

The Victorian Perspective on Vampires: Vampire Stories in Nineteenth-Century British Newspapers

Jelige: “Vampire”

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Introduction

When one thinks about gothic literature, one of the first piece of fiction that comes to mind is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Considering that he is the most often portrayed literary character in films — he appears in 272 different films —, it is safe to say that his legacy does not just live on, but he is one of the most prominent figures among mythical creatures (see, Guinness World Records News). Of course, it depends on the person we ask, but the majority of people would describe a vampire as a tall, pale figure dressed in a cape who emerges from a coffin at night and preys on the blood of the living. However, this description does not line up with the vampires of folklore. The myths surrounding vampires vary from culture to culture; however, some aspects are constant. To understand this difference between the folkloric and the literary vampire, we must understand that vampires are a pan-European phenomenon that primarily originate in Easter-European cultures; however, from the nineteenth-century on to the present day, the image has integrated itself into Western popular culture and has broken lose from most of its roots (Groom 17).

Differences can be discovered between cultures, but in folklore, vampires usually tend to be unfortunate peasants who return to prey on the other villagers after their death. After the villagers have become suspicious of someone being a vampire, they would exhume the body and find it to have a ruddy complexion, maybe a pool of blood surrounding it and a bloated figure (Groom 78). They are hardly comparable with figures like Dracula, who is known for his pale complexion, supernatural abilities and aristocratic background. However, Dracula is not the first vampire in literature; a long tradition of vampire literature precedes him. Starting with John Polidori's *The Vampyre* and James Malcolm Rymer's *Varney the Vampyre: Or, The Feast of Blood*, the attributes attached to the fantastical creature have been changed drastically. In the nineteenth-century, many authors were inspired by the vampiric beasts and took artistic liberties with their characters. From adding the lengthened fangs to their description to making them fear the sunlight and religious symbols, vampires have lost many of their folkloric roots and got a new look and hunting method while being integrated into Western popular culture.

Not only did vampires undergo a drastic transformation in the nineteenth-century due to popular culture, but literature, newspapers and readers all began to change. Throughout the century, literacy has gone through an incredible growth. According to Dr Matthew Ingleby, "Between 1851 and 1900, there was a rise in British male literacy from 69.3 % to 97.2 %,

while for the female part of the population, the improvement in literacy rates was even more pronounced, from 54.8 % to 96.8 %” (Ingleby).

Such a drastic change in the number of readers and readership did not just affect society, the people, the books, and papers published in the second half of the nineteenth-century. The rise in literacy made new information available for working and middle-class people.

In the 1860s, journalistic sensationalism rose to fame. The sales depended on the reported cases of tragedy and the horrific. Penny newspapers started to appear, such as *Illustrated Police News*; its appeal was that it merged two of the most popular genres: police news and illustrated newspapers. Such newspapers were not always truthful or accurate; writers treated facts with certain liberty. Clearly, the best-selling papers were always the ones with a flashy headline and most gruesome crimes (see, *Illustrated Police News* in the *British Newspaper Archive*). The more respected newspapers also dedicated a bigger space for the accounts of murder and catastrophe in order to compete with the penny press. For example, in the sales of the *Star*, we can see precisely how the killings of Jack the Ripper affected the business:

In the wake of Annie Chapman’s murder, the *Star*’s circulation soared to 261,000 copies a day, then dipped down to 190,000 in mid-September, and rose again to 217,000 during the first week of October. Rather like a crude barometer of public interest in the Ripper murders, this paper reached a new peak of 300,000 just after Mary Kelly’s death. (Curtis 59)

Considering the mentality of the press and the insane popularity of vampires at the time, it is worth taking a look at the vampires that appeared on the pages of newspapers. The first step would be to compare the vampires described in articles published between 1850 and 1899 to the attributes of folkloric and literary vampires. Which image had a more significant impact on the vampire imagery published in the press? How did the authors of the articles approach the myths of vampires, did they treat them as an existing threat or considered them to be just fairytale monsters.

In my current research, after establishing what makes the folkloric and literary vampires different and how the changes done to the creature can be followed throughout the century; I will rely on the *British Newspaper Archive* database, which enables me to examine various periodicals and newspapers between 1850 and 1899. Due to the limited number of

articles found and analyzed, it is impossible to draw a general conclusion about Victorian readers. Many publications about the topic cannot be discussed because they were unavailable; for example, W. T. Stead's magazine *Borderland* and its article, "The Doctrine of the Demon Lover. Is He a Vampire, a Double, or an External?" (Baylen 34). On the other hand, I was lost among the millions of publications containing the word "vampire" (most of the results for this word were publications about the football team called "Vampires" or vampire was used in a metaphorical sense). The research will only focus on case studies and articles describing legends and myths. Articles that show apparent disbelief in the phenomenon will be first discussed, followed by the articles that give currency to the myth.

The Comparison of the Folkloric and the Literary Vampire

Due to vampires being rooted in Eastern-European culture, people had a very different perception of them in Western-Europe. Despite the knowledge of vampires, people did not automatically believe in their existence. Various creatures, such as ghosts, witches and werewolves, have been part of British folklore for a long time. For example, one of the first mentions of werewolves in British history is in *Otia Imperialia*, the encyclopedic work of Gervase of Tilbury, written in the 13th century. On the other hand, the word vampire only appeared in 1679, in *The present state of the Greek and Armenian churches, anno Christi 1678 written at the command of His Majesty by Paul Ricaut*. In this piece, Ricaut defines vampires as: "a pretended demon(s), said to delight in sucking human blood, and to animate the bodies of dead persons, which when dug up, are said to be found florid and full of blood" (qtd. in Wilson 580). This description is exciting and vital because it already treats vampires as superstitions. The fact that vampires were always perceived as foreign superstitions could have aided the British authors of the nineteenth-century in treating the creatures with such artistic liberty. Considering that vampire belief was widespread in Europe, and even in the United States, it is difficult to narrow down the description to a few characteristics. The next section will attempt to provide a quick overview of a few specific instances.

The Folkloric Vampire

When studying folktales, we always face the same problem that most of these stories lived on in national cultures by word of mouth, and not many have written records. In the eighteenth-century, there was a tendency to preserve folktales and collect them together in a

written form, but when it comes to vampires, it is not easy to decide where to look first. Montague Summers, a clergyman, writer, and teacher from the early 20th century, has provided one of the most detailed overviews of occult creatures; he dedicated two books to vampires. In his first volume, *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*, he traces back the vampire myth to Egypt, Greece and Assyria. Nick Groom, however, does not consider these instances as examples of vampires, merely as myths focusing on undead creatures. He argues that there are vampiric attributes to particular creatures, but that does not make them vampires; the witches in *Macbeth* are not vampires, despite drinking blood. He instead brings up the example of vampires in Serbian folklore. He does not provide a tale or myth as an example, but legislation that was passed in the first half of the 14th century:

Article 20 of the Emperor Stefan Dušan undertook to prohibit the unlawful exhumation of those accused of being undead: ‘When it happens that, by magic means, people are taken out of their graves and cremated, the village where that was done must pay a fine, and the priest who came to the cremation must be deprived of his vocation.’ The practice was clearly endemic, though, and there is a rich mythology attached to the undead across the entire region. (qtd. in Groom 78)

Vampires were also popular folklore motifs in Russia, initially called *upyr*. Aleksandr Afanasiev was one of the first to publish a collection of Russian folktales; therefore, his books are one of the most definitive sources. In these tales, the vampire often was a character who was previously a sorcerer, or it was featured in a cautionary tale where the focus was on the protagonist instead of the vampiric figure. Afanasiev describes these creatures the following way in his book, *The Poetic Views of the Slavs on Nature*:

Corpses who during their lifetime had been sorcerers, werewolves . . . suicides, drunkards, heretics, apostates, and those cursed by their parents . . . At the dead of midnight, leaving their graves where they lie as undecayed corpses, the vampires take on various forms. They . . . raise Cain and frighten travelers or they enter the peasants’ cottages and suck the blood from those sleeping, who always die from it afterwards. . . The pre-dawn cock’s crow compels the vampire to disappear instantaneously or forces him to the ground. (qtd. in Townsend 49)

In her doctoral thesis, Dorian Aleksandra Townsend examines how the *upyr* is described in folktales and how its image changes. She discovered that the external description of the creature in the tales “The Coffin Lid,” “The Two Corpses,” and “The Dog and the Corpse,” match up perfectly with the folkloric vampire. These stories feature a creature recognized by its ruddy complexion, lack of decomposition and ability to shapeshift into various animals (Townsend 52). Surprisingly, those features do not only characterize the *upyr* but also most European vampires. The vampires feared in other parts of Eastern Europe were similar, with only a few differences, for example, in their creation myth. In Russia, someone became a vampire if a bird flew over their grave or if an animal jumped over their corpse, while in Serbia, 40 days after the burial, a demon would possess the body, returning as a vampire (Groom 79).

Despite the parallels between different cultures’ imagery of vampires, it would be difficult to define the external attributes and associated behaviours of a vampire based on folk stories only. Therefore, it is only logical to rely on the various vampire cases of the eighteenth-century that lead to a widespread vampire hunt through Europe to describe these creatures. It was not unheard of in Eastern European villages to unbury the recently deceased and check for signs of vampirism if people started to pass away suddenly. It was, however, somewhat unusual for the Austrian forces, that were at the time occupying the country. According to Paul Barber, the literati started to attend the exhumations and write reports about them:

The vampire craze, in other words, was an early “media event,” in which educated Europeans became aware of practices that were by no means of recent origin, but had simply been provided, for the first time, with effective public-relations representatives. (Barber 5)

One of the most prolific cases that drew the world’s eye to Eastern Europe was the case of Peter Plogojowitz. He was a peasant from Kisilova, Serbia, who passed away in 1725. The following week after his passing, nine other villagers died suddenly, the victims varying from young to old (Groom 96). Paul Barber translated the article written about Plogojowitz’s death that was a starter point in this so-called “media-event.” In the article, the following description was given of the exhumation:

I went to the village of Kisilova, taking along the Gradisk pope, and viewed the body of Peter Plogojowitz, just exhumed, finding, in accordance with thorough truthfulness, that first of all I did not detect the slightest odor that is otherwise characteristic of the dead, and the body, except for the nose, which was somewhat fallen away, was completely fresh. The hair and beard—even the nails, of which the old ones had fallen away had grown on him; the old skin, which was somewhat whitish, had peeled away, and a new fresh one had emerged under it. The face, hands, and feet, and the whole body were so constituted, that they could not have been more complete in his lifetime. Not without astonishment, I saw some fresh blood in his mouth, which, according to the common observation, he had sucked from the people killed by him. (Barber 6)

Following this case, hundreds of other similar cases surfaced, and a wave of exhumating swept through Europe. The articles and reports about the exhumations all show a similar pattern and assign similar attributes to vampirism. Therefore, for my research, I will use Peter Plogojowitz's case as the prime example of a folkloric vampire. Based on the article translated by Barber, these are the signs that indicate that a vampire is preying on people. Vampirism spread like an epidemic; after one resident's death, others died too. Old, young, seemingly healthy people would pass away after a brief one-day illness. In these cases, the first person to die (here, Plogojowitz) would be blamed for the death of the others. Some of the victims, including his wife, complained on their deathbeds that Plogojowitz visited them at night, laid on them, and throttled them. It is vital to mention that the vampires of folklore, much like their literary counterparts, are sexual creatures, and their sexuality is obsessive (Barber 9). After someone was accused of being a vampire, their body was exhumated, and if the body showed warning signs, it was destroyed in various ways. The most common attribute of a vampire was if the body appeared fresh, lacked odour, and its complexion was ruddy. In Plogojowitz's case, they mention that his hair and beard have grown, as have his nails. It was a tale-tale sign if the body had blood leaking from its mouth or if there was fresh blood surrounding it that was not coagulated. After determining that the unburied body was a vampire, the locals quickly destroyed it. The method for this varied a lot; in Plogojowitz's case, the method was a stake to the heart, often it was decapitation or being burned. In the United States, the preferred technique was cutting the heart out and burning it. While Plogojowitz did not put up a fight, there are some cases, for example, Arnod Paole, who supposedly groaned and bled profusely when the locals put a stake through his heart. Paole's

case is legendary and a great example of the folkloric vampire. From his case, I would only like to highlight a few attributes I will keep an eye out for during my research.

Similar to events in Kisilova, the villagers complained that the Paole had been terrorizing them at night. It is important to note that, in most cases, the vampire is from a village and is preying on the locals and family members. Unlike the literary vampire, they do not belong to the nobility and do not have castles. According to the reports, Paole's victims have been said to become vampires themselves, and since he did not just attack the people but also the cattle, those who had eaten from the flesh of the attacked animals also became vampires. The villagers, who exhumed all the suspected vampires, noted that none was decomposing, and many were surrounded by blood. They were all staked and burned, but only Arnod Paole omitted a groan upon the impact, which made him one of the most memorable figures of the vampire epidemic.

While Plogojowitz is the most often referenced case, Paole's unfortunate afterlife created a more significant uproar among the people. Flückinger, a doctor sent to investigate the case, wrote a report on what he found, which was published in numerous newspapers. According to Groom, just in 1732, there were 17 articles about vampirism in international newspapers, and later, Flückinger's report was published in France and England as well, and its popularity did not wane: "Twelve books and four dissertations on vampirism appeared in 1732–33; over the next three years, a further 22 learned treatises were published in European cultural and intellectual centres such as Amsterdam, Halle, Jena, Leipzig and Vienna" (Groom 105).

Vampires became a media sensation and found their way into everyday vernacular and belief systems. Western Europe was sceptical of the phenomenon, but many believed the reports; among them was George II (Groom 105). Furthermore, due to England being in a political whirlwind of civil wars, vampires also became a tool of political warfare. In the following years, vampires would become a prevailing motif of political satires and commentary (Groom 106). It is no wonder that by the time the sensation faded (after Maria Theresa condemned the vampire panic in 1755), vampires had become well-known creatures to the public, which allowed the writers of the nineteenth-century to incorporate them into their stories.

In conclusion, the folkloric vampire can be recognized for its ruddy complexion and bloated figure. They can turn into animals and often prey on animals, especially cattle. The victim is from the same peasant background as the vampire, who lacks lengthened fangs or hypnotic abilities; these attributes come from literature. They are two of the most emblematic

added characteristics of the creatures.

The Literary Vampire

Vampires first entered the literary sphere in 1748, when August Ossenfelter published his poem “Der Vampir” in a newspaper, a piece directly inspired by Arnod Paole’s case—following that, vampires started to appear more and more in German and later in British poetry (Groom 178). In the romantic era, vampires are presented in a more supernatural light, often as a form of inspiration, all the while slowly stretching towards the slowly emerging Gothic. One of the romantic poets inspired by vampires was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose poem “Christabel” many consider to be a piece about a vampire. While Coleridge does not name the creature that Geraldine is supposed to be, some signs would allude to her being a vampire. For example, she falls to the ground and faints before approaching the iron gate and not having the strength to pray; she is also described as having a mesmerizing gaze that the victim cannot escape. There are other instances of vampires or vampire-like creatures in Romantic poetry, but none of them is as relevant as John Polidori’s short story, *The Vampyre*.

In 1816, when Lord Byron, accompanied by his physician, John William Polidori, travelled to Switzerland, they took part in one of literature’s most extraordinary events. The two of them and Byron’s friends Percy and Mary Shelly have begun a friendly writing competition among themselves. As we all know, this competition is where Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* and where Polidori was inspired to write *The Vampyre*. Besides the two great pieces of literature, the competition also began a tremendous literary feud between Byron and the doctor. For a significant part of the nineteenth-century, Byron was credited with writing *The Vampyre* because he had some serious involvement in it. During their stay in the villa, Polidori noted in his journal an instance where Lord Byron quoted a stanza from “Christabel,” which no doubt left an impression on his friends. Furthermore, the plot of the short story was originally Byron’s idea (Groom 189). He wrote the story’s beginning, then abandoned the project; it was later published by the title *A Fragment*. It was not till 1819 when, at the urging of the countess of Breuss, the story was revisited. Polidori decided to reapproach the narrative fragment, rewrite it, and finish it; this work became *The Vampyre*. It was published on 1 April 1819 with the name: A Tale by Lord Byron (Groom 191). It was a huge success, and the Lord was basking in the praise while the doctor was fuming and fighting with the *New Monthly Magazine* to be credited. Because Polidori was not a famous poet, only a physician, public opinion favoured Byron. In the end, Polidori won, but his

reputation was tarnished, and Byron's deceptive words in *Galvani's Magazine* did not help:

If the book is clever, it would be base to deprive the real writer, whoever he may be, of his honours; and if stupid, I desire the responsibility of nobody's dullness but my own. . . I have besides a personal dislike to "Vampires," and the little acquaintance I have with them would by no means induce me to divulge their secrets. (Rieger 3)

Despite the scandal surrounding the short story, it became one of the most celebrated pieces of vampire literature. It lays down the basis for all the literature that followed it and permanently changed the imagery connected to the creatures. Polidori, as a doctor, was no doubt familiar with the vampire cases of Europe and the Romantic poetry that those events inspired, which took a large leap from the folkloric vampire. The first significant difference we can discover between the folklore image and Lord Ruthven is their social status. While the vampires of the eighteenth-century all came from a peasant background and preyed on the other villagers, Lord Ruthven, as the name applies, comes from an aristocratic circle. He does not share the outer description of the folklore vampires either:

Those who felt this sensation of awe, could not explain whence it arose: some attributed it to the glance of that dead grey eye, which, fixing upon the object's face, seemed not to penetrate, and at one look to pierce through to the inward workings of the heart; but to throw upon the cheek a leaden ray that weighed upon the skin it could not pass. Some however thought that it was caused by their fearing the observation of one, who by his colourless cheek, which never gained a warmer tint from the blush of conscious shame or from any powerful emotion, appeared to be above human feelings and sympathies, the fashionable names for frailties and sins. (Polidori 39)

He is described as pale, which is the opposite of the tale-tale ruddy complexion. He does not return to his grave and travels during the day without a problem. Despite the folktales and cases not dedicating particular attention to the eyes of the vampire, we can already discover a tendency of a hypnotic case. Christabel was bewitched by Geraldine's look and could not break eye contact with her; here, we can see Polidori dwelling on Ruthven's dead eye that just slides over humanity. There is also a change in victims: the folkloric vampires are not picky eaters, and they seem to attack those who are closest to them; Polidori's monster preys on young virgins and goes out his way to hunt them down (he marries Aubrey's sister just to

murder her on their wedding night). Polidori also mentioned how the young victim of Ruthven was wounded in the neck, while the cases from the previous century did not specify vampires attacking at the neck.

The image created by Byron, which started the transformation of the creatures, was heavily influenced by Byron himself, not because he penned down the original idea but because the doctor based the character of Lord Ruthven on him. Following their stay in the villa, Lord Byron fired Polidori as his physician, and the enraged doctor tried to expose him through his book. Ruthven is someone, who is an outcast of the aristocratic circles, yet he is also adored and invited to every event; he shows no empathy towards his fellow men, preys on the innocent and virginal; he is a sexual predator. Byron is similar in the sense that he did not fit into his social circle, yet he was invited and the talk of the upper-class society. We can depict a parallel between the relationship of Aubrey and Ruthven and Polidori and Byron. Aubrey and Polidori are both naive and follow the men they look up to on the Continent, but during their travels, they grow more disgusted and uncomfortable with their friend's lifestyle. The vampire's nature as a sexual predator can also be discovered since Byron was notorious for his many affairs and scandalous relationships, including Claire Clairmont, Mary Shelley's half-sister, whom he seduced and left behind, pregnant with his child in the Swiss villa (Groom 190).

Taking a few steps back from the satirical embodiment of Byron, we can find a piece of vampire literature that further widens the distance between folkloric and literary vampires. In the 1840s, James Malcolm Rymer created the most famous vampire figure of the century, Sir Francis Varney (Groom 223). For a long period in the twentieth century, scholars believed that Thomas Preskett Prest wrote the infamous penny dreadful. However, in the 1960s, through Rymer's notebooks, it was discovered that he was the actual writer (Adams 19). When the first part was published in August 1845, it became a publishing sensation and became one of the most popular and well-known penny dreadful stories. The audience was captivated by the melodramatic chapters and the undisguised gore and sexuality. Another factor that drew the readers in was that it barely contained any of the tedious elements of Polidori. While Polidori relied on his medical degree and knowledge of Eastern European folklore and the cases of the eighteenth-century, Rymer felt no need to mention those. In his book *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*, Christopher Frayling claims that Rymer probably encountered the re-publication of *The Vampyre* by Polidori in 1938, in which the penny publication's illustrations had inspired him. On the other hand, Nick Groom believes that the stage adaptations of the short story were the initial inspiration. This would explain how there are

only three things that Lord Ruthven and Sir Varney share: their aristocratic background, their paleness and the fact that moonlights revives them.

The story takes place in 1730s England and follows the afterlife of Sir Francis Varney as he torments the Bannerworths and remembers the Civil War. Because of the incredible length and the fast pace it was published, there are many issues with consistency, and the setting can be confusing. Due to the liberties that Rymer took with the creature's description and behaviour, Varney has become one of the essential literary vampires. He added countless new attributes to the characters that have become embedded in the form of popular vampires (Groom 225). In the story's first instalment, Varney is standing outside the window of Flora Bannerworth in the hail, waiting to enter the room and attack the girl lying in her bed:

It is perfectly white—perfectly bloodless. The eyes look like polished tin; the lips are drawn back, and the principal feature next to those dreadful eyes is the teeth—the fearful looking teeth—projecting like those of some wild animal, hideously, glaringly white, and fang-like. It approaches the bed with a strange, gliding movement. It clashes together the long nails that literally appear to hang from the finger ends. No sound comes from its lips. (Rymer 18)

We can once again see the paleness that has become a tell-tale sign of literary vampires, contrary to folkloric vampires and their ruddy complexion. One of the most significant and prominent changes that Rymer executes is the addition of the fangs. In folkloric tradition, the vampire would drink blood from wherever it could get; Ruthven attacks the victim's neck, but it does not go into detail; Varney, on the other hand, attacks the victim in the neck with his fangs, causing two pinprick-like wounds and drinks their blood. This addition will survive for decades and, only 50 years later, will also be incorporated into the character of Dracula. Varney's gliding movement, supernatural strength and ability to hypnotise his victim, are traits that originate in this piece and now have become part of the vampire lore. Rymer takes over a few attributes of the folkloric vampire, for example, how people tended to fight the creatures: decapitation, stake to the heart. The character survives multiple gun wounds and is revived multiple times through the agency of the moonlight. Ultimately, in the end, he commits suicide (after growing tired of his immortal life) by throwing himself into the volcanic crater of Mount Vesuvius and essentially cremating himself.

Unlike Rymer, who did not rely on European cases or pieces of folklore to create his monster, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu incorporates them on a high level. It is not a stretch to say

that he paid more attention to them than Polidori did. The character he created is the most prolific female vampire in literature, even nowadays, and has become a bridge between the penny dreadfuls, such as *Varney, the Vampyre* and the dark world of *Dracula* (Adams 23).

The story follows the unfortunate encounter between Laura, the daughter of an English nobleman living in Austria and a sensual, aristocratic vampire woman named Carmilla. The monster first attacks her in her childhood, and she revisits her in her adulthood. Written in 1872, Le Fanu was probably aware of both Rymer and Polidori's works on the subject, but that did not stop him from reaching back to the roots of the myth. He kept some attributes the two authors had attached to the creature: such as the lengthened fangs from Rymer and the aristocratic background from Polidori; however, in many aspects, Carmilla appears to be separate from them. Setting his story to take place in Austria, his vampire is the first non-British creature in our list, and the attributes attached to her are reminiscent of the vampire cases of Europe. For example, unlike Varney and Ruthven, Carmilla does not attack at the neck but at the victim's chest. The folkloric theme continues when due to the bite, Laura falls ill. Just like in the articles that reported the eighteenth-century vampire panic, she also experiences breathlessness (like she is being asphyxiated) and has odd dreams. The contusion the doctor discovers on her body is also mentioned in Flückinger's report (Groom 232). Another trait Le Fanu borrowed from Eastern European folklore is Carmilla's ability to shapeshift into an animal; one night, Laura is visited by a gigantic black cat:

I saw, or fancied I saw, the room and its furniture just as I had seen it last, except that it was very dark, and I saw something moving round the foot of the bed, which at first I could not accurately distinguish. But I soon saw that it was a sooty black animal that resembled a monstrous cat. It appeared to me about four or five feet long for it measured fully the length of the hearthrug as it passed over it; and it continued to-ing and fro-ing with the lithe, sinister restlessness of a beast in a cage. I could not cry out, although as you may suppose, I was terrified. (Le Fanu 38)

The folkloric vampire is known for turning into animals, primarily dogs and wolves, and haunting the people and the livestock in that manner. Ruthven and Varney do not appear to have the power to turn into other animals, but *Dracula* is famously known for turning into a bat. Here we can also see a hint of Carmilla's hypnotic power, but it is not a supernatural element like it was in Varney's case; it is closer to her being captivating. As W. J.

McCormack puts it: “Feminine nature is powerful, destructively powerful, and its objects become hypnotized (or hyperstatically controlled) in its power” (McCormack 233).

Once they grow suspicious that Carmilla is the dead Countess Mircalla Karnstein, the characters approach their premonition in a way it would have transpired in the eighteenth-century. They embark on a journey to the chapel where she was buried, and the depicted scene could have been a report about an exhumation from Serbia. Carmilla lies in her grave “tinted with the warmth of life” (80), which is a significant difference from Varney and Ruthven, who are both very pale. Her eyes are open; her body is surrounded by a pool of blood, which was often reported in the newspapers. They end her undead life by staking her through the heart, decapitating and cremating her remains. Only a few pages later, Le Fanu calls out the other authors through Laura when she notes that: “I may mention, in passing, that the deadly pallor attributed to that sort of revenants, is a mere melodramatic fiction.” (82)

The author knew his literary counterparts but preferred the original folkloric approach to the creatures. Dr Polidori, who travelled through Europe, was aware of the vampire panic and the cases published in the newspapers; however, he took some liberties with the creature to embody Byron’s essence. On the other hand, Rymer did not research the matter extensively but created the creature’s attributes on a whim. And lastly, based on his description of Carmilla and the character’s reactions to her, Le Fanu was clearly aware of the cases published in newspapers. He even calls out the other authors for disrespecting the folklore creature. Other than the few bits borrowed, such as the lengthened fangs, aristocratic background, and supernatural strength, the character is inspired by folkloric traditions. Le Fanu only expands on the lore in a few places, such as allowing Carmilla to walk through closed doors, being confined to her coffin during the day and aversion to Christian relics.

Considering that out of the four vampires examined here, only *Dracula* made it into the popular canon; we can use him as a basis for comparison. Written in 1897, Bram Stoker managed to create the modern vampire by relying on folklore and literature. He did thorough research on the subject and spent several years drafting it. He studied Flückinger’s report and the Eastern European folklore from Emily de Laszowska Gerard’s article on ‘*Transylvanian Superstitions*’ (1885). His decision to set the book in Transylvania was possibly influenced by his brother George Stoker being a medical officer in Eastern Europe (Willis 304). He made careful notes on everything he could use in his book. His book balances the line between fantastical and reality, his approach to supernatural elements is scientific, and the sections untouched by the dark power surrounding the Count are as realistic as possible. In the library, he researched what route a ship would take from Transylvania to England, where it would

harbour and how long the journey would take. The articles his characters copied into their diaries could have been published in Victorian newspapers; real-life events directly inspired some. For example, the ghost ship mentioned in the book was inspired by a Russian ship called “Dimitry” that was wrecked at Whitby (Stoker et al. 139).

Furthermore, his work paid off because he created the most well-known literary vampire. As Nick Groom explains: *Dracula* is the climax of approximately 70 years worth of vampire stories and even more legends and articles. Immediately after its publication, it became a massive success as a yellow-covered book and was constantly reworked in literature, theatre and soon in movies as well (Groom 260). The reviews praised it, even Stoker’s good friend Sir Arthur Conan Doyle reached out through a letter to praise his work, and the author was even asked about the existence of vampires in an interview for the *British Weekly* (Groom 261).

One of the factors that made *Dracula* the success it is, is the monster itself. Count Dracula is a tall, pale nobleman from a foreign land, someone the Victorian people could have encountered on the street. In the 1890s, there were many immigrants from Eastern Europe, which is why the novel is often analyzed from the point of reverse colonization (Lloyd 3). Similarly to the other literary vampires, Dracula does not stand out from the crowd; a few aspects of him make his appearance uncanny, but nothing that would make the prey aware of the danger that is standing next to her. What makes him uncanny is the red light in his eyes, his ashen complexion, the hair on his palms and his sharp white teeth and, of course, the supernatural ability of the Count to appear younger after he fed on someone.

In terms of his social status, as it was discussed previously, he is a nobleman from Transylvania. His foreign origin is an element inspired by Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (Groom 264). The relationship between Jonathan Harker and Dracula, the surprised respect which turns into fear and hatred, could be parallel to the relationship between Aubrey and Ruthven. The characters themselves are somewhat similar. Aubrey and Jonathan are intrigued by the vampire, but at the same time, they are suspicious and scared. Ruthven and Dracula are dark and mysterious characters, who do not appear as a threat straight away, but the apprehension still slowly grows in the reader until they learn the truth about the character’s nature (Beresford 119).

The way Dracula attacks is reminiscent of Varney’s attacks. They both have the efficiency to stand at the window of young maidens and attack them in their sleep; they are both highly capable of hypnosis, which they utilise in their attacks. The Count also attacks the neck of the victim and leaves behind two minor wounds that are barely noticeable. Similarly

to Carmilla, he does not kill quickly, like folkloric vampires, but instead, the victim is sick for a long while, weak and bedridden till the vampire drains them of the last bit of their blood. The vampires' gliding movement, superstrength, and lengthened fangs also resemble Varney's attributes; however, his surprising dexterity and ability to climb on walls like a lizard are unique to him. Just like Carmilla, he is confined to his coffin during the day and cannot step into the sunlight, but this is the first mention of vampires having no reflections. This could come from a superstition he wrote down, considering that he tried to incorporate a few elements of Transylvanian folklore. He included the Romanian customs relating to garlic and rosary beads, or the blue lights mentioned in Chapter 1 could be brought up as an example since that superstition is carefully detailed in Emily Gerard's essay (Beresford 137).

Identification of Traits

The imagery attached to vampires has come a long way and changed drastically in only over a century. The carefully curated image of the folkloric vampire started its transformation during the Romantic era, but it peaked with the publication of *Dracula* in 1897. The obnoxious monster that preyed on the cattle and the innocent villagers turned into an aristocratic predator, more similar to a serial killer than a predatory animal. The attributes of the folkloric vampires vary from culture to culture, and the characteristics of the literary vampires differ from author to author. Therefore, this compilation of the most often occurring attributes will be used as the basis of my comparison of vampires in Victorian publishing.

Folkloric Vampire	Literary Vampire
Ruddy complexion	Pale Complexion
Poor background	Aristocratic background
Bloated figure	Generally attractive, thin
Can transform into different animals	Sometimes can turn into an animal (strongly connected to bats)
Preys on animals, human blood is not a necessity	Feasts only on human blood (prefers young, virginal women)
Does not have lengthened fangs	Has lengthened fangs
Attacks mostly at chest, sometimes suffocates the victim	Small wounds at the neck

Does not have hypnotic powers, but does come to people in their dreams	Skilled in hypnosis
Can be killed with a stake through the heart, or decapitating or setting the body on fire	Can be killed with a stake through the heart, or decapitating or setting the body on fire

Bats, Vampires, and Murderers

Article 1: “Bats and ‘Vampires’”

The first article to take a closer look at was published on the 26th of November, 1880, in the newspaper *Southend Standard and Essex Weekly Advertiser*. According to the *British Newspaper Archives*, this newspaper was published by Newsquest in Southend-on-Sea, Essex, England. However, this specific article does not focus on local events but on an event that stirred up a great commotion in Hampshire when a family believed that a vicious vampire had attacked their infant in their home. The article quickly explains everything that has gone down to allay any doubt over the events.¹

The report begins with a rather attention-grabbing sentence that gets straight to the point: “A Hampshire newspaper gives currency to a story, which, but for a timely discovery, might have gone far towards reviving hobgoblin belief amongst the simple-minded country folks concerned” (3). This first sentence gives us a great insight into who the newspaper’s target audience could have been and how they felt about the commotion. The article must have been chiefly read by middle-class people who lived in the cities, since its author probably would not dare call its readers “simple-minded country folks” (3) if villagers were among their primary demographics. It has a condescending tone when it talks about the newspaper that initially published the story and its readers who believed the story. It is notable that the author deliberately uses the word hobgoblin instead of the actual name of the creature in question; this must be due to the attitude and distaste of the writer of the short piece. The author believes such a topic and idea is childish, so instead of saying “reviving vampire belief” (3), he refers to them as hobgoblins, which were imp-like creatures in folklore. Considering the context of the sentence, it does not make a tremendous difference because all he is aiming to tell us is that some people almost believed in the existence of imaginary creatures. He chose this word instead of saying vampires because he genuinely

¹ A photocopy of the full article can be found in Appendix 1.

wanted to ridicule the “simple-minded country folk” (3). Hobgoblins are the less evil and more mischievous versions of goblins, fairy tale monsters, but not of the frightening kind. He is poking fun at the people in the story, putting a high emphasis on how gullible they are.

After the attention-grabbing first sentence, the anonymous writer describes what the Hampshire newspaper reported. In the introductory part, he sticks to the facts; his voice does not allude to his opinions. We are introduced to the room where the unfortunate accident happened and the people who got mixed up in this tale. Then we are introduced to the vampire of the tale:

Peeping into the apartment at dusk to see if the baby was still sleeping comfortably, judge of her dismay when she behold a black and winged creature uttering moaning sounds as it slowly flapped round and round the room, and finally alighted on the coverlet of the cradle, close to the child’s face! With a shriek the affrighted mother flung the door wide open, on which the imp-like creature, squeaking its displeasure at being disturbed, rose heavily from the child’s bed, and after one turn round the chamber dashed at the lamp in the chimney, which was extinguished with a crash, and then it vanished. (3)

The author keeps his neutral tone of narration and provides us with the original recounting of the events. He refrains from using a style that would poke fun at the mother or to make comments about her unnecessary fear.

The vampire described in the article is a precise mixture of the folkloric and the literary vampire. In both literary and folkloric tales, it is a common motif of the vampire that it can turn into an animal. In most myths, it can be any animal; however, we mostly hear of the vampire changing into a bat in the literary sphere. This account clearly describes a bat but with distinctively human-like attributes. The imp-like creature that moans and squeaks in displeasure is closer to the description of the folkloric vampire. Nineteenth-century authors avoided attaching such qualities to their pale and seductive monsters. Later, the writer also mentions that, after examining the child, the mother discovered a “slight puncture” (3) on its throat; this does not fit into the criteria of either of the vampires, but the author will provide an explanation for it. After seeing the drop of blood on the child’s neck, the mother comes to the conclusion that a vampire attacked it.

In the next part of the article, the author reports that after the husband’s arrival, the case was dismissed as an unfortunate misunderstanding. The child’s father examined the

chimney where he found the stowaway “vampire,” which was, of course, a long-eared bat. Furthermore, the child’s neck was only injured because its nightgown was fastened with a pin which pricked it when the mother came rushing in. So there was a rational explanation for the alarming accident and, in the end, it turned out that the baby was not hurt. After allaying all doubts over the case, the writer comments on how, in a similar case, panic would have spread in other countries, and it would not have been enough to say it was “only a bat” (3). Nevertheless, he does not dwell on the topic but instead brings up another unfortunate bat case that happened at the banks of the Amazon River. He explains that the bat, by nature, is a blood-sucker in other parts of the world. He describes a horrifying tale that Mr Bates, a prominent naturalist and explorer, told. The reported behaviour of the animals in Mr. Bates’ story would appear to be highly uncommon in Victorian England. Suppose that most of the reader’s knowledge of bats comes from their own experiences; the events described by Mr Bates would seem unbelievable. A large number of bats bothering someone at night that cannot be scared off by any means, and would even stay in the hammock and draw the sleeping Mr Bates’ blood sounds as vampiric as the case described before. However, not a hint of doubt is shown in the article, whether the attackers were simply bats or not.

This article shows how educated readers were probably sceptical about any vampire superstition. The joking tone at the beginning and the following account, which leaves no room for an argument, shows how distant readers of such newspapers proved to be to the idea.

Article 2: “A Human Vampire”

The second article to examine was published on the 18th of April, 1895, in the *Scottish Stonehaven Journal*. This notice is particularly short; considering the gruesome case it describes, it is odd that it only got a single column on a busy page. The author of the article gives an emotionless report of a tragic event. Unlike the first article’s author, this writer’s opinion on the case is not revealed; he merely states the facts. In the report, we find out that a rancher was brutally murdered in Iowa. The murderer is an escaped patient from the Sioux City Lunatic Asylum who believes he is a vampire: “There is a maniac confined in the Sioux City Lunatic Asylum who imagines himself a vampire and is considered excessively dangerous” (4). Despite being closely watched, he manages to break free to the high road where he encounters the rancher and attacks him.²

² A photocopy of the full article can be found in Appendix 2.

The article does not claim this man to be a vampire at any point, but it is still interesting to examine. The absolute certainty that the author shows is shocking; there is no hint of the escapee being anything other than insane. This highlights how certain people were of the fact that vampires are only fabrications of the mind. The author does not treat this event as a vampire case, yet the characteristics portrayed by the patient should be examined to gain insight into which vampire figure had more of an impact. Although this piece of news was published in Scotland, but the events described happened in the American state Iowa, so we must keep in mind that the picture depicted in the article is not necessarily from a British viewpoint but an American one. In the 1890s, there was a widespread vampire panic going through the States. During this period, tuberculosis wiped out entire communities and families in New England, leading people to believe that vampires were taking victims instead of a bacterium. The panic led to mass exhumation and the close examination of the hearts; if a body was found with 'living blood' in its heart, the heart was burned (Stetson 9).

We do not get a physical description of the "vampire," but there are various vampiristic behaviours that we can notice in the text. One of the significant traits of the literary vampire is its talent for hypnosis, which we can see exhibited by Sir Francis Varney and Count Dracula in their respective books. There is no reference in the article to hypnosis; however, this section can be read as an allusion to it: "A close watch was kept over him, but he managed to elude the vigilance of the guards and escaped" (4). While the murderer's talent for escaping is more similar to the literary vampire, the attack described in great detail combines the literary and the folkloric vampire: "The maniac sprang at Mr Converse in a fury, bore him to the ground, and literally tore him to pieces with his big teeth. When Mr Converse ceased to struggle the maniac fastened on his neck, and sucked the blood from a gaping wound" (4). The rage-filled, animal-like attack resembles the folkloric vampire, but the specifics of it are more similar to vampires found in fiction. If we believe that the author refers to the lengthened fangs as "big teeth" (4), then that would be an element that comes from James Malcolm Rymer's serialized fiction, *Varney the Vampire, or the Feast of Blood*. Moreover, the folkloric vampires were not associated with drinking from the neck of the victim; this is also an element added to literature.

This article does not show the personal opinion of the article's author, yet his opinion on the matter is clear; he does not prevaricate and gives no thought to the possible existence of vampires. To him, that man is insane, and his behaviour can only be explained by the illness of the mind, not by the nature of his being. He also makes no mention of the vampire panic that had taken over the States in the 1890s. He was either unaware of the phenomenon

or decided not to give currency to the possibility of the events being related.

Article 3: “A Family of Vampires”

The following article was published in the *Cornish & Devon Post*, on the 12th of March, in 1887. This newspaper was by Tindle Newspapers, located in Launceston, Cornwall, England. The short text tells the odd last wishes of Baron de Gostovsky from Lithuania. He requested that after his death, his body should be decapitated and only then buried. He claimed he had done the same thing for his wife because they are a family of vampires, and they do not want to return to hurt their children. His eldest son fulfilled the wish but fell sick afterwards. After recovering, he went to the cemetery, opened the grave, and then hurled the head into the nearby forest. The judge considered the locals’ strong superstitions and, with that in mind, only sentenced the man to a fortnight in prison.³

Similarly to the first examined case, this report also starts with a comment on how old-fashioned it is to believe in vampires. Although it does not make a point to ridicule those involved in the story, it points out that this view is highly outdated: “One might imagine that the wheel of time is turning backward on reading the following story which appears in a Continental paper” (4).

Possibly because this is a recounting of an article published in Europe, the writer does not go into details about how this vampire should be imagined. Readers from the Continent probably had a solid assumption of how the Baron would return, so the author of the original piece does not explain it further. Furthermore, the man who wrote this article, based on that belief, does not let his imagination run free with him or add horrid details.

Even though the narrative lacks a discussion of the vampire’s physical attributes, there is much information that helps categorize the creature.:

A landed proprietor, Baron de Gostovsky, living at Sabouor, near Danzig, made the request that at his death his head should be cut off before his interment, a service which he said he had performed on the body of his wife after her death. ‘We are a family of vampires,’ he added, ‘and if this precaution be not taken we can find no repose in the grave, but come back and bring misfortune to our children.’ (4)

³ A photocopy of the full article can be found in Appendix 3.

What is described above contains some of the most prominent aspects of the folkloric myths. While in literature, it is a common motif to stake a vampire through the heart to kill it; however, that is not the case in folk tradition. In the United States, the custom was to burn the vampire's heart to kill it; in most Eastern European cultures, the preferred method was cutting its head off. In the eighteenth-century, when a vampire panic swept through Europe, the process was described the following way:

In 1755, in Hemersdorf, a village near the Silesian and Moravian border the corpse of Rosina Polakin, deceased a few month before, was dug out of the ground of the cemetery by municipal decision, because people were complaining about her being a vampire and attacking them at night. Her body was found to be in good condition (as befits vampires), without any signs of decomposition, with blood in the veins. According to local custom, the poor family of the deceased was forced to drag the corpse, by means of a hook attached to a rope, through an opening made in the wall of the graveyard, to be beheaded and burnt outside. (Klaniczay 167)

Of course, this is only one of the various approaches that vary from culture to culture; however, beheading the corpse was one of the most common methods. It is not only the method of destroying the vampire that echoes the folkloric tradition but also the fact that the Baron fears for his children. Literary vampires are particularly fond of innocence, and their main targets are usually children and virgin women. On the other hand, folkloric vampires tended to return to their families and attack them, usually the freshly widowed wife and the unexpected children.

The writer's disbelief is again revealed in the middle of the text: "The eldest son faithfully fulfilled the father's request, but notwithstanding this, he fell ill a few days after the funeral" (4). Were this the original article from Europe, it may have said that not enough precautions were taken. People became suspicious of someone being a vampire if their family had fallen ill; they would assume that the dead relative was returning to his family and feasting on their blood. The writer knows that it is not the case, instead, there appears a severe reaction to the emotional distress. The author's final sentiment is the eldest son's trial and punishment. Typically, such a crime would be severely punished and frowned upon, but that is not the case in this community. Here, the eyewitnesses openly supported the boy's actions because his actions had their sources in the deeply-rooted Lithuanian folklore.

This case is one of the purest form of the representation of the folkloric vampire that can be encountered in newspapers and periodicals. While it does lack details in many instances, the vampire's behaviour, as it is described in it, is the unchallenged myth. It is not meant to influence people over the belief of vampires or evoke fear in them; its only purpose seems to be providing information about Lithuanian culture through a strange and unusual event.

Article 4: "A Few Evenings Ago . . ."

The following article to examine was published in the *Stamford Mercury* newspaper on the 6th of September 1850, in the town of Stamford, Lincolnshire. It is only a clipping surrounded by other news, but it is none the less interesting. The article recounts the events a gentleman experienced one night as he was walking home by a churchyard. That night he saw a woman ferociously "tearing up the turf and earth near a grave" (3). He immediately assumes that he sees a human monster, a vampire or a ghoul. He is watching from a distance, and once the woman leaves, he discovers that she was merely feasting on stolen goods, such as plums; as the article puts it: "[there was] not the horrible remnants of the feast of a ghoul, but the cupboard of a lawless vegetarian" (3).⁴

This short article only mentions the word "vampire" in passing and primarily refers to the creature in question as "ghoul" but it is clear that the reader and the author considering both. The author and the reader do not believe in the existence of such creatures; the events received a rational explanation and conclusion quickly. Therefore it should be put alongside the authors of the first two articles. However, it could be argued that this article is the grey middle ground between those who believe in vampires and those who do not. It debunks the case fast and gives no currency to the gentleman's first assumption being correct. However, compared to the first article, where the writer vehemently tried to convince the reader that the villagers who believed the news of vampires were fools, this piece does not degrade the gentleman. He is presented as a rational man who should be respected. He even smiles at his own disbelief and curiosity, which makes him stay rooted on the spot and wait for the woman to leave. Neither he nor the author thinks of vampires as ghouls as a real threat, yet those are still the creatures that they suspect the woman to be instead of a body snatcher. In the early nineteenth-century, people were terrorized by body snatchers, who would exhume bodies and sell them to anatomy schools. In the 1830s, in Scotland, William Burke was convicted of

⁴ A photocopy of the full article can be found in Appendix 4.

murdering sixteen people to sell the dead bodies to Robert Knox, a Scottish anatomist. By the 1850s, when this article was published, this illegal activity became less frequent due to the Anatomy Act of 1832, but some newspaper articles were still dedicated to the topic (Lennox 102). The gentleman could have assumed she was digging in a graveyard to make a profit, but that was not his first guess. The author does not imply that the witness had any other more rational guess; it appears that he was only expecting the woman to be a monster.

Sadly, we do not get a detailed description of the creature; it is impossible to guess whether the man suspected encountering Varney, the vampire, or his folkloric counterpart. Neither the folkloric nor the literary vampire have exhibited tendencies to prey on dead bodies; they usually emerge from their graves and do not revisit them for a feast. The gentleman and the author, too, probably expected the woman to be a ghoul, “[the ghoul] evolved into a term denoting a grave-robber into a term implying the cannibalistic eating of flesh. It is significant to note that the ghoul was a living creature eating the flesh of the dead” (Boon 35). The article leans towards the rejection of the vampire myth; however, the lack of insult towards those who do believe and the gentleman’s need to see with his own eyes what the woman was doing leads to the assumption that both man and the author could have been convinced of the existence of such creatures. We cannot talk about a well-honed belief of the creature, but it is interesting to see how it seems to be on the periphery of the man’s mind.

Article 5: “A Bulgarian Superstition”

The article, published on the 7th of April, 1869, in the *Brighton Guardian*, seemingly has a similar content to the third newspaper article, “A Family of Vampires.” Nevertheless, it could not be any different. Its title, “A Bulgarian superstition,” clearly sets the reader’s expectations on the topic. We expect to find an overview of Bulgarian vampires, with a few sentences referencing how odd it is to believe in such things and possibly a rational explanation of things. The reader’s possible expectations are not met in that matter; the author only mentions superstitions in the title and the first sentence; afterwards, he proceeds to talk about a few case studies, not once mentioning that this is what people “believed.”⁵

He talks about the creature and the illness in the present tense, not once implying that this creature is only part of fairytales: “When a man who has vampire blood in his veins, — for this condition is not only epidemic and endemic but hereditary, — or who is otherwise predisposed to become a vampire, dies, nine days after his burial he returns to upper earth in

⁵ A photocopy of the full article can be found in Appendix 5.

an aeriform shape” (2). He talks about how a village was infested with vampires, and the inhabitants had to hide together while the vampires in aeriform terrorized them and their houses with pranks and assaults. In his recount of the vampires’ actions and the villagers’ reaction, there is no hint of disdain or superiority, not when he talks about the unfortunate demise of a local champion wrestler who failed to “throw” a vampire, who in return crushed him (2). After settling the case of vampires in Derekuoi (through the help of an older woman who was suspected of being a witch), the author also tells the story of a strange man who arrived in a village 30 years ago, assimilated into society but was eventually cremated because his suspicious behaviour let them believe he was a vampire. At no point in the article, other than the first sentence, does the author draw the reader’s attention to the fact that these are mere superstitions. It is also interesting that the article keeps using the phrase “our village” (2), implying that the author is a local, but at no point is the writer introduced. First, we are told that the author will present us with an unadulterated version of Bulgarian superstitions and then tells us about a man who is actively avoiding alcohol and smoking to penance for the sins of his father. There is no allusion to who wrote this piece at the beginning or the end of the article; we are not told if it is a translation from a Bulgarian newspaper or an original piece, nor is any personal opinion interweaved into the text.

The vampire described in the article is, as to be expected, an example of a folkloric vampire. It mentions many elements of folklore, for example, physically leaving their coffins 40 days after burial. The author mentions that the vampire propensity is hereditary and spreads like an epidemic within the village. Some attributes we have not encountered before, but these factors do not come from literature but from the gaps between the various cultures’ vampire folklore. Vampires coming back from the grave in an aeriform shape and playing pranks on the villagers akin to the behaviour of goblins and kobolds seem to be a Bulgarian folklore-specific phenomenon. The tale of the mysterious man who arrived one day in the village also has many elements of the folkloric vampire, such as the creature preying on the cattle and animals, not on the people. Surprisingly, he only preyed on already dead or sickly animals; most records did not dwell on such specifics and that he could mangle with the villagers during the day. Another factor we have not encountered before is that the man missing one nostril was damning evidence. His trial is more similar to a witch trial of a vampire because, in most cases, they were found in their graves surrounded by blood. For example, the witch-hunters in England and the United States often looked for the Devil’s Mark or a third nipple that would confirm their suspicions of the accused being a witch (Mcdonald 507).

Despite being a singular case in a few aspects, this report of events lines up perfectly with the folkloric vampires, and there appears to be no intrusion of the attributes attached to literary vampires. The author's identity and nationality are somewhat of a mystery, and it is curious to see what the article's intent was due to its treating the superstitions with certainty and factuality. What the readers of the time could have thought of it is also a mystery because, unlike in some of the previous articles, the author does not influence the reader's opinion through active support of the vampire belief or an apparent disdain for it.

Article 6: "A Human Vampire in Russia — Sucking the Blood of a Murdered Child"

The third case to explore was published in the *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*, on the 12th of November, in 1892. We encounter a bone-chilling case of a vampire attack that was not part of the local news. In this case, the attack occurred in a small hamlet in Russia. One night, a tall woman entered the village on foot and asked to stay a night at one of the local's houses. The woman, who was home alone with her two small children (a three-year-old and an 18-months-old one), gladly let her stay. The guest, who carried a bottle of vodka with her, invited the lady of the house to join her in drinking. Once they had emptied the bottle, the guest asked the mother to go out and buy another bottle with the money she provided. According to the article, she only left the house for a couple of minutes, but when she returned, she found the place wrapped in darkness with her daughter crying out to her for help. With the help of the neighbours, she lit up the room to find the guest sitting on the floor with the little girl; she held a knife to her throat. Once they had disarmed her, the mother started to look for the baby, who was not in the cradle. The child was found under a bench, covered in blood with bits bitten out of it. The murderess was led away by five men to prison and was heavily guarded, partly to stop the villagers from lynching her.⁶

Based on the other articles, it is safe to say that this is the most gruesome account so far and the second one without a clear, rational explanation. The author does not make his standpoint on the events clear. He does not include his personal opinion nor a brief overview of Russian superstitions to allude to the fact that vampires do not exist. He merely states what happened and how the eyewitnesses perceived the strange woman: "After sunset, a few days ago, a sort of giantess, who described herself as a footsore wayfarer, arrived in the hamlet, and asked the first person she met for a night's shelter" (3).

⁶ A photocopy of the full article can be found in Appendix 6.

There are many essential attributes worth pointing out. Primarily, it is important to note that the woman arrived after sunset. Folklore vampires are weaker in the sun, but they survive, unlike literary vampires who burn if they come in contact with the sunlight. Another factor in the article that points to the literary vampire is the word “giantess” (3). Considering that the image of the folkloric vampire was inspired by the slowly decaying bodies of the exhumated, it would be odd to describe her as “giantess.” She also boasts about her strength later in the article: “Oh, if I could only get a drop of *vodka* to rouse me a bit I’d pound the whole five of you to a pulp!” (3) There is a brief mention of the murderess’ husband, who also seems to possess unnatural strength: “The murderess is the wife of a petty tradesman of the city of Akkerman, Yaroshevsky by name, who is said to be endowed with the muscular strength of at least three normal men, and when intoxicated he is unable to resist the impulse to put forth that power” (3).

While the article alludes to the fact that the woman is a vampire, one cannot help but think that the husband might be of a similar sort. It is not something explicit or straightforward, but his unnatural strength and how intoxication affects him could lead to the assumption that he is also a vampire. Alcohol is not the reason behind his drunkenness. Based on the short comment he makes, he also seems unphased by the night’s events: “Her husband declares that ‘she was always doing strange things when under the influence of *vodka*’” (3).

From the vampire-lore point of view, one of the article’s oddest parts is the attack itself. Being held at knife-point is not something either of the two vampire types often does. While folkloric vampires are more brutalist and animal-like in their attack, it is not typical of them to bite out part of the victim’s cheek: “A search was made all over the hut, and the child was found under the bench by the wall — the floor and wall being stained all over with blood and particles of the brains. The cheeks of the little boy was found to have been bitten out, and all the soft parts of the body sucked” (3).

This article is one of the genuine oddities in the collection of vampire stories; it stands out in many ways, primarily because it is the first case where the vampire is a female person and the first article where the reader cannot find a logical explanation for the events. This account appears to be one of those fabricated pieces of news where the writer puts blood and violence into the centre of his story to attract more readers and sell more copies. There are various signs that point to this. First of all, this last article puts the heaviest emphasis on the murder aspect. While the two others gave a factual recount of the events, they did not dwell on the gore element too much. In the second article, the author mentions that the victim “. . . was mutilated almost beyond recognition” (3) but does not detail how the body was injured.

In “Human Vampire in Russia,” the writer paints a detailed picture of the location and the body; the gore is almost tangible. The second thing that stands out is that the vampire introduced in the story does not fall into the folkloric vampire category. If this event had been published in a Russian newspaper, which then got reported in a British newspaper, the figure should have resembled the folklore myth more. Like most Eastern European countries, Russia has a long history with vampire myths, or as they are called, *upyr* myths. In their folkloric tales, the ability to shapeshift into other creatures always gets a heavy emphasis, and they are described as living corpses (Townsend 56). However, this description of the creature we encounter in the article is inaccurate. Finally, while the article fails to be cohesive with Russian vampire mythology, it seems to prove an argument made by Lewis Perry Curtis, Jr.:

Even a cursory glance at the national press confirms Richard Altick’s observation that the Victorians treated murder news like a form of ‘popular entertainment, a spectator sport.’ However upset they might be by the actual event, readers seemed to relish both the gruesome details of the crime and ‘the moment of truth’ when the jury returned a verdict of guilty and the judge imposed the familiar sentence of death by hanging. As Judith Knelman contends, women who committed homicide had a much greater appeal to the predominately male reading public, who regarded murderesses as far more subversive of the social order than homicidal men. Of course the paucity of lethal women—excepting those who committed infanticide—and their flagrant defiance of the codes of normative feminine behavior made such cases the very truffles of the murder-news feast. (Curtis 83)

It appears that this is one of the many fear-mongering articles, with either an entirely made-up story or an event that the writer heavily altered to entertain the readers more. The articles surrounding it are also a telling sign. Some of the titles on this page of the *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough* were: “The Blackburn Murder.”; “Sad Suicide of an Infirmary Official.”; and “The Cotton Crisis” (3).

In conclusion, in the sixth article, we find what we can take as an imaginary creation of a vampire that is most detached from society. Both folkloric and literary vampires clearly influenced the writer, but they were merely tools in his hand. He emphasises the elements that aided him in creating a story that would entertain and horrify its readers. The vampire in this article can perhaps be called a “press vampire,” a vampire, whose imagery was created by the

article's author for newspaper readers.

Article 7: "The Vampire — A True Story"

The seventh and last article that was selected for analysis goes by the title: "The vampire. — A True Story." It was published on the 1st of December, 1894, in the *Illustrated Police News*, in London. It was the first and the longest-lasting Saturday penny newspaper that merged two of the most popular Victorian genres: police news and illustrated journals (see, *Illustrated Police News in British Newspaper Archive*). Unsurprisingly, *Illustrated Police News* published one of the most complex vampire cases.

The article recounts the horrible deeds that had happened in a few Parisian graveyards approximately 40 years before the article was written. The criminal was nicknamed "The Vampire" because, at night, he would break into coffins, mutilate the body of the dead, and scatter the pieces left behind on the cemetery grounds. Guards would be standing around in the graveyard to catch the offender, but they never succeeded because the mysterious figure would disappear like a phantom. Not even the dogs sent after him would catch him because they would stop short, entirely transfixed by him. Even after the watch was doubled, their attempts were unsuccessful. Later, the delinquent moved to a new cemetery, where he violated the grave of a small girl who was only buried a day before; her body was mutilated, and her heart was extracted from her chest. The events profoundly disturbed the city, so the guards were doubled again. Eventually, one of the guards' bullets found its mark on the vampire as he jumped over the high fence. In the following days, one of the gravediggers overheard a few soldiers talking about how their sergeant got mysteriously wounded overnight. Sergeant Bertrand was arrested for his crimes, but the public was puzzled. The sergeant did not show signs of raging insanity but appeared kind and gentle. He admitted that he would violate 15 graves or more when this strange desire would seize him. The medical team diagnosed him with a case of monomania and declared that he was not in his right mind while committing those atrocities. Due to his condition, he was only sentenced to one year of imprisonment.⁷

The writer of this report provides many details on the vampire at hand: "A watch was kept and the guardians observed 'a mysterious figure' flitting about by night among the tombs, but they could never succeed in laying hands upon him. As they approached he disappeared like a phantom, and even the dogs that were let loose upon him stopped short and

⁷ A photocopy of the full article can be found in Appendix 7.

ceased to bark, as if they were transfixed by a charm” (2). These almost supernatural skills appear to be some of the most notable abilities of literary vampires. In *Carmilla*, we can read about the vampire passing through locked doors and disappearing like a phantom.

Furthermore, in *Dracula*, animals are transfixed by the vampire’s presence and will do as the Count commands them. Another section that resembles Count Dracula is the creature’s dexterity. One of the most bone-chilling parts of Stoker’s book is when Dracula moves along the castle’s outer wall, much like a lizard would do. In the article, this description befits that, “At midnight an explosion was heard, and a pursuit of the man who was seen climbing the wall was made, but before the guardians could seize him he had leapt the wall with an agility that surprised them all, and although they fired their muskets, he succeeded in escaping” (2).

There is one account in the article that alludes to folkloric vampires, but not to the ones we have been focusing on, the Eastern-European vampire folklore, but to the American case. A vampire panic swept through New England in the United States in the 1890s. For the American folkloric vampire, the solution was not found in the dead people’s chopped-off heads but in the corpses’ extracted hearts, which were then burnt. The description of the vampire’s physical appearance is not detailed but is based on the verbs and actions associated with him: disappearing into thin air, jumping over a 9-foot fence, and flitting about the tombs. The author does not state it explicitly, but the reader cannot help but imagine a lean, graceful creature while reading about how effortlessly he climbed up the fence or disappeared.

One can discover a clear pattern at this point in the articles. Similarly to the previous cases, here the author reveals that the vampire was nothing but a man who had a mental illness. Despite not being an actual vampire, the creature depicted this time clearly leans towards literary vampires. Another thing that is vital to point out in this article is that, just like in the sixth story, this is a creature we can consider to be a “press vampire.” This article is as much of a fabrication as the one that takes place in Russia. There are warning signs, for example, the fact that the events happened 40 years before, the newspaper issue appears in which it was published and the bloody details added to the story.

Conclusion

In this study, I was seeking an answer to how British society perceived vampires and how folkloric and literary vampires alike significantly impacted vampire imagery in the late nineteenth-century. The grandest difference between the two types is their complexion, social background, manners of attack and prey. I examined seven articles, published between 1850

and 1895, and the majority were local papers, except for the *Illustrated Police News*, which was county-specific. After conducting a close reading of them, I discovered several recurring patterns. Five out of the seven accounts gave a rational explanation for events and put a heavy emphasis on elucidation. One of the two articles where the writer did not unveil the true nature of vampires was the fourth one, but even in that one, we cannot say that the author wants his readers to believe in the existence of vampires. The fifth article does not advocate vampire belief either, but also manages to talk about them as something of reality, yet it fails to highlight the superstitious aspect of the article.

Only in the first and the fourth articles were cases described that actually took place in England. The first article was the one that was most vehemently against the belief in vampires, the writer did not shy away from mocking his fellow citizens for believing in such foolishness. On the other hand, the fourth article presents the event as something to laugh about, the confusion of a man who needed to ensure that he did not see a supernatural creature. In all the other cases, the vampire was from a foreign country and hunted the people of unfamiliar countries.

The vampires that appeared on the pages of the newspapers seem to be a mixture of folkloric and literary vampires. Only in two cases did the described creature fall into one category without including at least a few elements of the other. In “A Family of Vampires,” and “A Bulgarian Superstition” we see a folkloric vampire untouched by the popularized version of the creature, which is probably due to the fact that in the third article, the author did not recount a vampire attack but rather an odd burial tradition, that was deeply rooted in vampiric folklore. The sixth article was an overview of vampire-related cases from a Bulgarian village. Due to the vampires being in their original folkloric setting, attributes of the literary vampires could not intervene.

In “A Human Vampire in Russia” and “The Vampire”, we encounter something I would call the “press vampire,” the imagery of a vampire that borrowed various elements of folklore and literature to create a most exciting and digestible version for the readers. This vampire has the animalistic behaviour of the folkloric vampire but is also characterized by attacking the victim’s neck, which was an added element from literature. These articles do not include the folkloric motif of the vampire turning into an animal. Still, there is an allusion to the creatures turning into bats. This is because, at the time, many newspapers dedicated articles to the species of vampire bats that lived in South America, the newspapers paid more attention to the pest than to the mythical creature. Therefore, it can be assumed that the reason why the creature is so closely associated with bats is due to the animal’s fame. None of the

articles gives detailed physical descriptions of the vampire in its human form; the writers put the emphasis on the damage it caused and possibly mention a physical attribute that would give the creature an unnatural shape: “giantess, a mysterious figure, imp-like.” What is clear from the examined readings is that the authors relied heavily on the reader’s already existing knowledge of the myths. They did not feel the need to explain what a vampire is in any of the articles and left most up to the reader’s imagination. They only provided the necessary extra information and, in some cases, the gory details. The other noticeable difference between folkloric and literary vampires is their different social backgrounds. While folklore vampires come mostly from peasant backgrounds, their literary versions are often aristocrats. Regarding “press vampires”, their social status is the most versatile. In the seven articles, we have two scenes that takes place in a village (“Bats and ‘Vampires’” and “A Bulgarian Superstition”), a vampire that is from the aristocracy (“A Family of Vampires”) and the four stories where we can assume the vampire comes from the working -or middle-class. The Russian murderess preys on the poor but has enough financial security to acquire multiple bottles of vodka (“A Human Vampire in Russia”). We also meet a vampire who is a sergeant (“The Vampire — a True Story”) and one locked into an insane asylum (“A Human Vampire”).

In conclusion, it appears that the readers of these articles did not believe in the existence of vampires; they were curious about the notion but would not associate themselves with it. The discussed reports seem to keep a fair distance from such cases and tend to avoid entangling the British people in these stories. At times they would sneer lightly at people and cultures who entertain the thought of vampires as actually existing. When they write about such creatures, they pick specific attributes from the folkloric and literary vampire imagery alike. Still, they do not give heavily detailed descriptions because they assume readers are aware of what they are talking about, and an explanation would be unnecessary.

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