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Vampirism as a Shadow in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

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ABSTRACT

Through the studies of literal and metaphorical meanings of eating in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), this article investigates how the depictions of food and eating culture in Transylvania are the results of misrepresentations. Contrast to the illustrations about the consumptions of food in the Western table which accompanies the spirit of unity, the predatory images of vampires in Transylvania can be easily associated with an idea that communion is absent in the foreign land. The purpose of this article is, thus, to subvert the binary oppositions between East and West, with the focus on the descriptions of food and eating. For this goal, the examinations in this article include: three female vampires' language which involves the sense of communion, the Western characters' eating at a table which turns out to be a defective place in achieving the spirit of unity, and a lunatic character R.M. Renfield's abnormal eating habits that can be interpreted within the contemporary socioeconomic contexts. Ultimately, this article is to show how the vampiric images in Stoker's *Dracula* function as shadows that cover the violence of the Western middle-class capitalists in the contemporary capital-oriented society.

Keywords: Communion, *Dracula*, Eating misrepresentation, Stoker.

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1.0 Introduction

Literary descriptions of food and eating have been often interrelated to the discourse of binary operations between barbarism and civilization, as the former is associated with cannibalistic custom and the latter is with communion. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is not an exception to this, because the vampire infiltrating England from Transylvania to satisfy his hunger is depicted as a degenerative figure to be destroyed by the Western narrators. Critics have tried to subvert the hierarchical structures between the primitive East and the civilized West from Stoker's text, and this article is in line with the previous research as its goal is to reject the pre-existing hierarchical binaries. However, in this article, the object to reverse the binary oppositions is pursued with the method of focusing on the seemingly unimportant details that have been neglected in the text analysis of *Dracula*, and this is to find ambivalences in each side of the binaries represented in the table scenes. In fact, few has read this text with focusing on the table scenes in which non-vampiric figures (such as the Western characters or R.M Renfield) consume their meals, and the examinations of their table scenes would ultimately show how the violence of the vampiric modes of eating do operate with the connotations reflected in the non-vampiric figures' eating.

As for the details that seem trivial but play important roles in Stoker's text, the three female vampires' brief articulation and its literal meaning would be firstly investigated, to find out the sense of communalism out of the negative imageries depicting them. As opposed to the three female vampires' eating scenes that imply an act of communion that has been overlooked due to their aggressiveness, the following analysis of the table scenes of the Western characters is to find a defectiveness in their pretensions to achieve communal spirit. This is to show how the Western characters fail in their attempt to get the sense of trust in each other in a domestic level. Also, another detail to be focused on is the case of life-eating maniac R.M Renfield, who chooses flies and spiders out of all sorts of insects to imitate the natural food chain in his confinement. With the studies of the semantics of flies and spiders that are used as metaphors to indicate the contemporary situations in a socioeconomic level, Renfield's abnormal eating habit would be understood as an act that conveys the messages of resistance against the hierarchical systems between the exploiters and the exploited. Throughout all these investigations, it would be argued in this article that the pre-existing binaries surrounding the place of table in Stoker's *Dracula* do not function anymore in effective ways, and the aggressiveness that has been provided as a typical image of vampires is also hidden in the Western characters' representations of themselves in this text.

2.0 Derogatory descriptions of culinary culture in Transylvania

As it is Jonathan Harker's journal that begins the novel *Dracula*, and as this beginning is full of imageries of food and eating in an exotic land of Transylvania, Harker's descriptions about Transylvanian eating culture – which seems somewhat miscellaneous but at the same time interesting – deserve to be paid more attention to. These concerns, focusing on the metaphorical meanings of the food and eating in the exotic land, add more interest to the issues of representations of the exotic culinary culture understood (or misunderstood) by Jonathan Harker. Harker's records of the Eastern European food from the first day of his journey to Transylvania are: on May 3 in Bistritz located in Northern Transylvania, Harker tries to eat “paprika hendl” that is a “chicken done up some way with red pepper” (Stoker, 2003, p. 7), “mamalinga” of “a sort of porridge of maize flour,” and “impletata” which is an “eggplant stuffed with forcemeat” (Stoker, 2003, p. 8). Also, adding these descriptions, Harker forgets not to write, “Mem [Memorize]. get recipe for Mina” (Stoker, 2003, p. 7). About this short note, Troy Boone indicates that it can be read within the contemporary social contexts where the increase of knowledge is pursued for the expansion of the British Empire. Thus, he says, “Harker the solicitor travels to Transylvania, furthers the commercial progress of his British firm, keeps an orderly record of his experiences, and documents recipes for his wife Mina, a locus of domestic stability (he refers to her as the preparer of food, for example), waits patiently at home in England for his return” (Boone, 1993, p. 76). Boone is proposing an idea that Harker's personal descriptions of food and eating in Transylvania

can be understood as contributions to the enlargement of cultural knowledge in Britain, as the new recipe would add more information to the contemporary British culinary arts. Harker's journal recorded during his visit to Transylvania can function as a collection of 'new' things that would widen his experience, but at the same time the exotic food images that remain dominant in this documentary also reveal his difficulty in grasping what the exotic foods are. As a result, Harker's attempt to depict the 'new' food that is unfamiliar to him with his language – which has been previously established in his homeland where Transylvanian culinary culture does not exist – results in derogatory descriptions of Transylvanian food. For example, in his journal of the next day on May 4, Harker tries to eat something called as “robber steak,” which is understood 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 the London cat's-meat” with the wine of “Golden Mediasch” (Stoker, 2003, p. 12, *emphasis added*). The expression of “London cat's-meat” to explain the qualities of “robber steak” is used in a disparaging sense as it is literally seen, and Maurice Hindle specifies what the “robber steak” is in his notes for *Dracula*: “London cat's-meat” is “Horseflesh prepared and sold by London street dealers as food for cats” (Hindle, 2003, p. 440). In fact, Hindle's note can suggest more than what it seems, if readers put more focus on the location where the food is sold or even consumed (in “London streets”) than the fact that “cat's meat” is made by “horseflesh.” Harker's remembrance of the scenes of consumptions – of the acts that are done orally (eating) and economically (buying) – on London streets implies that the exotic food is hard for Harker to be accepted as a formal dish which can be prepared on a table in domestic places. About the beginning of the journey of Harker, Burton Hatlen mentions that “As he approaches Castle Dracula, Harker must leave behind him one by one all the symbols of civilization: trains, comfortable hotels, the English language. And he finds himself entering a world of barbaric foods and tongues, and of primitive superstitions” (Hatlen, 1980, p. 87), to contrast the contemporary Eastern and Western European culture through the binary oppositions between barbarism and civilization. The descriptions of food and eating in Stoker's *Dracula*, thus, are related to the distinction between East and West, and this dichotomy is from regarding the Eastern culinary custom as underdeveloped and the Western dining culture as more civilized. Thus, the narratives in Stoker's text start with establishing the hierarchical binaries between Eastern and Western culinary culture, and this hierarchy illustrated at the beginning of the story seems to last throughout the novel. This is because barbarisms in the former seem to be incompatible with the sense of communion but the civilized culture of the latter is repetitively depicted with the sense of commensalism. However, closer scrutiny of the eating scenes in Stoker's text would reveal that the vampires who have been considered as primitive figures in Eastern Europe are in fact performing oral activities in a sophisticated mode, and the sense of unity in the Western characters' table – that is expected to be a place for communion – is observed to be defective.

3.0 Eating in the castle of Dracula – from barbarism to civilization

In his travel narratives, Jonathan Harker's failures in understanding Transylvanian native dishes as domestic food formally prepared on a table are continuously repeated in the castle of Dracula which he finally arrives at. In this place does Jonathan Harker start to recognize that the tables prepared by Dracula are problematic because there is no communion, as the host who invites Harker does not share a table with his guest:

So I set to and enjoyed a hearty meal. When I had done, I looked for a bell, so that I might let the servants know I had finished; but I could not find one. There are certainly odd deficiencies in the house, considering the extraordinary evidences of wealth which are round me. The table service is of gold, and so beautifully wrought that it must be of immense value... I have not yet seen a servant anywhere, or heard a sound near the castle except for the howling of wolves. When I had finished my meal – I do not know whether to call it breakfast or dinner... (Stoker, 2003, p. 25-26)

The “odd deficiencies” mentioned by Jonathan Harker are found in the table, which is decorated with accessories of gold that is “beautifully wrought” to be “of immense value.” In the extremity of

ornateness of the table which makes Harker feel that he is supposed to follow proper table manners in the aristocratic estate, however, Harker finds that that “I have not yet seen a servant” who is expected to come and serve the guest. Harker’s perception of the deficiency is based not only on his previous notion of the formality at a table where a guest is given a wine decanted by a butler and a dish carried by other servants, but also on his notion of a symbolic meaning of a table where people (mostly of those who belong to the same social class) who eat and share food together to act communion. Undoubtedly, in the first dining occasion for Jonathan Harker in the castle of Dracula, the formal procedures of table services are not performed: in this note by Harker, who remembers that “The Count himself came forward and took off the cover of a dish, and I fell to at once on an excellent roast chicken. This, with some cheese and a salad and a bottle of old Tokay, of which I had two glasses, was my supper” (Stoker, 2003, p. 24), he sees neither anyone carrying the dishes of “roast chicken” with “some cheese and a salad,” nor a butler decanting “a bottle of old Tokay,” a wine produced in Hungary. Later, Jonathan Harker starts to feel the sense of strangeness at his table, because his eating food is not accompanied with the conversation with the host or anyone in the castle. For this reason, he says that “When I went into the dinning-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” (Stoker, 2003, p. 33). The absence of others at the same table where Harker dines suggests that in Dracula’s castle, the acts of eating can exist for the goals of being fed with aliments, or for enjoying the flavors of the food, but not for achieving the sense of unity of the group members. The virtue of communion, which is often understood with a mode of “happy ethic of consuming” (Williams, 1973, p. 30) in this context “where the dining table – as the site of hospitable and abundant eating and drinking – plays a central role in conveying a spirit of community” (LeBlanc, *Food, orality, and nostalgia for childhood*, 1999, p. 263), hence seems to be impossible in this place.

Even though the notion of communion appears to be absent in Dracula’s castle, however, the examinations of the scene of the three female vampires’ kisses through focusing on the literal meaning of their languages make clear that the three female vampires are in fact ‘sharing’ foods. According to Jonathan Harker’s journal on May 16th, which records the conversations from the three female vampires, one of them speaks to another, “Go on! You are the first, and we shall follow; yours is the right to begin,” and this is responded with “He [Jonathan Harker] is young and strong; there are kisses for us all” (Stoker, 2003, p. 45). This expression of “kisses for us all,” although it reminds readers of the practice of polygamous relations as three female vampires are about to ‘kiss’ together on Jonathan Harker’s body, indicates that the three vampiric characters are in fact ‘sharing’ what they want to incorporate into their body through the system of digestion. However, the grotesqueness in the scene which involves cannibalistic images of sucking life-blood hides the verbal meaning of their speech which suggests a communal act of eating.

In addition to the literal meaning of the female vampires’ language which indicates that they are performing communion in their own way, this expression of the “kisses” can be read metaphorically because the appetites for food and sex are often interchangeable as both of them belong to the category of carnal desire. The point is, despite the violence implied in the three female vampires’ acts to ‘kiss’ Jonathan Harker who does later recognize this as their attempt to suck his blood, the metaphorical meanings of their vampiric acts at this scene are not subjected to the level of barbaric practices. In other words, the three female vampires’ “kisses” are not fallen under the debate on the binary oppositions between the barbarism of the East and civilization of the West as it is seen that “Transylvania (the “land beyond the forest”) seems Eastern and primitive, alienated from Western and modern industrial England” (Boone, 1993, p. 78). The “kisses” are not regressive forms of eating, and Maggie Kilgour’s opinion supports this as she suggests that the act of ‘kissing’ is an expression replacing the act of ‘eating’ in a civilized society. As for this, Kilgour emphasizes that “the fact that sex is an incomplete act of incorporation may be seen as intensifying desire to the point where it becomes transformed into not art but aggression” (Kilgour, 1990, p. 8). She says:

Voltaire writes dryly: “I have spoken of love. It is hard to move from people who kiss one

another to people who eat one another" – knowing full well that in civilized society the two are often uneasily alike. Kissing and eating are obviously both oral activities, and at an extreme level of intensity the erotic and aggressive sides or incorporation cannot be differentiated... (Kilgour, 1990, p. 8)

According to Kilgour, the acts of kissing and eating can be interchanged in the sense that both pursue the same goal of a "perfect symbiotic union" (Kilgour, 1990, p. 7) between two physically separated entities. This interchange can be accepted even in a civilized society, where conceptual unities between the two separated bodies are regarded as the sublimated, and this is the reason why Kilgour stresses the importance of the symbolic meaning of eating: as an act for bodily incorporations, eating can satiate the unsatisfied sexual desire that pursues the complete physical unity between two bodies, through absorbing food in the exterior world into the interiority of body.

4.0 Pattern and tension in the table of Western characters

As opposed to the absence of communal eating in Transylvania, the table of Western characters – Jack Seward, Van Helsing, Jonathan Harker, Quincy Morris, Arthur Holmwood, and Mina Harker – is suggested as a counter to this absence in that the descriptions of their table are occupied with the sense of sharing. The table of the Western characters functions as a place to recheck their companionship as they share food and knowledge that are newly acquired. The concurrent events – to share food and knowledge in the same place – do in fact form a pattern observed in their table scenes, in which eating is often followed by disclosing individual secrets (as they hand personal diaries or journals to others when they dine with each other). Nevertheless, the Western characters' having communion on the same table is not a perfect means to achieve the true sense of solidarity. Rather, a sense of tension, despite the fact that this sense of tension is not manifested in the places of eating, lasts until the Western characters' adventure to conquer vampires is ended with a success. Also, the sense of tension occurs whenever Mina Harker is isolated from other members at a table, which has been in fact expected to be a place for the group members to engage in emotional interactions with each other.

In the dining scenes of the Western characters, acts of eating often precede the exchanges of personal secrets at the same spot, and a good example for this is when Van Helsing asks for Arthur Holmwood's approval to access the diary of his fiancée, Lucy Westenra, when they finish their dinner. This episode is recorded in the diary of Jack Seward who recalls, "We all dined together, and I [Jack Seward] could see that poor Art was trying to make the best of things. Van Helsing had been silent all dinner-time, but when we had lit our cigars he said: –" (Stoker, 2003, p. 181), and this remembrance is followed by the speech of Van Helsing, who mentions the need to have trust in the group members, to persuade Holmwood to give him Lucy Westenra's diary:

I know it was hard for you to quite trust me then, for to trust such violence needs to understand; and I take it that you do not – that you cannot – trust me now, for you do not understand. And there may be more times when I shall want you to trust when you cannot – and may not – and must not yet understand. But the time will come when your trust shall be whole and complete in me, and when you shall understand as though the sunlight himself shone through. (Stoker, 2003, p. 181)

About this speech from Van Helsing, Patricia Mckee underscores the virtues of "speculative capacity" and "open-mindedness" that become the bases for the sense of trust, which leads the Western characters to believe things beyond their current empirical dimensions (Mckee, 2002, p. 47). Arguing that the "open-mindedness" leads them to have diverse perspectives through sharing their different points of views as well as imagining things that are not plausible, Mckee illustrates the identity of the Western characters as capitalists who must see the flow of the capitals that move in a similar pattern with that of ideas (Mckee, 2002, p. 48). The Western characters' imagination about the things that are

unimaginable enables them to consider the possibility of developing the locations that have been impenetrable with their capitals, and their ways to enlarge the speculative dimensions through handing their personal documents to others to read them would be emulated in the method of moving their capitals from one to other places to expand their economic fields. The “speculative capacity” can be practiced by Arthur Holmwood in this scene if he opens his mind to believe the things that cannot be understandable at that moment, and to do this, he needs the sense of “trust” in Van Helsing. All these lengthy accounts from Van Helsing are to say, “I want you to give me permission to read all Miss Lucy’s papers and letters” (Stoker, 2003, p. 182), and Holmwood’s acceptance of Helsing’s request is a subsequent event that follows the dinner. Moreover, in addition to this example of the conversation between Van Helsing and Arthur Holmwood, Mina Harker’s meeting with Van Helsing also substantiates the ‘pattern,’ which indicates that the two consecutive events of eating food and sharing information do occur at the place of table. In this brief answer from Mina Harker, when she gives her shorthanded diary to Van Helsing who asks his access to her documents, she says, “By all means, read it over whilst I order lunch; and then you can ask me questions whilst we eat” (Stoker, 2003, p. 196).

Also, the significance of the sense of bonding and unity of the Western characters, whose narrations show that they have the spirit of commensalism on their table, is continuously marked by Patricia Mckee, and she further explains the meaning of trust among the Western characters in the contemporary socioeconomic contexts:

Although Franco Moretti’s influential reading of *Dracula* identifies the vampire with monopoly capitalism, the trust developed by the Western characters forms the more powerful conglomerate. They monopolize means of production and investment far more extensive in scope than the vampire’s reproductive capacity, and they profit also by apparent moral superiority of their openness and their trust in one another. (Mckee, 2002, p. 49)

Mckee’s interpretation, that the middle-class Western characters’ collective identity based on trust enables them to found a “powerful conglomerate” in capitalistic society, refers to the ideas of Franco Moretti who argues that the systems of monopoly and free competition are not incompatible to each other. Thus, Moretti mentions, “For him [the nineteenth-century bourgeois], then, monopoly and free competition are irreconcilable concepts. Monopoly is the past of competition, the middle ages. He cannot believe it can be its future, that competition itself can generate monopoly in new forms” (Moretti, 1988, p. 93). However, Mckee’s point is that, the revival of monopoly within the system of free competition by the contemporary middle-class capitalists brings more productive as well as morally superior methodologies to bourgeois who accentuate their mutual trust and cooperation. Also, regarding the issues of trust and openness of the Western characters, the meaning of Mina Harker’s body, which ‘opens’ itself to the other – when she is forced to suck Dracula’s body fluid – becomes more important in that it represents the interests of both sides that confront each other (Mckee, 2002, p. 45, 49-50). The fact that the body of Mina Harker represents the interests of the Western characters, leads Mckee to argue that “Mina becomes the most trustworthy as she becomes the most representative of Stoker’s characters,” since “trust is given to persons able to represent various interests with multiple investments” (Mckee, 2002, p. 49-50).

Even though the body of Mina Harker becomes the object to be trusted by the Western male characters, however, it is not to be forgotten that she is still depicted as a dangerous figure as her mentality gets connected to that of Dracula after the vampiric attack. The scrutiny of table scenes of the Western characters provides more clues to consider how Mina Harker is trusted and distrusted at the same time, even after she opens her body to Dracula. For this reason, there is a sense of tension, hidden under the surface of the communal spirit of their table, and it occurs due to the ambiguous position of Mina Harker who steps on the border line between inclusion and exclusion – to and from the bonding of Western male characters. Jonathan Harker’s journal on October 2 shows this when the male characters decide not to give any more information about their planning to conquer Dracula to Mina Harker, because “the very subject seems to have become repugnant to her, for when any

accidental allusion is made she actually shudders...our growing knowledge would be torture to her”(Stoker, 2003, p. 284). Subsequently, this decision does not allow their table to be a place for disclosing individual secrets and showing their trust in the other members anymore. The table, which is supposed to be a location for sharing individual thoughts and solidifying the sense of unity as they act communion, is now changed into a spot where the male characters do pretend to have communality. Jonathan Harker illustrates the change of attitudes of the male characters:

I could not tell the others of the day's discovery till we were alone; so after dinner – followed by a little music to save appearances even amongst ourselves – I took Mina to her room and left her to go to bed. The dear girl was more affectionate with me than ever, and clung to me as though she would detain me; but there was much to be talked of and I came away. Thank God, the ceasing of telling things had made no difference between us. (Stoker, 2003, p. 284-285)

The “ceasing of telling things” to Mina Harker makes their table – which has previously functioned as a place to share information – lose its original meaning as the male characters wait until Mina Harker goes back to her room after the dinner. As seen, she cannot be entirely involved in the group as the male characters hesitate to tell what they know.

In this sense, “the Vampire’s baptism of blood” (Stoker, 2003, p. 343), which is named by Van Helsing when Mina Harker is forced to drink Dracula’s blood, is possible to be understood as a turning point to Mina Harker, who is trusted again to be told of the on-going events to fight against Dracula. In other words, although “the Vampire’s baptism of blood” reflects the sense of anxiety over the vampiric attacks, it provides a chance to Mina Harker to be again accepted into Western male characters’ bonding since the male characters’ task to “sterilize” (Stoker, 2003, p. 311) Dracula from England becomes related to another mission, to save Mina Harker’s body. The male characters agree with each other on the matter that she has to know what happens on her body for her survival, and consequently, the previous pattern appears again when all of them restart to share their food and knowledge at the table. Jack Seward’s diary mentions this:

We had a sort of perfunctory supper together, and I think it cheered us all up somewhat. It was, perhaps, the mere animal heat of food to hungry people – for none of us had eaten anything since breakfast – or the sense of companionship may have helped us; but anyhow we were all less miserable, and saw the morrow as not altogether without hope. True to our promise, we told Mrs. Harker everything which had passed... (Stoker, 2003, p. 328)

The spirit of communion seems to reappear at this supper table where the Western characters are revitalized by the fact that they have aliments and the “sense of companionship” with Mina Harker who can be told of “everything which had passed.” Even so, however, this does not mean that the sense of tension surrounding Mina Harker is completely eased, because the tension that is only temporarily relieved at this scene is heightened again when Van Helsing mentions to Jack Seward, “Madam Mina is changing” (Stoker, 2003, p. 343), and “we must keep her ignorant of our intent, and so she cannot tell what she know not [to Dracula who shares his mental state with that of Mina Harker after “the Vampire’s baptism of blood”]” (Stoker, 2003, p. 344). From Helsing’s remarks, it is revealed that the feeling of tension, which has existed at their table behind their communal spirit, does now appear in a more manifested way as Mina Harker is changed into a vampire; the body of Mina Harker becomes a more dangerous object to the male characters who cannot fully accept or reject it either. For this reason, indicating Mina Harker’s hypnotic trance aroused by Helsing is “at least as much a lack of control as an assertion of it” (Boone, 1993, p. 84), Boone gives an account of the perils in blindly trusting Mina Harker’s opened body: “the male characters desire to protect Mina (their symbol of goodness), yet they also fear that, as a woman, she is the portal through which corruption can enter in order to undermine their activities” (Boone, 1993, p. 85). Obviously, Boone’s opinion collides with what Mckee mentioned earlier to insist that the Western characters’ virtue of ‘openness (or open-mindedness)’ works in a positive way to them – through which their capitals can be accumulated in the

new form of monopoly under the system of free competition. Considering these two opposite opinions, it is seen that there is an ambivalence in the concept of ‘openness’ pursued by the Western characters, and this ambivalence also raises the tension: Mina Harker is understood by the Western male characters not only as their advantage to read Dracula’s mind but also a threat that can impede the pursuit of their goal to destroy vampires. As a result, the tension existing at the Western characters’ table makes this place defective in achieving communion, and the following memorandum of Van Helsing portrays that their table is again changed into a spot occupied with doubts and concealments of truths:

I light a fire, for we have brought supply of wood with us, and she prepare food while I undo the horses and set them, tethered in shelter, to feed. Then when I return to the fire she have my supper ready. I go to help her; but she smile, and tell me that she have eat already – that she was so hungry that she would not wait. I like it not, and I have grave doubts; but I fear to affright her, and so I am silent of it. She helpme and I eat alone... (Stoker, 2003, p. 387-388)

Van Helsing confesses that he has “grave doubts” but he decides to be “silent of it.” Observing that Mina Harker cannot consume the food of human beings anymore as she is converted into a vampire, he doubts whether Mina Harker’s identity becomes more similar to that of vampires, but he does not want to frighten her through telling his thoughts. In fact, this passage recalls what Maggie Kilgour articulates, “you are what you eat,” as “eating is the most basic of all these needs, which it can also stand for, and in most cultures it is regulated by strict social practices that determine what can and what cannot be eaten” (Kilgour, 1990, p. 6). What can be eaten by humans to fulfill their basic need for hunger cannot be consumed by vampires, and vampires’ act of sucking blood for their nutriment cannot be imitated by human beings because it is forbidden by “strict social practices” that do not allow the acts of cannibalism. These differences are the factors that distinguish the identities between human beings and vampires, and the contents from Van Helsing’s documents reflect this issue. Therefore, in this scene where the tension caused by Mina Harker’s alienation from the male characters is climaxed, their failure of sharing the same table can be examined with the matter of identity that is decided by the modes of eating.

5.0 Renfield and decoding his acts to prey on flies and spiders

If the examination of the table of the Western characters is about their conflicts which disturb them to have the spirit of unity in domestic places, this analysis of the metaphoric meaning of eating behaviors by R.M. Renfield, a psychopathic patient in the lunatic asylum of Dr. Jack Seward, is associated with the issue of the middle-class Western characters’ capitalistic activities in the contemporary socioeconomic contexts. While Renfield is categorized as the one who suffers from mental disorders, a certain pattern in his repetitive behaviors – in terms of eating flies and spiders in his artificial food chain – rejects the idea that his abnormality is disqualified to be interpreted. Rather, the re-illuminations of Renfield’s abnormal eating habits, in the process of converting the symbolic image of predatory spiders sucking blood from flies into the violence of middle-class capitalists exploiting capitals from proletariats, unfold this: the narrations of the Western middle-class characters who are preoccupied with the anxiety of facing vampires, do function as shadows that cover the aggressiveness of their own class in capital-oriented society.

As mentioned earlier, the zoophagous trait of Renfield works as an indicator for the Western characters (especially to Dr. Jack Seward) to identify him as an insane patient who nevertheless has a behavioral patterns coming out of his madness. In order to reach this, the diary of Jack Seward has to be considered as it treats the acts of Renfield to the minute details. He records, on the date of June 18, that “He [Renfield] has turned his mind now to spiders, and has got several very big fellows in a box. He keeps feeding them with his flies, and the number of the latter is becoming sensibly diminished, although he has used half his food in attracting more flies from outside to his room” (Stoker, 2003, p. 77). Jack Seward’s depictions of Renfield’s acts continue in the next diary on July 8, where it is stated, “He managed to get a sparrow, and has already partially tamed it. His means of taming is simple, for

already the spiders have diminished,” with the conviction that “There is a method in his madness” (Stoker, 2003, p. 78). The “method” in the acts of Renfield is later speculated by Jack Seward, who is curious about his “homicidal maniac” (Stoker, 2003, p. 79), as a system through which he can accumulate and absorb power of lives. This conjecture makes Jack Seward obsessed with the idea that Renfield can be a threatening figure who has similar attributes to those of Dracula, and in fact, it is not only the text of Dracula but also the historical research on Dracula legends that support the connections between the two figures of Renfield and Dracula. The zoophagous traits of Renfield, in addition to his attempts to escape from the lunatic asylum to chase his ‘master,’ lead the doctor to have the “confirmation of our [the Western characters’] idea” that “All those outbreaks were in some way linked with the proximity of the Count” (Stoker, 2003, p. 240-241). Also, in Bacil F. Kirtley’s studies of Dracula based on the factual accounts in Dracula legends, it is said, “In his novel Stoker seems to have adapted the legend of Dracula [the historical figure of Vlad Tsepesh, the governor of Wallachia from 1456 to 1462 and 1476 (Kirtley, 1956, p. 134)]’s imprisonment and to have attached it to the figure of Renfield, the zoophagous (life-eating) maniac” (Kirtley, 1956, p. 136). As the fear of the attacks from Dracula sucking the life-blood from human body is superimposed on the figure of Renfield, who seems to imitate the vampiric acts as he tries to consume things alive, alternative views to understand his abnormal eating habits are obstructed.

However, Renfield’s obsession with capturing insects and eating them, which seems not to allow other interpretations except the analogies between Renfield and Dracula, can be re-illuminated through paying attention to his imitations of the mechanisms in the natural food chain. The understandings of symbolic messages in Renfield’s actions are based on the similarities between predatory human beings desiring for capitals and hungry spiders preying on flies in nature, and this analogy is often used to signify class struggles between bourgeois and proletariats in the contemporary Europe. Ronald D. LeBlanc explains the metaphoric meanings of arachnidan imageries devouring flies, and according to him, the theory of advocating Marxism is connected to the “semantics of the spider image in cultural texts by portraying the proletariat’s class enemies, especially the bourgeoisie... This imagery was invoked so that the use of violence and terror against these class enemies would be seen as not only justified but also necessary” (LeBlanc, *Slavic sins of the flesh*, 2009, p. 213-214). Furthermore, Wilhelm Liebknecht’s “The Spider and the Fly” is another example using this symbolic image of spiders and flies to criticize the hierarchical positions between bourgeois and proletariats. In this text, Liebknecht articulates, “You, workers of town and country, are the Fly that is sucked dry and killed, the Fly that is devoured and on whose blood others live!” with calling the “industrial workers (the group of the oppressed)” as flies, which are the opposites to spiders that are the “moneybags, the exploiter, the speculator, the capitalist” (The spider and the fly, 1972). Liebknecht continues to add:

The Spider once used to spin his web from the big castles and manors, today he prefers to establish himself in the big industrial centers, in the rich quarters of the blessed of our time. You find him mostly in the factory towns, though he also nests in the country and in the small towns, he is wherever exploitation flourishes, wherever the worker, the propertyless proletarian, the small craftsman, the day-laborer and the debt-burdened small peasant are mercilessly exposed to the unbridled greed of speculators. (The spider and the fly, 1972)

Liebknecht’s passage is interesting in that the “spider” image originates from bourgeois in capitalistic societies as well as aristocrats in the previous feudal systems, as it “once used to spin his web from the big castles and manors” but today it “prefers to establish himself in the big industrial centers.” The metaphor of “spider,” thus, is used to denounce the one who has the privilege of activating socioeconomic power over the repressed: in the feudal society it is aristocratic despots that prey on the working peasants, but in the period of the late nineteenth century, this metaphor does rather indicate the middle-class bourgeois who betray their hunger for capitals. The former reflected in the image of spiders is well-depicted in *Dracula* where Count Dracula belongs to the class of aristocrats, and the fear of Dracula’s sucking blood for accumulating his vital power is associated with the anxiety over the system of monopoly that is “perceived as something extraneous to British history as a foreign threat”

(Moretti, 1988, p. 93). In this situation, the concepts of trust and collective identity that are emphasized in the Western characters' tables are recalled again because the emphasis on cooperation of the Western characters collides with the idea of monopoly based on the capacity of a single individual who wins at the economic competitions. On the contrary, as for the latter of bourgeois capitalism, because the voraciousness of the middle-class capitalists exploiting proletariats is an inadmissible idea for the Western narrators, it has to be buried behind the fear of vampiric attacks originated from the foreign land. The hidden facts, however, can be discovered through paying attention to Renfield's abnormal eating that involves the metaphors functioning within the contemporary socioeconomic contexts.

Besides, Liebknecht's text differentiates Renfield from Dracula, an aristocrat residing in "big castles and manors," as well as from the middle-class Western characters establishing themselves in "big industrial centers." The characteristics of Renfield are now able to be detached from the powerful imageries of Dracula, and this is due to the ambiguous origin of Renfield in Stoker's text. There are no specific descriptions about the identity (regarding race and class) of Renfield except the fact that he is a lunatic confined in an asylum, and this vagueness allows Renfield to avoid the same criticisms against the predatory blood-sucking vampire. Rather, concerning the fact that Renfield is an imprisoned figure under the surveillance of Dr. Jack Seward and his attendants, his position is closer to that of the oppressed in the society. From Renfield's imitation of natural food chain in his micro-dimensional ways by using flies, spiders, and birds, it is assumed that Renfield is not only a creator of the hierarchical relation but also a destroyer of it: by putting birds into the box to eat spiders or devouring all of the living things up by himself, Renfield destroys the pre-existing power relations that are implied through the symbolic images of spiders and flies. Renfield's abnormal eating does have messages of resisting hierarchal systems, but still, it is not easy to grasp whether Renfield has intention to go against the social structure, or whether his desire to subvert the system remains in his unconsciousness which is not yet understood by Dr. Jack Seward as well as Renfield himself.

6.0 Conclusion

In Stoker's *Dracula*, the representations of eating culture in Transylvania in Jonathan Harker's journals are full of aggressive images that are incongruous with the ideas of symbiotic relationships. There is no sense of commensalism in Transylvania according to Harker's journals, and the scene of three female vampires, even though the languages of which are in fact suggesting a sense of communion, is distorted with the focus on their cannibalistic images. On the contrary, the tables of the Western characters are suggested as the emblematic spaces to embody the Western characters' spirit of unity and trust as they share nourishments of food and knowledge. However, more studies on the Western table show that their table is defective in achieving true spirit of unity, which can be fulfilled only when Mina Harker is accepted to the bonding of the Western male characters who continuously doubt the safety of sharing information with her. In addition to the scrutiny of the Western table that reflects the Western characters' inner troubles as they fail in having the sense of solidarity, the illuminations of abnormal eating acted by Renfield provide more clues to understand the socioeconomic positions of the Western characters as the middle-class capitalists who are reluctant to show their hunger for capitals. These investigations – to find ambivalences from each side of the representations of eating scenes to reverse the pre-existing binaries – ultimately show these: the documentations of the Western narrators contribute to hiding the violence of the Western middle-class capitalists behind their sharing acts at a table, and their aggressiveness is also covered by the dominant images of vampires – who are in fact perform oral activities in a civilized mode according to their own ways – as they suck life-blood from human beings to satiate their hunger.

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