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## INTRODUCTION

Who has never heard of Count [Dracula](#) ? Who can honestly pretend not to be the least familiar with the most notorious vampire in the world ?

Since its first publication in 1897, Bram Stoker's masterpiece has never been out of [print](#). The first edition of the novel sold over a million copies and has been followed by about a hundred other editions up to now [\(1\)](#), which makes *Dracula* the most successful [vampire story](#) ever written, as well as one of the most emblematic figures of gothic literature, along with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Throughout the [twentieth century](#), *Dracula* has been the subject of numerous cinematographic adaptations which resulted in the massive spreading of the [story](#) and in *Dracula's* acquiring its mythical dimension. But at the same time, all those films - more or less faithfully adapted from Bram Stoker's writings - have gradually overshadowed the novel and oversimplified the story until it became nothing more than a stereotype oriented towards mass entertainment.

It was only in 1993 that both the original story and its almost unknown author were rehabilitated and brought into the limelight again, with the release of Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, which remains one of the most faithful adaptations of the novel.

Almost exactly one century after *Dracula's* first publication, it might be the best time to have a close look at this fascinating novel, and try to find an explanation for its massive success. What is it that has made this apparently ordinary vampire story become one of the most popular [gothic](#) novels ever ?

In the [first chapter](#), we will have a close look at the ambiguous relationship between reality and fiction that Stoker develops throughout the novel, then we will devote our central chapter to the central character in the novel, that is Count Dracula himself, and finally we will study the various symbolical aspects that can be found in *Dracula*

## I. REALITY & FICTION IN *DRACULA* : A CLOSE AND AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIP

The power of true stories is no longer to be demonstrated, and today one of the commonest [devices](#) used to generate fear in literature is to establish a doubt in the reader's mind concerning the veracity of the things he or she is reading.

But if it is common today, at the time when Stoker wrote his masterpiece he acted as a pioneer in establishing such a close and ambiguous relationship between reality and fiction in his novel. In *The Dracula Myth*, Gabriel Ronay emphasises Bram Stoker's talent in making his supernatural story seem authentic : "It is Stoker's ability to create a sense of the possibility of the impossible and transcend man's mortal limitations that grip the reader." [\(2\)](#)

### A. comments on the form : a taste of authenticity

One thing that appears quite clearly in *Dracula* is a very strong desire on his author's part to make his story appear as authentic as possible.

Even before the beginning of the novel itself, Stoker's intentions are made clear through the presence of an epigraph of the most unusual kind.

The epigraph to a book is generally used as a first insight into its general essence, to give a [first impression](#) of its own particular atmosphere. It works as a kind of short introductory element given to the reader in the form of a particular key sentence or an appropriate quotation, the purpose being to shed light on the global meaning of the book, to make it easier for the reader to apprehend the author's intentions.

In *Dracula*, far from shedding light on the novel, the epigraph appears as the first factor conveying the ambiguity between reality and fiction that will be exploited throughout the whole book. Already before the novel has even begun, Stoker tries to establish doubt and confusion in the reader's mind, by presenting his book not as a novel, but as a serious account of a real-life experience.

"How these papers have been placed into sequence will be made clear in the reading of them. All needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibility of latter-day belief may stand forth as simple fact. There is throughout no statement of past events wherein memory may err, for all the records chosen are exactly contemporary, given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them." [\(3\)](#)

Stoker's wish to introduce his novel as a collection of authentic testimonies is here obvious. The epigraph appears to be a warning to the reader, an assertion of the exactitude of the documents presented in the book, all this written in a pseudo-official style in an attempt to gain some more credibility.

Bram Stoker could definitely not have found a better opening for *Dracula*. The author makes his intentions clear from the very beginning and this short introduction is very representative of the entire book. An echo of this ambiguous epigraph is to be found in the conclusion to the book, a note supposed to have been written by Jonathan Harker seven years after the events related in the novel, in which Van Helsing declares : "We want no proofs; we ask none to believe us !" [\(4\)](#)

This is to be considered as another occurrence of Bram Stoker reasserting his intention to present the novel as a true story, this time through the voice of *Dracula's* most reliable character, as we shall see later.

The interesting point is that at the same time Stoker completely denies his responsibility concerning the content of the book. From the status of author, he steps back to become a mere observer, totally uninvolved, almost on an even footing with the reader. According to the first sentence of the epigraph, Stoker did not even play a role in the gathering nor in the organisation of the various documents that are displayed in the book, as it is supposed to be the results of Mina and Jonathan Harker's work, as we are told in chapter 18 :

"Let me write this all out now. [...] In this matter dates are everything, and I think if we get all our material ready, and have every item put in chronological order, we shall have done much" [\(5\)](#) "So I told them, as well as I could, that I had read all the papers and diaries, and that my husband and I, having type-written them, had just finished putting them in order" [\(6\)](#)

In fact, if we believe the epigraph, the latter then supposedly becomes Bram Stoker's only contribution to the writing of *Dracula*.

The writing of such an epigraph was apparently motivated by a strong desire to create a puzzling atmosphere, to put the reader in a state of confusion before the reading of the novel, but as we will see later, there might be another probable explanation.

Bram Stoker's choice of the epistolary form - a literary genre already well on its way towards extinction at the end of the nineteenth century [\(7\)](#) - is also in keeping with his desire to give the novel a taste of authenticity which has been introduced in the epigraph.

The book is composed of a number of various [elements](#) - extracts from some characters' diaries or journals, letters, telegrams and occasionally newspaper articles - that have all been carefully dated, except for one letter from Lucy to Mina appearing in chapter 5 in which she only mentions an elusive "Wednesday" [\(8\)](#), and a message left by Van Helsing on Dr Seward's phonograph, which is displayed in chapter 24. According to those dates, if we except Jonathan Harker's last note, added seven years after the writing of the other documents, the novel covers a period of approximately six months, as it opens on the third of May, the last document being dated from the sixth of November.

This systematic use of dates in *Dracula* affects the book's credibility in several ways. On the graphic level, the simple fact of having a date put on nearly all the documents has the effect of making them appear more authentic. The date being part of the stereotype of the official style, it endows the document with a certain aspect of seriousness, just like the use of a pseudo-official language in the epigraph.

The use of dates in *Dracula* is also part of the process of creating a context for the novel. The plot no longer exists completely outside reality, at a purely abstract level. It is set in time, the dates becoming a bridge between the novel and the real world, linking the narrative a bit more closely to the reader's personal sphere.

Finally, another reason for the use of dates in *Dracula* is that it enables Stoker to give a very realistic rendering of time in his novel. The story being told from several different points of view, the narrative cannot follow a single chronological line, for Stoker sometimes has to relate several events that are supposed to happen simultaneously. As a consequence, the book is riddled with examples of flashbacks, jumps

in time, and ellipses, which gives a realistic rendering of time and implies the use of a calendar during the elaboration of the novel.

An interesting point to notice is the total absence of reference to a particular year throughout the book. If we consider the care with which a specific date has been selected for each document, then we can hardly imagine this absence to be merely accidental. Bram Stoker is most likely to have intentionally omitted to relate his novel to any year in particular, so that it is up to the reader to make his own choice. The events related in the book might take place at almost any time - staying within certain limits of coherence in consideration of the historical background of the novel - and this means that the reader can relate it more or less closely in time to his own personal sphere. For today's readers, Bram Stoker might as well have set his novel on a precise year, it would not make a great difference, but for the people who read it within a few years of its publication, it must have been quite an interesting experience.

However, this is probably not the only reason why Bram Stoker decided not to give any precise information about the supposed year of occurrence of the events depicted in *Dracula*. Keeping in mind the author's determination to present his novel as a true story, it appears only too natural for him to make it difficult for anyone to confirm or invalidate the authenticity of the contents of his book. In this light, the absence of reference to a particular year throughout the entire book becomes one of the best ways to discourage any attempt at checking its veracity.

Another aspect in Stoker's use of the epistolary form is quite revealing of the author's desire to create a general atmosphere of authenticity. At the beginning of each new section, we are given very precise information about the next document to be displayed - its nature, its fictional author, and occasionally some other complementary information - which is delivered in the form of a section title.

This is how we learn that Jonathan Harker's journal is "kept in shorthand" (9), whereas Dr Seward's diary is "kept in phonograph" (10), that the two letters from Mina to Lucy displayed in chapter 12 remained unopened, and that Van Helsing's note in chapter 15 was "not delivered" (11). Among many other instances, Stoker also specifies that the article from 'the Dailygraph' appearing in chapter 7 was originally "pasted in Mina Murray's Journal" (12), and that a letter from Van Helsing presented in chapter 15 was written "by hand" (13).

This regular display of unnecessary pieces of information - as they do not play any decisive role in the plot - is exclusively intended to make the documents appear more authentic, by making an accumulation of apparently insignificant details that actually function as factors of realism.

However, Bram Stoker's choice of the epistolary form was certainly not exclusively motivated by his preoccupation with authenticity and realism. Another essential function of the epistolary form in *Dracula* is to convey an effect of suspense.

In fact, the unravelling of the plot is achieved mostly from the subjective points of view of three characters - Jonathan Harker, Mina Murray and John Seward - the other protagonists of the novel only being granted casual interventions throughout the book. Actually, Stoker's main device to create an atmosphere of suspense and mystery is to tell the story from the points of view of three characters who do not have a global understanding of the situation. This is the reason why Professor Van Helsing, who is the only person in the story being able to give a correct interpretation of the events, is almost never given the opportunity to speak directly, his words being reported only through the diaries of other characters, so that we are never given his intimate conviction about what is really happening, until he tells the main protagonists.

In doing so, Bram Stoker puts the reader in a situation which is quite similar to that of the characters of the novel, in the sense that we are not given any supplement of information other than that available to the cast of *Dracula*. As a consequence the mental process taking place in the characters' minds in their search for the truth is simultaneously repeated in the reader's mind, thus establishing another connection between the novel and the real world.

The general effect produced by the form of *Dracula* is then one of authenticity and realism. Actually, the only element in the form of the book which is not in keeping with this otherwise homogenous impression of truth is the division of the book into chapters. Why did Bram Stoker decide to use such a device after having devoted so much care to the creation of a pseudo-authentic context? We shall answer this question later in our study.

But after having studied the form of the novel, let us have a look at the contents of the *Dracula*.

### **B. A meticulously documented novel**

Although Bram Stoker always claimed that *Dracula* was the transcription of a terrible nightmare he had had when staying at the 'Kilmarnock Arms' - a little inn situated in Cruden Bay, Scotland - which had been caused by "a too generous serving of dressed crab at supper one night" (14), it is today absolutely certain that the novel was the result of six years of work at least.

In the course of the last decade, a number of notes preliminary to the writing of Bram Stoker's masterpiece has been 'unearthed' in the United States by Radu R. Florescu and Raymond T. McNally during the elaboration of their book, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*. Those documents, kept at the Philip H. and A. S. W. Rosenbach Library in Philadelphia - and thus referred to as the 'Philadelphia notes' - are composed of some 75 pages of various information that Stoker started gathering as soon as 1890, for the purpose of writing a story about an "Undead Man". The Philadelphia notes contain precious material concerning Bram Stoker's sources, including a list of some books he consulted, but also some of the early drafts of the novel, among which one dated from 8 March 1890 reveals the basic elements of the plot, organised into four sub-books respectively entitled 'To London', 'Tragedy', 'Discovery' and 'Punishment'. The American critic Clive Leatherdale has made an interesting interpretation of *Dracula's* early structure, which at the same time provides a very convincing explanation for the book's division into chapters :

"This quaternary breakdown is suggestive of four acts of a play, and the fact that the finished novel concentrates most of the action in two multi-roomed buildings (one in Transylvania, the other in London), as if inviting a future stage

adaptation, suggests that Stoker was alive from the start to *Dracula's* theatrical prospects. Moreover, the chapter divisions frequently serve no obvious scene-separating function. Many chapters end in mid-scene or mid conversation, and operate more as curtain calls, providing pauses at regular interval" (15)

This statement is all the more convincing as we know that a stage version of *Dracula* was performed at the Lyceum theatre in London - of which Bram Stoker was in charge as an administrator - in May 1897, a few days only after the publication of the book.

But probably one of the most important interests in the Philadelphia notes is that they highlight an enormous documentation work carried out by the author before starting to write the novel. This resulted in a massive input of authentic elements into the novel, thus creating a very realistic background for the story, and establishing powerful links between the novel and the real world.

Those notes reveal a certain tendency in Bram Stoker to get obsessed with details, and almost every element in the book - even the most insignificant detail - seems to have been the object of a careful study, motivated by an extreme concern with realism.

As far as language is concerned, Stoker seems to have been particularly meticulous in his documentation work, in order to be able to produce an appropriate and realistic style of writing corresponding to each type of document or character.

The official language which is used a few times in the novel - mostly in letters written by solicitors, as those appearing in chapter 8 and chapter 20, but also in the previously mentioned epigraph - must not have been much of a problem for Bram Stoker, who was himself a man of law, having been educated at Dublin's Trinity College for the purpose of becoming a clerk. The journalistic style adopted in chapter 7 and 11 cannot have been problematic either, Stoker having had an experience of journalism from 1871 to 1876, as the unpaid editor of a theatre column in the *Dublin Mail*.

The dialect spoken by old Mr Swales however, is the result of some research made by Bram Stoker, and constitutes a perfect example of the novelist's obsession with realism.

On a vacation trip at Whitby, Yorkshire in 1890 - during which the first notes concerning a supernatural tale about an 'Undead Man' were taken - Bram Stoker had numerous conversations with the local population, and later consulted a book entitled *A Glossary of Words Used in the Neighbourhood of Whitby*, by Francis Kildale Robinson in Whitby's Library. The Philadelphia notes contain a list of 164 words taken from that book, 64 of which have been used in the novel, among which 'kirkgarth'(churchyard) and 'boh-ghosts'(terrifying apparition) (16).

The language used in the description of the Demeter's chaotic arrival in Tate Hill Pier is also the result of an identical documentation work. Both Stoker's occasional chats with local fishermen and his consultation of Robert H. Scott's *Fishery and Barometer Manual* helped him in the use of nautical expressions such as 'mares'-tails', and the ranking of a 'No. 2 : light breeze' (17).

The language spoken by Thomas Bilder, the keeper of the 'Zoological Gardens' interviewed for the 'Pall Mall Gazette' in chapter 11, might also be the result of similar research, although there are no explicit traces of it left in the Philadelphia notes. Finally, it is interesting to note the care devoted by Stoker to the use of an appropriate language for his Dutch Professor, Abraham Van Helsing

However, language is far from being the only field in which Bram Stoker carried out some documentation work before he started to write his novel. Throughout the book it appears quite clearly that the author also gathered a considerable amount of information concerning medicine.

According to the Philadelphia notes, the author received some invaluable help from his surgeon brother, Sir William Thornley Stoker, who familiarised him with the symptoms and treatment of specific head injuries. This enabled Bram Stoker to give a very realistic account of Professor Van Helsing's operation on Renfield in chapter 21, after the latter was attacked by Dracula : "'We shall wait,' said Van Helsing, 'just long enough to fix the best spot for trephining, so that we may most quickly and perfectly remove the blood clot; for it is evident that the haemorrhage is increasing.' (18)

In chapters 10, 11 and 12, the author also displays some knowledge concerning blood transfusion, although no specific source of information on this subject is acknowledged in the Philadelphia notes. However, Stoker's knowledge in this particular field soon proves to be quite limited. Except for the use of a specific medical term such as 'defibrinate', the blood transfusion process is only vaguely described : "Then with swiftness, but with absolute method, Van Helsing performed the operation. As the transfusion went on something like life seemed to come back to poor Lucy's cheeks" (19). Nevertheless, this approximate account does not prevent the use of the blood transfusion to work as another realistic element. We must keep in mind that at the end of the nineteenth century, blood transfusion was not such a commonly known operation as it is today, and that the simple fact of mentioning it in *Dracula* endowed the novel with a certain scientific quality, thus increasing its credibility.

This occasional display of medical knowledge is also to be seen in consideration of Bram Stoker's wish to set his novel into a definitely modern context. *Dracula* was written at the end of the nineteenth century, a period of great technological and scientific progress, and the author obviously intended to reflect this particular aspect of his time in the novel. In order to create a realistic background for his story, Stoker introduced some of the most recent innovations of contemporary Europe into the novel. Once more, this is to be considered as another means of establishing powerful links between the novel and the real world.

The use of the phonograph for Doctor Seward's diary is an obvious instance of Bram Stoker using an up-to-date 'gadget' to give his novel a touch of modernity. Jonathan Harker's use of photographs during Count Dracula's purchase of his London estate is also directly relevant to the author's desire to set his novel into a definitely modern context, the invention of photography being still quite recent when the novel was written : ". . . I have taken with my Kodak views of it from various points." (20)

Another blatant example is to be found in chapter 8, in which the author uses Doctor Seward's voice to make a totally gratuitous display of scientific knowledge : "If I don't sleep at once, chloral, the modern Morpheus -  $C_2HCl_3O.H_2O$  !" (21) The use of the exact chemical composition of Seward's soporific product appears completely unnecessary, as it has absolutely no significant consequence on the plot. Its only function is to convey an impression of seriousness and exactitude in order to endow the book with some more scientific credibility.

But Stoker is not exclusively concerned with exactitude in his use of scientific elements in *Dracula*. Another particular aspect of science is also developed throughout the book, which is quite representative of the state of European science at the time : experimentation.

This particular aspect of science is mostly developed through Doctor Seward's account of Renfield's behaviour. Several times throughout the novel, we are given Seward's original hypotheses concerning the nature of his patient's sickness, and even some personal attempts to give an explanation for the functioning of the human mind : "What I think of on this point is, when self is the fixed point the centripetal force is balanced with the centrifugal : when duty, a cause, etc., is the fixed point, the latter force is paramount, and only accident or a series of accidents can balance it." (22) This passage appearing in chapter 5 is actually quite suggestive of Sigmund Freud's own theories which were written a few years after the publication of *Dracula*.

This type of experimental approach is quite representative of the author's spirit during the elaboration of his novel. The Philadelphia notes reveal that Bram Stoker himself indulged in experimental thinking during the genesis of the book, as they outline a theory of dreams developed by Stoker, which he probably used for the description of vampire attacks from the victim's point of view. (23)

Another element belonging to the field of experimental science in the novel is the use of hypnotism on Mina by Professor Van Helsing in chapter 23. Once again, the Philadelphia notes do not mention any specific source of documentation on that particular subject, although it clearly appears that Bram Stoker had some knowledge of the works of Mesmer and Charcot. The latter - whose technique would be used a few years later by the above mentioned Sigmund Freud - is even mentioned in chapter 14, in a conversation between Seward and Van Helsing about the irrational : "I suppose now you do not believe in corporeal transference. No? Nor in materialisation. No? [...] Nor in hypnotism - 'Yes,' I said. 'Charcot has proved that pretty well.' " (24) This specific reference to Charcot - apart from establishing another link between the novel and the real world - seems to indicate that Bram Stoker himself was familiar with the works of the French scientist. But as for the blood transfusion episode, the actual description of Van Helsing's hypnotism session on Mina reveals that the author only had a fairly superficial knowledge in this field : "Looking fixedly at her, he commenced to make passes in front of her, from over the top of her head downward, with each hand in turn. Mina gazed at him fixedly for a few minutes [...] Gradually her eyes closed, and she sat stock still, only by the gentle heaving of her bosom could one know that she was alive." (25) Once again, the description of the process itself, that is the specific technique employed by Van Helsing to generate Mina's hypnotic trance, remains rather vague, although it perfectly fulfils its function within the plot. After all we should keep in mind that *Dracula* remains a fictional work, and that it is not meant to exude the precision of an encyclopaedia of science.

However, the field in which Bram Stoker appears to have carried out the most important documentation work during the elaboration of the novel is probably that of geography.

Throughout the book, the author regularly mentions specific geographic locations both in eastern Europe and in England, such as Exeter, Whitby and sites in the greater London area. This particularly detailed geographic context constitutes one of the most significant inputs of real elements into the novel. At the same time, it definitely sets *Dracula* apart from earlier gothic novels, in the sense that it is the only one to be so concretely related to the real world, as opposed to any kind of imaginary land.

As far as the locations in Britain are concerned, the Philadelphia notes establish that their use in the novel is the result of first-hand research mostly. As we previously mentioned, the author began to tour Whitby as soon as August 1890, gathering various pieces of information necessary to the writing of his novel, and Stoker was quite familiar with the London area as he had lived there since 1878.

Radu R. Florescu and Raymond T. McNally, in their book entitled *In Search of Dracula*, have established a list of the various authentic places appearing in the novel that can still be found, both in London and Whitby (26).

According to them, Count Dracula's main London lair - a mansion located at "No. 347 Piccadilly" (27) in the novel - was based on a real house, that has since become 138 Piccadilly, and now stands next door to the Hard Rock Café.

The 'Zoological Gardens' mentioned in chapter 11, where Dracula receives help from an escaped wolf, were based on the real London Zoo, located in Regent's Park, which it is still possible to visit today. Bram Stoker carried out some first-hand field research there during the elaboration of *Dracula* : the Philadelphia notes mention a visit during which Stoker studied the behaviour of certain animals. (28)

Hampstead, the location of Lucy Westenra's attacks on children mentioned in chapter 13, is also a real London suburb that can be reached from central London in half an hour by underground. There stand the 'Spaniards', an authentic English pub which is referred to in chapter 15, and 'Jack Straw's Castle', a real inn in which Seward and Van Helsing have dinner before they proceed to their first examination of Lucy's grave : "We dined at Jack Straw's Castle along with a little crowd of bicyclists and others who were genially noisy." (29)

Whitby is also a real town located on the east coast of England, in North Yorkshire. As previously mentioned, Bram Stoker went on holidays there in 1890, which enabled him to give a very realistic picture of the area by incorporating some of the town's most distinctive features into the novel, such as the authentic 'Tate Hill Pier' mentioned in chapter 7.

Whitby Abbey, referred to in chapter 6 as ". . . a most noble ruin, of immense size, and full of beautiful and romantic bits. . .", is another authentic site in Whitby that can still be admired today. The original convent was founded by the abbess Hilda in 657 AD, and was sacked

by the Danes approximately ten years later. Bram Stoker included some of those historical elements into his description, as well as an allusion to an authentic local legend, according to which Hilda sometimes appears there as a ghost, all dressed in white : ". . .there is a legend that a white lady is seen in one of the windows."

St Mary's church, with its picturesque graveyard, is also authentic, and apart from being ". . .the nicest spot in Whitby. . ." (30) as it offers a splendid view of the harbour, it also provided Bram Stoker with authentic material for the writing of his novel. Among 1530 readable tombstones available in St Mary's churchyard, Stoker recorded no less than 91 original inscriptions, some of which he faithfully transcribed in *Dracula*.

The anecdotal use of the 199 steps leading to the churchyard from the bottom of Tate Hill -although Mina only mentions ". . .hundreds of them. . ." (31) - is relevant of the same desire to give a very realistic description

Actually, Bram Stoker's account of Whitby is so accurate that Radu R. Florescu and Raymond T. McNally even managed to establish a precise reconstitution of Mina's whereabouts during her night search for Lucy related in chapter 8 : "To trace Mina's path on the night she followed sleepwalking Lucy to her encounter with Dracula, go along East Terrace just behind the Stoker Seat, cross the harbour bridge, and go to the north onto Church Street. . ." (32)

The detailed account of Transylvania given by Stoker in the first and last chapters of the novel is even more impressive, as we know that the author never actually visited this region of Eastern Europe, establishing this part of the settings of *Dracula* exclusively through books, such as Emily Gerard's two-volume travelogue entitled *The Land Beyond the Forest*, which is mentioned in the Philadelphia notes. (33)

During the elaboration of *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, Radu R. Florescu and Raymond T. McNally successfully attempted to follow Jonathan Harker's steps in his trip from London to Transylvania, an authentic region located in the northern part of modern Romania.

Jonathan Harker begins his journey in Munich, Germany, and then travels by train to Vienna, capital of modern Austria. The next stages in his journey take him to Budapest, in Hungary - that Stoker correctly spells in the old-fashioned way 'Buda-Pest', as it is composed of two distinct cities sitting across each other on the Danube - and to the Transylvanian city of Cluj, which Stoker chose to mention by its German name, 'Klausenburgh' since at this time it was located within the Habsburg Empire. (34)

"Here I stopped for the night at the Hôtel Royale. I had for dinner, or rather supper, a chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was very good but thirsty. (*Mem.*, get recipe for Mina.) I asked the waiter, and he said it was called 'paprika hendl,' and that, as it was a national dish, I should be able to get it anywhere along the Carpathians." (35)

Amazingly enough, the 'Hôtel Royale' in which Jonathan Harker spends the night is authentic, and has since become the 'Continental', where one can still actually order 'paprika hendl', or even 'mamaliga' and 'impletata', two other authentic local dishes that are mentioned in the novel.

According to the authors of *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, Bram Stoker's description of the landscapes seen by Jonathan Harker during his ride from Cluj to 'Biztritz' - today called Bistritza - is very realistic, as it was directly inspired by the various travel guides available at the time.

There, our protagonist stays at the 'Golden Krone Hotel', another authentic establishment that still actually serves 'robber steak', and local 'Golden Mediasch wine'. (36)

Finally, the last stage in Jonathan's journey to Dracula's castle is the travel to the Borgo Pass, a real col known as 'Prundu Bîrgaului' in Romanian, which is located a few kilometres to the east of Bistritza, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains. Once again, according to Radu R. Florescu and Raymond T. McNally, Stoker's description of the place is authentic, and his use of specific geographic and topographic details implies the consultation of a very detailed map of the area during the writing of the novel.

This is of course to be considered as another manifestation of the impressive documentation work carried out by Bram Stoker during the elaboration of his novel, which is once more very revealing of the author's desire to give his book an air of authenticity.

However, Stoker is not completely serious in his way of dealing with reality and fiction in *Dracula*. In fact if we take a closer look at the novel, we realise that sometimes it almost becomes something of a game for him to introduce elements of the real world into the story.

### C. Stoker toying with reality and fiction

Throughout the entire book, Bram Stoker can be felt toying with gratuitous allusions to the real world that reinforce previously established ties between reality and fiction in the novel, although they are most of the time coded and almost unnoticeable.

By indulging in this sort of play with reality and fiction in *Dracula*, Stoker does not only create additional links between the real world and the book, he also establishes a kind of complicity between himself and the reader, who seems to be invited to detect and decipher Stoker's enigmas.

Some examples of Bram Stoker toying with reality and fiction are to be found in the origins of a few characters' names in the cast of *Dracula*.

Jonathan Harker for instance, borrows his second name from a real person, Joseph Harker, belonging to the author's personal sphere, as he

was regularly employed as scenic designer and painter at the Lyceum Theatre in London, of which Bram Stoker was the administrator (37). The use of a real person's name is here totally gratuitous and does not have any symbolic significance in the novel. It is a pure example of Stoker's habit of playing with reality and fiction by spreading bits of the real world on almost every element in the novel.

Another instance of this peculiar habit can be found in old Mr Swales' name, which was taken from a real tombstone inscription during one of Stoker's visits of St Mary Churchyard in Whitby. Once again, the choice of this secondary character's name does not have any particular consequence in the novel. It is simply used for the sake of inputting one more element from the real world into the story. The fact that all the tombstone inscriptions used in chapter 6 are authentic is also relevant to the same motivation.

The case of Arthur Holmwood's name is slightly different. It is still relevant to Stoker's compulsive use of elements belonging to the real world in his novel, but this time the choice is not totally arbitrary, it is related to the general subject of the book. Two particularly interesting hypotheses for the origins of the name 'Holmwood' have been advanced by Clive Leatherdale, in *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*. First, Arthur's family name might be a reference to another successful vampire story in English literature, *Varney the Vampire*, written in 1847 by Thomas Peckett Prest. 'Holmwood' would then be taken from 'Ringwood', a character appearing in Thomas Peckett Prest's novel, this supposition being reinforced by the fact that in chapter 9 Stoker situates the Holmwoods' family home at 'Ring' (38). A second possibility establishes Arthur's second name as a juxtaposition of two distinct family names, Holm and Wood, that would inevitably have been brought to Bram Stoker's attention when reading a review of Henry Irving's *King Lear* in an 1892 edition of *Lloyd's Weekly Advertiser*. An article displayed on the same page than that devoted to the star actor of the Lyceum Theatre related the most unusual story "of a certain Mr Holm, accompanied of Mr Wood, who broke into a vault in St Mary churchyard, Hendon, to sever the head of his mother's body." (39)

However, Bram Stoker did not restrict his little game to the use of elements from the real world in his characters' names. Another blatant example of the author transplanting a real-life acquaintance into the novel can be found in the extract of the 'Westminster Gazette' displayed in chapter 13, in which the correspondent's voice is used to make a totally gratuitous allusion to Ellen Terry, one of the Lyceum Theatre's actresses with whom Stoker entertained a strong friendship : "Our correspondent naïvely says that even Ellen Terry could not be so winningly attractive as some of these grubby-faced little children pretend - and imagine themselves - to be" (40)

The episode of the Demeter's arrival in Whitby, related in chapter 7, probably constitutes the most interesting example of this game between reality and fiction that Stoker plays throughout the novel.

Dracula's arrival in Tate Hill Pier was directly inspired by a real event : the shipwreck of the *Dmitry*, a Russian ship out of the port of Narva, which ran aground on Whitby's coast on October 24, 1885. This true story was told to Bram Stoker during his stay in Whitby, by a coast guardsman he met on a visit to the village lighthouse. He later gathered more precise information on that subject by consulting the archives of the *Whitby Gazette* in which he found a report of the event :

"The piers and cliffs were thronged with expectant people, when a few hundred yards from the piers she was knocked about considerably by the heavy seas, but on crossing the bar the sea calmed a little and she sailed into smooth water. A cheer broke from the spectators on the pier when they saw her into safety." (41)

In *Dracula*, Bram Stoker rewrites the story in the form of a newspaper article published in the 'Dailygraph', and has Mina paste the clipping into her journal.

The way in which the names appearing in the original story have been changed is very revealing of Bram Stoker's playful spirit. In the novel, the ship comes from 'Varna', a real port in Bulgaria, but also an anagram of the original 'Narva'. The ship's original name, the 'Dmitry', becomes the 'Demeter', in reference to Alfred Tennyson's *Demeter and other Poems*, published in 1889, Stoker being not only an admirer, but also a close friend of the English poet. (42)

Finally, one last instance of Stoker's play with reality and fiction is to be detected in the very last section of the novel, that is to say the note supposed to have been written seven years after the rest of the documents that are displayed in the book.

Thanks to the Philadelphia notes, we now know with certainty that Bram Stoker took the very first steps in the elaboration of *Dracula* in 1890. As the book was first published in 1897, this amounts its genesis to 7 years, which is precisely the exact duration that Stoker chose to leave between the events related in the book and the last note.

Could this be merely coincidental ? As we have previously noticed, Bram Stoker had an almost obsessive preoccupation with details and precision, which would most probably have prevented him from choosing at random an element situated in such a strategic place in the book. But then what was Stoker's purpose in making a parallel between the amount of time involved in the writing of *Dracula* and the period of time covered by the entire book ?

It could be perceived as a way of indicating the supposed year of occurrence of the events related in the novel, which would then be set in 1890, the last note being added in 1897, just before the publishing of the documents.

It might also be an appropriate means of finishing the omnipresent pattern that closely knits reality and fiction together throughout the novel, as it is suggested by the inherent meaning of the number seven, generally used as a symbol of wholeness.

Another interesting device which Stoker used in his attempt to establish a close relationship between reality and fiction in *Dracula* was to include the pre-existing myth of the vampire into the novel.



#### D. The use of a pre-existent myth : the vampire

Bram Stoker's first contact with the vampire myth has commonly been attributed to his friendship with Richard Burton, a prominent orientalist who translated *One Thousand Nights and One Night* into English, the latter including a tale about a Hindu vampire. But this is only partially true, as it does not take into account previous vampiric literature, which constituted the most considerable source of inspiration for Stoker's novel.

Although *Dracula* is beyond any doubt the most famous vampire story that literature ever knew, it does not necessarily mean that Stoker was the first to introduce the vampire myth in fiction, and in spite of *Dracula's* enormous success - which has almost completely overshadowed all its predecessors - one cannot possibly deny the influential role that the latter played on Bram Stoker's choice to write a novel about a vampire.

The novel that actually marked the first apparition of the vampire myth in British literature was John Polidori's *The Vampyre*, published in 1819, which led to a vampire craze in English and French theatres in the 1820s and created popular demand for vampire serial novels. (43)

The previously mentioned *Varney the Vampire or, the Feast of Blood*, published in 1847 by Thomas Peckett Prest, was also a very influential work that contributed to familiarise the author of *Dracula* with the myth of the vampire.

However, the most important literary source of inspiration for Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is probably to be found in *Carmilla*, a vampire novel published in 1871 by another Irish author, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. Not only did Stoker borrow the title of his main character from Le Fanu's 'Countess Carmilla', but according to the Philadelphia notes, he also originally intended to set his novel in Styria, a part of modern Austria, and the setting of *Carmilla*. (44)

But whatever influences were responsible for Bram Stoker's use of the vampire myth in *Dracula*, the most interesting point is to be found in the effect it produces on the entire novel.

Actually the use of the vampire myth is to be considered as another element relevant to Bram Stoker's desire to establish a confused relationship between reality and fiction throughout the book. In this light, his choice of the vampire myth is judicious, in the sense that it appears as an excellent means to endow the novel with the pre-existing ambiguity which is inherent to the myth itself.

As a product of superstition, the vampire exudes an ambiguous and controversial quality that fits the author's purpose perfectly. When *Dracula* was first published in 1897, quite a lot of people actually believed in the existence of those undead creatures that were supposed to have infested Europe in the previous century, and amazingly enough, some people still give credit to their existence today. Vampirism is one of those irrational beliefs which science has always been unable to eradicate, as it has its origins in the most commonly shared metaphysical question : is there a life after death ?

This accounts for the universality of the myth - and thus partly explains *Dracula's* world-wide success - as few societies are without their own versions of the vampire. In chapter 18, Bram Stoker uses Professor Van Helsing's voice to make an allusion to the universal aspect of the vampire myth : "For, let me tell you, he is known everywhere that men have been. In old Greece, in old Rome; he flourish in Germany all over, in France, in India, even in the Chersonese; and in China, and the peoples fear him at this day." (45)

Bram Stoker's own version of the vampire is both composed of 'authentic' elements drawn from the vampire of European folklore and of a few personal innovations added by the author to meet the requirements of his novel's plot. According to the Philadelphia notes, Stoker's main source of information concerning the vampire myth is to be found in an article by Emily Gerard entitled 'Transylvanian Superstitions', which was first published in an 1885 edition of *The Nineteenth Century Magazine*, and was later incorporated into the previously mentioned *The Land Beyond the Forest*.

Among many characteristics borrowed from the vampire of folklore, Stoker's vampire Count does not throw any shadow and does not make any reflection in a mirror. He can change in form and size, has the ability to see in the dark and is endowed with some control over the elements. Being dead, his skin is icy to the touch, as remarked by Jonathan Harker in chapter 2, ". . . it seemed as cold as ice - more like the hand of a dead than a living man." Nevertheless, he possesses an incredible strength and speed of movement, which Professor Van Helsing establishes in chapter 18 : "This vampire which is amongst us is of himself so strong in person as twenty men. . ." (46)

Another characteristic which is directly relevant to the vampire of European folklore is to be found in *Dracula's* inability to impose his presence on a victim he meets for the first time, unless the latter shows some kind of complicity. This appears particularly clearly in the description of Jonathan Harker's arrival at Castle Dracula : "Welcome to my house ! Enter freely and of your own will ! He made no motion of stepping to meet me [...] The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward. . ." (47) In the same way, Stoker's vampire has to be invited to be able to enter a place for the first time. This sheds light on the particular role played by Renfield in the novel : "Come in, Lord and Master !" (48)

Still in keeping with the characteristics of the traditional vampire, *Dracula* is crucially repelled by garlic and such Christian items as the crucifix and the holy wafer. The various modes of disposal of a vampire which are exposed by Professor Van Helsing in chapter 18 are also part of the original superstition : "The branch of wild rose on his coffin keep him that he move not from it; a sacred bullet fired into the coffin kill him so that he is true dead; and as for the stake through him, we know already of its peace; or the cut-off head that giveth rest." (49)

Bram Stoker also put considerable stress on the vampire's animality, by using the authentic folkloric connection between vampires and werewolves. According to the superstition, the latter were supposedly likely to become vampires after their death. (50) This animal aspect of the vampire can be felt in *Dracula's* physical appearance itself. According to Jonathan Harker's description appearing in chapter 2, the Count

has pointed ears and protruding canine teeth, his hands are broad, with hairy palms and squat fingers, and finally his long and sharp nails are not without evoking the claws of a wild beast. According to his notes, Stoker directly based this aspect of Dracula's physical appearance on Sabine Baring-Gould's *Book of Were-Wolves*, in which the author displays an account of a so-called authentic werewolf case :

"The teeth were strong and white, and the canine teeth protruded over the lower lip when the mouth was closed. The boy's hands were large and powerful, the nails black and pointed [...] A werewolf may easily be detected, even when devoid of his skin; for his hands are broad, and his fingers short, and there are always some hairs in the hollow of his hand." (51)

The animal side of Stoker's vampire Count is not only expressed through his connection with the werewolf. In chapter 3 Jonathan Harker describes Dracula crawling down the walls of his castle, ". . . just as a lizard moves along a wall.", while in chapter 23 he moves ". . . panther-like. . .", has a ". . . sort of snarl. . ." on his face, and shows ". . . lion-like disdain." (52) This animality is also to be found in the Count's ability to change into a wolf or a bat, in keeping with the vampire of folklore, as for his control over ". . . all meaner things : the rat, and the owl, and the bat - the moth, and the fox, and the wolf. . ." (53)

However, Bram Stoker did not restrict his vampire Count within the pre-established characteristics of the vampire of folklore. Several personal elements were added by the author, making Dracula special both in his attributes and in his way of becoming a vampire.

First, Stoker's insistence on the fact that his vampire character can only rest in consecrated earth, ". . . in soil barren of holy memories it cannot rest. . ." (54), is a major divergence from traditional vampire folklore, and can even be perceived as a sacrilege, as the original Orthodox superstition established that an Undead, if excommunicated, could not rest in hallowed soil. Nevertheless, as a consequence of *Dracula's* enormous success, this specific element which was added to the traditional version of the vampire by Bram Stoker has finally become an integral part of the myth, as it is today mentioned in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica's* definition of the vampire : ". . . by daybreak it must return to its grave or to a coffin filled with its native earth."

Another blatant example of Bram Stoker's wish to differentiate Dracula from the vampire of folklore is to be found in the Count's immunity to the rays of the sun. While the traditional vampire is supposed to be very sensitive to sunlight and can only appear at night, in chapter 13 Stoker permits Dracula to walk quite naturally through the streets of London in broad daylight, thus infringing on one of the most fundamental elements of the original myth.

As far as Dracula's way of becoming a vampire is concerned, no clear information is provided on this point in the entire book. According to Clive Leatherdale, Bram Stoker did not wish to allow his vampire Count to become a 'nosferatu' by any of the traditional procedures of folklore, as those always imply being a victim in some manner : "Count Dracula can be a victim of nobody and nothing. If he is a vampire, it must have been through his choice and power. He was neither bitten whilst alive by another undead, nor was he sentenced to a vampiric punishment for any of the appropriate transgressions." (55) Actually, the only passage in the book which seems to refer to Dracula's vampiric origins is to be found in Professor Van Helsing's words reported in chapter 18 : "The Draculas were, says Arminius, a great and noble race, though now and again were scions who were held by their coevals to have dealings with the Evil One. They learned his secrets in the Scholomance, amongst the mountains over the Lake Hermanstadt, where the devil claims the tenth scholar as his due." (56) This reference to a mythical academy supposedly located in the Carpathian mountains establishes the Count as the spiritual offspring of the devil himself, which endows Dracula with a very special status and definitely differentiates him from the traditional vampire of folklore.

However, *Dracula* does not only stand apart from the vampires of folklore, but also from other literary vampires, as no other vampire character is based on an actual historical character, this being another of Bram Stoker's innovations, this time in the field of gothic literature.

## II. STOKER'S COUNT DRACULA : HISTORICAL AND FICTIONAL ELEMENTS

### A. Stoker's 'encounter' with Dracula

When Stoker began to gather material for the writing of his supernatural tale, the author had not yet decided to base his central character on a real historical figure, and he actually did not know anything about the real Dracula at that time. In his early notes, Bram Stoker mentioned instead a 'Count Wampyr', who had most probably been named in reference to a previous success of vampiric literature, John Polidori's *The Vampyre*. Stoker's novel was initially entitled *The Un-Dead*, and the book only acquired its definitive title at the very last minute, when it was about to be printed, in 1897. (57) However, Stoker's decision to change the name of his vampire character into a mysterious 'Dracula' took place much earlier, more precisely in the course of the summer of 1890.

As for his introduction to the myth of the vampire, Bram Stoker's first 'encounter' with the historical Dracula also has its legend.

This sudden change of name has commonly been attributed to Professor Arminius Vambery, a prominent orientalist at the University of Budapest, who is mentioned by Van Helsing in chapter 18 : "I have asked my friend Arminius, of Buda-Pesth University, to make his record. . . [...] The Draculas were, says Arminius, a great and noble race. . ." (58)

This additional example of Bram Stoker's habit of transplanting real-life acquaintances into the novel constitutes the origin of a theory according to which the real Arminius Vambery supplied information on the real Dracula.

Bram Stoker's *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* record that he was actually introduced to the Hungarian Professor on 30 April 1890 and met him again on several other occasions. Unfortunately, nothing is known of Stoker and Vambery's conversations or correspondence, and no trace remains of Professor Vambery's hypothetical writings on Dracula or on vampires in general. As a consequence, his alleged role in the genesis of Stoker's masterpiece remains purely theoretical as it cannot be confirmed by the use of concrete evidence. Moreover, it has recently been established that *Dracula* could have taken its final shape without the intervention of Arminius Vambery, as all the information concerning the historical Dracula which is displayed in the novel, appears in Bram Stoker's sources listed in the Philadelphia Notes. (59)

So once again, Stoker's vampire Count seems to have been the object of an impressive research work.

In fact, Stoker's first known introduction to the historical Dracula seems to have taken place at the Whitby Public Lending Library in August 1890, during his previously mentioned vacation in Yorkshire.

During one of his frequent visits at the library, he came across a book entitled *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia with Political Observations Relative to Them*, written in 1820 by William Wilkinson, a British Consul at Bucharest. It is in this book that Bram Stoker first read about the historical figure that would provide him with an ideal base for his undead character.

The discovery of this book perfectly coincides with the first mention of Dracula in the Philadelphia notes, thus invalidating the theory according to which Arminius Vambery played a decisive role in the genesis of Stoker's masterpiece.

The fact that Wilkinson's book is the only work to be associated with a specific call number in the Philadelphia notes - ". . .shelf 0.1097. . ." (60) - also stresses its importance in the elaboration of *Dracula*, for it clearly indicates that Stoker consulted it repeatedly during the writing of the novel. According to the authors of *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, Stoker even incorporated no less than ten citations from *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* into his novel. (61)

However, Bram Stoker did not draw all the necessary information concerning the life and deeds of the historical Dracula exclusively from Wilkinson's work. The Philadelphia notes indicate further research carried out by the author at the British Museum, thus establishing Jonathan Harker's own documentation work alluded to in the opening pages of *Dracula* as another instance of Stoker toying with reality and fiction in the novel: "Having some time at my disposal when in London, I had visited the British Museum, and made some search among the books and maps in the Library regarding Transylvania. . ." (62)

In addition to Wilkinson's work and the previously mentioned *The Land Beyond the Forest* by Emily Gerard, Stoker appears to have gathered most of his material concerning the historical Dracula from a few other books listed in the Philadelphia notes: *Magyarland*, written in 1881 by Nina Elizabeth Mazuchelli; *On the Track of the Crescent*, by E.C. Johnson, published in 1885; *Transylvania, Its Products and People*, written in 1865 by Charles Boner; and Andrew F. Crosse's *Round about the Carpathians*, published in 1878. (63)

Actually, those books did not only provide Stoker with the historical material necessary to the elaboration of his Transylvanian vampire Count. They also constituted a considerable source of information concerning Romanian geography, local superstitions, and other complementary background information.

Now that Bram Stoker's sources for the use of the historical Dracula have been established, let us have a closer look at the historical figure which served as a concrete base for Bram Stoker's vampire Count.

## B. Identifying the historical Dracula

An interesting device that can be used in our attempt to identify the historical figure hiding behind Bram Stoker's central character is a close analysis of that mysterious name substituted by the author to the initial 'Count Wampyr'.

According to Radu R. Florescu and Raymond T. McNally, the name Dracula is in fact composed of two distinct parts: a root word, 'Dracul'; and a suffix, '-a'.

The root word - which in Romanian is spelled 'Drakul' and pronounced 'dra-cool' - has several meanings: in the Romanian language, 'drakul' can either refer to the 'devil' or to a 'dragon', which must have played quite an important part in Bram Stoker's choice of that name for the evil character of his novel.

However, in Romanian history, the name 'Drakul' is also associated with a Wallachian ruler, Vlad III, who acquired the nickname of Vlad Drakul in 1431, when he became a 'Draconist', that is to say a member of the mythical Order of the Dragon, created in 1387 by the Holy Roman Emperor in order to defend the Roman Church against Turk and Czech heretics. (64)

Then, the suffix '-a', which first appears to be an incongruous feminine ending, becomes a Slavonic genitive - the equivalent of the French 'de' - indicating that the bearer of the name is 'the son of' a person of rank.

In this respect, the name 'Dracula' points to the son of Vlad Drakul, thus identifying the historical figure hiding behind Bram Stoker's vampire Count as a fifteenth century Wallachian ruler, Vlad IV, also known as 'Vlad Tepes' - Vlad the Impaler - for his regular use of impalement, both on his enemies and on his own people.

This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that Vlad IV actually signed several documents as 'Dragulya', 'Dragkwlya', or 'Dragwyla', the Hungarian and German chancelleries having transcribed his name using the Latin alphabet as 'Dracole' or 'Dracula'. (65)

Vlad IV was born in 1430 in the Transylvanian town of Sighisoara, near Bistritza, but it was the neighbouring region of Wallachia that he would rule first in 1448, then from 1456 to 1462, and for the last time in 1476.

His father, Vlad III - or Vlad Drakul - who was himself prince of Wallachia from 1436 to 1446, was engaged in the struggle for the defence of Christianity against the Ottoman Empire. Around 1442, Vlad IV was captured by the Turks, who imprisoned him in order to gain his father's allegiance through blackmail. Vlad Drakul was then forced to have simultaneous dealings with the Holy Roman Emperor and the enemy, which were bound to be discovered.

In 1447, Vlad III was put to death at Christian hands, together with Mircea, his eldest son, and the throne of Wallachia passed to a Hungarian prince, Vladislav II. The latter was defeated by the Ottomans in 1448 at the battle of Kosovo, and the Turks put Vlad IV on the Wallachian throne. Dracula's first reign lasted only two months, and he was soon replaced by another Hungarian claimant to the throne.

Dracula's next accession to the throne of Wallachia occurred in 1456. This time, he was established Prince of Wallachia by the King of Hungary, John Hunyadi, who was replaced two years later by his son, Mathias Corvinus.

During his second reign, Vlad IV was often torn between Hungarian and Turkish interests, as both nations requested his allegiance. His authority was often flouted, especially in the Saxon town of Sibiu and Brasov. Dracula organised particularly violent punitive expeditions there, which participated in his gaining the nickname of 'the Impaler'.

In 1458, on the initiative of the newly established Pope Pius II, Dracula engaged in a new crusade against the Turks. Having crossed the Danube with his army, he destroyed almost everything that stood on his way, and in his report to the Hungarian King, Vlad the Impaler boasted some 23883 victims.

However, King Mathias Corvinus was in no hurry to struggle with the Turks, and suddenly decided to get rid of his unwanted ally by imprisoning him for treachery and inhuman cruelties.

It was only in 1476, when the Hungarian King needed his services again in his fight against the Ottoman Empire, that Vlad IV was eventually freed and re-established on the throne of Wallachia. But this time, his reign only lasted a few weeks, during which he led a desperate campaign against the Turks, and finally got killed on the battle-field.

This account of the authentic fifteenth century Wallachian prince is more or less objective, as it is based on several historical studies that have been carried out during the last twenty years.

The material that was available to Bram Stoker in the documentation work that preceded the writing of his novel was much more subjective, as it was essentially based on the folkloric version of the historical Dracula which has its origin in fifteenth century pamphlets. The latter first appeared in 1463, after Dracula's imprisonment, in a large propaganda campaign initiated by Mathias Corvinus to justify the arrest of his ally in the Pope's eyes. Those writings, probably conceived in Buda, were in fact mere catalogues of the various cruelties that were supposed to have been inflicted by Vlad Tepes, describing the latter as ". . .this scum of the Earth. . ." (66) Today, historians agree on the fact that Vlad IV was probably quite a cruel ruler, but they also assert that some of the content of those pamphlets might have actually been pure fiction.

However, this inhuman aspect of the historical Dracula most probably played a part in Stoker's decision to use him as a base for his evil Count. Wilkinson's work, which seems to have constituted Stoker's most important source of information on Vlad IV, described the latter in the same negative way as the fifteenth century pamphleteers, as an evil personality. (67)

Nevertheless, our portrait of the historical Dracula would not be complete without mentioning the heroic status he recently acquired among the people of modern Romania.

During the second half of the twentieth century, Vlad the Impaler has been considerably rehabilitated by Romanian historians, in an attempt to provide Romania with a national hero, ". . .because a nation still threatened by foreign domination needs the weight of its mythical heroes to survive." (68) In this purpose, Dracula's crimes tend to have been explained away, whereas his heroic actions in the struggle against the Turkish invader have largely been idealised, and in fact today Dracula does constitute a symbol of Romanian pride, particularly since the celebration of the five hundredth anniversary of his death in 1976.

So Dracula appears to be a half-real, half legendary figure, and a multi-faceted historical character, as he is alternately perceived as a tyrant, a 'cruel but just' ruler, a hero, and of course with the publication of Stoker's masterpiece, a vampire.

### C. Stoker's character : Count Dracula

An interesting way of establishing a connection between the historical Dracula and Bram Stoker's vampire Count would be to underline a physical resemblance between the two.

If we consider the description of Count Dracula made by Jonathan Harker in chapter 2, Dracula appears as "a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a speck of colour about him anywhere." (69)

A few pages later, Stoker gives us a more detailed account of his character's facial features :

"His face was strong - a very strong - aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion." (70)

If we compare this description with one of the numerous portraits of the historical Dracula, such as the 1485 Lübeck woodcut reproduced on page 62, there seems to be some kind of similarity.

However, before we draw any conclusion from this apparent similarity between the historical Dracula and Stoker's fictional character, we should compare the same extract from the book with the only surviving description of Vlad the Impaler, which was written by Niccolò Modrussa, a papal legate to Buda who knew the prince during his Hungarian captivity :

"He was not very tall but very stocky and strong with a cold and terrible appearance, a strong and aquiline nose, swollen nostrils, a thin and reddish face, in which the very long eye lashes framed large wide-open green eyes; the bushy black eye brows made them appear threatening. His face and chin were shaven, but for a moustache. The swollen temples increased the bulk of his head. A bull's neck connected his head [to the body] from which black curly locks hung on his wide shouldered person." (71)

This time, it appears quite clearly that Bram Stoker endowed his fictional vampire Count with some of the most distinctive facial features of the real Dracula. Actually, Stoker even seems to have based his description of the Count directly on the writings of Niccolò Modrussa, as some elements of the historical text are reproduced almost word for word in the novel. In fact, Bram Stoker's only significant divergence from the authentic description is to be found in the Count's white hair. Nevertheless, this can easily be explained by the Count's old age, as in chapter 13, once he has grown younger from the consumption of fresh blood, Jonathan and Mina Harker see him in London with ". . . a black moustache. . ." (72), thus establishing Stoker's Dracula as an almost exact copy of the historical figure, as far as physical appearance is concerned.

For Bram Stoker did not restrict the connection between Count Dracula and Vlad IV to a mere physical resemblance. Throughout the novel, Stoker displayed some historical elements that definitely link his Count Dracula with the historical Vlad Tepes.

In chapter 18, Professor Van Helsing clearly establishes the connection between the central character in the novel and the historical figure, by making an obvious allusion to Vlad IV, crossing the Danube in 1458 to lead his campaign against the Turks : "He must, indeed, have been that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk, over the great river on the very frontier of Turkey-land." (73) Stoker used the Slavic word 'Voivode', which is generally translated as 'Prince'.

The Count himself also gives some clues that help to demonstrate his connection with the historical Dracula. In chapter 2, he introduces himself to Jonathan Harker as a 'Boyar', another Slavic word which signifies a member of the landowning nobility, "Here I am noble, I am Boyar; the common people know me, and I am master," (74) thus establishing his belonging to a high social rank.

A few pages later, Stoker uses the convenient pretext of Jonathan Harker's curiosity about local history, to introduce an impressive catalogue of elements of Romanian history delivered through the voice of the Count : "I asked him a few questions about Transylvanian history, and he warmed up to the subject wonderfully." (75) Throughout his historical speech, Dracula clearly establishes his connection with Vlad Tepes, first by making a direct allusion to Vlad IV, "Who was it but one of my own race who as Voivode crossed the Danube and beat the Turk on his own ground ! This was a Dracula indeed.", and by mentioning the Impaler's brother, Radu the Handsome, a little later : "Woe was it that his own unworthy brother, when he had fallen, sold his people to the Turk and brought the shame of slavery on them !" (76)

However, there are several elements in the Count's discourse that highlight some inaccuracies in Stoker's use of Romanian history, such as the fundamental error of basing Dracula in Transylvania when he actually was Prince of neighbouring Wallachia. Stoker's decision to label his vampire a Count is also relevant to the same erroneous nature, for Vlad Tepes was a 'Voivode', and the title 'count' is totally alien to the Romanian social hierarchy. (77) The reference to Dracula's so-called 'Szekely' descent - in fact the authentic designation is 'Szekler' - has also been proved by historians to be completely irrelevant. (78)

However, we should keep in mind that Bram Stoker was a novelist, and did not intend to write a biography of the historical Dracula. Even though Stoker's Count has quite a lot in common with Vlad IV, he is certainly not supposed to be an exact reflection of the historical figure on which he is based.

In fact, Stoker's Dracula is a composite character, which combines both fictional and historical elements, the author's most original innovation being the association of the historical Dracula with the previously unconnected myth of the vampire.

Now let us proceed to the last stage in our study of reality and fiction in Stoker's novel, and try to locate the mythical Castle Dracula.

#### D. Locating Castle Dracula

In *Dracula*, Stoker situated the Count's castle at the Borgo Pass, which as we previously remarked is an authentic location in the midst of the Carpathian mountains.

If we consider the number of real elements that Stoker introduced in the settings of the novel, such as the authentic St Mary's Churchyard and the authentic Whitby Abbey in Whitby, then one could easily imagine that Bram Stoker's reference to a castle in the vicinity of the Borgo Pass is also authentic.

However, it seems that there is nothing at 'Borgo Prund' that quite corresponds to the ". . . vast ruined castle. . ." mentioned by Jonathan Harker in the opening chapter of the book, later described with some more details by his wife Mina in chapter 27 :

" Then we looked back and saw where the clear line of Dracula's castle cut the sky; for we were so deep under the hill whereon it was set that the angle of perspective of the Carpathian mountains was far below it. We saw it in all its grandeur, perched a thousand feet on the summit of a sheer precipice. . ." (79)

According to Radu R. Florescu and Raymond T. McNally who actually visited the Borgo Pass in search of a suitable castle corresponding to Stoker's description, apart from a new 'Dracula Hotel' which has recently been built by the Romanian tourist agency, the only authentic castles in the area are the modest ruins of Castle Rodna and Bethlen Castle.

But even though there is no authentic Castle Dracula at the exact location mentioned by Stoker in his novel, it does not mean that Count Dracula's Castle exclusively stemmed from the author's imagination.

Actually, Stoker's inspiration for the description of Dracula's castle has often been attributed to the ruins of Skains castle, located in Cruden Bay, Scotland, a seaside resort where Bram Stoker spent some time in 1893, during the writing of his masterpiece. (80)

Another probable source of inspiration for Stoker's description of Castle Dracula in his novel has been advanced by Radu R. Florescu and Raymond T. McNally. The co-authors of *In Search of Dracula* established Castle Bran - an impressive building located in the heart of Wallachia, which successively belonged to prince Mircea, the emperor Sigismund, John Hundyadi and his son King Mathias Corvinus - as a hypothetical model for Bram Stoker's description of Count Dracula's castle. (81)

Stoker most probably learnt about Castle Bran during his extensive research on Romanian history, as the real Dracula was probably a guest of John Hundyadi there, and later a prisoner of his son Mathias Corvinus. The fact that the appearance of Castle Bran completely matches the grandeur mentioned in Mina 's description of the fictional Castle Dracula seems to confirm the hypothesis according to which it constituted a considerable source of inspiration for Bram Stoker.

The authentic Castle Dracula however, is much less impressive. Located in the Wallachian ecclesiastical capital of Curtea de Arges, it was the place of Vlad IV's coronation, and the burial place of many of Romania's early rulers.

Today, the ruined castle still stands on the top of a hill on the left bank of the Arges river, near a recently established hydroelectric plant. Some 1300 steps lead to the remains of Vlad Tepes's fortress, which is today very difficult to reach, due to the abundant vegetation that protects the site from unwanted visitors. (82)

Even though it remains unconnected with Bram Stoker's masterpiece - as the author chose to locate his vampire story in highly superstitious Transylvania rather than in the original country of Vlad the Impaler - the authentic Castle Dracula also has its legend, according to which the ghost of Vlad Tepes sometimes appears in the area, generally at the top of a hill, facing the orient as if ready to defend his country one more time against the Turks. (83)

Now that we have established most of the links that closely knit reality and fiction together throughout the novel, it is time for us to study the various symbolic aspects that can be found in Bram Stoker's masterpiece.

For *Dracula* does not exclusively function on the binary pattern constituted by reality and fiction. Although for most people today *Dracula* does not represent anything more than an exciting gothic story, full of horror, adventure and mystery - this being partly due to numerous adaptations of Stoker's masterpiece for the cinema that gradually reduced the plot to a mere horror story - the original novel actually exudes a considerable symbolic dimension which most probably played an important part in its enormous success.

### III. SYMBOLISM AND LEVELS OF INTERPRETATION IN *DRACULA*

#### A. The eternal fight between Good and Evil

The first symbolic aspect in *Dracula* is to be found in a manichean interpretation of the novel, presenting it as a universal account of the eternal struggle between Good and Evil.

Obviously, Count Dracula stands on the side of Evil, intending to multiply and take-over not only England, but the entire world, the universal aspect of the fight being stated by Professor Van Helsing in chapter 16 : ". . .they cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world; for all that die from the preying of the Un-Dead become themselves Un-Dead, and prey on their kind. And so the circle goes on ever widening, like the ripples from a stone thrown in the water." (84) According to Van Helsing's statement, the fate of humanity is clearly at stake, and the small group of vampire hunters led by the Dutch Professor suddenly acquires the status of saviours of mankind.

Even more interesting is the eternal aspect of the struggle developed by Bram Stoker several times throughout the novel.

It is first introduced by Doctor John Seward, when beginning for the second time his phonograph diary, after putting an end to it in chapter 13 : "Truly, there is no such thing as finality. Not a week since I said 'Finis,' and yet here I am starting fresh again. . ." (85)

This interesting statement seems to take on all its symbolic dimension when juxtaposed with Bram Stoker's account of Dracula's death in the last chapter of the book. Actually, the paragraph which precedes the Count's execution by Jonathan Harker and Quincey Morris is quite

enigmatic, and establishes the possibility that Dracula is not truly dead at the end of the story : "As I looked, the eyes saw the sinking sun, and the look of hate in them turned to triumph." (86) In fact, the novel's ending is so ambiguous that some critics established Bram Stoker's intention to write a second volume of *Dracula*. On the symbolic level however, it emphasises the eternal aspect of the fight between Good and Evil presented in *Dracula*.

Finally, another instance of the eternal aspect of the symbolic struggle taking place in the novel is to be found in the previously mentioned epilogue of the story. The last section of the book is supposed to have been written seven years after the events depicted in the novel, and thus endows the ending of the book's ending with the cyclical connotation inherent to number seven.

However, *Dracula* is not exclusively a universal representation of the struggle between Good and Evil, and the novel exudes much more specific symbolism, such as an important Christian aspect.

## B. Christian symbolism

The American critic Clive Leatherdale has labelled *Dracula* a ". . . Christian parody. . .", as its central character, Count Dracula, seems to be a negative reflection of Christ. All the values represented by Christ are either inverted or perverted by Dracula in the novel :

"Christ is Good : Dracula is Evil [...] Christ was a humble carpenter : Dracula a vainglorious aristocrat. Christ offers light and hope, and was resurrected at dawn : Dracula rises at sunset and thrives in darkness. Christ's death at the 'stake' was the moment of his rebirth : for the vampire the stake heralds 'death' and oblivion. Christ offered his own life so that others might live : Dracula takes the lives of many so that *he* might live. The blood of Christ is drunk at the Eucharist by the faithful; Dracula reverses the process and drinks from *them*. Both preach resurrection and immortality, the one offering spiritual purity, the other physical excess." (87)

The analogy can be pushed even a little further, if we consider the name adopted by Dracula during his stay in England, 'Count de Ville,' which can easily be turned into Count 'Devil,' and Arthur Holmwood's title 'LORD GODAlming,' thus definitely establishing the novel into a Christian context. Then *Dracula* is no longer a universal fight between Good and Evil, but a symbolic struggle between God and the Devil.

This explains the presence of quite a number of specific Biblical allusions throughout the novel, such as in chapter 2, Count Dracula's use of the words of Moses's son, Gershom : ". . . a stranger in a strange land. . ." (88)

Renfield, the lunatic in Doctor Seward's asylum, is probably the character which is most used by Bram Stoker to introduce references to the Bible or to Christian liturgy throughout the book.

In the same way in which Dracula appears to be an inversion of Christ, Renfield is labelled an ". . . anti-John the Baptist. . ." by Clive Leatherdale. In the Bible, John the Baptist's role is to prepare the way for the Messiah's arrival, and so does Renfield, who provides Dracula's entry into the lunatic asylum. Both characters seem to end in the same way, since John the Baptist loses his head, and Renfield dies of a head injury inflicted by Dracula in chapter 21.

In chapter 8, Renfield refers to his spider-eating activities as follows : "The bride-maidens rejoice the eyes that wait the coming of the bride; but when the bride draweth nigh, then the maidens shine not to the eyes that are filled." (89) This statement is a direct borrowing of John the Baptist's words when witnessing the coming of Christ : "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiced because of the bridegroom's voice. . ." (90)

Later in the novel, in chapter 21, when reflecting upon his relation with his 'Master,' Renfield establishes a parallel between himself and a figure appearing in the Old Testament : "I am, so far as concerns things purely terrestrial, somewhat in the position which Enoch occupied spiritually !" (91)

However, Renfield does not have the exclusivity of biblical allusions in *Dracula*, and the other characters of the book are also granted the use of biblical quotations.

Professor Van Helsing for example, makes a clear use of the parable of the seed and the sower in chapter 10, when explaining to Seward that he will reveal the nature of Lucy's illness in time :

"My friend John, when corn is grown, even before it has ripened - while the milk of its mother-earth is in him, and the sunshine has not yet begun to paint him with his gold, the husbandman he pull the ear and rub him between his rough hands, and blow away the green chaff, and say to you : 'Look ! he's good corn; he will make good crop when the time comes'." (92)

Of course, there are numerous other examples of biblical borrowings in the novel, which are expressed through the words or deeds of the other characters in the cast of *Dracula*. However our aim here is not to establish a catalogue of examples, but rather to give a global view of the various symbolic aspects in the book.

Another important aspect of symbolism in *Dracula* is to be found in the omnipresent sexual content of the book, which is quite surprising for a novel written and published during the Victorian period.

## C. Sexual symbolism

One thing that is very striking when reading *Dracula* for the first time is the omnipresent sexual content which is displayed throughout the

novel, even though sexual allusions remain purely metaphorical.

First, it is interesting to notice that throughout the novel vampire attacks are referred to as 'kisses,' and not 'bites,' which is basically what they are supposed to be. Those attacks actually constitute one of the major elements in the book that convey strong sexual meaning.

For example, Jonathan Harker's encounter with the three women vampires in chapter 3 is very evocative of an erotic experience, and although his life is supposed to be at stake, Jonathan does not seem to manifest much resistance :

"The fair girl went on her knees and bent over me, fairly gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. [...] I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the supersensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited - waited with beating heart." (93)

This account is quite revealing of the sexual aspect of the vampire attack, which is described mostly as a voluptuous experience, 'both thrilling and repulsive'. Far from being afraid for his life, Jonathan Harker is in a sort of dreamlike state, and actually seems to anticipate the kisses of the three vampire women.

This episode is described by Barbara Belford as the expression of the ". . . dearest fantasy of Victorian men : union with a pure girl transformed into a sexually aggressive woman." (94)

The dreamlike quality of the scene led Clive Leatherdale to establish a parallel between the account of a vampire attack and a 'wet dream,' which emphasises a key element in the study of sexual symbolism in *Dracula* : the association between blood and semen.

"The explanation of these fantasies is surely not hard. A nightly visit from a beautiful or frightful being, who first exhaust the sleeper with passionate embraces, and then withdraws from him a vital fluid; all this can point only to a natural and common process, namely to nocturnal emissions accompanied with dreams of a more or less erotic nature. In the unconscious mind blood is commonly an equivalent for semen." (95)

In this light, the sexual content of the book is no longer to be exclusively found in vampire attacks, and the blood transfusions appearing in chapter 10, which are initially meant to save Lucy's life then become a metaphor of sexual intercourse. And although she is promised to Arthur, Lucy also receives blood from Doctor Seward, Quincey Morris and Professor Van Helsing, thus indulging in adultery.

This symbolic interpretation of the blood transfusion process is confirmed by Doctor Seward's account of it, which is not without evoking a first sexual experience : "No man knows till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own life-blood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves." (96)

In chapter 13, Professor Van Helsing also clearly establishes the ambiguous nature of the successive blood transfusions he performed on Lucy, during his very convenient fit of hysterics :

"Just so. Said he [Arthur] not that the transfusion of his blood to her veins had made her truly his bride ? [...] If so that, then what about the others ? Ho, Ho ! Then this so sweet maid is a polyandrist, and me, with my poor wife dead to me, but alive by Church's law, though no wits, all gone - even I, who am a faithful husband to this now-no-wife, am a bigamist." (97)

Another blatant example of a metaphorical description of sexual intercourse is to be found in Arthur's disposal of vampire Lucy, through the use of the stake as a phallic element (98):

"He struck with all his might. The thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions [...] But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy bearing stake [...] And then the writhing and quivering of the body became less, and the teeth ceased to champ, and the face to quiver. Finally, it lay still. The terrible ordeal was over." (99)

As Clive Leatherdale states it, little imagination is required to interpret this passage as a description of passionate intercourse, Bram Stoker conveniently overlooking the folkloric prescription of the vampire being destroyed by one single thrust. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by Stoker's mention of Arthur's 'post-coital' exhaustion : "The hammer fell from Arthur's hand. He reeled and would have fallen had we not caught him. Great drops of sweat sprang out on his forehead, and his breath came in broken gasps." (100)

Once the omnipresence of sexual symbolism in *Dracula* has been established, there still remains the question of Stoker's motivation for endowing his novel with such a strong sexual meaning.

Apparently, this particular aspect seems to be the result of an intense sexual frustration. Daniel Farson, one of Bram Stoker's early biographers, claimed that *Dracula* was directly inspired by the frustrating sexual life Stoker had been leading with his wife Florence Balcombe since the birth of their son in 1879. (101)

However, *Dracula* is not only the result of sexual frustration, but also of severe sexual repression. According to Stephen King, horror literature often constitutes - both for the author and the reader - a means of developing antisocial and subversive feelings that society manages to repress most of the time (102), and in Bram Stoker's case, it was sexuality that was repressed by Victorian society.



In this context, we discover the previously mentioned epigraph in a totally different light : it no longer appears as a mere way of endowing the novel with a false authenticity, but also as a means for Stoker to deny all responsibility concerning the controversial sexual content of his book if necessary.

But the repressive forces at play in *Dracula* seem to go far beyond the mere limits of the exterior pressure imposed by British Victorian society on the author, and sometimes actually appear to stem from the writer himself, as Bram Stoker paradoxically proved to be a radical enemy of erotic literature, as in this extract from *The Censorship of Fiction*, published in 1908 :

"A close analysis will show that the only emotions which in the long run harm are those arising from the sex impulses [...] Within a couple of years past quite a number of novels have been published in England that would be a disgrace to any country even less civilised than our own. The class of works to which I allude are meant by both authors and publishers to bring the winning of commercial success the forces of evil inherent in man [...] As to the alleged men who follow this loathsome calling, what term of opprobrium is sufficient, what punishment could be too great ? [...] This article is a deliberate indictment of a class of literature so vile that it is actually corrupting the nation." (103)

At this point, a new question arises : was Bram Stoker conscious of the sexual potential contained in his novel, or is *Dracula* the expression of strongly repressed inner conflicts taking place in the dark recesses of the author's subconscious ?

A closer analysis of the novel actually reveals quite a number of interesting Freudian elements.

#### D. Freudian elements

According to Freud's theories, which were established roughly at the time of *Dracula's* first publication, the sexual drive is one of the most important elements constituting psychic energy.

The works of Sigmund Freud established several stages following the psychosexual development of each individual, each stage being characterised by a preoccupation with certain parts of the body. When the sexual drive is repressed, the individual is most likely to be subject to guilt and neuroses, but also to regress to one of the early stages in psychosexual development.

Freud's theories, when applied to Bram Stoker's masterpiece, seem to highlight the existence of some elements belonging to the oral stage in the novel. In this way, *Dracula* is a perfect illustration of 'regressive infantilism,' as it displays an omnipresent concern with 'orality,' which is expressed through an obsession with bites and bloodsucking emerging throughout the novel. (104)

However, probably the most important Freudian element which is to be found in *Dracula* is the omnipresence of Oedipal relationships throughout the novel.

Two main father figures seem to emerge from the book : Count Dracula, who has one family in a castle, and is willing to extend it by acquiring colonies of vampires, and Professor Van Helsing, who tries to replace his lost son by the young men and women around him.

This existence of two competing fathers actually resolves the Oedipal complex, for the 'sons' are both allowed to kill one and accept the other.

However the rivalry between the two father figures is not the only one existing in the large figurative family constituted by the main characters of the novel. There is also a latent rivalry between the 'brothers' for Lucy's hand, but those passions are eventually channelled in their common fight against the evil father trying to steal their women.

Still in keeping with the notion of the Oedipal complex, *Dracula* appears to be riddled with examples of parricide. The most important instance is obviously the Count's death, but Dracula is far from being the only father figure to die in the novel : we must also consider Old Mr Swales's death, the death of Arthur's father, and the death of Harker's employer Mr Hawkins as examples of parricide.

Actually, the term parenticide would be more appropriate, as the novel also contains several instances of mother's death, such as Lucy's mother, or the peasant woman looking for her child outside castle Dracula in chapter 4, upon whom the Count summons his wolves.

Finally, another psychoanalytical element which found its way in Bram Stoker's novel is the fear of castration. This element is mainly developed through the novel's obsession with teeth, and Jonathan Harker's fear of the three vampire women at Castle Dracula : "I shall not remain alone with them; I shall try to scale the castle wall farther than I have attempted. [...] At least, God's mercy is better than that of these monsters, and the precipice is steep and high. At its foot man may sleep - as a man." (105)

However, Bram Stoker's personal involvement in the novel is not exclusively unconscious, and the author seems to have deliberately introduced quite a lot of personal elements in the novel, making it possible for the reader to consider *Dracula* as a symbolic representation of Bram Stoker's life.

#### E. *Dracula* as a symbolic representation of Bram Stoker's life

According to Alain Pozzuoli, one of the best French specialists of Bram Stoker, *Dracula* shows many striking similarities with its author's life, and most of the characters in the novel seem to find an echo in Bram Stoker's personal sphere.

Count Dracula supposedly stands for Henry Irving, a famous English actor who worked at the Lyceum Theatre, and with whom Stoker entertained a very ambiguous friendship, a strange mixture of attraction and repulsion.

Mina can either be a representation of Florence Balcombe or Charlotte Stoker, who were respectively Bram Stoker's wife and mother, while Lucy supposedly stands for Ellen Terry, the actress of the Lyceum Theatre mentioned in chapter 13, whom Stoker was secretly in love with, and who eventually left with Henry Irving. (106)

As far as Bram Stoker is concerned, he is actually part of several characters in the cast of *Dracula*. First, he is obviously represented by Jonathan Harker, who bears some of the characteristics of young Bram Stoker, and particularly his being a solicitor.

Bram Stoker is also to be found in the character of Professor Van Helsing, whom he lent both his Christian name, 'Abraham', and his physical appearance, as Mina's description of the Dutch Professor in chapter 14 seems to be an actual portrait of the author himself (107) :

" . . . a man of medium height, strongly built, with his shoulders set back over a broad, deep chest and a neck balanced on the trunk as the head is on the neck [...] the head is noble, well-sized, broad, and large behind the ears [...] big, bushy eyebrows [...] The forehead is broad and fine, rising at first almost straight and then sloping back above two bumps or ridges wide apart; such a forehead that the reddish hair cannot possibly tumble over it, but falls naturally back and to the sides. Big, dark blue eyes are set widely apart, and are quick and tender or stern with the man's moods." (108)

Finally, another specific aspect of Bram Stoker's life symbolically represented in *Dracula* is Stoker's childhood, during which he spent seven years in bed because of some mysterious illness that was never properly diagnosed.

This explains the novel's particular interest in strange undiagnosed diseases, such as Renfield's mental illness, for which doctor Seward has to " . . . invent a new classification. . ." (109), but also Lucy's symptoms of a vampire attack, which remain undiagnosed for a good part of the novel.

In addition, Stoker's confined existence during his childhood can be compared to that of the vampire, since he was " . . . bound to his bed as Count Dracula to his coffin." (110)

## CONCLUSION

Throughout our study, we tried to establish the ambiguous nature of the relationship between reality and fiction that Bram Stoker developed in *Dracula*.

We saw that this ambiguity can be felt in the form of the book itself, through the extensive use of realistic details, and the author's nearly obsessive preoccupation with authenticity. We realised that Stoker also introduced that ambiguous relationship into the contents of the novel by riddling the book with authentic elements from the real world, and by using the ambiguity which was already inherent to the vampire myth.

This peculiar relationship between reality and fiction is itself ambiguous. On one hand it appears to be a device used by the author to generate fear by pretending that the horrible events described in the novel are true, but on the other hand it seems to be developed by the author in a gratuitous and playful way.

However, *Dracula* does not exclusively work on the two levels constituted by reality and fiction. The novel also exudes a considerable symbolic dimension, which endows Stoker's masterpiece with a depth that is rarely found in gothic novels.

The novel can be perceived as a symbolic representation of the eternal struggle between Good and Evil, a parody of the Bible, but also displays an omnipresent sexual quality which is directly relevant to the author's inner conflicts. The Freudian aspects of the novel led some critics to consider *Dracula* as a symbolic representation of Bram Stoker's life, endowing the book with some more emotional strength.

Actually the evocative power of *Dracula* is so strong that anyone can interpret it in his own way, which has most probably played a major part in the novel's enormous success.

Throughout the twentieth century, *Dracula* has been interpreted in many different ways, which definitely asserts the universality of Bram Stoker's masterpiece.

The novel has successively been presented as a struggle between Tradition and Modernity, as a symbolic allusion to the spreading of Nazism in Europe, and as an allegory of the Cold War, the latter being particularly interesting.

As a conclusion, we should emphasise the fact that even after one century of existence, Stoker's vampire Count is still able to generate enthusiasm among the reading public, which beyond any doubt ranks him among the immortal characters of gothic literature.

## NOTES

(1) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 221

- (2) Gabriel Ronay, *The Dracula Myth*, p. 53
- (3) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 8
- (4) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 449
- (5) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 268
- (6) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 274
- (7) Stephen King, *Anatomie de l'horreur*, p. 62
- (8) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 71
- (9) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 9
- (10) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 78
- (11) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 243
- (12) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 95
- (13) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 224
- (14) Harry Ludlam, *A Biography of Dracula*, quoted in *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 3
- (15) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 86
- (16) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 83
- (17) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 95
- (18) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 330
- (19) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 149, 150
- (20) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 35
- (21) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 125
- (22) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 78
- (23) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 87
- (24) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 229-230
- (25) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 371
- (26) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *In Search of Dracula*, p. 295-297
- (27) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 325
- (28) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 87
- (29) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 235
- (30) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 80
- (31) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 82
- (32) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *In Search of Dracula*, p. 296
- (33) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 88
- (34) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 6
- (35) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 9
- (36) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *In Search of Dracula*, p. 296
- (37) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 115

- (38) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 135
- (39) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 128
- (40) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 213
- (41) Barbara Belford, *Bram Stoker, a Biography of the Author of Dracula*, p. 222
- (42) Barbara Belford, *Bram Stoker, a Biography of the Author of Dracula*, p. 232
- (43) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 223
- (44) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 87
- (45) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 285-286
- (46) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 26, 283
- (47) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 26
- (48) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 333
- (49) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p.287
- (50) Roland Villeneuve, *Loups-garous et vampires*, p. 91
- (51) Sabine Baring-Gould, *the Book of Were-Wolves*, quoted in *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 222
- (52) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 47, 364
- (53) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 283
- (54) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p.
- (55) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 107
- (56) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 288
- (57) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. Mc Nally, *In Search of Dracula*, p. 151
- (58) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 288, 289
- (59) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 87-88
- (60) Barbara Belford, *Bram Stoker, a Biography of the Author of Dracula*, p. 222
- (61) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 230
- (62) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 9
- (63) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 229
- (64) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 41
- (65) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 58-59
- (66) Gabriel Ronay, *The Dracula Myth*, p. 64
- (67) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 229-230
- (68) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 236
- (69) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 25
- (70) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 28
- (71) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 103
- (72) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 207
- (73) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 287-288

- (74) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 31
- (75) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 40
- (76) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 41, 42
- (77) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 96
- (78) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces*, p. 231
- (79) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p.24, 442
- (80) Barbara Belford, *Bram Stoker, a Biography of the Author of Dracula*, p. 233
- (81) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *In Search of Dracula*, p. 60-63
- (82) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *In Search of Dracula*, p. 66-68
- (83) Alain Decaux, *Histoires Extraordinaires*, p. 122
- (84) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 257
- (85) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 228
- (86) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 447
- (87) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 190
- (88) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 31
- (89) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 125
- (90) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 193
- (91) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 321
- (92) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 145
- (93) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 52
- (94) Barbara Belford, *Bram Stoker, a Biography of the Author of Dracula*, p. 5
- (95) Ernest Jones, quoted in *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 160
- (96) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 156
- (97) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 211-212
- (98) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 161
- (99) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 258-259
- (100) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 259
- (101) Alain Pozzuoli, *Bram Stoker, Biographie*, p. 61
- (102) Stephen King, *Anatomie de l'horreur*, p. 81
- (103) Bram Stoker, *The Censorship of Fiction*, quoted in *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 169-170
- (104) Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend*, p. 173
- (105) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 69
- (106) Alain Pozzuoli, *Bram Stoker, Biographie*, p. 63-65
- (107) Radu R. Florescu et Raymond T. McNally, *In Search of Dracula*, p. 148
- (108) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 218-219
- (109) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 90

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