



# *Letter from Castle Dracula*

*- the News Bulletin of The Transylvanian Society of Dracula*

**CONFERENCE SPECIAL**

**PLUS AN ESSAY ON "CAPTAIN VAMPIRE"**



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“Good Lady Ducayne” by Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1896) [[GoogleBooks](#)] [[University of Minnesota Duluth](#)] (not explicitly about vampires, although it does concern the harvesting of a victim’s blood)  
“The Vampire of Croglin Grange” by Augustus Hare (1896) [[Project Gutenberg](#)] [[Lesvampires.org](#)] [[National Wildlife Foundation](#) - PDF]  
“Phorfor” by Matthew Phipps Shiel (1896) [[GoogleBooks](#)]

## **APPENDIX II: Some pre-1897 novels and stage plays dealing with mesmerism, the abuse of hypnosis or crimes committed by persons with a double consciousness:**

1870: Charles Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (unfinished)  
1880: William Mintorn, *Le somnambule*  
1885: Charles Richet (Charles Epeyre), *Possession*  
1886: Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*  
1887: Charles Richet (Charles Epeyre), *Sœur Marthe*  
1888: Kate Marion Cordeux (Daniel Dormer), *The Mesmerist’s Secret*  
1893: Paul Lindau, *Der Andere*, stage play  
1893: Henri de Gorsse & Louis Forest, *Le procureur Hallers*, stage play, based on the play by Lindau  
1889: Violet Fane, *The Story of Helen Davenant*  
1894: George du Maurier, *Trilby*

## **BOOK NEWS: VAMPIRES AMONG US BY MARK BENECKE & INES FISCHER**

Shortly after delivering a fascinating presentation on “real vampires” or “vampyres” at the BBEC Conference, Mark Benecke and Ines Fischer sent us their new book *Vampyres among us – Volume III* for review, with a study conducted by Ines Fischer. It is clad in a glamorous cover in stylish black-and-red design and published by Edition Roter Drache ([www.rotedrache.org](http://www.rotedrache.org)); it also bears the logo of the Transylvanian Society of Dracula – German Chapter. The edition is limited to 400 copies. A few issues are still available through this [Amazon link](#).

The introduction explains that vampires do not only exist in the novels by Bram Stoker and his colleagues, but also in real life, as normal – or not-so-normal – people who identify themselves with the vampire role. This can vary from innocent schoolgirls who like to use some extra kajal around the eyes or roleplayers who only suck blood in their fantasies, to persons who attempt to draw energy from their victims or actually drink blood. This study only addressed persons who had consumed blood (or felt a lust for it) and shows that human blood is clearly preferred over animal blood. This human blood can come from conserves or from friends who willingly donate it – but in the German-speaking online community organised by Ines Fischer, 12% of the interviewed members have made the step to prick a partner with a needle or making a small cut with a razor blade unasked. In the large majority of cases, this was part of an erotic role play and none of the partners involved did experience this as an assault. The borders with other subcultures are floating and there



also may be an overlap with certain psychological conditions such as Asperger Syndrome or depression, or medical conditions such as photophobia. But as the authors convincingly state: “It probably does not take us any millimetre further if we, like some vampyres, deny these overlaps or, like some psychologists, use them merely as a sorting aid. An identity is an identity, whether as a biologist, male, female, cowboy enthusiast, men’s talor, pipe fitter, family man or rose breeder.”

Mark and Ines therefore plead to discuss the vampyre phenomenon “in an open, free, objective and verifiable manner” and not to be guided by prejudice – such as believing that only young people would pick this path or that they must be imitating horror movies. As already demonstrated in Timișoara, there are people who discover their vampyre identity only in their late twenties or even later, while there are others who indulge in blooddrinking fantasies even before sexual maturity, and still others who keep up their identity for a long time after having discovered it as teens or twens. The large majority of interviewed members, however, for the first time felt a lust for blood between the age of 13 and 17, the awaking as a vampyre thus overlapping with a period of emerging sexual desires. Another interesting fact is that the interviewed members of this community have a higher-than-average education.

The book reproduces the questionnaires filled in by 100 participants and presents an evaluation of these data, looking at region, age, gender, sexual orientation, preferred rituals, choice of donor, safety measures, frequency and volume of blood consumptions, emotions before and after consuming blood, participation in other subcultures, sleeping patterns, sensitivity to light and noise, social mentality, etc. Although the sample of 100 is not large, the authors made sure that the questionnaires were only accessible to members in relevant online groups, that only completely filled out questionnaires were taken into account and that “posers” were sorted out. Both the questions and the answers thus come from persons with a truly sanguineous interest in the issue. Recommended for all with a lust for blood—or knowledge.

## ONE SUNNY DAY IN TRANSYLVANIA

The BBEC Conference on Beliefs and Behaviours in Education and Culture held by the West University of Timișoara, Romania was concluded with a one-day trip to the land of Transylvania. This treat was appreciated especially by the group of enthusiasts of Gothic and Vampire Studies gathered at the workshop “Where’s the Place of Dracula: (De)Constructing Stereotypes in the Study of the Mythical Space in Literature and Space.” Every respectable specialist of Gothic Studies (whether openly or secretly) dreams about experiencing a glimpse of the supernatural or, even better, meeting a vampire, preferably Count Dracula in his own person (common knowledge). I am not an exception, so I was looking forward to this trip with excitement, impatience and appetite whet by a vast number of excellent articles, speeches and ideas of my fellow scholars presented during two afternoons at our vampyre panel.

On day three we set off for the Hunedora Castle (also referred to as Corvin Castle) situated in the heart of Transylvania. Regardless of the thorough knowledge of Bram Stoker’s novel and long years spent on studying origins, history and rational academic views behind the literary masterpiece, in the mind of a Film Studies scholar, the image of Dracula will forever be associated with Bela Lugosi rather than with the historical Vlad Țepeș, the infamous “blood thirsty” Vlad the Impaler. Imagine my joy when the first traces of Count Dracula encountered during our post-conference escapade turned out to be cinema related! Right outside Timișoara, still in Timiș County, there is a town of Lugoj (Hungarian Lugos), the place of birth and hometown of the iconic Bela Lugosi. Even though we did not stop to visit, a mere signpost grew to a rank of a sign prophesying wonders awaiting us further away.



The Bela Lugosi Cinema in the pedestrian zone of Lugoj.

After some hours we reached our destination. Hunedora Castle is one Europe’s largest castles, built by order of John Hunyadi, General and later Governor of Hungary. Currently it is also known and popular as a haunted castle, which annually attracts crowds of tourists from all over the world as well as numerous researchers, scholars and writers. One of the alleged ghosts haunting the castle is none other than Vlad Dracula - the Impaler. The signs and remainders of the human Vlad’s era can be found, among others, in the torture chamber hidden in the castle’s dungeons, open for tourists as part of the museum. Although we know almost for certain that neither Hunedora Castle nor any other in this area served as a model for Bram Stoker’s fictional Dracula Castle (there is a sketch in Emily Gerard’s book but Stoker probably never read it), a one day visit to Hunedora is enough to see that it could easily become an inspiration for any Gothic novel and film. Built in Renaissance & Gothic style, with its tall towers and menacing thick walls, the castle makes an impression of an impenetrable fortress cradling thousands of mysterious stories and memories of people who perished within its walls. Did we encounter ghosts and vampires? – Probably a wrong time of the day. The blazing June sunshine did not grant success of this quest either. Nevertheless, the memory of one perfect day in Transylvania remains. Next stop Whitby!

P.S. A big thank you to the conference organisers and all the fellow vampire enthusiasts for sharing your passion and making it a fabulous and unforgettable experience. Here’s to the next one!

Magdalena Grabias, Lublin, Poland