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The Vampire in Literature

Old and New

B.A. Essay

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Abstract

Vampire literature has changed dramatically over the centuries. The old vampire is a blood-thirsty, emotionless monster, this is seen for example in the novel *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. The new vampire, the sympathetic vampire, is more open-ended. The vampire is closer to human, beautiful, a teenager, an American, and could in fact be your next door neighbor. The new vampire does not represent evil, or the devil, but what is suppressed in modern society. Additionally, the vampire is an outsider in society. This creates some of the conflict in modern vampire stories.

The new vampire seems to owe its origin to Ann Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*. Others have followed, interestingly mostly female writers, with strong female characters. Furthermore, Ann Rice still has a strong fanbase.

These two kinds of vampires have two immensely different supporters. The supporters of the old vampire want Dracula to be a monster. They like the monstrosity, having a clear distinction between a good and a bad character, and the victimization. The supporters of the new vampire on the other hand like it to be a beautiful creature that does not want to hurt people, often drinks animal blood, and is trying to fit into society. Often, this is shown by having the vampire as an American teenager.

This essay explores the differences between vampires in literature, from the older monstrous types to the sympathetic vampires in modern novels.

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Introduction

Fictional tales have always been popular. Stories about monsters were often told to children to educate them about dangers. The monsters in these stories are often supernatural beings that do not exist, unlike for example serial killers or floods that unfortunately do. Stories about vampires are especially popular, and were often told to children to prevent them from going out into the night alone.

However, before we go further, let us examine definition of a vampire from the Merriam-Webster online dictionary: “the reanimated body of a dead person believed to come from the grave at night and suck the blood of persons asleep”. This definition is similar to the novel *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. But what happens when a victim is bit by a vampire? “A person attacked by a traditional vampire suffers the loss of blood, which causes a variety of symptoms: fatigue, loss of color in the face, listlessness, depleted motivation, and weakness” (Melton xxxi). If the victim has suffered immense blood loss, it can be fatal. The information above is all strikingly similar to the plot and details of the novel *Dracula* and other similar novels.

However, let us look at another description of the vampire: “Vampires, old or new, are cannibals feeding on the world around them, acting out in their own persons the bloody support system that sustains our lives” (Zanger 26). This is similar to the Merriam-Webster above. However, the former definition talks about the vampire rising from the grave at night, and sucking blood from people who are sleeping. This is exactly what *Dracula* did: “... The cornerstone upon which all vampire characters now turn was laid in 1897 by Bram Stoker in his novel *Dracula*... there are hints of deeper sorrow and an alienation from the place and time in which he finds himself, but Stoker never allows the reader entry into the viewpoint of the vampire as he stalks his victim” (Guiley 8).

The second definition does not mention graves, sleeping, or even the night. One interpretation is that the definition has changed, because the vampire has changed. In the definition above, it also says “Vampires, old or new ...” (Zanger 26). Consequently, it informs us that there are now two types of vampires. There is a new type of vampire in town and it has changed immensely from the old type. This is a “new,” modern, and sympathetic vampire. This new vampire, the sympathetic vampire, is radically different in many aspects. The difference lies in its abilities, a loss of limitations, age, appearance, the vampire's origin, and its home. In fact, the vampire literature as a whole has changed

genres. But what does this do to the old vampire (the vampire as a monster), and its fans?

Horror and gothic fans are losing interest in modern vampire literature because the sympathetic vampire is characterized as a plain human with various added attributed such as fangs, strength, glamour, etc., which is why the modern literature has grown from horrific to exciting and perhaps even seductive.

1. The First Major Vampire and how he Defined the Archetype

The old vampire is drastically different from the one that is so hugely popular today. Especially when considering what the archetype of the vampire is now, and was about 100 years ago. A few centuries ago, the archetype of the vampire in literature would be Dracula. Of course, there were some stories about vampires before Dracula and many right after, but the image and the personality of Dracula has become the archetype of the vampire as a monster. Especially considering all of the films that have been based on the novel Dracula by Bram Stoker. Milly Williamson explains this perfectly: “The character of Dracula has come to stand for the vampire generally because this figure is seen as representative of a universal psychic condition or, alternatively, of the spirit of the age” (5). The novel Dracula by Bram Stoker was written in 1897. At that time in Great Britain, the vampire might have been looked on as the ultimate monster and thus the vampire books were of the horror genre. The novel Dracula seems simply to have underlined those feelings and thus the novel, and other novels like it, and has become a classic for vampire and horror fans. One might even say that the folklore of the vampire became more widely known with Stoker's novel. Dracula has, in a sense, become the archetype for the vampire as a monster, and is what every writer bases the vampire as a monster on.

1.1. Character Traits

Looking at the old vampire, especially Dracula, the reader can see that there are some character traits that make the vampire so monstrous.

While the early literary vampires pictured by such writers as Goethe, Coleridge, Shelly, Polidori, Byron, and Nodier were basically parasites, possessing few traits to endear them to the people they encountered, nevertheless they

performed a vital function by assisting the personification of that darker side possessed by human beings. The romantic poets of the nineteenth century assigned themselves the task of exploring the dark side of the human consciousness. (Melton xxxii)

Going forth with this theory, the vampire as a monster would be something that people fear. However, to try and find out what is so terrifying, let us break down Dracula's characteristics and looks, centering on what it is that makes him so monstrous.

Dracula (and other vampires during that era in literature) lives in seclusion, in a rural area, and he lives alone. Dracula does not have any friends. He lives in a castle with a scary basement. He is far from being handsome and he does not look young. As Guiley explains it, Dracula is made to look animalistic (presumably because he can change into a wolf and other animals) and he has big eyebrows, a lot of hairs on his hands, and bad breath (Guiley 8). He sleeps in a coffin during the day and only goes out during the night. His manner is polite, yet no one seems to trust him. He is simply terrifying. "In appearance the folkloric vampire was horrible, not so much because it was monstrous, but because of its disgusting semi-decayed nature" (Melton 22). This nicely applies to Dracula. He just never seemed to look quite right in the novel; he could never blend in with human society. Instinctively, people would know that there was something wrong about him. Much like Mr. Hyde, in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, where the reader can never put a finger on what is wrong with Mr. Hyde – what the monstrosity is.

Dracula (and other vampires like him) is male and a sexual predator. He sneaks in through the bedroom window of ladies where they lay in their bed sleeping, and brutalizes them during the night (drinks her blood, thus making the reader think of sex). One could even say that once a woman is turned into a vampire herself, she is described as horrible. This is simply because her sexuality has surfaced. She is actively seeking sex and other males (though in some novels she seeks females as well as men). At the time that Dracula was written, this was positively horrifying. A woman was expected to lie still and not participate in a sexual act. It was looked at as a necessary part of being married, but a woman was not supposed to like it. Only the man was allowed to enjoy it.

In the novel, Dracula was actually looked at as the embodiment of evil, or even the devil himself. "In Stoker's novel, Dracula is presented to the reader as the earthly

embodiment of supernatural evil” (Zanger 18). Dracula, the vampire, is the devil come to life. And who would not be afraid of that? Dracula was such a monstrosity that he poisoned everyone he touched/tasted. This is why everyone was afraid of him, because they did not want to be transformed into a monster themselves. Or perhaps they did not want Dracula to emphasize the monstrous traits that humans already have in them, which is the hunger. This is, of course, the sexual hunger, which is represented as bloodlust in Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*.

1.2. Abilities and Limitations

In Bram Stoker's novel, *Dracula*, Dracula himself is a terrifying vampire. However, part of what makes him such a monster are his various abilities. For example, he can turn into a wolf or a bat at will. Also he can dissolve into mist or smoke. “The vampire's relationship to the animal kingdom is manifested in its ability to achieve **transformation** into various animal shapes; its command over the animal kingdom, especially the rat, the owl, the **bat**, the moth, the fox, and the wolf; and to a lesser extent its prey upon animals for food” (Melton 17). These abilities all come in handy when Dracula is finding his next victim or fleeing from an enemy. However, there are some things that are not in Dracula's favor. For example, Dracula cannot stand daylight, he has to be invited into a stranger's house, he cannot stand garlic (it is poison to him), and he cowers away from crucifixes. This might be a hint that Dracula is somehow the opposite of God – the devil. Also, Dracula cannot be seen in a mirror (Zanger 19). Dracula seems to be able to attract any lady that he wants, and make people do what he wants. There are many names for this ability, but to be consistent, we will call it glamour. Dracula can use glamour on anyone, all that he has to do is to look into their eyes and tell them what to do. They will do his bidding, without another thought. Or perhaps, without any thought at all. In short, he controls that person.

However, Dracula does not seem to have the full range of human emotions. “The solitary Dracula could, like the Old Testament God, only relate to humans and only within a very narrow range of interlocking emotions: in Dracula's case, hunger, hate, bitterness, contempt” (Zanger 22). According to this theory, Dracula is not capable of other human emotions, for example happiness, love, and such. Zanger's theory tells the reader that Dracula is only capable of negative emotions, no positive ones. Perhaps this is one of the things that makes Dracula so terrifying. If a person would make him angry,

there would be no rationalizing with him, or appeal to his sympathy.

However, another interpretation is that Dracula does love Mina. Perhaps not in the traditional way but nonetheless he does love Mina in his own way.

1.3. Gender and Vampires

At the time *Dracula* was written, literature was heavily male dominant and people were very religious. In Stoker's novel *Dracula* we are not told whether Dracula (and his wives) are the only vampires on earth or not. The novel seems to indicate that he is the first and the only true vampire and that no one like him exists on the planet. If this is true, this would somehow make him even more horrible. The reader might be even more inclined to think that Dracula is a monster if he is the only vampire in the whole world. This strongly implies that the Dracula equals the devil theory, is true. If there are many vampires, then they could not all be the devil. There is only one true devil, Satan. This makes him all the more monstrous and terrifying. Of course, Dracula does have the ability to make more of his kind, as seen from his wives, and perhaps that is a part of his monstrosity. The fact that he can infect innocent people and dramatically change them.

Perhaps a part of what makes him so monstrous is where he comes from. It is a foreign, unknown, and mysterious place with different kinds of people and traditions. It seems that some people do not know how to act around him, for example Harker (Zanger 19). For all one knows, at that time, people were afraid of foreigners. They might have been afraid of the exotic, the unknown. The fact is that in the Victorian era in England, xenophobia reared its ugly head, and it is no wonder that *Dracula* and other vampire stories became best sellers.

Vampire stories about the vampire as a monster, were mostly written by British writers. Often with the vampire as a foreigner, as in *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. Perhaps this is because the writer is borrowing the century old folk tale from that foreign country. There are many vampire folktales all over the world, but no two stories are the same. However, going back to the western vampire literature, it seems that at the time of *Dracula*, the vampire and all that it entails, had not found its way to America yet. Literature about vampirism in that time is mostly from European writers and in European setting.

Also, this was a male dominant theme. "*Dracula*, it seems, is a man's tale. And not just a man's tale, but a heterosexual man's tale" (Williamson 7). The writers were male, the protagonists were male, the hero was male, the villain was male, and the vampire was

male. The females in these stories are always helpless, terrified, and insignificant creatures. They sit back while the men go and try and fix things, and all that they do is sit in their seats and write letters. They are the designated victims. Of course, women are often victims in the newer stories, but they are, more often than not, not as desperate or useless as in these older stories.

1.4. Supporters and Reactions

Fans that like vampires such as Dracula, usually love them because of the horror. The fans think “the character of Dracula was constructed to be despised” (Williamson 61). The reader never gets to hear what Dracula thinks and is never really told what he does unless he is around the human characters in the book. Nothing is seen from the vampire's perspective in the novels. Thus, it can be deduced that one is not supposed to like Dracula, to see things from his perspective, or to sympathize with him. It does not seem to be what Bram Stoker wanted when he wrote *Dracula* or what other writers of vampire literature at that time were aiming for. “Dracula, for Stoker and for Stoker's readers, is the Anti-Christ” (Zanger 18). In these classic novels which include the vampire as a monster, the meal of the day for the vampire is romanticized. There is a relationship between the vampire and the victim, and the writer often concentrates on that (Zanger 21). Partly, this is what thrills the reader. Both the thrill that the vampire gets from the victim, and the horror that the victim is feeling during the feeding. Also, the fact that there is a clear distinction between the predator and the victim, a good and a bad character. This old type of vampire in literature really seems to underline the importance of everything being black or white. There is no blurring of the lines in these stories, as is commonly seen in the newer ones.

Needless to say, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker is a famous novel, which has an enormous fan base. “Indeed, the novel has supposedly never been out of print since the day that it was first published. Allegedly, the only book that can rival that record is the Bible” (Curran 62). Now, let us see how the new vampire differs from the old one.

2. The Sympathetic Vampire: the New and Improved?

There are many things that have changed with the appearance of the sympathetic vampire in literature. Perhaps the most prominent change is the one toward normalcy. “The contemporary vampire of the 1980s and 1990s has shown a distinct trend toward a normal appearance that allows them to completely fit in with human society and move about undetected. Such modern vampires have almost no distinguishing **characteristics** with the exception of **fangs** (extended canine teeth), which may be retractable and show only when the vampire is feeding” (Melton 20).

Vampire literature has changed dramatically over the centuries, and has perhaps changed with the time. Perhaps this is a change that was needed. As Milly Williamson explains it “The twentieth century produced a new generation of morally ambiguous, sympathetic vampires who lure audiences with the pathos of their predicament and their painful awareness of outsiderdom” (29). However, many vampire literature supporters are not happy about this change. These supporters are the ones that like the monstrous vampire and the horror genre (as described above). They like the suspense, the horror, and perhaps they like the male as the dominant sex and the female as the helpless victim. These supporters love the classic. In fact, some of this has remained in the vampire stories, but not as much as it used to be. In modern literature, it would just seem silly and outdated. This change from the monster and the horror genre; is something that reader seems to either love or hate. The vampire literature has been moved from the horror genre to romance, action, and perhaps even erotica. Examples include the novels, *Twilight*, *Uprising*, and *Guilty Pleasure*.

However, there are many changes to the vampire itself, including its ability and moral stand. “During the last generation, as the vampire became the hero or at least the sympathetic figure with whom the reader identified, the question of the vampire feeding off of humans rose to the fore. If a vampire renounces the taking of blood from **victims**, there are few nutritional options remaining: purchasing blood from various sources, finding willing donors, artificial blood substitutes, or animals” (Melton 19). The modern vampire does not always want to feed on humans, to kill an innocent person. The vampire often wants to keep its soul, to go to heaven. The most popular blood substitute in vampire literature seems to be feeding of animals.

The sympathetic vampire in literature has kept some of its predecessor's abilities, but

it has also lost a few of the limitations that the vampire as a monster had. For example, the new vampire cannot change into an animal or smoke, but it also has nothing against garlic, crucifixes, or thresholds. “Likewise, in the modern secular literary context, vampires sometimes emerge as a different species of intelligent life ... or to otherwise normal human beings who have an unusual habit (such as blood-drinking) or an odd power (such as the ability to drain people emotionally)” (Melton xxx). This new vampire seems to be moving towards the vampire as a normal human being with extra abilities. The vampire has moved from being a monster to being revered. Since it has been established that the abilities of the vampire have changed and evolved with the new vampire, let us next look at the new vampire's character traits.

2.1. Character Traits

The sympathetic vampire introduces something new to the literature, a vampire who could be one's next door neighbor, yet somehow does not fit into society. “Leaving folktales behind, the literary vampire of the nineteenth century transformed the ethnic vampire into a cosmopolitan citizen of the modern imagination. The literary vampire interacted in new ways with human society” (Melton xxxii). As said above, this new and modern vampire has had a lot of drastic changes. These changes to the vampire have made it possible for it to interact with humans, with human society.

Somehow the centuries have made the new vampire, the sympathetic vampire, into a beautiful and charismatic young vampire. “... 'otherness' returns in the vampires of the twentieth century as a source of empathy and identification. This signals one of the most important transformation in our perception of the vampire – it is no longer predominantly a figure of fear in Western popular culture, but a figure of sympathy” (Williamson 29). This seems to fit with the theory that there is relatively little horror in the vampire literature anymore; it has changed into something else entirely. Or perhaps the new horror vampire literature is simply not popular enough to be noticed anymore. This new vampire always seems to be sexy and young. Often this new vampire is a misunderstood teenager or young adult trying to fit into human society.

However, this new vampire is a lot harder to describe, because there really is no archetype. Except perhaps the typical American teenager and its conflict with trying to fit in. “The sympathetic vampire has been considered to be rebellious, domesticated, intimate – and indeed it is all of these things at one time or another – but most of all the

sympathetic vampire is *melodramatic*” (Williamson 40). This new vampire wants to be human, to fit into human society, yet it is not willing to obey all rules. Also, Williamson is right in saying that the vampire is melodramatic. When the vampire falls in love, it is almost always a Romeo and Juliet type of love. It is complicated, tragic, and often includes going to the extremes to keep the love of their life alive. The sympathetic vampire could be a man or a woman, young or old (in years, not in looks). Lives alone or with his/her family (which might be human or vampire). This is why the new vampire literature is not all in one common genre, there are many depending on the book. It could be romance, mystery, drama, thriller, young-adult, or even erotica, or perhaps even more than one genre for each novel.

This new type of vampire literature is much more open-ended and varied. However, one thing that almost all have in common, there is a boy and a girl that fall in love, however unlikely that they could or should end up together. There is almost always a force working against them, whether that is a vampire council or the parent of the human (which can be equally dangerous). Even though *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice might be said to be the beginning of the new and sympathetic vampire, perhaps this vampire has evolved even more from Louis and Lestat. Perhaps *Interview with the Vampire* was simply the beginning of the vampire's transformation, not the end.

There are many drastic changes in the sympathetic vampire's life and abilities. For example, the vampire may live with other vampires (a mate or a family) or even with a human (a mate or a family). “The new vampire, on the other hand, is often presented to us as multiple, communal, and familial, living with and relating to other vampires” (Zanger 18). The vampire as a monster could never have lived with a human. Also, the vampire now has the full range of human emotions. For example, Bill loves Sookie, Alex loves Joel, and Jean-Claude loves Anita Blake. Vampires can now enjoy all of the human emotions, not just the hunger. Even though the hunger is always at the top of the vampire's mind. The vampire often thinks that he is not human, does not have a soul, or cannot feel human emotions, until that special someone comes along. Some, like Jean-Claude, believe that humanity has been beaten out of them. This means that the vampire now has new emotions, for example love, affection, sorrow, and remorse. This means that the vampire has gained all of the positive emotions, on top of the negative ones, but also some of the more contradictory emotions. Also, the vampire often tries to be as human as possible and that means that some do not want to kill other human beings simply to

survive. So some vampires decide to try animal blood to sustain them. In some stories this works, and some not. However, the one common thing is that it never tastes as good as human blood and also is not as thrilling as drinking from a human. When this works, it only sustains them, as intravenous fluids would a human. The human never gets particularly full, there is always the feeling that you should eat, that you need to eat. So when a vampire feeding of an animal gets this feeling, it still craves human blood (can hear the blood, can taste it in the air, can see the vein in the neck) but tries as best as possible to not drink from a human. This seems to be a constant struggle for the vampire. As Guiley explains it “The theme of the blood substitute has been used often in fiction as a way of relieving sympathetic vampire protagonists from the nasty business of feeding off humans” (11). This theory works quite well because some vampires are simply too scared or too moral to kill or hurt a human being. “Reluctance and the refusal to ‘feed’ has become an important development in the conventions of the sympathetic sub-genre of vampire fiction and are symbolic of the vampire’s misrecognized innocence” (Williamson 43). As in Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight*, the Cullen family feeds on animals to be more human, to be able to survive and blend in to human society.

In the novel *Interview with the Vampire*, it is clearly stated by Lestat that vampires can survive on animal blood. However, Louis’ distaste for it is obvious. Lestat also explains to Louis that he might have to live on rats if he intends to travel in a ship. He even says “Rats can be quite nice” (Rice 31), but “It gets cold so fast” (Rice 31). Therefore, this fits in with our theory that vampires in literature can live off animal blood, but do not really like it. It is acceptable to survive, but given a choice, the vampire drinks from the human (or wants to drink from the human).

Also, when the new vampire is feeding or turning a human, there is emotion involved. As mentioned above, the old vampire does not portray any feelings, so this is new. The sympathetic vampire, in some books, even introduces the future vampire to the vampire race and its ways. The old vampire tries to teach the new vampire; in some ways like a parent would their child. This can be seen in the novel *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice when Lestat is telling Louis about the vampire; “As he talked to me and told me of what I might become, of what his life had been and stood to be, my past shrank to embers” (12). Another thing that has changed with the new vampire is that in the novel *Interview with the Vampire*, Louis seems to be bored. He has lived so long, 200 years, that everything has become a repetition. He is bored with life, even life as a

vampire. However, let us look more closely on what the sympathetic vampire has lost and gained in terms of abilities.

2.2. Abilities and Limitations

Another change in the sympathetic vampire's life is the change in its abilities. Just from the story *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, we see that the vampire had the ability to change into a bat or a wolf, he can glamour people into doing what he wants, he has to be invited into a house, he cannot stand a cross, garlic or daylight. As said above, the new vampire is more varied. "With the loss of vampire's metaphysical and religious status, there is a parallel loss of many of their folkloric attributes. Though still possessing prenatal strength and shunning the light, most contemporary vampires have lost their mutability, which is the essence of all magic. They can no longer transform themselves into bats or mists or wolves or puffs of smoke; in addition, they no longer wait to be invited over a threshold, and mirrors and crucifixes appear to have relatively little effect on them" (Zanger 19). The vampire's abilities do vary between different novels, but there are some things that never change. For example, the vampire needs blood to survive, the vampire can heal extra fast, the sunlight can hurt/kill a vampire, and the vampire does not fit properly into the existing human society.

However, let us take the Laurell K. Hamilton novels about Anita Blake for instance. Asher has an orgasmic bite; this means that when he bites a human (and if he wants to) he can make the bite feel good, even orgasmic, to the human that he bites. "Oftentimes, modern vampires even report getting psychological or sexual high from drinking blood" (Melton xxxi). However, what is different about Asher is that he can make the victim feel just as good, even better. This makes the bite of a vampire even more sexually charged than before. Every master vampire that Anita Blake meets also has an animal to call. For instance, Jean-Claude's animal to call is the wolf (werewolf). The werewolf thus has to do what he says; Jean-Claude is the master. The werewolf still has a pack and a master within the pack and they make most of their own rules inside the pack, but when Jean-Claude calls or asks them for something they have to obey. For this reason, they are often used as bodyguards or personal blood bags for their master. They are his animals, animals to call.

Another change is that some vampires in modern vampire literature are not affected by crosses or garlic. For example, in *Guilty Pleasures* the vampires are not affected by

garlic at all. However, Laurell K. Hamilton puts a nice twist on the cross. The vampires are affected by crosses, but only if the human holding the cross is religious. So if a human that did not believe in God held up a cross against a vampire, it would not work. However, if a religious human (like Anita Blake) holds up, or wears, the cross against a vampire it emits a light that the vampire cannot stand and burns if placed on the skin of a vampire. This light that comes from the cross is like the sun and as mentioned above, the sun hurts and can kill vampires. However, as the cross is burning it can also burn the human, as it has with Anita Blake. In the Sookie Stackhouse novels by Charlaine Harris, the cross does not affect the vampires at all. Bill can even hold the cross, inside of a church, with no effect at all.

The last thing that has changed is that this new vampire, the sympathetic vampire, could be your next door neighbor. Some recent serial killers have a wife, children, and live in a very normal neighborhood. No one who knew those serial killers could have guessed what they do with their free time. This new fear in people gives the sympathetic vampire a new role. "This new, demystified vampire might well be our next door neighbor, as Dracula, by origin, appearance, caste, and speech, could never pretend to be" (Zanger 19). This new vampire looks normal, like a human. Also, it acts like one. This is because, in most novels, the vampire is relatively newly made, so it holds on to with its human traditions and actions. Or as in the Sookie Stackhouse novels, the vampires are trying to "mainstream," which means to assimilate with the humans into a human society and to live peacefully together with the humans knowing about vampires. In a way, the vampires are coming out of the closet. This does not always go well, as one could imagine.

2.3. Gender and Vampires

One thing that is radically different in modern vampire literature, is the knowledge included in the stories that there are many vampires in this world, and more and more are being made. They are just good at hiding what they are to the humans or they assimilate into human society. It is no longer that the vampire in the novel is the only one in the world, thus he is the demon. This seems a bit like a change towards looking at vampirism as a plague. It is spreading, infecting humans. This change has made the new vampire into something a little less scary than Dracula, than the old vampire as a monster. Keeping up with the theory that Dracula is the devil, then many vampires cannot equal

many devils. This theory therefore does not work with the sympathetic vampire. However, going forth with the infection theory, it would exonerate the vampire from any blame. If the person were sick, then he or she cannot be blamed for their actions. Thus, the vampirism in literature seems to be moving towards looking at vampirism as a sickness that can infect other people through bites.

As in the novel *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice, it is included in the story that there are other vampires in the world. Louis says to the reporter about Lestat; “He didn't consider the world's small population of vampires as being a select club, I should say” (Rice 14).

One thing that accompanies the increasing amount of vampires in the world is that they seem to need some sort of policing, not unlike humans do (perhaps they are not so different from us after all). This policing comes in many forms, for example the Volturi in Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight*, The Vampire Federation in Scott G. Mariani's *Uprising*, and the Council in the Anita Blake series. Though these do not police their members as the police would its district; they seem to only observe from a distance and then intervene when something has gone wrong or some human is about to, or has, found out about the vampire race. However, when they intervene it is always fast and deadly. These operations do not seem to leave anything up to chance. Also, these operations are always feared. The vampires follow their rules or live in fear of these operations getting to them and are constantly on the run. Perhaps this is because they are so lethal and exact, that they are feared. However, these councils are always very old. In every novel that has this type of council it has always been controlled by the same few vampires for many centuries. They have thus built up their terrifying reputation over the centuries. Perhaps everybody needs something to fear, even the vampires.

Modern vampire literature is a lot more female based. The female writers seem to dominate this genre now. “**The Female Vampire in Recent Fiction:** As in the movies, Dracula and his male vampire kin dominated twentieth-century vampire fiction writing. However, some female vampires gained a foothold in the realm of the undead. Many of these have been the imaginary product of a new crop of female writers ...” (Melton 821). For example, Laurell K. Hamilton, Anne Rice, Stephanie Meyer, and Charlaine Harris and with them come strong female characters, heroes, vampires and such. Examples of strong female characters are Anita Blake and Sookie Stackhouse. There are not many helpless female characters in these novels anymore. And if there are, they seem more

ridiculous than anything else. Of course, there are a few exceptions. One is from the novel *Twilight* where Bella is a helpless female in the first three books, but eventually learns to stand up for herself and her family in the last book.

An example of this is the novel *Guilty Pleasures* by Laurell K. Hamilton. Anita Blake, vampire executioner, is a strong female character who does not let her self be pushed around. In particular men and she does everything so that she is not the helpless victim. Anita Blake has a small and delicate body, but she does everything in her power to be the opposite of helpless. She is trained in several types of hand-to-hand combat and carries a gun (a Browning Hi-Power). “I drew the silver crucifix free of my blouse and let it hang in full view. I have several guns, and I know how to use them. I keep a 9mm Browning Hi-Power in my desk. The gun weighed a little over two pounds, silver-plated bullets and all. Silver won't kill a vampire, but it can discourage them. It forces them to have to heal the wounds, almost human slow” (Hamilton 6). She always has a necklace with a cross around her neck, and usually several knives on her body also. She runs a few times a week and really tries to push herself a little more each time. This is not something that she does to look good; she does this to avoid getting killed by the monsters that can easily bench-press a car and are often hunting her in the novels. As Anita herself explains, she is not the type of girl who likes putting on make-up, heels and fancy clothes. “I hate to shop. I consider it one of life's necessary evils, like brussel sprouts and high-heeled shoes” (Hamilton 125). However, she does have make-up, heels, and fancy clothes, but only uses them when it is absolutely necessary and takes no pleasure doing it. She has the practicality that very few women do. She is more like a man in that way. “More recent fiction has feature BadGirl/Tough Girl vampires who can fight, kick, and gun their way out of confrontations with evil males, yet are soft and sexy in the bedroom... Such traits also have been given to female vampire hunters as well, such as Hamilton's Anita Blake” (Guiley 12).

Anita Blake is not a vampire. Nonetheless, later in the Anita Blake series by Laurell K. Hamilton, in a book called *Narcissus in Chains* she develops a power called the “ardeur.” This is a sexual power, in which she uses sexual acts to gain power and to keep this power in check. “Some vampires do not take blood; rather they steal what is considered the life force from their victims” (Melton xxxi). She uses sexual acts to drain the life force of her partner, to her. This is why she has many sexual partners, because if she uses the ardeur on a person too often, they could die. Also, she needs to feed the

ardeur often, so this forces her to have many men in her bed. In this way, she is a vampire, though far from the traditional vampire. She does not need blood, she only needs to feed the ardeur. She might also be described as a succubus. “But it was generally held that the incubi was male whilst the other, much more prolific and dangerous succubus, was female” (Curran 20). Curran also goes on to say that the succubus is “both female and sexually voracious” and that these women/demons slept with men and drained them sexually. Also, these women could harm the men doing this (Curran 20). This goes nicely with the description of Anita Blake and the ardeur. In short, she is not to be messed with.

Another point that has changed with the sympathetic vampire is that the narration of the story is more vampire centered now. Sometimes the vampire is even the narrator, though that does not happen often. An example is Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*. Most likely, it is the soon to be lover of the vampire that is the narrator, or a future vampire. This is happening more often and perhaps puts the vampire in a better light than if the vampire itself were the narrator. This can be seen in the Laurell K. Hamilton's *Guilty Pleasures*, Charlaine Harris's *Dead Until Dark*, and Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight*.

2.4. Supporters and Reactions

Every genre of literature has its own fan base, and the fans of the sympathetic vampire literature are like no other. Perhaps this is because the fans of the sympathetic vampire can relate to the vampire and its troubles. “Vampire fans empathise both with the vampires' outsiderdom *and* the love between the vampires that makes living their existence bearable. These fans have found in the vampire a figure that expresses painful outsiderdom and love in a way that echoes own their experiences in the world” (Williamson 189).

But why do people read literature about the modern vampire? Melton puts forth a theory in his book; “The vampire's amazing adaptability accounts for much of its popularity. It served numerous vital functions for different people during previous centuries. For enthusiasts, today's vampire symbolizes important elements of their lives that they feel are being culturally suppressed. The most obvious role thrust upon the contemporary vampire has been that of cultural rebel, a symbolic leader advocating outrageous alternative patterns of living in a world demanding conformity” (xxxiii). This lines up well with the fact that the new vampire in literature is a lot more varied

(adaptable) and open-ended, as said above. The writer can put the new vampire in any environment known to man. For example, a club owner, a private investigator, a traveler, a circus owner, or a teacher and then situate the story around the vampire, blood, and trying to fit into human society in some way.

It seems like this huge fan base started with Anne Rice, her books and later, the movie adaptation from her novel *Interview with the Vampire*. “The film version of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* opens with Tom Cruise as the Vampire Lestat and Brad Pitt as Louis. It becomes the largest grossing vampire movie of the twentieth century” (Melton xxvii).

As Milly Williamson explains “The sympathetic vampire today produces enormous fan cultures” (38). In her novel, she focuses on “Anne Rice Vampire Lestat Fan Club (ARVLFC) in New Orleans” (Williamson 119) which is relevant here. Williamson brings forth the theory that the sympathetic vampire fan reads vampire literature because the reader can sympathize with the vampire being an outsider, being misunderstood, not fitting into modern society or even perhaps achieving a certain standard in modern society (Williamson 185). “This sense of the pain of not belonging is expressed by many twentieth-century vampires” (Williamson 187).

Williamson also explains that to the readers, the vampire is “...a misfit with a good image” (Williamson 186). Meaning that the vampire can be seen as a “bad boy,” yet being a decent person when you get to know him/her (which the reader always does). Perhaps the vampire is the ultimate bad boy/girl.

Conclusion

The two types of vampire in literature have many obvious similarities and differences, but I have concentrated on the basic differences of abilities and characteristics.

The differences between the new and the old vampire in literature are so drastic, that each have a completely different fan base, and the new vampire could even be described as more of a human, with a supernatural twist, than a fully fledged vampire.

It is hard to define the new vampire in literature, because it is much more varied than the old vampire. It can be a man or a woman, young or old, a new vampire or an old one. Moreover, these vampires somehow never fit into human society. This could be because the vampire is shy, poor, bullied, unattractive, unemployed, or almost anything else that humans come across. This is one of the reasons that people read the novels and watch the movies about the new vampire, because they can relate to the troubles of the vampire and thus root for the vampire to succeed. However, this would never have happened in a story about the old vampire. While, the old vampire did not fit into human society and was in fact alien to human society, the reader never sympathizes with the old vampire. This is because the old vampire, the vampire as a monster, was horrifying. It was monstrous, unattractive, and a killer without a conscience or whole range of human emotions. The old vampire only seems to have access to negative human emotions such as hunger and anger. Also, the reader never hears about the old vampire's opinion, or his inner monologue. The vampire, or even a future vampire, is never the narrator. Simply put, the reader is not supposed to sympathize or connect with the old vampire. It is a monster that needs to be put down and nothing more. In the literature about the old vampire, it seems to have gotten a lot less attention in the stories. All of the attention was given to the lady, the victim, and those that were hunting the vampire and trying to kill him, the hero and his helpers. This is why the literature about the vampire as a monster is a horror genre. There is a clear line between the good and the bad. As said above, the new vampire is more open-ended. Thus, one genre does not cover them all. The literature about the new vampire can be action, comedy, romance, or even erotica.

However, what makes this literature so popular today is that the vampire expresses something that is oppressed in our society today. Something that not everybody has accepted. Also, this makes people stand out and not fit into our society (Melton xxxiii). A lot of the modern vampire literature tries to deal with these problems, no matter how

small, or at least try to find an acceptable answer and put it in the stories.

This massive vampire popularity seems to have started with Anne Rice's novel *Interview with the Vampire* and the appearance of the sympathetic vampire. It then progressed into a film, and eventually even a book series called the *Vampire Chronicles*. The novel *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice was published in 1976 and is still popular. There are even whole fandoms, groups of supporters, dedicated to these novels and Anne Rice herself.

Also, Rice seems to be one of the first to develop the sympathetic vampire, the new vampire in literature. This is seen when Rice has Louis drink animal blood, instead of hurting, or even killing, human beings. Louis is afraid for his soul, he does not want to be a murderer. Also, another thing that is a part of the sympathetic vampire in literature, is when Louis and Claudia find other vampires. If this were the old type of vampires in literature, there would be no other vampires. However, there are more of them, but most of them are simply like Dracula, mindless killers who think of nothing but blood. This seems to support the theory that the vampire in literature has grown from being a monster, to a sympathetic vampire who can focus on something else than the hunt and blood. Now the vampires has the whole range of human emotions and can live their life fully.

Even though Anne Rice was one of the first to write about the sympathetic vampire, it has evolved even more since the novel *Interview with the Vampire*. Now the biggest part of the vampire novel is, arguably, the romance. During this evolution of the vampire, the vampire kept some of its abilities, most notably the abilities that help it be more human. The new vampire has shed some of what made the old vampire such a monster. However drastic the changes to the vampire in literature is, it is still a vampire. It is a more human and sympathetic vampire, but a vampire nonetheless. The reader was terrified of the old vampire, now the reader is fascinated and excited.

An argument can be made that this is a natural development for the vampire in literature. Especially since there are also some modern vampire books that are of the horror genre. To me, there a type of vampire literature for everyone. There are action, horror, romance, exotica, and comedy novels. I look forward to seeing how the vampire in literature will evolve even more in the future. I am also glad to be rid of the helpless female victim, or at least being able to read about stronger female working to shed that image and become independent.

Given the arguments above, it may be ventured that the vampire in literature can only

evolve in one direction, the direction being, opening up even more. Thus we may, in the future, see strange things like vampires without fangs or totally normal vampire family of four, utterly devoid of all horror and monstrosity. We may even see thoroughly human vampires that are somehow more human than humans.

It may furthermore be ventured that young authors may try to invent similar openings for mummies, Frankenstein monsters, aliens, zombies, and androids for example; in a similar way as the vampire literature has evolved. In fact evidence of this can already be seen in the growing literature on zombies. For example, in the novel *Warm Bodies* by Isaac Marion and the movie by the same name. Finally it may be ventured that this development will not go very far, or at least not as far as the vampire literature has gone, as they are building on basic monsters that never have reached the somber attractions that the old vampires in fact did. For however horrifying the old vampires were, there was always something fascinating about them, that is simply not there in other monster. It is hard to imagine a sexy mummy that is also the good guy, for instance. The old vampire still had something sensual about him, for example the blood lust which makes one often think about sex. Even though the scenes in which Dracula is creeping in through a ladies bedroom window often makes one think about rape, it has evolved in the direction of sex for the modern vampire. There is no such sensual, or even human, element to any of the other monsters mentioned above, except perhaps the werewolf. The werewolf also seems to be evolving toward a more human monster.

This brings me to the final point, which is that the basic reason for the proliferation of the vampire literature is indeed this basic reason, that the vampire has some basic element, some fascination that somehow resonates with us, both old and new.

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