Taking Dracula's Pulse: Historicizing the Vampire

Lisa Lampert-Weissig

Perhaps it's only fitting that my fondness for the Marxist critic Frederic Jameson's exhortation—"always historicize"—very likely cost me my big Hollywood break. Somehow a developer for film scripts had gotten hold of my name and wanted to discuss my research as possible film material. I was skeptical when I read his email, but I also grew up in L.A., so I gave the guy a call. As I suspected, he wasn't all that interested in most of my work on medieval literature, but there was one aspect of my research that sounded intriguing to him: vampires. I should have just cooked up a kung fu action flick about Erzsebet Báthory on the spot, but, instead, when he intoned, "Ah, the timeless creature, the vampire," I couldn't help myself. "Actually," I interjected, "the vampire is anything but timeless. Vampires are historically constructed creatures." Summoning up my best understandings of the work of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Nina Auerbach, I launched into a mini-lecture on the need to historicize the vampire.

Needless to say, I'm still waiting for my lucky break, but my insistence on historicizing has been good for my day job. I want to share here how my emphasis on historical and cultural contexts in my classes on vampire literature and film has led to some very successful discussions and student writing on the vampire, particularly in relation to questions of race and sexuality. My course is structured chronologically with Stoker's *Dracula* at its center. It is my contention that what has made the figure of Dracula a "timeless legend" is actually very much connected to history. Stoker took, I believe, the "pulse" of his time. His work distills anxieties about sexuality, technology, race and empire that were already present in European discourses about the vampire and presents them in ways that fit his particular place and moment, England in 1897. The themes that dominate *Dracula* continue to be with us, of course, and the class also looks at how writers and artists since Stoker have taken up these themes and how they continue to adapt them.[1] As Nina Auerbach has contended, "every generation creates and embraces its own vampires" (vii). In my class we look at how this embrace of the vampire has occurred from the very beginnings of this literary figure in the West—the so-called Vampire Epidemic of the 1730s—through to twenty-first century works like Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* and the television series *True Blood*.

Course enrollment has ranged from 40 to 100 students, which has impacted the types of assignments given. For lower enrollments, I have included a brief writing assignment for each class: a "thinksheet." For each class session, I post a list of study questions on the course website and then ask the students to respond to one of the questions in a one-half

to one full page typed answer. The thinksheets form the starting point for discussion. The thinksheets are not graded on a letter scale. Each student begins with an "A" on his or her thinksheets (typically 20 percent of total grade). Students are allowed to miss one or two assignments and after that the "A" begins to erode. I comment extensively on the thinksheets. This allows me to dialogue with students and encourages them to take the assignment seriously: it's not "busy work." The fact that the individual thinksheets aren't assigned letter grades also allows students to simply "think" and explore ideas. If a student turns in a thinksheet that clearly doesn't fulfill the assignment (very short or extremely sloppy, for example), he or she is immediately notified in writing that the overall thinksheet grade depends on carrying out the assignment in good faith and is asked to meet with me in office hours if the problem persists.

The thinksheet question for my discussion of the Murnau and Herzog adaptations of *Dracula*, for example, is as follows.

In the conclusion to Stoker's *Dracula* evil is defeated in a way strikingly different to the endings of the Murnau and Herzog films. In a paragraph discuss the changes in the conclusions and then write another paragraph arguing what you see as the significance of that change. How does it change our view of the overall story? of its depiction of evil? of its depiction of Dracula? (choosing one of these elements will suffice for the analysis).

At the larger range of course size, I have to drop this writing assignment and the course consists primarily of lecture. Even with the lecture format I still provide students with study questions posted on the course website and use small group "break-out" sessions in order to facilitate student engagement. For the larger lecture course I give a traditional in-class final examination with short-answer questions, ID terms and an essay question. The smaller classes have had a take-home final with a choice of essay questions designed written in about the same time as a three-hour traditional in-class exam. Since the smaller courses have thinksheets, I see less of a need to test whether or not students have done the course reading, as they must complete the reading to write the thinksheets. Therefore, overall, the lower enrollment classes have more writing, more discussion and less reliance on lecturing, although the course at all sizes is still structured to meet minimal departmental and campus-wide page requirements.

No matter what the enrollment, students write a 10–12 page research paper. In preparation for the paper, we have one lecture by our humanities librarian about research techniques and resources. Students are also required to submit pre-writing assignments: a bibliography created on Refworks (I will be switching to Zotero—an open source bibliography program—the next time I teach the course) and a one-page abstract that explains their thesis and approach. With half of our course readings originally in German and half originally in English, the course is designed to fulfill requirements for both our English Literature and German Studies students. Our handful of German studies students has special requirements for paper topics using German primary texts in the original; we make arrangements for German credit guidelines at individually at the beginning of the course. To save on costs for the students I try to limit the number of books they need to purchase and rely heavily on our library's e-reserve for short works as well as on texts and translations available on the web.[2]

The students in the course have primarily been juniors and seniors, in part because of enrollment restrictions on upper-division courses. About half of the students have been majors from our Literature department and the rest have come from a very wide variety of majors, including many from science and engineering, which is not surprising given the

emphasis on science on the UC San Diego campus. I have found that the thinksheet questions, lecture on library resources and the pre-assignments for the research paper have been extremely important in helping non-majors to understand disciplinary expectations for literary analysis.

My course begins where my research on vampires originally began: in the Middle Ages. Perhaps based on my own youthful encounters with Anne Rice's Lestat, before researching the vampire, I had always imagined that the literary vampire had its roots in my field of primary training, medieval literature, but this not the case. I begin my lectures with this misconception and we then consider the vampire within a pantheon of monsters, including the werewolf, wonderful examples of which can be found in medieval literature such as Marie de France's lai, "Bisclavret," or the romance narrative, *Guillaume de Palerne*. But despite a tantalizing reference to a *sanguissuga* [blood sucker] in William of Newburgh's *Historia rerum Anglicarum* [History of English Affairs] vampires do not burst on the literary scene until the eighteenth century.

The rest of my lecturing on these origins is then devoted to the historical context of this emergence and the so-called "Great Vampire Epidemic" of the 1730s. I draw upon the important folkloric and forensic research of Paul Barber in *Vampires, Burial and Death* (1988) and the provocative thesis of Erik Butler's *Metamorphoses of the Vampire* (2009) to look at how the vampire legend took hold in Western Europe. This requires that I provide the students with some background into both the Ottoman and Hapsburg empires and how the Peace of Passarowitz in 1718 led to Hapsburg military and medical personnel encountering the phenomenon of corpse exhumation and execution in response to plague among those native to parts of Serbia and Wallachia.[3]

I present the students with maps of the region as well as have them read translations of reports from Hapsburg officials that are readily accessible in Barber. These reports sent back by these officials of famous cases such as those of Arnold Paole (1718) and Peter Plogowitz (1725) led to the true vampire epidemic, an epidemic of scientific and literary production in Western Europe. This rampant interest in vampires was fueled, Butler argues, not simply by curiosity, but by political anxiety: those in the West were disturbed and intrigued by native inhabitants of the Balkans carrying out vampire-killing rituals in defiance of Hapsburg officials. Butler's close readings of these reports demonstrate that the inhabitants of these Balkan villages were not simply acting on their own pre-scientific answers to natural phenomena of disease, burial, and decomposition (Barber). The Balkan peasants were also engaging in acts of political resistance against yet another invading empire, as Hapsburg domination of the region replaced that of the Ottomans. I ground this reading of the origins of the vampire in a very specific discussion of Western European views of the Balkans and the ways that these early discourses can be tied to discourses of race and ethnicity through representations of Ottoman/Hapsburg conflict as well as tensions between different Christian denominations. I also explain how the flurry of dissertations that followed these reports from the Balkans, such as Michael Ranft's *De Masticatione Mortuorum* (Leipzig, 1728) demonstrate intersections between political and early scientific discourses that continue in the vampire legend today. It is no accident, I argue, that the first piece of vampire literature, Heinrich August Ossenfelder's 1748 lyric "Der Vampir" appeared in the pages of *Der Naturforscher* [The Nature Researcher], a natural philosophy journal. I use a handout with my own translation for the lyric for the course; a good translation and the German original can be found in Crawford.

We read and analyze "Der Vampir" and continue on to the emergence of the vampire

in a variety of German-language texts, reading Gottfried August Bürger's widely popular lyric "Lenore" (1773) in relation to the Seven Years' War (1756–63) and Goethe's "Braut von Korinth" [Bride of Corinth] (1797) within discourses of East and West and of religion, superstition, and the Enlightenment. We look at two short stories, "Wake Not the Dead!" (1800) (attributed to Tieck but likely by Raupach) and E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Aurelia" (1818).[4] These early vampire narratives introduce several important elements that remain with us throughout the course. Themes of sexuality and an Orientalist fascination with an exoticized East are deeply connected to the original sources of these literary productions, the reports of vampires from the Balkans.

Also running through these texts is a critical engagement with Christianity that can range from the negative references to pious mothers in "Der Vampir" and "Lenore" to the much more fully articulated critique on Christian sexual strictures in Goethe's poem. This Christian thematic also needs to be considered in relation to Enlightenment critiques of religion and superstition and to early scientific activity and discourses of the period. The first vampire poem, after all, appears in a journal about natural philosophy — early science — and we consider the ways that the vampire, as a being both living and dead, engaged those interested in questions of science. All of these themes, I try to show, can be found in the figure of the vampire and also come to shape racial representation in relation to this figure. We consider the question of intersectionality: what makes a human identity? (Crenshaw). And how can we think about this question in relation to a non-human being? How can thinking in this way help us to define the human?

After setting up the early German context for the literary vampire, we move on to the English literary vampire. Since there are so many non–Literature majors in the course, I give a further lecture on Romanticism and its role in English literary history. We then read Coleridge's "Christabel" (1797/1800) and Byron's "Giaour" (1813) as antecedents to Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819).[5] We look at this text in relation to the intriguing story of its creation at Villa Diodati along with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and then examine the currents of sexuality, Orientalism, and the development of an intimate relationship between Aubrey and Ruthven in the story. We read these in the context of its German and English textual antecedents and also carefully lay the groundwork for how these themes will be treated in later texts.

After reading Polidori we then turn to LeFanu's *Carmilla* (1872). Both texts depict homoerotic relationships between a vampire and a human, but in radically different ways. I present *Carmilla* as an important transition text between the early Romantic vampires we have been examining and Stoker's *Dracula*, for which it seems clearly to be a source. I also bring in here a mini-lecture on the Gothic tradition, which has been haunting the earlier texts we have examined, and consider this tradition in relation both to Romanticism and the vampire tradition. We pay special attention to the Styrian setting of *Carmilla*, reading it both in terms of the East/West tension between the Balkans and Europe that we have already seen, but also in the context of LeFanu's own Irish background. We consider depictions of sexuality and ethnic difference in relation to each other and to the scientific framing of the text within the papers of Dr. Hesselius. We then turn to examine LeFanu's portrayal of the attraction between Laura and Carmilla in relation to the stark contrast that they pose with the little-known German vampire short story, "Manor," written by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–95) in 1885.

Ulrichs' story is noteworthy because of its positive depiction of a homoerotic relationship between a vampire and a young man. Ulrich is himself a fascinating figure. Trained

as a jurist, he openly advocated for rights for homosexuals at a time when homosexuality was illegal in a growing range of German-speaking territories, territories through which he himself had to move to escape persecution and imprisonment. Ulrichs eventually died in poverty in Italy, where he composed "Manor." Set in the Faero Islands, located halfway between Norway and Iceland, "Manor" eschews the typical Orientalist setting of the vampire tale, and the love story between boy and vampire unfolds in an entirely working-class milieu, a fishing village. The love between the two, which lasts beyond death, is also eventually accepted by the boy's mother, in another inversion of the typical role of the intervening mother, that goes back to Ossenfelder's "Der Vampir." We examine "Manor" within Ulrichs' own theory of homosexuality, "Uranism," and its components of Nordic myth, looking at "Manor" as a point of contrast against the dark and gothic representations of vampirism that dominate our course readings.

After Ulrichs, we turn to Stoker's *Dracula*, which is the fulcrum of the course. We read the novel as a kind of nodal point for the themes of science, religion, race, gender, and sexuality that we have been examining. We first focus in on *Dracula* as a novel of 1897 London, beginning with a look at the various locales that Stoker details in the novel, using graphics and maps. Drawing upon work by Bram Dijkstra and Elaine Showalter on fin-de-siècle culture, we consider the various elements of this culture that Stoker brings to the novel and the ways that Stoker makes thematics we examined in earlier texts "nineteenth century up-to-date with a vengeance" to reflect the concerns of 1897 England (Stoker, 180).

Setting up this information for the students includes lecture materials on the relevance of the New Woman, the Wilde trial in 1895, the advent of technological advances that feature throughout the novel, and, as Stephen Arata has so convincingly demonstrated, a fear of Occidentalism that shapes the novel's representation of ethnicity and race. We examine Stoker's representation of Dracula and the region from which he comes in terms of late nineteenth-century views about the East and about race, including "sciences" such as Lombroso's phrenology. We read the novel as "taking the pulse" of late-nineteenth century England, tapping into the currents in vampire narrative that we have already examined and which will continue to influence vampire literature and film into the present day.

After completing *Dracula* we turn to two German film adaptations of Stoker's work, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's 1922 *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* and Werner Herzog's 1979 remake, *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht*.[6] We look at each film as an adaptation of Stoker's work considering how Murnau and Herzog transfer the film to specific German contexts. We first consider Murnau's film within the context of Weimar film and the specific political and cultural milieu of Germany after the First World War and significantly also after the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918. What would it mean to an audience member in 1922 to witness the coming of a plague ship after the Spanish flu epidemic had wiped out millions? Prominent in our considerations are those readings of *Nosferatu* that see its depiction of Count Orlok as anti–Semitic and which also read the film in the context of the rise of National Socialism (Kracauer and Elsässer). We also do some frame-by-frame analysis of the work, considering the background to silent film and also the question of the monster himself—is he sympathetic?

We then turn to Herzog's remake, examining it, following the work of S.S. Prawer, as a post–Holocaust film. We look at the Count not as a possible figure for the Jew, but instead as a figure for evil and consider the ways in which the residents of Wismar can be viewed not as mere victims of the vampire, but as complicit in their own fates. Why does Jonathan decide to take on the assignment to Dracula's castle and how do his ambition and his rest-

lessness contribute to his fate? When Jonathan himself becomes the new vampire, is this a radical change or a fulfillment of some element of his character?

We look specifically at the film in the context of the New German cinema and the way that many young filmmakers of Herzog's generation, born during or just after the era of National-Socialism, came to question the roles of their parents and grandparents in the atrocities of World War II and the Holocaust. Looking at the film as a post–Holocaust film, a reading inspired by S.S. Prawer, gives it a new dimension. The films striking opening shot of mummies takes on added meaning when considered against photographs taken at the liberation of Nazi concentration camps. We also follow Prawer in considering the way that the film borrows from German Romanticism. We go back to the elements of German and English Romanticism that we have already covered and then compare individual shots in the film to German Romantic paintings.

The most significant sequence here is the long segment in the film where Jonathan hikes the final stretch to Dracula's castle. We consider the role of the Wanderer in German Romanticism and examine Casper David Friedrich's "Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog" (1818) to consider how Herzog is drawing upon the German Romantic tradition (Casper and Linville). Herzog himself was a friend of the critic Lotte Eisner, who pioneered the readings of Murnau's film version in the context of German art history. We also note the soundtrack in this sequence, which employs the eerie two-chord chant by Popul Vuh that haunts the opening mummy sequence and which recurs in the film and then changes to the opening of Wagner's "Rheingold" as Jonathan reaches a mountain summit.

We consider the visual and audio references to German Romanticism in the context of German history. Herzog, following Murnau, moves the Dracula story to a German context, the Biedemeyer era. We consider this historical period in German history, one of relative peace, but also one that Thomas Mann thought was characterized by a "machtgeschütze Innerlichkeit," an ability to turn within to focus on hearth and home that was afforded by military strength (a situation I ask students to consider in relation to their own lives as contemporary U.S. citizens). Herzog stresses the bourgeois order of Lucy and Jonathan's home with details that echo Murnau's and he writes of this setting: "Hier ist die Welt in biedermeierlicher Ordnung" [Here the world is in Biedermeyer order] (Herzog, *Stroszek*, 79). We consider the significance of the German concept of "Kultur" as well as Germany's role as a cultural leader in the Romantic era. We then consider whether if, by drawing upon some of great masterworks of German cultural production, Herzog is implicitly questioning Germany's path. How did the nation that produced such art also produce such evil? And where does such evil come from? Is it, like Dracula, a figure from without—coming from the East? Who is the figure in the dark cape on the bridge in Wismar and what might this figure symbolize? Is there something within the characters and Wismar itself that draws the vampire?

We consider these questions also in relation to Stoker's *Dracula* and the figures of Lucy and Jonathan in the novel? We consider finally Hannah Arendt's concept of the "banality of evil" in relation to the Biedermeyer context of the film and German post–War consciousness. How does the transferring of the action from England at the height of Empire to this historical era in Germany change the representation of evil? What is the role of two historical context—Biedermeyer-era Germany and post–World War II Germany—in shaping the figure of the vampire? And, if the inhabitants of Wismar are perhaps implicit in allowing evil in their midst, how can such an interpretation of complicity with evil be seen in the post–War German context?

We then turn to read two texts that are explicit in their connections between vampires, blood, and race and that mark a bridge from European to American contexts, Hanns Heinz Ewers' 1921 novel *Vampir* and Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* (2005). Both writers attempt to shake up reader expectations by exploring taboo topics. Ewers (1871–1943) is a little-known but fascinating figure. An occultist and prolific and popular writer in pre–World War II Germany, he wrote *Vampir* as the final volume of his Frank Braun trilogy. Loosely autobiographical, *Vampir* is based on Ewers' time in the United States during World War I, where he agitated for the German cause and was briefly imprisoned for this work. The novel follows Frank Braun as he also works for the German cause during World War I, but focuses on his relationship with his half–Jewish lover, Lotte Lewi, and a mysterious ailment plaguing him. Frank experiences periodic episodes of debilitating weakness, the occurrence of which seems synced to his meetings with Lotte. He comes to suspect that Lotte is a vampire, draining him of strength, but at the novel's end he discovers that just the opposite is true. Frank himself is the vampire, his condition contracted through a bat bite while in the South Seas. Lotte has been offering her blood to him, out of love for him, but also out of devotion to the German cause. Her sacrifice enables his rhetorical efforts on behalf of the Fatherland.

Teaching *Vampir* poses numerous difficulties.[7] The German edition and its U.S. translation (1934) are both rare and the American edition is bowdlerized, cutting out passages depicting pedophilia, as well as Ewers' anti–American rhetoric, and his offensive racist language concerning people of color. The text is also far from a literary masterwork, but is worth teaching because of the explicit ways that it connects vampirism and early twentieth-century discourses of race. A self-proclaimed "philo–Semite," Ewers represents an interesting case of cognitive dissonance because he was also an early and ardent supporter of Hitler and Nazism. We examine the sections in *Vampir* that proclaim both the German and Jewish "races" as uniquely destined for combined glory, as inheritors of the glory of the twelve tribes of Israel and explore how Ewers' "philo-semitism" is merely the flipside of the anti–Semitism and racism that are the hallmarks of National-Socialism. A provocateur like Ewers might seem to be a target for Nazi persecution and, indeed, works like his *Fundvogel* (1928), which focuses on a transsexual, led to the banning of his writings and his own (self-contested) expulsion from the Nazi party. The racist hierarchy within which he views German-Jewish destiny, however, differs from Nazi racism in its embrace of certain kinds of Jews, but is also essentially in accord with it. We examine these issues through sections of the novel and through selections of some of Ewers' "philo–Semitic" writings. The vampire is central to Ewers' notion of race, since blood is the primary symbol of race for him and we examine the use of blood in the construction of the concept of race and in racist discourse.

Against this background we read Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* (2005), which begins with Shori, a character who awakes not knowing her true identity or even understanding the nature of her own being. Shori slowly comes to learn that she is part-human and part–Ina, the product of a genetic experiment begun by her Ina mothers. Ina have a different social structure than humans, with a communal and clan-structured society that also involves living in open, symbiotic relationships with humans that involve feeding, sex and intense emotional bonds. The humans and the Ina become dependent on one another, a co-dependence that mirrors addiction. The relationships between Ina and humans are also not entirely equal and Butler uses this imagined social picture to explore questions of social hierarchy, co-dependence, race, and slavery and their intertwined relationship in U.S. history. Butler challenges reader expectations by having Shori appear to be a black girl of around age 10

or 11, when she is actually 53 years old. We discuss the novel in relation to the slave narrative and the *Bildungsroman* and contrast the ways in which Butler and Ewers use themes of blood and vampirism to explore questions of race, racism, addiction, and sexuality in highly contrasting ways.

Butler's novel is our bridge from European to U.S. contexts. We shift back in time to examine *Blacula* (1972) and *Ganja and Hess* (1973). My approach to these films involves an opening lecture on the contexts of Blaxploitation film and how *Blacula* fits into this moment in film history with specific attention to representation of African Americans in film and to the shift in vampire films in the early seventies to the modern day begun by the commercially successful *Count Yorga, Vampire* (1970) and the television series, *Dark Shadows* (1966–71). We pay special attention to the opening of the film, which sets the story of Mamuwalde/Blacula within the history of slavery in the Americas, a contribution to the film introduced by the actor who plays Blacula, William Marshall. In the thinksheet for *Blacula*, students are asked to discuss how this opening shapes the film. While acknowledging that *Blacula* is a commercial film and intended as entertainment, we also consider the film within larger national discourses of race and specifically within the context of L.A. history.

This is an especially engaging part of the course for me because I was growing up in L.A. when *Blacula* was made, and for my students, the majority of whom are from Southern California, many from L.A. We look at *Blacula* as a Los Angeles film, focusing on the portrayal of the LAPD in the film, both in terms of the systemic racism depicted in the force and the choice to feature scenes of crowd control, curfew and officers in riot gear. I then introduce the historical context of the Watts Rebellion/Riots of August 1965, arguing that the depiction of race and racism in the film must be considered against this background. If Blaxploitation cinema was marketed to an African American audience, what would that target audience have made of the depiction of the LAPD in the film? Of Mamuwalde/Blacula as a tragic hero? Of the film's reference to the Black Panther party? We also turn again to the concept of intersectionality. How does the representation of Mamuwalde/Blacula intersect with the film's portrayal of female characters and with its homophobia? Following the work of Jenkins, Medovoi and Novotny, we look at these questions within the specific historical context of the Black Power movement, which is introduced to the students through lecture.

We then turn to the much less well-known film *Ganja and Hess*, which likely would not have been made if not for the commercial success of *Blacula*.[8] Director Bill Gunn was given backing to create another Blaxploitation feature, but what was created instead is a beautiful "art film" with a challenging narrative structure that explores race, racism, sexuality, Christianity and, especially, addiction, which is at the center of the film. At the center of the film is Dr. Hess Green, played by Duane Jones, who is perhaps now best known for his role as Ben in George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*. Green is wealthy, highly educated, and isolated from the black community. He becomes a vampire through an attack by his suicidal assistant, George Meda, who attacks him with an ancient African object contact with which leaves him addicted to blood. Hess then falls in love with Meda's wife, Ganja, who has come in search of her missing husband, marries her and turns her into a vampire. Hess's situation is characterized by his addiction and by his isolation from the rest of the black community. He lives in isolation on an estate in the wealthy, white enclave of Westchester County in New York, a home where he notes that he is the "only colored on the block." The movie contrasts him to his chauffeur, who is also the leader of a thriving

African American church. Hess eventually rejects the vampiric state and dies in the shadow of the cross. In considering *Ganja and Hess* we focus on mise-en-scène, cinematography and sound to examine how vampirism functions as a metaphor for addiction in the film and how through the use images of African and European art, of sound and of Christian imagery, Gunn explores questions of race and racism in the 1970s U.S.

From these early films we then turn to two works that students are often quite familiar with: *Blade* and the HBO series *True Blood*. We look at Blade as a story about race, miscegenation, and slavery, as Blade, like Shori in Butler's Fledgling, is a human-vampire hybrid. Is vampirism a metaphor for white identity in *Blade*? The film also features prominent yet rather obscure visual references to Asians and Asian-Americans. We explore the ways that the film's hero, Blade, comes to represent both a racial hybrid and a figure that is also a cyborg. Blade uses technology to fight vampires and to fight the vampire within himself, tying this element in the film directly back to Stoker's engagement with technology and science in *Dracula* and to the paradigms of race in that novel.

We end the course with the HBO series *True Blood*. Students view episode one of the first season of the show and also the special extras included on the boxed set of Season One, which includes mock advertisements for and against the "Vampire Rights Amendment" alluded to in the show and a "Mockumentary" about vampires after the "Great Revelation." These ads go along with various websites created by the show for the American Vampire League, a group that lobbies for vampire rights and the Fellowship of the Sun, a church devoted to the eradication of vampires. To study the series we look closely as well at the title sequence of the show, breaking down the images and discussing the ways in which they relate to the show's treatment of race, sexuality, religion and also notions of ecstatic experience. We then finally analyze *True Blood*, which premiered in September 2008 in relation to California's Proposition 8, the ballot measure designed to limit marriage in the state to only being legally valid between one man and one woman, which passed in November 2008. Prop 8, debate over which was extremely heated and public in California at the very time that *True Blood* premiered, seems to me and to my students to be a clear context for the series. I try, however, to keep our discussion away from reading *True Blood* as a simple analogy or allegory. Instead we focus on the question "Are vampire rights human rights?" This question, prompted by the special DVD features like the Vampire Rights Amendments ads, brings us to discussions of how society defines "the human," and "the citizen." How do legislators, jurists and individuals make decisions about who is entitled to civil and human rights and who is not?

The vampire, a liminal figure that is human and not-human, dead and yet living, provides a unique way for us to discuss these issues. The discussions have ranged to the questions of racial equality, immigration and rights for the LGBT community alluded to specifically in the series, and also questions of rights for those who have been convicted of crimes, specifically pedophiles, since vampires in the series are not strictly benevolent and can be dangerous. How does one determine the status of personhood and who should have the right to make such decisions?

We don't obviously find answers to these questions, but as one student remarked to me, the context of vampire narrative can create a "safe space" for students to speak about these issues. We are dealing with issues of identity and rights rather directly, but because the vampire is also a fictional creation, students can examine these questions through the characters and situations in the films and novels with a combination of engagement and distance that can allow for more open discourse. Throughout the course we also continually

look back at earlier historical contexts in order to compare texts and contexts. How, for example, can we examine the "out of the coffin" themes of *True Blood* in connection to themes of homoeroticism in "Christabel," *Carmilla* and "Manor"? How do discourses of race in *True Blood* figure in comparison to how they appeared in earlier works such as Ewers' *Vampir* or *Blacula*?

This deep engagement with the vampire narrative and with its historical contexts has led to some extremely strong research papers. One very successful paper prompt asks students to compare Richard Matheson's 1954 *I am Legend* with the 2007 film version starring Will Smith. Students use close analysis of the both the film and the novel as well as the historical contexts in which they are written. Matheson wrote his novel in the 1950s and set it in Compton, an area of Los Angeles that had a growing African American population at that time.[9] The 2007 movie, which casts a wildly popular African American actor as its lead, changes the racial dynamics of the story, just as the film's setting in New York had to also have an impact on its post–9/11 audience. Students have gone in many directions with this comparison, including investigations of primary materials related to the Cold War context of the novel and detailed studies of the artwork featured in the 2007 film, but each approach tied the question of the vampire to a very specific historical moment to terrific results.

Another highly successful prompt asked students to think about the 1897 portrayal of technological innovations in *Dracula* in relation to Bekka Black's 2010 *iDrakula*, a novel created out of text messages, web searches and email exchanges that centers around the iPhone. Students considered the role of technology in each case and the way that this technology shaped the novels' characterization as well as their treatments of gender and race.

The final assignment for the class has varied. I have, for example, used a traditional exam format, with short answers, ID terms and essays in a three-hour in-class exam for my large lecture. In the classes with smaller enrollments, however, I don't feel a need to test the students on the readings because the thinksheet assignments force them to read and write about all reading assignments. In these classes I have asked students to write a take-home essay of 800 to 1000 words an op-ed style and these have produced some excellent essays. They are to pretend that the editor of a major newspaper has asked contacted them to explain the current popularity of vampires based on their wide readings in vampire literature. They are to present their own thesis about why they think vampires have such current popularity using some of the earlier work that we have read as a major part of their argument.

The prompt attempts to get students to present original ideas in a concise way while all the while asking them to demonstrate their knowledge of our readings and the contexts that produced them. The assignment allows students to consider their own historical moment in relation the past and helps them to see how the knowledge they have gained about historical representation can aid them in thinking about their own social contexts and considering the ways that the themes of race, gender and sexuality that run through vampire narrative can be more fully understood and appreciated in relation to historical contexts.

So this discussion of my class can perhaps best be seen as the somewhat ironic story of how the creature of the night has been good for my day job. Remembering to "always historicize" cost me my name in lights, but asking students to consider the figure of the vampire not as timeless, but as a creature constructed and reconstructed within history, has helped us to consider in productive ways some of the most challenging political and social issues of our own time.

Notes

1. These ideas are at the core of my book project, "Dracula's Pulse," which examines Stoker in light of early Latin and German works and as a source for contemporary vampire narrative.

2. In order to attempt to keep student costs low I have tried to use electronic reserves or resources available on the web whenever possible and have attempted to cite useful ones in my notes here.

3. A wonderful source on these early materials and current research on them is *Magia Posthuma*, the blog of Niels K. Peterson.

4. There are numerous early translations of "Lenore" that can be found on the web. I have assigned this one by Rossetti: http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Lenore_%28Rossetti%29. A translation of Goethe's "Braut" can be found in Collins 136–142 as well as widely on the web. "Wake Not the Dead!" can be found at http://www.sff.net/people/doylemacdonald/l_wakeno.htm or in Frayling (165–190). "Aurelia" is also in Frayling (190–207).

5. I ask students to purchase the collection edited by Williams, which contains the Byron, Polidori, and Coleridge we read along with *Carmilla* and Stoker's *Dracula*.

6. Murnau's film is now widely available on the web, but I strongly recommend the Kino version listed in the bibliography. Herzog shot his film with an international cast in multiple languages. After learning that a couple of confused non–German-speaking freshmen experienced the double terror of accidently watching the entire film in German without subtitles, I now to take extra care to guide students carefully through the viewing options available through DVDs and the Web.

7. Useful sources on Ewers are Brandenburg, Knobloch, Kugel, and Wikoff. See also Lampert-Weissig, which contains further bibliography.

8. *Ganja and Hess* has a complicated production history. Diawara and Klotman and the additional materials on the 2006 DVD are especially helpful for preparing to teach the film.

9. The Compton setting has been especially meaningful to my current UCSD students in light of the racist "Compton Cookout" incident connected to our campus. This event and the various responses to it brought national attention to the problematic campus climate at UCSD and other UC schools. UCSD campus climate has been a significant component in our discussions in the vampire class and very likely has potential relevance on other campuses as well. On the "Compton Cookout" and its impact see Archibold.

Bibliography

Arata, Stephen D. "The Occidental Tourist: Dracula and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization." *Victorian Studies* 33.4 (1990): 621–45. Print.

Archibold, Randal. "California Campus Sees Uneasy Race Relations." *New York Times*. 26 Feb. 2010. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Viking, 1964. Print.

Auerbach, Nina. *Our Vampires, Ourselves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Print.

Blacula. Dir. William Crain. Perf. William Marshall, Vonetta McGee. American International Pictures, 1972. Film.

Barber, Paul. *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. Print.

Black, Bekka. *iDrakula*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2010. Print.

Blade. Dir. Stephen Norrington. Perf. Wesley Snipes. New Line Cinemas, 1998. Film.

Brandenburg, Ulrike. *Hanns Heinz Ewers (1871–1943): Von Der Jahrhundertwende Zum Dritten Reich: Erzählungen, Dramen, Romane 1903–1932*. New York: Peter Lang, 2003. Print.

Butler, Erik. *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732–1933*. Rochester: Camden House, 2010. Print.

Butler, Octavia E. *Fledgling: Novel*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005. Print.

Casper, Kent, and Susan Linville. "Romantic Inversions in Herzog's *Nosferatu*." *German Quarterly* 64.1 (1991): 17–24. Print.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome, ed. *Monster Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. Print.

Collins, Margo, ed. *Before the Count: British Vampire Tales: 1732–1897*. Camarillo, CA: Zittaw Press, 2007. Print.

Count Yorga, Vampire. Dir. Robert Quarry. 1970. MGM Home Entertainment, 2004. DVD.

Crawford, Heide. "The Cultural-Historical Origins of the Literary Vampire in Germany." *Journal of Dracula Studies* 7 (2005): n. pag. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 1241–1299. Print.

Diawara, Manthia, and Phyllis R. Klotman. "Ganja and Hess: Vampires, Sex, and Addictions." *Black American Literature Forum* 25 (1991): 299–314. Print.

Dijkstra, Bram. *Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality and the Cult of Manhood*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996. Print.

_____. *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-De-siècle Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. Print.

Eisner, Lotte H. *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. Print.

Elsässer, T. *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary*. New York: Routledge, 2000. Print.

Ewers, Hanns Heinz. *Fundvogel: Die Geschichte einer Wandlung*. Berlin: Sieben Stäbe, 1928. Print.

_____. *Vampir: Ein Virwilderter Roman in Fetzen und Farben*. Berlin: Sieben Stäbe, 1928. Print.

Ewers, Hanns Heinz, and Fritz Sallagar. *Vampire*. New York: John Day, 1934. Print.

Frayling, Christopher. *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991. Print.

Ganja & Hess. Dir. Bill Gunn. Perf. Duane Jones. 1973. Image Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

Herzog, Werner. *Stroszek; Nosferatu: Zwei Filmerzählungen*. München: Hanser, 1979. Print.

_____, dir. *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht*. Perf. Klaus Kinski. 1979. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2002. DVD.

I Am Legend. Dir. Francis Lawrence. Perf. Will Smith. Warner Home Video, 2008. DVD.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991. Print.

Jenkins, Jerry Rafiki. "Blacula and the Question of Blackness." *Blaxploitation Revisited*. Ed. Eric Charles Pierson, Christine Acham, and Gerald R. Butters. Santa Barbara: Screening Noir, 2005. Print.

Knobloch, Marion. *Hanns Heinz Ewers: Bestseller-Autor in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik*. Marburg: Tectum, 2002. Print.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. 1947. New York: Noonday Press, 1959. Print.

Kugel, Wilfried. *Der Unverantwortliche: Das Leben Des Hanns Heinz Ewers*. Düsseldorf: Grupello, 1992. Print.

Lampert-Weissig, Lisa. "*Kulturvampir*: George Sylvester Viereck's *House of the Vampire* and Hanns Heinz Ewers' *Vampir*." *Open Graves, Open Minds: Representations of Vampires from Enlightenment to the Present Day*, eds. Sam George and Bill Hughes. Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming 2013.

Novotny, Lawrence. "Fear of a Blaxploitation Monster: Blackness as Generic Revision in AIP's Blacula." *Film International* 7, no. 3 (2009): 14–26. Print.

Marie de France. *The Lais of Marie De France*. Trans. Glyn S. Burgess. New York: Penguin, 1986. Print.

Matheson, Richard. *I Am Legend*. 1954. Cutchogue, NY: Buccaneer Books, 1991. Print.

Medovoi, Leerom. "Theorizing Historicity, Or the Many Meanings of Blacula." *Screen* 39.1 (1998): 1–21. Print.

Murnau, F. W., dir. *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*. 1922. Kino International, 2007. DVD.

Night of the Living Dead. Dir. George A. Romero. Perf. Duane Jones. 1968. Elite Entertainment, 2002. DVD.

Peterson, Niels K. *Magia Posthuma*. n.d. Web. 2 Feb 2013.

Prawer, S. S. *Nosferatu—Phantom Der Nacht*. London: BFI, 2004. Print.

Ranft, Michael. *Traktat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Toten in Gräbern*. Diedorf Ubooks, 2006. Print.

Ryan, Alan. *The Penguin Book of Vampire Stories*. New York: Penguin, 1987. Print.

Sconduto, Leslie. *Guillaume de Palerne: An English Translation of the 12th Century French Verse Romance*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004. Print.

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. *Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus*. 1831. Ed. J. Paul Hunter. New York: Norton, 2012. Print.

Showalter, Elaine. *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*. New York: Viking, 1990. Print.

True Blood: The Complete First Season. Dir. Alan Ball. Home Box Office. Warner Home Video, 2009. DVD.

Ulrichs, Karl Heinrich. "Manor." 1885. Trans. Hubert Kennedy. *Embracing the Dark*. Ed. Eric Garber. Boston: Alyson, 1991. 98–108. Print.

_____. *Matrosengeschichten und Gedichte: Ein Lesebuch*. 1885. Berlin: Rosa Winkel, 1998.

Wikoff, Karin Elizabeth. "Hanns Heinz Ewers' Vampir." MA thesis, Cornell, 1995. Print.

Williams, Anne, et al. *Three Vampire Tales*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003. Print.