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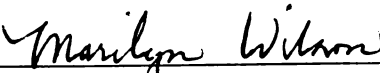
The Evolution of the Vampire in  
Adolescent Fiction

presented by

Gael Elyse Grossman

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in English

  
Major professor

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE VAMPIRE IN ADOLESCENT FICTION

By

Gael Elyse Grossman

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
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## ABSTRACT

### EVOLUTION OF THE VAMPIRE IN YOUNG ADULT FICTION

By

Gael Elyse Grossman

In this study I look at the history of the vampire in literature and its appearance in recent young adult novels in order to determine both the recent popularity of vampire characters and to explore this area of literature as a genre separate from horror or shock fiction. Young adult and adult readers of vampire fiction were also interviewed in order to ascertain their perceptions of the genre as well as their history as readers. In the interviews, non-directive interviewing techniques were used after a specific set of base questions so individualized clarifying questions were also asked.

In my analysis of the novels, I utilize some of the cultural codes developed by Linda Christian-Smith in order to study issues of power associated with gender, and I do a cultural critique of the vampire character in a variety of legends and literature.

My findings show that young adult fiction utilizing the vampire character has evolved from pure horror fiction to a more complex genre with well-defined and detailed characters and plots. Vampire fiction does not simply reinforce the

cultural codes of romance found in some other genres of young adult and adult fiction but in significant ways offers perspectives that move beyond established cultural codes. Although some of the codes of romance are upheld in some of the novels, for the most part both male and female characters are seen as empowered, and females in the novels are not tied to traditional codes. The codes dealing with female passivity and male dominance have been strongly challenged.

In my concluding chapter I discuss specific ways these codes are challenged in young adult vampire fiction; detail the information achieved through my interviews; suggest further studies needed to broaden the information gained from this study; and raise the question of responsible adults (parents, teachers, and librarians) becoming more involved with this type of literature.

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CHAPTER ONE  
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

I like reading stuff about vampires. Some people might think it weird but I like it. They're not simple creatures - they're complex. Some like people, others like killing people. A vampire could be friendly or nasty or anything like that...my older sister says there weren't many books about vampires when she wanted to read about them. She steals mine sometimes. As long as she's home it's fine, when she takes them back to college it pisses me off. (Iris -- young adult reader)

I first became interested in vampire fiction when I noticed a growing interest among students and friends in a role-playing game called Vampire the Masquerade. Much like Dungeons and Dragons did years earlier in the realm of heroic fantasy, this new game (under the auspices of the White Wolf gaming company) has individuals interacting in a game of "let's pretend," working with others to create elaborate fictional stories. I wondered why people were so interested in creating such elaborate vampire stories and wanted to know if this was going on in the publishing world as well. When I looked into it, I was surprised to see how many works of vampire fiction existed in both the adult and young adult market. On closer inspection, I found that the young adult books appeared to have some strong divergences

from the adult market. This began my research into the evolution of the vampire character in young adult fiction.

This chapter is divided into several sections to begin my exploration of the topic. First there is an overview and explanation of the project, followed by a review of the literature and related research. Then comes the organization and design of the study, concluding with a definition of the terms.

### **Introduction to the Project**

Writing in 1994, Ken Gelder, author of *Reading the Vampire*, stated, "Over the last twenty years, vampire fiction has opened itself up as it were, to operate on a grand scale" (124). One aspect of this subject is that of fiction intended for younger readers. Vampires have been showing up in many different adolescent and children's books, sometimes as main characters (*The Last Vampire* series), other times as supporting characters (*The Silver Kiss*) or even the "boogeyman in the closet": something never seen but influential in the ways the characters in the story react (*Uncle Vampire*).

Admittedly, many of the vampire character appearances are in collections like *Goosebumps*, *Fear Street*, and *Spooksville*. According to many in the field of adolescent and children's literature, these collections are known as



"shock fiction." Diane West, a reviewer of adolescent fiction, describes them as writing where "narrative exists solely to support a series of shocks occurring at absurdly frequent intervals. Push-button characters serve as disposable inserts to advance the narrative, shock to shock" (39). West discusses how this type of writing sends readers into a search for hormonal surges as their bodies go through the "fight-or-flight" phenomenon, an ongoing quest for increased physical stimulus (40).

Today's shock fiction bears a direct relationship to the "penny dreadfuls" of the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The purpose is to provide entertainment via an adrenalin rush. The readers get a physical reaction from what they are reading. Many of those penny dreadfuls have not survived, so too many of these works of shock fiction may not survive the next few decades outside of garage sales and twenty-five cent bins at used bookstores. Even though the genre itself has been around for a couple of centuries, it is just in the recent few decades, much like children's literature publication itself, that some have been written expressly for children and young adults.

It would be all too easy to put the various works of young adult vampire fiction into the same shock fiction grouping. However, many of the young adult works of vampire fiction do not rely simply on the simple adrenalin surges

that occur in shock fiction. Instead, the characters can be multi-dimensional, the stories complex, and the settings well-researched. While the thrills and shocks of young adult vampire fiction may draw many readers, only part of the genre of vampire fiction should be labeled as shock fiction. It is not always easy to distinguish completely between books of literary quality and those, that like shock fiction, don't seem to possess these qualities. Charlotte Huck's criteria for judging the quality of children's literature includes features of plot, setting, theme and characterization (17-22), which I use in chapter three to discuss the distinguishing characteristics of quality vampire fiction from mere shock fiction.

There are three major questions I considered as I looked at young adult vampire fiction: What type of literature is it? Why do young adults read it? What do readers bring to this type of writing and what do they take from it?

Although romance seems to be a major factor in the popularity of young vampire fiction, many readers may look to it for other elements. What might these elements be? What are their reasons for reading it? Since not all young adult readers focus only on young adult fiction, are adult vampire fiction works similar or different from the young adult vampire fiction? If a young adult reads one type, is it necessarily for the same reasons? Are the two types of

vampire characters the same or even similar? Do these two types of books regard society, the power structure, and the fantastical in the same ways?

Other questions I or others raised included: Did the readers of vampire fiction read other works? What genres were vampire fiction the most closely related to: romance, horror, or something else entirely? How easy or difficult was it to gain access to this type of literature? These are some of the questions addressed in this study. They are also some of the most important questions this study raised in how vampire fiction functions to critique or validate cultural assumptions. The idea that all adolescent vampire fiction is shock fiction is an overly-simplistic idea, and one that needs to be dismissed in order to see more clearly the variation and value in adolescent vampire fiction.

While some works of shock fiction may have vampires as characters, shock is not one of the overall defining qualities of young adult vampire fiction. Cosette Kies, writing for *Voice of Youth Advocates*, believes that some of the horror books being published for young adult audiences are well written, but are often "lost in the vast number of potboilers" (144). Some of the major defining qualities of vampire young adult fiction include: interaction between the supernatural and natural, rebellion against accepted social norms, and a new telling of old legends. Stock villains,

blood and gore, and even romance do not necessarily play a part in all young adult vampire fiction. Romance tends to be a common occurrence in many of the young adult vampire novels, but not all. The romance of the young adult vampire novels tends not to be as explicit or erotic as the adult counterparts. In recent years, in my experience of perusing books stores and new titles for a variety of young adult literature classes, it has seemed to me that there have been a growing number of young adult books which utilize vampires as characters. However, there has not been a matching amount of research on the subject.

### **Issues Related to Vampire Fiction for Young Adults**

There **has** been a large amount of scholarship done on vampire literature for adults. Margaret Carter, Greg Cox, Brian Frost, and James Twitchell are chief among those researchers. Some, such as James Twitchell, do not focus on current uses of vampires in fiction but on the vampire as subject of more canonical literature such as the Romantic period. However, research and identification of the vampire character in young adult fiction is sparse. Melton, a religion and folklore researcher, states:

It would appear that as of the mid-1990s, vampire juvenile literature is in the midst of healthy growth period. The immediate future should see the production of many new vampire titles for children and youth (345).

What he does not speak to is the lack of study of this type of literature. This project is an attempt to fill this gap. I intend to show the similarities and differences of the vampire characters of adolescent fiction from those of adult fiction as well as from those of historical vampire fiction. There are many different uses of the vampire as a character in young adult fiction. There are the typical horror-erotic vampires as seen in works by authors such as L.J. Smith, R.L. Stein, and Janice Harrell. There are also the young adult books where the erotic and sensual are ignored and the mystery/suspense theme is heightened instead. This type includes the babysitter-as-vampire series by Ann Hodgman and various books by Nancy Garden, Thomas McKean, and others. Vampire literature can be seen as a composite of horror, fantasy, mystery, and romance novels. Some of the books focus more on the idea of rebellion against authority and helping out friends, and the fact that some of these friends are vampires appears to be peripheral information at best. There also appears to be more strong female vampire characters in the young adult fiction than in the adult vampire fiction. Authors Christopher Pike and Jerry Piasecki both have the more powerful vampires in their stories as female, instead of the more typical male of the adult vampire fiction. Vivian Velde's heroine may be mortal, but she does not fill the

part of a victim or a revenge seeker in *Companions of the Night*.

### **The Beginning of the Study**

I began my study into young adult vampire fiction in a simple manner. I believed my initial idea, "What is behind the evolution of young adult vampire fiction?" would involve analysis of recently published books and interviews with young adults who read this type of fiction. I felt the end result would be simple and straightforward. As I started to look at large numbers of the books and spoke with the readers, it soon became apparent that this was not the case.

Just because a book had a vampire as a character did not mean it dominated the issues in the book, nor did it make it horror or even romance. The readers of this literature were not all similar either. Most did not just concentrate on horror or romance reading, and they seemed to read a great deal in different genres. Their introduction to this type of literature showed differences as well. Not all began reading it after reading other books that could be considered shock fiction, nor did they all read the same type of books outside of this fiction.

The fiction was not always seen as "just" fantastical. At times, readers would be able to relate issues from the novels with their own lives. Other aspects of these books

touched on socio-political ideas, dominancy, and counter-culture. This was the beginning of my topic expansion into some of the sociological underpinnings of both young adult vampire fiction and those who read it. I moved away from a simple gloss of this genre, and into a focus of what issues are raised by this type of fiction. As I read more of the books themselves, I was able to answer a few of my questions about vampire literature and shock fiction. There is more to adolescent vampire stories than shock fiction. Also, while having some titles which are clearly romances, this genre is not dependent on romance as an overall characteristic.

### **Explanation of the Project**

In my attempt to show how the vampire fiction intended for a young adult audience is not merely shock or potboiler fiction, I will discuss the role of the young adult vampire novel and what the reader's expectations are as I work with the interactions between the text and the readers. I will also discuss recent works of adolescent vampire fiction in terms of how they fit with past and present cultural codes of vampire fiction in general. I will briefly describe the history of the vampire character itself in oral and written tradition and then show how the character of the vampire represented different facets of human desires and fears.

How and why the vampire changed from a bestial creature to a suave and elegant villain or even tragic hero will be addressed as part of the cultural critique of the vampire character. A look at the types of characters a vampire may be represented as in adolescent fiction will also be a focus in this section.

As I analyze the response data from the young adult and adult interview subjects, I will discuss whether they support or challenge the cultural code information already garnered. The information gained from this analysis can help lead to a new understanding of why vampire characters have been so popular with young readers. This analysis of adolescent vampire fiction and the adolescents who read it should indicate why the fiction is so popular and how it correlates with earlier vampire fiction.

### **Importance of Vampire Literature**

Many adolescents tend to read only what is assigned to them in schools. Any genre that they choose to read on their own, without prompting or assignments from teachers or other adults, is important. This reading is neither guided nor assigned. While some of these books may be denigrated or called "shock fiction," others, like Klause's *The Silver Kiss*, have been judged as one of the American Library Association's Best Book for Young Adults or the *School*



*Library Journal's* Best Book of the Year. They are not neatly definable.

The readers choose to read these books because for one reason or another these books speak to them. Even though there are major fantasy elements in most of these novels, they explore issues that their readers can relate to and identify with: readers are not being condescended to in these novels. As Diana Mitchell states, "novels, just like television, not only reflect what is going on in society, but also shape the society and function as a form of socialization by making it appear that the institutions and people shown are part of the norm" (7).

If these books present specific viewpoints and values, they can influence and shape young adult views of the world. If there is an overall view presented in the majority of the books, that view has an impact on the readers. This can be seen in a similar relationship as Linda Christian-Smith's inquiry into how adolescent girls are impacted by adolescent romance novels. "[w]ritten narrative, constitute powerful ways of influencing how women understand themselves and their relation to the conditions under which they live" ("Romancing the Girl" 76).

If these novels present, even in fantastical or romanticized settings, specific views on dominance, character interaction, and gender relationships, many

readers might believe that this is the way society is or should be. If counter culture and rebellion against perceived social wrongs are lauded, this might be seen as an important moving away from a currently acceptable view of society. As part of my research, I used a series of interviews with readers of vampire fiction will help establish its impact.

### **Review of the literature and related research**

Little work has been done on the vampire in literature for adolescents. Noel Carroll's *Philosophy of Horror* which investigates the reasons the overall genre has become popular is a good starting point; however, he mentions adolescent reading interests and vampire characters only in passing. His main focus is the reasons horror in its entirety draws readers and viewers. James Twitchell deals with the psychological attraction of horror fiction and the vampire as a character in particular in his book, *Dreadful Pleasures*, but again does not focus on the adolescent reader. While Twitchell's book *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature* gives a great deal of background on the literary history of the vampire, adolescent readers are not mentioned in detail. Clive Leatherdale's *Dracula: the novel and legend* also provided an in-depth study of the history of the vampire legend as did

Margaret Carter's *Shadow of a Shade: A Survey of Vampirism in Literature*. Carter's book is a focus on vampire and gothic horror bibliography and literary history. Each of these texts focus on earlier vampire literature and the earlier mythological basis for the vampire legends. They were very helpful for a background on the history of the vampire but did not provide much insight into why people read this type of fiction. Marin Riccardo's multimedia listing of the vampire as a character provided titles of adolescent and children's books, but nothing more. This text was most specifically a listing of works, not an explanation. Most research on the vampire character deals with its impact on literature, and the psychological and religious reasons behind its creation. The vampire is also generally seen and researched as a figure of horror or eroticism for adult readers. Because of this fact, my research into nonfiction works about vampires and horror fiction found a dearth of information on young adult readers. These particular authors and their ideas will be discussed more in-depth in subsequent chapters.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the popularity of the young adult series novel created controversy. There are those who believe that the books deal with matters that are interesting to adolescents without threatening them (love without the responsibilities of negative sexual involvement)

or provide excitement to the readers at a relatively low level of involvement (shock fiction). Teachers, librarians, and parents have argued that reading these books might lure reluctant readers into the habits of a good reading. The idea is that these former reluctant or non-readers can then be directed to better literature (Kaye, Kies, Moran and Steinfirst).

Kies, in fact, feels that most of the horror novels currently published for adolescents fit the definition of "quickly written formula books" and that they should be viewed as escape reading (144). She does not dismiss these books and states that because they produce humor and enjoyment they should not be ignored. Kies also indicates that, "a number of superior scary books for teens with supernatural themes are being published" (144). While she is concerned with adolescent horror in general, it is possible that the specific books with vampire characters are more tilted toward the superior side than the schlock. Moran and Steinfirst believe that adolescents read formula books because they are fast and easy reads. Once readers have exhausted themselves in this type of fiction they can more easily be directed to "better literature."

A variety of periodicals: *Voice of Youth Advocates*, and *American Educator* provided articles such as "The Humor in Horror" and articles about shock fiction (a category where

much of the adolescent fiction utilizing vampires is placed). An online interview with Caroline Cooney, author of several of the fiction books mentioned by participants in the study, was also helpful as it gave her viewpoint on why she utilizes this character type and the purposes it serves.

Three previous dissertations or theses on the vampire in literature have been written that show some similarity with parts of my proposed study. "Dancing with the Devil: The Vampire Motif in selected 19<sup>th</sup> Century Literature" done in 1989 at Northeast Missouri State University by Rebecca Jean Sutherland focused on the rise of the vampire legend and its transformation into a literary character. This paper, while dealing with the history of the vampire in literature, differs from mine in that the history of the vampire is the end of the paper, not merely a section of the study. It does, however, contribute a great deal of bibliographic sources as well as providing an overview of the history of the vampire figure.

The other dissertations and theses that also share similarities with the historical overview of vampire literature include "Predators of the Spirit: The Vampire theme in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Literature" done in 1975 at University of California by Liahna Klenman Babener, and "Bloodlines: Domestic and Family Anxieties in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Vampire Literature" done in 1998 at the University of Georgia by

Amanda Raye DeWEES. Of all three studies, DeWEES' examines the purpose and effects of the vampire literature on its audience which bears the most similarity to my study of why adolescents read fiction with vampire characters. Again, it differs from my proposed dissertation in that it focuses on the 19<sup>th</sup> century literature. However, DeWEES' examination lends itself as a wonderful beginning to my focus of adolescent readers.

An interesting feature of DeWEES' dissertation is found in her assertion that "male writers primarily deployed it as an embodiment of marital and familial anxieties" and gives the message that "a disastrous fate awaits those who refuse to follow society's template" (i). She tends to discuss in depth the differences between the nineteenth century's vampire characters and our modern ones. She points out that the modern vampire tends to be the hero, not the villain, even though both centuries' vampires are akin in that they are solitary wanderers (either "by choice or circumstance"), and notes that "our vampire epitomize what seems to be cultural longings to live detached and essentially solitary lives" (2). These comments have a direct relationship to some of the apparent reasons adolescent literature utilizes the vampire character. They also show an important change in the use of the vampire as a character. Previously, the vampire was utilized solely as a figure of warning; it is

now also often a figure readers want to relate to or even become.

DeWEES also discusses the basic plot of the vampire story; it begins when relocation has occurred. Either the mortal victim has moved or stopped in a area on a journey, or the vampire relocates (13). This is a format that has carried over into much of the vampire literature written today. The story can be as innocuous as *Bunnicula* or as menacing as *The Vampire Twins*.

Another important research work is Norine Dresser's *American Vampires: Fans, Victims, and Practitioners* published in 1989. Dresser, a folklorist, was drawn into the study of the phenomena of the American vampire when a 1985 study of the connections between the disease porphyria and vampirism reached media attention and she was asked to respond to it. After she saw the furor her response and vampires in general had on the people, she decided to research and finally survey people on their beliefs regarding vampires. As she states, "I wished to discover only what people believed [about vampires] and why *they* thought they believed that way" (69). Her research questionnaire went out to 574 students from a variety of high school and college classrooms. They ranged in age from fifteen to sixty-three years old. The questions concerned themselves with what the subjects knew about the vampire

myth (creation, attire, destruction, etc). The questionnaire also contained questions about werewolves. A second questionnaire was distributed to "vampire fans" through lists of subscribers to vampire "fanzines" in order to research "contemporary beliefs in vampires and vampirism" (229).

While Dresser did not focus on vampire literature, she looked into why people have formed ideas about vampires and where in modern society these ideas may have their origin. This is important to my research, especially when looking at how vampire fiction uses the character of the vampire to represent what society attempts to repress or promote.

Diana Mitchell's dissertation, *Gendered Constructions in Twenty-five Recent Young Adult Novels: A Content Analysis of the Cultural Codes of Identity and Position*, was an excellent window into analyzing residual and emergent values in young adult fiction. While she worked with a sampling from "best books" lists, and I worked with top selling books with a particular theme, her organization and explanation of cultural codes and their impacts on both the readers and texts were a substantial aid.

Another important avenue for my research is that of reading theory. As a cultural critique of the vampire in literature is a center point of my analysis of the vampire literature, reading response theorists such as David



Bleich, Wolfgang Iser, and Louise Rosenblatt become important resources in order to explain the way readers and texts act and react with each other. The texts of vampire literature are embedded with cultural assumptions and codes that are either implicit or explicit, and reader response theory is one way to begin to reveal these codes and how they impact their readers. Just as people may not realize what they reveal about their culture and upbringing by how they react to people and experiences, the texts of works of vampire literature reveal the cultural codes of the society within which the author writes.

The interactions between the reader and the text, as well as the assumptions both make of each other, are important points to consider in my study. These assumptions combine to give each reader an individual view of the story and the characters that another reader may perceive. Also, the implications and assumptions of the text reveal what type of reader is expected to read it. Readers with similar expectations and backgrounds can therefore be expected to gain similar insights and have similar reactions from the same texts. Looking at the makeup of readers of a particular type of literature or text aids in understanding the similar or different interactions they gain from a text. Put together, these dual readers of the text and the readers can reveal a great deal of useful information.

## **Design of the study**

This study was an attempt to discover the expectations, reading interests, and history of adolescents who read vampire literature. As there are many different types of books which utilize vampires as characters, one of the major areas of investigation was to find out which types of books these self-declared 'avid readers' preferred. In order to compare adolescent readers to adult readers of vampire literature, a group of adult readers were interviewed as well. Fifteen adolescents between the ages of ten and seventeen in the Marietta, Ohio area were interviewed. A similar number of adult readers were interviewed as well. Once they were interviewed and their remarks transcribed, pseudonyms were assigned for the purpose of anonymity. When possible, after the original interview, groups of interviewees were brought together in a discussion group to talk about vampire literature. The purpose of the latter action was to hear what the individuals had to say about this form of literature **outside** of the constraints of a one-on-one interview.

It is difficult to set up a study of this kind. There did not seem to be large numbers of readers who would identify themselves as readers of vampire literature. There were two methods I utilized in order to find adolescents who were willing to be interviewed. The first method was

inquiring of adolescents directly if they read this type of literature and were willing to be interviewed. If they and their parents agreed, I would interview them and ask for names of individuals they knew who read this type of literature. The second method was asking acquaintances who were either parents of adolescents or teachers of adolescents for names of young adults who read vampire literature. Because of the method of finding subjects, this study may not be representative of the readers as a whole.

Once I had the readers, each interviewee was asked an identical set of questions. The specific questions included finding out when the readers began reading vampire fiction, what they expected from this type of literature, what interested them in vampire fiction, their ideas on why others read this type of fiction, their view of the abilities and weaknesses of the vampire in this fiction, and their perceptions of other readers of vampire literature. Further questions included titles of books they'd read, their history as readers, and perceived power and gender struggles in this type of character. Non-directive interviewing techniques were used, so extra, individualized clarifying questions were asked of each person as seemed necessary. A complete list of the base questions can be seen in Appendix A. When possible (with the majority of the young adults and forty percent of the adults) group meetings

were also set up so that I would be able to gather information on the people's interactions with other readers of vampire literature. When interacting in groups, individuals were more prone to specifically describe texts and characters that they liked or disliked. They were also more likely to discuss in detail a definition of vampire powers and abilities and their perceptions of effective vampire characters. The group dynamics led to such discussions, while the individual interviews did not. Individual follow-up interviews were not done, yet they could be the basis of a future study. The individual interviews were conducted either at the person's house, or in three instances for easier accessibility, at my office. The setting of the interviews did not appear to impact the interview process.

The questions, in these interviews, help reveal assumptions and ideas that the various readers have as well as helping to explain why readers choose to read vampire literature. The questions aid in understanding not only what these readers read into these texts but find there as well. The importance of this is threefold. This research aids my understanding of what attraction the vampire as a character has for young adult readers as well as gaining information about the readers themselves: who they are, what else they read, etc. It also opens explorations into some

of the other facets of vampire literature including whether this type of literature merely is in the horror genre with a focus on a specific character type; whether vampire literature can be classified as a subset of romantic/erotic adolescent literature; whether vampire literature intended for a young adult audience is the same as vampire literature intended for an adult audience.

The common conception of young adult readers of vampire fiction is that they tend to be loners who dress in a counter-cultural manner, and keep mainly to themselves. While discussing my project with others, this was quite frequently the description I was given as to the adolescents I would find to interview. I found quite the opposite. The interviewees themselves were a mixed group. The young adults, as stated before, ranged in age from ten to seventeen. Eleven of the fifteen were involved in extracurricular group activities including, four in scouting, five in 4H clubs, three in sports, five in a variety of religious youth groups, and two in band. Only four were not involved in extracurricular group activities; one of those was in a marching band program that met during the school day, and one worked almost full time on the family farm. Many of the young adults were outgoing and gregarious; however, one or two were rather shy and withdrawn.

Originally, I began with fifteen adults in my study as well. For a variety of reasons, including personal time commitments and unease at being interviewed, five asked to be removed from the study. The remaining ten ranged in age from 25 to 43. Six of these individuals worked in a variety of technical or 'white collar' fields; the remaining four would be considered 'blue collar' workers. Two of these individuals were involved in chorale, and three were members of service organizations such as Lions or Zonta. One was a distance runner involved in competitions and one was a participant in a bowling club. Five of the adults were married and had children; however, none of the children were involved in my study. These individuals tended to be involved in Band Boosters, PTA, and Scouting activities. Again, these individuals did not fit some of the stereotypes of the vampire fiction reader.

### **The Sample of Vampire Books**

In deciding how to choose the books used in this study I began with the collection of a list of adolescent books utilizing vampires as characters through looking at the following popular young adult bestsellers': (1) Waldenbook, whose rankings are based on reports from over 1000 stores, and (2) B. Dalton Bookseller's Bestseller lists, which are compiled from weekly sales reports generated from over 800

stores. These stores were chosen because both of these booksellers have stores throughout the country, and large numbers of book buyers utilize their services. This means that books listed on these bestsellers' lists have had the opportunity to reach readers in a wide geographic area, and follow some of the nationwide reading trends. After this start, when interviewing my subjects, books they mentioned reading that utilize vampires as characters were also added.

This helped me place each reader in regards to his or her reading choices. A complete list of titles and authors used, with annotated descriptions, is listed in Appendix B.

The next chapter, which deals with the interviews themselves, also groups these titles according to their utilization of the vampire character.

### **Organizations of this Study**

This study will be divided into four parts. "History of the Vampire" will contain a history of the vampire in literature and legend. As stated before, there have not been many studies on the vampire in adolescent literature, so this chapter will focus more on the overall use of the vampire as a character in fiction. "Cultural Critique of the Vampire" analyzes the vampire as a cultural icon. It will place socio-political issues such as power relationships and gender issues within the context of

vampire literature and discuss the young adult literature which seems to address these issues the most. "Views of the Vampire Reader as Shown Through Interviews" will deal with an analysis of the interview data itself. Most of the data in this section comes from one-on-one and group interviews of readers of vampire fiction. "Conclusions and Implications" will discuss the findings, conclusions, implications for the information, and recommendations of how to use the information. An annotated bibliography of all the vampire literature surveyed will be attached as an appendix. A secondary appendix will be the list of the questions themselves.

### **Definition of terms**

In order to avoid any misunderstanding growing out of terms used frequently in the study, I set forth the following definitions:

Adolescent or young adult: An individual in the period between childhood and adulthood. In this study, such an individual is defined as a person between 10 and 18 years old.

Adolescent or young adult fiction: stories and novels that are written primarily for adolescents and young adults. (In the preface of their 1989 book, Donelson and Nilsen defined this as "any book freely chosen for reading by



someone in this age group.")

Vampire fiction: stories or novels that either contain characters who are identified as vampires or which revolve around the idea of vampires.

## CHAPTER TWO HISTORY OF THE VAMPIRE

I want to read stories about why they're here. Where they came from. How they learned how to do all the things they do. That's the type of vampire stories I like. (Carl - young adult reader)

The really cool thing about vampires is how they get there. I keep reading about different ways vampires happened and what they do. That's neat! (Beth - young vampire fiction reader)

In order to begin discussing the vampire character in a variety of works of fiction, it is first necessary explain not only what a vampire is, but where it came from, and how it has become a popular character. To give the reader an idea of this, and perhaps the vampire's fascinating draw, I will provide a historical overview of the vampire.

### **Defining the Vampire**

In 1977, Martin Riccardo founded one of the first periodicals devoted to the topic of vampires: *The Journal of Vampirism*. At that time, the subject might have been catering to a small number of enthusiasts, but in the past twenty-four years, what was a special interest has grown to become a fascination for millions.

Today, the popular appeal of the vampire is reflected in the more than 20 active vampire interest organizations in the United States and England with their own regular publications (Melton, xiii). This number does not include the various fan clubs devoted to the popular vampire television shows -- *Dark Shadows* and *Forever Knight*; or the computer bulletin boards, web sites, or vampire role-playing group organizations.

Western culture seems to be increasingly drawn to the vampire. While the image of the vampire has been appearing on the silver screen, in radio dramas, television, role-playing games (most notably White Wolf's popular *World of Darkness* system), and in music (the Goth movement especially), much of the popularity began with the written word, or even prior to it in oral myths and legend.

Frost describes a vampire as fundamentally, "a parasitic force or being, malevolent and self-seeking by nature, whose paramount desire is to absorb the life-force or ingest the vital fluids of a living organism in order to sate its perverse hunger and perpetrate its unnatural existence" (27). The vampire myth has occurred in nearly every culture, with written evidence occurring as early as the cave paintings. Martin Riccardo explains how cultures around the world have long had both "a

respectful fear of the dead and a belief in the magical qualities of blood" (Melton xiii). Leatherdale mentions that "[f]ew societies in the past did not have their own version of the vampire" (15).

### **The Vampire around the World**

Early Tibetans began cremating bodies in order to prevent vampirism, and their modern descendants still believe that the spirits of the dead follow the living; subsequently, the lamas offer sacrifices of fox liver and fresh hot blood as a means of calming the vampire gods and keeping them from the dead (Carter 16). Offering the dead blood and other gifts was acknowledgment of the beliefs that blood was a very powerful commodity. Thus the early beginnings of the vampire, a blood seeking undead, began.

Vampire tales have been translated from Sanskrit, and the Arabs passed the legend to the Greeks at around two millennia ago. Without too much pause, the legend spread to Transylvania, Hungary, Poland, and Bohemia as well as many other European countries (18). The power of the mythology itself to spread so quickly gives an important glimpse into the legend's later allure.

Each country has both its own version of the myth and a unique name for the creature. Sometimes a country

had more than one name for these blood-imbibing creatures. *Empusas* were Greek spirits who disguised themselves as beautiful women in order to lure young men to a murderous and bloody wedding night. *Lamiae*, again Greek, also appeared as women: the lovely creatures not only fed on blood but often removed their own eyes for an additional gruesome effect (Aylesworth 3). The Greeks also had the *Striges*, monsters who would turn into birds and fly through nursery windows in order to feed on newborn babies (5). Even the *Odyssey* has vampiric or blood drinking images. Odysseus offers blood to weakened spirits to strengthen them (Leatherdale 20).

In Asia there was not only the *telamaur* (a vitality draining spirit) but the *vetala* (another vitality drainer) and the *penanggalen* as well. The *penanggalen* was an entity comprised solely of a head and stomach which flew through the air in search of its prey: infants and women in labor (19). While there are not many still existent vampire legends in India, perhaps due to "Brahmin and Buddhist-inspired asceticism and vegetarianism," Kali is seen as a blood drinking goddess of war and death (19). Jones states that, "the Malayan *Molongm* as well as the *Penangelam* of Indo-China, visit women at night and live on the human blood they suck" (117).

The Irish generally believed that vampires usually bothered only their own families. One of these stories involved a priest who died suddenly far away from home. Many of his relatives attended his funeral, but his mother was too ill to make the journey. The mourners returned to find the mother unconscious near her cottage's front door. When she woke, she told her listeners that she had heard footsteps and a knock at the door. At the door was her 'undead' son with white skin, red eyes, and long gleaming fangs. The mother fainted at the sight, and her son ran off into the night (Aylesworth 37).

*Striges, Empusas, Lamiae, lilitu, vampyr, vampir, upyr*, or, most common to modern American readers, *vampires*, were at the least bothersome, and at times, highly dangerous. Each culture had a different way of dealing with the unwanted undead. They could dig up the bodies, and hang or burn them, or place notes of forgiveness on the chest (36). Others decapitated the corpse and stuffed the mouth with garlic cloves (*The Living Dead* 12). While people in most countries dealt with the undead by reburying, chopping, burning, hanging, or staking the bodies, the French were much more restrained. They believed that one could be protected from Vampirism simply by paying a large fine, a type of

vampire tax (Aylesworth 46).

### **Why the Vampire**

Leatherdale says that "the concept of the vampire is founded upon two precepts: the belief in life after death, and the magical power of blood" (15). Most of the early vampire legends were from oral tradition. There were reasons these legends continued on and were eventually written down. As Twitchell points out in *The Living Dead*, premature burial was common and people were sometimes buried while they were in comas or catatonic states, especially during "plague years when hasty disposal of the body was of primary importance" (19). If someone were to open a coffin, what might be found would not be evidence of a vampire, but results of death by suffocation. Bodies could be contorted and inner casket lids scratched. Grave robbers also left bodies disheveled. Some bodies might disappear altogether, not because the dead were off looking for a meal, but because money-hungry body snatchers sold the corpses for medical study. Some vampire tales would be perpetuated by the misdiagnosis of certain diseases: "pernicious anemia,...the victim shrivels up, needing new red blood cells to survive; porphyria,...the photophobic patient's teeth and hair take on a fluorescent glow; [and]

tuberculosis, where the...symptoms are weight loss and...coughing [up] blood..." (19). Many of the Christian religious beliefs in the power of blood and the idea of the dead returning in one form or another have caused the prevalence of vampire 'reports' in both Eastern and Western Europe from the 12th century on (Melton iiix).

Although many cultures have a mythology of blood drinking spirits, Leatherdale believes that undead blood drinking corpses are European in nature (20). The Eastern or Central European idea of vampires is solid and often sexual in nature (20). This idea is the physical walking (or flying/shapechanging) undead, not merely a noncorporeal spirit. As Leatherdale states:

[t]hey [Europeans] had had a proven demonstration of man's capacity to die, to be buried, and to rise again with special powers to visit the living – Christ himself. And had he not promised to resurrect the dead and offer eternal life? Even today the words, 'Rest in Peace' which accompany Christian burial contain dark allusions. Is there a suggestion that the corpse might not rest, but walk? (22-23)

There is not just the religious hypothesis for corporeal European vampires. Juan Gomez-Alonso hypothesizes in a article published in the journal *Neurology* that rabies epidemics might account for the particular development of the Eastern European vampire.



"Many features attributed to vampires have also been described in disorders of the limbic system" (857). According to Gomez-Alonso, many of the symptoms of rabies -- bloody frothing at the mouth, retraction of the lips and baring of teeth, hydrophobia, and an avoidance of images -- are very similar to descriptions of vampiric looks and behavior (857).

According to his research, a "major epidemic of rabies in dogs, wolves, and other wild animals was recorded in Hungary around 1721-1728" (858). Wolves and other wild animals such as bats and felines are often associated with the vampire legend. The number of rabid wild life, and perhaps through them rabid humanity might have helped spur on the vampiric legend.

Although reports of vampire attacks are not abundant, a scattering of incidents over the years has helped to keep the myth alive. The most famous real-life "vampires" are Vlad Tepes (Vlad the Impaler), and Countess Elizabeth Bathory, who reportedly killed 600 young women so she could bathe in virgins' blood. There have been several others throughout the years who have managed to make headlines with their vampire-like activities. In 1879 in Germany, Fritz Haarman, who owned a meat market, was arrested for killing between 24 and 50 boys and drinking their blood (Ayelsworth 69). In 1949,

London officials executed John George Haigh, a hotel manager who killed nine guests and drank their blood (72). Modern American legend occasionally has sensationalist stories of vampires as well, some backed up by incidents of blood drinking like that of Jerry Moore who confessed in May of 1982 to drinking the blood of his Chicago girlfriend after he killed her (Riccardo 6). Stephen Kaplan, director of the Vampire Research Center, sends questionnaires to people who contact the center claiming to be vampires. He defines individuals as vampires when "they have a physical addiction to blood, drink it, believe it will prolong their lives, and find sexual satisfaction through the blood-drinking ritual." This does not cause him to put them in the category of Dracula or other legendary vampires; however, he does consider them vampires (Ramsland 34). All of these incidents work to keep the myth alive and a topic for the tellers of tales around the fire as well as modern writers.

Millions of horror buffs relish these bloody and often sensuous tales. Brian Frost suggests that people read this type of literature not only as a means of escape but also because they have a strong desire to "experience the lost emotion of supernatural terror" (23). Frost further notes that:

[T]hough the Terrors of the Ancient World have long been outlawed and set down as products of the unbridled imaginations of our ignorant forbearers, the ingrained atavistic need for the stark, purgative stimulation of supernatural terror has not--nor ever will be--winkled out from its impregnable stronghold in the dark chamber of the unconscious. And it is...the vampire story--in particular...that deal(s) with deep-rooted fears... (23)

Other scholars, such as Carl Jung, have speculated that vampire literature serves as an unconscious release for some dark labyrinth of racial memory (22).

### **Vampires in Literature**

It is difficult to determine exactly which was the first work of vampire literature because the line between myth and fiction is not easily defined. There is evidence, however, that the convention of the "superhuman demon who steals about at night sucking the blood of the living" began with *Beowulf* (*The Living Dead* 30).

Twitchell cites Nicholas Kiessling's 1968 article on Grendel when he states that Grendel is referred to as "se maera" which is translated as "night monster." From this linguistic evidence, Kiessling concludes the following:

The author of the *Beowulf* story, in giving Grendel the ancestry of Cain....might very well have been familiar with the incubus and lamia...These witches could consume the insides of men and so kill them, or they could act as vampires (Grendel himself sucked out the blood of Hondscioh). (qtd. in *The Living Dead* 31)

In the twelfth century, William of Newbury recorded the activities of "human bloodsuckers" or "Sanguisugae," in the *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*. It tells the story of a man who died and by all accounts was properly buried. Soon after, he began night visits, not only to his family but to animals and neighbors as well. When these raids became bolder, even during daylight, the townspeople requested assistance from the local clergy. The body was exhumed, and the archdeacon laid absolution on the dead man. The tomb was resealed and peace was restored (31).

Brian Frost contends that a little known eleventh century Anglo-Saxon poem entitled, "A Vampyre of the Fens" is the first work of vampire fiction. According to Frost the vampire theme seems to disappear from literature until the 15th century and Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur. Even then, the vampire reference in this work is limited to a single mention of "The high-born lady of a castle whose life is sustained by endless dishfuls of virgins' blood" (36).

From the eighteenth century on, vampire literature proliferated. In *The Natural History of the Vampire*, Anthony Masters traces the vampire's development from the base folk tradition to a literary concept:

In the eighteenth century there was a good deal of debate about vampirism in various

German universities--these debates being both philosophic and academic. The eastern European incidents [live burials following the plague], coupled with the rising tide of hysteria and ecclesiastical encouragement, were the subject of a mass of treatises and papers. These in turn sparked off the imaginations of a number of German writers including Heinrich August Ossenfelder, who wrote a poem entitled *Der Vampir*, Goethe, who produced the famous ballad *The Bride of Corinth*, and Burger, who wrote the particularly chilling romantic vampire-fantasy *Lenore*, first printed during 1773. (196)

The Marquis de Sade wrote *Juliette* in 1791 and *Justine* five years later. Both works express the view that "vampirism is a grotesque extension of the link between sadistic eroticism and bloodshed" (Frost 37).

By the early 1800's, the vampire theme was spreading in Europe, especially in England. John Stagg wrote a grisly ballad called *The Vampyre* (1810). In this story, Gertrude, the heroine, finds her lord Herman looking pale and near death. He tells her that he had been visited nightly by his recently buried friend, Sigismund. Herman tells how Sigismund came to suck his veins of "the stream of life" and drain the "fountain of his heart." As Herman dies, Gertrude is visited by the ghostly specter of Sigismund and immediately swoons. The next morning, Sigismund's sepulcher is opened as he is found "still warm as life, and undecay'd." The ballad ends as the vampire is staked (Carter 24). Other nineteenth century

poetical works include Robert Southey's Thalaba the Destroyer (1801), Coleridge's "Christabel" (1816), and Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (1819) (Frost 37).

At this point, the vampire was no longer a loathsome plague that supposedly visited ignorant peasants, nor was it just a quasi-scientific/religious curiosity that puzzled intellectuals. Once the English Romantic Movement seized upon the vampire, the concept began to develop in a new direction. Romantic poets recognized the symbolic possibilities of vampirism. They began to use vampires as a way for fictional lovers to reunite beyond the grave. Poets used vampirism as a ghostly metaphor for undying love. The poems of Southey and Coleridge, which both incorporate powerful female vampires, inspired such later writers as the Shelleys and Byron to use the vampire motif in their works.

By 1819, the vampire genre began to change from the basically bestial tale to the structure of a Gothic romance. In her book, *Shadow of a Shade: A Survey of Vampirism in Literature*, Margaret Carter describes this mode as follows:

The concept of the dead arising from their graves to feed upon the blood of the innocent and the beautiful is not a macabre but a voluptuous idea. The vampire works out his spell in the dark, in Gothic landscapes of gloomy mansions, wind-washed valleys or crumbling ruins of some great chateau nestling on a wooded hillside. He rises from the moist

and damp earth in a glowing mist or black fog through the vaults that rest under cobwebs faintly lighted by the dim radiance of the rising moon. The moon-drenched clouds etched across by a pattern of naked branches established a psychological mood of anguish and foreboding.

The vampire is not a ghastly figure appearing like a demon from hell with fangs bared or eyes bloodied. He is tall and handsome, his hair dark and well groomed: despite the waxen pallor of his face and vivid redness in his lips curled in a smile. As the Undead he casts no shadow and has no reflection but what is prominent are his canine teeth. The hollow beneath his eyes adds to his romantic expression of undefinable melancholy diffusing a lonesome sadness. His black cloak flutters in the breeze as he silently glides along empty corridors while the wind rustles through shroud like ghostly curtains. (20)

Byron toyed with the idea of writing a vampire tale, but it was Dr. John Polidori who finally took his employer/friend's outline and wrote *The Vampyre* (1819). This story did more than any other to establish this romantic trend; it was a major turning point for the vampire. For the first time, the vampire was not depicted as a plague-ridden beast as had been the tradition since medieval times. Also for the first time, the vampire sported the black bat-winged cape, an indication of his new seductive image. Polidori's vampire, Lord Ruthven, was a nobleman modeled after the flamboyant Lord Byron. "Like his factual equivalent, the vampiric Ruthven takes a subtly perverse pleasure in tormenting those he loves; and it is this particular

trait that identifies him as one of the many incarnations of The Fatal Man, the archetypal anti-hero created by the founders of the Romantic school of literature" (Frost 38). The image of the Byronic vampire is stereotypically tall, gaunt, and pale; yet despite his forbidding appearance, he is irresistible to his female victims and coldly threatening to their male protectors. Although his victims "shrink instinctively from his presence at first, the fatal seducer's magnetic personality and overpowering sexual fascination overcome their morbid fear of his ultimate objective" (Frost 39).

Polidori takes care to prepare the reader for this new literary terror. He provides "a brief history of the vampire and a catalogue of his peculiarities" (*The Living Dead* 107). In addition, Polidori compares the rise of the vampire myth to the spread of Christianity (107). Finally, he asserts that vampires are actual demons, citing the history of Arnold Paul, "a Hungarian vampire whose strange story had already been told in the 1732 *London Journal*" (108).

Polidori's tale was so popular abroad that Charles Nodier adapted it into an 1820 stage version which became a huge success in Paris and elsewhere; however, it was not until 1852 that an adaptation reached London. According to Basil Copper in *The Vampire in Legend and*



*Fact,*

[Dozens] of imitators arose in the theatre in France and elsewhere until the vampire pieces reached ludicrous proportions. Some were even farces with music, which shows how far the imitators had strayed from Polidori's original intention. (62)

Playwrights were not the only artists to explore this popular theme. Emily Bronte used the vampire motif in *Wuthering Heights* (1849) to explore the dark, untamed corners of the human psyche. Other authors such as Edgar Allen Poe used variations of the motif to experiment with horror, while Dante Gabriel Rossetti later used mythological vampires to symbolize his perception of sexuality.

In order to understand the vampire motif at work in the works of both Bronte and Poe, the term "psychic vampire" needs to be explained. A psychic vampire is a parasite which feeds not on the blood of a living being, but on its energy. A psychic vampire may be inanimate as well as animate. In *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), the psychic vampire is the ancestral Usher home and the victims are Roderick and Madeline. The house, by some hideous process, has "a devitalizing effect on the doomed couple, bringing the horror of madness into their lives and condemning them, in true vampire fashion, to a living death" (Frost 41). In addition, Madeline becomes a more typical vampire as is suggested by her return from

the tomb in order to seek revenge on her brother (Carter 10).

In *Wuthering Heights* (1849), Heathcliff has his own reason for wanting a vampire burial for Hinley Earnshaw "buried at the crossroads without ceremony of any kind" (Twitchell 9). Twitchell labels Bronte's character the "demon-cum-vampire" (116), a psychic vampire struggling for power. If the reader carefully considers what Nelly has to say, there is an implication that Heathcliff acts like a vampire (117). This is not to suggest that Heathcliff is actually a vampire, but Bronte wants the reader to be unsure and ill at ease. Even though Heathcliff "is never shown as an active vampire (for that would have ruined our superstitions), we are shown an occasional footprint...to keep us checking" (118).

Another literary form which dealt with vampires around 1850 was the Penny Dreadful. The foremost of these works, because of its immense popularity and influence on later vampire fiction, was *Varney the Vampyre, or, The Feast of Blood*. This was published in serialized form (a kind of vampire soap opera) and was well over 800 pages in length. The narrative features Sir Francis Varney, an important fictional precursor of Stoker's Count Dracula.

These literary vampires were all male, but female

vampires were quickly emerging onto the scene as well. "It was not really until 1836, with Gautier's *Clarimonde*, that '*la belle dame sans merci*' became a '*cliche indisputable*'" (Frey 67). Gautier creates a strain of *femme fatales* and beautiful undead women which continued onward from that time period. His most famous was *Clarimonde*, the vampire courtesan of "*La Morte Amoureuse*" (1836). After this point, the female vampire appeared in many works throughout the 1800's and up until today.

One of the last literary vampire works predating *Dracula* concerns another female vampire. Published in 1872, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's Gothic novelette, *Camilla*, sensuously explores vampirism from a feminine perspective. Leatherdale describes the female vampire as a "complex, self-motivated personality" rather than a caricature (54).

The literary work that has most influenced the twentieth century in writing about vampires is, undoubtedly, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Stoker had a wide range of vampire myth and fiction to draw from when he wrote *Dracula*, and until recently, Stoker's vampire was the definitive incarnation for all that followed, a model monster described by Margaret Carter as follows:

The vampire feeds on blood, lives for centuries unless killed, can be destroyed only in certain

prescribed ways, can assume various animal shapes, can take the form of mist to pass through near-solid barriers, hypnotizes his prey, casts no reflection, sleeps in a coffin on a bed of his native soil, controls animals and the weather, has visibly pointed fangs and hairy palms, avoids sunlight, cannot cross running water except at limited times, cannot enter a dwelling without an invitation, and transforms victims who die of his bite into creatures like himself. (32)

The image of Count Dracula is compelling to the reader because he is essentially a human being even though he is also a ferocious monster. He embodies a certain dignity and stillness as he gestures commandingly with his flowing black cape. He is dark and sensuous. He is a demon, yet the reader is always aware that he is also a man. He is a distinct change from the early, less 'cultured' creatures. "Despite his ravenous activities, there lingers an eternal sadness about his personality, a brooding, withdrawn happiness. He lingers in this world, but he is not of this world" (Carter 27). Stoker's work altered the myth regarding the method of becoming a vampire (dying due to a vampire attack). In addition, "Dracula" became the name for all vampires (*The Living Dead* 17). From *Dracula's* publication, until about 1960, few works dealing with vampires were written. There were, however, a number of movies including several versions of *Dracula* as well as a famous adaptation called *Nosferatu* (1922).

## **The Revival of Vampire Literature**

The American literary market experienced a definite vampire revival in the early 1960's. This was due in part to a publicized "scientific" effort to discover the real identity and castle of Count Dracula. Whatever the cause, vampire literature began to flow off the presses. A few of the more notable works of the period included: Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962), Theodore Sturgeon's *Some of Your Blood* (1961), Jim Harmon's *The Man Who Made Maniacs* (1961), Peter Saxon's *The Vampire Cameo* (1968) and Raymond Gile's *Night of the Vampire* (1969) (Frost 97).

Also significant during this period was a renewed interest in macabre verse which appeared mainly in small publications and fan magazines. These pieces tended to adhere more to the romantic idea of vampires. Once science fiction writers like Niel Straum, "Vanishing Breed" (1970), and Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend* (1954), took the vampire legend into the popular press, this quickly changed. In the hands of science fiction writers, vampirism became a sign of a separate, spacefaring race who stopped by to visit the planet Earth; a further mutation of Homo Sapiens; a disease easily treated with the proper medication, etc.

The writings of an author like Chelsea Quinn Yarbro

(author of a series of books featuring Saint Germain, a vampire from the pre-Christian era) begins to pull the reader away from the Stoker vampire and towards a weaker, more human, version. Saint Germain is a being who needs to drink blood to survive, has a weakness while over water, and must rest on his native earth. While this is very similar to some of the weaknesses of the Stoker vampire, Saint Germain has very few of the benefits. He possesses greater than normal strength and can hypnotize people but has none of the other vampiric powers. There is no animal or mist form for him. Suzy McKee Charnas sets the stage similarly for her vampire, Edward Lewis Weyland, in *The Vampire Tapestry* (1980). "Though possessing none of the traditional vampire's occult powers, Weyland has inhuman speed, strength, hearing and eyesight, qualities Charnas justifies by citing similar abilities in the animal kingdom" (Carter 42).

Recently, a significant contributor to the vampire has been Anne Rice. "Her major vampire character, Lestat de Lioncourt,...has taken his place beside Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and *Dark Shadows* Barnabas Collins as one of the three major literary figures molding the image of the contemporary vampire" (Melton 508). Her version of the vampire as seen in her best selling "Vampire Chronicles" series has spawned movies (Geffen Pictures' *Interview*

with the Vampire), comic books (Innovation Corporation's *The Vampire Lestat* and fanzine *The Vampire's Companion*), and paintings among others. Rice's fictitious wide-sweeping tapestry of vampire life and history reaches from the beginning of the vampires thousands of years ago to the present time. Her portrayal of vampires of varying age, power, and mystique has already had an impact on Goth culture, role-playing gamers, and other authors.

### **Abilities of the Vampire**

As Margaret Carter described, the powers of the vampire used to be drawn specifically from Stoker's version in *Dracula*. In recent literature, this has changed. Nowhere is this more evident than in adolescent literature. The vampire does not just change into bats, rats, or wolves anymore. In *Hunter's Moon*, the vampire can change its appearance at will, reflects (a decayed version of itself) in a mirror, and can take the form of dust. In Harrell's *Vampire's Love* series, the vampire can take on any animal form or mist, but has the chance of forgetting who it truly is and dissolving forever. Sunlight only weakens Harrell's vampires; they can still move about , but lose some of their abilities during daylight.

The weaknesses of vampires also have changed a great deal in recent literature. Not all of the vampires in current literature need to be invited inside, nor do they all fear running water (Harrell, Stine). However, stakes and religious symbols do impact the majority of vampire characters and garlic usually does as well. Some of the authors (Doyle & MacDonald) have also changed the earlier legends so that silver harms a vampire too. The need for native soil is mentioned in only a few of the novels (*Goodnight Kiss* and *The Silver Kiss*). Authors of adolescent fiction are changing the vampire legends in order to portray vampires in a different light than just horror figures, as well as utilizing the stories themselves differently.

In Klause's *The Silver Kiss* the vampire, Simon, while possessing the powers and abilities of a vampire, is capable of compassion and care for his mortal friend Zoe. He and she together hunt down and destroy his younger brother who is a vampire himself. In the end, Simon takes his own life instead of remaining a vampire. Much of the earlier vampire literature has the vampire reveling in its powers and abilities. A change that has been brought about by modern vampire fiction, more specifically adolescent vampire fiction, is the fact that the vampires don't always want to be what they are.



The Vampire Twins series, written by Janice Harrell also differs from traditional vampire literature. The vampire legend has been modernized. Vampires have a sub-society, meet in specially designed bars, and can interact with humans even to the extent of marriage and families. While changing into a vampire occurs through the more traditional way of draining and blood exchange, it seems that family line is very important. The twins' father and aunt are vampires and want to make them vampires too. This is different from the traditional vampire-as-loner idea that began in the nineteenth century. As the main characters' Aunt Gabrielle says, "You must have noticed how some families produce musicians, others mathematicians. We tend to produce vampires" (*Bloodlines* 226). Later in that same conversation she refers to their "cute little baby fangs" (226).

The vampire in adolescent literature is very different from the earlier monsters, or even the later suave villains of the night. Their strengths and weaknesses are different, as is the way they view people around them and their own abilities. While some revel in their powers, others are disgusted by them.

The history of the vampire clearly shows that vampires and vampire literature have changed over time;

change becomes apparent as we look more closely at the cultural critique of the vampire character itself.

CHAPTER THREE  
CULTURAL CRITIQUE OF THE VAMPIRE CHARACTER

My mom is like "Why do you read this stuff?"  
Actually, she doesn't say it just like that, but it sounds better than what she really says. She doesn't mind me reading it, but sometimes I think she likes seeing me read other types of books. She doesn't know that I like reading lots of books 'cause she only notices the ones with strange pictures on the covers. (Andy -- young adult reader)

While the history of the vampire shows its roots in what Twitchell and others consider the human desire not to leave things undone, the vampire came to represent much more: unfulfilled longings, the power of blood, redirected Christian beliefs, etc. The vampire did not just stay as its early representation though. As the vampire continued to be used as a symbol and character in literature, it began to represent more. The vampire became specific to certain types of literature and became subject to a variety of interpretations.

In a study like this, viewing how specific types of literature fit into and are interpreted by the culture in which they exist are done by reading the texts and considering both what is stated and what is being assumed

by the statements. Linda Christian-Smith seemed to arrive at the code of romances through what she found in the sample of novels she studied; Diana Mitchell arrived at her analysis of the cultural codes embodied in award winning young adult fiction through a similar analysis.

Literature utilizing the vampire character may be dealt with in a similar manner. Questions to be addressed include: What role does the vampire play in this variety of literature? What is its purpose, and how is it viewed? What are the readers getting from these texts as they read? Do these texts support or go against current cultural and societal codes? How are males and females viewed in these texts? All of these are questions that need to be addressed in order to see the impact of adolescent vampire fiction.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in young adult vampire fiction the role of the vampire has changed from that of the earlier century's warning against breaking up the family unit, symbolic reunification of lovers beyond the grave, or even figure of horror. The vampire in young adult fiction has many more roles to play. It can be used in a symbolic way as in Caroline Cooney's books, or even to stand as a metaphor for incest as in Cynthia Grant's work. The vampire can also be a rebel or a figure in need of help. The vampire in young adult

fiction does not always revel in its own powers or wish to be a vampire.

### **The Vampire Character**

Noel Carroll constantly refers to "the paradox of horror" in his book, *The Philosophy of Horror*. Much of this paradox focuses on "how people can be attracted by what is repulsive" (160). Why, for example, was the repulsive, bestial, blood-drinking parasite reformed in the Romantic Period into a suave, elegant, controlled entity? "Monster" seems a harsh term compared with the literary vampires of that time period. Other bestial, legendary predators of humanity - the lycanthrope or werewolf for one - were not so transformed.

Part of the reason is that vampires, unlike lycanthropes, have many of their abilities while in a human form. There is no need for the vampire to transform into something obviously non-human. Many writers, Stoker included, have changes occur in the feeding vampire's teeth, but that is not as extreme as a human becoming a wolf in order to rampage and destroy. The vampire, while being a monster, is a uniquely human one.

Because of the incredible variety of vampires and vampire types in literature and legend, they easily lend

themselves to a number of interpretations. Even the most recent incarnation of the vampire, young adult fiction, has a variety of types. Caroline Cooney's vampires (*The Vampire's Promise* and *The Return of the Vampire*) are very powerful and evil beings who tend to play with their victims. In *The Vampire's Promise*, the vampire is a powerful ancient force with no humanity in it at all. In *The Return of the Vampire*, the vampire is again inhuman and promises Devnee, the main character, anything she wants in return for psychically draining others. To Cooney, the vampire is a purely evil force with no redeeming qualities. She sees it as a perfect representation of evil (Cooney). Its purpose is to reflect evil and people's cruelty in the strongest terms. It is a force more than a character. Her vampires are purely symbolic. In a sense, she utilizes the vampire much as the authors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did. However, she gives them nothing more than hunger and a desire for evil.

L. J. Smith's vampires (*The Vampire Diaries* series, and *The Night World* series) tend to be more human. The characters have likes and dislikes, desires and fears like humans. In *The Vampire Diaries* series, the vampire is seen as an undead human who was changed; the other series has both "natural" (born) vampires and the more

usual "made" (undead human) vampires. Vampires are seen as possessing both good and evil qualities, and some can be seen as sympathetic characters by the readers unlike Cooney's vampires.

Most critiques of why the vampire has become entrenched in the more modern stories and legends of cultures tend to revolve around three areas: political, repression/sexual, and coming of age.

The point where the monster emerges is always immediately seized by an overwhelming amount of meaning -- and that is valid for the whole subsequent gallery of monsters, vampires, aliens, etc. It has immediate social and ideological connotations. The monster can stand for everything that our culture has to repress -- the proletariat, sexuality, other cultures, alternative ways of living, heterogeneity, the Other. There is a certain arbitrariness in the content that can be projected onto this point, and there are many attempts to reduce the uncanny to just this content. (qtd. in Gelder 52)

Here, Frederic Jameson, author of *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, touches on one of the reasons horror, as well as fantasy and science fiction, are viable genres read by many. By their very nature of "non-truth," these genres are able to address issues and concerns that realistic fiction cannot. Issues that cannot easily be raised, fears that would seem childish, and ideas that would be perceived as selfish and reprehensible in realistic fiction can be addressed in horror fiction (where, until recently, the

vampire character was firmly ensconced).

When a book does not fail, when the reader has gone driving through of his own accord, that book has worked strange magic. Suddenly it becomes easy to talk about "the world" of that book...We never stop, consider the implications of the world of the book, and than decide quite rationally, that we will accept that world. (Rabkin 36)

Can the vampire, as Gelder's earlier quote mentions, stand for that which society represses? Is the vampire a figure not only of horror but one who represents the Other, alternative social structures, and more?

### **Reader Response Theory**

Before addressing these questions, it is necessary to discuss how readers and texts interact because over a period of time reader expectations shape new texts, just as texts can shape reader expectations. Readers are not *tabula rosa* regarding a text, each brings his or her own background experiences and expectations. In a sense, that fact is why individuals review books so differently -- each has a different transaction with a particular text and thus see it differently.

"[T]hey will nonetheless bring with them experiences, interests, and a lengthy agenda of ideas, problems, worries, and attitudes, all of which concern and preoccupy them" (Probst 3). Here, Probst brings up what many reader-response theorists, Rosenblatt among



others, often discuss: the idea that each individual reader brings something to the text. However, when a group of readers - whether Linda Christian-Smith's romance readers or adolescents who enjoy reading works of vampire literature -- all read the same texts, there are some similarities not only in what they **bring to** the texts, but in what they **take from** the texts as well.

This point is especially important later in this and other chapters as the various cultural codes embedded in texts of adolescent vampire fiction are examined and discussed. Respondents to the interview questions who respond similarly to specific questions have had similar transactions with the text and are leaving the text with similar readings of it.

Reader-response theory is built on the idea that readers respond to the images which the words on the page suggest. The theories of Louise Rosenblatt, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, David Bleich, and others explain that texts evoke memories, create expectations, invite conclusions, reverse direction, and delay revelation; readers construct meaning and fill in gaps, all while juggling their own memories, beliefs, and moods. Readers focus on the reading process, or what Rosenblatt calls the lived-through experience of the text.

In *The Act of Reading* Wolfgang Iser draws on

linguistic theory to explain that since a text - which cannot be seen and understood all at once, in its entirety -- differs from an object; there can be no traditional subject-object static viewpoint. Instead, "there is a moving viewpoint which travels along inside that which it has to apprehend" (108). The activity of reading is consecutive: the reader grasps the text in pieces so that during the reading, "there is a continual interplay between modified expectations" (of what comes next) "and transformed memories" (of what has already been read). Since the "text itself does not formulate expectations...nor does it specify how the connectability of memories is to be implemented," it is left to the reader who must then be an active participant in the realization of the text (111). He also describes that text as "an arena in which the author and reader participate in a game of the imagination ("The Reading Process" 51).

The idea of imagination is of specific importance when regarding non-realistic works. It is easy enough for an author to describe snow in such a way that the reader can have a transaction with the text that concludes in understanding if the reader is familiar with snow. It becomes more difficult if the reader only has a dim concept of snow or none at all. Fantastical texts

such as those employing fictional character types like vampire require readers to be willing to "play along" with the text, suspending disbelief until after the reading and interaction is concluded.

In her book, *The Reader, The Text, The Poem*, Louise Rosenblatt found that readers seemed to employ one of two methods to evoke a literary work: some readers took the text piece-by-piece, modifying or rejecting interpretations as they proceeded, while others tried first to grasp the overall idea by skimming quickly and then going back to verify or modify their reading. Either way, readers had an active part in creating the text - they were responding, predicting, verifying, and correcting during the reading experience. They were not just idly absorbing the material with no effort on their part. She also discovered that readers bring their own memories, feelings, and attitudes to their reading. Images in the text stimulate and these memories, feelings, and attitudes then become a part of their interpretation and understanding of the text. Interpretation is ongoing; the reader works to form a coherent and cohesive understanding of the work and his or her actualization of it.

Iser takes this idea of reading activity and compares it to what occurs when individuals view the

night sky. Each person may "be looking at the same collection of stars, but one will see the image of a plough, and the other will make out a dipper" (*Implied* 282). However, to carry this analogy a step further, if the person was brought up with the constellation named "The Ploughshare," it becomes more difficult to perceive "The Big Dipper" and vice versa. This is the same way that individual readers select and organize particular elements in order to arrive at their own realization of a literary work. Both efforts involve "interaction between the explicit and implicit, between revelation and concealment. What is concealed spurs the reader into action, but this action is also controlled by what is revealed" ("Interaction" 111).

This idea makes the idea of gender-typing and gender assumptions even more important. When a reader reads a text, there are certain assumptions that are already being made. Certain titles or job descriptions may have the reader drawing a conclusion that later on the text supports or disproves. "Gender and gender-typing are among the most powerful influences channeling the experiences of individuals" (Crawford and Chaffin 14). The phrase, "chief engineer" will often have the reader assume the character is male. So too do the words vampire and victim bring up specific gendered concepts.

However, with the current change in society, readers may be slowly changing their responses to texts. This brings about another idea: texts can be embedded with cultural assumptions and invisible cultural codes that may or may not be obvious ones. These assumptions and codes become reinforced by readers who see their assumptions rewarded in the text. This can become a vicious cycle, where the texts and the readers' assumptions reinforce each other. In other words, this reciprocal relationship between readers and texts can reinforce cultural assumptions which then go back into the texts themselves. It's a dizzying cycle, and breaking it can be difficult for both readers, who have specific assumptions, and authors, who want their readers to have some basis for understanding.

Critics such as Frederic Jameson want the act of interpreting texts to become not only political but to contribute to social change as well by revealing the social and ideological implications of texts. Paul Armstrong, in his book *Conflicting Readings*, asserts that the interpretation of texts "is an intrinsically political activity because power is present in the act of understanding in many forms" (134). He also points out the balance of power between reader and text in that texts may attempt for their readers to act and react in specific ways, "either reconciling them to the existing

state of things or inciting them to protest and resistance" (137). Readers and their interpretations also have power over the texts and they can review texts in such a way as to change or alter other people's ways of reading the work.

This change or alteration cannot go too far from the original meaning as readers must always be responsible to the text. Rosenblatt suggests that a free, uninhibited reaction to a work is necessary before understanding and discussion can begin (*Literature as Exploration* 75). David Bleich argues that individuals' most memorable experiences are those which were in some way emotionally significant (1). These two ideas contribute to the idea that discussion of a text can lead to a greater understanding of it.

In *Literature as Exploration*, Rosenblatt also outlines her views of the readers' relationship with the literature they read:

Our eyes must always be directed toward that dynamic interaction between the work of art and the personality of the reader...to broaden the personal context of emotions and ideas...the development of literary appreciation will depend upon a reciprocal process: An enlargement of the student's understanding of human life leads to increased esthetic sensitivity, and increased esthetic sensitivity makes possible more fruitful human insights from literature. (273)

Not only do literary works aid their readers in gaining a greater understanding of the world around them, but as

readers understand more about the world around them, they gain more from their reading. This is an important concept because readers will gain from and enjoy different texts depending on their current understanding of the world and human interactions.

What do all of these reader-response theorists have to do with the genre of vampire fiction? When readers choose to read books (as opposed to having them assigned as a school project or even selected from a pre-generated list), they are making a statement of interest. Not only are they picking texts they feel they have an interest in, they are also "buying into" the text for the period of time they spend reading it. They may be able to explain or describe that the text is fiction and hence "not real," but during the time they engage in the reading process, they are interpreting and interacting with it. Due to this, they are influenced by the text, perhaps even after they read it.

Based on the texts that they read, readers' views of the vampire as a character is shaped. Each individual author chooses a different facet of the vampire to explore in his or her books. Readers' views of these vampires are shaped by the texts, yet, depending on their responses to the texts, future authors will utilize specific types of vampires. When Stoker published

*Dracula*, he was drawing from many of the earlier legends and written texts; as later authors wrote, they drew from his text.

During the nineteenth century, much of the vampire fiction was, as DeWEES explains, "a medium for expressing anxieties about marriage and family issues" (4).

However, as mentioned in the last chapter, this has changed with modern vampire fiction. What does the modern vampire literature focus on and express?

### **Disruption/Reflection of Social Convention**

As mentioned earlier, from its start, vampire literature has both upheld and stood against current social convention. In the 1800s, the vampire was seen as menacing the family structure. "In the nineteenth century, when vampire literature came to be, the marital status and family roles of victim and vampire were of paramount importance" (DeWEES 2). During this time period, vampire literature was a way to explore concerns about marriage and other family issues as well as show support for marriage conventions (4). In these stories, vampires were coming between what was seen as "proper" relationships and were punished for it. Modern vampire stories, especially those meant for adolescents, are very different in this regard. Due to this, the transactions



between the readers and the texts are different, and a different focus on the vampire-as-character occurs.

The popular Night World series by L.J. Smith shows a world populated by vampires, lycanthropes, witches, and other supernatural creatures partaking in the institution of marriage, conducting family interactions, and even bringing people from the "mortal world" into theirs when they become attracted to each other. In this series, social conventions are being upheld, even to the case of older family members being horrified at the idea of interactions with mortals "James [a young vampire in the series], we've been through this before. You know that your mother and I are worried about you getting too close to Poppy [his mortal friend]. Too...attached...to her" (*Secret Vampire* 34). This conversation sounds curiously familiar to individuals who have "grown attached" to people outside their family's familiar structures of ethnicity and religion. The Night World is populated not just with beings who wish to uphold the conventional way of interactions, though. There are "Night Worlders" and mortals alike who interact in each others' spheres, befriend and even fall in love with each other.

It is not just the characters in this series who battle either to uphold or tear down current social conventions. The characters in Annette Klause's award

winning book *The Silver Kiss* and Vivian Velde's *Companions of the Night* struggle against the current social and familial constraints in order to interact with whom they wish. Kerry, the main character from Velde's story, goes against both her family's imposed curfew, and the societal rules of her learner's driving permit in order to help out her younger brother and retrieve a beloved toy. This is only the beginning of her rebellion, though, as throughout the story, she goes against most of her family's and society's rules in order to help out Ethan, her brand new Undead friend. She determines that aiding a friend is more important than these imposed rules.

Is this a new movement in tearing down social conventions in adolescent vampire fiction? The answer would seem to be "yes" as none of these characters really has any long lasting punishment for going against "the rules." Instead, happy endings are prevalent. This is very unlike the earlier vampire stories when punishment was meted out to those who opposed society's dictates.

The vampire story for adolescents is often a coming of age story. The characters decide which of society's rules are necessary and which are there for purely conventional reasons (or can be ignored when necessary). They are making choices and taking responsibility for

their actions. In a sense, they are choosing which parts of the political/social structure to uphold and which to go against. It is a form of civil disobedience.

### **Politics and Political Power; Adapting to the Adult World**

Vampires are not just a reflection of the political structure; in recent decades, the vampire character has often **become** the political structure. White Wolf's increasingly popular tabletop and live action role-playing game "Vampire: the Masquerade" shows this very clearly. The players of these games assume the personae of vampire characters in a world that is different than the modern world only in that supernatural creatures such as vampires, werewolves, and magicians move freely throughout the social strata. Thus, much as in Christopher Pike's series The Last Vampire, vampires utilize cell phones, cars, and even guns. "It is a Gothic-Punk version of our world, a place of extremes - monolithic, majestic and altogether twisted" (Rein-Hagen 29). This particular game, and the fiction writings it has spun off, often tends to have the vampire characters actively manipulating and controlling the mortal political structure. "Vampires control many of the institutions in the mortal world, especially those which are centrally located and controlled by one city" (109).

Perhaps because people often have a sense of disconnection with the political and governmental systems around them, this type of vampire story has been increasing in popularity. While the amount of literature dealing with this type of vampire has been increasing lately, the ideas have been around for some time. Another aspect of this game system is the conflict between the established vampire groups (the Elders) and the younger ones (the Neophytes). This conflict is a mirror of the conflicts in modern American society between generations, genders, social classes, and ethnicities.

For adolescent readers, this type of vampire literature is attractive because it brings up the conflicts they are concerned with. The vampire myth appears to function for adolescents as a way to explore interactions, experience immortality, and escape "the rules" of the adult world. In adolescent books containing vampires, the vampire is not always in the position of seducer or attacker. The vampire can also be friend, ally, or victim seeking aid. In his article, "The Vampire Myth," Twitchell explains the vampire figure as "the most complete condensation of the problem and the resolutions of pre-adolescence" (115). In adolescent fiction, the vampire is not always the monster, sometimes

the vampire is the character the readers **want** to be. The vampire is the rule breaker, yet at the same time, becoming a vampire means that there is a new grouping of rules and etiquettes to follow. This is an interesting paradox of vampire fiction. The vampire is freed from certain constraints, but bound by others.

This is similar to the change adolescents approach as they are told, "Stop acting like a child; you're an adult now." Is it really any wonder that there is a "vampire puppet on Sesame Street...or even why any child would want to eat a 'vitamin enriched' breakfast cereal named 'Count Chocula'" (109)? While Norine Dresser surveyed college and high school respondents and found a list of what attracted them to this genre, much of their interest was in the vampires' immortality, power, and sophistication. The vampires embody that which some of the readers would like to be. The vampire often functions as the rebel, the attacker of current societal norms.

Again, these prejudices have been around for some time in the vampire writings. "Stoker reinforces social, class, racial and sexual prejudices... manipulate[s] apparently non-political issues into forms which would serve the dominant ideology" (Jackson 121). While Dracula in Stoker's story was punished as this

disrupter of convention, this is not the case in more current vampire fiction. Unless the vampire is portrayed as a monster who must be defeated (*Vampire's Kiss*, the Blood and Lace series, and *The Return of the Vampire* among others) it is often presented in a better, more supportive light (*The Night World* and *The vampire Diary* series, *The Silver Kiss* and even *Tombstones: The Last Drop*).

### **Vampire Fiction Embodies Freedom**

Vampire fiction can also give teens a taste of independence. When Megan and her friend go to investigate mysterious teen disappearances, they take a summer job and head out away from their family. The adults are unable to deal with the problem; the teenagers are not (*Song of the Vampire*). Themes like this one enable readers to visualize their own freedom from the rules and strictures of adult society and be on their own.

Throughout most of the young adult titles this scene is repeated. The vampires are not something that adults can generally deal with. In fact, many times the adults don't even realize that these troubles are being caused by vampires. It is up to the adolescents of the stories to work their way through the problems the vampires

present on their own. One noticeable exception is The Last Vampire series by Christopher Pike. The protagonist is a vampire herself, and while she may interact with the world of adolescence, it is an alien one to her. The other stories have both the vampire characters and the young adults slipping between both the adult and adolescent world with varying degrees of ease.

In the *Vampire's Kiss*, when teenagers Susan and Angie seek help from an adult, Angie's aunt Carlota, they are told, "'This is your task' she said emphatically. 'It has been given to you to do, not to me. I can give you advice, but I cannot do the work. If I interfere, I might upset the balance and work against you'" (170). Here, the adult informs the teens that it is up to them. The adult world cannot contend against the horrors of the vampire; only the teens can battle against them and rescue their friends. More telling is the continuation of the conversation between the characters. Susan asks for knowledge, for Carlota to teach them what to do. She is informed, "you do not need a teacher" (171). The knowledge is not something that can be taught in school or anywhere else; it is something she already has within her. This is something that adolescent readers enjoy, the idea that adults are not the holders of all knowledge.

The vampire in adolescent literature stands as a sign of independence; although the characters may want adult interaction and aid as in the previous example, or go against adult society as in the *Night World* series or *Companions of the Night*, adults are not needed. As *Song of the Vampire* shows, many times adults **can't** go where the characters need to go or do what they need to do. The vampire stands not only as a symbol of independence and freedom, but also as a symbol of crossing over into the adult world. The characters are taking the power of adult decision making into their own hands. When they do this, in a way, they are becoming adults even if the adult world does not see it that way. Thus, dealing with vampires is a rite of passage into adulthood for them.

This is nothing new in adolescent fiction. As early as Louise Fitzhugh's book, *Harriet the Spy* (1964), young adult characters survive on their own with imperfect parents unable to help them with their problems.

Reading about characters dealing with vampires is one way for adolescents to see the vampire as a symbol for independence, but a vampire's freedom of action is another draw for the adolescent reader. As Chelsea, a character recently turned into a vampire thinks, "The thing she liked most about being a vampire was she didn't have to put up with anything she didn't like. She didn't



have to go to school, she didn't have to live at home with her parents..." (*Blood Spell* 8).

### **Romance and Vampire Fiction**

While interviewing the adult participants in my study, several mentioned the fact that the covers and back of several of the young adult vampire books they saw appeared to be romances. While they placed texts like Cusick's *Vampire* into the horror category based on its cover, others like Smith's series *The Vampire Diaries* or Harrell's book *Blood Curse*, proved more problematic for them. The covers appeared to mimic covers of young adult, or the more sedate adult, books of the romance genre. The back covers of books like Adams' *Vampire Kiss*, only continued this confusion. "Finally Susan is in love. Drew is tall, handsome - and hiding something" (backcover). Even though these young adult books should not be considered romances, they seemed to confuse casual viewers as to how to classify them. Because of this, the codes of young adult vampire novel needs to be compared with those of the romance novel to see their similarities and differences.

Although not all works of vampire fiction can be labeled as romance, they do share some of the codes of romance that Christian-Smith found in her study of

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romance novels. Viewing her code of dominant code of romance that gives structure and meaning to the romance novel, we find the following:

1. Romance is a market relationship.
  2. Romance is a heterosexual practice.
  3. Romance manages sexuality while privileging non-genital forms of sexual expression.
  4. Romance is a transforming experience giving meaning to girls' lives and endowing girls with prestige and importance.
  5. Romance is about the dominance of males and the subordination of females.
  6. Romance is about learning to relate to males.
  7. Romance is a personal, private experience.
- ("Romancing the Girl" 81-82)

Some of these points hold true in all the books studied; others do not. In and of itself, this indicates that if vampire fiction is closely connected to romance, it is not the romantic structure of the romance novel itself. It is important to take a closer look at these individual points and how they are or are not supported in works of young adult vampire fiction.

### **Romance as a Market Relationship**

According to Christian-Smith's first dominant code of romance, the female contributes fidelity and devotion to the relationship. The male contributes status on the female for being with her. In short, the male is the valued person as all he contributes is his presence. This code does not seem to be upheld in the adolescent

vampire texts. Many females such as Lacey in *The Vampire's Promise* view themselves as individuals with or without boyfriends. "Lacey was amused. Bobby actually believed that it would make Lacey feel better to know that he, Bobby, had considered her as a date" (135). Rowan, Kestrel, and Jade from *Daughters of Darkness* are quite content on their own, without a male to give them "status."

### **Romance as Heterosexual Practice**

None of the books intended for adolescent audiences in the study dealt with anything other than heterosexual relationships either between humans, vampires, or any of the other supernatural creatures represented. While this does happen in some of the vampire fiction intended for the adult audience, it is absent in the adolescent vampire fiction.

Occasionally, a vampire of the same sex turns a mortal into a vampire (*The Silver Kiss* 115), but there are no sexual or sensual descriptions used as when a vampire either turns a mortal of the opposite sex into a vampire or feeds from him or her. Several series that adult subjects mentioned [Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* and Tanya Huff's *Vicki Nelson* series] do deal with non-heterosexual relationships, but none of the adolescent

novels do this.

While homosexuality may be becoming a more accepted part for adult vampire fiction, it has not become acceptable for young adult vampire fiction. There have been books intended for the adolescent market which deal with non-heterosexual relationships, but none which blend the vampire character with same sex relationships.

### **Managing Sexuality While Restricting it to Non-genital Forms**

There is also not a great deal in the way of genital sexual expression in these adolescent works. Part of this may be due to the fact that most of the texts dealing with sexuality made mention of the sensuality or eroticism of the vampire's feeding needs. Locke's series, *Blood and Lace* makes clear this fact as victims being drained are often mistaken for individuals in the throes of sexual contact. Harrell's *The Vampire Twins* series has vampires of the opposite sex from each twin desiring to turn the twins into vampires and describing how wonderful it would feel, but the vampires of the same sex do not approach them.

In *The Silver Kiss*, similar scenes are repeated between Simon the vampire and Zoe the mortal. His blood drinking is described as: "It was the tender ecstasy of

the kissed that he could send with his touch"(127). A similar scene occurs in *Blood Curse* when James, the mortal protagonist, is being drained by the Undead Rina.

He was unsure what he was going to do next, when suddenly a sharp pain made him shudder. A feeling like warm water lapping over him, swept him, and he seemed to be drifting - not caring what happened next...he felt only the sharp, true pain that set him free, a pain that was close to ecstasy." (69)

### **Romance as a Transforming Experience**

Many of the other dominant codes Christian-Smith mentions do not hold true in adolescent vampire fiction either. Another one of the codes she identified was that of romance as a transforming experience for the females involved. Being with a member of the opposite sex made them complete. While at first it seems that in *Hunter's Moon* Val's interest in dating supports the idea that romance is a transforming experience and gives meaning to her life, she explains that she is much too busy trying to deal with her family's problems and the fact that there's a dangerous vampire in the area. Romance is not central for her character development.

Romance and romantic entanglements are important to the characters in many of these novels, but it is not the central issue. Often survival and clearing up problems or mysteries are. While Susan from *Vampire's Kiss* begins

thinking about how it would feel to be kissed by another character in the book the following happens: "She shook her head, pushing the memory away. She couldn't think of Drew now. She had work to do" (158). Young adult vampire novels do not rely on the code of romance. When romances occur, they are often less important than the rest of the story. The female characters such as Val from *Hunter's Moon* or Darcy from *Vampire* do not rely on the idea of romance as the central part of a female's life.

### **Dominance of Males and the Subordination of Females**

Unlike the romance books studied in Christian-Smith's work, the male is not always the dominant one in adolescent vampire fiction. Pike's *The Last Vampire* series' protagonist, Alisa Perne, is a five-thousand-year-old vampire who dominates the books and the relationships she has. In the earlier scene from *Blood Curse*, James is described in passive terms, much like earlier romances describe the women in sexual relationships.

In two-thirds of the books, the females are powerful figures. They are either in control or equal partners with the males. In *The Vampire Diaries* series, while Elena begins as a weak character, in the end she is the

character to whom the others turn. In *The Chosen*, (one of the Night World series) Rashel, a mortal vampire hunter, is a deadly dangerous character. While she and a vampire character become attracted to each other, it is a meeting of equals. Neither one is subordinate to the other.

Books such as *Goodnight Kiss* have female characters just as dangerous as males and in the end a seemingly weak character, April, ends victorious. While this book is truly shock fiction, it is an interesting twist that a female character dominates in the end.

Of the works listed in the Appendix B, more than half of them have strong female protagonists who are not "following" the dominant codes Christian-Smith lists. While Megan and Iris (protagonists in *Song of the Vampire*) are involved in relationships, they are relationships of equals. While Devnee in *The Vampire's Promise* begins by partaking in the "cult of beauty" (she wants to be pretty so boys will notice her) throughout the novel she begins to realize how shallow that is and longs to be viewed as her own person, not merely an appearance.

### **Romance is About Learning to Relate to Males**

This code incorporates the idea of the importance of



learning to get along with and establish a [romantic] relationship with males. "This situates girls within a set of relations whereby they are the ones who must compromise and change" ("Romancing the Girl" 86). In a sense this builds on the ideas of the two previous codes as females having little importance or self worth outside of males. Some of the female characters in adolescent vampire fiction (generally not the protagonists) feel they need males to be complete. Angie from *Vampire's Kiss* secretly dates and "has been happy from the beginning" (19). She also compromises her own standards and changes for her boyfriend. "Angie was so crazy about him that if he could justify things, he could usually get Angie to go around with anything" (27).

While there are female characters who view their relationships with males in that way, there are also those who feel that they shouldn't be the ones to compromise in a relationship. Roxanne from *The Vampire's Promise* makes the decision to "dump" her current boyfriend because she is not comfortable with him anymore. Hannah in *Soulmate* is told by Thierry her vampire "boyfriend," "I want what you want. I want you to be happy. Nothing else matters to me" (207). While the phrasing may sound trite, the compromise is all on the male's side.

## **Romance is a Personal, Private Experience**

This code occurs in the works of vampire fiction relatively unchanged. Problems and difficulties occurring in the romance are viewed as individual to each relationship. However Christian-Smith's statement that "girls in the novels never 'compare notes'" does not hold up ("Romancing the Girl" 86). Female (and male) characters in these books are sharing information about their relationship with others. Eric and Jason in *Deadly Relations* discuss how Eric feels about Sabrina, the girl he is currently dating, and Shawn, a girl he has just become attracted to. Jessica and Elizabeth Wakefield discuss their boyfriend situation in-depth in *Kiss of the Vampire*.

However much characters may discuss their romantic entanglements, problems arising from the romance are seen as something the couple "needs to work out" on their own. When Elizabeth and Tom have a stressful time in their romance in *Kiss of the Vampire*, their friends leave them alone to deal with it. Only Elizabeth's twin sister Jessica inquires, and even then Elizabeth avoids telling her about their problems. "Usually she and her twin confided in each other about anything and everything. But this was all so new, so strange, and so nebulous somehow" (178).

An important point to remember is that the codes of romance are not merely seen in romance books. They indicate what romance readers and writers feel, perhaps subconsciously, are acceptable behaviors for people involved in romances. They are not something created without societal influence first. Societies with different standards of acceptable behavior would have different codes in their romances.

### **Cultural Code of Appearance**

The codes of romance as Christian-Smith defines them are not the only codes that occur in various works of fiction, there are other codes as well. One of them is the code of appearance.

Something that is similar between romance stories and works of adolescent vampire fiction is the fact that appearances are remarked on and, at times, focused on. Devnee of *The Return of the Vampire* begins by being very concerned about her appearance -- concerned enough to do just about anything for it. Elena from The Vampire Diaries series also begins by commenting on her appearance as "the fashion trendsetter...the girl every boy wanted and every girl wanted to be" (*The Awakening* 3). However, the concern about beauty and appearance fades. While many of the female characters are worried

about their appearance, Val in *Hunter's Moon* (12) and Devnee in *The Return of the Vampire* (3-4), they tend to put their concern about their appearances behind them and concentrate on survival. Some in fact, like Devnee, decide that it is not as important as they had first thought.

Another focus on attractiveness is the appearance of the vampires themselves. Perhaps drawing from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century literature, vampires in young adult fiction are depicted as being attractive. Their victims generally are portrayed this way as well. Rina (*Blood Curse* and *Blood Spell*) was turned into a vampire in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century because of her appearance, and she is attracted to James who is described throughout the two books as beautiful, handsome, striking, and attractive. Sabrina from Locke's *Blood and Lace* series is portrayed as beautiful. In *Soulmate*, Hanah, a mortal, finds a mixed group of vampires and humans and discovers, "Normal-type teenagers, except that a surprising number of them were extremely good looking" (163). The vampire and mortal characters in *Vampire's Kiss*, *The Last Vampire Series*, and almost all of the other novels read are portrayed as attractive as well.

The vampire myth in current literature, unless the vampire is clearly symbolic and not being used as an

active character, tends towards beauty and attractiveness. This is promoting the cultural value that interesting people are beautiful and attractive. In a sense, adolescent vampire literature (with a few exceptions) promotes that to be interesting, exotic, or dangerous one must be good looking. Anything else is not regarded as interesting.

This can be seen in today's culture by viewing television shows and movies as well as magazine advertisements, commercials, and more. Attractiveness is promoted. None of the books in this study had main characters who were overweight. While some of the characters did not feel they were very attractive and bemoaned their looks, the other characters in the books disagreed with them. Val in *Hunter's Moon* does not feel she's very attractive, yet her friends do.

A periphery character in *Tombstones: The Last Drop*, Sergeant Felder, after saying "I look dreadful" (81) is contradicted and told, "You don't look dreadful. You do need compliments. I'll bet not many people tell you how gorgeous you are" (82). Here again while a female character is critical about her attractiveness, her visual beauty is reinforced. In the majority of the books, only the female characters are interested in their appearance. The male characters are sometimes described

as attractive, James from *Secret Vampire* is described as "the handsomest boy at El Camino High" (4), but he does not seem interested in his appearance. However, appearance plays a large role in books. Even though characters are 'overlooking' their appearances, their looks are still being commented upon.

### **Gender Constraints**

A number of critics (including Jones, Twitchell, and Leatherdale) discuss the idea of the vampire (Dracula especially) as father figure and his slayers as the sons trying to wrest control of the women from him. Freud discusses this idea when he speaks of the Oedipus-complex as "typical for a child to regard what his father does to his mother in sexual intercourse as ill-treatment" (273). The vampire, seen as a figure who is older and more powerful, easily fits in place as the father figure yet can be killed without guilt ("The Vampire Myth" 111) and the vampire's female victim can thus be wooed and won. Jackson continues with the idea of vampire as symbol of sexual repression with, "The fantasy of vampirism is generated at the moment of maximum social repression...It introduces all that is 'kept in the dark': the vampires are active at *night*, when light/vision/the power of the look are suspended" (120).

A recent television show, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (taken from the movie of the same name), takes this idea, yet engenders a twist. Buffy, at first a high school student in the show, is a "vampire slayer." Her job is to keep vampires and other non-human creatures under control. This fits with many of the vampire slayer ideas that have appeared from *Dracula* on; however, there is a difference. Buffy is female, and the humans she protects are of either gender. This television show, and the book spinoffs, take away the idea of the victim as solely female and the victim's protector as male. While the "father figure" may still be encompassed in this story as an older more powerful figure, the sons protesting their father's power have metamorphasized.

Many of the adolescent books have the vampire hunter or the vampire itself as a female character. The main vampire hunters in *Song of the Vampire* are both female. While there are several vampires that they are hunting, the most difficult one to deal with (in a tradition that goes back to Grendal's mother in *Beowulf*) is the female vampire named Jade. In fact, unlike many of the works of adolescent fiction, this vampire gets away and will perhaps return to haunt the heroes again in a sequel.

While Rina finds and falls in love with the handsome James and plots for a way for him to fall in love with

her in return, the difference is that she is in control. This is a switch in the gender code: in this novel, the female character is either the equal or the superior of the male characters. Most of the females in these texts do not view themselves as inferior or controlled by the males because of their gender. More importantly, they do not act that way either.

The age of the vampire victims being helpless females rescued by their male counterparts has faded away. In *Kiss of the Vampire*, when Tom, Elizabeth's boyfriend suggests that they go to a costume party, "I could go as a vampire, with you as my victim" (19), he is told that he is being sexist and it should be the other way around. The vampire slayer, or even the menacing vampire is often female. An interesting twist is R. L. Stine's *Goodnight Kiss*. While this is a book from the Fear Street collection, and generally considered "shock fiction," the basic premise is a new twist. Two vampires, male and female, hold a competition to see which one of them can be more attractive and alluring to the mortals around them. Their chosen victims are of the opposite sex for each of them.

Although the idea of the female vampire is not a recent one, having occurred even before Stoker's *Dracula*, the difference is that these modern female vampires are



often more in control and are more accepted in the literature.

### **Vampire as Symbol of Eroticism and Repression**

The image of the vampire as "father figure" goes even further than the idea of the sons wresting control. "Vampires, in fact, have been connected with incest almost from their introduction into literature" (DeWEES 20).

A recent work of adolescent fiction, *Uncle Vampire* takes this even further. The main character, a high school student named Carolyn, created a world for herself where her uncle is a vampire. In fact, the uncle had been sexually molesting her for several years. In this particular text, the image of the vampire is a metaphor for incest, a metaphor the reader slowly begins to put together reading through the story.

Vampires stand as a sexual symbol for more than incest though. "The vampire myth is perhaps the highest symbolic representative of eroticism" (Jackson 120). Much has been written on the vampire story as eroticism and engendering - the penetration of the victim with canine (phallic) teeth and a sucking of the victim's (life supporting) blood. The sexuality of the vampire attack as creating new beings from the victims has also

been studied. As the psychologist Ernest Jones says in his text, *On the Nightmare*, "Its [the vampire] psychological meaning is correspondingly complicated" (98). Jones continues his idea of the quasi-sexual nature of the vampire by comparing the vampire's habit of drinking human blood with the sexual/spiritual energy draining of the Incubus-Succubus (116). In James Twitchell's text, *The Living Dead*, the vampire is exemplified as "an aberration of Romantic eroticism" (4). While stating this, he also stresses the fact that "the myth was also often used in serious attempts to express various human relationships" (4). In his article, "The Vampire Myth" he continues with the idea that, "The myth is loaded with sexual excitement; yet there is no mention of sexuality. It is sex without genitalia, sex without confusion, sex without responsibility, sex without guilt, sex without love-better yet, sex without mention" (113).

Twitchell, Jackson, Jones, Freud, Leatherdale and others have seemingly exhausted the study of the vampire as erotic symbol. However, with adolescent readers, the vampire seems more and more a figure of coming of age, and less a figure of eroticism. "This demand for immortality is a product of our wishes too unmistakable to lay claim to reality" (Freud 149).

Below the surface game of scares played around the archetypical campfire of Western culture, another

match is being waged with the utmost seriousness. .  
. Essentially, horror has little to do with fright;  
it has more to do with laying down the rules of  
socialization and extrapolating a hidden code of  
sexual behavior. (*Dreadful Pleasures* 65-66)

Here Twitchell states his belief that for adolescents,  
vampire stories indicate what is and is not acceptable,  
rather than being a source of erotic interest.

While Twitchell's assumption may be correct in some  
cases, I tend to disagree with explaining sexual codes as  
the sole, or even most important, reason behind vampire  
fiction geared specifically to an adolescent audience.  
In fact, his statement in his second book, *The Living  
Dead*, seems to hold more importance when viewing the  
reasons adolescents enjoy vampire fiction, "the  
psychological use of this mythic figure as an analogy to  
explain human interactions" (4).

As Freud stated while researching sexuality in  
children, "The analytic researches carried out by the  
writer [Freud] fell, to begin with, into the error of  
greatly overestimating the importance of *seduction* as a  
source of sexual manifestations in children" (241). In  
her study, Norrine Dresser found that sexual attraction  
was a major reason her subjects enjoyed reading vampire  
literature, but her subjects varied in age a great deal,  
and she did not specify which responses went with  
specific age groups. Another difference, is that most of

her adolescent subjects were, at this point, reading vampire horror books for adults, not those written for adolescents. The themes in the books written for adolescents do, as I have pointed out, differ a great deal from the themes of adult vampire literature.

## **Guilt**

Another aspect of horror, that dealing with vampires especially, is guilt. People wish that someone they know would die, and then if this occurs, they are suffused with guilt and fear that they were responsible. Although many psychologists have dealt with this issue, Ernest Jones succinctly describes it as:

The guilty conscience resulting from such wishes against those who are otherwise objects of affection naturally brings the thought that if they really died and the evil wishes were thus fulfilled, they would surely return from the grave to haunt and torture their 'murderer'. It is largely because such wishes are so common in the unconscious that the prevailing attitude towards the supernatural is one of fear and even terror... The psychological fact remains and must be faced, that the person who dreads the Vampire is the person really afflicted by guilt. (113)

However, this idea of guilt and responsibility generally holds true only with the development of cognitive and psychosocial development. Looking at a variety of psychosocial stages and development processes, it can be seen that this type of guilt does not seem developed until late in adolescence. Erickson's's

mention of guilt in the 3-6 year old range is not that complex a view. Instead, it is "self-criticism due to failure to fulfill parental expectations" (Seifert et al. 40). Viewing Erickson's stages of development, it seems most likely that the type of guilt associated with being the cause of the death of a loved one, thus condemning the person they hate to return, occurs late during the 5<sup>th</sup> stage, 12-19 years old, when the concepts of fidelity begin to form, or even in the 6<sup>th</sup> stage, 19-25 years old, when the "ability to establish close, committed relationships with others" occurs (40-41). It does not seem that the average adolescent reader of vampire literature is cognitively and psychosocially developed enough to experience the type of guilty conscience speculated by Jones and others.

Seifert and his co-authors have a slightly differing take on the multiple domains of development. During the adolescent state (defined by them as 12-18 years of age), there is the beginning of abstract thinking, but the development of postformal thought perhaps necessary for such complex feelings of guilt and responsibility does not appear fully formed until the stage of early adulthood (defined by them as 20-40 years of age) (5-6). Therefor these complex feelings are not the expectation in readers of adolescent literature.

This idea of guilt or longing/desire as the reasons for adolescent vampire fiction is something that will be explored further in later chapters.

### **Vampire Fiction versus Shock Fiction**

With the increasing presence of the vampire character in young adult fiction, it is becoming more important to distinguish between books of literary quality which utilize vampires as characters and books which are mostly shock fiction. If a book is primarily shock fiction, the vampiric character exists as a "plugin" monster that any other monster could easily substitute. Books of literary quality which have vampire characters are developing and forwarding the character of a vampire, not utilizing the vampire for its purely monstrous qualities. It is these latter books which have the most potential for the development and expansion of the vampire.

As stated early, shock fiction is primarily narrative which "exists solely to support a series of shocks occurring at absurdly frequent intervals. Push-button characters serve as disposable inserts to advance the narrative, shock to shock" (West 39). Using Huck's criteria for judging the quality of young adult literature (plot, characterization, setting, and theme), it is possible to distinguish between works of shock

fiction and works of better literary quality.

While all four criteria are important, the first and most obvious one is plot. Huck describes a well-constructed plot as "organic and interrelated" which progresses in a logical and natural manner "from the actions and the decisions of the characters in given situations" (17). She continues to differentiate between series books where the plot is predictable and "move rapidly from one improbable happening to another" (18). The very nature of vampire fiction makes it necessary for improbable happenings to occur. Vampires are not the normal part of a realistic landscape. However, how the authors deal with the progression of the action in a story utilizing vampires is an important part of judging the quality of a book. The plot in R. L. Stine's *Goodnight Kiss* is really beyond the characters' control and, except for the twist at the end, very predictable. Two vampires decide to stalk some humans in a competition to see which one is more powerful. Klause's *The Silver Kiss* and Harrell's series *Vampire's Love* is not as predictable. Actions that the characters take impact the storyline. It is not as if the characters are helpless to affect the plot. The characters and their individual qualities need to be seen as impacting the plot and story-line. Characters' actions and reactions need to be

seen as influencing the plot.

Characterization is also an important part of judging the quality of a book. A simple way of stating this is that characters who are only portrayed in one specific way lack depth, and characters who do not behave consistently are not well portrayed. While absolute consistency could lead a character to become stagnant and flat, the growth and change that occurs should have logical development. Without explanation, a character who has, for example, a fear of water, should not be portrayed as happily swimming across the English Channel. Characters should grow and change throughout the story, but this needs to be in a well developed manner and not as abrupt changes without the reader's ability to track these changes.

There are times that growth and change for specific characters will be avoided in a story. Cooney's vampires are memorable villains because they **do not** change. They are the epitome of evil and thus can't change without taking away from what the author intends. However, Devnee (the main character in Cooney's *The Return of the Vampire*) grows as a character as she realizes that **taking** someone's popularity and beauty can never be the same as **earning** it. Books with characters who are stock creations, who do not change or grow, tend to be books of



lesser quality because the focus is on the shock story-line at the expense of the mental growth and understanding of the characters. The characters in a shock story-line mainly serve to help deliver the adrenaline rushes, and their growth and development would detract from that purpose. A good example of this are the series thrillers like The Sweet Valley University Thriller books. The books in these series like *Kiss of the Vampire* rely on main characters Elizabeth and Jessica Wakefield who need to stay the same as all their other appearances in the successful Sweet Valley High and Sweet Valley University series. They are rather static characters with very specific, stock responses.

Setting, the third of Huck's criteria, also distinguishes shock fiction from books of better literary quality. Points to consider when judging a book based on setting include: whether the setting is well described, how realistic the setting can be described in an otherwise surrealistic story, and whether the setting conflicts with other aspects of the story. It is not as important to distinguish if the setting is taking place in reality as it is to distinguish if the setting fits with the story and is described in enough detail to give the appearance of possible reality. For example, Smith's Nightworld books, while existing as part of a series,

takes place in different locales and time periods. Some of these places, like the small town of Briar Creek (*Daughters of Darkness*) or the climbing structure play area (*The Chosen*) could exist, but others like the otherworldly club for vampires, witches, and other supernatural creatures could not. Smith's descriptions are detailed enough to seem realistic yet do not detract from the plot. In her book, *The Chosen*, vampire hunter Rashel and some companions keep an eye on the decaying district of an unnamed city. Smith's description of the setting is an accurate one. "All at once, as if they had crossed some invisible dividing line, the gutters were full of soggy trash and the fences were topped with razor wire. The buildings were government projects, dark warehouses, or rowdy bars" (24). On the other hand, Cusick uses stock, simplistic settings in his novel, *Vampire*. The opening scene takes place in a carnival with the characters going to a fortuneteller's tent. No real description of the setting is given; the reader is expected to be uninterested in any description past the most basic one.

Examining the theme of a book really enables the books of higher literary quality to stand out. "Most well-written books may be read for several layers of meaning" (Huck 19). *Companions of the Night* and *The*

*Silver Kiss* are not merely stories about mortals and supernatural creatures interacting and becoming friends; they are stories about learning to live and accept death as a part of life, and accepting the differences people have from each other. *Uncle Vampire* is not merely a vampiric horror story, or even a story using a vampire metaphor for incest and abuse; it is a story about believing and trusting in friends, and the obligations friends have for each other.

Many of the books analyzed in this study meet Huck's criteria for judging the quality of adolescent literature. Adolescent vampire fiction cannot, as a whole, be shoved into the category of low quality shock and serial fiction. Books like *The Silver Kiss*, *Companions of the Night*, *The Return of the Vampire*, and *Uncle Vampire* are individual books which show that adolescent vampire fiction can have well-developed plots, characters, settings, and themes. While perhaps not as highly regarded on this scale, many of the series vampire novels also reveal development in these areas. *The Night World*, *The Last Vampire*, *Vampire's Love*, and the *Vampire Diaries* are all series with plots, characters, settings, and themes that are developed and indicative of literary quality. Some books which involve vampire characters are works of shock fiction; not all of them fit into that

simplistic designation. Like any other genre of young adult fiction each of these books needs to be judged on an individual basis.

### **Final Discussion**

The concept of the vampire character has changed over the past years, especially in the vampire's portrayal in young adult fiction. The role has grown past the realm of mere monster or cautionary tale, and in some cases the vampire character is even viewed as a hero.

The literature itself has also expanded. It has gone beyond the idea of family values and often explores issues important to the adolescent reader. Issues of freedom, relationships, views of societal control, and even personal issues are all explored in a variety of the vampire fiction written for young adults.

These changes have made this vampire literature written for a specific audience very different from the adult literature with its lack of eroticism and lack of guilt associations. This literature is also not merely a subcategory of other young adult literature. It is not all pure horror, nor does it follow the code of romance.

This literature needs to be looked at not only from its own written text, but also from the viewpoint of what its readers create and interpret when reading it. This

idea will be pursued in more detail in the next chapter which deals with the responses of specific readers of vampire fiction.

CHAPTER FOUR  
VIEWS OF THE VAMPIRE READER AS SHOWN THROUGH INTERVIEWS

About the WHY's of the younger generations' fascination with vampires, It's almost like a form of rebellion against society - but it's also a way of conforming - a way of belonging and "fitting in." Perhaps it's more of a generational rebellion - young vs. old. There always seems to be a rebellious fad amongst the young (when I say young, I mean < the thirtysomething [sic] crowd). In the 20's/30's, it was the speakeasy - the 40's was the swingers - the 50's had the greasers and Jerry Lee Lewis - the sixties saw the emergence of the psychedelics and Joplin, the Doors and drugs, drugs, drugs - the seventies has hippies, dope, and flower power and drugs - the eighties has disco, punk and the beginnings of rap and coke - and the nineties have grunge, Goths, crack, methamphetamine and BODY PIERCING!! Every generation seems to have defining qualities - so the vamp fascination is both a rebellion and a conformity - if that makes any sense. It frightens me to think of what will define my son's generation. Every generation has to be worse than the one before it if it is to disgust and appal its predecessor. The 21st century promises to be a "real treat!!!" (E-mail response of an adult vampire-fiction reader)

**Development of the Study**

This study arose from my interest in discovering not only the expectations, reading interests and history of readers of young adult vampire literature but also how they perceived the genre and what similarities and differences exist between these young adult readers and their adult counterparts.

Once the individuals for the interviews were chosen, they were asked an identical set of questions including finding out when they began reading vampire fiction, what they expected from this literature, their self-explained reasons for interest in this literature, and specific questions about vampire characters. A complete list of these base questions can be seen in Appendix A.

When possible (with the majority of the young adults and forty percent of the adults) group meetings were also set up so that I would be able to gather information on the people's interactions with other readers of vampire literature. When interacting in groups, individuals were more prone to specifically describe texts and characters that they liked or disliked. They were also more likely to describe in detail their perceptions of vampire powers and abilities and the qualities of effective vampire characters. The group dynamics led to such discussions, while the individual interviews did not.

Utilizing their self-descriptions in answering these questions enabled me to step away from the trained critics' interpretation of this literature and view the responses and ideas of the readers themselves. This gives a broader look into the appeal and reader expectations of young adult vampire literature as those actively engaged in transactions with the texts are involved.

Involving readers of this literature in my study is also important because it enables me to collect and analyze data on these readers' reading habits, expectations, and analysis of the characters in the fiction itself. Popular assumptions of vampire fiction are that it is a trite area full of cookie cutter simplistic characters. My interviewing of readers of this fiction helps reveal that these assumptions are not true.

### **Introduction to the Study**

Janice Radway's research on a small group of Romance fiction readers is, in an odd way, a starting point for research on adolescent and young adult readers of vampire fiction. Like her study, this one focuses on a small group of readers from a specific geographic area - Marietta, Ohio. Also similar to her study is the fact that there is more to vampire fiction than first appears. The genre of adolescent vampire fiction is regarded in a similar manner as the romance genre; while both are considered popular fiction, neither genre is highly valued and wide sweeping generalizations about them abound.

While there is a sizable library system for a town of 15,000 (Washington County has a population of 62,254 as of the 1990 census), young adult horror books were not a high priority on the ordering list. Up until two years ago, when



a new individual became involved in ordering, many of the interviewed subjects stated that they had trouble finding the newer horror books on the shelf. One interviewee said, "When I was younger, a few years ago, I couldn't find the books I wanted like vampire or horror. Lately though, it's easier" (Janet). Like the Smithton women in Radway's study, these readers are purchasers of the material they read. In order to have access to most of this literature, an adolescent in the Marietta area would need to read reviews about these books outside the area; to purchase these books, an adolescent would need to go to a large chain bookstore in the larger town of Parkersburg, West Virginia (a forty minute drive). According to Eva Goode who is in charge of ordering young adult books for all branches of the Washington county system, requests for horror fiction have not come from the branch buildings. She tends to order horror titles mostly for the main branch.

The county library system is comprised of one main library in Marietta itself, and four branches in nearby towns. At the time of this study, there were over 154,000 books and other items available in the system.

Some of these young readers of vampire fiction found family support for their reading. Andy, a 14 year old male, had his mother's help in finding these books either on the Internet or on bi-monthly trips to the bookstore. Others

were occasionally chided for wasting their time reading this fiction (Beth and Donna). Due to the limited censoring of horror books at the local libraries, as well as some parents not wishing their children to read this fiction, there did tend to be some furtiveness in reading horror fiction.

While I acquired fifteen adolescent and young adult interview subjects, two individuals, who stated they read vampire fiction, declined to be interviewed because the interview required parental permission. In a sense, this reflected similar concerns that women in Radway's study expressed regarding how their husbands or children viewed their romance reading (*Reading the Romance* 87).

When asking for parental permission for interviewing the subjects, I heard a common theme. "Yes, he reads 'that stuff'," "She's reading, I don't care what she reads, even if it's that sort of thing, " and "I hope she gets over reading 'that stuff' soon, it's just a phase." The parents tended to view this fiction as a phase, or less worthwhile than other types of fiction. This view filtered down to the subjects as well; they knew that this reading was not viewed as highly as other types. Some of the subjects were apologists and defenders at the same time. "I know that it's not as good as some of the stuff my teacher wants me to read, but I like it" (Iris). None of the readers solely read this fiction, though.

In my study, the adolescent and young adult subjects were between ten and seventeen years old. Five were male and ten were female. Their names have been changed for the purpose of this study. Twice as many of them were female. This seems rather odd in light of the subjects' beliefs that there would be an equal number of female and male readers. However, while making inquiries for interview subjects, I found it easier to find young female readers of this literature. Their names and ages are as follows:

Andy 14	Amber 17	Fran 11
Brian 10	Beth 15	Gloria 14
Carl 14	Cindy 12	Hope 15
David 17	Donna 10	Iris 16
Ed 12	Ellen 13	Janet 17

Interestingly enough, those interviewed differed from what this study revealed on their gender perceptions of horror fiction readers. Most tended to feel that there would be more male readers of horror fiction than female readers or an equal number. "Most girls would be like, 'ooh gross.' I think more guys read it" (Amber). They also believed that more males would read fantasy and science fiction. The reverse was true when questioned about romance readers. From this, it is possible to speculate that these

readers place fiction utilizing vampires as major characters in a different category entirely. It is not in any of these other categories although; as Gloria said, "vampires aren't like always horror. Sometimes, like in the *Gold, no Silver Kiss*, it's a romance. And I just got one of my Mom's books where the vampire is like an alien or something [*The Madness Season* by C.S. Friedman]." Andy furthered this statement with his statement, "Everybody says, 'yeah it has vampires so it's horror', but it isn't. I like horror books and some books with vampires aren't horror; they're romance or something stupid like that."

Noel Carroll furthers this idea when he states, "Novels are denominated horrific in respect of their intended capacity to raise a certain *effect*. . . horror takes its title from the emotion it characteristically or rather ideally promotes; this emotion constitutes the identifying mark of horror" (14). The mere presence of one or more vampire characters in a novel does not make it a horror novel.

In order to see comparisons between younger readers and adult readers, I interviewed adults as well. Originally, I began with fifteen adults in my study as well. For a variety of reasons, including personal time commitments and unease at being interviewed, five asked to be removed from the study. The remaining ten ranged in age from 25 to 43.

Six were male and four were female. Their names have also been changed for the purpose of this study. All spoken quotations have been taken directly from taped interviews. They were transcribed verbatim. Pauses in the commentary have been marked with dashes. As with the young adults surveyed, this may not be considered a representative group due to the fact that subjects were found by asking individuals in book groups, libraries, and bookstores if they read this literature and would be willing to be interviewed. I would interview them and then ask for names of individuals they knew who also read this type of literature.

There were more male adult readers of vampire fiction than there were female. This number wasn't as significant as the readership difference between the younger readers. Part of this could be due to the fact that the adult vampire fiction tends to fall more into the horror/suspense and erotica areas while the vampire fiction intended for younger readers tends to span multiple areas including horror/suspense, humor and romance. There will be further discussion on the subjects' perceptions of the genres of vampire fiction.

Each interviewee was asked the same set of questions. The specific questions included finding out when they began reading vampire fiction, what they expected from this

literature, what interested them in vampire fiction, their ideas on why others read this fiction, and their perceptions of other readers of vampire literature. Further questions included titles of books they'd read, their history as readers, and perceived power and gender struggles in this type of character. Non-directive interviewing techniques were used, so extra, individualized clarifying questions were asked of each subject. For a complete list of the base questions, refer to the appendix.

As Ray Pawson discusses in his article, "Theorizing the Interview," there are "battle lines" drawn between proponents of 'structured' and 'unstructured' interviews (297). To reduce them to their basic definitions -- structured interviews utilize identical stimulus (questions) with all subjects; an unstructured interview "offers minimal steerage of the research topic [a few starter questions] within broad areas of discussion" (298). While both methods have their benefits, I chose to utilize an unstructured (non-directive) technique because I felt the information gained would be closer to the individual ideas of the subjects. Considering the particular matter of inquiry, the readers' reasons for reading vampire literature and their ideas and attitudes about it, unstructured interviews seemed a better way of approaching the matter. This format allowed for more give and take and explanation than the more rigid

structured interview.

Due to the limited nature of the interviews, this study can not be regarded as a truly random sample. After finding one individual, I would often ask whom he or she might recommend I speak with next. Two of my subjects are sisters, another two are cousins, and six are the children of co-workers at a community college. Not all of the respondents are familiar with each other though many of them go to the same schools. This group cannot be thought of as a scientific random sample, and conclusions should be extrapolated from this study with caution to apply to adolescent and young adult vampire fiction readers as a whole. Even with this in mind, it is necessary to start somewhere while exploring the nature of the vampire fiction reader.

### **Reading Amounts of the Subjects**

Most of the young adults tend to read a great deal and not all of it is vampire fiction. "I read, like, lots of stuff. Three or four books a week I guess -- Mostly whatever I can get my hands on. Like I read my dad's book, *Rainbow 6* [Tom Clancy]. I really like vampire books though" (Beth). Others like reading, but during the school year and all the activities that entails can read only occasionally. One said that during the school year she would read between

3 and 4 books a month, but this number increased a great deal over breaks. "In the summer I can read 3 books a week. More if I go to the beach" (Hope). The number of books read ranged from 3-8 books a month during the school year and 2-5 books a week during vacation time. The adults had similar reading patterns to the younger readers' school year reading patterns.

The readers of vampire literature in my study seem to read more than the average readers. According to a 1999 Kaiser Family report, 8 to 13 year-olds spend approximately fifty minutes a day involved in leisure reading (books and magazines) and 14 to 18 year-olds spend about 13 minutes a day engaged in leisure reading (Roberts et al 21). Using this criteria, readers of vampire literature spend more time reading books than the average adolescent population.

### **Reading Tastes**

Their reading was not limited to vampire and horror however. All of the young adult interviewees read other genres. Some, like Hope, "...read anything - anything at all. I like fiction better than non-fiction." Others like Carl read "biographies to see how people lived, autobiographies too, to see how they lived and thought." On the average, when non-fiction was read by the subjects, it tended to be historical or biographical. These readers have



wide ranging reading interests. None of them read only horror or vampire literature, and their reading tastes varied from subject to subject.

The adult readers were a slightly different story. Not all of them read outside of a few specified genres. One, a male professional in his thirties, read "...only horror. Unless I have to read something for work, I prefer reading horror novels. I just don't pick up other books at the library or bookstore." Another young man in his twenties admitted slightly defensively that "I read mostly horror and science fiction fantasy. I can get realism anywhere." A third subject in her twenties stated that she mostly preferred reading gothic fiction and horror.

The adolescent readers appear to be at a sampling stage of their reading; they're more willing to read outside of specific genres. Aside from one of the adult male readers, the adult readers tended to stay away from historical or biographical material, again unlike the adolescent readers. Discussing reading material other than that which the study is focused on may seem non-relevant; however, discussing this literature is much more complicated than it appears on the surface. The readers are not reading this genre in a vacuum; they apply knowledge that they have gained through other genres when reading this one.

### **Reader's expectations**

Aside from differences in their non-vampire fiction reading, each reader brought a different set of expectations and definitions to this genre. Some, like Hope, when asked what she would expect to find in a book about vampires, stated, "I would expect enough to make me...I would want to be scared, and I would want to be able to tell who the vampire is and, like, how it became a vampire." Carl, on the other hand, expected "...a clone of a character. Maybe a love connection between a vampire and nonvampire. Later he'd have to kill her or something. He doesn't really want to. Or a straight out horror or one with lots of killers." Amber expected "some carnage, evil, like I said. Hopefully some of their memories. I always like it when he [character from the television show *Forever Knight*] goes back and when he remembers hundreds of years ago and remembers when he was made...I like that a lot. I like the old stuff. I would expect it to be really good though. Evil. Good. Some flashbacks and I don't know other than that. Depending on what it is."

There was no real consensus on expectations of a work of vampire fiction among these teenaged readers. Part of the reason for this may be the wide variety of vampires portrayed in the books intended for adolescent audiences. The vampires in these books varied from the ancient Indian

origins of Alisa in *The Last Vampire* series by Christopher Pike to the separate species of L.J. Smith's *Night World* vampires. The tone varied as well, ranging as far as the more humorous books like *My Babysitter's a Vampire* that Brian and Ellen read to the short, more horror based, story vampires that David read.

It did seem that the younger the reading level, the more humorous the vampire tends to be. This was very apparent looking at books and characters intended for very young and often pre-readers. The earliest "vampire-type" character a person is likely to run into is the blueish-skinned, number-fanatic, The Count of *Sesame Street* fame. From this sharp-toothed bat and gloom-loving character, a reader might move onto Howe's *Bunnicula* series – stories about a white, vegetable sucking, pet rabbit or the humorous versions of vampires written by Ann Martin (*Ma and Pa Dracula*), Ann Hodgman (*My Babysitter...*), and Angela Sommer-Bodenburg (*My Friend the Vampire*).

Some of the respondents, Carl, Janet, and Beth, enjoyed some of the humorous portrayals of vampires. Beth said: "I like reading some of the funnier books to my sister. Right now we're reading some of the German books [Angela Sommer-Bodenburg], and she really likes them. We finished *Howliday Inn* [part of Howe's *Bunnicula* series] a while ago. She can understand them and then doesn't keep asking me about the

stuff I read. She's like really annoying sometimes, asking stupid questions, but when I say it's like *Bunnicula*, she shuts up. Mom likes that I read to her anyway and will take us to the store to get more books." Other readers like Amber were against these humorous portrayals. "It's a vampire; it's supposed to be bloodsucking and evil! Why should anyone make it funny and cute?"

Amber also drew a distinct line between the types of genres using vampires in fiction and film. She defined vampires as part of the horror genre as long as there were only a few of them, action adventure if there were "lots of them". "*Dracula* is like horror. There's only one of him and he's bad. No one is going to mess with him and he's really strong and powerful. He's in charge. *Blade* was like millions of vampires and they all get shot up – that's action, not horror" (Amber). Even if they didn't like the various genres using vampires, all the readers distinguished between these different types of fiction which utilize vampires as characters. They do not read vampire fiction merely as a horror genre; they understand that vampire characters can appear in a variety of genres.

### **Vampire as a figure of Romance**

The readers of this fiction did not distinguish just between action/adventure and horror though. Most of the

readers stated that they did not read vampire fiction for romantic threads. David stopped reading vampire fiction because "You know, it was fun until there was all the love stuff." When interviewed, he commented that "one of my friends just loaned me this really cool book about a vampire reporter [P Elrod's series], so I'm starting to read it again." When asked about the amount of romance in vampire fiction and whether or not she liked this, Janet responded, "When I read it [vampire fiction] I don't think about the romance. It didn't make me want to read it or not. I liked the stories." Janet's response to whether or not she would read a romance genre book was succinct: "No."

Only three of the fifteen subjects (all female) read romance books by choice. While Andy didn't mind romantic threads in the vampire fiction, in fact "sometimes it's kind of neat to see it there because it means the vampire is like real," he held the general opinion that "I wouldn't really be interested in just a romance; I'd feel silly reading it. It's okay in other books, though, just as long as there's not too much of it."

Amber stated, "No, I don't read romance novels," but then went on to say, "If I read anything romance novelly, it's going to be medieval: knights and ladies, and I'll get into it a little bit there, but I'd rather just hear about who was in charge and what their dealings were then."

Really.” What is interesting about these statements is that it seems that the romantic or even erotic thread that runs through many of the texts of vampire literature aren’t the main attraction for these readers. This correlates with the idea that vampire literature does not directly correlate with Christian-Smith’s dominant code of romance. If, as the interview subjects seemed to say, romance and eroticism is not their main draw for reading vampire fiction, what is?

Of perhaps greater importance is the fact that some of the readers who also read adult market targeted vampire fiction could make specific distinctions between them and preferred the young adult works. While some of the readers may have preferred not to mention the erotic or sexual foci of vampire novels, others like David and Gloria had no difficulty. During a spirited discussion the two had during a group interview they both commented on the sexual and sometimes (to them) overly explicit nature of adult vampire novels. David stated, “you know, if I want to read about sex and stuff, I’ll pick up Playboy or something. Of course, Mom might get upset.” Amid the general laughter, Gloria said, “I read some of that Anita: Vampire Hunter stuff (Laurell Hamilton’s Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter series)...and the first book was like okay but then the others got really into it [sexual description] and I stopped reading them.” Later on in the discussion she continued

with a rather scornful "you don't need sex to be a vampire, these people are so out of it!" While others like Hope did not contribute to that part of the discussion, they did not argue the points either, something they did at regular intervals throughout the discussion.

Vampire novels intended for young adults do not contain, either overtly or covertly, the amount of sexuality that the adult vampire novels do. The authors of these books are perhaps doing this for two reasons. The first reason is that publishers might not allow the explicitness of that type of writing. However, there has been a growing number of young adult books with explicit sexuality. The other reason is that they do not feel their readers are looking for this style of writing. Based on the interview responses of some of my readers, this seems a more likely explanation.

### **Reasons for reading Vampire Fiction**

Many of Amber's expectations seem to tie in with a desire for historical fiction. Throughout her interview, she expressed that her interest in vampire fiction was due to the history revealed ("the time period to me is really cool"). She also stated that she felt other people read vampire fiction because, "I think the idea of it being real...I would be a vampire if I could. Just because you

could live forever. You wouldn't eat right, but you know what I mean? And you'd be beautiful forever. You'd live in eternity. That's pretty cool."

Janet, another 17 year old, felt others read it because, "Some people, I think, like to believe in that kind of stuff. When I was younger, I thought it might be real too, but it was entertaining. Others read it for entertainment or to be scared."

David, another 17 year old subject, stated "Some people are just weird and only want to read this stuff. Others like to read it because they will want to know what it's like to be so powerful."

Hope, 14 years old, also felt that people read vampire literature because "They like the feeling of being scared. Just because it gives them a rush really." Here, she brings up a point many of the subjects did, readers want to get scared. She, however, continues with, "Maybe they want to be like a vampire - you know, live forever."

Fran, 11, stated rather scornfully, "Lots of people read it 'cause they want to get scared." Cindy and Brian shared similar comments. When asked if there were other reasons for reading vampire fiction, Fran admitted, "Some of it, like *Bunnicula* is funny," and "maybe some of them think it's real and want to know how to become a vampire."

All of these subjects revealed some interesting



assumptions:

1. Some people read horror fiction only for shock value.

2. Some people envy the vampire's power and abilities.

The younger the subject, the more he or she discussed the fear aspect and the less the idea of power or envy came up. For the younger readers then, vampire fiction may indeed be mostly shock fiction, whereas older readers are beginning to realize that they are not immortal and are going to age and change. Perhaps, along with accepting this fact, they would also like to be able to dodge it. Since they don't believe they can, vampire fiction, with its ageless powerful characters, attracts them. "It's cool to read about what the vampires do and how they act. They only have to listen to people who are more powerful than them. I guess age matters there but it's really power. If the vampire is tough shit no one messes" (Carl).

Another interesting factor is that almost all of the subjects felt people read vampire fiction because "It's like scary for them and they want to get scared" (Ed). By far, the majority of the subjects did not state that **they** read vampire fiction because they wanted to be scared. While it is possible that the subjects read vampire fiction for other reasons than being scared, I find it unlikely. In part,

because the interview was seen as 'academic' and I was viewed as an educator, I believe that the subjects came up with different reasons for their own reading of the adolescent vampire fiction. That is not to say that they were not reading it for other reasons too, but I believe the frisson of fear played at least a small part in their reading choice. In part, this lack of full disclosure from the subjects comes from what Susan Fiksdal, in her study on interviewing techniques, defines as part of the interview process itself:

The speech event *interview* is a contractual agreement for a specific, agreed-upon purpose set at a particular time and place between people who do not generally know each other. This agreement may be explicit or implicit, but there is an unequal relationship between the participants. This relationship, together with the purpose of the interview, determines the content of the questions asked. The interview is organized by questions and answers. The roles of questioner and informant are determined by the type of interview. (17)

The adolescent subjects realized that this was "an unequal relationship" and at times would answer my questions with what they felt were the **right answers**, the answers that showed them in the best light instead of **their** answers. This idea of unequal relationship did not occur as frequently with the adult subjects as they were beyond the point where my position as an educator could impact them. All of the adult subjects' answers to the question of why they read vampire fiction included the fear or horror aspect.

While it is possible that none of the adolescent subjects read vampire fiction for "the fright value," it is not likely. While not all of the adolescent literature utilizing vampire characters are horror books, many of them include sections to build suspense and fear.

### **Expectations of Vampire Characters**

Another difference between the younger and older readers was the expectations of the vampire characters. Subjects over 14 seemed to expect more complex characters. They wanted the information regarding the vampire characters' pasts, likes, dislikes, and reasons for acting the way they did. Some of these older subjects compared very closely with the adult subjects in that regard. Beth stated, "I expect there to be a lot about the vampire themselves. They shouldn't just show up and do stuff, I want to know why they're doing it." Many of the adult readers, with the exception of those who read only horror, expressed similar beliefs.

Another expectation most of the readers had was expressed clearly by Hope, "I would want to be able to tell who the vampire is and, like, how it became a vampire." She, like many of the other readers, does not want to be able to easily confuse vampire characters with nonvampire characters. While the lines might get shaded occasionally

as Andy described, "Sometimes, it's real hard to figure out who the vampire is, or even if there is one or if the author's just having you on, by the end of the story, everything should make sense," readers do want the issue resolved.

Older adolescent readers want to know more about the vampire, its abilities, and its background than younger ones seemed to want. The older subjects also tended to be able to volunteer more about what exactly a vampire was and what its powers were. Younger readers like Brian, Ed, and Cindy mostly described the vampire in Cindy's words as, "a person who drinks blood and only goes out at night." Older readers tended to go into more detail, including more information on what makes someone a vampire and the vampire's powers and weaknesses. Some, like David, could even compare them to more famous vampires of literary and cinema fame. "Not all vampires are like Stoker's Dracula; they can come out during the day or change into different shapes. Some are a lot weaker. I don't know if they can climb walls like he did though, but I guess they could."

A reader like Carl is on the cusp; he doesn't have a great deal of knowledge about what a vampire is exactly, but he does acknowledge that authors utilize the vampire and its abilities differently depending on what the author is trying to accomplish. "As a kid, there's a difference between that

stuff and the other stuff. Like a cross and holy water gets rid of them, but not in other novels. Sometimes it's silver and stuff. Kid's books write about them differently." When he was asked to elaborate on why he felt there were these differences, this was his reply: "It all depends on what the writer wants to do. A real powerful vampire or a weaker one? The more important the vampire, the less stuff hurts them." He, like other readers of vampire literature, has realized that the characters and their abilities are crafted the way they are for a reason, and not always to follow convention.

### **Perceived Gender Differences in Vampire Literature**

An issue of importance is not just how vampire literature deals with gender issues, but with how the readers of this fiction perceive it. One of the central questions subjects were asked was if they perceived differences in the roles of male and female characters in vampire literature. Some saw no gender difference between male and female vampires, "Sometimes the female vampires are more powerful, sometimes the males are" (Hope) - or how the male and female human characters were treated, "Like it doesn't matter if you're a male or female mortal; vampires don't care, they're more powerful than either" (Gloria).

Others did see differences in some of the older fiction

but not as much in the newer: "In some of the older books, you know, *Dracula*, sex matters. The girl vampires are real wimps. The stuff I read that's newer don't have this happening. Alisa [female vampire in *The Last Vampire*] is tough. She doesn't take anything from anyone. Sure some of the other books have wimps but the sex doesn't matter" (Hope).

Here Hope expressed what many of the other subjects felt. There might be some books where the females were less powerful than the males, but it wasn't a constant female as victim theme. When that was a common theme, the readers often tended to object. "I don't like Night World books. The guys seem to be like in control and stuff even when the girls are witches or vampires...I liked Pike's series and *Companions* [*Companions of the Night*]. The females aren't always the toughest, but they do things and don't just sit around waiting to get killed for snack food or something" (Iris). Here Iris expresses dissatisfaction with female characters not being equals in the fiction. She makes the deliberate choice to avoid fiction where females were not treated as equals. Luckily for her reading tastes, there is enough vampire fiction for adolescents with strong female characters.

As stated previously in Chapter 3, current vampire fiction does not embody the idea of the female characters'

being helpless victims. If anything, this fiction is showing females in a more powerful and positive light. "Sometimes the powerful vampires are guys; sometimes they're women. Diaries (The Vampire Diary series) is all about love and stuff and the vampires are male. But then they turn their girlfriend into a vampire and she's pretty tough" (Beth). To the readers of adolescent vampire fiction, the gender of these characters doesn't matter as much as what they choose to do. As discussed before, both males and females are choosing 'to do' in these novels.

### **Reading of Vampire Fiction**

When asked when they started reading vampire fiction, the majority of the adults responded that they began reading it in their late teens. The first book they generally read was Stoker's *Dracula* or one of Anne Rice's series. Most were drawn to the field through horror movies or friends/relatives telling horror stories. For several of them, adult market horror books were the first books they chose to read instead of reading books assigned to them in school. The adolescent readers had very different answers. Many began reading vampire fiction when they were between 9 and 12 years old and began specifically with books intended for younger readers. Part of the reason for this difference is the fact that until recently, there were no works of

vampire fiction intended for a younger audience; this, as mentioned earlier, is a recent phenomenon.

### **Selection of Vampire Novels**

When asked, most of the respondents explained that they or their peers choose the adolescent vampire books that they read. "I like see it on the shelf and it looks neat, so I get it" (Fran). "Sometimes my friends will say, 'It's a great book, you gotta read it,' and I'll pick it up" (Iris). Parents, teachers, or librarians do not play a large part in their choices. "I ask at the bookstore, and they'll tell me there's a new book in" (Carl). This indicates that conversations about these books are going on among peers, but not generally with adults. Books about vampire characters do not seem to be discussed with adults as widely as other books are. This leaves an entire genre of books being virtually ignored outside of its readership.

What exactly does all this mean for adolescent vampire literature? The concluding chapter will look at these findings as part of the discussion that summarizes current vampire literature intended for adolescents.



## CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

I know why I read this stuff [vampire literature], but I don't know if kids read it for the same reasons and I don't know if they should. (Adult reader)

This investigation was undertaken in an effort to determine the expectations, reading interests, and history of vampire literature. It was also an attempt to determine how recent works of adolescent vampire fiction fit with the past and present cultural codes of vampire fiction in general.

An introduction to the history of the vampire myth was given in Chapter 2. I indicated in that chapter that the vampire myth underwent significant changes when it transferred to print media from an oral culture.

While originally the vampire stood as a cautionary tale or a fear-inducing creature of legend and superstition, this has changed over the last few hundred years. As mentioned earlier in this work, in the nineteenth century the vampire became more than a bestial figure, it began to evolve into a suave, debonair villain of supernatural proportions. As DeWEES states, these vampires "gained sophistication and independent thought and motivation" (242).

Even more striking is the change the twentieth century enacted upon this literary monster. The vampire became more of a sympathetic character and began to "epitomize what seem to be cultural longings to live detached and essentially solitary lives" (DeWEES 2). The vampire became heroic as well as continuing as a figure of horror in the past one hundred years. Nowhere are the recent changes in the vampire more evident than in works of adolescent literature. In Foucault's work *Power/Knowledge*, he and Le Gaufey discuss the idea that the vampire novel of the nineteenth century portrayed the vampire as an aristocrat and the vampire's nemesis as a bourgeois who eventually destroys the decadent noble (223). This portrayal continued into modern vampire fiction, especially into adolescent vampire fiction where an up-and-coming young adult must defeat an older, and more powerful being, or the less privileged vampire must defeat an older, corrupt vampire. The less advantaged or less powerful person is needed to overthrow the more powerful. With adolescent vampire fiction this generally has the young protagonist overcoming great odds and defeating someone older and more experienced.

Foucault's explanation of the bourgeois vampire hunter destroying the more powerful aristocratic vampire continues into some of the adolescent vampire literature of today. The less powerful (yet fast-maturing) adolescent must defeat

the more powerful and entrenched in society vampire (the aristocrat). Although the overt political nature and power struggle of the vampire and vampire hunter has lessened, it is still there. The nature of the vampire makes it particularly effective as a figure of power which needs to be overthrown. In the views of the authors, it is time for a change in power and the growth of the adolescent. However, in other works the vampire is struggling against an 'aristocratic' or powerful vampire. While the vampire can stand for the powerful figure who must be overthrown, sometimes it is the vampire itself who is the bourgeois who rises up against the aristocracy.

This idea was discussed more fully in Chapter 3 where the varying interpretations of the vampire character were discussed. The vampire has been seen as a figure of repressed sexuality, alternative social structure, the Other, rebellion against society, and more. In adolescent literature, the vampire can be comic, heroic, romantic, and even tragic. Through my research, I have found not only the change in the character of the vampire, but, in part, how and why adolescents react to it. A review of literature and research studies pertaining to vampire literature as a body, reader response theory, and adolescent vampire literature were also presented in Chapter 3. An explanation of how adolescent vampire literature can not be regarded as merely

an offshoot of shock fiction was also covered in that chapter.

Chapter 4 delved into the answers of 15 adolescent subjects who characterized themselves as "readers of vampire literature." The questions themselves dealt with a discussion of their reactions to vampire literature, their perceptions of why they and others read vampire literature, as well as how they perceived the characterization of vampires. A summary of findings from the 10 adult subjects who characterized themselves as "readers of vampire literature" was another segment of this chapter. The specific design of the study was also presented there.

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, the conclusion, the implications for the findings, and the recommendation for further research.

### **Findings of the Study**

Throughout this study, I have attempted to define more clearly what adolescent vampire fiction is and how it is constructed. Part of this task entailed my attempt to dispel some of the widespread assumptions of adolescent vampire fiction. Other areas of concern when viewing this fiction are why it is of interest to its audience and why that interest is important.

One of the elements that needed definition or refutation

was that adolescent vampire fiction is merely shock fiction, which is not always the case. Admittedly, much of the fiction that utilizes the vampire as a character can be classified as shock fiction, where "narrative exists solely to support a series of shocks occurring at absurdly frequent intervals" (West 39), but not all of the fiction falls into this category. Some works of vampire fiction are well written and have won a variety of awards (*The Silver Kiss*); others enable writers like Caroline Cooney to "personify evil, choose your moral, and ram it home" (Cooney). In these instances, the vampire character is not shock fiction, serving merely as a way to deliver some "thrill-per-chapter quota" (West 41). Several of the works studied incorporated well-developed characters and detailed plots which are much more complete than general works of shock fiction. These works included Grant's *Uncle Vampire*, Pike's *The Last Vampire Series*, and Velde's *Companions of the Night* among others. As explained in Chapter 1, adolescent vampire fiction is most simply defined as works of adolescent fiction which contain a vampire character. This genre is not merely shock or horror fiction, it is much more. While stories such as Cusick's *Vampire* are generally seen as horror fiction, Klause's *The Silver Kiss* is more of a coming of age story with elements of a supernatural romance, and Velde's *Companions of the Night* lacks the shock fiction

elements completely and is again a coming of age story with elements of adventure and the supernatural.

Chapter 3 attempts to set up criteria for judging individual works of vampire fiction. The criteria utilized are from Using Huck's criteria for judging the quality of young adult literature. Examining the plot, setting, theme and characterization it is possible to distinguish between works of shock fiction and works of better literary quality.

During the interviews, I discovered that the participants did not view the entire genre as shock fiction either. Various individuals commented that some of the works they or friends read fit in that category, but they also discussed how many of these works did not. The fact that a novel with a vampire character could fit into the romance or historical fiction genre was frequently mentioned, and many of the readers spoke of their interest in reading historical non-fiction as well as adolescent vampire fiction.

Just as it cannot be categorized as 'shock fiction,' neither can most of these works be categorized as romances. While containing many of the structures of romance novels, adolescent vampire fiction is not specifically a romance. Those that have romantic themes of interest (The Vampire Diary series, *Blood Spell*, *Blood Curse*, and others) do not follow what Christian-Smith found to be the codes of

romance.

The codes of romance and how they are upheld or overturned in adolescent vampire fiction was discussed in detail in Chapter 3; however, in reprise, the codes that remain virtually the same in the adolescent vampire fiction books studied are that romance is a heterosexual practice, that it manages sexuality while restricting it to non-genital forms, and that romance is a personal and private experience with only the two involved negotiating the relationship. The other four codes are not maintained in this type of fiction. Romance is **not** seen as a market relationship in the studied works of adolescent vampire fiction. In these books, the male is not seen as the contributor of status for the involved female. Instead, female characters in these works see themselves as individuals with or without boyfriends. Their sense of identity is not tied up with having a relationship with members of the opposite sex. Romance is not seen as a transforming experience for the female characters, nor is it the central issue in these works. Females are not seen as subordinate in these books either. Unlike the romance works Christian-Smith studied, the male is not always the dominant one in adolescent vampire fiction. Many times, the females are viewed as equal or dominant characters. The final code that is not upheld in the works studied is that romance is

about females learning to relate to and establish romantic relationships with males.

When female characters do have relationships in these books, the male is not always the dominant character, nor is the female merely defined by her connection with a male character. In much of the literature, the female characters are just as capable as the male characters of making serious decisions unclouded by whatever romantic relationship they may be involved in. Susan in *Vampire's Kiss* and Lacey in *The Vampire's Promise* take action based on what is needed, not on emotional reactions. The interviews with readers of vampire fiction support this view in that they did not tend to view the works they read as works of romance, nor did they see female characters as submissive or at the mercy of patriarchal relationships.

If it cannot always be classified as shock fiction or as romance, adolescent vampire fiction cannot always be classified as horror fiction either. While much of it falls into the horror category, some authors use the vampire character for more humorous books (*Bunnicula*, *My Babysitter's a Vampire*, etc), and others utilize the vampire character for more romantic settings (*The Silver Kiss*). The response of the interview subjects varied here. While some indicated that not all vampire fiction was horror, many used the phrase "vampire fiction" and "horror" somewhat



interchangeably. Others tended to dismiss works of vampire fiction that portrayed the vampire in a non-serious or horrific manner. While they admitted that there were works utilizing vampires as characters, several did not consider these books acceptable in their use of the vampire as the subject of non-horror or suspense works.

Another element I discovered through this study was that adolescent vampire fiction **is** written differently than vampire fiction intended for adults. The amount of eroticism and sexuality is lessened and the possibilities for the vampire to be other than a figure of horror is greater. Several individuals who read both types of vampire fiction agreed with this, discussing the differences between the books intended for adult and adolescent readers. As Joseph De Marco points out, "It [young adult vampire fiction] has all the trappings of sex, all the feelings of a sensual experience but none of the real sex" (28). My interview subjects mentioned several young adult vampire books which were not horror in nature but very few adult vampire books which were not in the horror genre. There were also lively discussions from some the participants on their enjoyment of the adolescent vampire fiction that did not delve into the sexual or erotic, and their dislike of the adult fiction that did.

Another element I discovered through this study was that

on the whole, vampire literature does not promote sexism. On the whole, females are not seen as weak characters who need protection and aid. While some of the stories portray female characters in subservient roles where male characters need to rescue them (*Vampire*), most of the others portray both genders as competent individuals capable of making their own decisions and carrying out their own actions (*Vampire Diaries* series, *Night World* series, *Companions of the Night*, *Silver Kiss*, etc).

Instead of male characters being described by what they do and female characters being described by how they look, both genders are active in these stories and both have their appearances noticed and commented upon. Val, the female protagonist, in *Hunter's Moon* acts and reacts to situations, and male characters in L. J. Smith's *The Vampire Diaries* series and Christopher Pike's *The Last Vampire* series are described as handsome or even beautiful in appearance.

Foucault reminds us that "each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true" (131). When a genre of popular books portrays both genders as equally adept in dealing with difficulties, it is accepting the idea that equality is possible and brings this idea to its readers. While adolescents, like other readers, take their own meanings from what they read, the views

presented in these books can affect them in a positive way.

Diana Mitchell concluded in her study of gendered constructions of 25 young adult novels that females in these novels were no longer tied to the traditional character codes and that there was a strong movement in these books away from traditional codes of romance and beauty. This holds true for the works examined in this study as well; earlier codes of romance and beauty are not being rigidly upheld in adolescent vampire fiction; instead there is a move away from female characters being stereotyped as passive emotional beings who need to be protected and whose appearance is of paramount importance.

Zoe in *The Silver Kiss* is originally portrayed as a passive character who conforms to expectations. Later on, as her mother is dying in the hospital, she questions her conformation and begins to challenge it. Megan and Iris from *Song of the Vampire* are portrayed as strong characters who are recruited by an organization looking for people who are astute judges of character, shrewd, and "fearless without being foolish" (14). This description does not fit the earlier stereotypes of female characters as more emotional or weaker than males. During the interviews I conducted, several of the subjects indicated that this was one of the reasons they enjoyed reading adolescent vampire fiction. There was a sense of equality between the genders,

and there was no automatic assumption of strengths and weaknesses based on gender.

Perhaps connected with this literature's promoting equality between the genders on the whole, adolescent vampire fiction does not support current societal norms, but tends to have characters protesting social conventions. Protagonists like Kerry in *Companions of the Night*, Lacey and her friends in *The Vampire's Promise*, and every main character in the Night World series, went against rules and requests from their parents or other authority figures. There is a sense of rebellion in adolescent vampire fiction very different than in the adult works of vampire fiction.

Perhaps of even more importance to librarians, teachers, and parents is the fact that most adolescent readers of vampire literature find the books themselves or because of peer suggestions. Recommendations traded back and forth and title and cover art are the main reasons a specific book is selected. Very few of the interview subjects had books recommended to them by anyone other than a friend or bookstore employee. It appears that those who would be most interested in promoting quality literature to young adult readers, teachers, parents etc., and discussing why characters are acting in specific manners that may be deemed unacceptable, are least involved in suggesting specific books to these readers.

Adolescent readers are attracted to vampire stories for a variety of reasons including an envy or desire to be more like the vampire character, a desire to be scared, or even because their authority figures are opposed to it. De Marco again speaks to this when he indicates that adolescent readers are, in part, attracted to vampire literature because it allows them be "free from the fears of mortality and to feel that marginality that one is an outsider but not an outcast" (27). This last statement was supported by several of the interview subjects when they indicated that the vampire's power and position of not being completely part of society was a draw to them (Carl, Hope, David, and Amber among others). Younger subjects (Fran, Cindy, and Brian) spoke more to people reading vampire fiction for the scare factor. The older adolescent subjects spoke more in support of envying or relating more to the vampire characters than the younger subjects did.

### **Unforseen Information from the Interviews**

The interviews themselves were conducted in a semi-structured manner. Each interviewee was asked an identical set of questions which were then expanded into individualized clarifying questions. The base questions included inquiries on when the subjects began reading vampire fiction, their expectations from this literature,

their interest in this type of fiction, and their ideas on not only why others read it but their perceptions of these other readers as well. While some of the conclusions I and previous researchers had reached about adolescent vampire fiction were upheld by the interviews, some of the answers were surprising or particularly interesting.

The information I found most surprising was dealt with the readers' perceptions of the literature and those who read it. Even though there are many books intended for lower grade levels which include vampires as characters, *Bunnicula*, some of the Goosebumps books, Ann Martin's *Ma and Pa Dracula*, and others, subjects tended to classify readers of this literature as early teenagers or older, their own early reading experiences notwithstanding. Even Beth, who read some of these simpler books to her younger sister, tended to view readers as older. The subjects also indicated that they felt more males than females would read these types of books. Not only were two-thirds of my adolescent subjects female, but they tended to mention other females readers instead of males, so I found this very surprising. Obviously their perceptions of the readers and what they themselves indicated through the interviews were very different.

While much of the research about vampire literature (Twitchell, Dresser, and others) indicated a great deal of

sexual attraction and titillation factor for readers of this fiction, interview subjects, on the whole, really did not discuss this aspect much. The idea of romance and sexuality being part of the literature was mentioned, but the subjects tended to dismiss this factor instead discussing the vampire's power, history, and scare factor. On the other hand, the adult subjects brought up sexual attraction and titillation factors more. As indicated previously, part of this might be due to the unnatural structure of the discussion. Younger respondents might have felt uneasy speaking about sexual matters to an older interviewer, while the adult respondents did not. However the fact that some of the adolescent respondents specifically mentioned the lack of overt "sex scenes" in the young adult vampire literature and pointed out that several modern works of adult vampire fiction had a large number of sexual or erotic scenes, makes that a difficult conclusion to completely support.

I was also surprised and impressed with the amount and variety of reading materials of my young adult subjects. Unlike the older subjects who tended to concentrate specifically on certain genres, the adolescent subjects read a large variety of fiction and nonfiction. From their descriptions of what they read, they read a great deal of historical nonfiction. I expected these readers of

adolescent vampire fiction to concentrate on horror fiction especially, but they did not.

### **Implications for the Findings**

In the past two decades the number of adolescent vampire books has grown immensely. Since there are more and more works of adolescent fiction utilizing the vampire as a character, there are implications for the material found in this study.

Adolescent vampire literature should not be quickly dismissed as a body of reading since it is not all shock fiction or quickly written horror. The books need to be looked at as individual works. Many of them have merit in that they do not reflect sexist views or portray females as lesser or inept characters. Admittedly, some of the works of adolescent vampire fiction do this or are written merely for the thrill or shock value; however, this not the case with all vampire fiction. Works like *The Silver Kiss*, *Companions of the Night*, and *Song of the Vampire* avoid falling into the category of shock fiction or sexist writing. Other multiple works of adolescent vampire fiction by authors like Christopher Pike, L. J. Smith, Caroline Cooney, and Janice Harrell also avoid sexist views and portrayals of females as weaker characters.

The fiction itself is not easily classifiable; however,



it does not fit comfortably in any one genre. While adolescent vampire fiction works can have elements of horror and romance in them, or even be classified in one of those genres, as a whole, they are not specifically one or the other. The genre should be taken as a classification of its own and not crammed into either romance or horror.

These books are works that the readers **choose** to read; they are not assigned these books as part of school projects. I found it very startling while interviewing my subjects to realize that they do not concentrate on just one genre or read just a few books. They can be described as interested readers who read much more than the average for their ages. Because of this, it is important for parents, teachers, and librarians to be aware of the variety of works of adolescent vampire fiction in publication and to value each as an independent work.

Currently, most of the readers of adolescent vampire literature in my study do not have much input from parents, teachers, or librarians for what they choose to read. These books are generally self-selected or peer-reviewed books. Parents, teachers, and librarians who are concerned about the individual quality of the books read need to become familiar with these books so they can suggest those that overcome stereotypes and are better written. Currently, adolescent vampire literature appears to be neglected by

these groups and books are being selected by appearance and not merit.

Readers of vampire fiction tend to read outside of assigned school work and do not read merely horror fiction. Since vampire fiction is generally considered horror or shock fiction, too often readers of vampire fiction are characterized as poor readers or reading only horror fiction; from the sampling, this does not seem to be the case. Diana West describes shock fiction as "a retarding, pre-literate experience" (40). Parents, teachers, and librarians should not characterize readers of vampire fiction as poor or unwilling readers.

Due to the afore-mentioned implications, perhaps it is time that we take another look at adolescent vampire fiction.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This study has raised many questions and brought to my attention several areas where more research might be helpful.

1. A study should be done to determine what kind of literature adolescents read after, or in addition to, vampire fiction. It would be of interest to look more closely at their choices and see where else they go in their readings.

2. A study could be done to determine what factors influence the readers' choice of works of vampire fiction to begin with. My study merely asked subjects when they began reading works of vampire fiction and why. It would be interesting to see how age, gender, or family and socioeconomic background influences the choice of this particular type of reading.
3. It would be interesting to study the value system and cultural codes of assigned school readings, and compare the books' attitudes and values with those of adolescent vampire fiction. Perhaps these two types of readings aren't as far apart as it may seem.
4. A broadening of this study is necessary. This study focused on young readers in a specific geographic area and because of that fact was limited. A larger group from a variety of areas would enable more conclusions to be drawn about readers of vampire fiction based on background, geographic area, ethnicity, etc.

Vampire fiction intended for adolescent readers can not be regarded as merely shock or horror fiction. The authors of these books have taken a once limited character type and expanded it to reflect the complexities of the modern world and the role of adolescents in it. This type of fiction cannot be pigeonholed or relegated to particular

stereotypes. Several of these books, including *The Silver Kiss*, *Uncle Vampire*, and *Companions of the Night* have earned approbation and taken their rightful place alongside some of the more traditional genres of literature for young adults. However, while vampire fiction intended for young adult readers should be regarded as its own genre, these books need to be looked at as individual works and judged on individual merit.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Base Questions Asked of Readers of Vampire Literature

1. Why do you read vampire fiction?
2. Why do you think others read vampire fiction?
3. If you were in a bookstore and heard people discussing some vampire fiction, what sort of people would you expect them to be?
4. How long have you been reading this type of fiction?  
(Particularly those with vampires as characters)
5. Different books portray vampires differently; what were some of your favorite portrayals?
6. If a friend told you a book was 'vampire fiction,' what would you be expecting from the book?
7. If a friend (or colleague) was talking about how books with vampires are trash and useless reading, what would your response be? How would you defend vampire fiction, if at all?
8. Sometimes vampire fiction is seen as going against the social norm, do you agree with this? How does it?
9. Do you see the roles of the male and female characters in vampire fiction as similar or different from each other?
10. What kind of books do you tend to read?
11. How do you choose the books you read?

12. How would you describe yourself as a reader? Do you read a lot, a little?
13. Do you discuss the books you read with others? How?

## APPENDIX B

### Annotations of the Novels Used in this Study

Adams Carmen. *Song of the Vampire*. Avon Books. 1996.

Megan and Iris (who made their first appearance in *The Band*) are working with an international society that deals with werewolves, ghosts, and vampires. The two characters are asked to go spend the summer in Turo, CA, because a gang of vampires has been preying on the transient teen population. Adults can't break into the group, teenagers can. The only problem is, the vampires (hiding out as a music group) wouldn't mind if Megan joined them permanently. Megan and Iris are strong characters whose relationships with their boyfriends are based on equal respect for each other. The vampires are both male and female, and it is difficult to discern relative strengths.

Adams, Nicholas. *Vampire's Kiss*. Harper Paperbacks. 1994.

Susan finally falls in love. Her new boyfriend is tall, dark, and handsome, and has a secret he's hiding. Terrible things start happening in the town where she lives; girls' bodies are showing up drained of blood. There's a new band in town too who call themselves the Blood Brothers. Susan herself seems to have some type of psychic abilities



(which is a good thing considering all the problems that are occurring). Susan needs to rely on herself and her own abilities in order to defeat the menace. She is a rather strong character.

Cooney, Caroline B. *The Vampire's Promise*. Scholastic. 1993.

Lacey and her friends want an exciting time, so they visit an old, abandoned house. Unfortunately, it's not completely abandoned: a vampire lives there, and he's not very happy right now. His house is going to be destroyed in a week or so. He's willing to let all of them go with the exception of one person, but the teens must choose who stays. To make matters even worse, there's more than one vampire in residence. Cooney's vampires are pure evil with no redeeming qualities.

----. *The Return of the Vampire*. Scholastic, Inc. 1991.

Devnee and her family move into a new house where she finds out that not only can her shadow wander off without her, her dreams can come true. She's new in school and wants it to be a new start for her. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be. She feels awkward and out-of-place. One evening a vampire shows up offering a bargain. He will give her her wishes, if she gives him what he wants:

sustenance. She wants to be beautiful and smart, and the vampire delivers this to her. But what else does the vampire want? This book is the typical wish with a hook setting. Cooney's vampire characters tend to be purely evil with no grey areas.

Cusick, Richie Takkersley. *Vampire*. Archway. 1991.

A summer-mystery thriller. Darcy Thomas is visiting her uncle when a note appears informing her that she is the 'chosen one' of a vampire. Although this is mostly shock fiction, there is some aspects of a mystery as she tries to find out exactly what is going on. While there is no supernatural vampire, this book can be classified as vampire fiction due to its drawing on the aspects of horror in the vampire legend.

Dixon, Franklin. *Danger on Vampire Trail*. Simon and Schuster. 1971.

The first young adult book to utilize vampires, Hardy Boys #50 lands Frank and Joe in the middle of the Rocky Mountains. Once there they find the mystery deepening as they try to solve the problems of the Vampire Trail. Are there really vampires? Or is someone trying to make it look that way? Again this book draws on the vampire legend without any vampires appearing.

Doyle, Debra and James MacDonald. *Hunters' Moon*. Berkley. 1994.

Val is an ordinary high school student except that every full moon she turns into a werewolf. Now there's a problem, evil vampires are out to gain control of her family. This book has some interesting interpretations of the vampire myths as well as a strong female protagonist.

Grant, Cynthia D. *Uncle Vampire*. Random House. 1995.

Carolyn and her twin, Honey, share a terror: their uncle is a vampire. Carolyn wants to tell someone, Honey doesn't. While at first this book seems to be a vampire story, in the end it turns out to be much more. A very powerful story. This story takes the metaphor of vampire for incest from the eyes of a disturbed young girl.

Harrell, Janice. *Vampire's Love Series*. Scholastic.

*Blood Curse*. 1995.

*Blood Spell*. 1995.

This two volume series has a powerful female vampire protagonist who has become attracted to a teenaged boy named James. She masquerades as a new student at the local high school in order to learn more about him and modern society. This vampire character has slightly different abilities than

is usual: she can go out in daylight (although it weakens her) and she can shapeshift into any animal not just the select wolves and bats. While this character enjoys her power, she wants to become mortal again.

---. Vampire Twins Series. Harper Press.

*Bloodlines.* 1994.

*Bloodlust.* 1994.

*Blood Choice.* 1994.

*Blood Reunion.* 1995.

Twins find out their family secret: vampires. It turns out that there are vampires, psychics, and other oddities in the Montclair family tree, and the twins are the only 'normal' members. One twin becomes a vampire, and the other struggles with their shared family history.

Hoh, Diane. *Nightmare Hall: The Vampire's Kiss.*

Scholastic. 1995.

This is number twenty-two in a series much like Fear Street. Janie starts out the new college year hoping to forget about the death of her boyfriend. Her friends try to help, taking her to parties and setting up dates for her. Bats and wolves begin showing up on campus along with many of the other trappings of vampires. This is another work of almost pure shock fiction.

John, Laurie. *Kiss of the Vampire*. Bantam Books. 1995.

This is one of the new Sweet Valley University Thriller edition books which plays off the popularity of the original series. A vampire who thinks Elizabeth is the reincarnation of his former wife lost centuries earlier spirits her away. Tom, her boyfriend, and her twin sister have to rescue her. That is, if they can all believe they're dealing with a vampire. This follows many of the traditional ideas of vampires.

Klauser, Annette Curtis. *The Silver Kiss*. Dell. 1990.

Zoe's mother is dying of cancer when she meets the mysterious Simon. Her best friend won't talk about Zoe's mother at all. Simon seems to understand the problems she is going through and helps her cope with the cyclical nature of life and death. Simon is a 300+ year-old vampire who has also known the pain of losing a mother. This is another exploration of the vampire legend and about an individual who does not want to be a vampire.

Locke, Joseph. Blood and Lace Series. Bantam Books.

*Vampire Heart*. 1994.

*Deadly Relations*. 1994.

Sabrina's parents are dead and she wants to know what really happened to them. She returns to her family house on

Storm Point, Maine (a gloomy place where the sun never shines). Her strange uncle had been transformed into a vampire years ago by witch he jilted and has been subtly controlling the family ever since. While this story has many of the traditional vampire legends in it, Sabrina is a strong female character who acts, not merely reacts.

Peel, John. *Tombstones: The Last Drop*. Archway Paperback. 1995.

Tombstones in another horror series. Jared Irving went to investigate Full Moon Industries because of suspected pollutants in the water, now he's missing. His friends search for him and eventually find his corpse. Somehow, it's linked to Full Moon, but they're not sure how. Not only are vampires seen as the antagonists in this book but the protagonists find an undead ally as well.

Pike, Christopher. *The Last Vampire Series*. Archway Paperbacks.

*The Last Vampire*. 1994.

*Black Blood*. 1994.

*Red Dice*. 1995.

*Phantom*. 1996.

*Evil Thirst*. 1996.

*Creatures of Forever*. 1996.

This series again features a female vampire protagonist. This five thousand year old vampire is one of the oldest 'living' creatures in existence. Each book in the series goes into more details about vampire abilities and background (as well as introducing more and more characters). An intriguing story that weaves Indian legends of Kali, Krishna, and others with Egyptian legends of Set and immortality. Although Pike has written shock fiction before with rather shallow characters, the characters here are well defined and supported.

Smith, L.J. Night World Series. Archway Paperbacks.

*Secret Vampire.* 1996.

*Daughters of Darkness.* 1996.

*The Chosen.* 1997.

*Soulmate.* 1997.

These books all involve interactions between denizens of "the night world" (vampires, witches, etc) and mortals. The worlds are not supposed to mix, yet teens from both worlds seem drawn to each other. They all tie together, yet do not need to be read in order. This series combines the idea of undead vampires and 'living' vampires (people who were born as vampires).

---. Vampire Diaries Series. Harper Paperbacks.

*The Awakening.* 1991.

*The Struggle.* 1991.

*The Fury.* 1992

*Dark Reunion.* 1992.

Elena is a High School student in search of excitement and love. She finds romance with Stephan, a new student in school. She doesn't realize that Stephan has a brother, Damon, and that both are vampires. The series deals with the choices all of them make and the friends and enemies they have.

Sommer-Bodenburg. *The Vampire Takes a Trip.* Minstrel Books. 1982.

Tony Noodleman has to go on a vacation to Lower Boggsbottom and he drags his friend Rudolph the vampire along. This book was originally in German. This is a humorous book with vampire as a character, but not the main focal point. A variety of vampire legends are worked into this story.

Stine, R. L. *Goodnight Kiss.* Archway Paperbacks. 1992.

This is one of the bi-yearly Fear Street Super Chillers. Matt, April, and Todd go to the beach for the summer. At first they discount the bats that fly over the



beach in the evening. Matt is concerned when his friends become pale and listless and begin ignoring him for some new friends. Will he be able to save them before the vampires kill them both? The vampire characters are both male and female and there are some interesting twists, yet this is generally a work of shock fiction.

Velde, Vivian Vande. *Companions of the Night*. Harcourt Brace & Company. 1995.

Sixteen year old Kerry stumbles into an armed and dangerous situation at a Quick-Clean Laundry and ends up rescuing a young-looking vampire who is being terrorized and threatened by the store owner and some of his friends. She ends up falling in love (of course) and protecting her new friend. Some of this protection includes, lying to her father, theft, and other moral questions.

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