

# Vampires, Viruses, and Verbalisation: Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as a genealogical window into fin-de-siècle science

Hub Zwart

*Euthanasia is an excellent and comforting word! I am grateful to whoever invented it.*

– John Seward <sup>1</sup>

*They don't realize we're bringing them the plague.*

– Sigmund Freud

## *Abstract*

This paper considers Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, published in 1897, as a window into techno-scientific and sociocultural developments of the fin-de-siècle era, ranging from blood transfusion and virology up to communication technology and brain research, but focusing on the birth of psychoanalysis in 1897, the year of publication. Stoker's literary classic heralds a new style of scientific thinking, foreshadowing important aspects of post-1900 culture. *Dracula* reflects a number of scientific events which surfaced

---

<sup>1</sup> Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897/1993, p. 298).

in the 1890s but evolved into major research areas that are still relevant today. Rather than seeing science and literature as separate realms, moreover, Stoker's masterpiece encourages us to address the ways in which techno-scientific and psycho-cultural developments mutually challenge and mirror one another, so that we may use his novel to deepen our understanding of emerging research practices and vice versa (Zwart 2008, 2010). Psychoanalysis plays a double role in this. It is the research field whose genealogical constellation is being studied, but at the same time (Lacanian) psychoanalysis guides my reading strategy.

Dracula, the infectious, undead Vampire has become an archetypal cinematic icon and has attracted the attention of numerous scholars (Browning & Picart 2009). The vampire complex built on various folkloristic and literary sources and culminated in two famous nineteenth-century literary publications: the story *The Vampyre* by John Polidori (published in 1819)<sup>2</sup> and Stoker's version. Most of the more than 200 vampire movies released since *Nosferatu* (1922) are based on the latter (Skal 1990; Browning & Picart 2009; Melton 2010; Silver & Ursini 2010). Yet, rather than on the archetypal cinematic image of the Vampire, I will focus on the various scientific ideas and instruments employed by Dracula's antagonists to overcome the threat to civilisation he represents. Although the basic storyline is well-known, I will begin with a plot summary.

--

---

<sup>2</sup> John Polidori acted as Lord Byron's personal physician during his European travels and based his vampire story on an unfinished fragment by Byron, conceived at the same time and place as Mary Wollstonecraft's *Frankenstein*, in Villa Diodati, near Lake Geneva, in the rainy summer of 1816. Polidori's thesis, composed in Latin, was a medical treatise on *Oneirodynia*, i.e. somnambulism (Stiles et al 2010).

*Summary*

Jonathan Harker, a solicitor from London, travels to Transylvania, – a polyglot, multi-ethnic region “full of geological and chemical strangeness” (Stoker 1897/1993, p. 284) and beset by superstition –, to meet Count Dracula, who had expressed his intention to migrate to London, the teeming metropolitan centre of the modern Western world. In a dreary, unfamiliar landscape Jonathan is picked up by a mysterious driver who takes him to a dilapidated medieval castle in the Carpathians, on the edge of a precipice, heaving him in and out of his carriage with “prodigious strength” (p. 17, p. 20). When he meets the Count, Jonathan feels uneasy and intimidated by Dracula’s presence, by his cold hands, his sharp teeth, his pale, statuesque body and his nauseating (“malodourous”, “stagnant”, “foul”) breath. Soon, he realises that he is in fact the Count’s prisoner (p. 31). The castle’s doors are locked and seem too large and heavy for him to open, and he feels completely helpless (p. 31). During a nocturnal exploration he is physically harassed by Dracula’s “voluptuous” brides yearning for his blood. Utterly defenceless, he faints. In letters to his wife Mina, he confesses his traumatic and embarrassing experiences, identifying himself with medieval ladies once imprisoned there.<sup>3</sup> Soon it dawns on him that he is kept alive only because Dracula needs him for his envisioned real estate transaction, a first step towards unleashing an exponentially proliferating network of vampirism pervading the Western world.<sup>4</sup> Jonathan manages to escape to England, but has

---

<sup>3</sup> “Here I am, sitting at a little oak table where in old times possibly some fair lady sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love-letter, and writing in my diary in shorthand all that has happened... the old centuries have powers of their own which mere modernity cannot kill” (p. 39).

<sup>4</sup> “This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps for the centuries to come, he might, among its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood,

contracted a strange and debilitating brain disease in Dracula's castle. His collection of notes and diary entries, however, in stenographic shorthand (the new, bureaucratic style of writing which Count Dracula is unable to decode) will become a key component in the Dracula file.

Meanwhile, Mina's friend Lucy Westenra became engaged to a wealthy aristocrat named Arthur Holmwood, after turning down two other suitors: Dr. John Seward (a psychiatrist who studied with Prof. Abraham van Helsing in Amsterdam and now directs a private mental asylum near London) and an American adventurer named Quincey Morris. Seward is writing a scientific report about his "pet patient", a dangerous psychopath named Renfield who suffers from "homicidal and religious mania" (p. 94) and who eats spiders and flies, so that Seward labels him as "zoophagous". When Renfield telepathically registers the arrival of his "Lord and Master" and Lucy begins to display unsettling symptoms (restlessness, anaemia, sleepwalking, blood loss), Seward suggests to contact his former mentor Van Helsing, an expert in obscure diseases, who eagerly accepts the invitation.

Upon his arrival, Van Helsing is struck by strange marks on Lucy's neck and tries to save her life with blood transfusions, using blood procured from four gentlemen (Seward, Morris, Holmwood and Van Helsing himself) who volunteer to save the ailing female recipient with their revitalising bodily fluids. Because of the intimacy of the intervention, her fiancé Holmwood is the first gentleman to act as donor, but when his blood resource becomes exhausted, Morris, Seward and Van Helsing (overruling Holmwood's moral objections) feel obliged to contribute as well (although this, as Van Helsing phrases it, makes Lucy *de facto* a "polyandrist"). They must overstep such considerations to protect

---

and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons... a terrible desire came upon me to rid the world of this monster" (p. 52).

the life and purity of the vulnerable women who are Dracula's primal target (Lau 2016). But the damage has been done, and after her burial, Lucy's proves *undead* rather than dead, foraying the night with "voluptuous" and "insatiable" wantonness (p. 189). She becomes a nightmare version of herself, a human-shaped bat in search of fresh blood, with children as her victims. Van Helsing recommends "euthanasia" (i.e. brutally killing the dangerous undead woman in her sleep) and indeed, after a series of intense ethical deliberations, the four gentlemen open her tomb, and Arthur Holmwood is granted the privilege of driving a stake through her heart, literally impaling her, like an unfaltering "figure of Thor", driving the stake "deeper and deeper" into her undead body (p. 194).

Meanwhile, worried because of her husband's chronic brain fever, Mina decides to share his notes and letters (which she has copied on her typewriter) with Seward and Van Helsing. Because of this additional information, the connection with vampirism can finally be made. The physicians conclude that London has become the potential target of a vampire pandemic, and that Dracula must be hunted down at all costs. Mina herself, armed with a portable American "traveller's typewriter" (QWERTY type, a gift from Morris, p. 310) joins the team. Her text processing device, together with similar contrivances such as the phonograph used by Seward for making clinical records, proves extremely helpful in putting together a professional vampire file. Van Helsing explains that the undead Count, who had been an alchemist while alive, is actually "experimenting" (p. 269) and increasing his knowledge by using victims like Lucy and Renfield as research subjects (and wolves, bats and rats as research animals). The Western world is a laboratory for Dracula and at a certain point even Mina falls victim to the Count. He hypnotises her and forces her to suck his blood. She is saved, but remains "unclean", and an uncanny, telepathic rapport between her and Dracula develops, so that Seward and Van Helsing keep her under close surveillance, realising that, should she seriously

develop vampire symptoms, this would oblige them to commit “euthanasia” again.<sup>5</sup> And even Mina herself, being aware that her blood is contaminated by vampirism, proactively requests euthanasia, should the vampire infection transform her into an undead: “You must promise me ... that you will kill me” (p. 293).

Dracula is a distant voice, calling and manipulating his followers from afar, but because of the rapport, Mina herself can also function as a medium, a telepathic navigator. Van Helsing, who is an expert in hypnosis as well, and explicitly refers to the work of Charcot (p. 172), manages to establish a telepathic link with Dracula. Via this wireless Mina-Dracula connection and Mina’s hypnotic reports, they are able follow the undead Count back to Transylvania, where they slit his throat and plunge a Bowie knife into his heart, so that his undead body can finally perish into entropic dust.

As indicated, *Dracula* will now be read as a genealogical window into the fin-de-siècle era, exploring various connections between Stoker’s novel and contemporaneous scientific events occurring in the year of publication 1897: an epistemological turning-point, the birth year of psychoanalysis, and a remarkable year for science. The methodological starting point for this procedure is the principle of synchronicity (Zwart 2002; 2008; 2015), i.e. the hypothesis that synchronic events (occurring in various realms of science, society and culture more or less at the same time) share a common profile, a family likeness if you will. They reflect a common zeitgeist and may therefore mutually elucidate one another, so that the significance of one particular event (in this case: the publication of a novel) may help us to assess the significance of a various

---

<sup>5</sup> “Euthanasia is an excellent and comforting word! I am grateful to whoever invented it” (Stoker 1897/1993, p. 298). Although these sentences are actually written down by Seward, they reflect deliberations with Van Helsing, and he appears to be citing or paraphrasing him.

simultaneous events (such as scientific, technical or medical breakthroughs) and vice versa.

### *The year 1897*

1897 was an important year for science, a prelude to the twentieth century. The most noteworthy scientific event perhaps was J.J. Thomson's discovery of the electron as a subatomic particle, a first step towards elementary particle physics as a key research area of the century to come. After the electron ( $e^-$ ), a whole series of atomic particles were discovered: the photon ( $\gamma$ , 1900), the proton ( $p^+$ , 1911), the neutron ( $n^0$ , 1932), the neutrino (1959) and so forth, up to the current hunt for the Higgs boson ( $H^0$ ) at CERN.

In the same year 1897, Thomas Edison filed a patent for a device known as the Kinetoscope: a prototype model for viewing motion pictures, an important step towards twentieth century cinema (the cultural ecosystem where vampirism would thrive). But Edison's device was part of a long list of inventions coming from his lab in Menlo Park, including the phonograph, developed for recording and reproducing the human voice, invented in 1877, but perfected for mass production during the 1880s (Wicke 1992; Page 2011). In *Dracula*, this device is used by Dr. Seward, who keeps phonographic patient files, entering clinical observations as a daily routine (p. 197), but also by Lucy Westenra for her diary. The phonograph is explicitly presented as a leap forward in communication technology compared to old-fashioned handwriting. When Seward is unable to use it, he exclaims: "How I miss my phonograph! To write diary with a pen is irksome to me" (p. 298).<sup>6</sup> In combination with Mina's portable typewriter (which

---

<sup>6</sup> Cf. a similar quote by Mina: "I feel so grateful to the man who invented the 'Traveller's' typewriter... I should have felt quite astray doing the work if I had to write with a pen..." (p. 310). It is almost as if Stoker is advertising these (American) innovations (cf. Page 2011).

transforms the content of Seward's phonographic cylinders into hard-copy text), such contrivances prove powerful weapons in the anti-vampire campaign.

Also in 1897, the term "computer" was used for the first time for a mechanical calculation device (McCoy, 2010, p. 1). As pointed out by Wicke (1992), Kittler (1993), Picker (2003), Page (2011) and others, "bourgeois" bureaucratic devices such as the phonograph, the telegraph (p. 196) and the typewriter (equipped with a function called *manifold* that allows Mina to produce multiple copies) play a prominent role in *Dracula* and herald the coming age of electronic contrivances. These devices, I will argue, enable a symbolisation of the real.

In the same year, the German pharmaceutical company Bayer registered a trademark for aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid), a modification of salicylic acid or *salicin*, which actually was a folk remedy derived from the bark of the willow tree (*Salix* in Latin). Aspirin was the first mass product of modern industrial pharmacy, destined to develop into a large-scale research arena in the twentieth century and symbolising the shift from traditional low-tech (home-made) remedies to science-based pharmaceuticals. In *Dracula*, this shift is reflected in Van Helsing's eclectic combination of traditional remedies against vampirism (such as garlic, wafers and crucifixes) with more modern techniques to avert the looming vampire pandemic. But it is also visible for instance in Dr. Seward's use of a modern biochemical tranquiliser (chloral hydrate), for which even the chemical formula is provided:  $C_2HCL_3O + H_2O$  (p. 95).

Last but not least, 1897 is generally regarded as the birth year of psychoanalysis (Ellenberger 1970), another important twentieth-

century discourse.<sup>7</sup> In 1897, Sigmund Freud (a Viennese neurologist who attended Charcot's lectures on hypnosis and hysteria in Paris) began his opus magnum *Die Traumdeutung*, using his own (daily recorded) dreams as source material.<sup>8</sup> The birth of psychoanalysis is meticulously recorded in Freud's letters to Wilhelm Fliess, a maieutic diary or self-analysis published posthumously in 1950 as *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse*. Wilhelm Fliess was a nose and throat specialist from Berlin who speculated about a physiological link between the nose and female genitalia. He claimed to have discovered genial sports in the interior of the nose and believed hysteric symptoms to be of nasal-genital origin (Sulloway 1979/1992, p. 140). In 1897, Fliess published his monograph *Die Beziehungen zwischen Nase und weiblichen Geschlechtsorganen* [The Relations between the Nose and the Female Sexual Organs], which also contained a theory on infantile sexuality. In 1897, in his letters to Fliess, Freud reports the onset of his systematic self-analysis.<sup>9</sup> One of these letters contains the famous sentence "Ich glaube an meine Neurotica nicht mehr" ("I no longer believe in my neurosis theory", Letter 69 to Wilhelm Fliess, September 21, 1897). The discarded theory was based on confessions made by patients concerning incestuous seduction events which allegedly had occurred during early childhood. Freud's famous sentence is regarded as a pivotal turning point in the genesis of psychoanalysis, reflecting his renunciation of the seduction theory, more precisely: his acknowledgement of the decisive role of phantasms in the genesis of psychic syndromes. It is also the beginning of a life-long self-analysis (continued in *The*

---

<sup>7</sup> Ellenberger points out that 1897 is the year of Freud self-analysis, resulting in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The term "psychoanalysis" was first used by him in print in 1896.

<sup>8</sup> "Während dem Doktor Freud eben das Geheimnis der *Traumdeutung* aufgeht, erscheint Bram Stokers *Dracula*" (Kittler 1993, p. 19)

<sup>9</sup> "Der Hauptpatient, der mich beschäftigt, bin ich selbst" (Letter 67 to Wilhelm Fliess, August 14, 1897); "Meine Selbstanalyse ist in der Tat das Wesentlichste, was ich jetzt habe" (Letter 71 to Fliess, October 15, 1897).

*Interpretation of Dreams, Psychopathology of everyday life* and many other publications), although the label self-analysis is misleading for strictly speaking, self-analysis is impossible, as Freud himself indicates (Letter 75 to Fliess, November 14 1897). As Lacan emphasises, these documents rather constitute an analytic *dialogue* with Fliess (with Freud in the role of the analysand): the commencement and foundation (*Anfang*) of a whole oeuvre (Lacan 1954-1955/1978, p. 150).

Like Freud, Van Helsing and Seward are scientifically trained neurologists who must overstep their positivistic “prejudices” (p. 172) to master new techniques which allow them to address incomprehensible therapeutic challenges (vampirism in the case of Van Helsing, hysteria in the case of Freud). In Lacanian terms (Lacan 1969-1970/1991), they must switch from “university discourse” (i.e. the discourse of the expert, the one who *knows*, based on formal academic training) to the “discourse of the analyst” (which implies a willingness to suspend one’s expert knowledge in order to give the floor to the affected subjects themselves, listening carefully, with evenly poised attention, to whatever they report, however trivial, strange or indiscrete their free associations may initially seem; Zwart 2016). To come to terms with obscure afflictions, therapists like Freud and Van Helsing must overcome their professional, nineteenth-century scepticism and follow “the mind of the great Charcot” who, as Van Helsing puts it, used new techniques (notably hypnosis) to enter into “the very soul of the patient” (p. 172). Or, as Mina phrases it during her conversations with Van Helsing: “hypnotise me, so that I will be able to speak freely” (p. 277); or even: “hypnotise me and so learn *that which even I myself do not know*” (p. 290, my italics), a phrase which is reminiscent of Freud’s famous remark that, in psychoanalysis, analysands not only confess everything they know, but “more”: more than they know themselves (1926/1948, p. 215). Van Helsing also points to other psycho-experimental developments, taking us beyond Freudian psychoanalysis and into the area of the

occult, such telepathy and “electrical science”; - but all these connections will be explored in more detail below.

Two other events that are part of the novel’s techno-scientific ambiance deserve to be mentioned here as well, although occurring shortly after 1897, namely the discovery of the virus by Martinus Beijerinck in 1898 and the discovery of blood types by Karl Landsteiner in 1900. In Stoker’s novel, vampirism is described as an infectious condition, a self-replicating viral disease, transmittable via contaminated blood. It is by consciously infecting their victims that vampires produce copies of themselves so that vampirism can proliferate. In the next sections, I will analyse these various correspondences between *Dracula* and concurrent techno-scientific, biomedical and psycho-cultural developments more in depth, focussing respectively on (a) blood transfusion, (b) virology, (c) psychoanalysis, (d) brain research and (e) communication technology (with psychoanalysis occupying the central position in the series).

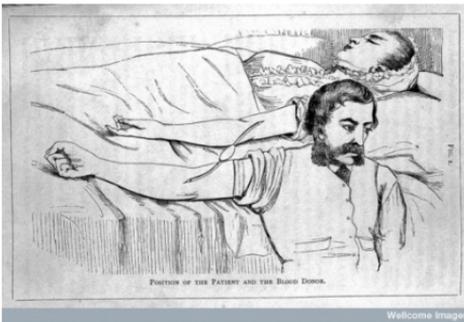
### *Dracula and blood transfusion*

When Van Helsing enters Lucy Westenra’s bedroom, armed with the “instruments” and “paraphernalia” of his profession, he immediately recognises that she has lost a significant amount of blood, so that “there must be transfusion of blood at once” (p. 111). This requires a male volunteer as donor, and her fiancé Arthur Holmwood arrives on the scene right in time (p. 112) so that Van Helsing can conduct the operation, transfusing Arthur’s pure (“undefibrinated”) blood into Lucy’s ailing body.

For centuries, blood-letting (‘negative’ transfusion) had been in use as a panacea, but in the nineteenth-century ‘positive’ transfusion was being tried as an alternative. It proved a hazardous and potentially toxic procedure, however, often with questionable

results, and sometimes giving rise to disastrous haemolytic effects, causing the death of the patient (Masson 1993; Learoyd 2012). In *Dracula*, blood transfusion is applied on four occasions, and consistently as a gendered practice, involving the transfusion of blood directly from male donors (two of whom are physicians) to a female recipient.<sup>10</sup> Lucy (a young patient whose physical afflictions draw the attention of physicians-lovers) is both a therapeutic and an erotic target, and in *Dracula*, blood (donated by eager male volunteers who compete with one another to become the next donor) functions as a substitute (a displacement, psychoanalytically speaking) for semen: a bodily fluid of symbolic value, transferable from male to female bodies, but possibly contaminated by (or at least associated with) infectious disease (such as syphilis for instance).

But the procedure fails to achieve the intended results and the novel describes how Lucy's condition changes from passivity and



lethargy (due to anaemia) into vampirism (with a behavioural spectrum ranging from “savage voluptuousness” up to feverish and wild “contortions”). The latter may actually suggest blood poisoning, misattributed to

vampirism, although rabies (transmitted by bats, as will be discussed below) may provide an alternative explanation (Gómez-Alonso 1998). Stoker's novel stages a team of physicians who, confronted with an unknown threat, revert to risky interventions. And when their transfusion experiment falters, they decide to euthanize their patient.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the illustration below (Aveling 1873, p. 303). Reproduced in: Wellcome Library, London (Lau 2016).

Due to Karl Landsteiner's discovery of blood types in 1900 (A, B, and 0, to which AB was later added), blood transfusion became more manageable and safe. Therefore, in the course of the twentieth century, the focus of concern shifted from incompatibility of blood types to the transmission of (viral) infections via contaminated blood products (such as viral hepatitis and HIV).<sup>11</sup> In retrospect, we may reinterpret some of Lucy's uncanny symptoms as resulting from iatrogenic blood poisoning, due to incompatibility of blood types, so that the treatment dramatically aggravated her condition. Landsteiner's discovery made blood transfusion safe; thereby transferred vampirism from the realm of biomedical concerns into the world of psycho-erotic deviance (Ramsland 2002) and cinematic fiction. On the other hand, precisely *because* Landsteiner's discovery made blood transfusion practically feasible, a new kind of vampirism emerged: an insatiable thirst for blood at work within the biomedical system itself, exemplified by the modern blood bank, frantically trying to meet the growing global demand for blood products and urging healthy citizens to become donors (Waldby & Mitchell 2006).<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the focus shift from the hazards of blood transfusion as such to the prospects of future pandemics proliferating through contaminated ("impure") blood. Indeed, transfusion is only part of the story and that Lucy's symptoms are overdetermined. Her anaemia is also associated with the mysterious scars visible on her

---

<sup>11</sup> Also, symbolic pollution would become a bio-ethical concern, notably when dealing with recipients from religious minorities, such as described in a novel by Ian McEwan "The idea of having a stranger's blood inside me makes me sick, like drinking someone's saliva, or worse. I can't get rid of the idea that transfusion is wrong" (2014, p. 142).

<sup>12</sup> This is reflected in the novel *The Red Star* by the Russian communist Alexander Bogdanov (1908/1984), about Martians routinely performing blood transfusions to increase productivity and life expectancy of the human workforce. The author himself died in 1928, after a foundering transfusion experiment (Groys & Hagemester, 2005).

throat: two little red punctures with white edges, reminding Quincey Morris of the wounds inflicted by “big vampire bats” living on the Pampas (p. 138), animals that not only drink the blood of their victims, but also infect them with mysterious and often fatal diseases, a phenomenon known today as “zoonosis” (Quammen 2012). And indeed, a big nocturnal bat is spotted near Lucy’s bedroom window on multiple occasions.

### *The vampire virus*

A basic concern enacted in Stoker’s novel is the potential toxicity of bodily fluids that are exchanged, between males and females, but also between bats and humans. From a biomedical viewpoint, there is more to vampirism than the incompatibility of blood types. The vicissitudes of vampire victims such as Lucy point to a stratagem of self-replication via transmission of infections.

The word virus literally means slimy, liquid poison or venom. In *Dracula*, it is clear that vampirism is transmitted via blood: either via the Vampire’s kiss, leaving two red marks on the victim’s throat, or via the Vampire’s “baptism”, which represents a kind of role reversal, with the victim being forced to drink Vampire blood (p. 286). Via exposure to contaminated blood, the “gift” (the poisonous donation) of vampirism enters the body, and victims are initiated into the vampire network, becoming carriers themselves, actively contributing to the proliferation of the disease, so that vampirism continues to replicate itself. In other words, vampirism emerges as a viral infection, a potential viral pandemic, albeit *avant la lettre*, for the term virus had not been invented yet.

Two years after Stoker published his novel, Martinus Beijerinck at Delft University (the Netherlands) confirmed the existence of a mysterious infectious agent, undetectable through microscopes. Notably since the 1980s, viruses have become the target of global concern. They have emphatically entered the global societal stage in

the form of newly emerging, zoonotic viral threats, from HIV up to Ebola and Zika: public health challenges that are closely associated with global societal developments such as increased mobility, disruption of ecosystems and the rise of mega-metropolises (Zwart 2014). Indeed, as David Quammen phrases it, “zoonosis is a word of the future, destined for heavy use in the twenty-first century” (2012, p. 21). Stoker’s literary intuition uses both the transmission route of viral infections (via blood) and the association with bats (as zoonotic carriers). Not only Quincey Morris, also Van Helsing himself associates vampirism with bats that live “in the Pampas” and “come at night to open the veins of cattle and horses and suck dry their veins” (p. 173), while inflicting mysterious diseases upon their victims. Indeed, the vampire is a kind of bat and Lucy “was bitten by such a bat ... here in London in the nineteenth century” (p. 173). The bite by the bat-like vampire (with its large canines taking fight at dusk) is what causes her disease. After Dracula’s escape back to Transylvania, the Van Helsing team members meticulously “sterilise” his hiding place, his “unclean lairs” (p. 260). Indeed, in contemporary virology “vampire bats” are allotted a crucial role in viral zoonosis, notably in South America, and especially in transmitting rabies (Poel et al 2006; Schneider et al 2009).

In other words, two years before the actual discovery of the virus, Stoker’s novel in an anticipatory manner stages vampirism as a viral infection, a potential viral pandemic, threatening London, the teeming metropolis. This menace to public health is caused by increased mobility: the ability to travel relatively fast and easy to remote places and back (from London to Transylvania and back) with the help of steamers and railroads, exposing the Western world to unknown infectious agents, which until then had been contained in isolated eco-cultural niches. Thus *Dracula* can be read as an anticipatory document, exploring emerging viral threats as part of the human condition of the emerging present.

But still, vampirism is overdetermined: it can neither be reduced to blood poisoning nor to viral infections, – if only because Professor Abraham van Helsing, expert in “obscure diseases”, and “one of the most advanced scientists of his day” (p. 104), is not a virologist at all. Rather, his viewpoints and techniques are of a neurological and psychotherapeutic nature. Various connections between Dracula and Freud, between vampirism and psychoanalysis can be drawn. The latter has been regarded as an (intellectual) pandemic itself. In 1909, accompanied by Carl Gustav Jung and Sándor Ferenczi, Freud visited the United States. According to Jacques Lacan, who had the story from Jung, upon entering New York harbour Freud allegedly spoke the famous words “They don’t realize we’re bringing them the plague” (Lacan 1966, p. 403). In other words, now that infectious diseases such as typhus, typhoid fever, bubonic plague, etc. were increasingly contained (via policies of quarantine, vaccination, etc.), they were replaced by psychoanalysis as a mental infection, coming from Continental Europe.

### *Psychoanalysis: Van Helsing and Freud*

Freud and Van Helsing represent a research field *in statu nascendi*. Van Helsing is a neurologist determined to come to terms with inexplicable phenomena that pose a challenge to the “scientific, sceptical, matter-of-fact nineteenth century” (p. 213). He employs hypnosis, explicitly building on Charcot (the proverbial giant on whose shoulders he stands) and develops a rapport with patients. Freud had been using hypnosis as well, but reformed his methods in the 1890s, replacing the hypnotic rapport by free association (automatic speaking). Still, he considered himself an enlightened physician who aimed to bring obscure afflictions such as hysteria within the realm of scientific understanding.

*Dracula* has drawn the attention of psychoanalytic readers not only because of the decidedly erotophobic (and therefore emphatically

erotic) content of the novel, but also because of its intellectual ambiance: the various congruencies that can be discerned between the ideas, practices and conversations of Van Helsing and his disciples and Freud's psychoanalytic style of thinking. Also where psychoanalysis is concerned, Stoker's novel reads like an imaginative anticipation of what was to come. For although Van Helsing used hypnosis while Freud opted for free association, some striking correspondences can nonetheless be pointed out. And this first of all concerns the psychoanalytic rule which says that, in order to probe neurotic symptoms, *everything*, however trivial or personal, is relevant. Or, as Freud himself phrased it: "We instruct the patient to ... report to us whatever internal observations he is able to make [taking care not to] exclude any of them, whether on the ground that it is too *disagreeable* or too *indiscreet* to say, or that it is too *unimportant* or *irrelevant*" (1917/1940, p. 297; cf. 1926/1948, p. 214). Seemingly trivial details (the bagatelle) may prove to be highly significant. Unconscious motives are revealed by failures and embarrassments, rather than by achievements.

This principle of non-selectivity can be encountered in *Dracula* on several occasions. Take for instance the following quote from Jonathan Harker's diary where it says: "I must keep writing... All, big and little, must go down; perhaps at the end the little things may teach us most" (p. 257). Earlier, Van Helsing had already urged Seward to be careful about his psychiatric notes: "Take good note of it. Nothing is too small. I counsel you, put down in record even your thoughts and surmises. Hereafter it may be of interest to you... We learn from failure, not success!" (p. 111). And later, when the hunt for Dracula has started, Van Helsing tells his team members: "We want no more concealments. Our hope is now in knowing all. Tell freely! ... It is need that we know all" (p. 254/255).

At the certain point Mina Harper (transcribing documents on her typewriter so as to add them to the files) asks the following

question to Van Helsing: “Dr. Van Helsing, will you read this, and tell me if it must go in. It is my record of to-day. I too have seen the need of putting down at present everything, however trivial; but there is little in this except what is personal. Must it go in?” The Professor reads it over and then hands it back to her saying: “I pray that it may” (p. 211). Van Helsing subsequently explains (in his idiosyncratic English) that the records must contain “everything”, especially the “little things”, because “we have seen how good light all the little things have made. We have told our secrets, and yet no one who has told is the worse for it” (p. 211). Thus, Mina’s typewriting, conducted with evenly poised attention as it were, transforms a heterogeneous pile of textual materials into a case study record: data which can be submitted to a symptomatic reading, waiting for revelatory cues.

From a classical psychoanalytical perspective, the vampire emerges as the incubus-like object of repressed libidinal desire (Jones 1951) and as the embodiment of the oral, biting / sucking drive<sup>13</sup>, which surfaces at night, when the super-ego’s censorship is temporarily suspended, draining the patient’s energy. If we subject *Dracula* to a close reading, however, several more detailed connections can be added.

First of all, Stoker’s Lucy reminds us of one of Freud’s first patients, known as Irma, the main protagonist in his most famous dream, recorded in *Die Traumdeutung* (Freud 1900/1942) as *Irma’s Injection* and dreamt on the night of July 23, 1895: the first dream meticulously interpreted by him. In this paradigm dream, Freud meets a former patient (Irma) who suffers from unexplainable symptoms. He asks her to open her mouth and peers curiously into her throat, where he notices a strange white spot. Three colleagues join the examination and after some deliberations they conclude

---

<sup>13</sup> According to Lacan, the young child is a little vampire (Lacan 1962-1963/2004, p. 2727), while vampirism itself exemplifies the oral drive (“La pulsion orale, c’est le *se faire sucer*, c’est le vampire”, Lacan 1964/1973 p. 219).

that the suffering is caused by an iatrogenic infection, resulting from a (rather carelessly administered) injection with a “solution” named *Trimethylamine*, whose formula appears before the dreamer’s eyes, printed in bold type. Freud’s detailed interpretations reveal that the dream addresses experiences of professional failure. Several details point to medical mistakes Freud had made and apparently, via this dream, he was trying to exculpate himself (at the expense of colleagues).

Several correspondences between Lucy and Irma can be pointed out. In both cases, there is the element of iatrogenic suffering (in Stoker’s novel associated with futile or even toxic blood transfusions) and in both cases a team consisting of four males (all of whom are physicians in the case of Freud, two of whom are physicians in the case of Stoker) prove unable to help their patient, but engage in questionable interventions and become entangled in intricate biomedical and bioethical deliberations. Like in the case of *Trimethylamine*, the structural formula of *chloral hydrate*, used by Seward, is provided in the text. In both cases, moreover, this chemical compound (this “solution” in the chemical sense) cannot really be regarded a “solution” in the biomedical sense, because the real problem is of a much more psychic nature. The white spot in Irma’s throat, raising suspicion (as the most visible mark of her affliction) is reminiscent of the two suspicious red-white dots on Lucy’s throat. They function as the Lacanian object *a* (Copjec 1994): an unsettling scar, an inexorable something, a tantalising non-object (the “negative” as it were of Dracula’s canines), in other words: an object of desire; a desire which Dracula and the Van Helsing’s male collaborators actually share, an obsession with the victim’s throat, serving as an erogenous zone. But whereas in the case of the Count this desire is acted-out, in the case of Van Helsing and his followers it is sublimated into biomedical interventions (including donorship). Similar to Irma, Lucy (a young female patient whose physical afflictions immediately draw the attention of physicians-lovers) is both a therapeutic and an

erotic target, and in *Dracula* blood functions as a substitute or displacement for semen, as we have seen: a bodily fluid of symbolic value, transferable from male to female bodies, but possibly contaminated by (or at least associated with) infectious disease (as in the case of syphilis for instance). As Copjec (1994) argues, Freud's dream-image of Irma's throat is reminiscent of female genitals, reluctantly offered for visual inspection. And whereas Seward feels hampered by considerations of discretion,<sup>14</sup> Van Helsing proves much less inhibited, going for a complete and detailed examination, arguing that all chambers (including a Victorian lady's bedroom) are alike to a doctor (p. 251).

Thus, intriguing resemblances can be pointed out between Abraham van Helsing from Amsterdam and Sigmund Freud from Vienna. Both were influenced by the work of Charcot in Paris and both feel forced to move beyond mainstream neurological research in order to enter the terra incognita of (poorly understood) psychic afflictions, employing methods and viewpoints that were frowned upon by the medical establishment. Both are willing to divert from the mainstream professional paths so as to access the human psyche via its undercurrents.<sup>15</sup> Van Helsing, who introduces himself to Mina Harker as someone who has studied men and women all his life, takes Jonathan Harker's (apparently unexplainable) neurotic brooding (due to the unspeakable traumatic encounter with *Dracula* and his brides) quite seriously, because his suffering "falls within the range of my study and experience" (p. 167). Yet, unlike Freud, Van Helsing continues to combine his study of obscure diseases with hard-core, brain-centred, medical, even surgical

---

<sup>14</sup> "I did not have full opportunity of examination such as I should wish; our friendship makes a little difficulty which not even medical science or custom can bridge over" (p. 103).

<sup>15</sup> *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo* ("If I cannot bend the Higher Powers, I will move the netherworld"), the phrase that Freud had chosen as motto for his *Traumdeutung* (1900/1942).

activities, including a neurosurgical operation, performed by him on patient Renfield.

### *Fin-de-siècle brain research*

Unlike Freud, who left the neurophysiology field to become a psychotherapist, Van Helsing continues to combine both vocations. Both he and Seward are trained neurologists: a profession about which Bram Stoker (coming from a family of physicians) was well-informed, notably via his brother Sir William Thornley Stoker, a brain surgery pioneer (Stiles 2013). And indeed, the human brain is an important focus of attention throughout the novel. We are told that Van Helsing “made the brain and everything that belongs to it his specialty” (p. 166) and that he made a name for himself because of his discovery of “the continuous evolution of brain matter” (Stoker 1897/1993, p. 213). Both he and Seward are quite familiar with brain research as it evolved during the 1890s, notably when it comes to cerebral localization (Stiles 2013).

Also in the portrayal of the novel’s central couple, Jonathan and Mina Harker, much attention is given to the condition of their brains. This first of all applies to Jonathan, who suffers from a “violent brain fever”, so that he has to be nursed by his wife (p. 93). He is troubled by neurological symptoms (including amnesia) resulting from his traumatic experiences and at various occasions we see him relapsing into a stupor or a freeze, or a sudden state of forgetfulness, due to the “injury to the brain” (p. 157). Where Mina herself is concerned, however, the trend is consistently in the obverse direction, notably due to her role as the professional, well-equipped and well-trained secretary of the team. Van Helsing claims at a certain point that her brain has evolved into a “man’s brain – a brain that a man should have were he much gifted” (210) and that “her brain is trained like a man’s brain” (p. 302). In other words, while her husband effeminates, she adopts the masculine

role. Contrivances such as typewriters apparently have an impact on the brain's plasticity, furthering social mobility and emancipation, or even gender swaps.

Besides the Count, whose peculiar brain will be discussed below, the most important neurological target in the novel is Seward's "pet lunatic" (p. 209): patient Renfield, whom Seward considers a fascinating case, a "wonderfully interesting" study (p. 108), a living window into the workings of the human brain. Renfield is, psychoanalytically speaking, not master in his own house ("I am not my own master", p. 220). He has been recruited by the Count to act as a faithful servant to "his Lord and Master", addressing Dracula in the form of prayers ("I am here to do your bidding, Master, I am Your slave. I have worshiped You long and afar off. Now that You are near, I await Your commands", p. 97). For Renfield, vampirism equals religion, building on "life" and "blood" as basic signifiers, and he finds himself in the position which Enoch once occupied, because he likewise walked with God. In fact, Renfield serves as a sort of "index" for the coming and goings of the Count ("He seems so mixed up with the count in an indexy kind of way", p. 222). Strange and sudden changes in Renfield's mood and behaviour indicate that "the Master is at hand", that Dracula is near. Under the sway of the Count's proximity, his religious mania intensifies and his notebook fills up with columns and small figures.

Seward uses his pet patient as a research subject and even considers subjecting him to "vivisection". Indeed, his desire as a researcher is to literally cast a glimpse into this mind that has become enslaved by a "malign influence". If he only could peer into the secrets of this intelligent lunatic's living brain, it would allow him to significantly advance his branch of science, thereby completely outdated established discourse (such as David Ferrier's brain map, explicitly mentioned in the novel and dating from the 1870s, but relying on vivisection performed on animals). Such an experiment,

moreover, would tell him something about his own “congenitally exceptional brain” (p. 69).<sup>16</sup> As Lombroso (1876/2006) argued: the brain of psychopaths (such as Renfield) and geniuses (such as Seward himself) are basically similar. Both forms of psychic deviance mirror one another. But alas, moral obstacles and societal resistance (against vivisection) prevent him from subjecting Renfield’s brain to such an intervention, which, as he sadly acknowledges, would be even more problematic than vivisection on animals. In fact, 1897 was also an important year for the anti-vivisection movement. In response to growing public opposition to research involving animals, the *Victoria Street Society* changed its name into “National Anti-Vivisection Society” in 1897.

At a certain point, Seward allows Van Helsing to join him on a visit to his favourite patient, and Van Helsing agrees that Renfield provides fascinating case material for studying mental delusions. But shortly after that, Dracula steals into Renfield’s cell and kills his faithful apostle. Seward and Van Helsing find him in a pool of blood: his back is broken, his skull severely damaged and he is paralysed. Van Helsing decides to operate, just above the ear, in order to reduce the pressure on the brain, where the whole motor area seems affected. As Stiles (2013) has demonstrated, the surgical details of the operation were provided by Bram Stoker’s surgeon brother.

Van Helsing’s neurological “philosophy of crime” explicitly builds on the viewpoints of Lombroso. A true criminal, Van Helsing explains, always works at one crime, and almost seems predestined to commit it (p. 303). This peculiarity in criminals is so constant, he maintains, that it is even known to the police. A better

---

<sup>16</sup> Seward feels strangely at home in his asylum, and has a clear awareness of his morbid inclinations. Lucy notices him playing with a scalpel, and at nightfall, while listening to the yelling of his patients, he admires “the wonderful smoky beauty of sunset over London with its lurid lights and inky shadows and foul clouds” (p. 125).

understanding of the criminal brain would offer scientists an Archimedean starting-point for studying the human brain as such (p. 303). Van Helsing is convinced that the Count is likewise “a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and qua criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind” (p. 303). He is selfish, remorseless, single-minded and fully committed to his predestined purpose.<sup>17</sup> Dracula is an atavism, equipped with a mind that was once well-adapted to brutal, pre-historic circumstances, but now poses a threat to the modern bourgeois world.

But in order to really enter Dracula’s mindscape, Van Helsing realises that he has to change perspective from a neurological to a psychoanalytical approach. He really begins to understand how Dracula’s mind works when he studies Mina’s transcripts. After reading through her typewritten diaries, Van Helsing exclaims: “Oh Madame Mina, this paper opens the gate to me” (p. 198). It offers him a Royal Road, so to speak, into Dracula’s drives and tactics. In Lacanian terms, Van Helsing switches from “university discourse (the discourse of the neurology expert) to the discourse of the analyst (reading carefully, with evenly-poised attention, waiting for the apparently trivial cues, the symptomatic bagatelle).

Thus, Van Helsing’s paradigm-shift (from nineteenth-century neuroscience to fin-de-siècle psychotherapy) concurs with a similar transition taking place (simultaneously as it were) in the professional biography of Sigmund Freud. But whereas Van Helsing functions as a literary counterpart of Freud, the professional activities of his disciple Seward rather constitute a

---

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Jay Gould points out how Jonathan Harker’s description of Dracula matches Lombroso’s physiognomy of the born criminal (aquiline nose, eyebrows meeting over it, pointed ears: Gould 1981/1996, p. 152). Dracula’s employment of the Szgany (gypsies) accords with Lombroso’s view of their inborn atavistic criminality (p. 155).

literary anticipation of the vicissitudes of Freud's most famous follower (and official successor): the psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung.

*Seward and Jung: psychiatry and the intrusion of the occult*

Comparable similarities as between Van Helsing and Freud can also be discerned between their most prominent disciples: between Van Helsing's favourite student John Seward and Freud's deflected follower Carl Gustav Jung. Both Seward and Jung began their careers as professional psychiatrists working with (often dangerous) psychotic patients in closed psychiatric institutes. At the time when Jung met Freud, he was employed at Burghölzli mental hospital near Zürich, where patients like Renfield were treated and where Jung, at a relatively young age, was entrusted with considerable responsibilities (second in rank only to the Institute's Director, Eugen Bleuler). Jung was much respected, both by colleagues and patients, and much like Seward he used patients as research subjects in experiments, such as the famous word association experiments developed to explore unconscious "complexes" (Jung 1905/1979). In fact, in Stoker's novel, Renfield is subjected to a kind of word association test when, during a question-and-answer session, he suddenly stops speaking at the word *drink* in combination with *spiders*: "[Renfield] stopped suddenly, as though reminded of a forbidden topic. So, so! I [Seward] thought to myself. This is the second time he has suddenly stopped at the word 'drink': what does it mean? Renfield seemed himself aware of having made a lapse, for he hurried on, as though to distract my attention from it" (p. 242). This may indeed be regarded as a highly typical, early-Jungian scene.

Renfield is depicted as a "homicidal" and "religious" maniac who consumes living insects as a sacred meal, a private religious ritual. Also in this respect, he is a typical Jungian patient whose symptoms resonate with and re-enact ancient religious rites. And Dracula (as

the archetypal medicine-man) supports these rituals by providing Renfield with Death's-head moths of a special type: *Acherontia Atropos of the Sphinges* (a label which not only refers to the netherworld, but also resembles the famous motto of Freud's *Traumdeutung*: "Acheronta movebo..."; If I cannot deflect the superior powers, then I shall move the currents of the netherworld). Renfield jots down "masses of numbers" in pocketbooks to keep account of his sacred meals (p. 67).

Meanwhile, in Seward's own mind, a scientific hypothesis, an "unconscious cerebration" is slowly taking shape concerning his patient's madness (p. 67), and he hopes that quite soon it will become a "conscious" idea. Seward uses Renfield (the "homicidal maniac", p. 68) as a research subject in a series of experiments and even coins a new "classification" for him, calling him a zoophagous (i.e. life-eating) maniac (p. 69). While Seward uses a phonograph, Jung was likewise eager to employ new devices for studying his patients, notably in the context of his word association experiments, such as a galvanometer, but also a *Fünftelsekundenuhr* (a one-fifth second time watch) to measure reaction times as accurately as possible (Jung 1905/1979).<sup>18</sup>

A Jungian reading of *Dracula* focusses on the vampire as an archetypal *Gestalt*, as a sorcerer or shadow. The confrontation with Dracula reveals an inner split in the protagonists' personalities. In the case of Jonathan, for instance, an ambitious Victorian gentleman suddenly experiences himself as weak, impotent and helpless. In a castle with enormous doors, he seems like shrunken

---

<sup>18</sup> Jung's experimental technique and up-to-date equipment is quite convincingly depicted in the movie *A Dangerous Method*, directed by David Cronenberg and casting Michael Fassbender as Jung (released in 2011). The movie convincingly stages the relationship between Freud and Jung and contains a scene where Freud (Van Helsing) joins Jung (Seward) during a visit to a psychiatric patient. Also the differences of opinion between Freud and Jung concerning the admissibility of studying telepathic phenomena as objects for research are addressed.

and emasculated, identifying himself with ladies who once were kept in Dracula's harem. While being molested by Dracula's women, he faints, so that the Count undresses him and carries him to his bed. In the case of Lucy, however, a stereotypically passive Victorian lady is suddenly transformed into a wanton male-huntress. Likewise, Dracula himself, a congenial and courtly personality during the day, changes into an uncanny creature (with bat-like or even reptilian characteristics) during the night. In other words, their personalities suffer a Gestalt-switch, from "personality no. 1" to "personality no. 2" (Jung 1962).

*Dracula* stages a series of collisions between respectable science and occult practices, in vogue during the fin-de-siècle era. The biomedical control over knowledge is challenged by intrusions of other forms of knowledges, of an occult and esoteric nature (Wynne 2000, p. 44). Van Helsing practices hypnosis, as we have seen, but, as Wynne phrases it, Stoker's novel features "a battle for the control of mesmerism, wresting it back from its occultist associations and retrieving it for science" (p. 47).<sup>19</sup> Whereas Sigmund Freud remained sceptical, discarding occultism as a "threat" to psychoanalysis, which should side with scientific materialism,<sup>20</sup> C.G. Jung (1902/1979) was much more open to telepathy and other techniques associated with obscurantism and playing a prominent role in *Dracula*. Yet, in Stoker's novel, the distribution of roles is reversed. While Van Helsing (the senior colleague) tries to convince Seward of the dangers of a self-imposed exclusion of occult phenomena from science (and for him this even

---

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Stoker's comments on Frederic-Antoine Mesmer, whom he includes in his book *Famous Imposters* because, although his "astonishing discovery" (hypnosis) is now tested and employed as a therapy and accepted as a contribution to science, he himself used it "in the manner or surrounded with the atmosphere of imposture" (Stoker 1910, p. 44).

<sup>20</sup> "Die Analytiker können ihre Abkunft von der exakten Wissenschaftlichkeit und ihre Zugehörigkeit zu deren Vertretern nicht verleugnen... Die Analytiker sind im Grunde unverbesserliche Mechanisten und Materialisten" (Freud 1921/1941, p. 29).

includes the use of Catholic ritualistic paraphernalia such as crucifixes and communion wafers), it is the disciple who stubbornly clings to the role of the scientific sceptic, resisting Van Helsing's "superstitions" for quite some time. Indeed, he even doubts his father-figure's soundness of mind and seriously considers the possibility that Van Helsing has gone "mad", regarding him as if he were patient ("I shall watch him carefully", p. 183).<sup>21</sup>

### *Electronic power and the cordon sanitaire*

According to Van Helsing, the Count is equipped with an atavistic brain: primitive and underdeveloped, but also very powerful, "mighty" and effective. Dracula is a highly educated person, a polyglot and *homo universalis* with an encyclopaedic historical knowledge, but also well informed about contemporary England. As a learned and civilised aristocrat, his brain is not deficient, but rather dramatically *different* in the sense of adapted to a very different cultural environment. For bourgeois visitors from the West, such as Jonathan, he is as intimidating as the physiognomy of the landscape he inhabits, giving it a face as it were. With its "great masses of greyness", Transylvania represents a lost world, a heart of darkness, a historical time capsule where conditions continue to exist which elsewhere belong to a vanished past (Arata 1990; Lucendo 2009).<sup>22</sup> And Dracula is an aristocratic tyrant who terrorises and exploits an (illiterate, superstitious) rural

---

<sup>21</sup> ("Van Helsing's monstrous ideas ... start out before me as outrages on common sense... I wonder if his mind can have become in any way unhinged... I shall watch him carefully", p. 183).

<sup>22</sup> Stoker, who never visited Transylvania himself, based his descriptions on Emily Gerard's *The Land beyond the Forest* (Gerard 1888). Count Dracula is often associated with Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia (1431–1476/77), also known Vlad Dracula or Vlad the Impaler: an alchemy adept, but notorious for his cruelty. In Stoker's novel, however, the connection with historical models remains vague ("a soldier, statesman, and alchemist ... there was no branch of knowledge of his time that he did not essay", p. 269; cf. McNally and Florescu 1994; Clasen 2012).

population.<sup>23</sup> The place where he dwelled for centuries is “full of strangeness” and replete with weird magnetic, with electric and occult forces (p. 284). To this environment, his tough yet subtle brain seems perfectly attuned. But such a brain could do a lot of harm in a great city like London, where he would “flourish in the midst of a disease that would kill off whole peoples”, and where “the greater world of thought” would be open to him (p. 285).

Dracula embodies the return of the repressed, in the political sense of the term: of the ancient regime and the *Herrenmoral* (in Lacanian terms: the discourse of the Master). He is the dominant Father of the primeval “horde” (Freud 1912/1940), predating on and accumulating women, scheming to add Lucy and Mina to his harem (via rituals such as the vampire baptism and the vampire kiss), but by so doing he runs into conflict with the “brotherhood” (Van Helsing and his disciples). But he is also the Master in Hegelian dialectical terms: an intimidating Gestalt who managed to secure his authority to rule over others long ago, by risking his life and facing deadly adversaries in battle, but now experiences that former servants (bourgeois professionals) become increasingly powerful, representing a new type of power, relying on modern technology and challenging his absolutism (“Transylvanie, c’est moi”). During his first meeting with Jonathan, he tells about the wars and battles he has fought (as the “brains” of his people) since time immemorial: against Wallachians, Saxons, Turks, Austrians, Hungarians, and so on. And he surrounds himself with servants, such as the Szgany and Slovaks: ethnic groups who instinctively and unquestioningly seem to acknowledge him as Master. Indeed, as Dracula himself phrases it: “I am boyar, I am master”, as he has been for a very long time (p. 26).

---

<sup>23</sup> Marx defined capital as dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour (“Das Kapital ist verstorbene Arbeit, die sich nur vampyrmäßig belebt durch Einsaugung lebendiger Arbeit und umso mehr lebt, so mehr sie davon einsaugt. (1867/1979, p. 247).

In contrast to Dracula, Jonathan-the-solicitor is a completely different kind of person: a Hegelian Servant, so to speak, who relies on professional knowledge and who, by displaying reliability in service, advances stepwise from clerk to partner. But Dracula realises that he is quite dependent on the professional knowledge of this servant when it comes to finding his way successfully into the modern bureaucratic world.

In modern metropolises, phenomena of vampirism tend to be domesticated and contained by transferring them to a different stage in the sense of *Bühne*: the phantasmagorical realm of artistic experience. Lord Byron, for instance, was not only the *author* of a Vampire story (entitled: *Fragment of a Novel*), but also served as model for the vampire Lord Ruthven in the story written by his personal physician John Polidori. Another example of a poet susceptible to the vampire complex was Charles Baudelaire (1857/1972) who, in his poems, confesses to be a vampire at heart (“Je suis de mon cœur le vampire”, LII). One of his greatest poems, entitled *A celle qui est trop gaie* (XXXIX), introduces a lover who desires to sneak into his lover’s room at night in order to bite her, creating a gaping wound in her “astonished flank”, kissing her new lips (her second mouth), so as to infuse a deadly, toxic venom into her unbearably beautiful body. Interestingly, in Stoker’s novel, it is Van Helsing himself who (as soon as he has reached Dracula’s castle) sneaks into the resting places of sleeping beauties. After a brief flash of inhibition, paralysed by the fascinating and radiant voluptuousness of these female vamps, he quickly proceeds to butcher them in their sleep, knowing very well that he would not stand a chance should he allow them to awake. And indeed, women are likewise described by Baudelaire as predators, equipped with dangerous claws and venomous teeth, so that it is advisable to approach them only when they sleep. Bourgeois culture responded to Baudelaire’s vampire poetry with censorship, a form of moral hygiene, forcing him to remove his obscene “litter” from his (now classic) volume.

But moral hygiene is an important force at work in *Dracula* as well, also with respect to the bio-political dimension. Steamers and trains allow for new forms of mobility, as we have seen, opening up remote and unfamiliar regions, including Dracula's surreal homeland. Strange practices and ideas, coming from isolated niches, start to circulate and find their way from the continent into cities such as metropolitan London: a perfect target for an erotic-religious gothic plague. Or, to use the terminology of Oswald Spengler (1918): vampirism seems about to expand from a regional subculture into a phenomenon on a global civilisation scale (and may even realise the dystopian possibility of a replacement of humans as the reigning species by post-human vampires: Stiles 2006). This threat calls for geopolitical hygiene (Kittler 1993). *Dracula* describes how a cordon sanitaire is created by a team of volunteers, working in secret (p. 285), a kind of secret service. *The* narrative ends in the triumph of a superior, "stainless" English constitution over that of an infectious, Eastern European "other" (Lau 2016). With the help of phonographs and portable typewriters, a data file is established that can be systematically analysed. Thus, the (initially quite erratic and enigmatic) behaviour of the invading vampire becomes as decipherable as ENIGMA during World War II.

Rather than on intimidation, Van Helsing's team relies on technological contrivances that compensate and complement their initial experience of deficiency or lack. Dr. Seward, for instance, initially feels "cicatrised" by the rejection of his marriage proposal to Lucy (p. 171), but armed with a phonograph, he shifts his focus of attention to his vocation as a researcher, displacing his intentionality from Lucy to Renfield and, eventually, to the invading Count. And while Lucy Westenra dies as a romantic femme fatale, Nina Harker's typewriter allows her to constitute herself as a new type of subject. These contrivances open up a new type of career, a new female profession: as secretary (Kittler 1993).

Mina becomes a pioneer, a role model, the embodiment of a “new woman”, as the novel phrases it; and her profession is bound to enrol millions of women during the century to come. Relying on her portable typewriter, she succeeds where weakened husband Jonathan (as well as the enchanting amorous idol Lucy) failed. Indeed, it is “Mina’s prowess with the typewriter that brings down Dracula” in the end (Wicke 1992, p. 467). As Kittler (1993) phrases it, Dracula is overpowered by communication technologies associated with the new professional bureaucracy.

To paraphrase Hegel, the novel stages a clash between Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) and superstition (*Aberglauben*), and Dracula’s Master’s discourse (or master morality) is eventually defeated by a squadron of modern professionals. Although Dracula and Van Helsing use similar methods, such as hypnosis, in the case of Van Helsing hypnosis is not an instrument of repression and manipulation, but rather an instrument of *information*, exemplifying a new power regime, based on data, on “intelligence”. After the elimination of Renfield, Mina takes over the latter’s role as “index”. It is as if (via Mina) an electrode is inserted into Dracula’s *Id*, as if a wireless connection is established from *Id* to *Id*, so that the Count’s movements can be telepathically traced and recorded. By hearing the click of the typewriter and by putting the phonograph’s forked metal to their ears to listen, the protagonists familiarise themselves with a new wave of electronic gadgets, representing a new, electronic enframing or *Gestell*, which is to become more infectious and pervasive than vampirism (Zwart 2017). And its elementary component is, not coincidentally, the very electron discovered in 1897.

*The Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real: a Lacanian assessment*

*Dracula* provides a window into fin-de-siècle research practices and collates various disciplines (haematology, virology, psychotherapy,

neurology) into a genealogic *Gesamtbild*, thereby elucidating the techno-scientific and socio-cultural constellation into which psychoanalysis was born. Its maieutic backdrop involves an epistemic spectrum ranging from blood transfusion via virology and psychotherapy up to emerging communication technologies. In various manners, as we have seen, these areas of research and practice reflect a common zeitgeist or family likeness. The question now is: how to summarize this common epistemic profile, the common denominator of these various developments? The basic, comprehensive formula, I will argue, is that both psychoanalysis and *Dracula* reflect a triumph of the *symbolic* over the *imaginary* as a techno-scientific strategy for coming to terms with the threatening *real*.

First of all, from a Lacanian perspective, Freudian and Jungian interpretations may be regarded as complementary to some extent, focussing on the symbolic and the imaginary dimensions respectively. A Jungian analysis foregrounds the imaginary: the vampire as a fascinating and intimating *Gestalt*. And indeed, initially the narrative unfolds in a cultural landscape under the sway of the imaginary. The Vampire functions as a threatening-but-seductive incubus, displaying reptilian behavioural repertoires and relying on intimidation and reflexes, but insensitive to the “symbolic order”: to morality and political legitimacy. In the course of the novel, however, the imaginary is increasingly eclipsed by processes of symbolisation, with the help of various contrivances (typewriters, phonographs, stenography, etc.), exemplified by Edison-like machines, reframing the socio-cultural ambiance in terms of “typographical” phenomena (Lacan 1957-1958/1998, p. 147).

The most professional representative of what Lacan refers to as “university discourse” is John Seward, whose writing practices not only reflect the importance of innovative text-processing devices, but also the growing importance of scientific symbolisation in areas

such as pharmacy and biochemistry. Whereas Van Helsing continues to rely on traditional remedies (garlic, wafers, etc.), Seward goes for evidence-based “solutions”. To fight his own symptoms (insomnia), he uses *chloral hydrate*, for which chemical formula is provided ( $C_2HCL_3O$ ), comparable to Bayer’s *aspirin* ( $C_9H_8O_4$ ) and Freud’s *trimethylamine* ( $C_3H_9N$ ). The biomedical symbolism of these chemical compounds reflects the advance of the symbolic as an immunisation strategy against the threatening real. With the help of symbolic elements (C, H, O, N, etc.) the scientific subject tries to control and domesticate the elusive object *a* (Dracula’s white, infectious and suddenly protruding teeth, and the marks they leave on a woman’s neck). And when John Seward, speaking into his phonograph, announces that he has decided to invent a new “classification” for his homicidal patient, calling him a *zoophagous* (life-eating) maniac, this neologism likewise functions as a signifier meant to contain and control this intrusion of the unclassifiable (this intrusion of the real).

Landsteiner’s discovery of blood types, resulting in the introduction of a small alphabet representing the presence or absence of antigens on red blood cells (A, B, AB and 0), likewise provides an optimal example of the symbolisation process. Via letter-like symbols, the archetypal image of the vampire is subverted (obliterated). As technology advances, Vampirism is reduced to its scientific, biomedical, noumenal essence (in this case: blood type, determined by antigens and manageable with the help of letters, i.e. labels on blood samples). Compatibility of blood samples can now be established with a simple test, resulting in a letter code, allowing physicians to determine health hazards for recipients in terms of *present* or *absent*, *Yes* or *No* (so that symbolisation eventually amounts to digitalisation: 1 or 0).

Present-day virology works in a similar fashion. With the help of DNA sequencing machines a symbolic code is produced, so that the infectious agent can be identified. Lacan refers to such processes

as the symbolisation of the real (at the expense of imaginary and mythological responses). This process will never be completed, however, and vampirism (the haunting archetypal image, preferably dwelling in cinematic environments) will never be eliminated once and for all. Increasingly, however, it is transferred from the realm of pre-modern, superstitious, “imaginary” beliefs (building on traumatic experiences such as blood poisoning) into the arena of cinematic fascination.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the symbolic is produced and sustained by processes of symbolisation, verbalisation and textualisation, relying on mechanical and electronic devices and scientific nomenclature, giving rise to a professional, knowledgeable discourse, functioning as an immunisation device designed to keep Dracula’s intimidating gestalt (and the “Master’s discourse” connected with it) at bay. In the course of the novel, we witness the unfolding of this process, slowly at first, but increasingly effective. While being imprisoned by the Count, for instance, Jonathan Harker already quotes Hamlet (p. 39) who used a portable notebook (his “tables”) for recording observations: a writing practice which was meant to erase and replace previous (“imaginary”) records that had been “copied” into his memory system.<sup>25</sup> Count Dracula intuitively senses the power of the symbolic, for when he intercepts some of Jonathan’s

---

<sup>24</sup> In popular culture of today, Lacan argues, the once uncanny Gestalt of the vampire has become trivialised into a comic book figure (Lacan 1961-1962, p. 41).

<sup>25</sup> “Yea, from the table of my memory / I’ll wipe away all trivial fond records ... / And thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain / My tables – meet it is I set it down” (Hamlet Act I scene V). In his notebook, Hamlet systematically replaces his imaginary picture of a harmonious parental marriage by a close monitoring of the doings and saying of the Queen, whom he now suspects of adultery. From a psychoanalytical perspective, the Count plays a similar role as Hamlet’s father: a horrifying, disruptive, authoritative voice coming from another world, deterring recipients from their normal course. Stoker was quite familiar Shakespeare’s play. He decided to become the manager of actor Henry Irving after seeing the latter performing Hamlet (Farson 1975).

stenographic shorthand letters, with their “strange symbols” quite incomprehensible to him (p. 44), he immediately destroys “every scrap of paper”, thus trying to erase all Jonathan’s “notes and memoranda” (p. 45). But the advance of the symbolic cannot be stopped.

Although Jonathan manages to return to England, he initially seems to have lost his physical and mental strength completely. And although he is formally promoted from clerk to partner in the company (thus progressing in the symbolic order of social and professional mobility), Mina finds her husband terribly weakened and excessively nervous: “the very essence of his strength is gone” (p. 170; in Lacanian algebra:  $-\Phi$ ). But this deficiency or lack can be technologically compensated, and Jonathan begins to recover as soon as he starts to follow Mina’s example by contributing to the team’s database, producing records and writings (Jonathan’s modern version of Hamlet’s “tables”). Again, the advance of the symbolic cannot be prevented. At a certain point, Van Helsing, presiding over a meeting of the anti-Dracula team, concludes: “We have here much data; and now we must proceed to lay out our campaign” (p. 215). Vampirism is overcome with the help of accumulated symbolic components (letters, texts, notes, dates, clippings, etc.) collated into the Dracula file, and resulting in the successful “symbolisation” of undead life. After Dracula’s demise, all that remains is an enormous “mass of typewriting of which the record is composed” (335), an enormous amount of textual litter.

Dracula and Van Helsing struggle to achieve control over Lucy Westenra and other female “research subjects”, initially via blood (taken by Dracula and replenished by Van Helsing), but subsequently also via hypnosis, allowing both Dracula and Van Helsing to turn human beings into unconscious informants. Van Helsing is as lethal as Dracula (provided the undead are included among his victims) and what is said about Dracula (“He had a mighty brain, a learning beyond compare... There was no branch

of knowledge of his time that he did not essay”, p. 269) applies to Van Helsing as well, who is described not only as a doctor, a scientist, a philosopher and a metaphysician, but also as someone who is knowledgeable in the history of ancient medicine; a single-minded scholar who has no time to spare for socialising or friendship. Dracula is Van Helsing’s “object *a*”: an alluring, enigmatic, spectral something to which everything else is sacrificed, but whose ontological status remains highly precarious and paradoxical: an *undead* object that cannot be reflected by mirrors and immediately returns to entropic dust as soon as the university expert finally captures it. For vampirism is an instance of “negative entropy”: a death drive bent on destruction, but surviving the subject’s own death, relying on the undead body as a carrier, so that “euthanasia” is indicated as a “second death”.

### References

- Arata, Stephen. 1990. The Occidental Tourist: Dracula and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization. *Victorian Studies* 33 (4): 621–645.
- Aveling, J. H. (1873) Immediate transfusion in England. *Obstetrics Journal*, 1873, 1, 303.
- Baudelaire, Charles. 1857/1972. *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Paris: Librairie Générale Française.
- Bogdanov, Alexander. 1908/1984. *Red Star*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.
- Browning, John Edgar; Picart, Caroline Joan (eds.) (2009) *Draculas, vampires, and other undead forms: essays on gender, race, and culture*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press
- Clasen Mathias. 2012. Attention, predation, counter-intuition: why Dracula won’t die. *Style* 46 (3/4): 378–398.
- Copjec, Joan. 1994. *Read my desire: Lacan against the historicists*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Ellenberger, Henri F. 1970. *The discovery of the unconscious*. London: Lane/Penguin.
- Farson, David. 1975. *The man who wrote Dracula: a biography of Bram Stoker*. London: Joseph.
- Fliess, Wilhelm (1897) *Die Beziehungen zwischen Nase und weiblichen Geschlechtsorganen*. Leipzig & Vienna: Deuticke.

- Freud, Sigmund (1921/1941) Psychoanalyse und Telepathie. *Gesammelte Werke* XVII. London: Imago, 25-44.
- Freud, Sigmund (1926/1948) Die Frage der Laienanalyse. *Gesammelte Werke* XIV. London: Imago, 207-297.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1900/1942. Die Traumdeutung. *Gesammelte Werke* II/III. London: Imago.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1912/1940. Totem und Tabu: einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker. *Gesammelte Werke* IX. London: Imago.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1917/1940. Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse. *Gesammelte Werke* XI. London: Imago.
- Freud S. (1950) *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse: Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess, Abhandlungen und Notizen aus den Jahren 1887/1902*. London: Imago
- Gerard, Emily. 1888. *The Land beyond the Forest: Facts, Figures and Fancies from Transylvania*. New York: Harper.
- Gómez-Alonso, Juan. 1998. Rabies: a possible explanation for the vampire legend. *Neurology* 51 (3): 856-9.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. *The mismeasurement of man*. New York / London: Norton, 1981/1996.
- Groys, Boris and Michael Hagemester. 2005. *Die neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Jones, Ernest. 1951. *On the nightmare*. New York: Liveright.
- Jung, Carl Gustav (1902/1979) Zur Psychologie und Pathologie sogenannter okkultur Phänomene. *Gesammelte Werke I. Psychiatrische Studien*. Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter, 1-150.
- Jung, Carl Gustav. 1905/1979. "Über das Verhalten der Reaktionszeit beim Assoziationsexperimente". *Gesammelte Werke II. Experimentelle Untersuchungen*. Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter, 239-289.
- Jung, Carl Gustav. 1962. *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*. Zürich und Stuttgart: Rascher.
- Kittler, Friedrich. 1993. *Draculas Vermächtnis*. Leipzig: Reclam.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1957-1958/1998. *Le séminaire V: Les Formations de l'inconscient*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1961-1962. *Le Séminaire IX: L'identification*. [unpublished]. <http://staferla.free.fr/>
- Lacan, Jacques. 1962-1963/2004. *Le Séminaire X: L'Angoisse*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1964/1973. *Le séminaire XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1966. *Écrits*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1969-1970/1991. *Le séminaire XVII: L'envers de la psychanalyse*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

- Lau, Travis (2016) "For the blood is the life": Dracula and the Victorian Politics of Blood. <https://remedianetwork.net/2016/03/14/for-the-blood-is-the-life-dracula-and-the-victorian-politics-of-blood/>
- Learoyd, Phil. 2012. "The history of blood transfusion prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century". *Transfusion Medicine* 22 (6): 372-376.
- Lombroso, Cesare. 1876/2006. *L'uomo delinquente / Criminal man*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Lucendo, Santiago. 2009. "Return ticket to Transylvania: relations between historical reality and vampire fiction". Eds. Browning J.E. and C.J. Picart. *Draculas, vampires, and other undead forms: essays on gender, race and culture*. Lanham etc.: Scarecrow Press, 115-126.
- Marx, Karl. 1867/1979. *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Oekonomie 1: der produktionsprozess des Kapitals*. Berlin: Dietz.
- Masson, Alastair. 1993. *The History of the Blood Transfusion Service in Edinburgh*. Edinburgh: Blood Transfusion Association.
- McCoy, Lisa. 2010. *Computers and Programming*. New York: Ferguson.
- McEwan, Ian. 2014. *The Children Act*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- McNally, Raymond and Radu Florescu. 1994. *In Search of Dracula: The History of Dracula and Vampires*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Melton, Gordon (2010) *The Vampire Book: the Encyclopaedia of the Undead*. Canton: Visible Ink Press.
- Page, Leanne. 2011. Phonograph, shorthand, typewriter: high performance technologies in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. *Victorian Network* 3 (2): 95-113.
- Picker, John. 2003. *Victorian soundscapes*. Oxford / New York: Oxford University press.
- Poel, W.H. van der, P. Lina, J. Kramps J. 2006. Public health awareness of emerging zoonotic viruses of bats: a European perspective". *Vector Borne and Zoonotic Diseases* 6 (4): 315-324.
- Quammen, David. 2012. Spillover. Animal infections and the next human pandemic. New York / London: Norton.
- Ramsland, Katherine (2002) *The Science of Vampires*. New York: Berkley Boulevard Books.
- Schneider M.C., P. Romijn, W. Uieda, H. Tamayo, D. da Silva, A. Belotto, J. da Silva, L. Leanes. 2009. Rabies transmitted by vampire bats to humans: An emerging zoonotic disease in Latin America? *Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública* 25(3): 260-9.
- Silver, Alain and James Ursini. 1993. *The Vampire Film: From Nosferatu to Bram Stoker's Dracula*. New York: Limelight.
- Skal, David (1990) *Hollywood Gothic: the Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen*. London: Faber.
- Spengler, Oswald (1918) *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*. München: Beck.

- Stiles, Anne, Stanley Finger, John Bulevich. 2010. Somnambulism and Trance States in the Works of John William Polidori, Author of *The Vampyre*. *European Romantic Review* 21 (6): 789–807
- Stiles, Anne. 2006. Cerebral automatism, the brain, and the soul in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences* 15: 131–152.
- Stiles, Anne. 2013. Bram Stoker's Brother, the Brain Surgeon. In: Stiles, Anne, Stanley Finger and François Boller (eds.). *Progress in Brain Research* 205. Amsterdam, pp. 197–218.
- Stoker, Abraham. 1897/1993. *Dracula*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth.
- Stoker, Abraham. 1910. *Famous Imposters*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.
- Sulloway, Frank (1979/1992) Freud, biologist of the mind: Beyond the psychoanalytic legend. Cambridge / London: Harvard University Press.
- Waldby, Catherine; Mitchell, Robert (2006) *Tissue economies: blood, organs and cell lines in late capitalism*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Wicke, Jennifer. 1992. Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and its Media. *English Literary History*, 59:2, pp. 467–93
- Wynne, Catherine (2000) Mesmeric Exorcism, Idolatrous Beliefs, and Bloody Rituals: Mesmerism, Catholicism, and Second Sight in Bram Stoker's Fiction. *Victorian Review*, 26 (1): 61.
- Zwart, Hub (2002) *Boude bewoordingen: De historische fenomenologie van J.H. van den Berg*. Kampen: Klement / Kapellen: Pelckmans.
- Zwart, Hub (2008) *Understanding nature: Case studies in comparative epistemology*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Zwart, Hub (2010) *De waarheid op de wand: psychoanalyse van het weten*. Nijmegen: Vantilt (374 pp.).
- Zwart, Hub (2014) Viral pandemics, Transhumanism and bio-art gadgets: a Lacanian reading of Dan Brown's *Inferno*. *Psychoanalytische Perspectieven*, 32 (4): 367–403.
- Zwart, Hub (2015) The Third Man: Comparative analysis of a science autobiography and a cinema classic as windows into post-War life sciences research. *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 37 (4): 382–412. DOI: 10.1007/s40656-015-0080-z
- Zwart, Hub (2016) Psychoanalysis and bioethics: A Lacanian approach to bioethical discourse. *Medicine, Healthcare and Philosophy* 19 (4) 605–621. DOI: 10.1007/s11019-016-9698-1
- Zwart, Hub (2017) 'Estimate' technologies and techno-cultural discontent: A Lacanian analysis of pervasive gadgets. *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology*. 22 (1): 24–54 DOI: 10.5840/techne2017456