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Erik Butler. *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732-1933.* Rochester: Camden House, 2010. ix + 225 pp. $75.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-57113-432-5.

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Erik Butler's monograph traces the development of the vampire figure in western European intellectual thought, from its eighteenth-century emergence in the so-called vampire epidemic in Austria-controlled Serbia to its first appearance on the screen in post-World War I Germany. He sees the vampire first and foremost as a modern figure brought in by the Enlightenment in Europe that serves to explain, on a symbolic level, various issues raised by the age of modernity. The period included a changing social and political order (the Industrial and French Revolutions, the rise of the middle class, etc.), shifting borderlands, the suffrage movement, and changing gender and family roles, as well as questions of sexuality, venereal disease, and madness that came to the fore at the turn of the century following the development of psychoanalysis. His monograph succeeds in rendering a thorough, multifaceted portrayal of the vampire and explains its persistence as a potent cultural symbol that came to address a number of fears and anxieties in a society going through changes. The vampire still functions in that regard today, as Butler's conclusion shows. Overall, *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film* employs various critical lenses (postcolonial, Marxist, gender, cultural studies, and psychoanalysis) to uncover "the logic underlying the vampire's many and conflicting forms" (p. vii).

The monograph traces the vampire's move from the folklore of eastern and central Europe to the literature and film of western Europe and the Americas in three chronological parts. The first part considers the vampire epidemic among the peasants in central Europe and its first, often satiric and highly metaphorical, portrayal in the literature of the Enlightenment and Romantic periods. The second part analyzes the vampire's two iconic presentations in British Gothic literature that brought angst to intellectual readers in western Europe because they depicted the vampire's threat as being real and close to home: Lord Ruthven of John Polidori's short story "The Vampyre" (1819) and Dracula of Bram Stoker's eponymous novel from 1897. The third part follows the vampire's appearance in German expressionist films of the Weimar period and in works of a psychoanalytic nature. The book has an introduction and a lengthy conclusion that offers a brief overview of the development of vampire narrative in the United States from Bela Lugosi's famous portrayal of Count Dracula in the 1931 Hollywood film to today's teenage vampire sagas.

Part 1 argues that the vampire entered the Western intellectual discourse at a time of disruptive political events in central Europe that brought about an increasing mixture of cultures and religions due to unstable borders and shifting

control of the territories. It is fitting that Serbia, a borderland fought over by the Ottoman and Austrian Empires, gave rise to this phenomenon. According to Butler, the vampire shows a disturbed social balance, oscillating between peace (life) and war (death) and marked by constant struggle, and competing religious systems added to the increased tension in the region. Christianity was at war with Islam and there were inner tensions within Christianity itself—Orthodoxy was followed by the peasants, Catholicism was supported by the imperial Austrian government, and a competing Protestantism encroached from the German north. This united the village community against the aggressive foreigner, be it the Austrian or the Ottoman, whom the villagers symbolically tried to get rid of through a scapegoating exercise (here, a sacrifice of the alleged vampire, an equally foreign and hostile entity). At the time when the vampire entered the written record, the intellectuals of western Europe saw it as a backward superstition of illiterate peasants, but later on, it became a handy metaphorical term to be applied satirically in the age of rationalism to express scorn for the "unclear pedigree of newly ascendant parties in political and economic affairs" (p. 54) or to attack politicians for their greedy and ruthless practices (e.g., raising taxes). The age of Romanticism, however, added depth and humanity to this still faceless and strictly symbolic figure, imbuing it with self-doubt, alienation, and torture, which the vampire now paradoxically placed not only on his victims, but also on himself, becoming a tormented Byronic figure.

Part 2 addresses the long nineteenth century with its ideas of imperial expansion, increased social mobility associated with the rise of the middle class and the nouveau riche, and new socialist and radical political philosophies that changed the traditional societal structure and order. In Butler's insightful analysis, Polidori's lead vampire, Lord Ruthven, is an impostor, a pedigreeless individual whose barbarism corrupts the English social body and brings lawlessness and terror. Butler argues that the various low-brow imitations of Polidori's vampire in French and English popular theaters signified the need of the masses for catharsis because societal tensions associated with a changing and modernizing society had brought about a different work order and had impacted the family structure, which resulted in confusion and the need for a scapegoat. It is interesting that the book does not include a chapter on Sheridan Le Fanu's ***Carmilla*** (1871–72)—even though it mentions the book fleetingly throughout the text—inasmuch as it is a telling tale of the Victorian fear of the "New Woman" and her thirst for power (as seen through her suffragist demands) and served as a major inspiration for ***Dracula***. While the Napoleonic era was followed by peaceful times in Europe, the British Empire's expansionist tendencies generated another anxiety—that of the "Other" and reverse colonization, as exhibited by Stoker's ***Dracula***. Stoker's novel also reflects societal tensions that arose out of "consumerist mass culture … [and] the … electrically driven forms of communication" (p. 109) brought about by industrial progress, and fear of homosexuality, which threatened the heterosexual Christian norms of the English bourgeoisie. Butler contends that, as a result, Dracula became the embodiment of England's "domestic worries" and a mirror through which the empire saw its "evil" (colonial) deeds abroad (p. 117).

Part 3 turns to Daniel Paul Schreber's ***Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*** (1903), a German work of memoirs that was written around the same time as Stoker's ***Dracula***. The memoirs present a real-life case of vampirism, with the author, a patient in a mental institution, functioning as a Stokerian Renfield (a madman in ***Dracula***). Schreber's alleged attack by a vampiric entity is one of the most complex chapters in Butler's monograph, deeply steeped in psychoanalytic theory. The chapter analyzes Schreber's claim that the vampire who attacked him was none other than God himself (referred to as "a soul murderer"), a declaration that Butler interprets as standing for

"vast conspiracies of internal and external agitators intent on taking over Germany and … [Schreber's] own person—the Fatherland and its citizenson" (p. 141). Butler weaves the cultural and social disintegration of the German Empire into the background that brought on Schreber's nervous breakdown and led to hallucinations and the need to symbolically castrate himself (he starts to see himself as a woman). Butler then looks at the German and Austrian horror literature of the time, which featured sexual and psychological perversions, and sees in it a reflection of "anxieties surrounding struggles for dominance by competing [ethnic and social] groups" (p. 143). World War I gave an outlet to these struggles, but instead of catharsis it brought on further troubles. Extreme violence, mass murders caused by modern war technologies, and an increase in ethnic tensions were reflected in interwar German expressionist films in the persona of the soulless, corpse-like, parasitic, foreign entity of the vampire. Butler's analysis shows that films such as Robert Wiene's ***The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*** (1920) and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's ***Nosferatu*** (1922, based on Stoker) introduced themes of antisemitism, racial separation, and a "reintroduction of social stability [that] led to the persecution of persons and groups deemed responsible for the community's affliction" (p. 160). These themes reflect tensions in the German society of the time and represent evils to come in World War II—the end of Butler's chosen framework for the book.

In his conclusion, which functions as a full-fledged chapter on its own, Butler offers a brief but informative overview of the transformation of the vampire from an ancient corpse to an eternal youth. He brings other genres of speculative fiction to his analysis, drawing an insightful parallel between the vampire figure and other "monsters" of contemporary pop culture, such as cyborgs, superhuman characters, and zombies. His main hypothesis is that the persistence and vitality of the vampire figure, despite differences in outward behavior or appearance, stem from the vampire's ability to reflect anxieties and fears associated with a changing society (i.e., the same reasons that inaugurated its appearance in the fine arts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries).

While the structure of Butler's book is traditional, judging by the works included in a recent anthology on the critical literature dealing with the vampire[1] and other monographs on the topic,[2] the book's novelty lies in Butler's use of various theoretical approaches to uncover the latent, unifying meaning of the vampire's symbolism for various cultures and epochs. Another strength of the monograph is its use of little-known texts, such as Schreber's ***Memoirs*** or minor popular texts inspired by the vampire classics. Butler's point of departure for the vampire discourse is the 1720s vampire epidemic in Serbia, when the vampire enters the written record of western Europe. Although this is understandable, Butler's erudite knowledge of literary theory would have been beneficial if applied to east European folklore on the vampire, given that there is a written record of this word in its Old Church Slavonic variation as early as the eleventh century.[3]

Butler's conclusion promises the reader a future look at the vampires in the Americas and beyond. However, he stops with the Americas and does not consider the vampire's move back to eastern Europe, or to Europe in general (the locale that occasioned this discourse), and the contemporary depiction of the vampire in European (especially east European) literatures. Despite these observations, the book shows the author's ability to synthesize a great number of primary and secondary (critical and theoretical) works relevant to the vampire and horror literature and offers an informative, theoretical analysis of the cultural transformations of the vampire figure in literature and film. It will serve as a great auxiliary read for courses in folklore, English, or comparative literature dealing with this enigmatic figment of the human imagination.

Notes

[1]. See J. Gordon Melton and Alysa Hornick, eds., *The Vampire in Folklore, History, Literature, Film and Television: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015).

[2]. See Jan Louis Perkowski, *Vampire Lore: From the Writings of Jan Louis Perkowski* (Slavica Publishers, 2006); and Bruce A. McClelland, *Slayers and Their Vampires: A Cultural History of Killing the Dead* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

[3]. McClelland, S*layers and Their Vampires*, 187-191.