089. An Unseen Invasion: Vampirism as Contagion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*[1]

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Abstract

As creatures that come back from the dead to haunt and hunt the living, vampires represent the fear of an uncontrollable, mysterious, foreign threat. Bram Stoker's Gothic novel *Dracula* (1897) presents vampirism not only as a curse that resurrects the dead human body as an undead monster, but also as a metaphor for a contagious disease. Transgressing boundaries between life and death, human and animal, past and present, the vampire breaches Gothic purity by contaminating the individual. Arriving as an elusive, unseen disease to the English soil and subject, Dracula exposes his victims to his contaminated blood in his quest to invade Victorian England. Consuming the body by feeding on the life giving blood, contaminating the victim by causing illness and death, and transforming the human into a vampire, Dracula embodies a contagion upon Victorian society. Accordingly, the aim of this paper to explore the links between the Victorian vampire and infection, looking closely at the role of blood in the creation of the monstrous threat. To that end, this paper aims to analyse how vampirism as a disease and Dracula as an agent of contagion reflect Victorian anxieties regarding the individual identity, social changes, fears of degeneration, and invasion of a foreign Other bringing destruction within.

Keywords: Victorian period, Gothic, vampires, infection, monstrous transformation

Görünmez İşgal: Bram Stoker'ın *Dracula* romanında salgın olarak Vampirizm

Öz

Ölümden geri dönüp yaşayanlara musallat olan ve onları avlayan yaratıklar olarak vampirler, kontrol edilemez, gizemli, yabancı tehdit unsurlarını temsil eder. Bram Stoker'ın Gotik romanı *Dracula* (1897) vampirizmi sadece ölü insan bedenini yaşayan ölü halinde bir canavarda dirilten bir lanet olarak değil, aynı zamanda da bulaşıcı bir hastalık metaforu olarak sunar. Hayat ve ölüm, insan ve hayvan, geçmiş ve şimdi arasındaki sınırları ihlal eden vampir, aynı zamanda Gotik saflığı da bireyi kirleterek bozar. Anlaşılmaz, görünmez bir hastalık olarak İngiliz toprağı ve öznesine ulaşan Drakula, Viktoryen İngiltere'yi işgal hedefinde kurbanlarını kendi kirlenmiş kanına maruz bırakır. Hayat veren kandan beslenerek vücudu tüketmesiyle, hastalık ve ölüme sebebiyet vererek kurbanını kirletmesiyle, ve insanı bir vampire dönüştürmesiyle Drakula Viktoryen toplum için bir salgını somutlaştırır. Bu bağlamda, bu makalenin hedefi canavarsı tehdidin oluşumunda kanın rolüne dikkatle bakarak Viktoryen vampir ve hastalık arasındaki bağları incelemektir. Bu amaçla, bu makale vampirizm hastalığı ve bulaşıcılık unsuru olarak Drakula'nın bireysel kimlik, toplumsal değişiklikler, yozlaşma

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korkuları, ve bünyesinde bir yıkım getiren yabancı bir Öteki tarafından işgal gibi Viktoryen dönem korkularını nasıl yansıttığını incelemeyi hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Viktorya dönemi, Gotik, vampirler, hastalık, canavarca dönüşüm

Introduction

One of the dominant horrors of modern world, contagion is reflected in stories of viral disease, infectious dangers, and foreign bodies. It is a threat that disregards borders between genders, social hierarchies and countries; unseen and unknown, it invades any country and transforms it to its will. As a malevolence that creeps between bodies, spreading through bites, and consuming the victim thoroughly, contagion creates a mystery that Victorian writers made flesh in the form of the vampire in the Gothic narratives. Indeed, though vampire stories have always occupied a significant part in the human imagination, the late nineteenth century, specifically the publication of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) marks a highpoint by making contagion a central focus of vampire fiction.

As Groom points out, "*Dracula* is the climax to over 70 years of vampire tales… But the vampire clearly existed before *Dracula* as a species of Enlightenment thinking in the contexts of medical science, theology, empiricism and politics, and it was this figure that both thrived in the nineteenth century and was adapted by Stoker" (2018, p. 170). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the belief in a corpse walking the earth, haunting and hunting the living, feeding on their blood was widespread in the folklore of Central and Eastern Europe. Yet, these vampires were mostly the result of an unnatural birth, a sort of curse, or of suicide (Oinas, 1998, p. 47-49). Contagious disease, for the folkloric vampires was not a common thread. Throughout the decades, the disease as an instrument of divine displeasure changed into a different fear reflecting the turbulent, urban society. By the late nineteenth century, pandemics of cholera and such epidemics were no longer associated "with meteors or divine visitation but with barges and ships, railways, markets and fairs, and mass movements and assemblies of people – be they marching troops, escaping refugees, or crowds gathered at political rallies and popular demonstrations" (Groom, 2018, p. 165). Similarly, the British literature prior to Stoker's work did not portray vampirism as a contagious force. From John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1820), to James Malcolm Rymer's penny dreadful *Varney the Vampire* (1847), and to Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), although these vampires inflict suffering, curses, and death onto their victims, the transformation of the undead does not reflect a contagion, or an exchange of bodily fluids that transform bodies into vampires. With this in mind, it can be argued that the contagiousness of vampirism emerged as a distinct trope at the end of the century, referring to a social, political, and moral problem regarding the late Victorian period. As "one of the most potent of all literary myths," Bram Stoker's *Dracula* modernizes the mythological vampire by setting the story in the fin-de-siécle at the heart of the British Empire (Punter & Byron, 2004, pp. 228). In general, it is the story of the vampire Count Dracula travelling to England with the unwilling aid of naïve solicitor Jonathan Harker, in order to invade the Empire in search of new victims. Hunting new victims and feeding on their blood unstopped and unchallenged, the Count sets eyes on Lucy Westenra, who becomes one of his first victims in the novel. Three of Lucy's suitors call in the aid of Doctor Van Helsing to solve Lucy's mysterious illness, which sets them on the trail of Dracula with the transformation of Lucy into a female vampire. In order to eliminate this new threat, Van Helsing forms a group named the Crew of Light and fights against the oncoming monsters. After Dracula attacks Jonathan's wife Mina Harker (neé Murray) to change her as well, vampire hunter Van Helsing leads the group to hunt Dracula, drive him from the English soil, and destroy him for once and all. As can be seen

from the very plot Stoker constructed, in *Dracula* the monster can be seen as brought to life out of the fears of widespread contagion, of invasion, and of an unstoppable unseen danger.

Consumption and Corruption Through Blood

To begin with, echoing Renfield's proclaim: "the blood is the life!" (Stoker, 2000, p. 118) throughout *Dracula* the vampiric contagion revolves on blood. Traditionally, blood is always connected with life; the flow of blood is what gives the body its life force, and what the vampire seeks to regulate its body as it cannot provide its own. Blood is the utmost symbol of life, as explained by Stephanou (2014) the earliest cultures and mythologies feature it as life itself; in the Western thought the ancient Greek philosophers associated blood with the soul, the psyche, the mind (pp. 5-6). Considering its necessity in ensuring a living consciousness and overall organism, blood has been acknowledged as the arbiter of existence and the self. Whereas living and breathing human bodies produce their own blood, Dracula as a vampire, a dead and reanimated body cannot. Hence, he must get it from another source for nourishment. And thus begins the vampiric targeting of the human bodies, mostly women, and feeding on their blood. As Donovan (2003) contends, in the Victorian context blood as a symbol acts as a crucial link in understanding the dynamic between purity and contamination:

> Traditionally, blood has signified both unity and division, has knit and separated families and tribes, created political dynasties and military alliances and even nations. In this context, Victorians not only spoke of *good* or *bad* blood, pure and tainted blood but of *black*, *white* and blue blood; they spoke of mongrelization and its consequences, of miscegenation and the threat of racial pollution. (p. 22).

The vampire is a dead body come to life, disrupting the borders of life and death, human and non-human, past and present. In its hunger for blood the threat of consumption reveals a fear of "change, decay and transformation that threaten to dissolve identities" (Stephanou, 2018, p. 75). The vampire hunts and feeds with its fangs, by puncturing the throat of its victim and sucking blood from the main arteries. The fangs and the mouth represent the ultimate threat to the living body – a threat of death, the dissolution of existence and identity. As Stephanou observes, "It is not accidental that death (*mors*) derives from bite (*morsus*), and thus the vampire is a fanged death and an embodiment of the mouth of Hell" (p. 75). Furthermore, the vampire's fangs indicate a disease upon the very blood they touch. Infectious diseases are acknowledged to be "passed from one person to another through close contact or touch" (Willis, 2007, p. 305). Accordingly, Dracula's fangs as he punctures the throat of his victims make up the first point of contact, poisoning the victim's blood insidiously. This bloodsucking is not a painful event for the victims in the moment, but like a disease, the after effects prove weakening and dreadful. Though the vampire's bite provides some thrill, the loss of blood causes fragile physical health, weakened bodies, as well as a weakened mental state. As Willis emphasizes, "Dracula's engagement with disease is so very apparent in the novel, it is clearly shown that vampirism is both infection and illness" (p. 302). The infection as it spreads through the body causes a need for blood and its life force, high sensitivity to sunlight, and weakened physical health. The close contact with Dracula in the castle causes Jonathan to be diagnosed with brain fever and a rapidly declining health, while Lucy's illness leave her unable to move, act, or even think easily. Lucy gradually loses herself into the infection, and expounds on the characteristics of her strange disease: "There was a sort of scratching or flapping at the window, but I did not mind it, and as I remember no more, I suppose I must have fallen asleep . . . This morning I am horribly weak. My face is ghastly pale, and my throat pains me. It must be something wrong with my lungs, for I don't seem to be getting air enough" (Stoker, 2000, p. 91-92). As she continues being consumed by Dracula nightly, her human body keeps getting weaker and eventually brings the organism to its eventual death. Despite all medical attempts, Van Helsing explains: "Young miss is bad, very bad.

She wants blood, and blood she must have or die" (p. 101). For Lucy the disease is incurable, and she slowly loses her humanity to the contagious nature and corruption of vampirism. Here it is interesting to note that although the term virus had not been coined in the late Victorian period, merely two years after the publication of *Dracula* an undetectable infectious foreign body is discovered in the Netherlands. As Zwart observes, "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" (2018, p. 28).

Likewise, the fear of contagion plays an autobiographical part in the writing of *Dracula*, as Stoker's own understanding of the widespread and devastating nature of diseases was heavily informed by the experiences of his mother. Having lived through the cholera outbreak of 1832 in Sligo, Ireland, Charlotte Stoker records her experiences of the disease in a letter to her son as follows: "Its bitter strange kiss, and man's want of experience or knowledge of its nature, or how best to resist its attacks, added, if anything could, to its horrors" (2003, p. 412). As she describes the rapid increase of the disease, it is easy to see how the vampire is manifested as representation: "One house would be attacked and the next spared. There was no telling who would go next, and one said goodbye to a friend he said it as if for ever. In a very few days the town became a place of the dead" (p. 413). Just as the vampire strikes one unknowing victim after another, infecting and consuming bodies without giving away a chance to resist, so has the historical contagion operates. Nevertheless, it is not the only biographical evidence that finds itself reflected in the form of the vampire. Bram Stoker's birth year coincides with the devastation of the Irish potato famine in which "starving and evicted tenants flooded into the city slums and workhouses, and with them dysentery, famine, fever, and typhus. Terrifying accounts reached Dublin from County Mayo, where workhouses had begun the inexorable transition into death houses" (Skal, 2016, p. 9-10). To that end, his childhood is filled with various horrors regarding infection, corruption in mind and body, widespread fear against and unseen threat that cannot be overcome. As David Skal (2016) further states:

> Most poignant and tragic were the now-legendary tales of the 'coffin ships' which carried typhus and cholera along with desperate immigrants to North America. Many never arrived alive; as many as a hundred thousand refugees were interred in one mass grave at a St Lawrence River quarantine station in Quebec. Bram undoubtedly heard these stories, told and embellished like folktales, and later could have read published first-person accounts of doomed passengers. (p. 22)

Both the historical outbreaks and the fictional infection are related to the theme of degeneration, in that degeneration is represented as a "blood disease, symbolically transmitted through vampirism," which suggests that "the vampire hunters are themselves pathologised through contact with the Count" (Pick, 1989, p. 168). This makes the vampire much more hard to eliminate and a serious threat against society, as some form of contact can never be avoided. The infection only starts with the contact, then it rapidly turns into a transformation. As Foster expresses, "Dracula infects by *extracting* blood but such extraction is also a kind of *infusion*, a procedure the more obvious when he causes Mina Harker to drink *his* blood" (2008, p. 357). Dracula hunts humans to feed, but he also targets young, genteel English women like Lucy Westenra and infects them with his own monstrosity, killing the potential future generations and possessing their identity. In such utter consumption, he transforms the upstanding Victorian gentlewoman into a monster, reflecting the deep fear of external threat taking root within. As Donovan remarks, "Stoker clearly understood the 'magic of blood' and the impact of blood imagery upon his Victorian audience. He understood that the presence and flow of blood would inevitably promote fear, terror, anxiety, as well as wonder, thrill and excitement" (2003, p. 10).

The bite of the vampire is a breach on purity. For Dracula, reproduction occurs only through the exchange of blood – by mixing his own blood with its victim through the bite, he can transform the human being into a vampire. As the long-suffering victim of his, Lucy's prolonged contamination and consumption eventually results in her transformation into a female vampire. Although Van Helsing diagnoses and aims to cure her using blood transfusion, it does not succeed. As the disease exists in the blood and is transferred across bodies via blood contamination, this curative process consists of transfusing the infected body with new, untainted blood. Notably, in Lucy's transformation the blood transfusion also play a role; her propriety and purity is breached first with the infection of the vampiric bite, and later as the vampiric corruption continues, with receiving blood from several different men under Van Helsing's care. Her skin carries the many marks both from Dracula's teeth, and Van Helsing's needle. In the end, her transformation makes the extent of her 'impurity' apparent and she is destroyed in a gruesome end. As Dr. Seward describes the vampiric new body,

> Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed. The sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness. . . by the concentrated light that fell on Lucy's face we could see that the lips were crimson with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death-robe. (Stoker, 2000, p. 175)

With his bite, Dracula compels the victims to be transformed into a liminal state between living and death, past and present, human and animal. As Punter and Byron (2004) point out, Dracula's power "ultimately lies not so much in the way he embodies transgression as in the way he functions as the catalyst for transgression in others: he prompts the release of energies and desires normally repressed in the interest of both social and psychic stability" (p. 231). His transformative powers first weaken the living human body, impair the mind, and urge the victim to disregard societal dictates in favour of baser instincts such as lust and hunger, concluding in dehumanization altogether. Consumed yet not fully transformed into a vampire by the Count, Renfield is a devoted acolyte and a "zoophagous (life-eating) maniac" (Stoker, 2000, p. 60) who desires to absorb as much life as possible from living creatures. As Dr. Seward observes, the vampiric infection transformed Renfield into a monstrous creature who is under the control of the vampire. Having rapid mood swings due to his connection with Dracula, he continuously gives into his animalistic urges and rejects what the doctor, as a representative of Victorian science and ideals advises. The transgressions of Renfield are ultimately tied to blood, which can be seen in his moment of dehumanization as Dr. Seward describes his attack and cutting the wrist "licking up, like a dog, the blood which had fallen from my wounded wrist" (p. 118). In other words, the enslaved victim inherits a degree of the vampiric monstrosity via contamination, blurring the Victorian human's delineated identity. Degeneration caused by the vampire into a baser self can be further seen in the moment where vampire Lucy is found feeding on a child as told by Dr. Seward:

> Lucy's eyes in form and colour; but Lucy's eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew. At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing; had she then to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight. As she looked, her eyes blazed with unholy light, and the face became wreathed with a voluptuous smile. Oh, God, how it made me shudder to see it! With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone. The child gave a sharp cry, and lay there moaning. (p. 175)

Not only the vampire here is physically monstrous but also "'its' tastes, appetites, and desires become even more extreme: unregulated, uncontrollable, unnatural, inhuman, and decidedly un-English" (Cozzi, 2010, p. 129). With this in mind, the vampire can be read as the culmination of Victorian fears regarding consumption and contact; consumption in the sense that the Victorian society and its inhabitants are directly under attack, and contact that results in the contamination by the

uncontrollable, elusive, foreign body. The vampire threatens to literally consume the Victorian body at will and degenerate the remains. To that end, as Cozzi notes, "the Other's taste for 'un-English' food and drink has become perverted and transubstantiated into a taste for the English themselves" (p. 149). The horror this uncontrollable appetite and danger evoke is likewise reflected in the troubling vision Jonathan experiences in which he is approached by the three Brides of Dracula, who attempt to charm and compel him to heed their call. Jonathan describes his feelings as a "wicked, burning desire," and "an agony of delightful anticipation" (Stoker, 2000, p. 33) in being confronted with their sensuality. Yet, as they are not pure, chaste, ideal Victorian women, he cannot help but depict his feelings in opposite terms, "thrilling and repulsive," and "a bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood" (p. 33). As the three vampires also hint to feeding from a small child, Jonathan feels disgust and shock at this complete subversion of norms and morality.

As the corruptive contact of the vampire leads to moral and behavioural decay, the individual is absorbed by the monstrous Other. The infection beginning in a smaller, personal scale threatens to corrupt the entire social body, just as a virus threatens a contagion after the conquest of a single cell in the vein. In the novel Lucy Westenra stands as a victim, a sacrifice, and a cautionary tale. As a young, beautiful, virtuous and proper girl she is a model for the young Victorian lady; yet, she is punished by vampirism for not controlling her awakened desires and transgressing boundaries. To that end, Mina and her best friend Lucy are juxtaposed in terms of purity and corruption. While Lucy is presented as promiscuous and capricious, demanding to have all three of her suitors at once and disregarding societal dictations, Mina is depicted as the proper, intelligent, virtuous gentlewoman waiting for her fiancé and acting as a moral guide to others. As Van Helsing remarks: "Ah, that wonderful Madam Mina! She has man's brain – a brain that should have were he much gifted – and a woman's heart" (Stoker, 2000, p. 195). Yet even such purity cannot remain untouched around Dracula. His attempt to turn Mina Murray into a full vampire after her infection is perhaps the most explicit portrayal of blood as contagion. When Count Dracula compels Mina to drink his own blood to transform her, he makes her drink from his chest. As Dr. Seward notes in his diary, the scene is horrific and the "attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink" (p. 234). Such intense closeness and the intermingling of the bodily fluids increases Mina's infection. Furthermore, as the Crew of Light traces the vampire's movements to kill it, even the very air around the vampire contains a poisonous force that weakens those infected. Investigating the vampire's lair, Jonathan is surprised to discover the extent of Dracula's corruptive power, observing:

> It was not alone that it was composed of all the ills of mortality and with the pungent, acrid smell of blood, but it seemed as though corruption had become itself corrupt. Faugh! It sickens me to think of it. Every breath exhaled by that monster seemed to have clung to the place and intensified its loathsomeness. (p. 208)

This environment deeply affects Mina, whose illness gets dire and allows Dracula's powers an advantage over her. Contamination gradually leads her to the vampire, influencing her control to waver though she tries to help the Crew as much as possible. At certain points when the disease gains control over her body, boundaries between her husband and hunter start to blur. She remarks: "Let us go to meet my husband, who is, I know, coming toward us," (p. 309) referring to Jonathan and Dracula both. The vampiric blood infecting her transforms her identity, and threatens the norms of traditional marriage, transgressing Jonathan's husband status. Dracula not only wishes to eliminate Jonathan, but also desires to invade and transform Mina's identity entirely:

> You know now, and they know in part already, and will know in full before long, what it is to cross my path. They should have kept their energies for use closer to home. . . And you, their best beloved one,

> are now to me, flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin; my bountiful wine-press for a while; and shall be later on my companion and my helper. (p. 239)

To look at this another way, Dracula here not only corrupts the pure Victorian woman and body, but also corrupts a key Christian belief. In the Bible, Jesus promises eternal life with the Lord under the condition of partaking in the holy communion to all who desires to believe his sacrifice: "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, John 6:54-56). According to the belief, Christ's blood is capable of purifying humanity's sins as he is the perfect redeemer. However, Dracula reverses and corrupts this ideal; the immortality vampire gives is no longer eternal life but eternal death. In his compelling Mina to drink his tainted blood, in a macabre reversal of the communion, the victim's agency is eliminated and the body transforms into that of a monster through close contact with the infected blood. In Renfield's insistence that "the blood is the life," the scriptural phrase is subverted both in its morality and address, the Count changes the Biblical "children of light" (Eph. 5:8) into his degenerate "children of the night" (Stoker, 2000, p. 280). The vampire's very origin is founded on a heresy, a transgression – though the communion urges the flock to take part in Christ's blood, the Bible puts a direct taboo against blood-cannibalism (Gen. 9:4; Deut. 12:23). As much as Dracula may see himself as a creature beyond belief, possessing the power to give life as well as take it, he is not a saviour figure but a corruptive one. Instead of saving others through his sacrificial blood, he demands blood from others for his own desires. Hence, his victims do not cherish the infection they receive, but see it as a mark of sin and corruption, as Mina exclaims: "Unclean! Unclean! Even the Almighty shuns my polluted flesh! I must bear this mark of shame upon my forehead until the Judgment Day" (Stoker, 2000, 247).

In addition, vampire as contagion is a layered threat as it is not only a danger towards the living, but also towards the future generations. The transformative power the vampire holds still has control over the subjects that are yet to take part in society. At the end of *Dracula* the Count is killed, Mina and Jonathan have a child and name him after Quincey Morris to pay tribute to his bravery. Although the narrative seems to indicate a happy ending, a closer look reveals how the threat and corruption remains. As Mina is still infected with Dracula's blood, it is the vampire blood she passes on to the veins of her progeny as well as Jonathan's genes. In this sense, though the child is often marked as a victory of love and determination over hardships, Dracula yet exists within the new social body. As he once announced to the Crew of Light that "your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet to be mine – my creature, to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed" (Stoker, 2000, p. 255). Like a virus vampire mutates, by infecting he spreads his powers and gets stronger. As Arata notes, "the novel's vampires are distinguished by their robust health and their equally robust fertility. The vampire serves, then, to highlight the alarming decline among the British, since the undead are, paradoxically, both 'healthier' and more 'fertile' than the living" (1990, p. 631). Hence the victim becomes liminal, dehumanized, suspended between life and death, victimhood and hunt, consciousness and animal instincts. Here it is interesting to note that the vampire has always been a significant metaphor for theories of contagion, as the term *Nosferatu* that is made synonymous with vampire in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* originates from the Greek *nosophoros* meaning "plague carrier" (Melton, 1994, p. 499). And indeed, all vampires have the power to infect, contaminate and destroy.

Accordingly, the fear of contagion spreading through migration is another point the vampires manifest. In what Stephen Arata calls "reverse colonisation," the arrival of diseases to imperial soil where "the 'civilised' world is on the point of being colonised by 'primitive' forces" (1990, p. 623) explains this

anxiety regarding vampires. Like a disease, the vampire makes up a foreign body, an Other that moves between places unchecked, unstoppable, consuming and corrupting the Victorian individual and social body. Dracula hunts with abandon; as he travels to England his hunger grows stronger. Terrorizing Jonathan and feeding on the Transylvanian folk, he is an elusive threat that proves most dangerous as he boards the ship Demeter. Unidentified as a monster, Dracula slaughters the members of the crew at will, to the degree that all the crew including the captain is found dead when the ships arrives at the Whitby Harbor. *Dracula* is hence an invasion story – yet instead of the colonial British subject invading the territory, it is a malevolent reverse. From the moment he begins his quest for England, Dracula brings disease, death, and destruction to the Victorian individual and social body. What is most threatening is that Dracula can pass as a normal human being, successfully existing as an aristocrat in the English society, moving beyond borders and interacting with bodies, able to bring the threat within. As Foster (2008) points out,

> Dracula seeks to conquer by a kind of biological warfare, infecting the actual bodies of his victim-recruits and also, he hopes, the body social of England. He brings not an army against England but only himself, planning to raise his army inside fortress England from those he turns into renegades and 'irregulars'; through vampirism, it will be an army that sleeps by day and conducts its guerrilla warfare by night. He himself is a foreign body – utterly Other – that seeks like a parasite to lodge itself in the host of civilized England. (p. 358-59)

By infecting the human body in his bites, Dracula assumes control over the individual. As the disease weakens the body, the contaminated blood transforms the victim into something monstrous, a threat to humanity. In his aim to spread vampirism over as many bodies as possible, Dracula forms an army that will possess the power to further infect, corrupt, and control the whole society. Transgressing boundaries of past and present, the vampire has the ability to pose an unstoppable threat in that sense, as Arata remarks, "Dracula's growth is not bound by a single lifetime, but instead covers potentially limitless generations" (1990, p. 640). The timeless threat reflects what Punter and Byron (2004) call an enactment of "late Victorian society's most important and persistent narrative of decline: the narrative of reverse colonization, the fear of a racial degeneration which would corrupt and destabilize identity" (p. 232). Dracula himself talks about this particular desire of contagion to Jonathan, commenting "I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death" (Stoker, 2000, p. 18-19). Accordingly, the way the Count talks aligns him firmly with contagion, from its infectious living stage, to transformation, and to eventual corruption and consumption. His dream of going to the very heart of the British empire reflects a disease working its way through the civilised world and body, having made its way to the heart from abroad.

Conclusion

The vampire is a mysterious, uncontrollable, unknown force that violates all boundaries. As a metaphor for contagion it describes the hysteria of crowds against the unseen threat, the corruption of bodies by teeth marks, and the circulation of socio-political and moral dangers. A monster transgressing boundaries between life and death, past and present, human and non-human, the vampire intrudes on the conventional, safe, delineated Victorian individual and social body. Moving between bodies, lands, and societies, the vampire is a disease upon the living, a poison in the arteries. Exposing the individuals to contaminated blood, the vampiric infection transforms the ill into carriers of the disease themselves. Like a virus, vampire continuously mutates – Dracula adopts the outlook of an English gentleman, can shapeshift, can compel minds; the vampire can travel across lands and exploit bodies unchecked, always spreading its control wider and wider. The vampire can be regarded as an agent of contagion in all senses – contaminating, corrupting, and controlling the subject. In conclusion, a closer look at the vampire,

specifically in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* through the lens of contagion and infectious disease offers not only a different perspective in analysing the creation of Victorian monsters, but also sheds light to the anxieties regarding the imperial, social, and individual body which the Other seeks to breed out of existence.

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