

SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE: UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF AN
ICON IN POPULAR CULTURE

HONORS THESIS

Presented to the Honors Committee of

Texas State University San-Marcos

In Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements

For Graduation in the Mitte Honors Program

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Introduction

Although the vampire has been a feared figure in mythology from early civilization up to the modern age, it is the publication of Bram Stoker's Dracula that infused the symbolism of the vampire into the soul of popular culture. Indeed, since the publication of Dracula the book has been printed in almost every language and hundreds of adaptations have appeared in film. The vampire also owes much of its genuine acceptance and popularity to Anne Rice's series, The Vampire Chronicles, which are written from the vampires' perspectives and wherein the vampires share their points of view. Since the publication of Rice's Chronicles, the myth has become so popular in Western society that a subculture of vampire enthusiasts spans from fans of vampire fiction and film to those who claim to be *real* vampires (The Secret Lives of Vampires). How can it be that something that should provoke fear and repulsion is now an icon of popular culture?

Scholars, most predominantly Joseph Campbell, suggest as one explanation that it is the very nature of mythology to *evolve* as humankind and civilization advances. Archetypes and symbolic imagery in mythology evolve to meet a society's need for an internal understanding of their external environment (Morong 363-364; Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces 255). Today, moral values are heavily debated and communities are equally divided on moral policy. In the midst of ambiguity, mythology guides an individual in being a "part of a community of shared values," and it helps an individual to follow a path toward self-actualization and toward true happiness (Morong 363). In particular, this is what the "hero's journey" (364) that appears in many stories of myth represents (Morong 364).

Historically, the vampire's dark appeal as a favorite figure of myth is closely tied to a rise in social anxiety which occurs as paradigm shifts occur within a given culture. Dracula, for example, was written and published toward the end of the Industrial Revolution and just before the

beginning of the Twentieth Century. Victorian London, at this time, is dark and soot covered, the streets are over-crowded, villains like Jack the Ripper haunt the shadows, a syphilis epidemic is indiscriminate of class as it ravages its victims, and scholars and politicians are in perpetual debate with regard to science and morality. Likewise, Interview with a Vampire was written and published after the Sexual Revolution of the Sixties and early Seventies. America, in 1976, is dark and brooding from the loss of Vietnam and the scandal of Watergate, villains like Charles Mason and Son of Sam haunt the shadows of two different coastal cities, an unknown disease (which would come to be known as AIDS later, during the early Eighties) is again indiscriminate of class as it slowly begins to ravage its victims, and scholars and politicians continue to be in perpetual debate with regard to science and morality (The Secret Lives of Vampires).

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the historic transformations of the vampire and to present an explanation as to why the vampire has evolved within mythology, changing from feared villain to dark hero in the stories of popular culture. Presented first, is a brief history of the vampire's cultural transformations including, a discussion of Romania's influence on the Western variant of the vampire myth. An overview of the vampire in early Gothic literature follows next, which shows the Victorian's influence on the image of the vampire in modern fiction. At last, a discussion of Bram Stoker's novel, Dracula, and Anne Rice's series, The Vampire Chronicles, viewed from the psychological perspectives of Freud and Jung, provides an explanation for the vampire's moral rise from feared villain of mythology to a dark hero of modern fiction and its continuing popularity as an icon of popular culture.

An Explanation of Myth

To fully understand the vampire's evolution from absolute villain to dark hero it is important to understand the role of myth within the consciousness of humanity. In Dracula, Dr.

Van Helsing is banding the novel's group of heroes, The Crew of Light, against a "myster[y] at which men can only guess..." (Stoker 217). The mystery, he reveals, is a vampire. It is a completely uncivilized corruption of morality and must be stopped. But what, in fact, is a vampire? It is a myth, but, however, it is important to note that myth is not necessarily "make-believe" (Campbell, *Thou Art That* 1-2). In *Thou Art That*, Joseph Campbell causally defines myth as, "other people's religion" (8). He also explains that myth is a metaphor. Drawing from Jungian psychology, Campbell says that myth is a product of a collective human psyche. Myth is the science of its time, an attempt to understand a complex and constantly changing world. To be more concrete, "A whole mythology is an organization of symbolic images and narratives, metaphorical of the possibilities of human experience and the fulfillment of a given culture at a given time" (2). The metaphor, in this case, the vampire of Bram Stoker's novel, is a myth that has changed and evolved with civilization as consciousness has advanced through time.

Transformations of the Vampire Myth

Cult author, Konstantinos, in the book *Vampires: The Occult Truth*, traces a summary of the evolution of the vampire myth as it develops into the romantic and sexually taboo image found in current western culture. Scholars vary on the dates that society began to organize in the Mesopotamian "cradle of civilization," but it is the ancient city of Sumer that provides evidence of early beliefs in the vampire (4000 B.C.E–3100B.C.E., Konstantinos 17). The Sumerians believed in the existence of evil, demons, and powerful, dark, and destructive deities. One of the most prominent in Sumerian mythology is a ghost-like demon, the *ekimmu*. If an individual dies violently or is improperly buried they become an *ekimmu* and is doomed to haunt the earth in search of victims (18). The *uruku* (also spelled *utukku*) of Sumer, however, is demon that is described as a "vampyre which attacks man" (19). Konstantinos also quotes part of a passage from

a Sumerian banishment incantation, which was taken from E. Campbell Thompson's, The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia that describes the evil deeds and vampiric activity of the Seven

Demons:

Demons that have no shame,

Seven are they!

Knowing no care...

Knowing no mercy,

They rage against mankind:

They spill their blood like rain,

Devouring their flesh [and] (sic) sucking their veins.

Where the images of the gods are, there they quake...

Ceaselessly devouring blood.

Invoke the ban against them,

That they no more return to this neighborhood... (Konstantinos 19)

The next evidence of a vampire myth appears in a region in Northern India. The Indus River Valley (3000 B.C.E.–2800 B.C.E., Konstantinos 23) began to advance at almost the same time period as Sumer. In this new culture the first beliefs in a vampiric deity appear with the goddess, *Kali*, who is said to have drunk the blood of the demon, *Raktavija*, to defeat him in battle. She is often seen covered in blood, with her fangs evident and her tongue out, signifying her desire to drink the blood of those offered to her in sacrifice (23-24). Later in Indian theology, The Tibetan Book of the Dead relates the deeds of 58 vampiric deities (Konstantinos 25).

Blood drinking creatures are found in Asian mythos as well. In ancient China, for example, there is the *chiang-shih* which is a creature of the night that is said “to tear its victims apart and

feed upon them” (26). Curiously, an adaptation of this blood drinking creature is also found in Australian mythos. The aboriginal tribes describe the *yara-ma-yha-who* which is a small creature that would jump upon its prey from the branches of a fig tree and suck their blood using its suction-cup shaped fingers (27). Another version is found in Africa, the *obayifo*, which, according to the tradition, is a witch that gains her power by sucking the blood of her sleeping victim (27). Another African vampiric creature is the *asasabonsam*, which is like the aboriginal *yara-ma-yha-who* in that it also ambushes its victim from above, hiding in the branches of trees the *yara-ma-yha-who* jumps upon its unsuspecting victim. However, rather than draining its victim of blood by using suction cupped fingers, like *yara-ma-yha-who*, the *asasabonsam* attacks using its “ferocious iron teeth” (27).

Greek mythology also includes a vampire, *Lamia*. According to the tradition, *Lamia*, the beautiful queen of Libya, is a vampire that drinks the blood of Greek children because the goddess Hera killed all of the children that *Lamia* and Zeus created in their adultery. The Greeks also provide the *vrykolakas*, which preys upon its friends and relatives and is created when an individual dies violently or is not buried according to ritual, as in the case of an individual’s excommunication (30). Konstantinos shares an early twentieth century story from this region, “The Vrykolakas of Pyrgos:”

E.’s mother, who we shall call M., was approximately twenty-one years old when the following incident occurred (circa 1922)...in the village of Pyrgos, which is located on the western shore of the Peloponnesus in Greece...in the 1920s it was just a small farming village. Like many other small farming villages, Pyrgos was a place where everyone knew everyone else...

One particular farmer (name unknown) in the village of Pyrgos was apparently suffering from...depression in the year 1922; he began drinking a lot toward the end of the last harvest...

One evening... [a friend found him hanging from a tree]...The wife's grief at learning of her husband's death was made worse when she spoke to the priest of the village about it the next day. He told her what she already knew, but refused to accept: As one who has committed suicide, her husband was to be 'buried in unconsecrated ground, without the burial prayers,' and was to be considered excommunicated from the Greek Orthodox Church...

For the next two months the woman was in mourning and kept to herself most of the time...After the same two month period, a strange plague appeared in the town. Within a week, eight people were forced to remain in bed due to 'loss of strength,' and two died. Nervous villagers commented on how the ill claimed to have been 'shaken' and bitten by something in their beds at night... [When the widow learned of the plague] she broke down and replied, terrified [to a female friend], that her husband had returned to her late every night and had 'lain with her' until the morning hours for the entire past week. The shocked woman begged the widow to go to the priest and tell him...The priest immediately gathered some men from the village to go with him to the grave of the vrykolakas outside the cemetery...the women were not allowed to go near the site...

[What the men found was that] The young man had been buried for two months, and appeared 'shriveled hardened,' as if he were a skeleton with only a thin layer of 'wrinkled flesh.' However, there was something about the thing that made

the men very uneasy. 'Even the priest could not touch the thing for a great length of time' ...

But when they opened the creature's chest, the men became frightened. Inside it, they found 'melted' remains, and a completely preserved heart 'that was beating still!' ...the priest took out a small bottle of holy water... 'the heart began to melt' ...[the remains of the vrykolakas were burned]...

Things in the village were quiet for the next two months [until the widow confessed] 'she was pregnant with the vrykolakas' baby!' ...

When she finally gave birth, almost a year after her husband's death, it was clear...exactly what happened. [Everyone understood what the widow meant when she said,] that her husband had 'lain with her' every night for the week of his return.

The baby looked like the 'monster that was his father.' It died only seconds after being born, and the priest took it away from its mother to take certain precautions before burying it. After that, the town was once again at peace...

(Konstantinos 52-57)

From Greece the vampire myth crosses easily into Bulgaria and becoming the *vampir* (or *ubour*, depending upon regional dialects) which is similar to the *vrykolakas* in that it is believed that an individual will become a vampire if they die violently, if the individual is excommunicated, or if the individual is improperly buried. The Bulgarian myth also presents the first evidence of a designated vampire hunter, the *vampiradzhija* (30).

At last, the vampire myth travels northward into the countries of Hungary and other Eastern European countries. The *strigoi morti* is an immortal blood-drinker that rises from the dead to drink the blood of its victims and is created by the traditional means of improper burial. *Nosferatu*,

is another name for vampire in this region and, like the *vrykolakas*, the *nosferatu* is a vampire that haunts a victim's bedroom and is able to have sex with the living (31). Konstantinos recalls a case documented during the eighteenth century in a Serbian region that later became Hungary:

The incident took place in the village of Kisilova around the mid-1720s...Peter Plojojowitz, the alleged vampire, died (it's not clear of what) and was buried. He was in his grave for about ten weeks when the villagers reported seeing him at night. They claimed that he came to them while they were in their beds and attacked them (it is Plojojowitz's alleged materializations in the houses of others that made him a phantom-like vampire). Some of the victims indicated that the vampire suffocated them. Overall nine people died within a week.

The general panic worsened when Plojojowitz's wife claimed to have seen her husband. She said that he came to her asking her for his shoes (it was a common belief in Europe that vampires desired certain earthly possessions). The woman was so terrified by the encounter that she left the village. After that, the people decided to exhume Plojojowitz's body to dispose of him as a threat once and for all.

The Imperial Provisor who reported the incident was at first against the idea of the vampire hunt, but he saw that the people could not be discouraged. So he and the parish priest went to the graveyard. When the body was exhumed, the first thing they noticed was that it was odor-free. They also noticed that the body was not decomposed and was whole, except for the nose, which had fallen away, and new skin was growing. The same was true for his nails. Finally, there was blood flowing from his mouth.

To destroy the body, the traditional stake was used. When it was driven through the ‘vampire,’ plenty of blood issued from the body. The body also displayed some ‘wild signs’ which were not made clear in the report. After staking, the body was burned and the village was no longer troubled. (Konstantinos 44-45)

In the 1730’s, a case of vampirism appears in Medvegia, Serbia. Records show that Austrian officials sent medical officers to investigate the claims that a series of deaths in the village was caused by a vampire. The vampire is reported to be Arnold Paole, who died after falling from a hay wagon. The villager’s report to the officials:

When they dug up his corpse, ‘they found that he was quite decayed, and that fresh blood had flowed from his eyes, nose, mouth, and ears; that the shirt, the covering, and the coffin were completely bloody; that the old nails on his hands and feet, along with the skin, had fallen off, and that new ones had grown; and since they saw from this that he was a true vampire, they drove a stake through his heart, according to their custom, whereby he gave an audible groan and bled copiously.

(Barber 76)

The Influence of a Romanian Prince: Vlad Dracula

Eastern European history plays an important role in the development and appeal of the modern vampire. Stoker writes, “I read that every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the center of some sort of imaginative whirlpool...”

(2). To date, some peasant populations of Romania continue to hold a solid belief in the *strigoi morti*. For example, in March of 2004, an article appeared in the Seattle Times describing how villagers in Marotinu de Sus believed the recently deceased Toma Petre to be a vampire. In accordance with Romanian vampire-slaying tradition, his relatives exhumed the body of Toma

Petre, cut out his heart and ate it. Petre's sister, Flora, asks, "What did we do?... If they're right, he was already dead. If we're right, we killed a vampire and saved three lives...Is that so wrong?" Romanian State Police, however, argue "vampires aren't real, and dead bodies in graves aren't to be dug out and killed again, even by relatives" (Schofield, par 3-4). The belief in vampires does seem superstitious when forensic pathology explains that "skin slippage,' oozing, blood-like fluids, a ruddy, bloated complexion, and even groaning (expulsion of air past the glottis when a corpse is moved or from pressing on the chest) are common with human decomposition" (Barber 77-80).

In Bram Stoker's Dracula, the Gothic Romance embraces Eastern European history and vampire lore, forever infusing western vampire fiction with the genre's essential characteristics. Basing the Count on Romania's legendary fifteenth century Prince, Vlad "the Impaler" Dracula, Stoker creates a frightful and believable villain that moves easily within the society it threatens. Not quite the Romanian, ruddy-faced, ghoulish, and smelly corpse recently risen from the grave, despite his unattractive description, the Count is civilized, to a degree; he's a nobleman and although he appears to be human, the Count has an element of creep about him that Van Helsing and The Crew of Light cannot abide. Stoker's vampire, like a sexual predator or a serial killer, is an unknown monster in plain view of the citizens of London:

I was looking at a very beautiful girl, in a big cart-wheel hat, sitting in a victoria [sic] outside Guiliano's, when I felt Jonathan clutch my arm so tight that he hurt me, and he said under his breath: "My God!" ...He was very pale, and his eyes seemed bulging out as, half in terror and half in amazement, he gazed at a tall, thin man, with a beaky nose and black moustache and pointed beard, who was also observing the pretty girl. He was looking at her so hard that he did not see either of us, and so I had a good view of him. His face was not a good face; it was hard, and

cruel, and sensual, and his big white teeth, that looked all the whiter because his lips were so red, were pointed like an animal's. Jonathan kept staring at him, till I was afraid he would notice. I feared he might take ill, he looked so fierce and nasty. I asked Jonathan why he was disturbed, and he answered, evidently thinking that I knew as much about it as he did: "Do you see who it is?"

"No dear, "I said, "I don't know him; who is it?" His answered seemed to shock and thrill me, for it was said as if he did not know that it was to me, Mina, to whom he was speaking—

"It is the man himself!"... "I believe it is the Count, but he has grown young. My God, if this be so! Oh, my God! my God! If only I knew! If only I knew..."
(Stoker 180-181)

In a quest, that began in 1969, to discover whether there is a historical basis to Dracula, Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu find conclusive evidence that proves that Bram Stoker based his vampire on a real man (3). In the novel, Van Helsing explains:

He must, indeed, have been Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk, over the great river on the very frontier of Turkey-land. If it be so, then was he no common man; for in that time, and for centuries after, he was spoken of as the cleverest and most cunning, as well as the bravest of the sons of the 'land beyond the forest.' (Stoker 254)

It is not by coincidence that Van Helsing's description of the Count is comparative to a dark hero of Eastern European History. Vlad the Impaler (or Vlad Tepes as he is locally known), a fifteenth century Romanian prince is the real Dracula. McNally and Florescu found legal documents in their research that record the signature of Vlad Tepes and they are signed, "Vlad

Dracula.” Stoker discovered the Romanian prince while researching his novel at a North Yorkshire library. His manuscript notes, which are housed at the Rosenbach Foundation in Philadelphia, show that the first name for Stoker’s vampire is, Count Vampyre; however, it is scratched out and replaced with Dracula. In the margins of one page of the original manuscript, the name *Dracula* is scribbled in three locations, as if Stoker were testing the name for creative impact (The Secret Lives of Vampires). “Dracul” in Romanian means, “devil” and it is also the word used for “dragon” (McNally and Florescu 9). In 1431, the Impaler’s father, also named Vlad, was given charge of the Order of the Dragon by the Holy Roman Emperor, Sigismund. The Order of the Dragon was a religious, military order devoted to fighting against the Turks. It is assumed that because the Impaler’s father flew dragon embroidered flags, the peasants considered this to be a sign of the devil and thus, he became Vlad Dracul, Vlad the Devil. It follows, therefore, that the Impaler would be considered, “Dracula,” “the son of the devil” (8-9).

The “son of the devil” certainly lived up to his name, both names: “Dracula,” and “Tepes,” which is Romanian for “the Impaler” (McNally and Florescu 9). While at war with the Turks, Dracula’s favorite measure of torture was impalement, however, it was also a favorite method of punishment that he dealt to those who were his subjects. Further, Vlad Dracula presents a sadistic sexuality in delivering punishment for moral crimes such as infidelity, which is often depicted as eroticism in modern vampire literature. McNally and Florescu write:

The extent of Dracula’s indignation against an unfaithful woman almost surpasses belief. Dracula ordered her sexual organs to be cut out. She was then skinned alive and displayed in public, her skin hanging separately from a pole in the middle of the marketplace. The same punishment was applied to maidens who did not keep their virginity, and to unchaste widows. In other instances, Dracula was known to

have nipples cut from women's breasts, or a red hot iron stake shoved through the vagina until the instrument emerged from the mouth. (91)

It is obvious by Romanian history that Vlad Dracula ruled his people with brutality, however, details of his civil dealings present, at least, some measure of rationality to his methodology. One famous incident where Vlad Dracula imposes an extreme measure of punishment upon his own people comes from an ancient Wallachian document which depicts the events surrounding the construction of Dracula's castle, Castle Arges. McNally and Florescu share:

So when Easter came, while all the citizens were feasting and the young ones were dancing, he surrounded and captured them. All those who were old he impaled, and strung them around the city; as for the young ones, together with their wives and children, he had them taken, just as they were, dressed up for Easter, to Poenari, where they were put to work until their clothes were all torn and they were left naked. (McNally and Florescu 69)

The story goes that soon after Dracula returned to power, after being held prisoner in the Turkish court he heard rumors that his brother, Mircea, had been buried alive. Dracula had the body exhumed and to his horror the body of Mircea was twisted, lying face down and his face held the ghastly grimace of suffocation. This enraged Dracula and his revenge was to teach the unfaithful boyars, his subjects and those who had given his brother over to such a fate, a lesson for all time.

At this time, Dracula wanted to build a new castle; and he wanted it to be closer to his home of Transylvania, high on the slopes of the Carpathians where he would have an advantage against the Turkish and Germanic forces competing for Romanian territory. He chose a location, Poenari, which is fifty-miles from the capital of Tirgoviste, and set his boyars to work: molding

bricks, and moving them across the river and up the steep mountain pass to a summit overlooking the valley of the Arges. After months of cruel labor Dracula's castle was completed. Castle Dracula is "a small mountain fortress of Byzantine and Serbian—rather than Teutonic—design" (McNally and Florescu 72) that, unfortunately, has been mostly destroyed by earthquakes over the centuries. Currently, all that remains of on the summit today is the crumbling remains of two of the castle's five towers (McNally and Florescu 72).

The horrific tales of Vlad Dracula's sadistic temper present a frightening and ruthless personality. It is important to note, however, that despite Vlad Dracula's horrific deeds he is remembered as a hero by the Romanian population. His skill in battle and suave political tactics—he married a Hungarian princess and converted to Catholicism to regain his country's throne—released Romania from Turkish occupation (McNally and Florescu 99). Further, his brutal tendencies restored order and morality where there was chaos: he had to eradicate traitorous boyars and deal with a starving peasant population. The Count is a mirror of Vlad Dracula's commanding and frightening demeanor. Both the Impaler and the Count seek control via the means of blood. Likewise, the vampires in today's fiction mirror the Count's predatory instincts, possess the same kind of primitive nature, and inspire the same sense of unease on the page or in film. However, today's vampires are more deadly. They blend with society even more so than Count Dracula; and, much like Vlad the Impaler, today's vampires are often seen as heroes for exercising their brutal tendencies toward negative forces.

The Victorians and the Romantic Influence on Modern Vampire Fiction

Presently there are two distinct images of the vampire. First, there is a traditional vampire from Eastern European mythology. Here superstition and magical thinking are central threads in the fabric of understanding. Today, in countries such as, Romania, much of population retains a

strong belief in the existence of vampires (The Secret Lives of Vampires). Here, the vampire remains as it has for hundreds of years, a disgusting, foul thing; it is an animated corpse returned to bring death to its living relatives (Barber 74). However, in Western European culture, a society where scientific reason and logic comprise the basis of understanding, the vampire has ironically evolved into something that is not only civilized, beautiful, and romantic, but it is also rebellious, sexually deviant, and extremely dangerous. The vampire, in modern fiction, often appears as a stimulating dark hero.

The Western variant of the vampire myth owes much of its creation to the Romantic authors and poets of early Victorian society, a time in which Gothic romance is flourishing as a genre. In 1816 Samuel Taylor Coleridge writes the first vampire poem of the era, Christabel, which is haunted by a vampire that pursues the blood of young girls. Also around this time, a group of young aristocrats including Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Lord Byron and his lover, Jane “Clair” Clairmont, and John Polodori hold a contest to see who could write the best ghost story. Mary Shelley’s contribution to the friendly challenge turns out to be the beginning of a masterpiece, Frankenstein, while Lord Byron’s contribution, a fragment of a poem, is later adapted by Polodori into The Vampyre, the first vampire novella in Romantic literature. The vampire here is seen as a creature more cunning than the primitive corpse of the traditional mythos. The story’s vampire, Lord Ruthven, is a Casanova preying on high society. It is said that Polodori based Lord Ruthven’s rakishness upon Lord Byron; Polodori was Byron’s personal physician (McNally and Florescu 141-145).

The next prominent Victorian vampire appears in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s Romantic horror, Carmilla. Carmilla is a tale of a female vampire’s, frightening and obsessive romantic

relationship with a young girl. Le Fanu's terrifying tale is thought to have influenced Bram Stoker in the creation of Dracula (McNally and Florescu 139).

Published late in the Romantic era, Dracula receives credit for developing much of the basic concept of the Western vampire myth and is a proven Gothic classic that continues to see numerous adaptations by modern artists. Like his predecessors, the Count in Stoker's novel is not the same kind of ghoulish cadaver that appears in the Eastern European myth. Indeed, they all manage to move through society with little suspicion until their true nature is revealed. Neither is Count Dracula the same kind of irresistibly attractive vampire—like Anne Rice's, Lestat—that appears in literature and film today. Rather, Stoker's vampire is quite a repulsive image:

His face was strong—a very strong—aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with loft domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man for his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

Hitherto, I had noticed the backs of his hands as they lay on his knees in the firelight, and they had seemed rather white and fine; but seeing them now close to me, I could not but notice they were rather coarse—broad, with squat fingers. Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and

fine, and cut to a sharp point. As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal. (Stoker 18-19)

These qualities of aristocrat and fiend evoke an image of the Count as the *other* that is to be feared. He is a stranger lurking in the bushes; the proverbial boogie man in the dark; that is to say, he is a bad man that should be avoided. However, vampires of modern fiction are not always the boogie man. Instead, vampires in modern fiction have evolved to become more like vigilantes than villains where their fiendishness remains intact, but, is used for good instead of evil.

For almost 30 years a renaissance of Gothic fiction has been underway in popular culture the vampire, now a favorite villain turned dark hero, continues to rise and haunt the shadows of gothic tales. To date, entering the word “vampire” in Yahoo’s search engine returns just over 20 million references that range in topics from vampire fiction and book reviews, to chat rooms and role-playing forums, to information on the vampire religion and lifestyle organizations, to online retailers and collectors of vampire merchandise and memorabilia, and, of course, vampire themed pornography. The vampire owes much of its success and popularity to the creative efforts of author Anne Rice. Prior to 1976, the vampire that haunts popular media holds a striking resemblance to the Count of Bram Stoker’s, Dracula: it is the *other* that threatens social normality. Indeed, by the time the mid-70s were in full swing, Dracula had appeared on stage and on the big screen numerous times. As an antagonist, a vampire, like the Count, drives the plot—it is the monster that is hunted. The vampire in Salem’s Lot, for example, a popular novel by Stephen King, is an imposing figure creating blood-crazed offspring with his bite. Anne Rice’s novel, Interview with a Vampire, however, changed the landscape of the Gothic genre, particularly with

consideration to vampire fiction. Rice approaches the myth from a different side of the story. Instead of placing the vampire in a secondary or antagonistic role to the living characters, the vampires in The Vampire Chronicles are the protagonists in the story (Benefiel 261).

Like the Count, despite his general unattractiveness, Anne Rice's vampires, on the surface, are civilized; however, their supernatural magnificence is compared to that of angels. They are so oddly beautiful that if they are not careful the vampires risk exposure. In New Orleans, where cultures and religions are so heavily mixed, and the hustle and bustle is round the clock, Rice's vampires blend into the shadows of streets. They move through society with seeming ease, concealing their supernatural powers, and charming their prey. They are sociopaths, stalking and killing their victims in plain view of New Orleans's high society; however, they prefer the blood of the evil-doer (Rice, The Vampire Lestat 242).

The depth and creativity of Anne Rice's stories, like Bram Stoker's tale, has been an inspiration to many contemporary writers. Throughout the 1980s and 90s bestselling authors across all genres found audiences enthralled with the vampire's dark embrace. Moreover, the vampire was no longer regulated to a bookstore's horror section. Romance novelists began to choose the vampire as their Byronic hero, weaving the vampire's bite into the steamy scenes that frequent the genre.

The vampire theme shows popularity in the new millennium as well. Numerous major motion pictures featuring a vampire in a leading role have been released: Dracula 2000, Dracula 3000, Blade II, Queen of the Damned (based on an Anne Rice novel by the same title), Underworld, Scooby Doo and the Legend of the Vampire, Van Helsing, League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, and Blade Trinity, to name a few. Plus, more novelists have included the vampire in their catalog. Take for example, Shannon Drake, a romance novelist, who successfully crossed

genres by writing a series of historical-thrillers featuring vampires as both protagonists and antagonists. Another example, *The Historian*, by Elizabeth Kostova, released earlier this year and featuring Vlad Dracula as the evil protagonist, is described by reviewers as a “runaway bestseller” (*Publisher’s Weekly* 58).

From this platform of popularity the vampire has become the icon of a subculture whose members range from film fanatics to role players who dress in long capes and have their teeth permanently altered into fangs. There are even those who claim to be *real* vampires; some only need the energy of others, while some need to drink blood. How is it that something that was once deemed evil and feared is now an iconic image in Western culture? What is it about the vampire that enthusiasts admire? An explanation appears in psychological burdens that arise from an era’s cultural expectations.

Perspectives of the Victorian and Modern Eras

“There are mysteries which men can only guess at, which age by age they may only solve in part” (Stoker 217). No truer words have ever been written with regard to consciousness and humankind’s quest to understand the world’s complexities. This brief sentence echoes a common debate often heard in the parlors of Bram Stoker’s Victorian European society and it is a debate that continues within social and academic circles today: When has scientific advancement gone too far—when does it become immoral; and, if science finds no evidence for something, does it exist? Or, is it only make-believe?

During the Victorian period the dialogs of philosophers such as Kant and Nietzsche are debated and scientists of Stoker’s time employ a strict empirical methodology where questions are answered by physical constructs—the objective, not the subjective, alone is considered worthy of examination; meanwhile, Deistic society members grapple with reconciling the advantages of

modern science with the complex issues of morality, the nature of man, the nature of God, and the nature of the soul and its questionable immortality. In the Forward to Richard Noll's book, Vampires, Werewolves & Demons: Twentieth Century Reports in the Psychiatric Literature, Dr. Raymond McNally writes:

It is, after all, rather significant that extensive outbreaks of the cases of vampirism rose historically not during the Dark Ages but precisely during the modern period of the Enlightenment. It often seems as if humans were breaking under the strain of too much rationality and the weight of too many so-call 'scientific' explanations.

(Forward X)

The Victorians felt oppressed by rigid moral standards and weighted social values. A rebellion of spirit is evident in the literature of the Romantics, specifically Gothic literature, and in the philosophy debated amongst the young, brilliant scholars, and the bohemian nobility, of the era. With official reports of vampire attacks frequenting Eighteenth Century news from Eastern Europe, the vampire easily found its way into early Victorian literature in the role of a villain that must be defeated—a threat to society's sense of normality that must be overthrown. In The Science of Vampires, Ann Ramsland points out the works of Elizabeth Miller (Reflections on Dracula, Dracula: The Shade and the Shadow, and Dracula: Sense and Nonsense) stating that with Dracula, Stoker “may have been tapping into the late-Victorian anxieties about the conflict between science—especially evolutionary theory—and religious faith. That both operate side by side in the novel and that both science and faith must be used to overcome Dracula suggests that the two are not incompatible” (9).

Likewise, the strains and weights of Victorian principalities continue in the modern period where political elections are won because of the candidates alleged “moral values;” and, where the

real issues of crime and poverty, and education and healthcare reform are left for, it is assumed, “faith based initiatives” to solve. Today politicians and religious leaders argue with scientists over the morality of stem cell research, and debate with the public on the morality of gay marriage and providing medical benefits for couples that live together but who are not married. It is evident that a rebellion of dark creativity continues against the suppression of rigid and weighted moral values with the success of the Gothic and Horror Genre in mainstream film and fiction. To gain further understanding of the vampire’s cultural symbolism it is important next to discuss the vampire’s significance as it corresponds to human psychology.

The Psychology of the Vampire: Freud’s Psychoanalytic Approach

Many scholars have molded the symbolic meaning of the vampire to fit a psychoanalytical model. In the immediate years prior to Dracula’s publication, a new area of study, psychology, gains respect as a science and medical doctors begin to practice in psychiatry. Psychiatric literature is in frequent circulation and a young Dr. Sigmund Freud is in the early stages of developing a new method of psychological treatment, later to become known as psychoanalysis. In Dracula, Stoker reveals a Victorian interest in the study of psychology through the diary of Dr. John Seward. In contemplation over the peculiarities of his patient, Mr. Renfield, and the direction of treatment he should take, Dr Seward asks, “Why not advance science in its most difficult and vital aspect—the knowledge of the brain” (75). Richard Noll contends, “Stoker’s Dracula is an extremely important work for two connections it makes that are essential to the understanding of the case histories of the clinical vampires of today: (1) the linkage of psychiatry and folklore, that is ‘insanity’ and vampirism; and (2) the fusion of sexual excitement and the drinking of blood” (10). Many Scholars view the dark sexual energy of the novel Dracula from a Freudian perspective, discussing the masterpiece in psychosexual terms, describing it as a Victorian sexual fantasy; a violent image of

the era's social and sexual taboos (Craft 107; Bentley 27). Often, Dracula is shaded as an Oedipal struggle and Freud's sexual symbolism is forced upon dark elements in the novel. Dracula, from a Freudian perspective, is an "interfusion of sexual desire and the fear of [Dracula's] 'red lips'" (Craft 107).

According to Freudian theory, behavior is a product of one's personality and personality is made up of three instincts: 1) id, which is driven by pleasure and wants immediate gratification of its needs which, according to Freud are sex and aggression, 2) ego, which is driven by reality and one's need for survival, and 3) superego, which is driven by moral perceptions that are influenced by an individual's parents and societal expectations (Sue, Sue, and Sue 44-45).

Count Dracula's erotic desire—the force that drives him; the goal of id—is oral pleasure, a taboo in Victorian sexuality. Sharing bodily fluids is an act between lovers that symbolically binds their hearts and minds. Sharing of blood is the deepest union of all, binding the lovers for eternity (McNally and Florescu 179). Just before the Count forces Mina to drink his blood he says "And you, their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin; my bountiful winepress for a while; and shall be later on my companion and my helper" (Stoker 304). The corruption of Lucy and Mina is a considerable insult to Van Helsing and The Crew of Light. In essence the Count possesses these women much more deeply than their lovers, Arthur and Jonathan.

Further, *Dracula* is seen as a Freudian struggle between the genders where power found within feminine sexuality must be suppressed and dominated by patriarchal society. As is the case of Lucy Westerna described by Ann Williams in The Art of Darkness, "Better that a woman be a pure, dead virgin, better that she lose her head and her heart than to remain a seductive, 'voluptuous wanton' and 'foul thing for all eternity'" (125). In the Victorian era this view of the

sexes is reinforced as Weiman and Dionisopoulos credit the work of Susan Lydon saying, due to the scientific limitations of the time, it was “concluded that because male sexual pleasure was necessary for reproduction and female pleasure was not, sexual pleasure was the sole providence of men” (Weiman and Dionisopoulos 34; Lyndon 202), effectively creating a sense of taboo surrounding female sexuality that still exists in present society. Quoting Judith Walkowitz’s explanation Weiman and Dionisopoulos suggest, “women...are bound imaginatively by a limited cultural repertoire, forced to reshape cultural meanings within certain parameters;” (Weiman and Dionisopoulos 34; Walkowitz 9) and this phenomena is reinforced within a culture by the retelling of the myth through assorted artistic media. Understanding, as Weiman and Dionisopoulos argue, that “media can play an important role in forming the individual and collective psyche of a culture,”(35) and recognizing that “the mass media can help create cultural myth and ritual by telling and retelling stories that reinforce common values, define what is normal and what is deviant, and make implicit social structures explicit” (Weiman and Dionisopoulos 35; Caputi and MacKenzie 70), it is easy to see how a concept such as the “double-standard” is maintained via the vehicle of mythology. The vampire in literature is the vehicle that perpetuates myths about the erotic desires of women. Its absolute otherness demands that society preserve the moral order of proper roles in human sexuality.

Christopher Craft suggests that the Victorian’s present an obvious anxiety over the existence of a flexibility within the gender roles of sexual relationships. Other literary works published during the late Victorian era, such as “In Memoriam” by Tennyson and “Calamus” by Whitman, also illustrate a society struggling to understand the concepts of feminine desire and male homoeroticism (112). In Dracula the symbols suggesting a patriarchal society’s fear of a world where men and women do not follow a strict set of rules with regard to sexual relationships

are evident. First, Count Dracula, an evil and sexually perverse force travels to England on the *Demeter*, a ship named after the female goddess of the harvest—Mother Nature. The ship arrives “As idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean” at the Whitby coast driven by the force of “One of the greatest and suddenest [sic] storms on record” (Stoker 80-81):

...masses of sea-fog came drifting inland—white, wet clouds, which swept by in ghostly fashion, so dank and damp and cold that it needed but little effort of imagination to think that the spirits of those lost at sea were touching their living brethren with the clammy hands of death, and many a one shuddered as the wreath of sea-mist swept by. (82)

Upon his arrival Dracula’s attacks Lucy first and then Mina, effectively changing their behavior from that which is traditionally accepted as becoming of women—demure, acquiescent, and most importantly, sexually unaware—to behaving in a manner that is more traditionally accepted as becoming of men—brave, defiant, and sexually desirous. The effects of the Count’s evil kiss changes Lucy from an innocent and virtuous Victorian girl into a vixen, desirous and hungry for her fiancé’s blood:

...Her breathing grew stertorous [sic], the mouth opened, and the pale gums, drawn back, made the teeth look longer and sharper than ever. In a sort of sleep-waking, vague, unconscious way she opened her eyes, which were now dull and hard at once, and said in a soft, *voluptuous voice*, such as I had never heard from her lips:—

“Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come back! Kiss me!” Arthur bent eagerly over to kiss her; but at that instant Van Helsing, who like me, had been startled by her voice, swooped upon him, and catching him by the neck with both

hands dragged him back with fury of strength which I never thought he could have possessed, and actually hurled him almost across the room...

I kept my eyes on Lucy, as did Van Helsing, and we saw a spasm as of *rage* flit like a shadow over her face; the sharp teeth champed together. Then her eyes closed and she breathed heavily. (Stoker 168-169, italics added)

After Lucy's death, her vampiric transformation is complete and she is an even more so removed from feminine propriety. Lucy's appetite for the blood of children adds to her perversion:

When Lucy—I call the thing that was before us Lucy because it bore her shape—saw us and drew back with an angry snarl, such as a cat gives when taken unawares; then her eyes ranged over us. Lucy's eyes in form and colour; but Lucy's eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew.....the face became wreathed with a voluptuous smile. Oh, God, how it made me shudder to see it! With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone. The child gave a sharp cry, and lay there moaning. There was a cold-bloodedness in the act which wrung a groan from Arthur; when she advanced to him with outstretched arms and a wanton smile he fell back and hid his face in his hands.

She still advanced, however, and with a languorous, voluptuous grace, said:—"Come to me Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms hunger for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!" (Stoker 223)

In contrast to Lucy's demise, Mina, despite her attack, acts as a flame within shadows. She represents hope for the Crew of Light that moral order is still within reach. As demonstrated by this dialog from Van Helsing:

And now for your Madam Mina, this night is the end until all be well. You are too precious to us to have such risk. When we part to-night, you no more question. We shall tell you in good time. We are men and are able to bear; but *you must be our star and our hope*, and we shall act all the more free that you are not in danger, such as we are. (Stoker 255, italics added)

As the "star" and "hope" for the Crew of Light, Mina remains resistant to the vampire's influence and abhors the vampiric desire for blood. Mina recalls the Count's final assault to the group:

...And oh, my God, my God, pity me! He placed his reeking lips upon my throat!... I felt my strength fading away, and I was in a half swoon. How long this horrible thing lasted I know not; but it seemed that a long time must have passed before he took his foul, awful, sneering mouth away. I saw it drip with fresh blood!...he pulled open his shirt, and with his long sharp nails opened a vein in his breast. When the blood began to spurt out, he took my hands in one of his, holding them tight, and with the other seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound, so that I must either suffocate or swallow some of the—Oh my God! my God! what have I done?...(Stoker 304)

Furthermore, Mina's character is describe by Van Helsing as, "...one of God's Women fashioned by His own hand to show men and other women that there is a heaven we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth"(198) and is noted for her bravery, something that is traditionally a description of male behavior, throughout the novel:

With sad hearts we came back to my house, where we found Mrs. Harker waiting us, with an appearance of cheerfulness which did honour [sic] to her *bravery* and unselfishness. (Stoker 325, italics added)

...we told Mrs. Harker everything which had passed; and although she grew snowy white at times when danger hand seemed to threaten her husband, and red at others when his devotion to her was manifested, she listened *bravely* and with calmness. (Stoker 326, italics added)

Before they retired the Professor fixed up the room against any coming of the Vampire, and assured Mrs. Harker that she might rest in peace. She tried to school herself to the belief, and, manifestly for her husband's sake, tried to seem content. It was a *brave* struggle; and was, I think and believe, not without its rewards. (Stoker 327, italics added)

At last, unconscious homosexual desires are also suggested in the symbolism of Bram Stoker's Dracula when viewed from a Freudian perspective. For example, in Kiss Me with those Blood Red Lips: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's Dracula, Christopher Craft implies that the vampire's repetitious desire for blood is suggestive of an unconscious homosexual desire where men are able to touch each other through partaking of the blood of women (128). This variant of "demonic or monstrous heterosexuality" is represented in the symbolism of the vampire's "kiss" (111) whereby the vampire's fangs are the penetrative force. Evidence for a hidden homoerotism in Dracula can be drawn from Jonathan Harker's account of his experience while residing at Dracula's castle in Transylvania. Jonathan is victim to three vampire women living in an area of

Dracula's castle. As he waits with eyes closed in "languorous ecstasy...with beating heart" (39) for one of the vixens to bite him, the Count arrives and in a rage exclaims: "How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I have forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me! Beware how you meddle with him, or you'll have to deal with me" (40).

The vampires bite is symbolic of sexual penetration for the victims in vampire fiction and blood is the vampires' resource for passionate pleasure. However, homoeroticism in Anne Rice's The Vampire Chronicles is closer to the surface of the story than in Bram Stoker's Dracula. In one example, Louis describes the moment Lestat changes him into a vampire:

...he lay down beside me now on the steps, his movement so graceful and so personal that at once it made me think of a lover. I recoiled. But he put his right arm around me and pulled me closer to his chest...I wanted to struggle, but he pressed so hard with his fingers that he held my entire prone body in check; and as soon as I stopped my abortive attempt at rebellion, he sank his teeth into my neck...I remember that the movement of his lips raised the hair all over my body, sent a shock of sensation through my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion...(Rice, Interview With a Vampire 18-19)

The Vampire Armand, in Queen of the Damned, and in his own story The Vampire Armand, tells of his relationships with both Daniel (the "interviewer" from Interview with a Vampire) and his maker, Marius. Armand is a mature vampire during his affair with Daniel where he is a voyeur in Daniel's bedroom and tortures him with the hope of the "dark gift." With Marius, Armand is a human boy that has been chosen by the vampire for his beauty:

...He opened his mouth and for a moment I saw the flash of something very wrong and dangerous, teeth such as a wolf might have. But these were gone, and

only his lips sucked at my throat, then at my shoulder. Only his lips sucked at the nipple as I sought too late to cover it.

I groaned for all this. I sank against him in the warm water, and his lips went down my chest to my belly. He sucked tenderly at the skin as if he were sucking up the salt and the heat from it, and even his forehead nudging my shoulder filled me with warm thrilling sensations. I put my arm around him, and when he found the sin itself, I felt it go off as if an arrow had been shot from it, and it were a crossbow;

I felt it go, this arrow, this thrust, and I cried out. (Rice, The Vampire Armand 32)

The Psychology of the Vampire: Jung's Analytic Approach

While it is instructive to view the symbolism of vampire mythology through the psychoanalytic lens an alternate rendering of the myth's meaning in popular culture is seen when considering it from the analytic perspective of Carl Jung. Jung held a more differentiated view of personality development and motivational drives than Freud. In particular, Jung believed Freud's theory gave too much credit to human sexuality as the primary influence on personality and that it did not give proper accreditation to the influence that society and culture has on the development of personality. While he maintained Freud's idea of conscious and unconscious mental processes, Jung believed there also to be a collective unconscious. According to the theory, the collective unconscious is a genetically inherited archive of all of humankind's experiences.

Further, Jung held that there are commonalities to being human. All people, for example, tend to live in groups and within each group each individual holds a unique role, varying cultures share similar notions of morality, and they share language and symbols that can be translated across cultures to have similar meaning (Griggs 246-247; Engler 74). Also held within the collective unconscious are "archetypes, or primordial images, myths, and evolutionary symbols

that provide individuals with wisdom about the past and predispose people to experience the world as their ancestors did” (Enns 127). Further, “there are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life; Endless repetition has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution” (Enns 127). A culture’s oral-traditions, along side print and film media, as earlier noted, serve as vehicles to perpetuate repetition of the vampire myth; likewise they carry forward the archetype of the vampire.

Jung felt that archetypes were particularly important to personality and behavioral development because they “represent different potential ways in which we may express our humanness” (Engler 74); they are guides that can lead an individual toward self-realization: “the fulfillment by oneself of one’s potential” (American Heritage Dictionary 620). According to Jung, archetypal aspects that influence an individual’s personality or behavioral tendencies are:

- a) The persona, which symbolizes the mask one wears to present a favorable impression of the self and to gain social acceptance;
- b) The shadow, which personifies the negative, antisocial, animalistic side of each person that must be tamed to avoid destructive behavior;
- c) The anima, which depicts the unconscious feminine side of the male psyche; and,
- d) The animus, which expresses the unconscious masculine side of the female psyche. (Enns 127)

According to Jung, emotional stability is gained only when the opposing archetypes—anima verses animus and persona verses shadow—within each individual are in harmony. The modern perspective of archetypes, at least from an analytical point of view, is that they are highly influential to our emotions and to our behavior. Archetypes, according to analytical theory, are also

influential in the development of personality. Enns writes that according to Jung, archetypes are very often found within cultural myths that are intended to be, “metaphors for how people act in real life” (Enns 127) and suggests that according to Bolen:

...archetypal heroes [or anti-hero, as in the case of the vampire] that appear in these stories serve as role models and help individuals expand their emotional repertoires. Archetypes are also seen as useful tools for diagnosing problems and understanding one’s struggle and endurance. They are seen as symbols that help people overcome adversity, reveal prescriptions for change ... and, encourage ordinary individuals to access the ‘hero within.’ (Enns 127)

Access to one’s inner problem solver, to one’s courage to create change, to that ‘inner hero’ is an appealing quality found in the modern vampire: Rice’s family of vampires drink from “the evil doer” (Ramsland, The Vampire Companion 130), Louis chooses to feed upon rats instead of feeding upon “mortals” (71), and Louis burns the *Théâtre des Vampires* in revenge for the deaths of Claudia and Madeline (Rice, Interview with a Vampire 309-312).

In The Power of Myth, with Bill Moyers, Joseph Campbell says that individuals are to “find what is the source of one’s own life, and [discover] what is the relationship of one’s body to [the] energy that animates it” (211). Part of the vampire’s appeal to society is based on the creatures seeming self-realization; the vampire represents a personality in harmony. The vampire’s mask is the human form. The Count, despite his odd and creepy physical form, is a nobleman. His title makes up for his waxy skin, pointed ears, and foul breath. He moves with ease in Victorian London. Louis and Lestat, plus all of the other vampires that haunt The Vampire Chronicles, are magnificent in their beauty. Their good looks and magical charm allows them to feed from Louisiana’s aristocracy without notice.

The shadow is the vampire's core personality. The Count, Louis and Lestat, and all vampires in fiction are driven by the demands of their shadow core. Blood is the vampire's ultimate desire; its passion; its social abnormality. Indeed, the vampire must literally have blood to survive and, therefore, blood is the vampire's eternal paradox. The vampire must curb its tendency toward immediate gratification—to satisfy its hunger—long enough to insure that it can do so without detection. The modern vampire reconciles its antisocial sanguine urges by drinking from a willing donor—lover—or from “the evil-doer,” as Lestat prefers, (Rice, The Vampire Lestat 424) thereby fulfilling its desire in harmony to the needs of persona.

With respect to Anima and Animus the vampire in fiction presents both sides of the gender spectrum equally, appealing to the modern notion of the androgynous ideal where both male and female tendencies of personality are realized (Engler 76). While the Count's feminine side is hidden in the shadows of Stoker's novel and appear, for the most part, as symbolic references to nature and in the erotic undertones of his attacks, Rice's vampires express their androgyny with candor. Candace Benefiel notes, “The male sexual penetration of the victim (with the phallic-substitute fangs) is followed by the more archetypal female nurturing of the victim, feeding him or her blood from the vampire's body” (262) and that “In the bulk of vampire fiction, a master vampire functions as father, mother, and husband, with other younger vampires and children/lovers” (263).

Indeed, Interview with a Vampire, in 1976, challenged traditional family structure decades before the current debates on the morality of gay marriage, and describes a dysfunctional family structure long before the term “dysfunctional” entered the language of popular culture. For example, in an attempt to keep Louis from leaving him Lestat gives a child, Claudia, the “dark gift” after Louis has fed upon her. Lestat explains their new family:

...She was not a child any longer, she was a vampire child. 'Now Louis was going to leave us, 'said Lestat, his eyes moving from my face to hers. 'He was going to go away. But now he's not. Because he wants to stay and take care of you and make you happy.' He looked at me. 'You're not going, are you Louis?'

'You bastard!' I whispered to him, 'You fiend!'

'Such language in front of your daughter,' he said.

'I'm not your daughter,' she said with the silvery voice. 'I'm my mamma's daughter.'

'No dear, not anymore,' he said to her. He glanced at the window, and then he shut the bedroom door behind us and turned the key in the lock. 'You're our daughter, Louis's daughter and my daughter, do you see? Now, whom should you sleep with? Louis or me?' And then looking at me he said, 'Perhaps you should sleep with Louis. After all, when I'm tired...I'm not so kind.' (Rice, Interview with a Vampire 94-94)

Taking into consideration the Women's Movement, this transition of extroverted androgyny in vampire fiction is a logical movement when comparing gender role stereotypes from the Nineteenth Century with those of the Twenty-first. Modern couples are almost forced to share domestic roles when both parties must bring in an income to support their family. Women have drawn from their inner animus to work effectively within the once male dominated work place, and men have drawn from their inner anima to nurture their children and care for their busy wives. The androgyny of Rice's vampires is a reflection of a challenging but necessary shift in gender roles faced by modern society.

Modern vampire fiction addresses other interfamilial relationships as well. Louis and Lestat, for example, are unhappy and their relationship is failing. Lestat is controlling, manipulative, and known for outward insensitivity and inner ruminations. Throughout The Vampire Chronicles, Lestat is commonly referred to as the “Brat Prince.” While Lestat relishes in the “dark gift,” Louis expresses humble regret for his own immortality. He is emotionally depressed and angry. Their “daughter,” Claudia, rages and rebels like a typical adolescent, yet the subject of dispute is more macabre than an ordinary family. Rice’s attention to details in the development of her characters makes them seem real, as if they, the vampires, really exist. It is easy to relate to these characters as they deal with the problems of “everyman.”

Concluding Discussion

Rice’s vampires, like the vampire in Stoker’s novel, are cultural mirrors of their time that evolve to reflect society, including its fears and fantasies. But, why has it transformed from a feared and repulsive figure in mythology into a dark hero in modern fiction? The answer is because modern society needs a dark hero, similar to Vlad Dracula in the history of Romania. Society needs the vampire in a world that is uncertain, that offers sexual double standards and strict ideals on the nature of love and family, and where violence is seemingly everywhere as it is broadcast in mass to the populace.

The vampire is a metaphor for the instinct of survival where sexuality leads to reproduction (a blood exchange with a vampire in modern fiction creates a new vampire) and where aggression is used for self preservation. Indeed, the vampire has conquered death by its very nature—the vampire is immortal. Historically, the vampire has appeared in a culture’s mythology predominately during time periods where social anxiety is on the rise. Likewise, in the new millennium—an age where the world is darkened by terrorism and war-mongering, where villains

like Dennis Lynn Rader (BTK Strangler) and Andrei Chikatilo haunt the shadows, where a pandemic of influenza is indiscriminant of class as it threatens the world populace, and where scholars and political leaders continue to heavily debate moral issues—it is no wonder that the shadow of the vampire rises to represent humanity’s dark instincts and remains a powerful icon in popular culture.

Further, the vampire, a creature of human likeness, is an outward expression of humankind’s most primitive—and most suppressed—instincts: sex and aggression. It is symbolic of dark energies hidden within the nature of humanity that society fears will be its own destruction. Blood, the shadow force of the vampire, represents passion—the passion that is found in love and the passion that is found in violence—which is the shadow force of humankind. The vampire as a dark hero is also a metaphor for the struggle with Eros and Thanatos in the human psyche as individuals attempt to fulfill their desire for passion, to know social acceptance, and to live in accordance with their conscience. In a society that is in perpetual debate over moral issues concerning ethics in scientific advancement, traditional family values, gay marriage, stem cell research, and the war on terror the vampire serves to remind humankind that in order to continue on a path toward survival, it is important to find harmony with all parts of humanity—especially the dark side.

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