

# CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT DRACULA CONGRESS

## OFFICIAL BULLETIN OF THE BRAȘOV CONGRESS INITIATIVE



## THE TRUE SOURCE OF MAKT MYRKRANNA? THE SWEDISH TRANSLATION & SERIALIZATION OF “DRACULA” FIRST AND EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH RICKARD BERGHORN



Announcement of *Mörkrets Makter* as a bonus for subscribers of *Aftonbladet*, 25 September 1899.

## SPRING ISSUE, MARCH 2017

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## A GREETING WORD FROM OUR INITIATORS

Braşov/Munich/Lublin, 5 March 2017

Dear colleagues and candidate-participants,

After evaluating the results of our Facebook poll about the most suitable date for the first conference in our planned series and discussing our options with the administration of the Transilvania University of Braşov and the organizers of the Dracula Film Festival in Braşov, we have now officially booked the required space in the grand aula of the University's new Conference Centre, for **17-18-19 October 2018**. We still have to fill in the precise schedule for these three days and the optional excursion(s) on Saturday 20 October 2018 – details will be published on our Facebook page and on our website.

Now that the date is fixed and candidate speakers can start planning their travel and their conference contribution, the time is ripe for yet another platform: This **conference news bulletin** will offer an opportunity not only to announce official conference news, but also to publish notes and articles on current research in the field of Dracula Studies that may be relevant for the upcoming events in Braşov. Being active in academic research ourselves, we know about the need to publish research results well in time, before an exciting discovery is shared with colleagues and academic rivals may gain access to its sources, prepared to launch competing publications which may threaten or dilute the academic accomplishment of the original author. Well-established academic publications such as the *Journal of Dracula Studies* (Kutztown University), the *Gothic Studies Journal* of the International Gothic Association and the *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* have time-consuming procedures for publishing submitted articles, and although we cannot promise with certainty that we always will be able to react within a day, at least we are free to act and judge your contributions without delay, based on our combined expertise and backed by our extensive personal contacts in the field. After the success of the Fourth World Dracula Congress in Dublin in October 2016 and the termination of the official activities of the Romanian Chapter of the Transylvanian Society of Dracula (which means that the *Letter from Castle Dracula - official news bulletin of the TSD* will not be continued), we hope that especially the young researchers of Gothic and Victorian Literature & Film we met at the Dublin, Timişoara and Sighişoara Dracula conferences will appreciate this additional

channel for announcing their research findings. The copyright of your contributions will remain with you and we will show you how to register your article with the US Copyright Office, for an official timestamp.

This first issue features a report by Hans Corneel de Roos, initiator of the Dublin and the Braşov conferences and editor/translator of *Powers of Darkness*, on the astonishing message he received from Swedish literary scholar, author and publisher **Rickard Berghorn**, plus the interview Hans just conducted with him.

Shortly after the official release of *Powers of Darkness* by Overlook Press, Hans received an intriguing email from Rickard, in which the editor of Aleph Bokförlag reported to be familiar with an **early Swedish adaptation of Dracula** that may have been the true basis for the subsequent Icelandic version published by Valdimar Ásmundsson. Over the last few days, Hans tried to check this thrilling claim, and his interview with Rickard published here is the first in which the latter explains about his groundbreaking discovery.

Needless to say, we are very excited to inform you about this surprising turn of events, that within weeks after the official publication of *Powers of Darkness* will add important background information about the early Scandinavian modifications of *Dracula*. A part of the still young theories about Valdimar Ásmundsson's sources and his possible communication with Bram Stoker may need to be updated; again, the publication and reception history of Stoker's vampire novel will experience a true shock. Hans himself values this as positive result of his book publication, together with Dacre Stoker and John Edgar Browning: without the international publicity generated by the Overlook book launch on 7 February 2017, this still earlier Swedish version would not have been identified as the possible matrix for the Icelandic one. Thanks to Rickard's alertness and cooperation, the international community of *Dracula* fans and scholars will now be informed about this amazing link.

Enjoy reading – and consider sending us your own articles for publication!

Florin Nechita, Hans C. de Roos & Magdalena Grabias,  
Initiators of the Children of the Night Congress Series

# SWEDEN'S *MÖRKRETS MAKTER*: THE SOURCE OF VALDIMAR ÁSMUNDSSON'S *MAKT MYRKRANNA*?

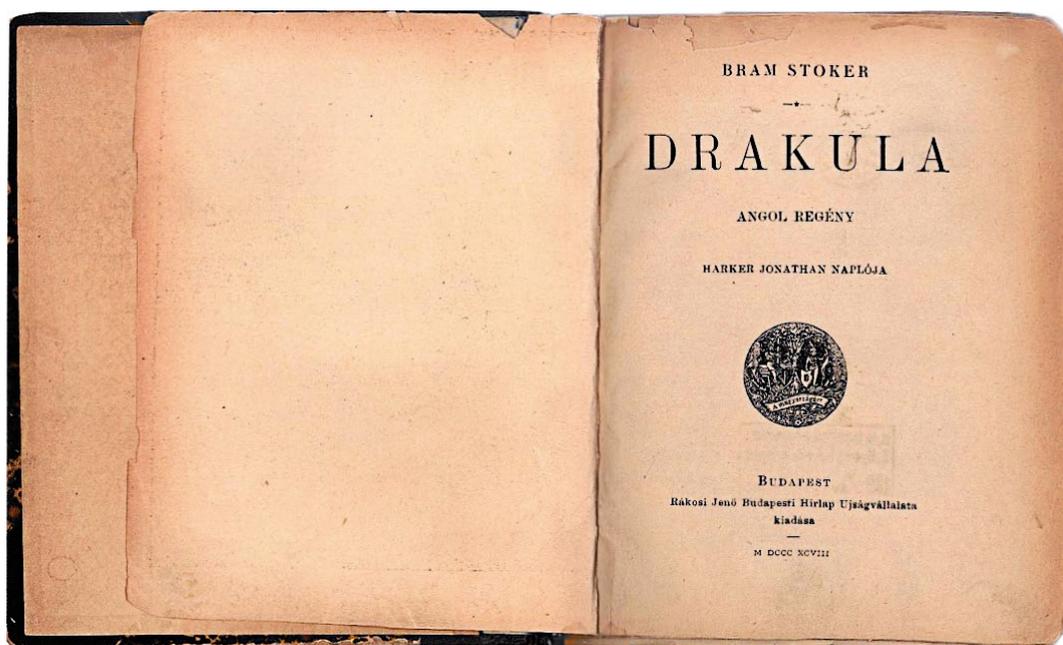
A new surprising discovery may reveal the true backgrounds of the Icelandic version of *Dracula*

By Hans C. de Roos, Munich

In less than three weeks after Overlook Press, New York, released *Powers of Darkness*, my annotated translation of *Makt myrkranna*, which received numerous positive reviews, the publication of the Icelandic version of *Dracula* already sparked fresh research findings, as the international buzz around the book reached a country that has not been charted yet on the map of academic *Dracula* research: Sweden. For fans of suspense, this country is especially known for its recent tradition of police & crime literature. In the 1970s, Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö had an international breakthrough with their stories around police detective Martin Beck, and today, authors such as Henning Mankell, Åke Edwardson, Stieg Larsson and Håkan Nesser lead the bestseller lists in the field of heinous manslaughter. It also has a – much less known – undercurrent of weird and fantasy literature (see the following interview). But not even my colleague, the Italian book hunter Simone Berni, ever suspected that Sweden may have been home to an early translation and serialization of *Dracula*, that preceded the Icelandic version and even started earlier than the first US serialization in the *Charlotte Observer* (from 16 July till 10 December, 1899) unearthed by David Skal.

Although Berni must be credited for locating a copy of the first translation of *Dracula* ever in the Hungarian National Library (see my report in *Letter from Castle Dracula* of June 2016, presenting the preceding Hungarian serialization in *Magyar Hirlap*), his book *DRACULA by BRAM STOKER – The Mystery of the Early Editions* (2016) does not mention Sweden at all.

Today, another fantasy fiction aficionado will step into the spotlight. On returning from my work visit to the Philippines on Thursday, I checked through my emails and between the tons of SPAM spotted a message that had been submitted through the contact form of my website [www.powersofdarkness.com](http://www.powersofdarkness.com). The sender had signed with the name Rickard Berghorn, which – according to the Swedish Wikipedia – is the pseudonym of Anders Karl Johan Svensson (\*1972), a Swedish author, translator and former editor of the horror magazine *Minotaur*. Currently, Berghorn is operating [Aleph bokförlag](http://Aleph bokförlag), a small publishing company, focusing on early horror and fantasy authors such as William Hope Hodgson, H. P. Lovecraft, Aurora Ljungstedt, Edgar Allan Poe and Steven Savile. He also runs [Timaos Press](http://Timaos Press) (classical works).



The first book edition of the Hungarian translation of *Dracula*, published 1898. Image: courtesy Simone Berni.

In his message, Berghorn informed me that upon reading the news around my book *Powers of Darkness*, he saw a connection with an early Swedish translation of *Dracula* that bore the same name as the Icelandic version: *Mörkrets makter*, which literally means “Powers of Darkness” and obviously is the Swedish pendant of the expression “Makt myrkranna.” According to Berghorn, the translation and serialization in *Fjallkonan*, starting in January 1900, would represent an abridged version of this more complete Swedish adaptation, that would contain scenes and paragraphs neither present in *Dracula* nor in *Makt Myrkranna*. Unlike the Icelandic story, the Swedish modification would never have been printed in book form, however – Berghorn announced to fill this gap soon by a Swedish book edition to be launched by Aleph.

As the reader can imagine, I was shocked and thrilled at the same time. Three years after I found out that *Makt Myrkranna* was no ordinary translation of *Dracula* at all – which triggered serious questions about the publication history of Stoker’s novel – Berghorn’s message now seems to imply that Ásmundsson may have used the Swedish newspaper serialization as a source, instead of – or next to – the 1897 Constable edition or an earlier draft or notes provided by Bram Stoker himself. The identical title indeed already suggests that Valdimar worked from the Swedish text, rather than from an English manuscript or from the published novel. In the interview following this article, Rickard will explain, among others, how he came to this conclusion and why he believes that Stoker must have actively contributed to the Swedish version. This means that instead of searching for a direct contact between Stoker and Ásmundsson, we now should better look for a possible communication between the Irish author and the Swedish newspapermen who launched this modified version of *Dracula* during the year 1899.

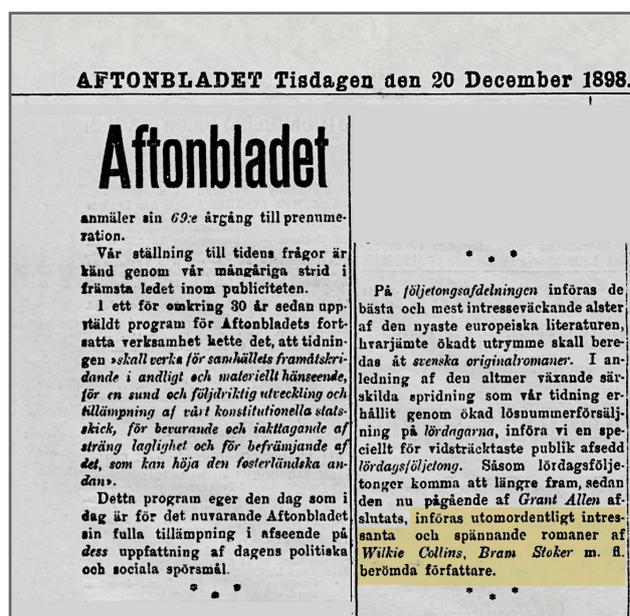
My first duty was to try and check Rickard’s extraordinary claim and have the existence of this early Swedish adaptation confirmed by official sources.

On the website of the [Miskatonic University Press](#) (named after a fictitious place described by Lovecraft and run by Rickard’s friend and colleague Jan Reimer), I found the following overview, stating that this early Swedish version of *Dracula* had been serialized not only once, but *three* times, in different newspapers or magazines:

- *Mörkrets makter (Dracula)*, in *Dagen*, 10 June 1899 - 7 February 1900
- *Mörkrets makter (Dracula)*, in *Aftonbladets Halfvecko-upplaga*, 16 August 1899 - 31 March 1900
- *Mörkrets makter (Dracula)*, in *Tip-Top*, nr 40-52 1916, nr 1-52 1917, nr 1-4 1918

As I also found out – and just has been confirmed by Rickard’s answers to my interview questions – the newspapers *Dagen* and *Aftonbladet* (literally: *Evening Newspaper*) had the same owners, and had their management and Editor-in-Chief in common: Harald Sohlman (1858–1927), member of the Sohlman dynasty that managed the *Aftonbladet* newspaper group during the period 1851–1929. Just like Valdimar Ásmundsson, Harald Sohlman was a Liberal, advocating free trade. But unlike Valdimar, he adopted a conservative stance, opposing the independence of Norway and the rise of Socialism in Sweden. During World War I, Sohlman entered into a secret agreement with the Germans, giving them control over the newspaper group and allowing them to spread pro-German propaganda in Sweden.

Although the complete scans of three subsequent serializations are not available to me yet, I managed to locate the announcements published in *Aftonbladet* of 20, 24 and 28 December 1898 respectively.



Announcement of Stoker’s work to appear in *Aftonbladet*.

Presenting its program for the year 1899, *Aftonbladet* highlights, among others, its literary supplement, which will pay attention to Swedish novels, but also feature fiction from abroad, which – after the ending of the story by Grant Allen – will include the “extraordinary interesting and thrilling novels by Wilkie Collins, Bram Stoker and other famous authors.” Similarly, the serialization of *Makt Myrkranna* in *Fjallkonan* is preceded by an extensive program for the year 1900, highlighting the paper’s various elements and promising the subscribers more high-quality reading material, justifying an increased subscription price of 4 instead of 3 Crowns. (*Fjallkonan* of 13 January 1900, frontpage).

# MÖRKRETS MAKTER

ROMAN

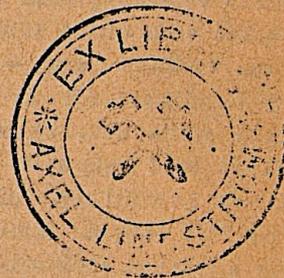
AF

BRAM STOKER

SVENSK BEARBETNING FÖR *DAGEN*

AF

A—e



FÖRORD AF UTGIFVAREN.

Huru dessa papper blifvit samlade samt ordnade till ett sammanhängande helt, förde blifva läsaren klart under berättelsens gång. Min uppgift har endast varit så vidt som möjligt utesluta öfverflödiga detaljer, samt för öfrigt låta de personerna sjelfva meddela sina erfarenheter i den okonstlade derade i *Dagen* början blifvit upptecknade. Jag har äfven af lätt förklarliga också oformliga åtskilliga såväl ords- som personnamn, som för öfrigt strimlor föllö ned de personers önskan som därmed ansett sig uppfylla en ett ord. Jag önskar brändadt och i sitt ursprungliga skick åt offentligheten, som hvarken med min övertygelse icke en skymt af tvifvel att de här tressanta som möter kligen egt rum, huru obannolika och oförklarliga de egendomliga figurer jag härda äga erfarenhetens synpunkt. Oförklar- om möjligt mera ocivilisat, gelse, dock delvis ännu icke blifva — ehuru det ofantliga slokhattar, vida, ridande forskning på det dolda själslifvets

Scan of the first page of the Swedish version. It is called a "Swedish adaptation for *Dagen* by A—e"

The preface is named "Forörd af utgifvaren," meaning "Preface by the editor." Only the next page will reveal if this preface is signed with Stoker's initials, as it is in the Icelandic version, or if A—e accepts the responsibility for it; as it is written in the first person singular, its author should be authentic with the author/editor of the whole narrative. The first lines of the preface match the text as we know it from *Makt mykranna*, suggesting that the by now internationally famous "Icelandic preface" in fact was derived from the earlier Swedish preface.

Another similarity that struck my eye was the way in which the serialization of this vampire novel was used to attract new readers. In *Aftonbladet* of Monday, 31 July 1899, we find an announcement that readers who on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday of that week will be buying single copies of *Dagen* will receive a free copy of the 168 pages that had been printed of *Mörkrets makter* up to that date.



**Dagens följetong.**

Den som  
**i morgon (tisdag)**  
 eller på nästkommande  
**onsdag och torsdag**  
 inom Stockholm köper lösnummer af  
 Dagen, erhåller  
**gratis**  
 det hittills tryckta,  
**168 sidor,**  
 af tidningens allmänt omtyckta,  
 ytterst spännande följetong:  
**Mörkrets makter.**



Similar advertisements appeared in *Aftonbladet* of 2 August 1899, in *Dagens Nyheter* of 1, 2, 3 and 4 August 1899, and in *Svenska Dagbladet* of 3 August 1899, the special offer always being valid for the same and/or subsequent days of the week. In *Dagens Nyheter* of 4 August, the size of the promised reprint has increased to 180 pages. The advertisement addresses buyers of single news paper copies of *Dagen* and offers “180 pages supplement as a separate print [*separattryck*] of the extremely thrilling and lively written novel *Mörkrets makter*, currently appearing in *Dagen*, that has raised extraordinary interest.”



**Gratis!**

erhåller enhver i Stockholm, så långt upp-  
 lagan hinner till, som  
**i dag**  
 köper lösnummer af Dagen  
**180 sidor följetong,**  
 separattryck af den nu i Dagen pågående  
 ytterst spännande och liffullt skrifna  
**Romanen**  
**Mörkrets makter,**  
 som väckt ett  
**utomordentligt uppseende.**

Lösnummerpris 2 öre.  
**Skynda!**



Left: *Aftonbladet* of Monday, 31 July 1899  
 Right: *Dagens Nyheter* of Friday, 4 August 1899

The advertisement in *Aftonbladet* of 4 September 1899 shows that by then, the serialization had reached almost 300 pages, which were offered as a free bonus to buyers of single copies of *Dagen*. An identical advertisement appeared in *Dagens Nyheter* of the same day.

**300 boksidor följetong gratis!**

En hvar, som Måndag, Tisdag eller Onsdag i denna vecka köper lösnummer af **DAGEN** å något af de försäljningsställen inom hufvudstaden, där tidningen finnes till salu, erhåller gratis på begäran — så långt upplagan räcker — den hittills tryckta delen, utgörande nära 300 stora boksidor, af tidningens allmänt omtyckta, ytterst spännande följetong

• **Mörkrets makter** •

**Dagens lösnummerpris 2 öre.**

*Aftonbladet* of 4 September 1899

Another type of advertisement can be found in *Göteborgs Aftonbladet* of 25 September 1899, that offers the bonus present to quarterly subscribers of the “halfvecko-upplaga” of *Aftonbladet*, appearing twice a week (see image on the title page of this news bulletin)

As we remember from my previous research on *Makt myrkranna*, Ásmundsson used an identical strategy to attract new buyers or subscribers for *Fjallkonan*; his advertisement appeared only in April 1901, however, after the Icelandic serialization had been completed. I cannot judge yet whether such promotional offers belonged to the standard practice of the newspapers of that time, or if Ásmundsson not only copied the content appearing in *Dagen* and *Aftonbladet*, but also the specific marketing methods of the *Aftonbladet* newspaper group.

A further parallel: although Rickard Berghorn stated that *Mörkrets makter* did not appear as a book edition, the size of the separate reprint differs from that of the newspaper itself; as we can see from the scan showing the start of the preface, the reprint was produced in octavo format, just like the book version of *Makt myrkranna*. I even suspect that the Icelandic book edition of August 1901 was issued with a soft cover, featuring an additional bluish title page, while the hardcover bindings we know now from various copies in libraries and private collections may have been added only later on – the bluish title page having been removed in most cases.

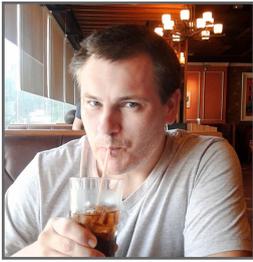
An article in *Fjallkonan* of 6 July 1898, page 102, evidences that Ásmundsson did not put it past himself to copy articles from other newspapers. Under the title *Stórveldi og smáríki* (*Great powers and small countries*), Valdimar discusses the balance of powers between larger and smaller countries, concluding that the larger entities in the end will prevail against the smaller ones: “How are 10 million Scandinavians to fight war against 50 million Germans, or 130 million Russians?” As the source of the article, *Fjallkonan* mentions *Aftonbladet*.

**FJALLKONAN 1901,**

Nýir kaupendur að Fjallkonunni 1901 fá í kaupbæti:

Þrjú sérprentuð söguöfn blaðsins í allstóru broti yfir 200 bls., meðan þau hrökkva, með mjög mörgum skemtisögum, eða „Makt myrkranna“ sérprentaða.

*Fjallkonan* of 13 April 1901



Rickard Berghorn, Bangkok

These provisory and rather hasty investigations needed to check the seriosity and scope of Rickard Berghorn's claim cannot answer the key questions raised by the announcement of his stunning discovery, of course.<sup>1</sup> We will have to wait for the full Swedish text and for Berghorn's own research notes, which will be presented in a Swedish reprint of *Mörkrets makter* by the end of this month, and later in an English translation. Only then, we can judge to what extent *Makt myrkranna* is derived from the Swedish serialization, and to what degree it is unique. It would be interesting to find out, for example, whether *Mörkrets makter* equally contains the plot elements that I suspect to be based on Stoker's early concept for the novel, such as the deaf and mute housekeeper woman, the Count visits to Lucy's sickbed or the East-London location of Carfax and Seward's asylum. Moreover, I wonder if the the hints to the Norse sagas contained in the Icelandic version were copied from the Swedish text, or rather added by Ásmundsson himself.

Another riddle that remains is whether the Scandinavian adaptations were created with Bram Stoker's consent and possibly with his active cooperation, or if *Mörkrets makter* instead was the product of piracy. Sweden signed the Berne Convention only in 1904, so that the serializations in *Dagen* and in *Aftonbladets Halfvecko-upplaga* were not hindered by international copyright restrictions yet. But the third serialization in *Tip-Top*, starting in 1916, must either have been authorized by Stoker still during his lifetime, or by Florence<sup>2</sup> – or it must have violated the Berne Convention already ratified by Sweden. As we can read in the following interview, Rickard believes that Stoker must have actively contributed to the text.

Last but not least, I would be curious to learn who has been hiding behind the pseudonym "A—e". Was it Harald Sohlman himself, possibly using a code for "Aftonbladets editor"? Both in Hungary and in Iceland, the Editors-in-

1 In his message of 17 February 2017 to me and in our subsequent correspondence, Rickard gave me permission to pass it to others; he actively supported the publication of this news bulletin. The credits for unearthing *Mörkrets makter* and discovering its connection to *Makt myrkranna* are due to Rickard Berghorn alone. All additional research in online newspaper archives was performed by me on 2-3 March 2017, using clippings and illustrations that are in the public domain. The scan of the first page of *Mörkrets makter* was provided by courtesy of the Swedish Royal Library.

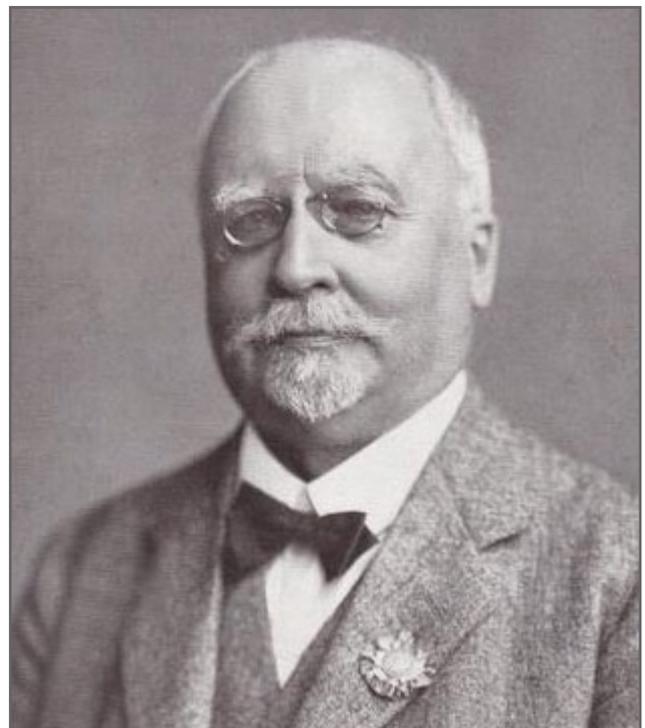
2 A option we can safely exclude, given her comments on the *Dracula* serialization in *Argosy: The Word's Best Short Stories* in 1921: "It is now being serialized for the first time,...."  
 "...I have willingly given my permission to the Editor to publish it in serial form.

Chief had personally executed the translation – would it have been different in Sweden? Again, I must refer to the interview, as Rickard announces to have a rather precise idea about this; we must leave it to him to explain his theory later on, when the time is ripe for this.

For now, I am content to have been informed about this exciting connection and been given the chance to rethink my theories on the origins of *Makt myrkranna*, an issue that has become of great interest to many fans and scholars of Gothic fiction over the past few years.

Munich, 5 March 2017

Hans Corneel de Roos



Harald Sohlman, Editor-in-Chief of *Aftonbladet* and *Dagen*, in 1926. From the cover of *Hvar-8-Dag Illustrerad Veckotidning*, Nr. 47/1926.

With many thanks to Rickard Berghorn, for sharing his discovery with me and allowing me to pass it on, and to Magdalena Grabias, Florin Nechita and Pienette Coetzee for their helpful comments.

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**De Roos, Hans.** "Buda-Pesth seems a wonderful place" How a Hungarian newspaperman produced *Dracula's* very first translation and serialisation. Letter from *Castle Dracula*, June 2016.

# MÖRKRETS MAKTER: EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH SWEDISH LITERARY SCHOLAR RICKARD BERGHORN

Email-interview conducted by Hans C. de Roos, Munich/Bangkok, 4/5 March 2017

► 1. How did you get across this early Swedish adaptation of *Dracula*? What was your first reaction?

It was fairly simple. I read the English translation and presentation of *Makt myrkranna – Powers of Darkness* in your direct English translation – and it hit me that the first Swedish translation of *Dracula* had the same title in Swedish, *Mörkrets makter*. I looked it up with help from my friend Jan Reimer in Sweden, since I live in Bangkok myself. It was published 1899-1900 as “a Swedish adaptation” in the newspaper *Dagen* and almost simultaneously in the half-week edition of *Aftonbladet*; two papers with the same owner and almost the same editorial staff at this time. I took for granted that *Mörkrets makter* would be the same version as *Makt myrkranna*, but it turned out to be **the** lost version of *Dracula*. The Icelandic version is a severely abridged version of this full novel, which is without any sketchy parts or chapters. The Icelandic version lacks, for example, the Renfield character, but he is back here, and the second and third part of the novel are told in diary and journal forms exactly as in the 1897 version of *Dracula*. The novel as a whole is longer than the original version of *Dracula*.

► 2. How is it possible, you think, that no other literary scholar in Sweden ever paid attention to this?

Part of the answer is that *Mörkrets makter* was never published in book form. However, the same thing happened in Sweden as in Iceland: literary scholars in Sweden actually know about this Swedish translation and adaptation since long, but obviously nobody really read the text; and if they did it, they didn't understand the significance of it. Furthermore, I am one of very few experts in the country who is also interested in Gothic and horror fiction. The research into Swedish weird fiction is in many parts almost ridiculously neglected, as I show in my book series *Svenska sällsamheter* (“Swedish Weird”). An example on this is that a wonderful author, Aurora Ljungstedt – one of the most widely-read and famous authors in Sweden during the 19<sup>th</sup> century – was totally forgotten even among literary scholars until the end of the last century, obviously because she wrote gothic novels, horror and sensational novels. She was the Swedish equivalent to respected authors such as Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and Wilkie Collins, but Swedish fiction researchers are generally not interested in “light” literature like this.

► 3. Do you have any reason to believe – or not to believe – that Bram Stoker authorized this Swedish adaptation, or even personally contributed to it?

I have no idea how much of this version is written by Bram Stoker himself. It can be the whole novel, or he provided the notes and ground structure to the unknown editor and translator named “A—e” (I have some good speculations about who this was). I think he was very much involved, because nothing else make sense. The whole novel, as different as it is, is written in Stoker's manner. In the Swedish version we find many extended descriptions of the local ethnography and folklore that we can't find in the 1897 version of *Dracula* or in the Icelandic version, and you can't expect that some editor or literary hack would delve into this topic to the same extent as Bram Stoker himself did. And all these almost lovecraftian ideas about apelike, degenerated ancient ancestors to *Dracula* (or “Draculitz” in the novel)<sup>1</sup> living in the oldest vaults and caves under the castle are things that only an author with a very vivid and original imagination can create – in other words, Stoker himself.

► 4. As a reader of Gothic fiction, which version of *Dracula* do you personally like more: Stoker's novel of 1897 or the Swedish adaptation of 1899?

Stoker's novel of 1897 appears as the more artistic version, in a conventional meaning, with hints and allusions rather than direct explanations. In this version, the sexual and erotic content is very much more explicit and obviously consciously described; and perhaps this is one of the main reasons why Bram Stoker wanted this version to be published in Nordic countries after it was censored in Victorian, puritan England. Many *Dracula* scholars have also seen the hints to social Darwinism in the 1897 novel; even this aspect is very much clearer here; in fact, this version can, on one level, be read as a satire on social Darwinism, with *Dracula* regarding himself as the prime example of a new master race with a natural right to conquer the world, and his degenerated clan members acting as simple-minded minions. I don't really care about a comparison; both versions have their advantages and setbacks, but together, they form a more fascinating whole.

**Thank you, Rickard, for this interesting interview.**

<sup>1</sup> In *Fjallkonan* and the 1901 book edition of *Makt myrkranna*, we also find the spellings “Drakulitz” and “Draculitz,” which have been removed from the 1950 and the 2011 editions – HDR.