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Reading Assignment

1. Explain how Racism is embedded in Dracula.

According to chapter 5 of *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siecle* by Stephen Arata (1996), Dracula is ridden with racism in a variety of ways. In particular, the notion that Transylvania, and eastern Europe as a whole, is a “whirlpool of European Races” that “usually involves conflict” (115) is addressed, implying not only racial tension among the Berserkers, Huns, Turks, Saxons, Slovaks, Magyars, and Szeklers in the area, but also a British attitude of superiority over them. Importantly, the idea that “Vampires are generated by racial enervation and the decline of the empire, not vice versa” (115) is covered. A large part of this book’s horror lies in the fact that its original audience is Victorian-era Great Britain, who are known for their colonialist, “our race is better than yours” attitude. The fears of an outsider not only getting in, but blending in so well and “tainting” Britain’s stock is exploited in the novel to great effect. The idea that Dracula can bite someone and effectively change them from a “respected Englishman” into a “primitive Other” is one of these fears. Although not discussed to as great a degree, the author also brings up an interpretation in which Dracula represents both sides of the Irish-English relationship simultaneously (120).

1. What does the vampire have to do with virility, as opposed to the British men in the novel?

The vampire’s virility in *Dracula*, juxtaposed against the British men’s lack thereof works on multiple levels. Firstly, it preys on British fears of sterility and reverse colonization. The point is made that figuratively, it took five fathers for the British to produce one son (118), whereas Dracula was able to convert/ kill numerous people effortlessly. Secondly, it helps primitivize Dracula. Not only is Transylvania seen by the British as filled with people of a lesser race, another key characteristic of primitivism is the exaggeration of their sex drive and almost eagerness and singlemindedness to reproduce. Dracula feels the need to seduce people and “eat” them about as strongly as he feels the need to eat or sleep.

Bibliography

Arata, S. (1996) “The Occidental tourist: Stoker and reverse colonization,” in *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siecle*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 111–120.