dracula tour, such as the monasteries of Bucovina or Bran Castle. My participation in the TSD symposium and tour and the first meeting with Professor Elizabeth Miller meant a milestone in the evolution of my research in the field of Dracula studies.

As she declared several times, the Canadian professor had a special relation with Romania. In an interview taken by Angie McKaig in 1997, Elizabeth Miller said that she first visited Romania in 1994, taking a standard Dracula tour, and, after that, became part of the Transylvanian Society of Dracula, and chair of the TSD Canadian Chapter:

My first trip to Romania (1994) was the standard Dracula tour. But while I was there, I was introduced to the Transylvanian Society of Dracula (a Romanian organization of scholars, researchers & others interested in the Draculas of both history and fiction) and was encouraged to join. In fact, I have since formed a chapter of the TSD in Canada. The »Baroness of the House of Dracula« in a ceremony at the Castle Dracula Hotel in the Borgo Pass. (McKaig 1997)

In the same interview, Elizabeth Miller expresses her fondness for the real Transylvania:

I have been back to Romania [...] to give papers and lectures at conferences and universities. I have grown to love Romania and have expanded my interest beyond Dracula into the country's history, culture and language. I especially enjoy Transylvania which is renowned for its beautiful scenery. Even though the association of Transylvania with Dracula and vampires was fortuitous (Stoker originally intended to have his vampire come from Austria), the connection is there in the collective Western imagination, and certainly adds to the appeal of the place for any Dracula fan. (McKaig 1997)

In 1991, Nicolae Păduraru, a former guide with the National Tourism Organisation, founded the Transylvanian Society of Dracula (TSD), which played a pivotal role in fostering Dracula studies. The activities of this society aimed to connect Romanian experts in folklore, history, and literature with international scholars interested in the Dracula myth, to highlight Vlad Țepeș' significance for Romania and dispel misconceptions about him in the West. Membership was open both to Romanian and foreign scholars, and chapters of the TSD were established worldwide, including in Canada, the United States, Germany, and Italy, led by renowned academics devoted to advanc-

ing Dracula studies. The inaugural *World Dracula Congress* stands out as one of the primary accomplishments of the Transylvanian Society of Dracula. As Daniela Diaconescu recounts, the event she organized together with Nicolae Păduraru “succeeded in bringing together more than 300 people to one common point, generically called Dracula, and in arousing the interest (incidentally, for the first and last time) of the main tourist authority: the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Minister himself” (Benecke 2015). The 1995 World Dracula Congress marked the commencement of a series of international events hosted in Romania, such as the symposium in Sighișoara that I participated in. For more details about the evolution of the TSD conferences and other scientific events it inspired, (including *Children of the Night Dracula Congress*) see Marius-Mircea Crișan and Duncan Light (2023).

I met Professor Miller again in 2012, when I participated in several events in the UK dedicated to the Bram Stoker Centenary. The first event was an international conference organised by Catherine Wynne, attended by important names in our domain, such as Elizabeth Miller, Dacre Stoker, Sir Christopher Frayling, Clive Bloom, Carol Senf, etc. It was an unforgettable experience to follow together with such Dracula experts, the steps of Dracula in Whitby. Then I saw how energetic Professor Miller was, despite her age, when I travelled by the same train with her from Hull to London, and she was arranging several details of the forthcoming book launch. Organised at the offices of Biteback Publishing in London, the book launch *The Lost Journal of Bram Stoker* edited by Elizabeth Miller and Dacre Stoker gathered the editors, members of the Stoker Family, as well as important voices in the field of Dracula Studies such as Clive Leatherdale, Clive Bloom, David Punter, William Hughes, Robert Eighteen-Bisang, Hans de Roos, etc.

Bram Stoker Centenary Symposium, organised by Dr Sam George, University of Hertfordshire, included, besides several plenary sessions, a visit to Golders Green crematorium, where the funeral urn of Bram Stoker is deposited. The main participants in this event were the Stoker Family, literary critics (Sir Christopher Frayling, Elizabeth Miller, William Hughes, Sam George, etc.), members of Dracula Society, and the press.

Another remarkable event was the Bram Stoker Centenary Celebration, organised by The Dracula Society in London, represented by Mrs. Julia Kruk, and The Lyceum Theatre in London (where Bram Stoker was the manager for twenty-seven years). It was during the 2012 Stoker Centenary in London that I met Hans de Roos for the first time, and I received a dedication in his *Dracula* edition: “Hoping to meet you again in Romania”, a hope which was fulfilled, several times, when our ways in the search of the legend met.

Over the years I was constantly in touch with Professor Miller, who offered me precious feedback anytime I needed. I was happy to have endorsements from her for the volumes I published on *Dracula*, and I was delighted to collaborate with her again at the 4th edition of the *TSD Dracula World Congress* (Dublin, 2016), when I shared with her and other prestigious colleagues the tasks of the scientific committee.

For me, Elizabeth Millers was and will always be an authentic Transylvanian. Not only because she belonged to the Transylvanian Society of Dracula, but mainly because I associate her with the model of the Transylvanian intellectual, scrupulous and precise in research. In a personal manner, I associate Professor Miller with my teachers of

Romanian language and literature in lower secondary school and in secondary school, who taught me how important precision is while discussing a literary text.

Elizabeth Miller succeeded in the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s to build a paradigm in the field of Dracula studies based on precision and academic research rigors. As the Canadian professor demonstrated, many sensationalist and speculative elements which affected Dracula research before the 1990s. The fact that a thorough distinction between proven facts and conjectures was encouraged led to the development of new directions in Dracula criticism. There is no doubt that the Dracula myth may stimulate the people's imagination, and it is this stimulating power which keeps the vampiric myth alive. But literary criticism has to stick to the characteristic rigor of literary studies.

The attention paid to Stoker's working notes for *Dracula* led to numerous discoveries, such as Hans de Roos's identification of the place of Castle Dracula on the mountain top Izvorul in the Călimani Mountains (De Roos 2017). But such a discovery might have passed unobserved or not considered in an environment influenced by speculation and conjecture. Only after removing superficiality, new values may be developed.

Besides the lesson of rigour, Elizabeth Miller also taught us how important passion and cohesion are. As researchers of the complex Dracula myth, we need to put passion in our research in order to keep its results alive, and we need to stay together, in order to make the literary values which we believe in as immortal as the story of Dracula.

Fig. 1. Elizabeth Miller and Marius Crișan, Borgo Pass, 2007



Source: photo from the author's archives.

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