



# Changed Personality of the Vampire in English Literature

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## Abstract

Vampires make for fascinating monsters. The vampire's literary history is traced in this article, from its earliest literary manifestations to the present day. As this article demonstrates, vampire literature has undergone a dramatic evolution over the course of this century. The author proposes a broad study of the vampire across history and literature in order to help the reader comprehend the character's development through time. Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, a seminal work in the genre, will be discussed in detail, as will its impact on young adult vampire literature. This is done through comparing and contrasting the vampire fiction of the nineteenth century with that of the present day, as well as by looking at different features in *Transylvania* and the other key works. The *Dracula* vampire and the current vampire couldn't be more different, and this difference has led to the "old" and "new" vampire subgenres emerging in recent years.

The similarities and distinctions between these two types of vampire stories are discussed, as are the folklore inspirations common to the genre. The modern vampire novel has shifted from the horror category to the urban fantasy subgenre because it has less in common with tradition than the novels of the nineteenth century. This shifting between genres is intriguing, and several explanations will be explored. Three more novel series are examined besides *Dracula*. L. J. Smith's *the vampire diaries*, P. C. Cast or Kristin Cast's *The House of Night*, and Richelle Mead's *The Vampire Academy* are three such series. All of the successful book series discussed here are aimed at teenagers and young adults.

**Keywords :** vampire, English literature, Modern vampire fiction

**DOI Number:** 10.48047/nq.2022.20.4.nq22370

**NeuroQuantology2022;20(4): 1394-1403**



## Introduction

Vampire stories were formerly meant to serve as a cautionary tale about the perils of the outside world, but they have now become a popular kind of entertainment. Vampire lore has been entertaining readers, particularly those with a penchant for the macabre, for quite some time. Due to the increased interest in vampires, several fan clubs, periodicals, and other products catering to this subculture have sprung up in recent years. Count Chocula cereal, an obvious allusion to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, is only one example of the many products that bear the author's likeness. *Dracula* is an important book in the genre of vampire fiction since it introduced the world to Count Dracula, the most well-known vampire character in literature. *Dracula*'s great popularity ensured that it would be referenced in subsequent works about vampires. The vampire's personality has changed throughout the years as new stories about the creature have been written. Writers of contemporary vampire fiction owe a great debt of gratitude to Anne Rice, whose best-selling book *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) popularized sympathetic vampire characters.

Vampires, who were once terrifying monsters, have evolved into tragic heroes that readers can identify with. The modern vampire population may be roughly divided into two groups: the "old" and the "new" vampires. The "ancient" vampires are reminiscent of the creatures that revel in their own wickedness that were typical of vampires in legend. However, the "new" vampires have less in common with the traditional vampires of

folklore since they are more human than monstrous and maintain a sense of morality. Novels like Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles* (1976–2014) and Whitley Strieber's *The Hunger* (1981) popularized the "new" form of vampire in the 1980s and 1990s. When vampire tales were adapted into other media, their popularity skyrocketed.

Films based on well-known vampire literature, like *Interview in the Vampire* (1994) and *Blade* (1998), continue to draw audiences. The same may be said about very successful television adaptations of movies, such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and others (1997-2003). Some television series about vampires are based on books. *True Blood* (2008-2014) was based on Charlaine Harris' *The Southern Dracula* series (2001-2013), whereas *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-present) was adapted on L.J. Smith's *The Dracula Diaries* (1991-1992).

### Historical Background of the Vampire

**The Vampire in Folklore** : Despite their modern prominence in literature—where they constitute an entire genre—vampires did not begin there. This is emphasized by Alan Dundes, who writes, "the reality is that the vampire did not begin in literature or popular culture" (location 13 of 2659) in the foreword to his book *The Vampire: A Casebook* (1998). Since it's probably next to impossible to pinpoint the precise beginning of stories about zombies, we'll go over that topic for now. However, legend of vampires had been around for millennia prior to their capture and employment as literary characters. Vampire mythology may be found on many different continents, but the stories from Eastern Europe are what we'll be looking at in this article.



It is difficult to determine where vampire legends first arose, but scholar Jan L. Perkowski "decided that it started in the Balkans" (Melton 561) when "speculation on vampires developed as a result of the conflict between pre-Christian pagan beliefs and Christianity" in the region. Vampires "acquired their position within the world view of the inhabitants of eastern or central Europe" from that point on (Melton 562). The job of the vampire was to "explain many sorts of unpredicted and undeserved misfortune that befell humanity," thus it was "not the ubiquitous emblem of evil it was supposed to be in the nineteenth-century eastern European literature" (Melton 562). Folklore "the vampires was a result of a variation that occurred in everyday life, usually a problem with the process for either dying and being buried or of birth" (Melton 562), rather than being created by other vampires or born that way, as is often the case in contemporary vampire fiction. Since the late eighteenth century, Europeans have been putting their accounts of vampires and vampire outbreaks on paper. People who were thought to be vampires were routinely buried alive to stop their undead "lives" and the bad energy that was said to be emanating from them.

The "vampires" were unearthed and skewered in the heart with a single piece of wood. The body was then usually beheaded or burned thereafter. According to Barber, Paja Tomic's body was dug up, stabbed with a hawthorn rod, and placed upon stakes because, after his death, he continued to haunt his family's home at night, causing the occupants much distress.

Vampire stereotypes have evolved over the years. The vampire has its roots in mythology, and many of its defining qualities come directly from the hideous depictions of the vampire found there. In literature, however, the vampire is often described as handsome and attractive. The vampire has undergone significant transformations since first appearing in literature. Vampires have changed through time from the terrifying monsters of folklore into something more akin to civilized beings, inspiring more curiosity than fear among modern audiences.

**The Vampire in Literature:** The Count from Dracula, the novel may be the most well-known literary vampire, but he was not the first. According to Melton, John Polidori's gothic short tale "The Vampyre" "was the first comprehensive piece of literature about a vampire published in English" (xiv). Legends about Lord Byron and a piece of one of his short stories served as inspiration. The publication of "Carmilla" by Sheridan La Fanu in 1872 signaled the beginning of a spate of fiction about vampires in literature. However, the genre of vampire literature did not take off until the publication of Bram Stoker's Dracula in 1897. Abraham "Bram" Stoker, formerly an obscure author, was transformed by this work into "the most successful horror writer of all time." Fractal Evidence, Version 4.

Even though "[n]o vampire book has ever matched the broad success of Dracula," which has been in print constantly since its first publication, the genre of vampire fiction is more popular than ever today. It's worth noting which Melton's book came out in 1994, and that since then, novels like Interview with the Vampire



(which gained new popularity thanks to a successful film adaptation) and Twilight (written by Stephanie Meyer) may have surpassed Dracula in terms of readership. However, fresh generations will continue to read Stoker's work.

Though "the vampire seldom featured in Irish literature," the "tradition of Irish vampire myth is treasured" (Melton 326), making it all the more intriguing that both "Carmilla" and "Dracula" were written by Irish writers. The proliferation of vampire fiction has necessitated the publication of a number of bibliographical works. There is a constant stream of bibliographies created to "deal with the massive outpouring of new vampire literature" (Melton 46), since "literary vampires have garnered the greatest attention" (Melton 46). There are many different bibliographies available, but according to Melton's book, "the thorough efforts of Riccardo, Frost, Finné, and Me" (46), have been the most helpful to academics. Other, more selective bibliographies have also been published and are widely used by fans. Given that Melton's book came out two decades ago, it's reasonable to presume that more recent, thorough works have appeared in that period. Vampires have been a staple in horror and fantasy literature, therefore their depiction has changed throughout time.

**The Differences between the "Old" and the "New" Vampire :** "The new one tries to be communal," he says, "and is frequently portrayed to us as many, communal and family, living with and related to other vampires." He then contrasts Dracula, the "old" vampire, to the "fresh" vampire, which he describes as "social and familial." (18). "[i]n Stoker's

work, Dracula appears to the reader as the earthly incarnation of supernal wicked" (18), and "Dracula, for Dracula and for Stoker's consumers, is the Anti-Christ," are two further ways in which Zanger paints Dracula as a thoroughly wicked and morally irredeemable creature. (18). It can be seen that the "new" and sympathetic vampires is on rising, in contrast to Dracula, who is depicted as the epitome of evil, in the other key texts studied for this article. This is likely because audiences find it more engaging to identify with the sympathetic vampire rather than the "old" vampire. Nelson's statements highlight the modern vampire's development into a being with superhuman abilities but without the monstrosity of the past. The following study of original texts provides more concrete evidence of this shift.

**Count Dracula:** Stoker had an unorthodox inspiration for Dracula. In 1890, Stoker "had a horrific nightmare: the nightmare made its way into a few thoughts he was jotting for a prospective narrative," as Christopher Frayling recounts it (4). Dracula is a work of fiction, although it is inspired by historical facts and tales of a group of seven vampires. Dracula was inspired, at least in part, by the real-life Vlad the Impaler.

In the 15th century, Vlad Dracula, referred to today as Vlad the Impaler or simply Vlad, was a "prince of Wallachia. Because of his "brutal style of terrifying his opponents and the apparently random manner in which he had individuals punished," Vlad got the moniker "the Impaler," also known as "Tepes" (Melton 668). For his role in preventing an Ottoman invasion of Romania, Vlad has become a national hero ("Vlad III").

1397



Dracula is a unique character that was inspired by the historical figure Vlad Tepes.

Dracula is portrayed by Stoker as a malicious yet clever creature, a predator that plays with its victim by frightening it before killing it. The two then begin to cooperate in an effort to outwit Dracula while engaged in a perilous game of cat and mouse.

Journals, newspaper articles, and letters tell the tale, which is chronologically ordered so that the reader doesn't have to go back and forth in time. In reality, the narrative is a compilation of information collected by Mina and, to a lesser degree, her husband, Jonathan Harker. To better understand the Count Dracula case, the Harkers, Lucy Westenra, John Seward, and Abraham Van Helsing have all contributed their diaries and other relevant documents to this bundle. It's noteworthy that, despite the fact that the narrative centers on Dracula and his deeds, we never hear the story from the vampire's perspective. By not giving Dracula's thoughts and feelings, Stoker makes the character more horrific, since the reader has no idea what to anticipate and can only imagine the monster lurking in the shadows.

In spite of "Dracula's tremendous popularity as a book," the narrative didn't become a widespread popular culture phenomenon until it made the voyage to cinema (Nelson, 2558). The work, however, has a dedicated following and continues to enjoy widespread acclaim from readers of all ages. If you want to know how the current literary myth of the vampire came to be, go no farther than Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (Melton 583).

Stoker's use of folklore themes is a large part of the story's appeal. He made a genuine person out of the stories, and that's how everyone came to identify Dracula. He made sure the vampire he designed was grounded in mythology by investigating traditional vampire characteristics. While incorporating his own creativity, Stoker did his best to present the vampire as he was depicted in folklore. His character's resemblance to its folkloric counterpart lent credence to the idea that such creatures may exist, heightening the terror of his tale. Is there anything more horrifying than the possibility that the creatures from folklore really exist?

Modern vampire literature may not make heavy use of legendary aspects, but it usually alludes to them. In *The Struggle*, the second book in L. J. Smith's *The Vampire Diaries* series, the protagonist Elena inquires of a vampire as to whether or not certain anti-vampire legendary aspects are effective (347).

**The Vampire Academy** : Richelle Mead, however an American popular author of urban fiction for both teens and adults, penned the books in the *Vampir Academy* series between 2007 and 2010. In the first book of the series, Rose Hathaway, an adolescent Dhampir, and her closest friend Vasilisa, commonly known as Lissa, Dragomir, a Moroi, are taken back to St. Vladimir's Academy. Rose is being groomed in the academe to serve as Lissa's personal bodyguard, as the Dhampirs' mission is to protect the Moroi from the Strigoi, the terrible undead vampires. They find themselves in several perilous circumstances together that they must overcome.



It may be argued that the Moroi & the Strigoi in Vampire College are more like two different species, although this is also true in the Vampire Diaries series. Mead borrows the terms "Moroi" and "Strigoi" from Eastern European tradition, where they refer to witches who become vampires after death, but she gives them a new meaning. The Strigoi are "undead and evil-feeding upon people in order to survive," whereas the Moroi are "alive and wield elemental powers" ("Vampire Academy Series"). It may be claimed that there are really four distinct kinds of vampires in the series. The Dhampirs are a third kind of vampire outside the Moroi and Strigoi, and then there's Victor Dashkov, who's a much like Dracula in that he's avaricious and self-centered but still a member of the decent vampire species. To the Moroi, Dashkov is equivalent to violent criminals in our culture.

According to Zanger's distinction between "new" and "old" vampires, the Strigoi would be the "old" vampire since they have surrendered to their evil nature, while the Moroi would be the "new" vampire because they have not yet abandoned their moral compass. The population of Moroi is quickly declining as an increasing proportion of Moroi are becoming Strigoi. A Moroi may become a Strigoi in one of two ways: either by being bitten by one, or by willingly murdering the person they feed on, who is generally another Moroi.

**The House of Night** : P. C. Cast with her daughter Kristin Casting are an American mother-daughter writing partnership who have become best-sellers with their House of Night series. Kristin Cast's mom, P. C. Cast, on the other hand, has written many

more books than only the House of Night trilogy. Before beginning work on The House of Night series, she had previously written three series and been inducted into the Oklahoma Writers Hall of Fame. Marked, the first book in the series, was out in 2007, and the writers continued writing books for the following seven years, wrapping off the series with the publication of the last book, Redeemed, in late the year 2014.

The story follows Zoey Redbird, a young vampire who is identified by a vampire tracker and sent to a Tulsa, Oklahoma, boarding school. She discovers others like her at the boarding school, where she establishes bonds that aid her through the perilous adventures she must embark on (this is comparable to the Vampire Academy, and will be explored more in the chapter: The Move between Horror to Fantasy). The relationships she builds are crucial in helping her cope with High Priestess Neferet, who pretends to be kind to fool everyone. The vampires in The House of Midnight series are portrayed differently from those in The Vampire Academy and The Vampire Diaries series since they are both born vampires or transformed into vampires via the exchange of body fluids or a bite.

Nyx, the child of Chaos and the mother of Hemera, the (Day) (Mahoney, p. 117 of 3624), selects the vampires to be featured in The House of Night series. "Nyx, Greek goddess of darkness, is generally recognized as a primordial deity, one of the founders of the universe," writes Karen Mahoney in her article "darkness in the House of Good & Evil: Nyx's The depiction in the House , Night Series" (location 117 of 3624). The series' main



heroine, Zoey Redbird, is selected by Nyx, much like all the other vampire youngsters. The first time Zoey meets Nyx, Nyx tells her, "I have Marked you as mine", one of several such allusions in the novel. As he puts his mark on her, the vampire hunter makes another allusion, saying, "Night hath chosen thee; thy death shall be thy birth". Being selected is not a picnic.

A person who is chosen in the fictitious world of The House of Night series receives a crescent moon mark on their scalp and begins their metamorphosis. It takes a few years for the metamorphosis to be complete, but as the reader discovers, Zoey's wasn't one of them. When asked about her feelings after being picked, Zoey explains, "The difficulty, of course, was that transforming into a demon was the brighter among my two alternatives." Option 1: I become a vampire, which in the eyes of most people is the same as becoming a monster. Option Two: My body resists the Change, and I perish".

**The Usage of Folkloric Elements :** Many works about vampires use aspects from vampire legend that have their roots in folklore. Bringing the ancient traditions to life in new and sometimes surprising ways, the folkloric stories have had a significant impact on vampire fiction. Vampires' 18 fictitious origin narrative or nonexistence altogether depends on the source. Among the many works of vampire fiction that draw heavily on documented legendary aspects, Stoker's Dracula is one of the most overt.

Stoker's writing demonstrates that he was acquainted with the vampire as it existed in mythology and that his perception of

the vampire was shaped by both literary works like "Carmilla" (Melton 584) and folkloric traditions. From the beginning, when it is made obvious that Dracula is a monster to be feared, until the end, when he perishes when his heart is pierced, his use of legendary tropes pervades the plot. Vampire stories don't always have to be rooted in mythology.

In Smith's *The Struggle*, for example, Stefan laughs when Elena asks whether garlic is useful against vampires (347), an example of how folklore is used little, nonexistantly, or even mocked in certain vampire novels. In and of itself, this is a significant assertion. Some authors may choose to ignore the folkloric depiction of the vampire because they are bored with the genre and want to write something new, because they want to differentiate their work from other vampire fiction, or because they want to write a story without doing any research into the folkloric legends. Some of the key features of Stoker's Dracula are outlined here, along with relevant ties to the other canonical works.

**Crosses, Crucifixes and Holy Wafers:** Crosses are a powerful amulet for keeping harm at bay. A cross "is a secure and universal defense against all demons and against every evil in general," as Veselin ajkanovi writes in "The Killing of a Vampire" (position 1172 of 2659). Symbols associated with God, who represents everything that is good, should be effective against vampires since God is the antithesis of evil. Crosses and crucifixes are prominent early on in Dracula when Harker makes his way to Count Dracula's isolated castle. Most of the individuals Harker meets are aware of





Dracula and attempt to dissuade him from going to the castle by crossing their arms over their chests and pointing at him with two fingers as "a charm or a protection against the evil eye" (Stoker, 161 of 6442). On his route to Dracula's castle, Harker stayed with a landlord who, as he records in his notebook, "looked at each other in a scared kind of manner" with his elderly wife. I asked him whether he knew Count Dracula and if he had any information about his castle, and both he & his wife checked themselves and said they didn't. (#129 of 6442 in the list of stokers)

**Stakes and Other Weapons and Ways to Kill a Vampire :** Since the first vampire tales were told, people have understood how to defend themselves with various weapons. The stake is the most well-known and often used instrument of defense against vampires. The "most well-known technique to kill a vampire" (579), according to Melton, "was by staking it in the heart." While today's vampire hunters employ stakes as weapons, their original purpose was to prevent the undead from escaping after death. The "corpses of deceased suspected of returning from their graves would be staked as a way of keeping them tethered to the earth underneath their body," Melton adds (580), before coffins were commonplace in Europe. Different locations have varying recommendations regarding the best way to carry out a staking.

It was widely held in Russia that if a person suspected of being a vampire was staked with more than one strike, the vampire would be resurrected (Melton 580). Different countries have different requirements for the sort of wood that may be used for stakes. For example, in

certain countries like Bulgaria, "in Bulgaria it is a red-hot iron which is driven into the heart" (Murgoci position 268 of 2659). "Sufficient to send a needle into the heart," as it was said in Vălcea (Murgoci page 268, line 2659). The concept that a vampire might be controlled or killed by being stabbed through the heart with something sharp was not unique to any one location, even though various people had varied ideas about what to use to stake a vampire. The stake has risen to prominence as a weapon of choice in vampire literature when rumors said they could be used to kill 22 undead at once.

Vampire stereotypes have evolved greatly from their folkloric beginnings. When the vampire was originally introduced into literature, it was part of the horror genre, and the image of the vampire was turned into that of a villain, akin to its folkloric predecessor. The "new" vampire has a greater sympathetic, and thus easier for readers to connect to; it often selects to attempt living a more normal life among humans, as if it could nevertheless relate to them, and is an evolution from the "old" vampire, which is reclusive, morally corrupt, and more an image of a monster or a demon. This distinction between "ancient" and "modern" vampires is linked to the degree to which books include folklore themes. When comparing writings that concentrate on the "old" vampire to those that focus on the "new" vampire, the former tend to include more folklore aspects.

**The old Folklore Element:** As a result, the "old" vampire has deeper ties to folklore than the "new" vampire does, as the impact of folklore is more apparent in the case of the "old" vampire. The "modern"





vampire is inspired by the folklore vampire even if there are less folkloric features in books about him. Vampires owe their existence to legend; without it, the modern vampire would not exist.

The vampire's transformation from villain to hero means he or she no longer fits well into the horror subgenre. There are certain works about contemporary vampires that belong more comfortably in the fantasy genre, and even more precisely in the urban fantasy subgenre, than they do in the horror category. This shifting between categories is the result of the incorporation of other forms of the supernatural, such as elemental magic, into current vampire novels. Despite these shifts, most of the vampire canon still owes something to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Authors of contemporary vampire fiction have, and will likely continue to, draw inspiration from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the seminal work in the genre. Stoker's work is primarily adapted for its characters and the folklore aspects from whence they emerged. Whenever you read a story about vampires, you're certain to run upon a character that reminds you of someone from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

It's possible to meet someone with Mina's warmth and wit or Van Helsing's stoicism on your travels. 26 A character who has undergone the transformation from human to vampire, like Lucy, appears often in the canon of literature revolving around vampires. Despite the fact that folklore elements in contemporary vampire fiction are seldom used, they are often acknowledged.

### Conclusion

What I've learned from my studies of vampire fiction is that, while modern authors still show traces of *Dracula's* affect in their work, they've begun to take their stories in fresh directions, providing their own ideas instead of slavishly reiterating those of the nineteenth century. The mythological "old" vampire and the modern "new" vampire vary enough to demonstrate the vampire's development through time. Once a hideous and terrifying beast, vampires have evolved into something endearing. Vampires in the 19th century literature were portrayed as monsters, but in contemporary young adult vampire fiction, they are portrayed more as superheroes. It will be fascinating to observe how the canon of vampire fiction develops and grows in the years to come, giving us fresh perspectives on this famous species.

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