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Kristy Eve Snow

Introduction

A Brief Irish Colonial History & Stoker's Vampire

Teland's political and colonial relationship with England can be traced back roughly one thousand years to the Norman Invasions of 1169. Over the next half a century, the English gradually took over the island and in 1603, following the Nine Years' War, the Irish were overpowered and Ireland became an English territory. After this victory, England began forcefully colonizing Ireland, and reimagining the island in its own image. While the land had previously been viewed as communal property, English property laws confiscated land from native Catholic families and partitioned it into individual holdings for settler purchase. Additionally, penal laws, which prevented Catholics from owning land or participating in government (among other restrictions), were enacted in an attempt to subvert and undermine native Irish Catholicism.

It was in this new, pseudo-English landscape that English settlers moved to Ireland and established themselves as the Protestant ascendancy minority through the purchase of land, and the filling of positions in the Protestant clergy and Irish Parliament. Margot Backus writes in *The Gothic Family Romance*:

Through the process of resettlement in Ireland, a large number of persons, themselves economically and socially displaced, achieved stable positions in English society. [...]Paradoxically, only by remaining in Ireland could the settler colonialist participate fully in the national economic and political life of England. (23)

Incapable of upward class or political mobility on his native English soil, the Anglo-Irish settler reinvented himself as an absentee, but nevertheless, aristocratic member of English society. Thus, the displaced Anglo-Irish colonizer, in an attempt to legitimize his position as a chiefly English dignitary, labeled the native Irish as both racially and nationally "other." He designated in his Irish counterparts those traits he did not want to recognize in himself, and in doing so, prevented Irish class mobility much like the imperial English had prevented

his. The once displaced Anglo-Irish prevented the Irish peasantry class from progressing through an antiquated feudal system and leasing land for tenant subsistence farming. This antiquated structure of land-ownership continued well into the nineteenth century and exacerbated the devastation of the Irish Potato Famine of 1845-1852. It also exaggerated the imperial condemnation of the Irish as a "diseased stock," as over one million people died of starvation, poverty, and famine-related illnesses (Gibbons 43). In his article "The Cultural Effects of the Famine," Kevin Whelan argues that while the Famine stagnated the culture of Ireland in the immediate post-famine period, it later prompted vast cultural changes in the postfamine generation of the 1880's—including the centralization of the Catholic Church as a moral and religious authority, as well as the core of Irish national identity. The post-famine generation sought to produce an Irish cultural identity that was previously ruined or prevented by the political and social injustices related to the Potato Famine. They sought to rewrite the Irish history that was taken from them by tragedy, and reinvent Irishness as an identity that was chiefly anti-English.

At the end of the nineteenth century, as the one-time colony rapidly approached nationhood, the fight for Irish nationalism advanced. Subsequently, the Anglo-Irish ascendancy culture deteriorated. The class was loathed in Ireland and without a place in a modernizing England. In this fin de siècle landscape, Ireland was seen as being occupied by two opposing, and religiously charged, forms of Irishness—the Protestant Anglo-Irish, who supported the union of England and Ireland, and were viewed as essentially English, and the Catholic nationalists, who asserted that Ireland should be a sovereign nation ruled by the Catholic majority.

Religion was not all that divided the island. Imperial conceptions of gender and family were simultaneously extended to and withheld from the Irish people. Joseph Valente writes in his book, The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922: "On one side, the Irish were enlisted as foot soldiers of empire, and so bound to the ethos of manliness; on the other, they were reduced to inmates of empire, and thus stigmatized as manhood's other" (19). The Anglo-Irish, linked to the English through Anglo-Saxon bloodlines, asserted themselves as the manly counterpart to a feminine native-Irish population. Each group viewed the other as a threat to Ireland's security, and as a mode of cultural and racial contamination. Despite these opposing classifications, there were Irish people belonging to more hybridized subject positions who struggled with a socially created racial and gender anxiety. In his book, Dracula's Crypt, Valente writes: "This psychosocial condition, the relationship of the subject with his own immixed otherness closely resembles the vampiric condition in Dracula, the

relationship of subject-victims with their undead emanation or doppelganger" (18).

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is the story of an English solicitor, Jonathan Harker, who travels to Transylvania to negotiate the sale of English real estate, and secure his position in bourgeois society. However, this transaction leads him to the vampire, Count Dracula, who uses Jonathan as a means to travel to London and feed on Harker's fiancée and friends. Despite drinking Dracula's blood, Harker's fiancée survives the encounter with the vampire, and, with the help of a band of men, Harker is able to kill the Count. However, the birth of Jonathan's baby, who holds the blood of all of the novel's characters through the earlier vampiric exchanges, signals the hybridity of the next generation.

Stoker's novel demonstrates that the binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized does not hold because it cannot be clearly defined or recognized. Instead, the paradigm produces a complicated, hybridized subject position with an uncertain future in a modern landscape. Through *Dracula*, Stoker interrogates colonialism and the future of the nations that emerge from it. He also questions where progress lies in the wake of a colonial past, and in a society which seeks to dichotomize identities.

English Subjectivity Confronts the Colony

Jonathan Harker, the first character to lend his narrative to Dracula, epitomizes modern English, middle-class subjectivity—a social role continually created and recreated by social contexts. As a newly certified solicitor, Harker travels to Transylvania to negotiate the sale of London real estate to the reclusive and aristocratic Count Dracula. While in pursuit of an idealized bourgeois lifestyle, Harker's journey forces him to confront an antiquated landscape, fierce Catholicism, and a feudal vampire. Thus, as Harker moves further from London and further from the luxuries of modernity, like trains that run on time (Stoker 28), he becomes bond between the contemporary and the historical, and consequently a bond between the colonial conquests of the past, and the postcolonial future. Through Harker's encounter with outmoded Transylvanian society, Stoker suggests that are no clear racial or national distinctions in colonial discourse. In order to achieve class mobility and to become the self-sufficient man he longs to be, Harker needs to address the colonial condition that produced his subject position. Similarly, instead of viewing the colonized other as its opposite, English subjectivity must confront and recognize the internalized aspects of the other within itself, and embrace its hybridized identity.

While the text never explicitly mentions Ireland, Harker's description of the Transylvanian landscape resembles

the writing of English travel journals describing the Irish countryside and its occupants. Harker writes of "[historical] casualties of war proper being assisted by famine and disease" (29). He also describes the "green sloping land full of forests and woods, with here and there steep hills crowned with clumps of trees or with farmhouses" (32), and roadside shrines and crosses vehemently worshipped by the locals (33). His account of the landscape gestures to the English version of Ireland with its "green sloping land," "farmhouses," and roadside crosses, all serving as indications of an agrarian, Catholic nation.

Although the above descriptions might mirror a depiction of Ireland, Joseph Valente argues in his book *Dracula's Crypt* that one should not view them as a direct catalog, but the evocation of a history of constructing colonial otherness:

[W]e must not draw the customary inference that the social landscape of Stoker's Transylvania deliberately and directly evokes the conditions of contemporary Ireland, but rather that Harker's report on Transylvania evokes a multigeneric, multiethnic, and multiperspectival construction of Ireland that had developed, unevenly, over an extended period. (53)

Stoker utilizes Jonathan Harker as the English lens through which Transylvania is described. Despite the Irishness implicit in Harker's narrative, Stoker sets Dracula in Transylvania and, in doing so, illuminates the irony of the imperial worldview conflating all colonial others. While the descriptions of the landscape are not derogatory in and of themselves, Harker's attitude towards the location and its occupants indicates his innate imperial sensibility, and his intrinsic desire to designate the Transylvanian occupants as "other" or opposite. In his journal, Harker criticizes his surroundings as the home of "every known superstition in the world" (28) and comments on the peasants' inappropriate attire. However, as Luke Gibbons argues in his book Gaelic Gothic: Race, Colonization, and Irish Culture, "race and empire begin at home, and... both colonization and the animus against Catholicism were inherently bound up with the subjugation of the Celtic periphery..." (11). While the colonizer justifies the conquest of the colonized through faith-based prejudices, those loathed qualities of Catholicism—namely superstition—transcend religious discourse, and are instead indicative of the dialectic relationship between colony and colonizer.

Although Harker vehemently contrasts Transylvania with England throughout his visit, he later utilizes some of the Catholicism and "superstition" that he previously criticized. On page 31 he accepts rosary beads from a peasant woman, and clings to them during his fearful journey. Throughout

the novel, Harker utilizes Catholic-based objects, including rosaries, communion wafers, and crucifixes, as primary modes of protection against the vampire, proving that while he identifies himself as "an English Churchman" (31), his anti-Catholicism is ambiguous, and bred from a "multigeneric," "multiperspectival" construction. In other words, the animus of colonialism inflicts both the colonizer and the colonized. While the colonizer inherently wishes to "other" and oppose itself to its colony, the act of imperialism instead bonds the two. This leads to the conflation of qualities, and the act of designating one's opposite becomes more complex. While Jonathan Harker might dismiss the Transylvanians as archaic and superstitious, he clings to their values for his protection. Throughout his journey, Harker's inability to easily designate rationality from superstition, or self from other, becomes more prevalent. As he begins to approach Dracula's castle, Jonathan is forced to confront the shifting and plural construction of his unique subject position.

The Man in the Mirror: Freud & Bhabha

While Jonathan Harker and Count Dracula might appear to be contrasting figures occupying distinct positions in a binary opposition, Stoker confuses and averts clear-cut antithesis through character doubling. Also referred to as a doppelgänger, Sigmund Freud describes the experience of the double in The Uncanny, writing: "[A] person may identify himself with another and so become unsure of his true self; or he may substitute the other's self for his own. The self may thus be duplicated, divided and interchanged" (142). When considering the motif within colonial discourse, the double becomes a mechanism for the colonizer to identify within the colonized those traits which he represses, and thus, a means to justify the oppression of the colonized. At the end of the Victorian era, when Dracula was written, the double served as criticism of the Victorian impulse to juxtapose people as either good or evil, masculine or feminine, dominant or subordinate, as well as colonizer or colonized (Kiberd 38). The doppelgänger effect demonstrated that within one subject position are infinite, fluid qualities challenging antithesis.

Resisting clear allegory, Stoker combines in each character disparate notions of the colonial relationship. The Count, on the one hand, resembles an imperial, masculine force—commonly associated with the British Empire. On the other hand, the vampire's archaism and racialized "otherness" aligns him more closely with stereotypes of all colonized others. Similarly, Harker signifies the working class, feminized vision of the colonized, but is fundamentally the model of modern British subjectivity. While occupying different physical bodies, the characters of the vampire and Harker conflate the literal with the repressed, as well as the modern subject with

the racialized other. Homi Bhabha discusses the concept of colonial imitation in his article, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." According to Bhabha, mimicry occurs when a colonized society imitates its colonizer to the point of near indistinguishability. Borrowing from Jacques Lacan's essay "The Line and the Light," Bhabha writes, "The effect of mimicry is camouflage...It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled..." (Lacan qtd. in Bhabha 85). In mimicking, the colonized never achieves complete synchronization with the imperial culture, and is left, instead, in a position of self-doubt. However, in mimicking the oppressor, the colonized gains a subversive advantage and in post-colonial discourse should embrace hybridity as a means of reinvention (Gupta 1-10). Many scholars have argued that the section that perhaps most unifies Harker and Dracula as doubled characters occurs in chapter 2 of the novel when Harker writes in his journal:

I had hung my shaving glass by the window, and was just beginning to shave. Suddenly, I felt a hand on my shoulder, and heard the Count's voice saying to me, 'Good morning.' I started for it amazed me that I had not seen him, since the reflection of the glass covered the whole room behind me. In starting I had cut myself slightly, but did not notice it at the moment. Having answered the Count's salutation, I turned to the glass again to see how I had been mistaken. This time there could be no error, for the man was close to me, and I could see him over my shoulder. But there was no reflection of him in the mirror! The whole room behind me was displayed; but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself. (50)

While this description may signal the paranormal or supernatural, I argue, instead, that Harker is recognizing his own innate hybridity but is mentally unequipped to recognize it. While shaving, Harker is positioned in front of both a mirror and a window—two means of self-reflection, and one of illumination. The act of shaving expresses Harker's need to transform himself into the modern, British gentleman—a position he is on the brink of achieving as a newly established solicitor. However, his transformation is stalled when his repressed other surfaces in the form of the Count. In a state of amazement, an indication of the sublime in the Gothic genre (Kilfeather), Harker is unable to break free of his limited perspective. Instead, as stated previously, Harker is imprisoned within a domestic space—observing the whole room in the reflection of the mirror. In his confinement, he is also trapped in an infantilized stage of development.

Although Harker is literally partaking in a state of selfreflection, he is not addressing the Count as a part of himself, but as a separate man, and in doing so is preventing himself from having a cohesive identity. Freud argues in The Uncanny that, "in the pathological cases of delusions," the double becomes a distinct entity, created by the observer and infused with those traits belong to his own "superannuated narcissism of primitive times" (142-143). Harker, as a representation of British subjectivity, is confronting Dracula as an embodiment of its own repressed imperial history. Rather than occupying a "true-self," or regarding his subject position as innately hybrid, the English Harker, in a state of "primitive narcissism" divides himself into two men—Jonathan and Dracula; the latter of the two becoming the object on which his own suppressed traits are projected. While Harker longs to escape Dracula, and later murder him, Declan Kiberd writes, "killing or annihilating the double is no final solution, for his life and welfare are so closely linked to that of his author as are the Irish to the English, women to men, so on. No sooner is the double denied than it becomes man's fate" (42). Considering this scene within an Irish subtext, the Count represents the colonial otherintimately tied to both English and Irish national identity, but rejected by both.

Gender & Colonialism

During the Victorian era, gender roles were highly debated and the attributes of each sex were strictly policed. Traditional Victorian gender roles—roles created by a patriarchal society portrayed the ideal woman as virginal, subservient, and entirely domestic, while men were expected to be dominant, unemotional, and intelligent. During this time, the tendency of men to categorize women through the virgin/whore binarythe notion that a woman is either pure and submissive, or sensual and unruly—was also commonplace. The Madwoman in the Attic by Gilbert and Gubar discusses this dichotomy and describes Victorian society as "a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters" (29). In Dracula, these larger gender implications are projected onto the psychosexual dynamic of the characters, with each occupying a hybridized version of prescribed gender roles (Kelfeather 79). Stoker treats gender as a fluid categorization, moving in and out of the expected norms, and through this interrogates the sexual aspect of the colonial relationship.

During the colonial period, Victorian gender roles became synonymous with the colonial relationship, with the colonizer embodying masculinity, and the colonized acting as the feminine. As Meaney writes in *Sex and Nation: Women in Irish Culture and Politics*:

[A] history of colonisation is a history of

feminisation. Colonial powers identify their subject peoples as passive, in need of guidance, incapable of self-government, romantic, passionate, unruly, barbarous—all of those things for which the Irish and women have been traditionally praised and scorned. (qtd. in Gray 87)

As Ireland moved closer to nationhood, the traditional construction of the masculine England and feminine Erin did not abate. Rather, the gender construction was internalized and reappropriated onto Irish women—newly stereotyped as a romantic, idealization of the Irish land (Valente 25). Irish women and the Irish national body became a feminine figure for the Irish male population to protect. Stoker criticizes this reappropriation in *Dracula*, and seeks to break the internalized gender norms of the Victorian Era.

Jonathan Harker's encounter with the three female brides of *Dracula*, or the "weird sisters" to borrow from *Macbeth*, exemplify the consequences of an extreme form of gender hybridity. The sisters represent a cruel and impulsive hypermasculinity in a female form, occupying the monstrous space in Gilbert and Gubar's described binary. These women seek to destroy children rather than create them, and exude a domineering sexuality that Harker struggles to resist:

All three had brilliant white teeth, that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. (61)

In a prostrate position, Harker fixates on the vampires' mouths. He longs for the women to bite him with their phallic teeth, but also fears complete victimization. Although Harker is attracted to these female vampires, who Stoker refers to as "voluptuous" numerous times, he is also aware of the danger of giving into their seduction; a vampiric penetration that would lead to his death. Joseph Valente points out in Dracula's Crypt that Harker's conflictual desire to maintain his masculinity but be feminized by the vampiric bite is bred from his complex subject position— English with an intermixed colonial other (Valente 18). While Dracula represents the patriarchal Anglo-Irish ascendancy on the brink of extinction, his brides represent the uncertain future of women outside of the colonial relationship. Although some have argued that Stoker's writing is misogynistic, I want to suggest that Stoker is struggling to combine disparate ideas of gender—one extremely prudish and heavily enforced by popular culture, the other hyper-sexualized and repressed—in these female villains. The female vampires are the hyperbolic

expression of a woman embodying Victorian masculine traits, or the severe consequences of the New Woman—a nineteenth century iconographic, progressive female who disregarded social gender norms (Eltis 452). Through them, Stoker questions the gender dynamic of a post-colonialist space. Rather than calling for an inverted gender relationship, Stoker calls for a more balanced hybridity.

Mina Harker (nee Murray) is the most hybridized female representation in *Dracula* because of her professional endeavors as a schoolmistress and her desired domesticity in her relationship with Jonathan. She blends prescribed gender roles, breaking free of an entirely domestic life while still proclaiming her devotion to her husband. Mina resists the New Woman label because of her commitment to being useful to her husband and his male friends. However, she maintains control through the compilation and editing of the journals and sources that comprise Dracula. Van Helsing, the leader of the men who kill Dracula, compliments Mina's dual-nature, saying:

Ah, that wonderful Madam Mina! She has a man's brain—a brain that a man should have were he much gifted—and a woman's heart. The good God fashioned her for a purpose, believe me, when He made that so good combination. (240)

Mina represents Stoker's ideal conception of the nation. While she is feminine, and ultimately subservient to her husband (and later, Dracula), her rational ability allows her to thrive both domestically and within a larger social landscape. In colonial discourse, Mina becomes the ideal Ireland—self-governing but, still reliant on her male counterpart.

While others fall victim to vampiricism in the novel, Mina actively participates in it. While Dracula is able to seduce Mina, as he did her friend, Lucy, his seduction does not lead to Mina's demise. Instead, his blood enhances her and ultimately allows her to aid the men in the novel to destroy the vampire. Unlike the sexualized exchange of blood between Lucy and Dracula, Mina and Dracula's encounter appears far more maternal. Dr. Seward writes in his account of the scene:

With [Dracula's] left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast, which was shown by his torn open dress. (283)

This exchange clearly alludes to the act of breastfeeding. While

Mina drinks from Dracula, her husband lies prostrate on the bed, unconscious and unaware of the unfolding scene. Rather than allowing this colonial force drain life from her, Mina is nourished by their encounter. While Dracula does drink from Mina, he also replenishes what he has taken. This exchange represents the ideal relationship between the colonizer, England, and the colonized, Ireland. Rather than opposing each other, or allowing one entity to take advantage of the other, their relationship is mutually beneficial. Despite the mutual nourishment, the men of Dracula, with Mina's help, are able to destroy the Count.

The Death of the Vampire and The Birth of the Nation

Dracula's death scene is surprisingly anti-climactic and somewhat ambiguous. After Mina drinks from the Count, she is able to sense his location telepathically. The men use her ability to follow Dracula back to Transylvania where they appear to kill him:

[O]n the instant, came the sweep and flash of Jonathan's great knife. I shrieked as I saw it shear through the throat; whilst at the same moment Mr. Morris's bowie knife plunged into the heart. It was like a miracle; but before our very eyes, and almost in the drawing of a breath, the whole body crumbled into dust and passed from our sight. (367)

While Dracula seemingly disappears, his killing is not as explicit as Lucy's. His throat is only slit, rather than his head removed, and his heart is pierced with a knife and not staked. Nonetheless, he appears to be destroyed. Dracula's death is fully mobilized—the men fight around a moving carriage, and his murderer is the once impotent Jonathan Harker. Jonathan's transformation from stagnant to active male represents the transformation of his once limited perspective. Through this scene, Stoker argues that national sovereignty is possible for Ireland, but only after a mutually beneficial relationship with England is established through the Home Rule movement." Mina, with her man brain and Dracula blood, is the means by which the men are able to free themselves from the Count. However, Dracula, as an earlier conceptualization of the nation, is imagined and has the potential to be outwardly projected again. In other words, sovereignty does not signal safety because capitalism and colonialism are so deeply implanted in the concept of nation.

The birth of Quincey Harker concludes the novel and signals the necessary hybridity of future generations. The child of Mina and Jonathan literally holds the blood of all of the major characters of *Dracula*; Mina and Jonathan through birth, and the blood of Dracula, Lucy, and the men through Lucy's

transfusions. He is the ultimate manifestation of Irish hybridity.

Conclusion

Benedict Anderson argues that the concept of the nation is inwardly imagined, and projected by its occupants. Because it is imagined, the national identity is also limited to the classification conceived by its creators. Although Ireland strives for sovereignty, the institutions it most fears and loathes—particularly colonialism—are so intimately tied to Irishness that they cannot be escaped. In projecting the nation, Ireland will undoubtedly need to acknowledge that those institutions that it dreads are necessary within national discourse, and connected to the Irish subject position through its colonial history. Through *Dracula*, Stoker argues that Irishness is a fluid identity, bred from the history it longs to forget, and imagined in multiple forms.

Endnotes

¹ Further supporting this reading, Dracula is greeting Harker in the morning, contradicting the nocturnal reputation of vampires.
¹¹ Irish Home Rule argued that Ireland should stay under the dominion of England, but practice self-government.

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