

French Vampire Fiction before *Dracula*

Soyez les bienvenus à mon discours!

MR

'HIGHLY INVENTIVE...
WITH A HINT OF THE FANTASTIC.
A VERY IMMERSIVE READ.'

NEIL ROOT, AUTHOR OF
FRENZY! AND *THE MURDER GANG*

STOKER

AND THE

VAMPIRES

OF THE

A NOVEL

LYCEUM

LEADING SCHOLAR ON **BRAM STOKER** AND THE **GOthic**

MATTHEW GIBSON

1732-1819

- French had long-held interest with vampirism.
- After the *Visum et Repertum* of 1732, on 17 vampires in Medvedia.
- Much speculation, as in Vienna and in Sweden.
- Early account of vampire by de Tournefort, former doctor of Louis XIV, account of burning the body of Vrukolakas in Mykonos (1701).
- Calmet, *Vampires et Revenans* (1743), takes accounts of vampire from de Tournefort, *Lettres Juives* etc.
- As in earlier use of vampire to represent financial parasitism, Voltaire (1764) takes the wry, comic view that like Serbia and Hungary, London and Paris have vampires, but that they are called bankers and businessmen.

Pourquoi en France?

- Many more vampire tales appear in France than in Britain in early 19th century.
- As we shall see, this is buoyed by France's political uncertainty, and by closer interaction with Slavic world, and with this the mania for folklore.
- The vampire frequently has a political meaning relating to France's own decay, or its superiority due to enlightenment philosophy.
- Brief Timeline: 1815 – Restoration of Monarchy, 1830 – July Revolution (Philippe d'Orleans King), 1848 – new revolution and brief Second Republic, 1851, Napoleon III becomes emperor – Second Empire, 1869-70 Franco-Prussian War, and 3rd Republic.

Charles Nodier 1780-1844

Polidori's (Byron's) "The Vampyre", translated by "Faber" in 1819, is a sensation in France.

Taken up by Charles Nodier (1780-1844). Already acquainted with vampire and stryge superstitions from time in Dalmatia.

Published a sequel, "Lord Ruthwen", by Cyprien Bérard. Set in Venice, Naples, Modena, with Aubrey helping new victims chase and finally destroy the vampire (Feb 1820)

Wrote the play "Le Vampire" with Achille Jouffroy and Pierre Carmouche same year (June 1820).

Scottish aristocratic background cements association with Byron (originally from Aberdeen).



PHILIPPE.

Porte S. Martin



Lord Ruthwen.

(Vampire.)

The title role!

The Bride of the Isles

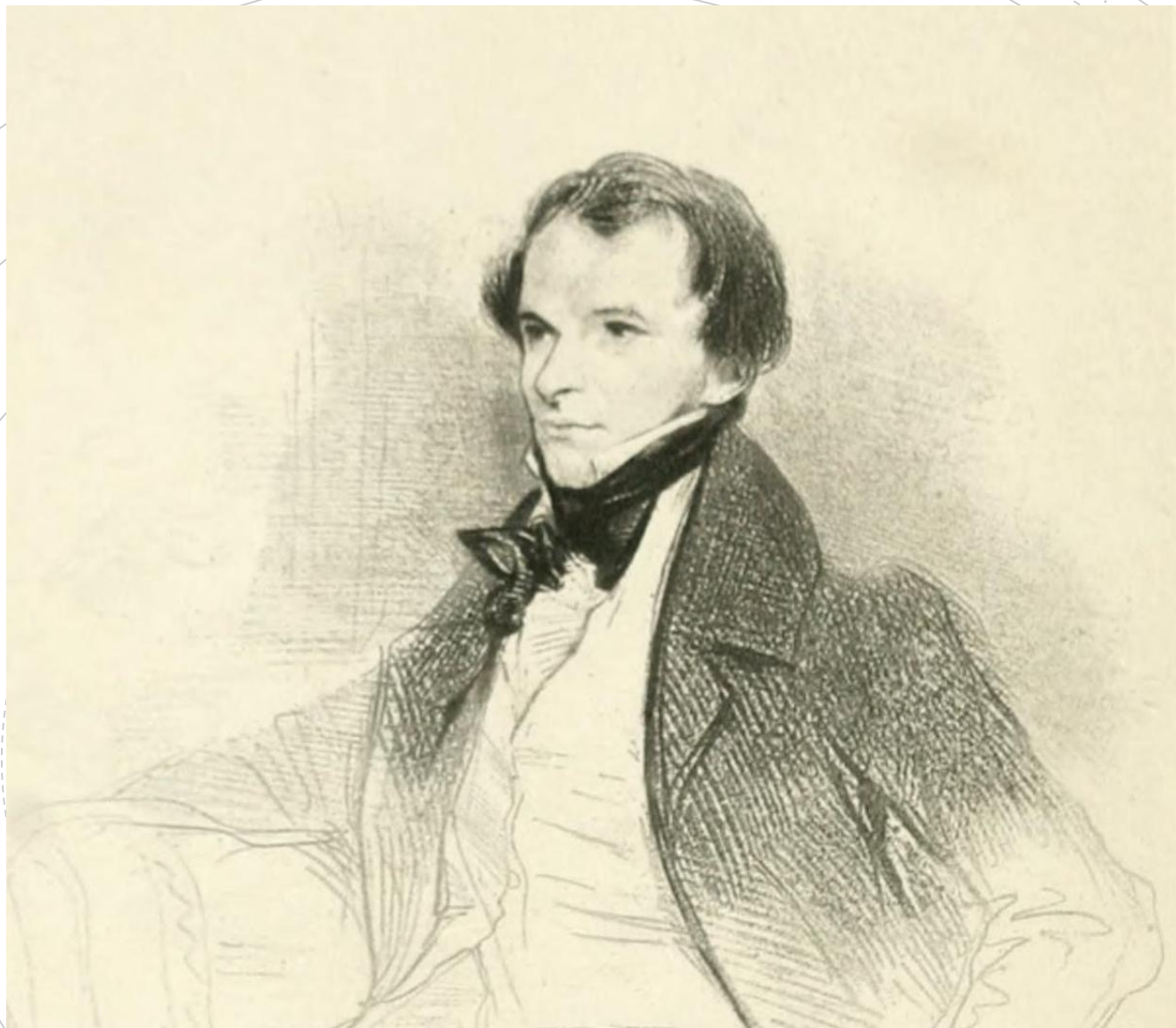
- James Robinson Planché also adapted Nodier's play some months later for the London stage...at the Lyceum!
- More music, and subtler development of the main character reflects British knowledge of the complex Byronic hero.
- Still a Scottish background, perhaps necessitated by the theatre's extant collection of Scottish costumes.
- The dynamic restores some of the original elements of Byron's *The Fragment*, but is much more comic than Nodier's play.

Nodier

- Nodier had lived in Napoleon's Illyrian Republic, from 1812-1813, and knew of both the vampire and the stryge superstition (described by Abbé Fortis, 1774, *Viaggio in Dalmazia*).
- Wrote various fantastic works, including *Jean Sbogar* (1818), based in the region.
- Also in 1821, "Smarra", a bizarre dream work which is based on "Illyrian" superstitions, but also from Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*.
- In *Infernaliana* (1822), reproduced excerpts from the vampire superstition collected by Calmet.
- Huge fan of Hoffmann's writings, which began to take France by storm in late 1820s.

La Vampire, ou la vierge de Hongrie (1825)

- Novel about Colonel Delmont, a bruised Bonapartiste who moves with wife and young children to a village near Toulouse. By Etienne de Lamothe-Langon.
- While away a pale woman moves next door. A Hungarian named Alinska, she begins attacking neighbours and drinking blood, waiting for colonel's return.
- It transpires she is the jilted lover whom the colonel left behind in Hungary after promising her marriage in the Napoleonic Wars.
- Capable of passing through matter, spattering letters with blood and vampirising others. Lamothe was one of the first writers to reintegrate the descriptions from Medvedia and Kisolova into the fictional vampire, as well as to make a contrast between rational France, and irrational Hungary.
- First female vampire in France – may show that author had read Hoffmann's *Gastliche Geschichte*, although makes an apology at beginning for making vampire female.



Prosper Mérimée

La Guzla (1827), a fake collection of poems by travelling Morlach musicians in Dalmatia.

Describes vampire superstition in poems like “Cara Ali” and “La Belle Sophie”.

Used to condemn primitivism of the Dalmatian Morlachs, and based on work of Fortis.

Le Vampire 1831

- After the July Monarchy is instituted, a twice-weekly journal appeared from March through to April, before petering out.
- Was aimed at exposing the vices of casinos, the stock-market and the lottery.
- Throughout various issues, vampire personified as a dandy parasite, combining the 18th century metaphor of the vampire as financial parasite with the new literary and theatre portrayals of Ruthven.

La Morte Amoureuse 1836

- One of Gautier's *contes fantastiques*, with the priest Romuald, who is obsessed by beautiful Clarimonde at his ordination, and then visits her at palace Concini just after her death, his kiss restoring her to life.
- Begins dual life as priest by day, dandy by night, until he catches her drinking his blood when assuming he is drugged.
- Moves vampire scene to Venice, and is clearly inspired by Jacques Cazotte's *Le Diable Amoureux* (1770).
- Again, like Lamothe, a female vampire.

**Dumas, père,
La Dame pâle
1849**

- Novella set in 1820s, during Polish uprising against Russians.
- The Countess Hedwige, a Pole, flees across the Carpathians, but finds herself captured by Roumanian bandits and two half-brothers, the virtuous Gregoriska and the degraded Kostaki, who turns out to be a vampire.
- Story deals with inherited sin and the decay of families.
- Also adds details to the myth: those sucked by the vampire become pale for remaining life, and those who fight with them must die, although go to heaven.
- In 1851, Dumas also reset Polidori's "The Vampyre" for the Paris stage.

Crucially, in
contradistinction
to British vampire
tales...

- The French tales are more numerous, even if the craze was begun by adaptations of Byron/Polidori.
- Part of the whole mania for the fantastic and frenetique in this era, heavily encouraged by Nodier and Hoffmann's writings.
- Early on, female vampires predominate, although they fit into the emerging form of femme fatale, and do not always appropriate masculinity.
- Nodier's popularisation of the accounts of Calmet, and his own interaction with the Slavic world, lead to the vampire being much more localised in Eastern Europe than in either the work of Rymer or of Polidori, with writers alluding to the folklore of Dalmatia, Hungary, and even Venice, which had formerly been the master of Dalmatia.
- Politics is never far away, with the vampire tale being used to examine the differences between the enlightened West and more primitive East, but also to comment on local financial abuses as well.

La Baronne
trépassée
1853

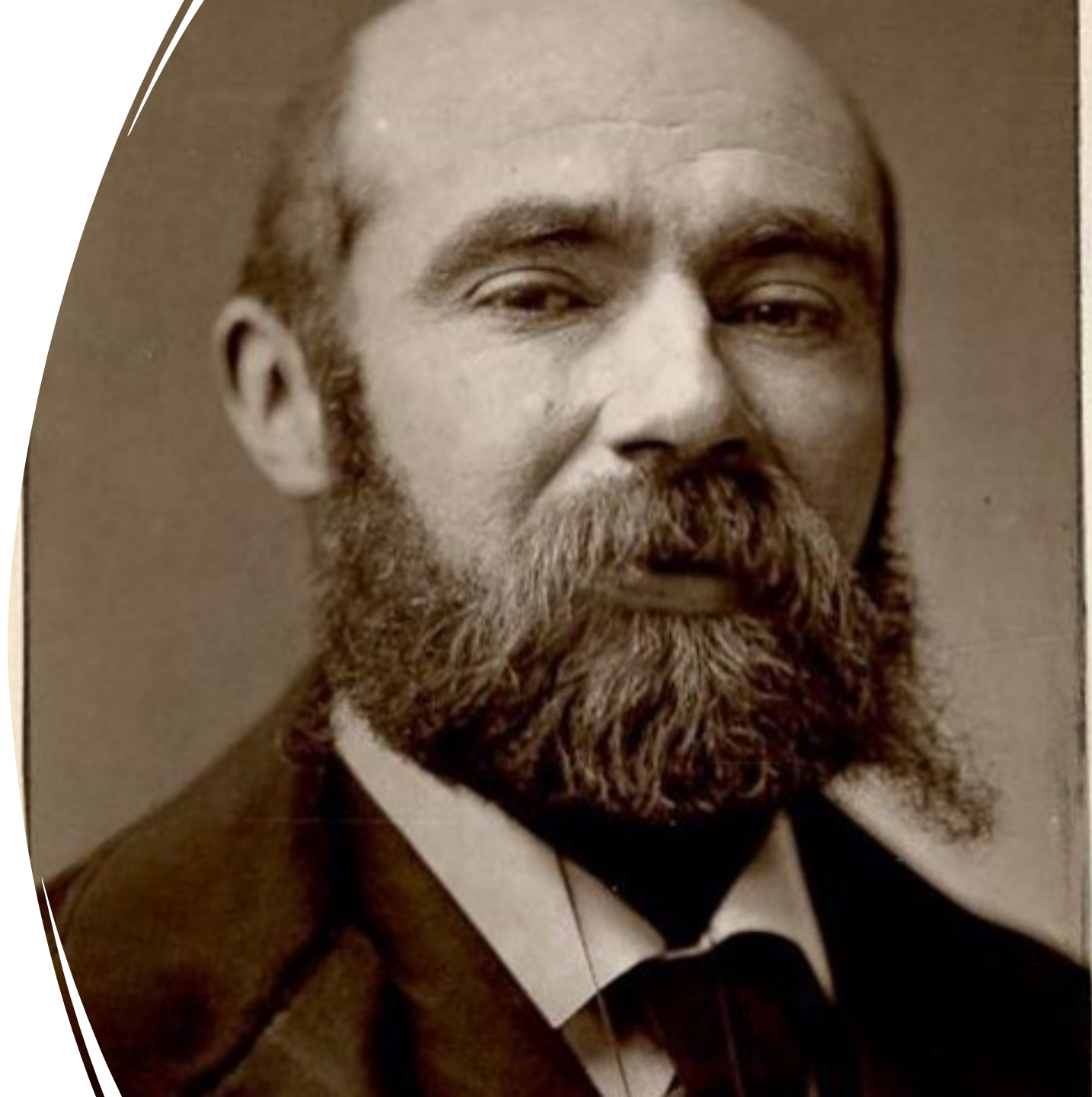
- First comic vampire novel, by the young Pierre Ponson du Terrail. Involves Baron de Nossac, young handsome nobleman marrying beautiful Hélène when bankrupt,
- He honours a debt to his mistress, la duchesse d'A....., and causes his wife's death through grief. She comes back as a vampire and haunts him, killing his wife.
- It is, believe it or not, a comic parody, as well as a historical novel set in 1720s involving the siege of Danzig and real people, and thus is first comic vampire novel. Makes fun of both aristocratic life , culture of preferment and the romances of court life.

La Baronne trépassée?



Paul Féval, père (1816-1887)
French novelist

- *Le Chevalier ténébre* (1860).
- Author of *La Vampire* (1856?; 1865).
- *La Ville vampire* (1874).
- Vampire stories which combine fantastique with real history.



Le Chevalier ténébre (1860)

- A tale set in 1820s, in which two brothers, a Baron Altenheimer and his brother, a monsignor, tell an audience at the Archbishop of Paris's house, that two Hungarian vampires who have continually terrorised the aristocracy of Europe, in Venice, in Spain and elsewhere, will attack that night and rob everyone.
- The attack is, of course, performed by the brothers themselves, which the narrator blames on the spirit of positivism and materialism, which has made people sceptical.
- Also draws from Potocki's *Manuscript Discovered at Sarragossa*.

La Vampire 1865?

- Second of a Two Novel series *La Drame des morts*, united by one continuous character, Sévérin, who is a fencer and Jacobin, and father of a fornicating daughter, Angele.
- *La Vampire* is a historical vampire novel, in which a female vampire, Lila-Addhéma, who must confess her past transgressions before attacking her victims (similar to Altenheimer brothers), seeks revenge on Napoleon just before his coronation in 1804, and tries to join with his would-be assassin, Georges Cadoudal.
- Blends real-life historical characters – Cadoudal, Napoleon, etc – with fictional ones, but is also, through allusion, a comment on contemporary world of the Second Empire, and rule of Napoleon III.
- Like earlier novel, it uses the vampire to complain about how the revolution has destroyed sacerdotal rule, the terror of the vampire unleashed by the revolution, and end of absolute monarchy.

La Ville Vampire 1874

- Another comic work that is also a historical novel – of sorts.
- Told by a woman who accompanied Ann Radcliffe on a journey to Montenegro, after her friend had been kidnapped by a vampire called Monsieur Goetz, and taken back to the vampire city.
- Full of amusing incidental characters, like her servant the brave Irishman “Merry Bones”, who is constantly screaming ‘begorrah!’.

Le Château des Carpathes 1892

- By Jules Verne. This is not necessarily a vampire story, the outlaw Baron Gortz being referred to mainly as a “Chort” rather than a vampire.
- Involved the death of an Italian opera singer, and the attempt by a young hero, Comte de Telek, to find her once more when he hears her singing again and sees her image on the baron’s ramparts.
- Is probably enthused by Verne’s pro-Romanian and anti-Hungarian sympathies vis-à-vis Transylvania. It is also an early work of science fiction.
- Maybe, like *La Dame pâle*, another influence on Stoker’s own desire to write a vampire tale set in Transylvania.

Ajoutées!

- Baudelaire's poem *Le Vampire* (1857), and Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1870) – works which are perhaps somewhat different as they exemplify the dandy's disaffection with contemporary Parisian life, and sense of alienation.
- Obviously later influence on Symbolists and Decadents like Huysmans.

Crucial points

- The fictional vampire in 19th-century France is more frequent and more detailed than in Britain.
- It focuses more on the regional nature of Eastern Europe, and is used to discuss Dalmatia, Serbia, Hungary and Romania, but is also made to comment on the revolution or on financial corruption in a variety of opposed ways.
- It is blended with the very self-conscious frenetique and fantastique genres discussed by Nodier, Ampere and others.
- It is also blended with the historical novel, but is frequently – quite early on – an excuse for comedy and satire.
- The vampire is frequently feminine – either an early version of the femme fatale, or else *Marianne en chaines*!
- Despite femme fatale element there is almost no emphasis on sexual minorities, as in work of Le Fanu, or even as in Dracula's family - less suggestion of homosexuality, or even on the New Woman - although there are occasional suggestions of masculine appropriation, in keeping with tradition of androgyny in early French 19th-century literature.

Pour moi?

- My own novel is heavily influenced by the work of Féval and of Verne, as much as it is about Stoker and *Dracula*
- Itself a historical novel with real people, but a gothic vampire narrative.
- Likewise influenced by the early vampire theatrical adaptations, and connection of vampire to the theatre.
- But I will let you read it to find out how....

MR

'HIGHLY INVENTIVE...
WITH A HINT OF THE FANTASTIC.
A VERY IMMERSIVE READ.'

NEIL ROOT, AUTHOR OF
FRENZY! AND *THE MURDER GANG*

STOKER

AND THE

VAMPIRES

OF THE

A NOVEL

LYCEUM

LEADING SCHOLAR ON **BRAM STOKER** AND THE **GOthic**

MATTHEW GIBSON