# Permeable Viewpoints and Parasitic Influence in BBC and Netflix's Dracula

Laure Blanchemain Faucon

**Permeable viewpoints and parasitic influence in BBC and Netflix's *Dracula***

Can Dracula still surprise us? It hardly seemed possible when the TV series *Dracula* directed by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss was released in January 2020 on the BBC and on Netflix. And yet, although it marks a return to the original text, Bram Stoker's novel, it catches the spectators off guard with all its unexpected twists and turns. One of the first aspects commented on by the reviewers was the elaborate plotting, typical of the creators of the BBC series *Sherlock* (2010-2017). While *Screenrant* criticised it because the promise of "lavish climaxes" was not successfully fulfilled (Donaldson), *The Guardian* praised it because the "dramatic flourishes" that the series is strewn with "give you the feeling that this is not just a treat but a tribute" (Mangan). The TV show presents a series of mysteries and riddles within the riddles and they rely heavily on the use of viewpoints. Benjamin Poore has qualified *Sherlock* as "a trickster narrative" where "virtuoso sequences […] which initially appear to be 'genuine' flashbacks of the show's 'real' storyline, […] are then revealed as unconvincing theories or fantasies" (96). The truth is often disguised because "like the trickster straddling two worlds, the perspective of Sherlock veers unpredictably between the physical world and the world of the mind" (Poore 97). This view certainly applies to *Dracula* as well, where most of the riddles are deeply embedded in the representation of the characters' subjectivity. What is troubling however is the interaction between the various subjective perspectives offered to our view. The aim of this article is to analyse this permeability of the viewpoints of the various characters not just as part of the ploys of detective fiction but also as a clue indicating parasitic influence. But while the parasite is used in general as a metaphor to express the fear of the foreign, a shift occurs in BBC and Netflix's series with the focus on death: contagion is explained by the parasite's refusal to die with its host, a view that humanises it.

**Viewpoint and parasitic detectives**

As Mark Gatiss said about the creation of *Dracula*, it all started as a joke when the silhouette of Benedict Cumberbatch shot from the back in his cloak with his collar up suddenly reminded him of Dracula (Gilbert). The connection between the vampire and the detective runs however much deeper than that. Investigation is a key theme in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, as several critics have pointed out.[1] Gatiss and Moffat's *Dracula* presents three main detectives in as many episodes: Sister Agatha Van Helsing, Dracula himself, and then Zoe Van Helsing.[2] This detective work implies a strong interaction between the subjectivities of the characters. Episodes one and two ("The Rules of the Beast" and "Blood Vessel")

[1] Rosemary Jann in particular has brought attention to the link between Sherlock and Van Helsing and has demonstrated that the vampire hunters back their claims with "observation, deduction and hypothesis testing" (280). The principle of "abduction" is used when the characters arrive at the correct hypothesis by eliminating the false ones (281) and the characters "order facts into chains of deduction" (282).

[2] There is an interesting echo of the vampire hunters' chase of Dracula when Zoe finds Dracula's home, using her knowledge to narrow down the possible buildings in episode three. A blend of Stoker's Van Helsing and Mina (although Mina does appear, though rather briefly, as a character too, in episode 1), she uses a "codified system" (Jann 283): she guesses Dracula's choices based on his breeding and ego ("The Dark Compass") and thus implicitly labels him as an aristocratic egotist, which makes him deterministically unable to hide, just as the "deterministic Lombrosoan model" (Jann 283) used by Van Helsing and Mina in Stoker's novel helps them infer his decisions based on the selfishness of his "child-brain" (296). Zoe's hypothesis is then verified thanks to his phone number, which is listed.

foreground the role of Sister Agatha[3] in the discovery of the truth through her reading of the other characters' minds. This mind reading implies both a deep immersion in and a critical distance towards the viewpoints of the others. In episode one, she adopts the critical attitude expected from a detective dealing with a testimony, whose subjectivity might be misleading. Jonathan's perspective when he recounts his adventures in Dracula's castle to Sister Agatha is conveyed with what George Wilson calls "subjectively saturated" shots, that is to say shots where "the character's visual perspective is completely determined by his or her present state of dreaming, hallucination, or inner visualization" (85). However, those shots are constantly interrupted and the superimposition of Sister Agatha's voice repeatedly breaks the spell and leads the spectator to take some distance towards the narrative with those recurrent reminders that what is seen on screen is not "reality" but Jonathan's version of it.

Such interventions also re-orient the investigation: the riddles that Jonathan attempts to solve are akin to red herrings. In his story, he persists in presenting himself as the knight in shining armour and tries to find out who carved a call for help on his window pane and where the baby brought to the castle has gone while the woman he is trying to help is a predator, and he is the one in dire straits. Jonathan appears to be constantly on a wild goose chase, lost, as symbolised by his inability to find his way in the labyrinthine castle. Those riddles, along with the mystery of the hidden map or the lack of servants in the castle,[4] obscure the real question, the one Sister Agatha is trying to answer: what caused Jonathan's present illness and what is the true nature of Dracula? The importance of the ordering of facts and the focus on details in testimonies was stressed in Stoker's *Dracula*[5] and like Abraham Van Helsing, Gatiss and Moffat's Sister Agatha draws the spectator's attention to significant details that failed to be interpreted by Jonathan when he told his story. When she asks why the woman wrote her call for help in English and not in Rumanian, it is supposed to help Jonathan realize that the woman was a vampire: it was through his blood that she had imbibed his knowledge and language. Sister Agatha's probing lays bare the inherent unreliability of Jonathan as a narrator while guiding him towards the truth. She helps him gradually unearth his repressed memories and discover his true nature: he has become a vampire.

Her reading of Jonathan's mind leads however to a rather troubling appropriation. Her influence over Jonathan's narrative is first suggested by the use of her voice as a voice over commenting on the subjectively saturated shot which depicts Mina in Jonathan's dream ("The Rules of the Beast"). Her rising interference is then conveyed by the projection of her image inside Jonathan's memory at the moment when he is trying to understand how he escaped from the roof of the castle ("The Rules of the Beast"). The following shot, which pictures Jonathan framed by a window with Sister Agatha behind him, symbolically underlines her overbearing influence over his viewpoint. Her appropriation of his narrative and even his memories is complete once his account is over. When she needs further information to understand better what made Dracula scream before Jonathan fell from the battlements of the castle, his memory is simply retraced, as suggested by the rewinding of the shot showing his fall. This rewinding starts immediately after a close shot on Sister Agatha's lit up face which suggests that the truth is dawning on her. Consequently, the status of the rewound shot becomes very ambiguous: is it still Jonathan's memory or is it Sister Agatha's version of it as she conveniently manipulates it to find her answer? Jonathan says he cannot remember and she is the one who realizes that he was facing the sun. She knows that Dracula screamed

[3] She is a blend of three of Stoker's characters: Abraham Van Helsing, Mina and Sister Agatha, the secondary character that nurses Jonathan back to health.

[4] This mystery is also explored in Stoker's book.

[5] As Rosemary Jann pointed out, the very "methodical ordering" (280) of the testimonies plays in itself an important role in the investigation since it is through the arrangement of all the evidence gathered in chronological order "that the main characters suddenly see the pattern that points to Dracula" (280).

because he was blinded by the golden crucifix on Jonathan's neck even before Jonathan remembers that detail. The epiphany it brings is more Sister Agatha's than Jonathan's and she concludes: "God is real!" The permeability of the two viewpoints unveils the vampiric quality of Sister Agatha's interpretative reading.

In the TV series as a whole, a parallel is drawn between the reading of stories and the reading of blood itself. As Dracula tells Zoe, "Everything is in the blood, if you know how to read it" ("The Dark Compass") because "blood is lives. Blood is testimony." The slight shift from the original "Blood is life" in Stoker's novel to "Blood is lives"[6] utterly changes its meaning. It turns the vampire into a detective of sorts, whose thirst for knowledge sends him on a quest for testimonies, which he then carefully interprets. Dracula's motto is accurately explained by Sister Agatha: "stories flow in our veins, if you know how to read them" ("The Rules of the Beast"). The metaphor of reading as vampiric appropriation also appears implicitly at the beginning of Episode two. The attention paid by Dracula to the quality of the books he reads recalls his careful choice of the preys he feeds on. In Gatiss and Moffat's *Dracula,* stories are indeed food for thought and Sister Agatha's use of Jonathan's account evokes Mina Harker's appropriation of the other characters' narratives to produce meaning in Stoker's novel. As Valerie Pedlar has highlighted, Mina's "performance as collator and editor-in-chief of the volume we are reading" can be compared to the way she reprocesses Dracula's blood and makes it her own: she consumes the characters' written material when she puts it in order and types it out (224-225).[7] This vampiric assimilation is portrayed in the TV show through Sister Agatha's influence over Jonathan's account. Her role as a parasite is further emphasised in episode three: she has been carried in Dracula's veins for over a hundred years and is also in Zoe's veins once the latter has drunk Dracula's blood ("The Dark Compass"). She causes hallucinations and absorbs Zoe's knowledge and modern language ("my DNA syncs with yours").

It is however in episode two that the deepening of the bond between Sister Agatha and Dracula is explained. Dracula tells the story of the voyage of the Demeter to England, peppered with a series of murders. As was the case with Jonathan Harker's narrative, Dracula's account is repeatedly interrupted by her comments, which sometimes appear as voice over when the images are suddenly frozen ("Blood Vessel"). She is again challenging Dracula's narration and pointing to its unreliability. This however turns to a battle: mind reading becomes a mind game, as symbolised by the game of chess, a recurrent image in the many adaptations of Doyle's works to depict the battle between Sherlock Holmes's intelligence and that of the criminal.[8] The metaphor was used in Stoker's novel to depict the vampire hunters' fight against Dracula's cunning.[9] In BBC's *Dracula,* the game of chess during which the story of the mysterious deaths on the Demeter is told materialises the battle

---

[6] Moffat and Gatiss playfully underline the hint with Sister Agatha's question: "are you sure [Dracula] did not say 'blood is life?'" ("The Rules of the Beast").

[7] Jennifer Wicke has also underlined that speech in Stoker's *Dracula* is vampirized by mass mediation and the "insinuation" of "invisible, or translated, stenography" (473). The text absorbs extraneous testimonies "just as Dracula assimilates the life-blood of his victims" (474). Rebecca Pope has more specifically called such appropriation parasitic: different discourses and languages are vamped together and the novel feeds off other discourses (199). Garrett Stewart presents Mina's transcription and retyping as a parody of vampirism (9) and Erik Butler explains that Mina's vampirism stems from the contaminating influence of the texts providing information on vampires. Because the texts are typed and thus mass-produced and mediated, they are no longer personal and Mina's immersion in them opens her body to infection (14).

[8] Chess is however barely mentioned in Doyle's stories with the famous sleuth. One of the very rare mentions is when Amberley's proficiency as a chess-player is seen by Sherlock Holmes as the mark of a scheming mind in Doyle's "The Adventure of the Retired Colourman" (1926).

[9] Van Helsing exclaims "Check to the King" (Stoker 135) when Lucy's health is temporarily preserved and he presents the little victories of the "Crew of light" as an "opportunity to cry 'check' in some ways in this chess game, which we play for the sake of human souls" (Stoker 223).

of Sister Agatha's and Dracula's minds. The characters' winning of losing moves on the chessboard reflect their proficiency in their verbal match.[10] Sister Agatha's immersion into the mind of Dracula evokes the projection into the mind of the criminal that typically helps the detective overcome his foe. Like both Stoker's Mina and Van Helsing, she must form a psychic union with the criminal before she can expose the truth and fight him. Several critics have compared Mina's connection to the Count and Abraham Van Helsing's use of it in his investigation to Sherlock Holmes's approach. Catherine Wynne states that "like Holmes's corresponding relationship to the criminal, they must become Dracula in order to destroy him" (56) and Betsy Van Schlun has shown that Mina's brain, with her "power of insight," her special bond that "enables her to relate to the criminal" and her extraordinary memory of data, reminds the reader of Sherlock Holmes's great intellect (303). In the TV series, the projection into the mind of Dracula does provide a better understanding of the vampire's experience, notably with the "subjectively inflected" point of view shots "supposed to represent subjective enhancements and distortions of the character's field of vision at the time" or "internal properties of a character's perceptual state" (Wilson 85). The flashes, close-ups and extreme close-ups on the wound of the sailor with the broken leg on the Demeter represent the flow of images overwhelming Dracula when he sees blood ("Blood Vessel"). This subjective representation is correctly interpreted by Sister Agatha as revealing his addiction to blood, a view that is not just confirmed by Dracula himself but also by the following close ups on the rare meat being cut, on the jugular in the throats of Adisa and Dr Sharma and on the vein inside Lord Ruthven's wrist, especially with the subjectively emphasised pulse of the veins ("Blood Vessel"). Such an interpretation also ties in, as Richard J Walker has demonstrated, with a possible reading of Stoker's *Dracula*.[11]

However, Sister Agatha's immersion into the mind of Dracula in episode two goes far beyond mere detective work, it goes deeper than she realizes. The extent of the fusion between the two characters utterly destabilises the narrative. While the voyage of the Demeter was presented as fiction, it turns out to be 'reality'. The game of chess on the other hand is unreal. This is a masterly instance of what George Wilson calls "twists" since "the epistemic structure of [this] segment is not specified straight away when it occurs" (89): while the spectator thought he was discovering the perspective of the vampire, he was also in fact in Sister Agatha's mind and what was presented as "real" was a shared hallucination. Sister Agatha was not projecting herself into Dracula's mind. His thoughts and memories were already within her, planted in her brain. Ironically, the little boat that Dracula places on the chess table reminds the spectator of the staggering twist in Bryan Singer's *The Usual Suspects* (1995) when the whole story turns out to have been invented by the protagonist telling it, as revealed by the close ups on the little objects and names that were the source of his inspiration. Here, the parallel between the boat in the bottle and the story of the Demeter seems to suggest that the events on the ship are all fabricated, while in fact they are real.

One is then led to reassess Dracula's little parody of a detective story. The very fact that he masquerades as a detective reveals his interaction with his victim: he has acquired the attitude of a sleuth through his consumption of Sister Agatha's blood. Dracula's ridiculous role-playing once again underlines the parasitic nature of the detective. It is because he is a

[10] When Sister Agatha insults Dracula, calling him a pig because of his lack of restraint, and compares him to "a fox in a hen coop", he changes the derogatory simile into the meliorative "like a connoisseur in a wine cellar" ("Blood Vessel") and turns the insult into a compliment, associating the pig with the valued truffles it is able to find. This verbal battle goes on and on, as when Sister Agatha's description of Dracula ("a sophisticated gentleman nothing more than a veneer") is parred with "the sophistication of a gentleman is always a veneer" ("Blood Vessel").

[11] According to him, the connection between vampirism and addiction is almost too obvious to make (257). Judith Halberstam describes vampirism in *Dracula* as "a psychological disorder, an addictive activity" (186).

vampire that he can so easily project himself into the mind of the others and unravel all the little mysteries so easily. If he has no trouble answering the Grand Duchess's little riddle (what was her birthday gift?), it is because she is a former prey and their minds are merged. When he answers the question, the angle reverse angle on their two faces makes the interspersed flashes ambiguous: one can no longer know whether they represent Valeria's memories or Dracula's ("Blood Vessel"). The depth of the bond between the two characters is conveyed through the gradual zooming in on their two faces. A parallel is here drawn with storytelling: the Grand Duchess is a wonderful storyteller, building up suspense, and Dracula appropriates her tale and finishes it. In his narrative, Dracula's appropriation of the viewpoints of the various characters is associated with his role as an omniscient narrator. If the whole detective plot around the deaths on board the Demeter is told from Dracula's perspective, the narration should then be limited to his viewpoint. However, as in a novel told by an omniscient narrator, the spectator also witnesses the events happening in other parts of the ship and has access to the other characters' memories and even their dreams. This would not be surprising if the whole story was fabricated but since the events turn out to be "real," it becomes problematic. The story starts with a horrific scene portraying the Captain of the Demeter in his cabin, waking up to be attacked by a decomposed sailor, later revealed to be the cook. This was however just a nightmare and there is here yet another twist: we were in fact immersed in the mind of the Captain. But how could we be if Dracula is the one telling the story? This immersion is possible because he is a vampire. Dracula's omniscience as a storyteller is explained by his ability as a vampire to imbibe the thoughts and knowledge of all the characters.

This sway over his potential victims was represented in Stoker's novel through his power as a hypnotist. Many critics have studied Stoker's *Dracula* as a comment on contemporary fears and practices of mesmerism and hypnotism.[12] Most interestingly, the anxiety around Dracula's invasion of his victims' minds has been interpreted as a projection of the contemporary fear of criminal mesmerism as a parasitic and contagious influence. As underlined by Lara Karpenko, John Bennett compared mesmerism to a contagion in his *The Mesmeric mania of 1851* (Karpenko 151). In BBC's *Dracula*, the vampire's spell over the characters and the invasion of their minds are presented in a way that clearly evokes parasitic contagion.

**Viewpoint and parasitic infection**

Dracula's contaminating influence can be felt in Jonathan's narrative when he cuts his finger on one of the shards of the mirror that the vampire has broken in Jonathan's room ("The Rules of the Beast"): the extreme close up on the falling drops of blood, combined with the slow motion, represents Dracula's subjective perception rather than Jonathan's. This is confirmed by the following close up on Dracula's face: his blood-shot eyes and his monstrous mouth, with the fangs out, reveal his blood lust. This temporary disclosure of Dracula's true nature seems however to have gone unnoticed by Jonathan at the time. The vampire's ability to commune with the others' minds also appears when he intimates the deaf and mute daughter of Dr Sharma onboard the Demeter not to tell what she witnessed during the night, when she saw him attack Lord Ruthven's wife, Dorabella ("Blood Vessel"). The girl's memory is altered: contrary to what happened at the time, Dracula now notices her presence as she watches and he makes a shushing sign with his finger on his lips. This contamination of the characters' viewpoint is also recurrently conveyed with the superimposition of his face on

[12] According to Daniel Pick, at the end of the nineteenth century "the 'hypnotic menace' becomes a matter of forensic investigation and grave public concern" (77) and Dracula embodies that fear. For a further study of this fear of hypnotists and its relation to Stoker's novel, see also Kelly Hurley.

the hallucinated image of the victim's beloved when Dracula is feeding on his preys. The sex scene between the injured sailor and Dorabella is revealed to be a hallucination when Dracula's hand, and then his face, replace the woman's ("Blood Vessel"). Similarly, a flash of his face interrupts the dreamed love scene between Jonathan and Mina ("The Rules of the Beast"). The vampire infects the others' viewpoint, as symbolised in the opening credits with the extreme close up on an eye looking upwards, its iris and its rim oozing blood.

This contamination is also represented metaphorically through the breaking of boundaries and the permeability between the inside and the outside. The window is used as an image to represent a potential way in. Episode one starts with a zooming in on a convent and its window, which is immediately followed by a zooming out on the window from the inside ("The Rules of the Beast"). The flowing movement that makes the spectator enter the convent although the window is closed suggests a certain permeability. When Dracula later arrives at that convent, the impending contagion is foreshadowed by the movement of the bats breaking the window and entering the room to attack Mina. The choice of the window as a point of entry highlights once again the infection of the characters' viewpoint since looking out of the window has become a common trope to refer to a character's perspective. The initial zooming out on the window features a fly on the windowpane. The following extreme close ups on Jonathan's eye and on the fly's eye lead the spectator to connect the two. The irruption of that unusual shot on the fly is so sudden that it feels invasive. When the insect finally lands on Jonathan's iris and goes inside it, it becomes finally clear that his view is infected. The contamination of the mind is then associated with the contamination of the body. It is metaphorically conveyed with Dracula's repeated attempts to break boundaries, as when he tries to enter the convent or the protective circles that Sister Agatha, like Stoker's Van Helsing, creates. When Dracula finally enters the convent and then the protective circle around Sister Agatha and Mina, he can also enter Sister Agatha's head, as his presence in her mind palace in episode two suggests.

Such situations seem to picture the breach of a cell by a virus. A parallel can be drawn with Stoker's novel. When Abraham Van Helsing tries to protect Lucy, he is bent on hermetically sealing the window and carefully rubs garlic "all over the sashes" (121). Garlic is then used both as an antiseptic[13] and as a medicinal remedy boosting her immune system: the garlic changes the nature of all the foreign elements coming inside the room since the Doctor ensures that "every whiff of air that might get in would be laden with the garlic smell" (131). His first attempt fails because of the intervention of Lucy's mother, who opens the window and lets the virus in. The second time, a wolf summoned by Dracula breaks in, crashing the window, which seems to symbolise the breach of a cell membrane by the virus. The "whole myriad of little specks […] blowing in through the broken window" (131) represents the viral microbes infecting Lucy's body. The obvious resemblance between the symptoms of Dracula's victims and the symptoms of syphilis has led several critics to study the representation of vampirism as a metaphor for disease in general.[14] Martin Willis has shown that *Dracula* stages the conflict between two contemporary medical approaches, contagionism, the belief that infectious diseases were passed through close contact or touch (Willis 305), and miasmatism, the theory asserting that "diseases were the product of environmental factors" (Willis 305), to finally turn to the nascent germ theory, as the descriptions of the metamorphosis of the infectious vampires into little specks suggests. This particular feature has also been commented on by Jens Lofhert Jørgensen. He draws the

[13] In Martin Willis's terms, "surrounded by the garlic flowers, a metonymy for antiseptic that combats the metaphor of vampirism as a microbe, Lucy is well protected from the microbial infection that vampirism represents (313).

[14] Pascale Krumm has shown that vampirism mimicks the pathology of syphilis with its three stages: hysteria, dementia and then death (7).

attention to the "bacteria-like features" of Dracula when he adopts the shape of "infinitesimal dust particles […] capable of entering even hermetically sealed room" (41) and shows that the vampire hunters' sterilisation of the crates of earth disseminated by Dracula evokes the containment of an "epidemic threat" (41). Hub Zwart on the other hand has paid closer attention to viral zoonosis, focusing on the role of the bats in the transmission of diseases (28).

Gatiss and Moffat also present vampirism as a viral infection: it is associated with physical symptoms conveying both illness and the loss of integrity of the self with the diseased fingers, the nails coming off, the loss of hair and the skin lesions. Dracula's attack on Zoe in episode three makes the comparison with a disease quite clear. When he drinks her blood, he is projected into her mind and then rejected because Zoe's body is already inhabited, it already harbours a parasite, a creature of death and decay ("The dark Compass"). This creature is the embodiment of cancer, the disease gnawing her from the inside. Zoe seems at first trapped with Dracula in an imaginary place reminiscent of Caspar Friedrich's *The Abbey in the Forest* (1809), like Sister Agatha in her mind palace. However, Dracula is the one who is contaminated and trapped with Zoe's parasite, death itself. What appeared to be a representation of Zoe's mind then becomes a representation of Dracula's mind and one is led to draw a parallel between the parasitic presence of the vampire in the characters' bodies and thoughts and the parasitic presence of the figure of death in Zoe.

The showrunners' interpretation seems even more literal in the title sequence, which showcases images of red cells put under a microscope. The very first image is an orange-red virus-like shape and its tentacles are fanning out, picturing the spread of the disease. In some shots the red cells look putrid and their membrane is broken by flies. As Stacey Abbott has demonstrated, "the emphasis on the close-up of the blood cell", and more generally the "preoccupation with analysing the minutiae of life, such as bacteria, microbes, viruses, genes and atoms," "has its place across a long history of visual representation of the vampire in film and television" (45). The vampires can be associated with viral microbes because they are in between the living and the non-living and like vampires, "are unable to reproduce until they are within a living host" (49). Once inside the host, they can get inside a cell and even genetically modify it to facilitate their own reproduction (49). This gradual modification is very strikingly emphasised in BBC's *Dracula*. Dracula is invading Jonathan's body as well as his mind. He is becoming Jonathan, up to the point where he actually wears his body like a suit and rips it open to shed it like a skin ("The Rules of the Beast"). This horrifying parasitic appropriation of the body is foreshadowed when Dracula claws his way out of the body of a wolf instead of shapeshifting back into his human form ("The Rules of the Beast"). Organic parasitism is here pushed to its extreme.

**Why flies?**

Emilie Taylor Brown and Ross Forman's interpretation of this kind of parasitism in Stoker's novel might help shed light on the choice of the association of flies and parasitic infection in the TV show. The method of transmission (biting), the symptoms (anaemia, fatigue and fever) and even the efficacy of garlic and the danger of leaving the window open at night are the same in malarial infection and vampirism (Taylor 18). More specifically, Dracula's fangs "resemble the proboscis of the mosquito, long thought to transmit tropical diseases" (Taylor 17). The metaphor of malaria certainly applies to Gatiss and Moffat's *Dracula* as well. When Dracula appropriates Jonathan's body in episode one, his aim is to use it as a disguise to enter the circle of wafer that protects Sister Agatha and Mina. His shapeshifting and his use of Jonathan's body as a trojan horse to cross the protective barrier call to mind the strategy deployed by the parasite that triggers malaria. Indeed the malaria

parasite, the *Plasmodium*, is able to switch "between as many as 150 genes" to outsmart the immune system and avoid detection (Nowak 755) and uses host cells in the liver to develop buds of parasites. It also acts on the signals sent by those dead host cells to the immune system in order to ensure their safe passage into the bloodstream (Sturm et al.). However, mosquitoes are not featured in the TV-series. The flies seem to be playing their role. They do not bite but they can invade the body, as underlined earlier, and they are systematically used to mark the characters' illness.

The choice of flies in the TV show was certainly dictated by their association with decay – in the title sequence, they both herald putrefaction and follow in its wake. It is also a hint at Renfield's obsession – and indeed, Renfield, a lawyer in the TV series, eats flies in episode three. In Stoker's novel, the metaphor of the fly is used to convey Renfield's rising influence over Dr Seward, whose mind is gradually contaminated by the madman's views. When the doctor obsessively attempts to find the right label to define the lunatic, the answer is said to be "buzzing in [his] mind" (71) during the whole day, a clear echo of the buzz of the fly "bloated with carrion food" that Renfield ate not long before (69). The buzzing thought seems to have been planted in Dr Seward's mind, like a growing parasite: "the rudimentary idea in [his] mind is growing" (69). Van Helsing too has a half thought "buzzing" in his brain (295). Renfield and his flies evoke vampiric assimilation. The madman's recreation of the Darwinian food chain and his "zoological ranking by sheer numbers of lives each species feeds upon for its survival" (Vrettos 166) are based on the assumption that, as Huxley emphasised, "all living things [are] reducible to universal protoplasm which, created by plants and consumed by animals, is plastic enough to be variously incarnated" (Blinderman 417). Renfield's fly eating is then a way to draw a connection between various lives, like Dracula when he is drinking blood. That particular aspect becomes a key element in the TV show. Blood is lives indeed, as graphically pictured in the opening credits: one shot features blood drops flowing from right to left. Each drop encapsulates the faces of various characters, which constantly shift and merge. Blood is more than testimonies: it is the protoplasm linking all lives.

This view sheds light on Dracula's words to Sister Agatha before drinking her blood at the convent: "You'll be part of me. You'll travel to the new world in my veins" ("The Dark Compass"). Through his blood, he makes her travel through time and establishes a bond with her great grandniece. The allusion to travel reminds the spectator that Dracula is a foreigner. As Stephen Arata has successfully demonstrated, with Dracula's arrival on English soil and his terrifying contamination of English victims, Bram stoker was playing on his contemporaries' fear of reverse colonisation: "the fear is that what has been represented as the 'civilised' world is on the point of being colonised by 'primitive" forces" (120). This is what Moffat and Gatiss seem to be hinting at with Dracula's allusion to his impending travel from Rumania, portrayed as primitive, to "the new world," that is to say England … until Dracula finally swims to the English shore to discover that this world is literally new: it is now the 21st century. Similarly, the image of the parasite has traditionally been associated with foreigners, and more particularly the Jews.[15] The fear of the parasite is also a fear of the invasion of the foreign. But the shift from the metaphor to a more literal representation of the parasite leads to a more universal reflection on the fear of death. The end of episode three unravels what is presented as the greatest mystery of all, the mystery around Dracula's origins, his limitations and his allergies. As it turns out, Dracula has imbibed all the superstitious beliefs concerning

[15] Monica Tomaszweska has related Stoker's depiction of the vampire as an infectious parasite, an invasive degenerate, to "the general apprehensions about degeneration of the imperial race" but also more specifically to the "fear of Judaisation" (6). The link between Dracula's monstrous parasitism and anti-Semitic discourse has also been established by Judith Halberstam. Jews crystallised many fears: they were linked to the spread of syphilis, to degeneration, to criminality and psychological disturbances (183).

vampires and has been limited by his fear that they might be true. Garlic, sunlight, crucifixes: all those weapons work on him because he is unwilling to take the risk of being hurt. His main preoccupation has always been to avoid death, which terrifies him. A reviewer called this revelation "a big thematic and emotional let-down" (Donaldson) but it ties in perfectly with the literal reinterpretation of Stoker's novel in the series as a whole: it is the parasite's survival instinct, its refusal to die with its host that leads to further contamination. Although Dracula is depicted as a monstrous villain, this conclusion tends to humanise him but at the same time it also brings us uncomfortably closer to the bacteria and microbes that inhabit our bodies. Common to all life-forms is the necessity to face death and it is what leads ultimately to the harmonious fusion between Zoe / Sister Agatha and Dracula. In death, they finally put an end to the fight and become one in the cell-like circle of fire ("The Dark Compass").

## Works cited


Abbott, Stacey. *Undead Apocalypse: Vampires and Zombies in the 21st Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

Arata, Stephen D. "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonisation." *Dracula: Bram Stoker*. Ed. Glennis Byron. London: Macmillan, 1999. 119-144.

Blinderman, Charles S. "Vampurella: Darwin and Count Dracula." *The Massachusetts Review* 21 (1980): 411-28.

"Blood Vessel." *Dracula*. Dir. Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat. BBC, 2020. *Netflix*. netflix.com.

Butler, Erik. "Writing and Vampiric Contagion in *Dracula*." *IJCS* 2:1 (2002): 13-32.

Donaldson, Kayleigh. "Why BBC and Netflix's *Dracula* Was So Disappointing." *Screenrant*. 4 Jan. 2020, screenrant.com/dracula-2020-bbc-netflix-bad-disappointing. Accessed 27 Apr. 2020.

Gilbert, Gerard. "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Dracula." *The Independent.* 28 Dec. 2019, www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/dracula-bbc-netflix-review-steven-moffat-mark-gatiss-sherlock-a9258606.html. Accessed 27 Apr. 2020.

Halberstam, Judith. "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*." *Dracula: Bram Stoker*. Ed. Glennis Byron. London: Macmillan, 1999. 173-196.

Hurley, Kelly. "Science and the Gothic." *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*. Eds. Andrew Smith and William Hughes. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.170-185.

Jann, Rosemary. "Saved by Science? The Mixed Messages of Stoker's Dracula." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 31:2 (1989): 273-287.

Jørgensen, Jens Lohfert. "Bacillophobia: Man and Microbes in *Dracula*, *The War of the Worlds*, and *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus.'" Critical Survey* 27:2 (2015): 36-49.

Krumm, Pascale. "Metamorphosis as Metaphor in Bram *Stoker's Dracula.*" *The Victorian Newsletter* 88 (1995): 5-11.

Forman, Ross G. "A Parasite for Sore Eyes: Rereading Infection Metaphors in Bram Stoker's Dracula." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 44:4 (2016): 925-947.

Karpenko, Lara. "'So Extraordinary a Bond': Mesmerism and Sympathetic Identification in Charles Adams's *Notting Hill Mystery*." *Strange Science: Investigating the Limites of Knowledge in the Victorian Age.* Eds. Lara Karpenko and Shalyn Claggett. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017. 145-163.

Leatherdale, Clive. *The Origins of Dracula: The Background to Bram Stoker'sGothic Masterpiece.* London: William Kimber ,1987.

Mangan, Lucy. "*Dracula* Review – A Blood-Sucking Delight that Leaves You Thirsty For More." *The Guardian*. 1 Feb. 2020, www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2020/jan/01/dracula-review-bbc1-steven-moffat-mark-gatiss. Accessed 27 Apr. 2020.

Nowak, Rachel. "How the Parasite Disguises Itself." *Science* 269: 5225 (1995): 755.

Pedlar, Valérie. "*Dracula*: A Fin-de-Siècle Fantasy." *The Nineteenth Century Novel: Identities*. Ed. Dennis Walder. London: Open University Press; routledge, 2001.

Pick, Daniel. "'Terrors of the Night': *Dracula* and 'Degeneration' in the Late Nineteenth Century." *Critical Quarterly* 30:4 (1988): 71-87.

Poore, Benjamin. "The Trickster, Remixed: Sherlock Holmes as Master of Disguise." *Sherlock Holmes in Context*. Ed. Sam Naidu. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Pope, Rebecca A. "Writing and Biting in *Dracula*." *LIT* 1 (1990): 199-216.

Schlun, Betsy van. *Science and the Imagination: Mesmerism, Media and the Mind in Nineteenth Century English and American Literature.* Leipzig: Galda + Wilch Verlag, 2007.

Seed, David. "The Narrative Method of *Dracula*." *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 40:1 (1985): 61-75.

Stewart, Garrett. "'Count Me In': *Dracula*, Hypnotic Participation, and the Late-Victorian Gothic of Reading." *LIT* 5 (1994): 1-18.

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Ed. Nina Auerbach & David J.Skal. New York, London: Norton, 1997.

Sturm Angelika et al. "Manipulation of Host Hepatocytes by the Malaria Parasite for Delivery into Liver Sinusoids." *Science* 313: 5791 (2006):1287-1290.

Taylor-Brown Emilie. "'She Has a Parasite Soul!': The Pathologization of the Gothic Monster as Parasitic Hybrid in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* and Arthur Conan Doyle's*." Monsters and Monstrosity from the Fin de Siècle to the Millennium.* Eds Sharla Hutchison and Rebecca A. Brown. Jefferson: McFarland, 2015. 12-28.

"The Rules of the Beast." *Dracula*. Dir. Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat. BBC, 2020. *Netflix*. netflix.com.

"The Dark Compass." *Dracula*. Dir. Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat. BBC, 2020. *Netflix*. netflix.com.

Tomaszweska, Monika. "Vampirism and the Degeneration of the Imperial Race - Stoker's Dracula as the Invasive Degenerate Other." *Journal of Dracula Studies* 6:1 (2004). kutztownenglish.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/jds_v6_2004_tomaszewska.pdf. Accessed 27 Apr. 2020.

Vrettos, Athena. *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Walker, Richard J. *Labyrinths of Deceit: Culture, Modernity and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007.

Willis, Martin. "'The Invisible Giant', *Dracula* and Disease." *Studies in the Novel* 39:3 (2007): 301-325.

Wilson, George. "Transparency and Twist in Narrative Fiction Film." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64.1 (2006): 81-95.

Wycke, Jennifer. "Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and its Media." *ELH* 59(1992): 467-493.

Wynne, Catherine. "Mesmeric Exorcism, Idolatrous Beliefs and Bloody Rituals: Mesmerism, Catholicism and Second Sight in Bram Stoker's Fiction." *Victorian Review* 26:1 (2000): 43-63.

Zwart, Hub. “Vampires, Viruses, and Verbalisation: Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* as a Genealogical Window into Fin-de-siècle Science.” *Janus Head* 16:2 (2018): 14-53.