

The Representation of the Medieval in *Dracula: Untold* (2014), and
its Influences as an Adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

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Abstract

This thesis will explore the place of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* within the 19th century cultural and literary construction of the Gothic medieval, and the nostalgia for the noble past of the Middle Ages. Based on this analysis it will further explore the afterlives of *Dracula* through its adaptations leading up to the recent film *Dracula: Untold*, and how these things reveal the way western culture perceives the connection between Vlad Dracula as a fictional character and cultural icon, and Vlad Tepes as a historical figure. Finally, this thesis will explore several academic views and classifications of the contemporary representation of the medieval in 21st century fiction, and use them to analyse *Dracula: Untold* as a contemporary film which takes place in a medieval setting.

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Introduction

The Middle Ages have often been the popular subject of literature and film. The same goes for the mythical creatures called vampires, and in particular, Count Dracula, the intriguing character thought up by Bram Stoker. The recent film adaptation *Dracula: Untold*, which was produced in 2014, combines the famous vampire legend with a medieval setting. The film tells the back story of how Vlad the Impaler became Count Dracula the vampire and it is set in the late Middle Ages, the year 1462, and it is based on semi historical events.

This thesis will explore how the Victorian novel *Dracula* and its adaptations stand within the tradition of modern depictions of the Middle Ages. The first chapter will argue how Stoker himself, and his novel fit into the 19th century trend of depicting the medieval and the Gothic, and how much Stoker was influenced by both in his lifetime.

The second chapter will analyse the cultural, historical, and literary influences of *Dracula: Untold*. It will explore the idea that Dracula as a character was based on Vlad the Impaler by Bram Stoker, and make a comparative analysis between what is known about his historical personae and how he is viewed in modern cultures. The findings of this analysis will be used as a framework to compare *Dracula: Untold* to Dracula's back story in Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* from 1992, and an episode of *Da Vinci's Demons*(2013) which also features Vlad Tepes as a living human noble in his own historical time. An important part of this chapter is the fact that the connection between Dracula the vampire, and Vlad the Impaler.

The final chapter will provide a more in depth analysis of the film *Dracula: Untold*, and will largely focus on how it fits into various scholarly classifications of the representation of the medieval in modern fiction. It will explore Umberto Eco's views on the medieval and how the film's features respond to those views, but it will also analyse the more recent, 21st century classifications of neo-medievalism and movie medievalism and provide an analysis of how *Dracula: Untold* fits into these classifications. It will also discuss the development of Dracula as a sympathetic character written to be empathised with by a contemporary audience, and the shift in the portrayal of the other and how it reflects contemporary feelings of anxiety for the Middle East. The chapter will conclude with a short analysis of the distinction between the two meanings of the name Dracula, and how they are used in narrative and symbolism, in vampire fiction in general, and in *Dracula: Untold* in particular.

The original intent of this thesis was to explore the possible connection between 19th century medievalism and late 20th-early 21st century medievalism through analysis of the adaptation of a 19th century novel set in a fictionalised version of a medieval, historical setting. However, this intent was pushed to the background after close analysis of primary and secondary sources and is no longer the main focus of the thesis. Thus, it will only be mentioned briefly in the final conclusion.

1: Stoker and *Dracula*'s Place within the 19th Century Medieval

The nineteenth century saw an explosion of romanticism and historicism, some of which already had its roots in the late 18th century, especially in England. Many artists, writers and architects tried to look to the middle ages for inspiration for their work. This resulted in works of fiction based on stories that were thought to hail from rustic parts of European countries, where the traditional stories of the oral tradition had endured. There were also many paintings depicting picturesque castles and pastoral pictures, and Arthurian legends were revisited in poems, paintings, and in music. This was the Romantic view of the “noble past”. They were a type of escapism, in particular for the upper middle class, in an age of technological progress and urbanism. These magic Middle Ages were one end of the medieval spectrum in 19th century literature. On the other hand we have what shall be called the Middle Ages represented in a more macabre fashion. This genre depicts a darker and more gothic side of the medieval. It also has its roots in the 18th century, and was popular throughout most of the 19th century. The genre speaks of a fascination with the strange and barbaric side of the medieval, and it denotes anxiety of invasion and a fear of the foreign, while also being intrigued by both. In England it sometimes went paired with a dislike for the Catholic Church, in works by writers like Lewis and his *The Monk*.

This chapter will attempt to answer the question of how Stoker's work fits into the cultural tradition of constructing and representing the Middle Ages during the 19th century. It shall explore claims made about Stoker and his influences, by scholars, and what it says about the genre of Stoker's work, and *Dracula* in particular. A close reading of certain passages in the novel itself shall also be used to explore the role of the medieval in the text. The intent of this chapter is to place Stoker's work within the development of the construction of the Middle Ages during the 19th century, in order to further explore how they are represented in the novel's adaptations, and the adaptation of *Dracula: Untold* in particular.

1.1 Stoker's Influence of the 19th Century Medieval

The 19th century medieval can be divided into two categories, the first being the more rose-colored romantic ideal. One that developed in artists like the pre-Raphaelites, and in writers who were looking for the noble, rustic past of the country by searching for traces of oral story-telling to record in the more rural parts of their countries. Think of writers like Grimm. The second type of the 19th century medieval in art and writing is more macabre, and is expressed in the Gothic and late Gothic. This genre is expressed in darker tones, and strange villains, that invade the good, civilised countries where the books take place. While the tones are almost the opposite from the magic medieval, these stories still serve as a form of escapism. They are designed to take the reader away from the everyday hardship of Victorian England, to the long ago and far away. To a setting with supernatural threats, larger than life characters, and picturesque castles. Stoker's surroundings, and events of his youth, and the literature by which he was influenced show that the medieval aspects of his writing would be closer to the macabre medieval than the magic medieval.

David Skal explains how Bram Stoker got a taste for the macabre in his childhood. That macabre was at least slightly influenced by the medieval. His father for example, worked as a civil servant in Dublin Castle, of which a part "once displayed the freshly impaled heads of Irish traitors" (Skal 41), a story which could have influenced Bram Stoker's imagination and his description of Castle Dracula. Skal also mentions that Bram's mother grew up in a part of Ireland that was ripe with fairy tales, and that she had a weakness for Gothic literature from authors like Edgar Allan Poe, and books like Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), where the protestant dislike of Catholics was expressed through degenerate Catholic villains. "The Gothic novels portrayed Catholicism with a lurid – and alluring – savagery". (42) Skal goes on to say that the villainous monk in Lewis' story has a "description and demeanour" similar to that of Dracula. Charlotte Stoker (Née Thornley) supposedly also developed a knack for storytelling, which Bram might have inherited, and was influenced by the macabre of the mid 19th century wave of plague and famine in Ireland. She was, among other things, anxious about premature burial, about which she knew a few anecdotes. (43) The idea of premature burial and the villains from gothic literature can very well have influenced Stoker's character of Dracula. These macabre ideas all give rise to a feeling of dangerous, invading medieval forces, bringing disease and corruption. Skal also explains that a young Abraham Stoker would have been influenced by both Irish, and continental, translated fairy tales, and that he would have experienced a thing he calls "the Christmas pantomime" (53) which did showings

of medieval morality plays, but also 19th century constructions of medieval fairy tales and the orient, such as Cinderella and Aladdin.

In the same collection of *Centenary Essays*, Paul Murray lists the idea that *Dracula* is a “largely Fin-de-siècle novel” as a myth that has been created in biographical works about Stoker (60). He claims that making such a statement about Stoker’s work reveals a lack of understanding and thorough analysis of both the genre and the author himself. However, he fails to elaborate why he does not think that *Dracula* is a fin-de-siècle novel. Maunder goes into a little more detail about the genre of 19th century literature in which he places the novel. He says that Stoker’s writing is part of the tradition of late 19th century authors like Robert Louis Stevenson and H. Rider Haggard, who wrote more fantastical, and imaginative adventure stories than fin de siècle authors, who were more pessimistic about the way society was progressing. The writing of such adventurous novels was a very lucrative business at the time. Maunder writes that these adventure stories often feature evil ‘barbaric’ and ‘foreign’ villains “monstrous or villainous ‘savages’ or ‘non-white’ masculinities which are more generally described in the terms: ‘they’ and ‘us.’” (Maunder 71) That “they and us” mentality is then expressed in the outsider, the non-English villain, who is a threat that needs to be vanquished. In *Dracula*, this outsider is the titular character. He is a foreign entity, which fascinates the 19th century English audience, Skal says villains like Dracula are “alluring” (42), but the character also works on the audience’s fears and anxieties because he is a threat to proper English society. This phenomenon of a foreign villain, who is both intriguing and scary due to his foreignness, is used quite often in English Gothic novels. Anne Williams confirms that such characters are “the “other” of the horror plot, the monster that must be destroyed. [Dracula] is, indeed, Transylvanian, not English; aristocratic, not bourgeois; Undead, not living.” (A. Williams 446). This fear and fascination for the foreign entity that is Dracula shows that the fear of outside threats is stronger than the pessimism and fear of the degeneration of society from within, which characterises typical fin-de-siècle writing. However, Maunder does also imply a number of times that Stoker is a fin de siècle writer: “Dracula feeds off a whole range of fin de Siècle writing” (Maunder 47) Hughes takes a similar attitude on several occasions in his article. According to him, the novel expresses “fears of both invasion from beyond national (or racial) borders and an impending domestic cultural decline” (114) Another argument for placing *Dracula* in the fin-de siècle genre is the fact that it was published in 1897, the end of the 19th century. It fits semantically, but in terms of genre scholars do not seem to agree on whether *Dracula* is fin-de-siècle or not. A middle

route may be that best course in this matter. The fact remains that the plot of Stoker's story, with its vivid descriptions of a far of lands filled with fascinating people, and its heroic chases to defeat the foreign threat, fits best within the adventure novel genre, while some of its dark and macabre tones can be seen as features of the pessimistic fin-de-siècle novels.

1.2 A Close Reading and Analysis of the Medieval in *Dracula*

In Stoker's novel this foreign threat from outside is Dracula, but it's not just his foreignness that makes him a threat. He is also a remnant of times past. He is described by the character Van Helsing as having a "child-brain." (Stoker, *Dracula* 352,373) Dracula, for all his powers, is underdeveloped, having lived in a remote medieval castle in Transylvania his entire existence:

"In contrast to Van Helsing and his band of enlightened scientific rationalists, Dracula is a creature of the dark, of madness, and of ancient superstition" (A. Williams 446)

While he is drawn to its potential, he does not fully grasp the civilised modernity of the London the book is set in, and is still trying to learn more about it:

"He learn new social life; new environment of old ways, the politic, the law, the finance, the science, the habit of a new land and a new people who have come to be since he was." (Stoker, *Dracula* 373)

His actions are also invasive. Van Helsing explains how he used to be a great war leader, and compares his attack on England, with his past military accomplishments when going "over the Turkey frontier." (373) So Dracula is an embodiment of a foreign invading power which is underdeveloped and is basically still stuck in the Middle Ages, and while he is trying to learn how the fast progressing society works, he mostly does so in order to better know his prey. Van Helsing, although not an Englishman himself, favours the civilised development, and modern weapons with which he believes they can fight the vampire. It becomes a battle between the violent medieval and the progressive modern age.

These observations provide insight when analyzing *Dracula* with Umberto Eco's model of the "Ten Little Middle Ages" from his book *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality* (Eco, *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality* 68-72). This analysis shows that Stoker's Middle Ages are not the Middle Ages of National Identities (70), where "the medieval model was taken as a political utopia, a celebration of past grandeur, to be opposed the miseries of national enslavement and foreign domination." However, in Stoker's *Dracula* this medieval

model is unnecessary, because England is not enslaved or dominated by foreign forces when the events take place. It was unnecessary for the English to want to go back to the noble past of the Middle Ages, because as a powerful, independent, and wealthy country there was no need for nostalgia for when things were better. Instead, English nationalism, when based on the Middle Ages, takes the form of an imagined historical continuity, where things have been getting progressively better and better since the Middle ages. In the novel, the country is portrayed as the civilised land of progress. This makes it a desirable place to invade for outlandish, less developed forces, Dracula in this case, but it also gives the western heroes the strength to fight back and drive out the invading force. The medieval in *Dracula* is revealed in the foreign places of Eastern Europe, as becomes clear in the description made by Jonathan in the first chapter of the novel. The medieval is strange, intriguing, and far away, rather than nationalistic, and romanticised. This points to the novel's Middle Ages fitting into Eco's Middle Ages of the Barbaric Age and Romanticism (69). The Dark Ages found in Transylvania include monstrosities and superstitions of a bygone age, no longer relevant in the fast progressing west. However at the same time the castles and sprawling mountains of Eastern Europe speak to the imagination, and Dracula himself is an intriguing character, as Jonathan cannot help being curious and hypnotised by his presence as well as being scared and anxious. It is this interest and love for the medieval that reveals the romantic medieval from Eco's description. He lists "stormy castles, ghosts" and "the eastern cruelty of *Vathek*" as features of the romantic medieval.

The experiences Jonathan Harker has at the beginning of the book can also be seen as examples the representation of the medieval in the novel, and how Eco's categories can be applied to them. The peoples of Transylvania do not live in a prospering progressive world. Jonathan explains how the area he is in "has had a very stormy existence, and it certainly shows marks of it." (Stoker, *Dracula* 3) He tells the reader that the area has been continuously plagued by war, plagues, disaster and famine. He also mentions that the Magyars "claim to be descended from Attila and the Huns." (2), and that the hotel he is staying in is "thoroughly old-fashioned" (4). He complains about the unpunctuality of the trains as he comes further east, implying that the people have not completely mastered this modern machinery, and as his voyage progresses, he travels only by carriage. The progress of his journey can be seen as a journey back in time through the use of increasingly more old-fashioned modes of transportation. The people he meets are very superstitious, and religious, and they live in fear of the supernatural. The People he describes are rather one-dimensional. They are

superstitious and strictly Catholic, they wear traditional clothing, and live in fear of the supernatural. They are the ones who seem to be more in need of a harkening back to the noble past. This is possibly what the story that they are descendent from the Huns functions as. The idea that they were once part of a proud and fierce warrior race as opposed to the troubles that bother them now. The description of the Romanian landscape with its mountains and castles, together with the description of the old-fashioned and superstitious people as an interesting sight also express a Romanticist view on the place. Stoker's middle ages are not the fairy tale like imaginings of the noble past of either his birth-country or England. Instead they are part of the branch of Middle Ages that are depicted as a foreign barbaric medieval, that is backwards thinking compared to the modern and civilised England.

That does not mean, however, that there is no trace at all of the 'noble past' image of the medieval in Bram Stoker's work. The group dynamic of the hunters for example, can be compared to the tradition of courtly and Arthurian romance, which was also popular in 19th century literature and poetry. Van Helsing expresses his love and respect for Mina on multiple occasions. The others are loyal to her in a similar way. They respect her courage, compassion, and dignified attitude, and wish to protect her to such an extent that she becomes their main reason for fighting, much in the same way that Arthurian knights would fight for a lady, whom they loved and were loyal to. Her indoctrination by Dracula, coupled with the trances she goes into are comparable to fairy stories where a maiden gets trapped in the fairy kingdom. An example of a story which demonstrates this is *Sir Orfeo* (The Auchenleck Manuscript). This Middle English poem tells the tale of how Orfeo's Wife Heurodis – a medieval version of the mythical figure Eurydice – is taken away against her will to the fairy kingdom. In this kingdom time does not move as in the real world. Heurodis does not age while she is there, until she is rescued by Orfeo. The fairy kingdom is also a place where people who are thought to be dead live on. This can be compared to what happens to Mina once she has drunken Dracula's blood. If she dies, she completes the transformation, and will be immortal, stuck in time, like in the fairy kingdom. Skal's explanation of Stoker's life shows that it was very likely that Stoker was exposed to fairytale folklore (see 1.1), including the trope of people being kidnapped by fairies. He explained that Stoker might have been dressed as a girl for a period of his childhood, to prevent him being kidnapped by fairies. (49) This idea implies that there was an anxiety for kidnapping and entrapment by fairies, and other supernatural and outlandish forces, in his childhood home. This anxiety might have persisted in his later life, or at least inspired his interest in darker folklore.

1.3 Stoker's Sources

It is seen as general knowledge that Stoker did extensive research for his stories, and many sources, both academic and informal, state that he used folklore from Eastern Europe as his source for the vampires in *Dracula*. A recent example of an academic source stating this is the article by Daryl Jones.

“Bram Stoker was extremely interested in folklore, and tended to research his novels quite meticulously. We know, for example, that he read as widely as he could in Eastern European folklore and history, as well as travel literature, while preparing *Dracula* “ (Jones)

A more informal article by Jo Harrington, called *Why a Stake Won't Kill a Vampire* from 2015, implies the same with the remark:

“Vampire historians can point to a long tradition of staking the undead in their graves. Bram Stoker didn't pull this stuff out of his backside, when he included it in his novel *Dracula*.” (Harrington)

Maunder also mentions Stoker's research in a similar way to Jones' article:

“Stoker's working notes for the novel reveal the breadth of his researches and in particular, his lifelong interest in folklore, the occult and science. He was familiar with Irish tales of the 'ún-dead' from an early age, he read Sabine Baring Gould's *Book of Werewolves* (1865) and Emily Gerard's 'Transylvanian Superstitions' (1885)” (Maunder)

However, neither of these sources gives any concrete examples of which folkloric sources Stoker actually used. Maunder only briefly mentions a couple of 19th century texts which has inspired Stoker, and Jones names “Lady Wilde's *Ancient legends, mystic charms and superstitions of Ireland* (1887)” as well as “Joseph Jacobs *English fairy tales*” as Stoker's sources for *The Lair of the White Worm*. These are all sources from the British Isles and the 19th century. A lot closer to home than the Transylvanian medieval folklore most sources talk about. Jo Harrington's entire article is about medieval Eastern European vampire hunting. She explains what methods medieval vampire hunters used to combat vampires. She focuses largely on the modern depiction of the wooden stake, and how it has changed over time. (Harrington)

“Your average medieval vampire slayer would take one look at the modern day stakes and laugh in your face. Their stakes had a cross bar near to the top. It served the dual purpose of pinning the corpse to the ground beneath and invoking the protection of Christ. The point of a stake was to stop a vampire from being able to rise from its grave.”

Her article explains how medieval undead vampires could not be killed at all, but had to be pinned to the ground, with large stakes to prevent them from rising out of their graves. This idea that vampires cannot be killed has changed in 20th and 21st century fiction, as it often includes small wooden stakes through the heart being the most frequently used method of killing a vampire. The 19th century vampire fiction seems to have led the way towards this, because the vampire can be killed completely, by for example destroying the body completely, as implied in *Carmilla* by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, or by driving a stake to the heart and cutting of the head, as depicted in *Dracula* when Van Helsing and the men go hunting for Lucy, when she has become undead. However, Harrington also neglects to mention any concrete Eastern European sources for her story.

A 2001 article by Patrick Johnson does give some concrete examples of Eastern European folklore, he lists features of vampiric abilities and weaknesses that are present in both 19th century and modern vampire fiction, and compares how much they have in common with the folklore from which they hail. However he also uses Emily Gerard’s ‘Transylvanian Superstitions’ as a source for his arguments on several occasions,

“In “Transylvanian Superstitions”, Emily Gerard (142) wrote that the *nosferatu* sucks the blood of his victims.” (Johnson 1)

“Emily Gerard writes that “every person killed by a *nosferatu* becomes likewise a vampire after death, and will continue to suck the blood of other innocent people till the spirit has been exorcized”” (2)

“In “Transylvanian Superstitions” Gerard writes about the practice of placing garlic in the mouth of an exhumed vampire, but nowhere does she say that Romanians used garlic to prevent a vampire from entering a dwelling or to otherwise protect a person from becoming a vampire’s victim.” (4)

And he also clearly states that:

“Bram Stoker’s research papers for *Dracula*, including articles from newspapers, magazines, and books, indicate that his primary source for vampire folklore was “Transylvanian Superstitions” by Emily Gerard published in the July 1885 issue of *The Nineteenth Century*” (Johnson 1)

All these sources imply that the main source of Stoker’s research on Eastern European vampire folklore came from Emily Gerard’s account. Emily Gerard was born in Scotland, and lived in Romania for a time because her husband was stationed here. A similar image arises to that of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who wrote the *Letters from Turkey* describing the Turkish court. These works are descriptions made by British women who have been to the eastern places they write about and describe what they see and hear themselves, but the fact remains that they write from their limited western-raised perspective.

Stoker himself never visited Romania. His descriptions of the landscapes in the countries through which the protagonists travel are based off travel accounts, and his main source for folklore on vampires was an account written by a Scottish woman. The things he read would also have gone through his own imagination, changing what was necessary to create a captivating story. The result is the romantic image of the superstitious, but proud peoples of Romania.

1.4 Conclusion

Bram Stoker was influenced by early Gothic literature, Irish and continental fairy tales, and by other writers from the 19th century. He is thought to have done thorough research on Transylvanian folklore for his vampire mythology, but it is quite likely that his sources were mostly western, translated accounts of what the country and his culture was like. Close reading of *Dracula* reveals that the medieval elements of the story mostly serve as a representation of the Middle Ages as a Barbaric Age, and the Middle Ages of Romanticism. The novel does contain some elements that exhibit the fairytale like representation of the nationalistic Middle Ages, but these are mostly implicit and symbolic. In general the novel represents the ancient and distant world of the medieval opposite the progressive, civilised world of nearby England.

2: The Portrayal of Dracula as a Historical Character

Dracula: Untold builds on the history of Stoker’s colourful character. It is based on the popular idea that Dracula was once the fifteenth century Transylvanian prince Vlad III, who

was called Tepes, which translates to the Impaler, after his death. The film tells the story of how Vlad the Impaler became the vampire Dracula. The story is sympathetic towards Dracula as a person, and portrays him as a man with good intentions, whose actions are almost forced upon him when the things he cares about are threatened by the Turkish army. This portrayal is very different from the popular portrayal of Vlad Tepes as a cruel dictator who tortured innocents, but it not without its sources. This chapter will focus on the modern western portrayal of Vlad the Impaler in modern adaptations of *Dracula*, and how they connect and clash with historical and cultural accounts. The intent of this chapter is to show that it is very difficult to look at Vlad Tepes as a historical figure, without associating him with Stoker's vampire Dracula and his adaptations, or seeing him as anything but a monstrous dictator. Analysis of recent and older sources will reveal how the dominant western culture, overpowers the views of Vlad Tepes in Romanian culture, and that *Dracula: Untold* tries to build a bridge between the historical and fictional narratives that influence the conflicting cultural perspectives.

2.1 Dracula in Historical and Cultural Context

The Idea that Vlad Tepes was the inspiration for Stoker's villain Dracula is something that has been developed since the mid-twentieth century, and that has become difficult to release from the collective cultural consciousness. An article by Bacil Kirtley from 1956 argues that a late 15th-century manuscript from a Russian monastery might have been one of the sources that Stoker used for his novel.

"The manuscript relates the story of Dracula (Rumanian for "devil"), which is the name bestowed in horror by monisk chroniclers upon Vlad Tsepesh, Governor of Wallachia from the years 1456 to 1462 and again in the year 1476." (Kirtley 134)

Kirtley sums up several acts of Vlad Tepes, mentioned in the manuscript, which illustrate the cruel and unusual punishments he made both foreign envoys and his own people suffer through. He says that Dracula's actions possessed "whimsical cruelty challenge comparison with the outrages of young Caligula" (134) He also mentions that: "The material of the Kirill-Belozerk manuscript was widely circulated among the monasteries of the Eastern Slavs, and by the middle of the 16th century had reach as far as Germany." This probably means that the manuscript was copied by other monasteries, since Kirtley implies that more than one manuscript of the text has existed. This is probably how the story of Vlad Tepes as a cruel dictator got spread across Europe.

The cruelty of Vlad the Impaler, which is discussed by Kirtley and often associated with him in modern western culture, is not completely absent from *Dracula: Untold*. However, it is largely implied that the cruelty that Dracula inflicts was a result of his education while he was in the care of the Turkish sultan. This part of his back-story is not purely speculation, since there are historical sources from before the film that confirm that Vlad Tepes was taken hostage and forced to spend part of his youth at the court of the Turkish sultan.:

“In 1444, at the age of thirteen, young Vlad and his brother Radu were sent to Adrianople as hostages, to appease the Sultan.” (Porter)

“Dracula and his younger brother Radu were taken hostage by the Sultan Murad II; Dracula was held in Turkey until 1448.” (Leblanc)

“The young boys stayed as hostages in Turkish captivity for several years. Dracula was held for six years, until 1448, while Radu stayed considerable longer, until 1462. During this captivity, the two boys were educated by the best minds of the Ottoman Empire.” (Vorsino 12)

The film inclusion of Vlad’s education at the Turkish court, although the film does not mention Dracula’s brother, has some basis in historical evidence. The way his back story is told also implies that he is blameless of any cruel acts of violence, even against innocent people, during his time as a soldier in the Turkish army. He is portrayed as simply following his own moral code. His decisions to do violence when he is no longer in the Turkish army are justified as necessary actions he has to resort to in order to do his duty as a good leader and protective husband and father. He becomes ruthless and violent, impaling the Turkish soldiers on spikes, by himself with vampire strength, in order to instil fear in the rest of the Turkish forces, so they might be scared of him and him alone, and retreat. It is shown as a necessary decision he has to make as a strong and protective male leader. He has to act violently to protect the defenceless people from worse violence in a world where the powerful can suppress the weak without consequence. This is a common trope used when portraying the Medieval as a barbaric age. The well-meaning hero has to go to great violent lengths in order to protect people. This is a very contemporary way to incorporate the violent act that Vlad Tepes committed, but it also has the potential to contradict the idea that those violent actions worked as inspiration for the merciless and unjustified cruelty of the vampire Dracula.

Kirtley seems absolutely certain that Vlad Tepes was Stoker's inspiration for his vampire. According to him, the violent punishments and whims of Vlad Tepes, worked as a template for Stoker's depiction of the vampire prince. However, the actual text of the novel does not really give any definite indication to this being true. There are several passages which discuss Dracula's previous life and hint at the "man-that- was" (Stoker, *Dracula* 280):

"He must indeed have been that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turks over the great River on the very frontier of Turkey-land [...] The Draculas were, says Arminius, a great and noble race, though now and again were scions who were held by their coevals to have had dealings with the Evil One" (280)

"That other of his race who in a later age again and again brought his forces over the great River into Turkey-land" (396)

"In his life, his living, he go over the Turkey frontier and attack his enemy on his own ground." (Stoker, *Dracula* 372-373)

These passages give no definitive confirmation that Dracula's identity as a mortal man was Vlad III, the prince of Wallachia who lived between 1431 and 1477. They only imply that he was a Voivode² of that region, and that he fought against the Turks. Dennis Deletant says: "Nothing in Stoker's work bears a historical relationship to the deeds of Vlad or to the events of his reign." (553) The parts of the novel that hint at Dracula's history only imply, but do not state. This implication, however, has given rise to a lot of research in the century that followed the publication of the novel. This included interpretation and research of historical accounts such as the manuscript found in a Russian monastery (Kirtley), and Stoker's own research notes. Many publications of the second half of the twentieth century came to the conclusion that the historical figure Vlad Tepes was Dracula's true identity. One of these publications is *In Search of Dracula: The History of Dracula and Vampires*, written in 1972 by Raymond T. McNally and Radu Florescu (McNally and Florescu). Bristow and Newman claim that this book had the most important role in making the connection popular by saying that it is "a connection perpetuated by the popular title authored by McNally and Florescu (1972)." The idea has become very popular in western culture, and is difficult to let go of.

"While Romania may be synonymous with Dracula, it was not until 1972 that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was linked with Vlad the Impaler. The vampire myth as we know it

² Voivode is a Romanian title for a ruler.

today is a product of Eastern and Western European history with a bit of Hollywood thrown in (Secor 2003).” (Bristow and Newman 217-218)

However, it was not until 1992, with the release of Coppola’s *Adaptation*, that people and Romania started to hear about the novel and the connection. “The *Dracula* of Bram Stoker was, until the 1992 film of the novel, largely unknown to Romanians,” (Deletant 552), and “Stoker’s novel was not translated in Romanian until 1992” (Bristow and Newman 217). Bristow and Newman go on to explain that Romania started trying to make money from *Dracula*-themed tourism from the 1990s onward, but also that there have been attempts to disprove the connection between *Dracula* and Vlad Tepes. This is mostly because Vlad Tepes is more of a national symbol, and a source of historic pride for Romanians. His cruel methods of torture and punishment are not ignored, but it seems that historians prefer to focus on his military accomplishments, and attempts to protect the country from a Turkish invasion:

“While known as an overall fair and brave ruler, he was also known as a harsh punisher of foreign invaders and unruly citizens by impaling them on stakes. He then displayed them publicly to frighten his enemies and warning any would be enemies of his strict moral code. It is this harsh punishment system he enforced that led to the coining of the name Vlad the Impaler.” (Bristow and Newman 218)

“Vlad, despite his cruelty, has been elevated by Romanian historians to the rank of national hero for saving his country from Turkish Domination.” (Deletant 553)

These quotes show that Vlad Tepes is not seen as the cruel dictator that western history makes him out to be. His torturous punishments of his own people are seen as an upholding of his own moral code, and his battles against the Turks as the actions of a strong military leader, and an early symbol for Romanian independence. This way of thinking makes the relationship between the Romanians and the western cultural icon that *Dracula* a difficult one. On one hand, there is a profit to be made from tourists who wish to visit *Dracula*’s home country, on the other hand there exists a “fear the fictional vampire--and his celluloid successors--may taint the reputation of a real-life hero.” (C. J. Williams).

2.2 Sympathy for *Dracula*

Dracula’s opinion of himself is a bit closer to the Romanian image of the national hero. He speaks about the history of his family with Jonathan Harker in the third chapter of the book. At this point, he is still pretending to be a mere descendent of the man he is talking about:

“When was redeemed that great shame of my nation, the shame of Cassova, When the Flags of the Wallach and the Magyar went down beneath the Crescent, Who was it but one of my own race who as Voivode crossed the Danube and beat the Turk on his own ground? This was a Dracula indeed!” (Stoker, *Dracula* 33)

He expresses great pride about his martial prowess, in this passage, and again later on in the novel while taunting the hunters about having outsmarted them. “Whilst they played wits against me – against me who commanded nations, and intrigued for them and fought for them hundreds of years before they were born.” (335) His words show a hint of the national hero who fought bravely against the Turks. However, the reader is not to take this admiration to heart, because Dracula is an ‘other’ in the novel, and therefore the reader is not meant to either sympathise or agree with him. While Stoker’s character betrays a fascination of the author with the occult other from a far away land and far off time, he still places Dracula in a largely negative light. Through Van Helsing’s mouth, Stoker implies that Dracula exhibited behaviour unfit for a military leader: “As he fled back over the Danube, leaving his forces to be cut to pieces so now he is intent on being safe.” (398) This passage hints at Dracula valuing self-preservation over the lives of his soldiers. It is in tune with the negative image of Voivode Vlad III of Wallachia, named Vlad the Impaler after his death, that can be has been perpetuated by most popular modern historiography. This image is that of a cruel dictator, who fights ruthlessly against the Turkish Empire, but is merciless, selfish, and sadistic when it comes to his policies. This image, which is widely accepted as historically accurate, defines Vlad Tepes as an other, as much as Stoker's Dracula.

Despite this othering of Dracula, Stoker’s novel is not completely empty of sympathy for Dracula. There is a passage of Dialogue where Mina speaks of pity towards Dracula.

“That poor soul who has wrought all this misery is the saddest case of all. Just think what will be his joy when he too is destroyed in his worser part that his better part may have spiritual immortality. You must be pitiful to him too, though it may not hold your hands from his destruction.” (Stoker, *Dracula* 359)

This passage is meant to show the unwavering sympathy and pity Mina feels for even an undead creature as Dracula. Her goodness is meant to shine through in this passage, as a pinnacle of virtuous womanhood according to Stoker. However, it seems to have had an unintended effect in later adaptations. It invokes the idea that Mina has a deeper connection with the vampire. The hypnotic trances, where Mina is able to tell Dr. Van Helsing what

Dracula's surroundings are, do this as well. This connection between Mina and Dracula is more strongly shown than the one he had with Lucy, whose knowledge of his existence is not elaborated on in the novel, or the three female vampires in his castle, who chastise him saying: "You yourself never loved; you never love!" (Stoker, *Dracula* 44), which implies that if there was a relationship between them and Dracula, that there was no real emotion on his part. This stronger emotional connection between Mina and Dracula can very well have been the inspiration for the incorporation of a more romantic relationship between the two characters, portrayed in films like Coppola's adaptation from 1992, where Mina is the reincarnation of Dracula's dead wife.

2.3 Coppola and Shore

Dracula's motivations in *Dracula: Untold* are similar to those that are revealed in the 1992 interpretation by Coppola, in the flashbacks to the count's life. The prologue of this film shows Dracula going to war against the Turks, and returning to find his wife dead, due to faulty information sent by "vengeful Turks" (Coppola). Dracula becomes angry when a priest tells him his wife's soul is damned, because she killed herself by jumping out of the castle. Dracula's anger is understandable because he fought the Turks in the name of the Christian God and in return he is told that his wife is dead, and her soul is damned because of that same god's laws. In his anger, Dracula turns away from the Christian faith, which damns his soul as well. This event is given as the reason that Dracula becomes a vampire.

The new adaptation works as an extension of Coppola's prologue. Dracula is shown to seek out his vampire powers before the death of his wife. The Christian themes are pushed to the background, and the film focuses more on vampirism given to someone by drinking an older vampire's blood. Dracula uses the power he has been given to defeat the Turks by himself. It explains how he is able to defeat the "insurmountable force" mentioned in Coppola's film (Coppola), which also makes an appearance in *Dracula: Untold*, where he has an insufficient amount of trained fighters to protect his people from the Turkish army which consists of more than 100.000 soldiers. He wants to defeat this army by himself within three days, and at the end of this he will become human once more, if he refrains from drinking human blood. His transformation into a vampire becomes permanent when his wife falls from a tower and he drinks her blood to keep his powers and take revenge. There are parallels between this and Coppola's version. Dracula's wife, who is called Elisabeta in the earlier adaptation and Mirena in the later one, falls from a tower to her death. The difference is that

in Coppola's film it is suicide due to lies sent by the Turks, and in Shore's it is murder by the Turkish soldiers who ambush her in the tower, and push her off the edge, which has no balustrade. The role of the Turks in her death becomes more active, and hers more passive, because it is no longer her decision to jump, but their enacting of violence against her. Another parallel is the drinking of blood as a catalyst that turns Dracula into a vampire, or permanently a vampire in Shore's film. There is also an element of vengeance in both films. The difference here is that Shore's Dracula wants to seek revenge against the Turks, because it's their fault his wife is dead, while Coppola's Dracula wants to seek revenge against God for damning his wife. The Catholic themes are a lot less prominent in *Dracula: Untold*. Catholic symbols such as the cross still hurt him, but there is little mention of heaven or hell. There is a scene where Vlad is praying, but this is mostly used as a segue into a conversation between him and his son. There are no clear indicators in the narrative, either symbolic or explicit, of a significant spiritual struggle, where he tries to come to terms with his religion, and his identity as a vampire which goes against the god of that religion. He finds salvation in rescuing his son, and his talk of "the next life" (Shore), and heaven means being together with his wife. This wish eventually results in him meeting her reincarnation Mina Harker, in a 21st century modern city market. She is played by the same actress as Mirena, like in Coppola's film. In *Dracula: Untold* the reincarnation plot goes a bit further by making their names similar as well. Other examples of visual similarities that betray the influence that Coppola's film had on the making of *Dracula: Untold* are the film's title, which appears in a primal looking font with a burning background, and the armour which Dracula wears into battle, whose design in both films is based on a red dragon. These narrative and visual similarities between the two films show the significant influence of Coppola's adaptation over *Dracula: Untold*.

2.4 Goyer's Vlad Tepes and Shore's Dracula

An example of another recent portrayal of Vlad Tepes as a historical character is when he makes an appearance in the episode titled "The Devil" of the TV-series *Da Vinci's Demons* (2013). The episode features an unlikely meeting between Leonardo Da Vinci and the Wallachian prince, and it is clear that this subplot is inspired by the vampire mythology which has surrounded this character in the past century. His features are indicators that this appearance was influenced by Stoker's novel and its adaptations. Vlad's eyes have a reddish hue his skin is pale, and his mannerisms and habits embody the "whimsical cruelty," which Kirtley describes (134). The surroundings of Goyer's Vlad are also reminiscent of the gothic.

His castle, while located in the middle of a lush forested landscape, is surrounded by the impaled body of Turkish emissaries, and it has a dark interior and macabre atmosphere on the inside, something that is embodied by the chandelier made of human bones in the dining room. When the prince first invites the protagonists into his castle for dinner, one of them expresses his anxiety that they will be the ones on the menu, which refers to cannibalistic tendencies of vampires. Dracula himself claims he has made “a deal with Lucifer” (Goyer), and that he can “see in the dark” and “cannot be killed.” Killing him does prove very difficult, as the protagonists try out several methods, which all fail. The climax of the episode involves Vlad being thrown out of a tower window, which should have been fatal. This is similar to both Shore and Coppola’s films, where it is Dracula’s wife who dies by falling from a tower. When the protagonists enter the courtyard where he fell, however, his body is nowhere to be seen. This narrative twist is reminiscent of the trope used by the Hammer Horror adaptations of *Dracula* from the 1970s, of Dracula coming back to life. This trope is often used in modern media, and has become a running joke in some fiction. The end of one film or volume includes Dracula being killed in some way, but then is revealed to be alive somehow in either a short cliff-hanger, or in the sequel. In others, like *Dracula 2000*(2000), and *Van Helsing* (2004), killing Dracula is set up as an almost impossible task, which the heroes need to succeed in by finding the one ritualistic act that might kill him. *Da Vinci’s Demons* keeps it ambiguous whether he truly survived, but when the protagonists look down the window the prince’s body has disappeared. This confirms neither his death nor his survival of the fall. The series does have some supernatural elements such as clairvoyant abilities, but whether Vlad Tepes is truly an undead vampire is left to the audience’s imaginations. However, the combinations of the Gothic aesthetic of Vlad’s appearance and surroundings, as well as his cruel mannerisms, work with the preconceived ideas of the western audience. They know about the connection between Vlad Tepes and the vampire Dracula, so the mise-en-scène, while remaining ambiguous about the truth of Dracula’s nature, does invoke the association with Stoker’s character.

This subplot of *Da Vinci’s Demons* is similar to *Dracula: Untold* because it places Vlad Tepes back into his historical setting. It also deals with the conflict between Vlad’s people and the Turkish Empire, which Shore also incorporates, as well as Coppola. However both stories portray this conflict very differently. *Dracula: Untold* seems to use a very clear moral judgement. Right and wrong are easy to distinguish in the film. The Turkish sultan is portrayed as an unfair dictator and cruel conqueror. Dracula’s violent actions are justified as a

defensive response to protect his family and people. David Goyer³ pays more attention to the grey areas of the conflict, although the show does tend to portray corrupt Catholicism as the main instigator of conflict. Goyer's Vlad Tepes is heavily affected by the war with the Turks, like Shore's Dracula, but his actions are not justified. Instead he is portrayed as the cruel dictator, whose hatred of the Turkish people led him to the torture of innocent people, especially those of Islamic and African descent. Goyer's Vlad Tepes is an example of the middle ages as a barbaric age, because his cruelties go unpunished due to his high status as a noble. This also stands in contrast with *Dracula: Untold*, because it is the Turkish Sultan who fulfils that role of an entitled, cruel noble, while Vlad himself is the example of a good, caring and protective leader. *Dracula: Untold* also incorporates the trope of Dracula's resurrection at the end of the film, when a subservient side character force-feeds him blood, after he purposefully tried to kill himself in the sunlight when his task of saving his son was accomplished. There is no ambiguity here. From the beginning of the film it is clear that Dracula will become a vampire, and he is clearly revived near the film's end, when he is fed blood. Furthermore, while Goyer's appearance of Dracula was a short subplot and has no further significance in the series' main storyline, Shore's use of an open ending hints at the intent of the filmmakers to produce a sequel.

Goyer stays true to the western image of Vlad the Impaler as a dictator with "whimsical cruelty" (134) as described in Kirtley's article, which is the more well-known image of Vlad Tepes in western culture. Shore however, gives the audience a more sympathetic portrayal of the historical figure. His version is closer to the "fair and brave ruler" (Bristow and Newman 218) who the Romanians see as a national symbol. It seems as if *Dracula: Untold* attempts to reconcile this Vlad Tepes and the vampire Dracula, by giving him relatable motivations of a father trying to protect his family. Whether the attempt succeeds or not depends on taste since the sympathy for Shore's Vlad Tepes is based on a very western Hollywood trope of a caring, protective father and husband, which works on the emotions of a contemporary audience, but also makes this Dracula a 21st century character, and possibly disregards some of the historical matter on which they try to base their story.

2.5 Conclusion

The widely accepted image of the historical figure Vlad Tepes is heavily influenced by the association between him and Stoker's Dracula. The idea of a sadistic dictator as the basis for a

³ Creator of *Da Vinci's Demons*

monstrous vampire is heavily ingrained in western culture, but many Romanians try to resist the connection, because Vlad Tepes is a national symbol, who was a good ruler in his time. Associating Vlad Tepes with Dracula became popular because of research and publications from the second half of the twentieth century and since then it has been used in many modern adaptations, such as Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. A few recent adaptations have put Vlad the Impaler back into his historical setting, such as *Dracula: Untold* and *Da Vinci's Demons*. These two portray Vlad Tepes very differently, but both portrayals have their roots in cultural influences of past adaptations and perceptions of both the historical and the fictional character. *Dracula: Untold's* portrayal of Vlad Tepes as a brave and fair ruler is something that might seem strange to a modern audience who are familiar with the idea of Dracula as a ruthless dictator. The portrayal has more in common with the Romanian national hero, and the film seems to want to reconcile Stoker's vampire and his adaptations with the Romanian idea of the historical figure.

3: *Dracula: Untold* within the Context of Contemporary Medievalisms

Dracula: Untold is different from most other adaptations which often take place in either the nineteenth century, such as adaptations that try keep the story in the novel's setting like *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, or the late twentieth, or early twenty-first century, when the filmmakers want to use a modern setting. Placing the story in fifteenth century Transylvania makes the story a historical fantasy. The medieval setting is a popular choice for modern film, and many scholars have published cultural analyses on the modern perception and representation of the medieval. This chapter will discuss how scholars define and categorize modern medievalism, and how *Dracula: Untold* fits into this definition.

3.1 Eco's Medievalism

The classification of medievalism by Umberto Eco was already discussed in chapter one. His classifications of representations as "types" of medievalism can also be applied to *Dracula: Untold*. The film fits in with the Middle Ages as a Barbaric Age, due to its portrayal of the setting as "a land of elementary outlaw feelings" (Eco, *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality* 69) The medieval setting of the film is one where powerful people, such as Mehmed II, are able to prey on the weak without consequence or punishment. A setting like this makes room for the masculine fantasy of a male hero, being forced to use violence as a necessary evil in order to protect people. As Umberto Eco explains, these Middle Ages are both used as an example of how much more civilised modern society has become, and as a setting where "one

is asked to celebrate, on this earth of virile, brute force, the glories of a new Aryanism.” (69) Male characters in this setting are expected to be either violent raiders and suppressers, think of the stereotypical Viking raiding defenceless villages, or the protective fatherly figure, using the same violence against the former archetype. Vlad’s wife and son *Dracula: Untold*, while scared of the monstrous creature Vlad has chosen to become, forgive him once they understand his reason for doing so was to protect him. The audience is meant to understand in the same way that Dracula’s actions are necessary because there is no other way to protect Vlad’s small country from such a large threat as the Turkish empire, in a barbaric medieval setting.

The film also fits in with Eco’s definition of the Middle Ages as a pretext. (68) This definition goes as follows “there is no real interest in the historical background; the middle ages are taken as a sort of mythological stage on which to place contemporary characters.” Dracula in *Dracula: Untold* is a contemporary character, because he is a product of the modern view on Vlad Tepes as a historical character, and the influence of previous adaptations of Stoker’s novel (see chapter 2). The film does not seem to concern itself with historical accuracy. Something that is obvious from the incorporation of the fantastical magical abilities and weaknesses of vampires. The portrayal of Dracula as a protective husband and father also marks him as a contemporary figure. There is not much academic research to be found on this trope, but it is often used in popular culture: the strong male father figure wishes to live in peace with his wife and child. He wants a happy fairytale ending, but some threat to his family makes the fulfilment of his desire impossible.

This archetype of the protective family man is something not traditionally associated with vampires. It is part of a more recent development in popular culture where vampires are represented not as others, or undead monsters one show fear and destroy, but as unfortunate, misunderstood immortals with human feelings one can sympathise with. “We now have “good” vampires who live in families and communities, rather than alone.” (Jennings and Wilson 165) Jennings and Wilson’s article also analyses the modern archetype of the vampire searching for his soul mate as something that has become popular in 21st century romantic vampire fiction. This archetype has become popular in adaptations of *Dracula*, where the titular character is searching for the reincarnation of his wife. Coppola, while he was not the first director to incorporate this plot, seems to have laid the groundwork for the archetype’s popularity. *Dracula: Untold* tells the story of how Vlad fails to protect his wife, with whom he has hopes of meeting again in the next life: “Why think separately of this life and the next,

when one is born from the last?" (Shore) These hopes eventually transform into his desire to connect with Mina, who is implied to be Mirena's reincarnation, in modern times.

Vlad's character in *Dracula: Untold* exhibits characteristics of the masculine archetype of the strong husband and father with a desire to protect his family. He also is also portrayed as a sympathetic character, whose motivations make him fit into the archetype of the romantic vampire looking for his soul mate. These characteristics of Dracula as a character mark him as a product of 21st century popular archetypes, who is placed within the historical setting of the Middle Ages. However this setting is not used so the audience will better understand the setting. Instead it is taken as a pretext, which "helps one [...] enjoy the fictional characters." (Eco, Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality 69)

3.2 Neomedievalism and Movie Medievalism

More recently scholars have developed new ways of analysing the way the medieval is presented in modern fiction. The most notable classifications in this field of cultural and literary analysis are neomedievalism, and movie medievalism. KellyAnn Fitzpatrick and David W. Marshall both discuss neomedievalism in their articles which were published in 2011. They both go into detail about what makes neomedievalism so difficult to define as a cultural phenomenon. Both seem to agree on the fact that the historical accuracy, or supposed historical accuracy has no real place in neomedievalism. Neomedievalist stories often takes place in a fictionalised version of the Middle Ages, in order to suit the writers' imagination, and to create an appropriate setting for the characters they want to portray and develop. There is a certain importance in the medieval, or fictionalised medieval setting of neomedieval fiction. Fitzpatrick explains and that it is generally believed that neomedievalism is not based on the nostalgia which other medievalisms seem to hang on to (12). Marshall's view is similar because he says that neomedievalism "has no concern for a veracious relationship to the past" and "no concern for accuracy or a real historical pastness," (23) but there does seem to be a certain allure to the genre of neomedievalism as a form of escapism. The fictionalised version of the medieval still exhibits aesthetic features that are recognisably medieval, while the events of the setting, whether they are based on alternate historical timelines, or on a new world history based on the writer's imagination, has no real influence on the real world, thus the audience does not need to relate it to real world events.

To what extent the world which the writer creates is fictional can differ, depending on the writer's imagination or preferences. Tolkien, for example created a fictional world based

on the early middle ages, and European folklore, where magic and fantastical creatures such as elves exist. His inspiration for his Middle Earth came from historically accurate sources, to which he had access as a university professor, but the world and its history were his own creation. Fitzpatrick uses the online game *World of Warcraft* (2004) as an example, which also takes place in a fantasy world with medieval aesthetic features. Fantasy games such as that are often believed to be the legacy of Tolkien's work. They take place in a fictional universe, with its own history, lore, and natural laws, which are generally based on some form of magic or magical deity. While historical and contemporary real world events are sometimes subtly referred to, through for example metaphor, there is no trace of true historical accuracy. On the other hand, there are stories which take place in real historical settings, but in which certain things are changed about the world, such as the addition of the existence of magic. Harry Brown uses the video game *Assassin's Creed* (2007) as an example, which takes place during the third crusade in the 12th century, but incorporates a conspiracy by the Knights Templar to control the world through a magical artefact (6). *Dracula: Untold* is closer to this setting, because it claims to take place in fifteenth century Transylvania, while it also incorporates the existence of vampires. These settings do not really try to tell the audience that this was really what was going on in the period it is set in. All they seem to do is add something fictional to an otherwise real period of history, which makes it possible for the writers' story to take place there. This choice of setting is similar to Eco's definition of the Middle Ages as a pretext. However there is a certain difference between the "mythological stage" (68) which Eco describes, and the one used in neomedievalism, because it is not just unconcerned with the historical background of its setting. It also uses imagination and influence from other stories, and mythology to adapt the setting in such a way that it no longer has any real bearing on the real world. The setting can then be used for a type of escapism, which is largely free of nostalgia.

Haydock's definition of movie medievalism is different from Marshall and Fitzpatrick's definition of neomedievalism, because he says that many of films set in a historical period are often advertised as telling the real story of their respective topic. The marketing of the film before its release is often paired with "claims of Rigorous fidelity, new discoveries, or fresh interpretations of all the available evidence." (Haydock 7). An example of such a film is the 2004 version of *King Arthur*, whose marketing claimed to be telling the real story behind King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, and that they were telling a historically accurate story based on actual historical sources, even though Arthurian legend

has always been fictional. Katarína Mináriková explores to what extent this claim is true. Her impression is that there was a genuine intention in making the film to be as historically accurate as possible, but she also concludes that “although the film claims to be a reproduction of the true life of Arthur and his contemporaries, it fails to deliver a believable historical background.” (45) Haydock criticizes this practise of advertising historical accuracy, because the intention of the filmmakers is not to gather an audience of academics, or learned people who want to expand or reflect on their historical knowledge, “but rather to lay the framework for the film’s reality effect and to authorize it as a site of what Lacan calls imaginary identification for a mass audience.” (7)

Dracula: Untold also tries to market itself as the revelation the real story of Vlad Dracula to an extent. The subtitle “Untold” already implies that this film will give new insight into, or bring light to new revelations about the essentially fictional story that Vlad the Impaler was a vampire. The voice-over of Dracula’s son during the epilogue of the film adds to this effect. The boy, who has taken on his father’s mantel, is aware of the sacrifices which his father made for him and for his people. The boy seems to be speaking to the audience as if to end his story by telling the audience that he has just revealed the true story of Dracula and Vlad the Impaler, which has been lost to history: “Prince Vlad was a hero, but there are no pictures or statues of him” (Shore)

3.3 The Shift of the Role of the Other in a 21st Century film

There seems to be a shift in archetypes in *Dracula: Untold*. Vlad is no longer the master vampire who has a number of vampire minions at his command. Instead he is called the minion in the power dynamic between him and the ancient vampire, played by Charles Dance, who gives him his power. He is also no longer the other in the film, as he is in the novel. The invading force in this story is the Turkish Empire, embodied by the ruthless sultan Mehmed II. He is the dangerous other, who is portrayed as something to be feared, but he exhibits no characteristics of romanticised Middle Eastern archetypes that would also make him a fascinating, or alluring other. The sultan is portrayed as a cruel man, misusing his power by demanding outrageous tribute from his vassal Dracula and the Transylvanians. Vlad tries to appeal to the history he and Mehmed have when they were growing up at his father’s court, but Mehmed is power hungry and merciless. He demands a thousand young boys be given to him, as hostages and to train them to be loyal soldiers to his empire. It becomes an unreasonable ultimatum, where not giving in to his demands will bring more war and

destruction upon the land. This threat of war becomes a reality when Dracula cannot bring himself to give up his son as a hostage as his father did. This threat of the Turkish Empire has at least some historical roots. Christopher Tyerman explains that after the official crusades of the late Middle Ages, a culture of unofficial crusading existed. He says that this culture went paired with a general fear of invasion by the Ottoman Empire. (30) Certain points in *Dracula: Untold* embody this fear. One of Vlad's men exclaims "Soon the entire world will be Turk," (Shore) at the sight of the number of soldier in the Turkish encampment. This line quite explicitly tells of the fear of Turkish domination, in which the Transylvanians live. Other, more subtle signs denote that Vlad and the Transylvanians are already at the mercy of the Turks as a small country with a weak army that is located right at the border between the Turkish Empire and the rest of Europe. An example of this is the scene where the Turkish emissary strides into Vlad's home during the Easter celebration and the tension that this event brings about. Vlad is not happy with the emissary's presence, but he cannot refuse his demands, because of the threat of war. These parts of the movie work together to create a sense of dread. Instilling fear in the audience for the Turkish villain, and sympathy for the Transylvanian people who are threatened by them. As a result, the Turkish Empire is portrayed as the other, since there is little known about them except that they are power hungry and cruel towards their vassal states. A very important part of the film which contributes to this is the film's prologue, which is narrated by a voice-over of Dracula's son Inegras⁴. It tells the story of how the Turks kidnapped a thousand Transylvanian boys to serve at child soldier-slaves in the Sultan's Army, Vlad being one of them. The description and visual imagery of the boys being whipped and trained to kill conveys that these boys were treated very badly. "These child slaves were beaten without mercy, trained to kill without conscience." (Shore) The description does not complete match with the historical account of Vlad III's time at the Turkish court. Vorsino says that Vlad and his brother were "educated by the best minds of the ottoman empire"(12) The imagery of the boys being whipped does have some basis, because Vorsino also says that Vlad was often beaten due to his behaviour as an "ill-tempered student," also the cage they lived in during their time there may have been a golden one but they were still hostages, taken captive to make sure their father obey the sultan's wishes, but their stay there was probably a lot less horrible than the film makes it out to be. The intention of this prologue is to show the cruelty and horrible influence of the

⁴ Played by Art Parkinson

Turkish Empire. It is also meant to justify Vlad's violent actions, as something he was trained into doing.

3.4 The Son of the Dragon versus the Son of the Devil

The distinction between the two meanings of the word Dracula, which are both "son of the dragon" and "devil", is very significant in *Dracula: Untold*. Dracula corrects the ancient vampire in the cave when the latter calls him "son of the devil". (Shore) Dracula says that his name means "son of the dragon, protector of the innocent." (Shore) This happens early on in the film, when Dracula is not yet a vampire. However, he seems to have changed his mind during the final confrontation with the Sultan Mehmed II, who calls him "Lord Impaler." He is also corrected – before he is killed – but this time Vlad says. "that is no longer my name. My name is Dracula, son of the devil."(Shore) This change in the meaning of his name seems to take place when Vlad's cause is no longer protecting the innocent, but revenge for his loss.

Vlad Tepes was called Dracula, or Draculea, because his father was named Dracul, dragon, after he was indoctrinated into the knightly order of the dragon. Vlad's brothers would also have used the name Son of the Dragon. The other meaning, Son of the Devil, would probably have been used more exclusively for Vlad, after his reputation as a dictator with a knack for torturous methods of punishments because was spread across Europe. In vampire fiction this meaning of Dracula is associated with the character more often, because of the idea that Vlad made a deal with the devil in to become a vampire. While the devil never shows up in person, associating him with Dracula seems almost essential, due to the Christian imagery which is always often part of his origin story. Dragons however, seem an optional choice to incorporate in vampire fiction. Dragons often make an appearance in medievalist and neo-medievalist fantasy. Luke Evans, who plays Dracula, also played the part of Bard who slays the red dragon Smaug in *The Hobbit* trilogy films which were released around the same time as *Dracula: Untold*. However, dragons remain only symbolic in *Dracula: Untold* and other vampire centric fiction, if they are used at all. In the scene leading up to the final confrontation with the sultan Mehmed II, A thunderstorm blocks out the sun to give Dracula and his vampires passage to the encampment of their enemy. This is when the motivation of protection is no longer there, because the larger part of his people has been whipped out. Dracula now only wants revenge for his wife, and to safe his son. At this point he has put on the armour which carries the image of a red dragon. The armour has only been indirectly mentioned before. It is a symbol of Vlad's time in the Turkish army when he committed many violent acts for which he was ashamed. Now, however he needs to embrace this potential for

violence and cruelty, and his monstrous nature to enact revenge on those who harmed him. The thunderstorm briefly shows the image of a dragon during a lightning strike. The scene invokes the image of a dragon being awoken from its peaceful slumber to wreak havoc on his enemies.

This symbolism of the Dragon being awakened and Dracula's acceptance of the meaning of his name being "Son of the Devil" happen around the same point in time at the end of Dracula's development as a character, and yet they seem to contradict each other. On one hand he once again wears the armour that is characteristic of a man who likes to be called Son of the Dragon, but embracing the name Son of the Devil, seems to imply that he leaves that other name behind.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided an analysis of *Dracula: Untold* through use of Umberto Eco classifications of the medieval and that of several other more recent scholars. From the analysis can be concluded that the film's medieval setting is an overlapping of Eco's Middle Ages as a pretext, and the Middle Ages as a barbaric age, because the late Middle Ages are portrayed as a near anarchistic stage for the contemporary portrayal of both the idealised masculinity of Dracula, and his characteristics as a sensitive vampire. The analysis of neomedievalism proved difficult, because there exists a general consensus that it is hard to define, but that fiction which applies neomedievalism as a partially or completely fictionalised setting, where there is little to no concern for historical accuracy beyond aesthetics. *Dracula: Untold* fits into this category of medievalism, because it takes place in a fictionalised version of fifteenth century Transylvania, but its claims to be revealing the "untold" story of Dracula places it in Haydock's explanation of movie medievalism. The contemporary influences that shaped *Dracula: Untold* also reveal how the film incorporates a shift in the representation of the dangerous other, who now comes from further east in the Turkish empire. Finally, the distinction between the two meanings of the word Dracula reveal that while the dragon as a mythological animal often appears in the flesh in medieval fantasy, its role remains largely symbolic in vampire fiction that features Dracula. However the existence of the devil, while never proven by his appearance, is almost essential to the religious imagery.

Final Conclusions

Stoker's *Dracula* is a novel that shows signs of being influenced by the macabre medieval which others many Eastern European things, portraying them as either old-fashioned and ineffectual, or monstrous and threatening in modern, civilised English society. The novel does not state that Dracula was Vlad Tepes, who was called The Impaler after his death based on his preferred method of torture. However, the research and interpretation of mostly western scholars in the twentieth century have popularised this idea, to the dismay of the Romanian people when the novel and its adaptations became better known in the country. While the connection between Dracula and Vlad Tepes is a very lucrative business for drawing in tourism, there still exists a fear among the Romanian people that the historical figure and national hero is overshadowed by the more powerful fictional icon.

Furthermore, the influence of the development of the connection between Dracula and Vlad Tepes cannot so easily be removed from the collective cultural consciousness, and the association is easy to trigger, even when placing him back into his historical setting without any conformation that he is undead. *Dracula: Untold* takes a different route, and tries to reconcile the Romanian national hero, with the fictional monster, by portraying Dracula as a tragic hero whose surroundings in a medieval barbaric age, forced him to become a monster to protect the ones he loves. The masculine archetype of the protective father, and the romantic archetype of the sensitive vampire are both 21st century tropes in popular fiction that make Vlad a contemporary character set in the Middle Ages as a pretext. This medieval setting is partly fictionalised to allow for the existence of supernatural forces, which allows for an experience of the medieval that exhibits medieval aesthetics, but is largely free of nostalgia for medieval ways of living, which is what 19th century medievalism was largely based on.

In conclusion, 21st century representations of the medieval may have certain similarities with the 19th century cultural ideas and ideals of the medieval. However analysing the medieval aspects of the 21st century adaptation of a 19th century novel, set in the late Middle Ages does not result in an in depth understanding of these similarities. Further research might still reveal new insights, perhaps if the researcher focuses on a different genre of film less influenced by the heavy impact of popular culture. Whether there is need for further research on *Dracula* and its adaptations is a matter of opinion, since a lot of research

has already been done, but a scholarly analysis of the popularity of vampires in popular culture in the early 21st century would probably prove an interesting read.

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