REVAMPING AN IMAGE
The Function of the Vampire in Society

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DEFINING THE VAMPIRE

In the second half of the twentieth century, people tend to use the terms "vampire" and "Dracula" interchangeably. Either word conjures up an image of a tall, dark man in a cape, oozing dark mystery and romance. Thanks to Bela Legosi, Frank Langella, Gary Oldman, and all the actors and dreamers who immortalized the tragic figure on stage, in film, and in romantic literature, Dracula serves as the modern poster boy for the undead.

This image of Dracula today would not have been recognized by the people who originally feared a blood-sucking creature of the night, or by the subjects of Vlad Dracula the Impaler, the historical figure from whom many details about Dracula (as we know him) have been borrowed. Vampires, in the sense of blood and life draining figures, are not and were not just menacing Eastern European men. Vampires have been feared for ages in one form or another in most civilizations. Modern civilization has even created a new breed of vampire, one that does not drain blood as much as life or psychic energy.

Why would a blood sucking (and life draining) creature appear in so many cultures and legends? Some would say because they do exist, but that is a hasty conclusion. Though alike in the desire for blood, most of the legends contain descriptions of very different creatures. This fixation on blood and how its loss drains life is not
difficult to understand. No matter what time period you find humans in, no matter what country they call home, all people know about the importance of blood; when a person loses enough of it, that person dies (Leatherdale 16). As Renfield observes in Bram Stoker's Dracula, "The blood is the life" (247).

So, after the observation that loss of blood equals death, is it illogical to equate blood with life, and, as a result, conclude that those without life (either those who had died or general evil spirits) would covet blood? Apparently not. The first people to draw this conclusion were the residents of the Indus River Valley in India. Vampire researcher Devendra P. Varma discovered, while studying the valley, wall paintings and carved figures of vampire gods with green faces, pale blue bodies, and fangs, that date back to 3000 B.C (Scavone 12). Varma cites "the mystery cults of oriental civilizations...the Nepalese Lord of Death, the Tibetan Devil, and the Mongolian God of Time" as the original sources of the vampire legend (qtd. in Scavone 16).

Another ancient people with a healthy respect for the dead were the Babylonians. They feared a creature they called an edimmu, which was a soul unable to rest who sucked blood from the veins of its victims (Transformations 110). Also, the Babylonians, along with many cultures then and since, feared Lilith, the first wife of Adam who was banished from the garden of Eden. Apparently the divorce
did not do much for Lilith's disposition, for she was reputed to drain the blood of infants and children, and was blamed for the erotic dreams of men. These dreams were very disturbing because they would rob men of a different bodily fluid, semen (Transformations 110). Although people today would not think much of this common occurrence, modern science proves that this parallel between semen and blood is not far off base. The chemical composition of blood and semen is nearly identical. Also, it takes forty ounces of blood to replenish one ounce of lost semen, so maybe the experience is more "draining" and akin to blood loss than modern skeptics allow (Leatherdale 150).

How universal is the vampire legend? The six populated continents all find legends of the creature in their cultural histories. Here are just a few examples of what sorts of beliefs these different peoples held:

Africa

This land is rich in vampire-type legends and blood taboos. For example, the Guineans feared that vengeful ancestors, bad spirits, or dead magicians would return to earth as an owenga. The owenga would roam the earth, killing people or at least searching for life-giving blood. To keep from attracting any such creatures, Guineans (and most North Africans) are careful to destroy anything with blood on it and to obliterate any blood that falls to the ground (Masters 48).

Another malevolent African vampire is the adze, which
flies around in the form of a firefly. Woe to him who catches it, though: this firefly changes into a human if captured, and feeds on blood, palm oil, and coconut oil. Its favorite food, however, is children, especially good-looking ones (Bunson 2).

The asanbosam was another type of African vampire, famous for sucking blood from the thumbs of sleeping people. There are three types of asanbosam: men, women, and children.

Various tribes around Africa try to protect themselves by feeding the gods and spirits who might be tempted to steal their blood. Animal sacrifices usually accompanied the worship of family spirits. The blood of the sacrifice would be spilled onto the ground (where the family assumed the spirit would drink it) and the family would eat the meat of the sacrifice, creating a situation and a relationship that seemed to satisfy both parties involved (Masters 47).

Asia

Seeing as how Asia is such a large continent with extremely diverse cultures, legends will be outlined by country.

China: China has quite an interesting vampire legend, in that it is so similar to the Eastern European concept of a vampire. Chinese vampires (or qiang shi) are considered demons who inhabit corpses and prevent the decay of their new bodies by feeding on other corpses or living bodies (Transformations 110). The Chinese vampire, however, sports
a slightly different look. The body of such a demon is covered with white or greenish-white hair, and is noted for its glaring red eyes and long claws.

Malaysia: Malaysia has quite a few vampire legends in its fold. One is the penanggalan, a creature that Darwin surely would have liked to see if only because it was a creature completely adapted to its purpose. The penanggalan, always a female, consisted of only a head and a dangling stomach and intestines. Her goal in life (or death) was to drink the blood of children (the younger the better) or of women in labor.

Another famous Malaysian vampire is the langsuir. Langsuir was originally a beautiful woman who died of shock when she learned her baby was stillborn. She is recognized by her beauty, her long nails, and her long black hair. Any beautiful woman who dies in childbirth can also become a langsuir. To control them (for sometimes langsuires may be rehabilitated into society), vampire hunters must capture and pin down the langsuir, cut her hair and nails, and stuff them into the hole in the back of her neck from which she drinks blood.

India: Hindus also recognize the penanggalan and the langsuir. The term "bhuta" is used to describe Indian vampires in general. There are quite a few of them, like the rakshasa (an incredibly powerful, omnipotent sub-being), the jibarkhwar (the liver-eater), the hanh saburo (that chase men with the help of dogs to drink their blood), the
hant-pare (creatures that cling to a bleeding wound like a leech to feed), the hantu-dor dong (that drink the blood of wild hogs and dogs), the mah'anah (that lingers at the graves of dead children), the pacu-pati (the "Master of Human Cattle," or the supervisor of all of the spirits, ghouls, vampires, etc.), the pisacha (can either cure diseases or inflict evil), and the vetala (sucks the blood of drunk or insane women).

Russia: Though the origin of the word is unclear, some contend that the term "vampire" comes from the Russian word "vampir," which is derived from the root "pi," meaning "to drink" (Scavone 17). Whether or not that is true, the Russians have had a healthy respect and fear for vampires. They define vampires as being the deceased returned from the grave: their vampires can only appear from noon to midnight, and can steal or switch hearts (replacing a hero's heart with one of a rabbit to make him a coward, for example) (Masters 101).

Australia

Vampire legends existed in Australia long before English convicts populated the land. The aborigines believed that the soul could survive death and could wander. Sometimes these wandering ghosts turned into mrarts, vampirelike creatures whose powers increased after dark. In New Guinea, islands just north of Australia, they had a fear of blood falling into the wrong hands. Much like the Africans and their fear of the owenga, the New Guineans also took great pains to dispose of blood properly.
Europe

Here is where we find the vampire legends that we (and Bram Stoker) were familiar with. The vampire was a reanimated corpse, come back to feed on the blood of the living. This legend was especially strong among the gypsies and the Slavs, though each region of Europe had its own spin on the legend, usually in the details of vampire repelling and vampire extermination. Some of the more interesting variations include:

- in Greece, the vampire was not feared until it was discovered that a dead werewolf returns as a vampire. Since the Greeks took their werewolves seriously, this was greatly upsetting (Masters 71-72).
- to Romanians, a seventh son and a child born with a caul, good luck signs in other cultures, actually were considered more likely to return from the grave as vampires. (Masters 91).
- the Muslim gypsies of the Balkans believed that pumpkins and watermelons, if kept more than ten days or after Christmas, would become vampires. After the "transformation," indicated by a drop of blood appearing on the fruit's surface, the no longer fresh produce would roll around on the ground and growl. People did not have much to fear from these vampires, for they had no teeth (Bunson 218).

North America

The Native Americans had many blood-drinking or
cannibalistic entities in their folklore, but there were so many tribes and variations that few volumes go into specifics about them. However, a few beliefs are described. The Ojibwa Indians believed in a kind of resurrection that would occur when a soul was barred from entering the next world. One ugly Native American vampire was said to have a horn-shaped mouth that was used to suck a man’s brains out of his ear (Bunson 186).

Salem proved to be not only a time to accuse people of witchcraft, but a time to accuse people of vampirism, too. Also, in the nineteenth century, a wave of "vampire attacks" coincided with the spread of tuberculosis.

South America

Again, some interesting variations on the vampire theme occur on this continent. Brazil, for example, has the jaracacas, a vampire which takes the form of a snake. It visits nursing mothers, feeding from their breasts and stopping the cries of the hungry babies by shoving its tail in their mouths. Also in Brazil is the legend of the lobishoman, who also preys on women. If the women survive the blood draining attacks, upon recovery they have one noticeable side effect: nymphomania.

Again, this description of "vampires from around the world" is by far from complete. It is difficult to cover every country and every legend when, in the words of vampirologist Leonard Wolf, "Vampires...have appeared almost
everywhere that men have bled" (Dream 125). This outline does, hopefully, give the reader a taste of the diverse and universal nature of the historical vampire legend.

That legend has evolved, though, so there's a new breed of vampire in town: the psychic vampire. Psychic vampires drain life from victims, so they exhibit the same symptoms as the victims of regular vampires, like pallid complexions, exhaustion, and death. However, they do not drain blood, but energy, be it mental energy, creative juices, or willpower. "When I talk about vampirism, I mean the draining of energy, the sucking of the will, the life force itself," begins Ellen Datlow in her introduction to her vampire anthology Blood is Not Enough (which she followed up with another vampire anthology with even less hemoglobin, A Whisper of Blood) (12). It is only logical that with modern medicine, which has reduced the dangers of disease and blood loss (two big factors in creating and sustaining the vampire legend), emphasis has left the blood and focused on life itself.

Vampires were originally created because people needed a culprit to steal or infect blood, and thus help explain the loss of life without obvious bloodshed. As time went on and individualism came in vogue, emphasis was placed on will, intelligence, expression, and other mental intangibles that by today are as significant to our quality of life as blood was to life in earlier cultures. Blood is too much taken for granted, too easily replaced, for people in the
modern world to see its loss as terrifyingly fatal. What is frightening is the loss of free will and even the life force itself, things science cannot measure but are still essential to life. Today men and women are taught how to protect their bodies, but they do not know how to protect their minds. Some authors around the turn of the century tried to arm their readers with nonfiction books on the subject, like Eaves's *Modern Vampirism: Its Dangers and How to Avoid Them* published in 1904, and Dion Fortune's *Psychic Self-Defense* in 1930 (Bunson 215). Even in fiction there seems to be no defense against the psychic vampire, which makes them even more frightening than the stakeable kind.

However, it is really the fiction writers who have profited from this new strain of draining vampires. Literally hundreds of stories have been written using this delectable theme. A wonderful starting point that really strikes the nerve when it comes to the threat and the power of these vampires would be "Carrion Comfort" by Dan Simmons. The story centers on a trio of vampires who have amused themselves through history by telepathically causing people to die, something they must do to continue living. In an even more gruesome twist, though, they keep score of quality, irony, and style of death, like judges for a diving competition at an empty swimming pool. Other well written variations on this theme are "Warm Man" by Robert Silverberg, about a psychic vampire who benefits a small town by feeding on the negative thoughts of its citizens
until he meets one troubled little boy; "Beyond Any Measure" by Karl Edward Wagner, which speculates about what might happen if a reincarnated soul meets up with her original body and the vampire who stole it; and "...To Feel Another's Woe" by Chet Williamson, about vampire actors who drain emotion and ability from others so they can use them on stage.

Some themes run through all these examples of vampiric beliefs. Ideas of sexuality, health, initiation, consumption, and blood taboo appear again and again in the descriptions. The sexual threat of Lilith and other such erotic vampires, the death encounters with these vampires result in, the creation of new vampires, the loss of blood; these all come together in this symbolic package of a walking corpse. Why would this be?

This all has to do with the function of the vampire. They have never been real creatures of the night who could be held at bay with garlic and crosses, or bloodseeking heads attached to intestines, or animated bloodthirsty rotting fruit. They have been the fears of humankind, transformed into a tangible being we could point at, avoid, combat, understand, and hate (and in some cases, emulate). Superstition created the vampire, and mankind has not been able to let go of it. In turn, the vampire has been adapted through time to fit the fears and concerns of the people.

At first, the vampire represented all of the darkness on the outside people were trying to keep away from. They
stood for illness and the dangerous unknown, the things that went bump in the night. Eventually, as definitions loosened, writers began unleashing their creative juices, and the metaphor of "vampire=death" began to absorb more themes, like the consuming nature of the elite, or the threat of the lower class. The face of the vampire was beginning to change. In fact, the vampire was looking more human every day. If the vampire becomes human in that it cannot be differentiated from the face seen in the mirror every morning, is it not reasonable to begin using the vampire as a symbol for the personal dark side of humans?

In the last two hundred years, the vampire has come to symbolize the beast within, the dark side that humans have a hard time 'fessing up to. Dark desire, which has inspired many people to do many deviant things, quite naturally fell into the symbolic guise of the vampire.

So what we have is a creature, which is mythical, but which has sustained the test of time due to its evolution. It has come to stand for many things, mostly from the dark side of human experience. However, it does take two distinct forms: the vampire from without and the vampire from within, one representing the evils encountered in society, and one representing the evils of human nature.
THE VAMPIRE AS EXPRESSION OF OUR PERSONAL DARK SIDES

"You have kind of a dark side, don't you?"

"No darker than yours, Bruce."

-Bruce Wayne (Batman)
and Selina Kyle (Catwoman)
in Batman Returns

Everyone has a dark side. Some people embrace it, like the villains we see on the movie screen who seem to revel in their evil ways. Most people, however, repress that devil inside. But, as Freud contended, anything repressed will make itself known somehow. Many people deal with this situation by projecting those negative thoughts, feelings, and compulsions onto something else. That "something else" has often been the vampire.

There are two ways the vampire can adopt the real, dark desires that people have. The first way is that "vampire" can act as a label we can paste on any deviant behavior other people exhibit that bears a resemblance to the characteristics of the vampire. Thus, we have vampire killers and vamps running around our society.

However, there is another side to this vampire obsession. The vampire is a figure that we want to be like and some people actually model themselves after. "The sexual metaphors, from seduction to the stake, continue to resonate...Our era is more obsessed than any with
immortality and eternal youth. The vampire is not really a menace. It's what we long to be," analyzes Les Daniels, author of Citizen Vampire and Yellow Fog (qtd, in Ramsland 35). The insinuation that we might want to be vampires may seem ludicrous at first, but think about what modern vampires have come to represent: sex, aristocracy, eternal life, power. These are all very desirable things, but not everyone is able to admit that they covet them. So, vampires find themselves either loved or hated, admired or feared, depending on a person's acceptance of the attractiveness of these attributes.

The most obvious (though mislabeled) vampire is the historical Dracula. Born in 1430, he was the second son of the Prince of Walachia, and eventually succeeded him to become Vlad III. He was better known as Vlad Tepes, or Vlad the Impaler. But the most famous name this man had came from being the son of "Dracul," a name his father earned for either being a fearsome warrior or because he belonged to a Catholic organization of knights called the "Order of the Dragon," dracul meaning "dragon." Being the son of Dracul, an "a" converted "Dracul" to "Dracula," or son of the dragon (Transformations 104).

Dracula did not actually invite anyone named Jonathon Harker to his castle, or crawl down walls face first. He did, however, cause a lot of blood to flow. As his nickname "Vlad the Impaler" implies, he was best known for his impaling. His countrymen both feared and revered him,
because although he was cruel, it was that extreme in cruelty which eventually inspired enough terror in the Turks to keep them from invading Walachia. When the Sultan of Turkey, Mohammed II, rode toward Walachia with his troops to invade, he was greeted by a forest of 23,000 dead Turks and Bulgarians. Mohammed II, the "Great Conqueror," is reputed to have turned to one of his advisors and said, "What can one do against a man who does such things?" He then turned his troops around and went home (Dracula: Fact or Fiction?).

But Dracula's cruelties were not limited to his foreign enemies. Vlad Tepes used any reason he could find to impale his own countrymen, even impaling for small offenses. Impaling itself was not an innovation, but Vlad Tepes elevated it to a sick sort of art form. He impaled people not only the traditional way through the rectum, but through "the front, back, and side; through the stomach, breast, navel, and groin. He had them impaled from above, while they hung upside down, and with rounded off stakes, to prolong the torture" (Transformations 105). He also was famous for impaling a village for no apparent reason, and having the stakes propped up in concentric circles, with the bodies at different heights according to social class (Transformations 105). Since this was all happening around the advent of the printing press, news of the evil prince of Walachia and his atrocities spread far and wide, making him one of the first people elevated by the media to the status of international celebrity. Bram Stoker, however, was the
first to merge Vlad Tepes with the Eastern European lore of the vampire.

Elizabeth Bathory is another early "vampire" who must be included in any discussion of real bloodsuckers. In this case, though, Elizabeth was not a blood sucker so much as a blood bather. Elizabeth, born in 1560 to a noble family in Hungary, had come from a long line of "sexual deviates, sadists and masochists, Satanists, poisoners, heretics, and intellectuals" (Transformations 123). As a sadistic and vain lesbian herself, she continued the traditional twisting of the family tree. One day, after she had slapped one of her serving girls so hard that the girl's blood splashed on her, Elizabeth, upon rubbing the blood in, thought that the blood made her skin look younger. She had tortured girls before this event, but this apparent rejuvenation gave her sessions a new purpose. Young maids that were lured to Elizabeth's castle were tortured, murdered, and drained so that Elizabeth could enjoy their pain and then bathe in their blood. Reports on the number of Elizabeth's victims vary. Some say as many as 610 were killed (Bunson 17). Testimony from an old serving woman who helped with the torture (and received gifts if she did her bloody work well) placed the number of victims closer to 40, a more widely accepted number (Glut 53).

Numerous "vampires" litter the annals of time, but two more eccentric examples deserve note. One is the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814), someone who made a decisive link between
blood and sex, even though the sex is on the deviant side and the blood's role in the act is straightforward rather than symbolic. In his novels Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue and Juliette, de Sade includes characters who enjoy watching bloodshed, cannibals, and necrophiliacs. The other eccentric, also a Frenchman, was Antoine Lever. He was a French mass murderer who would hide in the woods and wait for young women to walk by. He would then attack, rape, and kill them, rip out their hearts and drink their blood. When finally apprehended, he was asked why he drank human blood. His response? "I was thirsty" (qtd, in Bunson 154). He was sentenced to the guillotine and died in 1824.

These were people who were not consciously trying to be vampires, but got labeled as such after the fact. Other people, especially today, try to be or think they are vampires. While Vlad Tepes caused a lot of it to run, Elizabeth Bathory bathed in it, the Marquis de Sade reveled in it, and Antoine Leger consumed it because it was there, other people seek out and drink blood to be like vampires. Stephen Kaplan, the director of the Vampire Research Center in Elmhurst, New York, puts these modern blood drinkers into three categories:

1) fetishists erotically attracted to blood;

2) vampire imitators who adopt vampire trappings in search of powers of domination, immortality, sensuality, charisma;

3) true vampires, who have a physical addiction to
blood, drink it, believe it will prolong his or her life, and find sexual satisfaction in the blood drinking ritual (qtd. in Ramsland 34). Interestingly enough, Kaplan does not believe in the vampires of legend that turn into bats, are destroyed by the sun, are immortal, and actually sustain life by drinking blood (Ramsland 34). However, enough people fall into Kaplan's "true vampire" category to warrant taking a census every year. His latest poll, compiled in 1993, counted 1,215 true vampires in the world, a number up about 33% from last year's count of 810 ("Latest Stats" 1336). If, however, the definition of vampire is expanded to mean anyone who drinks human blood, vampire researcher Carol Page counts 50,000 vampires in the United States alone (Bunson 119).

The first group of blooddrinkers, the fetishists erotically attracted to blood, find the taking or the sharing of blood an integral component of fulfillment when making love. Take the testimony of Jack, a bisexual man who does not care for the term "vampire," but feels an "instinct" to drink the blood of others:

It's happiness. It's like making love. It's like the orgasm. It is the most inwardly erotic, sensual, warm, spiritual, uplifting thing that I do in my life....Drinking blood compared to orgasms is like the Pacific compared to a drop in a bucket (qtd, in Page 23).

Exchanging blood during sex, if the exchange is consensual,
represents self sacrifice on the part of the donor, which adds to the excitement of the vampire. Usually not much blood is consumed, because the procuring of blood itself is not the goal of the vampire; it is the relationship which allows for the willing gift of hemoglobin. Another vampire, Andrew, explains his first encounter with the eroticism of blood:

...this guy, he cut a pentagram in his hand with a razor blade. Then he cut me across the chest and he massaged me with his blood. His blood, my blood. My chest was covered with blood. Then he moved away...That really turned me on. It flattered me...The whole thing was a tease. The blood was a tease meant for me. It was a ceremony...It excited me that he would care enough to cut himself up...If somebody cares enough for you to suck your blood...I can't think of much more to ask (qtd. in Wolf, Dream 269).

People with this psychological fixation on blood to fulfill erotic needs are described as having hematomania, also called hematodipsia.

The second group of blood drinkers, the vampire imitators who adopt vampire trappings in search of powers of domination, immortality, sensuality, and charisma, are not fully committed to the vampire lifestyle but still imitate some aspects of it for the powers associated with the name.
Hell's Angels, for example, earn their "Red Wings" (in a kind of grotesque imitation of earning scout badges) by performing cunnilingus on menstruating women in front of the rest of the gang (Wolf, Dream 11). The imitation is more of a dare, an initiation, than an attempt to be vampiric. They are proving how non-angelic they can be by breaking the blood drinking taboo, and in turn earning the power of the healthy respect a vampire might get from a mortal, uninitiated human.

The third group, the true vampires -- the people who are addicted to blood, drink it, think it will make their lives longer, and find sexual satisfaction through it -- what are they like? Where do they come from? What would make them think that they were a creature of the night? According to Kaplan's census, the average male vampire looks 26 years old, has brown eyes, black hair, is 5 feet 10 inches tall, and weighs 170 pounds, whereas the females look about 23, also have brown eyes and black hair, are five feet six inches tall on average, and weigh about 120 pounds (qtd. in Ramsland 32). They live everywhere, but mostly in the city, it seems. Los Angeles, not surprisingly, has the largest vampire population in the United States at 35, though Dallas follows closely at 34, New York at 33, and San Francisco at 17. Worldwide, the remarkable (and alarming trend) has been vampire-teens, reported to be thriving in Australia, Britain, and Germany ("Latest Stats" 1336). When possible, they seem to form their own groups, sometimes
called covens. Not only does the union form a kind of "support group," (because, whether alive or dead, vampires are only human), it keeps the bloodsucking activity "in the family"; it's not like packs of vampires rove the streets in search of unlucky victims. Some even drink their own blood if they cannot find a source they can trust. Disease is not much of a worry for these vampires, because most blood-borne illnesses, even AIDS, cannot survive the strength of stomach acid. A cut in the mouth that tends to bleed is a possible entryway for such a disease, but doctors still contend that infection is not likely (Page 27).

But, the question remains, why would these people become vampires? The answer is not uniform -- all of the vampires have their reasons, real or contrived -- but, generally researchers cite the powerlessness the vampires feel as humans. As researcher Carol Page puts it:

One of the most compelling reasons is power. Many blood drinkers are disenfranchised, powerless people with little hope for the future. To actually convince someone to injure himself or to permit you to injure him, to give you his life's blood, can feel very empowering. It may be the only power they will ever have. For people who have fallen through the cracks of society, often lacking a loving home, education, or the intelligence to pursue it, and the social skills necessary to have healthy relationships, blood drinking also satisfies the need to feel special
and the desire for attention (65-66).

One of the vampires Page interviews, a famous self-proclaimed vampire named Misty, can serve as an example of this kind of vampire. Interviews with Misty reveal that what she lacks in intelligence, she makes up for in belief. She really does love human blood, and believes it makes her look younger. Her blood drinking started long ago, in her troubled childhood. She claims to have been born a vampire, saying that she made herself bleed from the time she got her first tooth. But the real clue to her condition seems to be her relationship with her grandfather, the only person who really showed her any love or affection. He drank glasses of blood and cooked with animal blood, which is not too unusual in his Philippine culture (Page 67). But, the blood is what has made its mark in Misty's thinking, and will be associated with love and acceptance in her mind forever. She made the jump from animal blood to human blood, though, saying that animal blood "does not have what's needed" (qtd. in Page 84). And so, we see a natural, even accepted, practice (using animal blood in cuisine) mutated into something most of society considers unnatural. Perhaps the leap from human to vampire is not as difficult as we would like to think.

Most of these vampires are benevolent. Interviews with "real vampires" reveal people concerned with their partner's well being, who would put their partner's fears above their needs and find alternative sources of blood (animals,
themselves, other people) if the partner is unwilling or unable to share his or her blood freely, for whatever reason. As with all things, though, there are some deviants. Ted Bundy, the Son of Sam, and Richard Trenton Chase (also known as the Vampire Killer), all were linked with vampiric activity. (Bundy bit his victims and said he felt like a vampire, the Son of Sam claimed to have been poisoned by bloodsucking demons, and the Vampire Killer drank the blood of his victims to cleanse himself of his sins.) Some even theorize that Jack the Ripper was really a vampire (Ramsland 34). Unfortunately, it is these "vampires" who gain notice, who make their way into the press and keep "vampire" a dirty word. Like most things in life, a bad few ruin it for the rest of the group. That may be why some vampires are referring to themselves by other names, like Sangroids, Methuselahs (presumably after the Biblical figure, whose name means "man of the dart" and who has the longest life in the Bible, 969 years), Homovamps and DODs (Descendants of Dracula) ("Latest Stats" 1336).

This continues to prove that the lure of the vampire is a powerful one. A look at legends, literature, and film shows quite a bounty of power and influence at the fingertips of Dracula and other vampires. Is it that much of a surprise that people who do not feel they fit in, who feel unloved and even unwanted, would covet the power of the vampire for himself or herself, and would be willing to adopt a form that would have them cast out of a society that
they did not feel a part of in the first place? Vampires, especially in the minds of people who try to emulate them, are powerful, are sexually attractive, have the right to consume and have been initiated into an elite group.

For the rest of us, who find the image of the vampire attractive but are wary enough not to want to meet a self-proclaimed one, literature and film have provided thousands of examples of these dark figures to entice, entrance, and seduce us. They have become all that we desire and theoretically can make us conform to those unconscious wishes, so we cannot be blamed for our actions; the devil made me do it.

The vampire began to become attractive and especially sexually mesmerizing in the nineteenth century, due to two reasons. First, science was making leaps and bounds, and vampires could not be scientifically proven as existing. So, they were ushered into the annals of myth and were defanged; that is, they were not the immediate threat they were once thought to be. Also, the Victorian era (and this was a time when a significant amount of vampire literature came from England) was a very sexually repressed time. Vampires were able to relieve some of the sexual tension through indirect expression of sexuality. The vampire's penetrating bite was the perfect metaphor for sexual penetration, and was less likely to be censored by straightlaced Victorian society. Bram Stoker's novel Dracula is called "Quasi-pornography," by C.F. Bentley in
his essay, "The Monster in the Bedroom," but there are no overt sexual acts. However, Stoker leaves a lot of sexuality barely buried for the reader to uncover. Clive Leatherdale, author of Dracula: The Novel and the Legend, reports that "a comprehensive search of the novel unearths the following: seduction, rape, necrophilia, paedophilia, incest, adultery, oral sex, group sex, menstruation, venereal disease, voyeurism -- enough to titillate the most avid sexual appetite" (145-146).

The novella Carmilla is another sexually symbolic Victorian vampire piece. The title character is a vampire who goes undiscovered by the narrator for most of the story. The narrator, Laura, is happy to have this unexpected houseguest around at first, even though she recognizes Carmilla from a nightmare she had as a child. Carmilla is beautiful, experienced, and seductive. What really makes this story notable is its foray into the realm of lesbianism. Again, the sex is not overt, but the language paints quite a picture:

She used to place her pretty arms about my neck, draw me to her, and laying her cheek to mine, murmur with her lips near my ear, "Dearest, your little heart is wounded; think me not cruel because I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness; if your dear heart is wounded, my wild heart bleeds with yours. In the rapture of my enormous humiliation I live in your warm life and you shall die -- die, sweetly die -- into
These were vampires that forced themselves on innocents, so those innocents could experience earthy pleasures, but would not have to accept the blame for them. Dracula broke into bedrooms, overwhelmed his victims, and had his way with them, the way the victim (and the reader) secretly wished he would. In that way, sexual needs were fulfilled, but no guilt was involved. Dracula was the Id, taking his fill the way the Superego-mired Victorians wished they could.

With time, Dracula and his other vampire friends did not lose their erotic natures. They still appeared from time to time as pure monsters with no attractive qualities whatsoever, like in the silent film Nosferatu. However, especially on the stage and screen, vampires were portrayed as being more and more attractive, more and more human. The more attractive the vampires became, the less likely they were to "force" themselves on anyone. Vampires became more romantic, in the sense of romance novel romantic. The heroines -- sometimes with the excuse of hypnosis by the vampire, sometimes not -- felt themselves drawn to Dracula, rather than shrinking away from him.

Frank Langella is an excellent example of the modern romantic vampire. His mesmerizing stage portrayal of Dracula led to the 1979 film version of Dracula. Langella's Dracula is devastatingly attractive and aristocratic; he
makes women swoon from twenty paces. Kate Nelligan's character Lucy Seward seems to have no qualms about allowing Dracula to remain in her bedroom after he materializes on her balcony, and many women envied her position. Why? Langella's Dracula oozes sexual charisma, to be sure. However, the viewer also gets a sense that he has not put his long life on earth to waste, and that he has learned all about what love, sex, and pleasure can be. In fact, Jim Hart, the playwright of *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, another romantic screen portrayal of the monster, was standing in line to see Langella's broadway version of the play when the woman in front of him announced loudly, "I would rather spend one night with Dracula dead than the rest of my life with my husband alive" (qtd. in Matthews and Beachy 75). Hart then realized that women, not men, were his market, and a new twist on Dracula was born. In this version, not only was every sexual euphemism stripped away and replaced by a more overtly sexual act, but a love story between Mina and Dracula was developed.

Vampires have become so romantic that they have begun to invade the romance novel market. In her essay "Welcome to the Dark Side," romance novelist Mary Jo Putney discusses how dangerous heroes are at the heart of most dark romances. Romance is already a genre in which "Characters are larger than life, with stronger passions, blacker faults, and brighter virtues" (99). But with a dark hero, the tension and emotions intensify:

Often the dark hero is obsessed with the heroine,
driven by a primitive passion to possess her in every sense of the word. An aura of potential -- and sometimes actual -- violence hovers over such books. As Jayne Ann Krentz says, the male protagonist is often both hero and villain, and the heroine's task and triumph is to civilize him, to turn him from a marauder into a worthy mate of whose formidable strength will be channeled into protecting his woman...She is a success in a very female way...and can now share in his strength (100-101).

There is another inspiration for the "vampire-as-romance-novel-hero" trend. With the feminist movement, as woman has graduated from housewife to superwoman, the traditional hero (already theoretically "molded to perfection") has not been able to make the same leaps that she had. Romance novel leading ladies, when they are superwomen, need supermen to complement the pair. Is it so surprising that writers are jumping into the supernatural for a new type of man who is literally a breed apart?

Lori Herter has written a torrid trilogy of romances starring vampire David de Morrissey, a man who volunteered to become immortal in order to preserve the works of his idol and mentor, Shakespeare. His help was not necessary to spread the Bard's word, and now he's stuck with immortality. Herter has him find the love of many lifetimes in Veronica, a woman who has made her own way in the world, in the first
book. He then loses her in the second, and gets her back (along with his humanity) in the third one. Herter explores in all three books the possible sensual benefits a creature of the night may possess.

Another book with a different line on life, death, and love is *Twilight Phantasies* by Maggie Shayne. Her hero and heroine (Eric and Tamara) are psychically linked: Eric, by a twist of fate, is her protector. Once she comes "of age," they fall in love. This is really this first time that Eric regrets his immortality, for it will make his time with Tamara comparatively short. In the end, he ends up converting her into a vampire. What better way to live happily ever after than to really live "ever after?"

Men have not been left out of the benefits of the sensual vampire. The female vampire has been just as aggressive, just as sensual, just as fantasy-fulfilling as their male counterparts. The best example of such a vampiress is Anne Parillaud's in *Innocent Blood*. She is beautiful, aggressive, deadly, and SEXUAL. She is even willing to use handcuffs in bed. Granted, she promptly snaps them with her vampire strength, but she was willing to make the effort. Catherine Deneuve in *The Hunger*, Grace Jones in *Vamp*, Jennifer Beals in *Vampire's Kiss*, Clarimonda in the story by the same name by Theophile Gautier; they all appeal.

In short, vampires are so frightening we accuse others of being them, so powerful and free that we want to be like
them, and so attractive that we want to be with them. Anne Rice, the queen of vampire fiction, has a say about this herself:

I think the vampire is a romantic, enthralling image...of this person who never tries and takes a blood sacrifice in order to live and exerts a charm over people; a handsome, alluring, seductive person who captivates us, then drains the life out of us so that he or she can live. We long to be one of them and the idea of being sacrificed to them becomes rather romantic (qtd. in Ramsland 35).
She's the quintessence of the horror behind the bright billboard. She's the smile that tricks you into throwing away your money and your life. She's the eyes that lead you on and on, and then show you death. She's the creature you give everything for and never really get. She's the being that takes everything you've got and gives nothing in return. When you yearn toward her face on the billboards, remember that. She's the lure. She's the face. She's the bait. She's the Girl (Leiber 347-348).

One effect government and economics have on a society is stratification. Some people end up being the haves, and others, the have-nots. Usually there is some tension between the resulting layers, the upper and the lower classes. By the nineteenth century, vampires can be seen as representing the threat one class is to the other. The upper class is seen by the lower as sucking it dry of money, labor, status, and pride. The upper sees the lower as an animalistic threat should it decide to revolt. Like the vampire, the lower class could easily physically overwhelm whomever it attacked.

The very image most people have of the vampire today -- that of the dark, aristocratic, tuxedo-clad count -- stems from the lower and middle classes' fears of the upper class, especially of titled people or royalty. John Polidori's "The Vampyre" characterizes its vampire as a threatening
vampiric image. Take, for example, "M is for the Many Things" by Elizabeth Massie, who shows that a government children's home has produced monsters who prey on women that remind them of mother figures. A more direct tie to the government can be found in "Do I Dare Eat a Peach?" by Chelsea Quinn Yarbo. The story describes the plight of Weybridge, who has amnesia but will be held by the government until they can determine his role in the murders of some undercover operatives. Throughout the story there is a question of whether or not Weybridge is "one of them," them presumably being vampires. However, the government, in its ability to control every aspect of Weybridge's life, its desire for every one of his thoughts, and its ability to make escape impossible, is just as vampiric as the creatures it is bent on catching. Dan Simmon's *Children of the Night* also uses vampires with strong governmental and economic ties to oppose the protagonists, who want to save an orphan baby (who is actually the child of Dracula) from the clutches of an unfeeling bureaucracy.

The economic vampire has been seen quite often in literature, too. Critics, well into this century, continue to analyze the economic aspects of Bram Stoker's novel, studying Arthur's affluence and influence, Jonathon's one-track business mind, and Mina's fallability as a consumer (Wicke 487). For the epitome of economic vampires, the often anthologized "The Girl With the Hungry Eyes" is a must-read. It is about a girl whose seductive look stimulates consumerism everywhere.
The vampire, an unquestionably evil creature, filled the role nicely for some. Attacking vampires did not result in the backlash an attack on a government or an institution would have. Attacking a vampire pulled men into a united front against a common enemy. Here was a feasible, socially acceptable outlet for frustration, which had the added bonus of being an activity approved of by every church, Catholic or Protestant. If there really were vampires at this time, they found themselves in quite a quandary: potential victims had armed themselves against attack, and vampire hunters were really getting into their work. At least the people could feel they had some recourse in regards to one of their problems. This situation did not last forever -- the French Revolution of 1789 and the Industrial Revolution starting in about 1760 shifted the attention of entire nations to other fronts -- but it served as an outlet at the time.

And so vampires, children of the night, have not just been characters in fairy tales. Their role in society has been much more active than allowing themselves to be portrayed in folklore, in print, and on celluloid. They have served as representatives -- either as one half of a simile or directly by absorbing the qualities of the aspect of society being commented on -- of society's evils. Can't figure out why you are tired and pale all the time? Has a vampire been visiting at night? Feel like the government is draining you of every last cent through taxes? Compare it to a vampire. Inexplicably driven to spend your money on
some useless item, just because you saw the commercial or the salesperson was very persuasive? Vampires are just as hypnotic. Think that some group in society is frightening, threatening, would take all you had if they had the chance? Sounds almost vampiric.

The cultural vampires are all of the outside threats that people perceive. They hunt us, they want to pull us in, they either want to make us one of them or eliminate us completely. The goal of humanity, it seems, has been to keep out of these lifestealers' grasps. But that has proven rather difficult, as the second category of vampires happens to be an internalized bloodsucker, expressing our personal dark sides.
THE CULTURAL VAMPIRE

As discussed in the first section, vampires represented evils in one of two categories: the evils found in a society or a culture, or the evil tendencies people had a hard time admitting to or expressing without the help of some creature to project this negative emotion on. Cultural vampires were the ones that appeared first. They began as representations of disease, and, like disease, spread to other areas where negative feelings or feelings of helplessness needed some outlet. The metaphor was extended beyond the fear of the unknown to encompass all sorts of evils society generated that people had to find a way to deal with. Vampires could be attacked, unlike any disease. They could be threatened, hunted down, and abused, unlike local officials or the moneylender that just turned down a loan. Discrimination against vampires was all right and had few repercussions, unlike class discrimination. This is not to say that this was the only way, the most common way, or even the best way to express frustration with these institutions, but it was one way. Indeed, it is a connection still used today, though usually in a more figurative sense. Disease, politics, economics, and class structures have all appeared under the guise of the vampire at one time or another, and still lurk in the shadows today.

The original vampire represented societal ills -- literally. All vampires originally were blamed for some
sort of sickness, harm, or death. The legends already discussed came mostly from folklore, oral tradition that has no founder, just memories of stories told at father’s knee. That makes the stories more or less timeless and their origins, it is safe to say, before science. People did not have the answers to all of the occurrences they observed. They did not know about germs, or how disease is spread. Here was a gap in knowledge, and, in the words of Professor Daniel C. Scavone, "When knowledge is not available, superstition often prevails" (43).

There was one scientific observation that the superstition could be based on, though: some people died because they bled. So, if other people died for no obviously apparent reason, was it not possible, even logical, that something unseen stole their blood, their source of life?

Certainly religion could not immediately refute this idea. Pagan religions adopted this model into their mythologies without much trouble, as we see with the African and Indian vampires. Vampires just became another breed of demon or god. Christianity did not immediately recognize the vampire as existing: the Catholic Church officially recognized these "agents of the devil" in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council of Catholic Church Leaders (Scavone 20). While doing so, the Church also established itself as the only authority strong enough to exterminate vampires, in an effort to draw its sheep closer to the fold.
However, the Catholic Church cannot claim to be completely free of vampiric tendencies itself. Indeed, any Christian religion that takes John 6:54 literally ("Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day") already has made the connection between blood and eternal life. Also, to believe in transubstantiation means to believe that you are actually drinking the blood of Christ at Communion. Though Freud was referring to Doppelgangers when he said in his essay on the uncanny, "From having been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death" (Freud 141), the same statement could be applied blood drinking. It is good to drink the blood of Christ, for you will be rewarded with eternal life. But if it is a vampire doing the drinking, death is sure to follow, or an eternal "undead" life that would be more of a curse than a blessing. This dichotomy between the vampire and the "blood drinking" vampire hunters has been a nagging question throughout the ages, and has been explored in some very interesting vampire literature. "Following the Way" by Alan Ryan, for example, has its main character discover why the Catholic Church has lasted so long while other strong institutions fell: the vampiric priests who run the Church are "ordained with the power of transforming ordinary wine into sacred blood, an endless supply for an endless lifetime" (572).

So, the creature is born and the belief is reinforced through popular belief and religious institutions. To get
back to the original idea behind the vampire -- disease -- it is helpful to look at what diseases have been blamed on vampires in history. Usually during the outbreak of a plague or the spread of some illness, vampires reappear in popular culture, whether they are blamed for the outbreak, as in the days before the Industrial Revolution, or serve as a metaphor for the specific disease, as in the AIDS epidemic or the turn-of-the-century concern about syphilis.

Before modern medicine, microscopes, and the today's stress on hygiene, people did not understand diseases, know how to treat them, or discover how to prevent them. People who suffered from tuberculosis, porphyria, or "the plague" found vampires blamed for their condition, or were accused of being vampires themselves. In the words of Susan Sontag, "Illness is the night-side of life" (Illness 3). It is only fitting that the ultimate creature of the night represents the draining diseases which ushered people to the prolonged sleep of death.

Tuberculosis, or consumption, was one disease which encouraged identification with the vampire because of its symptoms. Progressive emaciation, coughing, languidness, and fever were exhibited by TB victims, and the dramatic trademark of the bloodstained handkerchief could easily lead onlookers to attribute the victim's condition to repeated visits by a life-stealing vampire. Dickens describes the condition most vividly in Nicholas Nickleby, when he calls TB the "disease in which death and life are so strangely
blended, that death takes the glow and hue of life, and life the gaunt and grisly form of death" (qtd. in Sontag *Illness* 18). If a TB victim died, and other people in the town started to die, the original TB victim was often accused of being a vampire. The body would then be disinterred and dealt with accordingly. These "TB vampires" are especially prevalent in early New England folklore. Take, for example, the story of a pre-Revolutionary Rhode Island farmer. Farmer Stukeley had fourteen children, the eldest of which, Sarah, had died of TB. Soon after her death, five other children in the family got sick and died, complaining of visits from their dead sister. When yet another child got sick, Stukeley dug up the bodies of his already dead children. The five who had most recently died were in the normal state of decomposition. Sarah, however, "the longest dead, lay with her eyes open and had red blood in her heart" (Brown 1). Sarah's heart was removed and her body burned. Her seven remaining siblings lived (Brown 1). In reality, it is highly doubtful that Sarah was a vampire responsible for her siblings' deaths. Ascribing these victims vampire status gave the New Englanders a way to combat a disease they otherwise felt helpless against (Brown 1).

Another disease, porphyria, has served as a modern scientific explanation for both werewolves and vampires. Sometimes called the "vampire disease," it is easy to see how a connection was made between the illness and the legend. Porphyria (the name derived from the Greek word for
purple, since victims of the disease pass purple urine) is a rare hereditary blood disease which renders the body unable to produce heme, a component of hemoglobin (Bunson 210). Symptoms include extreme sensitivity to sunlight, excessive hairiness, lack of pigmentation, chemical imbalances, sensitivity to garlic (which stimulates heme production in healthy people; in porphyria victims, it intensifies the symptoms), and other potentially severe conditions. In severe cases, exposure to sunlight causes sores and scars on the skin or even makes fingers and noses fall off. And, most damning for the victim, the skin of the gums and lips would, in some cases, tighten and stretch, giving the teeth a fanglike appearance (Scavone 56).

Dr. David Dolphin, a professor of chemistry at the University of British Columbia, hypothesized in 1985 that porphyria was the cause of the spread of the vampire legend in the Middle Ages. Porphyria victims' symptoms fit the vampiric description and made them look undead, he contended. Also, even though the disease is a blood disorder and therefore cannot be directly "passed on" to bite victims, Dolphin argued that sometimes symptoms of the disease would not appear until stress triggered their manifestation. Being attacked and having one's blood sucked by a relative, he said, would be sufficiently stressful to make the dormant disease active (Seligmann and Katz 72). The theory, needless to say, caused a lot of controversy. One of the biggest bones scientists had to pick with Dolphin
was the contention that porphyria victims felt compelled to drink blood. Though they agree that today the introduction of blood into the porphyria victim's system provides relief, then it was not known that porphyria was a blood disorder. It is unclear whether or not victims were driven by the omniscient subconscious to try to ingest blood healthier than theirs (Bunson 70). Whether it was the main cause of vampire scares in the middle ages or one of many diseases labeled vampiric, porphria fanned the flame of vampire lore.

Plagues in general began talk of vampires for two reasons. First, the original victim of a plague was said to be a vampire, who after death would appear to future victims and infect them. This is more legend than truth and has been covered in other sections of this paper. Plagues also sprouted vampires because people dealing with plagues, on more than one occasion, planted victims too soon. In other words, people who fell victim to the plague were often assumed dead before they actually were and got sent to the cemetery without much of an investigation. Then, if the person did manage to escape the confines of tomb or grave, his or her reappearance inspired "terror, revulsion, and hysteria, and (the victims) were called vampires come back to prey upon the living" (Bunson 211).

This phenomenon was not limited to plagues. Catalepsy -- the condition in which victims are alive but their breathing, pulse, and vital signs are so slow even a trained doctor has a hard time telling whether or not they are dead
-- leads to premature burial, too. Even as late as the early twentieth century, over fifty cases of premature burial a year were reported in the United States alone (Scavone 54). Since exhumations were fairly common, the discovery of a body that was obviously not dead when buried (if the inside of the coffin was damaged, or the body contorted) added fuel to the fire. Obviously, the body had escaped the confines of the grave, and of course, any blood was that of the "vampire's" latest victim (Scavone 55).

The parallel between vampires and disease exists even today. The modern disease or condition most closely related to vampirism that has sparked a new outpouring of vampire literature, movies, and general imagery, unfortunately, is AIDS.

Notes one critic:

One reason for the recent resurgence of the vampire genre is the AIDS epidemic, which reinforces the time-honoured connections between blood, sex, and death. The link between vampirism and AIDS may not be explicit -- indeed, it is often best left unsaid. AIDS victims, after all, are meant to be pitied, vampires to be feared ("Goblins" 115).

Vampires and AIDS do run parallel; vampires usually pass on their vampiric condition to those they bite/penetrate, and AIDS victims usually pass on the disease through penetration, either of the sexual kind or through an
infected needle. The distinction this anonymous author makes (AIDS victims to be pitied, vampires to be feared) is not one that really needs to be made, because it is a distinction that does not always hold true. AIDS victims are often (unjustly) feared, and today's vampires are often made out to be very sympathetic characters. Anne Rice's character Louis is one such reluctant vampire. He is tortured by his vampiric identity, forced upon him by the decidedly unrepentant Lestat, and sulks while Lestat revels in the power his vampire qualities afford him. Peter Mansfield, the main character in the excellent novel by Marc Lovell titled An Enquiry Into the Existence of Vampires, is a vampire, searching the world for someone like him. He has even written a book about how vampires are really just misunderstood disease victims. Even in traditional vampire stories, like Dracula, victims are unwilling: they turn into vampires because vampires caused their deaths, not as a result of a conscious choice on their part. Lucy Westenra turned into a vampire after her death as a result of Dracula biting her while she was in a trance. As editor Leonard Wolf notes in The Essential Dracula, Lucy is made less evil because her will was not involved in her conversion (246).

The similarities do not end there. Both "diseases" are nondiscriminating: people contract them by being in the wrong place at the wrong time, allowing the wrong person to penetrate or being the victim of a forced penetration. AIDS patients often linger on in life in a death-like state,
while vampires linger on in death in a life-like state. As Andrea King, reporter for the *Hollywood Reporter*, says, "You cannot ignore the connection to AIDS" (qtd. in Piccoli 46). Screenwriter and co-producer of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* Jim Hart seconds the motion: "The AIDS virus is absolutely a vampire disease. A vampire infects your blood: your blood dies. And in order to survive, you need new blood" (Winer 172).

Disease is not the only evil of society vampires have served to represent. By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, eroticized death, in the form of deadly kisses, was being used more and more frequently by playwrights in English theatre as a device of social and political commentary (Eaton 1). From there, it was not too much of a stretch to have vampires bestowing the deadly kisses themselves, though they did not appear so much on the stage as in rumor and literature. Elements of society -- first politics, then economics, and then the layers of society itself -- became identified with and represented by the vampire by the eighteenth century and ever since.

Political and economic woes are two interrelated institutions which have conjured up images of consuming and victimization, and thus have invited comparisons to the ever hungry, ever leeching vampire. Take this eighteenth century condemnation from Voltaire:

One does not hear talk of vampires in London, nor even Paris,...(yet) in these two cities there are money-speculators, tax-stealers, businessmen who
suck the blood of the people in full daylight; but they are not dead at all -- though corrupt...The true vampires are the monks who eat at the expense of the king and the people (qtd. in Wolf, *Dream* 136).

Also in that century, more specifically 1732, in retaliation for both the vampire hysteria gripping the nation and the usual grumbling about the government, a satire was printed in *Gentleman's Magazine*. The author described the penchant of this governmental vampire to drain the blood of "the Body Politick" (qtd. in Bunson 206). Even Karl Marx jumped aboard the vampire train, claiming, "Capital is dead labour that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks" (qtd. in Leatherdale 216).

The comparison between governments, businessmen, and vampires has carried through the present and will certainly continue. An article on modern Bucharest called "Vampire City" by Simon Sebag Montefiore draws parallels with vampires and the political side of the city. The country's national hero, Vlad Tepes, is called "a Romanian George Washington with sadistic tendencies," and their recently deposed ruler Nicolas Ceausescu "the idiot vampire" (14). Montefiore quotes a Romanian woman, who says, "The best capitalists were the best Communists. These are real vampires, but very clever" (15).

Literature also reflects these different slants on the
aristocrat, and was modeled after a real-life person in retaliation for slights against the lower-class author. Polidori based his vampyre character, Lord Ruthven, on George Gordon, Lord Byron, partially out of spite because of Byron's shabby treatment of him. Ruthven is good looking, circulates in the elite circles of the ton, and is rather deadly but is not suspected as being so. Ruthven ends up exploiting the younger, naive, and good-intentioned Aubrey, eventually killing Aubrey's sister and indirectly causing the death of Aubrey himself. "Good Lady Ducayne" by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, is another story of a very upper class lady, who drains the life from her earnest but lower class companion Bella. Immediately in the story the line is drawn between upper and lower class when the employment agent who finds this job for Bella snaps, "My connection lies chiefly in the aristocracy, and in that class considerable deference is expected" (139). It must be noted that both of these writers were from Great Britain, and wrote these stories in the Victorian period, a time and country notorious for its strict and distinctive class divisions. Using vampires as the antagonists in these stories allowed the writers to make indirect social criticism.

But, this equation also works the other way around. Upper class people have cast social inferiors as vampires in stories to make their own points. In Pat Cadigan's story "Home by the Sea," the setting of the story is the end of the world as we know it, Armageddon. This is a time when
the "meek shall inherit the earth," according to the Bible. The "meek," at least in this story, turn out to be the vampires, who can keep people "alive" (or as close to the form they took before Armageddon as possible) through their symbiotic blood-sharing relationship with humans. Vampires have been a group that have been discriminated against for a long time. When everything is leveled, when everything that previously held value was destroyed, they are the ones that have the power to save the human race, according to the author.

In They Thirst, a novel by Robert R. McCammon, the vampires fought by the book's protagonists are not exactly the suave, evilly polite upper class vampires we see in other stories. Though the king vampire, Prince Vulcan, is an aristocrat by lineage, he acts like a punk kid. The rest of the prominent vampires are noticeably taken from the lower segments of society. He converts as his main henchmen tough and ruthless men, like the murderous biker Kobra. Kobra, in turn, starts a chain of conversion in East L.A. What a nightmare; the citizens of one of the most downtrodden sections of a U.S. city are suddenly empowered! Prince Vulcan, on his part, chooses his upper class vampires for the power they wield: a man who has made his fortune through the construction of coffins, a rich and beautiful real estate agent. But these people have no power as vampires beyond the influence they had in life, which made them targets in the first place. Even the protagonists, the
people who end up saving Los Angeles, are from the lower half of the middle class. A young boy, a policeman, a tabloid reporter, a Vietnam veteran who lives in the sewer system, a barrio priest, and a rising star comedian who had made it big but whose origins were humble are the ones who have what it takes to stop the advance of the vampire. This makes for even worse of a nightmare for the upper class: they cannot even save themselves. The upper class is finally rendered powerless by the lower class, and it takes the middle class to save the city.

So, vampires serve to represent institutional evils, be the institution political, economic, or social. In doing so, the vampire can help bring humans together, at least for a while, by giving them a common enemy. A real life outbreak of vampire attacks can help illustrate this idea. In eighteenth century Europe, according to vampirologist Anthony Masters, the belief in vampires was stronger than ever (243). This was also a time of political, economic, and social friction. Economically, the gap was widening between rich and poor, which in turn was emphasizing class differences. Governments were not doing much to help the situation, as they were dominated by the upper classes, who tended to want to preserve the status quo. This caused the beginning of a lot of friction between the upper and lower classes. However, a revolution is a big undertaking, and the people were not quite ready to take the chance on revolt quite yet. What to do? Find another enemy, an acceptable diversion for anger and aggression.
CONCLUSION

Vampires are popular because, of all the monsters, they're the most dangerous, the most human. Their habitat is night, and you can't tell who's a vampire and who's not. Everyone loves the vicarious danger.

- Charles L. Grant

Vampires. They have explained our fears without being explained. They have been banished to the land of myth but we still feel the danger. They are dark and mysterious and live on the outskirts of our culture's mentality.

There, in the shadows, they take on many shapes. When they first appeared, as an explanation for disease, vampires took on fantastic shapes and performed incredible feats. Into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they hung onto their identification with disease, but began to be applied to the more metaphorical diseases of society, like greed and corrupt politics. When individualism and science reigned in the nineteenth century, the vampire began to change its form. It was looking more and more human, and with its camouflage, it was all the more dangerous. It even began to leave blood alone to feed on the mind or the lifeforce itself.

Then the vampire found its greatest role of all: the portrayal of us, our desires, our needs, our wants that we
could not express without guilt. Those wants and needs and the freedom the vampire had in expressing them proved very seductive. Humans began to seek out vampires not for destruction, but for conversion, or at least catharsis. The more and more we see of the vampire, and the more and more tolerant and informed our society gets, the more and more sympathetic a character the vampire becomes. What had started off as humankind's worst nightmare has been metamorphasizing into an darkly attractive but dangerous creature, and in some cases, a hero. The vampire is still danger, though, is still chance, is still consuming, is still dark mysticism and evil tendencies.

What gets overlooked in all of the dark gothic mystery is that, however dangerous and parasitic we try to make vampires out to be, they were created and still exist for our own good. Not only that, but they have evolved with our society, to continue handling the dirty job of representing all we find frightening, as well as the dark side of power and the seduction, the desires, and the animal instincts within us we do not want to face head on. The vampire has come to mean all this, and more.

So, the crosses, the garlic, the holy water are all in vain. We have already invited the vampire to cross the threshold, and he is here to stay.


Frankel, Martha. "Interview With the Author of Interview With the Vampire." Movieline January/February 1994: 58+.


