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# **From Monster to Friend**

## - A Study of the Development of Vampires in Literature

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## Introduction

Although it is believed that the term “vampire” was first used during the seventeenth or eighteenth century (Wilson 1985 579), stories about the blood-drinking monster have been told ever since ancient times (Summers 2). Today, the creature is probably more popular in literature than ever, and there is even a subculture dedicated to the lives and ways of vampires. In modern literature, the vampire is not simply a frightening fiend, but almost something to be fascinated by, a complex individual with human feelings. Today, the vampire, who used to be man’s enemy, has become a friend, and in many cases even a lover.

In James Malcolm Rymer’s *Varney the Vampire* (1849) and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), vampires are terrifying creatures who spread fear among the people around them. Varney is perhaps, in appearance, the one who shares most traits with the dreadful folkloric monster, whereas Dracula is a gothic creature, a count, a high-class individual. Despite this, they are similar in the sense that their interest in man revolves around blood; they are not our human equals.

About 60 years after Stoker, in Richard Matheson’s *I Am Legend* (1954), the vampires are still bloodthirsty and evil beings, who have taken over the planet. They are dangerous, and there is no way for mankind to coexist with them, no way for the vampire to be our friend. And then, 22 years later, with Anne Rice’s *The Vampire Chronicles: Interview with the Vampire* (1976) something has changed. The vampire has feelings. He thinks like a human being. He can control himself and live among mortals. The vampire has become a complex character; just like a human being, he can be either good or bad, and he can have more than one side to him. During the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, vampire literature gained more and more attention. Two very popular literary works of the twenty-first century are Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* (2005) and Charlaine Harris’ *Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2001), the latter perhaps best known for the television series adaptation *True Blood*. Meyer and Harris both tell the story of a girl who falls in love with a vampire, and enters a whole new world. The vampires in *Twilight* and *Southern Vampire Mysteries* have come a long way from Varney in the story by Rymer; they have gone from being cruel monsters to being friends of humans.

In this essay I will discuss the differences between vampires through literary history with a focus on modern history, the earliest story being Rymer’s *Varney the Vampire* from 1849 and the latest being Meyer’s *Twilight* from 2005. Other literary works focused on will be those mentioned above: Stoker’s *Dracula*, Matheson’s *I Am Legend*, Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*, and Harris’ *Dead Until Dark*. I will discuss how the character of the

vampire has changed, in appearance as well as in its personality and lifestyle, and what the creatures and their characteristics may represent. I will also examine how the depiction of the vampire has developed through time, along with the stories in general and how they are interpreted.

### **The vampire and the world of its time**

To begin with, it should be pointed out that the six literary works dealt with in this essay cover a range of 156 years, and it is only natural that the characteristics of the vampires in the stories would change along with the world around them. For one thing, the six stories belong to three different genres. Whereas *Varney the Vampyre* and *Dracula* are horror stories, Matheson's *I Am Legend* moves toward the science fiction genre, and *Interview with the Vampire*, *Dead Until Dark* and *Twilight* are more in line with the fantasy category. Carter and McRae describe the science fiction genre as follows: "texts, usually novels, which stretch the imagination. Science fiction is usually set in other worlds or even planets. Frequently they are set in the future" (256). The fantasy genre is explained as "a text in which characters and events are imagined. Some may even be very obviously based on dreams" (252). The line between the genres two appears somewhat blurred, but science fiction author Ray Bradbury attempts to define the difference by explaining that "science fiction is really sociological studies of the future, things that the writer believes are going to happen by putting two and two together... Science fiction is a logical or mathematical projection of the future" (quoted on writingclasses.com). This applies nicely to Matheson's *I Am Legend*, taking place in a future Los Angeles.

*Varney the Vampyre* was the first full-length novel about a vampire (victoriangothic.org), and is assumed to have been inspired by Lord Byron, John Polidori and the vampire Lord Ruthven (Höglund 116), the main character of *The Vampyre. A Tale*, which was published in *New Monthly Magazine* in 1819, and which was the first English vampire story written in prose (Höglund 72). In the beginning of the story, Varney was more or less an "unfeeling predator" (victoriangothic.org), but eventually, Rymer started depicting him as more of a pleasant creature, a victim to his own cruel nature that he was forced to live with. A reason for this change could be that Rymer had to take the story to a place where the readers would not tire of it; the story ran in London's penny press and would do so for as long as it was popular (victoriangothic.org), and a monster with only one side to his personality might perhaps not be interesting enough in the long run. By granting one of the story's protagonists

an interview with Varney, showing his regretful and remorseful side, Rymer allowed the audience to identify and sympathize with the vampire. However, despite Varney's sorrow and aversion to his nature and his actions, he is not able to break his curse; he cannot choose to live a different way. Not even death is a way out.

Rymer, who wrote the series about Varney in the *Penny Dreadfuls* between 1847 and 1849 was inspired by Romanticism in general and Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1840) and Lord Byron and his misunderstood hero in particular (Höglund 116). The gothic novel, with its elements of horror, was on the rise during the nineteenth century (Carter and McRae 149), and it seems a frightening but tragic outsider such as Varney, sucking blood from young and innocent women, would fit right in. In the second half of the nineteenth century and the time of Stoker's *Dracula*, the Victorian middle and upper classes of Britain grew richer and more comfortable (Carter & McRae 126), an element that can be seen in Stoker's novel, for example in the close descriptions of everyday occurrences such as having dinner. The depicting of everyday routines appears to be an important part in the story, and Höglund points out the contrast between the descriptions of Jonathan Harker having dinner and the vampires barbarically wolfing down their food as significant (Höglund 208). *Dracula* and his castle become an opposing component to the relaxed, contented and above all normal lifestyle of Jonathan Harker and his British middle class. In a world where the ordinary is prized, the extraordinary would likely add to the elements of horror.

In the middle of the twentieth century and Matheson's period of time, the new genre science fiction had entered the literary scene and to some extent replaced the classic horror story (Höglund 294). In *I Am Legend*, Matheson mingled the classic horror creature of the vampire with elements of science fiction. The dystopia created in Matheson's future Los Angeles may well be inspired by World War II that ended less than 10 years before the release of *I Am Legend*, but according to Höglund, it is likely that the story deals with the question of quickly and widely spreading diseases, which became typical for literature during the twentieth century (Höglund 295-296). Matheson's protagonist, Robert Neville, does in fact come to the conclusion that an airborne bacterium infecting the blood is the reason everyone he knows either turns into a vampire or dies from the disease (Matheson 76).

During the 1990's, vampirism, which had been a literary symbol for illness such as tuberculosis during the nineteenth century, became rather a metaphor for AIDS and other diseases transmitted through blood (Höglund 295-296). Harris plays on this in *Dead Until Dark*, creating a different type of AIDS that is only harmful to vampires. It is called sino-AIDS and is transferred through the blood when a vampire feeds off an infected human, and if

one drinks the disease-ridden blood multiple times, it is fatal: "... if a vampire fed from an infected human more than once, the vampire actually died – redied? – without being staked" (68). Despite the specific illness changing, this symbolism seems to be consistent throughout the history of vampire literature.

### **The Vampires: personality and appearance**

Although the vampires presented in the six literary works focused on in this essay differ from each other, they all have certain traits in common. For example, they all have pale skin and, which is probably the most significant feature, sharp teeth for biting through the human skin. The vampires' differences are mostly in their personalities and their control over their own thirst for blood, and in the complexity of the characters.

In Rymer's *Varney the Vampire*, the vampire is introduced in the first few pages of the first chapter, in the middle of the night during a raging storm. He is standing outside the window of a young girl's bedroom, where he is trying to get in. The vampire is described as a "tall gaunt figure in hideous relief" (Rymer 11), and when the girl sees the horrifying creature, she is frightened speechless. The first parts of his body described are his long fingernails, with which he is tapping on the window, making a sound like hail. Further on in the chapter, the exterior of the vampire is described as follows:

The figure turns half round, and the light falls upon the face. 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 11)

One noted fact about Varney, our first vampire, that sets him apart from the rest and which is clear in the section quoted above, is that he is quite ugly and horrifying in appearance, whereas the others differ from their human acquaintances only in smaller details, such as their skin and, of course, their fangs. But even Varney manages to induce some sort of fascination in his victims, keeping them quiet while he moves closer through a form of hypnotising:

But her eyes are fascinated. The glance of a serpent could not have produced a greater effect upon her than did the fixed gaze of those awful, metallic-looking eyes that were bent on her face. [...] What was it? – what

did it want there? – what made it look so hideous – so unlike an inhabitant of the earth, and yet to be on it? [...] [She] cannot withdraw her eyes from that marble-looking face. He holds her with his glittering eye. (Rymer 11-12)

In Stoker's *Dracula*, the first acquaintance with the vampire is when young Jonathan Harker arrives at the Borgo Pass, where the Count himself collects him, dressed like a driver; Mr Harker does not suspect that the Count and the driver are in fact the same person, and when he does, it is to a great degree because of his vampiric attributes. Two of the first features noted about the driver are in fact his sharp teeth and his red eyes, the first typical of vampires in all of the six works. Just as in *Varney the Vampire*, the first encounter with the vampire is in the middle of the night. When meeting Count Dracula (dressed as himself), Mr Harker observes that his host has extraordinarily pale skin, and lips "whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years" (Stoker 27). Another classic vampire characteristic is the fact that Count Dracula does not appear in mirrors. Considering personality, the Count is very secretive and very anxious to keep up appearances to let Mr Harker believe that his only remarkable element is his wealth.

*I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson differs from the other stories in the sense that where the others focus on individual vampires, such as Varney and Count Dracula, Matheson writes about the creatures as a group, a "them". "They" are mentioned already in the very first sentence of the novel, but it is not until the third chapter that we actually find out for certain what they are. Up until then, the reader has to make an educated guess, knowing about vampires and their relationship with garlic, mirrors and human blood from other stories, (although garlic is not mentioned as a threat to the vampire in either *Varney the Vampire* or *Dracula*). As opposed to the other five novels in this essay, *I Am Legend* features vampires as more of a way to define the protagonist, Robert Neville, instead of centring on the vampire itself. However, a change in the interpretation of the vampire can still be seen. This story has two different types of vampires: the living vampire, and the dead. The dead, Neville soon figures out, function only by the virus that killed them, driven merely by their need for blood. They even kill each other when human blood is lacking (Matheson 11). The living, however, have a developed mind and can think rationally. The living can talk, whereas the dead, apart from Neville's old friend Ben Cortman, seem unable to. In appearance, the vampire in *I Am Legend* resembles earlier ones; they are pale, strong and cold.

Moving on to Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* and the seventies, something has happened to the vampire and its intentions. Whereas it is still pale and

supernaturally strong, it is no longer driven by simple need and want for blood. It has become a super-human, to a great extent functioning the same way but with higher evolved senses, thoughts and reactions. The vampires have full control over their actions; the vampire Lestat actually lives with his human father, and he searches out Louis with the intention to turn him into a vampire in order to get what he wants. While the lives of Varney, Dracula and the vampires of *I Am Legend* revolve around their lust for blood, the vampires in *Interview with the Vampire* try to lead ordinary lives, and their blood-drinking is merely their way of staying strong and surviving in the world. Similar to *Varney the Vampire* and *Dracula*, this story focuses on vampires as individual characters, but unlike the two earliest stories discussed here, we get to meet multiple vampires, and we learn quickly that they all differ from each other. In *I Am Legend*, we had two different groups of vampires; here we have true individuals.

In *Dead Until Dark*, Charlaine Harris continues on the track of Anne Rice, with the varying personalities: vampires who choose to live alongside human kind and try not to harm them, and those who do not care for other “races” than their own. Their fangs can be retracted, allowing them to blend in; it is not immediately obvious that they do not belong to the human race. In accordance with its four predecessors, the vampires in *Dead Until Dark* cannot live in the daylight, and just as in the previous stories, they are supernaturally strong and have pale skin. What is new here is that the vampires are allowed to live out in the open; people know about them, and they do not have to hide. They can, if they choose to, live from synthetic blood, which enables them to venture into human society.

Just like *Dead Until Dark* and *Interview with the Vampire*, Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* features both the good and the bad, and similarly to its predecessors, the vampires are portrayed as some sort of super-humans with their preternatural strength and highly evolved senses and speed. Here each vampire even has a personal “superpower” that sets him or her apart from everyone else. Edward, for example, has the ability to read minds, and his adoptive sister, Alice, can see the future: “Why can you read minds – why only you? And Alice, seeing the future... Why does that happen?” asks the protagonist (Meyer 268). Additionally, the appearances of the vampires of *Twilight* change when they turn into vampires: when their transformation is complete, they are not only supernaturally strong and pale, but they are also paranormally beautiful.

Along with time, the exterior of the vampire has had a clear development, starting with Varney as the horrible beast of the underworld and ending with the angel-like vampires of *Twilight*. In *Twilight*, Edward explains to Bella that vampires are designed to attract their



victims, who will then come to them on their own accord. This explains why, as opposed to Varney, the vampires in the later stories seem so strikingly beautiful to the people surrounding them. Dracula, while undoubtedly frightening in his manners and somewhat strange-looking, does not make his guests suspicious until they talk to him. Neither in *I Am Legend* do the vampires look very different from their appearances when they were human; the only way the protagonist, Robert Neville, can tell what they are is in fact by noting whether they are outside during daytime or only when night falls. In *Interview with the Vampire*, Lestat is spellbindingly beautiful to Louis – until he becomes a vampire himself. There seems to be some sort of magic surrounding him, drawing Louis towards him, an element helping the vampire to lure his victims closer to him. In Harris’ stories, the vampires look like human beings, but they have an ability called “glamouring” which enables them to charm their victims, in resemblance to Varney’s hypnotizing skills.

As previously mentioned, the characteristic fang-like, sharp teeth of the vampire that all six novels have in common and that used to be fairly noticeable can suddenly in Harris’ *Dead Until Dark* be retracted. This new ability makes the fact that the vampires aren’t human less apparent to those surrounding them, and gives them an increased opportunity to blend in. In *Twilight*, the teeth are less fang-like than in the previous five works, but they are still razor sharp and rock hard. What makes the vampires of *Twilight* less “discreet” than those of *Dead Until Dark*, however, is their eyes, which are affected by their hunger and the blood they drink; a hungry vampire has dark red eyes, whereas a vampire who has recently fed on a human has light red eyes, and the eyes of a vampire who has recently fed on an animal become golden brown. The red eyes can be found in *Dracula* as well, but it is not a typical trait of the vampire before *Twilight*.

Another noticeable trait of the vampire’s exterior is the pale skin, a fairly natural feature seeing as the vampires of the first five works in this essay are unable to stay in the sun. Sunlight is, in fact, one of the few things that can kill the vampires in *Dracula*, *I Am Legend*, *Interview with the Vampire* and *Dead Until Dark*, and it weakens Varney in *Varney the Vampire*. In *Twilight*, however, the only effect that sunlight has on vampires is that they sparkle beneath it, making them even more fascinating and beautiful, but still unable to dwell in the sun because of the clear evidence it would provide the people around them with, that they are in fact something other than human.

The pattern regarding the exterior of vampires appears rather easy to follow; the appearance of the vampire has gradually gone from terrible monster through looking just like any ordinary person, to a beautiful and godlike creature. A reason for this development could

be that, as mentioned earlier, the genre of the vampire story has changed, and the more recent ones are in fact love stories. Clasen argues that the very foundation of *Twilight* is “instant attraction” (122); Bella is immediately drawn to Edward because of his beauty: without it, she would most likely not have thought further about him. Attraction, and with it beauty, is important in the later vampire stories because they revolve around love and relationships in a way that the previous ones do not.

### **Love and sexuality**

Whereas love is a concept featured in all of the six stories, it is not a love that involves the vampires in either *Dracula* or *I Am Legend*. Varney, on the other hand, falls in love with his victim and he even tries, more than once, to get married. This fact shows that not all changes in the vampire story have the same easy-to-follow pattern as the vampires’ appearances. Varney does in fact, besides his exterior, seem to have more in common with Bill, Edward and other vampires of today than with Dracula, despite being from the same century. Höglund states that Varney “forebodes” the vampires of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, whereas Dracula’s characteristics are closer to the folkloric bloodsucker (121).

In *Interview with the Vampire*, the most prominent form of love is love toward matters such as art, literature, nature; all things beautiful. The existence of vampires does not solely revolve around their physical instincts; just like humans, they have individual needs and different interests. In *Dead Until Dark* and *Twilight*, the question of love between human and vampire is crucial. Sookie falls in love with Bill, who falls for her as well, and he also lets her know that he does not “care about people automatically”, that she is different (Harris 92). Just as in this case, Bella in *Twilight* falls for the mysterious Edward immediately, and similarly, Edward falls for her as well. Just as in *Dead Until Dark*, a big part of their connection comes from them both being different from other people, with especially *Twilight* focusing on the concept of true and eternal love (Clasen 131). However, similar to the story of Varney mentioned earlier in this chapter, Bella and Edward want to get married, but their relationship does not fully work until Bella becomes a vampire as well.

One thing all six literary works in this essay have in common is the motif of sex. Although it is more freely spoken of in the later novels, the hints about vampires, humans and the sexuality between them are unmistakable. Both Varney and Count Dracula have a tendency to find young women to provide them with their blood. For both vampires, their visits to these young women seem to have erotic connotations, and the blood sucking even seems to be a sort of metaphor for sex (Höglund 328-329). As Platt points out, “metaphors,

which liken a vampire's attack to sexual seduction, follow a long tradition in the representation of vampires in literature and popular culture, where the act of drinking a victim's blood is highly sexualized (83). In *I Am Legend*, Robert Neville's greatest concern when night falls and the vampires approach his house is having to listen to the female vampires trying to lure him out, and having to resist them. During daytime, however, watching the vampire women sleeping, his sexual drive has completely disappeared and he can again see them for what they really are: monsters with the sole goal to drink his blood. The female vampires surrounding Neville's house have some resemblance with the female vampires of *Dracula*: seemingly attractive and sexually arousing creatures who soon transform into diabolical monsters. In both books, sexuality is used as a way of trapping the male human.

In Anne Rice's *Interview With the Vampire*, we do not have to read many pages before the first mention of sex: "But I can't tell you exactly, any more than I could tell you exactly what is the experience of sex if you have never had it" (Rice 18). Here, Louis is trying to explain the experience of becoming a vampire and sex is his choice of comparison. A few pages later, he even compares the movements of Lestat, his "maker", to that of a lover's, and the feeling he has when Lestat is drinking his blood is similar to passion:

[He] lay down beside me now on the steps, his movement so graceful and so personal that at once it made me think of a lover. I recoiled. But he put his right arm around me and pulled me close to his chest. [...] I remember that the movement of his lips raised the hair all over my body, sent a shock of sensation through my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion... (22-23)

As mentioned above, the act of blood-drinking often works as a metaphor for sex in vampire stories, and it is perhaps even more evident in the following extract:

He was pressing the length of his body against me now, and I felt the hard strength of his sex beneath his clothes pressing against my leg. A wretched gasp escaped my lips, but he bent close, his lips on what must have been so cold, so lifeless for him; and I sank my teeth into his skin, my body rigid, that hard sex driving against me, and I lifted him in passion off the floor. Wave after wave of his beating heart passed into me as, weightless, I rocked with him, devouring him, his ecstasy, his conscious pleasure. (Rice 248)

Here, Louis meets a human boy and is instantly drawn to him, and the description of the vampire feeding resembles a sexual act, the vampire's teeth representing the genitals.

Following the same path as Anne Rice, Charlaine Harris is far more open about sex than her predecessors. From the very first time that Sookie sees Bill, she starts to become curious about the sexuality of vampires. We, the readers, soon learn that sex is a big part of the vampires' lives; in fact, sex seems to be almost equally as important as blood. There are even prostitutes "specializing" in vampires. Drinking vampire blood supposedly improves the sex lives of humans, and there is a market for selling it like drugs. In *Twilight* the subject of sex is not as evident, probably because the intended audience is younger than that of *Dead Until Dark*. However, it is rather evident when reading between the lines, especially in the last book of the series, *Breaking Dawn*, for example when Edward's brother Emmett questions the quality of their first night in their new home:

"So it's still standing?" he managed to get out between his snickers. "I would've thought you two had knocked it to rubble by now. What were you doing last night? Discussing the national debt?" (454)

[...]

"Not much wild about *you*, is there? I bet that cottage doesn't have a scratch." He laughed. "Did Edward tell you how many houses Rose and I smashed?" (481)

There has been a great amount written about *Twilight* and the matter of sex, and about the story's message supposedly being pro-abstinence. This seems to be a likely argument, seeing how *Twilight* differs from the other vampire stories, where the vampire is a strongly sexual being; in the relationship between Bella and Edward, Bella is the one yearning for lovemaking, and Edward is the one saying "no". Natalie Wilson writes: "constructing those females who have sexual desire and act on it before marriage as depraved, the abstinence agenda punishes females (such as Bella) who desire sex" (108). However, she also argues that the series may indicate that, in unequal relationships such as that between Bella and Edward, abstinence is likely to lead to a violence-free relationship, and at the end of the story, when Bella has become a vampire and they are finally equal, they can at long last be intimate with each other without Bella getting hurt, which is what happens when they first have sex and Bella is still human (108). When Bella too is a vampire, they are suddenly both allowed to be sexual creatures, just like the vampires of the other stories. Platt points out that, although Edward forces Bella into abstinence, he has to force himself as well "because the proximity and passion of the moment would most likely result in Bella's death" (77). This

indicates that the woman is not the only one who needs to be restrained, but while the man can control himself, she needs to be controlled and told what to do. Despite Meyer using a seemingly different angle in her connotations of sex, the link between the bloodlust of the vampire and physical attraction corresponds to the vampire stories before *Twilight*.

Seemingly common to all the vampire stories is the link between violence and sex, and vampires have often been interpreted to represent human fantasies of pleasure and pain (Höglund 120). In *Varney the Vampire*, this link can be found already in the beginning, where Varney visits Flora, the young subject of his affections:

Her beautifully rounded limbs quivered with the agony of her soul. The glassy, horrible eyes of the figure ran over that angelic form with a hideous satisfaction – horrible profanation. He drags her head to the bed’s edge. He forces it back by the long hair still entwined in his grasp. With a plunge he seizes her neck in his fang-like teeth... (Rymer 12).

Although the scene does not involve an actual sexual act, the description above resembles a description of rape. In *Dracula*, there is no recollection such as this of Count Dracula’s visits to young Lucy because she cannot remember them, and no one else is present. However, many interpret the description of the assassination of Lucy, where a group of four men surround her where she lies in her coffin and three of them watch as one drives a stake through her heart (Stoker 222), as unmistakably sexual; Elaine Showalter even argues that “the sexual implications of the scene are embarrassingly clear”, likening it to gang rape (Showalter 181). Milly Williamson builds further on this theory and discusses the “erotic fascination for unveiling and undressing female cadavers” which she claims is present in Van Helsing’s examination of Lucy (Williamson 16). She argues that the men in *Dracula*, and other stories written by men in the same period of time, find satisfaction and excitement in experimenting with the female body. This view corresponds to Robert Neville in *I Am Legend* who, stated by himself, tends to only experiment on female vampires to find out more about their “illness” (Matheson 49-50). He unwillingly questions this fact, and is appalled by himself for linking it to sex.

Although the vampire is often depicted as the rapist and the violator, in many cases, as for example Rymer, Harris as well as, and perhaps in particular, Meyer, the vampire is actually the hero saving the victim from a cruel fate (Wilson 2011 123). In *Dead Until Dark*, Bill saves Sookie after she has been attacked and beaten to the brink of death (Harris 29-32). In *Twilight*, Edward saves Bella right before she is about to be attacked by a gang of rapists in Port Angeles (Meyer 140), and we later learn that two of the three women in the

Cullen family were turned into vampires after being raped by human men and saved by vampires. Thus, the vampire has gone from being the offender to being the saviour.

### **Intentions and eating habits**

As previously mentioned, one important aspect regarding vampires that seems to have changed over time, or at least evolved, is that of their intentions towards humans. For Count Dracula and the vampires in *I Am Legend*, although very different in their ways of approaching their victims, drinking blood appears to be as much a goal as a necessity. The vampires of *I Am Legend*, as mentioned earlier, function solely on the need for blood, whereas Bram Stoker's mysterious Count appears very cunning and shrewd where he lurks in his castle, planning every move meticulously in his goal to acquire the blood he prefers, instead of settling for just anything. While the creeping creatures of *I Am Legend* act unthinkingly and on instinct and perhaps could be said to have no intentions at all, Dracula thinks ahead and uses humans for other purposes than food. The most obvious example is his inviting Jonathan Harker to his castle, the Count pretending to befriend young Harker but merely wanting him to work for him and with the true intention of keeping him in the castle: "If I be sane, then surely it is maddening to think that of all the foul things that lurk in this hateful place the Count is the least dreadful to me; that to him alone I can look for safety, even though this be only whilst I can serve his purpose" (Stoker 45). For Dracula, life as a vampire appears to be some sort of game, and the humans are his toys.

In *Interview with the Vampire*, the vampires have become individuals, as opposed to *I Am Legend* where they act as a herd. Each individual has their own intentions; some of them resemble Dracula and his desire for human blood, whereas others only feed on humans if absolutely necessary. Louis, for example, wishes to coexist with humankind with no intention to harm them. In resemblance to this, the vampires of *Dead Until Dark* have tried to live in "the normal world" since the revealing of their existence, and try not to do more harm than anyone else. As the vampire Bill states, they do not automatically care about people (Harris 92), but they still seem to have some degree of ethics and morals lacking in the actions of Dracula and the vampires of *I Am Legend*. However, some vampires still use humans for evil games, just like Dracula, and this is also a fact in *The Twilight Saga* where some vampires choose to live only with their own kind, using humans simply as food. But then again, not all people in the stories are "good" either, and not everyone has the same intentions, so one could say that the vampires in literature have become more and more human-like.

It could be claimed that *Dracula* and *I Am Legend* are told from the eyes of humans, whereas *Interview with the Vampire* and, to some extent, *Varney the Vampire* give us the point of view of the vampire, and that this may cause the readers to sympathize less with *Dracula* and Robert Neville's nightly visitors than with the others. However, *Dead Until Dark* and *Twilight* are written from Sookie's and Bella's, two human girls, respective perspectives all throughout the stories, and yet their encountered vampires appear much more compassionate than for example Count *Dracula*.

Closely connected to the matter of the vampires' intentions towards humans is the question concerning their eating habits, and here there is a profound difference between the vampires of the nineteenth century and those of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The vampires in *I Am Legend*, while seeking out humans with the objective to drink their blood, can also drink the blood from animals (Matheson 94) and, as mentioned before, if they cannot find human blood, they may even kill each other. While not drinking blood from other vampires, Louis, Lestat and the other vampires of Rice's stories share the capability of feeding off animals as well as humans, a fact that Louis learns shortly after becoming a vampire. It will not keep him as strong as human blood will, but it is an option. Bill and his fellow vampires in *Dead Until Dark* do not drink blood from animals, but in this fictive reality, a synthetic blood is manufactured in order to allow vampires to coexist with humans. Much like the animal blood in *Interview with the Vampire*, this synthetic blood does not fully meet the vampires' needs, but it is possible for them to maintain a diet without the blood of humans. In *Twilight*, Meyer gives her vampires the option of living off animals, just like Rice does in *Interview with the Vampire*. In accordance with their predecessors, the vampires of *Twilight* do not gain the same strength from animal blood as from that from humans, but the difference in health appears slighter, a notion that makes the vampires who choose to feed off humans seem more cruel, more *Dracula*-like, making an active choice where a human-friendly alternative is possible.

Some critics, for example Sandra Tomc, suggest that this eating habit of refusing to feed off humans that was introduced with Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* is a form of eating disorder (Tomc 96). Höglund writes that modern vampires have developed "obvious eating disorders", and that one of them is Louis from the fictive world of Rice. He is disgusted by the thought of drinking human blood and forces himself to live close to starvation, feeding only off rats and birds and constantly suffering from a gnawing hunger. Whereas Tomc focuses on the anorexic behaviour of Louis, Höglund also draws Edward from *Twilight* and Bill from *Dead Until Dark* into the discussion, comparing the synthetic blood

making up Bill's diet to some sort of nutritional drink (335). Furthermore, Höglund states that many vampires in modern literature have a more bulimic form of eating disorder and throw up out of guilt after drinking blood from a human (336). It could, however, be argued that the reason for Louis, Bill and the Cullen's decision not to drink human blood is strictly ethical, more in resemblance to vegetarianism, which the eating habits of Edward and his family are even referred to in *Twilight* (Meyer 2005 164).

### **The outsider**

Both Williamson and Höglund argue that one reason for the popularity of the vampire is based on the view of the creature as an outsider. The vampire has throughout the six literary works, from Varney to Edward, been an outsider, with the exception of the vampires of *I Am Legend*, where they have taken over the world and Robert Neville is left as the only living human. Because of their uncompromising need for human blood, Varney and Dracula are unable to live among humans. There is however a difference between the two; Varney despises his own being and wants nothing more than to be able to lead a normal life, whereas Dracula seems rather satisfied with his existence. Varney is, in fact, doomed to live a life in solitude from the very moment he becomes a vampire: "Be to yourself a desolation and a blight, shunned by all that is good and virtuous, armed against all men, and all men armed against thee, Varney the Vampire" (Rymer 751). The melancholy of Varney is shared by the vampires of the later half of the twentieth century as well as the ones of the twenty-first century; none of them wished to become vampires, but were unwillingly forced into it and now have to accept their fate. Now they have to "live" with their new non-human reality.

The sympathetic vampire becomes an outsider on more than one level; he does not belong with the humans anymore, but because of his remorse, he does not belong with other vampires either. He stands between two worlds, and this probably contributes to his attractiveness to the reader. Margaret Carter suggests that where the vampire used to invoke sympathy in its readers *in spite of* being a vampire, today we feel sympathy for the creature for the very reason that he *is* a vampire (27). This undoubtedly correlates to the changed intentions of the vampire; what makes Dracula different from others is his being a predator living off humans and *wanting* to kill, whereas what makes for example Louis from *Interview with the Vampire* different from others is that he is forced to kill and has to live with it. In other words, the otherness of Dracula is what makes him horrifying, but the otherness of Louis, Bill and Edward is what makes them appear sympathetic.



## Vampires and gender

Studying the six works dealt with in this essay, it is clear that not only the vampires have changed, but also the storylines and the motifs. One can argue that vampires no longer play the same role in literature, and the reason seems to be the change in the relationship between vampire and human, seeing as the two latest stories, *Dead Until Dark* and *Twilight*, are love stories between a human girl and a vampire. As previously mentioned, vampires in literature of the twenty-first century are often heroes, as opposed to the vampire villains of earlier stories.

Milly Williamson describes Stoker's *Dracula* as "a heterosexual man's tale", written by a man and, seemingly, for men (7). The women of the story are passive, while the men act. A common interpretation of the story is that "it raises male (heterosexual) fears in order to ease them" (Williamson 7), linking the fear of the vampire to Freud's Oedipus Complex and a combination of love, hate and guilt. *I Am Legend* could also be interpreted as a "man's tale"; it was, just like *Dracula* written by a man, and the only character who is actually alive is a man. Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, on the other hand, has been thought to "prematurely pose the end of stable gender categories", allowing fans of both sexes to identify with the protagonists (Williamson 55, 57). According to Williamson, the majority of female vampire fans in Britain prefer the emotional and sympathy-evoking characterization of the vampire to the cold and cruel depiction of Count Dracula (Williamson 58). Dracula is the villain of his story, whereas the vampires of *Interview with the Vampire* and Rice's following books, along with the later *Dead Until Dark* and *Twilight*, are rather "anti-villains", or at least complex characters with more than one side to them. Many female readers of vampire literature interviewed by Williamson in her research discovered the genre through Anne Rice, and later read *Dracula* "as a result of [their] already engaged interest in the vampire" (Williamson 59), but having been introduced to the creature via the humane vampires of *The Vampire Chronicles*, they found Stoker's characterization of Dracula too intent on making him despicable and hated.

Whereas *Dracula* may be considered a story for men, *Twilight* is on the other hand often described as a typical story for girls or young women: Ann Steiner writes that "the reader of *Twilight* is generally identified in the press and elsewhere as a girl in her teens who allows herself to become immersed in the narrative" (195) and that she is described as "over-emotional, non-intellectual, and easily influenced" (203). Whereas Platt, Sibielski and Grandena all argue that *Twilight* is a story of stereotypical gender roles where female sexuality is repressed, Steiner points to a study where "at least 40 per cent of *Twilight* fans

consider themselves feminists” (203) and argues that while this interpretation may be accurate if studying the content and themes, it does not say much about the reception of the novel. She argues that one does not have to agree with every word in order to enjoy a literary work; that being a fan of Meyer does not mean one has to agree with her gender stereotypes, and that *Twilight* being a “girly book” does not have to be a negative thing, despite statements such as: “paratextual *Twilight* is represented as hyperfeminine: uncontrollable, silly, and irrational” (qtd in Steiner 202).

Kane discusses the queerness of the vampire, posing it as an opposition to “the bounds of heteronormativity” (105). She explains the term “queer” as follows:

‘Queer’ was posed as a challenge to the social system. It is an open term; anyone who rejects heteronormativity can be queer. [...] It is an interventionist category that calls into question the terms upon which identity, tolerance, acceptance and assimilation are doled out.” (105)

What makes vampires queer, according to Kane, is that they “disrupt boundaries and blur clear demarcations” (106) by being neither dead nor alive, and neither completely masculine nor completely feminine. She argues that the vampire has been a queer creature all through its literary presence and that much of the queerness lies in the lips of the vampire. She points out the difference between *Dracula*, where “the vampire’s lips are the site of their disruptive and destabilizing queer power. [...] The vampire’s mouth is a place of undoing, a place where the ordered world loses its coherence” (107) and *Twilight*, where the focus is on the vampires’ eyes, the golden eyes of the Cullen’s making them less queer. Another part of the vampire’s queerness, according to Kane is “its homoerotic possibility” (109). This can be seen in *Interview with the Vampire* in the section quoted on page 9 in this essay, as well as in *Dead Until Dark*, for example in the following extract: “... Malcolm’s beautiful boyfriend, Jerry, slithered willingly over to Bill. I smiled as though my jaws were going to crack as he wrapped his arms around Bill, nuzzled Bill’s neck, rubbed his chest against Bill’s shirt” (Harris 67-68). Wilson (2011) links queerness with the outsiderdom of the modern, sympathetic vampire, and argues that the vampire turned queer during the twentieth century (16), contradicting Kane’s statement that even Count Dracula is a queer creature. However, drawing from Kane’s definition of the word, the only vampires who are seemingly not queer would be those of *I Am Legend*, where they are the majority and would hence construct the norm of society.

## Conclusion

The vampire has been a recurring character in literature for thousands of years. The creature is still today, as it was in the nineteenth century and even before that, a blood sucking predator who poses danger to man, but he does no longer have to be a monster living an isolated life as an outcast (whether willingly or unwillingly). Nowadays, the vampire can live alongside man in a human society and, despite not fitting in to a full extent, coexist with humans. What used to be man's enemy, as in *Dracula*, is now the love interest of the human girl in one of the most popular stories of the twenty-first century, *Twilight*. Whereas the monster from the nineteenth century was a horrifying fiend inducing terror in its victims, the vampire of the twenty-first century is a beautiful creature with its own complex personality.

The vampire story that used to have the purpose of horror is now a fantasy romance, an alternative world, where friendship and even love between the undead and the living is possible. The vampires of *Varney the Vampire*, *Dracula* and *I Am Legend* are all the reasons for terrible happenings in their surroundings, but the vampire boyfriends Bill of *Dead Until Dark* and Edward of *Twilight* are the ones preventing the ill deeds of others: the antagonist is now instead the hero. And the animalistic beings driven by their need and lust for blood in the earlier three stories are replaced by the humane characters of the later three, who can choose, albeit under much constraint, to leave all humans unharmed.

In a way, the story of *Varney* could on its own describe the development of the other five novels; at first he is a revolting monster, but as the story continues, he becomes more and more humane and even awakens sympathy among the readers. The vampire has gone through extensive changes in the stories used in this essay: from a hideous exterior to spellbinding beauty; from a diet consisting solely of human blood to alternatives such as animal blood and even synthetic blood; from feeling only hate, desire and appetite to being able to love. He has gone from being a monster, to being a friend.

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