

2013

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Recommended Citation

Brown, Creighton Nicholas (2013) "Dracula's Colonized Tongue Speaks Through Fanged Teeth," *Journal of Dracula Studies*: Vol. 15 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/dracula-studies/vol15/iss1/1>

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Cover Page Footnote

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When I picked up *Dracula* (1897) for the second time as a graduate student, after not having read it since middle school, I was struck by the inherent complexities within this prototypical vampire narrative. I found myself drawing on the recent trend in my readings of classic works—empathizing, and even championing, the traditionally read monstrous villain as the victim of inescapable circumstances. These villainous characters appealed to my sense of injustice and seemed to provide an interesting and valid space for reconsideration. This may have resulted from a recent reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) where I found I felt more feelings of compassion and fraternity with the creature than the maniacally enlightened scientist. This same identification occurred when rereading *Beowulf*; in this text, I discovered my reading-self aligning closely to the plight of the epic poem's traditional monster, Grendel. John Gardner's rewriting of this medieval poem *Grendel* (1971) only reinforced my desire to see the *monster* as a victim of systemic violence, a systemic violence engendered by the imperial or colonial machine. This trend applied to other characters and works such as

Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610) and even Professor Moriarty from Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. I argue my identification with Dracula, as with all other misunderstood antagonists, is not a *misidentification*, but instead results from recognition of the attractive, even sympathetic, nature of these characters. My identification with all of these characters, I contend, derives from the texts' successes and perhaps the authors' intentions.

This essay relies on a contemporary trend, where modern authors rewrite classic texts to reflect growing awareness of imperial, colonial, and postcolonial issues. For example, Jamaican author Jean Rhys rewrote Charlotte Brontë's most famous novel *Jane Eyre* (1847) in her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). As a precursor to *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* works to provide an identity and history for Bertha Mason, the original Mrs. Rochester and the iconic madwoman in the attic. The novel adds nuanced sympathy and a bit of humanity to Brontë's misunderstood creation. To the same effect, John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971) functions to humanize the monster of Anglo-Saxon myth presented in the epic poem *Beowulf*. Certainly, there are myriad examples of authors rewriting traditional narratives in order to give voice to the voiceless monsters and the misunderstood creations of the literary canon. This essay tries to achieve the same objective as Rhys and Gardner, but from the perspective of an academic essay. In other words, the purpose of this essay is to explore the latent postcolonial complexity in the character of Dracula.

Dracula holds a complexity that is not at first visible. Past readings of *Dracula* have focused on the story of a well-polished aristocrat who invades England in order to colonize new hunting grounds. The story also appears to champion the efforts of a small band of Englishmen, who struggle to rid their sovereign land of

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an invading colonizer. Readings such as this suggest that the novel exploits the anxieties of reverse colonization felt by many members of British society. Indeed, Stephen D. Arata argues such a case in his essay "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization." Arata posits that the British feared their empire was in decline, which would open a vacuum to be filled by an invading force, in this case, the Count from the Orientalized East. A thorough analysis of race, the travel narrative, and degeneration in the novel help to make Arata's argument very convincing, but this argument represents just one of two newer approaches to *Dracula*. While this approach provides a fascinating space within which to explore the many facets of the novel, I suggest that while one reading could legitimately argue that Dracula is the invader, and in fact he does appear to invade England, of more significance, we must also recognize that he suffers under the oppression of the English colonial system on the metaphorical level. This metaphorical level consists of a few key scenes, which traditional readings have read as showing Dracula as an eager colonizer, such as the scene where Harker and Dracula discuss English life and language in the Count's library. These scenes invite a specific metaphoric reading, not often represented in traditional readings. I instead will momentarily argue that this scene shows Dracula as a metaphoric colonized person in a story filled with what I suggest as the ambivalence toward empire experienced by its Anglo-Irish author.

Before moving into my analysis of the work itself and of the Count as colonial subject rather than colonizer, I need to briefly explore the precarious position in which Bram Stoker found himself, as an Anglo-Irish person living in the heart of the empire. Stoker's parents were, as John Paul Riquelme in his

introduction to *Dracula* terms it, “Protestant but not part of the ruling elite in Ireland,” which may have placed Stoker in a position between the Irish Catholic and Nationalist movement and the ruling Protestant Ascendancy because “although [his] parents were Protestants, they were neither socially prominent nor wealthy” (5). This is a thread Joseph Valente picks up and examines closely in *Dracula’s Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood*. Being a member of the Ascendancy did confer a static class status; instead Valente writes that Stoker’s “ambiguous class station growing up—middle-class respectability without middle-class affluence—combined with his doubly hybrid or ‘immixed’ ethno-national status,” made Stoker a complicated cultural writer (9). Valente explores this complicated *Irish* identity, as he comments, “For Stoker was not a standard issue middle-class Anglo-Irish Protestant, as has been almost universally imagined, but an interethnic Anglo-Celt and hence a member of a conquering and conquered race, a ruling and subject people, an imperial and an occupied nation” (4). Valente further explains this dichotomy of personality by exploring the different ethnic backgrounds of Stoker’s parents through the stories they told their son. On the one hand, Stoker’s father told him “tales [that] specifically celebrated the ambition, adventurousness, and martial valor of [his] forbearers, their enactment of an aggressive, disciplined, and dominating ideal of masculinity” (17). On the other hand, Stoker’s mother narrated stories commemorating “the domestic suffering and passive endurance of her Irish peasant compeers, their conformity with a patient and subservient ideal associated with femininity” (17).

According to Riquelme, after his education and some time spent working for the Irish Civil Service, among other jobs, Stoker moved to London, where he

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befriended Henry Irving, the stage actor, who would be a life-long companion and business partner. Riquelme suggests that during Irving and Stoker's working relationship, the actor and the author may have disagreed on the issue of Home Rule for Ireland. As an English citizen, Irving was steadfastly against autonomy for the Irish; as an Anglo-Irish citizen, Stoker seems to have been placed in the ambivalent situation of trying to mediate the two sides within himself. Riquelme notes that Stoker refers to "himself as a 'philosophical' supporter of Home Rule," which could show a desire on the part of Stoker to mask his true feelings on the Irish situation, while living in the heart of the empire and while experiencing "the effects of differential treatment [and] prejudicial attitudes" compounded by "contrasting accents" (17). I suggest that if Stoker was not a nationalist, he was at least torn between his allegiance to his homeland and his allegiance to the British Empire as a colonial citizen. Valente seems to agree with my assessment of Stoker, as he writes of Stoker's involvement in various societies at Trinity College, "A prominent member and officer in Trinity's most prestigious intellectual clubs, Stoker used these elect forums to voice not only a love of England and empire that was to last a lifetime but also the early stirrings of an Irish irredentism that was to crystallize in an equally enduring commitment to home rule" (22).

This embodiment of various identities described by both Riquelme and Valente is one of balance and not one of choice. Internally, Stoker needed to negotiate the two seemingly opposed sides of his inherited cultural legacy instead of one superseding the other. Fascinatingly, such a balancing act occurs in another classic Stoker text. In *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911), Stoker uses the mythology of the White Worm to construct a story replete with images of British colonization and the

various imperial or colonial waves that washed over the English shore. *The Lair of the White Worm* delivers the story of Adam Salton's return to Derbyshire from Australia at the request of his uncle Richard Salton. The two men are the last remaining members of the Caswell family. Adam is to inherit Caswell Castle—*Castra Regis*—and all the surrounding land, but these plans are complicated by the lore of a great white worm that lives in Diana's Grove and is said to haunt the family. The worm appears to be connected to the character of the Lady Arabella. The remainder of the story details the adventures of Adam, his uncle, and Sir Nathaniel, a friend of Richard's, as they try to stop the villainous Lady Arabella and her White Worm.

Interestingly, in order to tell this tale of horror Stoker draws on the complicated history of Derbyshire, which featured Druid inhabitants and successive waves of Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman colonizers—each colonizing the land and each contributing to the layered mythology of Diana's Grove (25). And yet, Stoker does not give supremacy to any of the former cultures that inhabited England. Indeed, Sir Nathaniel tells Adam that “Each legend, each superstition which we receive, will help in the understanding and possible elucidation of the others. And as all such have a local basis, we can come closer to the truth” (Stoker 23). In this evocative passage Sir Nathaniel does not give preeminence to any one culture or legend; he suggests that he and Adam consider them all equally as they navigate their way through abstract mythology to concrete creature. Through each legend the White Worm grows and becomes more nuanced and menacing, as though it is linked to each new and successive wave of invasive colonization.

Curiously, this novel not only reflects on the colonization through invasion of the British Isle, but also it relies on a reinforcement of the unparalleled might and

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expanse of the British Empire. At the opening of the novel, Adam returns from Australia, which was originally a British penal colony, where he has lived and worked. Later, Edgar Caswell, who appears to be in league with Lady Arabella, reflects on an object that is a “small copy of one of the ancient Egyptian gods—that of Bes, who represented the destructive power of nature” (86). This mention of Egypt recalls the years of political and colonial meddling in Egypt during the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Additionally, the mention of Bes as a god of nature makes an interesting connection to the White Worm, which is also a destructive, natural force. In effect, this brief passage appears to tie the worm to the imperial project. Could the White Worm be a legacy of imperialism? Curiously, again such a suggestion of British power occurs during a reflective moment for the character of Edgar Caswell. Edgar remembers creating a vast kite in China “far up-country, towards the headwaters of the Yang-tze-kiang, where the smaller tributaries spread out in a sort of natural irrigation scheme to supply the wilderness of paddy-fields” (73). This particular colonial mention brings to mind the Opium Wars and British interests in China and Southeast Asia during the mid to late nineteenth century. Through mentions of Egypt and other African countries, Australia, and China, Stoker appears to be extolling the successes and impressive expanse of the British Empire: Stoker has crafted an empire where the sun indeed does not set. This construction of British imperialism works to shield the other, more important consideration of cultures; that is, the allusions to British colonialism seemingly mask the equity of consideration given the Druids, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, and Normans in the narrative as Adam, Richard, and Sir Nathaniel attempt to end the White Worm and Lady Arabella. Masking such

as that present in *The Lair of the White Worm* seems to be a strategy utilized across several of Stoker's texts including *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* (1903), *The Snake's Pass* (1890), and of course *Dracula*—a strategy that may have arisen from his complicated identity as a member of both the conquering and the conquered race.

Stoker's life deftly illustrates the difficulty experienced by a colonial subject living in the heart of the Empire. In other words, the potential tension experienced by Stoker between his identity as an imperial citizen and a colonized Irish person requires the ability to mask one's inner identity. Another recent approach to the idea of masking comes from Dawn Duncan, an eminent scholar of Irish drama, in *Postcolonial Theory in Irish Drama, from 1800—2000*, where Duncan theorizes about the first generation of Irish writers shortly after the Act of Union in 1800, such as Alicia LeFanu: “[T]he first generation of writers following completed language dominance would have to exercise caution in any attempt to regain a voice for the native identity. Accordingly, the first tactic employed by these writers takes the form of a cautious request for acceptance of their national identity on an equal level with the nationality of the dominant speakers” (28). In other words, with the forced learning of English, Irish writers needed to find a way of writing under the noses of the imperial powers that be. Also, while being required to write in English, these Irish writers attempted to assert an equality of national identity in a language not their own. This idea of masking seems rather appropriate for an Anglo-Irish citizen living in the heart of the Empire. I contend that on one level Stoker wrote in a language not of his ancestry in order to publish a story replete with metaphoric anti-colonialism. Stoker's delivery method is tricky, as I have noted above, because traditional readings tend not to focus on the anti-colonial

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metaphors imbedded within the text, but the anxieties of reverse colonization. Stoker expertly masks his anti-colonial metaphors within a palatable story.

Tom Henthorne suggests in *Conrad's Trojan Horse: Imperialism, Hybridity, & the Postcolonial Aesthetic* that Joseph Conrad was a postcolonial rather than a colonial or imperial writer who needed to create a strategy for his works in order "to contend with a fiction market that for the most part demanded monologic affirmations of Britain's civilizing mission" (9). The strategy posited by Henthorne is the Trojan horse strategy, where one creates "'intentional hybrids'... that is, texts in which alternative perspectives are set against one another dialogically," and where an author like Conrad "conceal[s] radical critiques of imperialism in seemingly innocuous tales set in exotic places" (9). I suggest that many a postcolonial writer, including Stoker, masked their politics by writing narratives that appeared palatable to their imperial readers but in fact contain crosscurrent metaphors for anti-colonialism in order to nudge the (inter)national conversation in a postcolonial direction, and that they, like Conrad, also used a "Trojan horse" strategy, meaning that they created stories that exist on levels within levels in order to deliver revolutionary thought imbedded in imperial narratives.

I argue that Stoker needed to mask the ambivalence in his writing, while living and working in London, and chose to utilize a strategy similar to Conrad. For example, as I have mentioned before, the novel is often read as a reverse colonization narrative, but I argue that Jonathan Harker is the colonizer and the Count is the colonized. Stoker is utilizing the "Trojan horse" strategy by presenting one story where Harker is invited in order to mask the more political one about him as a typical colonizer. For one reason, it is Harker first who crosses the border into the Count's country in order to deliver

the deed to Dracula's recently purchased home near London. The manner in which Harker describes the countryside and its people as he travels toward the castle is reminiscent of what Mary Louise Pratt describes in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, where the natural philosopher—or traveler—describes, names, and catalogues the landscape and her people: "Both are authorized by the global project of natural history: one produces land as landscape and territory, scanning for prospects; the other produces the indigenous inhabitants as bodyscapes, scanned also for prospects" (64). In other words, Pratt documents the ways in which explorers, natural philosophers, and settlers, among others, commodify the people and landscape around them through descriptions in English. We see such actions when Harker describes the women as "pretty, except when you got near them," the terrain as "thunderous" and "dark," and in the opening pages of the novel compares this more Eastern culture of the Carpathians to another colonial property, China, which mirrors the imperial attitudes detailed by Pratt.

The Count, on the other hand, can be read as the masked colonized other, as first seen through analysis of language in the narrative. Traditionally, the Count is read as having his own desire to learn to read and speak the language of his new home, but one can also understand that desire to learn English as representative of the reality the Irish faced daily: learn English or decline. The story of the count wanting to learn English is the "Trojan horse" masking the story of linguistic oppression. This representation of language as political tool can best be seen in the scene where Jonathan Harker, representative of the English banking system, notices the large library adjacent to his bedroom in the Count's castle and takes great pains to note the contents of the library:

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In the library I found, to my great delight, a vast number of English books, whole shelves full of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers. A table in the centre was littered with English magazines and newspapers, though none of them were of very recent date. The books were of the most varied kind—history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law—all relating to England and English life and customs and manners. (44)

The many and disparate volumes housed in the library have been read as demonstrating the Count's desire to learn as much as possible about his new home, with its new supply of human beings to hunt, as Arata has noted. However, I suggest that we can also read this passage as a demonstration of Dracula's need to learn the language of his new colonizer. Through the reading of varied materials written in English—the tongue of the most successful imperial colonizers—the Count is trying to learn the language of the oppressor in order to combat the injustice of his second-class position in society as the colonial other. The English began a policy to eradicate the native Irish tongue early in their intertwined history with Ireland, but this took many generations and, even today, has not been completely accomplished.

While reading helps one to learn the grammar and words of a language, speech is an essential skill for communicating this new knowledge and for interacting in the imperial world. The novel illuminates this historical practice on the metaphorical level when the Count notes this essential truth when he reminds Harker, "Through them [the reference material] I have come to know your great England; and to know her is to love her," which is followed by, "But alas! as yet I only know your tongue through books. To you, my friend, I look that I know it to speak" (45). Harker responds with

praises for Dracula's knowledge of the English language, to which the Count responds, "True, I know the grammar and the words, but yet I know not how to speak them" (45). Dracula implies that he desires to erase his Transylvanian accent and wishes to replace it with an English accent.

Harker and the Count pass many nights together talking, in a vain attempt to erase the Transylvanian accent and replace it with a more pure English accent. I describe this as a vain attempt because the Count can never actually mask his true identity as the colonized nor can he ever truly imitate or replicate the spoken language of the colonizer, in this case Harker. In other words, the Count can only mimic the language of the colonizer, but he cannot ever achieve an authentic English accent, or as Homi Bhabha writes in "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," "He is the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized, is *emphatically* not to be English" (237). Dracula's need to learn the language of the oppressor in effect marks him as the colonial Other. I argue this need or pressure to learn English results in the metaphorical death of his own language, which I suggest leads to the violence Dracula imparts on the English characters throughout the novel. While historically it can take many generations to effectively kill a native tongue, I argue Stoker is attempting to metaphorically represent the policies of the English toward the Irish language. With this in mind, it is plausible to see this generational and imperial practice of erasing another's language represented in the rather quick turn from the Count's tongue of origin to the tongue of his metaphorical British colonizers.

Another aspect of Stoker's "Trojan horse" strategy, which furthers his revolutionary ideas, is the masked discussion of the Count's desire to pass as an Englishman. This aspect delves into the shift from

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Dracula's own culture to mimicry of the colonizer's culture. Traditionally, the Count is seen as utilizing English culture as a form of camouflage in order to hunt his new prey, but I argue that we could also read his efforts as the Count vainly attempting to become English, as he is now a subject of the British Empire—allegorizing the life of many colonized subjects wishing for a better life. For example, during one of the many late night conversations aimed at improving the Count's English, he reveals some of his anxiety with respect to the loss of his culture and identity when he confides in Harker, "Here I am noble; I am *boyar*; the common people know me, and I master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not—and to know is to care not for" (45). I suggest this break in the Count's confidence reveals much about the metaphorical nature of this text. Dracula becomes increasingly concerned about his identity as the aforementioned eventual loss of his language leads to his eventual loss of identity, while he attempts to become linguistically and culturally English. His anxieties about not fully becoming English are realized when Harker and Mina see the Count on the street. Mina relates the failed attempt at mimicry in her journal when she writes, "His face was not a good face; it was hard, and cruel, and sensual, and his big white teeth, that looked all the whiter because his lips were so red, were pointed like an animal's" (183). Stoker, through the character of Mina, points out the physical manifestation of what Bhabha described with respect to language: The Count can attempt to mimic or imitate the cultural practices of the English (i.e. dress), but will ultimately fail because he is inherently not British. Stoker is showing that the Count cannot pass in English society in order to allegorize the experience of the colonized, who is seen as a threat to the culture, just as Dracula is.

The final aspect of the “Trojan horse” strategy present within Stoker’s narrative develops the tension between an influential reading of the Count’s violence as excessive hunting for food and the revolutionary violence of an oppressed population. Often Dracula is seen as a vampiric aristocrat preying on the lifeblood of colonized commoners, but I contend that while the Count was moderately violent in his country of origin, his violence increased in England as a result of his aforementioned metaphorical loss of tongue and culture. While living in Transylvania, the violence enacted by the Count toward the natives, that is the consumption of the blood, was in fact for the purposes of survival and was isolated. Vampires need blood to sustain their lives. However, when Dracula moves to England, the intensity of his violence increases in the eyes of the reader, with the deaths of Lucy directly and Quincey indirectly, among others, and with the attempted killing of Mina. Again and as Arata notes, often this increase is seen as a representation of the savagery of the colonized other during the process of reverse colonization, but I contend this increased violence results from a complete lack of acceptance.

As I have noted before, no matter how hard the Count tries to erase his accent and perfect his English or to embrace the cultural aspects of the English, such as attire, he will never be accepted. This lack of acceptance creates a sense of alienation, which can lead to violence. In “Of Mimicry and Man,” Bhabha notes, “The ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from *mimicry*—a difference that is almost nothing but not quite—to *menace*—a difference that is almost total but not quite” (241). I infer that Bhabha suggests the inability to completely and peaceably imitate the colonizer leads to a violent backlash where differences are raised up as a point of violent rebellion. I would even

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go as far as to suggest that the Count's fangs are representational of the violence engendered by the voicelessness experienced by both the Count and those Irish men and women fighting for a free and independent Irish state. By delivering a masked story about a violent colonial citizen bent on reverse colonizing the heart of the Empire, Stoker is able to mask a metaphoric story about a colonized person attempting to gain acceptance, but being denied acceptance, and then turning to violence.

By reading *Dracula* in this way, we can better understand and appreciate the complicated subject positions explored in the novel. Through the fracturing of the prevalent readings of *Dracula*, we can recognize the complex existence experienced by those living lives of ambivalence and how writers like Stoker might have tried to represent that ambivalence through a multilayered text. We can also more fully appreciate Stoker's ambivalent position within the empire, which necessitated the creation of a complex narrative with the literal level masking the Trojan-horse-like metaphorical level, achieving a timeless narrative. This narrative continually offers fresh perspectives on the colonial/postcolonial situation, which will hopefully affect our readings of other classic texts.

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