

# The interwar Romanian translation of *Dracula*

A story of lost and found

Anca Simina Martin

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

Barbu Cioculescu, co-translator of the 1990 Romanian rendition of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* alongside Ileana Verzea, has claimed that their rendition marked the Romanian audience's first interaction with Stoker's *magnum opus*. In 2005 and 2009, however, scholarly articles surfaced positing the existence of an overlooked interwar translation. Nearly a decade later, this lost translation resurfaced through the efforts of a minor publishing house, which published it in book-length form in 2023. Serialized between 1928 and 1929, this newly rediscovered rendition, authored by Romanian poet and prose writer Ion Gorun, stands among the earliest ten translations internationally, predating the novel's publication in Ireland, Stoker's homeland, by half a decade. This study explores the rediscovery and peculiarities of Gorun's rendition, concurrently examining the socio-historical milieu surrounding its original release and elucidating the factors contributing to its century-long elusiveness. Furthermore, the study shows that, despite promoting Stoker's novel as being set in Transylvania, Gorun's translation tends to de-exoticize the Irish writer's portrayal of the region, either for fear of censorship or to circumvent confusion and disapproval among the local audience.

**Keywords:** Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, interwar, Romania, translation, vampire

## Introduction

In late 1920s Romania, when Ion Gorun published what is, to current knowledge, the first translation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* into Romanian, the country was experiencing an unprecedented influx of cultural imports featuring vampires, partly due to the spread of cinema. In fact, this medium facilitated the Romanian public's first indirect encounter with Stoker's Count through F.W. Murnau's unauthorized adaptation of *Nosferatu* (1922). However, this movie failed to spark

interest in the novel, whose translation, produced by Ion Gorun, was serialized in the magazine *Gazeta noastră ilustrată* [Our illustrated gazette] a few years later, in 1928–29. Consequently, the translation fell into oblivion for almost a century.

Its recent (re)discovery, closely followed by republication in book-length format, testifies that Dracula studies, and especially research into the translations of the novel, is an ever-fruitful field, with new translations and adaptations being routinely unearthed, studied, and sometimes even published in English. In 2016, for instance, Hans Corneel de Roos (2016) discovered the 1898 Hungarian version of *Dracula*, the first-ever translation and serialization of the novel. That same year, Rickard Berghorn (de Roos 2017, 135) reported to have found an extended Swedish adaptation of the novel, originally published in 1899–1900 and translated into English as *Powers of Darkness: The Unique Version of Dracula* (2022). In more cases than one, these are collaborative endeavors, either indirect or direct, between Dracula researchers or with help from outside vampire studies: de Roos' (2016) research into the Hungarian serialized *Dracula* was informed by a 2013 interview with Budapest-based Professor Jenő Farkas and Italian book hunter Simone Berni, author of *Dracula by Bram Stoker: The Mystery of the Early Editions* (2016). Similarly, Berni's (2021, 51) research into the Russian editions of *Dracula* was based in part on communication with Ekaterina Kukhto, an antiquarian bookseller in Moscow.

The (re)discovery of the interwar translation of *Dracula* into Romanian was no different and no less impressive. More specifically, it relied, on the one hand, on my 2021 revisit of earlier leads provided by historian Lucian Boia in 2005 and geographer Duncan Light in 2009 and, on the other hand, on the invaluable contribution of book collectors and hunters. This article sets out to explore this story of lost and found while offering an account of the omissions and alterations Gorun brought to Stoker's text in hopes of understanding how and why the Irish author's representation of Transylvania changes in translation.

## Vampire fiction in Romania before the interwar translation of *Dracula*

To understand why Ion Gorun's translation of *Dracula* remained forgotten for almost a century, it is important to clarify Romania's relationship with the vampire trope promoted by the novel. In a recent article (Martin 2023c, 21), I show that the country, whose literary links with the myth predate Bram Stoker's 1897 *Dracula*,<sup>1</sup> is, "in fact, neither its originator nor its innovator," owing much in this

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1. In Elizabeth Miller's words, "[a]lthough, before *Dracula*, most literary vampires were not connected with Transylvania or the Carpathians, there were notable exceptions. A collection of supernatural tales by Alexander Dumas (père), *Les Mille et un Fantomes* (1849), includes a

respect to France and Germany, whose cultures served as inspiration for the then-fledgling Romanian society. Specifically, the word “vampire” was borrowed from the French language in 1839 through a rendition of Victor Hugo’s ballad “La ronde du Sabbat” (Lovinescu 1913, 96). Additionally, the most famous iteration of the term in Romanian literature, the humorous blunder on “vampire” in I.L. Caragiale’s 1885 comedy *O scrisoare pierdută* [The lost letter] (1956, 17), draws on the metaphor of the vampire–exploiter,<sup>2</sup> which features in the works of Karl Marx (1929, 232), one of the period’s most prominent German thinkers.

With the spread of cinema in the 1920s, the semantic dimension of the word would expand to include the supernatural signified, which, when Caragiale published his play, was “foreign to Romanians in Transylvania” (Densușianu 1868, 450). This development coincided with the Romanian public’s first indirect encounter with Stoker’s *Dracula*, F.W. Murnau’s unauthorized adaptation *Nosferatu* (1922), which was explicitly advertised as being based on the Irish author’s prose fiction (Anonymous 1922). However, “[t]he period’s newspapers do not note any notable critical reactions to the movie, [...] yet the second to last advertorial [...] portrays it as a box-office success, which was brought back in another Bucharest cinema theater ‘by popular demand’ and ‘for a few days only,’ without any mention of the source material” (Martin 2023c, 19). This, I suspect, was because Stoker’s widow, then involved in a copyright infringement suit with the movie’s production company, learned of illegal screenings in Budapest and was considering “[pursuing] the receiver of Prana’s assets and liabilities rather than the offending officers of Prana itself” (Skal 2004, 207).

However, the trope of the supernatural vampire appears to have been influential enough to usher in a cascade of other more successful productions, such as the staging of Hans Müller-Einigen’s *Der Vampir oder die Gejagten* [The vampire or the haunted] (1923), directed in 1925 by a disciple of Max Reinhardt’s, which received various accolades. Another example is Heinrich August Marschner’s *Der Vampyr* [The vampire] (1828), an opera popular in 1927 which was indirectly inspired by John Polidori’s “The Vampyre,” one of the first English-language works to inform the modern trope of the vampire (Martin 2023c, 19). These are, however, exceptions to the rule; by then, a third meaning of the word “vampire” had come to dominate popular culture, both at home and abroad: the vampiric

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story about a vampire who haunts the Carpathians. [...] In “The Mysterious Stranger” (anonymous 1860), a vampire Count terrorizes a family in this area. The best-known work may be Jules Verne’s romantic adventure, *The Castle of the Carpathians* (1892)” (2011, 168).

2. Caragiale might have learned of this metaphor from his friend, Romanian Marxist thinker Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea. However, in “The Trope of the Vampire” (Martin 2023c, 17–18), I show that the association had already been used in literature and quite popularly so by the time Caragiale published his play.

*femme fatale*. In fact, Fred Niblo *The Temptress* (1926), distributed in Romania as *Femeia vampir* [The vampire woman], was so popular that it ran in the country's theaters until 1929, with Greta Garbo, who played the title character, inspiring *Greta Garbo* (1932), a novel by Romanian canon writer Cezar Petrescu telling the story of an aspiring vampire-like seductress (Martin 2023c, 19, 23).

During this stage in the development of the trope – which saw the myth transcending the Gothic formula – the Christmas issue of the magazine *Gazeta noastră ilustrată* [Our illustrated gazette], published on December 21, 1928, inaugurated the serialization of the first Romanian rendition of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Translated by writer and poet Ion Gorun (1863–1929), the book was advertised as “the novel of a vampire set in Romania” (*Dracula* 1928), but despite this marketing strategy, the rendition received little, if any, attention in the period's newspapers. Consequently, by the twenty-first century, the rendition had faded into obscurity, with some academic articles of the early 2000s (Boia 2005; Light 2009) arguing that it was either lost or the object of a collective false memory.

In March 2023, however, almost a century after the release of Gorun's translation, Dezarticulat, a small publishing house in Bucharest, republished the rendition in book-length format. This interwar translation, whose preface I signed, is among the earliest ten published internationally, predating the novel's release in Stoker's native Ireland by five years (Martin 2023b, 3). Its (re)discovery not only invalidates the theory that Romania's first direct encounter with Stoker's *magnum opus* occurred as late as 1990 with Barbu Cioculescu and Ileana Verzea's translation, but also offers insight into how the newly unified Romania of the 1920s approached works that portrayed Transylvania, a region then recently reclaimed after centuries of foreign rule, in an unflattering light.

## A review of the research into the interwar Romanian *Dracula's* whereabouts

Perhaps the first study to mention the existence of an interwar rendition of the novel into Romanian belongs to Romanian historian Lucian Boia, who published in 2005 the article “*Dracula, version roumaine*” in a collective volume in France. In the essay, Boia refers to “a rendition [of the novel] from 1928–1929” entitled *Dracula, romanul unui vampir* [Dracula, a vampire's novel], which was serialized in a medium-circulation magazine,<sup>3</sup> whose title he identifies in a footnote as *Gazeta noastră* [Our gazette] (Boia 2005, 22). The statement, though of little importance in the context of his article, nevertheless proposed a hypothesis which

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3. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

should have sent shockwaves among scholars at home and abroad; if Boia is right – they ought to have asked themselves – not only would his statement challenge the widely accepted notion that there was nearly a century-long gap between *Dracula*'s inaugural edition (1897) and the Cioculescu-Verzea Romanian translation (1990), but it would also mean that the interwar version mentioned by Boia is among the first ten published since the original, predating the publication of *Dracula* in Stoker's native Ireland by half a decade. However, the implications of Boia's claim have not generated any notable attention, at least not from the minimal clues provided by the Romanian historian: Boia does not mention either the issues in which the translation appeared or its translator.

The hypothesis of an interwar translation gained traction, however, with Duncan Light's "When Was *Dracula* First Translated into Romanian?," an article published four years later, in 2009. There, the British geographer, best known for his research into *Dracula* tourism in Romania, makes no reference to either Boia's essay or *Gazeta noastră*; in his study, Light introduces other leads regarding a possible interwar version, drawing on two testimonies and a footnote from a Romanian author. In an interview with the British geographer, Alexandru Misiuga, former head of the Bistrița-Năsăud County Tourist Office and a key figure in establishing the *Dracula* brand during communism, revealed that he had once come across a 1923 rendition of the novel by Gorun. A second reference to Gorun in relation to *Dracula* appears, Light explains, in an annotation made by Romanian historian Emil Stoian to his *Vlad Țepeș: Mit și realitate istorică* [Vlad the Impaler: Myth and historical reality]. According to the monograph's citation system, Stoian seems to refer there to an article by Gorun entitled "*Dracula*, romanul unui vampir de scriitorul englez Bram Stoker" [*Dracula*, a vampire's novel by the English writer Bram Stoker] and published in 1928 in *Revista noastră ilustrată* [Our illustrated magazine] (Light 2009, 43).

In short, Light's witness accounts and sources intersect at a single point: the identity of the translator. If the interwar translation indeed existed, it is highly likely that Romanian poet, prose writer, translator, and journalist Alexandru I. Hodoș, known by the pen name Ion Gorun, was its author. As for publication that serialized it, Light's sources point to two titles – *Revista noastră ilustrată* and *Realitatea ilustrată* [The illustrated reality] – with the caveat that the former does not refer to any magazines in the interwar period, and in the latter, Light explains, he had not discovered any excerpts from Stoker's *Dracula* (Light 2009, 43). This, it seems, was not (only) due to the reasons cited by the British researcher – the absence of *Realitatea ilustrată* from the archives of the largest Romanian libraries or the lack of public access to the collection, in many cases incomplete (Light 2009, 43) – but also to the fact that Light had not explored the lead offered by Boia four years earlier.

In a recent article (Martin 2021, 174), I show that the only interwar magazine to check all the boxes outlined by Boia – published in Bucharest and having the words “gazeta noastră” in the title – was, in fact, *Gazeta noastră ilustrată*, which sounds extremely similar to the two publications mentioned by Light’s sources. In other words, it is likely that the magazine indicated by Stoian in 1989 and the one identified by Boia almost fifteen years later are one and the same. This hypothesis is even more plausible as both Stoian and Boia cite the publication in the context of a similarly titled contribution – “*Dracula*, romanul unui vampir de scriitorul englez Bram Stoker” [*Dracula*, a vampire’s novel by the English writer Bram Stoker] in the former’s case and *Dracula, romanul unui vampir* in the latter’s – published in the same year, 1928.

### **A step closer to finding the interwar Romanian *Dracula*: The bound collection of facsimiles**

The hypothesis was to be partially confirmed after the publication of my 2021 article, when Valentin Gheonea, with whom I corresponded on this matter, gifted me a bound collection of facsimiles after *Dracula, romanul unui vampir de scriitorul englez Bram Stoker în românește de Ion Gorun* [*Dracula*, a vampire’s novel by the English writer Bram Stoker, translated into Romanian by Ion Gorun]. However, the volume, which the Romanian researcher had received from a book collector, exhibits some differences in relation to my hypothesis; specifically, the facsimiles do not mention the publication in which the rendition appeared and the handwritten annotations on the frontispiece do not identify *Gazeta noastră ilustrată* as the source magazine, but the publishing house Ig. Hertz. Moreover, according to the same notes, the publication year was not 1928 but 1929.

In other words, if these handwritten annotations are accurate, it means that the interwar translation into Romanian – one of the “Holy Grails” of Stoker studies – may have been published as a standalone edition rather than serialized in a magazine. Indeed, Ig. Hertz published book-length renditions, yet if that were the case for Gorun’s version of *Dracula*, it would be impossible to account for why some of the illustrations in the bound collection of facsimiles are numbered in a way that does not narratively coincide with the thirty-three installments of the translation. The only plausible explanation is that the rendition was released in a magazine, likely published under the imprint of Ig. Hertz: according to *Publicațiile periodice românești* [The Romanian Periodicals] (Desa et al. 2003, 439), *Gazeta noastră ilustrată*, entitled *Gazeta noastră* [Our gazette] until the sixteenth issue of 1928, was the perfect candidate.

Confirmation came in the autumn of 2022 when the team at the publishing house Dezarticulat, who would republish Gorun's translation in a book-length format, provided me with scans of the same translation, which had, in turn, been sent to them by a book hunter. Along with the digital copies also came a complete list of the *Gazeta noastră ilustrată* issues in which the thirty-three installments of Gorun's rendition were originally released. In the following months, the publishing house digitized the scans, restored the original illustrations, and re-released the translation in book-length format in late March 2023.

### Why was the interwar Romanian translation of *Dracula* “lost”?

How could the existence of Gorun's rendition have been forgotten until a year ago? Why is it not mentioned in the 2005 *Dicționarul cronologic al romanului tradus în România* [The chronological dictionary of the novels translated in Romania]? And why does Boia refer to the publication by its former title, *Gazeta noastră*, when the first installment of the translation was released after the magazine was renamed *Gazeta noastră ilustrată*? The answer to the first question can be found in the *Digitheca Arcanum* online database and a subsequent study by Duncan Light. First, of the roughly 4,000 Romanian journals and newspapers compiled by *Arcanum* thus far, only two publications mention the interwar rendition. Secondly, in his 2012 *The Dracula Dilemma: Tourism, Identity and the State in Romania* (75), Light recounts how “Misiuga himself often told the story of how he used personal contacts in Bucharest to gain access to a Romanian translation of *Dracula* dating from 1923 which was kept ‘under index’ (that is, restricted access) in a Bucharest library.” As for the second question, the explanation lies in the fact that the editors of *Dicționarul cronologic* did not have access to the 2017 edition of *Dicționarul general al literaturii române* [The general dictionary of Romanian language], where it is noted that “numerous texts rendered [by Gorun] from Heinrich Heine, Petőfi Sándor, Jókai Mór, Prosper Mérimée, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Carmen Sylva, [and] *Bram Stoker* exist in various magazines” (Stancu 2017, 1058, emphasis mine).

By far the most surprising answer, however, is the one that refers to the third question, which complements all the other previous replies. In the second volume of *Bibliografia relațiilor literaturii române cu literaturile străine în periodice (1919–1944)* [The bibliography of the relations of Romanian literature with foreign literatures in periodicals], under the section devoted to English literature, the 4530th entry reads: “Stoker, Bram. *Dracula. Romanul unui vampir*. — GN, I (1928), nos. 24–25; II (1929), nos. 26–55. Translation by Ion Gorun” (Brezuleanu et al. 1999, 184). Put differently, the interwar Romanian rendition of *Dracula*,

which Stoker researchers had been searching for all this time, was hiding in plain sight, in an index published in 1999. The entry in *Bibliografia* also explains the anachronistic reference in Boia's 2005 article; according to an appendix entitled "List of abbreviations of the indexed periodicals," the abbreviation "GN" refers to *Gazeta noastră* (Brezuleanu et al. 1999, 10), an error which the Romanian historian reproduced in his study. Yet *Bibliografia* reveals something else as well, as does the almost two-decades-long quest for (re)discovering the interwar Romanian translation *Dracula*. In Skal's words,

Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula* presents one of the most intriguing puzzles in literary history, a book that has attained the status of a minor classic on the basis of its stubborn longevity [...] more than on technical or narrative achievement. Stoker was not an innovator or a stylist of any distinction [...] and yet *Dracula* remains among the most widely read novels of the late nineteenth century. It has almost never been out of print. A span of centuries is no mean feat for an icon of popular culture, especially for one consistently ignored or denigrated by "respectable" critical authorities. Stoker's name does not appear in most textbooks of Victorian literature, the stage version is almost never mentioned in theatre surveys. [...] Yet, *Dracula* persists. [...] As *Dracula* himself notes, in Stoker's novel, "You think to baffle me. [...] My revenge has just begun! I spread it over centuries, and time is on my side." He might as well have been addressing his critics as any fictional enemies. (2004, 26–8)

Or his scholars, I might add. Far from being as surprising a case as the Swedish<sup>4</sup> or Icelandic<sup>5</sup> adaptations, the interwar rendition of *Dracula* into Romanian and,

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4. The serialized Icelandic version, discussed in the following footnote, was preceded by another in Swedish with the same title, *Mörkrets Makter* [Powers of darkness], and released in installments in two publications with the same editor-in-chief: *Dagen* from June 1899 to February 1900 and *Aftonbladets Halfvecko-Upplaga* between August 1899 and March 1900. The two publications printed the same version up to the escape of Harker's counterpart from the castle; from this point onward, *Aftonbladets* abbreviates what was published in *Dagen* and it is believed to have inspired the Icelandic version. The extended version of the Swedish adaptation in *Dagen* is twice as long as Stoker's novel and contains scenes or characters not found in the original, let alone in the abbreviated version from *Aftonbladets*. Notable differences in the extended Swedish adaptation – translated into English as *Powers of Darkness: The Unique Version of Dracula* (2022) by Rickard Berghorn – include the death of a factory worker (probably at the hands of the vampire Count) and references to English astronomer John F.W. Herschel or Edgar Allan Poe's last complete poem, "Annabel Lee." For a detailed analysis of the Swedish adaptations, see Hans Corneel de Roos' 2021, "*Mörkrets Makter's* Mini-Mysteries."

5. Long considered the first translation of *Dracula*, Valdimar Ásmundsson's *Makt Myrkranna* [Powers of darkness] is, in fact, an Icelandic adaptation of Stoker's novel. Initially serialized in 1900 and 1901, and published in a magazine managed by the translator, this adaptation was released in book-length format in 1901, with a preface claiming to have been written by Stoker



above all, its (re)discovery, are nevertheless part of a fascinating chapter in the history of Stoker's cult classic. On the same page, one finds two other inaugural translations of the novel. First, there is the Hungarian version, identified by scholar Jenő Farkas in 2010 as the earliest known translation of *Dracula*, not only in Europe or in Austro-Hungary but worldwide. In 1898, less than a year after the 1897 original, the Hungarian public had access to not one but two different formats of the same translation: one serialized, discovered in 2016 by Hans Corneel de Roos (2016), and another in book-length format, which Italian book collector Simone Berni had unearthed two years prior in the National Library of Budapest (2016,31). Secondly, there is the first Spanish-language version, serialized in 1935 and published in the "La Novela Aventura" collection of Hymosa Press. The Spanish rendition, cataloged by neither the National Library of Spain nor the Library of Catalonia, lacks information about its author. However, it is believed to have been prompted by the 1931 release of Tod Browning's *Dracula*, in which Bela Lugosi – born in Lugoj, then part of Transylvania – plays the Count (González Peláez 2018).

But is there any connection between the Romanian, Hungarian, and Spanish versions, apart from the fact that all three represent the novel's first encounter with these languages? I believe the answer is yes. Specifically, they exemplify a phenomenon that is far from isolated: the history of a cult classic such as Stoker's *Dracula*, initially received as pulp fiction, is almost as difficult to trace back at the center as it is in the (semi)peripheries, despite the often more advanced tools available to the former (digitized collections of works, exhaustive databases, access to the latest studies, etc.). However, the story of the (re)discovery of the first Romanian translation of *Dracula* may not have concluded here.

In a recent article (Martin 2021,186), I briefly mention that an incomplete translation of the novel, "adapted" into Romanian in 1990 by a group of no less than four editors and published by A.R. Cugetarea in Bucharest, exhibits orthographic peculiarities associated with a much earlier version, predating the stabilization of Romanian spelling. Could this be another interwar version – or perhaps even an older one – or is it a version that truly dates from 1990 but did

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himself in 1898, just a year after *Dracula* was published. In addition to purportedly referencing the real-life crime case of the "Thames Torso Murders" (1887–89) in both the preface and the book, the Icelandic version – translated into English as *Powers of Darkness: The Lost Version of Dracula* (2017) by Hans Corneel de Roos – introduces significant changes to the original plot: the characters' names are altered, Tómas/Harker's stay in Transylvania makes up about 80% of the novel, the vampire count has a deaf-mute housekeeper, etc. For a more in-depth discussion of the Icelandic adaptation, see Hans Corneel de Roos's 2014, "Makt Myrkranna: Mother of All Dracula Modifications?"

not enjoy careful proofreading? For now, the question remains open, providing the opportunity to further explore the rendition at hand.

### A translational analysis of Ion Gorun's interwar Romanian *Dracula*

If Stoker's abridged version loses 15% of the novel, the omissions made by Gorun and/or his editors exceed 20%.<sup>6</sup> In what follows, I will briefly look at those iconic scenes and references from *Dracula* that disappear from both the 1901 edition and Gorun's rendition, and I will also refer to a selection of key scenes from the novel which are missing only from the interwar translation. There is no biographical or textual evidence to suggest that Gorun had access to the abridged edition, but even so, a review of these shared omissions might be interesting, not only because it would reveal elements that the author himself and Gorun/his editor(s) alike considered dispensable, but also because it can provide a starting point for further discussions of the motivations behind these interventions.

In so doing, I will follow the structure proposed by Elizabeth Miller in "Shape-shifting *Dracula*: The Abridged Edition of 1901" (2015) and focus first on those scenes that the scholar believes do not affect the value of the shortened edition. Both the 1901 edition of the novel and Gorun's rendition lose, for example, Van Helsing's references to the Count's "child brain" (Stoker 1996, 263–264) and Quincey Morris's head "in plane with the horizon" (Stoker 1996, 257). While these mentions are not of much narrative value according to Miller, others "[lessen] the richness of the text by eliminating details about contemporary Victorian England" (2005, 40). Examples of such references include Dracula's intention to hire more lawyers in England (Stoker 1996, 36) and the legal ramifications of the dead sailor's hand at *Demeter's* helm (Stoker 1996, 79), which are missing from both the 1901 edition and Gorun's translation. These omissions are all the more dramatic as they also affect other real-life mentions such as those of English actress Ellen Terry (Stoker 1996, 160) and American writer Mark Twain (Stoker 1996, 172) or the references to Danish author Hans Christian Andersen (Stoker 1996, 295) and English painter Joseph M.W. Turner (Stoker 1996, 75).<sup>7</sup>

Some of the literary allusions in the original novel also vanish from both the abridged edition and Gorun's translation, which impacts the intertextuality of

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6. Unrounded, the percentage would be 22.4%. In calculating it, I only considered the sentences that were entirely omitted. If I had also considered individual words or parts of sentences, the percentage would have been significantly higher.

7. The references to Twain and Turner disappear from Gorun's version only.

the texts (Miller 2015, 40). For instance, references to Gottfried A. Bürger's poem "Lenore" (Stoker 1996, 17) and Samuel T. Coleridge (Stoker 1996, 76) are missing, as is the mention of the Shakespearean character Malvolio (Stoker 1996, 235). Quotations are also eliminated, with those from Roman historian Tacitus (Stoker 1996, 275), Archimedes (Stoker 1996, 296), and Lord Byron's *Don Juan* (Stoker 1996, 174) disappearing from both texts. Gorun, however, goes even further in his removing cultural references from *Dracula*. Scenes such as the one in which Lucy compares herself to Shakespeare's Ophelia (Stoker 1996, 122), which portrays the character as having more than an elementary education, are also eliminated.

The 1901 abridged edition and Gorun's version similarly omit references to prominent figures in the field of science – Martin Charcot, the French neurologist admired by both Van Helsing and Seward for his research on hypnosis (Stoker 1996, 171) – with the latter, however, featuring more such losses. They include, for instance, mentions of Scottish neurologist David Ferrier and English physiologist James Burdon-Sanderson (Stoker 1996, 71), as well as references to Max Nordau's and Cesare Lombroso's studies (Stoker 1996, 296). The final two are particularly significant since they occur in a context where Mina reveals herself as cultured enough to be able to analyze the vampire's psyche according to the period's latest research. In other cases, scientific references are simplified, which affects the depth of characters who are otherwise well-defined. For instance, Renfield's mention of Van Helsing's studies on the "continuous evolution of brain-matter" (Stoker 1996, 215) is ambiguated as "original procedure" in Gorun's version (2023, 275). Although Stoker does not rely on any specific medical discoveries of his time in this context, the reference contributes significantly to the narrative: it is probably the only allusion to Van Helsing's scientific endeavors in the novel, and the fact that it comes from Renfield reveals that the latter, despite his mental frailty, is aware not only of the Dutch scientist's work but also of the medical innovations in Stoker's universe. Another significant reference that disappears from the Romanian rendition is Renfield's mention of American President James Monroe's 1823 doctrine, whereby the United States pledged to prevent European powers from controlling nations in the Western Hemisphere. When Renfield compares it to a "political fable" (Stoker 1996, 215), he showcases his astute political observation skills, as enforcing such a commitment in the geographical context of the Americas would have been challenging for the United States without a formidable navy.

Other lines adding depth to the novel's characters, which vanish from Gorun's translation, involve Jonathan Harker. Although made oblivious in the rendition to the Count's curious plans and lifestyle – Harker neither comments on Dracula's annotations on the map for Carfax, Exeter, and Whitby (Stoker 1996, 29) nor wonders if he is alone in the castle with the Count (Stoker 1996, 30) – the English

solicitor experiences nevertheless an existential crisis during his stay in Transylvania, which comes at loggerheads with the original scene. Specifically, when pondering on the meaning of the cross received from the hotelier, he does it, according to Nina Auerbach and Skal's annotations for *Dracula*, "in terms characteristic of nineteenth-century secularism" (Stoker 1996, 33). Conversely, in the Romanian translation, his meditation points out his shifting perspective on the object from a form of idolatry to a source of solace (Gorun, 2023, 54).

Other such episodes that contribute to character development are missing from both the abridged edition and Gorun's rendition. For instance, Van Helsing's remark about Renfield – "Perhaps I may gain more knowledge out of the folly of this madman than I shall from the teaching of the most wise" (Stoker 1996, 225) – is missing from both versions, which further diminishes the complexity of Dr. Seward's special patient (Miller 2015, 44). As for Mina Harker, the two editions drop two of the lines that place her on a lower rung in relation to the male characters: neither in the 1901 edition nor in Gorun's translation does she fear being seen barefoot (Stoker 1996, 89), and she no longer goes to bed "when the men had gone, simply because they had told [her] to" (Stoker 1996, 226). However, unlike the abridged edition, Gorun's rendition preserves most of the instances of controversial behavior identified by Miller as being absent from the 1901 version (2015, 47–8). The only exceptions are Harker's remark about Transylvanian women "[looking] pretty, except when you got near them" (Stoker 1996, 11) and Seward's offer to forge Renfield's death certificate (Stoker 1996, 253), both of which are missing from Gorun's rendition.

"Count Dracula, too, is affected" by the omissions from the two versions of *Dracula* (Miller 2015, 45). From both the abridged edition and Gorun's rendition, a passage with Shakespearean undertones is missing – "The warlike days are over. Blood is too precious a thing in these days of dishonourable peace; and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told" (Stoker 1996, 35). Additionally, the Count no longer explains to Harker the meaning of the mysterious "blue flame" that the Englishman had witnessed on his way to the castle (Stoker 1996, 27). Fragments accounting for the Count's association with "the strangeness of the geologic and chemical world" (Stoker 1996, 294) are largely absent as well, as are the passages suggesting that Van Helsing holds some appreciation for the Count, describing him as "in life a most wonderful man. Soldier, statesman, alchemist—which latter was the highest development of the science knowledge of his time. He had a mighty brain, a learning beyond compare, and a heart that knew no fear and no remorse" (Stoker 1996, 263). Unlike in the 1901 edition, scenes, lines, or images commonly present in movie adaptations of the novel are missing from Gorun's translation. These include the description of the Count's hair-covered palms (Stoker 1996, 24), the comparison of howling wolves to the "music" of the "children of the night," the townspeople's inability to comprehend

“the feelings of the hunter” (Stoker 1996, 24), the description of his diverse library (Stoker 1996, 25), the fear of being perceived as a foreigner in London and the need to practice his English (Stoker 1996, 26), as well as Dracula’s iconic monologue on his ancestry and the history of Transylvania (Stoker 1996, 33–5).

However, Gorun’s rendition also removes scenes that, although sometimes absent from motion pictures based on the novel, offer new ways of interpreting the text. One such episode is the one in which Quincey Morris undergoes a blood transfusion in the hope of saving Lucy. Specifically, the interwar version pauses the original text before the moment when Morris offers to take part in the procedure and resumes it when he asks Seward how long Lucy has been receiving this treatment. On the one hand, it might seem that this is not a major omission – after all, the reader is made aware that, up to that point, Lucy had received transfusions from three other characters – but on the other hand, the procedure applied to Morris is unlike all the previous others. In Italian critic Franco Moretti’s view, Lucy dies shortly after Morris’s blood is administered is one of the many signs that Morris is in cahoots with the Count:

Nobody suspects when Morris, shortly afterwards, tells the story of his mare, sucked dry of blood in the Pampas [...] by ‘one of those big bats that they call vampires’. [...] Nobody, finally, suspects when, in the course of the meeting to plan the vampire hunt, Morris leaves the room to take a shot – missing, naturally – at the big bat on the window-ledge listening to the preparations; or when, after Dracula bursts into the household, Morris hides among the trees, the only effect of which is that he loses sight of Dracula and invites the others to call off the hunt for the night. (1988, 95)

Although present in the interwar version (Gorun 2023, 302), the final episode in Moretti’s enumeration loses its potential to reveal a supposed connection between the two because Gorun omits perhaps the most telling similarity between the Count and Morris: though exponents of diametrically opposed Worlds, they are nevertheless the only characters for whom the hunt is not only second nature but also the cause of their demise (Stoker 1996, 24, 282).

In other cases, the interwar translation omits whole parts of the novel:<sup>8</sup> this is the case, for example, with Mina’s diary entries for October 1 and 2 – the scene in which the Count visits her for the first time in the form of a “pillar of cloud” with “red [eyes]” (Stoker 1996, 227), an apparition Mina attributes to a nightmare. Another part that disappears is John Seward’s diary entry dated October 1, in

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8. What follows is not an exhaustive list of all the scenes that disappear completely or almost entirely from Gorun’s translation. I have chosen to mention only those that contain scenes that are relevant from a narrative point of view or in terms of nuancing the novel’s characters.

which Renfield makes the clearest confession of being under Dracula's control, though he avoids the words "blood" or "drink" (Stoker 1996, 214–8). Another omission affects Seward's diary entry for October 5, in which he and Van Helsing note the first signs of "the Vampire's baptism of blood" to which the Count had subjected Mina (Stoker 1996, 280). Lost is also Seward's diary entry dated October 28, when Van Helsing realizes that Dracula gave Mina wrong information telepathically in order to mislead them (Stoker 1996, 293–8). Other noteworthy deletions involve important scenes from Mina's October 30 diary entry, such as the ones in which the character, despite her frail health, studies the maps, piecing together all the available data and realizing that the Count's most likely route to the castle is on the nearby Siret river (Stoker 1996, 303–6). Missing from Gorun's translations are also Mina's diary entries dated October 1 and 2, which feature, among others, her remarks about the Count's "lovely country" and its "brave and strong," yet "very, very superstitious" people (Stoker 1996, 312).

Other interventions Gorun makes in the text remain, however, visible in the final version of his rendition. For instance, after omitting the episode in which Morris in Stoker's original text would have become the fourth donor (Stoker 1996, 138), Morris from Gorun's translation still states that Lucy

*a primit [...] sângele a patru bărbați puternici.*  
"received the blood of four strong men." (Gorun 2023, 177)

In other contexts, the Romanian translator vacillates between faithfulness and reinterpretation. When Mina is forced to drink blood from Dracula's chest wound (Stoker 1996, 247), Gorun reverses the roles:

*Cu mâna stângă prinsese mâinile d-nei Mina și le ținea cu brațul îndepărtat de trup; cu dreapta îi cuprinsese ceafa și-și apăsa fața de pieptul ei.*  
"With his left hand, he grasped Mrs. Mina's hands and held them away from her body; with his right hand, he grabbed the back of her head and pressed his face to her chest." (Gorun 2023, 301)

This results in a double error: the scene does not align with the otherwise faithful illustration on the same page, and Stoker's comparison – "The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink" (Stoker 1996, 247) – loses its coherence in Gorun's translation. A few paragraphs later, when Seward recounts the episode to Harker, the translator reproduces the same image:

*[Seward] îi povestii cum [...] [contele] și-a apăsat gura pe rana ei dela piept.*  
"[Seward] recounted how the Count pressed his mouth on her chest wound." (Gorun 2023, 304)

However, the source-text version of the event is preserved when Mina is the one who reconstructs the events (Stoker 1996, 252):

*Își sfășie cămașa, și [...] desfăcu o venă depe piept. Când sângele începu să stropească, îmi luă amândouă mâinile într'una și mi le ținu strâns, pecând cu cealaltă îmi prinse ceafa și-mi apăsă gura pe rană, încât sau trebuia să mă înec sau să înghit.*

“He tore his shirt and opened a vein in his chest. When the blood began to spurt out, he held both my hands tightly with one hand, while with the other he gripped the back of my head and pressed my mouth to the wound, so that I had no choice but to either choke or swallow.” (Gorun 2023, 307)

It is challenging to determine whether this is an instance of poor translation or negligent editing. However, in so doing, Gorun lost a scene with multiple interpretations, from the distortion of the Christian parable of the pelican piercing its breast to feed its young (Leatherdale 2011, 321), to the suggestion of suckling, or even fellatio (Craft 1996, 457–8). In the interwar rendition, this episode, which survives in Mina’s memory only, seems to transform into a false recollection, the product of a traumatic event.

### Transylvania without Transylvania in the interwar Romanian *Dracula*

However, the most evident omissions from both Stoker’s 1901 abridged edition and Gorun’s rendition involve the first three chapters. Both versions exclude Harker’s iconic remark on the transition from West to East, where he says that “[t]he impression [he] had was that [they] were leaving the West and entering the East” (Stoker 1996, 9). Additionally, the references to the local cuisine and the wine of Mediaș (Stoker 1996, 9, 10, 13), the historical details about Bistrița and observations about train delays (Stoker 1996, 11), the explanations regarding the state of infrastructure (Stoker 1996, 14–15), the remarks about the Czechs, Slovaks, and their carts specifically designed for rough roads, as well as Harker’s description of the Carpathians (Stoker 1996, 15), are all absent from both versions. As shown earlier, however, the omissions go even further in the interwar translation.

Harker’s preliminary research at the British Museum on the geography of Transylvania and the region’s “distinct nationalities” disappears (Stoker 1996, 9–10), as do his condescending comments on the “barbarian” appearance of the Slovaks and the hotelier’s dress, “of coloured stuff fitting almost too tight for modesty” (Stoker 1996, 11). Other omissions include the reluctance of the Bistrița hotelier and her husband to discuss the Count with Harker (Stoker 1996, 12), the hotelier’s placing a rosary around the Englishman’s neck (Stoker 1996, 13), and the

locals' polyglot allusions to werewolves and vampires (Stoker 1996, 13–14). Also gone are the description of *Mittel Land* and the mountaintop known as “God’s seat” and the remarks about the peasants prostrating themselves before shrines and the “painfully prevalent” goitre among the Czechs and Slovaks (Stoker 1996, 15). Missing from Gorun’s translation are also the driver’s offer to take Harker further to Bukovina with the other passengers and the subsequent tense exchange between him and the Count’s coachman/Dracula (Stoker 1996, 17). In fact, all that remains of the dialogue between the two is the coachman/Dracula’s urging the driver to be given the Englishman’s luggage (Gorun 2023, 44–5). Harker’s observations about the peculiar trajectory of the carriage that is supposed to take him to the castle, and the coachman/Dracula’s horse and wolf whispering abilities (Stoker 1996, 18, 20) also disappear, as do the references to the stones the “strange driver” placed “into some device” and the “optical effect” created by his ghostly figure (Stoker 1996, 19).

What could be a distinctive feature of the translations or adaptations of the novel for or in the peripheries, be they social – Stoker’s abridged edition (1901) for the “less sophisticated” British audience (Miller 2015, 39), released by the same publishing house as the original – or cultural and/or geographical – the case of Gorun’s translation in late 1920s Romania – are the omissions. In these two versions, the abbreviations involve precisely those scenes that bear witness to the author’s ethnographic research efforts regarding Transylvania. There is no textual evidence to suggest that Gorun had access to the abridged version; his rendition does not include the corrections made by Stoker in the 1901 edition. This, in turn, makes their disappearance from Gorun’s version even more striking, all the more as Harker’s observations about Transylvania are not missing from the 1898 Hungarian translation, which cannot be suspected of “exoticizing” intentions – Transylvania was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at that time – and which would have had a reason to abridge or “moderate” the Count’s unflattering description of the Magyars, who “claimed as kindred” (Stoker 1996, 34) Dracula’s fellow Szeklers only to eventually bind them under the “Hungarian yoke” (Stoker 1996, 36).

There is, however, circumstantial evidence to suggest that Gorun might have been influenced in eliminating these passages by the political circumstances of the 1920s. In December 1928, when the Christmas issue of *Gazeta noastră ilustrată* published the first three parts of his translation, the country commemorated a decade since the union between Transylvania and Romania. Perhaps Gorun aimed to eliminate the anachronistic, at times erroneous, and derogatory portrait that Stoker paints of the region to avoid harming the national sentiment, accentuated by this momentous event. For instance, *O cronologie a cenzurii în România* [A chronology of censorship in Romania] identifies an episode dated 26 January



1929, wherein, following an order from the Ministry of Interior, the Prefecture of Bistrița, a town in the former Austro-Hungarian province of Transylvania, was mandated to ensure that “no theatrical performance shall bring offense to national sentiment” (Petcu 2016, 227). However, this hypothesis fails to account for why Van Helsing in Gorun’s translation (2023, 271), like his counterpart in Stoker’s novel, identifies the Count as “that Voivode Dracula who earned his name fighting the Turks,” which likely evoked Vlad the Impaler in Romanian readers’ minds in a context where their ruler “is spoken of as a ‘wampyr’” (1996, 212).

Whether the product of censorship proper or a precaution on the translator’s – or his editors’ – part, it should, however, be noted that similar “advantageous” alterations appear in other translations of foreign texts featuring Transylvania, which were translated during pivotal moments in the region’s history. A case in point are the two 1897 Romanian translations of Jules Verne’s *Le château des Carpathes* (1892), which were similarly released a few months after the publication of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* in England, first in the then Austro-Hungarian Transylvania and then in Bucharest, the capital of Romania.

In a study published last year (Martin 2023a, 73–88), I show that the Transylvanian version of the novel, produced and prefaced by two members of the Memorandum movement – which advocated the rights of Transylvanian Romanians whose rights were jeopardized by the Hungarian administration, similarly effaces elements that do not support the idea that the French author was sympathetic toward the predicament of this community. As the preface to the Transylvanian translation suggests, that was no mean feat – the “translator was so fortunate and so free to change the Hungarian names with Romanian ones as it is [Romanian characters] who have them and, in so doing, the book looks as if it was written by a Romanian” (Dăianu 1897, X) – and contemporary reviews took due notice of the achievement, claiming that it “reads as if its famed author sought to appeal to us Romanians specifically” (Anonymous 1897). In fact, so resounding was the success of this translation that an article published in the eve of 1 December 1928 – which marked a decade since the Union of Transylvania with Romania – and a little over a month before Gorun’s rendition began to be serialized, wrote: “Jules Verne drew attention to us through *Le château des Carpathes* when the question of our nationality was brought before the entire world. Who can forget the immense joy of the previous generations when, amidst the period’s topical issues, [the novel] was released in our country, too. And in Transylvania of all places!” (Grigoraș 1928).

However, unlike the Transylvanian version of Verne’s novel, there is as yet no evidence that Gorun intended for his translation to read like a Stokerian tribute to the region; after all, when the translator omits to render Mina’s reference to the “very, very superstitious” people in the Count’s homeland, he also eliminates

her appreciative remarks regarding “the color and picturesqueness of the whole wild, beautiful country” (Stoker 1996, 311). Rather, Gorun’s rendition provides a representation of the region that is not only de-exoticized but also devoid of the elements that allowed for the Transylvanian version of *Le château des Carpathes* to be appropriated by the Memorandum Movement.

However, this is not to say that Gorun’s translation is implicitly more closely aligned with Transylvania’s socio-historical realities during the late 1800s, the period in which the plot is set. In the absence of Jonathan Harker’s colonial gaze and the “place myth”<sup>9</sup> popularized by Stoker in *Dracula*, Gorun’s depiction of Transylvania turns into a mere backdrop, with what remains of the region’s ethnography in the source text relegated to props. The beginning of the translation provides strong evidence in favor of this transformation: while Stoker’s nominal references to Transylvania are fully preserved in Gorun’s rendition, the first chapter, which focuses on Harker’s journey across the region, survives only to a limited extent, accounting for merely 35% of its source-text counterpart. Nevertheless, this degree of retention sufficed for the translation to be promoted as having been based on “the novel of a vampire set in Romania” (Anonymous 1928), a marketing ploy reiterated later when Tod Browning’s *Dracula* (1931) was advertised as starring the “great Transylvanian star” Bela Lugosi (Anonymous 1933).

## Conclusion

The (re)discovery of Ion Gorun’s 1928–29 translation of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, recently made available in a limited-run book-length edition, represents a significant milestone in *Dracula* studies. Its importance is not only symbolic — whether we like it or not, Romania, and particularly Transylvania, is closely associated with Stoker’s Count — but it also holds the potential to shed light on how Romania’s complex relationship with the bloodthirsty antagonist began. A 2020 public survey, whose findings were published three years prior to the re-emergence of Gorun’s translation, solicited opinions from respondents on why they believed Romania was reluctant to translate Stoker’s novel into Romanian (Voicu 2020). Four out of the six answers posted on the survey’s website attribute this hesitation to the novel’s potential to generate negative publicity for the region and Vlad the Impaler due to its perceived association between *Dracula*, Transylvania, and the Romanian voivode (Voicu 2020).

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9. Light explains in “Imaginative Geographies” that the Transylvania “place myth,” which emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century, associates the region with “the supernatural and with beliefs and practices that had all but disappeared from Western Europe” (2008, 9).

Yet, is this truly the reason why the novel failed to garner attention and, by extension, why Gorun's translation was almost forgotten? The answer, I believe, lies elsewhere. Jules Verne's *Le Château des Carpathes*, which similarly portrays a remote Transylvania haunted by vampires and inhabited by a terrorizing aristocrat, was praised by critics and enjoyed immense popularity. Unlike *Dracula*, however, Verne's work was authored by a writer who was well-liked among Romanian readers (Baghiu 2021, 94), and, more importantly, *Le château des Carpathes* lent itself more easily to positive interpretations of the region and its plight. Perhaps the fate of Gorun's translation – and that of Stoker's novel in Romania, for that matter – would have been different if *Dracula*'s portrayal of the region had resonated more positively with Romanian national sentiment.


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## Address for correspondence

Anca Simina Martin  
 Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu  
 Facultatea de Litere și Arte  
 Bulevardul Victoriei, nr. 5–7  
 Sibiu, 550024  
 Romania  
 anca.martin@ulbsibiu.ro  
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9274-3861>

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