Álvaro Herrera Pintado
"Cheating death: analysis of the literary vampires in role playing games"

Abstract: The figure of the Vampire, as we know it today, has captivated people's imagination for centuries. Vampire legends can be found in Mesopotamian cultures and in early Greek myths, as well as the blood-drinking spirits of Chinese and Japanese civilisations. These stories were particularly relevant in the folklore of Eastern Europe, and spread from there, first in the form of travelling tales in the 16th- and 17th-centuries, and then formalized as the gothic tales and melodramas of the romantic imagination in the late 18th and early 19th-centuries, coinciding with the re-structuring of society and the emergence of industrialization. Most scholars have argued that these stories reflected unconscious community fears at a time of rapid social changes. The vampire is one of the emblems of the Gothic exploration of the monstrous. It represents the inhuman and the undead. A monster of the night that lives at the expense of other living creatures.

Contemporary works of modern and postmodern horror maintain, in many cases, similar iconographies while incorporating some changes to the figure of the vampire. Closely associated with technological advance, the vampire took on new attributes with the emergence of cinematography. One of the first a most famous movies in this regard is 1922 *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (*Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror*) by the German expressionist F.W. Murnau.

In the early years of the 21st-century, the customary iconography of the vampire changed. These changes have a lot to do with targeting teenager audiences as potential consumers. All kind of products associated with the vampiric theme can be found today, from comic books to video and role-playing-games and music, all with a clear vampiric aesthetic in which the vampire is no longer an object of fear, but a figure representing difference and transgression. This is the case of the *True Blood* or *Twilight* series. However, this paper argues that the longevity and success of the vampire as a cultural icon is not only due to its transgressive social potential. My concern is with 'death', the ultimate human taboo. To prove my point, I will examine the figure of the vampire in the 1991 role-playing game "Vampire: The Masquerade" by White Wolf Publishing, a production that captures all of previous attributes of this classic figure. Because of the space limitations of this paper, I will only concentrate in three classic novels within the UK repertoire: *Dracula, The Vampyre and Carmilla.*

Keywords: Death, vampire, analysis, classic, novel, role-playing game.

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0. Introduction

Many anthropologists think that the inception of all religions is in the fear to death. This fear lies behind the intention of magic rituals performed by primitive cultures to foster hunting for survival and fertility for procreation of the species. Long before the great cosmogonic tales of creation, such as the narrative of the Enuma Elish, the Kojiki, the book of Genesis, as well as other world theogonies, the human heart was deeply concerned with death, after death and with how to deal of those who have just perished. The geopolitics of living spaces in the Neolithic shows that funerary sites and monuments to commemorate the dead were important landmarks. The expansion of towns and cities bears witness to the treatment of the dead in human history. Indeed, roots such as *semeio,* and *sema*, which have later become part of words such as "semiotics" or "semana" (in Spanish) come from ancient Greek "signal" and "mark" often referring to burial sites as meaningful 'signals'.

Ensuring an appropriate 'passing' of the deceased to its new condition has always been of utmost importance in all cultures, ancient and contemporary. The proper observation (or not) of funerary rites has given way to two different sorts of deceased: the "good" deceased, who continue their trip, whatever that may be, and the "evil" or "restless" deceased, those who linger on this world and refuse to stay in their tombs, either because of an inappropriate burial or a pending issue in life, causing them to return. This return of the restless is always a cause of fear to the living, and always carries fatal consequences, either as an omen about another person's death, the torment of relatives, or the demand for restitution of an adequate ritual. The restless bear manifold names such as draugr in Nordic culture, shiryo and yurei in Japanese culture, the French revenant, or the anima in Western folklore. Among this spectral fauna, a special place is reserved to those who not only torment the living, but who feed on them, and on their blood: the Arabian algules, African adze, Hebrew estrie, Babylonian ekimmu, and of course, the upir, the European vampire.

Although present in Greco-Roman mythology, the inception of the Western vampire dates back to the 16th and 17th- centuries, when many travel logs included tales of scourges of vampirism in East Europe. In these narrations Western audiences met for the very first time these horrific creatures who stalked the living. The only way to make them disappear was to visit their tombs (which were normally found with a ruddy look and filled up with blood) and pierce their hearts with a gigantic stake, or else chop their heads or feet, or

perform both rituals at the same time. Initially there was no magic meaning attached to the stakement ritual, which consisted in hammering a more than a meter long stake into the chest of a rebellious corpse in order to nail it to the ground so that it would not move. Similarly, rituals such as the amputation of the legs, or in the Nordic tradition, not moving away the corpse of a deceased through the doorstep but through a hole expressly made in the wall, and rock the coffin before entombing it, were all performed in order to confuse the deceased so that he/she would not find its way back home.

These tales had special impact in France, where they arrived from Slavic areas via Germany. The German translated the Slav term "upir" as "wampyr", and "wampyr" to French as "vampir", from which the English term "vampire" comes from. It is believed that the word started to popularise around the 17th-century (before this date, each country had its own name to refer to the hematophagous spectre, even though no one remembers the Iberian brucolaco). These tales, arrived from a zone of Europe considered more or less a wild land with nothing in common with the civilized part of the continent, captivated the imagination of everyone, authors of the age included, from who emerged the great classics of the vampiric literature: Polidori's *Vampyre*, LeFanu's *Carmilla*, Rymer's *Varney*, and of course Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. These classic are the basis of everything having to do with the vampire nowadays. From these classics and never surpassed starts, the literary vampire has travelled until today in many incarnations and formats, blending with popular culture and the icons of each age, giving birth to the most despicable creatures as well as the most glamorous vampires, rejuvenating and stylizing the original from its rural milieu, grave odour and unattractive looks to the cosmopolitan and seductive vampires of the *Twilight* series.

In the last few decades of the 20th-century this rejuvenated and stylish vampire, packed for the consumption of young generations, crossed his path with a rather new phenomenon: Role-playing games. Role-playing games arose in their most primitive form in the USA around 1996, as a variation of the popular War-games. But their official birth date was 1974, when the first edition of the famous Dungeons & Dragons was released. During almost two decades, games with fantastic-medieval themes ruled the circles of role-playing, with some exceptions such as the classic Call of Cthulhu based on the worlds of H. P. Lovecraft, and few not less interesting games set in science fiction environments (i.e. Shadowrun or Paranoia).

In 1991, White Wolf Publishing changed the scene of role-playing games with the presentation of the first edition of the game "Vampire: The Masquerade". The impact was immediate. This first edition won the Origins award, one of the most long-lived and important game fair of board games, role, simulation, etc., in the planet. The system of ""Vampire: The Masquerade"" was innovative in the sense that it brought in a more narrative play mode, setting aside infinite tables of numbers that regulated the dice rolls of the players, emphasising much more interpretation of their characters (in time this has been called "Narrative System" in opposition to the D20 System of Dungeons & Dragons or percentile, both much more based on statistics that restrict the creation and interpretation of a character by the player). The background of Vampire (the world where the players develop their adventures) was also tremendously ground breaking and imaginative. It divided the vampiric population into factions which with players could feel identified, and it also provided an aesthetic mixing suburban cultures and 19th-century Gothic that was called "Gothic-punk". The public embraced the new game and its world with enormous excitement. Quickly the game fairs like the previously named Origins or the GenCon filled up with disguised people in the image of their favourite clans, showing even and allegiance to their made up clan that sometimes verged on the absurd. Vampire, in fact, went further, and many people external to role-playing games who saw Dungeons & Dragons like something stale and marginal began to flirt with the fresh and attractive novelty of Vampire, being up to the date one of the most popularly recognised role-playing games.

1. Death and the undead

The main reason for this great success, is, again, death. Here, perhaps we are dealing with a cultural death, a death of values rather than physical disappearance. In today's world of growing uniformity and repetitive life style based on study-work-consumption-marriage-family, the Vampire offers an escape. Taking on the role of a vampire, players not only put themselves in the shoes of someone that has defeated death and reached immortality; they also become the embodiment of mankind as a predator. The vampire stands out from the grey multitude of uniform humans and their boring and repetitive daily life. It becomes a new model of individualism that does not need to work or abides by any human rule. Not only he feeds on common people but he also turns down laws and moral behaviour. He is above laws and morals, shattering the chains of society and reaching a paroxysmal state of freedom.

Of course, as mentioned, in order to reach this attraction, the vampire has evolved from its inception as restless dead to the refined and lethal being of today's imagination. At any rate, who wants to play with a brainless undead. From this point of view, vampirism itself is less important. What really matters is that players take on the role of the definitive aristocrat. If we confer this the supernatural attributes of upyr, its supernatural strength, its mesmerizing charm, the result is overpowering. For the vampire is also a morbid sexual icon, tremendously sensual and provocative. Thus, ""Vampire: The Masquerade"" created a definitive non-conformist icon; a kind of alternative night figure that not only moves against the tide, but also preys on society, imbued with supernatural powers; a creature that comes forth from the contempt towards that taboo.

A mixture of all the vampiric archetypes that have attracted and captivated the human imagination, the creators of ""Vampire: The Masquerade"" took the classic works of Gothic vampiric literature and extracted the most fascinating facets. The following section deals with these sources in reverse order, addressing how they find a new model in a novel scheme in order to to connect with the contemporary public.

2. Vampire, the Role-playing Game

2.1 Genesis and System

As already mentioned in the introduction, "Vampire: The Masquerade" first appeared in the 1991 Origins Game Fair, where it received an exceptional response by amateurs and professionals alike. The number of players quickly grew and in 1992 a second edition of the game appeared, having become the first copies of the basic rulebook a collector item. The reasons for this great success were its innovative gameplay and its fresh new perspective of the game offered by the vampire myth. In the world of role-playing games this is the same to fully hit the mark in the two main features, the gameplay and the atmosphere, that can attract an amateur. Many games with great game systems have not succeed and ended disappearing, but supported by a setting (this is, the imaginary world in which the player's adventure takes place) unattractive. On the other hand, many role playing games provide and imaginative and attractive setting, with great depth and originality, but they are unpleasant and almost unplayable due to bugs.

"Vampire: The Masquerade" system, patented by White Wolf Publishing, is denominated a "narrative system", and as its own name suggests, lay the foundations for the director narration. Until "Vampire: The Masquerade" came with this game system, role-playing games were no more than board games with an imaginary board. The player took the role of a character with a number of features provided by numerical values written on his character sheet, and even moral decisions that the player could take were conditioned by a basic and extremist moral alignment (good, bad, chaotic and mixtures). Actually there was no "character'' behind the character a person played with, just a series of numerical statistics combined with dice rolls were used to solve situations proposed by the game master. The narrative system totally changed that.

The idea was that players made the least possible number of dice rolls, reducing these to situations in which chance or the ability of the player's character affected critically the success or failure of a specific action. The real statistic that ruled the behaviour of the player was the background given by himself. The player had to create a fictional biography, psychology and personality for his character, which stopped being a prototype of a warrior, wizard or elf to become an imaginary individual with motivations, desires and impulses that the player must play as if they were his own. There wasn't a system of moral alignment to guide or constrict the player within parameters. For the first time, players actually played a character, they got into his skin and tried to react as they would do. The role play became a kind of stage play in which the actors improvise the dialogues and actions of their roles before an unknown script, and that it was only known as a whole by the game master, which could also modify on the go based on the freedom of movement of players, making the experience much more attractive. In fact, the game in its rules did not reward players who had killed more orcs or made the most lethal thrust against the wicked warlock of the day, but the player who created the most complex and imaginative role and got stuck into the character when interpreting and in the most realistic and coherent way. This is clearly reflected in the player's character sheets, sheets used to keep track of the physical and psychological characters statistics. Typically, these sheets were full of statistics on weapons handling, knowledge of various kinds, etc. With the narrative system features that helped to shape and play a fictional character were brought in character's sheets. It was also essential the story itself, the atmosphere for the players to develop their roles properly, the game master should deepen the characteristics of the environment surrounding his players, not so much of a strictly physical way, in terms of distances or environmental barriers, but the environment itself, if the players were in a place that was pleasant or otherwise made them feel insecure, if there was a sense of threat in the air or instead they were surrounded by a festive atmosphere. The mental landscape represented became more important because of its sensuality when attitudes that players took than the most pragmatic facts of the environment.

It was this system in which the players played a role that was not theirs which had such tremendous success. In fact, we could almost say it was the first time that players would get into the skin of an imaginary character created by them, they could be different people from themselves during the game session, breaking taboos, be powerful or vulnerable, open or shy, regardless of how they were in reality. Players spoke during the games as their characters would do, not limited to using the formula: My character does or says this. This only was very attractive for the players of the age. Including the fact that these new embodied characters were vampires, predators within human society but outside of its laws, is easy to understand the great reception the game received in its time and its longevity in the world of role-playing games.

2.2. Background

The other fundamental aspect of role-playing games is the background, the atmosphere. The background is the imaginary world where the adventures of the player's characters go by. In this case Vampire was also a success. The creators of the game not only created a small tapestry in which the adventures of a group of vampires are developed but they created an entire parallel world to ours, which they called World of Darkness, and where later other Role-playing games would be also developed role, this time with players impersonating werewolves, vampires and fairies. The World of Darkness is exactly like ours, is not a typical fantasy setting. Its history, countries and cities are the same as the real world, only with a small and delicate turn for the macabre. In the World of Darkness nights are always longer, shadows are darker and there is always something sinister waiting at the end of every alley in any city, it is our world through the filter of the Gothic novel. Players, in spite of being vampires with higher than human capabilities, are far from the top of the food pyramid.

The game makes clear from the beginning that in the darkness there are horrible things, worse than vampires, stalking players, either much older vampires, ghosts, werewolves, or even nameless creatures that lurks along the bowels of the world in the purest Lovecraftian style. Officially the aesthetic of this darkened world was called "Gothic-punk''. The truth is that the name could not be more appropriate. The aesthetic represented in the illustrations of rulebooks always showed young vampires dressed extravagantly, bringing modernity a step further, always covered in fog and dark environments. It was like changing the typical image of the Gothic novel of a spooky castle on a swamp for skyscrapers over Hudson River. The architecture changed, but the ominous and claustrophobic feeling transmitted was the same. In this world players always move the razor's edge, there was always an evil presence that hovered over them, and there was always a bad end that waiting to swallow them. The designers knew perfectly how to distil the oppressive atmosphere of the novels in which the literary vampire we know was raised, and take it to the world of today, it was the same theme played with different instruments, electric guitar instead of a pipe organ.

Accompanying this dark reflection of our world, the designers also created a parallel history for it. Again, the history of the World of Darkness is exactly the same as ours. If we could read a history book any of its schools, it would be an exact copy of a book of real history. What the writers of White Wolf did with great skill was showing scenes from history, giving new reasons to historical events. In the World of Darkness mankind has always been controlled from the shadows by vampires, who played their games of power throughout human generations. To give just one example, as in the real world, in the World of Darkness Rome destroyed Carthage, the difference is that in the World of Darkness the hidden reason that humans don't know is that this destruction was the culmination of a century-long struggle between two vampire clans who had been manipulating the two Mediterranean powers from the shadows.

2.3. The Vampire in the World of Darkness

Just as World of Darkness had its own history and specific environment, it also needed a specific vampire myth, more organized and more unified and coherent than the real one in order to conform a more solid material for the players when creating their characters.

In the World of Darkness, Cain is the first vampire, punished by God to feed on the blood of men and hide from sunlight for killing his brother Abel (lately this has spread like a kind of pseudo folklore taken as a sort of Christian or Jewish apocryphal). With Cain and Lilith, Adam's first wife, parents of the vampire race. This, however, has no actual mythological basis, since Lilith is the Hebrew adaptation of a much earlier Mesopotamian mythological figure called "lili" or "lilu" in masculine and "lilitu" in feminine, depending on the region, vaguely associated with nocturnal spirits. Indeed, there is yet no serious mythological work, properly documented, that relates the figure of Lilith to vampires.

In the story, Cain, looking for immortal company, gave his blood to three humans who also turned turn into vampires, the so-called Second Generation, who created a Third Generation which was formed by the founders of the 13 modern world clans in which cainites divide (Cainite is the term used by some vampires to refer to themselves in the role-playing game). Since this third generation to present of the game (by default the character created by a player belongs to the thirteenth generation) each vampire has belonged to a clan, clans that has been fighting each other for world dominance, grouped into different sects or covenants when the occasion required. The division in vampiric clans is not something merely political, as each clan has its own skills and characteristics that clearly distinguishes from other vampires. This is where the influence of Gothic vampire novel is clearly seen in the creatures of the role-playing game.

The basic precept of the game is that humans perceive vampires as individuals of the same race, when in fact they change tremendously depending on a clan or another. What the

creators of World of Darkness did was basically taking the figures of the classic vampires of the best known novels, and split them in 13 different archetypes, each one owner of one of the powers that have been given to classic vampires. To advance an example, when on a Gothic novel a vampire has control over animals, this vampire belongs to Gangrel Clan, while the unfitness for being reflected in the mirrors is a defect that have only the cainites of Lasombra Clan. Except for a few exceptions, each clan of "Vampire: The Masquerade" can trace their lineage not only to the third generation, but an iconic character in the classic vampire novel. This phenomenon revivified Gothic vampire in role-playing games through the relatively new channel, being an expression of how the myth of the vampire finds new ways and means to break into popular culture.

2.4. Literary vampires and role-playing games

This new incarnation of the myth of "the one who returns from the dead" in role-playing games is one of the most eclectic performances of the legend. Here, the creature has gathered and brought with it the cultural and literary features that have shaped the vampire as known in Western popular culture, especially novels and classic stories about vampires. Before exploring these sources, the following chart defines the diverse clans that appear in the role-playing game as well as their fundamental features and powers (called 'disciplines' in the role-playing game) that characterize each one of them.

Clan	Features
Ventrue	The aristocratic clan par excellence; they control most of the positions of power in the vampire society. Its fundamental discipline, Dominate, gives them the power to control the minds of humans and vampires.
Brujah	They could be called anarchist. They are always non-conformists and have bad temper. Potence discipline gives them superhuman strength that also exceeds that of many vampires, and Presence gives them the charisma that they use to foster revolution in society.
Lasombra	Exclusively possess Obtenebration discipline, which gives them the ability to manipulate shadows, being able to make them tangible to use as a weapon. They are a kind of morbid reflection of the Ventrue, with whom they have an ancient enmity. They are not reflected in the mirrors.
Gangrel	The more attached to nature clan and inherent to vampire's predatory beast. The Animalism discipline gives them the ability to dominate the animals and the ability Protean to change or adopt some of its features, like claws, fur, wings, etc.
Malkavian	All members of the clan Malkavian are clinically insane to a greater or lesser degree, in return they can access to visions and an optics of the world that goes beyond human or normal vampire's perception. Throughout history, many famous soothsayers and sibyls were actually vampires belonging to this clan. Their discipline, Dementation gives them the ability to spread the madness to their environment.
Nosferatu	Clan cursed with the deformity, their appearance is always monstrous, but deformity differs from one member to another. Typically they live underground and are charged with collecting information of any kind, which is traded or blackmailed to other vampires. Their discipline, Obfuscate, allow them to hide from the sight of others, even in a crowded area.

Tzimisce	The further from the human nature of all the clans. The Tzimisce have controlled Central and Eastern Europe for millennia, are the source of most of the legends from these areas. Are the archetype of aristocratic Transylvanian vampire who controls his vassals by means of terror. Vicissitude discipline gives them the ability to shape their flesh and bone and the others at will.
Ravnos	The Ravnos clan is mainly formed by individuals of gipsy ethnic. Nomads and tricksters by nature, their discipline, Chimerstry, gives them the ability to alter the perception of reality of other individuals.
Giovanni	Clan composed entirely by members of a huge Italian family. Their discipline, Necromancy, makes them masters of black magic and gives them the ability to reanimate dead bodies to act as their agents.
Toreador	It is the clan that represents sensuality within the World of Darkness. Usually painters, sculptors or other artists, are obsessed with physical beauty. Presence discipline gives them the ability to fascinate and seduce others with a simple gesture or glance.
Tremere	A clan of wizards and sorcerers. They do not descend from any of the third generation vampires, they got their clan status by a magical process, destroying a vampire of third generation. His discipline, Thaumaturgy, is a powerful blood magic developed by themselves.
Assamitas	Originally from Middle East, this clan is made up by murderers. They are the origin of the history of the cult of the Hassassin. His discipline, Quietus, gives them control over the blood of other vampires, often with murderous intentions.
Followers of Set	Clan settled mainly in Egypt, they worship the ancient god Set, mixed in the game with the figure of Set, the third son of Adam and Eve, they are said to descend from him. The Serpentis discipline gives them the power to adopt serpentine features that help them fight.

As we can see, the range of vampiric personalities that the system offers to the players is very broad, and gives great freedom to choose the basis on which to create their characters. Of course, we can identify some clans that have no relation to what would be the literary vampire classic, for example, Brujah Clan, who personifies a kind of anarchist vampiric movement, and that this is created for players who want to take a role of typically human rebellion to the vampire world, or the Followers of Set, which are primarily to expand the meta myth of the Role-playing game that gives birth to the curse in the children of Adam and Eve. Other clans merely serve to accommodate archetypes that have occurred many times in the popular image of the vampire world, such as the Clan Ravnos, which is not otherwise that the vehicle to include Gypsies, always mistreated servants of an evil vampire, giving them an identity, and eliminating any connotation that could be interpreted as racist in the background of the game. The Gypsies cease to be mere servants blinded by superstition, and become vampires within full rights. The same applies to the Assamites or the Followers of Set, exponents of Arab and Egyptian/ Negroid races respectively. Thus any majority culture has its place in the game as an equal to the other most classic European vampires.

3. Literary vampires and their connection in "Vampire: The Masquerade"
3.1. *Dracula* by Bram Stoker
The man known today as Dracula, born Vladislav III Basarab of the house of Daculesti, mostly known as Vlad Dracula, Kazıklı Bei (Prince Impaler) among the Turks, or as Vlad the Impaler for us, was born in Sighisoara, in the historical province of Transylvania in 1431, voivode of Wallachia twice, and died in 1476, he was a great hero who fought against

Ottoman expansionism in Central Europe, even if his methods earned him a terrible reputation: "It was his desire and gave him courage, when he saw flowing human blood" brief poem which appeared in Kronstadt in the time of Vlad Tepes. (Märtin, "Los Dracula: Vlad Tepes, El Empalador, Y Sus Antepasados", 1993, 122). It would be redundant now to dig deeper into the real-life of the historical figure who was the germ of myth, or the circumstances surrounding his life. Enough to say that the origin of the most famous vampire of all times, not only because of Bran Stoker 's novel, but hundreds of movies, comics, video games, etc. Of course it is also a major character in World of Darkness, and this paper would not be complete if we didn't deal his figure in depth. It is no coincidence that a hodgepodge of historical and literary Dracula really exists in the background of the role-playing game. Vlad Dracul is indeed one of the most charismatic and powerful characters within the vampire mythology that the creators designed as wallpaper for the adventures of the players.

In the role-playing game, Dracula belongs to Tzimisce Clan, in line with the historical and cultural background of this clan and not for the powers manifests. It is a case apart amongst others which we will deal, and possibly the most important of them, as the vampire created by Stoker shows powers which could be framed in almost any clan, or in other words, he seems to be the base vampire that writers of White Wolf took as the matrix for the different clans, breaking down his features and supernatural powers between several clans. As a basis, we can easily identify the Transylvanian nobleman of the novel in the archetype of the Tzimisce. However, if we take into account the skills he displays throughout the novel, we see that this would radically simplify the issue.

- Control over animals and other lower forms of life, as would be typical in the case of Gangrel Clan, besides taking the form of these, such as bats or wolves.
- Turns into a kind of hazy fog, in the Role-playing game it appears as one of the powers associated with the Protean discipline, also present in the Gangrel Clan.
- Ability to control the weather, which in the Role-playing game is only possible through the use of Thaumaturgy own spells of Tremere Clan.
- The need to sleep buried in his homeland soil, either directly or in a landfill chest, a feature that coincides with the Tzimisce Clan.
- Mind control over others, depending on the shape and aggressiveness and the type of person who is being dominated, either by imposing an aura of authority as in the case of the use of Domination, in which the Ventrue have the expertise, through some sort of mesmerism, that somehow we could associate with the Ravnos Chimerstry, or using something similar to the Presence of the Toreador. It also appears to have some kind of influence over the deranged minds, as in the case of the poor madman Renfield, who would be an example of Malkavian Clan Dementation. In any case the mind control disciplines have been diversified in the game to give different clans various areas of influence, and not make a single mental power too powerful. All disciplines of mind control that appear in the game have some clear example on Stoker's novel.
- The literary Dracula has also curious coincidences with the Nosferatu Clan, although they are not so straightforward. As long as a Tzimisce always adopts a superhuman appearance verging on the demonic or the angelic to cause a strong impression on those around him, Stoker's Dracula has certain physical features that make those around him to feel uncomfortable, as for example his bad breath, or in a more physical section, the hair covering the palm of his hands, or the sharp canine teeth or incisors always appearing over the lip. The vampires of other clans are able to conceal these disturbing or supernatural traits at will, but Nosferatu are unable to hide their supernatural features. Also, a Tzimisce Clan vampire would never put down to live in solitude in an abandoned ruins, as Dracula does at Whitby Abbey, and whether it would be and archetypical behaviour of Nosferatu. A Tzimisce would not abandon his native country alone, relying on his destination and in the dubious help

of a madman for the attainment of his objectives, he would be accompanied by a strong group of human slaves to help him in his enterprise for his comfort. Again this would be the typical behaviour of a Nosferatu, or a Malkavian.

Besides, in the role-playing game, for a person to be made a vampire, is not enough to be bitten by this, but he also must drink the vampire's blood in a ritual act known in the game as Embrace. Throughout the literature and mythology it has been many ways in which a deceased person could become a vampire, but this particular did not exist until it appeared in Bram Stoker's novel. By virtue of the provisions, I think the Dracula of Stoker not only cannot be framed in a clan, despite belonging to the Tzimisce in the game, but he is also the source of the most iconic clans of the World of Darkness.

Furthermore, in my opinion, the creators of the role-playing game, connoisseurs of the vampire classic literature, used to the figure as emblem, since every vampire must have a creator or Sire, as it is called, and every Childe (name that the Sire of a vampire uses to refer to its descendants) must respect and obey the vampire who made him for an unknown interval of time, in addition to exist a bond of blood, which mentally subdues every vampire who takes the blood of another older until the release by the older one. The World of Darkness Dracula is an exception. The background of the game tells the life of Vlad Tepes more or less adjusting to the historic reality, until the time when various forces allied against him and the real Vlad was killed.

At this point the story diverges, and we are introduced to a defeated Vlad, that hides for an unknown amount of time in one of his many castles. One night, his guards bring him a wounded and battered creature found floating in a river, and Vlad quickly identifies it with the strigoi, so much mentioned in the legends of his people. Taking advantage of poor state of the Vampire, Vlad in exchange for sparing his life, asks the vampire to convert him, which the creature happily accepts. The real problem comes later, when the belligerent Vlad, now being a vampire, subdues his wounded sire and forces him to break the blood bond that unites them, mark that will forever carry the unfortunate creator of Dracula. The name of the vampire that created Dracula is none other than Lambach Ruthven, generally known as Lord Ruthven. That is, the name of the protagonist vampire in Polidori's "The Vampyre". Beyond the name, Ruthven from "Vampire: The Masquerade" and Polidori have nothing in common, at least on the surface. Polidori's story was published in 1819, and was a great success and impact at the time, besides great influence on other writers, among them, Bram Stoker. The Irish published its "Dracula" in 1897, long after Polidori's novel, and obviously influenced by him, however, and sadly, Stoker's vampire totally eclipsed the great creation of Polidori, earning the position as the most famous vampire novel of all times, to the point that much of the general public is not aware of Polidori's *The Vampyre*.

The vampire created by John William Polidori is undoubtedly the sire of Bram Stoker's, many sources indicate that Stoker was influenced by *The Vampyre* when writing his novel, and yet, we can say that was the latter that won, deposing his ancestor and taking their place, a fact reflected in a humorous twist on the background of the creation of one of the most important vampires of the World of Darkness. For its part, the biography of Ruthven in the Role-playing game is filled with a series of misfortunes and setbacks that make him fall increasingly below within the vampire society. It seems the fate not only of Polidori but also of his creations and adaptations is to live in the shadow of others that have taken from him.

3.2. *The Vampyre* by John William Polidori.

The Vampyre was published in 1819, and written during the now memorable night in Villa Diodati, when the monster of Frankenstein was also created. It is not just a novel with a great impact on the prose of the time. It can be said that is the first novel that successfully led the vampire to the realm of fiction. Its impact on *Dracula* did not escape the creators of

the World of Darkness, becoming a major influence for the creation of the basic features of another major clan, the Ventrue.

Lord Ruthven, the protagonist of the novel, is an attractive and mysterious man, distinguished and noble appearance, appearing out of nowhere in the circles of high society in London, and being quickly noted. For the creation of his vampire, Polidori based himself on the work of Dom Antoine Augustin Calmet, "Dissertations sur les apparitions des Anges et des des démons esprits, revenants et sur les et de Hongrie vampires, of Boheme, et Moravie Silésie", published in Spain simply as "Tratado sobre los Vampiros'', seminal work in the study of the sometimes called upirology, and gatherer by the father Feijoo, in his "Cartas Eruditas y Curiosas", especially the story of Vrikolakas Thessaly (called brucolaco in Castilian). One of the descriptions refering to the creature in Greece is as follows: "Toda la isla estaba en una confusion terrible… por calles y plazas todo era sonar en gritos: *El Brucolaco, el Brucolaco*. Se veian familias enteras abandonar sus casas… Todas las mañanas oian nuevas insolencias del brucolaco." (Feijoo, "Cartas eruditas y curiosas" Vol 4. Letter 20, 285). This story seems to have been particularly inspirational to Polidori, as the figure of the vampire first appeared on the lips of a young girl that Aubrey knows in Greece.

As noted, although there is no words from the role-playing game's creators linking *The Vampyre* with the game, it is easy to see the influence this had at the time of its genesis. Evidence to support this theory comes from the fact that Lord Ruthven fits perfectly as of the archetypes of the Clans. Although the Ruthven in World of Darkness is a Tzimisce, the Lord Ruthven of the novel is clearly a member of the Ventrue Clan. Lord Ruthven is an aristocratic character, people are attracted by, not threatened by his presence, and he enjoys the company of humans. Also, we are not only given a background of nobility, but also of wealth and taste, of material power. We can start with this attitude when it comes to integrating Lord Ruthven in the Ventrue Clan. Vampires of this clan not only display some aristocratic ways, but they also like to mix in human society, and prosper on it and hold high social, administrative and political positions, unlike many other clans who reject such things, typical of the human world where they no longer belong. However Ventrue crave power above all in the human and vampire world, and especially the first are usually mere puppets in their games and cabals, puppets that usually have a tragic end when the Ventrue consider them not necessary. In these social enterprises always helps their discipline of Domination, which they use to influence and please people around them. Also, like any good vampire Ventrue do not age, they tend to change their identity when necessary or convenient and disappear for a time from the public scene and reappearing under another alias.

All these features can be observed in Polidori's Lord Ruthven. He also seeks the company of the aristocracy, seeking his prey merging with high society, dazzling with his mysterious aura, which can find its explanation in the use of 'Domination'. He does not doubt mixing more personally or even travelling with a human when he fancies. The vampire of the novel is also a chameleon-like, which is imposed by him in order to maintain his personal masquerade, as when he makes poor Aubrey promise not to talk about his supposed death at the hands of assailants at least during one year and day. This time is used by the creature to rebuild his public image and reappear in society, again in a dominant position, in this case as Earl of Marsden. Of course, both women and men that Lord Ruthven / Earl of Marsden seduces or uses as a tool, end up suffering or dying, all after the objectives of the vampire, as would be typical in the path of a Ventrue. We might also add that Lord Ruthven always tends to feed on young women he loves. In the novel it does not give us a clear explanation of this behaviour, perhaps beyond the personal taste of the vampire, but transferred to the Role-playing game could be a symptom of the weakness of Ventrue Clan, the exclusion of preys, which only allow them to feed on a specific type of people. In my point view, not only is Lord Ruthven well framed within the Ventrue Clan, but the game's creators used him partly as a model for shaping this clan.

Finally, and given the data presented in the table at the beginning of this chapter, it could be thought that Lord Ruthven is similar to Dracula when identified with a particular clan, as could also be put well inside Toreador Clan. However, the Toreador, although sometimes merges with circles of high society given his affinity for the artistic environments and bohemians, only does this because of a personal preference for the environment in which he operates. The Ventrue are totally pragmatic and choose this type of circles that is what brings them closer to the circles of power or preys they covet, while Toreador are capricious creatures who are really dazzled by the lights of high society, its shape, not the background of power these may have.

3.3. *Carmilla* by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu.

Carmilla was serialized over 1871 in the journal The Dark Blue. It is one of the works most undervalued of the vampire literature in the current audience, which are often unaware of the existence of this. It is the origin of many great aesthetic features of the vampires which have been left to us, such as the inherent sexuality attributed to these creatures. It is possible that in the work of Le Fanu the creature is exposed to us from this perspective, which has been exploited extensively in various media (especially in movies). Lord Ruthven appears to cajole more human through his wealth, nobility and cosmopolitan aura, rather than from a sexual level, while Dracula is sometimes repulsive to people who have close contact with him. However Carmilla is enigmatic, sensual and attractive. It also appeared for the first time something that later would become a cliché in the field of cinema and the vampire narrative (especially in certain kinds of works that could be considered more erotic than terror), as is lesbianism. But it must be taken into account, of course, that Le Fanu showed that in an elegant and evasive way, and above all, acceptable to the moral standards of the time.

The vampire Carmilla, or Millarca or Mircalla Karnstein (alias that the creature uses over the years), has fully identifiable traits and disciplines if we apply the rules of World of Darkness. However, there is not a specific clan based on them. We can glimpse in what clan she might fit better, given the sensuality and the surrounding atmosphere. However, let us look at the powers and characteristics which Carmilla displays. First we have his method of feeding. In the novel it is describes how the vampire victims are attacked during the night by a cat that bites them in the chest, and disappearing nimbly through the window. This can be clearly attributed to the possession of the discipline Protean, which Gangrel are great users. However Gangrel have an affinity for the animal that goes beyond their eating habits, being generally rude and scruffy creatures that move away from society or live apart from it, preferring the company of animals. Carmilla is clearly not a Gangrel. Secondly, the type of victims preferred by the vampire. All are young girls near her age. This, as in the case of Lord Ruthven, could be interpreted as a feature typical of Ventrue Prey Exclusion. However, while Lord Ruthven, given his social circle and large companies could choose to feed on both, young or adult women and men, does not, he drinks from maidens who he may not even know. On the other hand, Carmilla, having the same taste for the blood of young women seems no to do it by choice but by convenience, given her age, at the time, it would be strange for a child to frequent circles more adult or to be in the company of men. It seems that Ruthven chooses those victims because they are the ones he wants, however Carmilla does that because is the most comfortable method, maybe the only one, not by personal taste or some kind limitation. Another feature that could bring her closer to the Ventrue would be her noble origin (Mircalla Karsntein in life belonged to a noble family). In her non-life, Carmilla does not seem to pursue that nobility or power, which would be unthinkable from a Ventrue. So that would also rule out the Ventrue.

It might also be noted that Carmilla establishes easy friendship with their victims, causing them to quickly become attached to her, and turning them into inseparable friends. This could be interpreted as the discipline 'Domination', or perhaps more accurately

'Presence'. But in the novel, the protagonist, despite rapidly becoming inseparable from the creature not clouded by her presence, and is well aware of the unusual features that there are about Carmilla, such as her somnambulism and that she sleeps most of the day. In this case I would not attribute the affinity of the victims of the vampires, as proof of a paranormal ability, if not rather as a practice acquired over the years. We must remember that the discipline of 'Presence' does not dominate hypnotically her victims, but it makes these feel affinity, affection or even a desperate love for the user, it is distinctive of a clan in which I think Carmilla would fit more appropriately, the Toreador Clan .

As I have previously stated, however, it is not the traits as a whole which makes me frame her in a particular clan, but the general atmosphere of the work, and in this case the Toreador are also my choice. The Toreador Clan is the sensuality par excellence. They of all the vampires from World of Darkness are the most, if not the only, which are embedded in the pleasures of his lost humanity, reaching even really weird extremes. The regulations of the role-playing game state quite clear that the body of a vampire is physically dead, and purely physiological activities like feeding or normal sexuality represent an effort and some discomfort that do not compensate them. However, the Toreador enjoy all the aura of languid sexuality that their unconscious victims are offering, and may even treat themselves with mere contemplation of feasts or pompous dreamlike celebrations. It is that veiled sensuality that appears in Carmilla, those young girls being bitten by a cat in their white breasts while they sleep, an animal of a very distinguished elegance (not a wolf or a bat as might be the case of *Dracula*), with quiet ways and delicate movements, together with the dreams of the protagonist in which a woman appears in her room at night, that sexuality is not explicit, but perfectly implicit in the work, in the mind of every reader of it, which makes me think in Carmilla as a member of the Toreador Clan more than any other.

In any case, it is not only the environment of the work that makes me choose this clan, but also certain circumstances relating to Carmilla character herself. I mentioned before the possible use of the power of Domination by her, without being this too accused. There is another feature that makes this vampire stand out of the others who have been tried, and it is her apparent age. In all cases, it seems that vampires are frozen in the age at which they died and became undead, but both Dracula as Lord Ruthven were adults when this happened. However, Carmilla, based on the data we collect from the book, appears to be similar to the age of Laura, we must assume that she has an apparent age of about 20 years. In World of Darkness, few vampires are created so young, and less those created before the end of the twentieth century, as this youth is a major handicap when it comes to function autonomously. Not for nothing Carmilla always uses a woman as a hook who poses as a older relative in order to enter in the circle of her victim. Nevertheless, sometimes happens, especially in the Toreador Clan, that seeks among potential new members not only those with an aptitude for art, but also to those that are especially beautiful in themselves, and even more if they are in the summit of the beauty of youth.

Carmilla may be not integrated so clearly in a clan or another, but I think more than enough clear that anyone who knows the work and also the Role-playing game would frame the work in general in Toreador Clan, however, would be impossible to understand the modern image of the vampire, not only as predator, but also as a creature with a great sex appeal, without the exclusion of Le Fanu's "Carmilla".

4. Conclusions

Throughout the previous pages this paper has shown how the world of Gothic vampire novel, both in its general aspects and specific individuals, has been transferred to new media such as role-playing games. Of course, this is just one of the ways that the vampire myth reaches us today. Movies, video games and, of course, literary fiction still bringing to us the adventures of these creatures of the night. However, these windows of exploitation of the myth, have sought, especially in the last decade, the reinvention of the creature. They have

mixed, reconstructed and constantly deformed it, with the idea of giving a new image more accessible to modern public, with the underlying idea already emphasised in the introduction of this work, the cultural archetype of one who dies but refuses to remain in such a state.

Whether we want it or not, death is still present in our modern world. Contemporary society has distanced and isolated death. Cemeteries and funeral parlours are in the suburbs or in isolated areas of the cities, and "terminal" people are gathered in special wings in hospitals to let them die in the most possible aseptic manner, so as to avoid death from polluting everyday life. In many cases even the elderly are held apart, and it is known the abandonment many of our elders are subjected to. Their presence reminds us of the finiteness of our existence, and of the decay that predicts the end of own lives. Something natural not so long ago, to die one's own house, is a a rare and gruesome fact.

As a wise man once said, life is "the tragedy and 'Man,' its hero the Conqueror Worm" (Poe, "Edgar Allan Poe: Selected Poetry and Tales"2012, 166). Society refuses to think that our time is limited and, thus, it wraps our stay on earth under layers of self-deception. This rejection of death has become institutional and cultural, where typical expressions of the mortuary are something not only morbid and sinister, but even provocative. From this provocation drink plenty of urban tribes, like the Goth, extreme music groups and similar communities who, approaching death imagery, provoke and dazzle society.

The attraction for these creatures of the night can be seen as a form of rebellious attitude of one who likes to get in the skin, by means of a game, of someone who has entered the realm of death, and has returned. The existence of these figures are the embodiment of a walking attack on one of the deepest taboos of modern society.

The special interest on the game "Vampire: The Masquerade" for the author of these pages lies on the fact that, although the game has modernized the creature, it has not changed its basic features; it has not added or subtracted none of its original essence; it has just brought an old creature to the modern world. Through the pages of this role-playing game, the vampire novel lives on in the modern world, and it is these basic and archetypal features that have made "Vampire: The Masquerade" survive for more than 20 years (in fact, a new edition of the game appeared in 2014 through the crowdfunding support and it has been one of the projects with more support in the area).

At first, the basic objective of this work was to frame some of the most classic vampires of literature within the World of Darkness, simply dissect and consider what clan the belonged to in case we wanted to place them accurately in the background of the game . But over the development of these pages has become clear that the relations between each other were not simply those that could arise in extrapolating a game system to classic works of literature, it has revealed a process of feedback.

The archetypal Gothic vampire novel persists in the minds of many role players (and other public that has had access to other products, such as films, inspired by the success of the game) thanks to fundamental features and the environment of this role-playing game, but as we have seen, these same novels are what created the game environment that has captivated so many minds. It may not be directly printed on the pages of rulebooks by their proper names, but it is clear to anyone who delve into a little more that the relentlessness of Dracula, the insidiousness of Lord Ruthven, the fate of Varney the Vampire, Carmilla's sensuality, and even the cruelty of the creature in "The Family Vordalak" by Tolstoi or the solemnity of Bürger's "Lenore", and their oneiric and sometimes oppressive environments typical of the Gothic, are deeply rooted in the DNA of "Vampire: The Masquerade".

Many vampire archetypes have emerged in recent decades, and just as quickly they were created, they disappeared, destroyed by the next style of the moment. Not so, the creatures of World of Darkness, which are not modernized vampires, but old vampires, ancient restless dead who were released from the 18th and 19th-centuries classics, to form

pat of "Vampire: The Masquerade", refusing to die; looking at our new world with their old characteristics; still fascinating new generations with their never dying eyes.

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