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Arata, Stephen D. "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization." *Victorian Studies*. Summer 1990: 627-34.

Arata has written an article which critiques Bram Stoker's novel, *Dracula*, in a way that encourages the reader to think beyond the storyline and to search for meaning that reflects the time period. During the late nineteenth century, Britain was faced with the fear of invasion and political change. This was also a period in which the new woman was emerging, and technology was developing. The British welcomed the developments in technology, but they were not keen on the idea of immigration, changes in culture, or political change. In this article, Arata argues that Stoker's chief concerns addressed in the novel are that of racial strife, the collapse of empire, and vampirism (465). All of these concerns reflect the fears of the British who were terrified of reverse colonization.

Arata begins his article by discussing the significance of the location of Count Dracula's castle in Transylvania. During this time period, the political unrest in the East was a constant concern for the British. In addition, Transylvania had a variety of different racial backgrounds integrated into the culture, and this idea of intermingling was distasteful to the British as well. Therefore, Stoker's decision to use this region as the home of the dreadful Dracula is quite symbolic. According to Arata, "vampires are

generated by racial enervation and the decline of the empire;” therefore indicating that Britain was in grave danger of vampirism due to its declining status (465).

Arata argues that Stoker’s *Dracula* not only invades Britain as a political entity, but he conquers individuals as well by stealing their personal identity. *Dracula* colonizes his victims because he transforms them culturally, politically, and racially. His vampirism is terrifying because he permanently transforms his victims into natives (465). This idea is associated with the Roumanians who were a dominant race notorious for dissolving the identities of those they intermingled with. According to Arata, Stoker learned this from Emily Gerard (466). Interestingly, Lucy and Mina suffer a similar transformation when they become victims of Count *Dracula*, who is Roumanian. Arata also notes that *Dracula* is wise and full of energy, while the British males in the novel lack these characteristics; therefore, emphasizing that the vampire is more healthy and fertile than the British male. Stoker strategically creates his characters this way to point out the decline among the British. Arata also highlights the fact that non-vampire characters in the novel do not reproduce, and that there is a shortage of fathers, while *Dracula* remains quite virile. One example the article explores is the blood transfusions of Lucy Westerna. The fact that *Dracula* drains her blood, and the four men have to replace it, demonstrates the necessity of keeping the British race pure. Arata even points out that the blood is given to Lucy in a significant order. Holmwood, the British aristocrat, gives his blood first; Then, Seward, the other Englishman, donates his blood; finally, the two foreigners give their blood (467-468). This idea of *Dracula* having the ability to deracinate the British female characters in the novel symbolizes the fear of reverse colonization and the intermingling of races in Britain.

Arata also explores the idea that Dracula uses the female body to propagate his race. Arata argues that this fact alone suggests a connection between vampiric sexuality and female sexuality. “Both are represented as primitive and voracious, and both threaten patriarchal hegemony” (468). In nineteenth century British culture, the main function of female sexuality was for “propagation within the bounds of marriage.” The female desire for sexual satisfaction was deemed monstrous (468). Arata argues that if blood stands for race in this novel, one must look closely at the fates of both Lucy and Mina. The connection is that both women are used in a similar way. They are both used for racial propagation, which suggests a struggle for access to the female body; therefore, “Dracula’s biological colonization of women becomes a horrific parody of the sanctioned exploitation practiced by the Western male characters” (468). According to Arata, this suggests that “the fear and guilt characteristic of reverse colonization narratives overlap” (468). Dracula’s colonization of the female bodies in the novel is no different from Western colonization of other countries. Therefore, Dracula’s invasion “mirrors” the action and practices of the British and their imperialism.

Arata concludes his article by discussing how this idea of vampirism and reverse colonization relates to Ireland. He comments on the fact that Stoker was Irish and, no doubt, felt troubled by British rule over Ireland. In addition, he comments on the Irish stereotype, set by the British, which depicts the Irishman as ““primitive Dirty, vengeful, and violent.”” This description, of course, fits that of the ““savage”” (469). Arata continues by pointing out that the average British Victorian reader would be disturbed by Dracula’s invasion of Britain because it would serve as a reminder of the potential consequences that could result from British imperialism, such as an uprising,

particularly by the Irish. Finally, Arata concludes by arguing that Stoker's *Dracula* suggests the following analogies: (a) Dracula is to England as Ireland is to England; meaning that the English people fear the colonization and/or deracination of the Irish people, just as they feared Dracula's invasion and colonization of the female bodies. (b) Dracula is to England as England is to Ireland; meaning that England is the monster who invaded Ireland, dominated their culture, and stole the identity of the Irish people. In addition, it is Dracula's expertise in all things British that assists him in his mission to conquer Britain. Therefore, Arata determines that the British characters in the novel can see their own ideology reflected back at them (470).

Arata has done a wonderful job of critiquing *Dracula*, and he is successful in proving all of his arguments in relation to *Dracula* and reverse colonization. One of the ideas that can be further explored is the idea that the novel serves as a mirror for British imperialism. The idea that a Victorian British citizen could read *Dracula* and see the agonizing effect of their imperialistic dominance over the Irish is indeed worth exploring. In the novel, Dracula familiarizes himself with the British culture, language and practices. He successfully uses his knowledge and the British legal system to acquire land so that he has a place to settle and operate. He then begins to infect the race by forcing his bite upon the women and forcing them to do his bidding. Once, he begins sucking the female blood, he continues until there is no blood left, and he has completely transformed the female into a vampire. At this point, the female ceases to exist as the woman that she once was. She has completely lost her identity, and she has become one of his kind.

In the novel, this is what happens to Lucy Westerna. She is completely transformed into a vampire, and the only way to save her from this fate is to successfully end her life. Either way, she has lost her identity; her life has been stolen from her; therefore, Dracula is successful in colonizing or invading her body. Mina is also infected by Dracula; however, she is not totally under his influence. Mina, with the help of the four men, is able to fight back to a certain degree. Mina is strong; she has complete faith in her protectors, and she is determined to assist them in their fight against Dracula. As a result, Dracula is destroyed and Mina survives.

If it is true that Dracula mirrors British imperialism in Ireland, then it can be argued that Lucy and Mina are simply metaphorical characters who represent the Irish people. In addition, Dracula is a Roumanian invader, and the Roumanians are notorious for dominating other cultures. Therefore, Dracula metaphorically represents the British oppressors who dominate Ireland and transform their culture. Interestingly, the British familiarized themselves with the Irish culture in order to step in as the stronger force, invade them, and dominate them; much like Dracula does with the British in the novel. The British began to invade Ireland by securing their land in order to gain power, just as Dracula begins his invasion of Britain in the novel. The British took advantage of Ireland's poverty and their political vulnerability, and they forced British rule and culture upon the Irish. The British also began to use their influence over the churches in Ireland. Then, they diminished the Irish culture by forcing them out of native Irish hedge schools, which taught the children their lessons in Gaelic, and they forced them to attend schools which taught lessons in English. Finally, the greatest crime of all was the arrogant way that the British forced the Irish to speak the English language rather than speak in their

native Gaelic tongue. The British sucked and sucked the blood from the poor Irish people until they were completely transformed and had lost their national identity, exactly as Dracula does to Lucy in Stoker's novel.

When the British began to impose on the Irish, there were some natives who accepted their fate and decided change would be good for them. They were simply not fighters. They decided to assimilate into the British culture which was being imposed; thus, changing their identity forever. This group of natives is represented by the character of Lucy Westerna. They were the natives who were weak and tired. They were tired of the political rule which kept them in extreme poverty, and they fancied that they would get some relief from the British government. This group of people never realized that they were selling their souls to the devil. In other words, by the time they realized that they would be treated harshly by the British and remain in poverty, it was too late. Britain, much like Dracula, takes control of Ireland by using treachery. Once, the power was achieved, Britain used Ireland for their own profit and gain. The British couldn't care less about the Irish people. This is exactly what Dracula does to Lucy. He uses treachery to suck her in, and once she realizes what is happening to her, it is too late to turn back; she is transformed. Although Dracula is later defeated, the damage has already been done. Lucy has lost her identity forever. When the Irish people realized what was happening to them, and when they saw their culture diminishing, it was too late. The damage had already been done.

On the other hand, there were the citizens of Ireland who were outraged by British arrogance from the very beginning. They were rebels who were determined to stop the British from destroying their country. This group of people is represented by the

character of Mina Harker. Once Dracula begins to prey on Mina, she immediately catches on to him. She wastes no time in seeking help in trying to destroy him. There were Irish citizens who began to fight back immediately. They were determined to hold onto their identities, but they had a long fight ahead of them because the British were much more powerful and resourceful. Therefore, the Irish had to find a way to fight back. They had to find a way to hang on to their culture. Although, they were successful in keeping some of their culture, the major damage had already been done.

There are many connections that can be drawn between *Dracula* and reverse colonization as well as mirrored imperialism. Stoker was certainly caught in the middle of things with his Irish and British ties. Therefore, it is quite possible that he uses *Dracula* in an open minded way in order to demonstrate the feelings of both the Irish and the British, as well as to depict the importance of identity and national pride to both countries. One thing is for certain, Stoker's *Dracula* definitely addresses British imperialism and the colonization of Ireland. It provides the Irish people with hope for a brighter future, and it opens the eyes of the British to their selfish arrogance.