

2003

Michel Beheim, German Meistergesang, and Dracula

David B. Dickens

Washington & Lee University

Elizabeth Miller

Follow this and additional works at: <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/dracula-studies>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Dickens, David B. and Miller, Elizabeth (2003) "Michel Beheim, German Meistergesang, and Dracula," *Journal of Dracula Studies*: Vol. 5 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/dracula-studies/vol5/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Research Commons at Kutztown University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Dracula Studies by an authorized editor of Research Commons at Kutztown University. For more information, please contact czerny@kutztown.edu.

Michel Beheim, German Meistergesang, and Dracula

Cover Page Footnote

This article comprises two papers given at the International Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts in 2003. David B Dickens is a Professor of German at Washington & Lee University, while Elizabeth Miller is the author of five books on Dracula.

Michel Beheim, German *Meistergesang*, and Dracula

David B Dickens and Elizabeth Miller

[This article comprises two papers given at the International Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts in 2003. David B Dickens is Professor of German at Washington & Lee University, while Elizabeth Miller is the author of five books on *Dracula*.]

A. Beheim and the Tradition of German *Meistergesang* (David B Dickens)

While the name of Michel Beheim (1416-1472) is unfamiliar to most, the subject of one of his longer poems, a contemporary account of the atrocities committed by the historical Dracula, is widely known (and will be dealt with by Elizabeth Miller in the second part of this article). This section examines the poet himself as well as the age and the literary culture within which he worked, in particular the tradition known as *Meistergesang* (also *Meistersang*).

Beheim¹ was Germany's most productive poet of the fifteenth century. In German literary history he occupies a controversial position between the courts of the late Middle Ages and the newer urban society that fostered *Meistergesang*. He was long considered an epigone, an extensive borrower, and even a hack, but more positive assessments of his work have been appearing in the past thirty years. Born in 1416 in the small town of Sülzbach near Weinsberg in southwestern Germany, he followed his father's trade of a weaver until about 1439, when his local feudal lord, the Imperial Archchamberlain Konrad von Weinsberg brought him to his court, perhaps as a soldier. It may be fortuitous coincidence that Konrad, earlier close to Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund (r.1411-1433), was a member of Nürnberg's prestigious "Order of the Dragon," which had inducted Vlad Dracula's father in 1431, the same year Vlad was born. Konrad was something of a humanist, a poet of some accomplishment, and a patron who also encouraged Beheim's own development as a poet.

When Konrad died in 1448, Beheim offered his services to Margrave Albrecht Achilles of Brandenburg and served in his Heidelberg court from 1448 to 1454. He was court poet, to be sure, but also an emissary of sorts who traveled widely; thus, in 1450 he went to Norway and Denmark to attend the coronation of Danish King Christian IV as King of Norway. Beheim carried messages from Margrave Albrecht to the latter's niece, now Queen of Denmark.

Beheim had many such aristocratic patrons and benefactors and knew many courts,² but perhaps the most significant period of his life was from 1459-1466, the time spent at the court of Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich III (1440-93) in Vienna. He accompanied the Emperor on the "Bulgarian Crusade" against the Turks in 1460 and witnessed the popular uprising of the Viennese people against Friedrich and the siege of the Hofburg in 1461-62. He wrote about this in his *Book of the Viennese (Das Buch von den Wienern)*, a 13,000-line chronicle in "ponderous" rhymed verse (McDonald, *Song-Poetry* 245-55) composed during the years 1462-66. In 1462-63 Beheim was a frequent visitor to the Abbey of Melk on the Danube, where he met the Franciscan monk Brother

¹ The name is also found spelled Behaim. It is a common one of the time and indicates that the bearer or his family came originally from Bohemia (German *Böhmen*).

² Beheim lists them in a long autobiographical poem; in addition to Konrad von Weinsberg, Margrave Albrecht, and Emperor Friedrich III, we find King Christian I of Denmark, Duke Albrecht III of Bavaria, Duke Albrecht VI of Austria, Count Ulrich of Cilli, King Ladislaus Posthumus of Bohemia and Hungary, Duke Sigmund of Bavaria, and probably still others (McDonald, *Song-Poetry* 54, 209). Municipal records of Augsburg (1451, 1454, 1468), Vienna (1456, 1461), and Nördlingen (1468) also note sums paid to him. King Ladislaus of Hungary, of course, was a leader in fighting against Vlad Dracula.

Jacob, a refugee who had fled Dracula's cruelties. Beheim's poem about Dracula was probably completed in late 1463 and presented at court during the winter of that year. A falling-out with the Emperor led to his dismissal in 1466 (when Beheim entertained at the Imperial Diet in Nürnberg) or 1467; he returned to Heidelberg, this time to the court of Friedrich I, Count Palatine of Wittelsbach (1425-76).

Beheim was clearly more interested in poetry than in politics, for his new patron was an outspoken opponent of Emperor Friedrich and all the Habsburgs. However, he was also a music lover who enjoyed sharing the talents of his poet, and Beheim appeared at a number of courts. In 1469 he wrote a rhymed chronicle that lauded this new patron, *Life of Friedrich I of the Palatinate (Das Leben Friedrichs I. der Pfalz)*. Another major work, the *Palatinate Rhymed Chronicle (Pfälzische Reimchronik)* of 1471, may have been his last work, and he retired soon thereafter. We know that he returned to the town of his birth and was elected mayor. In 1472 he was murdered by an unknown assailant for unknown reasons.

Other aspects of Beheim's life are of some interest but do not materially change the picture already sketched. Thus efforts to see in his poetry an anticipation of the Protestant Reformation seem to exaggerate and overstate the criticism of the church that is admittedly there. However, Beheim appears to have been more interested in curbing demonstrations of excess ecclesiastical authority, in correcting widespread abuses, in a return to the Church's original values, than in any fundamental changes or a break with it. He was a staunch defender of the status quo and viewed both the heretic Hussites in his native Bohemia and the non-believing Turks who were threatening Christian Europe as equally dangerous foes.

These essentially conventional and conservative views also prevented him from displaying any significant sympathy for the stirrings among the peasantry marked by such inflammatory documents as "The Reformation of Emperor Sigismund" of about the year 1439. As someone who depended for his livelihood upon the maintenance of good relations with aristocratic courts, Beheim would hardly have been sympathetic to the uprisings that were to flare into the full-blown Peasants' Rebellion of 1476-1526.

Beheim's literary output and the breadth of his interests are his most remarkable traits. His four major chronicles are exceptionally long works. Of his 452 *Gedichte* or poems, many are religious; others deal with love, moral, and ethical subjects, still others with politics and history, such as the 1000-line account of Dracula. There are also early examples of *Meistergesang*. Finally, there is a long autobiographical poem, the source for most of what we know about his external life.

Since Beheim's Dracula poem is written in a stanzaic form that strongly suggests the structure of German *Meistergesang* that was developing simultaneously during his lifetime, full appreciation of the poem calls for some understanding of this cultural phenomenon. It developed at the end of the fourteenth century and reached its height in the sixteenth, lasting in some cities until well into the nineteenth century. It was a form of artistic expression meant to be sung that combined melody with text. The lute-like "rebec" was the most popular instrument.

Meistersang clearly evolved out of the medieval German lyric known as *Minnesang*. But whereas *Minnesang* was the product of an aristocratic court-oriented society, *Meistergesang* was the proud accomplishment of the bourgeoisie's guild system in the cities that were rapidly altering the nature of German society. This fundamental difference between two ages underlines the difficulty of classifying Beheim. He was a commoner, but he made his living as a court poet, even while his works included urban chronicles (Vienna, Trieste). Some have called him a late medieval troubadour. One authority on the *Meistergesang* states flatly that although "Michael Beheim probably belonged to no organized school of *Meistersinger*, he is certainly one of them" (Taylor 24). William McDonald asserts equally forcefully that Beheim "was no *Meistersinger* according to the modern definition of the term" (*Song-Poetry* 16). One frequently discussed poem in which Beheim examines his art is clearly in the form of *Meistergesang*.³ This controversy need not

³ See McDonald, "Michel Beheim" 451-71.

concern us as we turn to *Meistergesang* itself. It is necessary to go back to the guild system already mentioned.

Even today, many German trades and professions employ this system. It controls and regulates training; it also oversees and guarantees the quality of the tradesman's product. The case of the sixteenth-century shoemaker and mastersinger Hans Sachs (1494-1576) is illustrative. The system begins with a period of apprenticeship that usually lasted two or three years. The apprentice learned the fundamentals under the watchful eye of his own master or *Meister*. Sachs tells us in an autobiographical poem that he began his own two-year-long apprenticeship at the age of fifteen. He then spent five years as a journeyman or *Geselle*, traveling from city to city and working with many other master shoemakers until he had refined all the skills of his trade. His travels took him from Lübeck on the Baltic coast to Vienna on the Danube in the south. The conclusion of the journeyman years called for an examination, both theoretical and practical, and the creation of a "masterwork." Successful fulfillment of these requirements promoted the journeyman to master. He was now permitted to open his own shop, and, as business grew, he would take in an apprentice of his own and thus perpetuate the system.

The function of this system in trades and crafts is clear and admirable. By the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century certain cities, already proud of their accomplishments in other areas, applied the same system to musical and literary composition. The results were understandably not remarkable when judged by today's standards; still, it is noteworthy that some genuinely talented poetic voices nevertheless rose above the confining mechanical strictures of such a "system."

Meistergesang probably began in Mainz under the leadership of medieval poet Heinrich von Meissen (ca. 1255-1318). It was in Mainz, after all, that Gutenberg developed movable type and the printing press when Beheim was between thirty-five and forty years old. Schools for *Meistergesang* then spread throughout the Rhineland and across southern Germany, from Freiburg's school that displayed definite religious and scholastic tendencies, to Augsburg (where Beheim had also worked), to Ulm, and – of special significance – to Nürnberg, where Hans Sachs was later to preside over the most famous mastersinger school of all. We learn from the poem already mentioned that Sachs composed his first song in Munich in 1514, two years before he returned to establish himself in Nürnberg. It was a religious song that helps explain why the Nürnberg school met in the Church of Saint Catherine⁴ after the conclusion of Sunday morning services: this avocation, the mastersingers were saying, ultimately served God. Although he belonged to an earlier era, Beheim clearly felt the same way (McDonald, *Song-Poetry* 406). The mastersingers held regular competitions to display individuals' skills and to name new masters. Richard Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1868) presents precisely such a contest: the winner will not only be crowned master but will receive as well the prize of beautiful Eva, daughter of the goldsmith and veteran mastersinger Veit Pogner.

Just as any trade or organization has its rules and regulations (today's "company policy"), so did the schools of the mastersingers. The apprentice was a "pupil" (*Schüler*) who began his study under the supervision of a master (*Meister*). A knowledge of the complexities of the rulebook or *Tabulatur* advanced one to the level of *Schulfreund* or "friend." Now the aspirant had to prove his mastery of certain tradition-prescribed melodies, originally twelve in number, known in German as a *Weise* or *Ton*.⁵ Upon reaching this level, he became a "singer" (*Singer*). Composition of a new text to one of the standard melodies led to elevation to the rank of composer or *Dichter*. Finally,

⁴ Hans Sachs' house was never rebuilt after the destruction of Nürnberg in World War II; St Catherine's Church stands as a partial shell-like ruin that is (appropriately) still used for outdoor concerts.

⁵ *Ton* and *Weise* are often used interchangeably to mean "melody." More correctly, *Ton* refers to the metrical pattern, *Weise* to the melody (McDonald, "Beheim Reconsidered" 465, n.6).

composition of an original melody or *Weise* led to the highest level of master or *Meistersinger*. These melodies were at first known by the name of their original composer or by association with events of the church year such as Easter or Christmas. Thus Beheim indicates the *Osterweise* or “Easter-song” as the melody for presenting his Dracula poem. He frequently used the *Muskatblütton*, a tribute to one of his own models, a poet of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century named Muskatblüt. Hans Sachs also used this melody for one of his own early songs of 1516 (Weickmann 16).

The song was itself called a *Bar* and normally had three stanzas. Each stanza consisted of two shorter segments or *Stollen* which were followed by a longer *Abgesang*. Rhyme patterns were in general closely adhered to; on the other hand, there appears to have been considerable metrical freedom within a given line, something characteristic of both Beheim and Sachs (incongruities of word-accent and verse-accent were normal). Sachs wrote a song called “Composer and Singer” (*Dichter und Singer*) in which he compares the creative composer to a flowing fountain or spring; the singer is a dry river-bed in constant need of flowing water to avoid the risk of drying up. For Sachs it is clearly the text-composer who is the genuine artist; the singer is simply the “performing organ” (Weickmann 17).⁶ This poem has three stanzas of eighteen lines each that break down into two four-line *Stollen* (*aaab* and *cccb*) followed by an *Abgesang* of ten lines (*dedeffgggh*). The nineteen-line poem composed by Sachs for Walter in Wagner’s opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* also has two *Stollen* of four lines each (*abca* and *defd*); the *Abgesang* of eleven lines typically has a more complex rhyme pattern. Sachs himself displays precisely the same pattern in his own song “Ein bul scheidelied” (“A lover’s song of departure”): two four-line *Stollen* (both *abcd*) and an eleven-line *Abgesang* (*efgefgeghhiji*). Beheim’s popular and symbolic “Erzgräberbispiel” (“Miner’s Example”) of 48 lines has the requisite three stanzas of 4+4+8 lines each with a rhyme scheme of *abac/abac/efgehihj*.

Beheim wrote his Dracula poem in Vienna in 1463, in the year following Dracula’s imprisonment by King Matthias of Hungary. It is obviously a long *narrative* poem, and hardly an example of pure *Meistergesang*. Still, it employs a stanzaic form that itself exhibits affinities with *Meistergesang*. This verse form is similar to what is described above, but it is much simpler, something not surprising in view of the fact that Beheim’s work preceded that of the more stylized Hans Sachs by about eighty years; furthermore, Beheim did not write as a member of one of the later schools. His Dracula poem consists of 1070 lines made up of 107 10-line stanzas that display two three-line *Stollen* (*aab* and *ccb*;) and a four-line *Abgesang* (*deed*).

B. Beheim and the Dracula Connection (Elizabeth Miller)

The evolution of the reputation of Vlad Dracula as a ruthless tyrant was due primarily to a series of printed documents that appeared throughout Europe in the 1480s and 1490s, several years after his death. However, these were preceded by more contemporary manuscripts, one of which was a poem by Michel Beheim.⁷ Composed while Dracula was still alive, the poem of over 1000 lines was first performed at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich III during the winter of 1463. I say “performed,” as Beheim did more than just recite it; he sang his poetry, to the accompaniment of various musical instruments.⁸ The full title of the poem is “Von ainem wutrich der heis Trakle waida von der Walachei” (“Story of a Bloodthirsty Madman Called Dracula of Wallachia”).

⁶ The melody is Hans Sachs’ own *Silberweise*, the first melody he composed (1513). He used it for a number of his songs.

⁷ The original is located at Heidelberg University. It has been published in *Die Gedichte des Michel Beheim* (Berlin, 1972). I am indebted to German scholars Clemens Ruthner and John Buffinga for the translation used in this article.

⁸ A portion of the Dracula poem (set to music) is included on a CD entitled *Ich rühm dich Heidelberg: Musik der Renaissance am Kurpfälzischen Hof* (I Ciarlatani).

Establishing the context of Beheim's poem is essential, given the political implications of the damage it would do to Vlad Dracula's reputation. First of all, the Dracula poem shares many of the characteristics of Beheim's other works, specifically a tendency to exaggerate numbers for political purposes, to invent conversations of which there is no record, even to manufacture incidents. For Beheim, historical accuracy was less important than adherence to the central principle that history is a vehicle shaped at will and intended to promote a particular political point of view. (This may seem odd to us today, but one need think only of Tudor England, Soviet Russia, or even some productions of the History Channel!) The purpose of history, as exemplified in Beheim's poems, is also moral, given his conviction that history is the working out of God's plan for mankind. Of course, God's plan included the political machinations of Beheim's patron, Friedrich III and his allies. Not surprisingly, his poetry reverberates with images and narrative structures from the Bible. Also, that these poems were performed raises the possibility of deliberate dramatization by an entertainer ever conscious of the effect on his audience.

Beheim had no direct contact with Dracula. For his narrative, he relied on three sources: earlier widely-circulating narratives, most of which are part of what is now called the St Gall manuscript (from 1462); current events such as Vlad's arrest, filtered through a political lens; and a first-hand account gleaned from a Catholic monk who had recently encountered Dracula in Transylvania and lived to tell his probably well-embellished tale.

The St Gall manuscript (named after the Swiss monastery where it is located) comprises thirty-two short anecdotes, all of which present Dracula as a bloodthirsty tyrant. Here are typical samples:

Once he had a great pot made with two handles and over it a staging device with planks and through it he had holes made, so that a man could fall through them with his head. Then he had a great fire made underneath it and had water poured into the pot and had men boiled in this way.

Once several Wahlen [Western ambassadors] were sent to him. When they came to him, they bowed and took off their hats and under them they had brown and red berets or caps, which they did not take off. So he asked them why they had not taken off their caps or berets. They said: "Lord, it is not our custom. We never take them off before our ruler." He said: "Well, I wish to strengthen you in your custom." And as they thanked his grace, he had them take good strong nails and had them nailed around the caps into the head, so that they would not take them off. In this way, he strengthened them in their custom.⁹

Dracula's deeds are of such cruelty that they are noted in St Gall as worse than those of such bloodthirsty persecutors of Christianity as Herod, Nero and Diocletian: Beheim uses the same parallel in his own poem, underscoring Dracula as a persecutor of the Church and hence the enemy of all mankind. Indeed, he uses the term "wutrich" (bloodthirsty monster) which he also employs elsewhere in his poetry for the Anti-Christ as well as for Turkish sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. Dracula is just one of a number of evil characters, both past and present (a sort of fifteenth-century "axis of evil").

Beheim was also able to incorporate contemporary events. The poem was composed and read at court while Dracula was still alive, in fact, just a year after his arrest by the Hungarian king, Matthias Corvinus. By 1462, Vlad Dracula's reputation as an exceptionally cruel and sadistic tyrant had been well established. That year, Pope Pius II sent a legate, Niccolo Modrussa, to Buda to investigate the recent arrest of Dracula by Matthias Corvinus. The legate met Dracula in person, and has provided us with the only known description of the voivode in a printed source (Florescu & McNally, *Dracula: Prince* 85). His report back to the Pope claimed that Dracula had up to 1462

⁹ Translated by Raymond McNally. For the full text, see McNally & Florescu, *In Search of Dracula* (1994), 193-98.

killed 40,000 of his political opponents by the most ferocious of methods, including impalement and skinning alive. Such tales were readily embraced, in fact even encouraged not only by Corvinus but by other opponents of Dracula in order to justify his arrest and imprisonment. Most significant for our purposes is the opposition of the Saxons in Transylvania who had a long history of conflict with Dracula, over both political and economic issues: the Saxon merchants' challenge of his taxation policies coupled with their support of a rival claimant to the throne. Given this, we are faced with the thorny question of political bias, an issue that confronts any historian attempting to reconstruct the life and times of the historical Dracula.

Beheim did have the advantage of a first-hand witness to Dracula's atrocities, though even here one needs to be aware of possible exaggeration. His source was a Catholic monk who had just returned from Transylvania where he and two fellow monks had encountered Vlad's wrath. It appears that German Catholic monks had been victims of persecution in Transylvania as part of action undertaken by Vlad against Catholic strongholds. Several fled back to Germany and told their tales to German scribes.

Three such monks – Brothers Hans, Michael and Jacob – encountered Dracula in 1461 in his capital city of Târgoviște. Their activities had offended the voivode. Brother Michael was summoned to Dracula's palace and questioned as to what was in store for Dracula after he died. Michael replied cautiously, suggesting that Dracula could obtain salvation. Then Brother Hans was summoned and asked the same question. Being a more forthright man, he declared without fear (and knowing full well what his fate would be) that Dracula's actions were those of a wicked tyrant and that he was surely destined for hell. Dracula had him immediately impaled. The other two monks fled in terror, out of Târgoviște, through Transylvania and back to Germany. Jacob met Beheim in late 1462 and told him this story, which Beheim eagerly incorporated with great relish into his poem.

I want now to focus attention on one episode in Beheim's poem, given that it has cropped up as a possible source for Bram Stoker as he wrote his classic novel *Dracula* (1897). The episode is presented in the St Gall manuscript as follows:

And [Dracula] set off with all his army and ... came to the villages, castles, and towns. All those whom he overcame, he also destroyed and had all the grain and wheat burned. And he led away all those whom he had captured outside the city called Kranstadt [Brașov] near the chapel called St Jacob. And at that time Dracula rested there and had the entire suburb burned. Also as the day came, early in the morning, all those whom he had taken captive, men and women, young and old children, he had impaled on the hill by the chapel and all around the hill, and under them he proceeded to eat at table and get his joy in this way.

Beheim elaborates on the final statement, reporting it as follows:

It was his pleasure and gave him courage
To see human blood flow
And it was his custom
To wash his hands in it
As it was brought to the table.

In the novel *Dracula*, Van Helsing reports to the vampire hunters that “in one manuscript this very Dracula is spoken of as ‘wampyr’.” This has led a few scholars and researchers to search for possible connections between the historical Dracula and vampire legends. Some of the theories are nothing short of ludicrous.¹⁰

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of this, see Chapter 5 of my book *Dracula: Sense & Nonsense* (Desert Island Books, 2000).

One theory has gained widespread credence, albeit, as I will point out in a moment, it is far-fetched: that Stoker was in some way familiar with this episode in Beheim. *In Dracula: Prince of Many Faces*, Florescu and McNally state that Beheim's poem was "the source for Van Helsing's statement ... that he had found a document in which Dracula was described as a blood-drinker"; and that the verse in Beheim "provided Stoker with a significant historical matrix on which to base Dracula's identification with the vampire" (233). This position was confirmed in the revised edition of *In Search of Dracula* (1994): "In one verse Beheim described Dracula as dipping his bread in the blood of his victims, which technically makes him a living vampire – a reference that may have induced Stoker to make use of this term" (x).

Now this hypothesis presents two major problems, one having to do with exactly what Beheim said, the other with how Stoker could possibly have known of the poem. I will deal with the latter first. While it is very attempting to assume that Stoker knew of Beheim's poem, could he have? There are four possibilities: he had access to it himself, he read about it in a secondary source; someone told him about it; or he knew nothing about it. I support the last. To begin with, it is virtually impossible that Stoker would have seen the manuscript himself. That can be readily dismissed. But given the influence these early tales had on printed sources, which in turn caused long-term damage to Vlad's reputation throughout Europe, is it possible that he may have stumbled upon a secondary account of the episode? Several pamphlets began to appear in print during the 1480s and 1490s, more than twenty years after Beheim first recited his poem. Most of the episodes related by Beheim (as well as those in the St Gall manuscript) found their way into these pamphlets. Written in German and published at major centres such as Nürnberg, Bamberg, and Strassburg, these included pamphlets entitled "The Frightening and Truly Extraordinary Story of a Wicked Blood-drinking Tyrant Called Prince Dracula" and "An Extraordinary and Shocking History of Great Berserker called Prince Dracula." Researchers have discovered over a dozen of these pamphlets dating from 1488 to 1521.

The printers of the Dracula tales also included woodcut portraits of the prince and, in some cases, illustrations of his atrocities. The Braşov episode (eating while victims died) recurs in the Nürnberg pamphlet of 1499 and again in Strassburg 1500. In the latter case it was illustrated, thanks to the marvels of modern late fifteenth-century technology, with a lurid woodcut that has become one of the best known images of Vlad and his atrocities. The illustration was accompanied by a frontispiece, with text reading "Here begins a very cruel frightening story about a wild bloodthirsty man Prince Dracula. How he impaled people and roasted them and boiled their heads in a kettle and skinned people and hacked them to pieces like cabbage."

This German material was picked up by later historians such as Sebastian Münster and Johann Christian Engel, either or both of whom may have been a source for William Wilkinson's book, which we know that Stoker consulted. The problem is that Wilkinson provides no detail about Vlad's atrocities, referring to him (as Dracula) only briefly in passing. So while we know this is where Stoker found the name "Dracula," there is nothing in Wilkinson (or in any of Stoker's other known sources) about the historical Dracula's notorious methods of punishment.

The most widespread theory for those supporting a Stoker/Beheim link is that the source was the Hungarian professor, Arminius Vambery. In their argument concerning the influence of Beheim on Stoker (quoted above), Florescu and McNally suggest Vambery as the link between the two. This is highly speculative, given that there is not a shred of evidence that Vambery said (or wrote) a word to Stoker about Dracula, vampires, or even Transylvania. My contention is that, in the absence of any proof, Stoker had never heard of Beheim's poem.

But let's assume, for the sake of argument, that Stoker somehow did know about it, or at least about the infamous stanza in which Dracula is supposed to have dipped bread in the blood. According to Raymond McNally, "he [Dracula] had their blood gathered in bowls on his table, and

then he would take bread, dip it in the blood, and slurp it down.”¹¹ Such a statement is a remarkably liberal translation of the original German, which more accurately reads (and bears repeating):

It was his pleasure and gave him courage
To see human blood flow
And it was his custom
To wash his hands in it
As it was brought to the table.

Now, Dracula could still have consumed the blood by licking his fingers, but there is no explicit statement to the effect that he dipped bread in it and then ate the bread. The image presented in Beheim is much more of an echo of Pontius Pilate: washing his hands and all that this implies aligns Vlad with the enemies of Christ.

In conclusion, no connection has been established between Beheim and Stoker other than their works both include the name “Dracula.” We do not need any connections. The subject matter is fascinating in and of itself, and needs no further embellishment.

Works Cited:

- Florescu, Radu & Raymond McNally. *Dracula: Prince of Many Faces*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1989.
McDonald, William C. “Michel Beheim Reconsidered.” *German Quarterly* 48 (1975): 451-71.
McDonald, William C. *Whose Bread I Eat’: The Song-Poetry of Michel Beheim*. Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1981.
McNally, Raymond & Radu Florescu. *In Search of Dracula*. 1972. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.
Ramsland, Katherine. *Piercing the Darkness: Undercover with Vampires in America*. New York: HarperPrism, 1998.
Taylor, Archer. *The Literary History of Meistersang*. 1937. New York: Kraus, 1966.
Weickmann, Rudolf J. *Hans Sachs*. Schwabach: Peter Gersbeck-Verlag, 1975.

¹¹ Qtd in Ramsland 132. The same statement has been made in a number of television documentaries.

