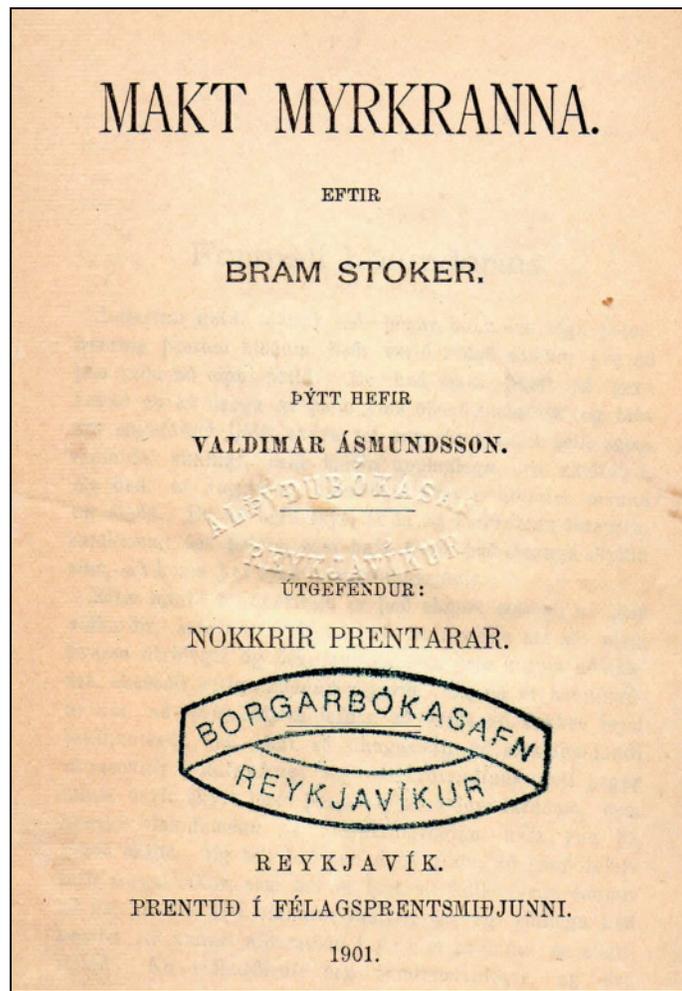




Letter from Castle Dracula

- the news bulletin of The Transylvanian Society of Dracula

FEBRUARY 2014



SPECIAL ICELAND ISSUE

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Bucharest, 3 February 2014

Dear TSD members all around,

As the Chief-Editor of our *Letter from Castle Dracula*, I have the honour to present this newest issue – January/February 2014 – of our official News Bulletin as a very special one, which will take us away from the snowy mountains of the Borgo Pass to the nebulous shores of Iceland.

Thanks to the hard work of one of our international members, Hans de Roos from Munich, a Knight in the Order of Count Dracula, we now may view this fascinating nation with new eyes, and at the same time learn some very amazing things about Bram Stoker and his *Dracula* novel.

As the following essay will explain, during the years 1898-1900, the *Dracula* story was completely reworked, seemingly with Bram Stoker's permission, by the Icelandic author Valdimar Ásmundsson. This happened a quarter-century *before* the stage and movie adaptations authorised by Stoker's widow Florence were created. The "Icelandic preface", known to some *Dracula* scholars already, seems to be – as Hans de Roos puts it – only the "tip of the iceberg". When I received an email from our Munich member this Saturday morning, with the message that after a long night of research, he had finally found the last piece of the puzzle and deciphered the foreword's strange remark about Jack the Ripper, I felt that something exciting was going to happen. Many beliefs we have held so long about Bram Stoker's novel may need fresh and intense attention again.

I hope that after reading this essay, following just shortly after our Christmas issue, you will answer to my questions: What will be now? How do we deal with these new theories, that seem so profoundly researched, from such very surprising angles? Personally, I feel that we should follow the suggestion already made by our distinguished president of the TSD Germany, Dr. Mark Benecke, and think of a meeting of all of you, in 2015.

I would like to thank Hans de Roos for his tenacity in "digging" the libraries from the U.S. to Iceland, to accomplish his work and to offer us this unexpected result.

Thank you for reading and for your feedback,

Daniela Diaconescu

Co-Founder and Vice-President of the TSD

MAKT MYRKRANNA: MOTHER OF ALL DRACULA MODIFICATIONS?

by **Hans Corneel de Roos, MA, Munich**

Hans C. de Roos (*1956) studied Political & Social Sciences in Amsterdam and Berlin. He is the author of *The Ultimate Dracula*, several essays on *Dracula* and (together with Dacre Stoker) the planned *Dracula* Bram Stoker *Travel Guide*.

Blindur er bóklaus maður

(Blind is a man without a book)

Icelandic proverb

With many thanks to Unnur Valgeirsdóttir at Reykjavik University Library, Sigurgeir Finnsson at the National and University Library of Iceland, Katrín Guðmundsdóttir and Einar Björn Magnússon at Reykjavik City Library, and to Vildís Hallsdóttir, who all kindly helped me with locating and understanding Ásmundsson's text. Especially, I would like to thank Ásgeir Jónsson, who sent me many invaluable comments, and Dacre & Jenne Stoker, who added some important details and discussed the various scenarios and their dizzying ramifications with me, just before the paper was published.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is sometimes called "the most popular book after the Bible", because it never was out of print after its first publication and has been translated into almost 30 different languages.¹ The very first of these translations, though, is known to *Dracula* scholars only – and to the inhabitants of an island in the North-Atlantic Ocean: *Makt Myrkranna* was created by the Icelandic journalist/author Valdimar Ásmundsson (1852-1902).² In Ásmundsson's home country, however, it was only recently rediscovered and republished in 2011, by initiative of the writer Ásgeir Jónsson. In English-speaking circles, this republication has gone completely unnoticed. It seems that the language barrier between the Anglo-Saxons and the descendants of the old Norse settlers has effectively prevented any acknowledgement of Jónsson's commendable action. As far as I could check, the only part of *Makt Myrkranna* known to the rest of the world is Ásmundsson's translation of the preface Bram Stoker extra wrote for it.³ And even this preface was largely forgotten, until Richard Dalby unearthed it and had an English retranslation published in his 1986 *Bram Stoker Omnibus*. Since then, this retranslated preface has repeatedly been quoted in secondary literature, as it suggests a connection between the events pictured in *Dracula* and the Whitechapel murder series attributed to Jack the Ripper. Ásmundsson's own artistic contribution to *Makt Myrkranna*, however, has never been recognised outside of Iceland. In Skal's *Hollywood Gothic*, a comprehensive overview of the many metamorphoses of *Dracula*, Ásmundsson's name is absent. Neither does it appear in the *Dracula* publication history compiled by Robert Eighteen-Bisang and J. Gordon Melton.⁴ Both overviews mention Stoker's second preface, not the modified plot. Similarly, in the *Dracula* bibliography by William Hughes, *Makt Myrkranna* is only referred to as an "abridged edition".⁵ In her *Documentary Journey into Vampire Country*, even the eagle-eyed Elizabeth Miller describes Ásmundsson's interventions merely in quantitative terms:

¹ See www.cesnur.org/2003/dracula/ for an overview.

² Literally, "Makt Myrkranna" means „Power of Darknesses", but usually, the expression "Powers of Darkness" is used.

³ Elizabeth Miller, 2009, p. 278, call this "the only preface Stoker ever wrote for his novel", but the British edition also had a – shorter and anonymous – preface, so that I will refer to the Icelandic preface as the "second preface".

⁴ Browning & Picart, 2011, p. 268, appendix *Dracula in Print: A Checklist*.

⁵ William Hughes, 1997, p. 21.

“The Icelandic text is divided into two parts of unequal length. Part I (pp. 5-167) corresponds to the first four chapters (Harker at Dracula’s castle) in the British edition, and is fairly complete and intact. Part I (pp. 168-210) is a brief précis of the original chapters 5 to 27 (pp. 55-390 in the British edition).

What is significant about this book is that the publisher requested and included a special foreword from Stoker. This invaluable piece appears in no other edition (...).”⁶

Like all other English-speaking *Dracula* experts, Miller typifies *Makt Myrkranna* as an “abridgment of the original novel” and appreciates its publication for Stoker’s preface only.

As I will show in this essay, this “Icelandic” preface and its allusion to Jack the Ripper are only the “tip of the iceberg”. Provided that the preface is authentic, the author of *Dracula* as early as 1898, one year after the publication of the first Constable edition,⁷ consented to a radical modification of his plot, preceding the Broadway adaptation authorised by his widow Florence by nearly three decades, and allowed his Vampire Count to be linked to a historical crime series even more horrid than the Ripper murders. Because this proposition may have far-reaching consequences for the publication and reception history of Stoker’s vampire tale as hitherto documented, I will demonstrate its plausibility step by step.



In 1926, Bram’s widow Florence Stoker wrote in a preface to a *Dracula* serialisation by the magazine *Argosy: The Word’s Best Short Stories* (London):

“It is now being serialized for the first time,....”

“...I have willingly given my permission to the Editor to publish it in serial form.”⁸

But Florence was mistaken. Already in 1899, Stoker’s US publisher stated in an advertisement that *Dracula* had “much success in England, and as a serial in America”; the actual shape of this serialisation, however, proved to be “maddening elusive”.⁹ As indicated by Elizabeth Miller in her foreword to *The Forgotten Writings of Bram Stoker*, the serialisation of *Dracula* is a “problem that has nagged *Dracula* scholars for decades.”¹⁰ As a result of intensive research, David J. Skal’s discovery of this first serialisation was presented in John Browning’s 2012 book; under the title *Dracula: A Strong Story of the Vampir*, Stoker’s novel was published in installments in the *Charlotte Daily Observer* from 16 July till 10 December 1899.¹¹ Most probably, Florence never knew about this.

⁶ Elizabeth Miller, 2009, p. 279, revised by Miller from her *Reflections on Dracula*, 1997.

⁷ Referring to *The Daily News*, London, of 27 May 1897, McAlduff, 2012, demonstrates that *Dracula* was first published exactly on that day, by Constable & Co.

⁸ Full text of Florence’s foreword in Miller, 2009, p. 284.

⁹ David Skal, 2004, p.68, quoting from the Doubleday & McClure advertisement in *The New York Times* of 7 October 1899.

¹⁰ John Browning, 2012, p. xviii.

¹¹ John Browning, 2012, p. 9, announcing David Skal’s forthcoming book *Bram Stoker: The Final Curtain*.

Curiously, I found out that Valdimar Ásmundsson published his translation of *Dracula*, preface included, in installments in his weekly magazine *Fjallkonan* between 13 January 1900 and 20 March 1901, well before the Nokkrir Prentarar hardcover edition appeared six months later – the 1901 book indicated by Dalby and since then referred to by all other *Dracula* scholars.¹² As far as I know, this is the first serialisation of Stoker’s story in Europe, the first serialisation in a foreign language, and the first – and only – serialisation featuring an abridged and modified version. Starting just six months after the first installment in the *Charlotte Daily Observer*,¹³ the publication in *Fjallkonan* not only confirms that Stoker endorsed the serialisation idea very early, but also demonstrates that he granted Ásmundsson far-reaching liberties in dealing with his story, even before his own abridged edition of the novel appeared with Constable & Co. in 1901.¹⁴ As I will show, *Makt Myrkranna* is much more than a serialisation, a translation or an abridgment: it is the very start of the ceaseless transformation of *Dracula*’s form and ideas in the hand of other authors, a process still continuing today.

At the beginning of January 2014, while preparing an essay for the *Journal of Dracula Studies* about the truth claim worded in Stoker’s two prefaces to *Dracula*, I started wondering about the true meaning of the following lines in his foreword to *Makt Myrkranna*:

“En viðburðirnir eru ómótmælanlegir, og svo margir þekkja þá, að þeim verður ekki neitað. Þessi röð af glæpum er mönnum ekki úr minni liðin, röð af glæpum, sem virðast óskiljanlegir, en út leit fyrir, að væru af sömu rót runnir, og slógu á sínum tíma jafnmiklum óhug á almenning sem hin alræmdu morð Jakobs kviðristara, er komu litlu seinna til sögunnar. Ýmsa mun reka minni til hinna merkilegu útlendinga, sem misserum saman tóku glæsilegan þátt í lífi tignarfólksins hér í Lundúnum, og menn muna eftir því, að annar þeirra að minnsta kosti hvarf skyndilega og á óskiljanlegan hátt, án þess að nokkur merki hans sæjust framar.”

“But the events are incontrovertible, and so many people know of them that they cannot be denied. This series of crimes has not yet passed from the memory -- a series of crimes which appear to have originated from the same source, and which at the same time created as much repugnance in people everywhere as the murders of Jack the Ripper, which came into the story a little later. Various people’s minds will go back to the remarkable group of foreigners who for many seasons together played a dazzling part in the life of the aristocracy here in London; and some will remember that one of them disappeared suddenly without apparent reason, leaving no trace.”¹⁵

¹² Richard Dalby, 1986. I found the first advertisement for the book edition of *Makt Myrkranna* in *Reykjavik*, 24 August 1900.

¹³ Because the Icelandic preface is dated August 1898, Ásmundsson may have had at least his plot outline and his serialisation plans ready by that time, nearly a year before the American installments started.

¹⁴ “*Dracula* was republished in an abridged version in the UK in 1901 by Archibald Constable and Company, Westminster. The publishers wanted to release a cheaper, easier to read version that would appeal to a wider range of people. As a result, the text was revised and reduced by approximately fifteen percent by Stoker himself. The book itself is a 144 page paperback with a white cover stamped on the spine, front panel and rear panel in blue.”
Source: www.bramstoker.org/novels/05dracula.html, edited and published by Paul S. McAlduff.

¹⁵ Here in the translation given by Richard Dalby, 1986. For my own purposes (and to be published soon), I have created a slightly different translation, closer to the Icelandic text, which in turn is a translation of Stoker’s – hitherto unknown – original letter or manuscript.

Makt myrkranna.

Róman.

Eftir

Bram Stoker.

Formáli höfundarins.

Lesarinn getur sjálfur séð, þegar hann les sögu þessa, hvernig þessum blöðum hefir verið raðað saman, svo að þau yrði að einni heild. Ég hef ekki þurft að gera annað en að draga úr þeim ýms óþörf smáatvik og láta svo söguþolkið sjálft skýra frá reynslu sinni í þeim sama einfalda búaingi, sem blöðin eru upphaflega skrifuð í. Ég hef, af augljósum ástæðum, breytt nöfnum manna og staða. En að öðru leyti skila ég handritinu óbreyttu, samkvæmt ósk þeirra sem hafa álitid það stranga skyldu sína, að koma því fyrir almenningssjónr.

Eftir minni sannfæringu er það ekkert efa-mál, að þeir viðburðir, sem hér er lýst, hafi sannarlega átt sér stað, hversu ótrúlegir og óskiljanlegir sem þeir kunna að sýnast, skoðaðir eftir almennri reynslu. Og ég er sannfærður um, að þeir hljóta jafnan að verða að nokkuru leyti óskiljanlegir, þó ekki sé óhugsandi að áframhaldandi rannsóknir í sálfræðinni og náttúrufræðinni geti þegar minst varir skýrt bæði þessa og aðra leyndardóma, sem hvorki vísindamenn né njósnarlögreglan hafa enn þá getað skilið. Ég tek það enn á ný fram, að þessi dularfulli sorgarleikur, sem hér er lýst, er fullkomlega sannur að því er alla ytri viðburði snertir, þó ég eðlilega hafi komist að annari niðurstöðu í ýmsum greinum en söguþolkið. En viðburðirnir eru ómótmælanlegir og svo margir þekkja þá, að þeim verður ekki neitað. Þessi röð af glæpum, er mönnum ekki enn úr minni liðin, röð af glæpum, sem virðast óskiljanlegir, en út leit fyrir að væru af sömu rót runnir, sem á sínum tíma slógu jafnmiklum óhug á almenning sem hin alræmdu morð Jakobs kvíðristara, sem komu litlu seinna til sögunnar. Ymsa mun reka miðni til hinna merkilegu útlendinga, sem misserum saman tóku glæsilegan þátt í lífi tignarfólksins hér í Lundunum, og menn muna eftir því, að annar þeirra að minsta kosti hvarf skyndilega og á óskiljanlegan hátt, án þess nokkur merki hans sæist frammar. Ált það fólk sem sagt er að viljandi eða óviljandi hafi tekið þátt í þessari merkilegu sögu er alþekt og vel metið. Bæði Tómas Harker og konan hans, sem er valkvendi, og dr.

miðjuna. Hárið fellur á herðar niður og augun eru svört og leiftrandi, svo að þeir líta ræningjalega út. En annars eru þeir að sögn meinleysismenn. (Framh.)

25 ára afmæli Búnaðarfélags Mosfellinga og Kjallnesinga. Á félag þetta hefir áður verið minst í Fjallk. Það var stofnað á þjóðhátíðinni (3. ág.) 1874, og var því 25 ára í sumar. Á aðalfundinum (1. vetrard.) í haust minti ritari félagsins á þetta, og var þá ráðgert að halda sérstaka skemtun í minning þess. Þetta samseti var haldið 27. nóv. að Lágafelli og tóku um 60 manns þátt í því, félagsm. (um 40) og konur þeirra. Hjónin á Lágaf., Ólafur Stephensen prestur og Steinunn Eiríksdóttir kona hans stóðu fyrir því, og veittu gestum fyrir ákveðna væga borgun. Förest þeim það rausnarlega. Eftir borðhaldið (um kl. 6. síð.) skemtu menn sér við ræður, söng, hljóðfæraslætt, dans, spil og leiki m. fl. um kvöldið og nóttina til næsta dags, og fór það alt vel og síðsamlega fram. Af ræðum má helzt geta þess, að í byrjun samsætisins (undir borðum) mintist séra Ólafur aðal-frumkvöðuls félagsins, séra Dorkels á Reynivöllum, er sökum heilsuleysis eigi gat verið viðstaddur, og afhjúpaði um leið stóra mynd af honum, er þau Lágafells-hjón gáfa félaginu, ásamt skrautrituðu spjaldi (jafnstóru) með kvæðum þeim, er ort höfðu verið fyrir tækifærið. Myndina hafði Á. Thorsteinsson gjört, en skrautritið B. Gröndal. Kvæðin voru: minni félagsins (B. B.), minni bænda og m. kvenna (G. G.). Ritari fél., Björn í Gröf, sagði því næst sögu félagsins. Það hafði, eins og mörg lík fyrirteki hjá oss, átt erfiðt uppdráttar framan af. Byrjunin var að visu all-álitleg, en svo smá-dofnaði yfir því, og var það mjög framkvæmdasmátt fram að árinu 1888. Voru félm. um 20 í báðum hreppunum síðustu árin áður. En þá voru þeir Guðm. í Elliðakoti (form.) og Björn í Reykjakoti (ritari) kosnir í félagsstjórnina og hafa verið það síðan. Það ár var fyrst veitt vinna (eftir tillögu B. B.) og hefir það haldist og aukist. Frá þeim tíma hefir félagsmönnum farið sí-fjölgaandi og eru þeir nú 75, eða flestallir búendur beggja hreppanna. Eftir að landesjóður fór að veita fél. tillag, jókst þó vinnan enn meir, og hafa síðan oftast verið 8 vinnumenn við jarðabótastörf hjá félm. alt vorið fyrir félagsins reikning. Auk þess hafa verið veitt verðlaun fyrir jarðabætur, húsa-bætr (hlöður) og fénaðar meðferð. Jarðyrkjuverkfæri voru og keypt og veitt félm. þar til þau voru orðin almenn og þörfin vakin. Félagslögunum var breytt árið 1889 (að tilhlutun B. B.) og breytti það mjög framkvæmdunum til bóta. Alls hafa í félaginu verið haldið 39 fundir (2 á ári síðan '88), sléttaðir 125,042 fóm. (139 dagsl.), nýyrktir sáðreitir 3776 fóm., tvíhl. grjótg. 1042 fóm., einhl. grg. 132 fóm., torfg. og torf og grjótg. 2444 fóm., skurðgarðar 1406 fóm., lokræsi 138

In Eighteen-Bisang's essay, Stoker's interest in the Whitechapel murders was thoroughly explored.¹⁶ But although Stoker was surely fascinated by these horrific events, which even forced the *Lyceum Theatre* to stop the highly successful stage performance of Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, in his *Dracula* novel we find no signs of public concern about this or a similar "series of crimes". Since in *Dracula*, the fatalities of Lucy and her mother were covered up by tampering with their death certificates and the deaths of Mr. Swales and Renfield were never connected with the Hillingham demises, outsiders can hardly have been aware of the interrelations perceived by the "Crew of Light".

The member who "disappeared suddenly" cannot refer to Lucy – she died in her bed and ended up in "the tomb of her kin". It could point to the wealthy Texan Quincey Morris, intimate friend of the noble Arthur Holmwood, who in Stoker's own text vanished during a trip to Transylvania. But who are the other "foreigners who for many seasons together played a dazzling part in the life of the aristocracy here in London"? The peculiar Dutchman Van Helsing entered the stage only shortly before Lucy passed away and certainly spent no time on society parties before leading his team to Romania. In her *Documentary Journey*, Elizabeth Miller is intrigued by the same question:

"Who are these foreigners? Are we to believe that one of them, a suspect in the "Ripper" murders, was yet another model for Count Dracula?"¹⁷

Instead of looking at the various foreigners suspected by Scotland Yard during the course of the Whitechapel murder investigations, I started to wonder if these incongruities maybe had a basis in the text of *Makt Myrkranna* itself. Would it be possible that Stoker's remarks reflected the changes made by Ásmundsson rather than *Dracula*'s original plot or police reports on the Ripper murders?

Answering this fascinating question was hampered by the fact that *Makt Myrkranna*, except for Stoker's own preface, was never (re)translated to English. In order to get to the gist of the matter, I was forced to create my own translation, which – though still very crude – allowed me to check the main differences between Stoker's and Ásmundsson's version.

As already indicated by Miller, the most striking difference is that in *Makt Myrkranna*, Harker's adventures in Transylvania amount to approximately eighty percent of the text, whereas in *Dracula*, they represent only four of 27 chapters. The remaining twenty percent, however, can hardly be called "a brief précis of the original chapters 5 to 27"!

After Harker's Transylvanian episode,¹⁸ Ásmundsson discards Stoker's concept of the epistolary novel. The Whitby and London sections are presented in a cursory but otherwise conventional narrative style, with only short references to Vilma's (Mina's) and Dr. Seward's diaries as sources. The Renfield character, Lucy's resurrection as the "Bloofer Lady", the search for the boxes with soil spread over

¹⁶ Robert Eighteen-Bisang, 2005.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Miller, 2009, p. 280, revised by Miller from *Reflections on Dracula*, 1997.

¹⁸ Composed of Harker's journal entries in chronological order (from 3 May – 28 June).

London, Mina's "blood-wedding" and telepathic connection with the Vampire, the confrontation at the Piccadilly house and the desperate chase across Europe back to Castle Dracula are completely omitted. Instead, new characters are added, including Lucy's uncle Morton, Hawkins's informant Tellet and the police detective Barrington, plus various foreign aristocrats such as Prince Koromesz, Margravine Caroma Rubiano and Madame Saint Amand. Instead of having a single encounter with the three "Vampire Sisters", Harker repeatedly meets a single blonde vampire girl, who arouses unknown desires in him. Instead of remaining almost invisible, the Count steps out into the spotlight as "Baron Székély", has polite conversations with Lucy and Mina in Whitby and entertains high-ranking guests at his freshly refurbished and prestigiously furnished Carfax estate. To this, Ásmundsson adds a political dimension, picturing the Count as the leader and financier of an international elitist conspiracy. This way the Icelander, who published on Socialism and Anarchism, puts the fiend in the corner of reactionary, social-darwinist forces as the arch-enemy of egalitarianism, at the same time linking him to vile murder, sexual libertinage, incestuous degeneration and satanic cult: at Castle Dracula, Harker sees the Count leading a kind of black mass. For an overview of the many modifications and additions see Appendix 1.

Unfortunately, I could not yet find any correspondence between Stoker and Ásmundsson documenting their cooperation or maybe even friendship. Ásmundsson was married to Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, who – like Stoker's mother – was an active supporter of women's rights. The other common denominator is that both Stoker and Ásmundsson were journalist-authors and both were theatre aficionados; Ásmundsson seems to have been intimately informed about London's artistic and intellectual life.¹⁹ By way of background research, I have tried to find out if any descendants are still alive (see Appendix 2), but have no results as of yet. My tentative conclusions about Stoker's approval of Ásmundsson's modifications are thus based on Stoker's biography, the text of Stoker's Icelandic preface, some elements in the novel and Stoker's preparatory notes for *Dracula*.

It is hard to imagine that Bram Stoker would allow a fellow-writer to completely rework and publish his *Dracula* novel without being informed about its changed content. As a theatre manager, barrister-at-law and co-director in Heinemann's "English Library" joint venture, negotiating book rights with many successful authors, Stoker very well knew the threats of plagiarism and other copyright infringements. For his dealings with Constable & Co., Stoker designed his own contract.²⁰ The staged reading of *Dracula or the Un-Dead* at the *Lyceum Theatre* on 18 May 1897 was organised as a mere "copyright reading", in order to protect Stoker's interests in any stage adaptation. In his *Hollywood Gothic*, David Skal lists the tedious steps Stoker had to take in order to establish the US copyright on his own account:

"If nothing else, *Dracula* is a quintessential story of power and control, and Stoker's early attempts to retain legal authority over his vampire foreshadowed many struggles that would follow."²¹

¹⁹ Email from Ásgeir Jónsson of 26 January 2014. I discovered that Ásmundsson also published the *The Million Pound Bank Note* by Stoker's good friend Mark Twain, in *Fjallkonan*, starting 14 February 1894. This story is also set in London. Both Stoker and Twain published with Heinemann, where Stoker was a Director in the *English Libray* joint venture. Dacre Stoker added the information that Stoker's friend Hall Caine had visited Iceland and had good connections with publishers there, so that he may have been instrumental in connecting Bram Stoker with his Icelandic partners (email and Skype conversation with Dacre and Jenne Stoker of 3 February 2014). These points urgently need further research.

²⁰ See Miller, 2009, p. 245 ff.

²¹ David Skal, 2004, p. 66. Skal also suggests that serialisation in an American newspaper may have been part of the strategy the novelist had in mind to comply with the intricate US copyright rules.

The fact that Stoker wrote an extra preface for Ásmundsson's version seems to indicate that the Icelandic initiative was explicitly authorised by him. Moreover, the preface paragraph previously quoted fits Ásmundsson's version much better than Stoker's original.

Most noteworthy, there is this puzzling remark about the Ripper murders "which came into the story a little later", although the original *Dracula* novel nowhere alludes to the Ripper.²² David Skal suggests that a review of *Dracula* in *The Stage*, proposing a connection between Stoker's plot and "the stabbing of women recently notorious in London" may have encouraged the Irishman to declare such a link *ex post*, although *Dracula*'s text nowhere supports it.²³ In her comment on the Icelandic preface as a "peritext", Brigitte Boudreau suspects that Stoker added the Ripper hint in order to anchor his novel in "actual historical context" and thereby increase its believability.²⁴ She also mentions Robert Tracy's thesis that an allegedly syphilis-ridden Stoker used the writing of *Dracula* as a vehicle to take revenge on the prostitutes responsible for his illness. But before we examine Stoker's health and sex life, would it not be more logical to check if in this preface, extra designed for *Makt Myrkranna*, Stoker maybe alluded to plot elements freshly incorporated by Ásmundsson?

In *Makt Myrkranna*, the Count explicitly refers to a sensational homicide series in London obfuscated by the dense fog. In Transylvania, Harker is confronted with three murders committed or arranged by the Count, victimising the dead girl Harker sees from his window, the girl killed during the sacrificial ritual and Margareth, the daughter of the innkeeper in Solyva; in the latter case, Harker is "widely suspected" to be the culprit – which indicates a certain public interest and police activity. In *Dracula*, we do not know for sure if the "half-smothered child" the Count hands to the three "Vampire Sisters" is actually killed,²⁵ and its mother is attacked by wolves, not by human beings or vampires.²⁶ In *Makt Myrkranna*, Lucy's housemaid is found murdered and police detectives investigate the case, whereas in *Dracula*, the maid is merely drugged with laudanum and no police is involved. In Ásmundsson's text, Van Helsing describes the Vampire not as a courageous anti-Turkish warrior, but as a criminal and murderer who lived on after natural death. On the other hand, Stoker's original story features the additional murders of Renfield in Purfleet and Skinsky in Varna. But whereas in *Dracula*, all murders appear completely unrelated in the eyes of the authorities and the general public and no police action is mentioned, in *Makt Myrkranna* a police officer, Barrington, is investigating the relationship between the dreadful events in Eastern Europe and those in London, and even Sister Agatha knows about a band of criminals – their boss being linked to Satan – using Castle Dracula as their hide-out.

²² In Robert Eighteen-Bisang's 2005 essay *A Thirst for Blood*, an alternative translation by Silvia Sigurdson is used: "Many people remember the strange series of crimes *that comes into the story a little later* – crimes which, at the time, appeared to be supernatural and seemed to originate from the same source and cause as much revulsion as the infamous murders of Jack the Ripper!" [My italics – HdR]. I see no valid linguistic reason, however, to link "er komu litlu seinna til sögunnar" with the first-mentioned "strange series of crimes", instead of with the later-mentioned Ripper murders. Moreover, the Iceland "komu" ("came") is past tense. In the following pages, this issue will be dealt with again.

²³ *The Stage* of 17 June 1897, David Skal, 2004, p.65.

Full text at www.beladraculalugosi.wordpress.com/contemporary-reviews-of-bram-stokers-dracula/

²⁴ Brigitte Bourdreau, 2011, p. 6, quoting Margaret Davison, 1997, p. 148.

²⁵ *Dracula*, Chapter 3, Harker's Journal dated Later: the Morning of 16 May.

²⁶ *Dracula*, Chapter 4, Harker's Journal of 24 June, before morning. It seems that Stoker's Count Dracula does not immediately or directly kill his female victims.

A decisive clue I found in the London crime series discussed by Harker and the Count (Journal of 8 May):

“Yes, this mist”, – he said impetuously. “I’ve also read about it in my books. I think it just increases my longing for London. This fog, which turns your day into night and lies like a thick blanket over the streets and squares. – Above all – the gloom and the darkness – I’d love to see it.”

“I’m afraid that you will soon be tired of it. Fog is the main drawback of London. It lies over the town like a vampire who sucks the blood and bone marrow from its citizens, poisoning the blood and lungs of the children and causing a myriad of diseases – as well as all those terrible crimes committed under its cover which otherwise would be largely impossible to undertake.”

“Yes” – he said breathlessly and the fire virtually burned in his eyes, – “yes, these crimes, these terrible murders, these murdered women, these people found in sacks in the Thames, this blood, that flows, that flows and streams, while the murderer cannot be not found.”

I think I do not falsely accuse him if I say that it appeared to me as if he was licking his lips for desire when I brought up the murders.

“Yes, it’s a tragedy”, he said. “And these murders will never be solved – never. – Your writer Doyle has written many good books about London, and I read your newspapers and according to them, barely two or three per cent of all murders are solved. Yes, London is a remarkable city.”

To me, this seems to hint at the Ripper murders... or to a murder series very similar to them! On closer examination, the very specific description “people found in sacks in the Thames” can only point to the “Thames Torso Murders” (1887-89), also known as the “Thames Mysteries” or “Embankment Murders”:

“Evidence that a killer’s [sic!] was at work first showed up in May of 1887, in the Thames River Valley village of Rainham, when workers pulled from the river a bundle containing the torso of a female. Throughout May and June, numerous parts from the same body showed up in various parts of London – until a complete body, minus head and upper chest, was reconstructed. (...)

The second victim of the Thames series was discovered in September of 1888, in the middle of the hunt for the Whitechapel Murder. On September 11, an arm belonging to a female was discovered in the Thames off Pimlico. On September 28, another arm was found along the Lambeth-road and on October 2, the torso of a female, minus the head, was discovered. (...)

The medical men involved, along with Dr. Bond, agreed that a degree of medical knowledge had been used, but they could give no evidence pointing to the method of death. Dr. Charles Hibbert, who examined one of the arms, stated that, “I thought the arm was cut off by a person who, while he was not necessarily an anatomist, certainly knew what he was doing – who knew where the joints were and cut them pretty regularly.”²⁷

The “Thames Torso Murders” thus commenced more than a full year *before* the Whitechapel murders. This led me to the conclusion that the Icelandic relative clause “er komu litlu seinna til sögunnar” does *not* refer to the Whitechapel murders *described in the novel later on* (“which came into the story somewhat later”), but to Jack the Ripper *starting to murder and spread terror* (“appearing on the scene”) only after

²⁷ Spicer, *The Thames Torso Murders of 1887-89*, n.d. See also R.M. Gordon, 2002, p. 35: “The old sacking was made of a common, coarse canvas.” Rainham is a sub-urb in the East of London, 22 km east of Charing Cross.

the “Thames Mysteries” had begun.²⁸ This would also explain the past tense “came” (Icelandic “komu”), instead of “comes” or “will come” (which would normally be used in a preface announcing a story element). In my view, “this series of crimes [that] has not yet passed from the memory” can only refer to these “Thames Torso Murders”, which Stoker’s new preface connects to Ásmundsson’s new plot and to its group of foreigners playing a conspicuous role in London’s aristocratic circles. Instead of pointing to Van Helsing’s band of accolytes, this group appears to consist of the foreign diplomats in London involved in the Count’s conspiracy, the elegant French Ambassador’s wife, Madame Saint Amand, Margravine Caroma Rubiano, the beautiful Countess Ida Varkony, her brother Prince Koromesz and to Baron Székély himself, as well as the dozens of foreign guests he hosts in his distinguished London residence.²⁹

This group – or the malefactors within this group – must have been active well before the Count travels to London himself, the Vampire greedily informing himself through the London newspapers about their results, before he is able to join and take part in the “fun”. Accordingly, *Makt Myrkranna*’s action must be set in the year 1887 or later.³⁰ The member suddenly disappearing without a trace most probably is the Count himself, although Margravine Caroma Rubiano vanishes as well and Madame Saint Amand dies after Van Helsing and Harker have extinguished the un-dead head of the criminal organisation.³¹

If we accept this reconstruction (which – in terms of “close reading” – seems to be the only logical explanation to me), Ásmundsson actually anchored his story in an existing historical context, in order to enhance its dramatic appeal. Furthermore, Stoker, as the author of the preface, must have been familiar at least with Ásmundsson’s plot concept, so that his remarks about this unforgotten, repulsive crime series, about Jack the Ripper, about the glamorous group of foreign aristocrats and about its disappeared member match Ásmundsson’s modified content, instead of being merely “empty” or “misplaced” references.

²⁸ Icelandic “að koma til sögunnar” is usually translated as “to appear on the scene”. Depending on the context, this can mean “to become visible”, “to start influencing things”, “to be introduced”, “to be established”, etc.

²⁹ In *Markt Myrkranna*, Harker mentions that the Count’s property is in the east part of London. At the start of Part II, it is explained that Purfleet, the location of Seward’s asylum adjoining the Carfax house, is a sub-urb of London. Thus, the Count and his allies operate in London itself, not in Essex. Stoker’s notes of 14 March 1890 also mention “the purchase of London estate”; only in the typed manuscript, Plaistow was replaced by Purfleet – see Klinger, 2008, p. 483, note 8.

³⁰ Harker’s diary starts in on 3 May, his dialogue with the Count about the “Thames Mysteries” is on 8 May, the sack made of canvas with the first female corpse was found in the Thames near Rainham on 11 May 1887, three days later. Technically speaking, *Makt Myrkranna*’s story thus can only have started on 3 May 1888, when various body parts of the same victim already had been found. The Pimlico victim was found in September 1888, which also marked the start of the Ripper murder. Although not very probable, 1889 is a possible year of action as well; the Count may have stepped in only later on. In the “Thames Torso Murders”, like the Ripper murders, women were killed and gruesomely mutilated. Like the Ripper, the killer seems to have had some anatomical experience. It is therefore completely correct to speak of crimes which seemingly “originated from the same source, and which at the same time created as much repugnance” as the Ripper murders. The crimes attracted massive press attention, until the Ripper murders started to overshadow the investigations in the “Thames Mysteries”. In 1898, when the Icelandic preface was written, the public’s memory must still have been fresh.

³¹ Ásmundsson does not disclose if all the group members were vampires and/or criminals, or if some of them were merely hypnotised and abused by the core crew. The Count obviously is the principal, the Austrian Ambassador Prince Koromesz and Countess Ida Varkony being in the second line of command. The precise role of Margravine Caroma Rubiano (medium/fortune-teller) and Madame Saint Amand (worshipped by many distinguished lovers, as the name suggests!) is still obscure to me; are they eliminated by the Vampire Hunters after the Count has been extinguished, or did they just simulate their exit in order to live on (and continue murdering?) somewhere else? Her carriage frequently being seen in Carfax, the French Ambassador’s wife may even be identical with Countess Ida Varkony (but then, where is her husband?) Possibly, even the Count’s daughter is still active. Altogether, there were 40-50 foreign guests at the evening reception in Carfax when Seward was present, a large group that may have acted as accomplices, possibly under hypnotic influence.

Other intriguing elements in *Makt Myrkranna* are the appearance of the deaf and mute woman acting as the Count's housekeeper (an identical character is mentioned in Stoker's original cast of characters) and of the police detective Barrington, the equivalent of Detective Cotford on Stoker's original list. On the very same sheet of paper, Stoker mentions a "secret room – coloured like blood". Eighteen-Bisang and Miller note that "in the novel, there is no such room in any of the Count's houses."³² In *Makt Myrkranna*, however, Harker discovers a secret room in Castle Dracula, where blood rituals are performed, the Count wearing a red cape. Even the idea of a dinner party, where the Count appears as the last guest, is echoed in Ásmundsson's description of the night buffet hosted by Countess Varkony, where the Count is the last to enter the scene. According to Stoker's notes, this reception was to take place "at the mad doctor's", that is at Dr. Seward's house/hospital. In *Makt Myrkranna*, it takes place in the neighbouring building, Seward being the only guest associated with the vampire hunters. Eighteen-Bisang and Miller bring up the question whether Stoker intended to portray Dr. Seward as insane.³³ In Ásmundsson's version, Seward actually goes crazy some time after he fainted at the Carfax gathering.

Possibly, Ásmundsson invented these story elements all by himself. But the idea that Stoker may have discussed some of his original plot ideas with his Icelandic colleague is too tantalising to be ignored.



To what extent Stoker himself actually was informed about the details of Ásmundsson's changes – or even played an active part in it – we can only guess at the moment. Some elements of the Icelandic version are so far removed from the original *Dracula* that inevitably, the question emerges if Stoker ever was cautioned about, for example, the satanic mass rituals or the amazing subplot of Dracula's daughter who played with the hearts of powerful rulers "like a child plays with grapes, before it sucks out the liquid". We even have to ask the question if the Icelandic preface, which has been venerated by *Dracula* scholars since 1986 like a mysterious meteorite fragment coming from a strange and far-removed world, was completely written by Stoker, or if maybe Ásmundsson added the discussed paragraph himself.

When I asked him for his opinion, Ásgeir Jónsson commented that the style of the preface is untypical of the highly eloquent Ásmundsson – which seems to confirm its authenticity as an operose translation from a foreign language:

"Valdimar Ásmundsson had a way with words and an extremely good command of his mother tongue. Our nobel laureate, Halldor Laxness, has called him the „best pen in the whole of Iceland in the beginning of the twentieth century". The translation of *Dracula* itself, although not loyal to the original text, is written in an extremely vivid and skillful way – that is why I decided to republish it. However, the preface is very clumsy, the sentences are very un-Icelandic and unlike Valdimar – they have much more of an English character."³⁴

³² "Deaf and mute woman" and "a silent man – English servants of the Count"; "Detective____ Cotford", "secret room – coloured like blood", see Eighteen-Bisang & Miller, 2008, p.26-27, with comments from the editors.

³³ Eighteen-Bisang & Miller, 2008, p. 22-23, footnote 49.

³⁴ Email from Ásgeir Jónsson of 1 February 2014.

Because the questioned paragraph first mentions a “group” of foreigners, but later refers to the disappeared person as “the other” as part of a pair only (“annar þeirra”, meaning literally “the other one of them”), Jónsson even proposes that Ásmundsson, due to the limited space available in *Fjallkonan*, may have *omitted* a part of Stoker’s preface, instead of *adding* something.³⁵

Ásmundsson may have deleted a line, or he may have not. That he would have *added* a complete paragraph or even have *created* a complete preface that sounds awkward and “un-Icelandic” in the ears of a native Icelandic speaker and experienced book writer such as Ásgeir Jónsson, seems implausible. I am not qualified to judge the stylistic finesses of Icelandic prose, so that for the moment, I thankfully rely on the appraisal by my Icelandic colleague, until further evidence turns up.

This night, I also discussed the matter with Dacre and Jenne Stoker, who agreed with me that the puzzling circumstances pictured here do not fit into any existing scholarly framework developed so far. If we accept Stoker’s preface as authentic, we must also accept that he must at least have been familiar with Ásmundsson’s intention to portray the Count as the leader of a glamorous aristocratic criminal group involved in the “Thames Torso Murders”, and to have the showdown take place still in London. This scenario is not altogether unrealistic, as – according to Dacre and Jenne Stoker – the London publisher Constable & Co. was sceptical of bringing up “social issues”. Linking the Austrian and French Ambassadors in London to a well-remembered series of execrable crimes might have been “just too much” for a British publishing house, so that distributing such a variant in far-away Iceland may have been one of the options to create a new and even more provocative version and protect its copyright.³⁶

The alternative is to discard the Icelandic preface, or at least the critical paragraph,³⁷ as unauthentic, until Stoker’s handwritten or typed manuscript is produced. For academic *Dracula* scholarship, this choice may be equally shocking, since important parts of modern *Dracula* exegesis are built on this text.



Whatever the case, several decades *before* the stage play adaptation by Deane & Balderston and the movie version with Bela Lugosi, Ásmundsson showed the Count as an aristocratic gentleman openly moving around in the highest circles; he cancelled his escape from London, so that the fiend could be eliminated while still in England. In his essay on Deane & Balderston, Michael McGlasson credits “The Men Who ‘Re-vamped’ Count Dracula” for changing the Count’s appearance and social behaviour:

³⁵ Email from Ásgeir Jónsson of 1 February 2014. This pair could be Count Dracula and Countess Ida Varkony, or it could refer to Count Dracula and Countess Varkony’s brother, the Austrian Ambassador Prince Koromesz, who seems to be influential but ill-reputed. That in *Dracula*, the identity of the Count is equally defined by the denomination “that other” (see my essay *Bram Stoker’s Vampire Trap - Vlad the Impaler and his Nameless Double*, 2012) could be more than just a coincidence: it seems that Stoker likes to play with pairs of references: one open (Vlad the Impaler; The Ripper murders), one obscured (“that other of his race”; the vague reference to “this” unforgotten murders series that shocked the public).

³⁶ Skype conversation with Dacre and Jenne Stoker, 3 February 2014. The Stokers mentioned Constable’s chief-editor Otto Kyllmann as an example of such a disapproving attitude, probably shared by other British publishers from Stoker’s time.

³⁷ A question brought up by Dacre Stoker was if the “secret police”, also mentioned in the preface, appeared in the new plot as well. It does *not*, but it only seems logical that after the cover of the conspiracy was blown, the secret police investigated the international diplomatic scandal. This again implies that the paragraph mentioning the secret police is equally critical.

“Even today, seventy-six years after the release of *Dracula*, Bela Lugosi is instantly recognized by most people. But Deane and Balderston remain virtually unknown, a rather sad situation considering that it was these two men who created the modern image of Count Dracula, the “cultured, courtly continental dressed in evening clothes and a cape” as contrasted with Stoker’s “pasty, old [and] unattractive villain dressed completely in black”³⁸

McGlasson explains that the changes made by Deane and Balderston were necessary to make Stoker’s villain presentable as a protagonist in a drawing-room drama and to compress the lengthy story. As this essay on *Makt Myrkranna* demonstrates, within sixteen months after *Dracula*’s first publication Valdimar Ásmundsson, with Stoker’s blessings or not, already anticipated these two important modifications and created the first radical “re-make” of Stoker’s narrative – vampire cape included.³⁹

And these were not his only innovations. Long before Stoker’s *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909) appeared and *Dracula’s Guest* was posthumously published (1914), Ásmundsson developed two strong female vampire characters acting individually, as opposed to the group of “Vampire Sisters”. Two decades before Count Orlok commented on Ellen’s beautiful neck, and half a century before Christopher Lee and Frank Langella began embodying a Dracula with a sexual appetite beyond his mere lust for blood, Ásmundsson’s Count chats about the physical beauty of women and the contingencies of changing erotic passion with a frankness that shocks the prude Harker. Another innovative feature is that for the first time ever, the Count has a clan or family (uncle, daughter, etc.) and a crowd of followers; he even leads group ceremonies and satanic rites – an idea showing up in *Dracula* movies only much later.⁴⁰

That the astonishing facts presented here have remained unnoticed in the official history of *Dracula*’s reception shows how strong language barriers still are even in this global era, where Reykjavik and London, Bucharest and Munich are connected online and so many digitised source materials can be accessed over the Internet: as far as I could check, not a single scholar outside of Iceland ever took the trouble to study Valdimar Ásmundsson’s unique re-creation of *Dracula*. I hope that this essay will change this: at least fans of gothic fiction should be interested to look across national borders.

München, 3 February 2014



Hans Corneel de Roos

³⁸ McGlasson, 2007, quoting Finn, Anne-Marie. *Whose Dracula Is It Anyway? Deane, Balderston and the World-Famous Vampire Play*, in *Journal of Dracula Studies* Nr. 1, 1999, pp. 8-14.

³⁹ Which triggers the question if Deane and/or Balderston ever heard of Ásmundsson’s version. McGlasson explains that their changes partly reacted to Murnau’s *Nosferatu* movie (1922), which had shown Count Orlok as an ogre rather than a gentleman. Ásmundsson developed his sophisticated Baron Székely two decades earlier, long before Murnau’s plagiarism shocked and irritated Florence Stoker, which makes the Icelandic modifications all the more remarkable.

⁴⁰ E.g. *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (1973) with Christopher Lee. The Count as the leader of a larger group of vampires can be found (as a parody) in *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967, Roman Polanski) and in *Sundown - The Vampire in Retreat* (1989, Anthony Hickox). Ásmundsson’s description of a crowd of ape-like adepts beating archaic drums and blowing trumpets while a helpless tied-up girl is being sacrificed to a monstrous creature seems to foreshadow a key scene from *King Kong* (1933), in which some natives of Skull Island dress up and dance in gorilla costumes, while other tribe members beat their drums or blow their conch shells, to attract Kong and guide him to the enchained Ann Darrow.

APPENDIX 1: Modifications of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* by Valdimar Ásmundsson

The most significant deviations from Stoker's plot in the Transylvanian episode are:

1. In Bistritz, Tómas (instead of Jonathan) Harker meets a German teacher, who tells him that the Count's family is well-known and very rich and that the rumours around him are based on superstition (*Fjallkonan* of 20 January 1900).
2. Although the Count complains about this superstition, which makes it difficult to recruit servants among the peasantry, in Castle Dracula Harker encounters an old woman, deaf and mute, acting as a housekeeper (*Fjallkonan* of 27 January 1900)
3. Instead of three vampire sisters, Harker meets a single blonde, blue-eyed, exceptionally beautiful and seductive young woman, wearing a diamond necklace with a ruby in the center. She complains (in German with an accent) about her loneliness and provokes strange sexual passions and "fever" in Harker (3 February 1900). In the rest of the story she meets him several times, provoking his wildest desires, but is repeatedly interrupted by the Count. He tells Harker that she is his close relative,⁴¹ attractive like Venus or Helena but mentally confused; she mistakes herself for her own great-grandmother. He tells about a painting showing a stunning likeness to the girl (21 February 1900). As their mysterious encounters continue, the blonde lady kisses Harker in the neck (17 September 1900) and begs him to take off his crucifix (27 October 1900).
4. The Count is thrilled by the London fog, which facilitated a horrible murder series. He mentions the many good books written by (Sir Arthur Conan) Doyle and the fact that in the "remarkable city" of London, only 2-3 percent of all murder cases are ever solved (2 March 1900).
5. Like in *Dracula*, the Count calls himself a Szekler, a descendant of the Huns. But instead of mentioning the anti-Turkish campaigns led by the Dracula dynasty, he shows Harker a picture gallery to introduce his family. When Harker spots the painting seemingly depicting the blonde girl, diamond necklace included, the Count repeats it is another person (14 March 1900). He tells about his uncle and the incestuous habit to marry only within the clan. He shows the portrait of his daughter, who played with the hearts of men in power "like a child plays with grapes, before it sucks out the liquid", while explaining his licentious views on promiscuous passion and the laws of natural selection.⁴² Looking at the portraits, Harker notices that one type of male face, dark-skinned, black-haired, with low brow, seems to appear again and again in the Count's family tree.
6. When Harker asks his host why the blonde girl does not accompany him to London, the Count explains that she is so pretty that she could easily become a victim of crime there, just like he has read in his books; it will be safer for her to stay at home (11 April 1900). Later, when Harker meets the blonde girl again during a night in the forbidden part of the Castle, the Count claims that he must have been dreaming (17 September 1900); Harker later checks the evidence.

⁴¹ Icelandic "frænka" can mean aunt, niece or cousin. Ásmundsson places „frænka greifans“ between apostrophs, so that we must doubt if Harker believes the girl to be actually related to the Count.

⁴² This daughter married a young Austrian prince, who died early – which excludes the possibility she was/is the wife of Prince Koromesz (Austrian Ambassador in London), unless the dead husband rose from his grave again. The young widow married again, but over time preferred a young peasant lover over her husband, who by way of revenge locked the couple in a tower room, with fatal results. According to the Count, she now rests in the Castle's crypt. As "Dracula's Daughter", she may sneak about every now and then; she may even be identical with Countess Ida Varkona or one of the other ladies.

7. Looking from his window, Harker discovers the body of a murdered young woman in the bushes, neck and breasts exposed (8 May 1900). Later on, he sees her mourning family.
8. During one of his explorations in the Castle, he is attacked himself by a monkey-like man with hairy arms (26 July 1900). He will meet similar creatures again when he discovers the “temple”.
9. When Harker finds the antique gold coins from Greek and Roman times and other treasures, he realises that the Count must be immensely rich (11 August 1900).
10. Harker suspects that the old woman must enter and leave the dining room through a secret door (8 September 1900). Finally he finds the hidden button. Through this passage, Harker reaches a hall with a large group of men and women, looking primitive and monkey-like.⁴³ (3 November 1900). He sees the Count leading some kind of religious ceremony, involving the sacrificing of young women, whom he hypnotises before they are bitten and killed. (10 November 1900).
11. While the Count pretends that the mail connections are disturbed, Harker discovers fresh British newspapers and letters from high-ranking persons from other European countries, obviously involved in conspiracies financially supported by the Count (19 November 1900).

After this lengthy Transylvania section, Ásmundsson (as an “omniscient narrator”) explains that while Harker is left a prisoner in the Castle, hovering between hope and despair, the action moves to Whitby. The following summarises the development of the modified plot in the last five installments:

1. After the arrival of the *Demeter* an old sailor, befriended with Vilma (Mina) and Lúsíu (Lucy) is found dead on a bench at the cemetery. The girls take a walk there and meet Lucy’s uncle Morton, who introduces them to Baron Székély, “a foreigner, middle-aged and of very peculiar appearance”, who enjoys chatting with Lucy.⁴⁴ The following night, Mina finds Lucy in nightwear in front of the window, apparently summoned by an imaginary voice; Vilma stops her from jumping out of the window. The next day, they meet the Baron again in the graveyard and speak about the Gypsies who have come to Whitby, the Baron praising their ancient wisdom and mysterious talents. The Baron suggests that Lucy may possess similar gifts, if she would only practise them. In her crystal ball, a Gypsie fortune teller sees how Arthur kisses another girl, but the next day he writes to Lucy that his sister Mary just has returned home; against her family’s warnings, she had married a Romanian – the assistant to the Austrian Ambassador in London, Prince Koromesz, a man of ill reputation. Lucy returns to London to prepare for her marriage, her health quickly deteriorating; she often speaks of the Baron. Dr. Seward sends for van Helsing. Together with Seward, Van Helsing finds Lucy’s housemaid bitten in the neck, the bedroom window smashed, and Lucy’s mother dead in bed next to her unconscious daughter. Lucy can be revived by blood transfusions, but dies all the same shortly after. While preparations for the funeral are made, her body seems to be more radiating and fresh than ever. In the night, Arthur sees Lucy rising from her coffin; he faints. According to his wish, the coffin is left open in the crypt, with food and blankets (episode of six chapters published on 9 February 1901).

⁴³ Ásmundsson does not tell if these primitive followers actually belong to Count Dracula’s family, nor does he explain the contrast between the exquisite, vampire women with their alabaster skin and the darker, broad-faced male family members.

⁴⁴ Except for “Lúsíu”, the Icelandic transcription of “Lucy”, I have kept the names “Tómas” and “Vilma” (from the full name “Wilhelmina”) given by Ásmundsson. In his 2011 republication, Ásgeir Jónsson has changed “Tómas” back to “Jónatan”.

2. In the next issue (Chapters 7-9, 21 February 1901) Ásmundsson turns the spotlight to Vilma (Mina). Through Hawkins and his informant Tellet she receives word that Tómas (Jonathan) is suspected of killing Margareth (“Margréti”), the daughter of an innkeeper from Solyva.⁴⁵ The Count has apparently left his Castle by the end of June, and – under the name of Harker – took money from a Budapest bank on 15 July; Harker’s belongings have been used by others as a disguise. Vilma and Tellet leave for Bistritz, and meet the old woman who had given her crucifix to Harker in May. They are joined by Hawkins and police officer Barrington, and visit Solyva and Castle Dracula. Vilma is attacked by a ghostly “white woman”. She is nursed by nuns in a monastery nearby.
3. Sister Agatha happens to take care of another English patient as well; Tómas and Vilma exchange letters without recognising each other, until they finally meet. Vilma informs Hawkins who comes to visit the couple with police detective Barrington, who reveals he has unravelled a large part of the mysterious events already, hoping that Harker can supply the missing information. He is shocked to learn that Harker cannot remember the events in the Castle. Hawkins makes Tómas and Vilma his heirs and the young couple marries. In Vienna, Vilma visits a famous neurologist who assures her that Tómas will recover, although the memory gap may persist. In Chapter 11, the Harkers come home, learn of Lucy’s death and are interviewed by Van Helsing. Hawkins dies. After his funeral, returning to Piccadilly, Vilma notices a beautiful young woman in a splendid carriage drawn by grey horses. She finds Tómas staring at a tall man of peculiar appearance who talks with her. She recognises Baron Székély whom she had previously met in Whitby. While Tómas instantly seems to forget the incident, Vilma receives a parcel from Sister Agatha containing his diary. While her husband is sleeping, Vilma reads it and begins to suspect that Count Dracula and Baron Székély are one and the same person (1 March 1901).
4. Chapter 12: Van Helsing borrows Harker’s journal and recognises the link between the Piccadilly encounter and the events at the Castle. Barrington visits Exeter as well, to learn about the Carfax house bought by the Count; he believes Van Helsing to be superstitious. Van Helsing explains to Vilma about the supernatural forces which may cause a murderer to live forth after his death and about the hypnotising powers such creatures can exert, like in the case of Lucy, drawing Arthur to the grave. Chapter 13 relates how Barrington questions Dr. Seward, whose asylum adjoins the Count’s Carfax estate. Seward has noticed major refurbishments and precious furniture being brought there. They discuss an ostentatious carriage pulled by grey horses, transporting an elegant lady, the French Ambassador’s wife, and some other persons visiting Carfax at night. Later that day, Seward is asked to treat the sleeping disorder of the beautiful Countess Ida Varkony by hypnosis; she lives in the house next to the asylum. She has black hair and large, deep eyes, speaks French with a foreign accent and mesmerises Seward – her hypnotist! – with her strange charm. Although she responds well to his suggestions, during the visit next day he finds her unconscious, without any signs of life. A mysterious voice instructs him to hypnotise her again. Finally, he manages to revive her, but feels himself drained of his own life-force, like after a blood transfusion; she even reminds him of Lucy. He is introduced to her brother, Prince Koromesz, and requested to return the following night (15 March 1901).

⁴⁵ Maybe Szolyva (Ukraine), 300 km north of Klausenburg. Ásmundsson’s remark that from Solyva it is just a short trip to the Castle implies that he moved Castle Dracula to the North; to Harker the Count confirms it is “far away from the Borgo Pass”.

5. In Chapter 14, Seward wakes up from his chloral-induced sleep and is unable to focus on his duties. In the evening he goes out to visit his attractive patient. On the street, he notices the splendid carriage of the French Ambassador's wife, as previously discussed with Barrington.⁴⁶ Countess Varkony and her brother, Prince Koromesz, are hosting a group of 40-50 guests, speaking French, but from different nationalities. Seward is the only Englishman among them. He notices the diamond necklace with the red ruby worn by the Countess.⁴⁷ He is introduced to Madame Saint Amand and Margravine Caroma Rubiano, a gifted medium and fortune-teller. The last to come into the room is an impressive aristocrat, evidently dominating all others; he seems to have great power over the Countess and announces a hypnotic experiment. The lights go out and Seward loses consciousness. When he awakes, Margravine Rubiano hopes that he will recover soon. Seward returns to the asylum and is addressed by a famous violin player, seemingly associated with the residents of Carfax. Back at the asylum, Seward hears a woman's cry from the Carfax garden. Later on, Seward's papers mention an agreement with the violin player to come and play music at his hospital. At this point, Seward's diary suddenly breaks off. In Chapter 15, Van Helsing meets with the Harkers, Barrington, Tellet and Morris. They have not heard from Seward in two weeks. Harker is recovering his memory and they have no doubt anymore that Baron Székély is Count Dracula.⁴⁸ Van Helsing explains that their supernatural enemy, half man, half animal, has lived for centuries and has amassed enormous wealth to serve his evil plans. In Chapter 16, Van Helsing and Morris visit the asylum. Seward is absent. Morris finds him at the Carfax property, obviously losing his mind.⁴⁹ The asylum is burned down, but Seward's diary notes in the strongbox are saved.⁵⁰ Van Helsing's men enter the Carfax house by forcing the lock.⁵¹ In the hall, Harker recognises the fiery decorations seen in the "temple" of the Castle. They find the Count lying in his coffin with the same red cape as worn during the sacrificial ceremonies. The Count wakes up and attacks Harker, but Van Helsing runs a dagger through his heart. The corpse soon crumbles to a small pile of dust. Chapter 17 is a conclusion or postscript, stating that Margravine Caroma Rubiano has disappeared and Madame Saint Amand has died; both seem to have had intimate friendships and amorous liaisons in the highest circles. Many ambassadors are called back home to their countries. Quincey Morris takes the blame for killing the Count, but is acquitted after a process behind closed doors. In the Count's boxes, the men find gold and other priceless treasures. The Carfax house is destroyed, but the Count's followers may still be hiding somewhere...

⁴⁶ As we remember, the same young woman was seen talking with the Count by Tómas and Vilma Harker near Piccadilly. Ásmundsson neither explains the precise relationships within this little group, consisting of the French Ambassador's wife, the Austrian Ambassador Prince Koromesz, Countess Ida Varkony (speaking French with foreign accent) and Baron Székély/Count Dracula, nor the exact roles of Mme. Saint-Amand and Margravine Rubiano, nor the place of Arthur's sister Mary in the story. Except for Mary, they all seem to be vampires or acting under the influence of the Count.

⁴⁷ This particular necklace suggests that Countess Ida Varkony is either identical with the blonde vampire girl or with the woman on the portrait Harker saw in the Castle. Because Countess Varkony has long black lashes and black hair instead of blonde, and Harker is convinced that the woman in the portrait is the blonde girl, the precise identities of these women remains mysterious. Possibly, the blonde girl *is* the woman in the portrait, who in a later age has assumed a new identity.

⁴⁸ In *Dracula*, the Vampire employs the alias "Count De Ville" to buy the Piccadilly house, but does not use it in public.

⁴⁹ This echoes Renfield's escape from the asylum in *Dracula*, where Seward has to fight with him.

⁵⁰ In *Dracula*, the Vampire manages to burn the papers and phonograph rolls, but there is a copy in the safe.

⁵¹ This corresponds to Van Helsing and his men opening the Piccadilly house with the help of a locksmith in *Dracula*.

APPENDIX 2: Descendants of Valdimar Ásmundsson and Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttur

I found no evidence that the daughter of Valdimar Ásmundsson and Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttur, (Laufey Valdimarsdóttir, 1 March 1890 – 9 December 1945) has ever married, but their son Héðinn Valdimarsson (26 May 1892 – 12 September 1948) has been married three times; he had two daughters from the last two marriages: Katrín and Bríet. See the short biography below. I think that the last daughter must have been the actress Bríet Héðinsdóttir (14 October 1935 - 26 October 1996), who thus was Valdimar Ásmundsson's youngest granddaughter; she appeared in various movies like *Á köldum klaka* (1995, Director Friðrik Þór Friðriksson), *Ingalo* (1992, Director Ásdís Thoroddsen) and *Skytturnar (White Whales)* (1987, Director Friðrik Þór Friðriksson).

Héðinn Valdimarsson [From: www.althingi.is/alttext/cv/is/?nfaerslunr=250]

F. í Reykjavík 26. maí 1892, d. 12. sept. 1948. For.: Valdimar Ásmundsson (f. 10. júlí 1852, d. 17. apríl 1902) ritstjóri þar og k. h. Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttir (f. 27. sept. 1856, d. 16. mars 1940) ritstjóri. K. 1. (30. júlí 1921) Marie Madelaine Leonie Callens (f. 29. júní 1898), frá Brussel. Þau skildu. K. 2. (21. ágúst 1926) Gyða Eggertsdóttir Briem (f. 12. maí 1908, d. 28. apríl 1983) húsmóðir. Þau skildu. For.: Eggert Eiríksson Briem, sonur Eiríks Briems alþm., og k. h. Katrín Pétursdóttir Thorsteinsson. K. 3. (15. sept. 1934) Guðrún Pálína Pálsdóttir (f. 15. nóv. 1909, d. 11. ágúst 2000) kennari. For.: Páll Bergsson og k. h. Svanhildur Jörundsdóttir. Dóttir Héðins og Gyðu: Katrín (1927). Dóttir Héðins og Guðrúnar: Bríet (1935).

APPENDIX 3: Recent Theories about Bram Stoker's interest in Jack the Ripper

That the interest in a possible connection between Bram Stoker, his *Dracula* novel and Jack the Ripper is still unflinching is shown by the fact that at the very moment the manuscript for this essay is being submitted for publication, the Whitechapel Society is discussing the theories launched by Neil Storey:

“Jack the Ripper could be connected to Bram Stoker’s fictional horror character Dracula, according to a new theory emerging. Suggestions have been made that Dracula is more about the Whitechapel Murders of 1888, than a Transylvanian count in the old Austro-Hungarian empire. Historian Neil Storey explains the link to the Whitechapel Society’s next meeting on February 1.

“Storey explores how Stoker created Dracula out of the climate of fear that surrounded the Ripper murders,” the society’s secretary Jo Edgington explained. “Stoker may have known the Ripper personally and hid the clues to this terrible knowledge in his book published nine years later.” Storey provides the first British-based investigation into the sources used by Stoker and paints a portrait of his influences, friends and the London he knew in the late 19th century. He has gained unprecedented access to the archive of one of Stoker’s most respected friends, shedding new light on who he may have based Dracula on. His talk is set to reveal new insights into the links between Stoker’s fictitious creation and the most infamous killer of all time.”

Quoted from *The East London Advertiser* of 17 January 2014

Already in 2012, Storey presented his theories in *The Dracula Secrets: Jack the Ripper and the Darkest Sources of Bram Stoker* (The History Press). Drawing from the archive of Stoker’s friend Hall Caine, Storey proposes Francis Tumblety as the Ripper’s identity, without providing conclusive evidence, as I could read in various expert comments. As far as I could check, a connection between Bram Stoker, Valdimar Ásmundsson and the “Thames Mysteries” – fictitious or real – has never been proposed yet.

My further publications:

For interested readers, I refer to my following publications. PDF versions of my articles can be emailed on request. Please feel free to contact me at deroos@dractravel.com.

- *Castle Dracula – Its Exact Location reconstructed from Stoker’s Novel, his Research Notes and Contemporary Maps*. Published 7 Febr. 2012 by Linköping University Electronic Press, Sweden.
- *Bram Stoker’s Vampire Trap – Vlad the Impaler and his Nameless Double*. Published 19 March 2012 by Linköping University Electronic Press, Sweden.
- *The Ultimate Dracula*. Munich: Moonlake Editions UG, April 2012, ISBN: 978-3943559002.
- *Heeft de Vampierbestrijder uit Bram Stoker’s Dracula echt bestaan? De Amsterdamse psychiater Albert van Renterghem en de hypnose*. Published in the Dutch literary magazine *De Parelduiker*, October 2012.
- *Fact & Fiction in Bram Stoker’s Dracula – Time for a New Paradigm*. Special 2013 Christmas issue of *Letter from Castle Dracula*, the official news bulletin of *The Transylvanian Society of Dracula*.
- *Dracula Bram Stoker Travel Guide* – planned travel book about locations related to the *Dracula* novel, together with Dacre Stoker. Project Website: www.dractravel.com.



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