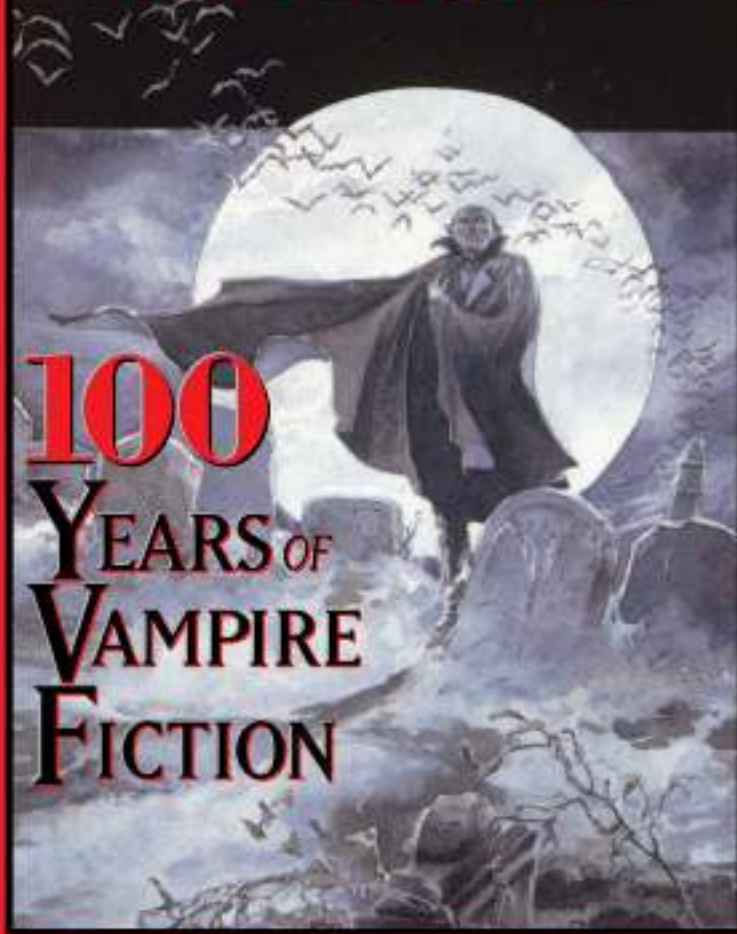


BLOOD THIRST



100
YEARS OF
VAMPIRE
FICTION

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
LEONARD WOLF

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of
Vampire Fiction



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INTRODUCTION

by LEONARD WOLF

BLANK Stoker's novel *Dracula* appeared in 1897, one hundred years ago. Since its publication, the book has never been out of print and its title character, Count Dracula, has become so icon of terror familiar to many millions of people. All the world knows the count's name and for what he is famous. He has lost his status as a character in a work of fiction and has become instead a figure embedded in our subconscious.

Perhaps because Stoker's Dracula evolved into such a mythic figure, subsequent writers of vampire fiction have failed to invent a character of comparable grandeur. Regardless of the explanation, there have been very few vampire novels of distinction published since 1897; of more than one hundred fifty, only a handful is of literary merit.

This handful includes George Sylvester Viernick's *House of the Vampire* (1907), Dion Fortune's *The Demon Lover* (1927), Richard Matheson's *Anno Legend* (1950), Theodore Sturgeon's *Waves of Fear: Flood* (1961), Raymond Chandler's *The Death of a Vampire* (1971), Fred Saberhagen's *The Vampire Tapes* (1975), Stephen King's *Salem's Lot* (1975), Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's *Hotel Transylvania* (1977), Garth Lee's *Sabella or the Floodstone* (1980), Suzy McKee Charnas's *The Vampire Tapestry* (1980), and Whitley Strieber's *The Hunger* (1981).

Of that small list, the works that most engage our attention are those by Stephen King, Anne Rice, Suzy McKee Charnas, Garth Lee, and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, all of whom are included in this anthology.

King, author of a single vampire novel (*Salem's Lot*), has won a loyal and enormous following with his compelling plots and capricious style. Rice has created a five-volume series of vampire novels, the *Vampire Chronicles*, in which she develops a kind of epic vampire theology. Her lush prose and polymorphous characters have enraptured millions of readers. Both writers are monuments on the horror fiction scene.

Charnas and Lee are both accomplished prose stylists. In Charnas's work, the idea of the vampire transcends its usual limitations as an armature for a horror fiction, becoming (as it does, for example, in J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*) a means of investigating the most dangerous, if also the most exalting, of human experiences: being in love. In Lee's hands, vampire fiction can feel darkly suspicious even as it is curiously otherworldly, sweetly dreamlike.

*Revised from the chronological list at *V&B: Vampire Fiction*, 1996.

Yarloc created Count Saint-Germain, the noblest of the sympathetic vampires who began to appear in fiction in the 1930s. Saint-Germain, the hero of *Hotel Transylvania*, is a model of decency, grace, and intelligence. He is also a superb lover who, in his long life, has learned erotic secrets that render his lovers (they are not exactly his victims) weak with gratitude for his attentions. He is a rather wandering hero of the Scarlet Empress—heroic, witty, wise, distinguished, and dedicated to doing good—and the demon lover for whom women, in fiction at least, are presumed to be waiting endlessly.

If the writers of vampire novels have not, by and large, produced works of real literary merit, short-story writers in this century have produced a rich array of vampire fiction, as the stories collected here demonstrate.

Before turning our attention to these stories, I want to deal with a literary critical—and perhaps psychoanalytic—problem that has vexed me for more than three decades: What is there about the image of the vampire that makes it such a singularly attractive genre to twentieth-century readers and novelists? If we look at popular culture fiction, what do we see? In murder mysteries, we are interested in variations on the “who done it?” theme. In sword-and-sorcery fiction, the interplay of derring-do and the supernatural holds our interest. In the so-called women’s Gothic Novel (the bodice-ripper), the pulsing eroticism beneath the story line draws in the reader. And in mainstream horror, the reader’s interest is focused on the variety of gruesome ways in which human lives are threatened, tormented, or ended.

But vampire fiction, which has elements of all the above genres, exerts an amazing pull on readers for a reason that we may find disturbing.

To begin with, any vampire fiction has blood as its primary metaphor. As the mad Renfield in Stoker’s *Dracula* says, quoting the Bible, “The blood is the life,” a fact impresses upon any of us who have ever read or seen someone else bleed copiously. Beyond that, as Havensick El is explained long ago, “There is scarcely any natural object with so profoundly emotional an effect as blood.”*

Over the years, blood has acquired a variety of social meanings. The Bible memorializes the first shedding of human blood in the story of Cain and Abel. A bond of blood, as between members of different clans, stands for close relationships, for brother- or sisterhood. We say of particularly cruel people that they are bloodthirsty. There are cultures in which menstrual blood is regarded as taboo and others in which it is supposed to bring good luck. Folk tradition has it that pacts with the devil must be signed in blood. In the Catholic Christian tradition, there is the profound mystery of the salvational power of wine transubstantiated into the blood of Christ.

**Studies in the Psychology of War*, *Scientific Monthly*, Vol. 5, p. 6, 1916 (Oct. 1916).

Blood can also represent our identity. Speaking proudly of a child or a grandchild, we say, "My blood flows in his or her veins."

Some years ago, I thought I had a key to the power of the vampire image. In an essentially sociological reading of Stoker's *Dracula*, I was willing to believe that the vampire count stood for the modern industrialized world's fascination with "energy without grace, power without responsibility."¹ I saw in *Dracula* a symbol of the unbridled, and often exploitative expansion in the twentieth century of industrialism and the factory system. The phrase "energy without grace" referred to the contemporary tendency to admire vitality for its own sake, regardless of its intended use.

When America was still involved in the war in Vietnam I had no trouble seeing in *Dracula* an apt symbol of that disastrous and bloody conflict. It seemed to me, too, that *Dracula* stood for the American fixation on youth and for our well-known unwillingness to confront the reality of our own death.

I have not entirely abandoned such views, but now the appeal of vampire imagery to me seems less global and more personal. Contemporary readers and bloggers are drawn to vampire imagery because it speaks to them about deeply inner (and especially sexual) temptations and doubts.

The point is—and in recent years, it has been made again and again by many commentators on the genre—that the blood exchange represents every variety of sexual union: men with women, men with men, fathers with daughters, mothers with sons, women with women. Moreover, the vampire's embrace is perceived as an intimate entry. In Stoker's novel, the innocent Lucy, "vampirized" by *Dracula*, acquires the looks and manners of a sexually experienced whore. Over the period of her vampirism, Lucy gets from the male heroes are perceived, by the deities as making them, in a sense, Lucy's husbands. And, when *Dracula* takes Mina Harker's blood, and forces her to drink his, he uses the language of the marriage ceremony: "She is blood of my blood, flesh of my flesh." Because she has *Dracula's* blood in her veins, Mina has a psychic bond with him, enabling her to guide his energies to him.

In addition to the erotic implications of the blood exchange, vampirism has psychological and spiritual meanings as well. In nineteenth-century stories (especially in Stoker's novel), the vampire's victim is spiritually ruined because the vampire is defined as a creature of the devil.

Stoker's *Dracula*, when we first meet him, is a loathsome, white-haired old man with bad breath and hair on the palms of his hands. He recaptures his youth and sustains his immortality by drinking the blood of his victims. In twentieth-century fiction, particularly that written in the second half of the century, the religious content of the imagery has progressively

¹Will, *Leonard's A Dream of Dracula* (Farrar, 1983).



diminished, and the vampire, more and more frequently, is seen as a chief of psychological energy rather than as a threat to the immortal soul.

Not only have late-twentieth-century vampires been secularized, but they have also been more and more explicitly criminalized. The vampires imagined for us by writers like Rice and Yarbro and filmmakers like Francis Ford Coppola are baroque, youthful, romantic, and sensual.

I have begun to think, too, that the vampire embrace fascinates late-twentieth-century readers because of the gracefulness with which it is usually depicted. One thinks of the dramatic saltness of the vampire's leeching. A vampire bends over his or her victim; there is a not particularly painful little bite, and the victim's face takes on a look of bliss. How different—and to some readers, how soothingly different—than is from the usual, and essentially awkward, tumults of sex.

Finally, there is the special meaning that the vampire idea has acquired in our minds since the coming of AIDS. Because it is a blood-transmitted disease, AIDS has reemphasized the ways in which blood, sex, and death are linked, giving an additional meaning to our reading of vampire fiction. The vampire was seen simply as a monster who could endanger a victim's life and that his or her immortal soul. Now, in the age of AIDS, the blood exchange between vampire and victim, still deadly, has the new and very modern implication of a death preceded by a lingering and incurable disease.

Stories about vampires existed long before Stoker. There is a vampire episode in Lucius Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, a second-century Latin classic, and there is an amount of vampire folklore in Europe. It was not, however, until the nineteenth century that *The Vampire*, the first vampire novel in English, appeared. *The Vampire*, by John Polidori, an aristocratic friend, traveling companion, and physician of George Gordon, Lord Byron, was written in answer to a challenge Byron made to his guests in the Villa Diodati on a rainy summer evening in Geneva in 1816. Those guests included Polidori, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Mary Shelley, all of whom Byron challenged to write a ghost story. Byron himself never wrote more than a fragment. Percy Shelley did not make the attempt. Mary Shelley's response to the challenge was the novel *Frankenstein*.

Polidori's *The Vampire* appeared in 1821 and had an impact, particularly on the European stage, far beyond its apparent merit. Polidori's vampire is Lord Ruthven (a faintly disguised Byron), a palid English nobleman who befriends a young gentleman named Aubrey. Ruthven "suscipit lesus" Aubrey's sister even as Aubrey—bound by an oath not to reveal for a year what he knows about Ruthven—is unable to save his sister from her fate. Since neither Aubrey nor his sister are characters with much lady dufluy of vitality, and since the plot of the novel turns on Aubrey's keeping a ridiculous promise, one can only be surprised at the story's durability in theaters on the Continent in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The next major fictional vampire character to appear in print was *Vampyr* (1847), for a long time attributed to Charles Brockden Brown but actually written by James Malcolm Rymer. Although excessive in length and frequently ridiculous, the novel is dear to my heart. I am enchanted by the author's endlessly ingenious wordiness, and by the novel's almost infinite number of subplots.

Rymer's prose is "high pitched and breathless. We have hairless beauties and a 'trial' garter figure in hideous relief . . . a long, gaunt hand which seems ritely destitute of flesh . . . the figure turns half around . . . it is perfectly white—perfectly bloodless . . . her beautiful rounded limbs quivered . . . he seizes her nose in his fang, too toothy—a gush of blood, and a hideous sucking noise follows. . . ." Readers of Rymer's prose must be endlessly patient and tolerant of drawn-out suspense. The blood-thirsty Verray is as memorable as he is unbelievable. But here, unlike the more well-known *Dracula*, there is some sympathy for the vampire.

From the unintentionally comic and scintillating endless pages of *Vampyr* *the Vampire*, we move next to Sheridan Le Fanu's 1872 novella *Carmilla*, a superbly written, beautifully crafted story by a man who, like Stoker, was an Irishman. The vampire in *Carmilla* is a woman, as are her victims. This fact has led many readers, critics among them, to conclude that this is a novella whose primary focus is lesbianism. I do not share that view. I am convinced that the power and the literary value of Le Fanu's story lies in its study of the fragility of human love. Of course, there is a deep undercurrent of *Les* in this story, as there is in all love stories. But Le Fanu's focus is on the tragic fact that betrayal, too, is an essential element in love—not on the fact that the vampire's victim is a woman. As Carmilla describes it, "As I draw near to you, you, in your turn, will draw near to the others, and learn the rapine of that cruelty, which yet is love. . . ."

The next novel to appear was Stoker's, in 1897. When I describe Count Dracula as "embedded in our subconscious," I may, without intending it, seem to imply that the novel alone broadcast the image of the count to the world. That is not what happened.

Stoker's novel, conceived originally as a "shilling shocker," did not reveal to its first readers the layers of meaning that late-twentieth-century critics have since found in it, and which have made subsequent readers acknowledge the novel's greatness. Read only for its plot, as it originally was, *Dracula* is still a first-rate adventure tale in which a group of devoted and high-minded heroes pursue and finally destroy an evil Transylvanian creature of the night who preys on British women and men. Stoker added to that plotline another not particularly complicated element. The antagonist, Count Dracula, is depicted as a satanic creature, the Primal Dragon, and

*Mason, David, ed., *Vampyr* (New York: Dover, 1977).

his pursuers as a sort of composite St. George doing battle with the dragon.

Stoker did not attempt anything like character analysis. His characters are two-dimensional, his humor is a step above music-hall comedy. His heroes are heroes, his women are beautiful and good (even Dracula takes their party). Dracula himself is a minion of Satan and is wholly villainous.

On the other hand, Stoker—who spent most of his adult life in the service of Sir Henry Irving, England's most famous actor, and who heard fine stage prose being spoken almost daily—had an ear for high-sounding speech, which he imitated with considerable success in *Dracula*. He was aided by his slight knowledge of the historical Vlad Tepes, a fifteenth-century Transylvanian tyrant whose practices are notorious. He had also read a wonderful travel book by an Englishwoman named Emily Gerard, *The Land Beyond the Forest* (1888), in which he found most of the vampire lore he used in *Dracula*.

Stoker also possessed an extraordinarily acute vision of the psychological implications of his central metaphor. I do not say he understood them. To see clearly is not the same as to understand what one sees. Stoker's story, as he gave it to us, has left us wrestling ever since with its varied meanings.

Though *Dracula* in its time sold reasonably well, it did not become a best-seller until after Stoker's death. However, it was films based on Stoker's book that eventually made Dracula a household word.

It should not surprise us that films based on Stoker's novel have never been faithful to his text. Stoker's story, though it makes for dramatic reading, has far too many characters and far too many incidents to sustain a filmgoer's interest for very long. In any case, film fiction is not the same as fiction as print fiction. Film has to show what a print reader can imagine. We need not then grade our film versions of the Dracula story on whether they are or are not faithful to the book.

The German film *Nosferatu* (1922), made by Franz Olfers, is a pirated, thinly disguised version of Stoker's story. F. W. Murnau, the film's director, believed that by making superficial changes to the names of Stoker's characters, he could appropriate the story. An outraged Florence Stoker sued and eventually prevailed in the German courts, which ruled that all copies of the film were to be destroyed. Fortunately for us, some copies survived.

In Murnau's silent film, the vampire is seen as a caricature of a monster. Max Schreck, the actor who plays Count Orlok, the vampire, is given the pointed ears of an animal, long fingernails, a face with hideously distorted features, and glaring eyes. If he resembles any literary character at all, it is Varney the Vampire, but in fact he is simply meant to look like a monster.

Nosferatu, despite the deficiencies of comparatively primitive filmmaking technology, is one of the world's greatest horror films. The sequences

in which Orlok appears feel like authentic transcriptions from nightmares. The dramatic scene in which Orlok comes to "vampirize" Mina (Mina Harker in Stoker's *Dracula*) is terrifying in the extreme and, as in Stoker's *Dracula*, has religious implications, as Mina assumes the role of a sacrificial figure who will die for the sake of humanity.

Although *Mysterium* is indeed frightful, it would be nearly ten years before the film appeared that would give the world the Dracula it would never forget.

In 1931, Universal Pictures released Tod Browning's *Dracula* with Bela Lugosi in the title role. The film, based on the Hamilton Deane/Johnston stage play adaptation of the novel rather than on the novel itself, is marred by comic intrusions meant to appeal to theater audiences. I have taken critical potshots at this poorly edited film in my time, but despite its jerky pacing and wooden performances by David Manners (John Harker), Helen Chandler (Mina Harker), and Frances Dade (Lucy Weston), it is still, because of the unsurpassed achievements of Lugosi as Dracula and Dwight Dyer as Renfield, the most memorable Dracula yet made. Lugosi's face and accent will spring to mind whenever the name Dracula is mentioned. With this film began the psychologizing of the name Dracula. Who can ever forget Lugosi's magisterial "I do not drink . . . wine," or his "Lower to them, children of the night. What music they make"?

The Lugosi film created for us the Dracula we now experience as an archetype: the vampire in tie and tails who is a supremely civilized yet unmistakably feral being who can be drawing room charming but may also take on the guise of a cat or a wolf. Always he (or she) is an irresistible force whose dynamic energy is profoundly attractive.

That attraction has been preserved to us on screen in a variety of guises. Christopher Lee's Dracula in the English Hammer Films productions of the late 1950s and 1960s is cold, cool, immobile, and implicitly violent. Genevieve Holden's title role in *Dracula's Daughter* (1976) is brooding, anguished, and profoundly dangerous. Frank Langella's theatrical Dracula (1979) is playful, witty, charming, and utterly cuddly. John Cazale, in *Into the Red as the Dracula* (1965), is as funny as the characters who appear in *opéra bouffe*, while William Marshall, in the exploitation film *Dracula* (1972), is dignified and dynamic with the look in his eyes of a man who has suffered an incurable inner wound. Gary Oldman, in Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), has the difficult task of playing several roles in that film: the fierce fifteenth-century warrior Vlad Tepes, the aged nineteenth-century Count Dracula, the blood-reverent youthful count, and, at intervals, the deranged version of that self.

I have described at length the part that the film industry has played in the development of our ideas about vampires because, since 1922, the criticism of the vampire entrance has been rendered in film more and more explicitly; and, almost as a corollary, the vampires themselves have



been reimagined for us as sympathetic creatures: as Byronic heroes, as admirable outlaws, as heroic antagonists of God himself.

The twentieth-century shift in the perception of vampires on movie screens has had its impact on the vampire fiction that has appeared in print. The distance between Stoker's conception of his evil Count Dracula and Yarbro's elegant, lusticious, and admirable Count Saint-Germain is exemplary. For Stoker, Dracula, an unambiguously evil creature in the service of the devil, preyed not only upon Christian lives but also on Christian souls. Saint-Germain, who actually wears a cross, is infinitely wise and decent. If Dracula preyzines women to procure their damnation, Saint-Germain does the same to give them supreme pleasure.

In a century in which God and Satan have become increasingly irrelevant in the popular arts, there has been an accompanying secularization of the vampire idea. There has been a shift in interest on the part of readers and filmgoers. While in the earlier books and films the vampire's victim suffered from his or her entrance, in more recent works the focus is on the erotic sensuality of the embrace. Death may be the result, but, as in Coppola's film interpretation of Stoker, it is a small price to pay for the ecstasy and the immortality and youth that is the vampire's gift. Not surprisingly, for many readers and filmgoers, the grace of God is less appealing than a rubrically sensuous passion.

The stories in this collection were selected with two goals in mind: first, to give readers as much pleasure as a single anthology can be expected to provide; second, to display the evolutionary shift in the treatment of the vampire.

Though literary theory is not my strong point, that has not kept me from noticing that the tales can fall into six descriptive categories. But a reader should be warned: categories are rhetorical devices, useful in making suggestive distinctions. The reader should not be surprised that one or another of the tales in this book could fall into a category other than the one to which it is assigned. For instance, "Shamblesu," by C. L. Moore, could easily fit in any of four categories: The Classic Adventure Tale, the Psychological Vampire, the Science-Fiction Vampire, or the Non-Human Vampire. But Moore was chiefly a science-fiction writer, so I feel most comfortable calling her tale science fiction.

The categories, then, are:

- The Classic Adventure Tale, for which the narrative line of Stoker's novel is the model. In such tales, the tension of the plot derives from the antagonism that exists between the entirely evil vampire and the good people on whom he or she intends to feed. The designated victims, singly or with help, fight back and are usually unslain. Examples include "The Blood Is the Life," by F. Marion Crawford, and the excerpt from Stephen King's *Salem's Lot*.

- The Psychological Vampire. This category, it should be noted, does not appear as a distinct genre until the mid-twentieth century, the age of

breed. In the tales under this rubric, the word "vampire" is more nearly a metaphor than it is a literal description of the antagonist. The vampires in these stories do not drink blood. Instead, they are thieves of energy. In Mary L. Wilkins-Freeman's "Lucia Miller," Lucia literally, without meaning a hard, drives those who hate her into early graves.

- **The Science Fiction Vampire.** In this category, the stories take place within a recognizable science fiction ambience—time travel, intergalactic voyages, genetic mutations, chemical constructs. Of the such stories, lacking psychological or allegorical resonance, are, from a fictional point of view, comparatively weak. Both C. L. Moore's "Stamblean" and Scott McKee Charnas's "Unicorn Tapestry" are powerful exceptions to this rule. "Stamblean" satiates, almost unbearably, the "belly, dreadful, and wet" physical attraction of monstrous wrappings, while "Unicorn Tapestry" focuses on the intellectual attraction of the creature.

- **The Non-Human Vampire.** Stories in which non-human vampires appear normally do not inspire much reader sympathy; low grade horror is what such stories usually achieve. It is hard to care for the tortures of cat-vampires, dog-vampires, plant-vampires, rabbit-vampires, or, as in one amazing genre book, a cow vampire. For *World's Best*, however, I have gathered tales of non-human vampires that outvie this general principle, such as Herta Henz Evers's "The Spider" and Terrib Lee's "Dite-Me-Nor or, Fleur de feu." In "The Spider," the mimetic gestures that the vampire and her victim exchange between their facing windows become a hypnotic ballet performance whose graceful form adds beauty to the tale. With "Dite-Me-Nor . . ." it is Lee's suave and romantic prose that gives the story depth.

- **The Comic Vampire.** One would suppose that it would be hard to find humor in a genre of fiction in which blood drinking is a central theme. Still, there are vampire jokes and there have been a considerable number of quite funny vampire films. Not the least among them are *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967) and *Love at First Bite* (1979), which spoof both vampirism and the shibboleths of the Love Generation. Then too, Abbot and Costello gave explicit vampirism for such laughs as they could get. In this anthology there are some funny short stories, such as filmmaker Woody Allen's "Clown Dracula" and Frederic Brown's "Blood."

- Finally, we have **The Heroic Vampire.** The tales in this category, like those listed as Psychological Vampire stories, are antithetical to the vampire fiction scene. Here we have the diametric opposite of Stoker, with the vampire no longer representing absolute evil. Instead, the reader is meant to sympathize with the creature. We have Edvard Bryant's "Good Kids," Anne Rice's "The Master of Rattoping Gate," and the tale of a vampire photographer with a deadly artistic ambition in Laura Anne Galton's "Exposure." The charm of the latter story lies in the delicious

paradox that its vampire protagonist, a creature of darkness, is desirous of capturing a sunrise on film.

Here, then, is *Blood Thirst: 160 Years of Vampire Fiction*, a collection of vampire tales written in the century following Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Sometimes the tales are grotesque, sometimes violent, sometimes whimsical, and sometimes profound. The startling variety of the stories gathered here is proof of the paradox that, though Stoker's fictional vampire could cast no shadow, his literary shadow hovers over all the tales in this book. Who'd have thought the old man had so much blood in him?



THE CLASSIC ADVENTURE TALE

Prior to literature of the twentieth century, vampires were depicted as unrepentant monsters, heartless creatures of hell who threatened the innocent and tested the courage of brave men and women. As the stories in this section show, there is still a lot of life left in such old-fashioned fiends. *Dracula* remains the model for such adventure tales, pitting Dr. Van Helsing and his bandy band of vampire-hunters against the succubally unstoppable menace of the undying count. This type of conflict has been avidly imitated ever since in innumerable sequels and copies.

Still, several subsequent writers have crafted novels exploring ingenious variations on this theme of heartless vampire and earnest foe. *Prey* by Leslie H. Waatan (1965) updates the traditional adventure tale, and gives it a new sense of contemporary verisimilitude, by changing the hero to a big city cop and disguising an old-fashioned vampire story as a police procedural. Jeff Rice accomplished much of the same feat in *The Night Straker* (1973), which inspired two 'V movies and a short-lived TV series about a spook-chasing renegade named Carl Kolchak. Stephen King's best-selling *Salem's Lot* (1975), excerpted in this volume effectively transfers Stoker's plot to a small New England town. *Neuroscope* by Brian Lumley (1986) is a gleefully gory mixture of science fiction, espionage, and full-blooded vampire fighting that has spawned at least nine sequels and is still going strong. Other successful tales of Good versus Undead Evil include *The Light at the End* by John Scapp and Craig Spector (1986) and *Bloodletter* by Warren Newton Beale (1994).

In these novels, and in the stories that follow, there is little of the moral ambiguity seen in much of today's vampire fiction. The vampires are dastardly and dangerous, and the humans are resourceful and in peril.

Of these tales, Stephen King's vampire and his good-guy opponents follow the Stoker formula most closely. In M. R. James's "Coelebs Magnus," the count is more a force than he is a person, but he is an evil force.

It is the sheer, fear-inspiring threat of supernatural evil that propels these stories. The Classic Adventure Tale works now, as it did in Bram Stoker's time, because it taps into our primal fear of blood-sucking creatures from beyond the grave.

LAFACADIO HEARN (1850–1904)

Patricio Lafacadio Teodoro Carlos Hearn, the great interpreter of Japanese culture to the Western world, was born in Greece and spent his childhood in France, England, and Ireland. He was, for many years, a journalist. Among his other literary achievements are his translations of Theophile Gautier into English. Gautier, it will be remembered, is the author of La Mort d'Arcturion ("Arcturion's Love"), one of the finest vampire tales ever written.

Hearn began his career in America as a reporter for the Cincinnati Enquirer and soon started, along with his friend Henry Harvey, Ye Gingham, a journal of social satire. The publication lasted for only a few months, but Hearn went on to many successful writing ventures, including Cinq: A Memory of Last Island (1889), with which he made his mark among American writers. His works are gathered in many posthumous volumes, including Lillona's (1904), Essays on American Literature (1920), Barbarous Barbers and Other Stories (1919), and the six-volume Collected Writings of Lafacadio Hearn (1922).

From 1890 to 1894 Hearn lived in Japan, where he seems to have found his spiritual home. Kwanran (1904), Hearn's collection of Japanese folktales and ghost stories, was the basis for Masaki Kobayashi's wonderful film of the same name (1964).

The tales in Kwaidan reflect the view that everything in the world, living or not, is sentient and capable of exercising will, whether for good or evil. It is a view we will see reflected in Algernon Blackwood's "The Transfer." Hearn's tales are notable for their fluidity, for a simplicity of narrative style that we tend to think of as "Japanese."

Here, in "The Story of Gisagon," the narrator assumes that supernatural creatures inhabit the natural world, and that they hunger to experience human life. Without reaching for psychological detail or intricate plot development, the story, in the form of an allegory about a succubus, describes what the ingredients are for sensuality in love: a desiring man, a beautiful and charming woman, and a difference between their two natures so great that disaster is inevitable. Like other examples of the Classic Adventure Tale, it is also an elemental tale of ordinary humanity confronting a dangerous supernatural force.

THE STORY OF CHŪGORŌ



A long time ago there lived, in the Koishikawa quarter of Yedo, a *barakoto* named Suzuki, whose *yashiki* was situated on the bank of the Yoronawa, not far from the bridge called *Naga-no-hashi*. And among the residents of this *yashiki* there was an *ashigaru* named Chūgorō. Chūgorō was a handsome lad, very amiable and clever, and much liked by his comrades.

For several years Chūgorō remained in the service of Suzuki, conducting himself so well that no fault was found with him. But at last the other *ashigaru* discovered that Chūgorō was in the habit of leaving the *yashiki* every night, by way of the garden, and staying out until a little before dawn. At first they said nothing to him about his strange behavior; for his absences did not interfere with any regular duty, and were supposed to be caused by some love-affair. But after a while he began to look pale and weak, and his comrades, suspecting some serious folly, decided to interfere. Therefore, one morning, just as he was about to steal away from the house, an elderly retainer called him aside, and said—

"Chūgorō, my lad, we know that you go out every night and stay away until early morning, and we have observed that you are looking unwell. We fear that you are keeping bad company and injuring your health. And unless you can give a good reason for your conduct, we shall think that it is our duty to report this matter to the Chief Officer. In any case, since we are your comrades and friends, it is but right that we should know why you go out at night, contrary to the custom of this house."

Chūgorō appeared to be very much embarrassed and alarmed by these words. But after a short silence he passed into the garden, followed by his comrade. When the two found themselves well out of hearing of the rest, Chūgorō stopped, and said—

"I will now tell you everything, but I must entreat you to keep my secret. If you repeat what I tell you, some great misfortune may befall me.

"It was in the early part of last spring—about five months ago—that I first began to go out at night, on account of a love-affair. One evening, when I was returning to the *yashiki* after a visit to my parents, I saw a woman standing by the river-side, not far from the main gateway. She was dressed like a person of high rank, and I thought it strange that a woman so finely dressed should be standing there alone at such an hour. But I did not think that I had any right to question her; and I was about to pass her by, without speaking, when she stepped forward and pulled me by the sleeve. Then I saw that she was very young and handsome. 'Will you not walk with me as far as the bridge?' she said. 'I have something to tell you.' Her voice was very soft and pleasing, and she smiled as she



spoke; and her smile was hard to resist. So I walked with her toward the bridge and on the way she told me that she had often seen me going in and out of the Yoshihito, and had taken a fancy to me. 'I wish to have you for my husband,' she said; 'if you can like me, we shall be able to make each other very happy.' I did not know how to answer her, but I thought her very charming. As we neared the bridge, she pulled my sleeve again, and led me down the bank to the very edge of the river. 'Come in with me,' she whispered, and pulled me toward the water. It is deep there, as you know; and I became at once afraid of her, and tried to turn back. She smiled, and caught me by the wrist, and said, 'Oh, you must never be afraid with me!' And, somehow, at the touch of her hand, I became more helpless than a child. I felt like a person in a dream who tries to run, and cannot move hand or foot. Into the deep water she stepped, and drew me with her; and I neither saw nor heard nor felt anything more until I found myself walking beside her through what seemed to be a great palace, full of light. I was neither wet nor cold; everything around me was dry and warm and beautiful. I could not understand where I was, nor how I had come there. The woman led me by the hand; we passed through room after room,—through ever so many rooms, all empty, but very fine,—until we entered into a guest-room of a thousand mats. Before a great alcove, at the further end, lights were burning, and cushions laid as for a feast; but I saw no guests. She led me to the place of honor, by the alcove, and seated herself in front of me, and said: 'This is my home. do you think that you could be happy with me here?' As she asked the question she smiled; and I thought that her smile was more beautiful than anything else in the world; and out of my heart I answered, 'Yes. . . .' In the same moment I remembered the story of Urashima; and I imagined that she might be the daughter of a god; but I feared to ask her any questions. . . . Presently maid-servants came in, bearing rice wine and many dishes, which they set before us. Then she who sat before me said: 'To-night shall be our bridal night, because you like me; and this is our wedding feast.' We pledged ourselves to each other for the time of seven existences; and after the banquet we were conducted to a bridal chamber, which had been prepared for us.

'It was yet early in the morning when she awoke me, and said: 'My dear one, you are now indeed my husband. But for reasons which I cannot tell you, and which you must not ask, it is necessary that our marriage remain secret. To keep you here until daybreak would cost both of us our lives. Therefore do not. I beg of you, feel displeased because I must now send you back to the house of your lord. You can come to me to-night again, and every night hereafter, at the same hour that we first met. Wait always for me by the bridge; and you will not have to wait long. But remember, above all things, that our marriage must be a secret, and that, if you talk about it, we shall probably be separated forever.'

'I promised to obey her in all things, remembering the fate of Ura-



shina, —and she conducted me through many rooms, all empty and beautiful to the entrance. There she again took me by the wrist, and everything suddenly became dark, and I knew nothing more until I found myself straining alone on the river bank close to the Nakano basin. When I got back to the *yashiki*, the temple bells had not yet begun to ring.

"In the evening I went again to the bridge at the hour she had named, and I found her waiting for me. She took me with her, as before, into the deep water, and into the wonderful place where we had passed our bridal night. And every night, since then, I have met and parted from her in the same way. To night she will certainly be waiting for me, and I would rather die than disappoint her; therefore I must go. . . . But let me again entreat you, my friend, never to speak to any one about what I have told you."

The elder *ashigaru* was surprised and alarmed by this story. He felt that Chûgôrô had told him the truth; and the truth suggested unpleasant possibilities. Probably the whole experience was an illusion, and an illusion produced by some evil power for a malevolent end. Nevertheless, if really bewitched, the lad was rather to be pitied than blamed; and any forcible interference would be likely to result in mischief. So the *ashigaru* answered kindly:—

"I shall never speak of what you have told me—never, at least, while you remain alive and well. Go and meet the woman; but—beware of hurt! I fear that you are being haunted by some wicked spirit."

Chûgôrô only smiled at the old man's warning, and hastened away. Several hours later he reentered the *yashiki*, with a strangely dejected look. "Did you meet her?" whispered his comrade. "No," replied Chûgôrô; "she was not there. For the first time, she was not there. I think that she will never meet me again. I did wrong to tell you; I was very foolish to break my promise. . . ." The other vainly tried to console him. Chûgôrô lay down, and shook his head more. He was trembling from head to foot, as if he had caught a chill.

When the temple bells announced the hour of dawn, Chûgôrô tried to get up, and fell back senseless. He was evidently sick, —dreadfully sick. A Chinese physician was summoned.

"Why, the man has no blood!" exclaimed the doctor, after a careful examination: "there is nothing but water in his veins! It will be very difficult to save him. . . . What maleficence is this?"

Everything was done that could be done to save Chûgôrô's life—but in vain. He died as the sun went down. Then his comrade related the whole story.

"Ah! I might have suspected as much!" exclaimed the doctor. . . . "No power could have saved him. He was not the first whom she destroyed."



"Who is she?—or what is she? the *ashigaru* asked. "Is Fox-Woman?"

"No; she has been haunting this place from ancient time. She loses the blood of the young . . ."

"A *Serpent-Woman*?—A *Dragon-Woman*?"

"No, no! If you were to see her under that bridge by day light, she would appear to you a very loathsome creature."

"But what kind of a creature?"

"Simply a Frog—a great and ugly Frog!"

M. R. JAMES

(1862—1936)

Maurice Rhodes James, a vision teacher, was a master ghost-story writer as well as a sought-after scholar, primarily of the medieval world. He was for many years a fellow of Cambridge University in England until, in 1914, he was elected professor of Eton.

Though he would not obviously acknowledge a belief in ghosts, he nevertheless mastered the ghost-story genre. His best-known ghost stories are "The Ash Tree," "Queen Alberta's Scrapbook," "Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Soul," and, of course, "Count Magnus," reprinted here. His collections include *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (1904), *Coloured Ghost Stories* (1912), *A Thin Ghost* (1915), and *A Warning to the Curious* (1926).

In addition to his achievements as a ghost-story writer, James is important in the history of the horror literature genre because he was an early appreciator of the talents of Sheridan Le Fanu, a collection of whose stories "Niallme Connell's Ghosts" he edited. Le Fanu was the author of "Carmilla," an influential early vampire story.

Parasites who think a vampire's diet is, by definition, liquid, may object that "Count Magnus," who does not drink blood, is flying under false colors in an anthology of vampire fiction. The objection is valid. My two-part defense must be, first, that "Count Magnus" is such a splendid example of James's wonderful pseudohistorical ghost fiction that I could not resist including it. Second, though the count does not drink blood, he does, like every other vampire, crush away the life of his victims.

James's horror tales owe much of their effectiveness to the tension he is able to create between his realistically described settings and the supernatural events that take place there. In "Count Magnus" James slowly, slowly lets his story wander from England to Stockholm, and from there to Vestergetland. Carefully, almost imperceptibly, our attention shifts from what would seem to be the protagonist, Mr. Wendell, to the Babcock family hierarchy, and from that, finally, to Count Magnus himself.

"Count Magnus" borrows from Stoker the technique of keeping his horrid creature offstage through most of his tale. The supernatural climax of the story, told in the even tones of a scholarly narration and coming after so many pages of unsurprising detail, is particularly horrible. As in other tales of his nature, there is little attempt at metaphor or symbolism or psychological complexity; the reader is simply asked to be frightened by the unhappy fate of an unaware man who unwittingly falls prey to a malevolent vampire.

COUNT MAGNUS



By what means the papers out of which I have made a connected story came into my hands is the last point which the reader will learn from these pages. But it is necessary to prefix to my extracts from them a statement of the town in which I possess them.

They consist, then, partly of a series of collections for a book of travels, such a volume as was a common product of the forties and fifties. Horace Murray's *Journal of a Residence in Iceland and the Danish Isles* is a fair specimen of the class to which I allude. These books usually treated of some unknown district on the Continent. They were illustrated with woodcuts or steel plates. They gave details of hotel accommodation and of means of communication, such as we now expect to find in any well-regulated guide-book, and they dealt largely in reported conversations with intelligent foreigners, easy innkeepers, and garrulous peasants. In a word, they were ordinary.

Begun with the idea of furnishing material for such a book, my papers as they progressed assumed the character of a record of one single personal experience, and this record was continued up to the very eve, almost, of its termination.

The writer was a Mr. Wrexall. For my knowledge of him I have to depend entirely on the evidence his writings afford, and from these I deduce that he was a man past middle age, possessed of some private means, and very much alone in the world. He had, it seems, no settled abode in England, but was a frequenter of hotels and boarding-houses. It is probable that he entertained the idea of settling down at some future time which never came, and I think it also likely that the Pantheon fire in the early seventies must have destroyed a great deal that would have thrown light on his antecedents, for he refers once or twice to property of his that was warehoused at that establishment.

It is further apparent that Mr. Wrexall had published a book, and that it treated of a holiday he had once taken in Brittany. More than this I cannot say about his works, because a diligent search in bibliographical works has convinced me that it must have appeared either anonymously or under a pseudonym.

As to his character, it is not difficult to form some superficial opinion. He must have been an intelligent and cultivated man. It seems that he was near being a Fellow of his college at Oxford - Brasenose, as I judge from the Calendar. His besetting fault was pretty clearly that of over-meritiveness, possibly a good fault in a traveller, certainly a fault for which this traveller paid dearly enough in the end.



On what proved to be his last expedition, he was plotting another book, Scandinavia, a region not widely known to Englishmen forty years ago, had struck him as an interesting field. He must have acquired or some old books of Swedish history or memoirs, and the idea had struck him that there was room for a book describing travel in Sweden, interspersed with episodes from the history of some of the great Swedish families. He projected letters of introduction, therefore, to some persons of quality in Sweden, and set out thither in the early summer of 1863.

Of his travels in the North there is no need to speak, nor of his residence of some weeks in Stockholm. I need only mention that some sagacious resident there put him on the track of an important collection of family papers belonging to the proprietors of an ancient manor-house at Vester-gårdsklad, and obtained for him permission to examine them.

The manor-house, or *herregård*, in question is to be called Råbäck (pronounced something like Roulback), though that is not its name. It is one of the best buildings of its kind in all the country, and the picture of it in Dahlberg's *Svevia antiqua et modernæ*, engraved in 1694, shows it very much as the course may see it today. It was built soon after 1600, and is, roughly speaking, very much like an English house of that period in respect of material and brick with some facings—and style. The man who built it was a scion of the great house of De la Gardie, and his descendants possess it still. De la Gardie is the name by which I will designate them when mention of them becomes necessary.

They received Mr. Wrexal with great kindness and courtesy, and pressed him to stay in the house as long as his researches lasted. But, preferring to be independent, and trusting his powers of conversing in Swedish, he settled himself at the village inn, which turned out quite sufficiently comfortable, at any rate during the summer months. The arrangement would entail a short walk daily to and from the manor house of something under a mile. The house itself stood in a park, and was protected—so should say grown up—with large old timber. Now if you round the walled garden, and then crossed a close wood fringing one of the small lakes with which the whole country is pitted. Then came the wall of the copse, and you climbed a steep knoll—a knob of rock lightly covered with soil—and on the top of this stood the church, fenced in with tall dark trees. It was a curious building to English eyes. The nave and aisles were low, and filled with pews and galleries. In the western gallery stood the handsome old organ, gaily painted, and with silver pipes. The ceiling was flat, and had been adorned by a seventeenth-century artist with a strange and hideous "Last Judgment," full of lurid flames, falling circles, burning ships, crying souls, and brown and smiling demons. Handsome brass chandeliers hung from the roof, the pulpit was like a deacon's house covered with little painted wooden cherubs and saints; a stand with three hour-glasses was hinged to the preacher's desk. Such sights as these may be seen in many a church in Sweden now, but what distinguished this

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