

“Things that Make One Doubt if They be Mad or Sane” Coping with the Monstrous in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*

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Abstract This article focuses on Bram Stoker’s landmark novel *Dracula* (1897), in order to better assess how the phenomenology of the monstrous emerges as inextricably interfused with a late-Victorian socio-cultural background. Attention is drawn to a discursive framework pivoting on scientific discoveries and medical research, as well as degeneration theories and the motif of atavistic regression. Taking its cue from recent trends in literary criticism, this paper also examines how the resort to a cutting-edge technological equipment, such as Mina’s portable typewriter and Dr Seward’s phonograph, can be instrumental in abating Dracula’s vampiric threat.

Keywords Vampire. Supernatural horror. Late-Victorian context. Mimetic dimension.

Summary 1 Introduction . – 2 One and Many: Dracula’s Sprawling Polymorphism. – 3 Mimetic Wonders: Towards an Abatement of the Monstrous Threat.



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1 Introduction

Originally (under)rated as a late-Victorian potboiler in the stock genres of Gothic horror and the supernatural adventure story, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) has long been accorded the iconic status of a literary landmark from a variety of perspectives. Over and above its popular appeal, this monumental shocker can be read as a cult classic, a vampire-literature *Urtext*, as well as an impressively stratified work. Wavering between the poles of novel and romance, journalistic writing and the play-script form, the epistolary/diaristic style and the medical case report, *Dracula* locates itself at a semantic intersection where a cluster of topical issues compellingly come to the fore, or are implicitly addressed. That is why simply letting Count Dracula fall into the category of the bloated, enervated, and blood-thirsty predator of folkloric tradition and popular mythology would be ultimately misleading, from the point of view of both the 1890s' backdrop and the character's overflowing afterlife in literature and the arts, let alone his teeming progeny within the film industry and the media. In our times, Dracula's virtual scion continues to be perceived as “a being who is simultaneously terrifying and attractive [...] a being whose allure reaches to the deepest levels of the collective unconscious” (Heldreth, Pharr 1999, 1). Such an image also elicits strong responses in the spheres of sexual initiation, transgression or perversion and taboo breaking, and often feeds into our deep-seated fears of tainted blood, racial contamination and infectious diseases being spread via the ‘deadly bite’ of a stigmatised Other. In John S. Bak's hyperbolic statement, in

the age of AIDS and widespread HIV - that postmodern plague not only of sexual transgression but also, and if not more so, of Third-World poverty and postcolonial wreckage - Dracula seems as poised as ever to haunt humanity. (Bak 2007, xiv)

Stoker's Undead is said to have “simply haunted the 1980s as ubiquitously as he had the 1890s, and continues to do so to this day” (xv).

A transhistorical figure who maintains his ethno-cultural ties and yet resists containment by overcoming boundaries and resorting to versatile adaptation, Dracula has grown into a political metaphor and a symbolic receptacle for a whole range of attitudes, drives, and behaviours (anthropological, psychological, archetypal). One of the reasons why Stoker's novel remains a stronghold in the vampire (and literary) canon is to be found precisely in such an extraordinary communicative potential. That is to say, in its ‘cannibalistic’ capacity to digest and allegorise aspects of a multifarious phenomenological context which encompassed, among others, scientific advancement and occultism, evolutionary tenets and magnetic telepathy, national/co-

lonial issues and late-capitalist economy, commodity culture and the woman question. Importantly, however, these multiple strands are woven together in a text that, while showing a rich metaphorical potential and an underlying mythic structure, also spoke "very specifically to the heady world of fin-de-siècle London in the year of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee". *Dracula* has thus retained its force as a "political and context-specific" narrative (Luckhurst 2018, 2). One might even contend that the book has functioned "like a generative machine for criticism", being so dense in informational details and

taking on the rich colourings of many artistic, cultural, political, social and scientific discourses that swirled anxiously through the public sphere in the 1890s. (4)

By treading a mimetically-orientated path, this article aims to investigate such a pivotal intermingling in Stoker's novel between the dreadful manifestations of the preternatural and a historical, socio-cultural background that greatly contributed to the text's reception and long-lasting dissemination. This porous overlapping enhanced the impact of a vampire narrative that acted like a magnet for a reading public who lived on the cusp of a new century, but was in many ways attuned to the inheritance and axiology of the previous age. When approached as a visionary, ominous offspring of the last years of Queen Victoria's reign - with its reactionary forces and unsettling counter-currents throughout the Decadence interregnum - Stoker's 'possible world' proves to be a crucial nexus, a graphic locus of encodings and reverberations where supernatural horror tapped into the notions of madness, deviance, social pathology and 'unnatural' desires. To be sure, in "no other British fin de siècle novel is the sex=disease equation so prominent or so uniquely played out as it is in *Dracula*. Vampirism is the ultimate 'sexually-transmitted' degenerative disease" (Davison 1997, 27).

2 One and Many: *Dracula's* Sprawling Polymorphism

On the paratextual level, a suitable point of departure to deal with the iridescent qualities of Stoker's literary creature is constituted by the loose structure of the book itself. The main backbone of *Dracula* - its articulation in chapters and sections - is similar to an open and permeable matrix wherein the plot flows along. Indeed, the twenty-seven chapters making up the novel provide but a basic, paratactic palimpsest where one would look in vain for a clearly progressive sequence of interlocking frames or a thematic development. The titles are all rhematic and often interchangeable, with the same heading featuring in different chapters. Moreover, none of them is associated with

the name of Dracula, so that in the very table of contents the eponymous protagonist appears to be forcibly silenced. By contrast, this opening appendage does shine a spotlight on the main characters involved in the lacerating struggle with the Transylvanian Count. Glancing through the titles, the reader thus comes across "Jonathan Harker's Journal" (I-IV, XIX-XX, XXII); "Mina Murray's Journal" (VI, VIII), supplemented with a newspaper clipping posted in her diary ("Cutting from *The Dailygraph*, 8 August", VII) and her post-marriage "Mina Harker's Journal" (XIV, XXVII); "Lucy Westenra's Diary" (XI), along with the letters exchanged between her and Mina (V, IX); "Dr Seward's Diary" (XII-XIII, XV-XVIII, XXI, XXIII, XXV-XXVI), with the addition of his correspondence with Arthur Holmwood ("Dr Seward to Hon. Arthur Holmwood", X) and a symbolic bow to Abraham Van Helsing ("Dr Seward's Phonograph Diary, spoken by Van Helsing", XXIV).

Intriguingly, then, when skimming over the book one wonders where the title character may be found and how he is to jostle for textual ground. Accompanying the table of contents is also a paratextual gloss that reinforces this sense of mystery and puzzling elusiveness:

How these papers have been placed in sequence will be made clear in the reading of them. All needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of latter-day belief may stand forth as simple fact. There is throughout no statement of past events wherein memory may err, for all the records chosen are exactly contemporary, given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them. (Stoker 1994, 8)

In the first place, of course, due consideration must be given to the codes and *topoi* of Gothic, fantastic and sensation fiction, among which is the well-known repertoire of authentication strategies aimed at supplying incredible stories with a factual patina (the semblance of 'simple fact'). Even so, this tacit fictional pact risks being invalidated when, in the novel's last page, we are faced with Jonathan Harker's curiously dismissive "Note", in which the reliability of the contemporary eye-witness accounts is virtually - and safely - debunked. As Jonathan surmises:

In the summer of this year we made a journey to Transylvania, and went over the old ground which was, and is, to us so full of vivid and terrible memories. It was almost impossible to believe that the things which we had seen with our own eyes and heard with our own ears were living truths. Every trace of all that had been was *blotted out*. The castle stood as before, reared high above a waste of desolation. [...] I took the papers from the safe where they have been ever since our return so long ago. We were struck with the

fact that, in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is *hardly one authentic document!* nothing but a mass of type-writing, except the later note-books of Mina and Seward and myself, and Van Helsing's memorandum. We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as *proofs of so wild a story.* (Stoker 1994, 449; emphasis added)

This passage is worth quoting in full because, from the point of view of our analysis, it records a salient shift in perspective. As though hovering on the threshold between the diegetic and extradiegetic spheres, the author seems now to pave the way for another kind of contract, along the lines of an 'epistemological agreement' with his Victorian readership. In a nod to reasonableness and sound judgment, *Bram Stoker* might be said to ultimately perform an exorcism in the style of *Abraham*, his literary projection and legendary vampire hunter. As it happens, in his annotation sneaked in seven years later as a coda to the happy-ending closure of Mina's journal (Chapter XXVII), Harker proceeds to take stock of their terrifying ordeal only to tone it down through the corrective filter of pragmatic and prudent detachment. Not only does he emphasise how difficult it would be for anyone to credit what had once been their "living truths", but he also quotes Professor Van Helsing as celebrating the untainted virtues of Mina, now the mother of a little boy, and gleefully exclaiming: "We want no proofs; we ask none to believe us!" (Stoker 1994, 449).¹

Possibly a wink at a complacent middle-class public, this reminds us of a Prospero-like farewell bringing down the curtain in/on a work that, in his acting manager's role for the Lyceum Theatre, Stoker had initially conceived for the stage. Be that as it may, the novel's post-script offers a helpful entry for pondering, in hindsight, the effects of Dracula's mesmeric (in)visibility. Jumping back to the story's *dénouement*, just a few pages earlier, one is indeed struck by the frantic, breathtaking dynamics of the Archenemy's much-awaited death. According to Mina's reconstruction, in the section of her journal dated 6 November, the band of five 'brave men' (plus herself) heroically succeed in neutralising the monster in his own mother country and

¹ Raj Shah makes an interesting point here by highlighting the aporias of mechanical reproduction from a metaliterary perspective that draws on Walter Benjamin's seminal "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936): "Despite Van Helsing's truculent denial of the significance of the absence of the original documents ('We want no proofs; we ask none to believe us!' [Stoker, *Dracula* 351]), the above comment betrays an evident dissatisfaction with the banal material residue of the adventure, which lacks the legitimacy of the lost original papers. The very text in the reader's hands, therefore, is itself a mechanically reproduced simulacrum, establishing a *mise-en-abyme* of the novel's reconfiguration of the hierarchy of the original and the copy" (Shah 2014, 430). On the disruption of textual closure enacted by Harker's appended "Note" see also Arata 1990, 641-5.

within reach of his castle. Their impetuous, lightning-swift attack sows bewilderment and eventually overawes the gypsies who are carrying the Count's coffin back to his fortress. Nonetheless, doubts arise in relation to the hasty and unorthodox manner of this execution, where no homage to sanctified rituals is paid. Gone is the wooden stake to be driven through the heart or chest of the Undead, with the holy water, sacred wafer, crucifix and wreath of garlic blossoms being equally wiped out of the picture.² In their freewheeling assault, Van Helsing's male allies can be shown to dangerously - if unwillingly - twist the rules and get to grips with the red-eyed corpse as if it were a mortal, a flesh-and-blood antagonist to be defeated on the battlefield. Winchester rifles and, most of all, knives take the place of the sacred tools that are a staple of any vampire slayer's killing kit:

As I looked, the eyes saw the sinking sun, and the look of hate in them turned to triumph.

But, on 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' bowie knife plunged in 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.

I shall be glad as long as I live that even in that moment of final dissolution there was in the face a look of peace, such as I never could have imagined might have rested there. (Stoker 1994, 447)

At this point, the action-packed plot gives more space to Quincey Morris's courage, unconditional devotion and self-sacrifice - the intrepid man from Texas is fatally injured during the fight - than to Dracula himself, who is simply stabbed to death and portrayed as an evil spirit ostensibly appeased. Dracula's head is not cut off and his body is not burned to ashes: rather, he appears to suddenly crumble into dust and evaporate in a flash. As a result, when thinking of how summarily the vampire meets his end in the novel's epilogue, we are prompted to ask if such a turn of events should be passed off as just one of Stoker's 'mental lapses', in a book too often assumed to be flawed and hastily written, or if, on the contrary, this fleeting climax was a conscious and carefully-crafted choice on the author's part. Leaving aside the vein of garish sensationalism and the plain moral pushed home, the Count's final metamorphosis into a cloud of dust might ac-

² This blatantly goes against the grain of Lucy Westenra's highly ritualistic execution. In the wake of her *post-mortem* transmutation into a 'foul Thing', she undergoes heart-staking, mutilation and destruction at the hands of Holmwood, Van Helsing, and Seward. See Stoker 1994, 256-60.

tually be a reminder of his numinous transformative capacity. One even catches an appalling echo of Mina's vampirisation in Chapter XIX, where one night, while staying as a guest in John Seward's lunatic asylum, she falls prey to Dracula's hypnotic powers and defiling 'kiss'. After creeping in through the joinings of the bedroom door as "a thin streak of white mist" growing thicker and thicker, he materialises into a whirling "pillar of cloud" with shining red eyes (Stoker 1994, 308, 309). In her journal entry for 1 October, Mina observes that "through it all came the scriptural words 'a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night'" (309), and this supports the idea that the vampire's demonic vitality is likely to become all the more loathsome and desecrating the moment he levitates and floats in the air as a phosphorescent mass. Tellingly, Mina's parallel casts Dracula as a direful replica of the pillar of cloud and fire evoked in Exodus (13: 21-2), in which the Lord manifests Himself as a luminous beacon guiding the Israelites during the day and night on their way out of Egypt.

Needless to say, the spinning incorporeal column that temporarily engulfs Mina is no spiritual guidance, but a corrosive flow of energy unleashed by the Antichrist - a draining and parasitic force that strives to cripple the will, weaken the body and corrupt the soul of its victim. In physical terms, Dracula seems to mark off his territory as a quickly rising 'dust devil', a whirlwind that humans must resolutely prevent from sweeping across their domain.³ In order to avoid being caught up in the foul debris of such a vortex, Professor Van Helsing goes to all lengths to establish his alliance with a secularised 'confraternity of knights' who are called upon to defend the English (and Western) kingdom in the name of civilisation, progress, and peaceful coexistence. Albeit not always above reproach, the Dutch metaphysician's paladins do step into the arena and never betray their apostolic zeal and solemn duty. From the initially phlegmatic, traumatised and then daring Jonathan Harker to the doubting-Thomas qualities and hard-line positivism of Dr John Seward, from the generous, sometimes oversensitive 'noble soul' of Arthur Holmwood (soon-to-be Lord Godalming) to dauntless and tough Quincey Morris, this assorted task force is motivated by one paramount goal: chasing the Archfiend back to the nether world where he belongs.

At a critical juncture in the story, Catholic Abraham Van Helsing - whose first name chimes not only with Stoker's, but also with that of the biblical patriarch hailed as the progenitor of a new spiritual race and "friend of God" (Isaiah 41: 8) - commits himself to cat-

³ Again, Lucy's case affords an instance in point. In her memorandum relating to the Count's last attack, she states that her bedroom was invaded by an entity appearing in the guise of a big bat, a gaunt grey wolf, and eventually a myriad of floating little specks "blowing in through the broken window, and wheeling and circling round like the pillar of dust that travellers describe when there is a simoom in the desert" (Stoker 1994, 174).

echising his 'circle of the faithful' in preparation for a sort of Armageddon. With the shining star of virtuous Mina metaphorically illuminating their path, they proceed to make their covenant and share terrible secrets about a diabolical foe capable of jeopardising the very existence of mankind. In this connection, Van Helsing stresses how counterattacking such a foe requires a formidable act of faith as well as the scrupulous examination of fact-based reports, with an eye to the effective measures to take and the tactics to adopt. In other terms, a gruesome scenario jammed with "possible impossibilities" (Stoker 1994, 231) is bound to call for a plan of battle and a phase of focused training by an evolved 'medicine man' like this Doctor of Medicine, Philosophy and Letters. As Seward describes him in his correspondence with Holmwood, Van Helsing is an open-minded thinker and scientist who "knows as much about obscure diseases as anyone in the world" and is gifted with a unique blend of traits ranging from an iron nerve and resolution to a humorous side and an all-embracing sympathy (137). All in all, Van Helsing is to be trusted like a spiritual father, especially when it comes to his tying up loose ends and finally getting to the heart of the matter, as exemplified by the following couple of excerpts, the former taken from his first encounter with Mina (Chapter XIV) and the latter referring to a climactic, strategic briefing with his allies (as related in a section of Mina's journal included in Chapter XVIII):

I have learned not to think little of any one's belief, no matter how strange it be. I have tried to keep an open mind; and it is not the ordinary things of life that could close it, but the strange things, the extraordinary things, the things that make one doubt if they be mad or sane. (223)

There are such beings as vampires; some of us have evidence that they exist. [...] This vampire which is amongst us is of himself so strong in person as twenty men; he is of cunning more than mortal, for his cunning be the growth of ages; he have still the aids of necromancy [...] he can, within limitations, appear at will when, and where, and in any of the forms that are to him; [...] and he can at times vanish and come unknown. (283)

The conviction, energy, and unwavering dedication to the cause connoting Van Helsing's close-knit committee are of a piece with an access to initiatory knowledge and a healing craft inextricably linked to the victory of good over evil and the future of humanity. With all this in mind, and returning full circle to the previously raised point concerning the anomalous *modus operandi* of Dracula's murder, we can now make some assumptions about Stoker's depiction of the Count's last hours. The perfunctory way the Lord of the Undead

is seen to cross the threshold of death might have stemmed from a choice grounded in both an external logic – i.e. the publishing market – and an internal, diegetic one. The first scenario hinges on the possibility to set the scene for a sequel to the novel and therefore securing a viable space for Nosferatu's resurrection: for his return with a vengeance, as it were.⁴ Although that route was not directly followed by Stoker, it is unquestionable that his hint would yield a rich harvest among a host of succeeding authors over the decades (from writers to film directors, screenwriters, and playwrights). Suffice it to mention, among the earliest seminal reworkings, German F.W. Murnau's *Count Orlok in Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*, the renowned 1922 silent movie that stealthily drew so much lymph from Stoker's source as to lead Florence Balcombe (Stoker's widow) to sue the producers for copyright infringement. Incidentally, seventy years later, Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* would turn this polarisation on its head by flaunting a literal adherence in a filmic transposition that was partly an operatic reinterpretation of the book and a revision of Dan Curtis's 1974 television movie. Predictably enough, latter-day revivals reached a peak in 1997, which marked the centenary of *Dracula*'s first publication and was celebrated through commemorative sequels worthy of the original, such as Freda Warrington's prize-winning novel *Dracula the Undead*.⁵ A similar title recurs in *Dracula the Un-Dead* (2009), a riveting rewrite by Ian Holt and Dacre Stoker, the author's great-grandnephew, who also released *Dracul* (2018), a prequel he penned in collaboration with J.D. Barker.

Tracing a chronology of the genre-diversified, myriad 'revampings' of Stoker's hypotext would fill many pages. *Dracula*'s afterlife, whether commercially successful or critically acclaimed, has been flourishing to a ripe old age, and the list of the novel's countless appropriations, adaptations, or reviving continuations to date scarcely needs illustrating here. Without taking anything away from this copious allographic production and the policies targeted at re-launching the book, I would rather shift the focus to the internal logic of the 1897 version and supply some inferential cues. *Dracula*'s epilogue might well have met the reading public's expectations on ac-

⁴ Clive Leatherdale pursues the same tantalising line of thought: "Folklore, too, insists on ritualistic observation of prescribed rites. These are not followed in the case of *Dracula*, who is dispatched as if he were human, with cold steel [...]. Initially it seems that *Dracula*'s look of 'triumph' is premature, but could it be the attackers' sense of satisfaction that is misplaced? Stoker had already informed his readers that vampires have the power of dematerialisation and can transform themselves into specks of dust. Conceivably, then, the Count dematerialised just in time. Realising his narrow escape he prefers to lay low, until such time as Stoker resurrects him in a sequel" (Leatherdale 2001, 115-6).

⁵ For a detailed survey of *Dracula*'s glittering afterlife within a century of the novel's first publication (1897-1997), see in particular Davison 1997 and Madison 1997.

count of the well-deserved triumph of the good and righteous, but, on closer inspection, some spine-chilling implications seem to lurk behind that auspicious veneer. As a matter of fact, one is tempted to posit Dracula's instant pulverisation as a temporary stage within a phoenix-like process preluding to a new, devilish dawn. If, in Van Helsing's phrasing, the strong and cunning monster is able to "vanish and come unknown", then a reasonable doubt remains that his passing might boil down to yet another disappearing trick, in spite of the dependability and accuracy of Mina's reconstruction of his assassination. Alive and dead, aristocratic and degenerate, a mighty intellect and a child-brain, a synecdoche for an arcane species takeover and an evolutionary dead end, Dracula is one and many, and his sprawling polymorphism is certainly too deeply ingrained in the novel's universe to be downplayed.⁶

This being so, my impression is that Stoker metaphorically capitalised on the vampire's protean and prismatic identity from start to end, on the level of structure as well as plot threads and incidents, in such a way that many facets and issues end up clustering around his character. In the orchestration of the narrative, the eponymous anti-hero keeps on slipping through the textual net, only to frequently re-emerge as a mutating signifier, a nightmarish vision, a distorted memory trace, a haunting reification of traumatic experiences and phobias. A case in point regards the aftermath of Jonathan Harker's miraculous survival in the first half of the novel. If a defence mechanism induces him to suppress memories concerning his ghastly captivity in Transylvania, the amount of psychic energy absorbed in this process of denial (literally, his brain fever) is suddenly curtailed the moment he is seized by panic at the sight of a rejuvenated, red-lipped Count walking down Piccadilly like a peeping *flâneur* (Stoker 1994, 207-8). When realising how easily the wall of psychological resistance can be smashed down, Mina resolves to open the so-far sealed parcel containing her husband's shorthand diary. This eye-witness testimony will of course unveil Harker's buried memories and help him tackle their traumatic impact by assimilating them "belatedly after a period of latency" (Khader 2012, 79) and towards the regaining of control over his life. As he remarks, "now that I know, I am not afraid, even of the Count" (Stoker 1994, 225; emphasis in original). At the same time, his journal - which Mina has the foresight to typewrite, so that "we shall be ready for other eyes if required" (215) - adds to

⁶ To put it in Jamil Khader's words, despite "the apparent containment of the threat of the foreign monster at the end of the novel, there is no simple return to normality, no celebration of the triumph of good over evil, and no closure for the victims. Not only [...] does Dracula's blood run through the veins of the Harkers' son Quincey, while Mina remains contaminated in some sense by the vampiric, but also the vampire's victims continue to be haunted by Dracula's polymorphous spectral presence" (Khader 2012, 95).

the archive of documentary proofs that will be instrumental in rooting out evidence about Dracula's moves and plans. In other words, it contributes to awakening Van Helsing's Christian warriors to the monstrous threat embodied by the 400-year-old Vampire-King.

In a relevant sense, therefore, *Dracula's* world lends itself to being read as a (pre-)Freudian substitutive formation seeping into the remotest areas of the unconscious: into one's drives, submerged memories and fears, repressed desires, subliminal perceptions and sexual fantasies. This is, again, suggested by an episode relating to Jonathan's Transylvanian ordeal. Namely, by his erotic encounter with three women vampires lying in wait in a secret portion of Dracula's castle, where the stupefied solicitor would have surrendered to the predatory advances of one of those voluptuous creatures, had it not been for the totemic Count's imperious interdiction. Indeed, before being overwhelmed by castration anxiety, Jonathan describes his excitement through phrases overlaid with guilt-ridden sexual allusions, such as "wicked, burning desire", "agony of delightful anticipation", and "languorous ecstasy" (Stoker 1994, 51-2). Even more perturbing is the notorious scene of devilish communion, or baptism of blood, that casts a heavy shadow of uncleanness over Mina, as Dracula endeavours to turn her into 'flesh of his flesh' and 'kin of his kin', in a grotesque mimicry of Adam and Eve's consubstantiality (Genesis 2: 23-4) and the Christian marriage service (from Ephesians 5: 28, 31). This hideous violation holds centre stage in Chapter XXI ("Dr Seward's Diary"), via Dr Seward's first-person record (336, 339) and an embedded narrative focused on Mina's point of view (341-3), in a Chinese-box structure where the testimony of the vampiric rape's victim is conveniently filtered through the physician's 'clinical' (and male) perspective. In essence, Dracula would elect Mina as his Lilith-like companion and helper by officiating an obnoxious rite that sees him open a vein in his breast and press the woman's mouth to the wound, so as to force her to swallow the spurting putrescent fluid (blood/semen).

Despite its heavy sexual symbolism and potentially devastating effects, this abominable intercourse also lays the groundwork for a momentous backlash enabling the good brave men to plan their countermove and arm themselves to cope with the monstrous. As happened with the transcription and circulation of Jonathan's journal, or with the sharing of Lucy Westenra's papers, they can be shown to admirably make a virtue of necessity. Proverbially, the tougher things get, the more these tough associates are propelled to rely on their own expertise, mutual support, and entrepreneurial aptitude. As pointed out by Van Helsing, "it is need that we know all. For now more than ever has all work to be done quick and sharp, and in deadly earnest" (341). It is as if, once the truth of weird phenomena is verified, a conduit for wholesome action and a restoration of order would also come to hand. This is what a mentally recovered Harker implicitly

confirms when extolling Van Helsing's capability of casting out demons (including inner ones):

[Mina] showed me in the doctor's letter that all I wrote down was true. It seems to have made a new man of me. It was the doubt as to the reality of the whole thing that knocked me over. I felt impotent, and in the dark, and distrustful. [...]

"But Madam Mina told me you were ill, that you had had a shock." It was so funny to hear my wife called "Madam Mina" by this kindly, strong-faced old man. I smiled, and said:

"I was ill, I *have* had a shock: but you have cured me already."

"And how?"

"By your letter to Mina last night". (225-6; emphasis in original)

Spiritually and psychologically set free by the truth - this time in an echo of the Gospel of John (8: 32) - Harker eventually quells self-doubt and succeeds in chasing away the spectre of madness. Such a reining of the monster within, however, is ominously countervailed by the foreign monster's further spreading his tentacles into the God-fearing men's path to heaven. As anticipated, Dracula's vile scheme to subjugate Mina and claim her as his property is an attempt to irrevocably subdue his enemies by striking at one of "God's women fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth" (226). Through an infective exchange of bodily fluids, the Count forges in fact a mesmeric, telepathic bond whereby that angel-like woman, a model of selflessness and sympathy, risks being metamorphosed into a maleficent automaton condemned to do his bidding. And it is precisely at this scathing juncture that Van Helsing's contingent manage to turn the tables by transforming Harker's wife into a benevolent proto-cyborg of sorts, with whose aid they will track down the opponent at the acme of his homeward journey. While preventing their 'white lily' from sinking into the filthy mud, and therefore fighting for her soul, they resort to her newly-acquired psychic ability as a research implement, a sensory receptacle, a "piece of technology within the men's arsenal of vampire-hunting tools" (Brownell 2010).⁷ As Roger Luckhurst vividly sums up, Mina appears as "a kind

⁷ The complexity and sometimes contradictory features of Mina Harker - the female central character, fluctuating between the extremes of the Angel-in-the-House *topos* and the figure of the New Woman - are a staple in orthodox *Dracula* scholarship. Throughout the narrative, her agency is alternatively enhanced and reduced, as emblematically witnessed by the novel's very last words: "This boy will some day know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is. Already he knows her sweetness and loving care; later on he will understand how some men so loved her, that they did dare much for her sake" (Stoker 1994, 449). Through Van Helsing's crowning homage to her,

of embodied search-engine herself, with sailing times and train timetables at her fingertips. She even becomes a kind of occult communication device herself, a new-fangled two-legged telephone, able to dial up the Count from afar once she is in mesmeric rapport" (Luckhurst 2018, 4).

The special connection ensuing as an aftereffect of Dracula's attack is a form of intuitive/emotive telepathy that Van Helsing exploits by hypnotising the 'good woman' with a view to locating the vampire, who "lies hidden in the hull of a boat" within a coffin not dissimilar to "a telecommunication box" (Lanone 2018, 2). The penetration of Mina's subliminal mind triggers a long-distance conveyance of kinaesthetic perceptions through which she records and emits signals pertaining to both thought-transference and the sensory domain (sight, touch, and hearing). In the final stages of their epic battle, therefore, the nineteenth-century crusaders avail themselves of an upgraded armory in which Mina's peculiar sensitivity - her 'becoming-machine', so to speak - might be compared to the performance of a radio transmitter/receiver. Although the Count proceeds to "tune in and out" of this organic transceiver, the hypnotised medium's ability to enter the foe's mind at sunrise and sunset undercuts "the bat's system of echolocation". As a result, the message-conveying circuit is "switched on and off almost at will" by human operators and a virtual web is woven which tightens "around the Count, to prevent him from escaping" (Lanone 2018, 2-4). In short, Van Helsing's men waste no time in pressing home the advantage and remain in command.

By a meaningful coincidence, *Dracula's* publication year also marked a historic milestone in the context of electric phenomena discoveries and the radio industry, since on 2 July 1897, in London, Guglielmo Marconi was finally granted a patent for his radio transmission system. Notably, when Stoker was writing his novel, the new horizons opened up by experiments on electromagnetic waves and wireless telegraphy had already garnered much public attention. The applied-science innovations "related to the second great industrial revolution - the electrical one - seemed to reinvent the possibilities of everyday life" by virtue of "communication technologies, wireless telegraphy and mysterious Hertzian waves" (Luckhurst 2018, 5) which ushered in developments by, say, Édouard Branly, Alexander Popov, Nikola Tesla, and Marconi himself. As to the corporeal transfer of information via trance states and hypnosis, it should be observed that 'telepathy' was given its official imprimatur by Frederic W.H. Myers, one of the founding members of the Society for Psychological Research (SPR), in 1882. Moreover, in the last decades of the

the plot appears to be drawn together "as if it had been all along a romantic quest purely for the sake of Mina's salvation" (Brownell 2010).

nineteenth century, this sanctioning focus on telepathic communication and mind-reading came coupled with a larger debate surrounding Occultism, Spiritualism, and the notion of psychic force.

The line of thought pursued in the last paragraphs helps us set Stoker's work against the multifaceted background mentioned at the beginning of this article. The context-specific quality and cultural porosity of *Dracula* are in keeping with a semantically-loaded discursive terrain that branches out into different areas, so that the novel both stands the test of time and palpably interfaces with its contemporaneity. On the one hand, as we have seen, the book unlocked the key to an exegetical approach that would become a staple feature of psychoanalytic criticism. The vampire's egotistic craving, libidinal energy and sadistic bent are among the purple strands that have been picked up by Freudian-theory interpreters, in conjunction with the symbolism pivoting on skin penetration, 'unspeakable' urges and taboos, psychosexual stages or incest conflicts. Besides, a mode of enquiry revolving around the assumption of Dracula-as-id, or as an allegory for neurotic anxiety and a return of the repressed, has given impetus to speculations digging into Stoker's life, from his puzzling childhood illness to his marital relationship and patterns of behaviour.⁸

On the other hand, *Dracula* kept pace with the dynamic worldview of its age. It dialogued with an epistemological framework underpinned by old systems of belief, ideological footholds and firm reference points as well as emerging paradigms, ethical quandaries and thorny questions. Victorian sexology, for one, opened a Pandora's box in matter of abnormal sexual appetites or aberrant double standards, suspected dysfunctions and venereal diseases. Correspondingly, scientific investigation crossed traditional boundaries by gathering data on, say, the logic of dreams and altered states of consciousness, such as catalepsy, aphasia and somnambulism (Lucy Westenra's sleepwalking soon comes to mind), not to mention dissociation and hysteria. If attracted to the SPR's philosophical scope and far-fetched postulations of paranormal activity, Stoker was at the same time captivated by brain science, comparative anatomy and advanced surgical techniques. Another crucial issue involved the efforts of intellectuals and thinkers to heal the breach between religious truths and the evidence corroborated by empirical science, with a huge amount of interest (and concern) being mobilised by the Darwinian concepts of evolution and man's descent, the conservative determinants of heredity and the struggle for existence.

⁸ For a useful overview assessment of *Dracula* as the "Freudian text *par excellence*", see the papers collected in Hughes, Smith 1998. See also, among several others, the chapter "Freud, Orality, and Incest" in Leatherdale 2001, 175-92, who starts his commentary by noting that the "year 1897 marked *Dracula's* publication and the commencement of Freud's psychoanalytical researches. For advocates of psychoanalysis *Dracula* yields a rich harvest" (175).

All this brings us neatly into a wide-ranging subject that, in the novel, often becomes a matter of discussion among the characters, especially between far-sighted, paternal Van Helsing and John Seward, his twenty-nine-year-old ex-pupil. An enthusiastic, sometimes ludicrously naïve advocate of scientific materialism, the latter is occasionally a "vehicle by which Stoker explains everything to the reader through someone who cannot comprehend unless everything is reduced to first principles" (Leatherdale 2001, 129). During their instructive confrontations on the goals, limits and state of the art of coeval research, the professor and the young physician also pay heed to physiology and neurology, including induced trance states and hypnotherapy. On one of these occurrences, Seward suddenly feels a surge of confidence as the interlocutor prompts him to tease out clues about Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-93), currently hailed as the father of modern neurology. Charcot's groundbreaking career and influential teaching left an imprint in a field that embraced physiology, pathological anatomy, the classification and treatment of hysteria, multiple sclerosis and various diseases of the nervous system. Here is a relevant excerpt from the novel:

"You are a clever man, friend John; you reason well, and your wit is bold; but you are too prejudiced [...] it is the fault of our science that it wants to explain all; and if it explain not, then it says there is nothing to explain. But yet we see around us every day the growth of new beliefs, which think themselves new [...] I suppose now you do not believe in corporeal transference. No? Nor in materialization. No? Nor in astral bodies. No? Nor in the reading of thought. No? Nor in hypnotism –"

"Yes," I said. "Charcot has proved that pretty well." He smiled as he went on: "Then you are satisfied as to it. Yes? And of course then you understand how it act, and can follow the mind of the great Charcot - alas that he is no more! - into the very soul of the patient that he influence." (Stoker 1994, 229-30)

The French neurologist's therapeutic recourse to hypnosis, together with his rigorous selection of diagnostic criteria and structured clinical observations, would gain increasing currency among his disciples and fellow clinicians, such as Pierre Janet (with his theorisations of the 'subconscious' and the 'magnetic rapport'), Gilles de la Tourette and Charles-Joseph Bouchard. When retracing our steps to the British scenario, we also come across the theses of physiologist Herbert Mayo about nervous susceptibility and liability to trance, as well as those of surgeon James Braid, who built on the legacy of mesmerism. Braid coined the psycho-physiological term 'neurypnology' and published suggestively-titled volumes like *Hypnotic Therapeutics* (1853) and *Physiology of Fascination* (1855).

As regards the decades 1870s-1890s, credit must be given to Anne Stiles's recent studies, in which she draws illuminating parallels with a composite theoretical corpus that Stoker had evidently clear in mind, from a nascent psychiatry to late-Victorian neurology, experimental physiology, and the localisation of brain function. High on the list were the mechanisms of 'cerebral automatism' and 'reflex action' explored by David Ferrier in *The Functions of the Brain* (1876), the research conducted by John Scott Burdon-Sanderson in his co-authored *Handbook for the Physiological Laboratory* (1873), and William Benjamin Carpenter's association of subliminal mental processes with the phenomenon of 'unconscious cerebration'. By expanding on the polarity between the new postulates of biological determinism and entrenched beliefs in free will and the immortality of the soul, Stiles contends that Count Dracula's tyrannical attitude and control of people's minds might eerily allegorise man's *reductio* to a soulless machine spurred by physiological stimuli. The vampire villain appears in this sense as a veritable icon of modernity, metaphorically getting his nourishment from "a period of intense scientific progress"; by ruthlessly performing experiments on human beings, he ends by "robbing them of their souls and their essential humanity - all allegations that could be directed with equal fairness towards the most avant-garde scientists of Stoker's day" (Stiles 2006, 132, 148). Again, Dracula "can be seen as a mad scientist of sorts: a stand-in for localizationists and automatists who argued that we are no more than the sum of our brain functions" (Stiles 2012, 55).

This intriguing hypothesis - comparing Dracula to a dystopian harbinger of a new *Zeitgeist*, rather than, typically, an epitome of atavistic regression - adds to the evocative power of a novel to whose planning Stoker dedicated several years (1890-97) and energy, as testified to by his voluminous working notes discovered in the 1970s at the Rosenbach Museum & Library in Philadelphia.⁹ In relation to medical pathology and treatments, there is little doubt that the author's first-hand researches spanned across many case studies and records. One should also not underestimate the fact that his family shared a professional interest in medicine and that his elder brother, Sir William Thornley Stoker (1845-1912), had built a name for himself as a prominent surgeon, anatomist, inspector of vivisection and

⁹ It is now a received view that Stoker's references and background knowledge reached back to folklore, anthropological studies, and ancient history. His sources ranged from William Wilkinson's *Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* to Sabine Baring-Gould's *The Book of Were-Wolves* and Emily Gerard's article "Transylvanian Superstitions", to say nothing of the notoriety of ferocious Vlad Tepes (Vlad III Dracula 'the Impaler'), the *Voivode* of Wallachia who, in the second half of the fifteenth century, had fought against the Turks. For an in-depth analysis of these models, see McNally, Florescu 1995 and Leatherdale 2001, 80-116.

cutting-edge expert in cranial and abdominal surgery. In 1896, when Bram was completing his novel, William became President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

In the upshot, *Dracula's* subtext converging on healthcare practices and taxonomies, blood transfusion procedures and consultations on symptoms, injuries or syndromes, ought to be lent more credence than it has been routinely granted. Surely worthy of mention are Dr Seward's clinical reports on Renfield, who, besides announcing Dracula's 'Advent' in an obscene reversal of John the Baptist's prophecies, is first of all a mentally-ill patient, a zoophagous manic-depressive gorging himself on blood and living creatures and prone to violent spasms. As the director of a lunatic asylum in London, a sort of Salpêtrière Hospital in miniature, Stoker's physician implicitly opens a window on a *tableau* of degenerative and rare diseases that, in late-Victorian culture, were sometimes labelled in terms of 'vampirism', especially when blood disorders (e.g. porphyria), hematophagy, sexual perversion or sadistic violence were involved (Jack the Ripper's 1888 blood-shedding atrocities being a case in point).¹⁰

3 Mimetic Wonders: Towards an Abatement of the Monstrous Threat

It is now a critical truism that the nineteenth-century urban Gothic and romance revival offered glimpses into "modern perspectives" and that both strove "to reduce anxiety by stabilising certain key distinctions", such as "male and female, natural and unnatural, civilised and degenerate, human and nonhuman". Accordingly, the social drama unfolding in *Dracula* held up a startling mirror to the "ordinary middle-class Briton" (Spencer 1992, 203-4). Among the meanings and forms pervading the knotty complexity of Stoker's novel are in fact the ones relating to a contagion/invasion narrative where pathological abnormality exceeds the bounds of vampirism itself, whether folkloric or clinically-diagnosed. In this light, the Count objectifies such a monstrous threat and high viral load as to potentially infect a whole nation and undermine the palimpsest of key distinctions mentioned above. A voracious foreigner and sly plague-carrier, Dracula ignites in turn a process of projective and 'purgative' displacement among the invaded country's people, who would compel

¹⁰ This perspective further blurs the boundaries between factuality and Gothic fantasy. On this thought-provoking shift towards a portrayal of the vampire as 'only too human' and a 'clinical type', see Hallab 2015 and Mighall 2003, who casts Seward as a positivist psychiatrist and representative of the Krafft-Ebian and Lombrosian school. For an analogy between Stoker's Seward and real-life William Joseph Seward, the superintendent of Colney Hatch Asylum (1882-1911), see Vanon Alliaata 2015.

sively bracket him as the prototype of a reversion to a lower state and a malevolent outsider intent on creating a breeding ground of underlings. No matter how depraved and deformed, he is however sharp-witted and adamant enough to draw up a plan for a political and economic control of the English capital. This is hinted quite early in the story via his interview with Harker and the Carfax estate sale transaction, an official preamble which will be followed by the vampire's off-book purchase of other houses in London, where he finally settles down as aptly-named 'Count de Ville'. In the guise of an entrepreneur and businessman ready to blend in and bathe sellers in cash, he appears to break into the system, recruit acolytes and 'pollute' the British establishment from within. As a member of the landed aristocracy and a feudal tyrant (namely, a *boyar* and a Kingdom of Hungary's *Voivode*), he hinders the *laissez-faire* principles and the activities of bourgeois competitors. At the same time, his growing monopoly and financial dealings invite comparison with the well-known Marxian metaphor equating capital with a vampire-like agent that thrives on the living blood of labour.

While making every effort to be assimilated into the English sphere - as he confesses to Harker, "I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity" (Stoker 1994, 31) - Dracula gnaws away at its socio-political order and, most of all, at its western identity, core values, and traditions. Indeed, the nuanced connotations of his genealogical and cultural otherness - pan-ethnically Eastern European/Oriental, Hungarian-Romanian with an alleged Szekely descentance from Attila the Hun, Russian, Slavic, iconographically Jewish - have been in the forefront of various insightful discussions. One needs only to look at Stephen Arata's path-breaking, oft-cited depiction of the marauding intruder as an "occidental tourist" plunging the English into a state of "reverse colonization" anxiety (Arata 1990, 621), or at Judith Halberstam's pointing to the disquieting homologies with "anti-Semitic nineteenth-century representations of the Jew" (Halberstam 1993, 333), and, more recently, at Jimmie Cain's thorough investigation of Russophobia and the way Eastern menace in *Dracula* "should be read as Russia, England's greatest imperial rival of the nineteenth century" (Cain 2006, 2).

As Jonathan notes in his journal's first entry, the Count comes from a district "in the extreme east of the country, just on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia, and Bukovina, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe" (Stoker 1994, 9-10). This is a sort of magmatic navel of the world that, by way of the tigerish warrior nobleman's infiltration into the English territory, frightfully brings into play the idea of an incipient decline of Britain as a world power. If emblazoned with imperial pageantry and jingoistic celebrations, Queen Victoria's di-

among jubilee was overshadowed by fears of attack, unrest in overseas colonies and possessions, and a palpable decay of global influence. As to the internal situation, this was of course the *fin-de-siècle* conjuncture, a connection one hardly forgets when considering that, on its first release on 16 May 1897, *Dracula* flaunted a bright yellow cover with the novel's title and author's name in bold red lettering. The extent to which the Yellow Nineties set about challenging traditional distinctions, along with the foundational principles of a patriarchal, heterosexual, Christian middle-class society, scarcely needs emphasising here. The collapsing bulwark of conservative discourse and bourgeois hegemony, the rhetoric of progress *vis-à-vis* the ideological strains concerning gender, class and race, were certainly grist to Stoker's mill. Well aware of such looming public anxieties, including a "crisis of imperial culture" and the harrowing possibility of a "reversal of Britain's imperial exploitations of 'weaker' races" (Arata 1990, 626, 634), he masterfully amplified these motifs and had his fictional 'guardians of the Empire' make common cause on issues like an impending moral decadence and the risk of 'going native'.

Not surprisingly, then, some of *Dracula's* abnormal anatomical traits (from his pointed ears to ape-like hairy palms), his morbid propensity for deviance and his being a primitive relic of a vanished race, are all elements that fall within the province of physiognomy, degeneration theories (e.g. Max Nordau's portrayal of the perverted egomaniac) and, last but not foremost, Cesare Lombroso's criminal anthropology. Importantly, Lombroso's notion of the "born criminal" as a savage and ancestral throwback, "good at crime because [he needs] only to repeat the same behavior" (Gibson 2006, 142), is pushed to the fore in the novel by means of Mina, the clever lady with a woman's heart and a man's brain. As she asserts, the Count is "a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and *qua* criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind. Thus, in a difficulty he has to seek resource in habit" (Stoker 1994, 406). Taking a lead from her evaluation, we can now make some final remarks on Van Helsing's team and their employment of an arsenal aimed at deferring the threat of such an "imperfectly formed" invader.

Another truism about *Dracula* is that "the more alien and mysterious the world Stoker presents, the more enthusiastically and ingeniously he exploits the technological innovations of his times" (Byron 2007, 48). While, in a state of emergency, the selfish vampire is supposed to fall back on habit or simply flee the crime scene, his human opponents rely on an ethics of communal commitment - their famed power of combination, stern sense of duty, progressive 'learning to believe' - and a striking ability to bend the rules and innovate strategies. As already underlined, the congregation's proficiency resides in their remarkable hold on - and even obsession with - timeliness, accurate classification and document filing. In consonance with Stoker's

knack for research, they are often intent on checking maps, studying train schedules, making calculations or inquiries on the spot and parading compelling deductions. Far from subsisting in ordinary clerical skills, their talents allow them to filter experience and transform it into a serviceable textual archive. By meticulously collating informational bits and knitting together in logical sequence each scrap of evidence they have managed to transcribe, they hit a significant mark. Again, in Mina's words, in "this matter dates are everything, and I think if we get all our material ready, and have every item put in chronological order, we shall have done much" (Stoker 1994, 268). As the plot thickens, she actually lends a helping hand as a board secretary ("Professor Van Helsing [...] made me sit next to him on his right, and asked me to act as secretary", 282) and spares no effort in producing copies, sending telegrams or scanning weather updates.

Therefore, the group has a few trump cards to play. Their supply of 'mimetic wonders' relating to communication modes and up-to-date information storage includes two nineteenth-century jewels of technology, namely Mina's portable typewriter, through which she converts handwritten material and oral recordings into searchable documents, and Dr Seward's phonograph. As highlighted by Leanne Page, Stoker proceeded to maximise the "high performance technologies" available in the late-Victorian period, as represented by "startling innovations in information and communication technology, such as the typewriter, the gramophone, long-distance telephone lines, and undersea telegraph cables" (Page 2011, 96-7). Diana Louis Shahinyan similarly underscores how the motley Crew of Light take full advantage of and openly discuss "typewriting, telegraphy, phonography, shorthand, postal and railway services, and the Kodak camera" (Shahinyan 2018, 120). These wonders of upgraded technology are tantamount to a talismanic equipment that would counteract the centuries-old Count's traditional learning tools (such as the civil lists and blue books collected in his Transylvanian library). The ingenious arrangement of vibrating stylus and metal cylinders covered with wax - a later version of Thomas Edison's 1877 phonograph - captures Seward's clinical notations and thoughts in real time, just like "a wonderful machine [...] cruelly true" (Stoker 1994, 266). By the same token, the handy traveller's typewriter used by Mina is endowed with a manifold function that enables her to produce multiple copies at once (Page 2011, 99). Above all, it could be seen as a hyper-mediating medium, since it is "the technology through which all other technologies in the novel (stenography, phonographic records, and telegraphed messages) are produced and made accessible to the characters and to the reader" (Page 2011, 109).

This said, however, there remains a margin of doubt that teasingly projects us back to the question of Dracula's spectacular polymorphism and resistance to categorisation. If it is true that, after the vampire has set fire to the phonographic cylinders and the parcel of manuscripts, the typewritten documents provide an anchoring point for memory retrieval, no graphomaniac labouring or clicking of the typewriter keys appear to lay the fiendish ghost to rest. When, in his appended "Note", Jonathan comes to the conclusion that a mass of type-writing has largely replaced authentic sources – with Van Helsing's corollary that "we ask none to believe us!" (Stoker 1994, 449) – we are encouraged to at least redress the balance and reflect on the limits, as well as the glaring strong points, of technology. If knowledge risks being transmuted into "a marketable product" (James 2012, 97), the Count's immersion in alchemy and Scholomance sorcery is probably bound to overwhelm the "stenographer's stake" (Fleissner 2000). Certainly a criminal, Dracula is neither insane nor childish, but rather a Devil's companion (his chosen tenth scholar, to be precise). And his menacing words, too, cannot easily be silenced: when humans try to hunt and frustrate him in his designs, they "will know in full before long, what it is to cross my path" (Stoker 1994, 343). In the meantime, Van Helsing's crew had better stay healthy and carve out time on their schedule in order to recuperate. Not for nothing do references to hearty meals abound in the text, as suggested by the following passages:

Now you must eat. You are overwrought and perhaps over-anxious. Husband Jonathan would not like to see you so pale [...]. Therefore for his sake you must eat and smile [...]. You must eat now; afterwards you shall tell me all. (222-3)

There are terrible things yet to learn of; [...] Come, there is dinner. We must keep one another strong for what is before us; we have a cruel and dreadful task. When you have eaten you shall learn the rest, and I will answer any questions you ask. (267)

Eating a good supper, sipping a glass of brandy, or sitting in a comfortable armchair are a kind of earth-bound, everyday equipment that assists human fighters in warding off exhaustion. When dramatically caught between mesmeric enchantment and her household duties, Mina herself is said to slip out of trance with a funny anti-climax: "Would none of you like a cup of tea? You must all be so tired!" (409). Warmly welcomed by the band of brothers, one hopes that this invitation might also help defer Dracula's peremptory demand for a chalice of blood.

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