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From Prince of Wallachia to Prince of Darkness: An In-Depth Analysis of the Identity of Vlad Dracula

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From Prince of Wallachia to Prince of Darkness: An In-Depth Analysis of the Identity of Vlad Dracula

History

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I have used both primary and secondary sources to analyze the life and depictions of the character of Vlad Dracula, Prince of Wallachia (1431 – 1476) and the infamous inspiration for Bram Stoker’s iconic vampire novel *Dracula*. Through my examination of these sources I have proven that Vlad Dracula cultivated a hybrid identity, neither fully Western Christian European nor Muslim Turk, which left him on the outside of societal boundaries, leading to his depiction as a monster. This hybrid identity helped Vlad Dracula’s critics to demonize him, and inspired his infamous status. The most critical factor in the formation of this hybrid and monstrous identity was the atmosphere in which Vlad Dracula lived. Using anthropological and historical theory on borderlands, I have constructed a depiction of Wallachia during the time of Vlad Dracula’s rule, as an area of intense conflict. The principality of Wallachia was in a delicate situation, stuck between Christian West and Turkish East, and struggling to maintain allegiance to the weakened Eastern Orthodox church. Using these sources, I have found that the presence of permeable borders, both politically and culturally, played a critical role in Dracula’s reign and eventual downfall. I have also employed literary theory on monstrosity, primarily the work of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, to illuminate how the hybrid identity which was adopted by Vlad Dracula, led to his depiction as a monster. Through the events of Vlad Dracula’s life, including his family relations and various times spent in captivity, he cultivated a hybrid identity; neither entirely European nor Turkish, but rather a mix of both. This hybrid identity allowed Vlad Dracula to manipulate his delicate situation within the borderland of Wallachia. Vlad Dracula’s hybrid identity, which allowed him to employ conflicting identity markers at different times, left him outside of all societal boundaries.