

‘Vampires: Consuming Monsters and Monstrous Consumption’

Brooke Cameron, Suyin Olguin and Ian Clark, Queen’s University, Canada.

‘Nutritional needs vary from vampire to vampire, but a general guideline is to feed until your hunger is satisfied. For most, this means consuming up to six pints of fresh blood a night. Your hunger will tell you when to feed, but how much blood you require is another matter’ -- *The New Vampire’s Handbook* (Proctor 2009: 55).

To become a modern vampire is to become a creature of monstrous consumption. Indeed, when one thinks of the vampire, one typically defaults to various notions of dissident appetites; in particular, one thinks of the monster who, though human-like in appearance, feeds upon the blood — or another such life force — of its mortal counterpart to prologue its own undead existence. This is the point of the (satirical) manual for the ‘*Recently Turned Creature of the Night*’ (the book’s subtitle), by the self-identified vampire, Miles Proctor, which in its chapter on ‘Feeding’ focuses largely on the traditional idea of vampires consuming human blood. As if in implicit recognition of the cultural taboo against (or ‘monstrosity’ of) predation upon humans, subsequent sections within this chapter include discussions of ‘selecting and luring prey’ (Proctor 2009: 60) while avoiding detection [so, do not feed on celebrities like Bono, whom ‘cameras will catch you biting’ (61)] and ‘animaltarism’ for the ‘growing population of vampires who eschew the consumption of human blood’ (71). It is this last point, on the different forms or sources of vampiric consumption, that this special issue takes as its central theme. Even the author of the handbook suggests, at the conclusion of the above excerpt, that vampires must vary their feeding habits depending upon cultural and historical contexts. ‘Vampires have no army of nutritionists to stroke their chins and revise dietary recommendations

every decade' (55), Proctor writes, and so the newly turned must, it is implied, deduce for themselves both how much, and also what, to consume. The survey of articles in this special issue show just how wide-ranging vampiric consumption might actually be across time and cultural contexts.

Recent vampire narratives illustrate not only the variability, but also the adaptability of the modern vampire. Indeed, our continued cultural investment in the horror of a vampire who consumes blood can be seen in such popular yet differing works as the graphic novel *30 days of Night* (Niles and Templesmith 2002) and its adaptation (Slade 2007), the film *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (Amirpour 2014) and the television series *The Strain* (del Toro and Hogan 2014-2017), to name just a few. Still, as the *Dracula* (Gatiss and Moffat 2020) miniseries suggests, even the most iconic of blood-sucking nosferatus must adjust their mode of predatory consumption to survive within changing cultural contexts — for example, using iPhones and social media to enthrall their victims (Lucy). While Gatiss and Moffat's series is most obviously a comment on our modern society's often self-destructive reliance upon consumer technologies, the underlying point about adaptability is also vehemently made by the wise author of the aforementioned handbook: 'If a vampire doesn't keep up with the times, it's easy for [them] to begin to feel obsolete, which can in turn lead to reckless hostility. Such a vampire will wind up dead' (Proctor 2009: 153). All joking aside (for how can the undead 'wind up dead'?), Proctor's advice points to the underlying idea that vampires' appetites can vary or evolve for reasons like cultural survival.

Based on the continued popularity of such narratives, it would seem that the question or even ethics of the vampire's predatory consumption is something that

continues to occupy modern audiences. We have, for example, a very sympathetic ‘vegetarian’ vampire in Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* saga (2005–8). At the same time, Charlaine Harris’s *Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2001-13) shows humans marketing and consuming vampires, therein reversing the typical power dynamic of this relationship. This is not to mention the abundance of fan fiction on, and film adaptations of, vampire stories, signaling our own ravenous cultural appetites for representations of this libidinal Other. Furthermore, the consumer-friendly narratives of these twentieth- and twenty-first century works present us with a very new or ‘post-Victorian’ vampire who is, as Nina Auerbach suggests, ‘a part of what I am and what my times have become’ because of its relationship to desire (1995: 1). Matt Haig’s *The Radleys* (2010), as well as Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec’s television adaptations of L. J. Smith’s literary series, *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-17), are even more avant-garde in their representation of contemporary vampires who enjoy partaking in ‘human’ acts of eating and drinking. In every case, the vampire is defined as Other because of appetites that comparatively challenge or draw attention to human rules of consumption.

This special issue of *Revenant* celebrates our continued fascination with this modern vampire as a figure of monstrous consumption. After all, ‘what makes a vampire a vampire’, according to Monster Theorist Jeffrey Weinstock, is ‘appetite and the act of sucking. This can be the crude consumption of blood or the metaphorical draining of energy or life-force’ (2012: 128). The Encyclopedia Britannica also claims that ‘[c]entral to the vampire myth [. . .] is the consumption of human blood or other essence (such as bodily fluids or psychic energy)’ (Eldridge 2021). In a recent issue of *The Journal of Vampire Studies*, Margaret L. Carter offers a similar definition of the vampire: ‘This

creature maintains his or her prolonged existence [. . .] by draining the life-force of living victims, usually by consuming blood' (2021: 60). Shifting from theory to practice, Proctor's *The New Vampire's Handbook* even includes detailed tables and charts on 'Blood Consumption by Age' (2009: 56), 'Some Common Side Effects of Blood Starvation' (57), and what to do in a situation of 'Overfeeding' (57-59). Indeed, this representation of appetitive discipline has the dual effect of reminding us that the vampire is a figure of hunger and want, who at the same time, threatens to rupture such structures of control or definition.

This issue, 'Vampires: Consuming Monsters and Monstrous Consumption', explores the idea of the modern nosferatu as a monster defined by blood-lust and cannibalistic appetites as well as energy parasitism and sexual predation. At the same time, its collected essays demonstrate the wide range among modern representations of vampires' appetites and a corresponding range in their human reception — from vampires who scare and terrorize, to vampires who evoke readers' sympathy and, maybe even, self-reflexivity. Despite the differences in their subject material, the essays in this issue share a common investment in thinking through the role that consumption plays in marking the vampire as monstrous Other. There are articles on those moments when the vampire's appetite presents as threatening, as well as articles on how the vampire's bite might also mediate bonds of intimacy. Taken together, the articles presented here suggest that the modern vampire, as if heeding Proctor's advice all along, has evolved to survive in myriad cultural contexts.

It is not our goal here to provide a history of the vampire, for there is already an abundance of excellent studies on this topic — as well as studies on the vampire’s predecessor, the revenant (see Dodd 2021: 1, Caciola 2014: 311-338, and Keyworth 2006: 241-260). However, it is worth mentioning that these histories played a key role in our decision to limit our issue to the vampire of recent centuries. We take our cue from Nick Groom in particular, whose recent and unprecedented historicist analysis of the Vampire helps us to see how this figure has always been more than a literary metaphor of, say, Arata’s ‘The Occidental Tourist’ (1990); rather, as Groom shows us in *The Vampire: A New History* (2018), the modern vampire was born through a very real and material history of cross-cultural consumption and appropriation. In this way, Groom’s book is a game-changer, opening the door to a new wave of criticism that takes seriously the figure of the Vampire and its various cultural histories — rather than, for instance, reading it always as mere metaphor or repository for our cultural needs (for examples of this new wave of criticism, simply consult many of the books included in this special issue’s Reviews section).

As Groom demonstrates through his unprecedented deep historicist analysis, the modern European vampire and its nineteenth-century offspring are ‘creatures of the Enlightenment: their history is rooted in the empirical approaches of the developing investigative sciences of the eighteenth century, in European politics and in the latest thinking’ (2018: 4). Groom cites the case of Arnole Paole (d. 1726), a Serbian Hajduk who, according to local accounts, rose from the dead after 40 days buried, and killed 16 people in his home village of Meduegne. Paole’s story gained international recognition when Austrian officials tasked medical experts (first, an Imperial Infectious Disease

Specialist named Glaser and then a regimental surgeon named Johann Flückinger) to investigate the case. The latter's account of the villagers' ritual to rid themselves of the vampire (exhumation, staking, decapitation and finally burning) helped establish some of the modern rules surrounding vampirism that persist to this day. There are, of course, various oral traditions and other earlier accounts of similar undead monsters, revenants or proto-vampires. Hence, Groom's very thesis is premised upon the pre-existence of this longer tradition of such figures, mostly in accounts from Eastern Europe as well as stories dating as far back as ancient Greece. But it was at that moment in history, Groom contends, when these Eastern European monsters were verified by, and mediated through, the new scientific methods of European Enlightenment that the modern vampire was born.

Bloodlust, or monstrous consumption, is a critical component in this historic naming of the vampire. Indeed, the name 'vampyre' first appeared in 1725, following a similar cross-cultural encounter over the Peter Blagojević case. Ernst Frombald, an Austrian medical official in the Imperial Army, was charged with investigating the case of Blagojević, a recently deceased peasant rumored to have risen from the dead to spread contagion in his home village of Kisilova (likely modern-day Kisiljevo). Frombald's name for this undead predator, the 'vampire' — as well as his report of the local villagers' exhumation, staking and cremation of the corpse — was republished later that year by the Viennese newspaper, *Weinerisches Diarium*, to a much wider audience. In this published account, the modern vampire was identified as a blood-sucker by two local officials from Gradiška District who witnessed the exhumation: 'not without astonishment, I saw some fresh blood in his mouth' (Barber 1988: 6-7).

A century later, John William Polidori published *The Vampyre* (1819), the first full-length narrative in English on the vampire figure, thus ushering in a new genre as well as western mythos for this modern monster. Christopher Frayling identifies Polidori's novella as 'the first story successful to fuse the disparate elements of vampirism into a coherent literary genre' (1992: 108). Per the latter, D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf offer a concise list of Polidori's four specific innovations. The revenants of old folklore were often described as monstrous corpses who rose from the dead to feed on family or friends and local villagers. Polidori's vampire is not only more cosmopolitan, but he is also human-like, aristocratic and seductive (2008: 11-15). Yet, it is Lord Ruthven's consumption of blood that ultimately gives away his true identity as vampire. Indeed, this is Aubrey's horrible lesson when he discovers his beloved Ianthe murdered: 'upon her neck and breast was blood, and upon her throat were the marks of teeth having opened the vein — to this the men pointed, crying, simultaneously struck with horror, "A Vampyre! a Vampyre!"' (1918: 48). Blood also features prominently in, or runs throughout, the rapid succession of deaths at the close of the novel. First Aubrey, distressed by his sister's marriage to Lord Ruthven, dies after 'an effusion of blood' from a broken vessel in his brain, and later, though guardians rush to save her, Miss Aubrey is discovered dead, having 'glutted the thirst of a VAMPYRE!' (72).

In looking to this vampire history, both literary and cultural, one cannot help but wonder why the vampire's consumption of blood is so monstrous in the first place. In other words, to understand what makes a vampire terrifying we must also consider the cultural meanings (especially taboos) surrounding the consumption of human blood. To understand this is also to understand the thread connecting vampires who drink literal

blood to those who consume more abstract life-forces. This slippage is possible because blood has historically been read as some kind of vital essence or animating force. Who can forget Renfield's famous phrase, 'The Blood is the Life!', whether they have read Stoker's iconic novel or not? One may think this an obvious statement about the human body's physiological dependency upon a functioning circulatory system, but read in its cultural context, Renfield's statement also gestures toward long-held beliefs of blood as carrying the very essence of one's being or character. Roman natural philosopher Pliny the Elder, for example, describes how drinking the dying blood of gladiators was supposedly curative for epileptics: 'these persons, forsooth', he writes, 'consider it a most effectual cure for their disease, to quaff the warm, breathing, blood from man himself, and, as they apply their mouth to the wound, to draw forth his very life' (np; see also Groom 2018: 11 and Learoyd 2012: 308). Some folklorists made the jump from consuming blood to appropriating life-power more abstractly. The medieval mystic Hildegard of Bingen, for example, 'recommended baths of menstrual blood (*sanguis menstruus*) to cure leprosy — a belief that lasted for centuries', and there is also the case of 'the Hungarian Countess Elizabeth Báthory (d. 1614) [who] was reputed to bathe in the blood of young girls in order to retain her youthful beauty' (Groom 2018: 10).

These same assumptions persisted well into the twentieth century, but in a racist form whereby (up until the 1960s) institutions such as the American Red Cross insisted on separating black and white donor blood (see Kenny 2006: 456). Today, fear of blood as a source of bodily and social contagion lives on through medical policies that target and stigmatize queer bodies. Indeed, American men-who-have-sex-with-men must abstain from m/m sex for a minimum of 90 days before blood donation — this is,

unfortunately, still an improvement over their complete ban from 1983-2015 (see Laviertes 2022). Canadian Blood Services (CBS) did not accept blood regardless of the donor's sexuality until April 2022 (see CBS, 2022); though, both CBS and the United Kingdom's National Health Service (NHS) still ban donations from anyone who has partaken in anal intercourse within a 90-day window, despite all blood being rigorously tested for sexually transmitted infections (including HIV) (see NHS, 2021). While these changes are encouraging, if insufficient and long overdue, their persistence demonstrates the potency of blood in the cultural imagination as a source of contagion through tainted consumption, and, critically, its role in characterizing its source as a potentially destructive or deviant Other.

Recently, theorists working in the tradition of Monster Studies have helped us see how the vampire, in violating blood taboos, becomes a creature of horror — as well as fascination or allure. In *On Monsters*, for example, Stephen T. Asma traces our fears of unruly appetites back to the ancient Greeks and their equation between bodily discipline and social harmony. Asma cites Socrates on the theory of the human psyche as composed of three basic functions: 'reasoning power (logistikon), emotional conviction (thumos), and appetite or desire (epithymia)' (2009: 52). A healthy human psychology (or the soul) depends upon a careful balance among all three of these faculties. Indeed, Socrates advises a healthy inner life defined by goals set by the reasoning faculty and, importantly, supported by emotional conviction (driven by reason), to withstand hardships that might test our more instinctual drives or 'appetite' (Asma 2009: 52-53). In other words, reason and emotional conviction (the 'higher' faculties) work together to discipline or keep at bay those 'lower' and 'fiery appetites' (immediate gratification) which may otherwise

interfere with our ability to achieve goals (53). The persistent fear is that those lower desires might not submit to, or might somehow exceed, these higher faculties.

Monstrosity and appetite are thus intimately connected as that which threatens the social body, both at an individual and metaphorical level (Gordon and Hollinger 1997). Put another way, the unruly or deviant appetite signals an anti-social force, or that which is monstrously Other to the well-adapted member of human society.

To align the vampire with this appetitive Other, however, is not to deny the complexities of — or more importantly, the interdependency that exists within — the monster-human relationship. Rather, the vampire presents us with an opportunity to think about this Otherness as a projection of our own fears and taboos. As Jeffrey Weinstock explains, monsters ‘are things that should not be, but nevertheless are — and their existence raises vexing questions about humanity’s understanding of and place in the universe’ (2014: 1). ‘The Monster’, he continues, ‘undoes our understanding of the way things are and violates our sense of how they are supposed to be’ (2). Critics like Kearney invite us to think reflexively about what this monstrous Other says about its human counterpart and/as the true source of its creation and attendant meaning: ‘If we, however, treat “monsters” or “monstrosity” as fear projected on to another, then “otherness” comes to include all those traits (of us as individuals or a society), which we know exist but refuse (consciously or subconsciously) to acknowledge’ (Kearney 2013; see also Mittman 2013: 8). Jeffery Cohen imagines this projection in terms of time, explaining how the monster is literally a haunting figure whose presence channels the repressed past: ‘Remember me’, commands the monster; ‘restore my fragmented body, piece me back together, allow the past its eternal return’ (1996: ix). The monster haunts, Cohen

continues; 'it does not simply bring past and present together, but destroys the boundary that demanded their twinned foreclosure' (1996: ix-x). In this framework of embodied time, the vampire, then, is a projection of the past, its abject differences and its potential to alter or even consume our present.

It is easy to imagine this haunting call (to be re-membered) emanating from the vampire who, as the walking undead, confronts us with the terrifying truth that the past and the present are interdependent — we cannot bury and forget the dead. And this is why, though the articles in this issue are indeed ordered chronologically, there is no attempt on our part as editors to offer some kind of over-arching or cumulative account of the modern vampire. We instead think of each contributing piece as delivering a unique glimpse into a specific cultural moment and its idiosyncratic anxieties, as well as illicit or even open desires, toward vampiric consumption.

To acknowledge both our fear and desire for the vampire is, also, to pay equal critical attention to the cultural appetites for (or preferred 'flavour' of) vampire figures and fiction. We must ask what each representation of the vampire tells us about its respective historical context and, more importantly, its culture's unique fears and need or desire to police normative bodies. The latter point is crucial for, as theorists since Auerbach have persuasively demonstrated, the vampiric Other is also a body of desire: not only a representation of excessive appetite or forbidden wants, but also a necessary mirror to our normative selves (See also Butler 2013 for more the economic history of this vampiric desire). This is Cohen's point, too, in his landmark essay on 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)'. Thesis VI, for example, explains how 'Fear of the Monster is Really a Kind of Desire' (1996: 16), combining revulsion and want as constitutive of the

relationship between Self and Other. And thesis II ('The Monster Always Escapes' [1996: 4]) outlines how it is precisely because the monster is necessary to cultural constructions of bodily discipline — and the boundary between Self/Other (normative/taboo) — that the monster defies stable classification. Hence, 'The Monster Is the Harbinger of Category Crisis' (Thesis III [1996: 6]); the monster represents an inherent challenge to such classification or binary opposites. As Cohen explains, 'This simultaneous repulsion and attraction at the core of the monster's composition accounts greatly for its continued cultural popularity, for the fact that the monster seldom can be contained in a simple, binary dialectic (thesis, antithesis [. . .] no synthesis)' (1996: 17). All of this is to say that this special issue does not pursue one single or stable definition of the vampire; instead, true to the tradition of monster studies, we understand this figure as constantly in flux and evolving to suit our identity needs and forbidden desires.

Finally, on this question of desire, some of the essays in this special issue consider how vampiric modes of consumption sometimes provide an opportunity for connection with — or even sympathy for — the monster. Perhaps this is because the vampire's mode of predation is itself a metaphor for the unstable binaries between self and Other. According to Lorna Piatti-Farnell, the vampire's bite reminds us that the mouth itself, as a site of contact or 'encounter', can represent both violent penetration and connection, for 'Consumption, as an extremely tactile experience, is also unavoidably intimate' (Piatti-Farnell 2017: 232). Fabio Parasecoli also explains how the vampire not only violates eating taboos but, also, the very hierarchy of the food chain. 'Vampires, feeding on others, blur these boundaries: they are inherently relational, unable to separate themselves from their prey' (Parasecoli 2008: 45). We all look to specific rituals and objects of

consumption in an attempt to control our appetites and, thus, to build a cultural identity. The vampire's penchant for 'sucking blood', Parasecoli argues, 'reflects unbridled drives beyond simple hunger, pointing to some fundamental experience that all of us share in some measure' (2008: 43). As Timothy Beal writes, 'Perhaps part of what makes monsters horrifically *unheimlich* [uncanny] is that we see ourselves in them' (2002: 196, our emphasis). By putting humans back into the food chain, vampires encourage us to meditate on our own repressed and ravenous appetites; our own desires flow back to us through the vampire's bite. Subject and object mix together like the very fluids within the vampire's mouth, dissolving divisions and difference.

This is why, in conclusion, there can be no question of 'killing' the vampire — to return to Proctor's advice manual, with which we began this introduction. For the vampire is, and always will be, a part of its human counterpart, entwined in a continuous cycle of production and reproduction, abstention and consumption. We cannot leave this monster behind us; rather, we continue to resurrect and rewrite this monster to suit our various cultures' insatiable appetites.

Our special issue takes as its central or structuring theme this ongoing concern with vampires and/as monstrous consumption. We are interested in how the vampire might shift in social form and function as consuming Other across multiple texts and their respective cultural contexts. As a result, the argument or theory of vampiric consumption changes from essay to essay and therein confirms that each text/cultural context gets the monster it needs and desires. We begin with Damian Shaw's note, 'A Vampiric Revenant

at the Cape’, on *Makanna, or the Land of the Savage* (1834), one of the first English language colonial novels to be set in Africa. This novel gives us one of the earliest examples of the modern, non-aristocratic vampire as channeling, what Shaw reads as, white middle-class anxieties toward covetous relationships, both sexual and economic. Conversely, while also focused on themes of economic consumption, Matthew Gibson and Terry Hale’s article, ‘*Le Vampire* (1831): A Rediscovered Journal of the July Monarchy’, presents a very different account of the Romantic-era vampire. Gibson and Hale describe how the short-lived journal (3 March-10 April 1831) presents the parasitic vampire as ‘allegory’ for ‘bad government, financial scams and finally high capitalism’. This second article, though still focused on the late Romantic period, thus shows how a change in cultural context also shifts the specific economic concerns (or fears) from vampiric greed to outright corruption and parasitism. The last article in this first section, Jane M. Kubiesa’s ‘The Many Lives of Lord Ruthven: Somatic Adaptation, Reincarnation and (Mass) Consumption of Polidori’s *The Vampyre*’, considers the relationship between vampirism and the mass literary marketplace. Kubiesa is especially interested in Polidori’s invention of this modern vampire and its lasting appeal with popular readers, thus shaping the way we encounter this monstrous Other in subsequent texts (like *Dracula*).

The next four articles take us through the second half of the nineteenth century and, again, show us how the vampire is a true shape-shifter, changing meaning or social role as Other from text to text. Lindsay Katzir’s ‘Playing Vampire Games: Rules and Play in *Varney the Vampire* and *Dracula*’ discusses how James Malcolm Rhymer’s infamous creation for the penny dreadfuls represents a kind of literary consumption; in many ways,

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is a re-digested (so to speak) version of this preceding vampire of mass culture and the new rules and social meanings it helped institute. Next, both Rebecca Nesvet's and Cameron Dodworth's articles look at the relationship between the vampire figure and food culture. Nesvet's analysis traces mid-century concerns surrounding the consumption of meat and, thus, vegetarianism as an alternative solution to cannibalistic nightmares, while Dodworth looks at vampiric consumption and the social importance of foodstuffs as channeling late-Victorian xenophobia. In "'And then we be cannibals . . . or vampires": From Vampires to Vegetarianism in J.M. Rymer's Penny Bloods', Nesvet explains how *Varney, the Vampyre* (1845-6) and *The String of Pearls* (1846-7) present readers with an ethical vampire who attempts to practice dietary restraint by consuming bodies on the marriage market, rather than a literal 'feast of blood'. Conversely, Dodworth's 'Exotic Homogeneity: Culinary Othering in *Dracula*' shifts our attention to the late-Victorian context and the revenant's role in Stoker's Gothic novel as a critique of the English homogenous diet; in order to defeat this monstrous Other, Van Helsing and his gang must instead digest a variety of cultural dishes and, therein, gain mastery over an expanding, global gastronomic market. Published the same year as *Dracula*, Frances Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897) is also invested in late-Victorian mastery over dissident bodies; in 'The Vampire and the Prostitute: Sympathetic Monstrosity in Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*', Sarah Karlson reads the female vampire as tapping into growing fears around the fallen woman and sexual degeneration.

The final four articles in this special issue carry us into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Sarah E. Maier's '(Re)Consuming Stoker: Neo-Gothic Biofictions of the

Monster and his Maker’ looks at the legacy of Stoker’s iconic monster in writings by his great-grandnephew. Dacre Stoker’s historical fiction, *Dracula: The Un-Dead* (with Ian Holt, 2009) and *Dracul* (with J. D. Barker, 2018), demonstrates how vampiric consumption can extend beyond bodily desires to include the act of writing itself and (re)presenting — almost parasitically — his family’s literary legacy. Likewise, Lisa Nevárez’s ‘Devouring Books: Vampires as Literary Consumers’ looks at the parallels between the vampire and literary consumption with reference to Elizabeth Kostova’s *The Historian* (2005) and Éric Sanvoisin’s early reader series, *The Ink Drinker/Le Buveur d’Encre* (2002-present). Both of these authors, Nevárez argues, give us vampires who are addicted to (printed) words and who therefore encourage us to see quite explicitly how reading helps keep the revenant alive — or rather, undead. The next article, by Katie Magaña, interprets the vampire as a body that both consumes and is consumed within modern America’s commodity marketplace. ‘Bloody Economics: *The Sookie Stackhouse Novels* and the Cost of Being “Out of the Coffin”’ considers how Harris’s vampires, like good capitalists, participate in an economy which treats blood as an exchangeable good; what looks like passing thus subtly reminds us of the real costs attached to self-marketing, or the consumption of vampires and/as bloody commodities. The last article, Simon Bacon’s ‘Energy Vampires: Traumatic Consumption and Emotional Excess’, shows us again that vampires come in many forms, though they all share one key defining trait: a parasitic attachment to human victims. Through close analysis of contemporary films — *Event Horizon* (Anderson: 1997), *Nothing Left to Fear* (Leonardi III: 2013), *The Ritual* (Bruckner: 2017), and *In the Tall Grass* (Natali: 2019) — Bacon

argues that the Other's predation can take the form of energy vampirism, in which blood is substituted for human trauma more generally as the stuff of monstrous nourishment.

This special issue concludes with two creative works on the theme of vampiric consumption, as if to confirm that appetitive desire for this Othered figure can quite literally be generative or, in this case, directly contribute the continued literary replication of the vampire. The first is a series of four poems, 'Things That Haunt', by James Hamby, on the theme of death and how stories of the undead (vampires) continue to terrorize, crossing over from dreams into our waking lives and conscious understanding of ourselves. The first poem, 'Jester', is a scary reminder that death is always waiting for us, while the second poem, 'Rostrum', is a humorous take on human mortality. 'Crone' assumes an almost surreal dimension its exploration of the dream cycle, while finally, 'Skull' truly terrifies with its suggestion that the undead (revenants) are everywhere around us. Taken together, all four poems in Hamby's 'Things that Haunt' paint a powerful and, indeed, chilling account of humans as 'dehumanized, objectified, and consumed by others with more power'. The final creative work, 'The Devil You Know', by Sabrina La Mantia, gives us a very modern vampire who fronts a punk band. The poem charts our undead protagonist's rise and fall within the music industry, as well as his cult following's ravenous appetite. Through a clever mix of humour and modern Gothic imagery, La Mantia astutely reminds us of modern culture's almost cannibalistic hunger for celebrities.

Readers of this special issue of *Revenant* will, we hope, take away a new understanding of vampiric consumption's myriad cultural manifestations and of the vampiric figure's uncanny ability to survive in any age. We especially hope that readers

will come to appreciate the central importance of consumption — from eating rituals and sexual desire to economic demand or mass readership — in trying to define this elusive, shape-shifting Other. After all, the vampire continues to draw mass audience appeal, as much as it attracts terror or fear.

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