



THE LIVING DEAD

A Study
of the
Vampire in
Romantic
Literature

James B. Twitchell

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For Mary

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Preface

I couldn't care less about the current generation of vampires: personally I find them rude, boring, and hopelessly adolescent. However, they have not always been this way. In fact, a century ago they were often quite sophisticated, used by artists as varied as Blake, Poe, Coleridge, the Brontës, Shelley and Keats, to explain aspects of interpersonal relations. However vulgar the vampire has since become (as any twelve-year-old can explain), it is important to remember that along with the Frankenstein monster, the vampire is one of the major mythic figures bequeathed to us by the English Romantics. Simply in terms of cultural influence and currency, the vampire is far more important than any of the other nineteenth-century archetypes—more important than all the Wandering Jews, Don Juans, Reclusive Poets, Little Nells; in fact, he is probably the most enduring and prolific mythic figure we have. This book traces the vampire out of folklore into serious art until he stabilizes early in this century into the character we all too easily recognize.

But this book is really not about vampires; it is about Romanticism and what many major English and American artists found so intriguing in the myth. There are certain occupational hazards in attempting this kind of study: one must sacrifice depth for breadth, practice certain economies of scale, and always run the risk of mistaking and oversimplifying. Unfortunately, or fortunately, as the case may be, one of the central works, *Varney the Vampyre*, has been almost lost to us, and in this case I have taken the liberty of summarizing the plot, but in other cases I have treated only accepted masterpieces. Due to the exigencies of space, I have had to overlook the rich Continental tradition of vampire stories in the nineteenth century (Maupassant's *The Horla*, Tieck's *Wake Not the Dead*, Hoffman's "Aureila" from *The Serapion Brethren*, Nodier's *Smarra*, Alexis Tolstoy's *The Family of the Vourdalak*, many ballads in Mérimée's *La Guzla*, Baudelaire's "Metamorphoses of the Vampire," Gautier's *Clarimonde*, Turgenev's *Clara Militch*, Jan Neruda's *The Vampire*) as well as the vampire's rather startling rebirth in the contemporary novel, on Broadway, and in Hollywood. Occasionally, however, I could not stop myself and have wandered into the twentieth century (James's *The Sacred Fount* and D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*), but I did so only because I consider these treatments of the myth quintessentially Romantic.

This book has been great fun to write, and I am thankful to the Florida Humanities Council for their grants and to *Ball State University Forum*, *Studies in the Novel*, *Studies in Short Fiction*, *Tennessee Studies in Literature*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and *Research Studies* for their permission to use bits and pieces of

articles. I am also indebted to four years of students who have suffered me this strange interest, to my graduate instructors Jonathan Trobe, Richard Freeman, and Arthur Sandeen as well as to Professors Aubrey Williams, Leonard Woolf, and especially Devendra P. Varma for encouragement and instructive comments.

The Living Dead

1. Introduction

"Rubbish, Watson, rubbish! What have we to do with walking corpses who can only be held in their grave by stakes driven through their hearts? It's pure lunacy."

"But surely," said I, "the vampire was not necessarily a dead man? A living person might have the habit. I have read, for example, of the old sucking the blood of the young in order to retain their youth."

"You are right, Watson. It mentions the legend in one of these references. But are we to give serious attention to such things? This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain. The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply."

—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire*

Sherlock Holmes may have no time for vampires, but his friend Dr. Watson quite obviously does. As a matter of fact, Watson's mention of the "old sucking the blood of the young in order to retain their youth" hints that his knowledge may be extensive. For he knows that vampires are not always foamy-mouthed fiends with blood dripping from extended incisors, but rather can be participants in some ghastly process of energy transfer in which one partner gains vitality at the expense of another. Presumably the doctor knows this because he has done his reading, and it is that reading—not in the medical but in the fictional literature of the nineteenth century—that this book will examine.

While critical attention has been paid to other mythic figures in Romanticism such as Prometheus, Don Juan, and the Wandering Jew, the vampire has been overlooked. Partly this is because his current commercial popularity is almost invariably vulgar: vampire dolls, vampire teeth, vampire cartoons, vampire costumes, and "vitamin enriched" vampire cereal (*Count Chocula*), to say nothing of a spate of vampire television shows, movies, and comic books, have made him more a subject of parody than of serious study. However, the contemporary moon-faced, sunken-eyed, cadaverous vampire licking his chops at the sight of an unprotected virgin is as far removed from his Romantic lineaments as is the Frankenstein monster with bolts through his forehead and huge stitches down his cheeks from the creature Mary Shelley created.

Ironically, the vampire has also been overlooked because most of the early criticism, while often perceptive, was decidedly eccentric. Here is a case of iatrogenic criticism, for the doctor/critic has often done his subject more harm than good,

causing more confusion than clarification. The three prominent early critics of the vampire, all writing in the 1920s, were D. H. Lawrence, Montague Summers, and Mario Praz, and each had a profound influence on the shape of criticism to come. Lawrence's comments on Poe in *Studies in Classic American Literature* were rhapsodic about the vampire myth's ability to explain neurotic love. In *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*, Montague Summers, a controversial Jesuit, was critically hampered by his own literal belief in vampires, which caused many problems, not the least of which was his mistaking a popular "penny-dreadful" for a scholarly dissertation on vampires; while Praz, in *The Romantic Agony*, was overly concerned with making the vampire fit into a DeSadean interpretation of Romanticism.¹ Although these works often sparkle with brilliant insight, they more often illuminate the critic than the vampire. The situation is now changing, as there have been in the last decade a number of book-length studies of the vampire myth, but there is still no extended appraisal of the vampire in literature.²

What Summers neglected and what Lawrence and Praz overstated was the psychological use of this mythic figure as an analogy to explain human interactions. For the vampire in Romanticism had a more profound use than making the reader's skin crawl or showing how daring the artist could be. Admittedly, writing schauerromans exploiting gothic sensibility was fashionable, and, admittedly, the vampire story was an aberration of Romantic eroticism, as Praz implies, but the myth was also often used in serious attempts to express various human relationships, relationships that the artist himself had with family, with friends, with lovers, and even with art itself. In the works of such artists as Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats,

1. D. H. Lawrence, "Edgar Allan Poe," from *Studies in Classic American Literature*, in *Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. Anthony Beal (1932; rpt. New York: Viking Press, Compass Books, 1966); Montague Summers, *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin* (1928; rpt. New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1960; and Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (1933; rpt. and rev., London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

2. The best place to learn about the Romantic vampire is in Thomas Pecket Prest's (or James Malcom Rymer's, for the authorship is disputed, cf. E. F. Bleiler's "Introduction" to the Dover Edition) *Varney the Vampyre or, The Feast of Blood* (1847; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1972). This book has all the myth and more in two volumes. Arno Press also has an edition under the editorial direction of Sir Devendra P. Varma in three volumes (New York: Arno Press, 1970). Both editions are hard to use, as they are reprints of the original periodical publication, but *Varney* is invaluable as a source of vampire lore. The pioneering scholarly work on vampires was Dom Augustin Calmet's *Traité sur les Apparitions des Esprits, et sur les Vampires* (1746). Montague Summers's *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin* is primarily based on Calmet's work, and has itself been followed by a spate of derivative works, including Gabriel Ronay, *The Truth about Dracula* (New York: Stein and Day, 1974); Douglas Hill, *The History of Ghosts, Vampires and Werewolves* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); Leonard Wolf, *A Dream of Dracula: In Search of the Living Dead* (New York: Popular Library, 1972); Tony Faivre, *Les Vampires* (Paris: Eric Losfeld, 1962); Anthony Masters, *The Natural History of the Vampire* (London: Mayflower Books, 1974); Nancy Garden, *Vampires* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1973); Margaret L. Carter, *Shadow of a Shade: A Survey of Vampirism in Literature* (New York: Gordon Press, 1975); Raymond T. McNally and Radu Florescu, *In Search of Dracula* (New York: Warner Paperback, 1973); Basil Cooper, *The Vampire in Legend, Fact, and Art* (Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1974); and Christopher Frayling, "Introduction" to *The Vampyre: A Bedside Companion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978). Of lesser importance are a psychological study, Ornella Volta, *The Vampire*, trans. Raymond Rudoroff (London: Tandem Books, 1962); Peter Underwood, *The Vampire's Bedside Companion* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1975), chaps. 2 and 3; and an "Introduction" to *A Clutch of Vampires*, ed. Raymond T. McNally (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1974).

Emily and Charlotte Brontë, Stoker, Wilde, Poe, and Lawrence the vampire was variously used to personify the forces of maternal attraction/repulsion (Coleridge's *Christabel*), incest (Byron's *Manfred*), oppressive paternalism (Shelley's *Cenci*), adolescent love (Keats's *Porphyro*), avaricious love (Poe's *Morella* and *Berenice*), the struggle for power (E. Brontë's *Heathcliff*), sexual suppression (C. Brontë's *Bertha Rochester*), homosexual attraction (LeFanu's *Carmilla*), repressed sexuality (Stoker's *Dracula*), female domination (D. H. Lawrence's *Brangwen* women), and, most Romantic of all, the artist himself exchanging energy with aspects of his art (Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, Poe's artist in *The Oval Portrait*, Wordsworth's *Leech Gatherer*, Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, and the narrator of James's *The Sacred Fount*).

As befalls any critical work that attempts to discuss English Romanticism, a major problem is organization. Chronological organization will not work, for the vampire is a mythic figure who rather than developing new sophistication and sharpness, becomes instead tedious and dull. Chronological organization thus only reverses critical expectations, for what begins in order ends in diffusion. Comparisons are also difficult because outside of the current cinema, comics, and cheap novels, the vampire myth is rarely used twice for the same purpose. Definitions are also problematic, for the artists freely altered the myth to support artistic ends. So I have organized this work first around male and female vampires in the poetry, then chronologically as the vampire figures in the novel, and finally around the various attempts to use the vampiric analogy to describe the process of artistic creation. I then conclude with a brief summary of twentieth-century adaptations of the myth, detailing its use in D. H. Lawrence's middle novels. I regret that this organization often resembles circus elephants on parade, but, alas, there is not much interconnection between the works. This in itself may tell us something important about the Romantic "movement."

I will start with the female vampire, or *lamia*, not out of any Victorian deference but rather because here are the least sophisticated adaptations: Coleridge's *Geraldine*, Keats's *Lamia*, and *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, Charlotte Brontë's *Bertha Rochester*, and Poe's *Ligeia* and *Morella* have all been recognized and accepted in criticism as actually or potentially destructive females who have vampiric tendencies. The adaptation is not so clear with the male vampire in poetry, however, for here Keats's *Porphyro*, Byron's *Manfred*, and Shelley's *Cenci* are all assertive, fascinating, and in varying degrees demonic, but are they really vampires? Their demonism is more complicated than that of their fictional sisters, and vampirism may be only one of a number of metaphors used to describe them. To make organizational matters still worse, after the first twenty years or so of the nineteenth century, the vampire rather abruptly ceased to be a subject of poetry and instead found a temporary home in the stage melodrama before finding a permanent place in the novel.³ By the 1840s poetry had returned to more decorous subjects, allowing

3. While the vampire was a subject of Romantic poetry, it was not in the case of the Victorians. The only later nineteenth-century poems are Kipling's mediocre "The Vampire" (1897) and James Clerk Maxwell's youthful "The Vampyre" (1845). There were numerous French and English melodramas and two operas based on Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819). Cf. Summers, *Vampire*, chap. 5.

the novel to absorb what was left of the gothic spirit. The first vampire stories, Byron's "Fragment" and John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), introduced the demon to the worn-out Gothic novel, and in three decades the vampire had become a stock character to be exploited without mercy in Thomas Peckett Prest's *Varney the Vampyre*. Then Emily Brontë resuscitated the vampire in the poetic characterization of Heathcliff while her sister was doing the same with Bertha Rochester. For Heathcliff (at least according to Nelly Dean) acts *as if* he were a vampire, devouring both Earnshaws and Lintons for his own vivification, while Bertha has to be sequestered in the attic lest her libidinal desires destroy the men-folk. By using the vampire mythopoetically, the Brontës showed how powerful an analogy for aberrant energy transfer the vampire could be, and so set the temper for two later masterful prose treatments of the vampire: Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. These two popular but critically neglected works attempted to explore the sexually explosive and ambivalent nature of the myth and are not only thrilling stories but sophisticated psychological studies as well. They also introduced what has become a dominant theme in twentieth-century vampire lore—the vampire as the "love-them-and-destroy-them" adolescent male fantasy.

This study then concludes with what I consider the most important use of the vampire legend—the adaptation of the myth to explain the process of artistic creation. Here there is no set use of the story, rather a welter of varying interpretations. In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* the myth is used to explain the relationship between the teller of the tale (the Ancient Mariner) and the listener (the Wedding Guest); in Wordsworth's *The Leech Gatherer* (revised and retitled *Resolution and Independence* in 1802) it explains the relationship between the "real" poet (the Leech Gatherer) and the poet manqué (the speaker); in Poe's *The Oval Portrait* it illustrates the energy transfer between the creator (the painter) and the object of art (the sitter); in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* it is used to show the destructive nature of Realistic art; and in Henry James's *The Sacred Fount* it elucidates the interaction between artist (the narrator) and his illusionary "reality." It is in the final part of this study that we see what the other Romantic adaptations of the myth were moving toward—the coupling of human relationships, the artist himself now at the center, with the stuff of common folklore. Perhaps the best place to start, then, is with that folklore, for the Romantics did not create this beast *ab ovo*, but rather reshaped him from an already healthy body of lore.

The Vampire in Folklore

If ever there was in the world a warranted and proven history, it is that of vampires: nothing is lacking, official reports, testimonials of persons of standing, of surgeons, of clergymen, of judges; the judicial evidence is all-embracing.

—Jean Jacques Rousseau, "Letter to The Archbishop of Paris"

Before the nineteenth century the vampire seems to have only folkloric existence—an existence as historically old as it was culturally varied. For the vampire is truly ancient. Long before Christianity his presence was imagined among the peoples of coastal Egypt, in the Himalayan recesses of north India, and on the steppes of Russia. The proliferation of names gives some indication of mythic currency: called “Vurdalak” in Russia, “Vampyr” or “Oupir” in East Europe, “Ch’ing Shih” in China, “Lamia” in ancient Greece, the vampire was part of almost every Eurasian culture. As Bram Stoker’s fictional professor Van Helsing says in broken English about Dracula:

He is known everywhere that men have been. In old Greece, in old Rome; he flourish in Germany all over, in France, in India, even in the Chernesese; and in China, so far from us in all ways, there even he is, and the peoples fear him at this day. He have follow the wake of the berserker Iclander, the devil-begotten Hun, the Slav, the Saxon, the Magyar.⁴

And a nonfictional professor, Devendra P. Varma, has traced him into the Himalayas, where, Varma contends, the proto-vampire first proliferated through a host of different guises: the “Kali” or blood-drinking mother goddess; the “Yama” or the Tibetan lord of Death; the Mongolian God of Time afloat on an ocean of blood. From these highlands the vampire descended into the low countries, carried in the myths of the Huns and the Magyars into Eastern Europe, then into Greece, and finally into the Arabian and African cultures.⁵ All these strains contributed to the legend, with each new civilization and each new generation refashioning and recreating the vampire until he emerges as the Western monster we recognize today: a demonic spirit in a human body who nocturnally attacks the living, a destroyer of others, a preserver of himself.

From the few accounts we have it appears that blood-sucking monsters reached England relatively late, perhaps by the eighth century; the actual word “vampire” entered English writing much later, perhaps in the early eighteenth century. We know that there was a great wave of vampire mania in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1730s, and so it is probable that the word “vampire” then gained its currency.⁶ The vampire that the English inherited, a mixture of Slavic, Scandinavian, and Greek stock, soon had acquired quite precise characteristics. Although the first citation (1734) carried in the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes him as “a ghost who leaves his grave at night and sucks the blood from the living,” he was already a good deal more complex.⁷

Oddly enough, one can see this in a most unexpected source—the writings of

4. Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897; rpt. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1978), p. 266.

5. Devendra P. Varma, “Introduction” to *Varney the Vampyre*, pp. xvii–xix.

6. The most informative books on the vampire are still those by Montague Summers, *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*, and its sequel, *The Vampire in Europe* (1929; rpt. New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1961).

7. Here is the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s (1961) definition: “1. A preternatural being of a malignant nature (in the original and usual form of the belief, a reanimated corpse), supposed to seek nourishment, or do harm, by sucking the blood of sleeping persons; a man or woman abnormally endowed with similar habits.”

Alexander Pope. In a letter written in February 1740 to Dr. William Oliver, Pope jokes about his own ill health, which he claims will surely lead to his "death" and "burial" in the Twickenham grotto:

Since his burial (at Twitnam) he [Pope] has been seen some times in Mines and Caverns & been very troublesome to those who dig Marbles & Minerals. If ever he has walk'd above ground, He has been (like the Vampires in Germany) such a terror to all sober & innocent people, that many wish a stake were drove thro' him to keep him quiet in his Grave.⁸

Pope's wit shows more than passing knowledge of this nocturnal fiend, for not only does he know the proper methods of vampire disposal, but he also knows this creature is not to be taken seriously, at least in England. To the sophisticated Englishman, vampires were clearly a Continental concern.⁹ This was not the case for the unsophisticated Englishman, however. By the early eighteenth century the vampire had become a credible although not especially popular local fiend.

The English vampire by the end of the eighteenth century was not simply a ghost or a wraith but the devil's spirit which had possessed the body and trapped the soul of a dead sinner. In more precise terms, the vampire was an energumen—the devil's avatar, for although the human body was literally dead, the entrapped soul lived eternally under the devil's control. The vampire in English lore was therefore distinct from a ghoul, which was a living soulless body which ate corpses but did not drink blood. Also unlike the ghoul, which operated from external orders usually given by a sorcerer, the vampire obeyed internal commands.¹⁰ The vampire's body had not always been under the control of the devil; in fact, it had once belonged to a perfectly normal human who by some sin lost the protection of Christian guardianship, thereby allowing the devil admittance. This usually happened either because the sinner refused to obey religious law or was himself the victim of a vampire's attack. Since *Dracula* (1897), possession by attack has been understandably emphasized in the popular media, but previously the vampire population was thought to be primarily augmented by sinners, especially suicides.

It seems a terrible irony that the price paid for committing suicide was to make the self indestructible, for once the devil took control, the soul could never escape to an after-life until the demon was demolished. The best the bereaved family could do was to bury the corpse at a country crossroads, hoping that the sign of the cross would deter the devil. To make matters worse for the family, it was thought that the vampire's first victims would be his closest friends and relations. It is in this context that Victor Frankenstein compares his monster to "my own vampire . . .

8. George Sherburn, ed., *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, 5 vols. (London: Clarendon Press, 1956), 4:227.

9. For more on Pope's knowledge of vampires, see M. R. Brownell, "Pope and Vampires in Germany," *Eighteenth Century Life* 2 (June 1976): 96–97.

10. Often the myths of vampire and ghoul are confused, as they are in India; see Garden, *Vampires*, pp. 43–46.

forced to destroy all that was dear to me" (volume 1, chapter 6). Little wonder then that when Sophia Western in *Tom Jones* (1749) claims she would rather kill herself than marry Blifil she is easily dissuaded by Mrs. Honour's recounting the folklore:

Let me beseech your La'ship not to suffer such wicked Thoughts to come into your head. O lud, to be sure I tremble every Inch of me. Dear Ma'am, consider—that to be denied Christian burial, and to have your Corpse buried in the Highway, and a Stake drove through you, as Farmer Halfpenny was served at Ox-Cross, and, to be sure, his ghost hath walked there ever since; for several People have seen him. To be sure it can be nothing but the Devil which can put such wicked Thoughts into the Head of any body; for certainly it is less wicked to hurt all the World than one's own dear Self, and so I have heard said by more Parsons than one.¹¹ (book 7, chapter 7)

A hundred years later Heathcliff, for his own vampiric reasons, wants Hinley Earnshaw's body "buried at the crossroads without ceremony of any kind" (chapter 17).¹² The legal system reflected these concerns. In the early nineteenth century laws were passed in England which stated that the body of a suicide could only be interred between 9 P.M. and midnight, while a further law made it illegal to dig up the body of a suspected suicide in order to drive a stake through the heart. These laws were finally repealed in the 1880s, but they give some indication of the commonly believed link between the vampire and the suicide.¹³

An improperly buried suicide was almost a guarantee of vampiric possession, but lesser sins could also diminish the protection God afforded the true believer. Dying unbaptized, being buried in unconsecrated ground, being excommunicated, copulating with a witch or demon, being the seventh child of the same sex, being born on Christmas day (presumably for the effrontery of intercourse at the same time as the Virgin Mary—unfortunately the responsibility of the child, not the parent), being born with precocious teeth, being unruly during Lent—in fact, each culture developed a directory of such favors given the devil. The list varied with different societies, yet two classes of sins were common to all: first, sins against the church understandably carried sufficient promise of damnation to incite the devil; and second, any social peculiarity might be a sign of diabolical propensities. So in dark-eyed cultures the blue-eyed were suspect; in dark-haired societies the blond was exiled; the exception to the Procrustean norm was feared and cast out. However, persons suffering from epilepsy or anorexia were obvious choices in all societies, as well as those with cleft palates, since the deformity seems caused by the conscious drawing-up of the lip. It is almost as if the church, the state, and the community

11. For more on the treatment and burial of the bodies of suicides, with special reference to the case of "Farmer Halfpenny," see Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones*, "Wesleyan Edition," ed. Fredson Bowers (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1:349.

12. For more detail on Heathcliff's vampirism, see chap. 4.

13. Summers, *The Vampire*, p. 151; and Masters, *Natural History of the Vampire*, pp. 180–82.

recognized, perhaps unconsciously, the terrible potency of the vampire myth and capitalized on it to enforce their own standards of conformity.

If one did not commit suicide, was publicly religious and physically conforming, there was still the possibility that the vampire might possess the body after death. This would occur in the rare case when the vampire actually attacked and successfully transformed the victim into another vampire. This doppelgänger process is surely one of the myth's most intriguing aspects, for it implies a psychic conspiracy between attacker and vampire—an interesting analogue perhaps for our current mythology in which the rapist subconsciously invites the rapist. The vampire never wantonly destroys—in fact, his initial victims are preordained; they are those whom he loved most when alive. The initial victims are friends and family who, of course, recognize the vampire as one who was loved and trusted. This recognition is important, for the vampire cannot pick and choose on his own; rather he must be picked, “invited” into the relationship. The victim, not consciously realizing that the friend or relative is the devil in disguise, understandably and ironically obliges. Usually, if the vampire is male, the first victims are female; and if the vampire is female (called “*lamia*,” after the Greek monster), then the victim is male, but there is a distinct level of homosexuality carried in the myth that is often reflected in literary treatment.

The actual “attack” is almost always the same: it is nighttime, probably midnight, the bewitching hour. The moon should be full, for the vampire is not only revived by moonlight, he is energized by it. Assuming that the vampire is male, the female victim is preparing to sleep, in that dim world between sleeping and waking. She sees her recently deceased lover (often her late husband) standing before her, perhaps outside the window. Now the victim must make some inviting move; she must unhasp the window, open the door, do anything that shows she is acceding, even slightly. This crucial point is repeated in almost all the literary adaptations, for the vampire cannot cross a threshold without this invitation; he is bound to wait pathetically like a schoolboy until invited in. Once inside, however, his powers gradually increase. He is still not in control and so must attempt to entrance her with his hypnotic stare, for his powers are initially ocular, like those of many monsters. He need say nothing; just a look with his red, bloodshot eyes will suffice. This trance, if successful, will put the victim under his power, and she will have no memory of their encounters. He bends to kiss—the “love-bite” now quite literally the “kiss of death” or, more precisely, “kiss of deathlessness.”¹⁴ (Is the “hickey,” the crimson patch on the teenager’s neck, a vestige of mythic reenactment of this oral sadism?) His lips draw back, revealing his slightly extended incisors. He bows to her body; the movements are almost religious. Although he can puncture any part of her, after *Dracula* the neck became *de rigueur*. In folklore, however, he may just as

14. This kiss, the only physical action that the vampire really performs, is discussed in Masters, *Natural History of the Vampire*, chap. 3; Wolf, *A Dream of Dracula*, chap. 4; and Garden, *Vampires*, chap. 3. The best literary descriptions are in *Dracula*, chap. 3, and LeFanu’s *Carmilla*, chap. 7.

easily bite the arm or the breast, or, in some cultures, even the toes! He smells putrid, for his mephitic body is in a state of arrested decay; still the victim, now finally feeling repulsion, cannot escape. He makes his puncture, sucks or laps her blood, withdraws, and then disappears. In later developments of the myth he can change shape at will, becoming as invisible as mist or assuming the more usual shapes of a wolf or a bat. (Until the middle of the seventeenth century the vampire was not associated with the bat, but after the discovery of the "*Desmodus rotundus*" or vampire bat, he has rarely been associated with anything else.) The victim's sensations are wildly mixed—sensual, nauseous, warm, and mystified, as she falls into a troubled, exhausted sleep.

The now pavid victim is not immediately to become a vampire. She is weakened, not possessed. She may be lucky—the vampire may be destroyed or may have a liaison elsewhere; or she may have a friend who can recognize the symptoms of her ensuing enervation and take defensive action. For by no means is all weighted on the vampire's side. Up until the very moment of possession it is a two-handed game; for instance, in Christian cultures the vampire is terrified by all icons of the church—the cross, holy water, the Bible, the rosary; even the words "God" and "Christ," when spoken by the devout, can send the vampire into a paroxysm of fear. And for some unknown reason garlic and a few other herbs are also anathema to him. Furthermore, he is photophobic; since sunlight causes him to lose strength, a bright light directly shining in his eyes will cause him to wince away in fear. Although in folklore he was not solely the "creature of the night" he has become so in the movies; he moves in sunlight with only human strength.

If the victim does not defend herself, or if she allows the vampire to return, he will eventually drain her of blood until she wastes away. Finally, she will appear to die, but in reality the husk of her body is taken over by the devil. Her soul is trapped, and now she must start an eternity of searching for new analeptic blood-energy to keep from the pains of a starvation without end, a horrible life without death. She has become a lamia.

Logically, of course, if the vampire myth were scrutinized at all, it would fold under the weight of its own contradictions. Vampires would overpopulate themselves into a Malthusian oblivion, but myths, especially this one, are wonderfully exempt from logic. So the vampire lives on, eternally gathering in new victims, yet never upsetting the population balance. Perhaps the population is controlled by the vampire's own rather pathetic susceptibility to destruction, for one God-fearing man can decimate a whole population.

This "just man," in the folk version usually a priest or a "dhampire," understands the horrid habits of the vampire, and can search out and properly destroy the beast. The priest understandably is a logical choice in any vampire hunt, as he has both the knowledge of how evil operates and access to the armory of Christian icons. But the "dhampire" is a nonreligious facet of the myth which shows how Christianity syncretically grafted itself onto the old folklore. The "dhampire" is the child

of a vampire, usually a son, who intuitively understands how the parent will act.¹⁵ His overthrow of the parent, very much in the manner postulated by Freud in his "Primal Horde" thesis, accentuates the adolescent quality of the myth.¹⁶ This quality is reinforced in those stories where the priest or the dhampire has a young friend, a relative perhaps of the vampire's victim, who accompanies the vampire killer on the quest.

In the modern cinematic version of the story the vampire-destroyer is usually a doctor, often a hematologist, who aids the young man with his medical knowledge and paternal wisdom. Whatever the version, the posse must first locate the demon's sleeping grounds. The easiest way is to check nearby graveyards and examine all the burial plots. The vampire's grave may have tiny holes above it, through which the demon has traveled in the form of mist, for although the vampire cannot decompose, he can transpose himself into the elements as mist or storm. If these holes cannot be located, a number of alternatives are possible, the most common again involving a young boy. A male virgin must be set upon a white stallion and led around the graves, for all animals except the wolf and bat shun the vampire, and the horse will balk before crossing the vampire's turf.¹⁷ Once the grave is located, the casket is unearthed. Understandably this disinterment should occur during the daylight, for nightfall will give the vampire his phenomenal powers. The coffin lid is swung back, and there, lying in a shallow pool of blood, is the intumescent villain, a smirk doubtless on his face and his eyes opened in a glazed and eerie stare. Utmost care must now be taken, for the vampire, seeing all, realizes who his destroyers are and knows who his next victims will be should they fail to destroy him.

Since the body of the vampire is already dead, he must be destroyed rather than killed. In old tales he could simply be burned. If he wasn't burned, it was customary to stuff his mouth with garlic after the head had been decapitated. As elaborations became standardized, staking became a more popular mode of destruction. Staking (actually called "transfixation" by the Catholic church) became something of an art, for only certain wood could be used, and the stakes had to be inserted in a prescribed manner. Aspen, thought to be the wood of the cross, was preferred, but hawthorn or whitethorn would suffice. A swift, firm thrust of the stake through the heart did not kill the demon, but forever fixed him in his coffin by impaling him to the ground. In certain cultures the vampire's body was turned face down, so that should he come loose, he would not dig to the surface, but rather deeper into the earth.¹⁸ As he was staked, blood gushed from the wound, and, while he might

15. For more on the father-son relationship, see T. P. Vukanovic, *Gipsy Lore*, as quoted in Masters, *Natural History of the Vampire*, pp. 118-20.

16. This Freudian interpretation was first made by Maurice Richardson, "The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories," *The Twentieth Century* 166 (1959): 428, and reaffirmed in Royce MacGillivray, "Dracula: Bram Stoker's Spoiled Masterpiece," *Queen's Quarterly* 79 (Winter 1972): 523.

17. Summers, *The Vampire*, p. 200.

18. Vampire disposal is discussed in Summers, *The Vampire*, chap. 3; Garden, *Vampires*, chap. 5; Masters, *Natural History of the Vampire*, chap. 2; and Wolf, *A Dream of Dracula*, chap. 4.