

Scritture e Linguaggi
Collana di Lingue e Letterature

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Collana di Lingue e Letterature

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“The common darkness
where the dreams abide:”
Perspectives on Irish Gothic
and Beyond

edited by Ilaria Natali and Annalisa Volpone

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Permeable Borders: Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Its Sources

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is commonly considered as one of the most representative and, simultaneously, one of the most over-interpreted texts of the Irish Gothic. Almost ten years after Mighall lamented that "a vampire is rarely a vampire in criticism of *Dracula*" (1998, 63), Miller still hoped for "a *Dracula* in which wooden stakes are wooden stakes, and blood is merely blood" (2006, 1). To make matters more complex, the rich diversity of interpretations of *Dracula* seems to defy any "pattern of evolution or development," in that competing discourses can overlap, intermingle, and open up new possibilities rather than offer a "satisfactory closure" upon earlier analysis (Hughes 2009, 28).

Notably, psychoanalysis has been a key conceptual background for the study of *Dracula*; in particular, 'the monster' has remained in 'the bedroom' for decades after Christopher Bentley's influential article was published in 1972. Many scholars have made a case of how the vampire "represents the dangerous return of repressed sexual desire" (Bolton 2009, 59) and "liberates and exalts" it (Moretti 1983, 99).¹ *Dracula* is revealed to be permeated by a wealth of "surrogate sexual gratification[s]" (Hughes 2000, 157) and connected to impulses that have been variously identified as homoerotic, heterosexual, distinctively masculine, or distinctively feminine.² Freudian theories, as well as Lacan and Kristeva's revisionist views, have

1. On the topic, see also Twitchell 1981 and Leatherdale 1985.

2. See, for instance, Howes 1988, Shaffer 1994, and Williams 1995, 122.

provided tools for exploring sub-textual meanings of the novel, but have also generated conflicting ideas; thus, for instance, the vampire can be “extraordinarily erotic” and “anything but erotic” at the same time (Willmott 2008, 24; 31). Objections raised to these approaches point out a sense of anachronism in adopting psychoanalytic theory in the interpretation of *Dracula*. Although Freud’s first book about hysteria was published as early as 1893, his ideas gained popularity in England only in the 1920s; therefore, William Hughes says, “there is no internal evidence to suggest that Stoker was influenced by what was then a little-known, untranslated and highly speculative venture in mental science” (2008, 46).³

Psychoanalytically inflected interpretation has often combined or competed with cultural and historical understandings of the text, which draw especially on the powerful symbolism of blood and the image of Count Dracula as a foreign, contaminating presence. For instance, Daniel Pick (1989) explores the parasitical imagery of the novel in the light of degeneration theories; Judith Halberstam connects such imagery, together with Dracula’s “aversion to the cross ... his blood-sucking attacks, and his avaricious relation to money” to nineteenth-century stereotypes of the Jew (1995, 86). *Dracula* is often read in the context of political issues, such as the Eastern question (Gibson 2006; Kostova 2007) and, of course, in the wake of cultural and postcolonial approaches to Irish literature, which interrogate the hovering presence of Ireland in the text. According to some of these views, *Dracula* contains oblique references to Irish history, including the Famine (Smart and Hutcheson 2004) and the Irish Land War (Moses 1997). Discordant stances on the novel coexist also within some branches of Irish cultural studies. In fact, the Count has become a symbol of both the colonizer and the colonized, aristocracy and lower class (e.g. Gibbons 2004; Deane 1997; Eagleton 1995); he is a projection of the Anglo-Irish society in search of a national identity, but also a Catholic Land Leaguer devoted to political violence. In recent scholarly debate, “the notion

3. The extent to which Stoker might have become familiar with Freud’s theories through the Psychical Research Society seems debatable, since the group “inquired into thought reading, mesmerism, apparitions, and haunted houses” (Belford 1996, 212–13).

that *Dracula* is inherently allegorical” has often been found “not convincing” (Lennon 2003, 33); according to Ingelbien, “there is no reason to assume that the novel as a whole possesses a single, comprehensive allegorical intent,” as “Stoker was ultimately after things other than allegorical consistency” (2003, 1093). Controversy has arisen especially regarding what Richard Haslam defines “historicizing allegoresis” (2007a, 8), or a tendency towards “extract[ing] the political contexts (allegedly) inscribed allegorically within texts” (2007b, 84). More radical positions, such as James Murphy’s, have questioned the fruitfulness of seeking “Irish issues hidden in novels without explicit Irish themes,” an attitude that might betray “a secret anxiety about Irish fiction written during the Victorian age, that much of it was not truly Irish at all” (2011, 5).

Whereas this brief and incomplete overview cannot do justice to the rich field of *Dracula* studies, it emphasizes that the novel is open to conflicting interpretations, or even ‘excessive’ interpretations. For instance, Bruce Stewart expresses his concerns about “[t]he strategy of treating *Dracula* as blotting-paper for its author’s post-imperial anxieties,” which may result “in an over-interpretation of the textual signifiers on a fairly exorbitant scale” (1999, 70). Jarlath Killeen caustically remarks that the Count “has demonstrated a remarkable ability to mutate into almost anything: Irish landlord, peasant, Jew, proletarian, sexual deviant and liberator, New Woman, mother, menstruating woman, medieval aristocrat, terrorist, and anything else you can think of” (2014, 80). While Miller shows that critical discourse on *Dracula* contains both “sense and nonsense” (2000), Hans Corneel de Roos draws attention to specific cases of “bloody nonsense,” wondering: “what really is ‘unquestionable’ in the world of *Dracula* research any more?” (2016). In the face of the various calls for interpretive caution, it would be hardly surprising if *Dracula* scholars felt some anxiety regarding risks of (over-)interpretation.

Umberto Eco argues that over-interpretation may occur when a reading transgresses the cultural and historical knowledge that can be attributed to a writer, thus exceeding his or her “cultural and social treasury” (1991, 183). In a similar vein, but with a specific concern for Irish Gothic studies, Haslam recommends respecting the

intentions of both the author and the text by avoiding to read “as if one were explicating a deliberately designed allegory” a work “with none of the conventionally accepted generic characteristics of theological, moralistic, historical, political, or personification allegory” (2007b, 84). With these considerations in mind, the available notes for the composition of *Dracula* seem to be an ideal object of study; they can reveal not only details about the ‘treasury,’ or cultural repertoire specifically used for the novel, but also some of Stoker’s impulses and concerns while composing it. In addition, as I will argue below, Stoker’s pre-compositional notes can provide precious clues to identify the ‘Irish’ elements in *Dracula*, which seem to need more nuanced explications than racial or national allegory.

*We want no proofs; we ask none to believe us!*⁴

As is well known, the narrative technique of *Dracula* involves a typical element of Gothic literature, namely, using a set of (unreliable) documents, such as diaries, newspaper articles, and phonographic records produced or collected by the (equally unreliable) characters involved. I intend to demonstrate that, although at a different level, a similar sense of unreliability also pervades the documentary evidence of the novel’s writing process.⁵ To be more specific, I am referring to the available materials in “Bram Stoker’s Original Foundation Notes & Data for His *Dracula*,” a collection consisting of 124 pages written on 85 sheets of paper, currently pre-

4. *D* 351. All quotations from Roger Luckhurst’s 2011 edition of *Dracula* are referenced in the text by the abbreviation *D*.

5. My remarks on the notes for *Dracula* follow the assumptions, categorizations and definitions provided by genetic criticism. However, it should be noted that here I am not attempting a genetic study of *Dracula*; my preliminary (and provisional) investigation of “Bram Stoker’s Original Foundation Notes & Data for His *Dracula*,” the available pre-compositional materials of the novel, merely opens the way to an intertextual approach. A genetic study of the novel should include the pre-publication documents, such as the typescripts of *Dracula* (a privately owned 500-page typescript that is unavailable to the public), publication materials, “*Dracula’s Guest*” (originally part of *Dracula* and later printed as a short story), and *Dracula: or, the Un-Dead* (the play based on the page-proofs of the novel).

served at the Rosenbach Museum & Library; I have consulted these papers in the facsimile edition annotated and transcribed by Robert Eighteen–Bisang and Elizabeth Miller.⁶

The dates included in some of the notes suggest that Stoker worked on *Dracula* at least from 8 March 1890 to 5 April 1896. During these six years, he collected handwritten outlines and lists of characters, both handwritten and typewritten research notes, and newspaper clippings. The extant papers, probably preparatory material for the first sixteen chapters of the novel,⁷ seem to focus on some key topics that often intersect and overlap with one another: superstition, Balkan customs and history, geography (with particular attention to Whitby), and science/medicine.

The annotations concerning superstition have especially attracted critical attention; it is well known that among Stoker's most fruitful sources were Emily Gerard's "Transylvanian Superstitions" (1885) and Sabine Baring–Gould's *The Book of Were–Wolves* (1865). In *Dracula*, Jonathan Harker says, "every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some imaginative whirlpool" (*D* 6). This remark can be taken quite literally, when we consider that Stoker drew (or planned to draw) upon a rich heritage of legends that includes, "Baring–Gould. Curious Myths of the Middle Ages" and "Germany Past & Present," "Bassett. Legends & Superstitions of the Sea," "Dorman. The Origin of Primitive Superstitions [*among the Aborigines of America*]," "Jones, W. Credulities Past & Present,"

6. The order of the documents proposed by *Bram Stoker's Notes for Dracula: A Facsimile Edition* does not correspond to the original page numbers in the Rosenbach archive. Therefore, all subsequent quotations from this text will include reference to both Eighteen–Bisang and Miller's page numbers, preceded by the abbreviation "Notes," and the original page number, preceded by the indication "Rosenbach." It should be emphasized that relying on facsimiles does not compensate for working with the original documents and can be a major hindrance in philological investigation. However, since here I do not propose to look at the physical qualities of the pages, I have privileged the searchability and accessibility of the text over appreciation of the material aspects of the documentation.

7. As Eighteen–Bisang and Miller emphasize, "[a]lmost half the events in the novel are not mentioned in the Notes. Most of the interactions between human beings and vampires from chapters 16 to 27 are missing" (Notes 9); therefore, we might suppose that the documentation available to us is incomplete.

and “Jones Rev W. H. Magyar Folk–Tales” (*Notes* 78, Rosenbach 43a). Remarkably, most of the sources consulted by Stoker do not offer physical descriptions of vampires; the only reference to their outer appearance are the “goggling eyes” mentioned in a newspaper clipping about “Vampires in New England” (*Notes* 85, Rosenbach 46v), a feature which Stoker—perhaps wisely—decided not to include in his novel.⁸

Numerous details about the Count’s outer appearance, such as “canine teeth protruding over lower lip when mouth closed pointed nails,” “broad hands, short fingers & has some hairs in hollow of hand,” and “eyebrows meeting over nose” (*Notes* 56, Rosenbach 43va) are based on *The Book of Were–Wolves*.⁹ The choice of this source might have been influenced by Gerard’s article, where the werewolf is defined as the “[f]irst cousin to the vampire” (1885, 37). Further inspiration may have come from Baring–Gould’s *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, where the Antichrist has “teeth pointed like those of a cat” (1877, 170)¹⁰ and various descriptions of the bod-

8. According to Eighteen–Bisang and Miller, if Stoker had respected central European lore, he would have described the vampire as a “a plump Slavic fellow with long fingernails and a stubbly beard, his mouth and left eye open, his face ruddy and swollen” who “wears informal attire—in fact, a linen shroud—and ... looks for all the world like a disheveled peasant” (*Notes* 127, n257); a similar point is made by Patrick McGrath (1997, 41). Both remarks are based on Barber’s *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*. Actually, Barber does not suggest that this is a consistent image in Eastern folklore; he pieces together details from various reports and accounts on vampires to emphasize how drastically these figures have been changing over time in popular fiction (1988, 2).

9. In the published text, the Count is described as follows: “His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose ... The mouth ... was fixed and rather cruel–looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips ... [H]is hands were rather coarse—broad, with squat fingers ... [T]here were hairs in the centre of the palm” (*D* 20). Stoker combined various images from *The Book of Were–Wolves*; talking about a young man, Baring–Gould says, “the teeth were strong and white, and the canine teeth protruded over the lower lip when the mouth was closed. The boy’s hands were large and powerful, the nails black and pointed like a bird’s talons” (1865, 87). Later, he adds: “A were–wolf may easily be detected ... for his hands are broad, and his fingers short, and there are always some hairs in the hollow of his hand” (1865, 107); “By day the were–wolf has the human form, though he may be known by the meeting of his eyebrows above the nose” (110).

10. Similarly, in *Dracula* the Count’s “big white teeth ... were pointed like an animal’s” (*D* 161).

ies' pallor in the "Munich Dead house" (*Notes* 2, Rosenbach 35va), a grisly mortuary which received much attention from travelogues and periodicals in the nineteenth century.¹¹ In short, the figure of the vampire is the result of a conflation of different, even contradictory sources, in a Frankenstein-esque amalgam of parts. Stoker's procedure reminds us of the cultural interactions that Gerard identifies in Transylvania, where "various sorts of superstition have twined and intermingled ... until in many cases it is a difficult matter to determine the exact parentage of some particular belief or custom" (1885, 4). The process of hybridization adopted by Stoker redefines, transforms, and betrays his sources, with the effect of blurring cultural and historical boundaries.

Another crossing of borders seems to be at play when Stoker deals with geography and landscape descriptions, especially in the annotations regarding Transylvania and its surroundings. In the published text, Harker says, "I was not able to light on any map or work giving the exact locality of the Castle Dracula" (*D* 5). A similar sense of incertitude and vagueness can be found in Stoker's notes about Balkan scenery, for which sources are scant and research seems far from meticulous. Whereas the copious materials on Whitby also include drawings and photos, the notes about Balkan geography can barely amount to a "superficially realistic" representation (Walker and Wright 1997, 69). Johnson's *On the Track of the Crescent* is the main source for imagery regarding Transylvania and the Mittel Land, which Harker crosses at the beginning of the story; however, the few words that Stoker chooses to extract from the book are unaccountably banal, and contain conventional descriptions that may be applied to a wide range of locations. The notes later re-elaborated in the novel mention common vegetation,

11. Apparently, Stoker's early plans for the novel included Dracula's appearance among the corpses of the "Munich dead house" (e.g. *Notes* 2, 3, 29, Rosenbach 35va, 29, 25). The Munich mortuary became famous because "[n]o stranger should pass through Munich without visiting this establishment" (Fullerton Cumming 1839, 300), where it was customary to "lay [corpses] out behind a window, bedizened as if for a fête" (Wilberforce 1863, 26). The 'dead' were said to sometimes "come back to life there, and [proceed] to ring a bell provided for such an event" (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 1872, 652).

such as “Weeping birch trees in Southern Carpathians” (*Notes* 93, Rosenbach 54), “belt of dark fir and then snow” (*Notes* 95, Rosenbach 56), “Oak, Beech, Pine. Plenty water” (*Notes* 96, Rosenbach 57),¹² or generic details, as in “Houses (Hungarian) Separate. Blank gable to road” (*Notes* 93, Rosenbach 54).¹³ The same lack of specificity characterizes the annotations that do not appear in the novel, for instance: “Grey moss in abundant festoons from fir trees” (*Notes* 94, Rosenbach 55), “Bold forms and gentle slopes most attractive” (*Notes* 109, Rosenbach 70). The imprecision of the setting, combined with suggestive resemblance to various contexts, results in a sense of uncertainty and destabilization; even Whitby “shares a certain superficial similarity to Transylvania,” Walker and Wright say (1997, 61).

According to Goldsworthy, “[t]he way in which Stoker uses real Balkan topography to create an imaginary landscape is reflected in the way he treats Balkan history. He borrows and builds on many sources, not all of them dealing with the Balkans, in order to piece together an exotic historical amalgam” (1998, 92). As he did with superstition, Stoker conflated different travelogues and essays also when dealing with Balkan history, and he often modified, summarized or combined the original texts. At times, however, it is hard to say whether Stoker re-elaborated or merely misunderstood his sources. This is the case with a note about “SLOVAKS (Transylvanian peasants)” (*Notes* 103, Rosenbach 64). As some have already pointed out, Slovaks had little to do with “Transylvanian peasants,” and their presence was reported to be very scarce in that area in the nineteenth century. Klinger assumes that this error ensued because Stoker relied on Johnson’s “distorted account” (Stoker 2008, 21 n.37); in fact, it seems that it was Stoker who distorted Johnson’s

12. In the published text, these notes were re-elaborated as follows: “There were many things new to me: for instance, hay-ricks in the trees and here and there very beautiful masses of weeping birch ... the growing twilight seemed to merge into one dark mistiness the gloom of the trees, oak, beech, and pine ... the dark firs stood out here and there against the background of late-lying snow” (*D* 11).

13. In the published text, “Before us lay a green sloping land full of forests and woods, with here and there steep hills, crowned with clumps of trees or with farm-houses, the blank gable end to the road” (*D* 10).

account in his notes. The travelogue mentions "wild-looking Slovaks [who] whirled past on the rapid river, on their way down from the Carpathians" and their "Wallach neighbours" (1885, 243–44), but it never states that Slovaks are Transylvanian peasants.

In the notes on science and medicine, the confusion, conflation, and vagueness that characterize other parts of the documentation become even more blatant. Medicine is a central question in *Dracula*, and the available notes testify to a sustained interest in medical content. For one thing, references to insanity and asylums abound in the documentation, but, as Valerie Pedlar notes, this interest does not seem to be coupled by extensive reading of clinical literature (2006, 136). Indeed, Stoker makes use of second-hand sources, consulting Cheyne's popular *The English Malady* (1734), Browne's *Religio Medici* (1643), and Samuel Formay's *Considerations sur un sommeil extraordinaire* (1774) through the quotations included in Rivington's *The Theory of Dreams* (1808).

The characters "Mad Doctor" and "Mad patient" were apparently planned for inclusion in the novel since the earliest available sketches of the plot, dated 1890; interestingly, Stoker maintains some ambiguity regarding the doctor, as it is not immediately clear if "mad" indicates his specialization or his condition. A similar theme is found again in another plot scheme, with "A test of Sanity" (*Notes* 28, Rosenbach 24). This phrase calls to mind the first standard for jury instruction in the defence of insanity, the M'Naghten Rule (1843), more commonly defined in the juridical literature of the time as the "test of insanity" or "the right and wrong test," which established whether the accused was sane when committing the crime. Stoker was probably familiar with the Rule, as it generated much debate until the turn of the century, and was instrumental in problematizing bio-criminological theories such as Cesare Lombroso's *L'uomo delinquente* (*Criminal Man*, 1876).

Incidentally, Lombroso is famously cited in the novel when Mina claims, "The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and *qua* criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind" (*D* 317).¹⁴ The Italian physician did not enjoy

14. According to Lombroso's theory, the criminals' main traits included "prominent superciliary arches ... insensibility to pain, extremely acute sight ... and the ir-

much support from the British medical community; reservations on his ideas were expressed in *The British Journal of Psychiatry* (Arlidge *et al* 1867, 228), the *Journal of Psychological Medicine* (Hammond 1870, 179–93), and *The Scottish Revue* (Gardner 1885, 200). Indeed, “it quickly became evident that most of Lombroso’s claims were simply not sustainable when subjected to empirical review” (Jones 2016, 94). Lombroso is never mentioned in the available notes for *Dracula*, but Stoker might have had his theories in mind when he wrote, “Prof in speaking of Drac’s brain growth speaks of the heart–brain and the sense–brain” (*Notes* 49, Rosenbach 33b).¹⁵ The register adopted here is noteworthy: “heart–brain” and “sense–brain” have never been used in medical literature, and denote a lay approach to theories of cortical localization or phrenology; the latter was “quickly debunked by the medical establishment” but “quite popular with the public” because of its origin in folklore and superstition (Marshall 2000, 161).¹⁶

In the notes, Stoker uses other loose terms or colloquialisms, such as “brain fever” (*Notes* 30, Rosenbach 35c);¹⁷ even for the time, it was considered as “a name fraught with every conceivable association of horror and fatality,” a fruit of “pathological mystifications” (Dyer Lyons 1861, 63), which “has now no scientific acceptance amongst advanced medical men” (Richardson 1865, 396). Clearly, Stoker was not working on theories and expressions suitable for ‘advanced medical men;’ his treatment of medical topics lied outside of contemporary authorized avenues of medical discourse. The notes are devoted either to heterodox ideas—hypnotism, for instance, was medically marginalized in England—or to examples of scientific unreliability, incompetence and error. In fact, Stoker

resistible craving of evil for its own sake, the desire not only to extinguish life in the victim, but to mutilate the corpse, tear its flesh, and drink its blood” (1911, xv).

15. See Van Helsing’s comments about the Count in the published text, “This criminal has not full man–brain. He is clever and cunning and resourceful; but he be not of man–stature as to brain. He be of child–brain in much” (*D* 317); see also *D* 280–81.

16. The unreliability of these theories seems to be suggested in *Dracula*: Harker is defined a “physiognomist” (*D* 176) but, ironically, he fails to recognize the danger that the Count’s traits blatantly suggest.

17. For mentions of “brain fever” in the published text, see *D* 94, 99, 167, and 172.

jotted down some excerpts from Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica, or Vulgar Errors* (1646), from which he derived various excerpt focusing on the incompleteness of scientific knowledge (*Notes* 80, Rosenbach 43b).¹⁸ In addition, both *Vulgar Errors* and *Religio Medici*, which is quoted indirectly (*Notes* 106, Rosenbach 67), add to Stoker's penchant for conflation and hybridization of discourses, as Browne's method of scientific enquiry integrated theological and scientific ideas. Similarly, other sources and annotations seem to explore different kinds of dissolution of boundaries among discourses; particular attention is devoted to the connections between medicine and superstition, and include "Mayo, H. Letters on the Truths Contained in Popular Superstitions" and "Pettigrew, T. J. Superstition Connected with Hist. & Medicine" (*Notes* 78, Rosenbach 43a).

The available notes testify to one remarkable exception against a background of heterodox medical ideas and practices: Stoker consulted his brother Sir William Thornley, a prominent surgeon, to learn about brain injuries and their effects on motor abilities. Sir William's explanation, complete with diagrams (*Notes* 81–82, Rosenbach 45a–b), was used in the novel to illustrate the trepanning operation unsuccessfully performed on Renfield (*D* 256–8). As Stiles notes, "Stoker had access to modern medical theories by virtue of his education and ties to prominent physicians," among them his three brothers; yet, "his composition notes for *Dracula* reveal that he often turned to outdated sources," for some reason that "is not immediately obvious" (2012, 58–60). I would argue that, deliberately or not, Stoker's choice of sources and quotations calls attention to the heterogeneous nature of scientific knowledge and its unstable structuring logic. Medicine is an example of a paradox: it attains meaning and authoritativeness through its history, but outdated medical theories and practices often acquire attributes of folklore. Therefore, medicine and folklore are connected through a constant displacement of boundaries over time, a systematic trans-

18. Incidentally, the sections in the first book of *Vulgar Errors* list a series of methodological fallacies that Stoker seems to have programmatically followed in his medical notes: "Credulity," "obstinate adherence unto Antiquity," and "promot[ing] popular conceits."

formation in understanding the past, which implies contamination between different discourses. This contamination may be expanded to contemporary thought: after all, “we see around us every day the growth of new beliefs, which think themselves new; and which are yet but the old, which pretend to be young—like the fine ladies at the opera” (*D* 178).¹⁹

*We seem to be drifting into unknown places and unknown ways*²⁰

As far as the available documentation shows, Stoker’s note-taking procedures reveal various instances of inaccuracy and incoherence, a preference for unreliable sources, and a tendency towards indeterminacy, hybridity, and destabilization. Unsurprisingly, traits of epistemological uncertainty and “propensity for multiple discourse” (Howard 1994, 16) are among the main formal and thematic components of Gothic literature. It is fascinating, however, to see these elements at play on different levels; they pervade not only the thematic, formal and narrative structure of the published text, but also Stoker’s practices of writing and methods of composition. To put it boldly, it seems that for Stoker the Gothic is not only a mode of writing, but also a mode of thought. Besides, observing Stoker’s note-taking methods increases our awareness of the intertextual complexity of *Dracula*: if evidence related to the pre-compositional stage does not enhance the idea of the text’s originality, it shows that perhaps re-presentations and revisions of received knowledge are more deeply interwoven in the fabric of the novel than commonly assumed.

The intertextual and interdiscursive web underlying *Dracula*, for instance, opens the way to reflections concerning the elements

19. As already mentioned, the unreliability of medical discourse also pervades the published text of *Dracula*, which presents a series of failures in medical diagnosis and practice, together with symptoms and states that rupture the most basic principles of human biology: Lucy, for instance, is “more rose and more beautiful in a whole week after she die” (*D* 188).

20. *D* 332.

of the novel “that [are] historically specific to the Irish situation” (Killeen 2014, 27). With reference to the works of Maturin and Le Fanu, Haslam suggests that “recurrent incorporation of folklore” is a “distinctive feature of Irish Gothic” (2007a, 5). However, both the published text of *Dracula* and its documentation show very tenuous links to Irish folklore; these links would include, Miller says, “wolves, fog, mysterious strangers, gypsies and various superstitions” (2005, 63), elements which are hardly culturally specific. Miller also mentions a resemblance between the name “Dracula” and the pronunciation of “droch-fhola,” meaning “bad blood” in Gaelic (2005, 63); actually, Stoker’s notes suggest that he found the name for his character when reading William Wilkinson’s *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (1820), containing the history of Voivode Dracula (Notes 110, Rosenbach 71). The absence of concrete links between *Dracula* and Irish folklore has led some scholars to consider unverifiable connections; Stoker’s mother Charlotte is often mentioned as a source of horrific stories about the time she spent in Sligo during the cholera epidemic of 1832, and her accounts would have been later “recreat[ed]” in the novel (Belford 1996, 139). In addition, Stoker’s familiarity with Irish tales and mythology is often believed to have generated a wavering between science (English rationality) and superstition (Irish irrationality) in *Dracula*. The disservice done to *Dracula* by these interpretations is twofold: on the one hand, they imply that the novel lacks ‘Irish’ origins or motive; on the other, they perpetuate old stereotypes regarding Irish irrationality and Celtic ‘natural magic.’ Then, as Stewart wonders, “[h]ow far is Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* an Irish novel?” (1999b, 238).

Rather than folklore, one of *Dracula*’s specifically ‘Irish’ declinations of the Gothic mode involves the constant concern for (pseudo-)medical discourses, a preoccupation that emerges in both the pre-compositional notes and the published text.²¹ Remarkably, Stoker’s frequent use of medical imagery, terms and tones establishes a relationship with Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s “Carmilla”

21. Maurizio Ascari notes that Stoker “[draws] on his contemporaries’ faith in the power of science to explain what was once perceived as supernatural” (2007, 74).

(1871–72); probably, this is the less discussed aspect of an otherwise well-known derivative process connecting the two texts (see McCormack 1991, 842–43). Martin Willis is among the few scholars who have devoted attention to the role of science in Le Fanu's fiction; in particular, he has focused on "the language and etiology of contagion" and "the discourse of miasmatism" in "Carmilla" (2008, 116) to demonstrate that Le Fanu's "consideration of science is at the same time a consideration of politics" (123). *Dracula*, too, refers to miasma and infection (*D* 233, 297), as well as to a number of other scientific and medical theories which can take on a political complexion. However, Willis's point that Le Fanu "has constructed a contemporary political narrative from disease theories" revealing his "position on the Irish Question" (2008, 128) is hardly applicable to *Dracula*. Neither the published text nor the notes afford grounds for presumptions regarding Stoker's political views; for this reason, I also doubt that Stoker follows Le Fanu in "encapsulat[ing] ... the Irish Question into existing and contradictory scientific ideas" (2008, 124).²² In *Dracula*, medical discourse seems to be variously used to structure dynamics of power between the characters, in a way that could be reminiscent of how tropes of disease and cure have been exploited in long-standing British representations of Ireland.²³

Dracula revolves around doctor/patient relationships, which at different stages of the plot concern almost all characters. Besides being an agent of infection, the Count, who used to be an alchemist, acquires the habit of "creeping into knowledge experimentally" like a Victorian medical student (*D* 281). Professor Van Helsing

22. In this sense, I believe that some aspects of W. J. McCormack's remarks on Stoker may be open to further discussion; for instance, the scholar suggests that Stoker "aligns himself with the London-based exiles" (1991, 845).

23. The 'physician and patient' theme is long-standing in political discourse regarding England and Ireland; for instance, as early as 1596, Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* compared the colony to a diseased body that could be healed by a colonizer-physician. Similarly, in the 1670s William Petty opened his *Political Anatomy of Ireland* by stating: "... as Students in Medicine, practice their inquiries upon cheap and common *Animals*, and such whose actions they are best acquainted with, and where there is the least confusion and perplexure of Parts; I have chosen *Ireland* as such a *Political Animal*..." (1691, "The Author's Preface," n.p.)

and John Seward are unable to prevent the death of the “excitable” sleepwalker Lucy Westenra (*D* 71), Jonathan Harker experiences “a violent brain fever” (94), Mina Murray recovers from the vampire’s attack (267), and Renfield is a “homicidal maniac” (68) in a “strait–waistcoat” (98). Even if only temporarily, the most common roles assumed by the main characters are those of physicians, sick patients, and raving lunatics. Interestingly, the latter two categories are identified by Michael de Nie as prevalent with reference to stereotypical figures of the Irish in nineteenth-century British periodicals (2004, 267). Both after the Clerkenwell explosion and during the Land War, a whirl of British reports shared “a feeling that Ireland [was] inflicted with an incurable disease” and “the strait–waistcoat” was needed “for her mad fits” (*Daily Telegraph*, 19 December 1867, cited in de Nie 2004, 4, 225). On 8 June 1867, *Punch* published a sketch titled “The Mad Doctor,” showing Paddy²⁴ in a straitjacket beside Dr. Bull, who paternalistically reassures Hibernia: “Cut his head off? Of course not, my dear. We shall just crop him, and shave him, and take good care that he does no more mischief” (reproduced in de Nie 2004, 165).

On 16 March 1870, *Judy* published a cartoon titled “The Impatient Patient,” where a childish Paddy refuses the medicine administered by Doctor Gladstone (reproduced in de Nie 2004, 194). The fatherly gesture in the sketch may remind us of Van Helsing’s attitude while treating Lucy: “Now, little miss, here is your medicine. Drink it off, like a good child. See, I lift you so that to swallow is easy. Yes” (*D* 115). By 25 September 1881, according to *The Weekly Dispatch*, Ireland was watched once again “with the suspense that is felt when a new and powerful medicine has been given to a patient on whom all other means have been tried in vain” (cited in de Nie 2004, 229). During the Land War, Paddy was commonly represented as a sick and capricious child because, the *York Post and Leeds Intelligencer* claimed on 21 December 1881, “the mass of the Irish are still only children” (cited in de Nie 2004, 222). Like Dracu-

24. The stereotype of Irish “Paddy,” a childlike and belligerent boor, was a constant protagonist of British weeklies’ sketches since the early Victorian period; he often appeared alongside the symbolic Englishman, “John Bull,” a reasonable father and wise physician.

la, who is said to have a “child–brain” (*D* 317), Paddy was described as possessing “the strength of a man and the mind of a child—a kind of moral FRANKENSTEIN, scarcely morally responsible for his acts” (*Liverpool Journal*, 5 February 1848, cited in de Nie 2004, 122). After all, an “anecdote of [Irish] rebels licking he blood off the blades of their pikes was probably the most repeated tale” in 1798 (de Nie 2004, 61). These connections, of course, do not imply that *Dracula* draws directly on British characterizations of the Irish; it is also debatable whether Stoker elaborated “an imperialist fiction” based on theories of disease (Willis 2011, 31). *Dracula* seems to retain faint ‘memories’ of a cultural discourse; more or less consciously, it re-articulates and hybridises the eccentricity and complexity of some popular images of Ireland.

A similar point can be made regarding the ‘Eastern’ setting of *Dracula*. As we have seen, Stoker’s note-taking tends to create an image of Balkans that is indefinite enough to evoke many other possible locations. This indeterminacy, rich in clichés of unspoilt rural-ity, might have encouraged establishing adventurous associations between Transylvania and Ireland, to the point that, Gibson notes, “Transylvania is for a large number of critics merely a masked Ireland” (2006, 69). Actually, there exist oblique relationships between Stoker’s Transylvania and Ireland, whose import could be obscured by oversimplifications. It has already been noted that Johnson’s *On the Track of the Crescent*, one of Stoker’s main sources, repeatedly compares Balkan peoples to the Irish (e.g. Glover 1996, 34). In particular, for Johnson the Wallachs are as “grossly superstitious” as the Irish (1885, 249), and the Székelys are “a curious combination of the canny Scot and the imprudent Irishman ... Like the latter, they are excitable, and, consequently, despondent under reverses” (1885, 235). These comparisons, however, do not seem to have attracted Stoker’s attention enough to be included among his notes. Besides *On the Track of the Crescent*, Stoker drew much on another travelogue, Andrew Crosse’s *Round about the Carpathians* (1878). Crosse’s text shares a number of features with Johnson’s, not last, the habit of referring repeatedly to Ireland as a term of comparison—especially regarding political matters: “In the last century, in 1784, there was a dreadful outbreak of the Wallacks. Individually

they are really not bad fellows ... and one hears of fewer murders among them than perhaps in Ireland" (1878, 250). In this case, Stoker transcribes one of Crosse's analogies, although quite a trivial one: in Rosenbach 55 (*Notes* 94), he types "paprika hendl and 'gulg-as' [sic] (sort of Irish stew)," ²⁵ whereas the original text says, "[o]f course we had paprika handl (chicken with red pepper), and gulyas, a sort of improved Irish stew" (1878, 141). Curiously, Stoker's tendency to summarize his sources did not affect Crosse's reference to Ireland, except for the evaluative adjective.

The two travelogues did not inspire Stoker to turn Transylvania into 'another' Ireland, but I believe they showed him a specific rhetorical mode of narration, which primarily consists in "establishing authority through demarcation of identity and difference" (Spurr 1993, 7). The few quotations included above from Johnson and Crosse's accounts show how they maintained a sense of superiority towards the peoples they encountered, and the repeated references to Ireland suggest that they were adapting colonial discourse to what they perceived as a periphery of Europe, or an "insufficiently European Europe" (Goldsworthy 2006, 32). As Katarina Gephardt notes, *On the Track of the Crescent* and *Round about the Carpathians* "share a similar pattern of initial 'othering,' which involves an application of colonial discourse to the unfamiliar aspects of Eastern Europe," followed by "the effect of 'mirroring,' when ... they recognize the parallels between Britain and the Hapsburg Empire" (2016, 153). In particular, Johnson and Crosse's analogies between the Balkans and Ireland fall into the first procedure, as they are clearly comparing two instances of 'otherness.' Stoker seemed little interested in the specific connections drawn by these travelogues (at least according to the available notes), but he probably noticed and picked up their 'frontier rhetoric' and techniques of representation. Indeed, Harker's journal swings between 'othering' and 'mirroring:' after having complained about inaccurate train timetables in the East, Harker notes, "[a]t every station there were groups of people, sometimes crowds, and in all sorts of attire. Some of them were just like the peasants at home or those I saw coming through France and

25. "Paprika hendl" is mentioned in *D* 6.

Germany" (D 6). However, he is soon reminded, "we are in Transylvania; and Transylvania is not England" (D 23).

"[W]e must not draw the customary inference that the social landscape of Stoker's Transylvania deliberately and directly evokes the conditions of contemporary Ireland," Valente points out, "but rather that Harker's report on Transylvania evokes a multigeneric, multiethnic, and multiperspectival construction of Ireland that had developed, unevenly, over an extended period" (2002, 53). One might add that a sense of 'Irishness' is evoked in Harker's report through a rhetorical mode connected to representation of authority and frontier discourse, a mode which is rooted in the Irish cultural imaginary, but is also part of a wider and complex social and political context, as suggested by the indeterminacy of the Balkan setting in *Dracula*. Stoker's novel, as well as his note-taking procedures, shatters the monologism of any definite position and escapes ideological boundaries; culturally specific imagery is diluted and conflated in a network of discourses. Whether and to what extent this sense of cultural and historical 'permeability' might expand the unstable list of distinctive features of Irish Gothic is a question left open to further inquiry.

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