

**Within You, Without You (Part 1: Horror)**  
**By Jeffery Greb**

At one time, Blockbuster Video stores were ubiquitous. If you are old enough to remember them, you'll recall the displays were packed with cinematic offerings, first with VHS tapes and later with even more DVDs (due to the reduction of space needed to display the latter). Video stores had two main ways to organize their wares: alphabetically for the whole store or alphabetically within a specific genre. Blockbuster chose the latter method, presumably so that a customer not shopping for a specific title but who felt like watching, for example, a comedy could stroll the comedy section and choose among those videos. If memory serves, Blockbuster's standard groupings were new releases, drama, action, comedy, romance, documentary, and horror and science fiction (with completely separated areas for adult and children's videos). Of course, all of these are somewhat arbitrary in nature (with the possible exceptions of new releases and adult), and videos had to be placed somewhere in spite of genre crossover.<sup>1</sup> My point here is that early in the life of the franchise, some nameless person made the decision to join horror and science fiction together, unlike other genres, rather than attempt to discriminate; a decision accepted by their patrons as proper.

Apart from those who are genre purists, to most observers horror and science fiction seem to go together naturally. Horror and science fiction are frequently lumped together because they share a variety of qualities, chief among these being both genres use the strange and unusual as a vehicle to explore themes from a symbolic perspective rather than exploring them directly, as the same themes might be explored in a realistic drama. Given their similarities, it may seem hair-splitting to take the time to differentiate between them, especially given that those

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<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* The film *Tremors* (1990) could be considered horror, science fiction, comedy, or action by virtue of similar films in those sections.

differences may only be matters of degree within a specific work, and therefore not worth the effort to delineate. However, understanding what at first may appear to be subtle differences is exactly the direction to take for those interested in the genres in order to deepen their appreciation, both for academic critics as well as for casual fans. To define the difference directly: Horror can be seen as a turning within to make the unconscious, that aspect of the Self which is most hidden, visible in a stylized form and thus elucidate the human condition; whereas, science fiction uses similar forms to make observations about our relations to the outside world, rather than the interior world of our psyches.

### **What Is Horror?**

The psychological connection of horror to the unconscious is well-established and rooted to a tripartite theory of mind; specifically, the mind is divided into a conscious realm, a subconscious, and an unconscious. In everyday vernacular, subconscious and unconscious are often treated as synonymous, but they are not. The subconscious lies beneath the threshold of conscious thought but is accessible to it. We have awareness of our subconscious when we attune to it and make ourselves aware. Consciousness has no such direct awareness of our unconscious; however, it too is connected to our subconscious, and so the unconscious makes itself known to our conscious mind through the intermediary of the subconscious. Being pre-language (language is an apparatus of consciousness), the unconscious bubbles into the subconscious in the form of images, which can come to the fore when we turn over our minds to subconscious control during sleep. Our unconscious mind expresses itself in our dreams and nightmares, which is why Sigmund Freud focused so heavily on dream analysis when he developed his techniques of psychoanalysis. In our subconscious state of dreaming, images from our unconscious mix with those from our conscious mind to create a curious amalgam, a personal stew of images

expressing parts contributed by all aspects of our individual psyche, even those repressed by our conscious mind as untenable thoughts and desires. These repressed wants personified and given a life outside the mind is one defining aspect of horror.

The interaction between the conscious and unconscious mind is obviously different for every person, which accounts for the relative horror an individual may feel toward any particular unconscious image made real. For example, although I found both werewolf and vampire stories frightening as a child, the former terrified me more. As we shall see, among the defining qualities of the werewolf tale is the transformation of a fairly mild-mannered man into an absolutely unrestrained monster. As I grew older and looked back on my fears, I rationalized that my lack of terror about vampires stemmed from the fact that one can always reason with vampires. While they may kill you anyway, if you can convince them you can be of service, they may let you live. Of course, they will kill you eventually, but you have bought valuable time and may survive. On the other hand, if your best friend transforms into a werewolf, they will immediately rip out your throat; they are now an unreasoning animal. After many decades as an adult, I've come to realize the true terror came from the werewolf as the unconscious representation of my childhood inside the volatile home of an abusive alcoholic. On any given night, a real violent transformation might occur.

Unconscious forms themselves recur in similar shapes among people separated by culture and distance of both time and space and are known as archetypes. These archetypes have been catalogued and analyzed at great length by scholars like Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> To fully appreciate how these archetypes manifest themselves, see Jung's *Symbols of Transformation and Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (volumes 5 & 9, respectively, of his collected works) and Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, as well as many others. It is not necessary to ascribe to Jung's theory of the collective unconscious to see the archetypes extant in the world. (Campbell avoids Jung's theory in his work.) Jung's theory seeks to explain *how* archetypes exist, not *whether* the phenomenon of archetypes exists. Jung credits the many scholars coming before him upon whose work on archetypes he builds, as does Campbell, which reinforces the pervasiveness of archetypes.

Archetypes appear to us wearing the clothes of the particular culture in which we live, so their manifestations reflect and reinforce cultural (*i.e.* conscious) beliefs. For example, the European dragon is a terrifying creature that hordes things it cannot use (*e.g.* gold, damsels), whereas the Chinese dragon is jolly and considered symbolic of power and good fortune. They share a similar form, but they signify almost diametrically opposed concepts within the respective cultures; therefore, the unconscious mind of a person within each culture would use a dragon to indicate vastly different things.

Among the academics to observe the deep connection between the unconscious and horror is Joyce Carol Oates. Oates is also, of course, an author of renown, including within the horror genre. She tells us:

In a more technical sense, art that presents “horror” in aesthetic terms is related to Expressionism and Surrealism in its elevation of interior (and perhaps repressed) states of the soul to exterior status. Even if we were not now, in this Age of Deconstruction, psychologically and anthropologically capable of deciphering seemingly opaque documents, whether fairy tales, legends, works of art or putatively objective histories and scientific reports, we should sense immediately, in the presence of the grotesque, that it is both “real” and “unreal” simultaneously, as states of mind are real enough – emotions, moods, shifting obsessions, beliefs – though immeasurable.<sup>3</sup>

Both Expressionism and Surrealism as artistic forms connect to the unconscious. The former implicitly in its attempt to capture, not objective reality, but the subjective responses to reality; the latter explicitly in its attempt to draw images from the unconscious. The former includes artists like Edvard Munch and Wassily Kandinsky; the latter includes artists such as Salvador Dali and René Magritte.

That horror stems from repressed (because of their taboo nature) unconscious desires and fears is not a new recognition, nor one confined to academic discussion. In the introduction written for the 2007 edition of his masterpiece *The Shining*, Stephen King observes, “Monsters

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<sup>3</sup> Oates, Joyce Carol (1994), “Afterward: Reflections on the Grotesque” in *Haunted: Tales of the Grotesque*.

are real. Ghosts are too. They live inside us, and sometimes, they win.”<sup>4</sup> Near the end of a made for TV documentary *Monster Mania*, host Jack Palance tells us: “The creatures of the night scare us because, in a way, they *are* us. They represent the secret anxieties and nightmares we have about ourselves” [italics added].<sup>5</sup> “Secret” is the operative term here. We (usually) do not recognize the horror as projections of our own unconscious mind because, as discussed above, they emanate from our *unconscious*. Nevertheless, in Aristotelian terms to see them enacted from a psychologically safe distance, we still experience catharsis.<sup>6</sup> According to Aristotle, seeing our fears enacted with ourselves removed from the action purges the fear and results in our feeling enjoyment and pleasure. The act of catharsis explains the allure of subjects which we should loathe if we were to consider them from a purely objective perspective. Catharsis partly answers Oates’s questions, “What is the ‘grotesque’—and what is ‘horror’—in art? And why do these seemingly repellant states of mind possess, for some, an abiding attraction?” Horror speaks from a part of us that we do not even recognize *as* us suddenly made real, yet even without that conscious recognition, it can manage to help alleviate our anxiety (at least temporarily).

Catharsis alone, however, does not adequately answer Oates. Our attraction to the repellant also seems to be related to the notion the Romantics called “the sublime and beautiful.” As E. A. Poe<sup>7</sup> explains in “The Poetic Principle” (1850):

*That* pleasure, which is at once the most pure, the most elevating, and the most intense, is derived, I maintain, from the contemplation of the beautiful. In the contemplation of Beauty we alone find it possible to attain that pleasurable elevation, or excitement, *of the soul*, which we recognize as the Poetic Sentiment, and which is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of Reason, or from Passion, which is the excitement of the heart.

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<sup>4</sup> King, Stephen (2007), Introduction, *The Shining* (First Edition 1977).

<sup>5</sup> Burns, Kevin (director), (1997), *Monster Mania*.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle (about 330 BCE), *Poetics*.

<sup>7</sup> Poe was never formally adopted by John Allan, had no legal right to the Allan name, and was estranged from John Allan. He generally signed his name “E. A. Poe” or “Edgar Poe” and was called “Eddie” by confidantes.

Poe then makes the word beauty “inclusive of the sublime.” Poe’s sense of the sublime is that of an encounter with a manifestation of the infinite. To carry this idea back to Oates, we are drawn to the beautiful (in the contemporary sense) and the grotesque because they both carry this element of sublimity, albeit from opposite extremes. A person of astonishing beauty attracts the human eye, even when removed from sexual attraction. Does not the opposite, a person of astonishing grotesqueness, do precisely the same thing? Are you not equally liable to point out to a confidant a person of remarkable ugliness as one of remarkable beauty? Their extremity is what marks them as manifestations of the sublime.

Making our unconscious (and thus unrecognized or acknowledged) fears manifest, then, is one quality of horror, but horror also contains an element of blunt physicality. The bloodletting is generally not subtle. While it may sometimes occur “offstage,” unapologetic violence remains another defining feature of the genre. As Oates says, “One might define it, in fact, as the very antithesis of ‘nice.’” The point is for us to *feel* it, to short-circuit our rational (and rationalizing) faculties to *cut to the bone*, as it were, and communicate with states of mind below the threshold of consciousness. According to Oates, “no amount of epistemological exegesis can exorcise” our reaction to it because horror strikes us at a visceral level. It goes for the gut, not the head, and this visceral quality means horror is packed with conscious fears as well. A person does not need to connect with their unconscious repressed desires to react with a feeling of horror at the thought of gruesome physical pain and death. The combination of the two, however, is crucial to the *genre* of horror. We may be scared or frightened by all sorts of things that are not horror; it is our recognition of ourselves in *both* the monster and its victim, the psychological and physical responses respectively, which defines the genre. As King says, creators of horror

grope into our [unconscious] minds, find the things so terrible we can’t even articulate them (unless you’ve got the money and the inclination to spend twenty years or so on the

psychiatrist's couch, that is) and allow us to confront them. Not directly, though; few of us are able to look straight into the eyes of the gorgon. . . . A good horror story is one that functions on a symbolic level, using fictional (and sometimes supernatural) events to help us understand our own deepest fears.<sup>8</sup>

Oates asks, "Mankind's place in the food chain –is *this* the unspeakable knowledge, the ultimate taboo, that generates the art of the grotesque? –or all art, culture, civilization?" Horror reminds us that we are ultimately both the devourer and the devoured.

### ***An Example: Homer's Odyssey***

To see this symbolic psychodrama in action, let's start by turning our attention back to around the third century and examining the first (and greatest) sequel in literature: Homer's *Odyssey*. Ancient tales like the *Odyssey* survive for a number of reasons, the most obvious being they tell a good story (however difficult that is to quantify). Beneath the surface of plot, though, these stories serve a variety of functions. The first is cosmogonic; they explain the origin or operation of the universe. The second is social; they exemplify and reinforce the social norms of the culture. These two functions, interesting as they may be, do not cause the text to endure to present day; in fact, if they were the only functions of the story, they might even inhibit its continued interest to contemporary readers. The third function is psychological; the story conveys a psychic process or struggle in a symbolic form. Unlike the first two, this last function is divorced from time or specific epoch. Each of us endure similar processes as those symbolized in the story as we move through life, and thus we can still relate to their telling in very deep and profound ways.

One way to read the *Odyssey* is as Odysseus's symbolic psychological reintegration of Self following ten long years of war on the plain of Troy. (Significantly, his return also takes ten years; something to consider regarding our soldiers returning from the conflicts in the Middle

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<sup>8</sup> King, Stephen (2010), "A Forenote to the 2010 Edition" in *Danse Macabre* (1981, 2010).

East.) Each adventure he endures takes him a little closer to becoming the peace-time leader he needs to be to rule effectively on Ithaca. Being a great leader in war does not automatically translate to being a great leader in peace (just ask Macbeth how that worked out for him), so this psychological reintegration is crucial for Odysseus to reintegrate into society. The entire epic, therefore, can be read as a symbolic psychological journey.<sup>9</sup> Obviously, some of the psychological processes and conflicts represented symbolically may be those connected to horror as well.

While not topping most lists of works of horror, little in Odysseus's story cannot be considered as horror when viewed objectively.<sup>10</sup> From the benign veneer of the Lotus-Eaters, to the transformation of his crew into swine by Circe, to the gapping maw of Charybdis and the six-headed terror of Scylla, to his journey to the land of the dead, Odysseus faces horror after horror. Any of these adventures is fruitful ground for mining nuggets demonstrating the connection between psychology and horror, but for our purposes here, let's examine Odysseus's encounter with the giant cyclops Polyphemus.<sup>11</sup> The basic plot of the tale finds Odysseus and his landing party trapped in the cave lair of a cyclops, who blocks the entrance with a boulder too large for the men to move. The cyclops then proceeds to eat the men two at a time for his dinner and breakfast.<sup>12</sup> Odysseus devises a plan for escape. First, the Ithacans make wine and get

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<sup>9</sup> A few words about symbolism in general: Symbols are context driven and as such their meanings change as the context changes. In addition, symbols may have broad connotations, as opposed to a one-to-one relationship, and those may even be contradictory. As a simple example, consider the color red. Depending on context, red may have symbolic connotations about love, hate (violence), or both.

<sup>10</sup> This is true for Odysseus's portion of the story. The parallel story of Odysseus's son Telemachus does not qualify as horror, although it does symbolize a different psychological process through the search for his father.

<sup>11</sup> I do not pretend this is a complete exegesis of the tale; rather, it simply delineates some of the more salient connections to horror and depth psychology.

<sup>12</sup> Polyphemus's actions are diametrically opposed to proper behavior, and they are therefore good examples of the social function of the epic as well as the psychological function. Throughout the *Odyssey*, particularly in the journeys of Telemachus, we see the manners of the ancient world reinforced. Unannounced visitors must be treated in a certain manner, which is demonstrated by King Alcinoos of Phaeacia. Odysseus is bathed, dressed, and given food to eat. Only then does the king ask him to identify himself and his purpose..



Polyphemus drunk. Odysseus also cleverly tells the cyclops his name is “Nobody.” When the monster falls asleep, he and his men drive a sharpened, fire-tempered tree-trunk into the creature’s eye, blinding him. Polyphemus calls for help from others of his kind, but when they ask him what is wrong, he replies, “Nobody has hurt me,” and they wander off. In the morning, the blind Polyphemus must allow his sheep to leave the cave, and the men escape detection by hanging from the sheep’s bellies and return to their ship. (Unfortunately for him – and his men! – Odysseus has not learned a fundamental lesson of humility, and once freed from the cave, he cannot resist telling Polyphemus his true name, thus bringing down upon them a new curse from the cyclops’s father Poseidon.)

The cyclops story abounds with gory details: the screams of the men as they are devoured, the dribbling of flesh, blood, and wine from the monster’s mouth, the sizzle and pop of the eyeball as it explodes, as well as others, but our primary purpose here is to look at how the symbolism functions. The first detail to consider is the cave lair. The monster lives buried inside the earth. The hidden nature of his home connects the cave directly to the unconscious and the monster as the animus of the unconscious.<sup>13</sup> Polyphemus has a single eye, which suggests a limitation to his vision, *i.e.* his understanding.<sup>14</sup> His gigantic form and strength suggest the power of what he represents and its attendant danger. His behavior is impulsive and rude; his appetites insatiable. Given that Odysseus defeats the creature through his clever intellect, *i.e.* his conscious mind, a logical inference is that Polyphemus is representative of the id, the primitive and

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<sup>13</sup> This is not the only plausible interpretation. Jung primarily interprets caves as symbols of the womb and thus of death and rebirth. (He offers this interpretation in *Symbols of Transformation* and elsewhere.) The creature inside the cave, then, would be symbolic of the death-bringing aspect of the mother. A purely Jungian perspective, therefore, offers a different interpretation than I am offering; however, as I’ve intimated regarding symbolism (*c.f. fn 8*), both interpretations can be valid simultaneously.

<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, once he is blinded, Polyphemus recognizes his transgressive behavior and calls to Odysseus in apology. His now total lack of external sight implies inward vision or insight. (The blind soothsayer is a regular motif, *c.f. Teiresias*.) Unfortunately, Odysseus does not accept Polyphemus’s apology, insults him, and reveals his true identity.

instinctual part of the mind. The unconscious horror he represents, then, is the dormant desires of the id, controlled but lurking inside all of us, unleashed upon the world.<sup>15</sup>

Obviously, Homer was unaware of any of these psychological elements when composing the *Odyssey*. The work still retains its power, however, at least in part because they *are* there. This quality seems true for many ancient stories still part of the zeitgeist, though their cultural attachments may be long forgotten. Similarly, Shakespeare did not need to have other than an observational understanding of human behavior to produce some of the greatest dramatizations of it ever put to paper; dramatizations still elucidative despite our understandings from psychology, perhaps even more so. It may be doubtful that a good many contemporary creators of horror are fully appreciative of these elements I've described.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, whether they are aware of them or not, they exist. Remember, we are not looking at what is "scary;" rather, we are exploring what qualities define the horror genre. Many things are scary; not all of them qualify as horror.

### ***E. A. Poe***

If some contemporary creators of horror generate their works without the benefit of understanding these elements, others, like Joyce Carol Oates, clearly do understand and manipulate them to great effect.<sup>17</sup> Certainly, the first acknowledged master of the genre, E. A. Poe, was, for his time, an avid student of the workings of the human mind. American poet and scholar Richard Wilbur notes Poe's characters "aren't characters at all. They aren't the kind of

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<sup>15</sup> Polyphemus's blocking of the entrance/exit indicates a stoppage of the flow of psyche energy necessary for a psychologically healthy individual.

<sup>16</sup> Ray Bradbury bounces seamlessly between horror and science fiction (and is the very model of the "soft" type of the latter). In the 1980s, he told me he resisted the idea of psychoanalysis, although he realized it may benefit him, because he feared it may cause his imagination to "dry up." On the other hand, Stephen King has chronicled his battles with addiction and of therapy as an effective tool in that war, and he has found no such damage to his creativity as Bradbury feared.

<sup>17</sup> For example, see "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" (1966); *Haunted: Tales of the Grotesque* (1994); *Zombie* (1995).

people who eat breakfast, for example. . . . The reality they have is that they are parts of an enveloping consciousness or soul.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, Poe creates types symbolizing states of mind rather than true characters. According to Edward Hungerford, Poe “was always eager to arrive at exact analyses of qualities of the mind.”<sup>19</sup> In Poe’s day, that meant a study of phrenology. Although now considered a pseudo-science, in Poe’s time “the science of phrenology occupied a position not unlike the hazardous psychologies of today.”

That Poe speculated deeply upon the primary elements of mind cannot be denied. One of the greatest difficulties which phrenology had to overcome was the controversy over primary faculties. . . . Twice we find Poe himself entering the lists with the proposal of a primary faculty. In “The Black Cat” we find a hideous story constructed upon the idea of sub-liminal *Perverseness*.

(Here the term “sub-liminal” refers to below the threshold of conscious control, *i.e.* sub- or unconscious.) In other words, Hungerford sees the story “The Black Cat” as a kind of dramatic treatise proposing perverseness, which Poe defines in the story as the “unfathomable longing of the soul *to vex itself* – to offer violence to its own nature – to do wrong for wrong’s sake only,” as a primary psychological force.<sup>20</sup> Poe is therefore identifying for his readers his narrator’s unconscious motivations for the action of the story.

“The Black Cat” highlights another technique Poe uses to great effect: the first-person narrator. Poe appreciates the effect of a narrator saying “this happened to me” has on a reader of his fantastic tales as opposed to “I heard about this happening to someone else,” which is essentially the unspoken position of a third-person narrator. He takes this a step further in “The Black Cat.” The narrator in that story draws the reader even closer by beginning the story by

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas, Karen (director) (1995), “Edgar Allan Poe: Terror of the Soul”, *American Masters, Season 9, Episode 4*.

<sup>19</sup> Hungerford, Edward, (1930), “Poe and Phrenology” in *On Poe: The Best from American Literature* (1993), Louis J. Budd & Edwin H. Cady, eds.

<sup>20</sup> Poe, E. A. (1843), “The Black Cat.” The reader may recall Poe’s connecting beauty to the elevation of the soul to the sublime in “The Poetic Principle” discussed above.

saying (here in paraphrase): *I know how crazy this sounds – it sounds crazy to me, too. I know there’s got to be a simple, mundane explanation for these events, but because I can’t figure out what that explanation might be and I’m going to die tomorrow, I’m writing the events down so someone smarter than I can figure out what happened.* Wow, talk about getting the reader on your side!

Most of Poe’s narrators are not so self-aware. However, Poe recognizes the draw that “repellant states of mind,” as Joyce calls them, have upon us. We *like* observing the monster from a safe distance.<sup>21</sup> In Shakespeare, after Macbeth tells Macduff he will not fight, Macduff refers to him as a monster and says, “Then yield thee, coward, / To live and be the show and gaze o’ the time” to which Macbeth replies, “I will not yield / To kiss the ground before young Malcolm’s feet, / And to be baited by the rabble’s curse.” Macbeth refuses to play the monster for the amusement of those beneath him. Or as Tony Montana in *Scarface* says more directly on the subject, “You need people like me so you can point your fucking fingers and say, ‘That’s the bad guy.’ So? What’s that make you? Good? You’re not good. You just know how to hide.... So say goodnight to the bad guy.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, recognizing we are listening to an insane person pulls at our ear. For instance, I am sure you remember Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843) and that the narrator is crazy. You probably recall the plot of a confession of a murderer who has killed an old man in the night, and when the police come to investigate, he begins to hear the beating of the old man’s heart. Unable to bear the sound any longer, he admits the murder to the officers. (You may also recall the old man’s one grotesque “vulture eye.”) Moreover, you might remember how you reached your impression of the narrator as crazy. Perhaps you recall the narrator’s frequent protestations that he is not mad, and you reckon that only a crazy person would keep repeating

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<sup>21</sup> The word *monster* derives from the Latin *monstrum* meaning *wonder* or *miracle*.

<sup>22</sup> De Palma, Brian (director) (1983), *Scarface*.

they are not crazy. Maybe you remember the line, “I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him” used as evidence of his supposed sanity. Yet, these touches are not enough for Poe, who is the consummate craftsman. As he suggests in his review of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Twice Told Tales* (1842), every word within a short story should build upon a single effect and continue to do so until the story’s end.<sup>23</sup> He builds upon the impression of madness in the narrator by giving clear indications the narrator’s perceptions are inaccurate. For example, the narrator speaks of “thrusting” his head into the old man’s room every night, claiming, “It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening....” This description does not support the verb “thrust,” so either the narrator misspeaks, or he misperceives the passage of time. The latter is confirmed when he describes the night of the murder. His actions accidentally awaken the old man, whom he hears sit up in fright and not lie back down. He claims the pair remain frozen in their respective positions: “For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down.” While unlikely, the possibility exists that the narrator has remained silent and frozen, but for both of them to remain so for a full hour, especially when the other is a terrified old man, strains our credulity. Poe thereby not only confirms the narrator’s madness absolutely, but the distortion of perception is important in itself, since the narrator will later “hear” the beating heart of the dead and dismembered old man.

“The Tell-Tale Heart” also introduces us to another frequently employed motif in Poe which supports a connection to the unconscious: the premature burial. Usually, the motif is presented in symbolic fashion, as it is in “The Tell-Tale Heart,” by the burial of an alter ego for the protagonist, *i.e.* a manifestation of his psyche. This idea of the old man as an alter ego is

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<sup>23</sup> “[T]he unity of effect or impression is a point of greatest importance.” In this essay Poe places the short story form above that of the poem, which has limitations imposed by rhythm, for evoking the effect of beauty, *i.e.* connecting to the sublime, which in turn is connected to the unconscious.

supported by the fact that the narrator never explains, neither to us nor the police, who the old man is and why they live together. The old man's separate identity is immaterial to the expression of the horror. "The old man" fits within the boundaries of the Jungian archetype of the father (in Freudian terms the Superego), and his "vulture eye" connotes a corruption of his "vision" or way of seeing, the adjectival "vulture" particularly evocative of death. The old man is clearly dead (he *is* dismembered after all), but his heart (the seat of emotion) remains "alive" in order to implicate the murderer. These alter egos appear in several premature burial tales.<sup>24</sup> In "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846) Montresor entombs Fortunato alive in the depths of his family's crypt; in "The Black Cat" the narrator is caught because he accidentally entombs the cat in the walls of his basement with the body of his murdered wife, and it howls while the police are there. In both, the interment takes place underground, symbolic of the unconscious. Set during Carnival celebrations and excesses, Fortunato is dressed as a fool, complete with cap and bells, perhaps connotating a foolish aspect of Montresor's personality.<sup>25</sup> Unlike many of Poe's narrators, Montresor had not previously felt compelled to confess; we find out at the end of the tale the body has remained undiscovered for 50 years. The wife in "The Black Cat" clearly represents, in part, the conscience of the narrator. (In Jungian terms, she is the feminine aspect of the narrator's ego.) Her prevention of the destruction of the cat by the narrator leads to her

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<sup>24</sup> "The Premature Burial" (1844) deals with the topic without the intermediary of an alter ego. Presented more in the form of dramatic essay than that of a traditional story, Poe describes ostensibly documented cases of premature burial before the narrator launches into his own story, in which he believes he has been buried alive, although he is actually stuck in a narrow berth on a boat. Being buried alive was a real fear, especially during cholera outbreaks with worries about contagion, so much so that the bereaved could purchase devices, called security or safety coffins, with systems allowing someone so interred to ring a bell to alert those at the surface. (The term "saved by the bell" comes from these occurrences.) Enough cases of exhumed bodies found with scratches on the interior of the coffin existed to drive the fear. Of course, the fear itself carries its own pathological component, albeit different from the one discussed.

<sup>25</sup> Given Fortunato's appearance and inability to restrain his desire to try the Amontillado, combined with Montresor's cunning and patience to exact his revenge, the pair can also be read in Freudian terms as representative of the id and ego respectively.

murder instead. She and the cat are thus linked symbolically, and it is the entombed cat that reveals the murder.

Another tale utilizing an alter ego and premature burial, “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839), is worth examining in detail because the elements of horror are presented clearly. In brief, “The Fall of the House of Usher” is told by the narrator friend of Roderick Usher. The narrator has called upon his ailing friend and is alarmed by his declined health, mirrored by a deterioration of his physical house. He learns the illness is common to the Usher family, and Roderick’s fraternal twin sister Madeline is also ill. Soon, Roderick tells him his sister has succumbed and asks for his help entombing her into the walls of the house. The explanation Roderick gives for this curious request is he seeks to avoid her body being defiled by physicians hiring someone to exhume her in the night, so they can dissect her; a somewhat reasonable request for the period.<sup>26</sup> If Madeline decays sufficiently prior to being buried properly, Roderick rationalizes to the narrator, she can avoid that fate. They screw tight the lid of the coffin (something of a giveaway of her true condition) and inter it thus. Roderick’s decline accelerates as he becomes convinced Madeline will return. She does, of course, falling upon Roderick as the two collapse in death. As the narrator leaves, he watches the house collapse into the tarn.

As the nature of Usher’s malady may confuse a contemporary audience, David W. Butler explains:

On three separate occasions the narrator of “The Fall of the House of Usher” refers to Roderick as a “hypochondriac.” It seems odd he should do so, since he never expresses the slightest doubt that Roderick is really sick: indeed upon greeting Usher the narrator is shocked by his boyhood friend’s “terribly altered” appearance. The apparent contradiction is explained, however, when we realize the narrator, who lays claim to some knowledge of “the history of mental disorder” is using the term in its medical rather than its popular sense. Although he is at least initially unaware of the broad ramifications

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<sup>26</sup> Doctors sought access to cadavers from whatever means they could to advance their medical training, and the law typically forbade this type of dissection. The graverobbers were nicknamed “Resurrection Men.” *C.f.* Jerry Cruncher in Charles Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859).

which the disease has acquired in Usher's world, he has correctly diagnosed Roderick's peculiar combination of physical and mental complaints as symptomatic of hypochondriasis, a melancholic disorder which has been recognized for centuries and which was widely discussed by physicians in Poe's own time.<sup>27</sup>

Poe has the reasonable expectation, therefore, that his audience have some rudimentary understanding of this illness; specifically, his audience would know that doctors believed the disease was connected to the sufferer's environment, although they were not sure whether the environment affected the person or the opposite, and artists were particularly susceptible to the disease. Butler quotes Dr. Benjamin Rush (a signer of the Declaration of Independence) who argues "that 'poets, painters, sculptors and musicians' are far more prone to madness than chemists, naturalist, mathematicians, or natural philosophers." (Hypochondriasis was considered a type of madness.) Furthermore, doctors saw a connection between creativity and insanity, and Poe, like some other Romantics, saw this connection as a potentially transcendent power, a movement into a supernatural reality. Essentially, this artistic power can alter reality through what Coleridge calls the "esemplastic power" (qtd in Butler, *op. cit.*). Poe, therefore, connects Roderick, Madeline, and the physical structure with the Romantics' conception of the artist.

By dissolving the distinctions between the hypochondriacal Roderick and his environment, Poe posits a world in which the alienists' belief in the capacity of the mind to interact with the body which contains it, and the romantic idealists' faith in the imagination to interact with the world around it, are no longer suggestively similar, but one. (Butler, *op. cit.*)

Roderick's compositions, wild guitar improvisations, performance of "The Haunted Palace," and the like confirm his artistic stature.

Roderick embodies the mad Romantic artist. On one level, therefore, the story can be viewed as a symbolic commentary on the state of the artist, the artistic process, and even art

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<sup>27</sup> Butler, David W. (1976), "Usher's Hypochondriasis: Mental Alienation and Romantic Idealism in Poe's Gothic Tales" in *On Poe: The Best from American Literature* (1993), Louis J. Budd & Edwin H. Cady, eds.



itself.<sup>28</sup> On the level of horror, these same elements gain added significance.<sup>29</sup> The physical structure is symbolic of the Self. It “houses” the characters just as the Self holds the myriad components of the personality. The fact that Roderick and Madeline are not simply siblings but also twins emphasizes the closeness of the connection between them and helps us recognize they can be read as the male and female aspects of the personality; specifically, they are the male *animus* and female *anima* with respect to archetypal forms. The entombment is the attempt by one of the psychic elements to “wall off,” or repress, the other, which causes a disintegration of Self, a total psychic breakdown symbolized by the collapsing house.<sup>30</sup> (The repression of the feminine form is a greater disaster for the artist than it is the average person if the feminine is viewed as the creative and generative psychic form. It signifies a loss of artistic ability.)

All these tales contain some form of the externalization of unconscious (and usually untenable) desires. These unconscious elements lose their power to horrify when discussed as symbols rather than simply experienced. The monster loses its ability to terrify us when dragged out into the light and unmasked for what it is: a representation of unconscious conflict. This unconscious psychodrama in combination with the visceral qualities of the tale are the heart of the genre.

### **A Closer Look at Three Forms**

Before leaving the horror genre and moving to science fiction, however, it is illuminating to take a closer look at a few sub-categories within the genre to help us understand some of the range of their symbolic reference. There are plenty of forms from which to choose (*e.g.* witches

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<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, Jerome Charyn has a similar interpretation of Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) as a parable about the nature of art and the artist. (I analyze this novel at length below, albeit not from this prospective.)

<sup>29</sup> The significance is *added* because it is not contradictory to the interpretation of the story as a commentary on the aesthetic process.

<sup>30</sup> The house, of course, carries the additional meaning of the family itself, thus the dual meaning of the title.

and warlocks, spiritual manifestations like ghosts and poltergeists, the devil and demons), but I'll focus on the werewolf, the vampire, and the zombie. (For the sake of brevity and cultural familiarity, I'll limit my focus primarily to Western versions of these expressions, although forms of them exist worldwide.)

### *The Werewolf*

The werewolf legend is a branch of the tree of transformation or shapeshifter stories; specifically, it is part of the branch comprised of uncontrolled or involuntary transformations. In some tales involving transformations, they *can* be controlled. These shapeshifters are also part of a very old tradition, and they include characters as diverse as the Norse Loki and the Native American Raven and Coyote. Frequently, voluntary shapeshifters are an aid to humans, but they can also be a vexation. Sometimes (especially in more modern form), they can be downright dangerous and even horrific, as they are in John Carpenter's remake of *The Thing* (1982). Most often, however, voluntary shapeshifting is portrayed more as a boon than a curse, since it evokes a tapping into powers we may already possess but are unaware of. Consequently, they are the kind of transformation that often appears within comic book superhero culture. Sometimes these characters say a magic word (*e.g.* "Flame on!", "Shazam!") to initiate their transformations, while some, like X-Man Wolverine, control their otherness at will.<sup>31</sup>

Some forms springing from the involuntary branch are not directly connected to the werewolf. During the course of David Cronenberg's 1986 remake of *The Fly*, Seth Brundle slowly transforms into a genetic cross between a human and a fly, which he dubs Brundlefly. At one point when he still believes he is infected by a disease, he says, "I know what the disease

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<sup>31</sup> The Hulk is obviously of the uncontrolled variety. Bruce Banner understands what triggers his transformation into the Hulk, but he cannot stop it once it begins and can only beg people to stop *their* behavior before he crosses that threshold. The Hulk is misperceived as a monster, however, perhaps because of this very feature.

wants.... It wants to turn me into something else. That's not too terrible, is it? Most people would give anything to be turned into something else." Brundle is rationalizing his fears by acknowledging a common subconscious desire to be different from our established persona, hoping his transformation is positive in some way, like that of Peter Parker's into Spiderman. Although during his slow transformation he exhibits some connections to the werewolf (*e.g.* propensity for superhuman violence, insatiable sexual appetite), the fly symbolism does not emanate as a projection from the same unconscious source. The film can be viewed as science fiction, but it more properly fits horror. His gene splice with a fly is entirely accidental (in fact, he is drunk when it occurs), so the story merely uses science as a vehicle for the horror.

Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915) is a highly surreal, literary involuntary transformation story. The story famously begins post-transformation: "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a monstrous vermin." Kafka uses the word *Ungezeifer* (often mistranslated as *insect* since the word comes from a term for an unclean animal, so "monstrous vermin" seems a better translation into English) to describe Samsa. Samsa is certainly insect-like (the charwoman calls him a "dung beetle"), although from notes to the publisher we know Kafka wanted to keep Samsa's new form vague. Samsa's unconscious (through his "uneasy dreams") has transformed him into something else, but that something is nothing like a werewolf.

Due to its pervasiveness, most of us are familiar with the qualities of the werewolf legend. According to Ernest Jones,

The most prominent attributes which we may expect to have been used for the purposes of symbolism [in werewolf tales] are thus swiftness of movement, insatiable lust for blood, cruelty, a way of attacking characterized by a combination of boldness and cunning craftiness, and further the associations with the ideas of night, death, and corpse.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Jones, Ernest (1951), *On the Nightmare*.

A werewolf story begins with infection. Typically, a person becomes a werewolf after surviving a bite from a werewolf. (Although the most common method known to contemporary readers, a bite is not the only way to become a werewolf; some other methods include divine curse, drinking rainwater from a werewolf's footprint, and satanic allegiance. This last method is how Peter Stumpp (1589) claimed to have become a werewolf at his trial for lycanthropy. Direct werewolf to human infection, however, comes exclusively through a bite, not any other injuries from an attack in general.) At the next full moon, the victim transforms into a werewolf by sprouting animal-like hair, growing canine fangs, and developing extraordinary strength. Frequently, the shape of the head and face become lupine, and this transformation may extend to the entire body, rendering the new werewolf unrecognizable as a human being. Under the light of the moon, the creature prowls for new victims to slake its insatiable thirst for blood and human flesh. With the return of daylight comes a return to human form, usually with no memory of the nocturnal events. This pattern will continue unchecked until the werewolf is killed. In most stories, werewolves can only be killed with silver.<sup>33</sup> Upon its death, the werewolf returns to human form.

Infection through bite has significant implications for analyzing the werewolf legend. Biting has clear sexual connotations, and biting to infect, with its presumed exchange of bodily fluid, even more so.<sup>34</sup> Hypersexuality is also an association we hold toward wolves in general. Wilhelm Hertz, writing about the qualities of werewolves in 1862, notes, "But the wolf is not only the most bloodthirsty, he is also the swiftest and lustiest of our larger quadrupeds" (qtd in

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<sup>33</sup> In some older traditions, an exorcism, or sometimes even a simple conversion to Christianity, can cure a werewolf. In some newer versions of these tales, no special substance or incantation is required to take down this monster. An unpretentious hail of bullets may prove sufficient.

<sup>34</sup> Jones, a Freudian, places werewolves at the sadism stage of immature sexuality due to the biting.

Jones, *op. cit.*). Men aggressively on the hunt for women were colloquially called “wolves” for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and their “signal” to a female was called a “wolf whistle.” This trope is so widespread that in some cartoons around the midcentury, the male may actually transform into a wolf as he delivers the whistle.

Although I am not including fairytales in my main discussion here, those collected by the Brothers Grimm include some of the most horrific tales known, and the wolf in “Little Red Cap” (known in America as “Little Red Riding Hood”) is clearly a sexual predator in symbolic form.<sup>35</sup> Among the features of the original include the wolf asking Red Cap (whose name is evocative of menstruation and hence the onset of sexual maturity), “And what are you carrying under your apron?” as he is trying to lure her from her path (symbolic of the socially proper mode of being). Later, she and her grandmother are rescued by a huntsman (symbolic of the good aspects of the male), who says, “So here I find you, you old sinner!” when he sees the wolf. (If merely an animal, the wolf has not sinned by being true to its nature. “Sinner” implies the wolf is violating a social contract.) The huntsman cuts the wolf’s belly open and allows the two women to escape (a symbolic rebirth). He then replaces them with hot rocks and sews the belly together. The wolf awakens and dies. Unlike the Americanized version, the tale ends with a new encounter with a second wolf. This time neither Red Cap nor the grandmother are duped. Instead they lure the wolf to his death with the smell of sausages. (You be the judge of the sexual symbolism.) Like many of the tales collected by the Grimms, “Little Red Cap” is a cautionary tale in symbolic form, in this case to women to be wary of men with a hidden, aggressive sexual agenda (*i.e.* a wolf in sheep’s clothing).

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<sup>35</sup> Grimm, Jakob & Wilhelm (1812), “Little Red Cap” in *Children’s and Household Tales*.

The very name “werewolf” is a combination of *wer-*, the Old English for man, and *wolf* (from OE *-wulf*), literally meaning *man-wolf*. In almost every werewolf legend, the werewolf is male. Tellingly, a female werewolf is called a *wer-woman*, *i.e.* a *man-woman*, emphasizing the maleness rather than the wolfness.<sup>36</sup> Scary as they may be, most contemporary stories featuring female werewolves tend to lack the horror and power of the male versions and seem attempts at gender equity rather than remaining true to horror. In 16<sup>th</sup> century France, werewolf trials included some women accused of lycanthropy, but like the witch trials in America, both genders made up the accused, and lycanthropy was seen as a component of witchery and devil-worship. Other traits of the werewolf (*e.g.* hirsuteness) are predominantly male. The werewolf’s connection to sex, therefore, is best interpreted as one of aberrant *male* sexuality, not sexuality in general.

This masculine-focused interpretation is further supported by the feminine symbolism of the legend. The most obvious of these symbols is the moon. Archetypally, the sun represents the masculine and the moon the feminine.<sup>37</sup> Both the moon’s cyclical and reflective qualities are considered feminine. Of course, the feminine aspects of the moon are not the only connections to the werewolf: the moon evokes darkness, night, and death, as well as the realm between the conscious and the unconscious mind. The werewolf’s nemesis, silver, is also considered symbolic of the feminine. Similarly, silver carries the additional significant associations of purity, clarity, and awareness. Therefore, the wolf form manifests when induced by (struck by its light) a feminine symbol at the height of its power (a full moon) and can be destroyed by silver, another feminine symbol.

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<sup>36</sup> Over the same period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century discussed above, women were often compared to foxes.

<sup>37</sup> *C.f.* Jung, C. G. (1969), *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*.

To summarize this interpretation, the werewolf symbolizes unconscious male aggression (including unbridled sexual aggression) set loose upon the world unchecked. This view is supported by Auschwitz survivor and Jungian Robert Eisler, who explicitly connects the werewolf legend to the rise of Nazi Germany (replete with lupine iconography) and to instances of seemingly mild-mannered males suddenly “going berserk.”<sup>38</sup> It is further supported by popular expressions of the legend, as a quick survey of film portrayals shows. The first successful werewolf film is *The Wolf Man* (1941), and it heavily influences cinematic interpretations that follow.<sup>39</sup> In the film, Lon Chaney, Jr., plays Lawrence Talbot, who becomes the title character as well.<sup>40</sup> Talbot is a thoughtful and mild man, the former trait indicative of consciousness, and those qualities are contrasted by the unrestrained behavior of the Wolf Man form. The pattern of mild-mannered, socially proper man turning into uncontrolled monster is repeated. *American Werewolf in London* (1981) places the wholesome, all-American David Kessler in Britain, where he survives a werewolf attack and then devours his way through the film.<sup>41</sup> David Naughton plays the werewolf, and, you may recall, he gained fame in the late 1970s singing and dancing his way through the “Be a Pepper” Dr. Pepper advertising campaign, making him one of the least “monstrous” actors of the period.

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<sup>38</sup> Eisler, Robert (1978), *Man into Wolf: An Anthropological Interpretation of Sadism, Masochism and Lycanthropy*. Time has not been kind to this text. A staunch Jungian, Eisler’s defense of Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious unabashedly resorts to Lamarckism, despite his attempt to dress it up in the guise of Neo-Lamarckism, which fairs no better to scrutiny. Also, Eisler’s arguments regarding our early primate ancestors using today’s primates for support are refuted by the direct observational work of scientists Diane Fossey and Jane Goodall, as well as more current paleoanthropologists. These weaknesses are unfortunate because Eisler’s status as a concentration camp witness provides valuable insights that might be wrongly dismissed.

<sup>39</sup> The film *Werewolf of London* (1935) predates *The Wolf Man*, but despite good reviews it was a box office disappointment. At the time, the film was considered too similar to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), starring Fredric March and earning him an Academy Award for Best Actor.

<sup>40</sup> Chaney played the Wolf Man a total of seven times; it was his most popular and remembered role. Chaney is physically imposing but plays down this characteristic as Talbot in the film.

<sup>41</sup> Two other wolf movies were released in 1981: *Wolfen* and *The Howling*, but neither follows the werewolf legend as I am discussing it here. The former uses a purported Indian legend about god-like beings in the form of wolves. The latter places an individual character unwittingly within a town full of shapeshifting monsters. Although horror, the film uses different symbolism than a true werewolf tale.

The next year the film *Teen Wolf* (1982) debuts.<sup>42</sup> (Although not horror, the filmmakers play with werewolf motifs, albeit absent any bloodletting, which makes it illuminating here.) Unassuming Scott Howard (Michael J. Fox), suddenly finds himself growing thick body hair, larger canines, etc., until he transforms into a werewolf in front of the student body during a basketball game. However, in his wolf form he becomes more athletically successful and thus more popular. His father reveals to him that he too is a werewolf and advises Scott to learn to control his transformations. Scott enjoys his popularity as the wolf, until it destroys the relationships with his true friends, so he “puts the wolf away.” (Controlling his impulses changes the transformation from uncontrolled to controlled and pushes the story further away from horror.) Despite no longer being the wolf, he wins the big game in his human form. The story is a clear metaphor for male puberty. When young men feel the first big surge of adult male testosterone, they frequently overstep social boundaries until they learn to control their newly found urges and their associated physical prowess. The film, therefore, takes some of the same symbolic elements and removes them from horror.

Finally, there are *Wolf* (1994) and *The Wolfman* (2010). Both films star actors (Jack Nicholson and Benicio Del Toro, respectively) generally known for their smoldering sexuality rather than their mild-mannered demeanors. In the first, Nicholson plays a demoted editor-in-chief who, once bitten, takes revenge upon his employer (among others). The cerebral profession and the out of character violent revenge are important here. In the second, Del Toro plays his version of Lawrence Talbot with many of the same qualities as Chaney’s original.

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<sup>42</sup> The much earlier film *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (1957) is a horror crossover with science fiction. Although Michael Landon’s title character’s lycanthropy is triggered by a “psychologist,” he is seeing the doctor due to his increasingly violent outbursts. The movie ends with a speech about the doctor trying to play god, as is common for science fiction of the period; consequently, the werewolf qualities are overwhelmed by the science fiction themes.



The endings for each of these films share some features as well. In each, the werewolf in human form has a love interest, most of whom are threatened by him in his wolf form. *The Wolf Man* ends with Talbot bludgeoned to death by his father's silver-handled cane as Talbot threatens Gwen, who then cries over his body, which has returned to human form. *American Werewolf in London* ends when Kessler's wolf threatens his lover Nurse Price (Jenny Agutter). His eyes show recognition of her, and he turns deliberately from her and onto a battery of police instead who open fire and end the curse. (She too cries at the sight of his bullet ridden human corpse.) *The Teen Wolf* chooses his true love over being the wolf (and false love). The ending of *Wolf* pits Nicholson's Randall against a second werewolf of his creation intent on raping Laura (Michelle Pfeiffer). After disposing of the true menace, he runs away, and, showing early signs of transforming herself, she later follows, presumably to join him as werewolves. Lastly, Del Toro's Talbot is shot by Gwen then thanks her for ending the curse before he dies. Each has a symbolic reintegration of self, usually represented by the death of the wolf form, which is directly connected to avoiding the lupine violation of the human form's love interest, followed by the loving acceptance of a feminine figure. At its heart, therefore, the werewolf legend is about completely unrestrained male carnal desire, rape, and death – truly horrible desires to find lurking hidden within one's unconscious mind and thus left hidden there and instead dealt with through projection onto another.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps the penultimate werewolf story contains no werewolves at all: Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). Although a transformation

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<sup>43</sup> Some of the same desires are the source of the horror in another sub-genre I am not discussing here: the slasher film. The genre is directed at adolescents coming to terms with their sexual natures, and in most cases, it features a superhuman masked male figure who murders characters resembling members of the audience. The murders usually take place immediately before, during, or after a sexual act and are accomplished by penetrating the victims with a phallic symbol. (These are the classic features; the method of death now varies due to filmmakers trying to give audiences new thrills.) The lone survivor of the carnage is usually a sexually pure female.

story, for some readers it may seem odd to place this novel in the werewolf sub-genre at all, much less as a penultimate example.<sup>44</sup> To understand how the novel fits as a werewolf tale, we'll need to scrutinize the details attentively to avoid a popular misreading of the novel, which ignores the true nature of the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde. In that misconception, the "good" Dr. Jekyll loses control over his creation, the "evil" Mr. Hyde. This view encourages a reading of Jekyll's character to be like that of Dr. Frankenstein's, who is stricken with regret for his transgressions and the suffering they cause, even including the pain he causes his creation by refusing to create a mate for him and driving the Creature to exact revenge.<sup>45</sup> Jekyll, however, expresses no such regret, only fear of exposure. Unlike Frankenstein, Jekyll displays pride, arrogance, and defiance when he transforms in the presence of Lanyon; he even goads him into remaining to witness the act.<sup>46</sup> His fear is evident through all his rationalizing and blaming of Hyde for the sins committed in his name. As Jerome Charyn notes, "Dr. Jekyll is that common literary pest, the unreliable narrator who tells us 'everything,' his wickedest thoughts, but whose earnestness is a form of evasion."<sup>47</sup> His earnestness is a form of evasion because we are predisposed to accept his veracity in *all* things because he seems sincere. Each of the points of view of the novel are from men like Jekyll and offer similar appraisals of Hyde, but can the reader fully trust any of them?<sup>48</sup> Hyde offers each a view of his own true, albeit hidden, nature, and they like no part of what they see about themselves. The truth is, no matter how he tries to obscure the fact, Jekyll *is* Hyde. Hyde is not the evil part of him split away; they each carry the other simultaneously.

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<sup>44</sup> *C.f. fn 39.*

<sup>45</sup> Shelley, Mary (1818), *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus.*

<sup>46</sup> While the transformation is technically Hyde into Jekyll, as I discuss later the two are the same and retain awareness when in either manifestation. It is the Jekyll part of him doing the goading.

<sup>47</sup> Charyn, Jerome (1981), "Afterward" in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Bantam Books edition).

<sup>48</sup> Utterson's sections are in third person and are limited to his point of view, including thoughts. He (and we) listens to Enfield's recounting of his encounters with Hyde, and we read the posthumous writings of Lanyon and Jekyll.

Jekyll is a man of science, a doctor. He describes himself as ambitious and acutely aware of maintaining and increasing his social standing. This awareness causes his “profound duplicity of life,” and he regards himself “with an almost morbid sense of shame.” His shame stems from concealing his pleasures, which he recognizes other men like him feel no compulsion to veil (at least from gentlemen of like social standing).<sup>49</sup> We also learn from Utterson that Jekyll “was wild when he was young,” although Utterson does not reveal the nature of his wildness. Now at age fifty, with its attendant loss of vitality (including, one presumes, sexual vitality), Jekyll applies the learning of a lifetime to obscuring his identity so he can go forth and debauch without being detected. He develops a potion which transforms him into Mr. Hyde, a perfect disguise in which he can “hide.” Jekyll, however, is not merely hiding from his contemporaries; he is hiding from us. He tells us, “Hence, although I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil, and the other was still the old Henry Jekyll.” Which “old” Henry Jekyll: the staid doctor of fifty or the formerly (*i.e.* old) wild younger man? Of course, despite Jekyll’s efforts to tell us differently, they are one and the same.

Like the man and werewolf, Jekyll and Hyde appear in different shapes. Hyde is smaller and slighter in stature and appears younger. Jekyll theorizes these differences exist because the good side of him is more developed than the evil. Enfield and Utterson both describe Hyde similarly. Enfield says,

He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something down-right detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives the strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point. He’s an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can’t describe him. And it’s not want of memory, for I declare I can see him at this moment.

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<sup>49</sup> The hypocrisy of Victorian England, especially regarding subjects dealing with sex, is well-documented. It is explicated at great length using contemporaneous writings in Steven Marcus’s *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth Century England* (1974).

After Utterson meets Hyde, he calls him a troglodyte and says that “he seems hardly human.” Yet these differences do not exclude Hyde from the world of “gentlemen” such as them. The recognition of Hyde’s upper-class social status causes part of the difficulty in describing him; by all rights, his “deformities,” cryptic as they are, should be indicative of someone of a lower-class rank. Although Hyde disgusts both Enfield and the doctor called to the scene, they protect him against the angry mob of women after Hyde tramples the little girl. Enfield also negotiates (notably through a threat of scandal – Jekyll’s great fear) a cash settlement for Hyde to forfeit when it is clear the girl is not physically injured. He protects Hyde as one of his own station despite his revulsion of the man. Utterson, when he visits Hyde’s apartments with the police, appreciates the style and taste of the furnishings and artwork, although he attributes it to Jekyll, whom he assumes is being blackmailed by Hyde. Hyde, then, is accepted as one of them. We must remember the details of Enfield’s encounter with Hyde. Enfield says, “I was coming home from someplace at the end of the world, about three o’clock of a black winter morning ...” In other words, young Enfield was up to exactly the same sort mischief as Mr. Hyde and in a part of London where children might be unattended in the street to be set upon by a marauding juggernaut of a man at three in the morning.

The impressions of the “good” doctor himself are what lead us to an understanding of the true relationship between Jekyll and Hyde. Jekyll describes for us his first experience transforming into Hyde:

There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, stronger, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a millrace in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul.

Jekyll is *excited* by the transformation; it works “like a charm.” The event does not traumatize him; on the contrary, the results delight him. Only in hindsight does he claim that if his motives had been purer, the “projection” (*i.e.* Hyde) could have been “an angel instead of a fiend.” The claim obscures his motives and desires. If Jekyll were truly pure and good, he wouldn’t be searching to transform at all. Even more important than his rationalization, though, is the fact that he has impressions *at all*. When Jekyll is Hyde, Jekyll still perceives the world as the doctor. Examples of this abound (*e.g.* Hyde writes in Jekyll’s hand), but the most direct evidence comes from the doctor: “And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself.” Jekyll is no passive victim but a willing participant, and he remains so even when in his Hyde form. Hyde has awareness of Jekyll, too. When Utterson confronts Hyde and Hyde demands to know how Utterson recognizes him, he says by description. Hyde asks whose, and Utterson says Jekyll told him. Hyde angrily calls him a liar. He knows it is a lie because his mind includes Jekyll’s awareness. Jekyll’s protestation, therefore, “It was Hyde, after all, and Hyde alone, that was guilty,” is untrue and meant to dissemble.

I can hear the argument that even if Jekyll carried evil desires within him and has awareness when he is Hyde, a split *does* occur, and the truly reprehensible and violent behaviors (about which we know) happen when Hyde is dominant; therefore, Jekyll is not wrong in his assessment.<sup>50</sup> We cannot know for certain (we lack any version of events from Hyde’s perspective, after all), but the evidence for this claim is at best dubious. In the case of Hyde’s trampling of the child, by Enfield’s account it appears Hyde was not deliberate in his actions, merely careless. His actions appear completely accidental. Hyde’s great “sin,” therefore, is his

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<sup>50</sup> Such a claim actually places the story *closer* to a traditional werewolf tale wherein the two manifestations only reach mutual awareness at the moment of death (if at all). Jekyll’s awareness makes the horror much more acute.

indifference. Enfield is indignant, but what solution does he offer? He forces Hyde, in whom he recognizes a fellow Victorian gentleman, to give the parents money, to pay them off, throw money at the situation. What is this but indifference dressed in slightly altered clothes?

In the second case, Hyde's actions are both deliberate and brutal. The eyewitness, a maid living alone, describes an older gentleman passing a younger on the street below. The older speaks what appear to be polite words she cannot hear, perhaps asking directions, she theorizes. Quite suddenly, the younger man becomes enraged, stomping and "carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman." Taken aback, the older man retreats a step, but the younger suddenly clubs him with his cane and rains blows upon him, beating him to death. We learn of the events because the police find an envelope addressed to Utterson in the dead man's pocket. Utterson identifies the victim as Sir Danvers Carew, and he offers a description of Hyde as a possible suspect, which the maid can confirm because she met Hyde through her master. What is missing from the account, of course, is crucial: the words spoken by Carew that enrage Hyde. We do know, however, Carew has a letter addressed to Utterson in his pocket. (The letter to Utterson has the additional effect of placing all the "gentlemen," Utterson, Enfield, Carew, Jekyll, and Hyde, within the same social circle: a den of wolves.) By this time, Hyde is aware that Utterson is on his trail to help protect his friend Jekyll. In truth, however, Utterson is not so much Hyde's enemy as Jekyll's; revealing Jekyll as Hyde, albeit accidentally, would create a scandal of proportions beyond the bounds of those imaginable even to the socially conscious Jekyll. Did Carew ask Hyde if he knew the residence of his (and thereby Jekyll's) enemy? Was it Hyde or Jekyll *through* Hyde who became enraged?

These two incidents are also interesting for the symbolic details that link them to the werewolf legend. In the first, Hyde is set upon and Enfield protects him from a mob of angry

women. Men are present (the child's father goes with Hyde and Enfield to get the money), but it is the women who attack "as wild as harpies." "I never saw a circle of such angry faces," Enfield tells Utterson. The werewolf, as a representative of unrestrained male carnal desire, is an especially direct threat to women, and when a female child is injured by Hyde, they become unhinged. Of course, this response is entirely realistic; the women would be enraged even without the connection to lycanthropy. Given their rank as some of the lowest figures in the social order of Victorian England, due to both their economic status and gender, these women would be under constant male threat and abuse. Their response, however, also fits symbolically as potential victims of the wolf.

In the second, the maid who witnesses the murder describes Carew as "an aged and beautiful gentlemen," and that impression is augmented further as she watches him speak to Hyde: "[T]he moon shone on his face as he spoke, and the girl was pleased to watch it, it seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition ..." Carew is hardly innocent for the same reasons as Enfield is not: he is carousing the same streets as Hyde after midnight.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps the maid does not make this association because she is young and gullible (a "maid" both in experience and profession), and thus she doesn't see Carew as a possible threat. (She would do well to remember the words of the huntsman in "Little Red Cap": "So here I find you, you old sinner!") Regardless, Hyde's assault is sudden and reminiscent of the werewolf. Not only does Hyde attack when the moon is full, but his victim is bathed in moonlight. The violence itself is brutal and visceral; although she could not hear Hyde's words from her perch, the girl can hear the old man's bones shatter and see his body jump as it is struck repeatedly while lying in the gutter.

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<sup>51</sup> Charyn posits Carew might actually be trying to procure a sexual act from Hyde.

*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is the penultimate werewolf tale due to the character of the monster. Jekyll is no Lawrence Talbot, a victim of an attack with no direct memory of his later awful actions, who receives symbolic forgiveness from Gwen. By his own admission, Jekyll creates Hyde for the expressed purpose of releasing his werewolf nature. He is a willing participant in the horror, even as he tries to convince us of his own innocence. He never feels remorse or accepts responsibility for his actions. When other werewolves become aware of their monstrous natures, they accept the justice of their own annihilation. Upon their destruction they are symbolically forgiven by female love-interests. But beauty cannot “save the beast” of Hyde because Jekyll isn’t interested in love; he only seeks to slake his lust as Hyde, and the women recognize this difference and descend upon him “as wild as harpies.” Jekyll deliberately obfuscates his culpability. Although he is ostensibly speaking to us of Hyde, as we have seen, Jekyll is really talking of himself when he says, “This familiar that I called and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centered on self . . .” Hyde is never “sent forth alone,” Jekyll is always with him; therefore, both Hyde and Jekyll are wholly “centered on self.” This selfish quality is the essence of the werewolf. As Jones says, “The Werewolf thus became in sinister poetic symbolism the image of the animal and demoniacal in human nature, of the insatiable egotism that is the enemy of the whole world.”

In *Danse Macabre* (1981, *op. cit.*), Stephen King asks us to “[g]aze, if you dare, on the face of the *real* werewolf. His name, gentle reader, is Edward Hyde.” The truly frightening thing about the tale is that Jekyll/Hyde is not alone; throughout the novel, werewolves of London prowl the streets at night in full recognition of their lycanthropic kin. In 1888, a mere two years after the novel’s publication, the lycanthropy becomes literal when the Whitechapel murders



begin, and that real-life werewolf still captures our imaginations today.<sup>52</sup> The disturbing truth about the symbolism of the werewolf is that the more overtly the afflicted tries to repress the part of the unconscious mind it represents, the more vehemently that hidden part demands expression.

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The reason I've spent a good deal of time explicating how the werewolf legend in its variety of forms fits this definition of horror is because the psychological connections are easier to see with the werewolf than with the other two monsters I'm discussing. The connection of horror to our own unconscious mind may not be readily apparent so we must look for it attentively. As we've seen, in this context the werewolf is our normally subdued animal-like rage set loose upon the world. While we may successfully keep all evidence of such unbridled rage in check, most people have nevertheless felt it swelling inside them and are thus aware of its existence and of what they may be capable if those impulses go unresisted (though that knowledge may also remain repressed given its untenable nature to our persona – in the Jungian sense of the term). Like the cyclops Polyphemus, the werewolf lurks within us all as one possible mode defining our selfhood. Whether viewed as Freudians like Jones might suggest as a remnant of an earlier stage of development dominated by the id or as some form of inhibition formed through acculturation, we can recognize the obscured connection once we are aware of it. Investing the time with the werewolf, therefore, hopefully will pay dividends as we explore the more difficult to recognize unconscious connections of the vampire and the zombie.

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<sup>52</sup> Although just about everyone has been accused of being Jack the Ripper, prominent theories persisting to today postulate the killer was a gentleman who regularly visited the area to engage in its rampant debauchery. Visiting Whitechapel after dark is what "gentlemen" did. The killer's apparent education (he had a clear knowledge of anatomy, and the misspellings, etc., in his "notes" can be seen as a ruse, *i.e.* a purposeful trick to throw police off track, both suggestive of education) and freedom of movement (a private coach, as opposed to a cab, was likely used) are both indicative of wealth and power. Things fair no better in America: in 1893 H. H. Holmes sets up his "murder castle" in Chicago. (*C.f.* Larsen, Erik (2003), *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America.*)

## *The Vampire*

The symbolism associated with the vampire is particularly complex. As Jones observes, “None of the group of beliefs here dealt with is richer or more over-determined than that of the Vampire, nor is there one that has more numerous connections with other legends and superstitions. Its psychological meaning is correspondingly complicated . . .” Part of this complexity is due to these multiple overlapping connections; part is due to the dramatic cultural shift of the form of the vampire from a night demon to a sophisticate and seducer.

Just as the werewolf is a branch of the larger group of transformation or shapeshifter stories, the vampire is within the broader tradition of revenants, creatures who return from the dead. Unlike the werewolf, however, the vampire as we know it is not an ancient legend.<sup>53</sup> The word itself first appears in European languages in 1725-35. Before then, the vampiric revenant was a part of other legends. Sources from the medieval period forward have assigned demons or the devil with the power to possess the dead to serve their purposes. For example, prior to his ascension to the throne of England after the death of Elizabeth I, James VI of Scotland published *Daemonologie*, his treatise on witches.<sup>54</sup> James ascribes to witches the power to enter corpses and reanimate them to plague the living. In general, the myriad tentacles stretching from earlier legends to the more modern vampire account for some of the symbolic range in the latter legend; however, the vampire derives its sexual component from specific demonic roots.

Because of his Freudian perspective, Jones is especially elucidative on this connection. He locates part of the origin of the vampire legend in the earlier legends of the incubus and

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<sup>53</sup> Again, I’m focusing my discussion on the Western horror tradition, not all cultures.

<sup>54</sup> James VI, King of Scotland (1599), *Daemonologie, In the Forme of a Dialogue, Divided into three Books: By the High and Mighty Prince, James &c.* For those unaware, this text provided source material for Shakespeare’s *Tragedy of Macbeth* (1606), written, at least in part, to flatter the new English king.

succubus. Both are demons who visit sleepers for the purpose of sexual intercourse, the former being the male and the latter the female version.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Jones notes,

The historical roots of this particular conception are too numerous to allow of their being traced here. It must suffice to say the central idea itself, the belief that sexual intercourse can occur between mortals and supernatural beings, is one of the most widespread of human beliefs. It is to be found in most religions, from Zoroastrianism to modern spiritualism; perhaps the most familiar examples are the amours of the Greek gods.

Although Jones does not make the explicit connection of this idea to Christianity, Mary's miraculous pregnancy falls under this tradition. (Christian imagery will also dominate vampire legend, which we shall see as we explore the vampire directly.) Jones explains how this common belief in supernatural sex comes from dreams and how the incubus is a manifestation of the belief in anxiety form. Typically, the incubus forces itself upon the helpless sleeper, sometimes scratching and biting its victim. Even in those instances when the act is pleasurable within the confines of the dream, upon awakening the sleeper is wracked with guilt over the social transgression it represents. Given the dream's untenable conscious nature, ascribing it to forces outside of and uncontrolled by the Self becomes understandable. The incubus also has explicit connections to the vampire myth. For example, in his study of Romanian superstitions, Heinrich von Wlislocki says, "The Nosferat [vampire] not only sucks the blood of sleeping people but also does mischief as an Incubus or Succubus."<sup>56</sup>

Psychologically, many revenant tales center on the wish to reunite with a deceased loved one.<sup>57</sup> For example, W. W. Jacobs's story "The Monkey's Paw" and the multitude of variations it inspired involve a grief-stricken couple who first wish upon the magical paw for money.<sup>58</sup> Their

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<sup>55</sup> For brevity, I'll henceforth lump the two together under the name "incubus."

<sup>56</sup> Qtd. in Stern, B. (1903), *Medezin, Aberglaube und Geschlechtsleben in der Türkei*, qtd. in Jones, *op. cit.*

<sup>57</sup> I'll explore another variant when we look at the zombie.

<sup>58</sup> Jacobs, W. W. (1902), "The Monkey's Paw" in *The Lady of the Barge*. Jacobs was likely influenced by *1001 Arabian Nights*, given that he explicitly references it early in the story, it fits the pattern of some of the jinn tales in the work, and the work also has many ghoulish stories (e.g. "The History of Gherib and His Brother Agib" [vol6]).

wish is granted when their son is horribly crushed in a machine at work, and the company compensates them with a cash payout. They next wish for their son to return, which he does, but in the same mangled state as at the time of his death. They use their final wish to return him to the grave. Although the desire to be reunited with a lost loved one is normal and understandable, in the vampire legend that desire is combined with the sexual element it received from the incubus, which leads to repression. In addition, unlike the typical victim of the incubus, the vampire usually has some connection with its victims. In most variations of the legend, the vampire at the very least prowls the area it walked in life, and often it seeks out relatives for its first victims. This difference combined with the vampire's revenant nature, which the demon incubus also lacks, means the vampire links the further psychological taboos of incest and necrophilia to those taboos associated with the incubus, making for a frothy mix of potentially repressed desires.

When the vampire starts to become recognized as a legend of its own, it also carries with it some of the specific regional folkloric details of the particular version of revenant from which it sprang. In one region vampires might have control over beasts, while in another the creature might have the same powers as a poltergeist. Eventually, these disparate qualities coalesce with the appearance of the literary vampire; however, long before they do, nearly all vampires share two distinct features: "The two essential characteristics of a true Vampire are thus his origin in a dead person and his habit of sucking blood from a living one, usually with fatal effect" (Jones, *op. cit.*). While you might have been tempted to add a third characteristic, vulnerability to sunlight, that quality is a later invention. Folkloric vampires *prefer* to conduct their unspeakable actions under cover of night, but they generally have no problem moving about in broad daylight as well.

The act of sucking has clear sexual connotations. A staunch Freudian like Jones locates sucking (and kissing, too) in an infantile stage of sexual pleasure; however, the act isn't aberrant in itself. A lover's kiss along the sensitive nerves of the neck is so ubiquitous a practice it spawned the term "necking" to describe kissing with a lover in general. The act drifts toward dysfunction when it connects with the sadism associated with biting. Jones tells us love gives way to fear when it is guilty and repressed and that morbid dread always signifies repressed sexual wishes.

Further, we know from psycho-analysis that the replacement of repressed sexuality by fear is a process brought about by the persistence in the unconscious of the unsolved incest conflicts of infancy. This also explains the constant association of sadism and fear in such beliefs, dreams, etc., for the infantile conception of sexuality is always sadistic in nature. Three changes thus take place in the original wish [to be reunited with the dead]: (1) love reverts to sadism, (2) the event is feared instead of desired, and (3) the individual to whom the wish relates is replaced by an unknown being.

The unknown being in this case is, obviously, the vampire, a creature which signifies our unconscious disquiet brought on by our repressed desires and symbolized, in part, by the creature's inability to rest easy in the grave.<sup>59</sup>

The substance of blood carries its own sexual connotations. These associations originate in ancient peoples' attempts to explain the menses. As Raymond Crawford explains, "It must be remembered that till the middle of the seventeenth century . . . it was generally believed that the male semen and the female menses were the constituents out of which a child was formed, and by most the leading part was assigned to the menses."<sup>60</sup> Crawford goes on to quote Pliny, "The seed of the male, acting as a sort of leaven, causes it [the menses] to unite and assume a form, and in due time it acquires life and assumes a bodily shape." Some went so far as to claim semen

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<sup>59</sup> Even if the vampire was known to its victim while it was alive, as the undead it has transformed into something "unknown."

<sup>60</sup> Crawford, Raymond (1916), "Of Superstitions concerning Menstruation" in *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* 9: 45-66.

is a distillate of the male's blood to explicitly associate them. "For Aristotle, semen is the residue derived of nourishment, that is of blood, that has been highly concocted to the optimum temperature and substance. This can only be emitted by the male as only the male, by the nature of his very being, has the requisite heat to concoct blood into semen."<sup>61</sup> These old beliefs of blood being integral to insemination still resonate today in terms like "bloodlines" and sayings like "blood is thicker than water" in spite of the fact that we no longer ascribe to their source.

In the Abrahamic religious tradition, menstrual blood draws specific attention in Leviticus 15.<sup>62</sup> Although not stipulated in Genesis, tradition links menstruation to Eve's punishment for leading Adam into temptation. Certainly, ". . . menstruation was a symbol of the essential sinfulness and inferiority of woman, polluted alike and polluting," as Crawford notes. The blood of the vampire legend, however, is not solely related to the menses. While menstruation may be the source of associating blood with sex in general and illicit sex in particular, blood has additional connections in the context of vampirism, most obviously as a life-force upon which the undead feeds, although perhaps as important is the blood imagery central to the story of Christ.

Religious mania can be connected to the drinking of blood. Eisler devotes space to this connection in an appendix titled "A Clear Case of Vampirism." He details the case of John George Haigh, an Englishman executed for murder on August 15, 1949. Haigh was

brought up in the literalist fundamentalism of ignorant Plymouth Brethren parents in a fanatically religious atmosphere, where newspaper reading and listening to the wireless were forbidden, where the wrath and vengeance of God was held over his head as punishment for every trifling misdemeanour and where the drinking of the blood of the sacrificed Lamb of God was impressed upon him in the gruesome literal sense . . .

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<sup>61</sup> Salmon, J. B. & L. Foxhall (1998), *Thinking Men: Masculinity and Its Self-representation in the Classical Tradition*.

<sup>62</sup> The same chapter speaks of a discharge from a man, semen or otherwise, being unclean; however, the man is basically enjoined to simply wash to regain his purity.

Later, Haigh joins the Church of England, embracing his faith wholeheartedly. He becomes a choirboy and then assistant organist for Wakefield Cathedral, and at seventeen wins a “divinity prize” for an essay on St. Peter. At the time, he experiences a recurring dream he calls “the Dream of the Bleeding Christ” and is troubled by the fact that Christ was left to suffer and bleed upon the cross. Around 1944-45, a new dream comes to him, “the tree dream,” repeated nightly for seven nights, in which a forest of crucifixes gradually transformed into trees. A substance dripped from a branch of each tree, and as he approached, he could see it was blood and a man was collecting it in a bowl. The bowl was offered to him, but the man would recede each time. After he begins killing his victims and drinking their blood, he is able to drink the blood from the bowl in his dream. Haigh’s real vampirism dramatically highlights the connection of the related symbolism in the vampire legend to the Eucharist. Christ’s directive to eat of his flesh and drink of his blood, in the transubstantiated form of bread and wine, are presented in an inverted form in the evil doings of the vampire.

Given the origin of the vampire legend in revenants controlled either by Satan directly or by his minions and worshippers, such as demons and witches, finding instances where vampire iconography overlaps with that of Christianity isn’t surprising. This overlap becomes even more predictable when we recognize that most monsters in folklore are vulnerable to some form of attack from representations of religion. Since these creatures are manifestations of repressed untenable desires, it makes sense that their opposite, the movement toward light and good (at least as goodness is framed by the culture), counters their ability to do mischief. What makes the vampire unique, however, is that because of its disparate origins, it carries with it more of this symbolism than any other legend.

As we've seen, the drinking of blood recalls the Eucharist. Consider also some of the Christian apotropaics, magical forces used for protection, connected to vampires once their folkloric forms coalesce in the literary vampire. The display of a crucifix will keep a vampire at bay, as will a rosary, a string of knots or beads used in prayer. Vampires cannot step foot on consecrated ground, and their flesh can be burnt by holy water. A stake through the heart will kill a vampire, and most traditions require the stake to be wooden, reminiscent of Christ's cross, and for some the wood must also be ash, which they believe to be the same wood as the actual cross.<sup>63</sup> While not explicitly Christian, vampires are also said to cast neither reflection nor shadow, which is emblematic of their lack of a soul. As such, they are not open to the redemption offered through Christ. Similarly, their vulnerability to sunlight signifies their powerlessness against the cleansing properties of enlightenment, including religious illumination. Being a creature of darkness also marks it as a representative of the unconscious.

The diversity of traditions from which the vampire myth springs also means many of the qualities we associate with them don't have Christian overtones. The apotropaical properties of garlic is a clear illustration. For centuries, garlic has been thought to possess medicinal, restorative, and protective powers. Scholars believe *moly*, the plant given to Odysseus by Hermes to protect him against Circe, is garlic, for example. That garlic should extend similar protection against vampires, therefore, seems logical. The tradition of the vampire spending its restive state within the confines of its coffin also makes sense, as well as the necessity of the creature returning to the coffin at sunrise. Symbolically, as a representative of the unconscious, the vampire must relinquish its power to the conscious mind with the return of the light (*i.e.* rationality) and fittingly does so through a kind of reburial (*i.e.* repression). The inability of the

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<sup>63</sup> The original purpose of staking was generally to prevent the vampire from rising from its coffin, rather than to pierce its heart to kill it. Consequently, other materials, like iron, were used in some regional folkloric versions.



vampire to enter a domicile for the first time without an invitation yields to similar psychological explication. The house is symbolic of the Self, as it is in “The Fall of the House of Usher,” and under the protection of the ego. Once allowed in, the destructive manifestation of the unconscious is free to wield its carnage.

I could continue to list more vampire traits to analyze, such as shapeshifting, mind-control over beasts and weak individuals, and decapitation as a form of execution, but my main point is to show the range of associations the vampire holds, which complicates our understanding of its relationship to horror. Again, this extensive list is connected to the legend after the regional folkloric versions are merged in the literary vampire, but they are able to unite thusly because the very range of the repressed desires the vampire symbolizes allows for this unification. It is as if each regional version contributed an element, and so each could still see its beliefs reflected in the blend and therefore accept the legend as a whole. No other legend has so wide of a collection of attributes, and the list I’ve presented isn’t even exhaustive. No wonder the vampire (specifically Dracula) is called the Prince of Monsters; the vampire is truly a kind of monster royalty.

The movement toward this eventual amalgamation of localized vampire legends can probably be traced to an incident in Croatia in 1672, which incited a community panic. Jure Grando purportedly returned from his grave to terrorize and sexually assault his widow, as well as “cause” numerous unexplained deaths in the village.<sup>64</sup> The incident is significant because it is the first time in Europe a person is reported to be a vampire and identified by name. It’s also close to the date when the word *vampire* begins to appear in European languages and that

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<sup>64</sup> The story of Jure Grando is detailed in Wright, Dudley (1924), *The Book of Vampires*. In contemporaneous accounts, Grando is referred to as *strigoi*, which eventually becomes the Romanian word for vampire; however, at the time, the word was more precisely used to describe a vampiric revenant possessed by a witch.

appearance marks the shift to the vampire as its own separate revenant myth. The reports of the case are eventually disseminated widely into other regions expanding its influence.

A vampire hysteria starts spreading across Europe about fifty years after the Grando incident. What comes to be known as the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Vampire Controversy begins in Prussia in 1721 and quickly spreads throughout eastern Europe and then the rest of the continent. The hysteria begins in villages where reports of dead residents returning to prey upon the living become rampant.<sup>65</sup> Local officials get swept up in the frenzy and order exhumations and stakings, as well as organizing vampire hunts to scour the area for the creatures. While the hysteria itself remains confined to the countryside, reports of the goings on capture the imagination of the public at large, which increases a general interest in what was essentially a new belief: a vampiric revenant outside the tradition of being controlled by another malevolent force. The intensification largely comes from the publication of a firsthand account by Austrian military surgeon Johannes Fluckinger detailing the hunt and destruction of the Serbian vampire Arnaud Pavle, filled with vivid and shocking details.<sup>66</sup> The formality of the report and the qualifications of the author give added credence to other vampire stories and lead to its translation and reprinting in Holland, France, and England, eventually followed by translations into German, Latin, and Italian.

The timing of this mass hysteria is particularly interesting, as it occurs at the height of the Enlightenment or Age of Reason. Coming on the heels of a series of revolutionary scientific discoveries, the Enlightenment locates humankind's greatest capacity in our rationality. As such, it eventual strikes a fatal blow to the notion of monarchy while weakening the theocratic

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<sup>65</sup> Many of these vampires do not drink their victims' blood. Frequently, their victims simply die mysteriously close to the time of the vampire's appearance. Blood sucking doesn't become a universal vampiric trait until the lore is codified in the literary version.

<sup>66</sup> Fluckinger, Johannes (1732), "Visum et Repertum."

authority enjoyed by the Catholic Church. The period is also marked by the skeptical examination of superstitions and folkloric beliefs. These beliefs begin to be discarded, even among the masses, as opposed to solely among the intelligentsia. The vampire legend is not simply ignored by the intellectuals of the period, however. As Stu Burns points out, the leading theologian of the age, Dom Augustin Calmet, a Benedictine abbot, takes up the subject in a two-volume work.<sup>67</sup> Not a freethinker by any definition, Calmet places great weight on the veracity of eyewitness testimony and a method of argument more in line with that of St. Augustine and St. Jerome than his contemporaries.

In his consideration of the Arnaud Pavle case, for example, he copies in several pages from the *Glaneur Hollandais* [the Dutch translation of Fluckinger's report] contending that the supposed visitations were the imaginings of people already sick, and that the soils in which the Serbian vampires were buried may have played a role in the supposed supernatural condition of the bodies. That being said, however, Calmet still assumes – or appears to assume – that even the most fantastic events probably occurred, strictly on the weight of testimony. When considering the possibility that vampire reports are inaccurate observations of premature burials, for example, he dismisses this argument by asking: “If all this is only imagination on the part of those who are molested, whence comes it that these vampires are found in their graves in an uncorrupted state, full of blood, supple, and pliable; that their feet to be in a muddy condition the day after they have run about and frightened the neighbors, and that nothing similar is remarked in the other corpses interred at the same time and in the same cemetery?” (Burns, *op. cit.*)

Both Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire attack Calmet; Rousseau attacks his rhetorical flaws, rather than mentioning vampires directly, but Voltaire ridicules the notion altogether, in part through pointing out vampires are nowhere to be found in Classical literature.<sup>68</sup> Others, like Gerard van Sweiten, are not so dismissive without first thoroughly examining reports.

Yet, at the same moment, this new belief in vampires not only takes hold but does so with a vengeance. (Alexander Pope refers to himself as a vampire in a 1740 letter quoted by Burns

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<sup>67</sup> Burns, Stu (2007), “And With All That, Who Believes in Vampires? Undead Legends and Enlightenment Culture,” *European Studies Conference Proceedings*, University of Nebraska.

<sup>68</sup> Burns speculates Rousseau may have considered the idea of vampires so obviously preposterous as to warrant no discussion on his part.

[*op. cit.*].) This paradox of rationality infused with irrationality is understandable if viewed through a broader anthropological lens. As I discussed above in my example of Homer's *Odyssey*, ancient stories and beliefs serve a variety of functions; specifically, they serve a cosmogonic, social, and psychological function. When scientific evidence and rational explanation remove one or more legs of this three-legged stool, it may collapse; however, the needs it satisfies don't simply go away. The vampire legend, to continue the metaphor, presented an intact stool at a time when stools were becoming scarce. Science had not yet fully explained the physical processes of decomposition. Properties such as the normal reversal of rigor mortis 48 hours or so after it began, receding gums and skin revealing more of the teeth and fingernails, and the effect of bacteria growth causing abdominal swelling followed by foul-smelling blood-tinged fluids exuding from the mouth and elsewhere, as well as the role of temperature, were not well understood and were all taken as signs that a corpse had reanimated. Therefore, the mysteries revealed during exhumations, particularly by less educated villagers, combined with the ultimate mystery of death found a home in the vampire myth. The legend also reinforced societal norms, reflected in the widely held idea that the revenant could not rest because of some failure to properly execute important rituals, like burial rites. Finally, as detailed at length above, the psychological connections filled the need of unconscious repressed desires to find expression.

Viewing this hysteria from our current perspective may lead us to feelings of superiority, but such feelings are an illusion, as we are still susceptible to similar panic and frenzy in our cleansed modern world. For example, following World War II, a panic begins around the subject of UFOs, which continues for decades. Jung analyzes this phenomenon, and he locates its source

in the anxieties we developed in the face of the double threats of the possibility of nuclear annihilation and the further deterioration of religious orthodoxy.<sup>69</sup>

Another example is the evil clown hysteria that appears near the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This panic begins in 1981 with the report of men dressed as clowns attempting to lure away a group of children. (Significantly, the report comes from the children themselves without adult corroboration.) It sets off a hysteria that continues to occasionally resurface today. Fuel is added to the fear by things like the real-life clown monster John Wayne Gacy and the fictional Pennywise from Stephen King's *It* (1986). As with the vampire hysteria in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, public officials sometimes become drawn into it and appear in the media giving credence to reports or even creating search parties to track down the phantom clowns. Investigations of instances in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have revealed them to be pranks or even performance art pieces capitalizing on the fear.<sup>70</sup> Coulrophobia, the phobia of clowns, doesn't sufficiently explain this mania. As with most phobias, true coulrophobiacs are relatively rare; however, many people find a clown's make-up unsettling. The make-up conceals the identity of the person beneath it and makes it difficult to read their intent. These qualities coupled with the uncanny effect of exaggerating various features (*e.g.* lips, eyes) while obscuring others can create anxiety. When you throw in the fact that an evil clown embodies the inversion of the intention of the genuine clown (*i.e.* to bring joy and happiness to people, particularly children), the phenomenon can be seen as a perfect vehicle for expressing fears about child safety. In spite of our advances as a species, human psychology and the forces driving it have remained remarkably persistent and consistent through the ages.

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<sup>69</sup> Jung, C. G. (1979), *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies* (from vols. 10 & 18 of *Collected Works*).

<sup>70</sup> For an overview of the phenomenon, see the documentary *Wrinkles the Clown* (Michael Beach Nichols & Christopher K. Walker, directors [2019]).

One way to explain the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Vampire Controversy is through the concept of the Other. Without going too deeply into the idea here, the Other is that which is seen as in opposition to the Self. In simple terms, the Self is everything that encompasses the individual, including beliefs and systems of belief. During the Enlightenment, many felt their complete world-view disintegrating around them and had a need to resolve how and why this could happen. The easiest resolution was to project the causative factors onto something outside of the Self, in this case onto the mythic vampire. (This projection clearly mirrors the projection of untenable unconscious desires found in horror in general.) While similar in practice of using the Other as a scapegoat, the difference here comes from an internal collapse of the Self resulting in an unconscious projection of fault. With scapegoating, the projection is conscious.<sup>71</sup>

The lasting effect of the controversy is that it moves the proper vampire from a relatively obscure new folk belief common among people of the countryside into the mainstream. By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, vampires appear with increasing frequency in poems and stories and become mainstays in penny dreadfuls, cheap serials of lurid tales. This public fascination gives rise to the literary vampire, which first appears near the start of the century and becomes further refined as we move to its end. While retaining and codifying many of its rich collection of symbols, the vampire legend shifts to focus on its sexual elements. Three influential 19<sup>th</sup> century vampire novels highlight this shift and the assembly of the vampire traits we recognize today.

The first vampire novel of consequence is *The Vampyre* (1819) by Dr. John Polidori, which tells the story of a rich young Englishman named Aubrey who meets the pale and mysterious Lord Ruthven at various social gatherings throughout London. They strike up a friendship and decide to travel about Europe together. Ruthven tells Aubrey of his plans to

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<sup>71</sup> The clearest succinct example is the rise of the Nazis in post WWI Germany. Hitler and his ilk purposefully directed blame for German failures onto specific ethnicities, *i.e.* the Other.

seduce the daughter of a countess, whom they both know, when they reach Rome. Ruthven's confession causes a falling out between the pair, and after writing to warn the countess of Ruthven's plans, Aubrey travels alone to Greece, where he falls in love with a woman named Ianthe. She tells him about the legend of the vampire, who are said to roam the area. Ianthe is eventually found dead with her throat ripped out.

About the time of Ianthe's death, Lord Ruthven appears in the area, which Aubrey views as coincidental. They reconcile and decide to resume travelling together. Unfortunately, the pair are set upon by bandits, and Ruthven is mortally wounded. On his deathbed, Ruthven implores Aubrey to remain secret about himself and his death for a year and a day. When Aubrey relents and swears his fealty, Ruthven dies laughing. Ruthven's body disappears the next day, and before returning to England, Aubrey visits Rome. There he discovers the countess and her family are in ruin, and her daughter is missing.

Once home, Aubrey is astonished to discover Lord Ruthven again in England, healthy and living under a new name. Making matters worse, Ruthven is seeing Aubrey's sister socially. He reminds Aubrey of his pledge, which instigates Aubrey's emotional collapse. Upon recovering, Aubrey learns Ruthven is set to marry his sister on the day his oath expires. Racked with guilt, Aubrey again plunges into illness. He writes to warn his sister and dies shortly thereafter. The letter fails to arrive in time; she marries Ruthven and is found dead, drained of blood during their wedding night. Lord Ruthven has vanished.

The genesis of *The Vampyre* is also important to its influence. By the time of the novel's publication, the Enlightenment has given way to Romanticism as the dominant mode of thought. Very briefly, two distinctions between them are that the former focuses on rationality and the qualities people hold in common, like the desire and right to be free, while the latter emphasizes

the importance of emotion and the primacy of the individual. Works such as John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1688) and Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" (1776) are replaced by imaginative creations like Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" (1819). Romantic characters come to dominate fiction, from heroes such as the title character of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819) to the mad narrators of Poe. Other aspects of Romantic fiction have similar traits as well, such as strange and unusual plots and settings, which gives rise to the Gothic as a subgenre of Romanticism.<sup>72</sup>

Furthermore, Polidori is the personal physician of Lord Byron, a key Romantic and Gothic figure. Byron's scandalous private life, replete with multiple notorious affairs, including accusations of sodomizing his wife and a rumored incestuous affair resulting in a child, spurs the prurient interests of the public and produces the Byronic hero as a type of Romantic hero, which is used as a recognizable figure in the works of other writers, like the Brontës. Some consider Byron to be the first modern celebrity, and he actively promotes his self-image as a decadent bad boy. (One of his married conquests, Lady Caroline Lamb, refers to Byron as "mad, bad and dangerous to know.") The public views his works like *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812) and *Don Juan* (1824) as autobiographical. His popularity leads to his wife Annabella coining the term "Byromania" to describe the phenomenon.<sup>73</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> century public simply cannot get enough of all things Byron.

Polidori accompanies Byron to Europe, a self-imposed exile from which Byron never returns, and the pair join poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, his lover Mary Godwin, and her cousin Claire Claremont, Byron's former lover, at Lake Geneva. The group spends a gloomy, rainy June

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<sup>72</sup> In England, interest in the Gothic wanes with the crowning of Queen Victoria before resurging at the end of the century. In America, Romanticism is supplanted by Realism by the end of the Civil War.

<sup>73</sup> Bostridge, Mark (3 Nov 2002), "On the trail of the real Lord Byron," *The Independent on Sunday*.



reading fantastic tales, leading to a bet as to whom can write the most horrific story. Byron's contribution is a story variously known as "Fragment of a Novel," "A Fragment," and "The Burial: A Fragment" (1819).<sup>74</sup> Polidori uses Byron's story as inspiration for *The Vampyre* and Byron himself as inspiration for Lord Ruthven.<sup>75</sup> In fact, the character's name appears earlier in Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816), and that character is a barely disguised Byron. When *The Vampyre* is first published, the novel's authorship is attributed to Byron, despite both he and Polidori declaring the latter its true author.

The subject matter and its connections to Byron add to the success and influence of *The Vampyre* and mark it as the first important literary vampire story. As such, the novel establishes some key features separating it from its folkloric roots. Among its lasting canonical contributions is placing the vampire within the aristocracy.<sup>76</sup> No longer a revenant peasant roaming the countryside, the vampire now moves through the halls of power and privilege. Placing the vampire in this rarified company creates dramatic interest. We enjoy drawing the curtain separating us from the rich and mighty to observe their goings-on. The fact that what we see on display over the course of the vampire story – their vanity, weakness, and destruction – gives us pleasure. Their failings demonstrate us that they are no better than us (they're worse – they're monsters!) despite their wealth and advantage.

Moving the vampire to within the aristocracy also shifts how we perceive the vampire's immortality. The vampire accumulates power and wealth over centuries, which changes how we consider its predicament as a member of the undead. Folkloric vampires wander without hope of

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<sup>74</sup> Mary Godwin's contributes *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, published in 1818 after her marriage to Shelley.

<sup>75</sup> Byron dedicates *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812) to someone named Ianthe, a further connection between Byron and Ruthven.

<sup>76</sup> As we'll see, the character of Dracula also fits the form of the Byronic hero.

rest, perhaps even unaware of the moral implications of their actions. They are afflicted and cursed. The vampires of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are not morally conflicted; Lord Ruthven relishes his conquests and literally laughs in Aubrey's face when he knows his future evil is secured. Readers again get pleasure from seeing the corruption of their aristocratic masters symbolically presented as truly monstrous and their public authority as ill-gotten, but also from seeing their repressed desires for behaving in a similar manner brought to life.

Importantly, Ruthven is primarily a seducer, placing sex in the center of his depravity. The seduction of his victim is central to his *danse macabre*, and his pleasure is palpable in his execution of it. This aspect is enhanced at the time of the novel's publication by the Byron/Ruthven connections but remains in place in future vampire stories without that real-life correlation upon which to draw. Also, Ruthven kills his victims through exsanguination. Although I spent time detailing some of the symbolic sexual (and Christian) associations with blood, most folkloric vampires are not bloodsuckers. In keeping with the older traditions from which they came, most folkloric vampires tend to kill indirectly. After their visitations, their victims fall ill and die suddenly and mysteriously. Still, enough folkloric vampires *do* drink blood for Polidori to use the method and for readers to recognize it as part of the lore. Cementing vampires as blood drinkers, *The Vampyre* brings the sexual associations of the legend and their attendant psychological repression to the fore. The vampire, as pointed out by Jones, becomes entwined with untenable repressed sexual desires, pruning away some other folkloric vampire traits. No more will vampires inarticulately wander country roads nor lay in coffins with gaseous, bloated abdomens.

By the time of the publication of *Carmilla* by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Romanticism as the dominant mode of thought is long abandoned.<sup>77</sup> During the Victorian Period that supplants it, with its attendant rise of the wealth of the middle class, a variety of reforms instituting higher moral standards begins with the passage of the Reform Act of 1832. Although the public excesses embodied by men like Byron vanish, illicit sexual activity does not; it merely hides from public view. Respectability becomes the watchword, as we've seen with Dr. Jekyll's fear of exposure.<sup>78</sup> We also saw among Jekyll's retinue that there remains a tacit acceptance of debauchery as long as it stays out of larger public notice, at least for men if not for women. For the Victorians, the home becomes a sanctuary and refuge from the outside world, and the home becomes the domain of women. Men live in the public sphere; women inhabit the domestic. Women are encouraged to put energy into things like religion, considered an extension of the home, while men remain "of the world" and all that phrase implies. Consequently, the already extant patriarchal hypocrisy regarding sexuality and its expression deepens, while intensifying the associated taboos result in the curious paradox of simultaneously increasing both the interest in the subject and its further repression.

Le Fanu's novel purports to be part of the casebook of Dr. Hesselius, the first credentialed occult investigator in literature. It imparts the story of Laura, daughter of a rich English widower living in Styria, a region of Austria. Her father tells her the expected visit from his friend General Spielsdorf is delayed by the sudden death of his niece Bertha. Laura pines for a friend until one day a carriage has an accident outside their small castle. The carriage contains a teenage girl about Laura's age and her mother. The mother leaves the girl, Carmilla, in their care for three months and hurries away to an important engagement. Laura and Carmilla

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<sup>77</sup> Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan (1871-72), *Carmilla*, first serialized in *The Dark Blue*.

<sup>78</sup> *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) dates from this same period.

recognize each other from a dream the former had when she was six, a dream she claimed at the time was real. In it, she felt a sharp pain in her breast, although no marks were found upon it.

Laura and Carmilla become staunch friends, but Carmilla won't divulge any of her personal history. Laura also notices some strangeness about her, like refusing to take part in prayers and sleeplessness at night followed by sleeping excessively during the day. Carmilla is also moody and makes clear sexual advances toward Laura. When a painting from 1698 is restored, Carmilla's exact likeness to the subject, Countess Karnstein (named Mircalla), is noted. During this time, young women in the village start mysteriously falling ill and dying.

Laura begins having restless dreams. Sometimes in their course, a cat-like creature with needle-teeth bites her breast and then transforms into a female figure before exiting through the closed door. Eventually, she sees Carmilla in a blood-soaked nightgown at the foot of her bed as part of her nightmare. (Carmilla is later discovered, not in her room, but wandering the grounds.) Her father summons a doctor, who finds wounds at the base of her neck and warns her father not to leave her alone.

Laura and her father set out for the village of Karnstein, leaving word for Carmilla to join them when she finally awakens for the day. En route, they meet General Spielsdorf, also headed for the village. He tells them the eerily parallel story of the death of Bertha, his niece. The guest they welcomed for three months after a similar accident was named Millarca, and Spielsdorf witnessed her preying upon Bertha and drove the beast away. Bertha died the next day, and the General set out in search of the vampire Millarca to destroy her. Once at the village, Carmilla appears at the tomb of Mircalla Karnstein, and the General identifies her as the vampire Millarca. He attacks her, but she escapes. They realize Carmilla and Millarca are both actually Mircalla, the Countess Karnstein. (The names are anagrams.)

Before encountering Carmilla at the tomb, they learned from an old man that the area was once overrun with vampires and was cleared of the revenants by a hero. Later, the General locates Baron Vordenburg, the hero's descendent and himself an authority on vampires, who reveals his ancestor was in love with the Countess and hid her real tomb. Using his notes, the General and the Baron locate Mircalla/Millarca/Carmilla in her tomb, eyes staring open as if dead but breathing and apparently alive. When they pound a stake into her heart, she unleashes a bloodcurdling scream. They also behead her then burn her body and scatter her ashes in the river. Laura never fully recovers her health.

Especially given the period, *Carmilla* is surprisingly direct in expressing the sexuality of the vampire and the pull it has for Laura. This energy is clear in Laura's descriptions:

I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust. . . . I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence.

[and]

Sometimes after an hour of apathy, my strange and beautiful companion would take my hand and hold it with fond pleasure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. It was like the ardour of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful yet overpowering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs, "You are mine, you shall be mine, and you and I are one for ever."

It is difficult to imagine Le Fanu daring to be more explicit, and it's little wonder *Carmilla* is considered the first lesbian vampire novel. The story, therefore, heightens the focus on sexuality, particularly forbidden sexuality, we see in *The Vampyre*, while it relocates the emphasis onto female sexuality, which is especially repressed during the Victorian Period. In addition, although Carmilla preys exclusively on women (as does Lord Ruthven), she can also choose to extend her connection to emotional involvement when it suits her. The novel not only builds on the

emphasis on sexuality and its attendant symbolism, but it also continues Polidori's innovation of making the vampire an aristocrat.

*Carmilla* adds elements to vampire lore not found in *The Vampyre* as well. One of the most noteworthy is the character of Baron Vordenburg, the vampire hunter. From this point forward, vampire tales typically have a character who lends the others (and the audience) his expertise in the lore. Unlike Ruthven, Carmilla explicitly cannot pray and listening to hymns hurts her ears, making the vampire unholy and thus the enemy of the righteous and subject to attack using its symbols. She is also a shapeshifter, in that she can pass through closed doors and at times transforms herself into a cat. Carmilla is tracked to her tomb, her refuge and sanctuary. The vampire's unholy reign is ended by a stake through the heart, although she's beheaded and cremated to make certain her demise. All of these have antecedents in folklore and/or other lesser literary vampire tales and become canonical for future iterations.

Without question, the most influential and enduring literary vampire novel is *Dracula*.<sup>79</sup> When it is first published, however, its preeminence is not a foregone conclusion. While garnering some good critical reviews, the novel doesn't catch on with the public until after cinematic adaptations of it hit the big screen. *Dracula* is an epistolary novel, and I see this structure as one of its strengths. For the uninitiated, an epistolary novel is told in the form of letters, journal entries, logbooks, and even newspaper articles, and Stoker uses all of these to tell his tale. The form, along with the related technique of the frame story, is prominent throughout the Romantic Period and continues in English Gothic literature throughout the Victorian Era. (A frame story is a narrative in which the main story is claimed to be discovered or otherwise in the possession of a narrator or another character and then presented to a group within the narrative or

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<sup>79</sup> Stoker, Bram (1897), *Dracula*.

directly to the reader.) Examples of these forms include Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), told through letters and the ship's log of the Captain who discovers Frankenstein in the Arctic; Washington Irving's *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819), the tales therein purported to be representatives of American folklore collected by Crayon; the preface from the aforementioned *The Scarlet Letter*, in which Hawthorne claims to have found the manuscript in the custom house where he worked; the letters, journals, and testimonies previously discussed in the analysis of Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; and *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James (1898), in which Douglas, one of the characters trading ghostly tales at a winter's idyll, sends for a manuscript (the novel) and reads it to the other guests. Using the epistolary or frame form for a vampire story isn't even Stoker's innovation to the vampire genre; *Carmilla* is presented the same way.

Originality, then, isn't why I find Stoker's use of the form appropriate; rather, I'm considering its efficacy. First, his audience is more used to both writing and receiving letters than we are today, as well as getting much of their news and information from them, so they are more comfortable with accepting the technique as a narrative. In fact, reports of vampirism during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Vampire Controversy reached the public through these very means. Second, presenting the fantastic through the supposedly impartial voices this form provides allows the audience a convenient excuse to suspend their disbelief. Finally, an author who recognizes the immediacy afforded through the use of a first-person narrator is normally in a pickle if they seek to build suspense. As I discussed earlier, Poe uses first-person to great effect, but his narrators are generally mad and are the killers, not the victims, in his tales.<sup>80</sup> Poe typically creates suspense through leading the reader to wonder exactly what horrible crime the narrator will

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<sup>80</sup> Poe has exceptions, of course. "MS. Found in a Bottle" and the C. Auguste Dupin stories come to mind.

commit and how they'll commit it. But how can an author achieve suspense using first-person in a vampire novel? If told as straight-up first-person narration, the audience knows the narrator can't die; whether the vampire or its victim, the narrator must survive to tell the tale.<sup>81</sup> This problem is solved, however, by the epistolary form. A character can conveniently send a missive any time up to just before their death; we simply need another source to inform us they died for the story to continue.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, no one in an epistolary novel, like *Dracula*, is safe.

The plot of *Dracula* is well known and doesn't require an overly detailed summary here. Briefly, British solicitor Jonathan Harker travels to Count Dracula's castle in Transylvania to finalize the latter's purchase of various properties in England. At first Harker is delighted by his gracious host, but wandering the castle against the Count's orders, he is set upon by three vampire sisters from whom the Count rescues him. He realizes he is actually a prisoner and Dracula is also a vampire who wants Harker for himself. When their business is concluded, Dracula abandons him to the sisters, and Harker narrowly escapes.

Back in England, Harker's fiancée Mina is visiting her friend Lucy in Whitby. Lucy has a trio of suitors, and though she chooses one, all agree to continue their friendship. Meanwhile, Dracula sets forth to England aboard ship with fifty boxes filled with earth, in which he must lay to regain his powers. Crew members slowly disappear during the voyage until none remain but the captain, who witnesses a large dog leap from the ship when it runs aground at Whitby. Workmen pick up the boxes and hide them in various locations as part of Dracula's effort to maintain a series of safe locations for himself should the need arise.

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<sup>81</sup> Interestingly, Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (1851) got panned by English critics when released for a related reason. The publisher neglected to include the epilogue, leaving critics to wonder what happened to Ismael, the narrator, after the *Pequod* sinks with all aboard. Consequently, Melville's masterpiece remained relatively unknown until the 1920s.

<sup>82</sup> A cinematic variant of this technique is the "found footage" story, like *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), *Paranormal Activity* (2007), and *Cloverfield* (2008).



Dr. Seward, one of Lucy's former suitors, starts treating her because she begins wasting away after suffering bouts of sleepwalking. He invites his mentor Dr. Abraham Van Helsing to consult. Van Helsing recognizes her symptoms for what they are, but his efforts to protect her are thwarted repeatedly by chance. Soon, Lucy and her mother are attacked by a wolf. The mother dies outright in terror, and Lucy is found dead with neck punctures. Again, Van Helsing attempts to employ various apotropaics to keep Lucy from converting into a vampire, but the reports of children going missing make clear to him he is unsuccessful. He and the suitors surprise Lucy at her crypt, pound a stake through her heart, behead her, and fill her mouth with garlic.

Seward also asks Van Helsing to consult regarding one of his patients, R. M. Renfield, who is confined to an asylum and feeds upon flies, spiders, and even small birds. Mina returns from Budapest, where she travelled to meet and marry Harker. They join the other vampire hunters, who work from Seward's residence, in their search for Dracula. They realize Renfield is under Dracula's influence and study him as part of their preparations to attack the vampire. The hunters successfully begin tracking down the boxes filled with earth and destroy them with Christian apotropaics, as well as do battle with Dracula on multiple occasions in the course of their efforts.

Dracula goes on the counterattack and begins stalking Mina and then attacks her three separate times. He also feeds her his own blood, which transitions her to vampirism without her dying first. She is not completely converted, however, and she suffers from bouts of semi-consciousness during which she is aware of Dracula's perceptions and uses this knowledge to aid the hunters. Dracula visits Renfield and offers him eternal life for pledging unwavering fealty to him, but he refuses in order to help Mina, who he met and urged to flee. The Count severely injures Renfield after rendering him helpless with his stare, and the group installs the madman

within Seward's residence as well. Dracula attacks Mina again, but the group repels him with crucifixes and holy water. Before fleeing the residence, the Count destroys their records and breaks Renfield's neck.

Using Mina to track his whereabouts, the hunters follow Dracula in flight back to his castle. She and Van Helsing head directly to the castle, while the three men hope to ambush the Count before he reaches home. (Van Helsing kills the three vampire sisters.) They discover he is being transported by gypsies in his final box of earth, and they set upon them and do battle. Harker eventually cuts Dracula's throat with a Nepalese machete called a *kukri* and Quincey, mortally wounded, finishes the Count with a Bowie knife to the heart. Dracula crumbles into dust, and Mina's curse is lifted.

I won't take the time to trace all the vampiric elements of the novel to illuminate their sources or which are original to Stoker, although I'll discuss some motifs in common with the other two vampire novels. (Think of *The Vampyre* and *Carmilla* as guideposts marking a path for us to *Dracula*.) Besides, others have documented these things past the threshold of speculation. My purpose is to show how much our contemporary notions of the vampire have evolved from their folk beginnings to today to understand how they all still connect to the psychological definition of horror. My immediate purpose, therefore, is to demonstrate how *Dracula* in some ways marks the end of that evolutionary trail.

*Dracula* codifies the elements of the vampire story we now take for granted. From its publication forward, Transylvania is considered a center of vampire activity, although it wasn't during the folkloric vampire period. The vampire must also sleep in a container filled with earth from its native land to replenish its strength if away from its burial site. In *Carmilla*, Carmilla has elongated canine teeth, but by *Dracula* and after, vampires have true fangs. Dracula must be

invited into a domicile before he can enter it at will. He also casts no reflection and uses mind control over his victims. When Dracula (the head of a vampiric family tree) dies, the death lifts the curse for the vampires he created. Finally, a person can transform into a vampire through drinking the vampire's blood.

*Dracula* intensifies the sexual connotations and their associated unconscious repression in vampire lore. Stoker's description of Harker's assault by the three sister vampires in Dracula's castle is reminiscent of Le Fanu's descriptions in *Carmilla*. Of the encounter, Harker writes in his journal:

All three had brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. 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.

[then]

The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply 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, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. 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. . . . I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited – waited with a beating heart.

Two things are abundantly clear from this description: we are witnessing a type seduction, and Jonathan Harker enjoys it despite (or is it because of?) its forbidden nature, forbidden both by the morals of the time and by his betrothal to Mina.

Harker's desire to submit to this transgression is thwarted by Dracula's appearance. He chides the sisters,

"How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it?" . . .

[The vampire described above says,] "You yourself never loved; you never love!" . . .

[The Count replies] "Yes, I too can love; you yourselves can tell it from the past. Is it not so? Well, now I promise you that when I am done with him you shall kiss him at your will."

This exchange is significant for multiple reasons. The talk of “love” implies much more than simple predation, as does referring to a vampire’s bite as a “kiss.” Dracula’s rebuttal that he is capable of love is reflexive back toward the sisters, implying they were recipients of his love in the past. The implication goes beyond simply making them vampires; it includes the insinuation they hold a special standing for him outside of their victimhood. It also foreshadows Dracula’s later obsession with Mina and how he uses his own blood to convert her, rather than conversion through death by exsanguination. Lastly, promising them Harker “when I am done with him” adds a whisper (some critics hear a shout) of homoeroticism.

Dracula’s implied sexual fluidity adds a repressive dimension beyond even the lesbianism shown in Countess Karnstein’s behavior and choice of victims. Whether intentional by Stoker or not, it also harkens back to Byron. Byron may have been subject to sexual advances from one of his mother’s suitors, and he has homosexual encounters while at Harrow and Cambridge and likely beyond.<sup>83</sup> Like the Byronic hero, Dracula is cultivated and urbane. Harker finds him an engaging and convivial host. Yet, he is also disdainful and rebellious of society’s rules and refuses to be constrained by them. In addition, his behavior smacks of overconfidence, which will ultimately prove self-destructive.

One of the main sources of horror in *Dracula*, therefore, stems from sexual repression.

As King observes in *Danse Macabre*:

Early on I mentioned my own belief that much of the horror story’s attraction for us is that it allows us to vicariously exercise those antisocial emotions and feelings which society demands we keep stoppered up under most circumstances, for society’s good and our own. Anyway, *Dracula* sure isn’t a book about “normal” sex; there’s no Missionary Position going on here. Count Dracula (and the weird sisters as well) are apparently dead from the waist down; they make love with their mouths alone. The sexual basis of *Dracula* is an infantile oralism coupled with a strong interest in necrophilia (and

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<sup>83</sup> Tantalizingly, the suitor’s name is Lord Grey De Ruthyn, not a far stretch to Lord Ruthven of “A Burial” and *The Vampyre* fame.

pedophilia, some would say, considering Lucy and her role as the “bloofer lady” [who preys upon children]). It is also sex without responsibility . . .

*Dracula* carries the sexual connotations we first saw in *The Vampyre* and later ratcheted up in *Carmilla* to an explicit conclusion. The sexual associations with blood I planted earlier have now sprouted and bloomed as well. Besides drinking her blood, the Count preys upon Mina through compelling her to drink *his* blood, a true exchange of bodily fluids like those exchanged in sex. Henceforth, the blood imagery in vampire tales often carries this sexual component.

Stoker’s novel adds a dynamic missing from the earlier two: a romantic rival. Unlike previous vampire victims we’ve explored, Mina has a love interest: Jonathan Harker. (Lucy does as well.) Although presented as controlled by Dracula’s mesmerism, Mina is nevertheless drawn to him. She is placed between a socially acceptable representative and his antithesis, and it is unclear who will eventually win her “affections.” Oates tells us,

Of all monstrous creatures it has been the vampire that by tradition both attracts and repels, for vampires have nearly always been portrayed as aesthetically (that is erotically) appealing. . . . And is this the forbidden truth, the unspeakable taboo – that evil is not always repellent but frequently attractive; that it has the power to make of us not simply victims, as nature and accident do, but active accomplices.<sup>84</sup>

Given Victorian expectations, Mina is of course “loyal” to Harker and helps him destroy Dracula; however, we can assume she feels the same type of ecstatic abandonment in Dracula’s embrace that Harker describes when confronted by the sisters. *Dracula* presents a symbolic love triangle in which a woman must resist the seductions of a socially unacceptable but sexually alluring “man.” Harker must “remove” this interloper for Mina to remain “faithful.” This rivalry

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<sup>84</sup> Oates makes these comments in connection to *The Turn of the Screw*; however, she doesn’t elaborate as to why she considers it a vampire story. While that novel is certainly sexual, I don’t read Peter Quint as a vampire. Instead, I am of the camp who view the Governess as psychotic, driven mad by her repressed sexual desire for her employer. She is thinking of him when she first “sees” Quint and is the only person who sees him in the novel. (*She* claims the children see him and lie about it; they deny it.) Therefore, *her* actions, not some sort of psychic vampirism, lead to Miles’s death.

structure allows for repressed male fears of sexual inadequacy, as well as female desires for sexual fulfillment, unspoken but implied in an encounter with a symbolically sexually promiscuous figure, to flourish.<sup>85</sup> After the Victorian Period, this triangle is sometimes presented much more overtly, in that the woman professes her love for the vampire as well. In some cases, like in the film *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, the vampire recognizes Mina is an incarnation of his true love, reborn from long ago, and the story is, in part, a doomed love story (as, I suppose, most love stories are).<sup>86</sup>

If you recall, blood also carries symbolic associations with Christianity, and Stoker lays on the Christian apotropaics. For example, crucifixes keep Dracula at bay on numerous occasions. Harker believes the only way he survives Dracula's castle is because of a small cross he wears. The captain of the *Demeter*, the ship that carries Dracula to England, lashes himself to the ship's wheel with a rosary and survives. Van Helsing's attempts to save Lucy and later to prevent her transformation center on crucifixes that through happenstance or deliberate action are removed. After Mina drinks Dracula's blood, Van Helsing tries to reverse its effects through prayer and by placing a communion wafer to her forehead. The attempt fails, and the wafer burns her skin and leaves a horrible scar; however, the very fact that the wafer scorches her shows that the holy is the vampire's enemy. (The scar disappears with Dracula's demise.) In addition to Christian apotropaics, garlic is also used throughout the novel.

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<sup>85</sup> Male sexual fulfillment being notoriously easier to achieve than female, this dynamic is less likely in reverse. If Mina learns of Harker's encounter with the sisters, for example, she may feel betrayal (as Harker worries in his journal), but it is unlikely her anger is rooted in the intense pleasure he felt during the experience, despite the probability that he never feels the same level of pleasure when Mina kisses his neck. A still extant artifact of the patriarchy is that while both sexes may consider matrimonial vows as sacred and their violation as betrayal, men are more obsessed with whether or not the transgressor enjoyed the experience more than sex with them.

<sup>86</sup> Coppola, Frances Ford (director) (1992), *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. This device is used in other horror stories and films as well, particularly those involving ghosts and revenants (e.g. *The Mummy* (Stephen Sommers [director] [1999])).

Unconscious sexual desires are one source of horror in *Dracula* but so is fear of the Other, and here it plays out overtly. In *The Vampyre*, Lord Ruthven is an Englishman who travels to Europe, and though he preys upon victims there, to Aubrey (and us) he remains a countryman. Camilla is a Styrian countess, but the other main characters are English. *They* are outsiders in a foreign land, not she. Dracula, however, emigrates from his homeland to England. To Stoker's audience, he is an exotic foreigner and brings the fear of cultural contamination with him. A foreigner with his "new ways" is especially disquieting for Victorians with their clearly stratified culture (which can be seen in just about every novel by Charles Dickens). By their intrinsic nature, foreigners disrupt the social order, an order that includes sexual mores. (How might a hot-blooded outsider upset the staid customs practiced between a proper English gentleman and his lady?)

Dracula recognizes his Otherness. One reason he prolongs Harker's business in his castle is so that he can perfect his English. When Harker compliments his English, Dracula replies,

Well, I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble; I am *boyar*; the common people know me, and I am master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not – and to know not is to care not. I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stops if he sees me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words, "Ha, Ha! a stranger!" I have been so long master that I would be master still – or at least that none other should be master of me.

From the perspective of plot, Dracula will be able to prey upon the English more effectively if they do not mark him as foreign; however, his words are more interesting for what they reveal about his character. He cannot abide the notion that he might be perceived as quotidian. His vanity and arrogance, which will ultimately lead to his downfall, are on full display – he's a Byronic hero. Dracula cannot truly remain a "master" and be recognized as such if he is simultaneously seen as an outsider, and he cannot stand to be relegated to a lesser role.

Obviously, Stoker continues the tradition begun by Polidori of placing the vampire within the aristocracy, as well as that of Le Fanu of providing a vampire expert to aid in the monster's destruction. Van Helsing sees to it that Lucy is staked and talks of the necessity of staking Dracula, but in the end, he is destroyed by knives.<sup>87</sup> Whether or not intentional, as a canonical text such inconsistencies in *Dracula* give future vampire tales "permission" to bend the rules to fit the story or create new rules for themselves. After *Dracula*, the vampire expert outlines which specific parameters of the vampire tale are applicable. Must a crucifix be consecrated to protect characters, or can they simply make a cross shape using ordinary objects for protection? Must a vampire attack a victim three times (a universally magic number) to turn them into the undead, or will a single time suffice? The ground rules for the legend can shift from tale to tale, and the vampire expert lets us know what the rules are.

As I mentioned earlier, *Dracula* is not an immediate success. That begins to change in 1922. In that year, the first film adaptation, F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*, is released.<sup>88</sup> Today, the film is considered a masterpiece of German Expressionism, an artistic school you'll recall Oates identifies as closely related to horror. The story is a thinly disguised retelling of the novel, although Murnau makes a few important changes.<sup>89</sup> Dracula is renamed Count Orlok, and the action is set in Germany, not England. Orlok only kills his victims; he doesn't create new vampires. Murnau's most significant change and addition to vampire lore, though, is making sunlight lethal to his Count instead of merely weakening, as it is to Dracula, and sunlight does indeed kill Orlok in the end. Thematically, the film focuses on Orlok as a representative of the

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<sup>87</sup> They are also both beheaded, which may seem like literal overkill but at the same time it seems a prudent action under the circumstances. Besides, England has a long tradition of executing individuals by multiple means. If your crime was serious enough, you might suffer disembowelment, followed by beheading, then draw and quartering with a burning and scattering of the remains.

<sup>88</sup> The full title is *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (or *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* in German).

<sup>89</sup> It's disputed whether Murnau is trying to hide his source or he openly admits it.



Other. Given the period and Orlok's stereotypical Jewish appearance, the film carries clear tones of antisemitism. For example, Orlok brings swarming rats with him, which spread plague in the literalization of antisemitic tropes about Jews as vermin and destroying German culture like a disease.

Florence Stoker, Bram's widow, sues the production company behind *Nosferatu* for copyright violations and wins. The court orders all unauthorized copies to be destroyed, and chance alone leaves a copy intact. Interest in the court case spurs interest in the film, however, which increases interest in the novel. In 1924, Florence authorizes a stage adaptation of the novel in England, leading to an American version in 1927. Bela Lugosi first plays the Count on the New York stage. Obviously, he reprises the role in the 1931 Universal film.<sup>90</sup> Although that movie and Lugosi's performance may seem campy today, upon its release the film is immensely popular, and the novel is rediscovered. Dracula, as a character, continues to make appearances in other Universal horror films made in the 1930s and 1940s.

The Dracula mantle is picked up in the 1950s by the British company Hammer Films. In 1958, they cast Christopher Lee as Dracula and Peter Cushing as Van Helsing, roles they will reprise for Hammer multiple times into the mid-1970s.<sup>91</sup> Simply glancing at a poster advertising any of these films tells you all you need to know about their focus. They invariably feature the promise of buxom women spilling their décolletages onscreen as they willingly proffer their open throats. Of course, this promise ultimately goes unfulfilled, but the quantity of heaving cleavage they present leave the sexual connotations clear. Oftentimes, but not always, the bosoms in question belong to minor characters, barmaids in peasant tops and corsets groped as

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<sup>90</sup> Browning, Tod (director) (1931), *Dracula*. Universal discovered Stoker had incorrectly filed for copyright in the U.S., making the novel public domain here.

<sup>91</sup> Fisher, Terence (director) (1958), *Dracula* (released in the U.S. as *Horror of Dracula*).

they deliver steins of ale to leering townsmen in a tavern below an inn in which much of the action takes place. (Keeping sets simple and limiting their number helps keep the production costs down for these low budget, albeit popular, films.) The sex is implied but obviously so.

A significant shift occurs for the vampire in popular culture in 1967. The previous year, ABC television premieres a supernatural themed daytime soap opera titled *Dark Shadows*.<sup>92</sup> The show follows storylines of multiple supernatural characters, one of whom, Barnabas Collins (Jonathan Frid), is a vampire who appears about ten months into the broadcast of the series. In keeping with the pattern established for the series, the character's storyline is originally intended for a limited run, but Barnabas becomes such an immediate fan favorite, and brings an accompanying ratings boost, that he soon transforms into the central character for the entire show. Barnabas begins television life as a conventional vampire, but as his importance grows, his character transforms as well. He becomes a protector for the other characters in the supernatural Collins family circle, as well as a forlorn figure with multiple loves unrequited due to his curse, which he seeks to reverse. In other words, he changes from a Byronic hero to a protagonist in a more traditional tragic love story. Whether causative or merely indicative, Barnabas, despite the character's popularity, marks a decline in the vampire's ability to horrify, which we'll see deepen later.

In the mid-1970s, two fine vampire novels are published back-to-back. The first is Stephen King's *Salem's Lot* (1975). King uses *Dracula* as a skeleton upon which he places the flesh of his novel. In *Danse Macabre*, King details some of the scenes from *Dracula* he adapts for his own novel, but he deliberately avoids using the symbolized expressions of repressed sexual desire so salient in the original.

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<sup>92</sup> Curtis, Dan (creator) (1966-71), *Dark Shadows*. Curtis created, wrote, produced, and/or directed numerous TV (and sometimes theatrical) horror productions throughout the 1960s-70s.

When I wrote my vampire novel, *'Salem's Lot*, I decided to largely jettison the sexual angle, feeling that in a society where homosexuality, group sex, oral sex, and even, God save us, water sports have become matters of public discussion . . . the sexual engine that powered much of Stoker's novel might have run out of gas.

Instead, King chooses to sow then reap the fertile field of the Other as the basis for its horror.

The novel begins with a prologue in which King plays with the epistolary and frame story forms. It features a man and boy on the run across the country and into Mexico. On the road, the man keeps searching newspapers for information about a town in Maine, and in Mexico he finally finds a story about Jerusalem's Lot, 'Salem's Lot for short, a town now mysteriously devoid of residents. As the pair ready to return, the boy confesses to a Catholic priest, who is disturbed enough by the confession to mention it to the man. The novel can be read as a kind of dramatization of that confession, although the man, Ben Mears, is more properly the protagonist.

When we flashback to the beginning, we meet Ben as a writer and former resident returning to 'Salem's Lot to write about the Marsten House, where he had a frightening experience as a child. He (and we) learns the house was recently purchased by Austrian Kurt Barlow, who is said to be on buying trip for antiques and thus not around, though we meet his partner Richard Straker who runs their shop. During the first half of the book, the town and its people are the centerpiece. Appearances are mostly of a picturesque and quaint New England village, but there are ripples of disturbance which slowly surface: child-beating, drunken rape, constant neighbor to neighbor gossip, and the disappearance of youngster Ralphie Glick.

Then all hell, in the form of Barlow, breaks loose. Barlow is King's Dracula, but rather than simply searching for fresh victims upon which to feed like Stoker's fiend, Barlow seeks to convert the entire town into vampires. Ben, Mark Petrie (the boy), and a host of other intrepid but ultimately doomed vampire fighters successfully slay Barlow, as well as his minion Straker, but in the end too many of the town are converted for them to do more than flee. The novel

concludes in an epilogue with Ben and Mark returning and planning to burn 'Salem's Lot to the ground to wipe out the hidden creatures of darkness.

The slow burn of the novel's first half is key to King's particular take on the Other. It is the equivalent of neighbors who happily lived next to a serial killer for years finding out about the monster after his arrest and telling the press, "He was such a nice man; he used to cut the grass." Like Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown*'s recognition upon his return to Salem after his night of temptation in forest, we see that evil is everywhere. Our family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances who we think we know so well are fundamentally unknown to us and unknowable. What we thought was *terra firma* is really *terra incognita*. As James Smythe says of the novel,

Of course, the novel itself can be read as metaphor: the small-town American way of life, being bled dry by outside influences, left as a hollow shell of its former being. But I actually prefer to see it as what it is: a story about the evil that's always there, lurking in the darkness, waiting for a moment to return.<sup>93</sup>

Like the conflagration the speed of the second half of the book symbolizes (it covers less than three days), once we understand the nature of the Other, that we are easily lulled into complacency by its façade of normalcy, the evil all around us quickly becomes visible. We have bitten of the same horrific apple as Eve and Adam.

The second novel is *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice (1976). Rice's tack is almost opposite to King's; her book focuses on the eroticism inherent in the vampire myth. Like King, she flirts with a frame. The story of Louis de Pointe du Lac is told as an interview recorded by a young reporter referred to as "the boy." Louis is a 200-year-old vampire, who is befriended and then soon turned by vampire Lestat de Lioncourt, who seeks his "companionship." Rice makes the sexual nature of this friendship very clear, however. For example, before becoming a

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<sup>93</sup> Smythe, James (11 Jun 2012), "Rereading Stephen King: Week Two – Salem's Lot" in *The Guardian*.

vampire, the pair beat a slave to death. Louis says, “As we beat the body, bruising the face and shoulders, I became more and more aroused.” When Lestat prepares to bite Louis’s neck, he tells us, “The movement of his lips raised the hair all over my body, sent a shock of sensation all through my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion.”

Nevertheless, Louis is never truly comfortable as a vampire. At first, he eschews drinking human blood in favor of animals’, but Lestat eventually goads him into it. His disenchantment leads to the possibility of the pair splitting up, but Lestat turns a five-year-old girl to create a “family” and a reason for Louis to stay. They call her Claudia, and though she is forever locked in a child’s body, her mind continues to grow and mature. This condition causes her to hate Lestat, but unlike Louis she has no compunctions about preying upon humans. “I kill humans every night,” she says. “I seduce them, draw them close to me, with an insatiable hunger, a constant never-ending search for something.” Claudia hatches a plan for Louis and her to kill Lestat, and they leave him in their burning house and head for Europe.

In Paris, they encounter a coven of vampires who live in a theater and hold “performances” where humans are killed in front of other humans who believe they are watching an elaborate stage production. Louis is drawn to Armand, the coven’s leader, and Claudia, worried she’ll be abandoned, convinces him to turn a woman named Madeleine to create a family unit once more. Unfortunately, Lestat soon reappears and demands retribution. The other vampires lock Louis in a coffin to starve and set Claudia and Madeleine in a courtyard to be killed by the sun. The two women die, but Louis is rescued by Armand, who was away when Lestat turned up.

Louis and Armand gradually grow tired of one another, and Louis returns to New Orleans, which is where the boy interviews him. The novel ends after Louis tells how weary he

is of immortality and the guilt of the pain and suffering he has caused. The boy, however, is not moved by Louis's sad and lonely existence. Instead, tempted by the lure of eternal life, he begs Louis to change him into a vampire. Louis attacks him and disappears, and the boy sets out to look for Lestat.

*Interview with the Vampire* and the many sequels it inspires have proven very popular. It is difficult to say how many sequels it spawns because in addition to the thirteen officially listed (as of 2018) as part of the *Vampire Chronicles*, characters from them appear in other works by Rice. A big part of their attraction is the eroticism, which should not come as a surprise given that Rice has written erotica under the pseudonym Anne Rampling and hardcore pornography as A. N. Roquelaure. As we've seen, much of the sexuality in the novel is homoerotic; however, with the character of Claudia, a woman in her 60s who looks no older than five, tones of pedophilia also ring. (In addition to Claudia's above description of preying upon humans, Louis says of her early on, "I remember the powerful beating of [Claudia's] heart against mine and I hungered for it, hungered for it so badly.") Again, we see the setting loose on the page of repressed sexual impulses, albeit in a form less reminiscent of *Dracula* and more of *Camilla*.

However, perhaps King's instincts in this regard have proven right in the long run. King writes of his worry that the sexual engine driving the vampire tale is running out of gas in 1981, and the statement reflects a decision to avoid using it made still earlier. In the intervening years, we have become even less repressed about our sexuality, and the vampire has grown increasingly less prominent in horror as it has become a less appropriate means to express our unconscious fears.<sup>94</sup> King, though, identifies a group for whom sex will always remain anxiety producing in a

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<sup>94</sup> These fears haven't just disappeared; however, horror may no longer be the best mechanism by which we deal with the anxieties they produce. This doesn't imply everyone is repression-free, nor that the repression manifests itself in healthy ways. It may be at the root, for example, of our ubiquitous consumption of pornography.

way for which expression through horror makes sense: “Sex makes young adolescent boys feel many things, but one of them, quite frankly, is scared.” Obviously, King’s gender specificity is moot. For the uninitiated or barely initiated, sex carries both intense allure and fear no matter the gender. If anything, the constant barrage of sexual images with which adolescents are bombarded today only increase these anxieties, since they provide hyperbolic versions of everything from physical prowess and dimensions to the sexual acts themselves.

Consequently, today the vampire’s expression as a manifestation of unconscious sexual fears appears primarily in books written for young adults, *i.e.* middle school age and slightly older, those burgeoning on sexual maturity and consummation. These versions are similar to the relationship between *Teen Wolf* and a true werewolf tale. They maintain the iconography of vampire lore while defanging the monster itself. The best example of this phenomenon is the *Twilight* series of novels by Stephanie Meyer.<sup>95</sup> These novels are meant to sooth sexual anxiety, not exploit it. Edward, the vampire who is Bella’s (the protagonist’s) love interest, isn’t truly frightening. (I submit any vampires who play baseball for amusement are, by their very nature, not horrific.) The danger he represents is superficial. The story is less a vampire tale than a version of *Beauty and the Beast*, wherein Bella sees through Edward’s beastly nature and “cures” him.<sup>96</sup> (The name *Bella*, of course, means *beautiful*.) The books are romance novels, not horror. Even earlier than Meyer, L. J. Smith creates *The Vampire Diaries* novel series in 1991, and they increase in popularity through a television series of the same name that runs from 2009-2017.<sup>97</sup> Although the vampires are more dangerous than in Meyer, the series of books traces the romance between Elena and Stefan, the vampire. In the first book, Stefan believes he may be responsible

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<sup>95</sup> The series begins with *Twilight* (2005) and ends with *Breaking Dawn* (2008).

<sup>96</sup> Barbot de Villeneuve, Gabrielle-Suzanne (1740), *Le Belle et la Bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*).

<sup>97</sup> The publishing history of these books is too long and convoluted to bother to detail here.

for recent deaths, but it turns out the killer is his brother and fellow vampire, Damon. The symbolism is thus more complicated than in *Twilight* with brothers embodying good and evil aspects of the psyche, but it is nonetheless not adult horror.

Similarly, the vampire in fiction aimed at adults is now usually relegated to the role of “bad boy” in romance novels, although without the level of attendant danger present in his Byronic hero form. They make other appearances as well. Charline Harris’s *The Southern Vampires Mysteries* series of novels, which is developed into the television series *True Blood*, is a good example of their use.<sup>98</sup> The series, in both print and televised forms, offers plenty of images of horror, but they are presented as a device for communicating social themes. The series uses vampires and other supernatural beings as a vehicle to explore things like race relations, gender issues, and discrimination. Therefore, it remains thematically about the Other, but it empathizes with the Other; it does not fear the Other. The trappings of horror are there, but they exist to serve drama, not the unconscious.

To be sure, vampire novels are still published; however, while they might be consumed readily by some horror fans, none has reached a level within the popular consciousness approaching that of King’s *Salem’s Lot* or Rice’s *Vampire Chronicles*. Best sellers like Elizabeth Kostova’s *The Historian* (2005), which has Dracula (Vlad the Impaler) at its center, are not works of horror. Our more open ideas regarding sexuality have dragged the vampire into the sunlight and ended its reign as Prince of Monsters. Even if that is so, you may ask, what has happened to our unconscious need to express our fears of the Other, the very thing upon which King bases his vampire masterpiece? That role shifts to the final manifestation of horror we’ll discuss: the zombie.

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<sup>98</sup> The novel series begins with *Dead Until Dark* (2001) and ends with *Dead Ever After* (2013). The HBO series runs from 2008-2014.



## *The Zombie*

As fellow revenants, vampires and zombies have similarities. In *Danse Macabre*, King explicitly links the two, connecting the zombie films *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* to vampires, although “. . . the symbolic act of blood-drinking has been replaced by the act of cannibalism itself as the dead chomp into the flesh of their living victims.”<sup>99</sup> It does not seem coincidental that as the vampire loses the potency to address repressed sexual desires (half of its symbolic range), the zombie lurches forward to claim control of the rest: the Other.

The ascendancy of the zombie can be traced through the evolution of cinematic interpretations of a single work. Richard Matheson’s *I Am Legend* (1954) is a vampire novel that focuses on the Other. In it, we meet Robert Neville in a post-pandemic world where the illness has turned all humans, except him, into vampires. They behave like traditional vampires, reacting to apotropaics like garlic and crucifixes, limiting their movements to darkness, and drinking blood. The vampires are invulnerable to bullets, so Neville hunts and destroys them with stakes, while spending the rest of his time (when he isn’t drinking himself into a stupor) searching for a cure.

His studies reveal the pandemic is bacterial, and there are two types of vampires. The first are the infected living, who behave like vampires as their disease worsens; hence, the efficacy of an apotropaic like crucifixes holds over them. They are conditioned by their past knowledge to recoil from them as a vampire would. The second type are reanimated corpses set in motion by the bacteria, as the organism infects both dead and living tissue. Although both groups are referred to as vampires, this reanimated group behaves in a way we think of as more consistent with zombies, reactive to stimuli but without evidence of highest brain functions. The

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<sup>99</sup> Romero, George A. (director), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978).

bacteria itself is sensitive to garlic and sunlight, so therefore its hosts are as well. Neville also learns the disease emits a glue-like substance to seal wounds like bullet holes instantly; however, if injured with a broad, open wound exposing a large amount of tissue to the air, a vampire liquifies. This effect is caused by the bacteria switching from anaerobic to aerobic and consuming their hosts. Armed with this knowledge, Neville more efficiently dispatches the vampires in greater numbers.

One day, he encounters a terrified young woman named Ruth. He coaxes her home. Although he is suspicious of her (she recoils from garlic but is immune to sunlight), they eventually gain mutual trust and comfort each other physically and emotionally. Neville describes his search for a cure and promises to cure her. Before he can, Ruth knocks him unconscious and flees. Neville awakens to a note which explains her situation. (Is Matheson purposely toying with epistolary form here?) She is, in fact, infected and sent to spy on him; however, her people have discovered medicinal therapies which prevent death (and thereby reanimation) and ameliorate other effects of the bacteria. The reanimated vampires are truly dangerous, but these other survivors are building a new society. Unfortunately, Neville has killed so many of them that they are his enemies. She professes her love, even though Neville killed her husband, and urges him to run.

Neville chooses to stay, believing he can reason with the group and join them. He is wrong, and they unleash a horde of revenant vampires, mortally wound him with a gunshot, and take him prisoner. Ruth visits him in his cell, and he understands the new society's need to execute him for his actions against them. She gives him suicide pills, so he won't suffer. As the novel ends, Neville waits for the pills to work and looks out the window. He sees the others

looking at him with hatred, and he realizes he will be a legend whose story is handed down among the generations of the new society, like the legend of vampires was in his.

The first adaptation of the novel is *The Last Man on Earth*, starring Vincent Price as Robert Morgan, (*i.e.* Neville).<sup>100</sup> Besides the name change, the qualities of the vampires change as well. They cease to move much as humans (and vampires) do and become lumbering. He is killed in a church through impalement (*i.e.* like a vampire). The novel is adapted again in 1971 as *The Omega Man* (Boris Sagal, director). Charlton Heston plays Neville, and Rosalind Cash is Lisa (*i.e.* Ruth). Vampires are replaced by photosensitive albino mutants, who call themselves the “Family” and seek to wipe out humanity for causing the pandemic through biological warfare. Neville is again impaled, but Lisa, who has turned mutant and betrayed him, later escapes with other survivors and a serum developed by Neville. The final adaptation readopts the original title and stars Will Smith as Neville.<sup>101</sup> Here, a mutated virus developed to fight cancer goes horribly wrong and wipes out 90% of the world’s population and turns most of those remaining into flesh-eating mutants extremely vulnerable to UV light. They are also hyper-fast and strong. Neville gives the cure he discovers to Anna (his Ruth) and sacrifices himself with a grenade, so she and her son can escape to a stronghold in Vermont. In the end, Neville will be a remembered as a legend for saving humanity.

So *I Am Legend* begins as a vampire novel, but it serves as the source material for a zombie movie, as opposed to a vampire movie, 50 years later. And the book is not just any vampire novel – the Horror Writers Association honors it with a special Vampire Novel of the Century Award in 2011. To see this evolution from vampires to zombies, let’s look a little closer

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<sup>100</sup> Salkow, Sidney & Ubaldo B. Ragona (directors) (1964), *The Last Man on Earth*. Originally, the great Fritz Lang of *Metropolis* fame was scheduled to direct. When notified of the change of director, Matheson purportedly said, “Well, there’s a bit of a drop.”

<sup>101</sup> Lawrence, Frances (director) (2007), *I Am Legend*.

at the changes the material undergoes. The novel is written in 1954, less than a decade after World War II. Matheson's vampires are not supernatural beings; they are created, albeit accidentally, which can be viewed as a metaphor for the transformation of the German populace into Nazis.<sup>102</sup> King points out “. . . that Neville's very success as a vampire-hunter . . . has turned *him* into the monster, the outlaw, the Gestapo agent who strikes at the helpless as they sleep.”<sup>103</sup> The Vincent Price version is released ten years later when many who were adults during the war would still be under the age of 50, and of the three films, it most closely follows the novel. Matheson's theme, that we are all (at least potentially) monsters, crystalized at the novel's end is almost entirely gone. A meager symbolic echo of it remains as Price is impaled by a spear in a church, almost like a Christopher Lee Dracula might; however, he has derived no self-awareness and dies spewing curses.

Although *The Omega Man* is released a mere seven years later, the world has changed dramatically. (The change is visible: compare photos of the Beatles or the Beach Boys in 1964 versus 1971 to see it reflected.) The intervening years see the Summer of Love; the assassinations of Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy; numerous protests, occupations, bombings, and riots; the moon landing; Woodstock; and, significantly, the Tate-LaBianca murders. The social order established by the WWII generation is in total disarray, an upheaval led by their own children, who themselves have transformed into beings almost unrecognizable. Their children exude Otherness with their long hair, odd clothes, loudly amplified music, loosened sexual mores, and recreational drug use, the last of these replete with attendant maniacal laughter, dervish-like dancing, induced catatonic-like states, and otherworldly visions and hallucinations. This all threatens the complete collapse of the culture as they know it.

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<sup>102</sup> Recall how Eisler details the Third Reich is rich with werewolf iconography.

<sup>103</sup> *Danse Macabre, op. cit.*

Originally a factory worker in Matheson then a scientist as played by Price, Charlton Heston's Neville is now a military man, a representative of the guardians of social order standing alone against the chaos. The mutants are Luddites because they see technology as causing mankind's destruction through biological warfare and direct that hatred toward Neville. (In life, many young people choose to abandon society's comforts and live on communes during this period of technological achievements epitomized by the Apollo Program.) The film's mutants, though fanatical and determined, are neither revenants nor flesh/blood eaters. The sole remnant of vampirism is their nocturnal behavior due to photosensitivity, although Heston's character dies a death similar to Price's, *i.e.* similar to a vampire's. The mutants are a cult and call themselves the "Family." Charles Manson's cult, known as the "Manson Family," commit their astonishingly brutal and gruesome murders under the cover of darkness in 1969. Manson himself is sentenced in 1971, the same year *The Omega Man* premieres.<sup>104</sup>

Obviously, a much longer interval passes before the last film, and by 2007 the Boomer young adults of 1971 are in charge. The filmmakers, with their use of the original title, seem to want to return to the novel, but zombies have now fully replaced the dominance of vampires in the culture; consequently, the film results in a jumble of all that came before it. Smith's Neville is a soldier like Heston's, but the mutants revert to being flesh-eaters, which King points out is analogous to blood-drinkers. They are cunning (they snare Neville the same way he snares one of them) but sizzle like bacon in sunlight. Interestingly, an alternate ending is shot in which Neville returns the mutant leader's female upon whom he perfected his antidote serum. When the mutant leader departs with her in peace, Neville realizes and regrets how he experimented on the

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<sup>104</sup> Some of the Beach Boys, specifically Dennis Wilson, know Manson, and one of Manson's songs is recorded by them, albeit uncredited. "Cease to Exist" is reworked into "Never Learn Not to Love" and credited to Wilson. It is released as the B-side to the single "Bluebirds Over the Mountain."

mutants without regard for their humanity. This ending is scrapped for one where the monsters are kept irredeemable and Neville heroic for his opposition to them until his sacrifice at the end.

Our review of *I Am Legend* and its subsequent interpretations demonstrates the shift from the vampire as representative of the Other to that role being filled by the zombie. But why? Why is the zombie better at this role today than the vampire? As I've suggested, the sexual repression and its anxiety the vampire symbolizes seems to have moved from horror to other expressions; however, even without it, the vampire remains a powerful example of Otherness. Yet, when the vampire appears in horror today, it frequently does so as a vampire/zombie hybrid. For example, *The Strain Trilogy* (2009-2011), by Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan, and the television series of the same name (2014-2017), concerns vampiric zombies under the control of a vampire master out to dominate humanity. (Incidentally, the master's chief minion is a former SS concentration camp officer.) What additional elements does the zombie bring to make it a better vehicle than the vampire alone for expressing anxiety about Otherness?

To understand why, we must go back to the zombie's origins and examine how the legend changes over time. As del Toro points out,

A lot of people don't realize this, but the modern myth of the zombie was birthed out of vampirism. The original conception of the zombie was just a revived soulless creature. The modern idea of the zombie as a cannibal corpse was birthed out of George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* and Romero has stated several times that he was just trying to do his own version of *I Am Legend*.<sup>105</sup>

I agree with del Toro's assessment, but some readers place zombie references much earlier; specifically, they place them in the oldest extant work of literature, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.<sup>106</sup> Gilgamesh's story is told in cuneiform inscribed clay tablets, some fragmentary, rediscovered by

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<sup>105</sup> Watercutter, Angela (16 Nov 2011), "Guillermo del Toro Talks Vampires, Giant Monsters and the 'Arrogance of Science'" in *Wired*.

<sup>106</sup> Tablets with stories about Gilgamesh date to 2100 BCE.

scholars in 1849 and first translated in the 1870s. Since then, it has been translated multiple times, and the versions do not always agree, including for the passage in question where Ishtar entreats her father Anu to release the Bull of Heaven. In the Andrew George translation (2003), Ishtar threatens, “If you do not give me the Bull of Heaven, . . . I shall bring up the dead to consume the living, I shall make the dead outnumber the living.” The same passage in an earlier translation by N. K. Sandars (1960) threatens the released dead “will [cause] confusion of people, those above with those from the lower depths. I shall bring up the dead to eat food like the living; and the hosts of dead will outnumber the living.”<sup>107</sup> Clearly, the difference rests on whether the dead will *eat* the living or eat *like* the living. No matter which translation is more accurate; however, Ishtar’s threat is more about disrupting the social and natural orders to get her way than raising a zombie army. (Anu, before he accedes to her wishes, asks if she has taken pains to ensure the people will not starve because releasing the Bull of Heaven is its own disruption of that order.) In any event, she doesn’t make good on her threat, so seeing no zombies here, we’ll skip a few thousand years.

If vampires are relatively late to the monster party compared to werewolves, the zombie just barely arrived. The word first enters English as *zombi* in 1819, but the idea enters America through Haiti slightly earlier with slaves brought from that island nation to our shores. It comes from the enslaved West Africans’ religion of vodou (or voodoo here) and stems from their belief in a bifurcated soul.<sup>108</sup> One part of a person’s spirit controls higher functions (what we might call executive brain function) and the other motor functions. Both are at risk to wander upon death and may be trapped by a *bokor*, an evil necromancer. The bokor can then utilize the body of the

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<sup>107</sup> Ishtar is usually considered as the Mesopotamian god of sex and war (*i.e.* death). Does that make her God of the Vampires as well?

<sup>108</sup> Believers view vodou and voodoo as religions separated by specific differences; however, I am presenting a combined overview, as could be done for Christianity and Islam without delving into the specifics of differing sects.

deceased person to do their bidding. Culturally, this zombie is not something to be feared but pitied. The fate of becoming a zombie, however, is terrifying, and it comes to serve as an allegory for slavery itself, where the victims of which have lost all semblance of autonomy.

Around the same as *zombie* enters English, *Frankenstein* is published, which coincidentally has been marked by some as the first zombie novel, based upon creators of bona fide zombie works declaring it to be inspirational.<sup>109</sup> This thinking seems wrong to me for two reasons. First, zombies are dead individuals who are reanimated, and part of their horror is the contrast of the individual's past as a living being with their undead experience. The Creature, on the other hand, is an assemblage of parts and thus entirely new; he has no past. Second, the Creature better fits a different type of revenant: the dead avenger.<sup>110</sup> These revenants seek vengeance upon the living for a real or perceived slight perpetrated against them in life or in response to some kind of defilement of their remains after death. The story of the Mummy (especially the 1932 Karl Freund version starring Boris Karloff) as well as numerous tales published by EC Comics and appearing in *Tales from the Crypt* and other comic books, and their subsequent retellings in various film and television forms, fit this revenant type. Some of the latter include "The Thing from the Grave!" (1951), "Scared to Death!" (1951), "The Handler" (written by Ray Bradbury) (1953), and more.<sup>111</sup>

The honor of first zombie novel, therefore, goes not to *Frankenstein*, but to *Herbert West–Reanimator* by H. P. Lovecraft.<sup>112</sup> The novel is certainly indebted to Shelley's, which Lovecraft acknowledges. The plot follows West, a mad scientist intent on proving life is a mere

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<sup>109</sup> E.g. H. P. Lovecraft and George A. Romero.

<sup>110</sup> Some of Poe's premature burial tales fit this category.

<sup>111</sup> Sometimes body parts alone seek revenge as in "The Maestro's Hand!" (1950), which is similar to the novel *The Lizard's Tail* by Marc Brandel (1979) in turn made into the film *The Hand* (Oliver Stone [director] [1981]). In all three, a severed hand seeks revenge.

<sup>112</sup> Lovecraft, H. P. (1922), *Herbert West–Reanimator*, first serialized in *Home Brew* (Vol 1, 1-6).



mechanical process by using a serum to reanimate the dead. The narrator, another doctor, is both fascinated and complicit in aiding West. Eventually, West's efforts result in his being swarmed and destroyed by the reanimated. The specific differences from Shelley, however, are enough to push the novel into some new territory. First, West reanimates many bodies, creating an army of the undead who swarm together. Like the Creature, they are unpredictably violent, but unlike him they are almost completely inarticulate. (Some utter or scream single words.) Lovecraft's monsters are also cannibalistic, and West dies by disembowelment. These changes make it a zombie novel, in the modern sense, although the word *zombie* never appears. It is also almost irredeemably awful.<sup>113</sup> Consequently, aside from its historical importance, the novel is forgotten (at least until the 1980s).

While Lovecraft's novel isn't influential in its time, W. B. Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1928) is. Seabrook is a flamboyant figure adept at self-promotion. Aleister Crowley stays at his farm in 1919, and he claims to have eaten human flesh in Africa. Ostensibly a travelogue of Haiti, *The Magic Island* describes zombified plantation workers at great length and brings the word *zombie* into the popular consciousness. The book also serves as inspiration for the film *White Zombie*, the first zombie movie.<sup>114</sup> August Derleth publishes *The House in the Magnolias* (1932), a story about Black zombie slaves, the same year. Therefore, Lovecraft's detour aside, the idea of the zombie returns to its roots derived from enslaved Blacks in both the books and film. Consequently, the zombies in *White Zombie* are not like movie zombies today. They are revenants enslaved to do the bidding of their master named (I kid you not) Murder Legendre and played by none other than Bela Lugosi.

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<sup>113</sup> S. T. Joshi says the book is "universally acknowledged as Lovecraft's poorest work." ("H. P. Lovecraft" published at *Scriptorium* and archived at waybackmachine.com.)

<sup>114</sup> Halperin, Victor (director) (1932), *White Zombie*.

The zombie of the title is a woman named Madeleine Short, who travels to Haiti to meet her fiancé Neil Parker. Plantation owner Charles Beaumont encounters her and is so smitten he goes to Murder and beseeches his magical help to win her. (Murder's sugar workers, as well as his guardian retinue, are zombies he created.) Murder agrees but tells him the only way to do so is through zombification. Charles poisons her shortly after her wedding, and he and Murder raise her from the dead. Neil enlists the aid of the local doctor, who is wise to Murder's murderous ways, and the pair assail Murder's castle to rescue Madeleine. As the zombies close in on Neil, the doctor knocks Murder unconscious, which breaks his spell over the reanimates, and they wander indiscriminately and tumble over a cliff. When Murder awakes, he and Charles, now remorseful, do battle, and they fall over as well. Murder's death releases the curse over Madeleine, and she and Neil are reunited.

A torrent of zombie movies floods theaters after *White Zombie*, including *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936), *King of the Zombies* (1941), *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), *Zombies of Mora Tau* (1957), and *The Plague of the Zombies* (1966). Generally, all feature a white woman (or women) threatened, including menace from other zombies, with death and zombification. What we're looking at in these instances is the racist trope of Black people as the Other.

Up until now, I've been tracing how horror reflects the fear inherent within our own unconscious desires, which in turn both repels and attracts us. The horror represented here, however, is not necessarily unconscious. For some, it may be below the threshold of consciousness, but it is also a conscious, albeit repugnant, fear for others. The source of the evil in these films is voodoo, *i.e.* an African system of belief, whether the perpetrators on film are Black or not. (Bela Lugosi will never be taken for Black, no matter how ridiculous the name of his character.) We infer through the practice of their evil beliefs that Blacks are primitive,

violent, and unintelligent. The “traits” are a means to justify Jim Crow laws and racial segregation. With their threats to white women, including the unspoken but implied sexual threat, the symbolic messages are clear: Blacks are to be feared. While certainly not anywhere near perfect, cultural attitudes have shifted dramatically for the better since the 1930s-1950s, and I find these films lose their ability to horrify in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, except for the blatant ignorance and bigotry they embrace.

If the zombie had remained in this original form, it is likely its popularity in horror would have waned; however, the release of George A. Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) turned the concept of the zombie on its head. As I noted earlier, Romero was inspired by *I Am Legend*, rather than traditional, *i.e.* voodoo, zombies. He says,

I never thought of my guys as zombies, when I made the first film. . . . To me, zombies were still those boys in the Caribbean doing the wetwork for [Bela] Lugosi. . . . I never called them zombies. I never thought of them as zombies. It was only when people started to write about the film and take it a bit seriously that they started to call them zombies. So I called them zombies when I made the second film 10 years later.<sup>115</sup>

Whether or not intentional, the impact of this film changes horror as we know it and not just for how it redefines zombies. Until *Night of the Living Dead*, horror films are heavily influenced by the German Expressionism from which they first debuted, taking cues from F. W. Murnau’s silent *Nosferatu*. As such, they are highly stylized, and the best of them, even the more pulp renderings like those from Hammer Films, rely primarily on mood and atmosphere rather than gore to achieve their desired effects. For better or ill, Romero embraces the carnage in his apocalyptic vision. We see zombies realistically devour their victims, flesh strains and tears under their ravenous appetites. Whereas in the past, the camera might pan away from the

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<sup>115</sup> Collis, Clark (18 Jul 2017), “George A. Romero thought *Night of the Living Dead* would be a one-off,” in *Entertainment Weekly*.

monster as the audience hears a bloodcurdling scream, now we see them sink their teeth into their victims.

The film is of the era immediately preceding the MPAA ratings system of G, M, R, and X. Like *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, director) from the previous year and *The Wild Bunch* (Sam Peckinpah, director) released the following year, *Night of the Living Dead* pushes the boundaries of its genre into more graphically realistic territory. Audiences are simply unprepared and shocked. As Elliott Stein notes, the film

. . . traded the expressionistic sets of the traditional fright flick for a neorealistic style—Romero’s use of natural locations and grainy black and white gave his gorefest the look and feel of a [documentary]. And this was not Transylvania, but Pennsylvania—this was Middle America at war, and the zombie carnage seemed a grotesque echo of the conflict then raging in Vietnam. In this first-ever subversive horror movie, the resourceful black hero survives the zombies only to be killed by a redneck posse, and a young girl nibbles ravenously on her father’s severed arm—disillusionment with government and patriarchal nuclear family is total.<sup>116</sup>

Much of the movie’s aesthetic stems from Romero shooting it on a shoestring budget, but the effect is synergistic, the elements work together to produce a total greater than its individual elements, which even unintentionally harken back to the epistolary form discussed earlier.<sup>117</sup>

Fittingly, *Night of the Living Dead* begins in a cemetery, where adult sister and brother Barbra and Johnny are attacked by a gray, tattered man. Johnny is killed, but Barbra escapes to a farmhouse. There, she meets Ben, who fends off the gathering horde with fire and with a rifle he finds. (We later learn a previous encounter taught him fire’s efficacy against the zombies.) Barbra drops into a semi-catatonic state as Ben looks to secure the house. Harry and Helen Cooper emerge from the cellar, as do the young couple Tom and Judy. The Coopers’ daughter Karen remains in the cellar, sick from a bite she suffered when the family was attacked before

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<sup>116</sup> Stein, Elliott (7 Jan 2003), “The Dead Zones” in *The Village Voice*.

<sup>117</sup> *C.f. fn 82*.

taking refuge. The Coopers return to the cellar, but Tom helps Ben board up windows, giving the group some degree of safety from the horde.

As the night continues, the group hears reports that reanimated cannibalistic corpses now roam the eastern seaboard, and posses of armed men are attempting to hunt them down. The monsters can be killed either by destroying the brain or by fire. They also learn about a rescue center in their area. Ben devises a plan to refuel his pickup, then take the group to the rescue center for protection and medicine for Karen. When he and the young couple try to fill the truck, however, they are swarmed over. The truck explodes from a gasoline spill, killing the couple. Ben escapes and makes it back to the house, but Harry refuses to allow him in. Ben breaks in and beats Harry for his actions. As the zombies break through their defenses, Ben shoots Harry in all the commotion. Meanwhile, Karen dies, reanimates, and begins feasting on her father. She also kills her mother. Barbra is dragged through an opening by her reanimated brother, and Ben is forced to retreat to the cellar. After killing the reanimated Harry and Helen, he waits out the night. He surfaces in the morning and looks out the window, only to be shot in the head by a member of a roving posse.

Whether or not at times accidental, the influence of *Night of the Living Dead* is difficult to overstate. Only Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) does more to disrupt the nature of horror films, and that film can be connected to Romero's in at least two ways. First, Hitchcock makes the deliberate decision to film in black and white. He chooses to do so in part to lower the production costs but also to prevent the shower scene from being overly gory. Romero's decision to do the same actually heightens the realism. Too often in films made during roughly the first 35 years of the color era, blood is too bright a shade of red to appear real. (Think of the blood dripping from the puncture wounds made by any Christopher Lee Dracula.) But black and white

cinematography and the attendant shadows from the “night” creates a realistic illusion. (Both films purportedly use watered-down chocolate syrup for the effect.) Romero is not concerned with too much gore, but he does have the problem of creating believable special effects on a miniscule budget. Black and white also allows him to disguise foods like ham as human flesh without needing to address elements like color differences, turning a possible liability into a boon encouraging the audience’s suspension of disbelief.

The second and more important connection to *Psycho* is the ending. Hitchcock kills off Marion Crane (Janet Leigh), whom he has established as the main character, in that famous shower halfway through the picture, which throws his audience into disequilibrium by destroying conventional expectations. They are further destroyed at the very end of the movie. Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins) may be captured, but as the psychiatrist (Simon Oakland) explains, Norman is no longer Norman; he’s his mother, and she is the real murderer. The added question of responsibility, then, creates a disquieting feeling of ambiguity in our sense of justice. Who deserves righteous punishment? Norman? His mother? Norman’s concept of his mother?

Romero takes this lack of moral clarity further. In werewolf movies, the werewolf dies atoned for his transgressions. In vampire films, the vampire’s reign is ended with a stake in the chest, even if he’s destined to rise from the grave in a sequel. In *Night of the Living Dead*, however, the hero is shot in the head, and the zombie carnage continues unchecked. We are left reeling and alone in an amoral universe, where the righteous are punished along with the wicked. In *Danse Macabre*, King cites the end of the film as an example of an expectation for a horror story to end with a twist, a final big scare, as it were. While this observation is not wrong, something greater is going on here than, for example, when Carrie’s hand explodes from the grave in Brian De Palma’s adaptation (director, 1976) of King’s book *Carrie* (1974), or when the

body of Michael Myers disappears despite falling from the upstairs bedroom balcony in *Halloween* after being shot six times by Dr. Loomis (Donald Pleasence).<sup>118</sup> In the latter example, the bogeyman is still *out there* with the potential to return to menace Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis) again; however, this time a savior (Loomis) *does* arrive. *Night of the Living Dead* says no one will save you. You cannot count on family (zombie Johnny kills Barbra; the Coopers are devoured by their zombie daughter), society (the posse kills Ben), or even yourself (Ben does everything “right” but dies anyway); you are ultimately doomed.

Romero claims he isn’t making any sort of political statement with the film; nevertheless, viewing it within the context of the period makes it especially difficult not to see such a statement. Casting Duane Jones, a Black man, in the role of Ben makes a political declaration. Although the film is finished prior to MLK’s assassination that same year, racial protest and violence are events viewed nightly by the American public in the years leading up to the movie. Romero has said Jones simply had the best audition, though the role originally called for a white actor. Jones insisted on altering his character from the uneducated man on paper to an educated one on film, more cerebral than Harry, the representative of the white patriarchy. Ben slaps a white woman (the hysterical Barbra), takes authority over a group of whites, especially challenges and dismisses patriarch Harry (including physically beating him), shoots invading white people (albeit zombified – none of the zombies are Black), and in the end is killed by a posse of armed white men looking very much like a lynch mob.

The lasting impact of *Night of the Living Dead* for our purposes here, however, is that it radically alters our entire concept of the zombie. Gone is the idea of the traditional zombie with its impression of the zombie as a victim forced through black magic to helplessly do the bidding

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<sup>118</sup> Carpenter, John (director) (1978), *Halloween*.

of an evil bokor master. In its place, Romero gives us a zombie which becomes accepted as the modern form with its own set of qualities. Of course, he has no idea he is defining a new type of monster at the time; consequently, he breaks some of the exact zombie “rules” he is given credit for creating. Still, subsequent zombies follow a set of principles generally established by Romero.

Most striking of these characteristics is that the zombie is now a cannibalistic flesh eater, and right off the bat we hit one of Romero’s exceptions when a zombie pulls an insect off a tree and devours it in a close-up. Some later zombie permutations do eat animals, wild and domesticated, but animals are not as easy to catch as people, who remain their primary prey. (Watching these revenants rend human flesh with teeth and bare hands and then consume it raw lends these acts a disturbing atavistic quality.) They are also insatiable in their appetite. In nature, a herd of wildebeests can rest easy after a pride of lions brings down and eats one of their number. They remain safe from attack even after the beast is fully consumed and the lions rest and digest nearby with full bellies. Not so with zombies. They “live” solely to eat and remain ravenous no matter how much they consume.

The modern zombie is an autonomous agent; it answers to no master other than itself. Yet, these zombies form hordes or swarms when alerted to the presence of prey, and while not technically cooperating, they attack en masse. Moreover, the cognition of the modern zombie is low. They react to stimuli, mostly sight and sound, and use it to locate prey. They recognize their own kind and do not attack them; therefore, they are only *cannibalistic* in comparison to their former manifestation as a living human. Because of the ceaselessness of their desire to consume and the fact that they assault as a group, they can overcome some obstacles placed to prevent their advance. Their numbers allow random chance to permit the occasional opening of a door,



for example. Mostly, however, they defeat defenses in their path through the brute force of their collective power. They are not tool users, although Romero again breaks this “rule” when Karen kills her mother with a trowel.<sup>119</sup> Finally, despite their lack of brain power, Romero establishes the most consistent way to deanimate the reanimated: the destruction of the brain either through gunshot, bludgeoning, or blow with a sharp blade (*e.g.* sword, machete, shovel).

People live in a constant struggle between two diametrically opposed psychological drives: the impulse toward individuality versus the urge to be a member of a group. This battle first begins in adolescence as teenagers seek to assert their individuality in order to separate from their parents. They regularly, and exasperatingly from the perspective of their parents, express their need to be recognized as unique and singular human beings. Simultaneously, however, they have a deep need to fit into a social group, and nothing can be as painful to them as to be ostracized and shunned by their peers. As we further develop into adulthood, the intensity of this conflict diminishes. This reduction of internal discord is due to the fact that during the movement toward individuation (for Jung part of the natural process of psychological development), we gain a more secure sense of Self.<sup>120</sup> For most people, the conflict never truly goes away; however, it now can paradoxically manifest itself in the expression of the Other.

The concept of the Other is related to all personified manifestations of horror. Sometimes the Other lives hidden among us. These cases include some creatures like the werewolf whose Otherness is triggered and revealed by forces outside their control (*i.e.* the full moon), as well as those who keep their Other natures hidden through acts of conscious will (*e.g.* the debonair literary vampire, many witches, warlocks, and some demons). However, some are locked in a

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<sup>119</sup> Romero later creates a zombie named Bud in *Day of the Dead* (1985) who obviously thinks and even acts as a sort of antihero in the film.

<sup>120</sup> *C.f.* Jung, C. J., *Symbols of Transformation* (1967) & *Psychological Types* (1971), Vols. 5 & 6 respectively of *Collected Works* (R. F. C. Hull, tr.).

permanent state of Otherness for all to see clearly. Frankenstein's Creature, the folkloric vampire, and the modern zombie are all examples of this latter type.

If you recall, I first brought up the concept of the Other in the context of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Vampire Controversy as a possible reason for why the idea of the vampire captures the imaginations of the country-folk. In that context, the Self is properly defined as the individual as a member of the collective. The Other (the vampire) is emblematic of outside forces eroding the entire worldview of the villagers. As the vampire morphs into the modern zombie, though, the relationship to the Other shifts as well. The first stage of that process is the literary vampire. Its Otherness becomes hidden, and it manifests itself through the violation of sexual norms. The Self is in opposition with the greater collective; the Byronic Hero rebels against the accepted social orthodoxy. With the modern zombie, however, the Other again shifts back to that aspect of the Self lured or drawn to the collective. Examining the characteristics of the modern zombie (as "defined" by Romero) through the lens of the Other makes this clear.

Although it can be directed at an individual figure like the folkloric vampire, fear of the Other typically manifests against an entire group or class, rather than individuals. In an historical context, fear of the Other was successfully exploited by strongmen and their minions throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a method to consolidate power and led to the genocides of the period, from the massacres of Armenians by the Ottomans (Turks), through the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps, Stalin's "Great Terror" and Mao's "Great Leap Forward," to Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge killing fields to rid Cambodia of the so-called ethnically impure, and on and on through Serbia and Rwanda to China's current campaign against their Uyghur minority. Consequently, as a lone and anomalous figure, even the folkloric vampire is not the most

effective means to capture the fear generated by the Other, especially given our contemporary understanding of the phenomena the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Vampire Controversy attempted to explain.<sup>121</sup>

One of the defining attributes of the modern zombie, as well as their power over their more cognitively aware prey, is their tendency to swarm into hordes. A single zombie of the lumbering Romero-type can be readily outmaneuvered and outpaced by a healthy person. (Of course, hubris regarding their ability in this regard frequently leads to the unwitting death of many characters.) A horde of zombies, however, is a different matter. An individual in the open can be easily overwhelmed by such a troupe, and the sheer mass of hordes can shatter windows, collapse locked doors, destroy barricades, and otherwise invade the relative safety of hiding places. Given the danger a group of zombies represents, it is not surprising that it is from this tendency which the horror emanates.

Vampires are primarily solitary creatures, whether folkloric or literary. As I speculated earlier, the earliest incident which likely brought the word *vampire* into the general European consciousness involved the revenant Jure Grando of Serbia, and Grando never bit anyone and definitely didn't create new vampires. He was accused of sexually assaulting his widow, and his proximity alone was thought to cause several unexplained deaths. Dracula, the quintessential literary vampire, is certainly a confirmed biter, and he sometimes uses his bite to create other vampires. However, Dracula uses this ability deliberately and sparingly. He converts people to service his nefarious needs, not simply to create more vampires. While it is true some vampires seek to use this power to repopulate the world with their kind (notably King's Barlow from

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<sup>121</sup> It's interesting to note that the antisemitic tropes found in Murnau's *Nosferatu* purposefully enhanced the horror for German audiences, as the film is released between world wars at the precise moment in history that Jews are beginning to be explicitly blamed for Germany's troubles.

'*Salem's Lot*), most are like Rice's Lestat and Louis, who create others using Dracula's mold.<sup>122</sup>

In fact, infecting people simply to proliferate their kind most often occurs in vampire/zombie hybrids, such as del Toro and Hogan's *The Strain Trilogy*, rather than "straight" vampire stories. The "goal" of the modern zombie may simply be to sate its insatiable hunger, but there are secondary effects. Although it may not consciously seek world domination, as does the *strigoi* master in *The Strain*, the outcome is the same. Romero establishes the tenant that zombies beget more zombies. Whether killed outright, like Barbra's brother Johnny, or temporarily surviving a zombie bite only to die of infection (which later zombie tales make clear is not mere sepsis, but infection of another kind), like the Coopers' daughter, a victim is doomed to join the zombie ranks. Vampires *may* create more vampires; modern zombies *always* create more zombies.

Taken together, these twin traits of zombies of attacking in groups, albeit coincidental rather than deliberate, and the certainty of infection if bitten make the zombie a superior venue over the vampire for the expression of both conscious and unconscious fears of the Other. As I suggested earlier, the zombie marks a shift from the vampire as an individual violator of social norms back to the Other as the collective, presented in this context as a swarming horde. The psychological need to belong to a group is turned on its head. This group is mindless and devours all in its path. Yet the desire to be a part of it is there and real; hence, it must be repressed since it is untenable as a conscious thought.

As noted above, the Otherness of the literary vampire remains hidden. Whether Dracula himself or the three vampire sisters who set upon Harker in Dracula's castle or the earlier Carmilla, the Otherness of the literary vampire only becomes clear when it engages in its nefarious acts, *i.e.* when it sets out to oppose the social order. Otherwise, the literary vampire

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<sup>122</sup> Recall as well that King deliberately desexualizes his vampire novel, which significantly alters his vampires' role as the Other as the source of its horror.

acts and appears attractive, rather than repellant. As a seducer, the true nature of the literary vampire cannot be revealed until the critical moment of attack, and even then, its monstrous form can continue to remain hidden to the victim.<sup>123</sup> The zombie, though, is no shapeshifter; like the folkloric vampire, the zombie has permanently transformed from its living state into something else. For those who knew either when alive, the creatures remain recognizable, but their humanness is gone. They may resemble the *Homo sapiens* they were, but they no longer fit the description from the Latin of “discerning, wise, sensible.” This fact exacerbates the horror. The unconsciously desired transformation into a member of the Other symbolized by the zombie means a total loss of Self.

While I’ve spent considerable time contrasting the vampire and the zombie as manifestations of the Other, like the vampire, the horror evoked by the zombie has further connections to repressed psychological desires and guilt. Broadly speaking, the zombie can represent the unpunished truth within us coming to get us. To see this at work, let’s return to some stories we’ve already discussed from this perspective.

If you recall, my gloss of Poe focused in part on the recurring motif of premature burial found throughout his canon. I suggested that in such stories, those buried alive function as an alter ego for the protagonist and symbolize an aspect of the Self the protagonist is attempting to repress. The buried, however, refuse to stay so (usually through hallucination or a surrogate) and can therefore be viewed as revenants.<sup>124</sup>

For the purpose of better understanding the zombie, “The Fall of the House of Usher” is the best tale of this type on which to focus our attention. In it, Roderick convinces the narrator to

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<sup>123</sup> *C.f.* The voluptuous descriptions of the attacks upon Laura and Harker quoted earlier from their respective novels.

<sup>124</sup> “The Cask of Amontillado” is an obvious exception since Fortunato remains undiscovered for 50 years. In this case, Montressor’s confession acts as a sort of return of Fortunato.

help entomb Madeline, his twin, while she's still alive, though the narrator believes her to be dead. She literally claws her way out of her coffin to seek her revenge upon her brother. As a revenant, then, Madeline resembles a zombie in her relentless pursuit of Roderick to exact her revenge upon him. On the level of plot, her desire for revenge is clearly understandable; after all, Roderick *did* try to murder her. On the symbolic level, her revenge represents the refusal of one aspect of the Self to be dominated by another, which leads to the destruction of the Self, symbolized by the collapse of the house into the tarn.

When I introduced the vampire, I discussed revenant tales in general and "The Monkey's Paw" in particular. (I centered on how many revenant tales capitalize on our desire for reunification with a deceased loved one.) In that story, things go horribly wrong for a couple who use magical wishes on a mummified monkey's paw to summon their dead son from the grave. They then use their final wish for him to return to the cemetery. Of course, this seemingly simple, straightforward, and relatable desire is more psychologically complex than it may first appear.

Neither of these two stories does well in depicting representations of the Other through Madeline nor the son. The horror produced by the revenants in both, therefore, emanates from a different psychological source; namely, it springs from what I've termed the unpunished truth within us returning to hold us accountable. For Usher, that "truth" is the attempted dominance by part of the Self over the rest. In Jungian terms, it is the attempt of the *animus* to control the *anima*, the male and female parts of the personality respectively. Furthermore, the full integration of the Self (individuation) is inhibited by such an attempt and is indicative of mental illness. Consequently, the story dramatizes how the repressed portion of the Self will rise up against the part attempting to control it, resulting in a complete mental collapse.

In Jacobs's tale, after obtaining the monkey's paw from their dinner guest, the father, Mr. White, admits to his wife and son Herbert he is reluctant to wish upon it. Besides, he declares he is content with what he has, saying, "It seems to me I've got all I want." At this critical moment, Mr. White is very much like the native pearl diver Kino at the beginning of *The Pearl*.<sup>125</sup> Steinbeck's novella starts with Kino squatting in the doorway of his dirt floor hut, facing the sunrise and feeling absolutely content as he listens to his wife Juana and infant son going through their morning ablutions. That state of peace is eventually destroyed by the discovery of what should be great fortune: the Pearl of the World. With its discovery, Kino's repressed desires find expression in the possibilities he now sees because of it: a rifle for himself, a church wedding ceremony for Juana, and an education for Coyotito. Of course, the novella takes a tragic turn from there.

The destruction of Mr. White's satisfaction also arises from trying to be more than content. After his father's declaration, Herbert, who doesn't believe in the magic of the paw, suggests that if his father is clear of his mortgage, he'd truly have no worries and ironically calls for him to wish for a sum of £200.<sup>126</sup> The wish, of course, leads to Herbert's death, which leads to the second wish for his return from the grave, which leads to the wish that his mangled corpse return to the cemetery. Like Kino, Mr. White loses his fulfillment and is left with only the emptiness and despair of his grief when his repressed avarice is given a voice.

While neither Madeline nor Herbert qualify as true zombies, as fellow revenants they can cover much of the same psychic territory, just like the vampire and zombie do. A zombie can

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<sup>125</sup> Steinbeck, John (1947), *The Pearl*. While not a work of horror, Steinbeck's ending is certainly horrific.

<sup>126</sup> It's interesting to note that Kino's fear over his own son's scorpion sting coupled with the greedy lies of the doctor lead to his desperate search for the pearl. Ironically, Coyotito would have survived without the doctor's help and instead is killed by the men attempting to steal the pearl from Kino. As Bob Dylan says in "Like A Rolling Stone": "When you ain't got nothing, you got nothing to lose" (*Highway 61 Revisited* [1965]). Possession carries with it the idea of loss, just as the archetype of the mother carries with it the opposing ideas of life and death. *Because* the mother gives us life, she simultaneously dooms us to death.

perfectly depict the symbolic disintegration of the Self and the hidden corruption of avarice, as well as many other things. This symbolic fluidity of the zombie helps explain its complexity compared to the relative simplicity of the werewolf. In addition, as we'll shortly see, it connects the zombie to a wide variety of conscious fears as well. Finally, both are part of the reason for the zombie's continued popularity as a form of horror.

Zombie films quickly begin to proliferate after *Night of the Living Dead*, and eventually they achieve preeminence over other manifestations of horror. Most of these permutations offer us little to help further our understanding of how the zombie functions as a manifestation of horror; however, some significant milestones should be acknowledged before wrapping up our discussion. First of these is *The Return of the Living Dead*.<sup>127</sup> This film introduces the world to brain-eating zombies and creates a subgenre dedicated to them. These are generally similar to the Romero zombie, except they retain some power of speech, although they are usually limited to articulating their fondness for their favorite meal: "Brains!"<sup>128</sup> While I hope you can see the symbolic potential of the development, it remains an isolated subgroup that never supplants the more versatile general modern zombie.

A more important development occurs in the mid-1990s as the luster of the zombie is beginning to fade. In 1995, the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo cult sets off a coordinated attack during rush hour on the Tokyo subway system by releasing the biotoxin sarin, which kills 14 and injures about 1,000 more. The next year, Capcom releases a video game titled *Biohazard*, marketed in the U.S. as *Resident Evil*, and Sega releases *House of the Dead*.<sup>129</sup> These iterations are significant

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<sup>127</sup> O'Bannon, Dan (director) (1985), *The Return of the Living Dead*.

<sup>128</sup> Besides devouring brains, these zombies cannot be killed by a blow to the head.

<sup>129</sup> Fujiwara, Tokuro (general designer) (1996), *Biohazard/Resident Evil*. Sega (1996), *House of the Dead*.



for several reasons. First, they are hugely popular games, which increases the zombie's popularity among a younger audience, leading to a renaissance of the form lasting through today.

These games also mark the popularization of a major deviation from the Romero zombie: speed. These zombies are no longer stiff-legged, lumbering dangers easy to outrun and outmaneuver; they can now chase down their hapless prey.<sup>130</sup> While the slow-moving version continues a parallel existence, fast zombies become an option for creators of horror, sometimes both being attached to a single initial work. For example, the novel *World War Z* features slow-movie zombies, and the film adaptation has the fast type.<sup>131</sup>

Finally, they also begin a direct focus upon the source of contagion itself. In *Night of the Living Dead*, the cause of the dead rising to devour the living is unknown, although it is implied that somehow a mysterious meteor or comet is to blame. Now, the source is frequently a bioweapon (*Resident Evil*) or some sort of a laboratory accident (*I Am Legend*). These reflect actual fears after the Tokyo sarin gas attack, which is followed by the bombing at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996, where fragments were sent to the CDC for bioweapon analysis. The fears are further amplified in the wake of 9/11 and continue with the SARS (2003) and H1N1 (2009) pandemics through COVID-19. The film *28 Days Later* illustrates these changes.<sup>132</sup> A rage virus accidentally escapes a lab, and its victims turn on the uninfected. Although not reanimated corpses, they qualify as zombies by how they mob mindlessly together and exhibit a complete loss of control of their former selves (*e.g.* loss of personality).

This newer type of zombie doesn't totally supplant the earlier types, any more than fast zombies entirely replace the more traditional slow ones. However, the source of contagion is

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<sup>130</sup> Interestingly, the story of the mummy undergoes a similar change from the Universal original in its late 20<sup>th</sup> century rebooted versions.

<sup>131</sup> Brooks, Max (2003), *World War Z*. Forster, Marc (director) (2013), *World War Z*.

<sup>132</sup> Boyle, Danny (director) (2002), *28 Days Later*.

usually clearly identified, even in a film like *Quarantine*, where a TV crew is trapped in a building infected by a mysterious virus after the CDC locks the place down to prevent further spread.<sup>133</sup> This evolution also prevents the form from getting stale, allowing new audiences to discover it while maintaining its previous fanbase. (Of course, I'm not including zombie/comedy hybrids, like *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), *Zombieland* (2009), and *The Dead Don't Die* (2019). Although they contain plenty of jumps and scares, these films tend to be social commentary masquerading as horror, using qualities of the zombie – insatiable appetite, for example – as metaphors for things like mindless consumerism rather than tapping into unconscious fears.)

As a vehicle for expressing fears of the Other, it seems unlikely the zombie will lose popularity given our polarized political climate. People on both sides of the political spectrum have been shocked to discover friends and relatives absorbed into a collective of extremism. They may retain enough semblance to the persons we once knew to remain recognizable, but their beliefs make them something different and even monstrous. If it can happen to them, we wonder, why not us? And as I've suggested, on some unconscious level we desire absorption into the group and thus fear that aspect of ourselves.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention a final zombie film before wrapping up this discussion of horror in general and zombies in particular: Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017). Set in present day, the movie follows Chris Washington (Daniel Kaluuya), a young Black man, on a visit to meet the parents of Rose (Allison Williams), his girlfriend who is white. A pilgrimage to meet a partner's parents is not unusual, nor is an interracial relationship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, Chris's experience of being one of only couple of Black people in an all-white enclave is also sadly still too common today. To Chris (and to us), those few Black people seem very

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<sup>133</sup> Dowdle, John Erick (director) (2008), *Quarantine*.

odd, and at a garden party thrown by Rose's parents, the feel of the event is strangely reminiscent of a slave auction with the white guests evaluating Chris in a variety of disquieting ways. (We later witness an actual secret auction.)

Rose's mother Missy (Catherine Keener), who is a hypnotherapist, convinces Chris to undergo a session ostensibly to help him quit smoking. However, we soon learn the "therapy" is really a ruse to drug and control him. In a catatonic state, he is informed he will endure an operation where another consciousness, that of an elderly white man, will replace his. He will retain awareness as his former self, but he will be under the control of the new consciousness. Fortunately, through his own cunning and the help of a friend who recognizes something nefarious is happening and comes to find him, Chris is able to avoid this fate and destroy the evil community.

With *Get Out*, the zombie tale reaches full circle, again becoming an allegory for human bondage. Although few critics and fewer audience members made any link to the origins of the zombie and the vodou belief in a bifurcated soul, Peele tells his tale from the perspective of the *zombi*, rather than the evil bokor. Thus, he powerfully elucidates a theme about the hidden nature of racism using the symbols and ideas brought to America by way of Haiti through Africans in slavery. Like the original zombies, these are victims with which to empathize not fear.

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I selected the werewolf, the vampire, and the zombie upon which to focus because of their familiarity but also to highlight some interesting differences within the horror genre. The psychological focus of the werewolf tale remains relatively immutable through time. The surface stories of Lawrence Talbot/the Wolfman and Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde are very different, but their shared symbolism reveals their thematic intimacy, even though the latter is not generally thought

of as a werewolf. The werewolf tale is always going to center upon the unleashing of the Freudian id, just as the devil is always going to be “the representative of the evil in man” (Jones, *op. cit.*) no matter the details of the plot in which he appears.

In some ways, the vampire legend is the direct opposite. The psychological conflicts these tales represent shift emphasis depending upon the concerns of the period. Because of its diverse origins, the vampire has a panoply of associations that can be brought to the fore to emphasis to better fit the unconscious fears of a specific time. As we’ve seen, the vampire has carried sexual associations from its origins, and in some folkloric cases, like that of Jure Grando violating his widow, it is unambiguous. However, in most folkloric stories the sexual connotations are more implicit in things like the symbolism of sucking blood, rather than explicit. The advent of the literary vampire marks a shift toward sexuality, which then becomes inexorably linked to the vampire in the modern imagination.

The zombie strips the literary vampire of its sexuality and focuses on the Otherness of the revenant. The complexity of the vampire’s repressed psychological associations is thus multiplied in the zombie to a degree that makes it difficult for us to see how we are simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by it. However, the lure of giving over our Self to the mindless group represented by zombie as Other is nonetheless real, albeit deeply hidden.

### **The End of Part 1**

In Part 1 of this essay, I’ve postulated that what distinguishes horror from other genres is that horror takes our unconscious repressed desires and brings them to life using a symbolic veneer. Of course, horror exhibits other qualities as well. In *Danse Macabre*, King tells us “. . . I will try to terrorize the reader. But if I cannot terrify him/her, I will try to horrify; and if I find I cannot horrify, I’ll go for the gross-out. I’m not proud.” I don’t pretend this psychological

interpretation of horror is original; in fact, I've tried to show the opposite and used a variety of critical voices to support this view. Instead, I've led our meandering frolic through the genre to explicate how this process has unfolded and changed through time.

Part 1, then, has explored the *within you* half of the title "Within You, Without You."<sup>134</sup> The length of this discussion was necessary given the fact that the true meanings of works of horror are buried alive and require quite a lot of digging to set free. Part 2, *without you*, explores the genre of science fiction, and as my title suggests, the qualities of the genre are explicitly on display for all to see. Therefore, the approach in Part 2 is different from Part 1, as you shall see.

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<sup>134</sup> Of course, the title itself is lifted from the George Harrison song of the same name from *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) by the Beatles.