

***Dracula* Addressing Old and New**

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Crișan, Marius-Mircea, ed. *Dracula: An International Perspective*. Palgrave Gothic. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. xi + 280 pages. ISBN 978-3-319-63365-7. Hb. \$101.51.

“The monster always escapes,” states Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in the second thesis of his monster theory (4), implying that the monster always comes back, ready to transform and haunt us in a new form. Nothing proves this better than the ever-recurring character of *Dracula*, perhaps the most famous of the monsters that have captured the imagination of writers, filmmakers, readers, spectators, and scholars. *Dracula: An International Perspective*, edited by Marius-Mircea Crișan, focuses on the ways we see Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* as the monster who keeps returning, changing, influencing, and surprising us. Written by distinguished scholars of the field, this collection of essays discusses new aspects of the *Dracula* discourse, enabling the reader to see the iconic vampire character as a cultural product that had a well-definable literary cradle (I mean, a grave) to surface from and whose impact has been growing with time passing.

In harmony with the volume’s chronological approach, the first four chapters of the book explore the literary tradition that Stoker’s peculiar monster was born into. The opening essay by William Hughes emphasizes the importance of the Irish Gothic that determines the rhetoric of Stoker’s *Dracula*. Via two case studies, Le Fanu’s *In a Glass Darkly* and Stoker’s *Dracula*, Hughes demonstrates that Irish Gothic is not only distinguished by being “the most religiously conscious of all of the national Gothics, but the most influenced by the disciplines of medicine and of law” (25); thus these works have the structures like “case studies” in the noted disciplines (26). Continuing the book with a chapter still on Irish Gothic, Donatella Abbate Badin examines “The Discourse of Italy in Nineteenth Century Irish Gothic,” claiming that the representation of Italy, in fact, corresponds to “Ireland’s image of itself and of its anxieties” (39). In this context, the works by Maturin, Le Fanu, and an anonymous author that Abbate Badin compares may be seen as preceding attempts of what Stoker aimed at in his *Dracula* later, namely transforming a foreign land into a violent space, which “serves to externalize the inner conflicts of a troubled collective psyche,” that of the Anglo-Irish population (48-49). Well-researched and interesting as the paper is, it presents only two passing comments, inserted as almost afterthoughts, that allow the readers to connect the text to Stoker’s similar method of constructing

Transylvania as an imaginary landscape, and this is a disturbing shortcoming in a volume that promises centering its interest on *Dracula*. The essay's content fits the volume's concept, but more direct links to Stoker's work with some analysis should have justified its presence in the collection, because in the present form it is completely left to the readers' imagination and/or preexisting knowledge to recognize the connection.

After these chapters on the importance of Irish Gothic, American Gothic is considered as an influencing factor in creating a fictive East in *Dracula*. Lucian-Vasile Szabo and Marius-Mircea Crişan argue that Poe was a literary model for Stoker, and thus it is apt to consider Poe's prose also as a source that shaped Stoker's imagological construction of a haunted East as a mythic land that is presented in the context of technology. The first half of the paper, showing the likeness between Poe's method of creating his mythic Hungary and Stoker's imaginative version of Transylvania, is intriguing—not only to Hungarian readers like myself, I believe. The second subchapter, turning to the issue of technology within the urban environment, appears less successful, as the context of *Dracula* thins away.

The last chapter whose main concern falls on the literary roots of *Dracula* takes us to Germany and Britain: in his profoundly researched paper, Sam George proposes and substantiates the claim that the *Dracula* myth is related to the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. George's analysis stresses the importance of Transylvania as the mythic realm of the protagonists, as well as the strikingly similar attributes that *Dracula* and the Piper have, and shows how the interrelatedness of these texts become apparent in literary and filmic retellings in Britain and Germany.

The next two papers make an attempt at highlighting new aspects of Stoker's aim and method in his writing of *Dracula*. Hans Corneel de Roos investigates "Count *Dracula*'s Address and Real Life Identity," relying on comparing the novel's use of geographical details with Stoker's original notes for the novel as well as with contemporary map information. While *Dracula*'s identity is one of the most exhaustively researched and written about topics in the academic discourse on *Dracula*, de Roos makes the point that it was against Stoker's concept to allow a clear, unquestionable identification in these matters, as he used historical details "to attract the maximum of attention with a sensational 'true story' backed up by seemingly authentic details, that upon closer examination, however, elude a fact check" (110). This chapter is followed by Clive Bloom's "Dracula and the Psychic World of the East End of London," which links *Dracula*'s fictional Transylvania to the liminal space of East End through the Ripper's work that also took pleasure in "the spectacle of murder and the display of blood" (127). However, the real treat

of the paper for Dracula fans and academics stems from Bloom's approach: not only does he base his research on Stoker's classic, but also on its Icelandic version *Powers of Darkness (Makt Myrkranna* [1901]), written by Stoker and Valdimar Ásmundsson. As this work has just been translated into English by Hans Corneel de Roos (as *Powers of Darkness: The Lost Version of Dracula* [2017]) this study is one of the first to examine this little-known variant and uses it together with the original *Dracula* to decipher Stoker's "phantasmogoric [sic] vision . . . whereby the material worked on is transformed into a cultural configuration in which reality is subordinated to fantasy" (134).

The aforementioned chapters demonstrating the significance of places especially through their imagological constructions in the novel are accompanied by four further studies in which the importance of location is attached to the notion of tourism either in the fictional work or in our contemporary reality. "Tourism and Travel in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" by Duncan Light opens this section, arguing that tourism is an intriguing theme in the novel that also strengthens the much-discussed theme of modernity. Not going into profound analysis, the essay stays on the level of categorization through which Light differentiates between four types of tourism that Stoker writes into his classic: business tourism, health tourism, political tourism, and dark tourism, noting that Dracula's travel does not fit into the category of tourism at all. Marius-Mircea Crişan's study about the importance of Castle Hunedoara in the Dracula myth first gives a brief survey of how the association of the castle with the myth has attracted tourism, which, in return, resulted in a fruitful connection between film industry using this Gothic landscape for various films, accumulating the location's importance in the vampire myth. In the second part of the article, the author turns to the investigation of the past: he explains the importance of the castle in the history of Transylvania and provides some evidence that Stoker was aware of it. This chapter is followed by "Location and the Vampire: The Impact of Fictional Stories upon Associated Location" by Kristin L. Bone. She looks at how the location written into three fundamental vampire works has generated a special interest for fans, who as tourists or authors themselves have made a change in the importance of the location (either boosting tourism or further adding to the mythological impact of the location through expanding its fictional universe). Unfortunately, this chapter loosely connects to the accentuated Dracula theme of the volume, as Bone rather focuses on Anne Rice's New Orleans in association with her *Interview with the Vampire* and Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* having considerable impact on the publicity of Forks, Washington, whereas *Dracula*'s Whitby and Bran Castle as important fiction locations are discussed in a mere two pages.

The oncoming section centers on vampire identity, with the first study, John Edgar Browning's "In Search of Dracula's Oracular History," providing a brief outline of how Dracula is constructed as Other in the original work as well as in its early stage adaptation and the most notable cinematic adaptations. With a special emphasis on the vampire's speech, Browning illustrates how these adaptations reflect the culture that recreates the monster. The conclusion relates to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's monster theory, which could have been an essential source for this study, but, unfortunately, Cohen's words resurface only in the passage quoted from an article written by Caroline Picart and Cecile Greek. A different approach to analyzing vampire evolution is applied in Nancy Schumann's chapter on "Vampiric Emotion and Identity in *Dracula* and *Interview with the Vampire*," which compares emotionless Dracula to Rice's humanized male vampires, as well as the female vampire characters in the two works. The essay makes valid points, but on a much discussed topic in vampire criticism, and thereby offers little new to readers who are aware of the vampire paradigm shift that begins somewhere with Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*.

The last group of essays surveys various themes within the Gothic. Magdalena Grabias's chapter investigates, as its title suggests, "Gothic and Horror in Contemporary Cinema and Television." Grabias makes a clear attempt to link her essay to Dracula studies, but she tries to squeeze in too much at the expense of an in-depth analysis based on extensive research. The overall theme, the Gothic, is too broad to present the material as a coherent, well-focused study, especially that the conclusion about how the Gothic tradition used in the examined modern films "may be perceived as a parallel of our contemporary multidimensional and multiethnic world" is not systematically built up. Instead, we get an overview of what the author considered as important Gothic-related films based on the identified motifs. Dorota Babilas's chapter on "Papa Dracula" successfully surveys a more narrowly defined topic with the intention to show the rise and the development of family values in vampire narratives. Babilas provides focused analyses to demonstrate the "shift of the character of Dracula from the source of sexual threat (or liberation) to a guard of female chastity" (251) and eventually to a character who "merely repeats the normalisation and domestication of the Gothic heroines" (252). Covering classical works as well as including very recent examples, this exploration offers a lot to think about how Dracula's character has transformed due to the emergence of the family rhetoric. The final chapter by Carol Senf on "The Evolution of Gothic Spaces" argues that "the Gothic, which was originally situated in regions that were exotic, remote, and Other, is now located in spaces that are both

mundane and familiar” (260) and that “Stoker should be credited for revealing” this transformation (272). While it would be beneficial to have more examples especially from the modern works to demonstrate the trend which surely exists, these last two chapters aptly conclude the volume, highlighting the influence of Stoker’s masterpiece on the contemporary entertainment industry.

In short, *Dracula: An International Perspective* offers a kaleidoscopic view of how *Dracula* has generated new discourses within the Gothic and how it keeps influencing even our everyday reality. It should be an essential item in libraries of colleges and universities where Stoker’s vampire classic is on the reading list, for it indeed presents a variety of new perspectives of this never-aging novel.

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Work Cited

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