



Edited by
Tabish Khair and
Johan Höglund

Transnational
and Postcolonial
Vampires

Dark Blood



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Johan Höglund 2013
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Foreword: Empire's Vampires

Elleke Boehmer

How 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. Our understanding of empire, it is no wonder, is engorged with metaphors of blood-suckers, parasites and vampires, of dog-eat-dog, the fulsomely alive battenning down upon the barely alive, and the barely alive upon bare life itself – as the essays in this volume highlight in different and complex ways.

From the day the colonizer takes possession till the day he reluctantly departs, whether the colonized space be Ireland or India, Mauritius or Martinique, his activities connote the extraction of the very stuff of life, the life-blood, from those – the colonial other – who have absolutely nothing other than abject life in abundance. And so it is, as the essays here acknowledge, that the abject, despoiled, bled-dry other is seen always in distorted, monstrous form, the preyed upon become the predator, the embodiment of pure terror, the living dead, whose perhaps most terrifying aspect is the implication that they will return. The vampire – like its opposite, the colonialist – has never quite had its fill.

If empire is defined as a set of practices designed to keep the imperial body politic intact and to ensure its growth, then imperialism in its forms of both ambition and anxiety might be said to be founded upon vampire-like lusts and aversions, which agitate and reproduce one another. Empire fears always the pollution, disorder and unmanning that might come from without, yet the marks of invasion, of penetration, are always already visible upon the so-called inviolable imperial body. As this covertly suggests, there are few more canny (and indeed uncanny) imperial stories than Bram Stoker's 1897 *fin-de-siècle* novel *Dracula*, something which several contributors here recognize. By tracing a map of Britain under threat of invasion from the East, *Dracula* gives expression to 'an imperialism that feels itself to be overstretched and insecure' (Boehmer 2004, p. 56). Using a many-leaved narrative reportage Stoker's novel

attempts finally to allay its concerns about excessive expansion by structurally boxing in the at-first strangely ubiquitous Count. Yet Robert Baden-Powell's foundational primer *Scouting for Boys*, too, published within a decade of *Dracula*, though it is on one level eminently pragmatic and un-Gothic, is obsessed throughout with the firming, tightening and closing of the Boy Scout's bodily defences, as if in fear of alien contagion (Baden-Powell 2004, pp. 195–203). This is to the extent that even the boy's natural orifices, as against his body's vampiric perforations, are policed and shut down. 'Black mouth' or the open snoring mouth of the sleeping man in camp, writes Baden-Powell, can be a give-away to an enemy and could in some cases prove fatal. Self-control should be exercised to avoid at all costs exhibiting the uncontrolled vulnerability of the open mouth.

Transnational and Postcolonial Vampires: Dark Blood tracks the vampire through the literature of various Anglophone cultures, largely metropolitan or settler, in which the vampire legend has transferred via lines of more or less direct cultural inheritance, and moves on to readings of the 'vampire' in the light of 9/11. An interesting aspect of this volume is the examination of the vampire as a worldwide or planetary figure or trope of terror. Branching off from these tracks, and extending the vector of Tabish Khair's essay on the non-human in South Asian literature, a further development for this collection's investigations is to consider the vampire as she or he appears in novels and stories emerging out of the interface between very different cultures, as for example in the Caribbean, which is what the contribution by Gina Wisker explores, or Nigeria. How does blood-letting and the taking of blood figure in these contexts? Do preoccupations with the succubus-like wretched of the earth continue, especially given that empire continues to manifest in myriad neocolonial and parasitic forms in the world today? Do the various participating cultures to the vampire's representation shape it in different ways, as the tradition of the predatory Mammy Wata in Nigeria suggests they might?

Ben Okri's short story 'In the City of Red Dust' is a powerful instance, told from a Nigerian perspective, of how neocolonial survival of a hand-to-mouth kind is contingent in every way upon blood-letting (Okri 1988). In the story the friends Emokhai and Marjomi, both poor and broke, make their way through city streets owned by politicians in collaboration with the banks to Queen

Mary's Memorial Hospital where they sell their blood for food. It is their one reliable source of income. At the hospital the nurses treat them badly, chastizing them for selling too much. Yet the gambler Marjomi, who is gifted with particularly 'high-grade blood', insists on giving more as without it he would starve. 'Do you think we drink it, eh?' the nurse suggestively asks (p. 44). Her remark, like the stupor that comes over him as his blood is drawn, or like his later 'possession' by want and rage, acts as a powerful reminder of the vampire-like (post)colonial economy that the friends inhabit, in which the state literally feeds upon the blood of its citizens. Wherever they look, the city streets, covered in a blood-like red dust, confront the two with the ferocious statues of slave-traders and other one-time figures of authority who, in true vampire fashion, 'wreaked terror on their people' (p. 50).

In the postcolony the predatory present remains strongly connected to the equally predatory past. That, in itself, represents a good reason for a collection of this nature.

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Aspasia Stephanou has recently defended her PhD thesis, entitled 'Our Blood, Ourselves: The Symbolics of Blood in Vampire Texts and Vampire Communities', at the University of Stirling, Scotland. She has published articles and chapters on vampire communities and globalization (in *GlobalGothic*, forthcoming); on blood and performance art; and on black metal theory (in *Glossator*, forthcoming). She is also co-editor of a collection of essays on *Transgression and Its Limits* (2012). Her interests include post-continental philosophy and philosophies of nature, and Gothic and contemporary horror narratives with a focus on blood, the vampire and matter.

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1

Introduction: Transnational and Postcolonial Vampires

Johan Höglund and Tabish Khair

When Jonathan Harker, deep in the Transylvanian mountains, embarks on the final stage of his journey towards Count Dracula's residence, he overhears the frightened natives whispering 'Denn die Todten reiten Schnell' – 'for the dead travel fast'. Dracula, in the disguise of Harker's driver, flashes a gleaming smile in the speaker's direction causing great consternation and much crossing. The vampire then drives Harker into an unholy night full of howling wolves and strange omens, taking the hapless Englishman the final few miles to the castle that, in many ways, marks the border between East and West or between the imagined self of Europe and the Oriental Other.

Indeed, the dead travel both fast and wide in narrative. The vampire has always been a traveller and the vampire story frequently explores and transgresses national, sexual, racial and cultural boundaries. Appearing in many cultures during different epochs, the vampire is not only a wandering creature but also a shape changer. As Tabish Khair observes in this collection, though with reservations about cross-cultural equating, undead 'demons' appear in Indian literature at least as early as the eleventh century, though they take culture-specific shapes. In China, the undead and jumping jiang shi have been part of folklore for hundreds of years, as has the Greek vampire: the Vrykolakas, and the Rumanian Strigoi, perhaps the most direct forbears of the modern vampire. During the nineteenth century, when the vampire became a staple of the imperial Victorian Gothic, this creature continues to travel and to change, moving between different geographical and social settings and taking on several and seemingly contradictory shapes. The vampire is first

2 Introduction

imagined in British prose as a nobleman and sexual predator in *The Vampyre* (1819) by Lord Byron's physician John Polidori. It then takes on female form, and is used to explore alternative sexualities, in Le Fanu's *Carmilla* from 1872. The year 1897 saw the vampire manifest not only as the transforming and transformative Transylvanian Count Dracula in Bram Stoker's central novel, but also as the Caribbean succubus Harriet in Florence Marryat's recently rediscovered *Blood of the Vampire*.

The publication of *Dracula*, a narrative where many of the European folkloristic elements converge, marks the institutionalization of the authoritative European vampire who is afraid of garlic and Christian symbols, and who cannot cross water or exist in the sunlight. However, the vampire continues to transform and travel even after the appearance of the notorious Count. As Ken Gelder has shown in his study *Reading the Vampire* (1994), *Dracula* was extensively translated, filmed, televised and rewritten during the twentieth century. In this way, the Transylvanian Count embarks on a transcultural process of his own, negotiating and violating new national, sexual and imperial borders. While never quite out of fashion during the previous century, the vampire has arguably never spread as far and wide as during the first decade of the twenty-first century. In Hollywood, in Japanese Manga and Korean art film, in video games, in pulp fiction and on the *New York Times* bestseller list, the vampire continues to evolve and degenerate, proliferate and disperse. Through its itinerant ways and transformative body, the old and modern vampire take the reader on trips from the imperial metropolis into the colonial periphery, to the places where East and West intersect, where stable cultural categories clash, collapse and transform, allowing both the human and the political body to take new and often disturbing forms.

Thus, the vampire narrative effectively and continuously maps transnational, colonial and postcolonial concerns. The relationship between the vampire and transnational and colonial issues has been noted in literature and the British vampire in particular has been explored from this perspective. In his important essay from 1990, 'The Occidental Tourist', Stephen D. Arata argues that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* can be viewed as an Eastern terrorist imperialist, a being set on bringing the horrors of colonization to the British. Similar claims have been made by other scholars of the late Victorian Gothic,

including Patrick Brantlinger, Judith Halberstam, Kelly Hurley and Ken Gelder, all of whom have discussed Stoker's vampire as a transcultural demon who embodies the many anxieties that plagued the British during the *fin de siècle*.

The present collection seeks to organize and expand such readings of the vampire through a series of essays that together consider the vampire narrative as a global and transcultural phenomenon. If, as Tabish Khair has suggested in *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness* (2009), the Gothic is the writing of Otherness, the vampire is perhaps the creature that most frequently has been manifested as the Other in literature and film. To understand this strangely menacing and popular creature has arguably never been more important than it is today, in the wake not only of globalization and the worldwide dispersion of culture this has entailed, but also in relation to the aftermath of 9/11 and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. As Glennis Byron and Aspasia Stephanou observe in their contribution to this book, postcolonial critics have recently argued that the US venture into the Middle East has made it absurd 'to speak of ours as a postcolonial world'. This situation makes it eminently important to keep an eye on the journeys and permutations of the global vampire.

With the intention to explore both this and other colonial, post-colonial and transnational contexts, this book collects a number of important and readable studies of the transnational and postcolonial vampire. A number of these are written by writers who have been central in opening up and shaping the field of postcolonial Gothic studies. Other contributions have been produced by scholars who build on, discuss and modify the existing understanding of what informs the postcolonial or transnational vampire, but who also observe how this vampire sometimes transcends culture to operate as a problematic signifier in various media.

The contributions cover a wide range of topics and a broad array of vampirism, effectively illustrating the extent to which the vampire has infected and transformed our understanding of past and present, colonial and postcolonial, imperialism and neo-imperialism. The editors' intention was to include essays that explore and open up the field and not to drive a transfixed stake into the heart of the vampire. As such, the essays differ in focus and approach: while most of them deal with textual and filmic instances of the transcultural

and transgressive vampire figure, in different shapes, at least two essays also lean towards a more metaphorical exploration of the vampire; while most essays focus on specific texts, some also adopt a more survey-based approach. This mix, the editors felt, was not just demanded by the topic but would also be of particular use to scholars and, especially, students who employ this collection to open up areas for further research.

After the interesting and thought-provoking foreword by Elleke Boehmer and this general introduction, the essays have been organized according to overlapping thematic concerns, moving from largely literary engagements to increasingly politicized readings on vampire literature and of vampire media metaphors in the light of the post-9/11 world. This also means that starting with an examination of 'colonial' and 'classical' vampire texts the essays expand to cover various more recent and postcolonial texts and films – Irish, Canadian, South Asian, Australian, Caribbean, Black British, etc. – and end up addressing some current neocolonial aspects.

Ireland's colonial vampires

Since its first appearance in English fiction, the ageless vampire has haunted European history in many different ways. One of the premises of this collection, and of several important studies on the vampire (see Punter, Gelder, Byron, Arata), is that this haunting is intimately tied to imperialism and colonialism and to the many anxieties that accompanied these practices. From this perspective, it is interesting that the most important British interventions into the vampire genre, *Carmilla* and *Dracula*, were produced by Irish writers. The ways in which texts by these writers negotiate British colonialism in Ireland is explored by Robert A. Smart in the collection's first contribution, 'Postcolonial Dread and the Gothic: Refashioning Identity in Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*'. In his thorough study of two of the most important representatives not only of the Irish Gothic but of vampire writing *per se*, Smart notes that through the Gothic, and the image of the vampire in particular, the Catholic Irish could be made to embody the twin position of abject monster and desirable other. While this representation of the colonized (Irish) as vampires helped to enable British hegemony by making metaphorical sense of the repeated 'reconquests' of colonial

territory, the Irish Gothic also problematized the imperial project by denying the reader final closure. In both *Carmilla* (1872) and *Dracula*, as in a great many later vampire narratives, there is a sense that the invasion of British territory and identity is not over with the closing of the narrative; the undead will keep rising from their graves as long as the existing power relationship is in place. In addition to this, Smart's essay importantly revisits the Irish vampire's taste for blood and relates this to a colonial and religious dynamic.

Interestingly, the vampire has also been used in modern times to interrogate the relationship and confrontation between Catholic Ireland and imperial Britain. Maria Beville's analysis of Brendan Kennelly's epic *Cromwell: A Poem* (1983) reveals how vampire myth is used to explore not only the violence that shook colonized Ireland during the seventeenth century but also the historicization of this period. Thus, Kennelly's interesting poem is read by Beville as an attempt to employ the vampire myth to simultaneously give Gothic shape to the abject horrors that Cromwell's incursion entailed and to deconstruct the colonial as well as nationalist discourses that have informed our understanding of the relationship between colonized Ireland and colonizing Britain. In her analysis of Kennelly's dark poem, Beville also interestingly suggests that the Gothic in general and the postcolonial Gothic in particular has a revisionist potential that resituates both author and audience in relation to colonial history.

Transnational and postcolonial vampires

A crucial concept in postcolonial studies is the hybrid as explored by a number of postcolonial theorists, including Gayatri Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha, Paul Gilroy and Mary Louise Pratt. The vampire, existing between life and death, is by nature a hybrid being. This makes it uniquely placed to inhabit various postcolonial positions. In 'The Man-Eating Tiger and the Vampire in South Asia', Tabish Khair covers much of the history of the vampire as Oriental Other but focuses on the vampire in South Asia. Discussing the many ways in which the vampire is at the same time absent and present in South Asian literature, Khair also traces the relationship between the Gothic vampire and the native cannibal in Orientalist discourse. However, Khair also importantly notes that the vampire in Indian literature takes on a specific Asian shape in the form of the man-eating tiger,

thus accentuating the common perception of the vampire's ability to cross literary and cultural borders.

In 'Celebrating Difference and Community: The Vampire in African-American and Caribbean Women's Writing', Gina Wisker emphasizes how the hybrid, metamorphosing vampire can fulfil a key role for marginalized women writers who seek to interrogate and deconstruct the colonial prison-house of history. Covering a wide range of writers and vampire texts, Wisker importantly observes that the vampire sometimes appears as the colonizer in the postcolonial Gothic while at other times this creature is made to pose as a paradoxically regenerative Other in relation to destructive imperial practice. In relation to this, she sheds light on how the concept of (vampire) community operates in postcolonial women's writing, arguing that this phenomenon provides a contrast and a possible antidote to the hierarchical and predatory behaviours of (neo-)imperial regimes.

The hybrid nature of the postcolonial vampire is also explored in 'Postcolonial Vampires in the Indigenous Imagination' by Maureen Clark. This contribution traces two different developments of the vampire in postcolonial fiction. While the colonial, late Victorian vampire embodies the geopolitical fears that Arata termed the 'anxiety of reverse colonization', the modern, postcolonial vampire can be imagined as a white colonizer. Clark's interesting essay thus discusses how the vampire is reimagined as a European other in Australian fiction, lending new and powerful meaning to the vampire as he transforms into a harbinger of white imperial Armageddon. Her discussion of *The Night Wanderer* furthermore illustrates how imperial practice, as an aspect of the spread of global capitalism, can be pictured as vampiric and how those colonized are themselves affected by this plague.

A similar issue is raised by Justin Edwards in his contribution 'Canada, Quebec and David Cronenberg's Terrorist-Vampires'. Through an important historical and geographical reframing of director Cronenberg's influential *Rabid*, Edwards again illustrates how the postcolonial vampire can be imagined to emanate not from the colonial periphery, but from within Western modernity itself. The vampires that terrorize the streets of Quebec in *Rabid* are thus a product of rampant Western medical science and at the same time closely related to contemporary and very local processes and discourses of decolonization and terrorism. In this way, Edwards discusses one of the first examples of how vampirism is stripped

of its Oriental and religious connotations and instead reimagined as a peculiarly Western disease. This understanding of the vampire becomes important both in the neo-imperial vampire story and in the related zombie narratives that films such as *Rabid* help spawn.

In his contribution to this book, 'Citational Vampires: Transnational Techniques of Circulation in *Irma Vep*, *Blood: The Last Vampire* and *Thirst*', Ken Gelder maps some of the ways in which the transnational vampire has been pictured and re-represented in recent cinema. Covering a wide selection of films, Gelder notes that the modern vampire narrative is unremittingly self-citing, perfectly aware of and flaunting its many past reincarnations. Gelder effectively argues that while modern vampire film sometimes loses itself in the imperatives of citation, it still displaces (post/neocolonial) historical trauma through allegory. This allows films such as *Blood: The Last Vampire* and *Thirst* to furtively interrogate the horrors of the Vietnam War, the dangers (again) of modern medical science, the confrontation between (religious and cultural) selfless ideals and the many desires that globalized technologies and cultures enable.

Neocolonial vampires

As Chambers and Chaplin observe in their contribution, the modern vampire often transcends the traditional role of Oriental, monstrous other, posing instead as a misunderstood and misrepresented outsider that demands our sympathy and understanding. A further transformation of the vampire as 'sites of identification', as Fred Botting describes the creature (2002, p. 286), is discussed in Johan Höglund's contribution 'Militarizing the Vampire'. If *Twilight* and *True Blood* merge the vampire narrative with the romance tale, films belonging to the *Blade* or *Underworld* series, or Jennifer Rardin's *Jaz Parks* novels, combine the war and espionage story with vampire fiction, reinventing the vampire as a clandestine warrior who supports rather than challenges the West and the modernity that it supposedly champions. This transformation marks the arrival of the militarized vampire, a creature that does not rely on its lethal, transforming and transformative body but rather on the deadly, technological advances of modernity.

This recent reinvention of the vampire as a soldier needs to be understood in relation to the War on Terror launched by the

George W. Bush administration in 2001. In fact, many post-9/11 vampire narratives tap into the geopolitical upheaval that this war, fought on multiple fronts and with a plethora of weapons, brought on. In several of these recent vampire stories, the vampire again eschews the military arsenal of modernity and instead reassumes its role as a bringer of Gothic Armageddon. From this perspective, Chambers's and Chaplin's contribution 'Bilqis the Vampire Slayer: Sarwat Chadda's British Muslim Vampire Fiction' explores how author Chadda shuns the sympathetic vampire in favour of a traditionally malign and utterly dangerous presence. The return to the vampire as an evil demon and agent of destruction is not, however, a resurrection of Stoker's Occidental tourist playing one side in the Manichean war between British good and Oriental evil. Instead, Chadda's novels exemplify how the vampire can be made to infest concurrent and contradictory positions in global society. The mixed-race and mixed-religious vampire slayer Billi SanGreal is thus not involved in trying to keep London safe from Eastern reverse colonization. The London she inhabits and partly embodies has already been invaded and hybridized; it is already postcolonial. It is this society that the demonic forces threaten to invade and collapse.

Chadda's novels about Billi SanGreal are certainly not the only ones that reanimate the vampire as a harbinger of doom. In their interesting and timely essay 'Neo-imperialism and the Apocalyptic Vampire Narrative: Justin Cronin's *The Passage*', Glennis Byron and Aspasia Stephanou discuss Cronin's portrayal of the vampire as an utterly alien and abject life form informed by an insatiable thirst for blood and programmed for Armageddon. In a novel set in a near future where the War on Terror has escalated into a form of perpetual global warfare, they observe that Cronin imagines the vampire as part racial/colonial other and part military product, engineered in order to finally establish an everlasting Pax Americana. Through this representation of the vampire, and by conflating the apocalyptic Gothic, the Western and the early American frontier Gothic, Cronin's novel thus engages with US neo-imperialism on many different levels.

In many of the contributions to this collection, it is observed that the Muslim is often pictured by dominant post-9/11 discourse as a vampire. Professor of rhetoric John S. Nelson has interestingly compared George W. Bush to the vampire-slaying 'daywalker' Blade,

a comparison motivated by the positively religious zeal by which Bush embarked on his crusade against Islamic fundamentalism.¹

The afterword by David Punter is a fitting and at the same time open-ended conclusion to this collection, keeping in mind the transgeneric character and origins of both the vampire and Gothic fiction. One of the first to stress the importance of *Dracula* as an important literary work, Punter contributes through a poem that is both an intervention and a meditation on the vampires that have invaded, sustained and intervened with human culture throughout the years. Like the devils that haunt Gadarenes in the New Testament or the dead that flow over London Bridge in *The Waste Land*, they are legion.

As editors, we believe that the range of essays included here, which cover poetry, fiction, film, TV and folklore, has sufficient variety for the reader to see where and how debates around this topic arise, while maintaining a focus on the key terms that shape the rationale for this volume. It is not our intention in this introduction to spell out all their salient features or their particular strengths, which vary from essay to essay: for that, we refer the reader to the essays that follow, each on its own and all of them together.²

Notes

1. <http://ir.uiowa.edu/poroi/vol2/iss2/7>.
2. A word, finally, about the references. A consolidated bibliography at the end of a collection of this nature has some advantages and disadvantages: while it lists all the major references in order, it makes it more difficult for the reader, who reads one essay at a time, to hunt up specific references per essay. As such, we have combined the two formats: full bibliographical references are provided at the end of each essay, but a selected and consolidated list of major works is also provided at the end of the book. This, we hope, will combine the advantages of both the options.

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2

Postcolonial Dread and the Gothic: Refashioning Identity in Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

Robert A. Smart

Contexts

The past survives; conquest and expropriation have failed; or, to state the same proposition conversely, the present is pure revenant, a mere extension of something more real. (McCormack 1997, p. 251)

I want to begin this exploration with two short textual quotations. The first will likely not be familiar to most readers:

Her mouth was red, her face rose-red and her clothes were red from drinking the blood of her only-son and her mouth was crimson-red from the dark streams of blood that fell from [His] wounds, drinking and kissing the ground on which those waves of blood fell. (Quoted in Ryan 2002, p. 172)

The astute reader will begin to wonder exactly what – as well as where and when – this scene refers to as she encounters the words ‘her only-son’ in the middle of the passage. The second quoted passage is from a different, later and more familiar text:

One night, instead of the voice I was accustomed to hear in the dark, I heard one, sweet and tender, and at the same time terrible, which said, ‘Your mother warns you to beware of the assassin.’ At the same time a light unexpectedly sprang up, and I saw Carmilla,