Vampires Now and Then

From origins to Twilight and True Blood

Ritgerð til B.A.- prófs

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This essay follows the vampires from their origins to their modern selves and their extreme popularity throughout the years. The essay raises the question of why vampires are so popular and what it is that draws us to them. It will explore the beginning of the vampire lore, how they were originally just cautionary tales told by the government to the villagers to scare them into a behavior that was acceptable. In the first chapter the mythology surrounding the early vampire lore will be discussed and before moving on in the second chapter to the cult that has formed around the mythological and literary identities of these creatures. The essay finishes off with a discussion on the most recent popular vampire related films *Twilight* and *New Moon* and TV-series *True Blood* and their male vampire heroes Edward Cullen and Bill Compton. The essay relies heavily on *The Encyclopedia of Vampires, Werewolves, and other Monsters* written by Rosemary Ellen Guiley as well as *The Dead Travel Fast: Stalking Vampires from Nosferatu to Count Chocula* written by Eric Nuzum as well as the films *Twilight* directed by Catherine Hardwicke and *New Moon* directed by Chris Weitz and TV-series *True Blood*. Eric Nuzum's research on the popularity of vampires inspired the writing of this essay. As well as these two books the research of the paper was mostly done on the internet because of the expansion of web pages and internet users it has become a valuable part in helping people to find their inner vampire and connect with others with the same vampire interest.
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Introduction

Vampires, real or not real, have been around for hundreds of years and have been gaining more popularity throughout recent years in their various forms. The vampire lore has grown immensely from their mythological beginnings to something that people believe might exist in today's world. With the help of Bram Stoker, Anne Rice, Joss Whedon and Stephanie Meyer the vampires have continued to be popular throughout the years. It seems that what was once feared has now become something that people seek out, whether it is to entertain oneself, through some kind of media; books, films, television shows etc., or to find somewhere to belong. In the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} century it seems like vampires are a big part of our imagination and in fact, as will be detailed later on, a big part of some people's lives. It is this extreme interest in vampires that inspired the writing of this paper.

There are those that strive to be like vampires, those that dress in a certain fashion and those that believe themselves to be actual vampires, for better or for worse. There are many questions that need to be raised as to what makes people think that they are vampires. Why do people feel the need to seek out these vampires? What is it about vampires that make them so appealing? This particular paper will most likely never find its answer to what it is about vampires and the vampire legend that cultivates us and keeps us wanting to know more but hopefully bring us closer.

Again and again the vampire lore and vampire related content surfaces and human kind does not seem to be able to resist it. Most recent are the books and films surrounding the \textit{Twilight Saga} along with the popular TV-series \textit{True Blood} which will be discussed later in the text. Before being able to understand what it is about vampires that makes the human race so enthralled with them it needs to be established what exactly are vampires? Are they real or are they purely figments of our imagination?

**What are vampires?**

There are many different types of vampires known in the world. There are folkloric vampires,
living vampires, literary vampires, psychic vampires and psychotic vampires to name a few examples. Psychotic vampires are those who are unable to function in the normal community mostly due to the fact that they mutilate, kill and drink the blood of others around them. The psychic vampires are those who drain the life force or life energy of others, either willingly or unwittingly. This can be achieved through magic or just ill content towards another person. Those who are considered psychic vampires are, in the broadest sense, anyone who drains the energy from another by whatever act. They can also be in the form of people that constantly need help or ask others to do their work for them. Literary vampires are those created through fiction such as Count Dracula, Lestat De Lioncourt, Blade, Edward Cullen and so many others. In modern times living vampires are people who believe that they are real life vampires, based on what is most commonly known about vampires through popular vampire mythology or fiction. To supposedly become a vampire most often people have to go through some sort of gruesome bloody ritual involving the blood of those who they believe to be vampires. The living vampires were those who had supernatural powers and fed on human blood, such as witches and warlocks. These living vampires would become vampires in their death. The folkloric vampires are almost all beings with supernatural powers. They include demons, revenants and those who would return from their grave after dying from the plague, drowning, being killed by another vampire, from possession or from any unnatural causes. These are the most common vampires and are only seen at night, around midnight. They must always return to their grave before dawn (Guiley 289-290).

The mythology surrounding vampire lore has been around for thousands of years. First recollections of these creatures of the night are from ancient Mesopotamia where people were believed to be blood sucking demons. A similar belief can be found in ancient Greece and India but it was among the Slavic peoples, during the 17th and the 18th centuries, which vampires and vampirism became a threat. The stories were used to scare people away from committing suicide or being buried improperly and to explain untimely deaths and disease, like rabies. Slavic lore tells of
a vampire known as *kudlak* who could shape-shift into various animals like an ox, bull, pig or a bear and would hunt only during the night. It could render any land barren and would hunt either to strike fear into nearby tribes or to kill them. It had a counterpart called a *krsnik*, thought to mean cross. A *krsnik* would fight the *kudlak* and protect its tribe. A *kudlak* was not an undead person but rather a person possessed by evil spirits. A way to get rid of a *kudlak*, or the spirits within, was to confess one's sin. If a *kudlak* died it became more dangerous and in order to prevent it from attacking people, the tendons below its knees were cut and if that did not work it had to be staked with a hawthorne (Guiley 174). A very similar belief circulated in Romania where male vampires were called *strigoi*, and could be either dead or alive. These *strigoi* were thought to be able to shape-shift into a mammal that could fly, or a bat. These types of vampires were not thought to be evil but their presence was considered a bad omen, the *strigoi* being bearers of various illnesses. Those who were in danger of becoming vampires were especially single people who had died without forgiveness from their parents. The measures taken to become absolutely sure that the person who had died would not become a vampire varied from stabbing the corpse in the heart with a sickle, cremating the corpse and throwing its ashes into the wind and burying a bottle of wine near the grave and drinking it several weeks later. The person who drank the wine would then be protected from the vampire. More extreme methods in being sure that a corpse would not become a vampire were to cut out its heart in two or drive a nail through its head. One could also put garlic under the corpse's tongue. Garlic was presumed to have healing properties and cleansing abilities, once and for all answering the question why vampires hate garlic. Rosemary Ellen Guiley gathered various mythology and facts about vampires for her book titled *The Encyclopedia of Vampires, Werewolves and Other Monsters*, published in 2005, and in her segment about *strigoi* vampires she wrote the following:

A Romanian anecdote recorded in 1932 tells of a man who became a *strigoi* after death, [...] The police went to his grave and dug him up, finding the
corpse ruddy and bloated. Attempts to impale it with pitchfork through the stomach failed when the skin mysteriously could not be pierced. A soldier who tried to hit the corpse with his rifle hit himself instead. A wise woman was summoned, who did magical incantation over the corpse while being alone with it. She then struck it in the stomach with a knife (Guiley 269).

A convenient way of explaining how the body could not be pierced by, presumably, a blunt pitchfork or a stupid police officer is to tell the people that this was obviously a vampire. What the women did differently in order to pierce the skin, if one disregards the fact that the knife was probably sharper than the pitchfork, remains unknown. There is another Romanian folktale about a living strigoi which tells of a man who refused to have a wedding in a church but reluctantly agreed to his soon to be wife. After the ceremony he bared his teeth to his wife, her mother told her that this was probably his way of telling her that he loved her. When her parents came to visit them one night they were nowhere to be found. The husband had locked them inside and through the window he was seen biting his wife neck and sucking her blood. He was shot through the window by the villagers (Guiley 268-269).

Nevertheless, the best way to get rid of a vampire is to burn it to ashes. Staking or, mutilating the vampire will only prevent it from attacking but not all vampires are stopped by these actions so the only course of action left is burning it (Guiley 50). Sunlight does not, contrary to what many believe, destroy the vampires. The introduction of sunlight as a destroyer is something that has developed through the literary world of vampires. In Serbian lore the vampires lose their supernatural powers during the day but gain them again during the night, a gift from the devil. Most European lore tells of them attacking their victims during the night. Even Dracula was seen during the day. The belief that direct sunlight could destroy a vampire was first introduced in Nosferatu directed by F.W. Murnau. It was later popularized in many remakes of Dracula. Stephanie Meyer, along with popular vampire writer Anne Rice, does not make the sunlight hurt the
vampires, but in Meyer's stories their skin glows like diamonds if exposed to direct sunlight (Guiley 272-274).

In folklore a mirror is referred to as soul stealer as depicted in Russian mythology "mirrors are the invention of the devil because they have the power to draw souls out of bodies" (Guiley 202). Common folklore also considers that mirrors should not be in the same room as a sick person since the soul is at a more fragile state when the person is sick and they would be easily drained of their soul and put in danger of dying. Stoker adapted these folklore stories into Dracula which were later adapted into many other vampire related material and still continues to dominate our perception of vampires. The count himself avoids mirrors and there are no mirrors seen in his castle and he breaks the one that Harker brings with him (Stoker).

There are three recurrent ideas about vampires and the vampire lore that seem to have become almost universal; They drink blood from other beings, they have more strength than a normal human being and they are immortal. The vampire myth and the universe that surrounds them have always been popular but it seems that it gains a certain boost every now and then. There are other things that seem to attract us to the vampires. The definition of a vampire offered by Jan L. Perkowsky is: "a being which derives sustenance from a victim, who is weakened by the experience. The sustenance may be physical or emotional in nature" (Dundes 47). In the 20th century the definition has changed from being unwanted into something that mankind wants to exist. The vampires have moved on from being demons and scary stories to being the most powerful beings on earth and making people question their reality and wanting to know more about these creatures of the night. Montague Summers offers: "The vampire has a body, and it is his own body. He is neither dead nor alive; but living in death. He is an abnormality; the androgyne in the phantom world; a pariah among friends" (Summers 6).

In most media the vampires are depicted as extremely sensual and erotic and this has been interjected into modern fashion. What is called Goth and Emo fashion is mostly based on dressing
in skin tight black clothing, heavy make-up and pale skin making them look like the undead.

**Vampire Cult**

As well as dressing up as vampires others have gone one step further and regard themselves as real life vampires. One online group that call themselves *Temple of the Vampire* offer instruction on how to become vampire, but only if you become a member of their group and buy their *Vampire Bible*. "The Vampire Bible is highly condensed and multi-layered with meaning. In just a few short pages the essential keys to unlock the secrets of Vampirism are revealed to you" ("If Vampires were real, would you want to be one?"). And if this book is not enough for one to understand how to become a vampire there is another slightly longer book that you can order from their web page explaining the first one ("Would You Dare To Penetrate The Deeper Secrets of Vampirism?").

There are many vampire related web pages available. These web pages have become very popular amongst people who wish to seek out their inner vampire or contact others who feel as they do. The internet helps people all across the world unite and makes them feel welcome and not outcasts. One of these vampire online guides is called *Drink Deeply and Dream*. This page offers a different approach to vampirism than most others in the way that the person whom operates the web page is trying to explain the differences between real life vampires and fictional and is not trying to recruit more vampires to her coven. "DrinkDeeplyandDream was never about me. It was never for me. It was made for others so that they might get some sanity out of the insane, and some place to go that was safe"(Turner, "About the Owner/Founder of the Site and the Site's History." line 36).

The site offers different guides to how to live your life as a vampire, as well as general info on vampirism and the difference between the mythological beings and real life vampires. The 'web mistress', as she calls herself, explains how most real life vampires cannot turn others into vampires due to humans not being strong enough and they will never be as strong as the real ones, they will only be half-breeds. One is born a vampire and it is not a choice or some ritual that makes you a vampire. The real life vampires, according to this page, live life just as normal humans. They eat
regular food, do not avoid the sunlight, they are not immortal and cannot in most cases turn others into vampires. It is all just speculation and what each individual feels that makes them a vampire. They do however need to suck red blood that they get from donors, unless they are some other kind of vampire and they are described as having heightened senses. They have greater speed than a normal non-athletic human being. They only know that they are different but cannot offer any explanation on how or why except that their transformation begins as they enter into adulthood, between ages 17-24. One of the major inconveniences of being a vampire is that you may suffer headaches due to heightened senses. The web page nevertheless offers advice on how to reduce them like staying hydrated, avoiding caffeine, relaxing and taking some pain killers. What is truly great about this web page however is that it offers help to those that need it and that you should accept you as you are and not try to be any different. Vampirism is something that should not be craved, somewhat like the philosophy Edward Cullen in the Twilight Saga bestows onto Bella (Turner, "Vampire Guide 502: What is the Cause of Vampirism?"). This relationship regarding Bella and Edward will be further explored later in this paper as well as Edward's philosophy. But what is vampirism? According to Guiley the most accepted explanation of a living vampire is that "living vampires are malevolent, evil people [...] that prey upon other living people through magic" (Guiley 182). The people who are born vampires do however not look normal, whatever looking normal means. If a child were born with a caul, with teeth or something that resembled a tail it would be considered a vampire. It was also believed that if a pregnant woman did not eat salt during her pregnancy her child would become a vampire. Another indication that a child would become a vampire was if it was the seventh child of a seventh child of the same sex; the seventh son of a seventh son or a seventh daughter of a seventh daughter. It was still possible for females to become a dead vampire if they were taught to be one by a real life one (Guiley 182).

What makes these websites, and likely the vampire lore, so appealing is that it gives people a place to belong. Those marked as outcasts for being different in some way can find themselves
welcomed by the vampire society.

Not all people who believe themselves to be vampires function as well in the society as the 'web mistress' of the *Drink Deeply and Dream* web page, these would be psychotic vampires. In 1996 a group of teenagers who had been playing *Vampire: The Masquerade* began a slow demise towards insanity relating to vampire activities, this will be discussed later on. *Vampire: The Masquerade* is a role playing game developed by White Wolf Publishing. The game is most likely responsible for the, now common, hatred between vampires and werewolves, pushing away from the *Dracula* lore where he was able to control wolves and other animals as well (Nuzum, p 161). *Dracula* is a novel written by Bram Stoker first published in 1897. The novel is built up like a journal told by several narrators, most notably Jonathan Harker and his betrothed Mina Murrey whom becomes Dracula's victim but later leads to his downfall (Stoker).

*Dracula* was extremely popular not so many years ago and has been the subject of countless movie plots. Its popularity even prompted a group of Romanians to found an organization called Transylvanian Society of Dracula in the 90's and use it to promote studies regarding Vlad the Impaler and other vampire lore, like the one that Eric Nuzum, a journalist who will be followed later on, went on during his vampire hunt. Vlad the Impaler, also known as Vlad Tepes was a ruler in Transylvania famous for impaling his victims on spikes (Guiley 307). The Transylvanian Society of Dracula has even established chapters in the United States of America, Canada, Japan and Italy. It sponsors the world *Dracula* congresses and an annual symposium commemorating the journey of Jonathan Harker to castle Dracula (Guiley 284). In fact when searching on the Google search engine for the keyword *Dracula* one returns 14 million result pages ("Dracula"). In comparison when searching for more resent vampire lore like the character Lestat from Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* one gets 1.6 million page suggestions ("Lestat"). Anne Rice wrote *The Vampire Chronicles*, along with many other novels. *The Vampire Chronicles* revolve around the vampire Lestat De Lioncourt and his journeys. The vampires in Rice's novels are very powerful, sensitive
and sensual. For *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* one gets approximately 4 and a half million results ("Buffy The Vampire Slayer"). *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was a very popular show broadcast from 1997 to 2003 about a girl whose destiny is to fight demons and vampires throughout her adult life. It can be argued that Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* is responsible for popularizing the vampire mythology, Stoker was not the first one to write about vampires. Despite the fact that the character itself has starred in countless films and other related media people are becoming less and less interested in this character. *Dracula* is nevertheless, contrary to what many believe, not the first vampire story published in English. The first story is a short story called *The Vampyre* by John Polidori, who was Lord Byron's physician. The short story introduced many elements that are heavily connected with modern mythology about vampires. In Polidori's story the vampire has died and risen from its grave, it is seductive and does not only hunt for food but the emphasis is more on the erotic element, the vampire is also connected somehow with the moon and is a wealthy, amoral, mysterious aristocrat. These elements are the ones that have begun to rule in mankind's imagination of vampires, popularized through *Dracula* and throughout the vampire genre from then on.

The world's first vampire museum, called Dracula museum, was founded in 1990 by Jeanne Keyes Youngson, also the founder of the Vampire Empire, formerly known as the Count Dracula Fan Club but was changed in 2000. The museum housed many vampire and Dracula related items but was later sold to Austria and was eventually retired and put into storage. The Vampire Empire kept many of the museum's Bram Stoker items (Guiley 112). Since 1965, the foundation of the Count Dracula Fan Club, the Vampire Empire has become the largest vampire organization in the world, and has worked alongside Transylvanian Society of Dracula. The Vampire Empire encourages research and study of vampires and the vampire lore and is even divided into many divisions, including its own publishing called the Dracula Press, a research library for those who are on the lookout for vampire related articles, books and journals. Vampire Empire also associate with many other organizations dealing with monsters and mythological beings, including a private
organization for the alumni of the University of Cincinnati called the Draculean Circle and the Vampire Empire also cosponsors a Vampire Pen Pal Network with an organization called the Vampire Information Exchange, a correspondence club (Guiley 293). The Vampire Empire has a massive internet website dedicated to all things connected to the vampire lore.

The teenagers that were mentioned on page 8 had been playing the game a lot and began to think that they themselves were vampires. They cut each other and drank their blood and became convinced that they had vampire like powers. The leader of the group even took it so far that he attacked their friends' parents and beat them to death and drank their blood. Another vampire related crime connected to this particular game was in Dallas where a group of teenagers began drinking each other's blood and vandalizing the town until they were caught. The crimes connected to this game are no reason to panic because vampire related killings were around before the game and will be even if the game were banned. There have been many accounts of vampire killings and crime related offenses connected to other genres, depending on the dysfunction or fetish concerned, as well as being able to cope with something that isn't real. After seeing Interview With The Vampire a man returned home and stabbed his girlfriend while repeatedly yelling that he was going to drink her blood. Another man convinced a group of teenage girls to join a vampire cult involving him putting white make-up, fangs and a cape on and biting their necks. Australia also had its vampire related crime, in fact it is one of the most widely cowered trials in their history:

Four young women in Queensland, Australia, developed an interest in the occult. One of the women convinced the others that she was a vampire and led them through a series of self-mutilations and crimes meant to turn the other three into vampires as well. The group eventually picked up a local man outside a bar with the promise of group sex, lured him to a remote area, and stabbed him to death (Nuzum 165).

Two of these women, most likely the ones that drank the victim's blood, were convicted, one of the
four pleaded guilty and the fourth was not convicted. What all of these crimes do have in common though is that all were committed by either teenagers or young adults obsessed with vampires. One can argue the point that vampirism drove them to act out these urges that they had to commit these crimes, the close contact with the bloodlust or constantly imagining to be a vampire until they believed it, and it would be a good point well made, but when one considers the count of people who commit crimes while believing it will give them vampire powers, or believing that they are vampires, and the people who are exposed to vampires and vampire lore and don't commit any crime there has to be something amiss with aforementioned people to begin with. Who is to say that playing a game revolving around assassins would not have pushed some of those people over the edge as well and triggered them to commit these acts. This is just one of the many ways that vampire interest and the influence of the vampire lore breaks out (Nuzum 161-165).

Why is it then that more and more people, not just those that commit crime, seek out vampires? In the literary and media world there are countless novels centering on vampires and they always seem to be popular. The journalist Eric Nuzum wrote a book about his search for real life vampires, *Dead Travel fast: Stalking Vampires From Nosferatu* published in 2007, all the while realizing that vampires do not exist and that he would never find a suitable answer. Nuzum's book is built up like a journal on what he did or did not discover when conducting his vampire search. This includes throwing up when trying to drink his own blood and going on meetings with people who believe themselves to be vampires. Nuzum ventured to Transylvania to go on a tour filled with inaccurate information about how Bram Stoker based his novel on Vlad the Impaler when in fact Stoker only got the name Dracula from what the natives used to call Vlad in his time Dracula meaning "son of the dragon", Vlad's father being the dragon or Dracul (Nuzum 62). As well as going on vampire related tours Nuzum sought out people who believe that they themselves are vampires, some more than others. Nuzum even went as far as arranging a meeting in a dark place with a man he had never met before who claimed to be a vampire. Whilst waiting for the man in
complete darkness in an abandoned park he decided that his research was not worth dying for in the hands of a crazy person and left (Nuzum 30). He also agreed to meet with a group of vampires to try to get them to tell him what they find interesting and fascinating about vampires and why they choose to live their lives the way they do. After having a nice dinner with the vampires and feeling ignored every time he asked a question about being a vampire and how they know that they are vampires, he suddenly realized that he was the only person who mentioned the word vampire. The people with him did not seem that bothered about being vampires. For them it is more of a place to belong to. For them the appeal of being a vampire is that there are others that think like them. The vampire lore has become part of their image but does not rule over them. The vampires have become their role model but they themselves are individuals united through their interest (Nuzum 32-45).

Vampires in modern media

**Twilight**

Recent popular vampire related books, TV-shows, films etc. have limited ties with what has become universally accepted in the vampire lore, that they are wealthy former aristocrats, evil and avoid sunlight and Dracula is their master. Dracula did make an entrance into the TV-show *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* where the plot of the episode uses Dracula's legacy, Dracula being a womanizer and extremely charming, to further its own storyline and perhaps pay homage to this once extremely popular character ("Buffy vs. Dracula").

First to mention is the recently popular *Twilight Saga* by Stephanie Meyer. The *Twilight Saga* consists of 4 novels. Both the first and the second have been made into feature films, and follow the books storyline quite thoroughly. The first book, *Twilight*, published in 2005 and film released in 2008 and the second book, *New Moon*, published in 2006 and film released in 2009. The films, along with TV-series *True Blood*, will be the subject of the latter half of this paper. To
compare when searching for *Twilight Saga* on Google search engine it suggests 33.7 million web pages ("Twilight Saga") which is more than twice the results for *Dracula* and the other two keywords combined. When searching for the keyword vampire Google offers 79.6 million results ("Vampire") showing just how extremely popular the *Twilight Saga* is in comparison. Within the Twilight world Meyer disowns, so to speak, the code that vampires are demon infested evil beings that seek to rule mankind and create as many of their kind as they can by having the main vampire family vegetarians.

The two films that have been released in the *Twilight Saga* cycle around the romantic relationship between Bella Swan, portrayed by Kirsten Steward, who is the protagonist in the films as well as the books, her friends are Jacob Black, portrayed by Taylor Lautner, whom she knows from when they were children, and Edward Cullen, portrayed by Robert Pattinson. In the first film the audience gets introduced to Bella when she is about to move into a small town called Forks to live with her father. Bella is 17 years old when the story begins, the same age as Edward Cullen was when he was transformed into a vampire by the patriarch of his vampire family, Carlisle, portrayed by Peter Facinelli. Jacob is the one that introduces the audience and Bella to the old Quileute legend about vampires and werewolves. He explains how his people are thought to be descendants from wolves, and later on in the saga it turns out that Jacob is in fact a werewolf, which is the subject of the second book and film *New Moon*, and the Cullen family are thought to be vampires.

The first meeting between Bella and Edward happens during class as Bella is seated next to Edward who catches a whiff of her scent and immediately becomes obsessed with her. Later in the film he confesses to Bella; "I wanted to kill you. I've never wanted a human’s blood so much in my life" (Twilight 0:53:50–0:53:58). This first impression is very hostile towards Bella because Edward now hungers for Bella and can't stand her scent, climaxing in Edward's storming out of the class and trying to change classes to avoid being around her, something that Bella takes great
offense to. Bella begins to suspect that something is not quite right with the Cullen family and her suspicion is confirmed when Edward stops a van from hitting Bella by using his extreme speed and strength. Bella begins having dreams of Edward in her room, which later turn out not to be dreams but Edward stalking her. Bella becomes more and more curious about Edward and after a visit to a beach she meets Jacob who then tells her the story about the Quileute legend. Bella begins her own research of the Cullen family after touching Edward's skin and feeling how icy cold it is, when Edward saves her the second time inadvertently revealing that he can read minds. Bella then reveals to Edward that she has become aware of Edward's being a vampire but she does not fear him. The breaking point of the film is when Edward decides to show Bella how he looks in the sunlight, using his incredible speed to run up a mountain above the cloud bank that covers the town most of the time, in *New Moon* he tries to commit suicide by using the same method, showing others what his skin looks in the sunlight and revealing what he really is, a predator. This shows how uncomfortable Edward is with being a vampire and not being comfortable in his own skin. Trying to scare Bella and push her away from him he explains how her scent is his personal drug. Bella does not care for the blood thirst he has for her.

There have been many speculations regarding the relationship between Bella and Edward. One of which is regarding the fact that Bella is only 17 years old but Edward, being a vampire and having the curse of immortality, was born in 1901 and is over 100 years old when they meet and fall in love. A question has to be raised if it is morally right for a 100 year old man to be dating a 17 year old. Being able to be over 100 years old and still go on dates with beautiful young women is more than likely to appeal to the male audience of vampires. Edward Cullen only has the look of a 17 year old boy but has lived a whole life, although he has lived it as a 17 year old boy for about 100 years. The frustration of always having to be in high school and continually having to graduate must be extremely difficult to handle and would be enough to make anybody crazy. Cullen faces the inevitability of never growing up and constantly having to relive the same short life over and
over again. Bella seems to like this escape from the life she lives. She doesn't care about the fact that he is a vampire and craves to be one too, only to be able to be with him always and forever. Edward is reluctant to grant her this request as he could not make her as cursed as he is. Ultimately the fact that Bella is not a vampire but Edward is pushes Edward to his breaking point and in the second film he goes to seek his death by the most powerful vampire family known, the Vulturi. Bella also pushes herself to her limits, almost killing herself at one point because the only way for her to see Edward is if she is close to death with the adrenalin in her body pumping hard. She is barely saved by her friend Jacob who has also become in love with her and believes the Cullen family to be dangerous and thinks that it is his duty to protect her from them.

The vampires in Meyer's saga are less affected by direct sunlight, or not at all, as in so much other vampire fiction. Sunlight does no damage to their skin but it does however make them glitter like it is made out of diamond. In this regard Meyer is true to the old folklore of vampire not being destroyed by direct sunlight, although in Meyer's stories they are not weakened by it either. It is not vital for them to feed on human blood, although it does make them stronger, but in fact they can live quite a normal live within a society and feed on animals. Edward explains it is like humans only eating tofu and never gaining full strength but rather keeping you alive. Another important rule about the vampires in Meyer's saga is that when one becomes a vampire his or her biggest strength becomes even greater. Edward's greatest strength in life was empathy so when he became a vampire he was able to read the mind of others around him. Other notable abilities that the Cullen family has are being able to control the emotions of other people, foreseeing the future, extreme strength and compassion.

The vampire family in the Twilight Saga, the family the main character circles around, are called vegetarian vampires; One's that do not drink human blood but choose to feed only on animal blood. Their hunger for human blood however always exists but through sheer force of will and mind they can hold that hunger back. In fact the 'father' or the patriarch of the family is a skilled
doctor at the local hospital. One vampire in this family, Jasper, portrayed by Jackson Rathbone, does not have the same force of will as the others and is very tense when he first meets Bella. In the second film Bella gets a paper cut so deep that she begins to bleed and Jasper loses control of himself and tries to attack her (New Moon).

Another thing that Meyer accomplishes to do in her novels, and what is transpired in the films based on the novels, is to make the vampires more romantic, intimate, and more in touch with their soul than the vampire people are used to dream about, that is to say the main vampire family in the *Twilight Saga* consist of these 'in touch with their souls' kind of vampires. There are also vampires that go on a rampage and kill humans and are more traditionally evil, the vampires people have come to know and crave. In the first film entitled *Twilight* Bella meets three of these vampires where one of them becomes intoxicated with her scent, much like Edward. Unlike Edward this particular vampire, James portrayed by Cam Gigandet, does not fall in love with Bella and wants her to love him back but rather sees her as his ultimate prey, a more traditional vampire. James begins to hunt Bella resulting in Edward's arriving at the climax of the attack to save her yet again. When the Cullen's come and save Bella from James they rip him apart and burn his remains. This is again how Stephanie manages to stay true to the old vampire folklore where the only way to get rid of a vampire was to burn it to ashes. Before James' death he does bite Bella who then begins her transformation to a vampire, which is what she really wants and most of the audience with her so that Bella and Edward can spend their lives together forever. Edward however decides to stop the vampire venom from completely turn her by sucking the infected blood out. In the process he starts to lose control of himself as he is almost unable to stop feeding on her blood.

Edward Cullen has taken over as the most popular vampire of recent times. He is the kind of character that makes many women tremble at their knees and wish their husbands or boyfriends to be more like him. Other that may have held the title would be Dracula, who was mystical, suave and seemed to have power to posses the minds of beautiful women, a character that many males
would want to be, or at least crave to have his powers. Next in the line would be Anne Rice's Lestat de Lioncourt who was very sensual and exciting and seemed to capture the minds of women across the world. Nevertheless Lestat lacks the same masculinity as Dracula, on account of being in an intimate relationship with another male vampire. The third is Spike from the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Spike was the ultimate bad boy, cool and did everything that he wanted to regardless of the consequences, until he regained his soul towards the end of the series. Spike did have a counterpart in the series called Angel who was also a vampire but had regained his soul and is perhaps an inspiration for the creation of Edward Cullen. He is romantic, handsome and vulnerable and women all over the world fall madly in love with him. An interesting point to bring up is that Edward Cullen doesn't appeal much to men, as the others have. In fact the male reaction towards Edward is much more along the lines of hatred, or rather extreme dislike, rather than wanting to be like him. Although Edward possesses the ability to make women fall madly in love with him he doesn't seem to be able to bring the masculinity that most other fictional male vampires have. He seems to be a vampire that women identify with more than men. He represents a good and honest man, soft good looks and would sacrifice all to be with his love. He is the man that women wish to marry.

Edward symbolizes a new kind of good vampire in this new wave of vampire interest. The interest in vampires always seems to come again and again in a wave after wave. It seems as if when one can barely remember about these mythical beings a new wave of vampire madness will begin. There is always a core group of people that will keep craving about being vampires and in some years the story of Edward and Bella will most likely be replaced by other vampires.

What is interesting in the list of these ultimate vampires is that they are all male. Most of them are very masculine, have control over women, hunt the weak and are stronger than an average person. All of these are qualities that most males seem to crave and a very strong point as to why males are drawn to vampires. Stephanie Meyer has popularized this new kind of vampire that
appeals to women in a new way: A vampire that has a soul and craves to live like a normal human being, thinking of his immortality and craving for blood only as a curse. Edward himself believes that his soul is lost because he has become this monstrous being.

In writing the *Twilight Saga* storyline Stephanie Meyer is clearly heavily influenced by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* through forbidden love. This is especially transparent in the second film. Among the first scene we see in *New Moon* is a dream sequence of Bella as an old woman and Edward having not aged at all. She mistakes the old lady as her grandmother to whom she is introducing to Edward. When she gets to school she is reminded that it is her birthday, which she is immensely distracted by, as she is now a year older than Edward was the age he got transformed into a vampire. Although the *Twilight Saga* itself is not a story between the two most powerful families in the town being mortal enemies it is a story about a forbidden love. In *New Moon* Edward and Bella have begun dating and Bella desperately wants to become a vampire and fears her aging will eventually become a problem between the two lovers. Jacob is not to keen on Bella dating Edward or having any connection with the Cullen family. Even Edward seems to realize that their love cannot endure anything but is so in love with Bella that he has become addicted to her, as well as she has become addicted to her. This is seen when Edward leaves Bella on the account of Jasper having tried to attack her after she cut her finger. Bella then goes into remission which seems identical to when people stop using drugs. The only way for her to be with Edward is if she pushes her life to the limits, going on a motorcycle or jumping off a cliff nearly killing herself. Jacob however has become Edward's main rival for Bella's love after his departure. He goes and comforts her and helps her deal with her pain and is there for her when she is in danger, he is the one that saves her when she jumps off a cliff. Bella finds comfort in Jacob's arms and tells the audience that it helps her forget about the pain caused by Edward leaving her.

Through the immense success of the *Twilight Saga* books, and films, Edward has become a legitimate contender for the most popular vampire of all times. It can be fairly stated that the title
was previously held by Dracula but with this new soul searching vampire, although most people would probably agree that in no way is Edward soulless, Edward has taken over the female audience and through them the male audience will get to know him as well. Edward's constant self loathing and powerful good looks, enhanced strength, speed and compassion towards human life make him both a sensitive character as well as a strong and powerful one. He is the character that makes the audience hope for a happy ending all the while believing that he may not have it. His love for Bella is so strong, too strong perhaps, that it is impossible for him to make her as he is. When she proposes to the other vampires in the Cullen family to take a vote on whether they should make her a vampire or not he becomes infuriated because as Rosalie, Edward's adopted sister portrayed by Nikki Reed, tells Bella as she votes against her becoming a vampire her fate is not one she would wish for Bella. Their love is forbidden and unwanted but they themselves are unable to live without each other. Love between vampires and humans will always be forbidden, but as is often the case with the human race that which is forbidden is that which captivates us. They even go to extreme lengths to be with each other. Bella jumps off a cliff almost killing herself in the process so that she is able to see Edward. Edward's sister Alice, who has the ability to see into the future, interprets her vision as Bella committing suicide and tells Edward who in turn goes to the only place where he can follow her into death. He is saved at the last second by Bella but his actions are not without consequence. These actions show how deeply Edward is in love with Bella making the audience more captivated by Edward as a persona and a selfless vampire. This makes Edward more vulnerable than most vampires known to date which is probably what this so alluring about this new type of vampire. At this point the audience gets the first chance of meeting the most powerful vampire family known, although having been told of them earlier by Edward. These are the Vulturi and they are the ones that uphold the law in the vampire community and they have no respect for human life, besides their leader being fascinated by Bella and her ability to block the ability of other vampires. The Vulturi represent the stereotypical vampires, they have no respect for
human life and never expose themselves as what they are. The Vulturi perhaps represent the old
fascination with vampires, total freedom, power and strength.

**True Blood**

Along with the *Twilight Saga* another popular vampire connected TV show has surfaced. It, like the
*Twilight Saga* films, is based on a popular book series called *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*. *True
Blood* is darker than *Twilight* and *New Moon* but still has some similarities, one of which being both
*Romeo and Juliet* related storylines of the ever exciting forbidden love. *True Blood* is more sexual,
most episodes having explicit sex scenes in them, and it deals more with the death aspect and drug
addiction. The show also introduces the idea of not only are the vampires addicted to human blood
but humans can become addicted to the vampire blood.

The first season is mostly based on *Dead Until Dark* written by Charlaine Harris published in 2001. The TV series revolve around waitress Sookie Stackhouse, portrayed by Anna Paquin, who has telepathic abilities and can read the thoughts of her patrons, and the vampire Bill Compton, portrayed by Stephen Moyer. In the True Blood universe scientist have created artificial blood called true blood giving the vampires the opportunity to expose themselves to the world. In the town in which they live in, Bon Temps, there has been a series of murders all of whom women that in some way are connected to vampires are killed. Firstly vampires are being blamed for the gruesome murders and later on Sookie's brother Jason, portrayed by Ryan Kwanten. Jason is the womanizer of the town and the prime suspect of the serial murders as he has slept with all of the women that were murdered except his grandmother. He later turns out not to be the killer, although he turned himself in believing that he did kill the women under the influences of vampire blood. Vampire blood, called V, is highly addictive for normal human beings.

Bill Compton has become one of the more known vampires in today's world. Bill has not yet become as famous as Edward Cullen despite their similarities. Bill becomes enthralled with Sookie the first time he sees her, much like Edward with Bella (*True Blood*). One major fact still
divides the two. Edward chose to be a vampire but would not choose the life of a vampire for anyone else and refuses to turn Bella into a vampire. This is seen in the first film where Carlisle Cullen is seen talking to Edward, most likely to explain what he is about to do, before biting him (Twilight). Unlike Edward Bill did not choose to become a vampire, as revealed to the audience in the fifth episode of the first season of True Blood. Bill is reminiscing to a crowd of people about the Civil War, in which he served, and the loss he suffered during the war. When presented with a photograph of his family he becomes extremely emotional showing his humanity. Whilst explaining that he became a vampire before being able to return to his family after the war he sheds a tear of blood, showing that when vampires cry they cry blood. He is later interrogated by the Sheriff about the murders that have been happening in the town. Bill explains how vampires would not be able to withstand all the blood that was spilled during the murders so it is very unlikely that vampires are behind the killings. Towards the end of the episode there is a flashback scene when Bill is on his way home after the war and is dire need of food and water. He finds a house in which a vampire lives in. When he refuses to have a sexual relationship with her she takes revenge on him by turning him into a vampire thus disabling him to return to his family. Bill is somewhat of a humanitarian, although he has had his share of a murderous spree drinking the blood of humans. He shows compassion for human life. He saves Sookie's life by staking another vampire with dire consequences. Bill is sentenced to replenish the ranks of the vampires, since he murdered one of his own, by turning a young teenage girl into a vampire. As stated by his prosecutor he needs to destroy the life form he loves more than his own kind. He reluctantly agrees to this but is unable to teach her this new lifestyle of vampires leaving her in the care of his brethren at the local vampire bar called Fangtasia, a bar that humans can visit to offer themselves to the vampires, either their blood or sexuality.

Vampires in the True Blood universe have abilities beyond human capability, and abilities humans wish they had. Enhanced strength speed and the ability to heal very quickly as well as
being able to charm normal humans to do their bidding, or even forget what has happened. Bill Compton uses this charm ability when he is forced by his superior to bite the teenage girl. As in Anne Rice’s novels the older the vampire are in True Blood the stronger they become as well as being able to withstand sunlight longer than others. Vampires in True Blood and Rice’s novels can show reflections in mirrors and people are able to take photographs of them. As Rice points out and is later retold in Guiley's book "vampires must live in the same world as mortals, which means having reflections. Otherwise, in a modern world full of reflective surfaces it would be difficult for vampires to remain unnoticed" (Guiley 203). The two types of vampires, from True Blood and Anne Rice's vampires, can stand before a cross and hold other Christian related items proving that they are not evil demonic creatures, assuming that God is good and the Devil and demons are real (True Blood). The True Blood vampires nevertheless can be destroyed by staking the heart. In New Moon we see in Bella's dream that Edward casts no reflection in her mirror. This can be interpreted so that the deep down she might believe that Edward is soulless as he himself fears (New Moon).

Edward and Bill have become two of the more popular vampires of our time and one more than the other, Edward is more popular amongst modern female audience of all ages. They are both stuck in their own Romeo and Juliet stories of forbidden love and both accomplish to survive it, so far. What differs between the two stories is that True Blood is by far more gruesome than Twilight and New Moon. It leaves little to the imagination regarding drug abuse and the vampire sex life. In fact vampire sex life has been somewhat missing from the new vampire lore. It is always more suggested than shown. True Blood also brings the sexuality of the vampire back, on a more visual level than Twilight Saga does and Buffy The Vampire Slayer did, as well as showing people addicted to vampires like drugs. In Twilight and New Moon all of the Cullen vampires have a significant other but it is never hinted that they do have sex. In True Blood sex is a very big factor of the series making it thus the more forbidden and harder, for some, to resist.

An article in Vanity Fair suggests that the vampires' fight for right has many similarities
with the gay rights movement. An example of this is how the church disowns both, evangelists in real life and Fellowship of the Sun in *True Blood*. What seems to be so exciting and draws people to *True Blood* is that it offers so much gore and blood, especially compared with *Twilight*. The main difference between *True Blood* and the *Twilight Saga* is the sensuality factor. Although both stories have love and vampires as main characters that do not drink real blood, *True Blood* goes beyond letting the imagination loose and shows the dirty truth behind the vampire sensuality. It shows vampires in their darker form. It offers a reality on what could happen if vampires were real. If fake blood were created would the modern world see vampires rise from their graves and greet us. If that would in fact happen the vampires would lose part of their mysterious identity most likely rendering them less interesting in the process (Samaha).

**Conclusion**

In conclusion as to what is it about vampires that continue to fascinate us and what can explain this new wave of vampire interest, there is no real answer. It seems that they continue to resurface in our minds as much as they rise from their graves. Although there is no real Dracula, Edward Cullen, Blade, Lestat or Bill Compton, vampires have become real. They may not rise from their graves or only hunt during night, or hunt at all, but they do exist both in our minds and in our world. There are those that believe that they themselves are vampires and feel the need to drink blood; how disgusting it may sound it does happen. Who is to say that they are not real life vampires? In Stephanie Meyer's novels they do not need human blood to survive and there are plenty of people who eat meat that has barely been cooked. One can probably find in every workplace available some kind of psychic vampire, those that continually feed on the energy of others and never do their own work without help from others. These are, unlike the literary vampires, the vampires that disgust us and tire us the most. There are of course also those that have only adopted the fashion that is connected to vampires. Skin tight leather clothing, black t-shirts and eyeliner completed with pale faces and long hair with as many colors as possible. Within the world of vampires the only
ones that the human race seems fascinated by are the ones that are inaccessible to us. They are the ones that we hope are real and continue to haunt our thoughts and dreams. Perhaps it is exactly the fact that they are unavailable to us that keeps mankind fixated on them. Perhaps it is man's flaw of always wanting what he cannot have, his curiosity of the unknown that haunts him. Another theory can suggest that it is the freedom and immortality that the vampires possess that thrills mankind. The freedom to do whatever one wants and never having to die is the dream of many people. One can even further suggest that it is mankind's need to control everything in its surrounding. To have the strength and charm of the vampires is indeed worthy of worship. Perhaps it is a combination of all. The not knowing what it is, the freedom and the immortality with bundles of strength and the ability to charm anyone we meet. Who would not want to be a vampire with those powers? It is up to the individual to find out. Some like them because it gives them a place to belong. Some like the freedom, power, immortality or the strength that they offer. There is no one right answer to why they are so fascinating but multiple ones.
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