Episode 23 - Vlad the Impaler, Dracula and the Jews

Hello, I am Adrian Iosifescu, your host of the History of Romanian Jews podcast and this is episode 23, where we'll be discussing the facts and fiction concerning the Wallachian prince Vlad the Impaler, the fictionalized Dracula character and how all these relate to the Jews.

By-the-way, you just listened to **"**Vlad The Impaler", a Wallachian medieval song. A link to the song is provided in the Notes.

Let's start by discussing who the real Vlad the Impaler was versus the literary Dracula personage. Here are the **historical facts**:

Vlad III, commonly known as Vlad the Impaler, or Vlad Dracula, or Vlad Drăculea, in Romanian Vlad Țepeș, reigned in the Wallachian Principality three times between 1448 and his death in 1476. He is often considered one of the most important rulers in Wallachian history and a national hero of Romania.
Vlad III was born in 1431 in the Transylvanian city of Sighisoara, a descendant of a long line of Wallachian rulers. His grandfather, Mircea the Great, a famous 14th century Wallachia prince, fathered a number of illegitimate children, including Dracula's father, Basarab. When Mircea died, Basarab, the son, was sent to the court of the Hungarian Emperor Sigismund. While his brothers squabbled over their father's throne, Basarab was busy learning warfare and diplomacy under Sigismund. As a reward for his diplomatic skills, Basarab was named the military governor of the province of Transylvania. A few months before Dracula was born, Basarab was inducted into the prestigious and secretive Order of the Dragon, a group of European leaders who were sworn to defend the Holy Roman Empire against infidels. Upon his induction, Basarab took the name Dragon, pronounced Dracul in Romanian.
Ironically, Dracul is also the Romanian word for devil, a term that would later be applied to his murderous son. Although a sworn member of the crusading order, Basarab Dracul was not blind to the political and military reality of his time. The Turks were massing an invasion force on his southern border, and Dracul's small army was not strong enough to repel them. The situation worsened when Emperor Sigismund died in 1437. Without his benefactor, Basarab Dracul was left to face the Turks alone. Realizing that he was powerless to stop the impending invasion, Basarab made a hard choice; he agreed to continue the Wallachian custom of paying the Turks a tribute of 10,000 gold ducats every year. As a way of proving his loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, Basarab Dracul accompanied Sultan Murad II on a raid into neighboring Transylvania, during which the Turks destroyed a number of villages and captured 70,000 prisoners. Not surprisingly, his overtures to the Turkish sultan strained his ties to the Hungarian empire and, more important, to the powerful Hungarian warlord Janos Hunyadi.
As ruler of Wallachia, Basarab Dracul was caught between the towering egos and massive war machines of Hunyadi and Murad II. It was an unenviable position. In 1441, Hunyadi began planning a crusade to drive the Turks from their positions in Serbia and Bulgaria. He called on Basarab to honor his sworn oath and join the crusade, but the Wallachian ruler refused. Instead, Dracul remained neutral in the conflict. His attempt to please both parties backfired. Both Murad and Hunyadi were enraged by his refusal to participate on either side. The furious

sultan summoned him to a meeting to discuss his loyalty. Foolishly, Basarab Dracul took along his two youngest sons, 12-year-old Vlad and 8-year-old Radu. Upon their arrival, the sultan took all three captive. Dracul remained a prisoner for a year, until he swore on both the Koran and the Bible not to participate in any future wars against the sultan. Murad then allowed him return to Wallachia, but he held onto Vlad and Radu as hostages to insure that Dracul kept his word. Vlad's captivity at the sultan's court proved to be the formative experience of his life. He endured harsh discipline and strict supervision, but he also gained deep insight into Turkish life and, more important, their military. Vlad and Radu both trained with the Turkish Janissary corps, the sultan's elite warriors. Consisting primarily of European children who had been stolen from their homes or sent to the sultan as tribute, the Janissaries were converted to Islam and raised as fanatical Muslim warriors.
Meanwhile, Hunyadi, still smarting from his defeat at Varna, was infuriated by Basarab's latest concessions to the Turks and sensing an opportunity to rebuild his shattered reputation, he invaded Wallachia in 1447. This invasion, in turn, sparked a revolt among the Wallachian boyars, or noblemen. The combination of Hunyadi's forces and the rebellious boyars was too much for Basarab Dracul. He attempted to flee, but was captured and killed. His oldest son was also captured by the rival boyars and buried alive.

With his father and older brother dead, 17-year-old Vlad was finally released from Turkish captivity. As the oldest surviving son of a member of the Order of the Dragon, Vlad inherited his father's crusading oath. He also took pains to assume his father's mantle, even going so far as to adopt the nickname "son of the dragon," or Dracula. Murad supported Vlad in his attempt to reclaim his birthright. Vlad led a small Turkish invasion of Wallachia in 1448 and succeeded getting to the Wallachian throne. However, his victory was short-lived. Two months into his reign, Hunyadi reassembled his forces and drove Vlad from power. He was forced to flee to Turkey and then to Moldavia, where he remained for three years. Vlad Dracula lost his last friend and protector when his brother-in-law, Prince Bogdan of Moldavia, was assassinated in 1451. He was forced to flee again, this time into the wild Transylvanian lands controlled by Hunyadi. However, just when it seemed that Dracula's luck had run out, the political pendulum swung back in his favor. Sultan Murad II died and was replaced by his son, Mehmed II. Mehmed was an ambitious man who made no secret of his desire to conquer Constantinople. Hungary, Wallachia, and Transylvania were also in his sights. Hunyadi began preparing for a confrontation with the new sultan. He was counting on the support of Vladislav II, Dracula's brother installed on the Wallachian throne, but his puppet voivode had a change of heart, negotiating a separate alliance with the sultan. The infuriated Hunyadi immediately set about looking for a replacement. The only viable candidate was Vlad Dracula.

Dracula was given a commission in Hunyadi's army and charged with defending the Transylvanian border against Turkish or Wallachian incursions. When Mehmed II besieged the Serbian city of Belgrade with 90,000 men, Hunyadi rallied to the city's defense. With only a handful of men, he dealt the Turks a crippling defeat. Mehmed lost almost a third of his force and was personally wounded while trying to rally his troops. This stunning victory became known as the "Miracle of Belgrade" throughout Christendom. While Hunyadi and the sultan battled for Belgrade, Dracula mounted an invasion of Wallachia. After a series of bloody

skirmishes, he finally reclaimed his father's throne in 1456. He wouldn't be able to count on Hunyadi's support to help him hold the throne, because the old Hungarian warlord succumbed to the plague shortly after the siege of Belgrade.

No sooner did Dracula take the throne than he came into conflict with the boyars who controlled much of the country. These were the same nobles who had revolted against his father and buried his brother alive. Dracula's desire for revenge, along with his need to consolidate his power, drove him to commit one of the most notorious acts in his bloody career. He invited 200 rival boyars to a feast, ostensibly to discuss their differences. However, at the end of the meal, the boyars were dragged from the dining hall in the capital of Tirgoviste and marched 50 miles to the ruins of Castle Dracula in Poenari. There, they were immediately put to work rebuilding the old castle, and many died of exhaustion. Those who were too old or too weak to work were impaled on the spot. This was the genesis of Dracula's famous nickname Vlad Tepes, or Vlad the Impaler.

The slaughter of the boyars was the first of many violent acts committed by Dracula during his reign. In order to tighten his grip on power, he created new positions in his government called the armasi. He filled these positions with foreigners, thugs, mercenaries, and other outsiders. The armasi became his secret police, willing to carry out his most horrific orders without hesitation. Dracula used the armasi to enforce his personal obsession with law and order by brutally executing people for even minor infractions. Dracula's execution methods were literally demonic—he killed some by crushing them under the wheels of carts. Others, stripped of their clothes, were skinned alive. Still others were impaled on stakes or roasted over red-hot coals. Historians estimate that the victims of Dracula's armasi numbered between 50,000 and 100,000. Dracula's worst atrocities, however, occurred in the neighboring province of Transylvania, a thriving commercial center that had a large German population. He launched a punitive raid on the Transylvanian town of Bistrita in 1457, burning and looting the town and slaughtering much of its population. He launched another raid the following year, destroying entire villages and leaving hundreds of German merchants twisting on stakes. In 1459, he crossed the border again, centering his anger on the trading center of Brasov. He burned the city to the ground and impaled any survivors he could find. Dracula's atrocities in Transylvania caused a tremendous backlash in the German community.

Although Mehmed II had been defeated at Belgrade, the Turks were still a potent force in the region. One of Dracula's first actions as voivode was to continue the Wallachian tradition of paying tribute to the sultan. He also gave the Turks free movement through his lands and sent 500 boys a year to the Turkish Janissary corps. However, all that changed when Pope Pius II called for another crusade in 1459. The only European head of state who responded to his call was Dracula. Perhaps in an attempt to honor his father's oath, Vlad Dracula stopped paying tribute and refused to send any more boys into the Janissaries. Turkish recruiting officers who ventured over the Danube to steal children were captured and impaled.
Enraged by Vlad Dracula's continued insolence, the sultan planned a trap for the Wallachian ruler near the fortress of Giurgiu, an imposing fortress that had been constructed by Dracula's

grandfather on an island in the center of the Danube. Dracula learned of the sultan's trap ahead of time and avoided it. Relying on knowledge gained from his years in captivity, Dracula disguised himself as a Turkish officer, and being fluent in Turkish he convinced the sentries to open the gates of the fortress. His men then rode in unopposed and conquered the massive citadel without resistance. Dracula next embarked on a series of raids along the Danube. With the onset of winter, he was able to cross the frozen river easily. He managed to capture or destroy a number of key ports, making it difficult for the Turkish fleet to operate on the river. The open rebellion was more than the sultan could bear. He sent a force of 18,000 men to recapture the ports and teach Dracula a lesson. The Turks penetrated deep into Wallachia, destroying villages and capturing numerous prisoners. Vlad Dracula caught up with them as they were returning to the Danube, laden with captives and the spoils of war. The Turks lost over half their number in the ensuing battle. These early successes made Dracula a hero throughout Europe. Even the Pope took notice.

Mehmed, then embarked for Wallachia at the head of a massive invasion force. The Wallachian army, consisting mostly of untrained citizen levies and light cavalry, numbered roughly 25,000 men—less than one-tenth the size of the sultan's army. After a failed attempt to prevent the Turks from crossing the Danube, Dracula retreated deep into the mountains of Wallachia. He engaged in a scorched-earth policy, burning villages, butchering cattle, and poisoning wells. His forces left nothing behind for the advancing Turks. At night, his cavalry raided the Turkish supply lines and slaughtered any stragglers they could find. Despite Dracula's efforts, by early June 1462, Mehmed had advanced to within 60 miles of Tirgoviste, the Wallachian capital. There, on the plains before the city, Mehmet beheld an unspeakable sight—a virtual forest of impaled Turks. The sight of thousands of impaled corpses caused the sultan to immediately order his army to turn around and return home. The Turkish withdrawal was hailed as a mighty victory for Dracula. But his victory had come at great cost. Much of Wallachia had been laid to waste. Dracula's small army suffered terrible losses, and thousands of Wallachian citizens were killed or taken prisoner. What was left of Dracula's force scattered to the winds after the fighting was over. Although the sultan had withdrawn his main army, he left Vlad's brother Radu behind with a small Turkish force. Radu entreated the boyars to support his claim to the throne and end the pointless conflict with the Turks. The boyars, weary of war and tired of Dracula's bloody reign of terror, threw their weight behind Radu. Like his father before him, Vlad Dracula found himself facing an invasion from without and an insurrection from within. Unable to fight both the boyars and Radu's army, he fled.

Dracula succeeded in reaching Transylvania, where he appealed to Hungarian Emperor Matthias Corvinius, the son of his former benefactor Janos Hunyadi, for help but Vlad Dracula, an overthrown prince with no supporters and no money, was of little use to Corvinius. Instead, the Hungarian emperor recognized Radu as the rightful ruler of Wallachia and imprisoned Dracula. In order to justify his actions, Corvinius claimed to have uncovered documents that showed Dracula had entered into a secret truce with the sultan. These documents were clever forgeries created by Germans merchants as revenge for Vlad's atrocities in Transylvania. Once their contents were revealed, Dracula's popular support melted away.

Dracula remained a prisoner of the Hungarian emperor for 12 years. However, all was not lost for the outcast prince. The emperor resisted pressure from the Germans to execute Dracula. He even allowed Dracula to marry one of his cousins, with whom he fathered two children. Radu ruled Wallachia until 1473, when he was ousted by Basarab Liota, a member of the rival Danesti clan. Once in power, Liota began making peace overtures to the Turks. This unsettled Corvinius and prompted him to release Dracula from prison. After accompanying the emperor on a crusade into Bosnia, Dracula invaded Wallachia for the third time in 1476. He defeated Liota in a bloody battle and once again claimed his father's throne.

But his final reign was short-lived. Two months after recapturing his throne, Dracula's bloody and headless body was found lying in a field. No one knows exactly how Dracula died. He had a long list of enemies, including the German merchants, Orthodox priests upset over his late-life conversion to Catholicism, Wallachian boyars weary of his incessant bloodletting, rival claimants to the Wallachian throne, the Turkish sultan, and many others. Whoever was responsible for killing Dracula, they couldn't kill the legends and myths that surrounded him. Thanks to the German propaganda, Dracula's infamous deeds lived on for centuries after his death.

Dracula's image underwent a significant overhaul in the latter half of the 20th century. Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, looking to foster Romanian nationalism, ordered a new investigation into Vlad Dracula's life. The result was a slew of propaganda depicting Vlad Dracula as a national hero. Statues of Vlad Dracula were erected throughout Romania, and his image even appeared on Romanian postage stamps. At the same time, all mention of his atrocities was omitted from public records. Stoker's novel, and the slew of Dracula films and books that followed, were condemned as anti-Romanian propaganda.

Despite his overwhelming brutality, many Romanians still regard Vlad the Impaler as a national hero. Dracula's victories against the Turks, although ultimately pyrrhic, made him a standout figure in Romanian history. Dracula has also become popular for a far different reason—tourism. The castle of Bran was labelled Vlad's castle and the tortured chamber there became one of the most visited sites. There were even plans to build a Dracula Land theme park.

One has to recognize that the historical facts about Vlad's life make a better novel then most fiction about him.

Let's look now at the **fictional character, the Dracula vampire**, based on the real Vlad the Impaler. Dracula stands as a fascinating cultural icon and one inspired from historical sources, particularly the life and deeds of Vlad III "the Impaler" of Wallachia.

The name Dracula, which is now primarily known as the name of a vampire, was for centuries known as the sobriquet of Vlad III. Diplomatic reports and popular stories referred to him as Dracula, Dracuglia, or Drakula already in the 15th century. He himself signed his two letters as "Dragulya" or "Drakulya" in the late 1470s.

Dracula is the Slavonic genitive form of Dracul, meaning "the son of Dracul or of the Dragon". Vlad III is known also as Vlad the Impaler, in Romanian Vlad Țepeș. This sobriquet is connected to the impalement that was his favorite method of execution. The Ottoman writer Tursun Beg referred to him as Kazıklı Voyvoda (Impaler Lord) around 1500. Mircea the Shepherd, prince of Wallachia, used this sobriquet when referring to Vlad III in a letter of grant of April 1551.

The historical visual material that survives consists of several painted and printed portraits and narrative scenes, including the now-famous “Ambras Portrait. ” Completed several decades after Vlad’s death, but based on a now-lost original from the 15th century, the portrait shows the Wallachian ruler as a respectable figure dressed in rich royal garb with features that we have come to associate with him: a stern appearance, aquiline nose, large eyes, long curly hair , and prominent mustache. Vlad appears in a similar guise in other visual sources from the 15th and early 16th century, including the woodcut showing him dining among a forest of the impaled. This image was printed in Strasbourg in 1500 along with stories of atrocities committed by the Wallachian ruler , known as Dracole Wayda. Please see the Notes for these images.

Stories about Vlad's brutal acts began circulating during his lifetime. After his arrest, courtiers of Matthias Corvinus promoted their spread. The papal legate, **Niccolo Modrussiense**, had already written about such stories to **Pope Pius I**I in 1462. Two years later, the Pope included them in his Commentaries.

The German poet **Michael Beheim** wrote a lengthy poem about Vlad's deeds, allegedly based on his conversation with a Catholic monk who had managed to escape from Vlad's prison. The poem, called “Von ainem wutrich der heis Trakle waida von der Walachei” or "Story of a Despot Called Dracula, Voievod of Wallachia", was performed at the court of Frederick III, Holy Roman Emperor, in Wiener Neustadt during the winter of 1463.
According to one of Beheim's stories, there were two monks who came into Wallachia and were invited to come see him. He took the one monk and asked him what good people said of him. This monk was very frightened and said: “People say everything good about you and that you are a very pious lord”. He ordered that this monk be held. And the other monk was brought to him, who was questioned by him like the first. The second monk thought: “I must die, so I will tell him the truth, ” and he said: “You are the greatest tyrant one could find in the world, and I’ve met nobody who ever says anything good about you. ” Then Dracula said: “You have told me the truth, therefore I will let you live,” and he let him alone. And he sent again for the first monk, and asked him if he would also speak the truth. The first monk spoke as before and Dracula said: “Take him away and have him impaled because of his dishonesty.” Vlad also ordered the impalement of their donkey because it began braying after its masters' death. Another story mentions that Vlad had a good meal prepared for all the beggars in his land. After the meal, he had them locked up in the barn in which they had eaten, and burned them alive. He felt they were eating the people’s food for free and could not repay it.

Antonio Bonfini also recorded anecdotes about Vlad in his Historia Pannonica around 1495. He described Vlad as "a man of unheard cruelty and justice". Bonfini's stories about Vlad were

repeated in **Sebastian Münster**'s Cosmography. Münster also recorded Vlad's "reputation for tyrannical justice". Antonio Bonfini in Historia Pannonica mentions that Turkish messengers came to Vlad to pay respects, but refused to take off their turbans, according to their ancient custom, whereupon he strengthened their custom by nailing their turbans to their heads with three spikes, so that they could not take them off.

German stories

Works containing the stories about Vlad's cruelty were published in Low German in the Holy Roman Empire before 1480. The stories were allegedly written in the early 1460s, because they describe Vlad's campaign across the Danube in early 1462, but they do not refer to Mehmed II's invasion of Wallachia in June of the same year. They provide a detailed narration of the conflicts between Vlad and the Transylvanian Saxons, showing that they originated "in the literary minds of the Saxons". The stories about Vlad's plundering raids in Transylvania were clearly based on an eyewitness account, because they contain accurate details including the lists of the churches destroyed by Vlad and the dates of the raids.

The invention of movable type printing contributed to the popularity of the stories about Vlad, making them one of the first "bestsellers" in Europe. To enhance sales, they were published in books with woodcuts on their title pages that depicted horrific scenes. For instance, the editions published in Nuremberg in 1499 and in Strasbourg in 1500 depict Vlad dining at a table surrounded by dead or dying people on poles.

Accounts like these circulated through printed pamphlets in the decades after Vlad's death, especially in the period between the 1480s and the 1530s. Fourteen versions of these pamphlets were printed in various German towns, from Nuremberg to Augsburg, and from Strasbourg to Leipzig. The purpose of these pamphlets, as one hypothesis argues, was to enlist the support of German towns in the struggles of the Transylvanian German Saxons who built communities in regions of the Carpathian Mountains and suffered due to local oppressions. Vlad had many conflicts with the Transylvanian merchants during his reign, which often resulted in struggle and death for those opposing him.

Slavic stories

There are more than 20 Slavic manuscripts written between the 15th and 18th centuries which preserved the text of the *Skazanie o Drakule voievode* ("The Tale about Voivode Dracula"). The manuscripts were written in Russian, but they copied a text that had originally been recorded in a South Slavic language, because they contain expressions alien to the Russian language but used in South Slavic idioms (such as *diavol* for "evil"). The original text was written in Buda between 1482 and 1486. The nineteen anecdotes in the Skazanie are longer than the German stories about Vlad. They are a mixture of fact and fiction, according to historian Raymond T. McNally. Almost half of the anecdotes emphasize, like the German stories, Vlad's brutality, but they also underline that his cruelty enabled him to strengthen the central government in Wallachia.

What stands out in all these accounts is the cruelty of his deeds, and especially the acts of killing and impaling. The latter, a barbarous method of punishment, has a long history dating to antiquity. During the fifteenth century, impaling became a signifier of the vicious "East" in

general, i.e. Eastern Europe or the Ottoman Empire, and intimately tied to the figure of Vlad Dracula. He and his realm became strange, savage, and mysterious through the circulation of these stories and later.

Bram Stoker's research for his famous novel was not carried out on the ground in the Wallachian and Transylvanian regions of modern Romania, in the Carpathian Mountains, or in other parts of Eastern Europe, but in English reading rooms, at the British Library, the library in Whitby on the North Sea coast, and other places that afforded him access to primary and secondary sources, such as the pamphlets just discussed. These texts informed Stoker's characterization of his Dracula as a monstrous, ruthless figure, mysterious and disturbing to the reader just like the realm from which he hailed. The German pamphlets publicized a certain frightening image of Vlad Dracula, which Bram Stoker further transformed into a modern vampire—a powerful undead—perhaps even more terrifying and peculiar than the historical figure. Dracula, in turn, has inspired numerous creative adaptations in film, plays, novels, and art throughout the twentieth century and into the present, contributing to the ongoing fascination with vampires and Eastern Europe in the popular imagination.

Stoker appears to have both loathed and sympathized with Dracula, and therefore, placed Dracula in the role of outcast, a role with which Stoker, as an Irishman living in England, may have identified. Dracula's role as racial outsider results from Stoker giving him Jewish attributes and largely basing him on depictions of the Wandering Jew. Besides his possible personal identification with the Jews as outcasts, Stoker was very interested in the legend of the Wandering Jew, whose attributes are echoed in Dracula. Stoker was most fascinated by French author Eugene Sue's The Wandering Jew published in 1845, which depicts the figure as a rebel and Romantic wanderer who achieves the reader's sympathy by his benevolence toward humanity. The Wandering Jew becomes the hero of the work by defeating humanity's real enemies, the Jesuits. Stoker's fascination with Sue's novel resulted in his heavily researching the Wandering Jew legend in the British Museum, as he did with the vampire legend. Stoker's friend, Hall Caine, later remarked that the Wandering Jew became "one of Bram's pet themes". There is good evidence that Stoker intentionally used the Wandering Jew as a source for his depiction of Dracula. Dracula has the same powerful hypnotic eyes attributed to the Wandering Jew, but Stoker also elaborates upon the eye description by giving Dracula's eyes a red gleam suggestive of the "evil eye." Dracula further shares with the Wandering Jew a supernaturally extended life. Both characters converse with great knowledge of the past, which amazes listeners who are ignorant of the speakers' extensive ages.

While Stoker's interest in the Wandering Jew carried over into aspects of Dracula's character, Stoker's use of Jewish characteristics for Dracula also reflected the growing anti-Semitism of late Victorian England. What had captured the Victorian imagination was the fear of infiltration by Eastern Europeans, namely, Jewish Europeans. By 1882, 15 years before "Dracula" was published, 46,000 Jews lived in England, many having been chased out of Russia and Poland by antisemitic pogroms. Many Jewish merchants and bankers soon reached prominence in their fields, and their otherness became a threat to English cultural identity. During this period, the press continually discussed the Jewish "problem," largely by attacking the immigration of Jews into England and the financial world, with which they were stereotypically associated . Stoker's decision to have the novel center around Dracula's migration to England is intended to

symbolize the migration of Eastern European Jews to England in the late nineteenth century. Dracula's intent to colonize England with a race of vampires reflects an English fear that the Jews would take over England. The destruction of the "Jewish" Dracula becomes a "socially acceptable" way to express a widespread English desire to rid England of the Jews. More popular as a Jewish stereotype was the belief that Jews were wealthy. Because many Jews were usurers, they were comparable to vampires because they could financially drain their debtors. Blood and money became metaphors for one another because both are necessary to sustain life. Consequently, Jews, and especially usurers, were treated as types of vampires in literature. These numerous Jewish attributes associated with vampires make Dracula the embodiment of a racist stereotype.

Jew-coding is when characters in literature, movies, television, and other media are not explicitly stated as Jewish but possess enough stereotypically, often negative, Jewish characteristics to be subconsciously read as Jewish. Jew-coding is extremely common in classic European folklore and fairytales. During the Holocaust, the Nazis used classic European folktales as antisemitic propaganda catered toward children. For example, in Little Red Riding Hood, the wolf represented Jews. In Cinderella, a beautiful Aryan girl was held captive by " racially foreign", "rassenfremd", wicked stepsisters. In stories such as Rapunzel, a beautiful Aryan girl was held captive by a heavily Jew-coded witch.
The Nazis approached vampires in a similar manner. In 1922, a man named Julius Streicher attended the premier of Nosferatu, a German silent film based on Bram Stoker's Dracula. The main character, Count Orlok, based on Count Dracula, was heavily Jew-coded, with "a curved nose and greedy little eyes that lusted hungrily after young, fair-haired Aryan women." Streicher became obsessed with the film, returning to watch it day after day. The following year, in 1923, Streicher became the founder, publisher, and editor in chief of the infamous Der Stürmer newspaper, which became a mouthpiece for Nazi propaganda. Soon enough, Der Stürmer began publishing antisemitic caricatures of Jews depicted as vampires.
For Streicher, the vampire represented the Other — the deformed, ugly, un-German, disease-ridden well-poisoner. In other words, the Jew.

What a straight-line from Vlad the Impaler to Dracula to vampires to Jews!
This concludes this episode.
Please see the notes for more information on **Judaism and Early Vampires.**
Until next podcast episode, be well.