

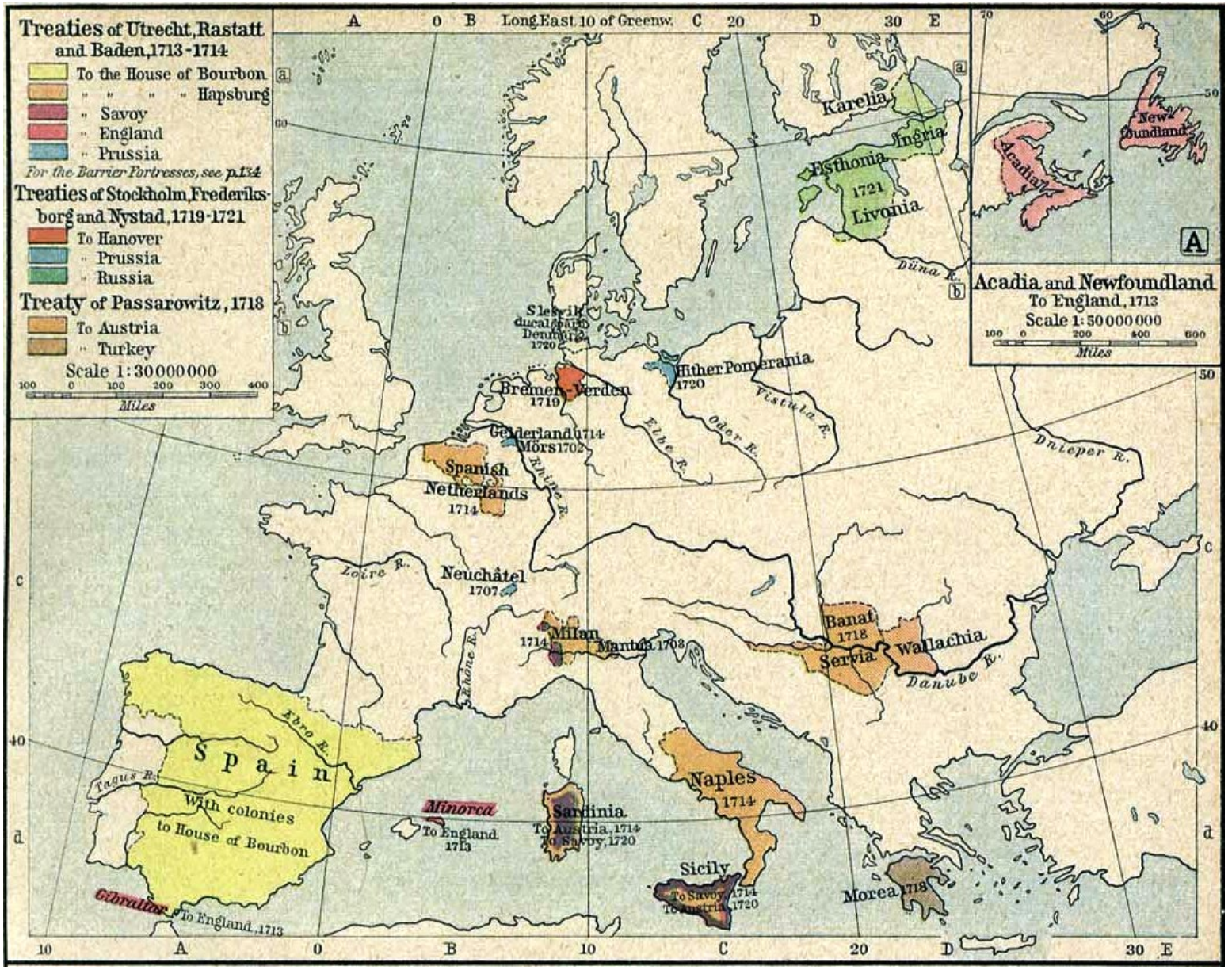
History of the Vampire in Folklore, Literature, and Film

Presented by Dr. Megan Bryan,

PhD in English from the University of York, UK



PEACE OF PASSAROWITZ



PETER PLOGOJOWITZ

After a subject by the name of Peter Plogojowitz had died, ten weeks past—he lived in the village of Kisilova, in the Rahm District—and had been buried according to the Raetzian custom, it was revealed that in this same village of Kisilova, within a week, nine people, both old and young, died also, after suffering a twenty-four-hour illness. And they said publicly, while they were yet alive, but on their death-bed, that the above-mentioned Plogojowitz, who had died ten weeks earlier, had come to them in their sleep, laid himself on them, and throttled them, so that they would have to give up the ghost. The other subjects were very distressed and strengthened even more in such [beliefs] by the fact that the dead Peter Plogojowitz's wife, after saying that her husband had come to her and demanded his opanki, or shoes, had left the village of Kisilova and gone to another. And since with such people (which they call vampires) various signs are to be seen—that is, the body undecomposed, the skin, hair, beard and nails growing—the subjects resolved unanimously to open the grave of Peter Plogojowitz and to see if such above-mentioned signs were really to be found on him. To this end they came here to me and, telling of these events, asked me and the local pope, or parish priest, to be present at the viewing. And although I at first disapproved, telling them that the praiseworthy administration should first be dutifully and humbly informed, and its exalted opinion about this should be heard, they did not want to accommodate themselves to this at all, but rather gave this short answer: I could do what I wanted, but if I did not accord them the viewing and the legal recognition to deal with the body according to their custom, they would have to leave house and home, because by the time a gracious resolution was received from Belgrade, perhaps the entire village—and this was already supposed to have happened in Turkish times—could be destroyed by such an evil spirit, and they did not want to wait for this. Since I could not hold such people from the resolution they had made, either with good words or with threats, I went to the village of Kisilova, taking along the Gradisk pope, and viewed the body of Peter Plogojowitz, just exhumed, finding, in accordance with thorough truthfulness, that first of all I did not detect the slightest odor that is otherwise characteristic of the dead, and the body, except for the nose, which was somewhat fallen away, was completely fresh. The hair and beard—even the nails, of which the old ones had fallen away—had grown on him; the old skin, which was somewhat whitish, had peeled away, and a new fresh one had emerged under it. The face, hands, and feet, and the whole body were so constituted, that they could not have been more complete in his lifetime. Not without astonishment, I saw some fresh blood in his mouth, which, according to the common observation, he had sucked from the people killed by him. In short, all the indications were present that such people (as remarked above) are said to have.

with great speed, sharpened a stake—in order to pierce the corpse of the deceased with it—and put this at his heart, whereupon, as he was pierced, not only did much blood, completely fresh, flow also through his ears and mouth, but still other wild signs (which I pass by out of high respect) took place. Finally, according to their usual practice, they burned the often-mentioned body, *in hoc casu*, to ashes, of which I inform the most laudable Administration, and at the same time would like to request, obediently and humbly, that if a mistake was made in this matter, such is to be attributed not to me but to the rabble, who were beside themselves with fear.

Imperial Provisor, Gradisk District.[1]

- Kisilova is modern day Serbia
- Peasant vampire
- Epidemic of illness
- Strangles victim as well as draining blood – "suffocation" feeling
- Body undecomposed, with "fresh skin" grown
- Staked and blood flowed

MICHAEL RANFT, *DE MASTICATIONE MORTUORUM IN TUMULIS*, 1728

SHOEMAKER OF BRESLAU

In the year 1591, on the twentieth of September, a Friday, early in the morning in the garden behind his house, a well-to-do shoemaker in the city of Breslau cut his throat--for what reason, no one knew. He had cut the veins of his throat with his knife, and was obliged to die from the wound. When his wife had seen this and told her sisters, they were all most distraught about this sudden misfortune, but sought to conceal it however they could, considering it a great disgrace.

For the ghost was there right after sundown, and since no one was free of it, everyone looked around constantly for it. The ones most bothered were those who wanted to rest after heavy work; often it came to their bed, often it actually lay down in it and was like to smother the people. Indeed, it squeezed them so hard that—not without astonishment—people could see the marks left by its fingers, so that one could easily judge the so-called stroke [that the shoemaker was alleged to have died from].

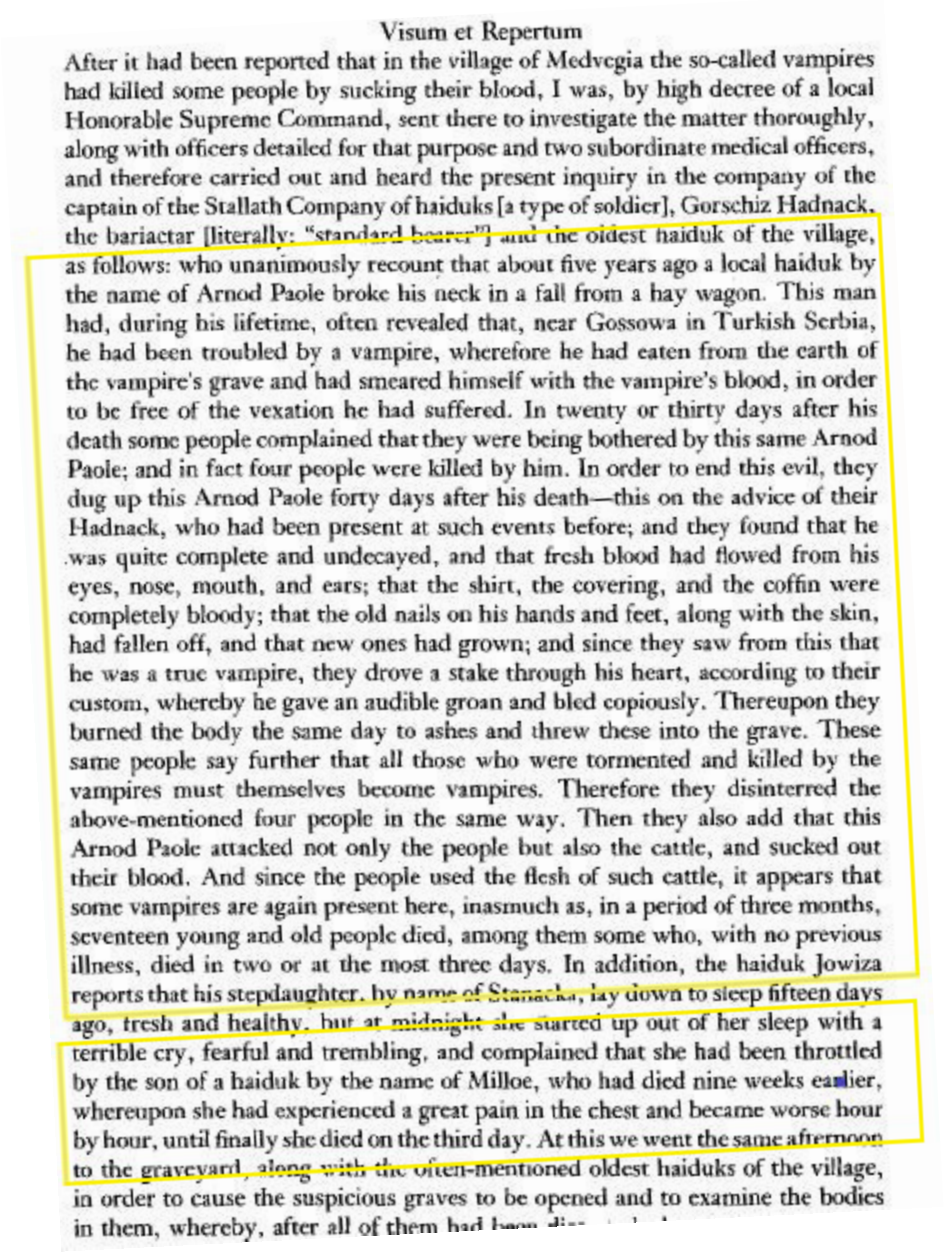
The corpse had lain in the grave now into the eighth month, from September 22, 1591, to April 18, 1592, when the grave was opened, by high command. Present were the entire council, the innkeepers, and other functionaries. In the opened grave they found the body complete and undamaged by decay, but blown up like a drum, except that nothing was changed and the limbs all still hung together. They were—which was remarkable—not stiffened, like those of other dead people, but one could move them easily. On his feet the skin had peeled away, and another had grown, much purer and stronger than the first, and as almost all sorcerers are marked in an out-of-the-way place, so that one does not notice it easily, so did he have on his big toe a mole like a rose. No one knew the meaning of this. There was also no stench to be noticed, except that the cloths in which he was wrapped had a repulsive smell. The wound in his throat gaped open and was reddish and not changed in the slightest. The body was guarded day and night on its bier, from the fourth to the twenty-fourth of April, except that in the day he was put out in the air, whereas in the evening he was put in a house there. Everyone could see him up close, and every day many citizens, and many people from the neighboring areas, went there. Nonetheless the exhumation did not help: the ghost, which they had hoped to banish by this means, caused still more unrest.

Whereupon, on the seventh, the council had the hangman take the corpse out of the other grave. Then its head was cut off, its hands and feet dismembered, after which the back was cut open and the heart taken out, which looked as good as that of a freshly slaughtered calf. Everything together was burned on a pyre built up of seven klafters* of wood and of many pitch rings. But so that no one would gather the ashes or the bones and keep them for sorcery, as tends to happen otherwise, the guards were not allowed to let anyone near. Early in the morning, when the stack of wood had burned up, the ashes, in a sack, were thrown into the flowing water, whereupon, through God's help, the ghost stayed away and was never seen again.

- Breslau is modern day Poland
- Well off vampire, but not aristocratic
- Death by suicide
- Strangles victim as well as draining blood – "suffocation" feeling
- Body undecomposed, with "fresh skin" grown
- Odd mole on toe ("Devil's mark")
- Corpse bloated with blood
- Head removed and heart and body burned

JOHANN GEORG THEODOR GRÄSSE,
SAGENBUCH DES PREUSSISCHEN STAATS, 1868

ARNOLD PAOLE



Visum et Repertum

After it had been reported that in the village of Medvegia the so-called vampires had killed some people by sucking their blood, I was, by high decree of a local Honorable Supreme Command, sent there to investigate the matter thoroughly, along with officers detailed for that purpose and two subordinate medical officers, and therefore carried out and heard the present inquiry in the company of the captain of the Stallath Company of haiduks [a type of soldier], Gorschiz Hadnack, the bariactar [literally: "standard bearer"] and the oldest haiduk of the village, as follows: who unanimously recount that about five years ago a local haiduk by the name of Arnod Paole broke his neck in a fall from a hay wagon. This man had, during his lifetime, often revealed that, near Gossowa in Turkish Serbia, he had been troubled by a vampire, wherefore he had eaten from the earth of the vampire's grave and had smeared himself with the vampire's blood, in order to be free of the vexation he had suffered. In twenty or thirty days after his death some people complained that they were being bothered by this same Arnod Paole; and in fact four people were killed by him. In order to end this evil, they dug up this Arnod Paole forty days after his death—this on the advice of their Hadnack, who had been present at such events before; and they found that he was quite complete and undecayed, and that fresh blood had flowed from his eyes, nose, mouth, and ears; that the shirt, the covering, and the coffin were completely bloody; that the old nails on his hands and feet, along with the skin, had fallen off, and that new ones had grown; and since they saw from this that he was a true vampire, they drove a stake through his heart, according to their custom, whereby he gave an audible groan and bled copiously. Thereupon they burned the body the same day to ashes and threw these into the grave. These same people say further that all those who were tormented and killed by the vampires must themselves become vampires. Therefore they disinterred the above-mentioned four people in the same way. Then they also add that this Arnod Paole attacked not only the people but also the cattle, and sucked out their blood. And since the people used the flesh of such cattle, it appears that some vampires are again present here, inasmuch as, in a period of three months, seventeen young and old people died, among them some who, with no previous illness, died in two or at the most three days. In addition, the haiduk Jowiza reports that his stepdaughter, by name of Stanacka, lay down to sleep fifteen days ago, fresh and healthy, but at midnight she started up out of her sleep with a terrible cry, fearful and trembling, and complained that she had been throttled by the son of a haiduk by the name of Milloe, who had died nine weeks earlier, whereupon she had experienced a great pain in the chest and became worse hour by hour, until finally she died on the third day. At this we went the same afternoon to the graveyard, along with the often-mentioned oldest haiduks of the village, in order to cause the suspicious graves to be opened and to examine the bodies in them, whereby, after all of them had been dis-

- Ex-soldier in Serbia
- Led to investigative report commissioned by local authorities called "Visum et Repertum" (Seen and Discovered)
- Cited by Robert Southey in *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801)
- Made vampire by encounter with vampire in Turkish Serbia – thought blood of vampire would protect them
- Body undecayed
- Fresh blood in eyes, nose, mouth, and ears
- New skin grown
- Stake through heart and body burned
- People attacked by vampire or who eat livestock attacked by vampire pass on condition
- Throttled and pain in chest

...AND FRIENDS!

[illegible] of them had been dissected, there was found:

1. A woman by the name of Stana, twenty years old, who had died in childbirth two months ago [three in Horst's account], after a three-day illness, and who had herself said, before her death, that she had painted herself with the blood of a vampire, wherefore both she and her child—which had died right after birth and because of a careless burial had been half eaten by dogs—must also become vampires. She was quite complete and undecayed. After the opening of the body there was found in the *cavitate pectoris* a quantity of fresh extravascular blood. The *vasa* [vessels] of the *arteriae* and *venae*, like the *ventriculis cordis*, were not, as is usual, filled with coagulated blood, and the whole *viscera*, that is, the *pulmo* [lung], *hepar* [liver], *stomachus*, *lien* [spleen], *et intestina* were quite fresh as they would be in a healthy person. The uterus was however quite enlarged and very inflamed externally, for the placenta and lochia had remained in place, wherefore the same was in complete *putredine*. The skin on her hands and feet, along with the old nails, fell away on their own, but on the other hand completely new nails were evident, along with a fresh and vivid skin.

2. There was a woman by the name of Miliza (sixty years old, incidentally), who had died after a three-month sickness and had been buried ninety-some days earlier. In the chest much liquid blood was found, and the other viscera were, like those mentioned before, in a good condition. During her dissection, all the haiduks who were standing around marveled greatly at her plumpness and perfect body, uniformly stating that they had known the woman well, from her youth, and she had, throughout her life, looked and been very lean and dried up, and they emphasized that she had come to this surprising plumpness in the grave. They also said that it was she who had started the vampires this time, because she had eaten of the flesh of those sheep that had been killed by the previous vampires.

3. There was an eight-day-old child which had lain in the grave for ninety days and was similarly in a condition of vampirism.

4. The son of a haiduk, sixteen years old, was dug up, having lain in the earth for nine weeks, after he had died from a three-day illness, and was found like the other vampires.*

5. Joachim, also the son of a haiduk, seventeen years old, had died after a three-day illness. He had been buried eight weeks and four days and, on being dissected, was found in a similar condition.

6. A woman by the name of Ruscha who had died after a ten-day illness and had been buried six weeks previous, in whom there was much fresh blood not only in the chest but also *in fundo ventriculi*. The same showed itself in her child, which was eighteen days old and had died five weeks previously.

7. No less did a girl of ten years of age, who had died two months previously, find herself in the above-mentioned condition, quite complete and undecayed, and had much fresh blood in her chest.

8. They caused the wife of the Hadnack to be dug up, along with her child. She had died seven weeks previously, her child—who was eight weeks old—twenty-one days previously, and it was found that both mother and child were completely decomposed, although earth and graves were like those of the vampires lying nearby.

9. A servant of the local corporal of the haiduks, by the name of Rhade, twenty-three years old, died after a three-month-long illness, and after a five-week burial was found completely decomposed.

10. The wife of the local bariactar, along with her child, having died five weeks previously, were also completely decomposed.

11. With Stanche, a haiduk, sixty years old, who had died six weeks previously, I noticed a profuse liquid blood, like the others, in the chest and stomach. The entire body was in the oft-named condition of vampirism.

12. Miller's child, twenty-five years old, who had lain for six weeks in the earth, also was found in the condition of vampirism mentioned.

13. Stanoicka [*sic*], the wife of a haiduk, twenty years old, died after a three-day illness and had been buried eight days previously. In the dissection I found that she was in her countenance quite red and of a vivid color, and, as was mentioned above, she had been throttled, at midnight, by Milloe, the son of the haiduk, and there was also to be seen, on the right side under the ear, a bloodshot blue mark, the length of a finger.† As she was being taken out of the grave, a quantity of fresh blood flowed from her nose. With the dissection I found, as mentioned often already, a regular fragrant fresh bleeding, not only in the chest cavity but also *in ventriculo cordis*. All the viscera found themselves in a completely good and healthy condition. The hypodermis of the entire body, along with the fresh nails on hands and feet, was as though completely fresh. After the examination had taken place, the heads of the vampires were cut off by the local gypsies and then burned along with the bodies, and then the ashes were thrown into the river Morava. The decomposed bodies, however, were laid back into their own graves. Which I attest along with those assistant medical officers provided for me. *Actum ut supra.*

(L.S.) Johannes Fluchinger, Regiment Medical Officer of the Foot Regiment of the Honorable B. Fürstenbusch.

(L.S.) J. H. Sigel, Medical Officer of the Honorable Morall Regiment.

(L.S.) Johann Friedrich Baumgarten, Medical Officer of the Foot Regiment of the Honorable B. Fürstenbusch.

The undersigned attest herewith that all that which the Regiment Medical officer of the Honorable Fürstenbusch Regiment had observed in the matter of vampires—along with both of the medical officers who have signed with him—is in every way truthful and has been undertaken, observed, and examined in our own presence. In confirmation thereof is our signature in our own hand, of our own making. Belgrade, January 26, 1732.

(L.S.) Büttener, Lieutenant Colonel of the Honorable Alexandrian Regiment.

(L.S.) J. H. von Lindenfels, Officer of the Honorable Alexandrian Regiment.

PUBLISHED IN NUREMBERG IN 1732

AAAHH!!! REAL VAMPIRES!

- Suspected after mass death in village - association with plagues
- Attack family first, and then spread to rest of village
- Comes at night to smother or throttle sleeper in bed
- No signs of decay on body – hair and nails have grown
- Supple limbs and fresh skin, sometimes with "Devil's mark"
- Lack of stench
- Blood on mouth or bloated corpse (hence blood-drinking belief)
- Often suicides or those who had died violently, or engaged in "immoral" behavior
- Also people born with any physical abnormalities.



"Thanks be to God, we are by no means credulous. We avow that all the light which science can throw on this fact discovers none of the causes of it. Nevertheless, we cannot refuse to believe that to be true which is juridically attested, and by persons of probity." – Dom Calmet, 1746

KILLING A VAMPIRE (AGAIN!)

- Head cut off, dismembered body, heart removed and burned
- Also good, old-fashioned stake through the heart (usually in conjunction with beheading or burning)
- Mouth can also be filled with garlic, an effective deterrent!

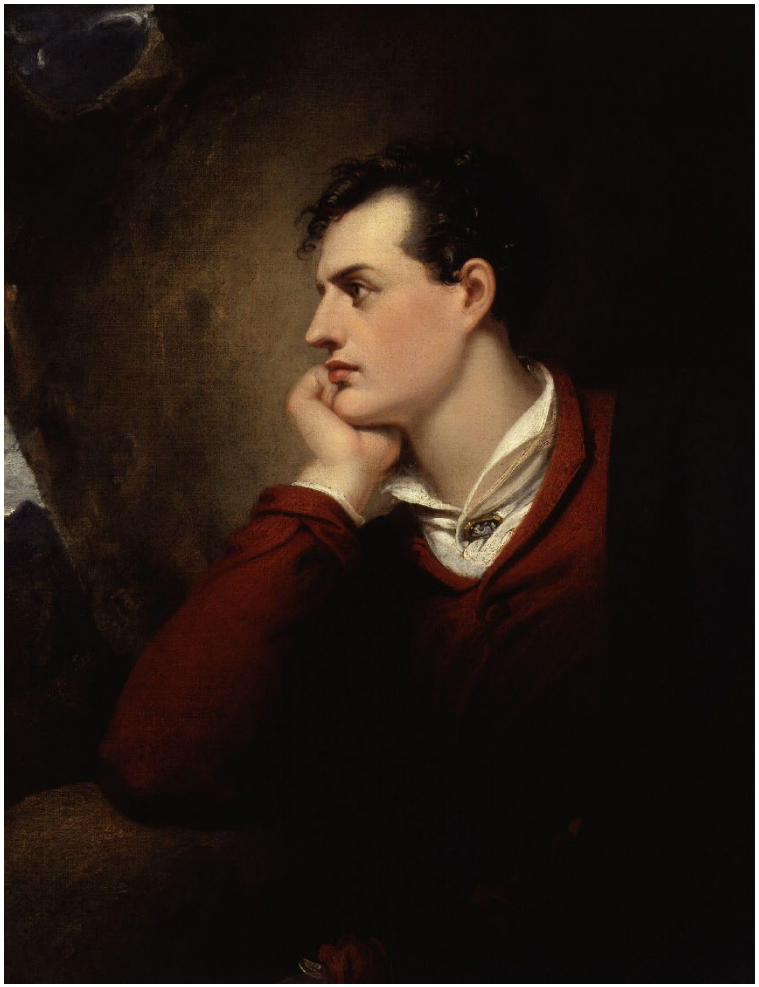


17TH CENTURY GRAVE OF A "VAMPIRE" DISCOVERED IN POLAND ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2022. SHE HAD A SICKLE AROUND HER NECK TO PREVENT HER FROM RISING AGAIN



13TH CENTURY GRAVE OF A "VAMPIRE" DISCOVERED IN BULGARIA IN 2014 - AN IRON ROD HAS BEEN HAMMERED THROUGH THE CHEST AND THE LEFT LEG WAS REMOVED AND PLACED BESIDE THE CORPSE

The Vampire Comes to England



George Gordon Byron, 6th Baron Byron, by Richard Westall, 1813

"But first, on earth as vampire sent,
Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent:
Then ghastly haunt thy native place,
And suck the blood of all thy race;
There from thy daughter, sister, wife,
At midnight drain the stream of life;
Yet loathe the banquet which perforce
Must feed thy livid living corse:
Thy victims ere they yet expire
Shall know the demon for their sire,
As cursing thee, thou cursing them,
Thy flowers are withered on the stem."

From "The Giaour" by Lord Byron (1813)

"FRANKENSTEIN" AND "THE VAMPYRE" – A MATCH MADE IN SWITZERLAND



MARY SHELLEY,
BY RICHARD ROTHWELL, C. 1840



VILLA DIODATI (STEEL ENGRAVING 1833)

"'We will each write a ghost story,' said Lord Byron, and his proposition was acceded to. There were four of us. The noble author began a tale, a fragment of which he printed at the end of his poem Mazeppa…Poor Polidori had some terrible idea about a skull-headed lady who was so punished for peeping through a key-hole…The illustrious poets also, annoyed by the platitude of prose, speedily relinquished their uncongenial task."

– Mary Shelley, introduction to the Standard Novels Edition of *Frankenstein,* published in 1831.

"THE VAMPYRE" (1819)



John William Polidori, by F.G. Gainsford, c. 1816

Polidori transformed "the figure of the vampire from bestial ghoul to glamorous aristocrat….his Lord Ruthven is really the conventional rakehell or libertine with a few of the vampiric attributes grafted onto him…for Polidori, the 'vampire story' is conceived as a variant upon the moral tale, a tale designed principally as a warning – here, against the fascinating power of the libertinism represented by his employer Byron."

Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick, Introduction to *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre* (1997)

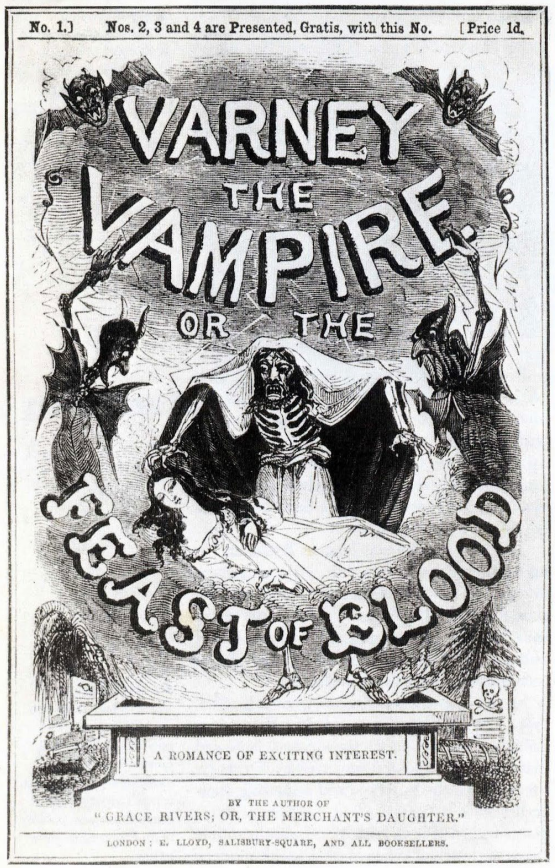
"VARNEY THE VAMPIRE" (1845-47)



Illustration from
Varney the Vampire
(1845),
Artist Unknown

"But never yet, in all my long career—a career extending over centuries of time—never yet have I felt the soft sensation of human pity till I looked on thee, exquisite piece of excellence. Even at the moment when the reviving fluid from the gushing fountain of your veins was warming at my heart, I pitied and I loved you. Oh, Flora! even I can now feel the pang of being what I am!...It is a condition with my hateful race, that if we can find one human heart to love us, we are free."

- Sir Francis Varney



Cover of
Varney the Vampire
(1845),
Artist Unknown

"CARMILLA" (1872)



Illustration by David Henry Friston for *Carmilla* (1872)

"I live in your warm life, and you shall die - die sweetly die – into mine…to die as lovers may – to die together, so that they may live together."

- Carmilla



Illustration by Michael Fitzgerald for *Carmilla* (1872)

The Real Dracula, Prince Vlad III of Wallachia, aka The Impaler



Portrait of Vlad c. 1560, supposedly copied from a portrait made in his lifetime



"And at that time Dracula rested there and had the entire suburb burned. Also as the day came, early in the morning, all those whom he had taken captive, men and women, young and old children, he had impaled on the hill by the chapel and all around the hill, and under them he proceeded to eat at table and get his joy this way."

- Translation of a German pamphlet and German woodcut, 1499

DRACULA: SON OF THE DEVIL, OR HARD BUT FAIR? IT DEPENDS ON WHO YOU ASK!

"Once there reigned in Wallachia a Prince Dracula, also known as the Impaler. This prince was very severe, but also just. He would not tolerate thieves, liars and lazy people. He did all in his power to extirpate such men from his land. Had he reigned longer he would probably have succeeded in freeing his land from such parasites and perhaps even prevented that others of that kind be born. But no such luck today!"

"The Gospel says that man shall earn his daily bread only through the sweat of his brow. Prince Vlad thought: 'These men [beggars] live off the sweat of others, so they are useless to humanity. It is a form of thievery…They are worse than robbers. May such men be eradicated from my land!'"

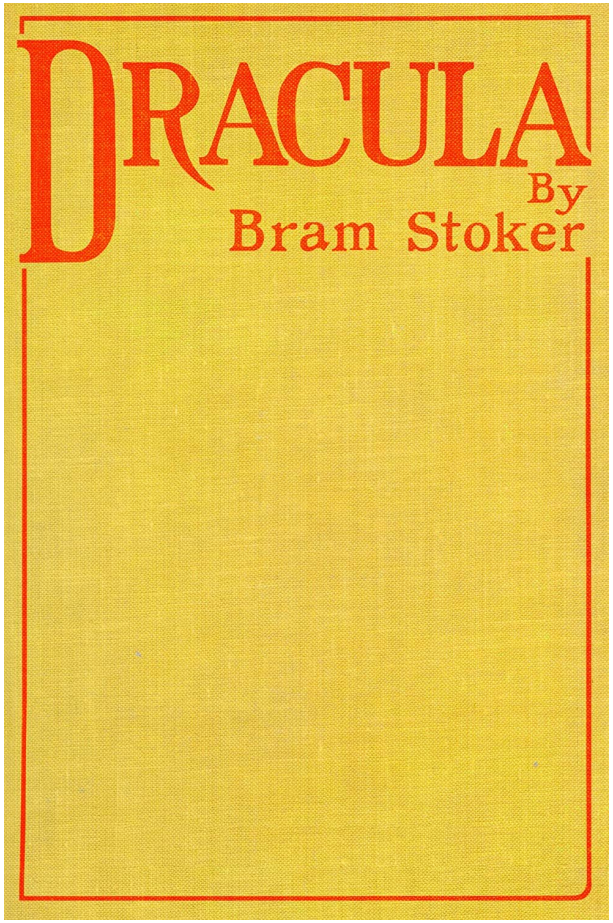
"Dracula was a man with grey matter in his brains and he insisted on good order in his state. Woe to any soldier he saw improperly attired, he rarely escaped with his life. He liked to see his citizens cleanly attired and looking smart. Around him, he could not tolerate anyone who floundered or was slow in his work. Whenever he noticed a libertine or a rake he lost his temper…It is just as well that Dracula does not rule our country today, for he would have had to expend many stakes, which might have eliminated from our land the innumerable drones who wither the very grass on which they sit."



All Romanian oral accounts translated by Radu Florescu, 1972

THE REAL BRAM STOKER'S "DRACULA" (1897)

- Mentions past as member of "a conquering race," one who "as Voivode crossed the Danube and beat the Turk on his own ground…who, when he was beaten back, came again, and again, and again, though he had to come alone from the bloody field where his troops were being slaughtered, since he knew he alone could ultimately triumph."
- Epistolary novel which blends modernity and archaic technology, settings, and characters
- Often read as reverse colonization narrative – foreign monster comes to colonize colonizers as vampires, but the complexity of the novel eludes simple interpretations.



COVER OF THE FIRST EDITION OF "DRACULA" (1897)

Count Dracula, Prince of Darkness, and King of the Movies



Max Schreck as Count Orlok in "Nosferatu" (1922)



Bela Lugosi as Count Dracula in "Dracula" (1931)



Christopher Lee as Count Dracula in "Dracula" (1958)



Gary Oldman as Dracula in "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (1992)

ALSO KING OF THE PARODIES!



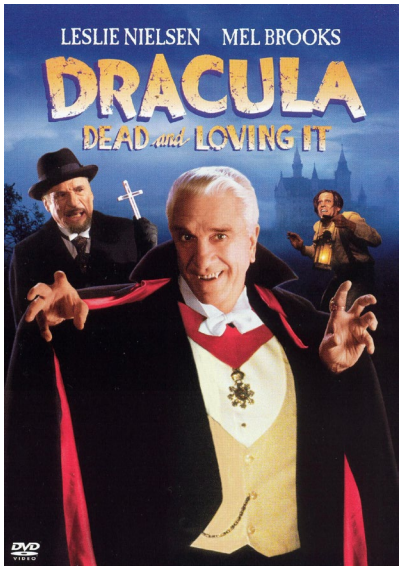
Count Von Count aka The Count from "Sesame Street" (Debut 1972)



Count Chocula from General Mills Cereal (1971)



Adam Sandler as Count Dracula in "Hotel Transylvania" (2012)



Leslie Nielsen as Count Dracula in Mel Brooks's "Dracula: Dead and Loving it" (1995)

Other Late 20th Century and Early 21st Century Vampires



Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise as Louis and Lestat in "Interview with the Vampire" (1994)



The Volturi from the "Twilight" series (2008-2012)



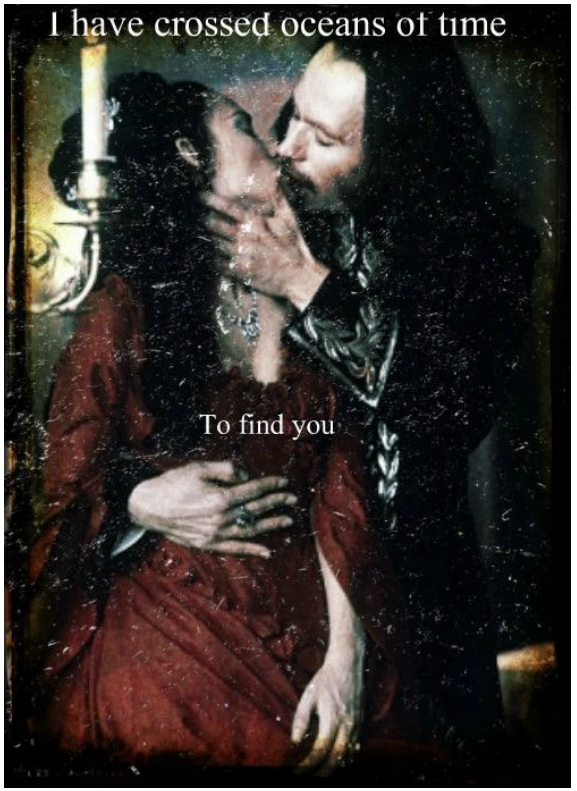
The cast of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (1997-2003)

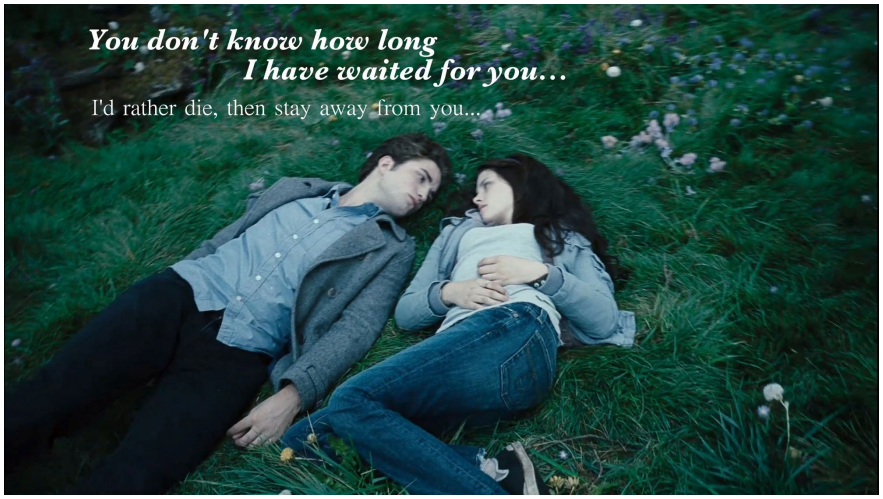


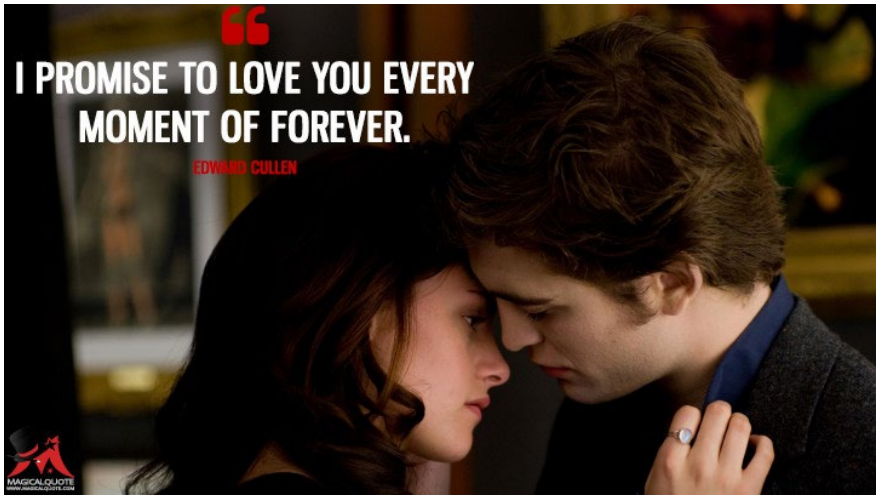
The cast of "the Vampire Diaries" (2009-2017)

WHAT HAPPENED?

"Our culture has turned a cold, alienating, impersonal monster obsessed with power and possession into the Byronic hero of eternal romance…All too often we have similarly humanized our own creations, our own late twentieth century vampires, given them infusions of 'good blood' to save them or turned their passionless bites into gentle 'exchanges,' forced them to anguish over moral questions, transformed them into glamorous aesthetes, sensitive lonely immortals, redemptive holy babies. Perhaps we have lost the true threat, the true violence, of Stoker's King Vampire" – Glennis Byron, Introduction to the Broadview edition of *Dracula,* 2006.







THE ENDURING POWER OF DRACULA



Christopher Lee in Hammer Films' "Dracula" (1958)

"But the Count! Never did I imagine such wrath and fury, even to the demons of the pit. His eyes were positively blazing. The red light in them was lurid, as if the flames of hell-fire blazed behind them. His face was deathly pale, and the lines of it were hard like drawn wires; the thick eyebrows that met over the nose now seemed like a heaving bar of white-hot metal." – Jonathan Harker's Journal, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, 1897

THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?

