

“I Am Full of Vague Fear, and I Feel So Weak and Worn Out”: The Fin-de-Siècle Syphilophobia in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*

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ABSTRACT

The syphilis epidemic of late Victorian Britain not only marked a health hazard but also attributed its spread to prostitution, the fin-de-siècle decadence, in a pervasive oppression and surveillance of female sexuality. In Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and Francis Ford Coppola’s film adaptation of the novel, vampirism works as a trope for venereal diseases, reflecting the response to the period’s syphilis epidemic and its perceived threat to Victorian society. By analysing the similitude between the vampiric and syphilitic contagions, this essay attempts to dissect how *Dracula* constructs and “Gothicises” the fear of syphilis as a gender anxiety within late-Victorian social disciplines.

KEYWORDS: vampirism; *Dracula*; syphilis; prostitution; fin-de-siècle

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As Elaine Showalter puts it, “during a period of gender crisis, the iconography of syphilis pervaded English [fin-de-siècle literature]” (“Syphilis” 166). As early products of the flowering of Gothic novels in the late Victorian age, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) are infiltrated by this syphilitic “iconography.” According to Joanne Townsend, Dorian Gray’s depravity may be construed as “the ravages of syphilis on the nation’s young men,” and Mr Hyde could even be read as “syphilis personified,” as he “provoked disgusting, loathing and fear” in contemporary English society (69). Following this Gothic tradition, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) is certainly no exception, with its depiction of the “spread of ‘syphilophobia’” in the late Victorian age (Liggins 177). In his story, “biting, sucking and [body fluid] transfusions” are all metaphors which link vampirism with the furtive and probably “syphilitic and deadly” act of love-making (Koc and Demir 428). Nick Groom in his *The Vampire: A New History* also remarks that “the whole nature of the vampire [in *Dracula*] has been rewritten as a protracted sado-masochistic sexual fantasy, appealing to every kink and sex-crime, from voyeurism to seduction, from paedophilia to gang rape” (183-84). All these paraphiliac *jouissances* are potential mediums of syphilitic promulgation, for as Van Helsing in Francis Ford Coppola’s film adaptation, *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992), discourses in his debut oration, venereal diseases (“the diseases of Venus”) “are involved in that sex problem about which the ethics and ideals of Christian civilization are concerned” (00:56:15-40).

By the late Victorian era, syphilis and other venereal diseases such as gonorrhoea had been assessed by “many doctors and public officials” as “a serious health hazard for the British population” (Walkowitz 48). Hence, along with this microbial infection, a contagion of syphilophobic anxiety swept through both British people and Stoker’s Irish compatriots. From 1864 to 1897, the British government published three Contagious Disease Acts (CD Acts) to prevent the spread of venereal diseases nationwide, which at the time, however, intensified syphilis anxiety in British society, triggering public animosity towards prostitutes, “fear of female sexuality and intensified misogyny”, as well as conjugal distrust and efforts to promote celibacy (Showalter, “Syphilis” 172). Meanwhile, lock hospitals, female penitentiaries, Magdalene asylums and other of what Michel Foucault calls “compact model[s] of the disciplinary mechanism” were rapidly developing (*Discipline* 197). They were created not

to prevent the spread of venereal diseases but to stifle or curtail civil, particularly female, “lust.” Though the CD Acts were finally abolished in 1886, after the persistent efforts of the Repeal Movement, launched by the Repealers (consisting mainly of middle-class females), the later National Vigilance Association (NVA), most members of which were the previous Repealers, was not so much a “protective surveillance” to purify British society as a disguised female sexual restraint (Bland 405).

All these late-Victorian social events may have influenced Stoker’s writing, wherein he reproduced the syphilis contagion as vampirism. Accordingly, in this essay I illustrate the iconography of syphilis in *Dracula* in an attempt to historicise the text in late Victorian Britain, thereby revealing the era’s (female) syphilophobia as both rooted in becoming a victim of this incurable disease and ‘Gothicised’ out of fear of being cast out by repressive Victorian social disciplines. Admittedly, since the 1980s some critics have already attributed vampirism in *Dracula* to syphilis (Showalter, “Syphilis” 172-73; Tracy 45; Spear 191-92; Byrne 130; Koc and Demir 428-29). However, they confine their arguments to generalities or fragments, and fail to further reference the *Dracula* text in detail. Additionally, none of them links the syphilophobia represented in the text to a larger social context in which female sexuality was tightly controlled by male power. This is where my study presents new and advanced findings.

I. Deformed Teeth, Dementia and Floriography: Stoker’s Syphilis Imagination

Dracula was once belittled as a platitudinous horror fiction written by a cack-handed storyteller, but recently, critics have begun to translate the vampiric symptoms it describes as those “of the terror of its age” (Ellmann viii). The blood in the novel not only stands for a supernatural power, heathenish threats, or economical or geopolitical conflicts, but more importantly and obviously, it refers to a biological substance, a parable of British people’s anxiety for fin-de-siècle contagions. Rabies, porphyrin and cholera are all diseases that critics have presupposed as the vampirism trope’s meaning in *Dracula*. As for venereal diseases specifically, they “gripped the popular imagination” in late Victorian Britain (Ellmann viii).

In *Dracula*, when Dr John Seward discusses Lucy's symptoms with Van Helsing, the latter remarks "very gravely" that "this case of our dear miss is one that may be . . . of such interest to us" (Stoker 119). The two doctors' instinctive judgment to equate Lucy's condition with an intriguing medical case may partially attest to the latent affinity between vampirism and contagious diseases. Furthermore, in Coppola's film adaptation of the novel, Van Helsing makes his screen debut while giving a lecture on diseases of the blood, particularly highlighting syphilis as "concern[ing] [them] here." Just then, he receives Seward's telegraph about Lucy's "near death" condition due to a "disease of the blood" (00:55:30-56:50), which also suggests "how useful it is as a means to" analyse this novel (Byrne 130). Indeed, vampirism is depicted as akin to syphilitic iconography, with their parallels evidenced in analogous symptoms.

Notably, in *Dracula* there is no dearth of similarities between the tools against vampirism and treatments for syphilis infection. To begin with, while Lucy sleeps, Seward notices in her open mouth her "pale gums drawn back from the teeth" that "looked positively longer and sharper than usual" (Stoker 152-53). Later, on her death bed, Lucy's canine teeth are portrayed as "longer and sharper than the rest" (159). The deformity of teeth is one of the typical features of a (soon-to-be) vampire. Yet, previous depictions of vampires' teeth seem slightly different from those in *Dracula*. Generally, vampire's upper canines are depicted as "somewhat protruded," while "the other upper anteriors (central and lateral incisors)" are also "slightly retruded" (Morse 193). In *Dracula*, however, despite Lucy's long and sharp canines, her "upper incisors [seem] normal-appearing" (Morse 193). Stoker in this obfuscatory modification challenges the stereotypical depiction of vampire physiognomy, and in this way possibly demotes the condition's sanguinary perversity to a purely pathological suffering. Significantly, "the deformed teeth" may also be rendered as a Lacanian "floating signifier," which may refer not merely to vampirism: the later stages of syphilis are "associated with [symptoms including] Hutchinson's teeth" (Kelly 74). In children with congenital syphilis, these "Hutchinson's teeth" are "sharp and pointed," and appear more "vampire-like" (Morse 192). These children also generally have a "pallid complexion" (Morse 192), akin to Lucy's "ghastly, chalkily pale" look, as Seward records (Stoker 120), which also contributes to the likeness between vampirism and syphilitic symptoms.

Additionally, in *Dracula*, the lunatic Renfield functions as Count Dracula's lackey, calling "the Count 'lord and master'"; he eventually also dies

at the hands of Dracula (Stoker 248). Renfield's "haughty," "uneasy and at length violent" behaviour when the Count approaches Carfax (his English estate) is therefore probably the effect of vampirism (100, 107), though this paroxysm of insanity may also echo the dementia regarded in the late Victorian age as a typical syphilitic symptom. According to case records from Dublin's Asylum, patients with syphilis were also diagnosed as suffering from dementia (C. Smith 1351-53), a Victorian-era umbrella term for "any severe, chronic or recurrent mental illness" (Kelly 75). In late nineteenth-century Europe, syphilis even became a synonym for mental illness. As Andrew Scull observes in his *Madness: A Very Short Introduction*, "myriad victims of what we now know was tertiary syphilis . . . found their way into the asylum," and they alone "accounted for . . . as high as 29.2% [of admissions] at the Charenton Asylum in Paris" in fin-de-siècle Europe (54). Elaine Showalter also states in her *The Female Malady* that "in the 1890s, research in medical science and cellular pathology proved . . . that general paralysis of the insane . . . was actually the terminal form of syphilis" (110-11). Seward's "immense lunatic asylum" could then metaphorically represent a milieu where overt sexuality (the cause of the inmates' paroxysmal madness, and probably the medium of syphilitic spread) is under serious custody and "silence be[comes] the rule" therein (Stoker 55; Foucault, *History* 3). I return to this thread in section III.

Stoker also uses two florigraphical symbols, garlic and wild rose, as tools to ward off vampirism. Van Helsing hangs a wreath of garlic flowers around Lucy's neck and rubs "them all over the sashes" (130-31). He boasts to Lucy of the smell as "like the waves of Lethe" (130). When Lucy derides the consecrated flowers as "only common garlic," Van Helsing warns her not to thwart him and demands her absolute obedience (130-31). Martin Willis argues that the garlic flowers could be "a metonymy for antiseptic that combats the metaphor of vampirism as microbe" (313). Indeed, in the coronavirus pandemic, garlic also "emerged as a possible protection against Covid-19 due to its possible anti-microbial properties" (Groom, "Viral Vampires" 12). In the context of late Victorian Britain, such "microbes" perhaps also point to the chlamydiae of venereal diseases. Although there is scarce scientific evidence that suggests the medical functions of garlic to cure or mitigate venereal diseases, in Jemma Stewart's view, garlic in *Dracula* is a floral succedaneum for narcotics: it "subdu[es]" the female "into passivity," "pacifying or suppressing wild, sexual desire" (337). Garlic may then "metaphorically [work]

to counteract the threat of . . . venereal disease from sexual profligacy, represented through vampirism” (337). Apart from garlic, wild rose is used against Count Dracula as well. In chapter 18, Mina in her journal records Van Helsing’s plan that “the branch of wild rose on [the Count’s] coffin keep him that he move not from it” (Stoker 240). Intriguingly, Muriel Sweet notes that “an infusion of chamise bark and leaves [from the rose family]” can be used to treat syphilis (18). This also testifies to the homogeneity of treatments for both vampirism and syphilis.

II. “Unclean” Bodies: Lascivious Flesh and Innocent Hosts

By the late Victorian period, the dominant medical view still preserved a misogynist tradition which branded women as “the source and active promulgators of syphilis” (Liggins 177). Emma Liggins describes that the female body was denigrated as “diseased” or of “deformity” from even “the earliest Greek medical discourse,” partially because the “vagina and secretions were . . . considered . . . somehow aberrant and diseased” compared with male genitalia (2, 5). Simone de Beauvoir theorizes similar viewpoints in *The Second Sex*, wherein she satires that “a constellation of [social] factors . . . transform this difference [between male and female sexual organs] into a female inferiority,” simply because “in a sense [a girl] has no [real] sex organ . . . to be grasped in the hand” (277). Not surprisingly, in Victorian Britain, women, particularly sex workers, “were then repeatedly troped as” the hosts of venereal diseases (Liggins 3). In this apparent fin-de-siècle witch hunt, many innocent “Angels in the house” were yet inculpated in their surrender to male bestiality. A number of female syphilis victims in late Victorian Britain contracted this “sinful” disease after they were raped, akin to a scene that Stoker metaphorically reproduces in his fiction. In chapter 22 of *Dracula*, when Mina realizes that she has been ravished by the Count Dracula, she wails out for her “polluted” body: “Unclean! Unclean! Even the Almighty shuns my polluted flesh! I must bear this mark of shame upon my forehead until the Judgement Day” (Stoker 296). Worse yet, male sexual violence was “interpreted as part of woman’s seductive play”; thus, a female victim of sexual harassment could hardly convince magistrates that she “was [really] a respectable lady” (Romero-Ruiz, “Shaping” 127). According to Deborah Logan, Victorian women “had no legal recourse against engagements broken after sexual consummation, much

less against seducers or rapists of any class,” and it was indeed the “loss of virginity” that compelled some innocent maidens to become prostitutes or die (30). Some of them sought solace in narcotics as well, with Elia Chepaitis observing that certain prostitutes “used opium to treat venereal diseases” (13). Similarly, in *Dracula*, Mina “ask[s] Dr Seward to give [her] a little opiate of some kind” and “a dose of chloral” to “have a good night’s sleep” without “hurt[ing]” her, after she is bitten and begins the process of becoming a vampire (Stoker 259-60).

Some victims of rape even resorted to infanticide as their revenge (Logan 30). Likewise, in *Dracula*, children fall prey to female vampires. In Transylvania, for instance, Count Dracula steals a child to satiate his three “she-beings” (Stoker 45), and when Lucy becomes a vampire, she also, as a “bloofer lady”, attacks only children (177). In these plot designs, Stoker may accuse these females of their sorrowful deeds and, further, insinuate male malevolence and patriarchal prosecution in the Victorian age. Notably, “the deflowered virgin” was objectified as “damaged goods,” bereft of any “economic values” (Logan 30). For a married woman, a post-nuptial assault could mean both a degeneration with an “unclean” body “targeted as the source of the [sinful venereal] diseases,” and her husband’s repudiation (Sponberg 2). In Stoker’s novel, after Mina is violated by Count Dracula, even her husband “made up [his] mind” that “if [they] [found] out that Mina must be a vampire in the end,” then she should be excluded from their vampire hunt (Stoker 297). Van Helsing also exhorts Seward that “[their] dear Madam Mina, [was] changing” and they henceforth “must keep her ignorant of [their] intent” to prevent her disclosure to the Count through telepathy (323).

Nevertheless, even an unravished married woman in late Victorian Britain was not guaranteed to be spared from syphilis distress. Syphilis indeed “bridges the Victorian’s perpetual divide between” a whore and a pure girl, “marking [them] alike with the trace of their common lovers’ contaminated touch” (Kennedy 262). Renfield’s enigmatic answer in chapter 8, “the bride-maidens rejoice the eyes that wait the coming of the bride; but when the bride draweth nigh, then the maidens shine not to the eyes that are filled” (Stoker 101), is possibly a clairvoyant riddle suggesting that the Count’s prey would shift from the “maiden” (his three she-beings and Lucy, though she was betrothed) to the married “bride” Mina. This puzzling remark may also be interpreted as the metaphoric suggestion that the vampiric syphilis was not confined to

promulgation within houses of unmarriageable prostitutes but had also spread to conjugal beds. Indeed, Karen Winstead states that many wives in Victorian era were “made . . . the victims of [decadent] syphilitic husbands,” as they were ignorant of their spouse’s infidelity and his premarital debauchery (315). This gave rise to the “dest[ruction]” of “notions of the innocent wife,” because “her body bears the same physical signs as that of the prostitute diseased through promiscuity” (Liggins 179).

This is to say that marriage was no longer a “safe haven” of male degeneration, which incurred late Victorian females’ “increasing antipathy to the role of innocent wife,” as a spate of fin-de-siècle New Woman novels highlighted (Liggins 190, 175). Instead, New Woman novelists such as Sarah Grand and Emma Brooke attempted to produce “a new kind of feminine ideal” that possesses “privileged sexual knowledge, not sexual ignorance,” so as not to be easily capitulated by the “Husband-Fiend” (Miller 15). For example, in Emma Brooke’s novel *A Superfluous Woman* (1894), the heroine Jessamine refuses courtship from Lord Heriot but is passionate for the healthy farmer Colin Macgillivray, because the latter “arouses in her an intense desire” whilst the aristocratic suitor, in her view, is “the most debauched of men” (Liggins 187-88). Likewise, in Grand’s *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), Evadne vilifies her husband as a “moral leper” and hints that the male body is the real promulgator of venereal diseases during her conversation with Mrs Orton Beg. Both of these New Woman novelists dissent from the then-prevalent medical view which attached innocent wives to the stigma of venereal diseases. Stoker must have been aware of these New Woman ideologies, as in *Dracula*, he depicts Mina as a traditional innocent maiden who envisions a society with gender equality (where women have more autonomous decisions over their sexuality and mate selection), but who then disassembles her own progressive thoughts with a joke about the New Woman campaigners:

Some of the “New Woman” writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But I suppose the New Woman won’t condescend in future to accept; she will do the proposing herself. And a nice job she will make of it, too! There’s some consolation in that. (Stoker 89)

But in the late-nineteenth century, these innocent victims, once infected with syphilis in their marriage, were “subsequently” seen as “hav[ing] an aptitude for prostitution” (Spongberg 1). Interestingly, in *Dracula*, after Lucy the betrothed is infected with the metaphorical vampirism, she descends to “outstretched [lustful] arms and a wanton smile” (Stoker 211). Her nocturnal prowl as a handsome young lady is also rare and unacceptable in late Victorian Britain, since only prostitutes loitered alone at night. Seward’s journal even describes the vampire Lucy as “a devilish mockery of Lucy’s sweet purity” (214). Such portrayals remind readers of Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, where Hyde is also the “devilish” double or “the lethal side” of Jekyll (Stevenson 55). In Stoker’s horror novel, it is then feasible to interpret Lucy’s vampiric afterlife as the darker recesses of her prior unconscious—or rather, her “lethal side” verges on exposing her maidenhood’s sexual proclivity. Revealingly, in a letter the maiden Lucy confides to Mina her seemingly promiscuous fancy: “why can’t they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her?” (Stoker 59). Such an immoral ease of libido, albeit in a private correspondence, is translated by Groom as “already” divulging her “half-vampire” state (*Gothic* 97). Carol Senf even reads Lucy’s “symptoms of . . . over-sexual reactions” as her descent into a case of “nymphomania” (119). To some extent, her perverse sexuality becomes blatant after she transforms into a vampire, which corresponds to the Victorian belief mentioned above that it is after the infection of “syphilitic vampirism” that an innocent woman may have the aptitude for immoral, wanton behaviour. Here, we can see that Stoker’s attitude towards Victorian female sexuality seems ambivalent or, to use Stephanie Demetrakopoulos’s term, “bipartite” (111). On the one hand, Stoker’s description of Lucy’s degeneration into a “wanton” literally panders to the stereotypical “female typology” in the 1890s. His biography also demonstrates his “chivalric statements” that those “Angels of the house” were merely “sweet and helpless,” and it was of men’s “noblesse oblige” to offer them protective surveillance (Demetrakopoulos 111). On the other hand, bringing in this patriarchal discourse indicates Stoker’s ironic perception of the then-popular misogynist stance. Thus, *Dracula* may be “far more supportive of the [feminist spirit] than is often allowed” (Kistler 367). Whichever it is, to probe into authorial intention is meaningless unless we further read the text under a “historicist/contextualist” paradigm (North 1). Therefore, in the next

section, I ascribe the late-Victorian syphilophobia troped in Stoker's text to a deeper fear of being an Other outside of 1890s social disciplines.

III. Sterilizing Society: From the CD Acts to the NVA

Andrew Smith notes that the late-Victorian attempt to “pathologise the prostitute was one aspect of a particular coercive form of control,” and this control was often “made manifest in specific expressions of institutionalised male power” (97). In the 1860s, for example, in response to the high rates of syphilis infection among military clients, the British government enforced the CD Acts (Bland 399). According to David Pivar, between 1864 and 1869, one third of the total “Army sick cases involved venereal diseases” (256), and the infection of these soldiers might have mostly come from “prostitutes in certain military depots” (Bland 399). The CD Acts worked to regulate prostitution and required every “identified prostitute” to “undergo medical examinations” (Pivar 257). If they were found diseased, they had to be “detained for treatment” (257). Although this historically notorious legislation was repealed in 1886, the CD Acts marked the beginning of discipline and “patriarchal[ly] . . . ordered” control over supposedly deviant bodies (Romero-Ruiz, “Identity” 71). Considering the “mid-Victorian social and sexual ideology” manifested in the CD Acts, we see that the contemporary government introduced regulations not to curtail male lust in the army (later extended to the public; Walkowitz 69). Rather, men's concupiscence seemed rationalized in this legislation, and prostitution was even believed “to be a necessity” so long as these “identified . . . fallen women” were regularly examined and ensured “cleaned” (Bland 400). Tabitha Sparks concludes that “the CD Acts targeted prostitutes rather than soldiers as the progenitors” of syphilis, thus “anticipat[ing] the defensive imperialism . . . that identified racial outsiders as both feminine and sexual” (115). For a period, the ideology to objectify and commodify women prevailed, and “the forced inspection, detention and [mal]treatment of” prostitutes and any suspicious women ensued. This led to the prosperity of “disciplinary institutions” in the late-nineteenth century (Foucault, *Discipline* 139), ranging from philanthropic convent houses directed by Anglican sisterhoods to the horrid lock wards and asylums (Mumm 527-28). In *Dracula*, Seward's lunatic asylum, where his “wonderful power” that Lucy fancies is

“over his patients,” is probably one representative of the contemporary lock hospitals in which most patients were syphilitic prostitutes (Stoker 55).

There were two reasons for them to be detained there. First, according to the CD Acts and public attitude, a syphilitic prostitute was “represented as a figure of contagion and disease that had to be controlled and contained,” and it was also stipulated that “women with syphilis” should be “confined for [at least one month], until the primary sores disappeared” (Romero-Ruiz, “Identity” 73, 76). Second, as I mentioned in the first section, a syphilitic patient was regarded as having a propensity for madness, and besides, “hysteria has long-standing association with the purported nature of femininity” (J. Smith 129). Therefore, a syphilitic prostitute (of the insane, weaker sex) was generally demonized as a dangerous figure who had to be confined and disciplined. Within lock asylums, the diseased women were further prosecuted by patriarchal tyranny, as they “were trained in values of subordination . . . the domesticity and respectability” (Romero-Ruiz, “Identity” 73).

According to Sparks, Stoker’s *Dracula* exactly depicts fin-de-siècle “medical doctors seizing . . . control over women’s sexuality” (111). In chapter 21, when an attendant sees Renfield “lying on the floor on his left side in a glittering pool of blood,” with “his back . . . broken” and “both his right arm and leg and the whole side of his face paralysed,” he immediately recalls “a young woman” who perished in such a similarly puzzling pose “at the Eversfield Asylum before anyone could lay hands on her” (Stoker 274-75). This affiliated woman, probably a diseased prostitute herself detained in a lock asylum, may have been a victim who could not tolerate the stringent quarantine and chose suicide. In fact, in such penitentiary-like lock wards (including the infamous London Lock Hospital and the Lock Asylum in Osnauburg Road), doctors “cared less about [the prostitutes’] ultimate cure than curtailing their sexual behaviour while they were visibly contagious” (Walkowitz 229). Analogously, in *Dracula*, when Seward finds Renfield consuming living creatures in search of their “life-force,” he is relieved that Renfield “had not been any trouble to” him (Stoker 190). Seward does not care about whether or not his patient’s zoophagous (life-eating) insanity could be ultimately cured, even regarding his behaviour “as sane as he ever was” (190). Sparks also argues that in fin-de-siècle Britain, “doctors use[d] the [diseased] women as objects of explorative research” (112). In *Dracula*, Seward’s nearly morbid fascination with Renfield’s case, as revealed when he confesses “the case of Renfield grows

more interesting the more I get to understand the man” (Stoker 68), exactly mirrors contemporary doctors’ voyeuristic snooping on (fallen) female patients and the Victorians’ “fascinat[ion] [with] deviance and obsess[ion] with its control” (Mumm 527). Seward’s asylum is not limited to a representative or fictional reproduction of the hideous lock hospitals for syphilitic prostitutes, but might become the epitome of a repressive, disciplined society in late Victorian Britain, where “the functioning of an extensive power that b[ore] in a distinct way [was] over all individual bodies” (Foucault, *Discipline* 198). As Foucault indicates, “the existence of a whole set of [acts, regulations] and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal brings into play the disciplinary mechanisms to which [syphilophobia] gave rise” (*Discipline* 199), though even he fails to “explore the possibility that the irrationality and difference the asylum silenced and confined is also the feminine” (Showalter, *Female Malady* 6).

Admittedly, lock hospitals did offer some treatment for detained prostitutes, with most conducting mercury therapy. Mercury, along with arsenicals and narcotics, was “praised as a panacea in [nineteenth-century Europe,] only to be relegated to obscurity in the next” generation (Sartin and Perry 256). In its earliest depiction, a French engraving published by Martinet in 1816 portrays a scene in which doctors present “poultices, opiates and mercury pills” to syphilitic officers after the Battle of Waterloo (Morton 280). Similar therapies appear in *Dracula*. In chapter 12, Seward records that “Van Helsing made a subcutaneous injection of morphia [for Lucy] . . . and with good effects” (Stoker 149). The morphia here is possibly “used not just as a narcotic, but as a base embalming solution (along with . . . mercury)” to treat the syphilitically perished female body (Scandura 18). In Victorian lock hospitals, cleanliness was another indispensable “treatment of primary syphilis” (Romero-Ruiz, “Identity” 75). Similarly, in the same chapter, Seward and Van Helsing “got a bath, and carried Lucy out as she was and placed her in it” and then “were busy chafing her limbs” (Stoker 147). Though this scene seems somewhat erotic, bathing Lucy for her treatment accords with the general medical practices for syphilitic prostitutes in contemporary lock hospitals.

The mercury and narcotics drugs, though they effectively “inhibited the progress of [the patients’] disease,” injured the inmates’ “teeth and kidney system[s]” (Walkowitz 229). But the poor teeth and kidney health, as worsened by this improper treatment, were only one aspect of the poor living conditions

that patients faced in lock wards. Josephine Butler in her report on the women in the garrison towns of Kent records that one patient “thinks her hands have been poisoned; they have broken out in such sores” (qtd. in Walkowitz 316). Besides, some women even “complained of being burned” in lock hospitals (Walkowitz 229). All those tortuous daily routines drove the inmates to frequently revolt against the authority in hospitals. As Judith Walkowitz points out, “riots occurred annually at the Royal Portsmouth” (215). Likewise, in chapter 11 of *Dracula*, Renfield also tries to revolt against Dr Seward: “His face distorted with passion,” he “had a dinner-knife in his hand” and he “struck at [Seward] and cut [his] left wrist rather severely” (Stoker 141). His attitude is possibly similar to that of detained prostitutes in real lock wards.

By the 1880s, however, the British public recognized that lock hospitals, “penitentiaries, reformatories” and other disciplinary institutions became “ineffective in stemming prostitution,” and a “fourth and broader” social purity movement was therefore launched (Bartley 155). In this context, the NVA was created, with its initial intent to “question, challenge, curtail and change men’s sexual behaviour as well as women’s” (156). To realize such a purpose, the NVA, in alliance with the police and magistrates, at first sought to close houses of prostitution. It jettisoned “even a modicum of sympathy” to those fallen women, and “viewed [them] as an infected group who would contaminate society” (158). In *Dracula*, if vampirism is seen as the trope of syphilis, then Dracula’s castle and his residences in Britain can be translated as metaphors for brothels, from which venereal diseases (i.e., vampirism) spread and wherein his three she-beings and the new female vampire Lucy are regarded as diseased prostitutes seducing male clients. Indeed, according to Margaret Strobel, women from continental Europe, especially the regions of Russia, Poland and Romania (of which Transylvania is a part), “dominated prostitution [in London] until 1910” (28). In light of this view, the vampire hunt team in *Dracula* may be viably read as the counterpart of the NVA in real late Victorian society. In chapter 23, for instance, Lucy complains to Jonathan that “[to hunt for the Count] is not a work of hate,” and shows her compassion for Count Dracula as “the poor soul who was wrought all this misery [in] the saddest case of all” (Stoker 308). She suggests that the team “must be pitiful to him” and abandon further efforts (308). However, Jonathan swears that “if beyond [destroying the earthly life of Dracula] [he] could send [the Count’s] soul for ever and ever to burning hell [he] would do it” (309). The team’s fierce determination here

borders on that of the NVA, as the latter wished for a thoroughly purified British society, indirectly preserving “an emblem of the Empire” in the last years of Pax Britannica, “when Great Britain was beginning to suffer a process of decline” (Romero-Ruiz, “Shaping” 140). Ironically, the NVA, through its social purity movement, “appeared unconcerned about the future of [(these probably diseased) prostitutes] thrown out of the brothels”; it actually “brutified” them but did not “reclaim” them (Bartley 168-69). Indeed, one of its effects was increased violence against illicit prostitutes. In *Dracula*, Van Helsing likewise proposes that they shall “cut off [Lucy’s] head and fill her mouth with garlic, and . . . drive a stake through her body” (Stoker 201). Even Seward shudders “to think of so mutilating her body” (201). This dark act also recalls the brutal deeds of Jack the Ripper in the 1880s, who committed a series of crimes against prostitutes in London, all outcasts from late-Victorian social disciplines.

In fact, female vigilantes of the NVA, most of whom were once the advocates of the repeal of the CD Acts, infiltrated every corner of Victorian Britain, yet they “ma[de] the [Victorian] women the victims of strict surveillance and control” (Romero-Ruiz, “Shaping” 132). Romero-Ruiz remarks that these social purists further “developed . . . the philanthropy and rescue work . . . in working-class neighbourhoods,” and as a result, “girls suffered an even stricter control of their lives and bodies, making their existence extremely difficult” (139). This form of control over (potential) “fallen women” transferred from lock hospitals under the CD Acts to stricter, ubiquitous surveillance by agents of the NVA, resembling what Foucault calls the transition of discipline from the “discipline blockade” to “panopticism,” from “a schema of exceptional discipline to one of a generalized surveillance” (*Discipline* 209). In such a transition, streetwalkers were “hunted from place to place” (Bartley 168), and “the exercise of power” became “lighter, more rapid, [and] more effective” (Foucault, *Discipline* 209). The NVA’s surveillance in the late-nineteenth century is identical to Jeremy Bentham’s “panopticon,” “a cruel, ingenious cage,” “everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in space or in time” (*Discipline* 205, 209).

Stoker and Coppola in their versions of *Dracula* also discuss the issue of pervasive surveillance and the Victorian need to “monitor” its citizens for compliance. In his film, Coppola promotes “a generalized panoptic surveillance (signaled by extreme overhead shots or enormous eyes appearing in the sky)” (Pheasant-Kelly 10). Within Stoker’s novel, Lucy and Mina are also depicted

as living under this panoptic surveillance. In contrast to Simon Bacon's argument that vampirism itself could be regarded as "an example of control and containment" through mesmerism and telepathy (71), I propose that the female protagonists in *Dracula* suffer a greater regimented, all-pervasive surveillance from the moral climate of their fin-de-siècle society. In chapter 8, for instance, when Mina walks home barefoot after chasing a sleepwalking Lucy at night, she "daubed [her] feet with mud, using each foot to turn on the other" so that "as [she and Lucy] went home no one, in case [they] should meet anyone, should notice [her] bare feet" (Stoker 91). The exposure of feet was deemed a quasi-exhibitionist act for girls in the late Victorian era, but it was at night that Mina returned home. Hence, there should be scarcely any chances that she might encounter someone, and even if she did, her bare feet would hardly be noticed. Therefore, her seemingly superfluous concern could only be understood as a fear of what Susan Bacon calls "the gaze of the all-seeing eye and the power of its ubiquity when the subject is unable to recognize what is observing [her], yet knows [she] is being observed" (109). This is indeed the panoptic power of the self-surveying dystopia Stoker depicts. Females are suspected as potentially "infected" fallen women; social purist vigilantes pervade the neighbourhoods of every town, and all women's words and deeds are under ubiquitous surveillance everywhere. What Mina fears or imagines to encounter is not certain vile figures, but an impersonal, uncanny power which, as Foucault notes,

has its principle not so much in a person as in a concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up. (*Discipline* 202)

This repressive power even prompts Mina's "anxiety about Lucy, not only for her health" but, more significantly, "for her reputation in case the story [of Lucy's sleepwalking in her nightdress] should get wind" (Stoker 92). This sleepwalking adventure becomes taboo for both Lucy and Mina, a clandestine misdeed lest it should demote them to "fallen women" if "leak[ed] out" (92).

IV. Conclusion

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* reproduces the fear of syphilis in the late Victorian age, leaving vampirism far from merely being "Gothicised" as a public health hazard. More pertinently, with this trope, the novel goes one step further to accuse then-contemporary patriarchal Britain of its social paraphilia. If, for Victorians, vampiric venereal diseases were debased as purely "moral problems," then fin-de-siècle syphilophobia should be presumed as a sociological malaise rather than a pathological anxiety (Romero-Ruiz, "Identity" 79). More specifically, the public anxiety of this medical problem in the late-nineteenth century was sometimes commingled with the dread of "social and cultural degeneration," and thus syphilophobia "concerned the medical profession and social reformists alike" (A. Smith 95). This assumption finds further support in Susan Sontag's remark that "the melodramatics of the [syphilis] metaphor . . . assume a punitive notion: of [this venereal] disease not as punishment but as a sign of evil, something to be punished" and "disciplined" (82).

Through its link to the syphilis scare, vampirism in *Dracula* becomes a sexual phantasmagoria in late Victorian Britain. Still disconcerting is the dual effect of combat against this personified evil spirit. On the one hand, Stoker in this horror mythology seems to express the British collective's abhorrence towards this incurable contagion and its "unclean" hosts. On the other hand, with the depictions of Lucy's miserable suffering from vampirism and Seward's hideous asylum, *Dracula* nearly borders on a mirror reflection of fin-de-siècle male debauchery, an exposure of the New Women spirit of liberty which prefaced the later feminist movements of the twentieth century. This dichotomy aside, the novel's pathological metaphor is certainly worth pondering further, along with its potential links to the "discipline-blockades" and pervasive panoptic surveillance (Foucault, *Discipline* 209). Indeed, just as Van Helsing in *Dracula*'s film adaptation describes, "civilization and syphilization have advanced together" (00:56:30-40). Stoker's portrayal of infected females might also elicit fin-de-siècle reformist sympathy to seek a more radical revolt against patriarchal oppression in this "unfinished, perhaps unending battle" (Groom, "Viral Vampires" 9).

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