

Light

The Dracula Dilemma

Tourism, Identity and the State in Romania

For many in the West, Romania is synonymous with Count Dracula. Since the publication of Bram Stoker's famous novel in 1897 Transylvania (and by extension, Romania) has become inseparable in the Western imagination with Dracula, vampires and the supernatural. Moreover, since the late 1960s Western tourists have travelled to Transylvania on their own searches for the literary and supernatural roots of the Dracula myth. Such 'Dracula tourism' presents Romania with a dilemma. On one hand, Dracula is Romania's unique selling point and has considerable potential to be exploited for economic gain. On the other hand, the whole notion of vampires and the supernatural is starkly at odds with Romania's self-image as a modern, developed, European state. This book examines the way that Romania has negotiated Dracula tourism over the past four decades. During the communist period (up to 1989) the Romanian state did almost nothing to encourage such tourism but reluctantly tolerated it. However, some discrete local initiatives were developed to cater for Dracula enthusiasts that operated at the margins of legality in a communist state. In the post-communist period (after 1989) any attempt to censor Dracula has disappeared and the private sector in Romania has been swift to exploit the commercial possibilities of the Count. However, the Romanian state remains ambivalent about Dracula and continues to be reluctant to encourage or promote Dracula tourism. As such Romania's dilemma with Dracula remains unresolved.



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