

Blood and Other Cravings

edited by

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Introduction

Vampires have been with us for a very long time. If one wants to research the roots of vampire legends, there are folktales, myths and legends from which our contemporary notions about vampires can be traced. And of course, Bram Stoker's classic Dracula is undeniably a work that has inspired countless subsequent vampire tales, both in print and on the screen.

But in the past few decades, vampires have become more than popular--they have become hot--in commercial terms and also, often, sexual ones. One might trace the rapid increase in the popularity of vampire tales to the 1976 publication of Anne Rice's breakout novel Interview With the Vampire, or perhaps to the 1977 Broadway production and subsequent 1979 film version of Dracula starring the young, handsome, sexy Frank Langella as the eponymous count.

Bela Lugosi as the count in the stage and film versions of Dracula was a figure of menace and creepiness, with his heavily Hungarian-accented English, piercing gaze and portentous delivery ("I never drink . . . wine," pronounced vine). Despite the fact that he tended to victimize young women, and there was an undeniable element of domination in the power he wielded over them, there was nothing like the sensuous, titillating appeal that oozed from Langella's landmark performance.

Since then, vampires have been a staple in books, stories, films and television, and in the past ten years or so, they have led the way to enormous popularity of a panoply of franchises based on one type of supernatural creature . . . and often a whole crew of creatures.

While Anne Rice's vampire series continue to sell, Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* Saga, Charlaine Harris's *Southern Vampire* series (with Sookie Stackhouse) and Laurell K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake* series have become popular phenomena far more successful than any of their type that came before. They're just the tip of the iceberg, though. There are others, Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula* series, L. A. Banks' *Vampire Huntress* series,, Brian Lumley's *Necroscope* saga, Sherrilyn Kenyon's *Dark-Hunter* series, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's *Olivia* series and *Saint-Germain* chronicles, and the *Vampyricon* by Douglas Clegg, and others long-running series that just sell and sell and sell.

If you're looking for stories that focus on the sensuous side of vampires, you probably want to find another book. Some of the stories here have sensuous elements that will inflame readers' interest. But these tales are about much more. More than sex; more than blood.

Two anthologies I edited, *Blood is Not Enough* (1989) and *A Whisper of Blood* (1991), were World Fantasy Award finalists. In each of those books, there were some traditional vampire tales, but also stories that went well beyond the idea of the traditional vampire as a bloodsucking creature of the night. Now, after two decades of increasing sophistication and invention in the realm of vampire fiction, writers have developed a greater range in their conception of what we might call a vampire.

The stories presented here ask you to consider a creature that can be in all ways human, and yet craves, for whatever reason--physical, psychological or emotional--the satisfaction of feeding upon something from another. What the vampiric person drains from his or her victim

might be blood, but it might also be the victim's energy, or the unfortunate's will to live, or perhaps even something else of the victim's substance.

Such themes were explored in the previous two anthologies, but I hope you will agree that the tales that follow offer new and thought-provoking approaches to traditional modes of the vampire story. There are two reprints and fifteen original stories by a roster of authors who have distinguished themselves in many previous works of fiction. They hail from the United States, England, Canada, and Australia, sharing a bond of nothing but the theme described in the title, Blood and Other Cravings. All the stories are contemporary, some have actual vampires in them, but many deal, in a variety of different, unique ways, with the "other cravings" part of the title.

To be more explicit would spoil the fun of discovery. So I will leave you to the tender mercies of the authors and their inventions. If you are ready for dark imaginings, I trust you will not be disappointed. There are some extremely dark tales ahead.

Good hunting.

--Ellen Datlow