



öPREDATORY SPIRITUALITY:ö VAMPIRE
RELIGION IN AMERICA

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Introduction

Paralleling the rise of contemporary Paganism, America has seen not only the rise of New Religious Movements but also new cultural subgroups. Among these subgroups are the Goth and vampire subcultures. As late as 1999, the vampire and Gothic subcultures were categorized together into the ill-defined ögothic.ö¹ Today, 64.43 percent of the vampire subculture would consider themselves as something unique apart from the Goth subculture.² In fact, contrary to the past conception of the vampire as a kind of blood-sucking parasitic contagion, the modern vampire is a romantic figure that has been highly refined by the eloquent writing of Anne Rice, who herself has succinctly captured the inner craving of a spiritual thirst. Rice's vampires represent the pinnacle of the evolving development of the fictional vampire from the folklore of Eastern Europe as a ruddy peasant who had succumbed to a sudden illness or quick violent death.³ Through *Dracula* (1897), Bram Stoker refined the fictional vampire into a contagious curse symbolizing illicit eroticism.⁴ Finally, Rice transforms the vampire into a charismatic

egotist who embraces his curse but is secretly seeking redemption; a figure palatable to teen culture.

The vampire subculture is composed of highly intelligent and creative individuals, immersed nostalgia and chivalry. The subculture comprises of people who feel they have been sucked dry by supposed progress and abandoned by the decaying artifacts of religion. Thus, without a place of their own, this culture has reinvented itself into ãa full-blown subculture with its own rituals, relationships, and boundaries.ö⁵ Yet, it is within the vampire subculture that a new form of religious expression has developed from both popular occulture and contemporary Paganism.

This article will discuss the trends of the emergent vampire religion. In particular, we will discuss the demographics of the vampire subculture and its religious tendencies. Then, the article will discuss the similarities and dissimilarities between contemporary Paganism and vampire religions themselves. Finally, we will briefly look at several specific groups providing an introductory overview of claims and features unique to each.

Context of the Study of Vampire Religion

Study of this new kind of spirituality is important because of the rapid proliferation of vampire religion groups. In the early 1990s there were probably no more than three groups that could claim to be vampire religions. David Keyworth's research in 2002 recognized socio-religious tendencies within the vampire subculture but also specifically identified five groups that could claim to be vampire religions.⁶ Our survey of vampire religions has identified nearly double that number, five of which have yet to be cited in the literature.



While there are probably only between 5,000 and 15,000 adherents belonging to all vampire religions combined, it is apparent that most of the vampire religions are less than thirty years old. Many of these groups experienced growth after the centennial of *Dracula* in 1997, after which some expected interest in vampirism to wane.⁷ However, if anything, interest in vampirism has continued to flourish in the media with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *Underworld* (2003), and *Blood Ties* (2007), and shows no sign of abating with *True Blood* (2008), *Twilight* (2008), and *Being Human* (scheduled for 2009).

Video media focusing upon the fictional vampire combined with the contributions of print media, such as comic books, novels, and role playing games has filled the pool of ideas Partridge calls "occulture."⁸ Occulture provides a source of ideas from the popular culture which the vampire subculture can draw upon. Nevertheless, this drawing is not a one-way street as the media also draws upon occulture for its own creative purposes.⁹ Hence, given that the interest in vampirism is showing no signs of waning, we can expect vampire religions to continue to grow in light of current cultural trends.

Since the vampire subculture is a group on the fringe, collecting hard data can present methodological problems. Alternative subcultures can change or fail to survive long enough to receive adequate coverage by academics. To date no published anthropological survey has been performed on the Goth subculture. One source of statistics is social networking websites from which the estimate can be derived that the ratio between Goths and vampires is at least 20:1;¹⁰ also social networking sites can provide a source of informal polls.

The single most important source of statistical data comes from the survey sponsored by Suscitatio Enterprises, LLC and the Atlanta Vampire Alliance (AVA) conducted from 2006 to 2008 and available from <http://www.suscitatio.com/>. The survey, entitled *Vampire & Energy Work Research Survey*, is the only comprehensive anthropological survey of the vampire subculture and includes 379 questions covering the range of background information, demographics, feeding habits, medical history, and spiritual beliefs and is based upon the input of 697 participants. The purpose of the survey was to not only raise the bar for future research but also to provide the academic community with accurate research that contests a small but growing body of published materials on the Vampire Community which paint it in an unrealistic, dramatic, and very negative light.¹¹

Vampire Subculture

By means of introduction, it is helpful to define vampire within the confines of the vampire subculture. The notion of a "living vampire" is a departure from the view of a vampire as a re-animated cadaver. Rather, within these subcultures a "living vampire" is a member of a cultural subgroup that sustains life through the consuming of the blood or life force of another individual.¹²

Living vampires are generally distinguished between two types: sanguine and psi.¹³ Vampires of the sanguine persuasion actually drink blood. Usually the amount of blood consumed is nominal, as the human constitution cannot tolerate ingesting large amounts. According to the anthropological survey conducted by AVA, 69.76 percent of living vampires consume blood.¹⁴ The blood is usually either supplied by volunteers or procured through legal channels. Such volunteers are euphemistically called "donors."¹⁵



The other type of vampirism, the psi-vampire, involves the draining of life energy. The means through which some living vampires claim to drain energy varies but can include touch, penetration of the skin, sexual contact, or even by line of sight. Furthermore, unlike sanguine vampirism, which depends solely upon volunteers, psi-vampirism may access unwilling subjects, since the legalities that constrain the collection of blood from an unwilling host are not present with psi-vampirism. In the AVA survey, 83 percent of living vampires practice psi-vampirism with 30 percent practicing psi-vampirism exclusively, and 50 percent of the survey respondents practicing both psi and sanguine forms of vampirism.¹⁶

As a subcultural group, there are some interesting trends revealed in the AVA survey. The first is that the majority tend to be female (62.9 percent).¹⁷ While previous works have hypothesized a significantly high incidence of male homosexuality among living vampires this is not born out by the survey.¹⁸ Nevertheless, in comparison, a high incidence of bisexuality was found among female participants (40 percent). Further revealed is the fact that the majority of participants are under 30 years old.¹⁹ It is also interesting to note that the mean IQ of this group is in the 137-150 category, which is much higher than the general population.²⁰

On the psychological front, AVA surveyed respondents who had taken the Myers-Briggs personality assessment, a measurement of psychological preferences as to how people perceive the world. The Myers-Briggs assessments measure four dichotomies of preferences: introversion/extroversion (I/E), intuition/sensing (N/S), thinking/feeling (T/F), and perceiving/judging (P/J). The survey revealed that the group

tended to lean towards IN personality types with INFP (9.6 percent), INTJ (10.1 percent), and INFJ (10.5 percent) forming largest personality types whereas in the general US population these types are 1.5 percent, 2.1 percent, and 4.3 percent respectively.²¹ The vampire community leans towards introversion (I) preferring information that is more abstract or theoretical (N). As for abnormal psychological problems, this cultural subgroup reported a variety of psychiatric illnesses with depression and bipolar disorder being the most common. However, these numbers were consistent with the general population. It is interesting to note that unusual psychiatric illnesses that relate to vampirism (e.g. haemophagia) were not present in the survey and the single incidence of Renfield Syndrome is not statistically significant.²²

Nevertheless, the one area in the survey that was a marked departure from the general population was the incidence of childhood abuse with 43 percent reporting either physical or sexual abuse. While these numbers are notoriously difficult to collect among the general population, the incidence among the living vampire subculture is significantly higher than what is reported from the population at large.²³ Thus, we might see a factor that could help explain the self-inflicting behaviors within the subcultural (such as ritual scaring and bloodletting).

Vampire Religion

Despite the panoply of information provided by the Atlanta Vampire Alliance survey, very little is revealed by means of causative factors of the origination of living vampirism. Unlike what is portrayed in the movie *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), one does not usually become a vampire by being bit by a vampire. On the contrary, it can probably be asserted, as some living vampires do, that vampirism is a choice. One adherent, who claims to be a member of Clan Lilith puts it well, "the



process of becoming a vampire is very intentional and is, in many ways, similar to converting to any other religion or culture.²⁴ Thus, when we discuss the religious milieu of vampirism we encounter something similar: a myriad of choices. Among the 697 persons who participated in the survey there were over two thousand faith-identities selected.²⁵ The notion of one religious identity per person must be discarded when dealing with this demographic group.

Three out of five responses in the AVA survey self-identified with new spiritualities and related practices such as Wicca, neo-druidic, divination, and theosophy. Thirteen percent of persons self-identified with atheism or agnosticism. Fourteen percent self-identified with Christianity. Between 6 and 15 percent of survey respondents (99 responses) specifically self-identified with Vampire Religions,²⁶ which will be the focus of the rest of the article. These numbers are consistent with a separate poll that found that 83 percent of vampire community members believed in life after death.²⁷

While the number of persons identifying with vampire religions is small, the significance of this new kind of spirituality is that it represents a movement coming out of contemporary Paganism. While there is considerable overlap between contemporary Paganism and vampire religion, unlike other Pagan groups there are some adherents that have left contemporary Paganism for vampire religion. Alexis, a convert to the vampire religion House Sekhemu, comments as follows:

I was heavily into Celtic Wicca for about 7 years. Then I began realizing that my local Wiccan community was little more than a social club for Christian bashers and there wasn't a whole lot of room for spiritual advancement. I believed that Wicca could

be a stepping stone to greater spiritual and self-awareness but the Wiccans I've been exposed to just weren't interested in progressing beyond spiritual mediocrity.²⁸

As vampire religion came out of contemporary Paganism, and given the overlap in memberships, we can expect some commonalities between the two spiritualities. Both spiritualities ascribe to ritual magic and spell craft.²⁹ Vampire religion is indebted to contemporary Paganism for the metaphysical foundation of its magical worldview, either to the conforming to the natural order (right-hand path magic) or the disruption of the natural order (left-hand path magic).³⁰ The other area of common ground is the idea of subjective truth constructs that run through both kinds of spiritualities. The mottoes of several vampire groups reflect this subjective truth ideology; for example, House Kheperuø, "Find your own truth" and House Quinotaurø, "Unity through diversity."

However, while there are some similarities, there are even more areas of dissimilarity. In contrast to contemporary Paganism, vampire religions have little interest in environmental concerns and by extension nature in general. Contemporary Paganism tends to exalt nature deities and ancient polytheistic systems as theological archetypes and is concerned with the environment broaching into the arena of nature worship.³¹ Vampire religions tend to be concerned with the ontology of vampires, but once that question is resolved there seems to be no compelling need for further theological inquiry. As such, the function of vampire ontology seems to be to establish an epistemological position in context to the rest of humanity rather than to establish moral or ethical foundations.

Another contrast with contemporary Paganism is that vampire religions tend to be conditionally exclusive rather than fully inclusive. While vampire religions will accept their members being a part of other non-vampire religions such as Buddhism, Wicca, or even Christianity,



membership into other vampire religions is often discouraged. While the religious laity may tie this exclusivity to tribal kinship customs as portrayed in media such as *Kindred: The Embraced* (1996) or *Vampire: The Masquerade* (1991), we found that among the leadership practical or philosophical matters often override perceived kinship. The Temple of the Vampire, because of its claim to be the "only authentic vampire religion," will discourage other vampiric religious affiliations.³² Likewise, House Kheperu will discourage membership into elitist left-hand path groups because of a conflict with House Kheperu's populous philosophy.³³ Yet, the adherents of vampire religions are interested in the affairs of other vampire groups to the point of being meddlesome with conciliatory events, mergers, and even attempted takeovers.³⁴ The final contrastive element between contemporary Paganism and vampire religion is the view of human nature. Vampire religion tends toward pessimism. Contemporary Paganism tends toward an optimistic view of humanity, where the individual is seen as having an inherent goodness. Vampire religion sees its own moral emptiness in light of its anthropology and projects it upon humanity as a whole.

When addressing vampire religions, there are general trends that demarcate their spirituality as unique. There are attributes unique to vampire religions that are derivative, but unrelated to its relationship to contemporary Paganism. As a spirituality, there is consensus as to the general definition of a "living vampire" yet there is disagreement as to a precise definition. Vampire religions agree that a vampire is living person that feeds upon blood or life energy, but debate as to whether a vampire needs to feed, how often she needs to feed, how to feed, is feeding to live or to feel alive. All the groups examined for this article

repudiate violence and lawlessness. Some groups have established strict moral codes against violence. Because of the connotations between sanguinary and the popular view of vampirism and a mass media that is perceived to exploit these connotations to scare a misinformed public for ratings, especially as Halloween roles around, the vampire religions have been compelled to make their position on violence clear.³⁵

A further commonality among vampire religions is dependence upon the role-playing game *Vampire: The Masquerade* (1991) for religious vocabulary and ethical foundation. As we observe this commonality, let us approach it with some cautions. Because *Vampire: The Masquerade* is a game set in real places with exacting detail, it can be easy to confuse the reality of vampire subculture with elements of the game not excluding the potential for violence that is used in game play. It is also a misconception to think that people who practice vampire religion take the role-playing game for real.

However, vampire religion is indebted to *Vampire: The Masquerade* for a rich religious vocabulary. Many of the terms used in a religious context have analogs that are borrowed from *Vampire: The Masquerade*. For example, they use "cub" instead of "convert," "house" instead of "church," "sire" instead of "pastor/elder," and "awakening" instead of "conversion."³⁶ *Vampire: The Masquerade* does provide a rich, convenient, and instant vocabulary for vampire religions.

The other contribution of the *Masquerade* is its contribution to the ethical system. The ethics of vampire religion can be described as both consequentialist and deontological. It is consequentialist in that it focuses upon the effect and deontological in that it often prescribes rule-based duties instead of ethical principles.³⁷ The effect is that one avoids unnecessary negative exposure to themselves and the group. The *Masquerade* would call this a "masquerade violation;" however, this



term is not used by vampire religions even though the principle is. Now, for vampire religion the avoidance of exposure is as much pragmatic as it is in principle. The *Black Veil* (also called the *Rules of 13*), a vampire religion statement of ethics, states as its first rule, "This lifestyle is private and sacred. Do not hide your nature, but never show it off to those who won't understand."³⁸

Another commonality among vampire religions is their anthropology. On the one hand, they generally regard humans to be prey. They will regard non-vampiric humans as being similar to unthinking cattle, i.e., suppliers of life energy needed for sustenance. While no vampire religion condones murder, they will see ordinary humans as part of the food chain:

The hierarchy of living beings on earth is based upon the food chain. Ultimately everything is reduced to the issue of who eats whom. To achieve the Vampiric Condition, the Vampire must come to a predator's perspective towards human beings. It is impossible for one to become Vampire if one is unwilling to prey upon the vital life force of humans.³⁹

On the other hand, they will also see living vampires as advanced or superior spiritual beings. Among right-hand groups, being spiritually advanced is often based upon the Gnostic idea that souls or angels become trapped in human bodies. Yet, among left-hand (luciferian)⁴⁰ groups, being spiritually advanced means that one has become more enlightened to one's own self-interests. Both groups agree that the essence of vampirism is the idea of the superior feeding off of the inferior, which the Black Order of the Dragon calls "predatory spirituality."⁴¹

A final common feature among vampire religions is that they *claim* to practice psi-vampirism exclusively. There is only one vampire religion, House Sekhemu, that openly claims a sanguinary basis for their vampirism. It is fairly typical for vampire religions to practice the drinking of blood even while disavowing the practice as is best expressed in the words of Nicolas Strathloch who was interviewed by Katherine Ramsland:

I do rituals on a daily basis, but blood rituals usually only during the full moon, and it's strictly from donors. We don't publicly acknowledge that the Temple [of the Vampire] practices blood rituals. It's a matter of personal taste. Publicly, we do look down on it aesthetically. We're primarily psychic vampires. We feed off the life force of other persons, drawing energy from their auras.⁴²

Most vampire religions have guidelines regarding the drinking of blood even if they do not officially sanction the practice. Such guidelines may include not only how to drink, but may also include restrictions against feeding off the ill or those who use alcohol or illegal drugs.⁴³

A Survey of Vampire Sects

The following is a survey of notable vampire religion sects. We have listed sects that explicitly claim to practice a form of vampirism and have purposely excluded groups that are not part of the vampire subculture even if they practice blood rites. At the time of this writing, none of these groups is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization even though they may act as a church. According to IRS guidelines, churches are not required to apply for 501(c)(3) status while religious organizations are required to do so.⁴⁴ It should, however, be said that many mainstream religious organizations began as a movement before incorporating, and



vampire religion is truly in its infancy. As stated above, most of these groups are less than thirty years old.

Temple of the Vampire

This group was founded in 1989 out of Lacy, Washington. The leader is George Smith. It is essentially a mail order religion to the degree that some have compared it to a scam. Nevertheless, even if it is a scam, some adherents do take it seriously as a religion; thus, this group requires serious consideration. Until just recently, Temple of the Vampire was the single largest vampire religion, now supplanted by Kheperism, a philosophy begun by House Kheperu. While Temple of the Vampire is a secret society not disclosing its core beliefs to outsiders, to insiders it promises to provide contact to other members and organize events. The group claims to be the only authentic international vampire religion, which has been in continuous existence since its creation some twenty years ago in 1989 when we registered our organization as a religion with the U.S. federal government.⁴⁵ It is, however, not disclosed as to what kind of registration they are talking about. The Temple of the Vampire does not have a 501(c)(3) non-profit tax filing with the IRS nor does it have a corporate filing with the state of Washington. The only filing from this group is a Registered Trademark for the logo, where George Smith is listed as sole proprietor.⁴⁶ Theologically, Temple of the Vampire promises to fulfill human potential, i.e., the attainment of power and wealth.⁴⁷ There is also an appeal to unknown masters, which are referred to as elder vampires, as a source of authority. This is similar to what had been done by the Solar

Temple.⁴⁸ As for personal eschatology, this group believes in reincarnation. Also, the group claims to have ancient origins in Tiamat worship and holds an apocalyptic vision in a future "Great Harvest," where vampire-kind will feed off the life force of billions in a cataclysmic consummation.⁴⁹

House Sahjaza

House Sahjaza was founded in 1997 in New York. The leader, Goddess Rosemary, formed the group as a direct descendent of "a coven of female pagan vampyres."⁵⁰ The group tries to appeal to artists, poets, and other creative types. Unlike Temple of the Vampire that claims to be a religion, House Sahjaza claims to not be a religion but a philosophy. Yet, the philosophy has clearly religious overtones:

The House Sahjaza Family are spiritually intuitive beings who exist between the physical and metaphysical worlds, thus providing us with magickal, divinatory, psychic, healing and empathic abilities. The Vampyre uses these to understand the mysteries of the Universe, Goddesses, Gods, Laos, Orishas, and other entities, and the complex yet exciting ancient and or esoteric paths that we have knowledge of in this day. We understand the importance of science but we also recognize that science proves the existence of a 'un-seeable' force within the Universe. We are a part of everything within nature, the 'un-seeable' force, otherwise known as the divine spark, is in each of us, and through our teachings we become more and more a part of the divine, opening up the God/Goddess potential within us.⁵¹

House Sahjaza also has strict ethical standards and dress codes, i.e., they always dress for success. Thus, the group does not attempt to appeal to a broad base, preferring a more elite following.

Theologically, the group is Gnostic. They hold to a dualistic view of nature. They also promise to unveil reality through the use of gnosis. Yet, it is significant to note that the compensation, which they promise,



is not reality but personal fulfillment. Ethically, they adhere to social Darwinism.

House Kheperu

House Kheperu was founded in 1996 in Medina, OH. The leader, Michelle Belanger, has been a long-time resident of the vampire community publishing one of the first magazines geared towards the vampire subculture, *Shadowdance*.⁵² While she tours the United States annually to promote her books, the influence of her books cannot be underestimated. Many of Belanger's books have formed the basis of other groups; such as, House Sekhemu. The most important of her works is the *Psychic Vampire Codex* (earlier and online versions of this work were simply called the *Vampire Codex*). Belanger's philosophy has come to be known as Kheperism and can be synergized with a variety of faith systems. The organization claims to be tax-exempt for the tax benefits as a religious organization.

House Kheperu tries to appeal to something more ancient than itself by grafting Egyptian symbolism over *Masquerade* concepts. The group has a strong hierarchical caste system that includes a priesthood.⁵³ Kheperism holds to reincarnation where one continually returns to feed off the life energy of other beings.⁵⁴ The philosophy promises greater self-awareness through the process of vampiric awakening.⁵⁵

A feature that is unique to House Kheperu is that it has started a home church organization called Kherete House (<http://www.kherete.org/>).

The group does not approve or provide missionaries, rather it renders assistance to those wanting to begin Kheperism home study groups.

House Sekhemu

While this group practices a brand of Kheperism and considers itself a sister house to House Kheperu, there are some interesting differences. Unlike House Sahjaza, House Sekhemu is not reticent to consider itself a religion, even posting testimonials as to how House Sekhemu has changed their lives as a religious system. This is also the only group that claims up front to practice sanguinary vampirism:

Most Sekhrians drink blood in various fashions such as in ceremony when the blood is mixed with wine (blood-wine), and/or during relations (not always sexual) with a donor/lover. Drinking one's blood or allowing one to drink from you is a most special and intimate act that requires trust as the sharing of one's blood has a tendency to bond people.⁵⁶

House Sekhemu also does not hesitate to integrate practices from Luciferian groups, i.e., magic ritual with a disruptive emphasis, yet Sekhrians also believe in the existence of a "Supreme Being" and study Theosophy.⁵⁷

Black Order of the Dragon

This group was organized in 1994 in Houston, TX by Michael Ford. The Black Order of the Dragon is actually the second of three tiers in this form of Luciferianism. Initiates are gathered into a group called the Order of Phosphorus. After two years, if initiates remain in good standing they are promoted to the Black Order of the Dragon. Finally, those who aspire to leadership are admitted to the Church of the Adversarial Light. The group essentially defines vampirism through a



Satanist lens of elitist self-interest, òí Luciferian Desire that is not the actual drinking of blood but from an initiatory point of view, the hunger for personal knowledge, power and vital life force within.ö⁵⁸ They hold that the purpose of magic or öpredatory spiritualityö is to consume astral energy or the Chi of others while spiritualizing belief and desire through gnosis.

Order of the Vampyre

This group is organized in San Francisco by Lady Lilith Aquino and William T. Butch. Order of the Vampyre is an order of the larger Satanic group, Temple of Set, which was established in 1975.⁵⁹ Membership is restricted to second degree initiates in the Temple of Set. The group practices left-hand path magic and is best described as a special interest group of the Temple of Set.⁶⁰

Other Groups

There are other vampire religions that require mention. Some sources have mentioned the Clan of Lilith.⁶¹ Little is known about the Clan of Lilith. Viola Johnson, who is also the leader of the group, reveals very little about the group itself. The literature available appears more self-promotional than informational. Almost nothing can be verified about this group, where it meets, its basic belief system, or what kind of vampirism is practiced.

Another new group, Vampire Awakenings was formed only two years ago and claims to be a fast growing vampire religion in America with

over 200 members. One distinctive feature of this group is its strict membership policies:

We do thorough background checks on ALL perspective members. Those who have been convicted of Murder, Child Abuse, Child Molestation, and Abuse of any kind will IMMEDIATELY be denied membership. We will ask several background oriented questions on the application and we expect them to be answered fully and truthfully. We WILL NOT allow anyone who has a history of mental illness to join our group, if however, you have not had any symptoms or problems in the last three years, you will be allowed to join as a member on probation. This is where your activity will be closely monitored[sic] while you are a[sic] active member of the group. After one year and one day, if there has[sic] been no problems you will be granted full rightful membership to Vampire Awakenings.⁶²

This group ritualizes the bond between donor and vampire through ceremony plus each transition within the group is celebrated by a rite.⁶³

Besides the previously mentioned vampire religions, some groups are also providing religious paths within organizations that are not in and of themselves religious; an example of this is House Quinotaur:

Non-Religious, we are working on developing a religious and also magickal path within our House. This Path however, is not necessary to follow to be part of House Quinotaur. We offer it as an extra for those who wish to explore themselves magickally or religiously.⁶⁴

And while House Quinotaur claims to be non-religious (as is the apparent norm for vampire religions), they also teach magic and the manipulation of spiritual energies. Interestingly enough, House Quinotaur holds that vampirism is genetic, i.e., that one has a genetic predisposition to vampirism and thus all vampires are related.⁶⁵ House Quinotaur is like many of the unaffiliated vampire houses in that it started out non-religious but is becoming religious as it explores issues of spirituality. Thus, we expect that as the vampire religious movement



progresses that we will see a continued migration from secular to religious organization.

Conclusion

While the proliferation of vampire religion is primarily an American phenomenon, there are signs that vampire religion is beginning to go international. Temple of the Vampire already claims to be an international organization. House Quinotaur has members in 16 countries and on every continent. The Ordo Strigoii Vii, which is a vampire church based out of Holland, is showing that vampire religion is starting to have appeal abroad.⁶⁶

Vampire religions represent a new religious movement that is unique from the contemporary Paganism that spawned it. The development of these groups has been rapid and unpredictable and many are still in a process of theological formulation. They tend to be media savvy but are also wary of negative publicity. While they represent a very small number of adherents, their numbers are growing and in many respects represent a development out of contemporary Paganism. Most groups have carefully considered the role of violence and have adopted pacifist creeds; thus, their potential for violence is minimal. Those who join vampire religions and theological ideologies are looking for something greater than "spiritual mediocrity;" they are seeking intimacy, fellowship, and community and to satisfy a deeper hunger with predatory spirituality.

¹Teresa A. Goddu, "Vampire Gothic," *American Literary History*, 11 (Spring 1999): 127.

²David Keyworth, "Socio-Religious Beliefs and Nature of the Contemporary Vampire Subculture," *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 17 (2002): 355-370. "Question 137," *Vampire & Energy Work Research Survey (VEWRS)* [article online] (Atlanta: Suscitatio Enterprises, LLC, 2008, accessed 23 Nov 2008); available from <http://www.suscitatio.com>; Internet. While the authors of this article have used the data collected by the *VEWRS* survey, their interpretation of the data is strictly their own.

³Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 2.

⁴Christopher Herbert, "Vampire Religion," *Representations*, 79 (Summer 2002): 114.

⁵Katherine Ramsland, *Piercing the Darkness: Undercover with Vampires in America Today* (New York: HarperPrism, 1998), ix.

⁶Keyworth, 365-6. Keyworth identifies House Shajaza, Order of the Dragon (of New York), Clan of Lilith, Order of the Vampyre, Temple of the Vampire, and Ordo Anno Mundi as vampire religious organizations. Of these groups, Order of the Dragon (of New York) appears to have been disbanded and Ordo Anno Mundi was probably misidentified as a vampire religion. While Ordo Anno Mundi practices ritual magic that involves blood, their use of blood in ritual appears to be incidental.

⁷Personal discussion with J. Gordon Melton, 18 Oct 2008.

⁸Christopher Partridge, "Disenchantment and Re-enchantment of the West: The Religio-Cultural Context of Contemporary Western Christianity," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 74 (2002): 244. Christopher



Partridge, "Alternative Spiritualities, Occulture and the Re-enchantment of the West," *Bible in TransMission*, (Summer 2005): 2.

⁹Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture*. Vol. 1 (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 84-85.

¹⁰This statistic is based upon the orders of magnitude of the combined Goth and vampire social networking website Vampire Freaks with 766,000 members [Reid Grey, "Online Social Networks, Virtual Communities, Enterprises, and Information Professionals," *Searcher*, 15 (2007): 37] when compared to dedicated vampire social networking sites such as Vampire Rave with 13353 members (<http://www.vampirerave.com/levels.php>) and Vampire Flirt with 3330 members (<http://www.vampireflirt.com/>).

¹¹*Frequently Asked Questions* [article online] (Atlanta, GA: Suscitatio Enterprises, LLC, 2008, accessed Nov 28, 2008); available from <http://www.suscitatio.com/research/faq.html>; Internet. "Examples of this are Katherine Ramsland's *Piercing the Darkness*, and Dawn Perlmutter's *Investigating Religious Terrorism and Ritualistic Crimes*. These works, if unchallenged, will represent source material that future researchers might have to go on when undertaking their own studies of our Community, and they are as fantastic as they are unrealistic. So, in a nutshell, one stated purpose of the VEWRS / AVEWRS is to address the flaws in previous research and refute the more fantastic claims made therein."

¹²J. Gordon Melton, *Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1999), xx-xxi. The words of this definition are a condensation of the thorough discussion provided by Melton who states that "all vampires are not resuscitated corpses" (p. xx). Also, "Some vampires do not take blood, rather they steal what is thought of as the life force from their victim" (p. xxi).

¹³Keyworth, 359. "Psychic vampires have often been ostracized by their more purist blood-drinking counterparts, or Sanguinarians as they are often called, even though the *Traits of Real Vampires* website is inclusive of both. Even so, it became apparent that blood-drinkers and psychic vampires are not one and the same." "Question 285" of *VEWRS* has only three categories of vampires: "sanguinarian," "psi," and "hybrid (Sang/Psi+)."

¹⁴"Question 285," *VEWRS*.

¹⁵Blood donors may also be referred to as "black swans" or "blood dolls." *Comprehensive Vampire Community Dictionary* [article online] (Baltimore: House Eclipse, 2003, accessed 23 Nov 2008); available from <http://www.house-eclipse.org/dictionary/b.shtml>; Internet.

¹⁶"Question 285," *VEWRS*.

¹⁷"Question 001," *VEWRS*.

¹⁸"Question 006," *VEWRS*. Ramsland (p. 14) states that "[W] was part of a large percentage of gay and bisexual culture that was into vampires." Of course, this depends upon what one means by "large." According to *VEWRS* survey, 12.3% of males identified themselves as homosexual while 16.58% identified themselves as bisexual with 66.31% identifying as heterosexual. It is probably fair to say that like the Goth subculture, vampire subculture attracts a higher than normal percentage



of bisexuals. However, despite the high incidence of homosexuality in vampire literature, the percentage of homosexuality is not a significant deviation from other minority subcultures, e.g., science fiction conventions.

¹⁹öQuestion 030ö and öQuestion 008,ö *VEWRS*.

²⁰öQuestion 026 & 027,ö *VEWRS*.

²¹öQuestion 024 & 025,ö *VEWRS*. These percentages were calculated from the surveyed vampire group alone (228 respondents). Energy workers were excluded from the calculations.

²²öQuestion 037,ö *VEWRS*. Richard Noll suggests that haemophagia, which is the uncontrollable compulsive act to drink blood and Renfield Syndrome, named after the *Dracula* character, which is the act of drinking (auto, animal, or human) blood tied with sexual enjoyment should be classified as mental illnesses even though they are not currently defined as such under the *Diagnostic & Statistics Manual of Mental Illness* (DSM-IV). Richard Noll, *Vampires, Werewolves, and Demons: Twentieth Century Reports in the Psychiatric Literature* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, Inc., 1992), 16-19. Noll is sympathetic to the vampire subculture and does not consider most living vampires to be mentally ill under these definitions. Question 037 in *VEWRS* included a category for Renfield Syndrome in the results.

²³öQuestion 151,ö *VEWRS*. According the survey 26.5% of the respondents suffered from sexual abuse. Haverkamp and Daniluk quoting a study by Briere and Runtz said, öEstimates of the incidence of

childhood sexual abuse range from 15% to 22% for female children and 3% to 8% for male children [Beth Haverkamp and Judith C. Danulik, "Child Sexual Abuse: Ethical Issues for the Family Therapist," *Family Relations*, 42 (Apr 1993): 134].

²⁴Dnash, *Fang Fetish* [article online] (Shelton, CT: Teeth by Dnash, 2007, accessed 13 Oct 2008); available from <http://www.teethbydnash.com/media/press/fangfetish/index.html>; Internet.

²⁵"Question 155," *VEWRS*.

²⁶Since there were over two thousand responses, only 697 participants, and multiple vampire religions, it is impossible to determine the exact percentage of participants that follow vampire religions. Thus, the range presents the case where the maximum multiple selections is assumed (6%) versus a case where there is only one selection per participant (15%).

²⁷"Poll 4160," *All Polls* [article online] (Maricopa, AZ: Vampire Rave, 2008, accessed 28 Nov 2008); available from http://www.vampirerave.com/polls_all.php; Internet.

²⁸Alexis, *Testimony of the Vampyre Alexis* [article online] (TX: House Sekhemu, 2002, accessed 17 Oct 2008); available from <http://www.ordo-sekhemu.org/alexisbio.shtml>; Internet.

²⁹William Sims Bainbridge, *Sociology of Religious Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 368. Keyworth, 367-368. While magic is a dynamic of contemporary Paganism because of its connection with "divine powers of nature" [John Peck, "Neopaganism," *A Guide to New Religious Movements* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 135-136], vampire religion has no *prima facie* basis for a magical



worldview and thus must borrow the assumption that vampires are spiritual beings [Madame Webb, *House Sahjaza Philosophy* [article online] (New York: Z/n Inc., 2008, accessed 25 Nov 2008); available from <http://www.sahjaza.com/assets/php/main.php?sec=philosophy>; Internet.].

³⁰Justin Woodman, "Alien Selves: Modernity and the Social Diagnostics of the Demonic in Lovecraftian Magick," *Journal for the Academic Study of Magick*, 1 (2004): 17-18.

³¹Scott Cunningham, *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Worldwide Ltd., 1988), xiii. D. J. Conway, *Wicca: The Complete Craft* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 2001), 15. Nicholas R. Mann, *Druid Magic: The Practice of Celtic Wisdom* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Worldwide Ltd., 2000), 144. Michael T. Cooper, "Research Observations: The Meaning of Life in Contemporary Druidry," *Sacred Tribes Journal*, 3 (2008): 36. Andrew J. McLean, "Neo-Paganism: Is Dialogue Possible?" *Sacred Tribes Journal*, 2 (2005): 5-6.

³²*What is the Temple?* [article online] (Lacey, WA: Temple of the Vampire, 2008, accessed 5 Oct 2008); available from <http://www.vampiretemple.com/temple.html>; Internet.

³³*Voices of the Vampire Community Public Meeting, 27 Apr 2008*. Information accessed 18 Oct 2008 from http://www.kherete.org/files/VVC_080427.doc, 23.

³⁴*Voices of the Vampire Community Public Meeting*, 27 Apr 2008, 3-4. "Court of Gotham is a LIE," [article online] (UK: Vampire Priest, 23 Mar 2008, accessed 30 Nov 2008); available from http://blog.myspace.com/ahriman_adamu; Internet. "By virtue of this person's [Father Todd Sebastian] inaugural message, he has hinted at a desire to eliminate the current status of our organizations... and, by extension, their respective stabilities... in a decidedly unwise attempt to restore personal power and influence over us all." Also see "Sanguinarium/Sanguinary," *Comprehensive Vampire Community Dictionary* [article online] (Baltimore: House Eclipse, 2003, accessed 6 Feb 2009); available from <http://www.house-eclipse.org/dictionary/s.shtml>; Internet.

³⁵*Vampire Hate on the Web* [article online] (Stop Vampire Hate on the Net, 2003, accessed 24 Nov 2008); available from <http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Hollow/6416/stop.htm>; Internet.

³⁶Do note that this religious vocabulary is an *analogous* use of the words expressed--it is not a one to one equality. Further there is not necessarily agreement between vampire religions as to the exact meaning of "cub," "sire," and "awakening," any more than there is an exact agreement between Christian organizations as to the meaning of "convert," "elder," or "conversion."

³⁷Father Todd Sebastian and Michelle Belanger, *Rules of 13* (New York: Sanguinarium, 2001), Rule 5. "Live your life as an example to others in the community. We are privileged to be what we are, but power should be accompanied by responsibility and dignity. Explore and make use of your vampire nature, but keep it in balance with material demands. Remember: we may be vampires, but we are still a part of this world. We must live lives like everyone else here, holding jobs, keeping



homes, and getting along with our neighbors.ö Other rules expound upon the treatment of donors (Rule 11), behavior in a haven (Rule 7), how to handle disputes (Rule 6), and how to act in leadership (Rule 12).

³⁸Sebastian and Belanger, *Rules of 13*, Rule 1.

³⁹George Smith, *Vampire Bible* (Lacey, WA: Temple of the Vampire, 1989), 9.

⁴⁰A common misconception is that Luciferian groups worship the Christian conception of the Devil. Rather they are philosophical idealists holding to the maxim, öDo what thou wilt.ö They use the idea of Lucifer as an archetype of being enlightened to self-interest.

⁴¹*Vampirism* [article online] (Houston, TX: Order of Phosphorus, 1994, accessed 13 Oct 2008); available from <http://www.luciferianwitchcraft.com/vampirism.htm>; Internet.

⁴²Ramsland, *Piercing the Darkness*, 125.

⁴³Michelle Belanger, *Psychic Vampire Codex: A Manual of Magick and Energy Work* (Boston: Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC, 2004), 119, 125-6.

⁴⁴*Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations, IRS Publication 1828* (Washington, DC: Department of the Treasury, 2008), 3.

⁴⁵*What is the Temple?* [article online].

⁴⁶US Patent and Trademark Office, Registration Number 3045235, Information accessed 5 Oct 2008 from

<http://tess2.uspto.gov/bin/showfield?f=doc&state=cmmrkm.2.1>. It is possible that the Temple of the Vampire may have filed for an EIN number, which is used by churches to open bank accounts. However, since EINs are non-public filings this is speculation. Besides, the IRS does not normally check the veracity of anyone filing an EIN as a church (or anyone else for that matter).

⁴⁷*If Vampires were real, would you want to be one?* [article online] (Lacy, WA: Temple of the Vampire, 2008, accessed 24 Nov 2008); available from <http://www.vampiretemple.com/index.html>; Internet.

⁴⁸Jean-François Mayer, "Our Terrestrial Journey is Coming to an End: The Last Voyage of the Solar Temple" *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader* (ed. Lorne L. Dawson, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 212.

⁴⁹Smith, *Vampire Bible*, 14-16.

⁵⁰*House History* [article online] (New York: House Sahjaza, 2008, accessed 25 Nov 2008); available from <http://www.sahjaza.com/assets/php/main.php?sec=history>; Internet.

⁵¹Madame Webb, *House Sahjaza Philosophy*.

⁵²Melton, *Vampire Book*, 721.

⁵³Michelle Belanger, "Introduction," *Vampire Ritual Book* [book online] (Medina, OH: House Kheperu, 2003; accessed 25 Nov 2008); available from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/goth/vrb/vrb02.htm>; Internet.

⁵⁴Belanger, *Psychic Vampire Codex*, 53.

⁵⁵Belanger, *Psychic Vampire Codex*, 55.



⁵⁶Do Sehkrians drink blood? *Frequently Asked Questions* [article online] (House Sekhemu, 2008, accessed 17 Oct 2008); available from <http://www.ordo-sekhemu.org/blackFAQ.shtml>; Internet.

⁵⁷Do Sehkrians believe in "God?" and "Why study Theosophy?" *Frequently Asked Questions* [article online] (House Sekhemu, 2008, accessed 17 Oct 2008); available from <http://www.ordo-sekhemu.org/blackFAQ.shtml>; Internet.

⁵⁸*Vampirism* [article online].

⁵⁹Melton, *Vampire Book*, 503-304.

⁶⁰*Order of the Vampyre* [article online] (San Francisco: Temple of Set, 2008, accessed 28 Nov 2008); available from <http://www.xeper.org/vampyre/>; Internet.

⁶¹Keyworth (p. 366) mentions the Clan of Lilith, and Dnash claims membership to the group. However, Keyworth's source is Viola Johnson, *Dhampir: Child of the Blood* (Fairfield, VA: Mystic Rose, 1996), the group's leader.

⁶²*Welcome...* [article online] (Vampire Awakenings, 2006, accessed 15 Oct 2008); available from <http://vampire-awakenings.bravehost.com/index.html>; Internet.

⁶³*Awakening* [article online] (Vampire Awakenings, 2006, accessed 25 Nov 2008); available from <http://vampire-awakenings.bravehost.com/awakening.html>; Internet.

⁶⁴*Introduction* [article online] (Warsaw, Poland: House Quinotaur, 2000, accessed 24 Nov 2008); available from <http://www.house-quinotaur.org/introduction.html>; Internet.

⁶⁵*Description* [article online] (Argentina: House Nekhbet/House Quinotaur, 2002, accessed 24 Nov 2008); available from <http://www.geocities.com/houseofnekhbet/description.htm>; Internet.

⁶⁶*Sanguinarius.org & Sanguinarium.net FAQs* [article online] (Topeka, KS: Sanguinarius, 2004, accessed 6 Feb 2009); <http://www.sanguinarius.org/sang-faqs.shtml>; Internet. Talon Patience, *All about Vampires and Vampirism* [article online] (Andover, MA: Helium, Inc., 2002-2009, accessed 6 Feb 2009); available from <http://www.helium.com/items/89012-all-about-vampires-and-vampirism>; Internet.