

## Exotic Homogeneity: Culinary Othering in *Dracula*

**Cameron Dodworth, Center for Research and Creativity at Methodist University in Fayetteville**

While much has been written and discussed concerning the concept of the vampire as a Gothic monster that is feared as a foreign Other — in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) as well as various other vampire texts — a discussion of the vampire as a culinary Other should also be considered. Xenophobia is clearly at stake in both contexts, as *fin-de-siècle* Britons were as wary of foreign foods as they were of foreigners. Taking *Dracula* as a primary example, it is apparent that fear of the vampire is xenophobic from a cultural standpoint and from a culinary standpoint. In *Dracula*, Van Helsing and his Crew of Light pursue the Count regardless of fear and potential infection, subsisting on local foods in international locations and using innovative and progressive technologies and techniques as tools against Dracula. They are successful due to a diversification in gender, technology, cultural experience and diet, while the Count is unable to consume his own local dishes — or even the dishes of England — as the sanguinary Dracula relies upon human blood for sustenance, and his diet cannot evolve past that singular food source. This Gothic-culinary Other is therefore culturally and dietarily homogenous, whereas Van Helsing and his crew’s strength derives from a varied diet, diversification in cultural experience, progressive and innovative pursuits in technology, and gender inclusion. The success of Van Helsing and his crew, on the basis of diversity and technology, parallels many of the realities of food consumption in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Many of these consumers were in dire need of a more diversified diet; advances in food technology increased convenience by cutting preparation time and greatly extending shelf life, leading to a more homogenous diet for many. However, technology proves to be somewhat of a double-edged sword — or a double-

pointed stake — in relation to the Crew of Light’s documentation and its lack as effective ‘proofs of so wild a story’ (Stoker 2000: 326), as well as in relation to processed food and its relative lack in nutritional value.

As *Dracula* is focused on the myth of the vampire and its archetypal association with consuming human flesh and blood, almost all analyses of *Dracula* on the basis of food have explored the text in relation to cannibalism. S. Brooke Cameron and Suyin Olguin reiterate that *Dracula* is

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. (2015: 79)

Leaving aside the perhaps more taboo consumption of the human body, earlier on in *Dracula*, Englishman Jonathan Harker seems to go out of his way to specifically describe his supper in his journal while traveling through the Carpathians towards his first meeting with Count Dracula. Harker writes of ‘chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was very good but thirsty’ (Stoker 2000: 1). He soon discovers from the waiter that ‘it was called “paprika hendl”, and that, as it was a national dish, I should be able to get it anywhere along the Carpathians’ (1). Harker mentions this ‘red pepper’ (paprika) three times in the opening five paragraphs of a novel that otherwise spends very little time describing food fit for human consumption. He even goes as far as to mark memorandums for himself to get the Paprika Hendl recipe for Mina,<sup>1</sup> as well as the recipe for eggplant stuffed with forcemeat that he refers to as “impletata” (2).

Writing from Dracula's Castle several days later, Harker remarks that 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. I dined on what they called "robber steak" — bits of bacon, onion, and beef, seasoned with red pepper' — again, paprika! — 'and strung on sticks and roasted over the fire, in the simple style of the London cat's meat!' (4-5). Harker also gives the reader a beverage critique, pointing out that 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' (5). Not only does he intimate that his dinner was reminiscent of that meant for animal consumption, he also seems to acknowledge that the 'robber steak', in combination with the sweet wine, might be a potential catalyst for the 'odd things' and experiences that he is about 'to put down' (4). Furthermore, after enjoying his Paprika Hendl so much on his first night in the Carpathians, before he arrives at Dracula's castle, Harker admits that

I did not sleep well, though my bed was comfortable enough, for I had all sorts of queer dreams. There was a dog howling all night under my window, which may have had something to do with it; or it may have been the paprika, for I had to drink up all the water in my carafe, and was still thirsty. Towards morning I slept and was wakened by the continuous knocking at my door, so I guess I must have been sleeping soundly then. I had for breakfast more paprika. (2)

Admittedly, paprika for breakfast, dinner and supper might be a bit overkill, but now the spice seems to be to be blamed, at least in part, for not only the supernatural and occult occurrences throughout much of this section of the novel, but also for Harker's insomnia.

Harker is Gothicizing and exoticizing the food that he has consumed and the foreign culture that he has experienced, rendering it all as an Other that is both misunderstood and, therefore, feared. He has merely been immersed in a diet of paprika and culturally foreign food, and he initially appears to suggest that this diet contributes to the fear and uneasiness that he begins to experience during his time at Dracula's Castle. Fittingly, David Del Principe points out that by 'eating carnivorously in these episodes Harker, in effect, throws down the gauntlet on flesh consumption, employing a human "fang" to draw the first blood in his battle of consumption with the Count' (2014: 29). Furthermore, Del Principe focuses on the chromatic significance of the Paprika Hendl, as the fact that it is 'made with paprika, pepper, tomato juice, chicken, flour, and sour cream attest the colors red and white, associated with human blood and the vampire's fangs' (29). Clearly, Stoker's focus on this bright red dish and foreign spice is purposeful, as it establishes the vampire as carnivorous, bloodthirsty, exotic, foreign and something to be feared. Additionally, these opening culinary forays establish how Harker seeks to consume and appropriate the foreign and exotic cuisine that he encounters, while the crew later assembled by Van Helsing seeks to consume and destroy the Count just as much as Dracula seeks to consume and appropriate English blood as food. The real raw carnage does not start until later in the novel, so leaving aside Del Principe's metaphorically chromatic interpretation, we are left with a few cooked meats and a veritable miasma of paprika in the opening pages.

This is why Harker's rather negative characterization of paprika — negative at least in the sense of its aftereffects — merits exploration, as this very well might simply be the case of an English character, created by an Irish author, overreacting to a novel and exotic culinary experience. Really, according to Gary Paul Nabhan, if anything nefarious could be attached to

paprika, it likely would not be its perceived physiological or psychological aftereffects, but rather its history in the European spice trade:

Moral threads continue to weave their way back through the centuries of trading spices, however, and the more that we try to pretend that we are freeing ourselves from what has gone before, the more obvious it becomes that we are destined to be stuck dealing with the very same ecological and social consequences that have dominated past human actions. (Nabhan 2014: 274-275)

Out of the 22 cultivated varieties of paprika identified by Dave DeWitt and Paul W. Bosland in *Peppers of the World: An Identification Guide*, only three are described as having any level of pungency: ‘cv. [Cultivated Variety] “Sobor” [. . .] Mildly pungent’ (DeWitt and Bosland 1996: 131), ‘cv. “Szentesi” [. . .] pungent’ (133), and ‘cv. “Roumanian Hot” [. . .] Medium pungency’ (132). According to Jean Andrews’s *Peppers: The Domesticated Capsicums*, only two varieties of the *Capsicum annuum* are generally used for paprika, as the very mild Anaheim Pepper is ‘used in the preparation of chili powder and paprika’ (1990: 87), and the likewise non-pungent Tomato Pepper or Squash Pepper, is ‘esteemed as paprika’ due to its ‘high color content’ (Andrews 1990: 112), having nothing to do with any significant capsaicin levels in either varietal (of which there is very little). Of course, it must be acknowledged that *Dracula* is indeed a work of fiction, which would obviously allow the author a certain level of artistic license beyond the real-life availability of paprika varieties in and around Transylvania. It is also unlikely that Stoker performed in-depth research on paprika varieties in that geographic region,<sup>2</sup> and even if he did, there have undoubtedly been a number of varieties that have been created during the almost 100 years between the publication of *Dracula* and of *Peppers* and *Peppers of the World*. Yet, as an interesting culinary exercise, it is apparent that it is highly unlikely that even Harker’s

potentially ultrasensitive palate, gastrointestinal tract, or psyche would be agitated by the paprika he consumed. Granted, either the ‘Szentesi’ or ‘Roumanian Hot’ varieties that DeWitt and Bosland mentioned could be a factor, since Harker is writing from Bistritz (*Bistrița*) and the region of Transylvania, not far from the Hungarian town of Szentes and Romania.<sup>3</sup> However, Harker’s description of his Paprika Hendl as ‘very good but thirsty’, and also remarking that later that evening ‘I had to drink up all the water in my carafe, and was still thirsty’ (Stoker 2000: 2), seems to have more to do with the astringency effect of over-seasoning or the possibility that it was a smoked paprika, since he never mentions any sort of burning pain from the spiciness of his dish.

Stoker is in no way taking artistic liberties by singling out paprika as a common spice in Transylvanian cuisine, and it must also be argued that Harker consuming this cuisine is very likely doing him more good than harm. Stefan Halikowski Smith observes that while ‘African peppers largely disappeared from the world market over the course of the sixteenth century, the American Capsicum genus, from dominating the cuisine of the New World, spread determinedly across the world’ (2008: 407). As a result, ‘[t]oday, the pimento is the world’s third most produced spice, behind pepper and cloves’, and the ‘story of Hungarian paprika, also a pimento, suggests that its success in the eighteenth century was primarily substitutive and based on its cheapness of production’ (Smith 2008: 407, 409). Andrews explains of these varieties that the ‘Slavic people in the Balkans called them *peperka*, *piperke*, or *paparka*, and by 1659 the Hungarians had changed the name to *paprika*’, and like most peppers, the varieties that are used to make paprika are ‘a bountiful source of ascorbic acid [vitamin C]’ (Andrews 1990: 5, 75). Though, vitamin C is ‘readily destroyed by contact with oxygen and heat’, so ‘in drying the ripe pods nearly all the vitamin C is destroyed’ (Andrews 1990: 75). However, capsicums are also

rich in vitamin A, which is ‘not impaired by cooking, canning, or storage’ (Andrews 1990: 76). Therefore, the health benefits of paprika remain, even beyond the resultant trace amounts of vitamin C, as Smith maintains that

The fact that pimentos are [currently] useful in the chemoprevention of cardiovascular disorders and cataracts did not escape physicians 500 years ago. That they are a recognized source of vitamins C and E and are high in antioxidants, a valuable tool in the fight against cancer, would not, however, have occurred to doctors at that time. (2008: 417)

Paprika can therefore be taken as just one microcosmic example of a larger issue plaguing much of Britain during the years preceding *Dracula*’s publication; that is, a lack of food diversity at least partially resulting from culinary and cultural xenophobia, creating a real or preferred homogeneity in food availability.

Contrary to the stereotypes of blandness that have, until recently, long stigmatized British tastes, British cuisine actually has a rich history in terms of flavor profiles and the use of spices. Jon Stobart supports this in claiming that ‘[t]raditionally, English cookery had made extensive use of a wide range of spices to produce richly flavoured dishes’ (2013: 222). However, ‘in the seventeenth century, and especially following the Restoration, there was a strong move against heavily spiced dishes and a shift towards courtly or French modes of cooking’ (Stobart 2013: 222). This characterization seems to hold true in the nineteenth century, but one can plainly see that Stobart is more concerned with the cultural elite in this analysis. Granted, as cookery books became more common throughout nineteenth-century Britain, the receipts/recipes provided reflect a strong French influence in terms of ingredients, technique and taste, while also incorporating ingredients that would be readily available and affordable for the British middle-

class households to which these books were primarily marketed. However, it must be acknowledged that these cookery books, as popular as they were, do not necessarily reflect how Victorians *actually* cooked, as not only would Victorian cooks — professional or amateur — often apply their own variations to ingredients and preparation methods (according to preference and/or necessity), but cookbooks themselves reflect, as Arjun Appadurai argues, an ‘effort on the part of some variety of specialist to standardize the regime of the kitchen’ (1988: 3). Therefore, these nineteenth-century cookery books are by no means exhaustive surveys of British cuisine. However, they can at least be considered as more standardized representations of Victorian cuisine, despite any tendency for their authors to idealize that cuisine, and also despite the oftentimes subjective nature of food preparation.

An analysis of some of the most popular cookery books of nineteenth-century Britain certainly reveals the French influence discussed by Stobart, as well as the general absence of dishes that might be deemed richly spiced,<sup>4</sup> but there is indeed an element of foreign culinary influence beyond the French, although the flavor profiles mainly rely upon herbs, spices, and other ingredients commonly available to British middle-class consumers. Charles Elmé Francatelli, former Chief Cook and Maître d’Hôtel to Queen Victoria, displays a strong French influence in his *The Modern Cook* (1846), undoubtedly due to his tutelage under Marie-Antoine Carême. Likewise, Maria Rundell’s *Domestic Economy, and Cookery* (1827) and *A New System of Domestic Cookery* (1847), Joseph Bregon and Anne Miller’s *The Practical Cook, English and Foreign* (1845), Alexis Soyer’s *The Modern Housewife or, Ménagère* (1849), Isabella Beeton’s *Book of Household Management* (1861), Mary Jewry’s *Warne’s Every-Day Cookery* (1872), Harriet Anne de Salis’s *Entrées à la Mode* (1887), and Agnes B. Marshall’s *Cookery Book* (1888), all include a number of recipes with French-influenced titles and/or culinary



methodology and terminology — with Jewry, de Salis, and Marshall each including a French subtitle for almost every recipe — and they all include at least some recipes inspired by Indian cuisine. In addition to English and French cuisine, Rundell's *Domestic Economy, and Cookery* discusses Scotch and 'Oriental' in its full title and contents, and even discusses some African cuisine, while Bregion and Miller discuss Western and Eastern-European dishes, as well as the 'American mode' of 'Turtle Soup' (1845: xxvii). Jewry, de Salis, and Marshall, however, organize their recipes by course, component, protein, etc., rather than by nationality, although international influence is clear in many of their recipes. A relatively wider array of flavor profiles is evident in the later Jewry, de Salis and Marshall texts in terms of the use of spices. However, aside from the curried dishes, it would be a stretch to classify their recipes as richly spiced.

Again, the ingredients and spices used in all nine of these nineteenth-century English cookery books are almost exclusively local to the British Isles in terms of cultivation and/or market availability, and while paprika is not listed in any of the recipes, cayenne pepper most certainly is (and somewhat more liberally so in the Jewry, de Salis and Marshall<sup>5</sup> texts). Keeping in mind that cayenne pepper is not only very similar to paprika in terms of plant species — cayenne pepper is yet another collection of cultivated varieties of the *Capsicum annuum* — production technique, and even color, this sheds some interesting light on Harker's encounter with the exotic paprika. For one thing, cayenne pepper was already established as a common ingredient in Victorian cooking, and it is almost always markedly spicier — or pungent, to again use DeWitt and Bosland's term — than paprika. Multiple recipes that include cayenne pepper as an ingredient are listed in all nine cookery books listed above, with Beeton's text even including the ingredient in the title of a recipe: 'CAYENNE CHEESES' (1986: 817). While these influential, middle-class cookery books reveal much about British interest in foreign cuisine, an

analysis of the working class on the basis of food and nutrition will further contextualize British cuisine, beyond just the cultural elite and the middle class, during the mid-1800s, as well as through the *fin de siècle* and culinary environment surrounding *Dracula*'s publication.

Understandably, working-class households tended to avoid spending wages on exotic spices to create dynamic flavor profiles and heterogeneous culinary experiences; however, working-class food choices and nutritional intake can reveal much on the state of British food in the mid-nineteenth century, in contrast to the *fin de siècle*. Paul Clayton and Judith Rowbotham make some interesting observations about the early-to-mid-Victorian working class, concluding that 'even at the lower end of the economic scale, [they] ate nourishing, if dull, food' (2008 'Part Two': 351). That those on a low budget often ate dull food should surprise no one, but Clayton and Rowbotham also discovered that an 'upturn in life expectancy discernable by 1861, and well established by 1871, was due to an improvement in nutrition which affected all classes, including the working-classes, thanks to a better availability, in quantity, of a range of foods at affordable prices' ('Part Two': 351). Clayton and Rowbotham's data upends many assumptions about the inadequacy of the working-class diet in the mid-nineteenth century, as they claim that 'diet and public health reached a high point in the mid-Victorian era' (2008 'Part One': 285). They even go so far as to argue that,

Contrary to received wisdom, the mid-Victorian working classes appear to have been following modern advice about healthy lifestyles almost to the letter. Not yet having acquired the taste for processed foods, they were in fact eating something closer to the Mediterranean diet or even the Paleolithic diet than the modern Western diet. This should have created enormous public health benefits; or, at the very least, very significantly reduced levels of degenerative disease. ('Part One': 287)

Granted, poverty and malnourishment were still major issues, but evidently mid-century nutrition for the working class was not in such dire straits in Britain.

Rather, leading towards the *fin de siècle*, these nutritional issues came to a head, and much of it had to do with emerging developments in food technology in relation to processed and convenience foods. Clayton and Rowbotham claim that this brief period of mid-century nutritional health proceeded to ‘decline noticeably at the end of the 1870s with the introduction of the first generation of processed foods’ (‘Part One’: 285). The convenience and affordability of these foods was tempting enough, but their negative nutritional impact was exacerbated by the fact that, as Clayton and Rowbotham claim, ‘from the 1880s on, endorsement was awarded to canned and processed milk, fruit and meat products as “ideal” for the consumption of the working-classes because of a presumed promotion in hygiene and nutritional value, as well as convenience’ (‘Part Two’: 356). As a result, the ‘late-Victorian working-classes enjoyed the benefits of such foods and were reassured by the official insistence on their quality (assurances based essentially on their freedom from adulteration)’ (‘Part Two’: 356). Food adulteration was still a critical issue for midcentury Victorian consumers,<sup>6</sup> but that benefit unfortunately distracted from the fact that the novelty of these food technologies resulted in a lack of awareness in terms of possible nutritional drawbacks. At the time of Stoker’s novel, these food technologies appeared to parallel the communication technologies used by the Crew of Light pursuing Dracula in terms of the advantages that they provided. However, while those advantages hold up for Van Helsing and his crew, the opposite is the case in relation to many *fin de siècle* food technologies. Unfortunately, the damage was done, as Robert Millward and Frances Bell illustrate through data based on ‘a wide range of socio-economic variables’, and that ‘cover a large sample for England and Wales in the Victorian period’ (2001: 700). Indeed, the ‘rise of

infant mortality in the 1890s is clear' (Millward and Bell 2001: 701), which is generally a reliable indicator of a lack of nutritional health in the rest of the population. The industrial canning or 'tinning' techniques used to create these new foods of convenience sapped much of the end product's nutritional value. Moreover, these processed foods epitomized homogeneity as consistency in process and product is a foundational goal, and, in order to appeal to as many consumers as possible, the variety of foodstuffs used in that process was likewise limited.

While the affordability and convenience of many of these processed foods increased food availability for late-century Victorians, a significant level of nutritional value and variety was sacrificed in the process. These products were therefore not so nutritionally beneficial to those who consumed them, although the extent to which these consumers actually understood processed foods' nutritional shortcomings is unclear. Adele Wessell notes that as 'food gets faster and cooks "assemble" rather than create dishes the industrialisation of eating attracts more vocal critics' (2007: 119), and Sumangala Bhattacharya observes that mid-century editorials and essays discussing 'dismal English food (a recurrent theme in the press in the 1850s) charged that bad cooking and its daily consumption by the populace were insidious evils that threatened the destruction of Britain, one household at a time' (2007: 3). However, these perspectives seem more focused on critiquing the lack of culinary art involved in preparing industrialized foods rather than on the issue of nutritional value.

Considering that, even in the last twenty years, the field of nutrition science has significantly changed its determinations of what is good or bad for one's health (e.g., saturated fats, carbohydrates and cholesterol), it might be beneficial to consider a more modern perspective on human nutrition than the comparatively archaic opinions contemporaneous to *Dracula*. Over the last several years, nutritionists have come to agree that consuming a greater

variety of food benefits one's overall health. As Maya Vadiveloo et al. state, '[d]iets with greater variety have been shown to promote energy intake and adiposity in short-term experimental studies', and that, in particular, '[e]xisting evidence suggests that dietary variety within nutrient-dense foods (e.g. fruits, vegetables, whole grains) encourages health' (2014: 1563). It also makes sense that, '[h]istorically, individuals who ate a greater variety of foods were more likely to consume adequate nutrients and reduce their mortality and the risk of chronic disease' (Vadiveloo et al. 2014: 1562). Larissa Drescher et al. agree, establishing that '[e]ating a large diversity of foods is an internationally accepted recommendation for a healthy diet, because it is associated with positive health outcomes such as reduced incidence of cancer or mortality' (2007: 647). In 'Food Diversity and Consumer Protection', Sara Tommasi goes as far as to intimate that 'quality of life is based on food diversity' (2017: 220). Even Emma Roberts, in her 'Preface' to the 1840 edition of Maria Rundell's *A New System of Domestic Cookery*, signals a Victorian understanding of the benefits of a diverse diet when she chides 'young ladies' for 'living on air, or vegetables, or a non-descript ambrosial kind of food', or worse, on 'Rout cakes', which have 'proved as detrimental' when 'taken as the only diet' (Roberts 2001: 553). Instead, Roberts recommends that a 'generous diet is in most instances absolutely essential to the complexion' (553), and complains that the 'happy medium between injurious abstinence and injurious excess is unfortunately too seldom preserved' (554).

Despite Victorians understanding the basic importance of diversity in diet, the means to that end would, at some point, necessitate importing foreign food varieties, but that need was complicated by a range of xenophobic to more rational complications. While discussing the potentially positive impact of the global diversity represented by the Great Exhibition of 1851, Paul Young points out that 'food served an obvious and compelling illustrative function,

providing evidence not only of material commonality but also of rich grounds on which to base an international trading community' (2009: 45). However, looking back even further, Nabhan argues that the 'ethical debate about the benefits and negative consequences of globalization no doubt began in the first communities that struggled to deal with the onslaught of goods from someplace else and the risks they posed to local economies and ecologies', and therefore these 'imported goods and the Faustian bargains negotiated to obtain them were likely seen as threats to what was intrinsically unique to the cultures and the places' (2014: 275). Tommasi also points out that 'before the current "globalization", any imported food, due to its nature, was perceived as peculiar and was purchased from abroad because of its distinction from the typical diet of a certain place' (2017: 217). Granted, the reason for importing foreign goods is their inherent distinction from domestic goods, but their perception as 'peculiar' might speak to xenophobic apprehensions.

By no means were foreign food materials imported merely on the basis of their distinction and variety, as this practice — and xenophobia — was also symptomatic of empire. Writing in vampire-metaphor mode in a foreword to *Transnational and Postcolonial Vampires: Dark Blood*, Elleke Boehmer argues that 'Empire fears always the pollution, disorder and unmanning that might come from without, yet the marks of invasion, of penetration, are always already invisible upon the so-called inviolable imperial body' (2013: vii). With similar intimations of infiltration and consumption, Suzanne Daly and Ross G. Forman discuss the nineteenth-century 'waves of immigration that would change the face of eating forever' (2008: 364-365). So, to what extent did Victorians tend to consider foreign foods as exotic opportunities to diversify one's palate and diet, and to what extent did those same foods signify the immigrant as peculiar Other, of whom one might do well to be wary? According to Rajani Sudan — and

perhaps to no surprise, considering the increasing social and cultural diversity of Victorian Britain — both tendencies existed, as '[x]enophobia is the process by which the "other" is constructed, but its definition is contingent on previous interest or attraction to the foreign (xenodochy)' (2002: 7). For Sudan, the 'fear of something foreign presupposes that "we" can understand what counts as foreign, but how are we to come to an understanding of the foreign without recognizing it within some signifying system that makes sense to us?' (7). For Victorians, then, the peculiarity and wariness evoked by foreign foods created an effect not dissimilar to Jonathan Harker's reaction to the exotic paprika; he is attracted by its peculiarity, and likewise wary of its aftereffects on his palate and psyche, but also struck with the urge to provide Mina with the means to incorporate these exotic dishes into their own domestic cuisine.

The irony of nineteenth-century Britons feeling at all wary of any non-European foreign entity — even if that entity is a food product — must be addressed. With few exceptions, the colonial British Empire is the actual threat. Granted, as Annette Cozzi suggests, the 'Other is external, the exotic and sinister alien infiltrating the nation and merging with its citizens' (2010: 130), whether that be the foreign Other or, more specifically, the foreign food-Other. However, from a global perspective, as a colonial power such wariness invites a proverbial idiom with culinary association: the pot calling the kettle black. For example, appropriating foreign ingredients into established domestic recipes is not necessarily malicious, but it certainly could be interpreted as a form of culinary imperialism. So, when April Bullock writes of 'the desire to domesticate or master the world by adopting new ingredients into more traditional foodways or transforming foreign cuisine by incorporating familiar ingredients into exotic recipes' (2012: 438), the terms 'domesticate' and 'master' are not the only troubling words that she uses, as she also reminds us that 'the term "exotic" is often associated with racist and bigoted imperialist

attitudes’, and that ‘some scholars have interpreted the impulse to eat the foods of colonial Others as a hegemonic act or an attempt to display capitalist mastery’ (Bullock 2012: 440). Admittedly, while the above passage from Cozzi uses the term ‘exotic’, that term has already been used several times in this essay, including in the title. However, like the impulse to either problematically appropriate or progressively fuse foreign ‘exotic’ ingredients into established domestic recipes, the term ‘exotic’ has a dual nature in terms of its positive and negative implications.

This theme of duality is not only fundamental to the Gothic — the genre from which the human/monster, dead/undead duality network of the vampire is progeny — it also exists within Victorian identity. Returning to homogeneity vs. heterogeneity, on which much of this essay is focused, Cozzi claims that ‘English identity is heterogeneity; yet heterogeneity is a strategy itself, for in Darwinist terms, variety increases the chances of survival. Thus Englishness proclaims homogeneity whilst taking shelter in British heterogeneity, allowing “little” England a greater chance of ensuring its own survival’ (2010: 13). One might even extend this concept of British heterogeneity to colonial and/or imperial British heterogeneity in terms of the Victorians, and then acknowledge one of the key inconsistencies in relation to the dual nature in which Victorians viewed themselves and are historically viewed: through sheer homogenous Englishness, the Victorians built a global empire, but the strength of that empire was built on cultural heterogeneity, of which ‘little’ England was, by definition, only a small part. Such incongruity helps explain — and again apply to Victorian England — Boehmer’s vampiric characterization of empire: ‘[h]ow hungrily empire feeds upon the substance of those whose life it requires to live and to thrive. How deeply empire fears that the same other it fattens to consume, will in the future turn to suck back what has been leached away’ (2013: vii). In



championing its heterogenous empire, Victorian England betrayed a xenophobia based on the potential strength of that heterogeneity to devalue and potentially overpower the illusion of homogenous Englishness.

Xenophobia is evident in many aspects of Victorian society, and food is no exception. The edited collection *Fear, Loathing, and Victorian Xenophobia* alone contains several essays that reference real-world and fictional examples of Victorian food xenophobia, ranging from: Charlotte Boyce's discussion of English xenophobia in regards to the potato of nearby Ireland; Marlene Tromp's discussion of how food represents the 'polluting Eastern world' (Tromp 2013: 42) in Charles Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*; Maria Bachman's discussion of British xenophobia in relation to Indian-made flatbread in one of the chapters of *The Perils* — written by Wilkie Collins, and also containing chapters by Charles Dickens — that connects the experience to 'the ingestion of the disgusting' (Bachman 2013: 114); Joy Sperling's discussion of Henry Mayhew's novel about the Great Exhibition of 1851<sup>7</sup> that depicts foreigners as 'cooking and eating badly smelling or disgusting foods' (Sperling 2013: 195); and Anne J. Kershen's reminder that 'in Victorian England, at the height of late-nineteenth-century jingoism, Italian penny ice-cream men were accused of being out to "poison the children"' (Kershen 2013: 349). After all, according to Kershen, the Victorians essentially coined the phrase, as it was 'at the end of Victoria's rule that "xenophobia", as a word to describe the reactive emotion to otherness, was formalized' (2013: 355). Victorians' emotional reactions to foreign foods are evidenced in the above examples, but similar to the discussion of the subjective, standardized, and even idealized nature of popular nineteenth-century British cookery books, such examples should be taken as emotional signs of underlying problems rather than full-blown Victorian xenophobic food rage. Fittingly, Sperling presents xenophobia as a more nuanced issue, arguing

that it ‘manifests as an aversion to, or an identified or acknowledged fear of, several kinds and degrees of the foreign’ (2013: 184). This is consistent with Sudan’s theory that ‘[x]enophobia and xenodochy work as an economy because they are mutually constitutive, and it is through this economy that national and cultural identity is manifested’ (2002: 6-7), as well as Boyce’s argument that, while the ‘food of the other can incite feelings of disgust and repulsion’ and ‘its ingestion threatens to unsettle the safe boundaries of the self’ (2013: 158), it is also the case that ‘xenophobia is caught up in a rather more elaborate set of relations than straightforward aversion’ (Boyce paraphrasing Sudan, 2013: 155). Like many other forms of fear and ignorance, xenophobia can be complicated.

Xenophobia has also, of course, been a major theme in past critical discussions of *Dracula*, as well as the aforementioned themes of Gothic — and Victorian — dualities, inconsistencies and complications. As a vampire, Count Dracula is feared and exoticized as a Gothic villain, but also as foreign invader and carrier of disease. As Aspasia Stephanou warns, ‘the corrupted blood of the racial other threatens to vampirise and pollute the pure family and nation’ (2014: 14). Count Dracula himself makes it clear that his eclectic family history — evidently a veritable “whirlpool of European races” — dictates that he is a threat, and is very much a *non-English* threat: “[w]e Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship” (Stoker 2000: 24). This is in response to Harker asking him about ‘Transylvania history’ (24), which reveals that Dracula equates his national pride — and/or regional pride, as a Transylvanian — to his familial or racial pride, which in turn speaks to Cozzi’s claim that ‘[i]dentities are innumerable, but one of the most powerful identifications is that of nationality; and national identity depends on both food and literature to sustain and replicate itself’ (2010: 5). In a similar vein, Thomas Fahy establishes

that ‘[g]astrocriticism, the study of food in literature, primarily focuses on the way eating choices define the self’ (2018: 247). Fittingly, Harker remarks upon the literary nature of his experiences in Transylvania so far, immediately after Dracula’s rather animated description of his national, regional, familial, and racial history; Jonathan writes in his journal that ‘this diary seems horribly like the beginning of the “Arabian Nights”, for everything has to break off at cockcrow — or like the ghost of Hamlet’s father’ (Stoker 2000: 25). As the early pages of this essay can attest, those early pages of Harker’s journal read as somewhat of a gastrocritical travel narrative; however, those culinary descriptions speak in direct contrast to the Count, whose national pride in relation to *food* is conspicuously absent!

From a culinary viewpoint, the novel unfortunately moves on rather quickly from Harker’s interesting food critiques to the ‘odd things’ related to vampiric activity. Even though food and eating are mentioned several times throughout the course of *Dracula*, there are few specific descriptions of *what* is being eaten. However, it is soon clear that, as far as the Count is concerned, his diet is extremely homogenous. Almost immediately after Harker’s arrival at Dracula’s castle, he is treated to one of the Count’s several excuses as to why he does not break bread with his guest: “‘I have dined already, and I do not sup’” (14). True, the Count does not sup, and what he has actually dined on is left to the imagination (which likely leads to the *bloody* truth). These gustatory absences are not overlooked by Harker, who wonders in his journal that ‘[i]t is strange that as yet I have not seen the Count eat or drink. He must be a very peculiar man!’ (22). This peculiarity is only exacerbated by the Count’s class and wealth, as Harker would assume that his host enjoys an almost limitless choice of cuisine, a stark contrast to the processed diet of the *fin de siècle* working-class, as well as to Harker’s middle-class limitations on more expensive foods. The reader’s imagined suppositions materialize when Van Helsing

explains, in his somewhat broken English, that the Count “eat not as others. Even friend Jonathan, who lived with him for weeks, did never see him to eat, never!” (205). Van Helsing explains that the “vampire live on, and cannot die by mere passing of the time; he can flourish when that he can fatten on the blood of the living” (205). The drawback is, of course, that just like normal *nonvampires*, the Count “cannot flourish without this diet” (205), despite the fact that this diet is very much out of the norm. Drinking blood evidently allows the vampire to avoid dying from old age — and even “grow younger” (Stoker 2000: 205) — gain “the strength of many of his hand” (205), and even shapeshifting abilities, in addition to several other preternatural enhancements. However, even in the world of Stoker’s novel, the difficulties in obtaining a sufficient supply of fresh blood, while avoiding discovery and other various threats to a vampire’s otherwise eternal life, are legion. There is an unmistakable sense of urgency implied in Van Helsing’s warning that the Count cannot flourish without his diet, as if the importance of maintaining this actually quite difficult diet and lifestyle can easily become a vampire’s weakness.

Once again acknowledging that this essay is indeed studying a work of fiction, it is interesting to consider that the real-world implications of the Count’s homogenous diet are really not that far removed from the world of the novel. As Stephanou points out, a blood-based diet, such as the Count’s, creates ‘competing meanings of blood as a symbolic or supernatural fluid and, on the other hand, as an empirical material’ (2014: 22). This duality further marks the Count as Othered, consistent with Cameron and Olguin when they argue that *Dracula* is a ‘novel deeply interested in the more general question of appetitive consumption as a marker of difference or “Otherness”’ (2015: 79). The vampire is Othered by the supernatural powers gained from a blood-based diet, and the simple fact that such a diet is not empirically possible. The concept of a

blood-based diet relates to Lorna Piatti-Farnell's claim that the "edible" and "inedible" arguably lie at the very core of both the conceptual and aesthetic boundaries of food horror, and what reactions to this are deemed as appropriate' (2017: 14). Granted, blood is technically edible, at least to an extent, as represented by the use of *cooked* animal blood in some culinary circumstances — like the many variations of blood sausage around the world, or the use of goat's blood in some South American and Caribbean rice dishes — but for most readers of *Dracula*, the very idea of drinking *raw* blood likely leads to a visceral reaction of disgust.

According to Piatti-Farnell, the

representation of disgust and revulsion in relation to food and consumption [is] the identification of that which we view as 'Other' in our culture, and an expression of the cultural anxieties that surround our behaviour in terms of bodily and psychological reactions. (2017: 13)

For raw blood, and likewise cooked blood in many cultures, it is the social stigma, and revulsion that renders a blood-based diet inedible, at least in terms of the *idea* of such a diet.

Despite cultural variance in the extent to which consuming blood (raw or cooked) is or has been considered edible, from a nutritional perspective, it is simply not feasible. Maria Parsons notes that 'medical advice and cures for anaemia in the nineteenth century often verged on the macabre. One suggested remedy for anaemia recommended to women was to ingest a daily cup of oxen blood' (2006: par. 23). Eight fluid ounces of oxen blood per day could very well prove to be medically problematic, regardless, and the fact that it is no longer recommended at least suggests that doing so is not medically beneficial. In the pursuit of yet another interesting culinary exercise, while also returning to a more *Dracula*-specific focus, some medical as well as academic liberties might be taken in consulting *The New Vampire's Handbook* (2009). Writers

Joe Garden et al. estimate that a several-hundred-year-old vampire, such as Stoker's Count, would need 2.75 to 4.5 pints of human blood per night (2009: 56) in order to 'flourish', to borrow Van Helsing's term; the inability to maintain that level will dramatically reduce that vampire's powers and overall wellness after a few days to a week (2009: 57). In all seriousness, though, Stoker's use of an exclusively sanguineous diet combined with the ability to transform into a bat obviously align his Dracula character with the common vampire bat (*Desmodus rotundus*). This association is strengthened when one considers the aforementioned sense of urgency that Van Helsing intimates when discussing the Count's need to maintain his diet.

Mariella B. Freitas et al. reference earlier studies that have shown the vampire bat to be

highly susceptible to short-term fasting showing a severe hypoglycemia followed by early deaths after 2-3 days of starvation. This metabolic response to fasting is not expected for most mammals with high protein diets, which are known to be especially resistant to long periods of fasting. (2013: 1)

Returning briefly to a human metabolism, Jamie Pope and Steven Nizielski laud the 'potent ability of dietary proteins to reduce hunger and extend the time until we feel hungry again (satiety)' (2019: 191). However, things are different for the specific high-protein diet of vampire bats. According to M. Lisandra Zepeda Mendoza et al., '[b]lood is a challenging dietary source because it consists of an ~78% liquid phase and a dry-matter phase consisting of ~93% proteins and only ~1% carbohydrates, providing very low levels of vitamins, and potentially containing blood-borne pathogens' (2018: 659). Freitas et al. also add that '[h]igh-protein diets induce striking early metabolic changes in human and animal models, especially when the diet contains at least 50% of energy derived from proteins' (2013: 1). Consequently,

*D. rotundus* is highly susceptible to fasting possibly due to its limited ability to store body energy reserves as glycogen and fat when food is available, and also due to its low ability to mobilize existing stores (protein) throughout fasting. This metabolic control of energy stores leads to severe hypoglycemia, followed by premature deaths after 24–72 h of fasting. (Freitas 2013: 4)

Despite having supernatural abilities sustained via a blood-based diet, the homogeneity of that diet would put the otherwise powerful vampire in a precarious position.

In a stark culinary contrast, the crew that Van Helsing assembles to destroy the vampire has power in sheer numbers, as well as in their ability to consume a diverse and nutritious diet and wield myriad technological devices and tactics. Again, unlike Harker's food descriptions earlier in the novel, the specific meals and dishes that the Crew of Light consume are not known to the reader, but they are indeed eating, and from Chapter 25 onward, they are eating *foreign* food. As Cameron and Olguin observe, 'food is something that *Dracula* is obsessed with. Following each scene wherein the "nation's blood" is purified, the men must replenish their strength through a hearty meal' (2013: 66). Indeed, the crew is consciously eating in order to maintain their own ability to 'flourish', as Harker writes that 'Dr. Van Helsing and Dr. Seward are agreed that if we do not eat we cannot work our best' (Stoker 2000: 248). Later, Mina encourages everyone with the fact that "[b]reakfast is ready, and we must all eat that we may be strong" (254), Van Helsing likewise encourages the group to "have breakfast which we all need" (269), and later he writes in a 'Memorandum' to Mina Harker's Journal: 'I will strengthen me with breakfast, and then I will to my terrible work' (317). These passages indeed do support Cameron and Olguin's claim that 'how one consumes will prove essential in the quest to differentiate and defeat the vampiric Other' (2013: 79). That they are consuming breakfast

proves significant, as it is the meal most antithetical to the Count's nocturnal habits, verified by the night that they found Dracula after he had taken 'a little refreshment' (Stoker 2000: 246) from Mina's veins, leading Van Helsing to crassly joke the next morning: "[d]o you forget", he said, with actually a smile, "that last night he banqueted heavily, and will sleep late?" (253). The contrast between sleeping hours is supplemented by the far more dynamic and diverse caloric and nutrient intake of the crew, further contrasted by the Count's homogenous hematophagy.

The crew's diet echoes their overall strategy to pursue and destroy Dracula, as the diversity in their food parallels the relative diversity of the crewmembers themselves,<sup>8</sup> as well as the technologies that they use in organizing, planning and recordkeeping. In a tactical move to hide their strategies and position from the Count, Van Helsing and his male allies decide that Mina — now infected by the vampire — should be kept unaware of that strategic information due to a discovered psychic link between her and the Count. Van Helsing makes it clear that "what we must do is to prevent this; we must keep her ignorant of our intent, and so she cannot tell what she know not" (277). Van Helsing soon realizes his mistake, as later in the novel, when he and the rest of the men hit a dead end in pursuit of the Count, Mina is accepted back into their confidence after she appears to correctly deduce the almost exact route that the Count would take back to the protect his castle. Once Mina finishes reading her astute and well-reasoned analysis to the men, Van Helsing proclaims that "[o]ur dear Madam Mina is once more our teacher. Her eyes have been where we blinked. Now we are on the track once again, and this time we may succeed" (304). Alison Case argues that Mina is an even more powerful character in the novel, since she reveals herself to be 'the active force behind the accumulation and organization of documents in the case' against the Count (1993: 230). For Case, the 'figure who organizes these documents is, hence, a key "plotter" in both senses of the term' (1993: 224). Nancy Armstrong



would agree, as she argues that ‘Mina is full of information that she has copied from and synthesized for members of the community’ (2005: 12), and according to Rosemary Jann, *Dracula*’s ‘characters are at the beginning, at least, often wrong or puzzled about the interpretation of the “facts”, their ability to record, reorder, share, and reason from their observations becomes at least as vital a weapon against Dracula’ (1989: 280). Mina learns how to use a phonograph and transcribes the cylinders by using a typewriter; Leigh Joyce Harbin notes that Mina is valued for ‘her technical expertise as typist and transcriber’, and she ‘memorizes numerous train schedules’ (2002: 32), like the ““train fiend”” (Stoker 2000: 291) that she is.

Count Dracula — the true fiend — despite his typically Gothic combination of dualities, is tragic in his homogeneity. He is singular in purpose, exclaiming to Van Helsing and his crew that “[m]y revenge is just begun! I spread it over centuries, and time is on my side” (263). However, what truly spells his destruction is his homogenous diet of blood. Despite that humans, pulsating with blood, are all around him, Dracula must methodically execute a clandestine process to sustain such a diet, which severely limits him due to its lack of attainability, sustainability, availability and nutritional value — and these last four issues also reflect many of the frustrations of food consumption in the nineteenth century and beyond. The Count is also *singular*, and is pursued by an organized and relatively diverse set of hunters that are just as motivated as he, but who also have access to an almost limitless diversity in diet and available technology. Despite the fact that, according to Harker, ‘in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document’ (326) in the crew’s arsenal of recordings and other technologies, Van Helsing and his crew are victorious and the vampire has failed.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for a Paprika Hendl recipe.

<sup>2</sup> Jimmie Cain claims that, in ‘his research for *Dracula*, Stoker consulted a number of relatively contemporaneous documents about the geography, peoples, and customs of Eastern Europe’ (2009: 129), which at least leaves room for the possibility of food research, but likely with a more general Eastern-European scope in mind, rather than food more specific to Transylvania.

<sup>3</sup> At the time of *Dracula*’s publication, Transylvania was not yet part of Romania, but rather was part of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

<sup>4</sup> Again, these observations are merely based on these more standardized and perhaps even idealized recipes, so individual variations on French influence, and on the type, amount and number of spices actually used, are entirely possible when these recipes were actually prepared.

<sup>5</sup> In addition, *Larger Cookery Book of Extra Recipes* — in typical Agnes B. Marshall’s entrepreneurial fashion — contains an advertisement for ‘MARSHALL’S CORALINE PEPPER’ (1902: 19), informing the reader that ‘A. B. Marshall begs to notify that the REGISTERED LABEL (Trade Mark) as hereunder will be on every red box containing a bottle of this now celebrated article’ (2902: 19). The advert further expounds upon the admirable qualities of the Coraline Pepper, claiming that it ‘is distinct from Cayenne, and is not much hotter than fine ordinary pepper’ (1902: 19).

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca F. Stern warns that, throughout the ‘1850s and 1860s the number of people who ate ostensibly nutritious food, only to wither and die in consequence, provoked both governmental and popular alarm. Food poisoning was no longer a rare occurrence’ (2003: 482).

<sup>7</sup> See Mayhew and Cruikshank (1851).

<sup>8</sup> *Relative* diversity, because it must be acknowledged that, although the crew contains a woman, an American and a Dutchman, Ertuğrul Koç and Yağmur Demir argue of Mina Harker, Quincey Morris, Van Helsing, Jonathan Harker, Arthur Holmwood/Lord Godalming and John Seward that ‘Despite their diversity in origin, class, and nation, the characters of *Dracula* constitute the predominant bourgeois *Weltanschauung*’ (2018: 428), although, more accurately, one might add that these characters more specifically ‘constitute the predominant bourgeois [British and/or Anglo-Saxon] *Weltanschauung*’.

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## Appendix

### Paprika Hendl

Yield: Serves 4

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour and 40 minutes

Whole chicken, cut into 8 parts	1
Paprika	2 Tbsp.
Butter, melted	1 Tbsp.
Extra virgin olive oil	1 Tbsp.
Small white onion, medium diced	1
Small yellow onion, medium diced	1
Garlic cloves, minced	6
Tomato paste	6 oz.
Tomato purée	28 oz.
Chicken stock	4 fl. oz.
Sour cream	8 fl. oz.
Kosher salt	as needed
Ground black pepper	as needed
Paprika	as needed
Chopped fresh chives	as needed

1. Season the chicken parts with salt, pepper, and paprika.
2. Warm the butter and olive oil in a medium or large saucepan over medium heat.
3. Brown the chicken parts on both sides and remove from pan (might have to do this in batches, depending on the size of your pan). Set aside.
4. Add the tomato paste to the middle of the pan and spread into about a 3-inch circle.
5. Add the onion and garlic to the pan outside of the tomato paste circle. Season the onions and garlic with salt and pepper, and with 1 Tbsp. of paprika. Sauté until the onions are translucent, and then mix with the browned tomato paste in the pan.
6. Sauté for 2 more minutes, then add the chicken stock, deglaze the pan, then add the tomato purée.
7. Bring to a simmer, simmer covered for 5 minutes, remove from heat, then blend well with an immersion blender (or remove the contents of the pan and put it all into a mixer or food processor) until puréed.
8. Return the pan to medium heat (and return contents to the pan, if removed), add the browned chicken parts, bring to a simmer, then cover with a lid and simmer for 1 hour.
9. While the chicken is simmering, add the remaining Tbsp. of paprika to the sour cream, and also season with salt and pepper. Mix well with a whisk.
10. When chicken is done, serve topped with the sour cream mixture and sprinkled with chopped chives.
11. This dish goes well with buttered egg noodles, along with any vegetable side that you might prefer, and can be paired with a white wine—like a Riesling, similar to the tart Golden Mediasch that Harker enjoys—or a nice Pilsner.