Consuming Appetites and the Modern Vampire
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Abstract:

This article looks at food and the role of appetitive consumption in modern representations of the vampire. Most critics have read vampire as embodying Victorian fears surrounding fin-de-siècle desire and sexual decadence. We instead want to shift the discussion to food and eating rituals. Using Francis Ford Coppola’s Bram Stoker’s Dracula as a bridge text, “Consuming Appetites and the Modern Vampire” compares the British tradition, which advocates disciplined appetites as defense against Dracula’s demonic invasion, with modern American texts, which celebrate the vampire as a reflection of its own culture of excess consumption. The vampire is marked as Other precisely by his inability to control his appetite, and the disciplined appetite is essential insofar as it differentiates between the human and vampiric Other. It is this legacy of appetitive excess which continues to inform our modern interpretations of the vampire, whether this figure is a direct inheritor of Dracula or a more sympathetic, even domesticated, vampire.

Key words: Dracula, Vampire, Blood, Eating, Consumption, Meat, Appetite, Other, British, American
Come, there is dinner. We must keep one another strong for what is before us. We have a cruel and dreadful task. When you have eaten you shall learn the rest, and I shall answer any questions you ask, if there be anything which you do not understand, though it was apparent to us who were present.

--Dr Seward’s Diary, Dracula 29 September (2002: 229)

In Bram Stoker’s infamous novel *Dracula* (1897) characters eat so that they might avoid being consumed, quite literally, by the blood-sucking Count from Transylvania. Indeed, *Dracula* is a text obsessed with food and appetitive consumption, more generally. As Dennis Foster writes, in his essay ‘The Little Children Can be Bitten,’ ‘[e]ating is on everyone’s mind, but of course eating is the central activity of the book’ (2002: 487). Food plays a central role because it is so often aligned with ‘strength,’ in both mind and body. In the above quotation, for example, Doctor Seward encourages Mina Harker (née Murray) to eat her dinner so that she can endure the terrifying tale of Lucy’s death, as well as the impending ‘dreadful task’ of warding off Dracula’s vampiric invasion. However, the novel is also interested in forms of consumption other than eating food; in fact, what makes the vampire so terrifying is that he engages in abnormal or deviant forms of consumption. He does not consume proper substances, such as food or ‘dinner,’ specifically; rather he feeds upon human beings by drinking their blood. Worse yet, his consumption does not adhere to the principles of moderation or a disciplined eating ritual. Instead, the fear is all along that he might drink to excess, consuming blood and, with it, the victim’s life. *Dracula* is, therefore, a novel deeply interested in the more general question of appetitive consumption as a marker of difference or ‘Otherness.’ As Seward knows full well, the political stakes of this question are extremely high, for what and how one consumes will prove essential in the quest in to differentiate and defeat the vampiric Other.

There has been, over the last few decades, an increase in scholarship on representations of food in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. Like Foster’s essay, both J.e.d Stavick’s ‘Love at first beet’ (1997) and Fabio Parasecoli’s *Bite Me* (2008) discuss the role of food in the formation of cultural borders and masculine authority within the novel. Gwen Hyman’s *Making a Man* (2009) and Annette Cozzi’s *The Discourses of Food in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (2010) read Stoker’s text alongside other *fin-de-siècle* texts anxious about decadent appetites and Otherness.
Building on this critical trend, this article considers the modern manifestations of this appetitive vampire as presented by contemporary film and fiction. We focus on Francis Ford Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992) as a critical or ‘bridge’ text within this tradition—as opposed to the Bella Lugosi or Max Schreck versions—because Coppola’s film brilliantly exploits the original novel’s obsession with food and appetitive consumption.\(^1\) We use the term ‘bridge text,’ which is our own term, in order to signal how Coppola’s film serves as a mediator (or ‘bridge’) between Stoker’s original novel and its subsequent narrative inheritors. Thanks to *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*, these later films and novels understand that food and disciplined consumption play a central role in our reception of the vampire figure. Yet this reception will vary, we explain, depending on whether the vampire remains committed to his British origins or whether he is instead repositioned within an American cultural context. As adaptation, Coppola’s film follows the British narrative of appetitive restraint, and yet the film’s astute representation of libidinal excess as alluring (even seductive) also complements the American interest in vampiric consumption.

As a bridge text, Coppola’s film stands as a firm reminder of the relationship between food and identity formation. According to Parasecoli, we all look to specific rituals and objects of consumption in an attempt to control our appetites and, thus, to build a cultural identity.\(^2\) The vampire’s penchant for ‘sucking blood,’ he continues, ‘reflects unbridled drives beyond simple hunger, pointing to some fundamental experience that all of us share in some measure’ (2008: 43).\(^3\) In her analysis of Victorian food and fiction, Cozzi explains how appetite often helps us distinguish between the English, as disciplined, and the excessive and therefore threatening or monstrous Other: ‘[t]he terrifying and monstrous hunger of these foreign predators [including the vampire] convinced the Victorian reader that national health demanded that these beasts be tamed and that the secret to British national identity depended on a balance of appetites and the moderation of consumption’ (2010: 128). The vampire is marked as Other because he consumes the wrong stuff and without moderation or self-discipline. This definition will also help us distinguish between the British and modern American vampire. Unlike its British counterpart, the American tradition celebrates the vampire’s appetitive excess. Rob Latham makes this point in *Consuming Youth* when he reads the vampire as a metaphor for American culture’s obsession with economic consumption; the vampire is, he writes, ‘literally an insatiable consumer driven by a hunger for perpetual youth’ (2002: 1) and, consequently, the ‘contemporary consumer is
thus, like the vampire, trapped in a stasis of perpetual youth’ (2002: 140). But while Latham looks at the wider culture of late-capitalism (the vampire as both capitalist and consumer), we want to restrict our analysis to the relationship between the vampire and food. This focused comparison helps us to see how, within the American tradition, the vampire not only passes but also he is even celebrated as a figure of excessive appetitive consumption.

Because of its role as mediator between Stoker’s original novel and its modern narrative inheritors, the first half of this article will look at Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* and its fascination with food and the vampire. Coppola’s film presents a compelling study of Victorian fears toward the vampire’s undisciplined appetite as linked with Otherness. The latter two sections of this paper will then trace Coppola’s legacy through a comparison of modern representations of the British and American vampire. The second section will look at modern film adaptations of *Dracula*, in which the vampire remains in England and thus invokes nineteenth-century fears toward excessive appetitive consumption. We pursue this argument through close analysis of Mel Brooks’s *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (1995), Guy Maddin’s *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin’s Diary* (2002), and the 2006 BBC’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (Dir. Bill Eagles). The third section, by contrast, will look at how the Dracula narrative is re-imagined—and eventually discarded, altogether—following the vampire’s relocation to and adaptation within an American cultural context. This alternative American tradition has almost entirely dropped all references to the Victorian novel and, with it, the fear of appetitive excess. For this history we look at Wes Craven’s *Dracula 2000* series (2000, 2003, & 2005), Stephen King’s *Salem’s Lot* (both the 1975 novel and 2004 miniseries), as well as Charlaine Harris’s *Death Until Dark* (2001) and the television series *True Blood* (2012). Unlike its British counterpart, this American vampire instead exposes the similarities between the human and the vampiric, or the vampire in all of us. And yet, despite this difference in views toward appetitive excess, both traditions nonetheless emphasise the central importance of food, and consumption more generally, in representing the vampire and his Otherness. Appetitive consumption is always the central trope that marks the vampire as Other, whether he be feared or celebrated.


The proper Victorian appetite is defined in terms of moderation, which precludes both excessive indulgence and denial. This is why, in Stoker’s novel, Jonathan Harker keeps lengthy records of

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his encounter with both foreign individuals and food. Right before his arrival to the Carpathians, for example, Jonathan writes, ‘There are many odd things to put down, and lest, who reads them may fancy that I dined too well before I left Bistritz, let me put down my dinner exactly’ (Stoker 2002: 31). It is as if Jonathan oddly assumes the reader is more interested in his diet than his encounter with the country and its people. Upon closer observation, however, one realises that food is the means by which the traveler ingests this foreign culture. Jonathan’s journals are filled with detailed references to his various meals and consumption of exotic foods, such as ‘robber steak,’ which he explains as ‘bits of bacon, onion, and beef, seasoned with red pepper, and strung on sticks and roasted over the fire, in the simple style of London cat’s-meat’ (Stoker 2002: 31). Jonathan’s ultimate goal is moderation through rigorous records and detailed narrative. Consider also his consumption of exotic spirits: ‘The wine was Golden Mediasch, which produces a queer sting on the tongue, which is, however, not disagreeable. I had only a couple of glasses of this and nothing else’ (2002: 31). Jonathan relies on his pen to record and therein contain this encounter with a foreign culture and its cuisine. This record reminds him of that Victorian virtue: moderation (‘only a couple of glasses’).

As in Stoker’s novel, Coppola’s film defines Dracula’s difference (that which sets him apart as Other) in terms of appetitive consumption. Upon their first meeting, Dracula invites Jonathan to dinner but then refuses to join the famished traveler as he eats. As the Count explains, ‘I will not join you; but I have already dined, and I never drink [pause] wine’ (1992). The pause is critical, for it draws our attention to an absence of both speech and appetite. Viewers know that the two are connected by way of an underlying joke: it is not that Dracula wholly abstains from drinking but rather that his preferred beverage is human blood, not alcohol. This scene thus echoes the original novel, in which Jonathan notes the Count’s repeated absence during scheduled meals: ‘When I went into the dining room, breakfast was prepared, but I could not find the Count anywhere. So I breakfasted alone. It is strange that as yet I have not seen the Count eat or drink. He must be a very peculiar man!’ (Stoker 2002: 50).

Coppola’s film understands that disciplined appetitive consumption plays an essential role in the Count’s vampiric invasion of England. After all, Dracula not only embodies but also encourages deviant and excessive desires among his vampire brides, who then act as proxy colonisers on his behalf. His first victim Lucy Westenra is particularly vulnerable given her libidinal hunger. In the novel, she asks ‘[w]hy can’t they let a girl marry three men, or as many

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as want her?’ (Stoker 2002: 80). Coppola’s film stresses her excess desire from the very beginning: she is interested in pornography, she flirts with multiple lovers, and she is in a near constant state of undress toward the end of her life (1992). In ‘Colour in Coppola’s Bram Stoker’s Dracula,’ Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard claims that the film uses the colour red as a shorthand for women’s liberated sexual appetites: ‘vivid primary colours [such as red] are therefore used as a language by which we share the two heroines’ minds as they discover and enjoy the freedom of sexual arousal and become “available” mature young women’ (2005: 247).

Rewriting Lucy as a redhead (not blond), Coppola signals the dangers implicit in her undisciplined libidinal appetite. Lucy’s vibrant red hair (worn loose) matches the form-fitting red negligee she wears to meet her vampiric lover, and both details foreshadow her inevitable vampiric turn to human blood (also red). After Mina rescues Lucy from sleepwalking, the latter confesses, ‘I had to. It sort of pulled me and lured me—I had no control,’ and then cries, ‘I still have the taste of his blood on my mouth’ (1992). Lucy has done more than have sex; she has consumed, through that fatal ‘kiss’ (Stoker 2002: 61), Dracula’s blood which then facilitates her vampiric turn. This is the slippery slope from excess desire to undisciplined and even deadly consumption.¹¹ Like Coppola, later inheritors to the Dracula narrative will continue to use red in order to thematize bodily want (for both food and sex), and yet the symbolic significance of such colours will vary depending on whether the Vampire adheres to or rejects the British tradition of appetitive restraint. Our later discussion of the American vampire will, for example, show how vibrant hues of scarlet are positively associated with libidinal hunger set against the backdrop of consumer culture, which makes a virtue of excessive desire.

In both novel and film, the threat of the Other can be solved through a carefully disciplined approach to eating rituals. The men will fight to reclaim Lucy—‘but,’ as Van Helsing quickly adds, ‘not on an empty stomach’ (Coppola).¹² With this comment, Van Helsing links food with men’s authority over women. Indeed, such a comment also reminds viewers of the original novel’s extended interest in blood transfusions, in which the men repeatedly pour their blood into Lucy’s veins in an effort to purge the vampire from her body. After each transfusion, the men must take some form of nourishment, most often a hearty breakfast. ‘Go into the room,’ Van Helsing tells Seward (after the latter has given blood), ‘and lie on your sofa, and rest awhile, then have much breakfast and come here to me’ (Stoker 2002: 144).¹³ Though Coppola’s adaptation focuses on dinner (as opposed to breakfast), Van Helsing’s comment nonetheless
confirms the vital importance of eating as a defense against the vampire. In both Stoker’s novel and Coppola’s film, the men look to food to sustain their corporeal quest to purge their women and nation of Dracula-as-foreign-threat.14

In *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992) meat plays a central role in distinguishing between normal and deviant appetitive rituals. The film includes an added pub scene (not in the novel), in which Van Helsing cuts into a large and bloody roast beef.15 As he slices, Van Helsing enthusiastically entices his companions Mina and Jonathan to ‘eat, feast. You'll need your strength for the dark days ahead’ (1992). By the end of the nineteenth century, vegetarianism became increasingly popular and was often associated with alternative medicine and animal rights movements.16 In Coppola’s film, however, the men are not too troubled by the idea of eating meat; indeed, they wholeheartedly embrace it, as if intuiting it as symbol of their victory over Dracula. No doubt this is Coppola’s point when he quickly jumps from the staking scene (of Lucy) to the bloody red steak in the foreground of the pub scene. The medium rare cook on the steak is of central importance, for the vibrant red blood is also a very visible reminder of the vampiric threat as negotiated through appetitive ritual. More than a visual pun (the men eat steak and talk of staking Lucy), the bloody meat is also Van Helsing’s opportunity to retell Lucy’s death as a victory for the collective group of men: ‘We cut off her head and drove a stake through her heart’ (1992). Van Helsing’s knife slices the meat as if a metaphor for the violent penetration of Lucy. The entire scene serves as a reminder of our continued investment in what Nick Fiddes refers to as the ‘macho steak’ (1991: 146). In his study of *Meat*, Fiddes explains how ‘meat is almost ubiquitously put to use as a medium through which men express their ‘natural’ control, of women as well as of animals’ (1991: 146).17 In Coppola’s film, the consumption of meat is both reward and fuel for the men’s continued battle against Dracula regarding authority over English women.

**The afterlife of Coppola: Modern Dracula**

Though Mel Brooks’s comedy *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (1995) offers viewers a rather parodic take on Stoker’s novel, its approach to food as a way to deal with the vampire’s legacy is worth serious examination. It is clear from the first scene, and Dracula’s outrageous wig (a replica of the 1992 costume), that Brooks looks to Coppola’s film as a source text.18 More important than costumes, however, is the film’s investment in food as both a point of humour
and, significantly, a symbol of the vampire’s Otherness. Renfield visits the Count in order to finalize the latter’s purchase of Carfax Abbey, but when Renfield cuts his finger on the edge of a paper the tone quickly changes from serious to funny (1995). Renfield attempts to stop the flow of blood as Dracula stares on fixedly with eyes bulging; the Count licks his lips and then begins noisily smacking his mouth in hungry anticipation of the blood—which at this point is spurting all over the place (1995). The noise attracts Renfield’s attention, and the horrified look upon his face is evidence of his growing realisation of his host’s ‘peculiar’ (Stoker 2002: 50) appetite. Indeed, the Count is marked as deviant both by virtue of the fact that he desires human blood, and because this desire is excessive—he is unable to control his hunger, as evidenced by his bulging eyes and chomping mouth.

Like Coppola, Brooks understands that it is the undisciplined appetite that marks one as the monstrous Other. Consider the scene in which Dracula hypnotizes Renfield, telling him that ‘From this moment on, you are my slave. You will sacrifice everything for my safety. In return, I will give you lives’ (1995). Viewers realise that Renfield has been successfully converted because his face quivers in obvious delight as the count lists the various ‘lives’ he will consume—‘Not big lives. Insects, flies, spiders.’ Like Coppola, Brooks also imagines the Victorian eating ritual as part of a larger and concerted effort to purge the vampiric appetite. This is the point of the breakfast scene wherein Doctor Seward tests whether or not his patient is indeed ‘Normal!,’ as Renfield himself insists (1995). Despite his sincerest efforts, Renfield cannot refrain from eating the various insects and flies (as opposed to the readily available muffins and jam). Seward is horrified by the display, crying ‘My god man! You’re eating insects right from the ground!’ (1995). What is most interesting, however, is the Doctor’s prescribed cure: he promptly calls for the attendant to give Renfield ‘an enema!’ (1995). More than just a vulgar joke, Brooks’s reference to the enema recognizes that the vampiric invasion manifests as an improper approach to food. As such, the doctor’s treatment targets the digestive tract and not, simply, blood (as in the original novel).

Food also plays a prominent role in the more recent BBC Masterpiece Theatre’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (2006). This film signals its debt to Coppola through both its title and representations of food as tied to gender and sexual discipline. In an early scene, Arthur Holmwood visits Doctor Seward with news of his and Lucy’s engagement. Seward is visibly stunned. While Arthur tries to speak frankly of feelings, Seward refuses to admit his pain and

instead fixates on their lunch date, asking ‘shall we go and eat?’ (2006). The lunch meal figures as a source of consolation or nourishment for his wounded masculine pride. In ‘Luncheon, Nuncheon and Related Meals,’ C. Anne Wilson frames the link between gender and lunch as a byproduct of capitalism and the lengthened workday. Up until the seventeenth century, she explains, dinner was taken at noon or one in the afternoon; however, ‘during the eighteenth century [dinner] slipped forward from two to three, and eventually to four or five o’clock’ (1994: 39). Consequently, working men (both middle- and working-class) were required to take some form of mid-day sustenance in order to tide them over until the end-of-the day dinner. And in Food and Cooking in Victorian England (2007), Andrea Broomfield also notes how a variety of food establishments, such as the pub and coffee shop, emerged as a response to the new need for men’s mid-day nourishment. More than places of nourishment, these were ‘distinctly male institution[s]’ designed to sustain men’s need to continue business away from, and in order to support, the home (2007: 44). In the BBC adaptation, Seward’s repeated insistence on lunch suggests the growing importance of this mid-day meal as not only nourishing the body but also as staving off emasculation.

The BBC’s adaptation also understands the more general Victorian principle of a moderate appetite. Such is the point of the numerous scenes aligning Dracula with wine, as if both vampire and alcohol are one and the same by virtue of excess. Early into the film Dracula offers his houseguest, Jonathan, some wine (2006), and once he is in England Dracula is again shown drinking wine with his new female friends (and future victims) Lucy and Mina. The women are delighted by his charms and, as they all sip his wine, promise to show him about the city (2006). Such scenes foreground the late-Victorian fear toward wine. ‘Though a taste for wine is suspiciously European,’ Cozzi explains, ‘the ability to balance indulgence with self-denial is one of the characteristics of the English’ (2010: 147). In the BBC’s Bram Stoker’s Dracula wine is both seductive and dangerous—or dangerous because it is seductive. The women let down their guard as they sip their wine and converse with Dracula. After taking a large gulp of wine, Lucy excitedly confesses her passionate love of the theatre and how it makes her ‘wish that I was dead, right then and there’ (2006)—this is an eerie request that the Count will eventually satisfy. But Dracula is outraged when Arthur interrupts and sends away the women: ‘You think you can control me. You watch as I take all your love, your country, your god. And it is you who will die’ (2006). Like the wine, then, Dracula represents a loss of control;

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he threatens to abscond with everything Arthur cherishes as markers of his English masculine identity.

Coppola’s influence can also be traced in recent films’ use of red as symbolic of appetitive excess. In the BBC film, for example, the women sip on red wine while visiting in a room that is almost entirely furnished in red—from the red curtains and painted walls, to the red tablecloths and furniture. The Victorian themselves recognized and feared the cultural meaning attached to such vibrant hues. In *Physiological Aesthetics* (1877), for example, Grant Allen explains how red (among other bright hues) is associated with undisciplined taste: ‘the vulgar,’ Allen insists, ‘are pleased by great masses of colour, especially red, orange, and purple, which give their coarse nervous organisation [sic] the requisite stimulus’ (1877: 45). As with Coppola’s film, the BBC adaption uses the colour red as a shorthand reference to *fin-de-siècle* decadent appetites. Featured prominently in the foreground of the parlour scene’s visual frame, the vibrant red wine is a symbolic warning of the women’s inevitable turn from decadent consumption to an insatiable vampiric lust for blood (2007).

Guy Maddin’s *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin’s Diary* (2002) also uses red, particularly in the blood transfusion scene, to remind readers that the vampire is associated with unrefined and therefore dangerous appetites. Like Coppola, Maddin frames Lucy’s vampiric turn as punishment for her voracious sexual appetite. Upon discovering Lucy lying unconscious, Van Helsing quickly deduces that ‘She has filled herself will polluted blood’ (Maddin 2002). The syntax of this statement is essential, for it signals that Lucy is the subject (and not object or victim) of the verb ‘filling’; in other words, her ‘pollution’ is the product of her dissident appetite—of her deviant desire to ‘fill’ herself with Dracula’s blood. As a cure, Van Helsing prescribes an immediate blood transfusion (2002). Viewers will recall how Coppola’s adaptation uses bright reds and oranges to signal dissident desire; Maddin makes a similar move when he injects small but shocking amounts of red into his otherwise black-and-white film. Bright red blood fills the tubes as the three men (Van Helsing, Harker, and Seward) pump their blood into Lucy’s veins (2002). The men’s bodies then simulate the transfusion as they literally ‘pump’ up and down above her, a motion which clearly evokes a kind of collective gang rape as they reclaim the unconscious Lucy’s blood and body.

**Reconstructing Dracula: Domestic Vampires**

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At the same time as Coppola resuscitated *Dracula* for late-twentieth-century viewers, there also emerged an alternative thread of American vampire narratives that celebrated rather than demonized the vampire’s excessive appetite. This latter tradition includes earlier works predating Coppola’s film, such as Stephen King *Salem’s Lot* (1975), and continues through to other recent texts such as *Dracula 2000* and Charlaine Harris’s hit series *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2001-13) and its television adaptation, *True Blood* (2008-present). For critics such as Nina Auerbach, this alternative narrative tradition highlight’s the vampire’s mutability, or ability to ‘blend into the changing cultures they inhabit’ (2012: 6); in *Our Vampires Ourselves*, she explains how vampires ‘can be everything we are, while at the same time, they are fearful reminders of the infinite things we are not’ (2012: 6). Building upon Auerbach’s claim, we look at how food plays a central role in this distinction between the vampire’s role as mirror or threatening Other. As argued in the previous section, the British tradition uses the food and eating ritual in order to draw attention to the vampire as an invasive threat; conversely, the American vampire is celebrated precisely because his/her appetite mirrors a culture in which wantonness and excess are celebrated. Despite this difference in reception, the American vampire is still defined by his/her excessive libidinal appetite.

As signaled by its title, Wes Craven’s *Dracula 2000* series (2000, 2003, & 2005) positions itself as inheritor to Stoker’s original novel. Yet opening events very quickly establish that the film is not a faithful retelling; rather, the film attempts to forge a new narrative tradition set within twenty-first century American culture. The series begins with the British Vampire, Dracula, who has been in Europe for a very long time and who is, in fact, none other than Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Judas was transformed into a vampire as punishment for this treachery). Yet the *Dracula 2000* series quickly (within fifteen minutes of the first movie) abandons this European setting and, with it, the original novel’s Victorian fear toward excessive consumption. Instead, after he is accidently resurrected by a group of thieves raiding an antique shop (owned by Matthew Van Helsing, descendant of Abraham from Stoker’s original novel), the reanimated Count Dracula quickly relocates to New Orleans in an effort to evade capture. What follows is a three-part series—including *Dracula 2000 II: Ascension* (2003) and *Dracula 2000 III: Legacy* (2005)—fascinated with the vampire’s ability to negotiate and even flourish within a modern American consumer culture.
Craven’s films regularly use the colour red as indication of the complementary relationship between the vampiric appetite and American consumption (both food and economic). The first film, Dracula 2000 (2000), offers viewers a modern-day Lucy who works at a Virgin Record Store and is thereby an active proponent of capitalist consumption. The store itself is covered in bright lights, mostly red, and its sign (featured prominently as Dracula enters) is evocative of dripping red blood (2000). Outside, in the seemingly endless Mardi Gras celebrations, partygoers work themselves up into a frenetic orgy of excess drinking and erotic dancing (2000). The overwhelming primary colours mark this as a space of decadent consumption of food and drink, as well as commodities. The modern Lucy literally embodies this colour symbolism when she chooses a tight red top for her date with Dracula, and later has flying sex with him against a bright red ceiling (2000). The second film of the series, Dracula II: Ascension (2003) also uses red as a shorthand reference to appetitive consumption. The female lead, Elizabeth Blaine (also in the final film), is first introduced wearing a vibrant red top and matching lipstick, as if to foreshadow her eventual vampiric fall (2003); she is part of a small group of New Orleans scientists fascinated with immortality, and Elizabeth eventually becomes Dracula’s bride after she drinks his blood and thereby facilitates his resurrection. The third film, Dracula 2000 III: Legacy (2005), follows the vampire in his return to Europe (Dracula’s castle in the Carpathian Mountains). This change in setting also ushers in a new reading of the vampire; red is now used to signal the horrors of appetitive excess. When Luke finally finds Elizabeth locked in a dungeon below Dracula’s castle, for example, he is horrified to discover she is drenched in red as she feasts upon the sex and blood of other vampires (2005). Blood covers the walls and red tapestries, as well as Elizabeth’s red dress and hair. With this final installment in the series, the colour red takes on new meaning as signifying the horrors of excessive—orgiastic, even—appetitive consumption.

Implicit in Craven’s series, particularly his first two films, is the idea of an alternative American vampire whose appetitive excess is a cultural and adaptive advantage. This idea can be traced back to Stephen King’s 1975 publication of Salem’s Lot. King’s novel predates Coppola’s film by nearly fifteen years and, as a result, arrives at a very different interpretation of the vampire, one which is not tied to Dracula or fears the decadent appetite. In his ‘Afterword’ to the novel, King claims that he consciously rejected Victorian notions of restraint, and instead looked to modern ‘comic books’ in which he found and reproduced ‘American vampires’ who

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drove cars,’ ‘went out on dates’ and even vampires who ‘owned the vampire restaurant’ (2004: 5.6, emphasis in original).\textsuperscript{24} King’s vampires try to blend in with their human counterparts by embracing the American ideal of excessive consumption. In one scene, for example, the vampire Barlow sends his assistant, Straker, on an errand to purchase ‘roast of beef, a dozen prime ribs, some hamburger, and a pound of calves’ liver. To this he added some dry goods—flour, sugar, beans—and several loaves of ready-made bread’ (2004: ch.4). As both a foreigner (Austrian) and a vampire, however, Barlow cannot participate in the physical act of eating and must, instead, rely upon his American ‘human watchdog’ and ‘human familiar,’ Straker (2004: ch.14) to carry out this symbolic act of consumption as cultural adaptation. As evidenced by his grocery list, Barlow clearly associates being human with an excessive consumption of meat. Nobody in the store takes note of Straker’s purchase because it is in keeping with the large amounts consumed by average Americans. In fact, excess is normal to characters such as Eva Miller, who runs a local boarding house with full meal services:

She was cooking her breakfast...four scrambled eggs, eight rashes of bacon, a skillet of home fries. She would garnish this humble repast with two slices of toast and jam, a ten-ounce tumbler of orange juice, and two cups of coffee with cream to follow...She liked to eat her morning meal in this utter solitude, planning the work ahead of her for the day. (2004: ch.3)

As part of her morning meal ritual, Eva takes advantage of the quiet time to fuel her system for the busy day ahead. Yet the word ‘humble’ is meant to be ironic, for there is nothing humble about Eva’s meal; self-control is non-existent in this town.

King’s equivalence between the vampire and modern American consumerism continues to resonate well into the new millennium. The 2004 television miniseries Salem’s Lot, like the original novel, celebrates human hunger as a normal—even valued—quality of American culture. The film’s opening sequence concerns a soup kitchen, as if to stress, rather than downplay, the desire for food. Shortly after, viewers are introduced to Doctor James Cody who ‘fights [his ‘winter malaise’] with fine dining and new clothes’ (2004). As in King’s original text, Straker is introduced as a loyal human who stockpiles both commodities (antiques) as well as humans (boys such as Danny Glick [2004]) in preparation for Barlow’s arrival. However, and in a post-Coppola twist, the 2004 film betrays an added self-awareness regarding the correlation

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between excessive consumption and the vampiric invasion. There is, for instance, the scene where Mark Petrie escapes Straker and races back to Eva’s boarding house in search of help; in a scene that echoes the novel, the hostess has cooked a sumptuous (if not decadent) breakfast. The table is loaded with toast, two containers of dry cereal, hot coffee, and an array of condiments. On the stove is a hot skillet heaped with sizzling bacon, sausages, eggs, and ham. Standing alone in the kitchen, Mike suddenly finds the sound of cooking food overwhelming, and his heart begins to pound so loudly that it rivals the deafening sound of sizzling grease (2004). He realises that it is this decadent consumer culture that has allowed the vampire to infiltrate and even pass within the typical American community.

Following in the footsteps of King, Charlaine Harris’s *Dead After Dark* (2001) describes an American society that is interested in and, sometimes, even accepting of the appetitive Vampire. With this first book, Harris quickly establishes that her series will focus on a modern culture in which vampires live among humans, crave domestic comforts, and even have certain legal rights. Harris’s novel prioritizes vampires who ‘had shown fangs on the silver screen’ (2001:101) to both distance her narrative from Stoker’s and to validate her new vampire-human order. Portraits of Gary Oldman, Bela Lugosi, and George Hamilton (actors who have played the Count in film) hang on the walls of Fangtasia and thereby encourage the curious human into active consumers of vampire-culture. Although Harris’s world does not deal with the vampire’s monstrosity, her depictions of appetitive excess and her use of the colour red to decorate the nightclub’s walls (2001:101) continue to channel the American vampire tradition. Both humans and vampires experiment with dissident forms of consumption as means to mutual understanding, if not assimilation. The vampires in Bon Temps consume synthetic blood, while humans occasionally drink vampire blood in order to ‘temporarily relieve symptoms of illness and increase sexual potency, kind of like prednisone and Viagra rolled into one’ (2001: 6). As a central protagonist, Vampire Bill accepts that consumption is therefore essential to his virtuous attempts at social assimilation. When he first visits Merlotte’s Bar and Grill, for example, Bill asks for a bottle of synthetic blood, but when Sookie says they do not carry it, he instead orders a glass of red wine (2001: 3). But he does not drink the wine, as Sookie later tells her grandmother, ‘He just sat and had a glass of red wine. Well, he ordered it, but he didn't drink it. I think he just wanted some company’ (2001:17). Even in Harris’s world of deviant and often excessive appetites, vampires are still marked as other by virtue of their inability to consume food. Though
‘comforting,’ Bill’s red wine is but an ineffectual—though telling—shadow of the vampire’s preferred beverage (‘telling’ because of its colour as linked with blood).

Though Harris attempts to differentiate her American vampire from its British predecessor, she still—like Coppola before her—remains faithful to the Victorian notion of food as vital to the human/vampire distinction. In Harris’s novel, the human ingestion of vampire blood threatens this categorical divide. While humans benefit from the consumption of vampire blood, the synthetic diet instead disarms the vampire and turns it into a kind of passive commodity. The human becomes the monster, empowered by the blood of the Other. Yet this role reversal is only temporary, and the consumption of food helps to restore the conventional divide between human and vampire. After consuming vampire blood, for example, Sookie feels ready to ‘connect with her human side’ by enjoying her ‘breakfast toast’ and is glad to rid of her ‘longing’ for human blood or what she refers to as ‘tomato juice’ (Harris 2001:211). Similarly, Bill’s inability to eat food continually reminds Sookie of his vampiric Otherness: ‘I would never fix his breakfast,’ she laments, ‘never meet him for lunch’ (2001: 161).

Food is also central to the human/vampire divide in True Blood, the television series based on Harris’s Dead Until Dark. In keeping with its novel source, the first season of the television series explores the idea of a new American vampire who is both accepted and even romantically pursued by humans; yet the show’s early reference to food as a source of frustration and alienation between Sookie and Bill is reminiscent of Coppola and the very Victorian idea that the eating ritual is essential to the human identity. In True Blood, Sookie’s frustrations take the form of a nightmare, in which Bill sits at the table reading the morning paper after cooking her a sumptuous breakfast of biscuits, grits, sausage, eggs, and fruit (2012). Sookie is surprised at both the bounty of food – ‘I don’t even know where to start’ – but also at the fact that Bill is up for breakfast. What looks like a happy moment of domestic communion takes on a sinister tone when she mentions the morning light; Bill glances at the window, and then is suddenly engulfed in flames. Through this dream, Sookie tries to processes the disappointing fact that Bill is a vampire and, consequently, unable to partake in foot rituals, such as breakfast. Food still stands as the only and critical factor distinguishing the American vampire from his human counterpart—it marks the boundary between us and the Other. Despite the tension between the two vampire traditions, one thing remains clear: Coppola’s film still stands as an iconic text, mediating between Victorian and modern interpretations of Dracula.

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Conclusion

‘[Dracula’s] the boogey man. He’s the shadow. He represents a part of ourselves, I suppose. And there’s something very erotic about that. Very sexual.’


When interviewed about his role as Van Helsing in Coppola’s Bram Stoker’s ‘Dracula,’ Anthony Hopkins pauses for a moment to ruminate on the iconic vampire’s Otherness as both a source of fear (‘he is the boogey man’ [2007]) as well as fascination and even libidinal attraction (‘there’s something very erotic about that’[2007]). That this ‘making of’ documentary was released fifteen years after the 1992 film is a testament to our persistent interest on Coppola’s film and, in particular, its idea that the vampire figure can teach us something about ourselves and our own deviant desires. Through this article, we have attempted to trace this fascination back to food and the fear of excessive consumption as outlined in Stoker’s original novel. The continued popularity of Stoker’s Dracula is heavily reliant on contemporary adaptations, even if they do not remain loyal to the original novel. As it was for Jonathan in Dracula’s castle, for Renfield in Brooks’s film, or for Sookie in Harris’s novel, the act of sharing or preparing a meal significantly influences one’s own place in society. The modern American vampire—just like his precursor, Dracula—continues to be marked as Other so long as he can not engage in the normative ritual of eating. The difference between the human and the vampire’s dietary choices was essential for the Victorians, and it has been a permanent link throughout the centuries, regardless of how close or how ‘domesticated’ vampires get.

Something not discussed at length in this article, because of our interest in Dracula and its legacy, is the rise in popularity of a third American vampire tradition that is in no way indebted to its Victorian predecessor. The popular success of American television series such as The Vampire Diaries (2009-present) and its spinoff, The Originals (2013-present), now positions us, in the twenty-first century, as appetitive creatures fascinated with, and also somewhat less frightened by, the prospects of vampiric consumption. Published at the same time as Coppola’s film, L.J. Smith’s original novel series (1991-92) is equally fascinated with the romantic tale and the hyper-sexuality of excessive consumption. However, The Vampire Diaries novels and television series present us with a very new or ‘post-Victorian’ American vampire who can be, as Auerbach suggests, ‘everything we are’ because of his relationship to food (1995: 130).

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Throughout this article, we have used the word ‘modern’ to describe Coppola’s inheritors and, specifically, the consumer-friendly American vampires in twentieth- and twenty-first century works by Harris, King, and Craven. *The Vampire Diaries* and *The Originals* are even more avant-garde (or ‘post-Victorian’) in their representation of contemporary vampires who enjoy partaking in formerly-human-only acts of eating and drinking. Damon and Stefan embody ‘seditious urbanity,’ a trait that Auerbach distinguishes as unique to the ‘American century’ (1995:146). In a pivotal scene in the first season, Elena asks Damon how he can eat even though he is dead. Damon, who gorges on a cheeseburger and fries, tells her that ‘[a]s long as [he] keep[s] a healthy diet of blood in [his] system, [his] body functions pretty normally’ (2009). Damon not only enjoys eating, but also shows appreciation for popular food; after all, he is offended by Elena’s dislike of pickles: ‘You don’t like pickles? What is wrong with you?’ (2009).

As we have stressed throughout this article, food remains the central ingredient by which we understand ourselves and our relationship with the vampiric Other. This thesis remains true of this third Post-Victorian tradition, in which the vampire’s ability to eat makes him more ‘like us’ and, even, sexually attractive. L.J. Smith’s description of Damon eating food, in *The Vampire Diaries Volume II: The Struggle*, is sexually suggestive; Damon ‘lean[s] in, and, neatly and precisely, bit[es] off the other end of [Elena’s] bread stick’ (1991:17). This equation between food and the human identity is something that Coppola recognized in Stoker’s novel, and it is an equation that continues to inform his narrative inheritors’ representations of the vampire well into the twenty-first century. The British tradition offers a vampire that, true to the original *Dracula*, is a monstrous figure of appetitive excess, while the American tradition is much more sympathetic toward the bloodsucker and is not burdened by the conventions of disciplined consumption. In each case, however, our relationship with the vampire is filtered through the rituals of eating and therein tells us more about our own fascination with food and libidinal appetites. The vampire is, as Hopkins finally reminds us, ‘a part of ourselves’ (2007) and our continued hunger for rituals of consumption by which we define our human identity.

1 John Badham’s 1979 *Dracula* is another film interested in food, but only with regards to a single character, Doctor Seward.
For Parasecolo, this is precisely the fear posed by vampiric consumption: ‘Vampires, feeding on others, blur these boundaries: they are inherently relational, unable to separate themselves from their prey’ (2008: 45).

As Timothy Beal writes, ‘Perhaps part of what makes monsters horrifically unheimlich [uncanny] is that we see ourselves in them’ (2002: 196, our emphasis).

See also Nina Auerbach’s Our Vampires Ourselves, which describes how the modern vampire is ‘subject to the dominant American Market’ (2012: 6).

See also Franco Moretti’s ‘The Dialectic of Fear’ (1982) for a classic Marxist analysis of the vampire.

Cozzi explains how this threat of the Other—within or without—betrays itself by consuming the wrong (i.e. foreign) stuff in excess (2010: 147).

In Making a Man, Hyman explains how, for Victorians, ‘the idea of taking in the alien, outside world through aliment is fundamentally threatening’ (2009: 3).

The Bedford St. Martin edition of Dracula defines ‘cat’s-meat’ as horse flesh prepared by street dealers as food for domestic cats’ (Stoker 2002: 31).

As Lyndon W. Joslin notes, in Count Dracula Goes to the Movies (1999), this joke can be traced back to the 1931 adaptation Dracula, starring Bela Lugosi in the lead.

Focusing exclusively on libidinal appetites, Vrunda Stampwala Sahay describes ‘a consensus’ among modern scholars that ‘vampirism in Dracula both expresses and distorts an originally sexual energy’ (‘Repulsive Pariah or Romantic Prince?’ 2002:1).

See also Katharina Mewald’s ‘The Emancipation of Mina?’ (2008) for a feminist analysis of Mina’s character.

Coppola even reproduces the misogynistic logic surrounding Lucy’s fall: Van Helsing calls her a ‘bitch of the Devil! A whore of darkness!’ as well as ‘a willing recruit, a breathless follower, a wanton follower’ and ‘a devoted disciple’ (1992: 1:16:55).

For more on gender and Victorian breakfast, see Andrea Broomfield’s Food and Cooking in Victorian England (2007), and Jennifer Davies’s In the Victorian Kitchen (1989).

As Foster points out, the word ‘breakfast’ comes up twenty-eight times in Stoker’s original (2002: 486-87).

In Of Victorians and Vegetarians, James Gregory recounts how, for most Victorians, the consumption of meat was something of a luxury and that ‘most Englishmen ate beef rarely’ (2007: 13).

In ‘Reading Meat in H.G. Wells,’ Michael Parrish Lee describes how ‘[d]iscourses of vegetarianism increasingly described meat eating as a degenerate practice, pushing civilized culture down the slippery slope to cannibalistic savagery’ (2010: 251).

See also Jeremy Rifkin’s Beyond Beef, which describes the association between meat and ‘power,’ or ‘virility’ (thus making it ‘suitable for masculine consumption’ [1992: 26]).

See also Lyndon W. Joslin’s Count Dracula Goes to the Movies, which cites the Bela Lugosi adaptation as another important source text for Brooks’s film (1999: 132).

Hyman also describes how Jonathan’s early travels through Transylvania are marked by his repeated consumption of mind-altering foreign red substances (Hyman 2009: 221).
Indeed, modern food historian Fiddes even goes so far as to claim that ‘[a]round the world red serves to suggest ideas of danger, violence, or revolution’ (1991: 68).

Tapping into a modern culture of consumerism, these new ‘Vampires in the American century embody seditious urbanity rather than dangerous intimacy’ (Auerbach 2012: 7).

See also Alan S. Ambrisco and Lance Svehla’s essay ‘The coin of our realm’ (2006) for more on the series’ interest in the link between consumerism and vampiric appetites.

This dungeon of decadent sexual excess also reminds viewers of Coppola’s scene where Jonathan is shown bound in a pit bathed in brilliant, red blood and surrounded by naked vampire women who feed on him in orgiastic ecstasy (Coppola 1992: 57:08).

Indeed, King claims his vampires do ‘not sip delicately, as Count Dracula sipped at the ever-more-wasted veins of Lucy Westenra’ (2004: 5).

Harris’s subsequent books in The Southern Vampire Mysteries introduce fairies, shape shifters, and witches into the human/vampire world.
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