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thesis entitled

THE ENDURING LURE OF THE VAMPIRE:
SADOMASOCHISTIC SUBTEXTS IN POSTMODERN AMERICA

presented by

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has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M.A. degree in English

Major professor

Date 6/25/02

# THE ENDURING LURE OF THE VAMPIRE: SADOMASOCHISTIC SUBTEXTS IN POSTMODERN AMERICA

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

2002

## ABSTRACT

THE ENDURING LURE OF THE VAMPIRE:
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The vampire legend exists in nearly all cultures around the world, and has permeated contemporary American culture at all levels—appearing in fiction, nonfiction, music, film, television, advertising and lifestyle—both in the mainstream, and the underground. This thesis explores the evolution of the vampire mythos from its initial appearance in English literature through its current incarnation in contemporary American culture, and examines a variety of explanations as to why the vampire has appealed and continues to appeal to audiences even in our most rational, scientific of ages.

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# INTRODUCTION

The vampire has always existed. All world cultures have some form of blood-sucking demon which plagues the living, from ancient Asia to Africa to Europe to the Americas. Clive Leatherdale notes that "legends of the dead returning to drink human blood have been found in nearly every culture where records have survived" (18). James Ursini and Alain Silver also comment that "vampires and vampire-like phenomena are prevalent in almost every recorded culture" (18). John L. Flynn agrees that "superstitions, myths, and legends about the vampire can be found, with divergent variations, in almost every culture in the world" (2).

The vampire has haunted us throughout the ages, and continues to haunt us in modern times. Martin Riccardo notes how between 1970 and 1978, Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum in London conducted an informal survey on who its patrons hated most. Coming in fifth behind four major real-life political figures (Adolf Hitler, Idi Amin, Richard Nixon and Mao Tse-Tung) was Dracula, demonstrating "the deep impression which the vampire image can make on the human psyche, and the strong response it can evoke" (Riccardo, Vampires Unearthed 3).

In contemporary America, the vampire has taken hold, becoming a permanent, pervasive part of our culture. Riccardo notes that "the vampire image has become a part of Americana; indeed, a part of Western Civilization" (Vampires Unearthed 3). Vampires have been instilled in our psyches ever since we were children, from Count Count teaching us our numbers on Sesame Street, to the stories our parents read to us at bedtime, to the cereal we ate at breakfast time (Count Chocula). There are a large number of vampire stories, television shows and films directed specifically at children,

including Mercer Mayer's Critters of the Night series, Mel Gilden's Fifth Grade Monsters series, cartoons such as Count Duckula (1988-93) and live action films such as the recent The Little Vampire (2000). So it is no wonder that by the time we reach adulthood, we understand the vampire so well.

Walter Kendrick comments on the pervasiveness of vampires in American culture:

> They are everywhere: in books, films, and TV, in advertising, in toys and games for all ages, in children's breakfast food. No American child (even one lucky enough to escape Count Chocula) can grow up without learning what a vampire is—an undead creature, uncannily both living and dead, that rises from his coffin in the after-midnight hours to drain our blood and to make us his own. (xvi-xvii).

Vampires have appeared on television in everything from the wildly popular Dark Shadows which featured the vampire Barnabas Collins as a major character (1966-71, revived for one season in 1991), to select vampire episodes of The Twilight Zone (1959-65), Night Gallery (1970-73), Kolchak: The Night Stalker (1974-75), Tales from the Darkside (1984-88), Friday the 13th: The Series (1987-90), Monsters (1988-90) and The X-Files (1993-2002), to dedicated vampire series such as Dracula: The Series (1990-91), Forever Knight (1992-96), Kindred: The Embraced (1996), Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-) and Angel (1999-). Vampires have also recently appeared on the daytime drama, Port Charles (1997-).

Vampires have been a constant element in popular film since Universal Studios first introduced American audiences to Dracula in 1931. Flynn comments on the ubiquitous nature of the vampire in films:

> The novel Dracula, for example, has been adapted for the silver screen more times than any other book and has inspired countless imitations, sequels, parodies, and spoofs. The words vampire and Dracula have become synonymous with sexual seduction, power, and domination, and are an integral part of our daily vocabulary. The vampire film continues to be a lively and prominent form of entertainment—fifteen or so were in production at the beginning of 1992. (1).

In addition to new releases, older vampire movies continue to be available to vampire enthusiasts through both television (vampire films appear most frequently around Halloween, but can also be seen throughout the year) and video rentals. Vampires have also been a popular element in the adult film market, first appearing in the 1970s in films suck as Dracula Sucks (1979), and more recently in take-offs on popular mainstream vampire films, including Muffy, the Vampire Layer (1992) and Intercourse with the Vampire (1995).

The vampire has been present in literature since the mid-eighteenth century, beginning with poems such as Heinrich August Ossenfelder's "Der Vampir" (1748), Gottfried August Bürger's "Lenore" (1773), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "The Bride of Corinth" (1797) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel" (1798), eventually developing into the prose of John Polidori's The Vampyre (1819), James Malcolm Rymer's Varney the Vampyre (1845), Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's Carmilla (1872), and finally, Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897), all before the dawn of the twentieth century. In contemporary America, the literary vampire seems to have found a permanent home. Ursini and Silver comment that "today vampire literature is being produced at a rate which is little short of astounding" (48).

Vampires have made their way into other elements of popular culture as well, appearing in advertisements for hotels, jeans, sunglasses, laxatives, cheese, trash bags, potato chips, milk, and vegetable juice cocktail. They appear in Broadway plays, musicals and full-scale ballet productions. They are prominent players in comic books, after being banned from 1954 to 1971, and are featured in many video games. Vampires seep into American lifestyle through role-playing games such as Vampire: The

Masquerade (White Wolf Game Studio, 1992), as well as through alternative music and the Goth club scene. Beyond the recent proliferation of vampires in popular culture, there has also been a plethora of academic work done on the vampire in literature, history, psychology and anthropology.

The Internet has also become a source of new life for vampires. Thousands of Web sites provide resources for new vampire fans to quickly get up to speed on the vampire legend and its history in fact and fiction, including the full text of public domain vampire literature such as Varney the Vampire and Carmilla. E-mail discussion lists and posting boards provide opportunities for people to share their thoughts on vampires with other like-minded individuals, to develop friendships and expand their interests. The peer-to-peer technology introduced by Napster also allows people to easily exchange vampire-related files, including everything from a favorite Buffy clip to a commercial-free version of last week's episode of Angel to the full movie version of Blade II (2002, no longer available in theaters; but not yet available on video).

Vampire fiction and film exceeds the boundaries of the horror genre into which critics such as Noël Carroll classify it, extending into romance, comedy, western, musical, ballet, animation, and mystery. Vampires have been featured not only as monsters, but also as heroes, lovers, detectives, aliens, and scientific anomalies. Vampires not only refuse to die, they refuse to be pigeonholed. Comedies are often seen as an indicator of saturation—when we have seen too much of a good thing, it is time to mock it. And yet we have seen vampire comedies come and go in the late seventies (Love at First Bite (1979)), the eighties (Once Bitten (1985) and Sundown: The Vampire in Retreat (1989)), and again in the mid-nineties (Dracula: Dead and Loving It (1995) and A Vampire in

Brooklyn (1995)), and yet the vampire theme has not grown stale. New stories continue to be brought to life in fiction, film, on stage, on television, in music, in comic books, and in art.

Nina Auerbach notes that "in the United States especially, Dracula has been one constant in the volatile twentieth century...by appearing immutable, he has survived this most fickle of centuries" (112). And on into the next, it would appear, as Dracula 2000, yet another variation on Stoker's novel, appeared in theaters at the beginning of the new century, followed by Shadow of the Vampire (2000), The Little Vampire (2000), The Forsaken (2001), Blade II (2002) and Queen of the Damned (2002), as well as new vampire fiction which continues to be published every year. A new Broadway musical is also in the works for Fall 2002—a musical adaptation of Roman Polanski's Dance of the Vampires (1967). Despite frequent claims made after each wave of vampire fiction and film that the vampire craze is "dead," new vampire stories continue to emerge. The vampire is here, its presence is growing, and it shows no signs of stopping.

In our scientific, rational world, why is there still such an interest in vampires? The explanation may be grounded in the very world we live in. In our world where science reigns, people continue to die from incurable diseases. In our affluent country, people are starving and living on the streets. In our postmodern age, there are no certainties. There is inexplicable violence destroying not just isolated individuals but thousands of lives in one fell swoop. We, or the ones we love, could die at any moment. Our environmental resources are quickly being tapped to feed our nation's inexhaustible hunger for power. We don't know what our future will be, and there is no clear path for us in life, no clear

roles for us to play. Gender and sexual distinctions have all been blurred. So how do we forge our identities?

The decline of belief in organized religion makes us question what we have been taught—is there really something wonderful that awaits us after death (whether that be heaven or reincarnation)? Or do our bodies simply stop, left to rot in the ground? What do we have to look forward to? Despite our professed lack of belief in the supernatural, even in contemporary American society there are things which we cannot explain, and so always, at the back of our minds is the suspicion that something more must exist, whether that something be gods, monsters, or both.

Now is a time for questioning the definition of what it means to be human. We may now be willing to believe in the supernatural, not as something horrific, but as something other-than-human, to be accepted and acknowledged for what we can learn from it. Perhaps now we can see these monsters as more like us, and therefore not so impure, and not so horrific after all. Of all the monsters that have become a part of our popular culture, vampires are the most dangerous, because they can be mistaken for one of us. The vampire walks among us, bearing a perfectly beautiful human form—exotic, alluring, immortal and deadly. Perhaps we enjoy imagining that something different could exist, and thrive within our society without anyone knowing about it. Perhaps we like to imagine that we, too, could get away with acting out our forbidden desires without punishment or even disrespect. Perhaps we simply want to live forever, love forever, or at least not fear for our lives.

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE VAMPIRE MYTHOS

Spawned in folklore, only in fiction and film does the vampire take its now-familiar form. What was once a singularly unpleasant piece of folklore has mutated through twentieth century fiction and film into something approaching a wish-fulfillment fantasy. What began as a smelly, evil walking corpse returning from the grave to harass and have sex with its family members evolved into the handsome, sophisticated seducer offering its victims forbidden pleasure. The contemporary vampire is now portrayed in many different ways—sometimes good, sometimes evil, sometimes desirable, sometimes undesirable, but always a force to be reckoned with. From its earliest to its most recent incarnations, the vampire has always played a sexual predator, whether the sexual predation is merely a guise by which to lure its victims, or a means of satisfaction for the vampire itself.

While sexuality has always been a component of the vampire myth—hinted at in the earliest literary vampire works such as The Vampyre (1819), Varney the Vampire (1845), and Carmilla (1872), made undeniable in Dracula (1897), and brought vividly to life in Hammer Films' rendition of the vampire in the 1950s and 60s—today vampirism has come to signify new forms of sexual freedom. A simple explanation for vampires' connection with sexuality could be the fear of sexually-transmitted diseases such as syphilis, and more recently, AIDS. But there is much more than fear inherent in the vampire's appeal. Terry Heller states that in Stoker's Dracula, a recurring theme is "the repression of infantile sexuality in favor of genital sexuality and reproduction" (79)—facing the forbidden in order to reject it, not accept it. However, in more recent vampire

narratives, this forbidden sexuality is fully embraced by both vampires and humans alike, in a celebration of sexual freedom where nothing is taboo.

The first vampire texts—The Vampyre, Varney the Vampire and Carmilla—were focused around the vampire as a central character. But in Stoker's novel, the focus turns much more to the effects the vampire has on those around him, and the battle to defeat him and restore normalcy. Vampire stories in the mid-twentieth century followed Stoker's lead, but as the sexuality of the vampire became more and more overt, interest in the vampire himself grew, and the stories have become much more focused on who the vampire is, and how he feels, how he experiences immortal life. Suddenly the vampire is able to prevail, or even be treated as a hero (in fiction such as Fred Saberhagen's The Dracula Tape (1975), Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles (1976-), Chelsea Quinn Yarbo's Saint-Germain series (1978-), Suzy McKee Charnas' The Vampire Tapestry (1980), and Poppy Z. Brite's Lost Souls (1992); television shows such as Forever Knight (1992-96) and Angel (1999-); and films such as Innocent Blood (1992), Interview with the Vampire (1994), The Addiction (1995) and Queen of the Damned (2002)). More recently, we have seen a return to Stoker's conception, as vampire hunters emerge as newfound heroes of the nineties in Buffy the Vampire Slayer (film, 1992; television series, 1997-), John Carpenter's Vampires (1998), Blade (1998, Blade II 2002), and The Forsaken (2001). While in Stoker's novel, Van Helsing is presented as a man who can battle Dracula with his wits and scholarly know-how, in more recent vampire narratives we have vampire hunters who combat the vampire with sheer physical strength, or elaborate weaponry.

**Early Vampire Narratives**

David Skal notes that "prior to the Romantic revolution of the early 1800s, the popular image of the vampire was that of walking, predatory carrion" (13). Polidori's 1819 novella The Vampyre changed that image forever. The Vampyre introduces the concept of the vampire as seducer, defiler, and abandoner. Lord Ruthven is a gentleman on the surface, but a libertine and vampire underneath. The women's attraction to Ruthven is easily understood, since he is a suave gentleman accepted into the upper echelons of society. Polidori's story inspired numerous stage adaptations which helped to instill this conception of the vampire into the popular culture.

Polidori introduced the literary vampire to the upper classes, theatrical adaptations introduced them to a wider audience, but it took Rymer's serial (Varney the Vampire, 1845) to introduce the vampire to the masses. Rymer's vampire is no gentleman. He takes his victims by force, with imagery clearly mimicking a rape scene:

> Her beautiful rounded limbs quivered with the agony of her soul. The glassy horrible eyes of the figure ran over that angelic form with a hideous satisfaction—horrible profanation. He drags her head to the bed's edge. He forces it back by the long hair still entwined in his grasp. With a plunge he seizes her neck in his fang-like teeth—a gush of blood, and a hideous sucking noise follows. (30).

Varney's female victims are repulsed by his fearsome nature, and yet simultaneously attracted, so that his attacks become sexual initiations at the same time. Varney is the first vampire who can transform his victims into his own kind, a premise that becomes central to most vampire stories later on, and is central to their popularity as well—so that fans may dream of becoming more than they are through an encounter with one of these unearthly creatures.

In Carmilla, the female vampire is still a sexual predator, but her victims are other women. Carmilla befriends her victims before she vampirizes them. Loving the victim is an essential component for her, but in loving them, she must consume them entirely, reveling in "the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love" (Le Fanu 89). Carmilla claims Laura as her own saying "You are mine, you shall be mine, and you and I are one for ever" (90).

Laura is immediately conflicted about how she feels towards Carmilla, feeling "drawn towards her," but also repulsed, though "the sense of attraction immensely prevailed" (87). Later, Laura describes the conflicting sensations she experiences when Carmilla holds and kisses her:

> I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust. I had no distinct thoughts about her while such scenes lasted, but I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence. I know this is a paradox, but I can make no other attempt to explain the feeling. (90).

Laura exhibits the combination of fear and desire which is a critical component of the vampire myth. There is something irresistibly attractive about the vampire, but also something deeply disturbing.

Although Laura never openly accepts Carmilla's amorous advances during the day, William Patrick Day notes that at night she welcomes the "unconventional love and sexuality offered to her by Carmilla" (Day 87). Day proposes that "Laura represses her memory of these moments...not because what occurs is horrible, though it is, but because she wants it to continue" (87). Despite the fear and disgust inextricably linked with her attraction to Carmilla, and the dreadful nature of Carmilla's nighttime visits, Laura cannot turn away her vampire lover.

Stoker's Dracula (1897) brings the implied sexuality of earlier vampire literature to the forefront, setting the stage for all vampire stories that were to follow. Gail Griffin comments that in Dracula, "for the first time vampirism is linked with stifled, obsessive sexuality, all the more urgent because forbidden" (Griffin 139). Clive Leatherdale notes how "a comprehensive search of the novel unearths the following: seduction, rape, necrophilia, paedophilia, incest, adultery, oral sex, group sex, menstruation, venereal disease, voyeurism—enough to titillate the most avid sexual appetite" (145-46). Maurice Richardson summarizes Dracula as "a kind of incestuous, necrophilous, oral-anal-sadistic all-in wrestling match" set in "a sort of homicidal lunatic's brothel in a crypt" (427). .

Christopher Bentley notes that "Stoker's vampires are permitted to assert their sexuality in a much more explicit manner than his 'living' characters" (26). Dracula himself is overtly sexual, and the women become sexual predators as soon as they become vampires. But the human characters also become willing victims (whether consciously or unconsciously) to the vampires, irresistibly attracted to their forbidden sexuality. Jonathan Harker undergoes "an agony of delightful anticipation" (41) as Dracula's vampire brides descend upon him. Although Lucy is in love with, and engaged to Arthur, she still is drawn repeatedly to Dracula—fighting her way outside to get to him. And Mina cannot resist the allure of Dracula even when her husband is asleep in bed next to her.

Jonathan describes the emotions and sensations he experiences as one of the female vampires approaches him:

> I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes. The fair girl went on her knees, and bent over me, fairly gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal.... Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips, and could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one's flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer—nearer. I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the supersensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dent of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited—waited with a beating heart. (Stoker 41-42).

He is afraid that she may penetrate him with her teeth, yet longs to feel her bite. The female vampire takes the role of aggressor, penetrating her prey, while Harker plays the submissive victim. This encounter is described in sexually explicit terms tinged with masochistic desire. Jonathan's first observation of the vampire women demonstrates the ambivalence he feels towards them—intense fear and intense desire, simultaneously: "There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (Stoker 41). He experiences both "deadly fear" and "burning desire," conflicting emotions which are "crucial to vampire sexuality" (Leatherdale 147). The vampire's power and sensuality appeals to us, but there is something deeply wrong with them, a stench of death.

Heller discusses what Jonathan could find so appealing about these vampire women:

> What do the ladies offer in exchange for Harker's self? Not mere sexual pleasure, but <u>forbidden</u> sexual pleasure. While Harker's society prescribes monogamy, they offer promiscuity—or at least polygamy. While Harker's society prescribes heterosexual relation with clearly differentiated gender roles, they offer the elimination of gender roles. While his society prescribes genital sexual contact, they offer at the least oral and possibly polymorphous sexual contact. The sexual alternatives the ladies promise, when taken together, suggest infantile sexuality: undifferentiated sexual pleasure orally centered, sometimes called polymorphous perversion. (78).

What appeals to Harker can be seen as the same thing that appeals to modern audiences—the vampire offers a life without boundaries, with limitations. Even the well-respected, well-behaved Mina cannot resist the vampire's kiss, confessing in her journal: "I was bewildered, and, strangely enough, I did not want to hinder him" (Stoker 308).

Dracula brought the vampire to the forefront of our consciousness, bringing with it our unconscious fears and desires. Over 100 years later, it is still relevant. The novel itself remains in print, its story continues to be remade and readapted and expanded, and audiences flock to see it in its latest form (in films such as Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992) and Dracula 2000; fiction such as Yarbo's Sisters of the Night trilogy (1998-), Bergstrom's Blood to Blood (2000) and Elrod's Quincey Morris, Vampire (2001); and television such as Dracula: The Series (1990-91) and an episode of Buffy the Vampire Slayer ("Buffy vs. Dracula," 2000)).

Stoker set the precedent for the female vampires that were to follow—wanton, lustful creatures who want to suck other parts of men's bodies just as much as their blood. Stoker also set the precedent for the dynamics of power now inherent in the vampire myth—of power through dominance (as seen in Dracula) as well as power through submission (as we see in Mina's ability to turn Dracula's psychic link with her against him). However, the male vampire as envisioned in Stoker's Dracula has not stood the test of time. The foul-breathed, hairy-palmed, beak-nosed nobleman who pursued Lucy and Mina only to gain power over their men would become a handsome, gentle seducer, offering eternal love to his chosen bride.

David J. Hogan notes that F.W. Murnau's Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror (1922), the first film adaptation of Stoker's novel, depicts the vampire as "totally devoid of sexual appeal" (138). Whereas Stoker's Dracula was on the surface a well-dressed, if not handsome, nobleman, Count Orlok is much more animalistic. He has pointed ears, long claw-like nails, protruding, rat-like teeth, bushy eyebrows and a bald head. Like his outward appearance, his inward nature is also animalistic—he acts on primal desires for carnal gratification. While most twentieth-century vampires attack only victims of the opposite sex, Count Orlok does not discriminate. He looks at Hutter with eager anticipation, and when Hutter cuts his thumb, he pounces upon him to suck the blood from his wound. Hutter awakes the next morning unsure of what has occurred, but closely examines an apparent bite on his neck. The next night, Orlok makes a more overt attack upon Hutter, entering his bedroom uninvited, descending upon Hutter as he cowers in his bed. Hutter's wife somehow senses this, awaking in a fright, calling out her husband's name.

When Ellen finally meets Count Orlok, she is fully aware of who and what he is, having read about vampires in the book she found among her husband's things: "Nobody can save you unless a sinless maiden makes the vampire forget the first crow of the cock—If she was to give him her blood willingly." She makes her choice. She feels the vampire coming to her, and throws open her bedroom window to invite him in, sending her husband out of the room. Orlok enters and bends over her, but it is not a romantic embrace. Fixated on his victim, he does not notice as the sun begins to rise. The vampire is destroyed when the first rays of the sun stream in through the window. Hutter returns in time to embrace his wife one last time before she dies as well.

The 1931 film version of Dracula, while not the first vampire film, was the first vampire film to appeal to a mainstream audience. Browning's adaptation (starring Bela Lugosi) presented the vampire as a "suave fiend" (Hogan 138), reaching back to the image of the vampire introduced by Polidori, and implanting a new conception of the vampire in the popular mind. Auerbach notes that while the Count in Stoker's novel was "not essentially lovable, nor...especially erotic," Lugosi's portrayal of Dracula "allows the twentieth century to steep him in desire" (115). J. Gordon Melton notes that Browning's Dracula "established the image of the male vampire which is still predominant today—the mysterious, European gentleman, with a dark hidden agenda" (Vampires on Video 64).

The "horror" in this film is "kept to a minimum," which, when compared to later, and especially the most recent vampire films, makes this material seem "very tame" (Flynn 37-38). Lugosi's vampire has no fangs, there is no blood and gore, there is no color, and there is little passion. And still, Dracula is shown to have an "irresistible sexuality" which is contrasted against the "repressed sexual urges of Victorian morality" (Flynn 39). Surprisingly, Universal Studios never expected the Count to be sexually attractive, only fearsome, and only realized the appeal of the vampire " after the film was released, and letters poured in from female fans" (Melton, Vampires on Video 64). The sexual appeal of the vampire would not soon be forgotten.

**Into the Postmodern World**

In the 1960s, "hazy memories of Stoker's novel collaborated with the insistent repetitions of Hammer movies to turn Dracula, originally a highly particularized, even innovative creature, into a weighty archetype, The Vampire" (Auerbach 130). The stereotypical male vampire can be seen as a "Byronic figure, seductive, erotic, possessing a hypnotic power which makes its questionable charms seem irresistible to its victims" (Ursini and Silver 54) who, as Gregory A. Waller notes, "seems perpetually about to caress and violate the beautiful, reclining body of a mesmerized, and in some fashion willing, virginal young woman" (21). Hammer Films further established the image of the male vampire as sadistic seducer and the female vampire as sexual predator that would be forever engrained in American culture. Later vampire narratives would begin to challenge or play with these conventions, but they could never be erased.

The emergence of Hammer Films' series of vampire movies (beginning in 1958 with The Horror of Dracula) had a major impact on the way the vampires were viewed and understood by audiences. The sexuality that was merely hinted at in earlier films became overt—women swooned in ecstasy, openly enjoying the animalistic bite of the vampire. Hammer Films produced 16 vampire films between 1958 and 1974, films which "enriched and elevated the vampire movie above (and beyond) its B-film level" (Flynn 83). Color is a new element in the Hammer films—night becomes deep blue, and blood becomes bright red. But color isn't the only innovation. Hammer did away with comic relief, and focused in on the grisly details. Hammer's vampire has fangs, and we see him bite into his victims. We see the blood, we see the rage in the vampire's eyes, the ecstasy

in the eyes and form of his victims. Hammer openly explored the relationship between vampirism and sexuality, between sadism and masochism.

Ursini and Silver note that in the Hammer Dracula films, "the psycho-sexual aspects of the vampire myth were explored to an unprecedented depth" (123):

> "Desire" and "obsession" became the key words as Thanatos and Eros were intermingled in victim and oppressor... The Lucy of the Hammer Dracula awaits her deadly leman in bed, breathless and eager. Even the quintessentially Victorian Mina has her repressions dissolved as Dracula bestows kisses and caresses on her before indulging his vampiric thirst. (124).

Horror of Dracula was the first film to dare to show a victim eagerly awaiting the vampire's visit, and making it easier for him to gain entrance. Once Lucy is sure she is alone, she opens her window, removes her crucifix, and lies down on her bed, fondling the vampire bites on her neck in eager anticipation for a return visit. Hammer's Dracula films firmly established the fantasy of the submissive female victim wanting to be taken, and appearing to be experiencing orgasmic pleasure as the vampire drained her blood.

Lane Roth states that "vampirism and evil, in the context of Horror of Dracula, are metaphors for subversive sex" (250). Dracula's "female victims are enraptured, not repelled, by his salacious savagery" (Lane. Roth 251), getting something from him that their prim and proper men could never offer—and this is the true allure for the vampire—forbidden pleasure. This pleasure is apparent not just for the victims, but also for the vampire: "when he bites a young lovely's throat he is not merely feeding, but experiencing (and inducing) a moment of orgasmic ecstasy. We can almost feel the vampire's lips brushing tentatively upon our throats" (Hogan 145-46).

Flynn notes how "when Dracula approaches his victims, they actually enjoy, rather than resist, his neck biting," recognizing "the vampire's movements" as "foreplay, and

what woman can resist such attention?" (Flynn 86). But in addition to Dracula's powers of seduction and sensuality, there is also "an air of tragic melancholy" about him (Flynn 86). Dracula is portrayed as an inherently lonely figure, looking for love and companionship. He becomes a figure of evil when his beloved has been destroyed, at which point he seeks vengeance on not just the perpetrator, but on that man's loved ones as well. As Hogan notes, "for the first time, Dracula was portrayed as an enraged lover" (Hogan 147).

In the years following the release of Horror of Dracula, more vampire films began to feature explicit sex and violence. Flynn comments that "the vampire, though still cloaked in ritual and superstition, took on an air of sadism and erotic sensationalism. Violent practices and sexual relationships of every kind in the human (and not so human) experience were explored" (Flynn 128). In Dracula Has Risen from the Grave (1968), not only do victims long for the vampire after he has first bitten them, but actually "solicit his bite" (Hogan 149). Hogan notes that "there is a fine moment of twisted eroticism when blonde heroine Veronica Carlson lies with radiant expectation upon her bed as the vampire approaches, lithely twisting her body to aid his angle of approach" (Hogan 149). James F. Iaccino comments that "Dracula himself also seems to engage in some loving foreplay each time he comes to her bedchamber" (65). Ursini and Silver also observe that "the responses of the young women in Taste the Blood of Dracula ... unmistakably suggest orgasm" (82).

Hammer's vampire films not only establish the image of the male vampire as sadistic seducer, but also confirm that of the female vampire as a sexual predator. Films such as The Vampire Lovers (1970), Lust for a Vampire (1970), Twins of Evil (1971) and

Countess Dracula (1972) juxtapose images of nudity with bloodletting, and subversive sex with vampirism, setting up the expectation that female vampires are all about sex—they will suck their lovers dry, in more ways than one.

In The Vampire Lovers, "Carmilla is an irresistible sexual juggernaut whose comely victims succumb to their own suppressed desires; they become vampires willingly, loving it" (Hogan 155). Lust for a Vampire, the sequel to The Vampire Lovers, "probably represents the apex of the English-speaking sex-vampire" (156), according to Hogan. In this film:

> Girls whisper, giggle, and play coy sexual games with each other while Mircalla moves through them like International Harvester. A male teacher is vampirized, and a lovely student (Pippa Steel) is bitten on the throat and breasts. When Mircalla pauses in her fiendish work, blood streams from her fangs and across her bare breasts. The image must surely be one of the most startling in cinema history. (157).

Unlike Carmilla in the original film, Mircalla vampirizes both male and female victims alike. Twins of Evil was the third film in the series, with vampire twins attacking both men and women in a small town. Countess Dracula turned to a different story for its inspiration, the historical tale of Elizabeth Bathory, who bathed in virgin's blood in an attempt to keep herself young. In the film, the Countess takes both young men and women as her lovers, "hoping to tap their youth and innocence" (Flynn 103).

Many later vampire narratives would return to this conception of the female vampire as a voracious sexual predator—beautiful, seductive, and deadly—as well as to that of the male vampire as the ultimate seducer. Now that the vampire's kiss had become openly erotic, and vampirism and sex inextricably linked, it is not surprising that at this same time "vampires became the focus of soft- and hard-core pornographic films" which

"utilized vampirism simply as a gimmick to link coupling (and tripling) scenes together" (Flynn 163) and to introduce sadomasochism as part of sexual play.

The daytime drama Dark Shadows (1966-71) was the first successful attempt to introduce a new vampire with his own unique personality, style and history. Barnabas Collins awakes in a new century still pining for his lost love (who took her own life when she learned he had become a vampire, refusing to join him in that existence). He becomes convinced that Maggie Evans is a reincarnation of his beloved Josette, and attempts to convert her into his vampire bride. This theme of the vampire as an immortal lover seeking his lost love in the face of another woman would be repeated again and again throughout vampire narratives in the years to come.

Iaccino comments that Barnabas Collins "was more man than monster because he suffered from that most human of emotions, unrequited love" (66). Barnabas is not the only one who suffers from unrequited love in this story. Dr. Julia Hoffman discovers in the bloodstream of Barnabas's victims a common "destructive cell" which she is able to eliminate. She takes Barnabas as a patient to attempt to cure him, and falls in love with him in the process. But he only has eyes for the reincarnated vision of his beloved. When Julia lashes out at him out of jealousy, he attacks and kills her in return, destroying his only hope for a return to humanity, and "signifying that the vampire is forever doomed" (Iaccino 67). Although Barnabas was actively seeking escape from his undead existence, he could not escape his murderous nature. This is another theme that would continue to be explored in later vampire narratives.

Vampire narratives of the 1970s took the conventions that had been established by Stoker, Hammer Films and Dark Shadows and began to weave them into the mythos that we have today. The vampire as sadistic seducer introduced by Hammer merged with the immortal lover introduced in Dark Shadows, and created the soulful, passionate, powerful vampire we see in the 1973 and 1979 film adaptations of Dracula, as well as in the more humanized vampires that emerged in the fiction of Saberhagen, Rice and Yarbo. Previously, the vampire was often a catalyst for sexual awakening and fulfillment, but not for love. Romantic portrayals of the vampire focus both on the emptiness that only perfect love can fill, and the fantasy that this perfect love can last forever.

Dan Curtis's Dracula (1973) was the first film to tie the concept of reincarnated love to the Dracula story. This film paints a picture of the vampire not just as a seducer, but as an ever-faithful immortal lover whose love will never die. When Van Helsing kills the vampirized Lucy, Dracula embraces her mutilated corpse and cries. Auerbach explains the emergence of weeping vampires as the "sensitized new men wishful feminists of the 1970s constructed" (136), becoming a different form of wish-fulfillment fantasy, not of forbidden sex, but of eternal love. Where Christopher Lee's Dracula unleashed his victims' sexuality, Jack Palance offers them devotion. The vampire becomes sexual, sensual, and completely, utterly loyal—what more could a woman want?

Frank Langella's Dracula, in the 1979 film adaptation directed by John Badham, took the role of the weeping vampire a step further. Langella's Dracula is a fully sensual, sexual, man, looking for a woman to share his immortal life. Flynn comments that Langella's Dracula " resembles a latter-day Valentino and brings a romantic elegance to the role" causing women "to swoon rather than cringe in terror" (205). Iaccino notes that

Langella's Dracula "sends women like Mina Van Helsing into repeated swoons and projects such a strong lust for life that other females are instantly drawn to him, abandoning their fiancés for the excitement and thrills he alone can provide" (69).

The women in this film, no longer portrayed as victims, become empowered by the sensuality and lust for life which Dracula instills in them, and "embrace vampirism with rapture as the sole available escape from patriarchy" (Auerbach 140). Lucy is not a reincarnation of a lost love, but a thoroughly modern woman who the Count falls in love with of her own merits. She is confident and self-assertive, frankly expressing her desire for the vampire, and her desire to join him in his immortal life. Her transformation scene is full of erotic tenderness, which Iaccino also describes as "perhaps the most sensual vampire scene of all time" (70), culminating in an unbreakable bond between the two, sealed in blood. This portrayal of vampirism as an escape from the trials and tribulations of everyday life carries through much of the fiction and film in the eighties and nineties, and has become part of the popular mythos and appeal of the vampire.

In Saberhagen's The Dracula Tape (1975), Dracula gets the opportunity to speak in his own voice, an opportunity denied him in Stoker's many-voiced novel. Dracula reveals himself to be both intelligent and humane, tormented by idiots, and deeply in love with Mina. Rice's Interview with the Vampire emerged in 1976, presenting a first-person portrayal of a very different kind of vampire. Rice's vampires, while sensual and erotic, are not capable of genital sex. However, they still have great love affairs, as seen between Louis and Lestat, Louis and Claudia, and Louis and Armand. Erotic love in Interview is always tainted with a hint of impropriety—whether homosexual, incestuous, or pedophilic. But these vampires exist beyond the rules of society. Louis tells the story

of his life as a vampire, describing the torment he has suffered, the moral anguish he has experienced, and the sinister underworld of vampires that exists. Unlike the vampires presented by Stoker and Hammer, Louis has never lost his human soul, and does not accept the necessity of taking human life in order to feed his own.

The eponymous hero of Yarbo's Saint-Germain series (first appearing in 1978) is another vampire who does not take human life in order to sustain himself. He takes only as much blood as is needed for him to survive, and often takes it from a willing lover or from a stranger who knows only pleasant dreams as a result. This vampire longs for intimacy, but not for phallic sexuality. Like Rice's vampires, traditional sexuality no longer plays a role in the life of Saint-Germain, but he is still highly erotic. As Auerbach comments, "Yarbo's many sex scenes make vampirism a celebration, not only of nonviolence, but of a sexuality richer and more variable than penetration" (149). This intimacy sustains him just as much as actual blood drinking does, and seems to echo Carmilla's intense emotional bond to her victims. Yarbo provides a deeply feminist perspective on sexuality, looking for the lover who can look beyond his penis to find other ways to more intimately pleasure a woman. In addition to sexual gratification, Saint-Germain also offers women freedom from oppressive situations when he can, and as in Badham's Dracula, that freedom is usually found through becoming a vampire.

These works set the stage for the vampire narratives that were to come, questioning which is the greater evil, the vampire or the humans? By the end of the 1970s, the vampire was thoroughly embedded in popular American culture, not just as a B-movie icon, but as an element of credible literature and film, a relevant metaphor for our ever-changing times. Carroll proposes that the reason horror fantasy in general became so

mainstream in the 1970s was that movie-goers at that time were the "first post-war generation raised by TV" and that "their affection for horror, to a large extent, was nurtured and deepened by the endless reruns of the earlier horror and sci-fi cycles that provided the repertoire of the afternoon and late-night television of their youth" (3). However, it wasn't just movies on TV that developed viewers' awareness and understanding of vampires. Supernatural series such as The Twilight Zone (1959-65), Night Gallery (1970-73), and Kolchak: The Night Stalker (1974-75) featured vampires among other monsters and things that go bump in the night, bringing the vampire into contemporary contexts, blending in with more commonplace fears.

In the 1970s, the vampire also began to evolve into forms that were quite different from the predominant conception. In 'Salem's Lot (1975), Stephen King brought the vampire myth back to its roots in folklore, showing vampires as mindless walking corpses, and vampirism not as a select club, but as a virus that spreads like wildfire. Even the appearance of the head vampire in the 1979 television miniseries (unlike the book) looked back to an earlier representation of the vampire—that of Count Orlok in Nosferatu (1922).

Nosferatu made another reappearance in the late seventies in Werner Herzog's remake, Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht (1979). In this film, the tragic loneliness of the vampire is much more apparent, as is the determined sacrifice of Lucy to save her husband and her town. As in the previous version, the Count is an omnivorous sexual predator, first slaking his thirst on Jonathan, but soon turning his interest to Lucy. Count Dracula demands that Lucy give him some of the love she gives to Jonathan, because "the absence of love is the most abject pain." Lucy at first refuses, even though Dracula

tells her that if she submits, she will have her husband back. But after watching the townspeople around her die of the vampire's plague, and realizing that even Dr. Van Helsing will not help her, Lucy determines to lure the vampire to her, and keep him with her until the cock crows. As opposed to the earlier version, this scene is not as simple as the vampire biting her and it is morning. Instead, the scene is much more drawn out. We see Dracula pull up Lucy's nightgown, and grab her breast in an awkward attempt at sexuality before he finally drinks from her. He tries to pull away after drinking his fill, but she pulls him back to her, sealing her own fate and his. Finally, the sun rises, and he collapses to the ground, not fading into nothingness as in the earlier version, but remaining as a very real, very tragic figure of loneliness and despair.

Another tragic vampire who seems to have no supernatural power of seduction, but has the power to destroy is George Romero's Martin (1977). Martin longs for the fantasy of women waiting for him in ecstasy to take their blood, but they will not allow this while conscious, so he must drug them before he undresses them, and since he has no fangs, he must gain access to their blood with a very unglamorous razor blade. Martin will drink from male victims, but only out of desperation—one man is taken in the woods, stabbed in the throat with a sharp stick; another is taken in an alley, slit down the arm with a piece of broken glass. But neither type of scene, no matter how Martin intends it, can be seen as romantic. Martin brings the vampire into the mundane, unsupernatural modern world.

It is never made clear in the film whether or not Martin is psychotic, or if he really is a vampire. He thinks he is, as does his cousin Cuda, and both he and Cuda refer to Martin being 84 years old, though he looks no more than 20. Whether or not Martin is a vampire, the film makes it clear that "there is no magic" in the world. Cuda welcomes

Martin into his home by saying "Nosferatu. Vampire. First I will save your soul. Then I will destroy you. I will show you your room." For Cuda, vampirism is a family curse (there have been "nine such accursed in the family") and it is now his turn to bear the family shame by housing Martin. Cuda is very concerned with keeping up appearances and maintaining an impression of propriety. He makes Martin attend church with him, gives him a job at his store, and instructs him to never take his victims from within their town, though he is perfectly aware that Martin will have to take victims from somewhere.

Despite his acceptance of Martin into his home, Cuda never fully accepts Martin as a family member, and never loses his fear or hatred of Martin for what he is. In response to Cuda's fear, Martin plays upon the stereotypes of what a vampire must be—walking around in the mist with a black cape, white makeup, and cheap plastic fangs. Cuda tries to defend himself by thrusting a crucifix in Martin's face. Martin laughs at him, telling him it's just a costume. "I am your cousin, Martin" he tells Cuda "You see," he says, biting into one of the garlic bulbs and touching the cross that Cuda has set out to repel him, "It isn't magic. Even I know that. It isn't magic." Even an exorcism can't change what Martin is.

Martin discusses his nature and his actions at length with a radio DJ, commenting on the misconception of vampires presented in the movies: "Vampires always have ladies. Sometimes lots of ladies. Well, that's wrong, too! ... If the magic part was real, and you could make them do whatever you wanted to, well, that would be different. In real life...in real life you can't get people to do what you want them to do." The film dispels the myths of power and seduction, showing only a sad, frightened boy whose only attempt at love leads ultimately to his death.

When Martin's willing lover—a sad, bored housewife—takes her life in the same way that Martin had often staged the death of his victims (by slitting her wrists in the bathtub), Cuda assumes Martin is responsible. Since he thinks Martin has violated his one rule—never anyone in the town—he dispatches him in the manner of a vampire, driving a stake into his heart. This ending provides no clear proof as to whether or not Martin was a vampire, since a stake to the heart would kill either man or vampire.

Love at First Bite (1979) plays with the conventions of the vampire film in a different way. The vampire still believes himself to have all the powers of seduction he has always been ascribed, and yet when brought from Transylvania into modern-day New York City, he discovers he is horribly unhip. He falls in love with a modern, feminist woman who is not so ready to swoon the moment he walks into the room. Yet she still succumbs to him. When he bites her, she bites back—interpreting his biting as a form of kinky sex. This is one of the first vampire narratives to end in a romantic, happy ending, as the vampire and his bride fly away together, transformed into bats.

In The Vampire Tapestry (1980), Charnas presents a vampire who is a non-human species—not immortal, not supernatural, just a predator that is made to look like us. Weyland is not looking for love, never falls in love, and cannot transform anyone else into a vampire to be his companion. But this does not bother him. He is not lonely or tragic. He is simply a hunter. Katje de Groot, an African huntress who recognizes Weyland's vampiric nature early on, observes how people are drawn to him, and comments: "For overcivilized people to experience the approach of such a predator as sexually attractive was not strange ... the great cats were all beautiful, and maybe beauty helped them to capture their prey" (41). Weyland is continually compared to the great

cats—a tiger, a lion, a leopard, a lynx. The lithe, sultry predator, who looks so appealing, but will tear your throat out if given the chance.

Weyland is weakened in three ways—first by gunshot, then by starvation, and finally and mostly fatally, by psychotherapy. Weyland is shot and wounded by the huntress when he attempts to drink her blood, and in his injured state is captured and sold to Roger, a curious New Yorker who intends to showcase the vampire for profit. Roger brings an ex-girlfriend over to be the vampire's first human meal in his new home. The experience for her is orgasmic:

> She put out her hand as if to push the vampire's head away, but instead she began to stroke his hair. ...Until he finished, she sat enthralled, whispering, "Oh, wow," at dreamy intervals. When the vampire lifted his drowned, peaceful face, she said earnestly to him, "I'm a Scorpio; what's your sign?" (68).

Even the non-human predator produces a state of ecstasy in his victims, lulling them into complacency as he feeds.

Roger's nephew, Mark, witnesses the feeding, and afterwards becomes the reluctant caretaker for the vampire. Weyland eventually uses the boy's sympathy against him to escape, drinking from the boy to save himself from starvation. He leaves the boy alive, allowing Mark to reflect: "To have someone spring on you like a tiger and suck your blood with savage and single-minded intensity—how could anybody imagine that was sexy? He would never forget that moment's blinding fear. If sex was like that, they could keep it" (110). Mark, young enough not to have experienced adult sexuality, sees the vampire's attack as anything but attractive. But adult women, and some men, continue to be attracted to Weyland, even when they are completely aware of his animal nature. Not unlike more traditional vampires, there is something seductive about

Weyland, whether he tries to exert that power or not. Even his therapist, polished professional that she is, cannot resist.

Charnas' vampire is the first to undergo therapy, and to have his animal nature threatened by the human qualities his therapist helps him uncover. Although Weyland comes to Dr. Landauer under the pretense that he is hoping to rid himself of his delusions of being a vampire (in order to be reinstated at the college he fled after being shot), their conversations grow more and more real, until his therapist realizes the validity of his supposed delusions: "He was drowning her in more than she had ever expected or for that matter wanted to know about vampirism" (137). As she begins to wonder whether what he's telling her is fantasy or reality, she also questions her own sanity and professionalism: "What kind of therapist becomes an accomplice to the client's fantasy? A crazy therapist, that's what kind" (139). And she quickly finds herself both attracted to and terrified of the man/monster she cannot define. And she notes to herself—"How come this attraction to someone so scary?" (139). Trying to understand her attraction to Weyland, Dr. Landauer postulates:

> In feeding (woman in taxi), utter absorption one wants from a man in sex—no score-keeping, no fantasies, just hot urgency of appetite, of senses, the moment by itself. ...All springs from, elaborates, the single, stark, primary condition: he is a predator who subsists on human blood. Harmony, strength, clarity, magnificence—all from that basic animal integrity. Of course I long for all that, here in the higgledy-piggledy hodgepodge of my life! Of course he draws me! (161).

However, Weyland, unlike traditional vampires, is not interested in sex. As he explains to Dr. Landauer, "My sex urge is of low frequency and is easily dealt with unaided—although I occasionally engage in copulation out of the necessity to keep up appearances. I am capable, but not—like humans—obsessed" (142). He uses sexuality simply to lure

his prey, whether male or female—to him it does not matter. He receives no satisfaction other than satiating his hunger to feed.

Eventually, the vampire begins to fear for his animal integrity as the therapy threatens to make him too human, make him feel too much compassion for his prey. He plans at first to kill his therapist, faking a suicide, so that there will be no trace left of all he shared with her. But she convinces him not only to let her live, but also to have sex with her. The doctor's fantasy is consummated as the vampire admits his desire for her, and willingly comes to bed with her.

Another example of the vampire as non-human species emerges in The Hunger (novel 1981, film 1983). Miriam Blaylock is the last of her kind and, unlike Weyland, she longs for companionship. Also unlike Weyland, Miriam can convert her lovers into creatures almost like herself, creatures who can live and love for centuries, but not forever. The gender of her lover does not matter—she begins with a male lover, and ends with a female one, and we are shown the endlessly aging bodies of all the lovers who have come before, both male and female. It is with her lover that she will roam the streets, killing and basking in blood. She is a serial monogamist, always hoping for the love that will truly last forever.

A more recent appearance of the alternate-species vampire is in Dance of the Damned (1988). The male vampire is handsome, seductive, and preys on those who he feels seek death. He chooses an exotic dancer at a strip club as his next victim, feeling her pain and desperation as she dances. He tells her about his life as a vampire, and she tries to teach him about the daylight world that he has never seen. At first, she seems willing to die, saying goodbye to her son, and returning home with the vampire. But when the time

comes for the vampire to take her, she finds a renewed interest in life, and sacrifices him to the sun in order to survive.

The eighties also saw a return to the traditional vampire—a supernatural sexual predator who subsists on human blood, is susceptible to sunlight and holy symbols, casts no reflection, and who can turn others into creatures like itself. The seductive gentleman vampire resurfaces in Fright Night (1985), To Die For (1989), and Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992); the wantonly sexual female vampire returns in Once Bitten (1985), Vamp (1986), Fright Night Part II (1989) and Bordello of Blood (1996).

In Fright Night, the seductive vampire awakens the latent desire in the modern woman—Amy was too much of a prude to have sex with the man she loves, but when seduced by the vampire she becomes a sexual creature of the night. The hero is a vampire-film aficionado, who recruits the host of his favorite television show to help him expose and destroy the vampire that lives next door. A new concept introduced by this film is the reversibility of vampirism—Amy becomes human again after Charley destroys the vampire. As in many vampire films, the vampire sees in Amy a long-lost love, and in the end, he appears as devastated in losing her again as he is in losing his own life.

Both To Die For and Bram Stoker's Dracula were marketed as love stories—To Die For's alternate title was Dracula: The Love Story, and the tagline for Bram Stoker's Dracula was "Love Never Dies." Both paint a picture of the vampire as a monster, but a monster with a heart, who can love the right woman passionately and devotedly for all time. In Bram Stoker's Dracula, the love between Dracula and Mina is portrayed as so strong that it can overcome any obstacle put in its path by life or death. Dracula crosses "oceans of time" to find the reincarnated soul of his beloved wife in Mina. He offers her

"life eternal, everlasting love." Though she willingly accepts his offer to be his immortal bride, this film does not allow vampirism to be a happy ending, and instead, Mina uses her love for the vampire to free his soul, decapitating Dracula with her own hand. Bram Stoker's Dracula is also one of the most graphically erotic portrayals of the Dracula story to date, notably in Harker's interaction with the three female vampires at Dracula's castle, Dracula's attacks upon Lucy, and Mina's drinking from Dracula's chest. To Die For also contains erotic love scenes between Vlad and the only woman he has ever loved in his lengthy life. He doesn't want to transform her into a mindless servant or even to drink her blood—he simply wants to love her. But he can't change who he is, and ultimately sacrifices himself in order to save his beloved from becoming like him.

In Once Bitten, the seductive and beautiful Countess needs the blood of a virgin to sustain her youthful appearance, and in modern-day Los Angeles, this is becoming increasingly difficult to find. She resorts to singles bars, and brings home the geeky Mark. After Mark has been bitten by the Countess, his skin grows paler, he begins to dress in black, wear sunglasses, and slick his hair back—so that when he shows up at a Halloween party, his "vampire" costume wins first place—even though he didn't consider himself to be in costume. As in Love at First Bite, the Countess must drink from her victim three times before the transformation is complete. The Countess's plans are foiled when Mark and his girlfriend have sex moments before she takes the final bite. The movie ends with a grandmotherly-looking Countess (having lost her youthful looks) deploring the state of a world in which it is so difficult to find a virgin.

Other female vampires of the eighties and early nineties become nothing more than flat representations of the femme fatale. Fright Night Part II presents the sister of the

vampire from the first film as a beautiful, mysterious vampire who seduces Charley despite his knowledge of vampires and previous experience in fending them off. Vamp features Grace Jones as a queen vampire who is also the headlining dancer at a strip club; she feeds off of the club's enthralled male patrons. In Bordello of Blood, the vampire queen Lilith is a powerful, evil seductress who runs a brothel where she and her vampire cohorts entice then victimize their clients. Once the men have given in to their desires, they must pay with their lives, or at least their blood and their humanity.

It was also in the eighties that Rice returned to her world of vampires, with The Vampire Lestat in 1985, followed by the Queen of the Damned in 1988, and many more novels in a regular succession, which together are now known as The Vampire Chronicles. Rice's vampires evolve into being objects not just of sympathy, as Louis was in Interview with the Vampire, but of admiration, and even envy. Skal comments on how Rice presented her vampires "not as nightmares but as objects of glamorous transcendence and desire" (198). Auerbach notes that Rice presents vampirism as "a select club, a fraternity of beauty and death whose members are expected to be handsome and refined enough not to irritate each other throughout eternity" (154). This image of vampirism permeated American culture in the late twentieth century, contributing to people's desire to become a part of this select club, to find everlasting friendship, everlasting acceptance, not just love and sex.

The idea of becoming a vampire as a way of finding an adoptive family was a dominant theme in many vampire narratives emerging in the late twentieth century, from Near Dark (1987) to The Lost Boys (1987) to Brite's Lost Souls (1992), all of which

focus on vampires who are perpetual teenagers—emphasizing their carefree, rock and roll lifestyle along with their sense of brotherhood and community. But becoming a vampire is not as simple as joining a country club—more like a street gang, prospective members must prove their valor and worth before being admitted. Accepted members find a place to belong, but stepping outside of that protective group is seen as suicide, or reason to be killed.

In Near Dark (1987), a young man meets a young woman, and they kiss. She bites him on the neck ever so slightly before running away, and soon we discover that she is a vampire, and that small bite has turned him into one as well. Rather than leave him sizzling on the road as the rising sun begins to react with his newly vampiric self, Mae and her band of vampire hooligans pick up Caleb and bring him along with them. However, Caleb is not so easily transitioned into the vampire lifestyle, and the other vampires are not so quick to welcome him. He must prove that he is worthy of joining them, and murder is the price of membership. But Caleb is unable to take a human life, and instead drinks from Mae's wrists after she has fed in order to sustain himself. Mae hides this from the other vampires, who would turn Caleb out if they knew the truth. Eventually Caleb is able to break away from the vampires and return home, where his father is able to reverse Caleb's vampirism through a blood transfusion (the first time in vampire literature where this is done successfully). Now that he has turned against them, the vampires come to wreak revenge on Caleb and his family. But Caleb and Mae are both able to escape, and now Caleb brings Mae into his world, using his own blood to perform a transfusion on her. He rescues her from her life of transience and vampirism, but also takes away her dreams of immortality.

The Lost Boys (1987) shows its vampires to be no more than rebellious teens on the surface—they wear leather, drive motorcycles, and are always looking for trouble—who just happen to drink blood as part of their rebellion. The vampire lifestyle seems to be counter-culture alternative, a way to be cool and on the edge. The night that Michael first becomes tainted by vampire blood, he buys a leather jacket, and awakes the next morning wearing an earring. Here, the male vampires seduce Michael more than the woman he is falling for—he is drawn in by their power and wants to be part of the gang. Although it is Star that leads him to the vampires, it is David's blood that he drinks, and David's blood that turns him into a vampire.

The advertising campaign for The Lost Boys included the tagline: "Sleep all day. Party all night. Never grow old. Never die. It's fun to be a vampire."—appealing to the teenage party-hardy sensibility. In addition, the film featured a loud rock-and-roll soundtrack, featuring popular "alternative" bands such as INXS and Echo and the Bunny Men. The cast also included the familiar faces of Jamie Gertz, Jason Patric, Corey Haim, Corey Feldman, Alex Winter and Kiefer Sutherland, all of whom had already starred in other popular teen films. The Lost Boys made it cool to be a vampire, but still, in the end, the evil vampires were destroyed.

Interestingly, the king vampire presented in The Lost Boys is far from being a lady-killer; instead, on the surface, he seems meek and nerdy. In order to convince Lucy to become his eternal bride, he doesn't attempt to mesmerize her with his seductive charms, but instead, tries to convert her children into vampires so that she will have no choice but to join them. Her youngest son joins forces with some of the local vampire-hunter-wannabes, and defeats the vampires before his mother must submit. It is important that

the good guys in this film, Michael and Star, are able to overcome their still-new vampiric nature while the vampires who delight in killing are destroyed. Vampirism is reversible for someone who has drunk the blood of a vampire, but not yet killed.

In Lost Souls (1992), Brite's vampires are pleasure-seeking partiers who drink alcohol, do drugs, eat candy, and "could walk in sunlight as their great-grandfathers could not" (Brite 5), though they prefer the night. In addition to the vampires' alternative lifestyle of drinking, drugs, and murder, conventional boundaries of sexual morality are also constantly crossed. Jessy seduces and has sex with her father. Nothing expresses his openness to having sex with anyone of either gender—for fun, for money, or simply for a ride—and later becomes the regular lover of his biological father, Zillah. And all the vampires regularly have sex with each other and partake in drinking each other's blood as part of their lovemaking.

The trio of Zillah, Twig and Molochai consider themselves to be a family—an incestuous, murderous family, but still a family: "They stood together, naked and embracing, the three of them as much a family as anyone could be, anywhere, ever" (Brite 83). When the half-vampire, Nothing, meets them, he immediately claims Zillah, Twig and Molochai as "his new family," saying that with them is "the only place where he had ever felt truly accepted" (Brite 154). They appear to be no more than vampire wannabes—"they wished they had fangs but had to make do with teeth they filed sharp" (Brite 5)—but as Nothing soon learns, they are not just pretending. When Nothing realizes that these three actually are vampires, he must make the choice as to whether or not he wants to join them. And in order to join them, he must prove his loyalty by ripping out the throat of his childhood friend with his bare teeth. Although Nothing cries

throughout the entire experience, he knows that "the taste of blood meant the end of aloneness" (Brite 158).

Vampires in all of these narratives begin to face moral dilemmas—to kill or not to kill in order to survive, in order to belong. In Interview with the Vampire, Louis chooses not to kill, and is able to survive first on rats, and later on partially-drained humans. In Near Dark, Caleb chooses not to kill, and survives first by drinking from Mae, and is later returned to his human state through a blood transfusion. In The Lost Boys, both Michael and Star abstain from killing and ultimately are returned to their human state after the head vampire is killed. In Lost Souls, Nothing chooses to kill but finally redeems himself by helping his human friends escape the wrath of his fellow vampires. This type of moral dilemma continues to pervade all contemporary vampire narratives, even those that define the vampire as evil by nature.

As the question of the nature of the vampire persists, vampires who are not at all evil begin to emerge, appearing both as heroes and as lovers. Nancy Collins's Sonja Blue books (first appearing in 1989) tell the story of a vampire who is also a vampire killer. In P.N. Elrod's The Vampire Files series (first appearing in 1990), Jack Fleming is a vampire and the hero of these stories set in 1930s gangster-ridden Chicago. The vampire romance has even appeared as a subgenre in itself, typically involving a sympathetic male vampire and the woman who loves him. Occasionally these focus on the vampire somehow getting cured to achieve a happy ending, but more recently, both films and novels are beginning to show vampirism as an acceptable alternative to being human and include people becoming vampires as an element of a happy ending. Examples of novels with this type of ending include Cheryln Jac's Night's Immortal Touch (1995) and

Amanda Ashley's Embrace the Night (1995). In some vampire fiction, the vampire is explicitly portrayed as the ultimate lover—granting intense sexual fulfillment in exchange for blood—most notably in books such as Jacqueline Lictenberg's Those of My Blood (1988), Elaine Bergstrom's Shattered Glass (1989) and Susan Petrey's Gifts of Blood (1992).

**Turn of the Twenty-First Century**

Riccardo comments that "the 1990s have ushered in what seems to be an absolute explosion in vampire interest" (Riccardo, "Brief Cultural History" xix). In addition to the continued proliferation of vampires in fiction and film, many television shows have also addressed vampires, including two separate episodes of the popular series The X-Files (1993-2002) as well as dedicated vampire series such as Dracula: The Series (1990), Forever Knight (1992-96), Kindred: The Embraced (1996), Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-) and Angel (1999-).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, vampires are no longer easily defined. While the basic characteristics tend to remain—drinking blood to sustain an abnormally long life—the depiction of the vampire and description of its origins vary greatly. There are romantic vampire stories, erotic vampire stories, pornographic vampire stories; portrayals of vampire as evil, vampire as tortured but loveable soul, vampire as another species, vampire as extraterrestrial. In an age with many themes, the vampire can represent them all—an addiction, a weakness, a desire, a need, a longing. But there is always an emptiness within us that the vampire can somehow fill, which is why these fictions continue to be published, these films and shows continue to be produced, and audiences

continue to flock to them. No matter how bad the plot, the acting, or how many times the same basic stories have been told, they still appeal to us.

In general, contemporary vampire narratives can be grouped into two constructs—Vampires-Are-Evil (where we cheer for the heroes who destroy them) and Vampires-Are-People-Too (where we identify with the vampires as creatures with human needs and emotions who wrestle with their own nature). Interestingly, even in narratives that would seem to clearly draw the line between what is evil and what is good, there is still a blurring of distinctions. The heroes who fight the evil vampires are not without reproach, and often face difficult decisions about which vampires they should and should not destroy. And as we begin to identify with the humanized vampires, we begin to lose our identification with our own human selves, being pulled deeper and deeper into the fantasy of power, submission and immortality.

Veronica Hollinger notes that an aspect of postmodernism is a "nostalgia for lost certainties" (203). The Vampires-Are-Evil construct can be seen as a harkening back to a more innocent time when good and evil were more clearly defined, and evil could be easily identified and destroyed. While humans in postmodern America are often paralyzed by our options, the evil vampire is capable of action. Its evil nature allows it to cut through the clutter—its only need is to feed, to survive. Morality no longer plays a role; human emotion no longer plays a role. It takes what it wants, what it needs, no questions asked. Hollinger also notes that, for the vampire, believing oneself to be evil is "a kind of moral justification for the killing which is necessary to sustain vampiric life. The fact that one is Evil is its own justification for the performance of evil acts" (203).

Evil vampires have most recently been explored in John Steakley's Vampire$ (1990, adapted for film as John Carpenter's Vampires in 1998), Buffy the Vampire Slayer (film 1992, television series 1997-), The Addiction (1995), From Dusk Till Dawn (1996), Blade (1998, Blade II 2002) and The Forsaken (2001). Destroying the evil vampires should be a simple choice, but even these narratives show that the choice is never so simple. The modern-day vampire hunters are not ideal figures themselves—yes, they are taking out the evil vampires, but does that necessarily make them good? And when their friends and loved ones become the enemy, the choice is not always black and white.

Jack Crow—the hard-drinking, foul-mouthed vampire hunter for hire in Vampire$—originally sought revenge against the vampires who destroyed his family. Now he's working for the Vatican, but that doesn't make him a saint. He is a ruthless killer of evil vampires, until one bites his best friend and partner. Although he knows his friend will soon become the enemy, he makes the decision to let him go.

From Dusk Till Dawn brings two criminal brothers, Seth and Richard Gecko, and their hostages to a roadhouse run by vampires. As soon as the sun sets, the vampires show their true faces and feast upon their patrons. Richard is turned into a vampire, and Seth must bring himself to destroy his brother in order to save himself and the other remaining humans. Kate Fuller, a hostage-turned-ally of the brothers, must kill her own father when he becomes a vampire.

In Blade, the title character gets his power from being part-vampire—he is infected by the evil he must hunt. Part of his quest is to find the vampire that killed his mother, though he eventually discovers that she has become a vampire herself, the lover to her killer. Blade cannot see any goodness in her vampire nature, and destroys her. In the

sequel (Blade II, 2002), Blade must team up with the vampires to fight off an even more evil foe.

In The Forsaken, Nick was infected by the vampire he is chasing. He is chasing the vampire not to save humanity, but only to save himself from becoming one of them. As in The Lost Boys, if Nick destroys the leader, he will save himself. One interesting twist in this movie is that Nick takes drugs in order to slow down his transition into a vampire, a new concept in the vampire mythos.

Joss Whedon first introduced the deceptively-named Buffy the Vampire Slayer to moviegoers in 1992. Beginning with a playful premise that brought moderate laughs but not much success in the film version, Buffy is a blonde cheerleader turned savior-of-the-world. In the film, she comes off as a superficial and uncaring bimbo, reluctantly fulfilling her destiny. The television series takes a more insightful approach, presenting Buffy herself as an intelligent, strong-willed as well as physically strong woman, who fights not only vampires and monsters, but also her own internal demons. She must explore questions of whom she can and can't kill (it's OK to kill vampires and demons since they have no soul; but it's not OK to kill vilely evil humans who rape and kill women, including your friends). Buffy also must question whether or not all vampires deserve to be killed—what if they repent their past crimes? What if they were your friends? Although Buffy in general refuses to kill humans, she does attempt to kill fellow Slayer Faith in order to save her boyfriend's life (only by drinking the blood of a Slayer can he be saved from a mystical poison). However, when given the choice between saving the world and saving her boyfriend, she makes the choice to send him to Hell.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer combines the themes of Vampires-Are-Evil and Vampires-Are-People-Too, continuing to destroy the evil vampires while bringing major vampire characters to the forefront, and allowing the audience to glimpse their past—including both their mortal as well as their vampire lives—to see how they became the creatures they are today. All of the vampires on Buffy, according to the show's internal mythology, are inhabited by a demon that allows them to live on once their body has died. Vampires on Buffy have always been innately evil, with the one exception of Angel, who was cursed with a human soul so that he would feel remorse for all the humans he had slaughtered. However, as the show demonstrates again and again, these vampires still have very human feelings, weaknesses and desires, most notably demonstrated in the character of Spike.

Spike was once one of the most notoriously evil villains on the show, killer of two previous Slayers, and bent on adding Buffy to the list. He is undeniably evil, and yet throughout the second season, we see him treat his beloved Drusilla with tenderness and devotion. In the fourth season, he has a behavior-modifying chip implanted in his brain that prevents him from doing physical harm to any human without inducing great pain in himself. This prevents him from acting out his evil intentions—but it cannot explain the love he develops for Buffy, his former enemy, and his brotherly treatment of her younger sister. The show made the question of his nature even more uncertain at the end of the sixth season, where Spike attempts to rape Buffy to make her love him, and afterwards is unable to believe what he has done—had he been a monster, he would have gone through with it no matter what Buffy said or did to stop him; had he been a man, he would never

have tried. But what is he? He leaves Sunnydale intent on making himself more fully one or the other.

Buffy herself often struggles with the line between what's right and wrong—who she should and shouldn't love, who she should and shouldn't kill. In "Lie to Me," she discovers that a friend who had betrayed her was suffering from a terminal illness that would have killed him in less than six months. She struggles with her emotions, wondering if she can really blame him for wanting to become a vampire. She tells Giles, "Nothing's ever simple anymore. I'm constantly trying to work it out. Who to love or hate. Who to trust. It's just, like, the more I know, the more confused I get." She asks Giles to tell her if it ever gets any easier, and when he asks if she wants the truth, she says, "Lie to me." Giles' facetious response is very telling:

> Yes, it's terribly simple. ... The good guys are always stalwart and true, the bad guys are easily distinguished by their pointy horns or black hats, and, uh, we always defeat them and save the day. No one ever dies, and everybody lives happily ever after. ("Lie to Me").

But that is never the truth, and nothing is ever so simple, especially in the Buffyverse.

One major rule in the Buffyverse is that although a Slayer can kill any evil creature without a soul, she can never harm a human. Buffy has often faced off against apparently human nemeses in Ted, her mother's abusive boyfriend ("Ted"), and Kathy, her college roommate ("Living Conditions"), both times being justified in her hatred (Ted turns out to be a robot, and Kathy, a demon). But Buffy willingly attempts to take the life of her fellow Slayer Faith in order to save the life of her dying boyfriend ("Graduation Day, Part One"). Apparently she learns her lesson, as despite the deeply evil nature of Warren, a very human villain in season six, she will not kill him.

In a time when successful vampire films seem to be based on little more that throbbing techno soundtracks and special effects, the most intelligently-rendered on-screen vampires have appeared on the small screen. The deep themes and metaphorical explorations of high school and young adult traumas on Buffy the Vampire Slayer have generated not just a teenage following, not just a nostalgic-adult following, but also a following among academics. With two collections of critical essays published this past year, and an online journal dedicated solely to "Buffy Studies," it is clear that this is more than just another teenage drama.

The Addiction also makes an interesting statement on the nature of evil as it relates to the vampire. There are no heroes in The Addiction. There are no fearless vampire hunters. There are only vampires and victims, and the vampires are victorious in the end, closing the film with a final feast of blood, spreading their disease to more victims, who will in turn become vampires, feasting on victims of their own. The protagonist of the film is a philosophy graduate student who is bitten by a vampire and soon becomes one herself. Already focused on the nature of human evil, Kathleen begins to explore her own capacity for evil as a vampire, as she attacks strangers, friends and professors alike to sate her thirst. She discovers that evil is the most addictive drug of all, which becomes the focus of her doctoral dissertation. She concludes "We are not evil because we do evil. We do evil because we are evil."

Jules Zanger notes that in many contemporary vampire narratives, vampires have lost their "metaphysical and religious status," so that they are no longer portrayed as agents of pure evil as Stoker's Dracula was, but instead as "merely ethnic, a victim of heredity" or

as "a member of a secret society or subversive political association" (19). And since contemporary vampires are often native-born Americans, "this new, demystified vampire might as well be our next door neighbor, as Dracula, by origin, appearance, caste, and speech, could never pretend to be" (Zanger 19). This construct of Vampires-Are-People-Too provides a metaphor for our own internal struggles, exploring our lack of certainties in its blurred lines between right and wrong, life and death, love and hate.

In addition to its ambiguous moral status, this type of vampire is also given other more human traits. Instead of just lurking and killing, these vampires have hobbies, and sometimes even a job. As Zanger notes "the new vampires can be art lovers or rock stars or even police detectives" (22). And like humans, the new vampires have a wider range of emotions than just hunger and hatred: "the new communal vampire can now experience tensions, love affairs, elective affinities, rivalries, betrayals...this communal condition permits them to love, to regret, to doubt, to question themselves, to experience interior conflicts and cross-impulses" (22). In other words, the contemporary vampire becomes much like us. Like us, but nearly invulnerable, and not subject to our rules for right and wrong.

This humanized conception of the vampire is prominent in most contemporary vampire narratives, from Yarbo to Elrod to Collins to select characters on Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Previous vampires may have been compelling, possibly even desirable, but it was more difficult to imagine ourselves in their shoes. Once we learn to see the "other" as other-than-evil, we can enjoy having it incorporated into a sympathetic character. And this mixing of not-me yet like-me is attractive—the vampire provides the

reassurance that we can all have some "other" in us and still be OK. So we learn to embrace the vampire, first as a friend, and eventually, as a lover.

The problem with becoming the lover of a vampire is that his victims must make themselves entirely vulnerable to his will—he may kill them or immortalize them as he sees fit. The pleasure of making yourself vulnerable to a vampire can be seen as similar to the exhilaration one might experience from bungee-jumping or skydiving—I can see the ground rising up to meet me as I plummet ever faster down—yet in those instances, you have a support structure keeping you safe. When you bare your neck to the vampire, it's like jumping from the plane without a parachute, and just hoping the ground is soft where you land. In this, the act of submission to the vampire can be seen as inherently masochistic.

Burton Hatlen notes that when the women in Stoker's Dracula "give themselves to their demon lover...their passivity is total, and that the end result of their sexual encounters with the Count is death," and hence Lucy and Mina's sexual response to the Count is "deeply masochistic." In fact, Hatlen contends that "all the sexuality in Dracula is sado-masochistic" (124).

Hatlen goes on to state that "the book not only equates vampirism with sexuality, but it also equates sexuality with sadomasochism" (125). He explores this further:

> In [Count Dracula], our sexuality confronts us as irreducibly alien, irreducibly "other." We can re-possess this sexuality only violently, by ecstatically surrendering ourselves to the dark hunger for death...insofar as Count Dracula incarnates our lost sexuality, he becomes the shape not only of our most terrible fears but also of our deepest desires. He is the other that we cannot escape, because he is part of us. He is the other that we loathe and love. (Hatlen 125).

The sadomasochistic nature of relationships in Dracula can be witnessed in all the sexual encounters in the novel. Jonathan Harker deliciously awaits being violated by the

vampire brides. Lucy and Mina do not resist the visits from the Count, though they seem to find them frightful (Leatherdale notes that Lucy's demise was really a "masochistic self-destruction as she repeatedly yielded herself to Dracula" (152)). Arthur Holmwood savagely stakes then beheads his fiancée in a scene that is clearly a metaphor for the violent deflowering of a virgin. Most vampire stories only thinly veil the sadomasochistic themes inherent in the vampire myth, but they are blatantly obvious to a modern reader of Dracula (though Stoker would never have admitted placing them there).

Joan Gordon would object to the equation of vampire sexuality with sadomasochism, proposing instead that in a "feminist rethinking of the traditional power structure" (230), there is "power in the giver of nourishment as well as in the taker" (233), so that vampiric feeding can be seen as "exchange rather than hierarchy" (234). While this is an interesting proposal, it does not explain the fear that is always mingled with desire as the vampire approaches its victim, and the violence which is inherent in so many vampire stories—is this really part of an equal exchange?

Later vampire narratives have addressed the theme of sadomasochism more explicitly. In The Vampire Tapestry, a therapist finds herself becoming sexually aroused at the idea of her patient feeding off a female victim, and later goes to bed with him, though she openly admits her fear of him. More recently, Buffy the Vampire Slayer has openly explored sadomasochistic pleasure in sexual relationships, usually experienced only by vampires, but also by the Slayer Faith, and in the sixth season, by Buffy herself.

In The Vampire Tapestry, on hearing the vampire's description of a successful hunt, Dr. Landauer is disturbed to not only find herself empathizing with the vampire instead

of his victim, but also sexually aroused. Later she dreams of herself in the place of the victim he described:

> He put his hand not on my neck but breast—I felt intense sexual response in the dream, also anger and fear so strong they woke me...I am not food, I am a person. No thrill at languishing away in his arms in a taxi while he drinks my blood—that's disfigured sex, masochism. (158).

She rejects her fantasies and feelings, and yet she continues to experience them. Despite her rationalization, her insistence that she does not long for this "disfigured sex," she eventually gives into her desires, rationalizing them once again, but still, ultimately, sleeping with the vampire.

Dr. Landauer propositions Weyland at the moment when he has threatened her life. He is shocked and immediately assumes her to be a masochist, asking "Are you one of those who come into heat at the sight of an upraised fist?" Still in denial, she replies, "My life hasn't twisted me that badly, thank God," yet she admits her fear to him, saying, "if you've known all along how scared I've been, you must have sensed my attraction to you too" (174). She admits her combined fear and desire for him, yet does not make the connection that there is an inherent masochism in acting on that combined set of emotions. This is not some moderate fear of what might happen if she were to proposition a client, but an outright fear for her life.

Vampires on Buffy the Vampire Slayer are portrayed as having voracious sexual appetites, and sadomasochistic tendencies. In the first season of the show, Angel argues with his former lover and fellow vampire, Darla, and ends up shoving her up against a wall. She is pleased with the direction their conversation has taken, and says, "That's good," but Angel continues to shove her against the wall. She doesn't mind, responding, "You're hurting me. That's good, too" ("Angel"). In the second season, the characters of

Spike and Drusilla are introduced, a vampire couple who are regularly shown to engage in rough, yet loving courtship.

When Spike and Drusilla have a fight, he tells her sweetly, "I don't want to hurt you, baby," then as she continues to resist him, he slaps her, punches her in the face, and corrects himself, "Doesn't mean I won't" ("Becoming, Part 2). Later this same interplay is repeated when Spike is now fighting the Slayer, who he has fallen in love with. Spike has Buffy pinned against a wall. He chuckles, and she punches him in the face. He punches her back, then lifts her up to look her in the eyes, saying, "I wasn't planning on hurting you." He then again corrects himself, "Much." Their fighting continues, growing more and more intense as Buffy throws Spike up against the wall, the plaster visibly breaking, a large hole left behind him from the force of the impact. Buffy slams him up against another wall. Spike is amused, asking, "You afraid I'm gonna..." Buffy cuts off his sentence with a passionate kiss. She slams her hand into the wall, creating another hole to get her arm around Spike's neck. Her other arm reaches down, and an audible sound of a zipper is heard. Their battle culminates in sexual gratification ("Smashed").

This is the first, but not the only sexual encounter for the Slayer and the evil vampire. Their escapades continue—always brutal, always purely sexual. In the following episode, when Spike tries to tell her they have something, Buffy replies, "Get a grip. Like you're God's gift." But Spike knows the truth: "Hardly," he says, "Wouldn't be nearly as interesting, would it?" It is the evil in him that appeals to her, the danger. As Spike later tells her "I may be dirt ... but you're the one who likes to roll in it, Slayer. You never had it so good as me. Never" ("Wrecked").

Margaret Carter notes that in contemporary vampire narratives, becoming a vampire is often seen "as a happy ending—or, sometimes, the inauspicious beginning of an altered life that proves, after all, to be happy" (31). Once we have accepted the vampire into our communities, and into our beds, recognizing vampirism as an acceptable lifestyle choice, we may begin to see the merits of that lifestyle, and to desire it for ourselves. We may embrace the other so fully that we become him.

Vampire narratives have recently begun incorporating the concept of the vampire wannabe—a human who may have never met a real vampire, but who longs to become one based on what he or she has learned about vampires through fiction and film. In Interview with the Vampire, the boy who has recorded Louis's story begs to be made a vampire, even though his entire tale was one of pain, horror, and finally, despair:

> "Don't you see how you made it sound? It was an adventure like I'll never know in my whole life! You talk about passion, you talk about longing! You talk about things that millions of us won't ever taste or come to understand. ... If you were to give me that power! The power to see and feel and live forever! ... Give it to me! ... Make me a vampire now!" (Rice, Interview 343).

When Louis fails to grant his wish, and punishes the boy with a non-fatal, non-transformative bite—the boy runs off in search of Lestat, who might be willing to change him instead.

In The Vampire Tapestry, Alan Reese, a self-proclaimed Satanist, attempts to leash the power of the vampire for himself. He tries to coerce Weyland into agreeing to a "partnership," where he would play god in a "Church of Blood" to Reese's high priest (272). In the vampire, Reese sees the possibility for a "long life, secret and secure in the strength of the predator" (276). Weyland turns Reese's desire for the forbidden against him, offering Reese the opportunity to become like him (which in Charnas' universe is an

impossibility), and as Reese leans down to drink from the vampire's bloody wrist, the vampire attacks, taking his revenge slowly and painfully.

In Lost Souls, the vampire Christian allows his victims to think he will turn them into vampires after they die, so that they let him drink their blood in a rapturous ecstasy that brings them to orgasm—the "little death"—at the same time it brings their actual death:

> "Are you a vampire? ... Make me into one, too," said the boy. "Please? I want to be one. I want to walk at night with you and fall in love and drink blood. Kill me. Make me into a vampire too. Bite me. Take me with you."
> ...
> He clasped the boy more tightly, and their bodies locked together in a final wash of ecstasy, Christian's belly warming and filling, the boy beginning to die. The boy's sperm flooded warm over Christian's fingers. ...if the boy had died thinking he would rise again as one with Christian, that could not be helped. It was kinder to let the children die believing as they did. (Brite 66-67).

Also in Lost Souls, Jessy is the ultimate vampire wannabe, having long been obsessed with vampires and having dreamed of becoming one. Her father recalls that passages in her stacks of vampire novels were often circled in blood, and that he found razor blades between the pages of Dracula. Jessy seduces her father in an incestuous parody of the vampire Lucy's plea to Arthur: "I need your blood, Daddy. I'm hungry. Your Jessy's hungry. Come to me." (Brite 79). She seduces him, has sex with him, cuts his throat and drinks his blood. She ultimately does meet a real vampire in Zillah, and becomes his lover, but cannot become a vampire. Instead, she is killed by her own half-vampire child as it tears its way out of her womb.

On Buffy the Vampire Slayer, a group of vampire wannabes gathers at a place called "The Sunset Club," sharing in their reverence of what they perceive to be the beautifully tragic life of the vampire. A wannabe calling herself Chantarelle explains her perspective on vampires, "They who walk with the night are not interested in harming anyone. They

are creatures above us. Exalted!" The group awaits the coming of the vampires in eager anticipation. Chantarelle says excitedly, "We're going to ascend to a new level of consciousness! Become like them. Like the Lonely Ones." The vampires arrive and the room turns to mayhem as the vampires feast on their now fearful victims. When faced with the reality of Buffyverse vampires, their awakening was anything but inspirational. ("Lie to Me").

The vampire wannabe is a creature not just based in fiction. In reality, there are many who long for what they see the vampire offering—power, immortality, freedom from moral and social constraints, freedom from sickness and injury, all the time in the world to do whatever it is you've always wanted to do, as well as admission into a secret society where you'll always be accepted for who you are. Charnas explains that audiences identify with the vampire "so that we can feel as powerful as he is. That way we can say: 'Who me, a victim? No way. I'm the baddest, I'm worse than Freddy the Slasher, so nobody dares mess with me'" ("Meditations in Red" 59).

The Internet provides a safe mechanism for living out this fantasy. Thousands of Web sites are devoted to items of vampiric interest for those who want to play vampire—how to drink blood from your lover, how to create your own fangs, how to order custom-made fangs and contact lenses. Chat rooms, news groups, and e-mail listservs build virtual communities of would-be vampires, who gather offline to indulge their shared interests. Live-action role-playing games such as Vampire: The Masquerade and local vampire-interest clubs also serve a similar purpose. Within these realms, people can adopt a vampire persona without modifying their real identity.

In e-mail discussion groups, chat rooms and on posting boards, vampire fans select a new name for themselves, and often construct an entire fictional character around that name, which they use when engaging in online conversations, or when writing individual or communal fiction. The Vampyres discussion list, which has existed in many forms and on many different servers since 1990, is one of the longest-running vampire discussion groups in existence, and includes vampire aficionados of a wide range of ages, nationalities and interests. Some are teenagers, some young adults, some middle aged or older. The majority of list members are American, though Canadians play a large part, and there are a scattering of other nationalities represented. There are those who simply are interested in vampires as a pastime, those who write vampire fiction, and those who have a more academic interest in vampires. But what is common to most list members is the practice of adopting an online "persona" which they use to sign their messages, to participate in "virtual parties" and shared online fiction (called "fluff").

In writing either in or out of "persona," list members create for themselves a freedom from criticism ("that's not my opinion, it's just my persona's!"), a freedom commonly associated with the vampire. Trevor Holmes points to the case of one particular list member, Anne Fraser, whose primary persona (she has many, all male) is an older, gay male vampire named Baron Gideon Redoak. The ability to present oneself as another person gives authors the opportunity to think, feel and express themselves not only as another gender, but also as another sexual preference, and another type of creature altogether. Holmes notes that in this context, "vampires are sources of self-invention and the very much outstaging of the problematics of gender identification and sexuality" (188).

Readers also incorporate the vampire characters from film, fiction and television into their lives through writing their own "fan fiction", continuing or varying the storylines initiated in their favorite narratives. These fans make the characters their own, and forge their own identities out of those characteristics of the vampire, or vampire slayer, they would most like to embody. Fiction is written, posted, shared and read, but never formally published, further demonstrating the ephemeral nature of the vampire identity.

While most vampire fans understand the vampire as a fictional construct that is fun to explore in their fantasy lives, others long for the fantasy to be real. Disturbed individuals (many of them teenagers) believe emphatically that vampires do exist, and that becoming one will make everything better—it will give them power and popularity, and provide them with an eternal group of friends and family who will always stand by them, never growing older or dying, and defending them to the death. They have built up a vivid fantasy in which being "turned" equals instant and everlasting beauty, invulnerability to all injuries and illness, and finally being "cool."

On the Vampyres discussion list, a common topic is the e-mails that members often receive in response to their vampire-centric Web sites, from people begging to be turned into a vampire. For example, Elizabeth Miller posted a message to the list asking for advice as to how to respond to the following message:

> I would give up everything to become one [a vampire]. I have nothing to live for!! I want to be a vampire. Cursed to roam this planet. That is the only thing that would bring me pleasure. My life is worth nothing and I want to die. (Miller, n. pag.).

Somehow, someone who is suicidal longs for immortality, seeking to end his or her human life and be born into a new existence, one without limitations, one where they would have a new family, and new powers, and never have to be afraid.

Beyond those who long to become vampires, or those who adopt fictional personas which allow them to pretend to be vampires, are those who claim to be "real vampires." For some, this means that they regularly engage in drinking human blood, but they do not imagine themselves to be immortal. Others, more frighteningly, truly believe themselves to have special powers, as well as folkloric weaknesses, and avoid daylight and other legendary banes at all costs.

Leatherdale notes that "in many societies blood is held to be an aphrodisiac, and it is not uncommon to find people who derive sexual satisfaction from shedding blood" (149). We can see evidence for this in the predominance of "blood sports" as part of the BDSM lifestyle (bondage, domination, and sadomasochism). It is taken to further extremes by those who actually believe themselves to be vampires, gaining power as well as sustenance during these "feedings."

Riccardo devotes an entire chapter of his vampire bibliography to studies on human blood-drinking, stating that "this phenomenon of individuals having an overwhelming urge to ingest blood does exist and is well documented" (Vampires Unearthed 101). Riccardo notes that such self-described vampires often do no harm to their victims since they use voluntary "donors," and that "because they keep their activities low-key, the extent of this kind of blood-drinking is unknown" (101).

Many research groups have been founded to study these "real vampires," including the Vampire Research Center in New York, founded by Stephen Kaplan, and the Vampire Research Society in London, founded by Sean Manchester. Kaplan has been conducting an annual vampire census since 1981, and has interviewed hundreds of self-described vampires over the years. Fewer than 100 of these met his qualifications for

what a modern "vampire" should be—"they need regular quantities of blood, they believe that the blood will prolong their life and help them remain youthful, and they often find the blood and its consumption to be sexually arousing" (Melton, Vampire Book 634). Sadomasochistic and sexual behavior is often closely tied to the bloodletting, but otherwise, many of these people live "normal" lives.

"Real vampires" are often associated with what Melton labels "the new gothic movement" (Vampire Book 264). According to Melton, this new gothic movement was born out of rock bands such as Bauhaus, Siouxie and the Banshees and Sisters of Mercy, whose music "articulated an explicit nonconformist stance vis-à-vis the dominant establishment" and "opposed narrow sexual mores and traditional established religions" (265). Melton notes that "those enthralled by the new gothic culture found the vampire the single most appropriate image for the movement" (265) and that "the gothic subculture has created a space in which self-designated vampires can move somewhat freely and mingle without anyone questioning their nonconventional habits" (635). Whether blood drinkers or not, many Goths dress in dark clothing and pale makeup, wearing custom-made fangs or modifying their teeth, and participating in alternative forms of sexual expression such as sadomasochism, bondage and blood fetishism.

Despite their unusual sexual practices and overall lifestyle, most self-described vampires stay hidden within their underground world. The ones who do make headlines tend to be more mentally disturbed, not being interested in or able to find willing donors, they resort to attacking and often killing others to drink their blood. Criminal vampires in the United States have included Salvatore Agron (convicted in 1959), James Brown

(arrested in 1967), Richard Chase (arrested in 1978), James P. Riva (arrested in 1980), and Jerry Moore (arrested in 1982).

Criminal vampirism can be seen to involve not only sadism, but also aspects of necrophilia and cannibalism. However, those "real vampires" who take their blood from willing donors may not have sadistic inclinations at all, but may instead simply be looking for intimacy and love. Drinking someone's blood can be seen as the most intimate of all lovemaking, reenacting the nourishing relationship of mother and child. This act is much more incestuous in nature than it is sadistic. The donor is also not necessarily masochistic, but can be seen as sharing in the fantasy of intimacy by sharing his or her own life fluid.

## REASONS FOR ENDURANCE

Glen St. John Barclay proposes that "there is nothing the world needs less than a new vampire story" (57), since "permissiveness has made the vampire story obsolete" (38). So why do new vampire stories continue to be published and produced? Why do American audiences keep clamoring for more? Barclay states that the vampire legend "does not fascinate because it responds to anything in human experience, or because it tells us anything about the nature of existence" (57). So why does it resonate across so many cultures? Why does it continue to appeal to generation after generation of American audiences—especially now, in a time when we are questioning everything and to be horrified, all we have to do is turn on the news? If we are not turning to the vampire for sheer stimulation, then what is it about the vampire that continues to enthrall us?

The vampire myth clearly addresses deeply-rooted longings and fears, since it exists in all cultures and continues to pervade contemporary American culture even in an age where rationalism and science rule. But what aspects of the vampire myth appeal to us? Immortality, immorality, sexuality, omnipotence? And which deeply-rooted longings and fears does it appeal to? Masochistic submission? Sadistic domination? Fascination with evil? The mystical significance of blood? All of these factors have been discussed at length in criticism both specific to the vampire mythos and to horror in general.

Flynn notes that "romanticism, power, sexuality, and visions of immortality" are "all key elements of the vampire myth" which together "have provided (and continue to provide) endless fascination for the general public" (Flynn 5). Heller comments on how the horror thriller "gives a brief license to the culturally forbidden, allowing it to take

form in monsters" (85). Ursini and Silver state that the appeal of the vampire is that he offers "sexual pleasure" to his victims in exchange for their blood, appealing to the "death wish of its prey" so that "the dramatic interplay between the vampire and its lover becomes a fusion of basic human instincts, not just self-preservative libidinal but also self-destructive" (55).

Leatherdale postulates that "Dracula reminds us of the dark side of ourselves: that in each of us there is a hidden, repressed, ferocious quality that we recognize in him" (224). And if we don't recognize aspects of ourselves in him, then we still want to be like him, or with him: "Many men would like to be able to seduce like him: many women would like to be seduced by him" (Leatherdale 224). The vampire becomes, in essence, an embodiment of what people would like to become. Power without limit, able to seduce any man or woman you please, never having to be afraid of sickness or of death, and always being young and beautiful. A change in your diet and sleeping habits seems a small price to pay in exchange.

Flynn notes how the vampire, personified by Dracula, can be seen as a kind of role model for readers who are frustrated with their role in society:

> Dracula remains unchanged in a changing society with no conscience or remorse for his actions. He knows only what he wants and satisfies those desires without any consideration for the consequences. He is the embodiment of evil without guilt, power without restraint, and sexuality without conscience. And in essence we secretly admire his ability to resolve or ignore problems with which we have difficulty in dealing. (Flynn 5).

Dracula has no fear—no fear of change, no fear of rejection, no fear of reproach, no fear of attack. He can do everything that we cannot, and has all the time in the world in which to do it. He is free from the constraints of time and its effects on the human body such as aging and ill health, and free from the constraints of society.

Vampires can be seen as appealing to two parallel desires: the desire to be all-powerful, all commanding, all-taking; and the desire to be taken over by something that overwhelms you both physically and spiritually. Neither is healthy, but both are ever-present sentiments in our society. The vampire not only attacks, but also seduces. His victims don't just moan in pain, but also in pleasure. This sadomasochistic pattern and fascination with the forbidden is a key element that differentiates vampire fiction and film from horror or Gothic fantasy in general.

Vampire stories where the vampire is evil are the most sadomasochistic in nature, where the victim longs to be taken against her will, degraded and defiled by the vampire. But there are many stories, including romances, where the vampire is the hero. He becomes more humanized, and more anguished by his inclinations to evil. The appeal of this vampire is simpler—here is a creature that is immortal, lonely, devastingly handsome, repentant and soulful. He has lived lifetimes and has attained immeasurable knowledge. He has a viewpoint that spans across history. The reader longs to know and comfort this wounded animal.

One possible explanation for the development of the humanized vampire is that since we see so much horror on the news each day, we're fairly jaded by the time we get to the big screen or other media that might offer us "horror" stories. How can fictional monsters compete with the real-life terror of bombings, anthrax, AIDS, high-level corruption, and drug wars? It is more intriguing to see how these creatures with a tendency towards evil try hard to be good in an ever and ever more jaded society.

Hollinger questions why a humanized vampire has developed in contemporary vampire fiction, and postulates: "Perhaps there is no room for an inhuman other, nor any

need of one, in a human world that can provide its own apocalypse" (209). Perhaps in these times we all need something to believe in—the power of redemption, the ability to surpass our current meaningless human existence into something more glorious, filled will new sights and sounds, and limitless possibilities. Perhaps we are searching for something not available to us in our current cultural order, the forbidden pleasures that cannot be easily found in our daily lives; whether sexual, sensual or otherwise experiential.

Another possible explanation is that our society has become more and more accepting of the "other"—of phobias, handicaps, dementias, addictions and alternative lifestyles. There is an increasing recognition of the importance of civil rights and cultural diversity, and many traits traditionally considered character flaws are now seen as treatable illnesses (alcoholism and other forms of drug abuse, compulsive gambling). We as a culture are more willing to come to terms with the "other" within ourselves and others—the "other" being anything we don't consider to be desirable or at least normal. This lights the way to humanizing the "other" who looks like us, and yet is not—the vampire.

But why have they always existed? Why do they continue to exist? What is it that makes vampires appealing to us here and now? Critics have proposed everything from the existence of shared archetypes in the collective unconscious, to the ever-present fear of death, to the postmodern state of society, to a quest for identity in an era of blurred boundaries, to a desire for sexual power, to a desire to regress to an infantile existence, to a desire for spiritual transcendence. The real answer may be that all of these are true.

**The Vampire Archetype**

Lawrence Alloway notes that "attempts to account sociologically for monster films always makes them symptoms of 'a sick society'" (123), as researchers try to correlate peaks in the popularity of monster films to political events. However, "sociological explanations of this kind fail to recognize the historical fact that there has always been a spontaneous human taste for monsters, for the more-than or less-than human" (123-24). The explanation for our interest in vampires does not lie simply in the state of our society—it runs much deeper—it is in our innermost thoughts, an ever-present element of our conflicting fears and desires.

The predominance of the vampire myth throughout the world, throughout history, can be seen as evidence of its archetypal nature. It cannot just be coincidence that nearly every culture the world over has a legend of a creature that comes at night to drink the blood of its people, most often returning from the dead. The vampire image must reflect deep psychological issues that resound in all human beings. As Melton notes, "there is something about the vampire that we already understand intuitively—with the knowledge coming from deep within our psyche" (Vampire Book 493).

Sigmund Freud uses the term "uncanny" to refer to the pleasurable yet fearsome sensation evoked by some horror narratives, which presumably is what keeps us coming back for more. He defined the uncanny as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" ("The Uncanny" 220). Freud states that "an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed" (249). Perhaps the enduring appeal of the

vampire is that it produces this uncanny experience in two ways: first, by reviving infantile complexes such as oral sadism and masochistic submission and second, by appealing to primitive fears that the dead may come back from the grave to infest the living. Freud explains why these primitive fears continue to haunt us:

> It seems as if each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to this animistic stage in primitive men, that none of us has passed through it without preserving certain residues and traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves, and that everything which now strikes us as 'uncanny' fulfils the condition of touching those residues of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them to expression. (240-41).

The image of the vampire can been seen as a vestige of our primitive selves, traces of which pervade all mankind. Whereas our ancestors may have once believed that creatures such as the vampire existed, and had a mortal fear of them, our ambivalent feelings of fear and desire for the vampire can be seen both as remnants of those primordial fears, and a nostalgic longing for the simplicity which we have lost.

This conception of consistent memories shared across humanity, across cultures, is similar to C.G. Jung's conception of the "collective unconscious." Jung proposes that all mythologies are based in "archetypes," primordial types of images that have persisted throughout all of human history within the "collective unconscious" that all humans possess. Jung notes that "whereas the contents of the personal unconscious are acquired during the individual's lifetime, the contents of the collective unconscious are invariably archetypes that were present from the beginning" (Aion 6). Within the collective unconscious, there are universal archetypes we all share, images that haunt us all.

Iaccino comments that "all archetypes have positive and negative aspects. They contain paradoxical elements of good and evil, divine inspirations as well as hidden fears of the dark side" (4). The persona archetype is the face we show the world. Iaccino

describes the persona as "a deception that the human uses to convince others that he can conform to society and be an upright and law-abiding citizen...the person's real 'face' remains hidden underneath and may never have a chance to be fully expressed " (6).

Our persona is our public-facing self, but there are desires and needs that are not socially acceptable, and must be hidden:

> There is another side to us, "one who wants to do all the things that we do not allow ourselves to do, who is everything that we are not"...that shadow side of our personality, reflecting those uncontrollable animal impulses that we try to keep in check and hide from others as much as possible. (Iaccino 6).

The vampire can be seen as an expression of the shadow archetype, which conveys those aspects of the self that our conscious self is unable to recognize. The shadow archetype "personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly—for instance, inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies" (Jung, "Conscious, Unconscious and Individuation" 284-85). The shadow is composed for the most part of repressed desires and uncivilized impulses, morally inferior motives, childish fantasies and resentments, but also contains positive qualities such as creativity and freethinking.

Jung notes that "the shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form" ("Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" 20). Confronting your shadow is the first step in the process of individuation that Jung saw as the goal of life—harmonizing the various components of the psyche, and striving toward integrity of the innermost self. Jung notes that in order to become conscious of the shadow, one must recognize "the dark aspects of the personality as present and real" (Aion 7). While some amount of suppression of the darker side is essential for social order, total repression of the shadow leads to its unbridled growth in the unconscious. Acknowledging the

existence of darker qualities in ourselves helps us control them, and leads to mental and physical well-being.

Flynn notes that "man chose certain archetypes and symbols to deal with those universal questions" of "the nature of life and death, good and evil, science and faith" (3). The vampire itself can be seen as an emerging archetype, a symbol of our attempts to come to terms with our conflicting desires and create a single identity. The vampire represents not only death but also a rebirth into a new way of being, free from social and moral constraints. The vampire exists only in darkness—a clear symbol of the unconscious. Healthy integration of the vampire archetype requires a willingness to embrace the totality of our being, to own this shadow aspect and transcend the duality of light and dark, love and hate, good and evil.

Many aspects of the vampire myth resonate with deeply-held fears and beliefs, including the fear of death and the mystical significance of blood. These are a part of the vampire archetype that is engrained in the human psyche. Leatherdale recalls primitive beliefs that "absorbing blood was absorbing life—and soul" (16) and of blood as "the only possible bridge between the two disparate universes" of life and death (17). The concept of the life-giving qualities of blood is found even in the Bible: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life" (John 6:54). Christ gave his own blood so that his followers could have eternal life, and contemporary Christians maintain their connection to Christ and their faith by drinking his blood in a sacred ritual. The symbolism of blood within the vampire myth can be seen as echoing the significant role which blood has played not only in Christianity, but also in much more ancient religions.

Melton notes that "vampire narratives express in complex form the fascination—both natural and unnatural—which the living take in death and the dead" (Vampire Book 492). Julia Kristeva agrees that the concept of "death infecting life," a critical component of the vampire myth, is a prime example of the in-between state of being which is the true source of horror (4). Kristeva discusses the nature of a corpse: "It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (4). The vampire crosses the boundaries between living and dead, human and animal. In its uncanniness, the vampire appeals to us, draws us in, and literally engulfs us, in its cape, in its mouth, in its fangs. Kristeva emphasizes the attraction, as well as the horror, of the undifferentiated, observing that "many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims—if not submissive and willing ones" (9), having fallen in love with death. Such an abject object may beckon to us, but must be cast away in order for life to continue.

On Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Spike explains to Buffy how every Slayer has a death wish:

> "Death is on your heels, baby, and sooner or later it's gonna catch you. And part of you wants it. Not only to stop the fear and uncertainty, but because you're just a little bit in love with it. ... That final gasp. That look of peace. Part of you is desperate to know: What's it like? Where does it lead you? ... Every Slayer has a death wish. Even you." ("Fool for Love").

This fascination with death is not confined to the fictional world, but is an essential part of the audience's attraction to images of death and life-threatening danger in film and fiction.

Morris Dickstein proposes that "the fear of death is the ultimate attraction of all horror films" (69). Dickstein sees horror films as "a safe, routinized way of playing with

death, like going on a roller coaster or parachute jump at an amusement park" (69). Kendrick discusses how "icons of horror" such as "vampires, zombies, mummies, werewolves, mad scientists, and cobwebby vaults...embod[y] the invasion of life by death." He sees "fear of death [as] their sole source of power" and therefore, this source is "bottomless" (Kendrick 221). Freud has noted how children create games around what they fear as a way of subduing those fears and gaining control, moving from a "passive situation" where they have no control to "an active part" where they can achieve mastery over their fear. ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle" 16). Similarly, in consuming vampire narratives, we may be exposing ourselves to what we fear in order to gain mastery over it.

We long to believe in a life after death, that we ourselves can continue, but we fear the price that immortality would cost us. This is why the vampire both attracts, yet repels; this is why we long to give in, yet resist. This is why, for most people, we can enjoy participating in the vampiric existence vicariously through fiction and film, but do not act on these fantasies in real life.

**Postmodern America**

Lester Faigley comments on how "our current era" is one of "randomness and dissolution," and how, since the 1960s, there has been a "growing awareness of randomness, ambiguity and chaos" (3). This sentiment is expressed in the postmodern movement in literature, art, philosophy and cultural criticism. Postmodernity is notable for its destruction of meaning—which leaves those of us living in a postmodern society searching for identity. Postmodernist thought rejects the concept of the autonomous individual and focuses instead on an anarchic collective, anonymous experience. There is

a merging of self and other, subject and object. People no longer want to be confined to one definition of self—or even to one gender or sexuality.

Jane Flax comments on how postmodern discourses "throw into radical doubt beliefs still prevalent in (especially American) culture but derived from the Enlightenment" (qtd. in Faigley 7). Flax lists eight of these beliefs which are called into doubt by postmodern theory, including "the existence of a stable, coherent self," the belief that "reason and its 'science'—philosophy—can provide an objective, reliable and universal foundation for knowledge," and that "science, as the exemplar of the right use of reason, is also the paradigm of all true knowledge" (qtd. in Faigley 8).

Based on Flax's list of beliefs, Faigley concludes that in postmodern thought, "there is nothing outside contingent discourses to which a discourse of values can be grounded—no eternal truths, no universal human experience, no universal human rights, no overriding narrative of human progress" (8). No wonder so many people feel lost today. We have major schools of thought telling us that there is nothing to believe in—no one definition of right and wrong, no one set of standards for how we should define ourselves within our society.

Faigley notes how "discourses on postmodernity often speak of the fragmentation of the subject, the loss of faith in science and progress, and a rising awareness of irrationality and chaos," attributed to "major economic and cultural shifts" (9). The decentered flux into which postmodernism launches us can be debilitating. With no clear definition of our selves or our purpose in life, we are left floundering, struggling to find ourselves.

We now live in an age where there are no limits on the amount and variety of things we can buy, religions we can try, and people we can be. American society used to be defined by the similarities in the way we dressed, what we ate, what we read, what we watched on TV. But now we have a multitude of options, and are defined more by our differences than our similarities. Instead of a small selection of broadcast television channels, we have cable and satellite dishes offering us hundreds of choices of live feeds, as well as videos we can rent. Our choices in music have expanded from what we could tune into on the local radio station, to hundreds of stations to choose from via satellite radio systems. Clothing and food from all over the world is easy to come by in our stores, or available to purchase online. The Internet provides instant access to information on any topic, and just about any product you could ever desire is available for easy purchase or download. And it has become socially acceptable, even trendy, to experiment with different religions from around the world. As Faigley notes, "the world has become a bazaar from which to shop for an individual 'lifestyle'" (12).

Having too many choices can lead to paralysis, or to always wanting more, never feeling fulfilled with the selection you have made, because there are so many other options available to you. Faigley comments that "the desire to consume is predicated on the lack of a stable identity" (13). With so many options for who we can be, it is hard to ever know who we really are. This leads to a kind of "cultural schizophrenia" (Faigley 13), which paralyzes us.

Most critics mark the beginning of the postmodern era as "somewhere between the late 1950s and the early 1970s (Faigley 9), when the transition from modern to postmodern ideals was most likely due to "a shift from the manufacture of traditional economic products to the production and distribution of knowledge" (Faigley 9). Carroll discusses how the lifespan of the postmodern movement roughly corresponds to that of the current horror cycle, which may not just be a coincidence. The horror genre increased in popularity just when "the international order set in place at the end of the second world war seems to have fallen into unnerving disarray," a disarray which includes "not only the demotion of the global power of the United States" but also "internal tensions" such as the "unending spectacles of political scandals, widely publicized business scams, economic altercations of all sorts including the oil crises and recessions, the debt crisis, the claims for enfranchisement of heretofore disempowered groups such as women and minorities" (Carroll 212). Our nation, our culture, and our population are in chaos.

Carroll notes that "predictably as the verities of the American Imperium falter, an overwhelming sense of instability seizes the imagination in such a way that everything appears at risk or up for grabs" and "relativism, both conceptual and moral, is a probable response at the level of thought to such social instability, while horror fiction, with its structural commitments to the fragility or instability of standing cultural norms, becomes a ready pop-artistic symbol for feelings that 'the center cannot hold'" (212). In horror fiction, we are presented with a metaphor for our own situation, for our own feelings of instability. Carroll explores those aspects of horror which demonstrate the presence of our postmodern anxieties:

> ...the sense of helplessness and paralysis it engenders in its characters, the theme of the person-as-meat, the paranoia of its narrative structures, all seem to address an uncertainty about living in the contemporary world which is made more urgent since within memory—or the illusions of memory—there is the belief that there was a time, not so long ago, when things seemed stable and a sense of certainty prevailed. (213-14).

Horror in general, but vampires in particular, seem to fill a need that has emerged in postmodern America. The two different constructs of the vampire that exist in contemporary narratives—vampires as evil to be destroyed versus vampires as sympathetic creatures with human emotions and needs—both address the unique needs of postmodern America. The Vampires-Are-Evil construct simplifies our complex world, distinguishing good from evil, allowing the evil vampires to be eradicated, and the good humans to walk away into the sunrise. The Vampires-Are-People-Too construct more directly addresses the chaos that we are facing, providing a metaphor for our own internal struggles, and evidence that we can overcome them.

The dissolution of distinctions and the perception of life and identity in flux merge perfectly with the concept of the vampire, who is neither living nor dead, who appears human yet is not; who both destroys and preserves as he attacks; and who does not conform to societal standards. As Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger note:

> At this present postmodern moment, it seems that even our monsters have become transformed, as the boundaries between "human" and "monstrous" become increasingly problematized in contemporary vampire narratives. For this is one of the functions of our monsters: to help us construct our own humanity, to provide guidelines against which we can define ourselves. Even the stock horror vampire, one of the most prolific figures in popular culture, is never simply a vampire; the roles played out by this figure shift as our desires and anxieties adapt to particular cultural/political moments. (5).

The vampire can accept multiple definitions, a fluctuating identity of dead but alive, evil but good, masculine but feminine. Vampire narratives embrace the chaos of the

postmodern world, delighting in what Anne Williams calls "the rejected 'otherness' that the Realists and the Romanticists had defined their favored literary modes against; the supposedly irrational, the ambiguous, the unenlightened, the chaotic, the dark, the hidden, the secret" (8).

Gordon and Hollinger discuss the plethora of themes addressed in contemporary vampire narratives, and how those themes are a clear statement on the postmodern state of our society:

> Such themes suggest our current anxieties about the dissolution of boundaries between the private and the public, the individual and society, one social group or nation and another, ourselves and our environment. How apt that the vampire reflects such border anxieties, since it penetrates boundaries by its very nature—between life and death, between love and fear, between power and persecution. And how apt that it thrives in this postmodern milieu of dissolving borders, between the virtual and the real, between private and public personae, in the breaking down of cultural and national boundaries, while a plague transmitted by the penetration of bodily boundaries—and often through blood—sweeps the world. (7).

The vampire is the other, he is irrational, he is ambiguous in that he spans categorical definitions, he brings chaos, and brings forth our darkest, most deeply hidden secret desires. Vampires are by definition creatures of the margins. It is no wonder that our interest in them peaks in such a time of decentering, unmarginalizing the marginalized. The instability of the once-secure world around us makes us feel more personally vulnerable, which may explain why the vampire story, which shows us both attacked and empowered simultaneously, has become so popular. The sadomasochistic themes inherent in the vampire myth may appeal to our sense of instability—as we try to grab control through domination, or give up control altogether through masochistic submission, and let others define ourselves for us.

Contemporary vampire narratives break down the conventional boundaries between human and monster and good and evil, as the vampires become much more heroic and soulful than their human counterparts. Many postmodern vampires are thrown into moral conflicts, questioning their very nature, trying to determine whether they are evil as a result of their nature, whether or not they are subject to the rules of God and man, and how they will live their lives. Hollinger sees that the first-person portrayals of vampires in such texts as Saberhagen's The Dracula Tape (1975) and Rice's Interview with the Vampire (1976) are "an inevitable result of the postmodern exercise of decentering" (200). The vampire, the marginal figure, becomes the focus of the text in the postmodern world, as well as the focus of our attention. Our interest now is not in the wreckage that the vampire leaves in its wake, as was often the case in nineteenth century vampire stories, but the experience of being a vampire—an experience many readers long to know for themselves.

In Rice's Vampire Chronicles, the postmodernist thought behind the nature of the vampire becomes apparent. Rice's vampires wrangle with questions of their own innate goodness or evil. First Louis in Interview with the Vampire fights against his vampiric impulses, attempting to survive on rats instead of on human blood. Then in The Vampire Lestat, we see Armand and his "Children of Darkness" adhere to ancient rules that command vampires to act as agents of Satan, living among the dead, and never daring to enter a church. In Queen of the Damned, the absolute origins of the vampire are brought to light, and the original vampire Akasha awakened. In Tale of the Body Thief, Lestat tests his own immortality, and in Memnoch the Devil, Lestat travels to Hell to find the true meaning of good and evil.

Does being a vampire by necessity make one evil? The vampire Armand led a generation of vampires to believe that they were so evil that they had to live in graveyards, stay off holy ground, and fear holy symbols. It gave them a definition of who they were. When Lestat and his mother/lover Gabrielle come into town, they throw those conventions to the wind, and these vampires must question their history and rituals. Hollinger discusses the key differences between Armand and Lestat in The Vampire Lestat. Armand is "the modernist," sticking to the conventional belief that vampires are evil; Lestat is "the ironic postmodernist," challenging conventions, and refusing to live his life by any preset rules. For Armand, "absence is paralysis;" when he comes to understand that there is no truth in the old rules, he does not know how to move forward (Hollinger 203). He despairs, and begins killing off his followers, forcing them into the fire, since he can no longer lead them in a world he no longer understands. But for Lestat, his "existentialism is also a celebration of the absolute freedom that arises from the suspension of revelation" (Hollinger 203), and he can thrive.

This grappling with identity issues is an appropriate theme for postmodern America, as we attempt to come to terms with who and what we are, and where we are going. New definitions of identity are emerging, and the concept of the vampire begins to seem more and more appealing. Vampires, like us, are shown to have identity issues, yet they have the power, the strength, and the time to overcome nearly any obstacle. As Margaret Carter notes, "contemporary writers present vampires as admirable because of the very traits for which nineteenth-century authors vilified them" (30) — for being different, for not adhering to social norms, for disobeying moral and religious codes. In postmodern society, we stress the individual's right to choose just about any path that they would

prefer to take, so long as it does not infringe on the rights of others. So if a vampire wishes to exist by subsisting on donated blood rather than stolen, what right have we to stand in his way?

Carroll explores the question of why the horror genre emerged when it did, and comments that "the emergence of the horror genre—especially in the form of the Gothic novel—overlaps with the period that cultural historians call the 'Enlightenment' or 'The Age of Reason'" (55), an age in which reason was elevated, and all that was supernatural denounced as figments of the imagination. Carroll hypothesizes that

> It may be thought that the horror novel represents something like the underside of the Enlightenment. Where the Enlightenment valorizes reason, the horror novel explores emotions, indeed particularly violent ones from the point of view of fictional characters...or it might be conceived of as a kind of explosion of that which is denied. (56).

Similarly, we can see vampire narratives in today's society as an expression of that which is denied to us, an externalization of our forbidden desires and inner demons.

Day's exploration of why the Gothic fantasy appealed to nineteenth-century readers further illuminates how horror narratives allow us to scare out our own ghosts and wrestle with our demons:

> In the space between the worlds of religion and myth and science, between romance and realism, between soul and psyche, between inner and outer life, nineteenth-century readers saw the source of their anxiety and fear, that is, in the failure of religious, scientific, and philosophical systems to create a sense of wholeness and unity in the self and in the world, which would have allowed individuals to define their own existence. The Gothic fantasy occupied this empty space, filled it through parody of these systematic visions that did not quite account for the world, and turned the anxiety and fear in that cultural gap into pleasure, articulating and diffusing the anxiety and fear that called it into existence. (10-11).

Similar to the existence faced by nineteenth-century readers, contemporary audiences no longer trust in religion, in science, in government or business. The decline of religion has led to a disbelief in the concept of the afterlife, something that we used to take comfort in, which eased our fear of death. Now we no longer have that cushion to break our fall. Science can no longer be seen as our savior when it cannot cure our most frightening diseases (such as AIDS and cancer), and instead offers up even greater horrors (such as human clones and artificial wombs). Small terrorist groups can bring down our largest buildings, and our government appears defenseless against them. There is very little to believe in anymore, and much to fear. Vampire narratives can be seen as a way of displacing our fears of the natural world (terrorists, bombings, anthrax, AIDS) onto a supernatural enemy against which we have a well-established arsenal of defenses—crosses, holy water, garlic, a stake through the heart, decapitation. We can protect ourselves against the known evil; it is the unknown evil we have greater cause to fear.

Auerbach notes that traditional vampires' "clearly defined abilities and disabilities assured us that if we studied hard we could conquer the unknown and kill undeath" (106). Theoretically, this would give us less reason to be afraid of vampires. However, in contemporary vampire narratives, it always seems that at least one of the traditional methods of dispatching a vampire will fail. In 'Salem's Lot, any cross-shaped object can repel a vampire if the wielder believes in it, but if the belief is not there, then no matter if the cross is consecrated, it will have no effect. This concept of belief is also applied in From Dusk Till Dawn, where a disillusioned preacher must find his faith in order to bless the water the group uses to fight off the vampires. We can see this lack of efficacy of

religious symbols against the vampire as symbolic of contemporary America's lack of belief in the power of religion to protect us from harm or save our immortal souls.

Contemporary American culture has made death the last great taboo. Once death was seen as a comfort—we were at last at peace, on our way to a wonderful afterlife. That comfort has been taken away through the decline of religion, and the insistence of science to prolong our lives at any cost—through machines, artificial organs, cryogenics, even cloning. The vampire offers release from both life and death. Freedom from fear of death, but also freedom from fear of living—of aging, of dying, of disease, of human limitations. As Mina says to the vampire in Bram Stoker's Dracula—"Take me away from all this death."

**The Quest for Identity**

The image of the vampire, in its blurring of distinctions, can be seen as representative of the process of self-definition which we must all go through to become individuals, distinguishing between the me and not-me. It also presents us with a fantasy for what we could become, or may simply serve as an outlet to experience the forbidden desires the self-we-have-become will not allow. By observing vampires, we create guidelines for how we can define ourselves and, as Gordon and Hollinger suggest, "construct our own humanity" (5).

Williams discusses how the development of identity has changed over time:

> In the earlier world "identity" came from the family one belongs to, a structure that both manifests and reinforces the concepts and hierarchies supposedly reiterated in every order throughout the universe, whether social, political, theological, or physical. In the newer and contradictory discourse, "identity" evolves in and through the desiring self's exploration of the world, in the dynamic established between self and other, in a difficult negotiation between the pull of inner desire and outer "reality." (95).

In postmodern America, our identity is no longer defined by our family, or even by our role in society. Instead, we must define it for ourselves as we experience the world. The consumption of vampire fiction can be seen as a method of exploring and developing the self, of crafting an identity, so that the separation between self and other, between me and not-me, is occurring not just in infancy, but throughout adolescence, and even adulthood. Readers engage with the vampire text to gain a deeper understanding of who they are. They see in the vampire, who casts no reflection, a reflection of themselves—a reflection of their own self-doubts, and their own longing for control.

Kristeva proposes that the sensation of horror harkens back to that original childhood trauma of separation from the mother. This separation begins a definition of the self that continues throughout our lives. The need for distinction between the me and not-me leads to a reliance upon clear categorization, so that creatures like the vampire, who defy the clear boundaries of living/dead and good/evil, call to mind that original battle for definition and distinction. As Williams discusses, "the things we experience as 'horrible' evoke that early anxiety about materiality and the borders of the self: between 'me' and the 'improper/unclean'...horror marks a threat to the bodily integrity of the 'I'" (75). The fear of the vampire is the fear of this immateriality—the fear of what lies beyond death, the fear of what lies beyond our definition of self, no matter if the "other" is also desirable.

Heller discusses how the creation of self can be seen as a giving up of forbidden pleasure:

> Psychoanalysts affirm that we begin to construct our identities by forming a concept of an "I" as separate from everything else...we must give up much that is part of us, for example, the desire to possess our mothers wholly or the continuous pleasure of passively receiving various stimulations. We gladly give up these things to become persons, but nevertheless we continue to long for what we have lost in the process. The forbidden images of the horror thriller offer us disguised forms of what we have given up, allow a controlled play with these images, and assist in a repetition of the original repressions by which we gave up those parts of ourselves. (194).

The images of the forbidden that are presented in vampire fantasies present us with forbidden potentials and desires that are not currently part of our selves, but nevertheless enticing. The pleasure of the horror thriller, according to Heller, is to exercise the choice of becoming a self again, deciding which elements we will and will not incorporate into our identity. But there is also pain associated with this process, the pain of having to deny ourselves those forbidden pleasures which are not consistent with the self-image. Vampire fantasies can be seen as compensating us for giving up the forbidden as part of our self-formation. We are able to re-experience those pleasures that are morally inappropriate, which we cannot accept as part of ourselves—pleasures such as oral sadism, masochistic submission, and sadistic domination.

Day probes the reasons why Gothic fantasy continues to thrive today, spawning new stories, and new variations on old myths. Day proposes that:

> Though the shape of anxiety and fear has changed, these emotions are not gone, nor have their sources changed. To have dealt with nineteenth-century anxiety about identity and sexuality does not mean we have come to terms with these problems; I do not think we can argue that we have solved the problems of identity and sexuality all that much better than the people of the last century. (Day 166).

Despite the advances we have made in science and in society, we still have much to fear. Despite our more permissive age, there is still much that is forbidden to us. We are unsure of who we are, and where we fit in. This alienation can lead to a craving not only for acceptance, but also for power over those who have rejected us. Both men and women who feel themselves looked down upon or disrespected may long to be in control, to be able to take whatever they want instead of waiting for it to be given to them. By engaging with a text that shows us someone who feels like we do—lost and alone, unable to fit into any well-defined group—yet has power to effect the world around him, we can feel empowered as well. Vampires offer us different ways to establish our identity—through power granted to an individual, or through the power of a group which one is accepted into.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer shows Spike's transition from weak, sobbing, scorned human to self-confident, braggart vampire. Drusilla finds him in an alley after he has been rejected by his beloved, and offers to give him "something glowing and glistening." She asks him if he wants it. Having no idea what she is offering, he replies, "Oh, yes! God, yes." Drusilla's face changes to her more animal form—yellow eyes, crinkled brow, and a mouth full of terrible fangs. She bites into Spike's neck, at which he exclaims "Ow! Ow! Ow!" but soon his cries of pain subside into moans of pleasure. As Spike explains to Buffy, "Becoming a vampire is a profound and powerful experience. I could feel this new strength coursing through me. Getting killed made me feel alive for the very first time. I was through living by society's rules. Decided to make a few of my own" ("Fool for Love").

A lack of love and commitment in real life, either within one's family, or in sexual relationships, can lead to an intense longing for a deep commitment in one's fantasy life. Another strong appeal of the vampire is the concept that vampires mate for life, or at least for several lifetimes. This idea is conveyed in Rice's Vampire Chronicles, The Hunger, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and in most vampire romances. The male vampire not only offers the female victim immortality, but will also always be there to protect her. His strength is beyond that of mere mortal men. And he has had centuries to perfect his sexual expertise.

Just as "intimacy and friendship" (Auerbach 14) were the lures of the early literary vampires such as Lord Ruthven and Carmilla, today the appeal of vampires is not just power, sexuality and immortality, but also the sense of being admitted into an elite club. The vampire provides a new family for those with unhappy family situations. Readers are turning away from the families who raised them, and looking to establish their identities with a family of their own choosing. Since a vampire (according to most accounts) is not born, but created by active choice of another vampire, a vampire's family is hand-selected. The vampire can choose who its family is, not be forced to get along with the family it was born into. The concept is portrayed in Rice's Vampire Chronicles, The Lost Boys, Near Dark, Brite's Lost Souls, and more recently, on Buffy the Vampire Slayer. The act of becoming a vampire allows one to create blood ties with someone who is not actually your kin. The act of creating a new vampire, giving undead life to a child, is both destructive and nurturing at the same time. The vampire drinks its victim's blood, but then offers its own blood in exchange to complete the process.

The vampire myth also allows us to envision simplified sex roles which, in our postmodern age, we may find appealing. As we venture forth into the twenty-first century, the roles of women and men in our society have become unclear. Men have typically been the breadwinners of a family, but now that women have entered the workplace, men are expected to excel not just in the office, but also at home. After the feminist movement, women are expected to be aggressive and powerful, to ask for what they want, on top of maintaining the responsibilities of hearth and home. Men and women alike must assert their dominance in the workplace, in society, and in relationships in a constant battle to prove their worth. This added pressure for both men and women can cause them to fantasize about being able to stop fighting, to let go, to have someone else take control.

James Twitchell discusses the appeal of the vampire to women, questioning, "Why should the female audience respond to the role of victim?" Why would she want to give in to a greater power, to submit herself to a situation where she doesn't know if she will live or die? Twitchell asks, "Does her passive, even conspiratorial, role support a chauvinist view of rape, in which the raped secretly encourages the raper?" He provides the answer, "it may indeed be supported by this myth" (114).

The vampire myth can be seen as the ultimate women's fantasy. Flynn discusses how Stoker's Count Dracula is "the quintessential vampire and symbol of romanticism, immortality, sexuality, aggression, and power," appealing to women's desire for romance—"his Old World charms and mysterious sexual allure cause heart flutters in Mina Murray, Lucy Westerna, and other women he encounters" (4). But the myth is not so simple, the fantasy not so safe. As Flynn notes, "the charm and sexual allure are

merely illusionary. Dracula intends to feed upon his female conquests, and to satisfy his needs fully, he must dominate them completely, body and soul" (4). By giving into the vampire, his victims are giving up themselves entirely, completely, dangerously and irreversibly. Flynn comments that "Bram Stoker's novel brilliantly explores that unknown territory of the soul where love, imagination, and mutual satisfaction become sex, fantasy, dominance, submission, and degradation of spirit—all central to our understanding of the vampire mythos" (4).

For men, the appeal of the female vampire may be not only the danger and passion that such a creature offers, but also the fact that she is the predator. Leatherdale mentions that in Victorian times, "many men must have felt burdened by their sexual responsibilities, and would have wished, like Harker, to simply lie back passively and soak up the pleasure" (158). They often acted on these wishes, or openly indulged the fantasy, as Leatherdale notes, "Victorian prostitutes frequently pandered to male masochism...and underground pornography often catered for masochistic activities, such as flagellation" (158). Today, both men and women may long for this release. And if they aren't so open as to turn to prostitutes or pornography to fulfill their fantasies, vampire narratives offer a socially-sanctioned enactment of those fantasies that they can experience vicariously.

Day explores the nature of relationships in Gothic fantasy:

> The relationship between self and Other is defined by the struggle between the impulse to domination and the impulse to submission. ...The pattern of all relationships in the Gothic fantasy, then, operates on the dynamic of sadomasochism. One asserts one's power either by inflicting or enduring pain, or both. ...The heroine accepts domination, accepts the position of masochist, because the assertion of her identity, tied up as it is with the qualities of passivity and respectability, demands she accept this role. (19).

In contemporary vampire narratives, and in contemporary American society, the female is no longer required to be the victim, and the male is no longer required to be the aggressor. In the postmodern vampire mythos, gender no longer matters. The vampire always plays the role of sexual dominant, whether male or female, and the victim always plays the role of sexual submissive, whether male or female. The vampire holds undeniable power over all it desires, draining the life of its victim until the victim becomes bound to it for all eternity. The victim is overwhelmed by the overt sexuality of the vampire, and submits even though this will mean losing his/her own identity.

The audience may identify either with the victim (secretly desiring to succumb to an all-powerful, voracious, dangerous sexual force), or with the vampire (secretly desiring to be the aggressor, taking victims by force). The moment of the vampire biting its victim can be seen as the crystallization of sadomasochistic tension—the victim experiences pleasure in being taken against her conscious will, the vampire experiences pleasure in taking from the victim against her conscious will—and the clear symbolism of blood flowing from victim to vampire in a transference of sexual power. In becoming the vampire's victim, the victim may also become a vampire, and thus a sadist instead of a masochist. Day sees this apparent contradiction as an inherent part of "the sadomasochistic pattern," in which "the self is both sadist and masochist, both dominated and dominator, at once submissive and assertive" (19). Both tendencies lurk within us all.

Day's description on the tensions facing men and women in the nineteenth century can easily be applied to the tensions facing early twenty-first century America:

> The very way in which these people lived posed the questions, What does it mean to be a man or a woman? What does it mean to be part of a family? without providing any clear answer. We can see that both these problems share a common focus and a common axis upon which their answers must turn: sexuality. An essential part of being human is defining one's relation to the other sex; a central part of being human is defining one's own sexuality. ...Perhaps the great age of Victorian repressions and willful blindness about the reality of sexuality is based on the anxiety caused by modern culture's inability to generate an effective, humane way of expressing sexuality in the mechanistic, technological, capitalist world. (Day 83-84).

These same problems plague us today. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing us is that, in an age of permissive sex, it is far too easy to be sexual, and more and more difficult to truly be intimate with another person. The vampire fantasy, and the vampire lifestyle, presents another opportunity for intimacy—sharing blood.

Day discusses the Gothic fantasy as a variation on the romance, where the hero or heroine descends into the underworld in search of lost identity. The key difference is that in the romance, the hero or heroine emerges from this experience refreshed, but in the Gothic fantasy "there is no ascent from the underworld":

> The hero never recovers his true identity. Once in the demonic underworld he becomes subject to endless transformation and metamorphosis, his identity permanently and completely fragmented in a world of cruelty and terror. ...The vampire is the most striking image of a human being fully transformed by the descent. Both more and less than human, it reappears from beyond the grave, the walking, if not precisely living, representation of the Gothic world. ...The descent into the underworld leads to the rejection of human identity and embracing of the monstrous. (Day 7).

Once we accept the underworld into our reality, we lose touch with our human identity. This can be seen in those individuals who take the vampire myth too seriously, and accept it as a part of their life, their identity. Like the hero in the Gothic fantasy, their identity may be "permanently and completely fragmented in a world of cruelty and terror" once they have embraced the monstrous, and rejected their humanity.

Christopher Craft comments on how the "interfusion of sexual desire and the fear that the moment of erotic fulfillment may occasion the erasure of the conventional and integral self informs both the central action in Dracula and the surcharged emotion of the characters about to be kissed by 'those red lips'" (167). Craft equates the basic fear of loss of life to a loss of the "conventional and integral self" which clearly relates to why contemporary readers would find this so fascinating. We work hard to build up a life for ourselves, a professional and social reputation. But that doesn't mean that everything we desire can be a part of the image we have created for ourselves. The fear of the vampire is the fear of losing respect and dignity by giving in to what we desire. The powerful do not always want to be in control, the passive do not always want to be told what to do. The vampire fantasy allows either player to switch positions and imagine themselves as swept away by all-consuming passion, or sweeping someone else away. In our fantasies, we can live out the experiences which would be socially unacceptable in our day-to-day lives. Vampire fiction and film give us this outlet.

**Forbidden Desires**

Freud believed that "all human experiences of morbid dread signify the presence of repressed sexual and aggressive wishes" (qtd. in Melton, Vampire Book 492). In a society built on monogamy and family, there will always be an enormous surplus of sexual energy that cannot be expressed, and as such, must be repressed. According to Freud, whatever is repressed must always strive to return, in whatever form. The morbid dread we feel for the vampire can be seen as evidence of the vampire as a representation of these repressed sexual and aggressive wishes.

Many critics have postulated that vampires represent repressed sexual wishes. Phyllis Roth states that "vampirism is a disguise for greatly desired and equally strongly feared fantasies" (59). George Stade comments that "Dracula is the symptom of a wish, largely sexual, that we wish we did not have" (vi). Similarly, Ursini and Silver note that:

> In a totemic sense these undead represent the arch-need of man to purge himself of his severest repressions, they are tokens through which vicariously the most sacred of taboos may be violated and sins that cry to heaven for vengeance committed. They rise up out of men's hidden fears and desires, glorying in their repulsive appetites and endowed with an epic quality like that of Milton's striding, primordial Death. (55).

Leatherdale also postulates that the real source of terror in the vampire story comes not from the story itself, but "from inside the human mind" (168):

> The real monster resides within us, the readers. People create for themselves the monsters they fear out of their unconscious and repressed yearnings and anxieties. Fear of sexual punishment and of death mean that—because sexual expression is linked to the body, which will eventually die—fear and sexuality come into common focus. Sexual repression in the mind becomes metamorphosed, transforming itself into visions of frightful beings. (168).

While the images generated by sexual repression are in fact frightful, underneath their horrific surface, we still long for the dark pleasures they represent.

Robin Wood notes that "the question has been raised as to whether Dracula is really about sexuality and sexual repression, or whether it is instead about the human fear of death, compensated for in the vampire's immortality." Wood concludes "if it is about the former, it must be also about the latter, " appealing to "the Freudian theory of the conflict between the Pleasure Principle and the Reality Principle" to prove this point:

> We are born with the Pleasure Principle—the naive expectation of the immediate and unqualified satisfaction of our desires—and our development grows out of the collision between this and the Reality Principle, the realization that our desires cannot all be totally and immediately gratified. The ultimate, irresistible reality, the ultimate and final interruption of pleasure, is plainly death. (369).

The vampire demonstrates absolute triumph of the Pleasure Principle—over social restrictions and moral restraints, and finally, over death.

Freudian psychoanalysis points to sexual perversion as the root of the vampire myth, and subsequent interest in the vampire. Among the perversions accounted for in vampirism is incest. One interpretation of the vampire attack is a version of the primal scene—the parents having sexual intercourse is envisioned as the father attacking the mother. The desire to see this scene repeated in vampire fiction and film can be seen as a desire the child may have had to trade places with the same-sex parent—the son taking the place of the father, the vampire, and the daughter taking the place of the mother, the victim—playing out what Freud sees as the first and most prevalent sexual fantasy in human life. These early sexual feelings lead to repression and denial as the child learns to control its forbidden desire for the parent, but the feelings reemerge at a subconscious level later in life, and may be vicariously fulfilled through consuming vampire narratives.

Vampires can be seen as symbolizing the fearsome aspects of mature, adult sexuality—what awaits the adolescent as he or she emerges from the innocence and naïveté of childhood. Early on in our lives, the vampire may appeal to our experiences with burgeoning sexuality, when all sex seems forbidden and strange. Sexual desires seem beastly in their gross physicality, and frightening in that they cannot be controlled, yet once explored, are liberating in the euphoria they induce. The movement from childhood to adulthood is paralleled in the victims' progression from innocence to sexual predation. Later in life, the vampire comes to symbolize the forbidden forms of sexuality which we should not desire, but do, now that "normal" adult sexuality has become not only permissible, but commonplace.

In postmodern society, when most sexual taboos have been admitted into the mainstream, vampires still embody the few taboos that remain. Heterosexual fornication has lost the stigma it once had, and deviant sexuality must take its place as the taboo. Vampires in the postmodern age become gender ambivalent, gay or bisexual, and into kinky, or at least nongenital sex. This association between vampires and deviant sexuality is not so much about associating deviant sexuality with evil, as it is about associating vampires with freedom from societal rules.

Freud has noted that "the psychical value of erotic needs is reduced as soon as their satisfaction becomes easy" ("Tendency to Debasement" 187):

> An obstacle is required in order to heighten libido; and where natural resistances to satisfaction have not been sufficient men have at all times erected conventional ones so as to be able to enjoy love. This is true both of individuals and of nations. In times in which there were no difficulties standing in the way of sexual satisfaction, such as perhaps during the decline of the ancient civilizations, love became worthless and life empty. ("Tendency to Debasement" 187-88).

This is an excellent statement on the state of affairs today. Now that heterosexual fornication is no longer taboo, we must find other, more controversial forms of sexuality through which to get our taste of the forbidden—homosexuality, bisexuality, incest, sadomasochism—all of which, as Melton notes, are "still considered perverted even by many who consider themselves otherwise sexually liberated" (Vampire Book 269).

The vampire's attacks have clear parallels to sexual activity. The vampire typically attacks individuals of the opposite sex, attacking at night, and often approaching its victims in their beds. The attack is specifically physical—the vampire must press its mouth directly to its victim's body—whether on the throat, the neck, the breast, or the wrist, it is a perverted kiss. For the majority of vampire aficionados, the appeal is

romantic and sexual. The vampire overwhelms its victim, and that is the most important aspect of its sexual appeal.

Walter Evans notes that "of all the movie monsters Dracula seems to be the most attractive to women" (59), commenting that "his appeal is not difficult to understand, for he embodies the chief characteristics of the standard Gothic hero: tall, dark, handsome, titled, wealthy, cultured, attentive, mannered, with an air of command, an aura of sin and secret suffering; perhaps most important of all, he is invariably impeccably dressed" (59-60). But is its appearance and personality enough to explain the enduring popularity of the vampire over other monsters such as the werewolf, the mummy, or the Frankenstein monster? It is not enough that the vampire presents a monster that is simultaneously human in appearance though corrupt underneath—that has been done before. Skal observes that while "most monsters take and trample...Dracula alone seduces, courting before he kills" (4). What is unique in vampire narratives is the relationship between the vampire and the victim.

Andrew Tudor discusses how the threat "posed by vampirism presumes a particularly intimate relation between vampire and victim:"

> Sucking blood from the throat – though it can, and would later, be presented as both bloody and violent – puts the two parties in an unusually extended and close relationship...and the physical form in which it became conventional to represent the moment of blood-taking has many of the external signs of the loving and erotic embrace. There is no need, therefore, to construct elaborate analogies between blood and semen, as do some psychoanalytic accounts, to establish the irreducibly sexual character of the vampire/victim relationship. (163).

Tudor points to examples in the 1931 Dracula, where several of the vampire's attacks take place when the female victims are lying in bed, "throats bare, arms lying languidly on the bedclothes, unable and unwilling to resist" (164). Since the

scenes cut before the vampire bites the victim, what exactly occurs is left even more open to speculation. Did he only take her blood? Or was there more to it than that? Also, after each encounter, the women emerge in an "unprecedented mood of satisfaction and well-being," as after sexual consummation (164).

Hogan notes that "sexuality, with its connotations of the bedroom, the dark, and nakedness, places us at our most vulnerable" (91). The vampire plays upon all these fears and vulnerabilities by preying upon its victims at night, in their bedrooms, climbing into their beds and penetrating their bodies in a very sexual way. The greatest fear, perhaps, is the element of ecstasy so often portrayed upon the victim's face—this is what they most fear, and yet also what they most desire. The audience witnesses the sexual ecstasy the vampire's victim is experiencing, and longs for that same release. The audience sees the sway the vampire holds over his victim, and longs for that same power.

Twitchell discusses our fascination with the vampire myth, focusing on the male vampire and his female victim:

> If you look at the psychodynamics of the sucking within the myth, you will realize that the woman enjoys it; as a matter of fact, it is highly sexual for both partners. ... A rape scene is played out through the gauze of fantasy. There is no mention of this in the mythography, but it is clear when we study the effects. He wants her, she may even want him; yet something is terribly wrong ... something evil is happening. ... Hence the audience response to the vampire is wonderfully oxymoronic: on one hand, the vampire is bad, evil, sucking what he should not be sucking, being sexual where he should not be; yet it is all somehow very alluring. (112).

Twitchell makes clear that it is the sadomasochistic nature of the sexuality in the vampire myth that makes it so appealing—though the audience would never want to admit it.

Twitchell drills down into the core truth of the vampire myth, the unspoken key to the vampire's dark appeal: "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" (112). At its core, the vampire myth is about the acting out on or submitting to carnal desire—passionate, violent, ecstatic. And yet the audience is freed from the responsibility, from the embarrassment, of ever having to admit to wanting to witness or experience such things. They go for the horror, but stay for the forbidden pleasure.

Riccardo comments on the seductive, sullying nature of the vampire: "The seductiveness of the vampire only embellishes the evil, for it lures the innocent into the deadliest of sins. It is the forbidden fruit, the forbidden love, the sensual kiss of death" (Vampires Unearthed 4). Riccardo notes that "whether or not the vampire is labelled 'evil,' the undertones of alluring deadly sensuality will always remain. It is that part of the vampire image which eternally keeps people coming back for more" (4). Even in stories with "humanized" vampires, there will always be the element of the forbidden, the violation of the natural order, if not moral taboos.

Feminist critic Andrea Dworkin comments that vampire sexuality, as presented in Stoker's Dracula, sets the stage for "an oncoming century filled with sexual horror:"

> ...the throat as a female genital; sex and death as synonyms; killing as a sex act; slow dying as sensuality; men watching the slow dying, and the watching is sexual; mutilation of the female body as male heroism and adventure; callous, ruthless, predatory lust as the one-note meaning of sexual desire; intercourse itself needing blood, someone's, somewhere, to count as a sex act in a world excited by sadomasochism, bored by the dull thud thud of the literal fuck. (119).

While Dworkin is condemning the state of sexuality today, she is hitting the nail on the head as to the appeal of the vampire story. Bored with the freedoms they've been allowed to experience in "normal" sex, both men and women want something new to make it all exciting again. And if they are too tied to tradition to act these desires out in

their own lives, they can experience them vicariously through watching, reading, loving the vampire as he descends upon his female victim, offering the ultimate rush of forbidden pleasure.

Day explores how the Gothic fantasy appeals to its reader:

> The exact nature of the Gothic fantasy's relationship to the reader remains ambiguous and potentially disturbing. The Gothic makes its appeal to the reader, not through action, character, ideas or language, but through spectacle. It is strange and exotic, but its sadomasochistic pattern appeals to the reader's fascination with the forbidden, as well as the unusual. (63).

This sadomasochistic pattern and fascination with the forbidden is a key element that differentiates vampire fiction and film from horror or Gothic fantasy in general. The vampire is sexy, seductive and supernatural. The vampire, more than any other character in Gothic fantasy, appeals to us. We don't just fear the vampire, we desire the vampire, we desire to be the vampire. The vampire is unique in that on the surface, he appears to be human—human with good looks, a sophisticated air, seductive charms, and power, both physical and mental. We fear him because he is stronger and better than us, we cannot beat him. This is also why we long to either be him, or at least be his chosen consort.

Devendra Varma explores the appeal of the vampire, addressing issues which he believes most scholars are missing—"the covert symbolism of the vampire concept" (19):

> 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...his victim has been lying awake in her bed awaiting his coming. ...She lies in an occult swoon for her midnight visitor, and awakens in languorous stillness at the break of dawn, like a sensuous maid after a night of love. ...Evil may be terrible, but it is also irresistible. Even a loathsome embrace marks the naked cruelty of passion. The vampire's embrace may plumb the bottomless pit of damnation; nonetheless, it ravages the heights of heaven with rage and rapture. (20).

The idea of the vampire is a "voluptuous idea," which reveals "the naked cruelty of passion" and the "heights of heaven." Varma makes clear the many levels of attraction to the vampire for a female audience. The vampire seduces our minds as well as our bodies, pulling us into another realm of existence.

The vampire is the ultimate female fantasy of love and commitment. He has lived many lifetimes, but never loved, until he finds his one true soul mate, and asks her to share eternity with him. She is uniquely able to melt the heart of a monster. Being selected as that special someone means not only will she be loved for all time, but she also will be beautiful and young for all time, protected from death and disease. Charnas proposes that the female audience comes to see the vampire as "the distant but dominant male, the alluring ice-King only awaiting the kiss of life to be rescued from what we insist on reading as his agonizing loneliness" and to allow ourselves "to indulge in the victim's delusion:"

> Mine is the kiss that will wake him and release all his powers in positive ways (perfect love casteth out fear); and how can he help but adore me for liberating him in this way?—in imagination, without costly error or penalty. The monster is domesticated, the tiger walks in all his beauty and power tamely by our side, and we bask in our own glory and in his. ("Meditations in Red" 62).

In this view, the appeal of the vampire can be seen as an appeal of power, both for the vampire and the victim. To become a vampire is to become all-powerful, but to become the victim is to control that power, to have that power available to you, on a leash. Every woman wants to tame the wild male animal.

The emergence of the vampire romance as a distinct genre says a lot about women's desire for the dark, forbidden, fearsome stranger. But even in less traditionally "romantic" vampire stories, this element is still present. In The Vampire Tapestry, a

professional female therapist decides to end her sessions with a vampire by getting to know his body as well as his mind, demonstrating a "troubling abandonment of professional ethics [which] erodes her hard-won independent identity" (Auerbach 151). In Dance of the Damned, the sexually potent exotic dancer still longs to be loved. The enduring appeal of the vampire story seems to suggest that women want to return to their submissive roles, no matter what position of professional or sexual power they may hold in their everyday lives. Williams notes that women's erotic fantasies tend to focus on "the sensation of 'being swept off one's feet,' of losing control, but in a context where such loss is 'safe' because of the benevolence of this greater power" (157). This is the ideal that many women may look for in the vampire fantasy—they are able to submit themselves to the beast without fear for their life. They can experience all of the ecstasy, but none of the life-threatening fear.

Skal observes that "the vampire is a spectre that frequently rises at the boundaries of social, religious and sexual conformity" (12). Vampires can be seen as another example of a sexual or racial minority, railed against by its opponents through "fearful fantasies of seduction, transformation, and unholy corruption" (Skal 12). The vampire becomes the "other," the other who is attractive to us because he is different from us, because contact with him is forbidden. Day notes that "we have taken the villain of Dracula and made him our own, made him...one of our images of what we are... an empowering vision of the self as Other, as Outsider" (146-47). The vampire is not just popular because he appeals to a primal fear in all of us, but because he also appeals to our desire for ultimate power, power which we see the "other" as having. Hatlen sees Dracula as a statement on sexual politics, demonstrating "our desire (and by 'our' I mean middle class whites) to

'submit' ourselves (I am here using the word 'submit' in the explicitly masochistic sense it has acquired in pornographic literature) to—i.e., to be sexually violated by—the 'dark,' 'foul smelling' outsider" (133).

Ernest Jones sees the fantasy/nightmare of bloodsucking as "a regressive mixture of sucking and biting characteristic of the oral stage of psychosexual development" (qtd. in Carroll 169). He states that vampirism represents "the more perverse forms of sexuality" involving sadism and hate. Jones notes that "when the more normal aspects of sexuality are in a state of repression there is always a tendency to regress towards less developed forms" (60). The most primitive form of sadism—oral sadism—takes precedence here, relating back not just to repressed sexual wishes, but to explicitly infantile desires.

Freud observes that "the first and most important activity in the child's life, the sucking from the mother's breast (or its substitute)" acquaints him with the pleasure of sucking. At this point in the child's life, "the child's lips behaved like an erogenous zone" and "the stimulus from the warm streams of milk was really the cause of the pleasurable sensation." At first, oral gratification is based on the self-preservative "need for nourishment ," but " later makes itself independent of it" as this desire becomes more sexual in nature ("Three Contributions" 586). Vampirism can be seen as a desire to return to the "oral" stage when the infant derived intense pleasure from first sucking, then biting its mother's breast. The presence of the vampire image in so many cultures can be seen as demonstrating a latent fantasy in all of us to return to a time when we took our nourishment when we wanted to, when our demands were met with a simple cry, and if something didn't please us—we could act out through our bite.

Brian Stableford refers to a theory originally proposed by Lloyd Worley, in which "our continued uneasy fascination with the vampire motif may be rooted in that experience of vampiric existence which we all have as a result of spending nine months in the womb and a further nine—or more—obtaining nourishment by suckling" (84). Being a vampire is an actual, physical universal experience grounded in our fetal and natal lives. We have all been a vampire, absorbing nutrients directly from our mother's womb, drinking in satisfaction from her breast. Many images in the vampire myth can be seen to echo that state of infantile bliss. The vampire suckles nourishing blood from its victim (most often from the throat, but sometimes from the breast), as the child suckles milk from its mother. The vampire must rest in an enclosing coffin, within its own native soil, as the child slept within its mother's womb. The vampire's rage, loud and shrill, is like the cry of the child who does not get what he wants. The vampire's mesmerizing power over his victims is like the control a child exerts over all those around him to bend to his wishes.

Jones proposes that forbidden desires are represented through frightful images because "the representation of the underlying wish is not permitted in its naked form." A frightful image, such as the vampire, is used to represent those forbidden desires, becoming "a compromise of the wish on the one hand and on the other of the intense fear belonging to the inhibition" (qtd. in Carroll 169). The vampire story enacts a latent desire for sadistic or masochistic acts in our sexual relationships. Watching such scenes allows us to vicariously experience forbidden pleasure. And yet, the taboo of watching such scenes, and experiencing such pleasure, makes us afraid. We cannot act on these desires, we should not long for these things.

Carroll discusses Jones's theories in relation to vampires in particular:

> For Jones the nightmare and figures of the nightmare like the vampire—i.e., the very stuff of horror fiction—attract because they manifest wishes, notably sexual wishes. However, these wishes are forbidden or repressed. They cannot be acknowledged outright. This is where the horrific, repulsive imagery comes in. It disguises or masks the unacknowledgeable wish. It functions as a camouflage; the dreamer cannot be blamed for these images by her internal censor because they beset her; she finds them fearsome and repulsive, so she cannot be thought to enjoy them (though she really does savor them insofar as they express deep, psychosexual wishes, albeit in mufti). The revulsion and disgust the horrific imagery provokes is the price the dreamer pays for having her wish fulfilled. (170).

We experience fear in order to mask our desire, in order to make our forbidden wishes more acceptable.

Heller discusses how Dracula grants wishes for his victims, wishes that are "infantile and individualistic: dreams of gratification without serious regard for the consequences to others. Gratifying those wishes gives power to the unconscious that can destroy the wishing individual" (80). This can be seen as true in many vampire stories. In Fright Night, Evil Ed becomes a vampire, and talks of how powerful he is, then has to be destroyed. On Buffy the Vampire Slayer, a childhood friend of Buffy's with an incurable disease becomes a vampire in an attempt to cheat death, but as soon as he rises in his new vampiric form, she stakes him. The vampire story can be seen as a lesson to society to not allow our forbidden desires to have free reign, but for many, these same stories are what drive an interest in the alternative lifestyles they will eventually seek out.

**Transcending Reality**

Many critics have noted the relationship between horror and the sublime, an aesthetic experience in which the primary factor is the presence of transcendent vastness or greatness that generates a feeling of awe and veneration in the observer. Edmund Burke, one of the first critics to directly link the experience of terror with the sensation of the sublime, observes that "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger...is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (39). However, Burke notes that "when danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are, delightful" (39). We are not meant to immerse ourselves in the sublime. By its very nature it must be a temporary experience, or it would overwhelm us. It is sublime because it is contrasted to our daily experience. If it became a daily experience, it would no longer be exhilarating, only terrifying.

H.P. Lovecraft postulates that horror can give rise to delight through the sensation he describes as "cosmic fear." Carroll explains that "the literature of cosmic fear attracts because it confirms some instinctual intuition about reality, which intuition is denied by the culture of materialistic sophistication" (162). Despite our lack of belief in the supernatural, even in contemporary society, there are things which we cannot explain, and so always, at the back of our mind is the suspicion that something more must exist, whether that something be gods, monsters, or both. Carroll discusses readers' fascination with horror narratives within Lovecraft's construct:

> We seek the morbidly unnatural in horror literature in order to experience awe, a cosmic fear with a visionary dimension that corresponds to instinctual, human views of the universe. The morbidly unnatural is a means to awe, and is sought not for its own sake but for that state which it induces in the audience. (163).

People are searching for spiritual transcendence in a time when they have given up on God and the Church, and are looking for something else to believe in.

Kirk J. Schneider hypothesizes that human interest in horror stems from the glimpse it provides us into the infinite. Gazing for a moment upon the infinite is awe-inspiring; however, being immersed in the infinite draws us over the line from attraction to repulsion. Schneider summarizes his hypothesis:

> (1) classic horror (and by analogy the self/cosmic relation) is both ecstatic and terrifying; (2) the basis for this condition is infinity (or "the holy"); (3) the further we pursue the ecstatic, the more we unveil its terrifying context; and (4) the encounter with this context (as opposed to the denial or passive acceptance of this context) promotes vitality and social sensitivity. (xii).

People seek out horror for the same reason they indulge in deviant forms of sexuality—they are attempting to make their lives feel more real, more vital, by exposing themselves to the infinite. Schneider discusses the concept of infinity as the ability to know "total surrender" or "total dominance" (1). Vampire narratives offer us this glimpse into infinity through both the passive victim (total surrender) and the aggressive vampire (total dominance).

Schneider explains the risks of flirting with the infinite:

> Celebration...is only the initial phase of what can be. On the other side terror reigns. Ecstasy is a glimpse of the infinite; terror is full disclosure. Ecstasy is marked by a degree of comfort, innocence, illusion; terror is ultimately bereft of these. Ecstasy implies some degree of containment or manageability; terror is unbridled. (1-2).

We can see that this description translates easily to the consumers of vampire narratives—there is great delight in reading about vampires, in watching seduction scenes

play out on the screen or in our minds, but experiencing this in real life would be going too far over the edge of the cliff, descending into terror. There are some who like to tread this line more closely than others, those who live the life of BDSM or even envision themselves to be vampires or vampire donors. However, as Schneider suggests, the safest route is to taste the infinite, but not take too big a bite.

Schneider explores the value of this glimpse into—and pulling back from—infinity which horror grants us, explaining: "Classic horror...underscores the virtue of paradox. It teaches us that human potentiality (amazement, excitement, freedom) is the flipside of human anxiety (revulsion, disgust, discomfort) and that both are essential for wisdom" (100). This can be seen as similar to Jung's view on the shadow archetype. When the shadow is recognized, it offers us its positive attributes and puts us on the path towards individuation. Similarly, by understanding our fears and anxieties, we can better achieve our full human potential.

A common perspective on horror narratives is that they offer a kind of "safety valve" through which socially unacceptable inclinations can be released without disturbing the natural order. As Drake Douglas comments, "perhaps, in some small way, the imaginative, often violent, world of horror provides us with a psychological safety valve, a mental expression of the hostilities and urge to violence which we must subdue within ourselves" (13). But the question is, are these inclinations really released in such forums? Or do these forums only whet our appetite for the forbidden?

Dennis Giles proposes that the film industry offers the viewer "a well-defended fantasy" in that while it offers transgressive images, and elicits both fear and desire in its audience, that desire will be "domesticated" and that fear will be "controlled;" overall,

"the industry promises a vision which the viewer knows will be psychologically and ideologically safe" (39). Barbara Creed discusses how "the horror film attempts to bring about a confrontation with the abject...in order finally to eject the abject and redraw the boundaries between the human and non-human" (14):

> Viewing the horror film signifies a desire not only for perverse pleasure (confronting sickening, horrific images/being filled with terror/desire for the undifferentiated) but also a desire, once having been filled with perversity, taken pleasure in perversity, to throw up, throw out, eject the abject (from the safety of the spectator's seat. (10).

Riccardo offers a similar argument, saying that "since the vampire is a villainous figure that we can hate, we can release the forbidden emotions through its image, and cheer when the vampire is staked, as the inner evils are crushed" (Vampires Unearthed 3). John Thomas also asserts that "it is through [the monster's] destruction by fire, sunlight or crucifix that we are purged of our own fear of the nonhuman. We must therefore identify with the victims of the movie monster, and find our release in the monster's ultimate death" (135).

Heller discusses how what he calls "horror thrillers" allow "the real reader to make a protected contact with that which should not be," and "by bringing readers into carefully controlled contact with symbolic representations of the culturally forbidden and affirming that control, the horror thriller becomes one of a culture's instruments of repression" (72). Heller hypothesizes that consumers of horror fiction are therefore better able to repress their forbidden desires, having achieved release through fiction, instead of through action. Heller crystallizes his argument in the conclusion of his book:

> We can take a kind of illicit pleasure in the mere contemplation of these images, but ultimately they must be put back. Horror thrillers are fairly careful, sometimes indeed, elaborately careful, to create and maintain psychological distance between the real reader and the terrifying images. ...The result is a highly controlled brush with the attractive/terrifying forbidden within the self. (193-94).

Day states that "the Gothic reveals to the reader the capacity of fantasy to convert the fearful, anxious, or dangerous into genuine pleasure," and has " a therapeutic value" in that "it converts tension, anxiety and fear—tensions about desire—into pleasure," the final results of which is "the taming of fear and the reassertion of the power of desire" (63). Similarly, Carroll proposes that:

> With the onset of the monster in a horror fiction, a cultural space is opened in which the values and the concepts of the culture can be inverted, reversed, and turned inside out. This is presumably cathartic for the audience; it allows the opportunity for thoughts and desires outside the culture's notions of acceptability to take shape. But the condition that permits this transgression of the norm is that, when all is said and done, and the narrative achieves closure, the norm has been reconstituted—the ontologically offensive monster has been removed and its ghastly deeds punished. So the norm emerges stronger than before; it has been, so to say, tested; its superiority to the abnormal is vindicated; and supposedly wayward, maybe brooding, thoughts and desires—from the perspective of the dominant cultural viewpoint—have been, figuratively speaking, lanced. (201).

But in vampire fictions, the monster is not always removed at the end, and its deeds, whether ghastly or not, are not always punished. And the audience, instead of feeling relief at being released from this dark fantasy world, is left wanting more. Many audience members leave the theater still with brooding thoughts, and find ways to incorporate these darker instincts into their everyday lives, whether through dress, action, or lifestyle. Instead of "celebrat[ing] the dominant cultural viewpoint and its conception of the norm" (Carroll 201), vampire fictions question that viewpoint and that conception.

Day discusses how, through the Gothic fantasy, the reader is able to explore the nature of his or her own identity within the limits of his or her own fear and desire:

> The reader is drawn into the fantasy just as the protagonist is drawn into the underworld. The reader experiences the Gothic world vicariously...the protagonist's identity is redefined by the unbounded possibilities of fear and desire, and the reader is able to explore their limits. This explains the peculiar pleasure readers take in the painful and frightening events that occur in the Gothic novel. We do not experience the genuine fear we would upon encountering a genuine vampire; rather, we experience a mixture of fear and pleasure...which renders the overall experience enjoyable. (63).

As Day notes, "the reader experiences the Gothic world vicariously." We do not have to go out and become a vampire or be attacked by a vampire in order to understand the fear and desire that would be inherent in that experience. Vampire narratives explore that for us, and we experience it through them. Within a fictional universe, "the spectacle of Gothic sadomasochism and horror" becomes "an externalized, public, and thus mediated, expression of the reader's fears and desires" which the reader can experience "from a safe distance" (Day 64). Day explains in more detail:

> Readers can indulge in voyeuristic fantasies of their forbidden desires. Readers can enjoy what they know ought to be feared and rejected without the danger and stigma that would come from actually acting out such desires. ...The text externalizes and validates their fantasies, for their private, inner desires now appear in a more-or-less sanctioned form. (69).

Day modifies this statement by saying "Of course, most readers of Gothic fantasy don't want to do any of these things anyway; they simply want to fantasize about them" (69), but that is not true for all readers.

There are those for whom the act of reading or watching a movie is not enough to express their fears and desires. These individuals take the fantasy one step further, and act out the roles of vampire and victim in their own lives, whether to a small degree, such as love-biting, or to the extreme of those who live their lives by night, sleeping by day in a coffin, and drinking their lover's blood as part of lovemaking. They have not integrated the fear, but embraced it, making that fear a part of their reality.

Vampire narratives allow the audience to explore their forbidden desires within a safe context, but what the audience does next is up to them. Will they reject these forbidden images and go back to their lives? Or will they embrace the forbidden? Day discusses the relationship between reader and text in the Gothic fantasy:

> The reader of the Gothic fantasy goes to it as a means of escape from conventional reality...the Gothic spectacle provides escape through the forbidden and dangerous. The very fact that the reader can find pleasure in it emphasizes that the genre offers a more subversive and daring type of escape than that provided by more benign fantasies... The rejection of conventional values is central to the tradition, and that rejection is direct and overt. However, after fulfilling the reader's need, the fantasy returns him to the real world where those values operate. In part, it does this simply by ending; when the text stops, fantasy stops. (Day 72).

Or does it? Beyond the vampire lifestylers, there are those who continue the fantasy through their own writing. A common phenomenon in the age of the Internet is "fan fiction," where fans of television shows such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer continue or extend the storylines in their own fiction, which they then share with other fans of the show. Similarly, all the discussion groups and Web sites dedicated to both fictional and self-styled vampires allow the vampire fantasy to thrive and grow. People don't necessarily want the fantasy to end, and instead, find other ways to incorporate it into their lives, to allow the fantasy to continue.

Critics who see horror narratives in general, and vampire narratives in particular, as simply a way of reaffirming the natural order are missing a key element. The audience does not simply identify with the victim out of fear for the monster, but also out of a desire to be the victim. And it is not just the victim we identify with, but also the monster—we desire to be him, we desire his power. This gets at a much deeper psychological issue. Vampire aficionados indulge in vampire narratives at every chance

they get—their unacceptable inclinations are not being purged, but reaffirmed by these fantasies. We keep going back for more and more. Each time, our desire may be temporarily sated, but it will never be purged entirely.

If, as Carroll suggests, horror "employs the abnormal, only for the purpose of showing it vanquished by the forces of the normal" (199), how can stories where the vampire is not vanquished be so popular? And what of those narratives that portray the vampire not as evil, but as simply another kind of creature with unique needs? These vampires toe the line between good and evil, normal and abnormal, by drinking only blood from animals (such as Louis in Interview with the Vampire, or Angel on Buffy the Vampire Slayer) or animalistic humans (as in Innocent Blood), or never killing their victims, but only drinking blood from willing donors. Contemporary vampire stories make us question the appropriateness of using the word "monster" to label these supernatural creatures, who may be seen as simply carrying out a different lifestyle. So how do these stories reaffirm the natural order? They do not. Instead they serve to make us question who the real monsters are, these sympathetic, alienated outsiders, or the lunatics who only by virtue of their biology are labeled human.

In discussing the relationship of the voyeur in Gothic fiction, Day notes that the voyeur "is inevitably drawn into an active role" (66). Since the consumer of the vampire narrative is essentially a voyeur of the activities taking place in the story, we can see that he, too, will inevitably be pulled in. The longer a reader engages with a text, the deeper he is pulled into the fantasy world, until the fantasy world becomes indistinguishable from reality. Day discusses this phenomenon:

> Enthrallment to the spectacle of one's own fears and desires...means that the voyeur must always join the spectacle first observed from a safe distance. The voyeur's power and pleasure are potentially infinite, as long as distance from the innermost desires of the self can be maintained. Once that distance is lost, though, the protagonist becomes a participant in the spectacle, which leads to fragmentation and destruction of the self. (66).

This is not only an issue applicable to protagonists in a novel, but also to consumers of vampire narratives who take the fantasy too far. An unfortunate side effect of the growing popularity of vampire fiction and film in our culture is the predominance of people who take the fantasy to heart. The news is filled with stories of vampire-related killings. There have always been a few such cases, noted in newspapers since the nineteenth century. Now the stories are so common they're quickly forgotten.

What does this mean for our society? Are our fears and desires allowed to run too freely? Day comments on what the predominance of Gothic fantasies in our lives can signify:

> First, it signals to the reader the problematic status of pleasure in modern culture. The need for escapist pleasure suggests its absence in the real world, a world that inadequately satisfies the desire for pleasure. By its content, terror and horror, the Gothic tells us that this lack, or failure, in the real world generates the pleasures of terror in the worlds we imagine. The fact that we have come to enjoy fear is a sign of the dominance of fear in our everyday lives. (Day 68).

Fear is an ever-present element of our postmodern society, when chaos reigns, and the news each day is filled with vague warnings that we should be on alert, that at any moment, our lives or the lives of those we love could be blown away by yet another devastating attack. The world today does not provide us with the pleasure we are seeking, only an all-too-real fear. Vampire narratives provide an escape from the everyday fears with fears that are much more attractive. The vampire is fearful, but also

powerful. We know what he wants, and what his attack will mean. We are willing to exchange our real-life fears for the fantasy he offers.

Day notes that the Gothic fantasy "also calls into question the lines between reality and fantasy, fear and desire, self and Other that exist in our society" (68); as we become too immersed in our fantasies, we may identify with the vampire so much that we become him. The Gothic fantasy "asserts the reality and importance of the inner life" yet "reveals that life to be a dark and mysterious thing, perhaps essentially unknowable, or knowable only at our peril" (Day 69). By opening ourselves up to our fantasies, we put our own identities at risk. "Only in the state of voyeurism can one be safe, but again, that safety is only an illusion," because once we complete the novel, or the film ends, we are "expelled from that world back into the reality from which escape was sought" (Day 69). Day discusses this further:

> The Gothic fantasy begins as a flight from the tensions, fears, contradictions, and anxieties of everyday life and ends by presenting the reader with an imaginary world in which they are reproduced in monstrous forms. ...What the Gothic fantasy finally offers the reader is knowledge that we must escape and the images of what we are fleeing from, but it offers no more than a temporary resolution of our problem. It tells us that escape is no escape at all. (Day 68-69).

Day states that "the Gothic imagination returns us to where we started with no final resolution, for resolutions lie, not in the imagination, but in the world in which the imagination functions" (192). The vampire story may be a release, but it is not, and should not be, a resolution.

We need to address our fears and desires, accept them, and incorporate them into our lives in some way in order to truly escape from then. We must acknowledge the forbidden desires in order to escape the fear. We must recognize the vampire in ourselves. We must integrate our shadow. Day notes that the Gothic, "through the

images of pain, death, and disintegration" reveals to us "the possibilities of pleasure, life, and wholeness" (193). This is the positive outcome that vampire narratives offer us, if the fantasy is not taken too far.

**Conclusions**

We all have an innate fear of and subconscious belief in vampires, as can be seen in their presence in all world cultures. This may be evidence both of Jung's conception of the collective unconscious and Freud's conception of the uncanny. The vampire is a familiar image that we know to fear. But if it is so fearful, why is it also appealing? It could be simply that the vampire represents repressed sexual desires, and that while we desire the forbidden pleasures that the vampire embodies, our inhibitions are so strong that they make us afraid. Yet we cannot completely reject these forbidden desires. The vampire has resurfaced in postmodern America since he represents some of the last remaining taboos, and violating taboos can be vitalizing. Sadism allows us to reclaim control in a chaotic time. Masochism allows us to stop fighting, and give in to a greater power. The vampire offers opportunity for release—whether vicariously, or firsthand.

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