

## HANDOUT

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### Implications of *Dracula*-Related Tourism

Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* has inspired tourism since Romania opened to tourists in the 1960s (Light 751). Reijnders shows that fans of the novel and its many adaptations seek both imaginative immersion in a fictional world and a connection with their fellow fans (Reijnders 236). To many Westerners, the association of Romania with the character Dracula is very strong; in fact, it is "so strong that the fact that Transylvania is a real place comes as a surprise" (Hovi, 62). Thus Stoker's novel, although not well known in Romania, has powerfully influenced Western perceptions of that country. As a result, Transylvania is seen in Western, "Balkanist" discourse as "a sinister, remote and backward region where evil and the supernatural run wild," (Light) just as Stoker portrayed it. In fact, commercial tour companies have gone so far as to market Bran Castle as the nearest approximation to the fictional Castle Dracula (Reijnders). In fact, in the novel, Castle Dracula is said to stand several hundred kilometers to the north of Bran Castle's actual location. Tourists who are deeply engaged with the *Dracula* myth may find that their expectations overwhelm their perception of the site itself ("Who Came First" 60). For Romanians, this is problematic. Certainly, Romania benefits economically from *Dracula*-related tourism. However, the image that such tourists seek fits uneasily with the Romanian state's desire in the 1970s and 1980s to be seen as a modern socialist country undergoing rapid industrialization (Light), and the identification of the vampire Dracula with Vlad Țepeș was demeaning to a historical figure who at the time was seen as a national hero (Light).

## Works Cited

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