Vampire Nationalism: The Political Discourse of Blood Purity Anxieties in Fin-de-Siècle France

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VAMPIRE NATIONALISM

THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF BLOOD PURITY ANXIETIES IN FIN-DE-SIÈCLE FRANCE

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Figure 1. *Le Vampire*, François Avenet, engraving in *Mémoires de M. Claude* (ca. 1882).

Acknowledgements

Welcome to the summary of my entire academic career, summarised in my second master's thesis, 'Vampire Nationalism: The Political Discourse of Blood Purity Anxieties in Fin-de-Siècle France.' This thesis fulfils the graduation requirements for the MA in *Politics, Culture and National Identities, 1789 to the Present* at Leiden University. I conducted research and wrote my thesis from July 2024 to January 2025.

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Sandra Johanna Nieuwland

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Vampire Nationalism

Comme le mercure subtil qui s'insinue par sa pesanteur et sa fluidité à travers tous les pores de la gangue pour s'emparer des plus minimes parcelles de métal précieux qu'elle renferme ; comme le hideux ténia, dont les anneaux parasites suivent dans leurs circonvolutions tous les viscères du corps humain, ainsi le vampire fait courir ses suçoirs jusqu'aux ramifications extrêmes de l'organisme social français pour en pomper toute la substance et en soutirer tous les sucs.

— ÉDOUARD DRUMONT

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Introduction

On a cold night in January 1895, Captain Alfred Dreyfus was sentenced before a jeering crowd outside the *École Militaire* in Paris. Dreyfus was accused of betraying France by passing state secrets to the German enemy, which was considered nothing less than a mortal sin back then.[1] The Jewish-Alsatian Captain maintained his innocence, but the case against him was based on more than only evidence. To his accusers, Dreyfus' guilt was written in his blood. As a Jew, he was an inadmissible parasite within the French body, feeding on its lifeblood and vitality. Dreyfus was merely the symptom of a deeper illness: an infection that coursed through the veins of the French body, threatening its purity and existence.[2] To many Frenchmen, blood mattered more than truth. Blood is something that goes beyond biology; it is an identity, a power, and, as history has shown, a political force.

The French fin-de-siècle experienced an intense historical movement driven by anxieties about a particular identity crisis, an era marked by ambiguity, modernity, and the fear of national decline.[3] Many perceived the era's cultural, social, and political shifts as a violation of the established order: a decadence of French culture or even the degeneration of France.[4] In this climate of existential fear, blame had to be cast on those thought to be 'draining' the national vitality and lifeblood. What vampire-like creature was responsible for sucking on France's once-healthy 'body', causing its blood to become infected?

An analysis of vampire discourse in France can illuminate broader currents in French nationalism as a whole. As a political metaphor, the once-literary figure of the vampire came to embody deeper and more complex issues. It represented the classic example of a threatening outsider within Western culture. In essence, the vampire myth is about an undead creature that rises from the grave to haunt the living, violating the established order.[5] In the second half of the nineteenth century, metaphors related to degenerate vampires became increasingly prominent, with politicians and intellectuals using these images to make sense of the growing identity crisis in France as well as in other West European countries.

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[1] Jean-Denis Bredin, *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, reprint ed. (New York: George Braziller, 1986) 3.
[2] Ibid., 79; *La Croix*, November 7, 1894, cited in Pierre Sorlin, *La Croix et les Juifs* (Paris: A. Colin, 1966) 111-112.
[3] Eugen Weber, *France, Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986) 11.
[4] This analysis builds on research presented in my previous MA thesis. See Sandra Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia: The Relationship Between Purity Discourse and Anti-Germanism in the Works of Nationalist Barrès and Republican Zola'* (Master's thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2023) 6.
[5] Sara Libby Robinson, *Blood Will Tell: Vampires as Political Metaphors Before World War I*, illustrated edition (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011) xv-xvi.

For several reasons, this study focuses on the crucial fin-de-siècle, a period marked by the years between 1885 and 1900. The period marked a significant turning point in Western civilisation since the social, cultural and scientific shifts that emerged in the 1870s fully began to manifest themselves in sophisticated political movements.[6] The rise of science as the dominant social authority was established by groundbreaking theories such as Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and Cesare Lombroso's criminal anthropology.[7] By the turn of the century, modern science had significantly advanced, with developments in blood transfusion, virology, and brain research becoming progressively popular concepts linking cultural critique to biology. The laws of nature provided new frameworks for understanding national decay and tensions.[8]

This period also marked the beginning of sharp gender and class tensions. In Victorian England, women began to collectively fight for their right to vote, property rights, and social equality. In Germany, Karl Marx published *Das Kapital* (1867), which exposed the abuses and exploitation of the proletariat. This was also a crucial period for Germany itself, which emerged as a unified political force only after its victory in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71).[9]

The Franco-Prussian War likely had even more repercussions for France. The post-war years were characterised by significant internal chaos and disorder after the downfall of the Second Empire (1852-1870) and the establishment of the Third Republic (1870-1940). Both psychologically and politically, France would carry the scars of a humiliating defeat.[10] The decisive Battle of Sedan provided the first unmistakable evidence of French *dégénérescence*: the old, weakened French Empire was defeated by the young, powerful German *Reich* in a battle for European domination.[11] All these issues took root during the 1870s but fully developed over the following generation, evolving into serious political movements after 1885.

The end of the fin-de-siècle period, the year 1900, does not mark the death of any of these issues. It also does not mark the end of 'vampire nationalism' as a political application. However, this date does mark a deep and permanent change in West European culture and society, making the fin-de-siècle a unique historical phase that requires a separate exploration. Many nineteenth-century anxieties survived into the twentieth century, but the nature and

[6] Weber, *France,* 11.
[7] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* xx.
[8] Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 14; Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-1918* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 25, 101.
[9] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell*, xx.
[10] Ibid., xix; Weber, *France*, 23.
[11] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie*, 317; Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 6.

essence of these anxieties changed over time.[12] Approaching these developments in the twentieth century requires a different analytical lens since the political landscape was changed by events such as the rising tensions before the First World War, the decline of European empires, and new forms of nationalism. Ultimately, this will require further research in another historical study.

A special emphasis is placed on France, but to explore its potentially 'unique' characteristics, this study also mentions other West-European powers. Despite regional differences, geographical distances, and historical rivalries, France, England, Germany, and Italy all dealt with similar cultural and social anxieties.[13] The fin-de-siècle period saw the rise of various new social groups that challenged the familiar order: Darwinist secularism, Lombroso's criminals, Victorian women, and Marx's bourgeoisie. These radical movements were all regarded as internal threats, destabilising the nation from within.

Interestingly, in France, something more is happening. For example, the word that Guy de Maupassant chose to name his monster, 'Le Horla', is a portmanteau of the French words *hors* and *là*.[14] The title of Maupassant's 1886 horror story sounds like 'the foreigner', 'the outsider', 'the thing from over there' and can be literally translated as 'the one that is over there.' This title perfectly captures the essence of France's victim mentality: a foreign outsider, an encroaching force, is disturbing the French nation as a whole, coming from outside its borders. Rather than only using vampire nationalism to highlight internal threats, as seen in neighbouring countries, France seems to adopt a unique mentality that could be explained by what the nation had experienced in the years before. France takes a different approach than its neighbours in dealing with its national identity crisis, as it presents the threat coming from abroad. The decision to focus on France is justified by its significant role in attributing its decline to external threats, thereby shaping a new character of nationalism.

To completely understand the topic of French nationalism and xenophobia, it is essential to involve vampire nationalism in political discourse as a case study. This case study helps to clarify the character of French nationalism. This analysis gives us a better understanding of what makes French nationalism typical. By examining how contemporary fears were articulated through the vampire figure, we can uncover distinct French responses to perceived threats. Without this symbolic case study, the different characteristics of French nationalism remain underexplored.

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[12] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* xx-xxi.
[13] Ibid., xviii
[14] Guy de Maupassant, *The Horla*, *The Art of the Novella* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2005) afterword by Charlotte Mandell.

The current standard scholarly interpretation is that no nationalism on its own is unique. Counterintuitively, nationalisms borrow elements from each other, and many strands are within them. Comparatist and cultural historian Joep Leerssen used to stress the networked nature of nationalism. He argues that a country's national self-image is not unique. Instead, motifs and concepts cross boundaries.[15] However, when considering vampires in political discourse, this may not be entirely true; some features of French nationalism are not transnational and do not cross borders. This hypothesis does not aim to discredit Leerssen's theory of 'networked nationalism' by proving that France is either extreme or singly unique. However, as a case study, vampire discourse does introduce a new, nuanced way of telling the story of nationalism, where it is able to take on different characteristics. The vampire trope thus functions as a critical analytical tool to better make sense of the character of French nationalism, especially in relation to xenophobia.[16]

This study ties in with the broader historiographical debate on French nationalism and xenophobia. From Maurice Barrès to Marine Le Pen, French politicians have always tried to define what distinguishes France from its counterparts.

It was not until the 1880s that scholars began to defend France's exceptional case compared to nationalism elsewhere. French philosophers in history, such as Ernest Renan and Jules Michelet, first formulated the notion that France is a 'soul', a spiritual principle based on the popular will to form a nation. This philosophical movement opposed the Fichtean conception that nationalism was essentialist, militaristic and ethnically defined, as the philosophers observed in contemporary Germany and Italy.[17] They positioned France as a unique 'people's nation', a living biological entity with a unique spirit, representing it as the beacon of liberty and civilisation.[18] This superiority complex was also embraced by Maurice Barrès in the 1890s and accumulated in the first form of proto-fascism.[19] Barrès added that France was unique in its focus on the spirit of the land and its ancestors. These communal aspects of national identity set France apart from the more individualistic nationalisms of the Anglophone and Teutonic

[15] On Leerssen's idea of 'networked nationalism', see Marjet Brolsma et al., *Networks, Narratives and Nations: Transcultural Approaches to Cultural Nationalism in Modern Europe and Beyond* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022) 19–20.

[16] A literary trope is an artistic effect created using figurative language (words, phrases, images), such as a rhetorical figure.

[17] Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1882); Carol J. Singley, 'Race, Culture, Nation: Edith Wharton and Ernest Renan,' *Twentieth Century Literature* 49, no. 1 (2003): 32–45, 35

[18] Stefan Berger, *The Past as History: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Modern Europe* (*Writing the Nation*; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 85-86.

[19] Robert Soucy, 'Barres and Fascism,' *French Historical Studies* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1967): 67–97, https://doi.org/10.2307/285867, 68.

world.[20] Other historians expanded on Barrès' principles by applying Social Darwinist theories to nationalism, where notions of racial superiority were used to validate French imperialism and war crimes.[21] From this viewpoint, historian Georges Sorel defended the extensive use of violence in war and revolutionary movements, viewing it as a necessary purifying force.[22]

The interbellum marked the beginning of criticism of French nationalism. The rise of fascism in Europe prompted French historians to critically reassess the violent nature of nationalism, as it risked developing dangerous exclusionary practices.[23] From the 1950s onwards, postcolonial critiques of French nationalism emerged from foreign colonial scholars, shedding light on new contradictions in French nationalism and pride. Aimé Césaire argued that French nationalism was built on exclusion and oppression. A sense of cultural superiority characterised it.[24] Frantz Fanon later added that French nationalism, rooted in the Enlightenment ideals of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*, often masked the violent realities of colonial oppression.[25] After World War II, French scholars became increasingly interested in studying the prehistory of antisemitism and particularly its links to French nationalism. This growing interest is reflected in key works that explore how antisemitic ideologies were not simply a by-product of Nazi influence but were deeply rooted in France's own history and nationalist frameworks. Henry Rousso's concept of the 'Vichy Syndrome' further complicated the character of French nationalism.[26] This is the paradox of French national identity: while advocating for universal principles and ideals, it often fell short in practice.[27] The French struggle to confront its dark chapter in history reveals the nature of French nationalism, characterised by an ongoing discussion about its past.

Since the 1990s, the far-right nationalism of the Le Pens has revived the biological determinism of nationalists like Barrès and Sorel from a century earlier. The nation and its 'people' are redefined as a shared blood heritage, identified with the family and the body, rooted in fears of decline and the perceived invasion of parasitic outsiders. The return to these anti-egalitarian and populist measures to halt France's 'suicide' since containing the powerful Germany after its (re)unification in 1989 has brought history full circle.[28] In his book *La*

[20] Ibid., 75; Maurice Barrès, 'La Terre et les Morts,' *La Patrie Française* (3e conférence) (Paris, 1899) 7.
[21] Gabriel Monod, 'Le Nationalisme,' *Revue des Deux Mondes* 1898, no. 1 (January 1898): 30-34.
[22] Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1920).
[23] Julien Benda, *La Trahison des clercs* (Paris: Grasset, 1927); Benda denounced the intellectuals who chose nationalism, xenophobia, racism, Marxism and militarism.
[24] Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal,* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1939).
[25] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967) 18-19.
[26] Henry Rousso, *Vichy et la mémoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987) 45-46.
[27] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. Howard Greenfeld (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991) 68-69.
[28] Stanley Hoffmann, 'The Nation, Nationalism, and After: The Case of France,' *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, delivered at Princeton University, March 3–4, 1993: 217-282, 257.

Contre-Démocratie (2006; Counter-Democracy), Historian Pierre Rosanvallon provides a famous critique of political philosophy as he outlines the complex relationship between the people and power in populist discourse. The 'people' are a collective ideal with diverse, conflicting interests and identities. A representation of '*le peuple*' is difficult to achieve because there is no single, homogeneous 'popular will. Nationalism claims to speak directly for 'the people' when, in fact, it only represents a part of society. It is an ideology actively supported to maintain hierarchies, rising from senses of insecurity and uncertainty.[29]

The historiographical debate on French nationalism has shifted from glorification to critical examination. Yet, the French persistent fear of the national Other keeps being a recurring theme. In times of crisis, when senses of national insecurity and uncertainty increase, a desire for a more homogeneous national order emerges. Anthropologist Mary Douglas' purity theory provides a valuable framework for mapping the typical characteristics of French nationalism. She argues that ideals of purity transcend notions of hygiene and health and can symbolise the cultural boundaries that societies tend to create in times of national crisis.[30] In this contextual framework, politics can no longer be understood without culture.

From a cultural and historical point of view, historian Arnold Labrie has examined fin-de-siècle purity thinking in his work *Zuiverheid en Decadentie* (2001; Purity and Decadence). Extending on Douglas, he argues that concepts such as purity, pollution, and disease reflect deeper societal anxieties and serve to safeguard a perceived national identity from external influences. As a result, nationalism becomes intertwined with purity discourse, often expressed through a language of health, hygiene and cleanliness.[31] Labrie's analysis, which connects the concept of purity thinking to French nationalism, aligns closely with this research. Purity discourse functions as a pivotal link that connects nationalism to vampire discourse.

By using vampire discourse as a case study, this research contributes to the broader historiographical debate on the different characteristics of French nationalism. It introduces a new perspective on the story of nationalism, showing how nationalism can take on distinct forms and characteristics. Therefore, this research offers a more inclusive understanding of nationalism as well as the most extreme and ugly forms of xenophobia. This study asks the following question:

[29] Pierre Rosanvallon, *La contre-démocratie: La politique à l'âge de la défiance* (Paris: Seuil, 2006) 5, 36.
[30] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London, UK: Routledge, 2010) 22.
[31] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie*, 13.

> ‘In what ways was the political discourse of vampirism and blood purity employed to reflect and represent nationalist anxieties in fin-de-siècle France?’

By addressing this question, the goal is to understand French nationalism better. The vampire symbol gave French nationalists a language and conceptual framework to articulate perceived threats to national purity. This language shaped political rhetoric and developed a culture that intertwined with rising nationalism. Thus, vampires also fed French nationalism. That is why words and rhetoric are so essential to investigate.

This research question is based on the work of other historians. After the Linguistic Turn of the mid-twentieth century, scholars in history started arguing that language is not just a neutral tool for describing reality but actively shapes people’s perceptions and social structures.[32] For example, Foucauldian discourse analysis and power relationships highlighted how language constructs social hierarchies and reinforces authority. The study of rhetoric and the history of concepts became increasingly important to historians in the 1970s because it exposed the ideas embedded in language. This shift in thinking paved the way for the Cultural Turn in the 1980s, which inspired historians to see culture, encompassing symbols, practices, beliefs, and representations, as central to understanding historical change and human behaviour. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu increasingly recognised that myths, symbols, and cultural practices were deeply interwoven with contemporary societal anxieties and power structures.[33]

The scholarship of vampirism also experiences the Linguistic and Cultural Turns. In the first half of the twentieth century, literary historians such as occultist Montague Summers had been mainly interested in vampires from a literary point of view.[34] It was not until the 1980s that cultural historians started to research the decisive significance of these vampire myths. Research on the subject began to shift when vampirism became reinterpreted as a projection of deeper societal and psychological anxieties.[35] Paul Barber’s analysis, *Vampires, Burial, and Death* (1980), is particularly notable for taking a groundbreaking scientific approach to vampirism, offering a systematic historical explanation for the origins and enduring appeal of these vampire legends.[36] Barber’s work has been instrumental in reinterpreting vampirism as not merely mythological and literary but also as a reflection of cultural and scientific concerns

[32] Rob Carson et al., ‘The Linguistic Turn and the Cultural Turn,’ in *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*, ed. Bruce R. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) 1754.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Montague Summers, *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1928) 68.
[35] Ibid., 278; Erik Butler, *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732-1933* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2010) 18.
[36] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

surrounding death. This has prompted other historians to investigate more closely why these myths became so deeply ingrained in society and resonated so much at certain times.

To fully understand the deep resonance of these myths in the fin-de-siècle era, we must first go to England. Much of the current research into the resonance of vampire discourse focuses on one specific time, place and text. The time and place are late Victorian Britain, and the text in question is Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).[37] Literary historians were the first to significantly contribute to the analysis of Count Dracula as more than just a fictional character. Franco Moretti explores how the Count embodies Victorian anxieties from a Marxist economic perspective: Dracula's journey to Britain, the world's economic superpower at the time, is symbolic of the capitalist fears of the time, he argues.[38] Christopher Craft examines *Dracula*'s themes of transgressive sexuality and gender, analysing how the Gothic novel projects repressed erotic desires.[39] He particularly relates it to 'the corruption of English womanhood.'[40]

While most historical studies on vampire discourse focus on either economic or gender hierarchies, some historians have explored alternative (trans)national interpretations of *Dracula*. Stephen Arata examines British fears of racial pollution and 'reverse colonisation', with Count Dracula symbolising the threat posed by 'backward' invaders from the colonies.[41] Jules Zanger builds on Arata's analysis by arguing that *Dracula* embodies the antisemitic anxieties prevalent in the fin-de-siècle, identifying Jewish immigrants as potential colonisers threatening Britain.[42] Jack Halberstam connects this antisemitic imagery with Dracula's 'aversion to the holy cross, his blood-sucking attacks, and his avaricious relation to money.'[43] However, in France, the vampire metaphor differed from these literary and cultural interpretations and took on a more political character. It was rooted in national vulnerability and trauma and served as a linguistic framework for nationalist discourse, reflecting France's unique historical vulnerabilities, thus distinguishing it from the literary and cultural tropes in Britain.

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[37] Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, Cosimo Classics Literature, reprint ed. (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2009); Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* xxiii.
[38] Franco Moretti, 'Dialectic of Fear,' *New Left Review* 136, no. 67 (November 4, 1982): 67-85, 69.
[39] Christopher Craft, ''Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's Dracula,' *Representations*8 (1984): 107–133, https://doi.org/10.2307/2928560, 110.
[40] Ibid., 129.
[41] Stephan D Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: Dracula and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonisation,' *Victorian Studies* 33, no. 4 (1990): 621–45, https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350391710.ch-007, 622.
[42] Jules Zanger, 'A Sympathetic Vibration: Dracula and the Jews,' *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 34, no. 1 (February 1991): 33–44, 33.
[43] Jack Halberstam, 'Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's 'Dracula.'' *Victorian Studies* 36, no. 3 (1993): 333–52, 337.

The existing scholarship on vampirism still shows limitations and is overly fixated on *Dracula*. Studies that examine broader themes beyond vampires, such as the interplay of blood, purity, and politics, provide more valuable insights for this research. Psychoanalyst Daniel Pick explores the parasitical imagery of the novel in light of Max Nordau's degeneration theory.[44] Solange Leibovici's essays have dealt deeply with right-wing writers from a psychoanalytic perspective.[45] Based on the psychoanalytic ideas of Pick and Leibovici, Labrie compares purity discourse in England, Germany and France at the turn of the century from a cultural-historical perspective. As a scholar focused on the intersection of literature and disease, the literary historian draws essential parallels between biology and cultural criticism. However, in researching the vampire myth, Labrie also fails to focus beyond Victorian England and *Dracula*.[46] He too, disregards the deeper resonance of degeneration theory in France, where, as Pick noted, concerns about bloodlines and nationalism were much more pronounced and more closely linked to the nation's political anxieties.[47] Currently, Tomislav Longinović has been the only researcher in vampire studies to relate the kind of vampire rhetoric to the ideology of nationalism and xenophobic politics. However, in his work, the literary scholar only focuses on the imagery of Serbians in the late twentieth century.[48] Sara Libby Robinson's work on vampires as political metaphors plays a crucial role in this research on vampire nationalism. *Blood Will Tell* (2011) examines how blood and vampire-related imagery were used to express social and cultural anxieties. The comparative historian examines how a coherent political metaphor emerged, particularly in an Anglo-Saxon context, but also occasionally addresses France, touching upon the theme of nationalism.[49] Despite their limitations, all these mentioned works collectively represent a significant shift in understanding the vampire as an embodiment of political nationalist anxieties.

Vampire discourse is significant beyond England as it adapts to different contexts and is able to take on new forms. The existing historical scholarship on vampirism leaves a significant gap in understanding how the vampire myth operates outside these contexts. This study fills this gap by shifting the focus away from Victorian Britain and *Dracula* and even from literature about vampires. Whatever subtext *Dracula* and other vampire fiction may contain, the real

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[44] Pick, *Faces of Degeneration,* 24-25.
[45] Solange Leibovici, 'Zuiverheid als Utopie: De Foute Kinderen van Pasteur,' Chapter in *De Hang naar Zuiverheid: De Cultuur van het Moderne Europa*, ed. Rob van der Laarse et al. (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1998) 93.
[46] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie,* 14.
[47] Pick, *Faces of Degeneration,* 70, 102.
[48] Timoslav Longinović, *Vampire Nation: Violence as Cultural Imaginary* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011).
[49] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 133.

essence of this study lies in the casual references to vampires as writers, politicians, and artists discuss broader political issues.[50]

Although an interdisciplinary group of cultural and literary historians have long been intrigued by the vampire metaphor, political historians have done too little to contextualise this cultural phenomenon fully outside the context of *Dracula*. Political research can shed light on why the image of the vampire resonated so strongly within French nationalist rhetoric. By examining vampire discourse as a historical case study in fin-de-siècle France, this research seeks to reveal distinctly French features that have been overshadowed by the overtly fixated attention given to Victorian England. This study holds new importance for political theorists as it helps uncover the distinct characteristics of French nationalism.

Vampire nationalism, as a case study, is a method to tell something meaningful about the unique characteristics of French nationalism. In this analysis, the vampire is not studied as a fictional character but as a linguistic framework that can reflect and represent deeper anxieties about national identity, cultural purity, and external threats. It is thus important to also consider what exactly typically characterises a vampire. Although vampire stories have been very versatile throughout the centuries, they all include the key aspect that a vampire traditionally feeds himself on the blood of living beings, which leads to the infection of his victims. The vampire's association with parasitism and blood containment is important, as it evokes fears of the spread of a dangerous, almost pathological condition. When framed in a nationalist context, this pathology is linked to national infection, aligning with portrayals of the nation as a physiological 'body' that has become sick. Parasitism, contagion and infection are the vampire's core elements that need to be considered in this study.

To understand how discourses around vampirism and blood purity were used to reflect and represent nationalist anxieties in fin-de-siècle France, a focus is placed on three types of primary sources: literary novels, political pamphlets and newspaper articles. Literature brings to light hidden and repressed fears. However, it does so by giving them creative form. This comment requires the necessary care on the part of the interpreter. Literature cannot be seen as a reservoir of historical data that can be used directly to reconstruct an external reality. On the other hand, perhaps no other type of source offers the historian such direct access to the reality of the past, where it is a matter of penetrating a world of feelings and fantasies. But even at this level, the past manifests itself only in an encrypted form.[51] Émile Zola's cycle *Les Rougon-*

[50] Ibid., xxv.
[51] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie*, 35.

Macquart (1870–1893) embeds vampiric metaphors to offer social critiques, depicting different groups as vampires draining the nation's resources. Political pamphlets, on the other hand, engage with nationalist discourse and ideology more directly. The ideas formulated in political treaties serve as more explicit expressions of fears, often straightforwardly addressing issues of national identity, cultural contamination, and moral decay. A prime example is Édouard Drumont's antisemitic treatise *La France Juive* (1886; Jewish France), which explicitly attacks Jews as 'parasites' exploiting the French nation. Newspaper articles showcase the reflection of these societal desires and fears beyond the intellectual spheres. For example, several articles in *Le Petit Parisien* discuss the perverse nature of criminal necrophiliac cases, drawing parallels with vampirism. This offers better insights into how anxieties permeated broader society and how the public responded to such themes.

These three forms of primary sources, which form the main body of this research, have been collected almost exclusively from the digital library of the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, called *Gallica.* The *BnF* collects, catalogues, preserves, enriches, and communicates the national documentary heritage.[52] A relevant corpus of sources was identified through keyword searches such as 'vampire', 'blood', 'purity', 'contamination' and 'decomposition', as well as through an exploration of already curated collections.

The research method consists of a close reading of selected primary sources and secondary literature research, with an emphasis on the rhetorical dimensions of the texts. It takes a particular interest in how the ideas behind the words reflect a deeper meaning. As a historical study, this research also identifies hidden and suppressed political fears in the rhetoric by providing historical context. For example, in Maupassant's horror story, *Le Horla*, the word 'vampire' is only mentioned once.[53] Yet, it will become clear that the entire novel revolves around a foreign, parasitic creature draining the lifeblood of the French people. This highlights that the themes of blood purity, contamination, and decay are just as crucial to the narrative as the explicit use of the word 'vampire.'

By studying the texts and letting the primary sources speak for themselves, this analysis reveals the hidden attitudes and prejudices of the place and time in which these texts were written, whether the author was aware of them or not. The statistics or factual statements that these authors claim to use to prove their points are not as important or meaningful.[54] The language these writers use, often based on a collective consciousness of cultural assumptions

[52] Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 'Gallica Digital Library,' accessed October 6, 2024, https://gallica.bnf.fr/accueil/fr/content/accueil-fr?mode=desktop.
[53] Guy De Maupassant, *Le Horla* (Paris, FR: Ernest Flammarion, 1886) 38.
[54] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* xix.

and clichés, is essential to understanding the underlying anxieties expressed in nationalist works.[55]

Fin-de-siècle France and its nationalist anxieties are closely linked to the spirit of *révanchisme* and Germanophobia (Teutophobia). Consequently, this thesis will mainly look for national representations of Germans as vampire-like figures. Furthermore, antisemitism also appears as a *leitmotif* throughout this analysis, reflecting the 'collective consciousness' of the time.[56]

This brings us to a further discussion of the structure of this study. This research addresses the unique political discourse of blood purity and vampirism through four thematic chapters. Chapter One explores the versatile functions of the vampire as a projection screen in the general history of Europe, which reached its high point during the fin-de-siècle. Over time, the vampire evolved from early modern Eastern European folklore to a powerful symbol of the cultural, political, and scientific anxieties in fin-de-siècle Western Europe. This chapter examines why the implications of vampirism as a political phenomenon resonated so strongly within fin-de-siècle Western Europe.

Chapter Two examines the anxieties of fin-de-siècle Western Europe and explores how these concerns shaped the different features of vampirism. It analyses how the political discourse of blood purity and vampirism reflected and represented internal anxieties of the social Other. By discussing how vampire discourse was used in other West European nations, this chapter highlights why France's distinct historical context led to different political representations of the vampire myth.

Chapter Three continues explaining why the vampire myth resonated in different political ways in France due to its historical context. Instead of focusing on internal anxieties, this chapter analyses the specific application of vampirism as both a reflection and a representation of external nationalist anxieties in fin-de-siècle France. It examines how the political discourse of blood purity and vampirism was employed to reflect and represent nationalist anxieties in fin-de-siècle France.

Chapter Four analyses how the convergence of internal and external fears in fin-de-siècle French political discourse, as described in Chapters Two and Three, contributed to the

[55] Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2016) 19, 98-103.
[56] Ibid., 19; Building on Edward Said's concept of the 'cultural archive', Gloria Wekker understands 'collective consciousness' as 'a repository of memory': 'the memories, the knowledge, and affect with regard to race that were deposited within metropolitan populations and the power relations embedded within them.'

representation of the Jew as the ultimate inadmissible vampire threatening French national health and vitality. Finally, the conclusion answers how the political discourse of blood purity and vampirism was employed to reflect and represent nationalist anxieties in fin-de-siècle France.

Chapter One: Fin-de-Siècle Western Europe

The Vampire Travels East to West

The history of the belief in blood-sucking creatures starts in Eastern Europe during the early modern period, where it was mainly rooted in phenomena such as premature burials and misconceptions about the decomposition of the human body. The belief in troubled spirits was an attempt by pre-industrial societies to make sense of the natural, often mysterious, processes of death and decomposition.[57] Vampires properly originated in Romanian seventieth-century folklore, particularly the mythology of the *strigòi* and *stryges*. These troubled spirits are said to have risen from the grave due to unholy burials or the disruption of sacred rites.[58]

The vampire archetype later gained prominence around the Balkans during the early eighteenth century. In 1725, the word 'Vampyre' first appeared in the Serbian legends of Arnold Paole and Peter Plogojowitz, two Austrian soldiers who, during the Ottoman-Habsburg Wars, returned from the grave to haunt Serbian villagers. These legends depicted the soldier vampires as 'shrouded ghosts who caused death and desolation.'[59] This new link between vampires and contagion marks the first time that vampire figures have been linked to a widespread fear of infection and disease.[60]

Stories about vampire sightings made their way to the German states, where men of science and natural philosophers began hearing about macabre observations by Austrian occupying forces in Central Europe. These reports were published in scientific journals and pamphlets. Ultimately, they sparked heated debates among German scientists, philosophers and theologians about the possible existence of vampires.[61] Theologian Michael Ranfft was among the first to approach the belief in vampires with a methodical examination, reflective of the Enlightenment's growing emphasis on reason and empirical observation. In his work *De Mastication Mortuorum in Tumulis* (1728; On the Chewing of the Dead in their Tombs), Ranfft explored the vampire myth by connecting it to the physical decomposition of the corpse. This was based on the discovery that when graves were dug up, some corpses had eaten away the inside of their coffins or even their own limbs. Conform to his time, Ranfft wrote his scientific

[57] Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death,* 5-9.
[58] Créméné and Françoise Zemmal, *La Mythologie Du Vampire En Roumanie* (Monaco, Monaco: Rocher, 1981) 11-12.
[59] Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death,* 5.
[60] Ibid., 16.
[61] Heidi Crawford, 'The Cultural-Historical Origins of the Literary Vampire in Germany,' *Journal of Dracula Studies* 7, no. 1 (2005): 1–9, 1-2.

report in what he called 'a rationalist manner' in contrast to what he called 'the emotional and enthusiastic styles of former writings about vampiric corpses.'[62]

This rational examination of the vampire myth was soon picked up in Northern France, where the Alsatian cleric and theologian Augustin Calmet was the first to systematically distinguish vampires from any other types of 'revenants' in his *Traité sur les Apparitions des Esprits* (1751; Treatise on the Apparitions of Spirits). Calmet described vampires as 'corporeal revenants' in contrast to the immaterial nature of ghosts and other spirits. He extended his analysis of vampirism by incorporating scientific approaches, exploring the phenomenon through the lenses of biology, psychology and chemistry.[63] In earlier pre-industrial European societies, these myths mainly carried religious connotations, often emerging as a way to explain and cope with the otherwise inexplicable.[64] However, the Enlightenment marked a significant turning point in the approach to these legends. Ranfft and Calmet aimed to replace superstitious explanations with scientific ones.

On the other hand, the Enlightenment itself also proved to be an excellent breeding ground for even more horror stories. The thought of something that could not be explained by empirical knowledge or science became all the more frightening. As Europe moved away from old religious traditions and embraced new industrial and scientific advances, it eagerly started exhuming buried corpses, something heavily opposed by the Church.[65] This became the age of Italian Catholic vampire scholars such as Archbishop Giuseppe Davanzati, who explored the unholy and satanic act of exhuming bodies, and Pope Benedict XIV. The latter provides the only papal document that has ever spoken about vampires.[66] The Italian pope wrote about the (in)appropriate treatment of the sacred bodies of saints and devoted an entire chapter, *De Vanitate Vampyrorum* (1752; On the Vanity of Vampires), to 'the cruel mistreatment and mutilation of bodies considered to be vampires.'[67] To end the fascination surrounding vampires, several European monarchs, such as Empress Maria Theresa of Austria and Frederick II of Prussia, enacted laws banning the exhumation of graves and the desecration of cadavers.[68]

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[62] Ibid., 2.
[63] Augustin Calmet, Henry Christmas, and Brett R. Warren, *Treatise on the Apparitions of Sprits and on Vampires or Revenants of Hungary, Moravia, et al. the Complete Volumes I & II* (Charleston, SC: Brett R Warren, 2015).
[64] Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death,* 5.
[65] Crawford, 'The Cultural-Historical Origins of the Literary Vampire in Germany', 2.
[66] Eleanor Bourg Nicholson, 'A Taste for Blood: Vampires, Catholicism, and Popular Culture,' Catholic World Report, October 22, 2021.
[67] Benedict XIV, *De servorum Dei beatificatione et sanctorum canonizatione*, vol. 3 (Venice: Ex Typographia Remondiniana, 1752).
[68] Crawford, 'The Cultural-Historical Origins of the Literary Vampire in Germany', 3.

However, the vampire figure continued to captivate the public imagination. The Romantic interest in folklore and the mystical attraction to death ensured that the vampire figure also subtly began to make its entrance into literature during the second half of the eighteenth century. The poem *Der Vampir* (1748; The Vampire) by Heinrich August Ossenfelder was published, followed by other German poems such as *Lenore* (1773) by Gottfried Bürger and Goethe's *Die Braut von Korinth* (1797; The Bride of Corinth), ultimately also reaching Great Britain with the publication of Robert Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801).[69] In Britain during the Regency era, it is said that the vampire figure began to take on a more charismatic and sophisticated character. The charming aristocratic vampire debuted in John Polidori's prose *The Vampyre* (1819), which featured an undead hero inspired by Lord Byron and became the precursor to the gothic vampire genre of fantasy fiction.[70]

Polidori's work was highly successful and contributed to the growing popularity, or rather obsession, surrounding deathly creatures. Victorian England witnessed the popular rise of different Gothic literary monsters, with Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831), Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), and Robert Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) standing out as *magna opera* deeply concerned with decay, moral insanity, and the blurring boundaries between life and death.

The popularisation of these macabre stories in Western Europe reflects the intense fear of death, disease and being buried alive, which peaked during the cholera epidemics of the late nineteenth century. In *La Mort réelle et la Mort Apparente* (1897; Death, Real and Apparent), French physician Séverin Icard details twelve cases of individuals mistakenly declared dead by their physicians. This condition, known as apparent death, represents an intermediate state between life and death, he states. If diagnosed and treated in time, individuals would be able to recover; however, if neglected or prematurely buried, it can lead to actual death, such as in cases of drowning.[71] Fairy tale writer Hans Cristian Andersen tried to save himself this by pinning a note to his nightgown each night with the words: 'I only appear to be dead.' The composer Frédéric Chopin left instructions asking for his heart to be cut open to ensure he was dead.[72] Moreover, the Italian invention of the 'safety coffin' in 1897 featured a system where a person could ring a bell from inside the coffin if they happened to still be alive.[73] Towards the

[69] Ibid., 4.
[70] Christopher Frayling, *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula* (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1992) 108.
[71] Dr. Séverin Icard, *La Mort réelle et la Mort Apparente* (Paris: Éditions Victor Masson, 1897).
[72] Daily Express, 'People Feared Being Buried Alive so Much They Invented Safety Coffins,' *Daily Express*, June 28, 2021.
[73] Ibid.

end of the fin-de-siècle, Western Europe had become a fertile ground for depicting fears through the vampire figure. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) stands out as the most significant embodiment of the Western vampire, even if it has little in common with its folkloric ancestors from the East.[74]

The Pursuit of the Purity Ideal

The question arises as to why a creature mainly found in old legends from Eastern Europe would have such a strong appeal to the West-European fin-de-siècle audience. Literature is a good representation of the preoccupation of an era, and Stoker's novel is a prime example of this. The novel delves into contemporary anxieties surrounding the dangers of the rapidly expanding metropolis: the rising crime, the moral degradation brought about by prostitution and alcoholism, the crushing anonymity of the masses, suicides and disease all haunting the overcrowded slums. These themes are interwoven into the gruesome figure of Count Dracula himself, whose portrayal as the unknown Other evokes fears of societal contamination.[75]

Stoker's Transylvanian Count does not merely invade England's shores but seeps into its veins, spreading death and corruption. The novel mirrors the pervasive anxieties of an era grappling with mass immigration and outbreaks of diseases such as tuberculosis, typhus, and cholera. For example, in 1892, tuberculosis alone accounted for 12 per cent of all deaths in England and Wales, symbolising the very real terror of invisible threats infiltrating the nation. Dracula's predation serves as an allegory for these fears. His vampiric bite echoes the perceived threat of immigrants bringing moral and physical decay to the heart of the empire. Through its macabre lens, *Dracula* captures a world fixated on the fragility of urban civilisation intertwined with death and disorder.[76]

For contemporaries of the fin-de-siècle, the 'New World' heralded chaos, erasing the established boundaries and causing confusion among the categories that had once defined the familiar order.[77] Sensitivities around what is considered 'pure' and 'impure' are heightened during periods of profound social and political change. This was clearly visible in the turbulent decades of the fin-de-siècle when intellectuals were preoccupied with a certain 'European

[74] Créméné Zemmal, *La Mythologie Du Vampire En Roumanie*, 89.
[75] Arnold Labrie, 'De Roman Als Historische Bron,' *Groniek: Gronings Historisch Tijdschrift* 156 (January 1, 2002): 405-414, 412.
[76] Zanger, 'A Sympathetic Vibration: Dracula and the Jews', 36.
[77] François Proulx, *Victims of the Book: Reading and Masculinity in Fin-De-Siècle France* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2019) 56; Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie,* 316.

identity crisis.'[78] The vampire symbolises this breakdown of boundaries: once-established borders between life and death, self and other, purity and corruption. Therefore, vampirism also engaged with pressing fin-de-siècle issues, using the supernatural to safeguard order, purity, and tradition in an increasingly uncertain modern world. The quest for purity is therefore accompanied by fears of change, ambiguity and transgression of boundaries.[79]

The vampire transcends its role as a fictional monster, as it becomes a powerful symbol of deeper societal concerns about purity, stability, and threats to the health and integrity of society. Here, a vital connection is drawn between physical well-being and social order. Hygienists played a significant role in tackling the fin-de-siècle problem regarding public health in Western Europe. They were able to use data to show where epidemics occurred and discovered that deaths from cholera occurred mainly in areas without clean water. These findings had significant political implications: the responsibility for ensuring clean water and preventing disease was transferred to the state government. As a result, the state began to intervene more and more in citizens' daily lives. It became possible to pinpoint who was responsible for a disease or a death. In this framework, vampire stories can also be regarded as a kind of 'humanitarian narrative.' They reflect societal concerns about suffering and the quest to improve it and highlight those responsible for compromising societal health.[80]

The desire for purity was not limited to physical health anymore but extended to social and cultural domains, influencing everything from hygiene practices to nationalist ideologies. The pursuit of purity, whether in the form of a clean body, an uncorrupted culture or an idealised nation, often led to an obsession with avoiding anything perceived as unknown, impure or foreign. This fuelled xenophobia, racism, and the fear of the Other.[81] The vampire, a creature straddling the boundary between life and death, emerged as a symbol of these anxieties tied to mortality, contamination, and disrupting social and religious norms. The distinction between life and death, hygienic and unhygienic, and the pure and impure became central to the vampire myth, reflecting a broader pursuit of the purity ideal.[82]

[78] Labrie, 'Purity and Danger in Fin-de-Siècle Culture', 10; Weber, *Fin De Siècle*, 11.
[79] Labrie, 'De Roman Als Historische Bron', 411.
[80] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie*, 181.
[81] Douglas, *Purity and Danger,* vii.
[82] Labrie, 'Purity and Danger in Fin-de-Siècle Culture', 272.

Diagnosing the Illness of Degeneration

Pursuing the purity ideal aligns closely with fin-de-siècle cultural preoccupations of a strange disease undermining national strength. From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, optimism seems increasingly less durable. In Western Europe, the recurring revolutions, the epidemics, and, above all, life in the big city are a source of concern and have become a public debate that doctors, hygienists and psychiatrists increasingly dominated.[83] The earliest theory of degeneration, in 1857 by Psychiatrist Bénédict Morel, argued that communities can stagnate or even decline if they are affected by an unfavourable environment.[84] Racial theorist Arthur de Gobineau, considered the father of racist ideology, stated that if a person is exposed to such a trait or disease for too long, it can become part of a person's blood, the place where all physical and behavioural characteristics are located.[85] The mixing of defective 'black' blood with that of someone else, Gobineau argued, resulted in people no longer having 'the same blood in its veins, having gradually affected the quality of the collective blood.'[86]

Decades later, the physician Max Nordau was inspired by the works of Morel and de Gobineau. Nordau's *Entartung* (1892; Degeneration) employed biomedical notions to establish a more general concept of social criticism. *Entartung* was particularly groundbreaking in establishing a widespread discourse on social degeneration, thereby giving science a cultural dimension. He believed degeneration occurred through environmental poisons, specifically the contemporary urban landscape.[87] According to Nordau, poor urban conditions such as fermented alcoholic beverages, tobacco, opium, arsenic, contaminated food and diseases such as swamp fever, syphilis and tuberculosis brought unfavourable influences that reduced a person's vital forces.[88] For Nordau, urban environments had produced an 'increase in degenerates of all kinds.'[89] The fin-de-siècle period, he described, was in itself a 'period of degeneration', a physical disease associated with hysteria and bacteria.[90]

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[83] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie*, 324.
[84] Michel Coddens, 'La Théorie De l'Hérédité-Dégénérescence. Morel, Lombroso, Magnan Et Les Autres,' *L'en-Je Lacanien* 27, no. 2 (2016): 123-149, 125-126; B. A. Morel, *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives* (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1857).
[85] Michael D. Biddiss, *Father of Racist Ideology; the Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau by Michael D. Biddiss* (New York, NY: Weybright and Talley, 1970) 123.
[86] Ibid., 114; Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1853–1855); Robinson, *Blood Will Tell*, 49-50.
[87] Max Nordau, *Degeneration, 1893* (New York, NY: Appleton and Company, 1895) 34–5.
[88] Ibid.; Robinson, *Blood Will Tell*, 49.
[89] Max Nordau, *Degeneration,* 36.
[90] Ibid., 34–5.

The ideas of degeneration found a wide audience among European politicians and intellectuals, who were already concerned about the weakening and decadence of societies. By the 1890s, degeneration was no longer just a medical theory about abnormal pathologies but was seen as a social theory used to explain various 'illnesses' from which European countries were suffering, such as alcoholism, prostitution, criminality, suicide, and the inability or unwillingness to reproduce.[91] In this sense, the theory of degeneration can be regarded as the diagnosis these intellectuals made for the 'disease' of the national 'bodies.'[92]

As a social pathology, the language of degeneration covers a wide range of phenomena that seem characteristic of modern life and threaten the perceived established order. The vagueness surrounding the concept is precisely what gives it its power: it provides the certainty of a scientific explanation for the many invisible dangers. The invisible dangers are named and reduced to a deeper abnormality. Degeneration is, above all, the disease of the Other, of all others who do not fit well within the purity ideal. And where that order rests on the notions of boundaries, discipline and hygiene, the Other is quickly labelled as 'sick', 'dirty' or 'contagious.' This explains why the implications of vampirism as a political phenomenon resonated so strongly within fin-de-siècle Western Europe; it was able to diagnose the disease and identify the infectious agent.

[91] Valerie Pedlar, *The Most Dreadful Visitation: Male Madness in Victorian Fiction* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2006) 15-21; Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 13.
[92] Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, 77; Jack Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 86.

Chapter Two: Internal Threats in Fin-de-Siècle Western Europe

Economic Violence

Robinson argues that the first documented metaphor of the word 'Vampyre' in Western Europe occurred in an economic context. A British pamphlet published in 1741 complained about Dutch financiers who undermined the efforts of British merchants who were trying to bring wealth into the country. These people were called the 'vampires of society', draining the Kingdom's resources without contributing to its prosperity.[93] In *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (1764; Philosophical Dictionary), Voltaire was the first to extend the economic metaphor to represent the entire exploitation of wealth by the elite. About stockjobbers, brokers, and men of business, the philosopher states:

> On n'entendait point parler de vampires à Londres, ni même à Paris. J'avoue que dans ces deux villes il y eut des agioteurs, des traitants, des gens d'affaires, qui sucèrent en plein jour le sang du peuple; mais ils n'étaient point morts, quoique corrompus. Ces suceurs véritables ne demeuraient pas dans des cimetières, mais dans des palais fort agréables.[94]

This passage contrasts traditional vampires with greedy capitalists in the cities who exploit the population during the day, suggesting that the real 'vampires' of society are those who profit from the suffering of others, not supernatural beings. Voltaire's metaphor became a successful *leitmotif* at the end of the eighteenth century, as it resonated deeply with the fervent revolutionary spirit. Voltaire also sought to criticise the nobility and the clergy as those who 'sucked the blood of the common people but are certainly not dead.'[95] As early as the French Revolution, the word 'vampire' commonly referred to the wealthy bourgeoisie as opposed to the commoners. In fact, it had become the entire *Ancien Régime* that was criticised.[96]

In the context of economic injustice, the vampire metaphor took on a new, more systematic form nearly a century later in emerging industrial Germany through the writings of the

[93] Cited in Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 74.
[94] Ibid.; Voltaire, *vol. VII, of Part I*, 143-144; Vampires were not heard of in London, nor even in Paris. I admit that in these two cities there were speculators, dealers, businessmen, who sucked the blood of the people in broad daylight; but they were not dead, although corrupted. These real suckers did not live in cemeteries, but in very pleasant palaces.
[95] Crawford, 'The Cultural-Historical Origins of the Literary Vampire in Germany', 2.
[96] Coralie Philibert, 'Les Vampires, Portée Politique et Sociale Du Monstre,' Accéder à la page d accueil de *Gallica*, October 18, 2019, https://gallica.bnf.fr/blog/18102019/les-vampires-portee-politique-et-sociale-du-monstre?mode=desktop.

economist Karl Marx. In *Das Kapital* (1867), the employers' insatiable hunger for constant production was equated with the 'vampire's thirst for the living blood of labour.'[97] Marx also depicted the mistreated proletariat as the victims of the vampire: They are 'stunted in growth, ill-shaped, and frequently ill-formed in the chest; they become prematurely old, and are certainly short-lived; they are phlegmatic and bloodless.'[98] Capital itself, Marx argued, is 'dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks.'[99]

Marx was not alone in finding vampires helpful as symbolic representations of the capitalist system.[100] Many writers and intellectuals started to echo the philosopher's rhetoric in France after 1871. The Franco-Prussian War left France with a severe economic recession and high unemployment. The peace accords of the Treaty of Frankfurt (1871) included the annexation of the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine, France's main mines and industrial centres, and a compensation of five billion francs, which would be approximately €479 billion today.[101] As a result, Marx's economic critique resonated strongly among French socialists after the War, who were deeply concerned with working-class suffering and the dehumanising effects of capitalism due to the economic depression. First and foremost, this is seen in the writings of the Republican Émile Zola. Zola was not a Marxist, but his works did explore class struggle and social issues through vampire rhetoric. He supported economic reform but did not advocate for Marx's revolutionary socialism. As a symbol for economic criticism, this makes the vampire metaphor even broader.

Zola's novel *Germinal* (1885) is often referred to as Zola's masterpiece and tells the story of the harsh realities of the coal mining industry in Northern France. In the novel, Zola's narrator describes the mine and its surroundings as 'awash in blood', from 'the sanguine reflections' of the stove in the miner's locker room to the 'long streaks of bloody rust' outside the mine.[102] Moreover, the mine itself is inexplicitly portrayed as a vampire devouring the miners. Over the years, several workers have died when the tunnels collapsed, and their blood was 'drunk and bones swallowed by rocks.'[103] The narrator criticises the rich mining companies

[97] Cited in Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 76; Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1906) 342.
[98] Ibid., 270.
[99] Ibid., 277.
[100] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 76.
[101] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 74; Robert Tombs, *France 1814–1914*, (New York: Longman, 1996) 49; Jonathan Steinberg, *Bismarck: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 329.
[102] Cited in Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 77; Émile Zola, *Germinal* (Paris: Fasquelle ,1906) 136, 27, 67.
[103] Cited in Ibid.; Zola, *Germinal*, 11.

as ‘sucking the blood of the poor who nourished them.’[104] Zola’s mineworkers all have the same ‘anaemic pallor’, characteristic of a vampire victim.[105]

Germinal is the thirteenth novel in the *Les Rougon-Macquart* cycle, which follows the lives of the members of the two branches of a wealthy fictional family. In the entire cycle, the members of the bourgeois Rougon-Macquart family are depicted as depleting France’s resources, exploiting the nation for their personal gain.[106] This theme is evident in *La Terre* (1887; The Earth), where Jean Macquart visualises a golden sea. And in *L’Argent* (1891; Money), Pierre and Félicité Rougon dream of showers of blood transforming in golden coins.[107] Driven by this parasitic instinct, the family relentlessly sucks the country dry, like leeches, while also infecting the nation with their own degeneracy. According to Labrie, the Rougon-Macquart family embodies the living dead, existing in a state of moral and spiritual decay, emitting an aura of decomposition across France. Their unsatisfiable hunger for wealth and power compels the family members to persistently feed on the nation’s recourses. Therefore, they represent the exploitation and manipulation of the masses.[108] In this perverse symbiosis, Zola suggests that the fictional family represents a far larger social phenomenon, unravelling the corruption and exploitation that exists in modern society. They represent the entire modern class struggle. By metaphorically linking vampires to the bourgeoisie, Zola stresses the vampiric nature of those in power who economically drain the nation’s vitality.[109]

Blood symbolises the mystical life energy that nourishes the land and transforms it into prosperity. The deceased become the fertile soil on which new life thrives.[110] In *Germinal*, the bloodshed in the mines leads to the rise of an army of miners who will generate even more capital.[111] This ‘cycle of blood circulation’ also makes Zola’s series of novels, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, a cycle.[112]

[104] Cited in Ibid.; Zola, *Germinal*, 228.
[105] Cited in Ibid., 79; Zola, *Germinal*, 14.
[106] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie*, 324; Émile Zola and Henri Mitterand, *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Nouveau Monde éditions, 2002).
[107] Ibid.; *La Terre* (1887), *La Fortune des Rougon* (1871), *La Curée* (1872) and *L’Argent* (1891).
[108] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie*, 332.
[109] Nieuwland, *’National Germophobia and Germanophobia’,* 46-47.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Zola, *Germinal*, 169–170.
[112] Proulx, *Victims of the Book*, 56, 59-60.

Shifting Gender Roles

The emergence of the New Woman, who rejected her traditional domestic roles and sought social independence, posed a direct challenge to male dominance and the conventional division of the sexes. This tension is particularly evident in late Victorian British literature. In Sheridan Le Fanu's vampire fiction *Carmilla* (1872), the 'Vampirella' seduces many young girls, which symbolises the fears surrounding women who are sexually liberated.[113] In Bram Stoker's 1897 classic, *Dracula*, the confusion of sexual boundaries becomes most apparent.[114]

Stoker's novel represents a cultural atmosphere that the psycho-historian Peter Gay describes as permeated by a 'pervasive sense of manhood in danger.'[115] Maurice Richardson highlights this panic in Victorian England by describing *Dracula* as 'a kind of incestuous, necrophilous, oral-anal-sadistic all-in-wrestling match,' emphasising the vampire's sexually perverse danger.[116] But even worse than Count Dracula himself are his brides, the 'Vampirellas', who gradually bewitch Jonathan Harker. He is hypnotised by their sparkling teeth and glittering red lips, which remind of a *vagina dentata*.[117] This impression is further reinforced by their bittersweet honey breath, 'as one smells in blood.'[118]

Although the German psychoanalyst Freud did not write about any vampires directly, these elements in British vampire fiction align closely with Freudian ideas on the unconscious, desire, and taboo.[119] Female sexuality, though tempting, arouses a fear that transforms into aggression. Stoker's Vampirellas embody the primal urges that Freud later describes in his theoretical paper *Das Unheimliche* (1919; The Uncanny).[120] The Vampirella's acts of biting and drinking blood symbolise the transgression of moral boundaries, reflecting repressed subconscious desires.

In *Dracula*, all women exhibit a symbolic death wish. An example of this is Lucy Westenra, a Vampirella who is led to her grave with 'the stake of mercy', whereby she returns to the male order as a dead woman.[121] This is also true for the pure and innocent Mina Harker, a Victorian

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[113] Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, *Carmilla* (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2000).
[114] Hughes, *Beyond Dracula,* 112.
[115] Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*. Vol. 1: *Education of the Senses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 197.
[116] Maurice Richardson, 'The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories,' *Twentieth Century* 166, no. 944 (1959): 419–31, 427; Franco Moretti, 'Dialectic of Fear', 102–104.
[117] Labrie, 'Purity and Danger in Fin-de-Siècle Culture', 267.
[118] Stoker, *Dracula*, 32; The fair girl advanced and bent over me till I could feel the movement of her breath upon me. Sweet it was in one sense, honey-sweet, and sent the same tingling through the nerves as her voice, but with a bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood.
[119] Kimberley, Steven. 'A Psychological Analysis of the Vampire Myth.' *Essex Student Journal* 1, no. 1 (2009): 38-45, 44.
[120] Sigmund Freud, *Das Unheimliche* (1919; repr., Scotts Valley, CA: Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018).
[121] Labrie, 'Purity and Danger in Fin-de-Siècle Culture', 266.

Madonna who is also abandoned by men and inevitably becomes one of the Count's victims. When Dracula cuts a vein in his chest so that Mina can drink, as a mother would feed her baby, Mina comes to her senses. She sees the blood and screams in horror: 'Impure! Impure!'[122] Mina's impurity lies in her sexual desire, fuelled by her adultery with Count Dracula. This sexual confusion ultimately results in sexual anarchy: the New Woman, rejecting her role as a sensible mother and chaste wife ends up devouring the sane men.[123] The fatal temptresses and murderous mothers symbolise the danger of liberated, sexually active women in Britain.

The Vampirella, seen as the 'alien within', must be eliminated to restore moral purity in Britain.[124] Female vampires became important symbols of internal societal fears, where the pure blood of the nation was threatened and prone to degenerate by the emergence of women's emancipation.[125] Women were frequently portrayed as seductresses and mistresses who were challenging traditional gender roles. They were thus often regarded as threats to societal purity. England stands out in the context of vampires combined with gender impurity. Here, the Eastern vampire myth develops most clearly. It mirrors the nation's increasing anxieties about internal social instability.

Stoker's emphasis on blood in *Dracula* ties into pseudoscientific beliefs about purity, where blood was thought to hold a person's essential qualities, including moral, racial and sexual integrity.[126] The French intellectual Michelet also expressed this view that one's blood determines the differences between the sexes. Michelet attributed a woman's inability to perform heavy labour or achieve intellectual success to the interrupted and irregular blood flow resulting from their menstruation:

> Elle ne fait rien comme nous. Elle pense, parle, agit autrement. Ses goûts diffèrent de nos goûts. Son sang n'a pas le cours du nôtre; par moments, il se précipite, comme une averse d'orage. Elle ne respire pas comme nous. […] Ses organes sont plus compliqués, ils l'alourdissent et lui font facilement perdre l'équilibre.[127]

Michelet moreover stated that if women engaged in severe mental or physical activities outside their traditional domestic roles, it would harm their health, appearance, and even their

[122] Stoker, *Dracula*, 35.
[123] Labrie, 'Purity and Danger in Fin-de-Siècle Culture', 266-67.
[124] Ibid., 267.
[125] Ibid., 266.
[126] Hughes, *Beyond Dracula,* 112; Stoker, *Dracula*, 106, 179, 254.
[127] Cited in Robinson, *Blood Will Tell*, 159; Jules Michelet, *L'amour*, 14th ed. (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1884) 50; She does nothing like us. She thinks, speaks, acts differently. Her tastes differ from ours. Her blood does not flow like ours; at times it rushes like a thunderstorm. She does not breathe like we do. […] Her organs are more complicated, they weigh her down and make her easily lose her balance.

reproductive organs.[128] Stepping outside the domestic sphere, it was believed by many Frenchmen, could make women impure. Even if such activities did not cause infertility, they were thought to result in physically or mentally deformed children. Children of these 'impure' mothers would not be fit to serve their country.[129]

In a country recovering from war, French intellectuals often drew connections between the sacrifices demanded of mothers and the sacrifices demanded of men through military service. Most men repaid the privileges of their citizenship with their blood on the battlefield, a scheme commonly known in France as *l'impôt du sang*, or the blood tax.[130] Women might not be able to shed blood for their country, but they could provide military soldiers for the state. For intellectuals who saw their population drop, it was difficult to accept that feminists argued that women should reject both their biological role and their patriotic duty.[131] In the decadent novel *Le Jardin des Supplices* (1899; The Torture Garden), written by the misogynistic Octave Mirbeau, all female characters are likened by the narrator to death, destruction, and Medusas. Clara, the novel's protagonist, derives erotic pleasure from everything dead, depraved and corrupt.[132] This sadistic woman, who also happens to be single, rich and bisexual, symbolises the fears that women who abandon motherhood or traditional roles would weaken the defence of their 'fatherland.'[133] This sense of social *malaise* is also reflected in Durkheim's sociological study, *Le Suicide* (1897; Suicide). In it, the doctor argued that France's high suicide rate and low birth rate were symptoms of 'a decline in domestic sentiments.'[134] Women who rejected their role as homemakers and mothers were described by Durkheim as 'draining the life force of the nation.'[135] These fears, symbolised through the figure of the vampire, intersected with nationalist discourse in a way that connected gender roles, degeneration, and national identity.

[128] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell*, 159.
[129] Ibid.; Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) 18.
[130] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell*, 132.
[131] Ibid., 163; Ledger, *The New Woman,* 18.
[132] Octave Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des Supplices* (Paris: Charpentier et Fasquelle, 1899) 'The Manuscript.'
[133] Ibid.
[134] Proulx, *Victims of the Book*, 18; Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 13-14.
[135] Émile Durkheim, 'Suicide et natalité: Étude de statistique morale,' *Revue philosophique* 26 (1888): 446–463, 462; *Une régression des sentiments demostiques*.

Moral Degeneration

Cesare Lombroso's *L'uomo delinquente* (1876; Criminal Man) introduced the concept of the 'born criminal' (*reo nato*), individuals who were biologically predisposed to crime.[136] In the context of Italian post-unification challenges, economic disparities, regional divides and class tensions, Lombroso's work was the first to pathologise crime by portraying criminals, often the poor, unemployed, and Southern Italians, as inherently degenerate and thus dangerous to the nation.[137] They were framed as internal threats to Italy's fragile national unity. Lombroso opened a broader discussion of the physiognomy of the 'born criminal' and the nature of the recidivist; he could even be seen as parasitic. Crime was seen as a destructive force within society, contaminating healthy bodies and races with its lousy blood and corrupting healthy reproduction. Many Europeans believed that the family and the nation were endangered and besieged by alcoholics, idiots, lunatics, morons and prostitutes, who 'fed' and 'poisoned' the morality of the nation.[138] In this context, the vampire became a symbol of decay and degeneration, representing the immoral as a parasite within society.

After its defeat in 1871, France was more concerned about the future health of both the state and its citizens than its neighbours.[139] The humiliating loss triggered a profound national crisis, leading thinkers, scientists and cultural commentators to search for the underlying causes of France's 'downfall.' The Third Republic aimed to recover the immoral pathologies from which the nation was suffering, including prostitution, promiscuity and pornography.[140] Syphilis contributed to moral degeneration by associating the disease with contagious promiscuity; as it spread through sexual contact, those infected, especially women, were stigmatised as 'fallen', reinforcing societal anxieties about sexual behaviour and threatening the purity of family structures.[141] For venereal diseases specialist Alfred Fournier, 'pornography threatened the integrity of the happy and healthy home and, by extension, the nation by submitting children's sexuality to a precocious publicity.'[142] Within this biological framework of contamination, the *Société Française de Prophylaxie Sanitaire et Morale* (SFPSM) was founded in 1891 to promote individual protection against venereal diseases beyond brothels and prostitution. For

[136] Cesare Lombroso, *L'uomo delinquente* (Turin: Bocca, 1876).
[137] Proulx, Victims of the Book, 58-59.
[138] Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, 173.
[139] Ibid., 102; Robinson, *Blood Will Tell*, 53.
[140] Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984) 143.
[141] Proulx, *Victims of the Book*, 31.
[142] Ibid.; Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006) 197.

the *SFPSM*, prostitution was 'as contiguous as the disease itself.'[143] Robert Nye explains that alcoholism was also viewed as contagious, even hereditary, affecting not only the drinkers but also their children. Children of alcoholics would be 'unstable or feeble individuals, idiots, epileptics, and the tubercular, all ending up as parasites of the state, national vampires.'[144] The French were highly sensitive to dangers posed by insiders.[145]

According to occultist Montague Summers' history of vampires in his scholarly classic *The Vampire, his Kith, his Kin* (1928), the term vampire also covered necrophilia in the nineteenth century.[146] This connection is particularly striking because, in this way, vampires can also be linked to degenerate morality and the visible proof of the sexual 'sick' nation. In 1886, Jean Frollo, writing for *Le Petit Parisien*, initiated a media frenzy surrounding Henri Blot, whose necrophilic acts led to his characterisation as a vampire.[147] Blot, a former gravedigger, was arrested for exhuming and sexually assaulting corpses of young women in Parisian cemeteries. He was sensationally labelled the 'Vampire of Saint-Ouen' by *L'Écho de Paris*.[148] This reflected national concerns about national degeneration, crime, and the breakdown of morality within France.[149] This provides a metaphor for contemporary sexual-political discourses on morality and society, which reflects the price of selfish desires and criminal corruption. In a collection of essays that examines notorious criminal cases, *Les Causes Criminelles et Mondaines* (1886; Criminal and Social Causes), Albert Bataille described Henri Blot as:

> Un assez joli garçon de vingt-six ans, à figure un peu blème. Ses cheveux sont ramenés sur le front, à la chien. Il porte à la lèvre supérieure une fine moustache soigneusement effilée. Ses yeux, profondement noirs, enfoncés dans l'orbite, sont clignotants. Il a quelque chose de félin dans l'ensemble de la physionomie; quelque chosi aussi de l'oiseau de nuit.[150]

Bataille's account detailed Blot's animalistic and drunken state due to Absinth, further intensifying the association between vampires and the national *malaise* of the breakdown of

[143] Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen*, 197.
[144] Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France*, 235.
[145] Proulx, *Victims of the Book*, 31.
[146] Summers, *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*, 68.
[147] Jean Frollo, 'Vampires', *Le Petit Parisien*, June 17, 1886, 2-4.
[148] Maxime Rouceron, 'Arrestation du Vampire de Saint-Ouen', *L'Écho de Paris*, April 1, 1886, 1.
[149] Summers, *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*, 69.
[150] Cited in Summers, *The Vampire:* 68; A rather handsome boy of twenty-six with a somewhat pale face. His hair is pulled back over his forehead in a dog-like manner. He wears a thin, carefully tapered moustache on his upper lip. His eyes, deeply black, sunken in the socket, are flashing. There is something feline in his whole physiognomy, something also of the night bird.

morality.[151] Bataille even presented Blot's crimes as 'the moral rot that threatened the health of the French nation,' as it was not the first time this had happened.[152] The cover's illustration, Figure 1, shows a man, 'the vampire of Montparnasse', who symbolises the morally corrupt force that takes away the purity and virginity of the French *Marianne*.[153] Thus, the vampiric metaphor illustrated that the nation was afflicted by a profound sickness characterised by perversive moral degeneration.

Deracination

The notion of moral degeneration is most vividly portrayed in the blood and soil doctrine of politician Maurice Barrès. Barrès' *Les Déracinés* (1897; The Uprooted) illustrates the experiences of seven young men from the Parisian bourgeoisie who return to their native homeland, Lorraine. Their stay in Lorraine reveals the profound *malaise* within French society, as it shows the men's disconnection from their roots (*racines*). A Kantian philosopher had misled the men, leading them away from their authentic selves and the vital connection to their land. It has left the young men with 'the most acute feeling from nothingness.'[154] Here, Barrès critiques the tendency to move to the city, where men become vulnerable to detrimental urban influences that dilute their national identity, making the nation as a whole weaker and more vulnerable. Barrès presents this 'deracination' as a sickness that afflicts the entire country, suggesting that the erosion of rootedness contributes to France's weakened state. This narrative serves as a cautionary tale, advocating for a return to one's roots and rejecting German philosophical influences that threaten the integrity of the national identity. In this way, Barrès' work embodies the belief that a strong and healthy nation needs individuals who are deeply rooted in their native soil. Through this connection, they can truly be strong and withstand external threats.[155]

Barrès argues that the nation is an organic and natural entity deeply interconnected with its land and people. He states that France's disconnection from its roots has made the country

[151] Albert Bataille, 'Gazette des Tribunaux: Police Correctionnelle, Le Vampire de Saint-Ouen,' *Le Figaro*, août 28, 1886, 3-4.
[152] Ibid.
[153] François Avenet, Le Vampire, engraving from *Mémoires de M. Claude, chef de la police de sûreté sous le Second Empire* (Paris: Jules Rouff, ca. 1882), reproduced in *Détective*, no. 410 (September 3, 1936): 1-16, 6; Marianne is the national personification of France.
[154] Maurice Barrès, *Les Déracinés: Le Roman de l'énergie Nationale* (Paris, FR: Librairie Plon, 1922) 504, 510.
[155] Ibid., 322.

vulnerable, allowing German influences to infiltrate. In Barrès' view, this 'uprootedness' has resulted in a lack of patriotic resistance to foreign influences, weakening the national identity and the French spirit.[156]

Although Barrès does not directly reference vampires, his portrayal of those who abandon their homeland mirrors the figure of the vampire, who drains the life force of its origin. Just as the vampire feeds on blood, these men drain the vitality of the nation by abandoning their roots, contributing to the country's moral and physical decline. Barrès presents this as a disease that endangers French health, promoting a return to one's roots to recover national strength and vitality. The erosion of 'blood and soil' weakens both the individual and France. Therefore, deracination symbolises a larger moral and spiritual decay threatening the nation.

In Britain, Germany and Italy, the vampires symbolised fears around socioeconomic, sexual and moral disorders. In France, deeper concerns about the future of the vulnerable civilisation came to the fore. For a nation concerned with survival, the vampire became a symbol beyond these social domains, reflecting an existential crisis. The vampire embodied vulnerability, which was linked to fears of a declining nation in the wake of external threats. It is crucial to distinguish the internal social Other that threatens national health from within from the external national Other that poses a threat from the outside. The social Other embodies internal national vulnerabilities, such as class divisions or gender roles, while the national Other typically represents external dangers. This distinction becomes particularly pronounced in France.

[156] Soucy, 'Barres and Fascism', 75.

Chapter Three: External Threats in Fin-de-Siècle France

The Vitality of The National Body

As established, biomedical metaphors became essential for articulating France's national identity, with the weak nation likened to an unhealthy and sick body. Theories of blood purity and biological health emerged as central themes in articulating nationalism, suggesting that a healthy nation requires an untainted population. Consequently, the national body was perceived as a living entity, where concepts of health and purity justified xenophobia.[157] Leibovici sheds light on the important relationship between cultural critique and biology, as well as the profound social and political implications of scientific discoveries at the fin-de-siècle. She examines the obsession with national purity that gripped France in 1877 after the discovery of the *bacillus* by the French biologist Louis Pasteur. Leibovici shows how racist and antisemitic thinkers such as Édouard Drumont and Georges Vacher de Lapouge were driven by the fear of social contagion, which would weaken the national organism.[158] In his political tract *La Fin d'un Monde* (1889; The End of a World), Drumont compares France to a sick body infested by parasites and on the verge of death. He writes:

> Le cadavre social est naturellement plus récalcitrant et moins aisé à enterrer que le cadavre humain. Le cadavre humain va pourrir seul au ventre du cereueil, image régressive de la gestation; le cadavre social continue à marcher sans qu'on s'aperçoive qu'il est cadavre, jusqu'au jour où le plus léger heurt brise cette survivance factice et montre la cendre au lieu du sang.[159]

For Drumont, this 'social corpse' reflects the national body, hollowed out from within and merely simulating life, an image hauntingly reminiscent of a vampire.[160] In his sociological treatise *L'Aryen* (1899; The Aryan), eugenicist Lapouge attributed France's 'sickness of spoiled bloodlines' to mixed marriages that degrade the 'genetic stock.'[161] These nationalist theorists

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[157] Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France*, 155, 157.
[158] Solange Leibovici, 'Zuiverheid als Utopie: De Foute Kinderen van Pasteur,' in *De Hang naar Zuiverheid: De Cultuur van het Moderne Europa*, ed. Rob van der Laarse et al. (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1998) 93; Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 19-20.
[159] Drumont, *La Fin d'un Monde, étude psychologique et sociale* (Paris, 1889) introduction, iii; The social corpse is naturally less easy to bury than the human cadaver. The human corpse spoils in the belly of the coffin, in the regressive image of digestion, while the social corpse continues to walk without anyone seeing that it is a corpse, until the day when the slightest shock breaks this artificial survival and shows ashes instead of blood.
[160] Ibid.
[161] George Vacher de Lapouge, *L'Aryen, son rôle social* (Paris: Fontemoing, 1899).

used biomedical discourse to describe strangers as 'microbes' and 'pathogens' who posed a threat to the health of the national organism. By characterising outsiders in this unhygienic way, nationalists could justify exclusion and discrimination on the basis that they were the source of infection and disease within the nation.[162]

Maupassant's fantastic and psychological short story *Le Horla* (1886) serves as a literary illustration of these anxieties. The novel presents a destructed character, constantly tortured, who ends up sinking into dementia, passing through various states, such as paranoia, hallucinations, anxiety attacks and sleep paralysis.[163] *Le Horla*'s protagonist is tormented by an invisible being, an entity from Latin America, presumably Brazil.[164] The Horla's vampiric characteristics progressively and dramatically possess the narrator. Seized by fear, the narrator confides in his diary:

> Cette nuit, j'ai senti quelqu'un accroupi sur moi, et qui, sa bouche sur la mienne, buvait ma vie entre mes lèvres. Oui, il la puisait sans ma gorge, comme aurait fait une sangsue. Puis il s'est levé, repu, et moi je me suis réveillé, tellement meurtri, brisé, anéanti, que je ne pouvais plus remuer.[165]

This passage illustrates the intimate relationship between the individual and the national body. The narrator's physical violation reflects collective anxieties about foreign forces sapping France's vitality. Gerald Prince highlights the significance of the Horla's Brazilian origin, suggesting that this foreign presence incites feelings of nationalism that spiral into xenophobia and racial fears.[166] This transformation mirrors a fear of cultural and racial contamination. His initial pride in his heritage transforms into a fear of being consumed, physically and culturally, by foreign influences.[167] Thus, *Le Horla* is not just a horror story but a projection of France's anxieties about its national identity. The vampire metaphor closely aligns with the idea of the nation as a living organism vulnerable to external threats. A foreign entity drains the narrator's

[162] Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 19-20.
[163] Guy De Maupassant, *Le Horla* (Paris, France: Ernest Flammarion, 1886) 17.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.; That night, I felt someone crouched on me and, with their mouth on mine, drinking my life between my lips. Yes, they were drawing it from my throat like a leech. Then he got up, sated, and I woke up, so bruised, broken, annihilated, that I could no longer move.
[166] Gerald Prince, ''Le Horla,' Sex, and Colonization,' in *Alteratives*, ed. Warren Motte and Gerald Prince (Lexington, KY: French Forum Publishers, 1993) 186.
[167] De Maupassant, *Le Horla*, 913.

vitality and causes him to become sick and infected, symbolising a broader assault on the vitality of the national body.

Anti-Germanism and Iron

The broader assault on the national body in fin-de-siècle France can be traced back to the profound implications of the Franco-Prussian War, an important turning point in the history of France. The humiliating defeat contrasted sharply with Napoleon Bonaparte's previous victories and aroused a pervasive sense of resentment in France.[168] The defeat by the emerging German Empire was not only a military loss but also a profound cultural and psychological blow to French national pride. This sense of defeat reinforced the belief that Germany was the greatest existential threat to France. France's defeat was seen as the first unmistakable evidence of decadence: the old, weakened French empire had lost the battle for European dominance to the young, powerful German empire. From then on, the comparison with the 'hereditary enemy' became a permanent feature of a long and painful self-examination, in which the supposed German superiority served as proof of the nation's ills.[169]

Demographic evidence showed that France's population grew only at one-third of Germany's rate. Between 1871 and 1911, the French population only grew by 8.6%, while the German population increased by 60% over the same period.[170] France's slow demographic growth, due to factors such as a low birth rate and a particularly high suicide rate, became a big concern, even an obsession, for politicians and intellectuals.[171] The population decline was interpreted as a symptom of national illness. This objective data served as evidence of Germany's vitality and dominance, which in turn was seen as confirmation of France's decadence and degeneration.[172] This framing positioned Germany as not only a military adversary but also the ultimate symbol of France's perceived sickness. The idea that Germany was responsible for the misery that France experienced formed the basis for the increasing growth of nationalist anti-German rhetoric.[173]

Zola's novel *La Débâcle* (1892; The Downfall) describes the sudden and complete failure of the French army at the Battle of Sedan in 1870. In the novel, Zola contrasts the discipline of

[168] Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 16.
[169] Ibid.; Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie,* 317.
[170] Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 31.
[171] Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 16.
[172] Weber, *France,* 19.
[173] Prince, ''Le Horla,' Sex, and Colonization', 186.

the well-organised Prussian army with the disorder of the chaotic French troops, who wander the battlefield completely disoriented without ever setting their sights on the enemy or knowing where the battle is taking place.[174] The French army planned to march to Berlin and beat the Germans, but they were quickly pushed back by the stronger, better-organised Prussian forces. The French were so sure they would win that they only brought maps of Germany, not Western France, causing mass confusion. The entire first part of the book describes the French regiments wandering around, unsure of what is happening. It is a total mess.[175] Zola's goal is impartiality because he wants to understand the causes of the defeat as objectively as possible.[176] That is why he does not spare any of the French leaders.[177] Nevertheless, he does not abstain from anti-German traditions either.

Regardless of his militaristic superiority in the War, the German remains essentially a barbarian. The German army, however disciplined, resembles a horde that invades France like 'a black invasion force', like swarming troops of 'black ants' that colour the entire country 'black.'[178] The 'Prussians', as Zola calls the Germans in their most negative sense, bear all the marks of the impure: they swarm like 'insects' which, insignificant in themselves, together have a terrifying effect. They are all bestial and primitive.[179] The animal violence to which the soldiers surrender themselves is, for example, represented by a Bavarian soldier. He is described as 'smeared with blood, like a terrible cave bear, like a rough-haired beast that looks completely red from the prey it has just torn apart.'[180] Everything animal is German. Zola's depiction ties into the motif of Teutophobia, where protestant Germans are commonly depicted as vampire figures raping the innocent French Catholic virgin *Marianne*.

The connection between vampirism and Teutophobia becomes most pronounced in the character of Otto Gunther. The German captain of the Prussian Guard is again portrayed in inhuman terms as a hard military Protestant. Despite his civilised appearance, he is no less cruel than his murderous troops. With his 'dry and hard air' and 'strong, military bearing,' he is the archetype of a Prussian Protestant: austere, cool and determined.[181] The Germans, though

[174] Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 52-53.
[175] Émile Zola, *La Débâcle* (Paris: Bibebook, 2009) Première Partie.
[176] Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 58.
[177] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie,* 406.
[178] Zola, *La Débâcle*, 181.
[179] Ibid., 250.
[180] Ibid., 242; *Et un soldat s'avança, un Bavarois trapu, à l'énorme tête embroussaillée de barbe et de cheveux roux, sous lesquels on ne distinguait qu'un large nez carré et que de gros yeux bleus. Il était souillé de sang, effroyable, tel qu'un de ces ours des cavernes, une de ces bêtes poilues toutes rouges de la proie dont elles viennent de faire craquer les os.*
[181] Ibid., 374.

inhuman and vampiric, were much better prepared due to their innovative science and carried out their operations methodically, according to an 'iron logic'.[182] While Germany was rejuvenated by its irresistible drive towards unity, led by learned and wise men, ready to rise as a whole, France, as Zola wrote in *Le Figaro* in 1891, was 'rotten to the very bone', paralysed by complacency in the memory of its glorious Napoleonic past.[183] Like other Frenchmen, Zola also wishes *Révanche*, the reconquest of France's lost provinces and a new confrontation is inevitable. But according to him, France can only resist another war if it also manages to master that German scientific formula and free itself from this chaotic inferiority.[184]

Jules Verne's Gothic novel, *Le Château des Carpathes* (1892; The Carpathian Castle), portrays the same German technological superiority that Zola speaks of through the theme of iron. In *Le Château des Carpathes,* the inventions of a mad scientist allow a Transylvanian nobleman to maintain control over a village through superstition and fear, drawing on the folklore from Eastern Europe.[185] Verne's novel reflects France's anxieties about the dominance of foreign powers. This becomes evidenced in the narrator's portrayal of Count Franz, a vampiric aristocrat whose name alone evokes Germanic associations. Count Franz represents the broader fear of a dominant Germany, illustrated by his power to control the village through advanced inventions and manipulations. Germany, portrayed through the character of Count Franz, possesses the necessary 'iron' to gain power, symbolising Germany's military superiority and industrial dominance over France. In contrast, the defeated France is likened to a body suffering from iron deficiency in the blood (anaemia), lacking the industrial and military strength symbolised by iron. Where there is iron, the blood is vital. In fact, Otto von Bismarck himself had already alluded to this in his speech *Blut und Eisen* (1862; Blood and Iron), at the time when he was Minister President of Prussia, about the unification of the German territories. Military, industrial and technological strength thus becomes tied to national health.[186]

Édouard Drumont's *La France Juive* also uses this metaphorical link between chemical elements and social weakness. The quantity of mercury in blood and urine correlates with the

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[182] Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 61.
[183] Émile Zola, *Le Figaro*, manuscrit autographe signé, Sedan, [1891]; 17 p. - Lot 267; *En face de l'Allemagne, toute frémissante de sa victoire sur l'Autriche, rajeunie par son élan irrésistible vers l'unité, ayant à sa tête des hommes instruits et sages, prête à se lever tout entière au premier appel, la France était comme pourrie à sa base par son immobilité dans l'orgueil de sa légende guerrière.*
[184] Frederick Brown, *For the Soul of France: Culture Wars in the Age of Dreyfus* (New York: Anchor Books, 2011) 466; Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 58.
[185] Jules Verne, *Le Château des Carpathes* (Paris: Pierre-Jules Hetzel, 1892); It is said that Bram Stoker may have drawn inspiration from *Le Château des Carpathes* for his novel *Dracula*, published only five years later.
[186] Cited in Michel Serres and Maria Malanchuk, 'Jules Verne's Strange Journeys,' *Yale French Studies* 52 (1975): 174–88, 175.

degree of toxicity. Drumont applied this imagery to the foreigners, 'the German Jews from the Frankfurt ghettos,' whom he depicted as a toxic poison that subtly weakened the French blood.[187] By linking mercury to invisible, destructive processes, Drumont strengthened his notion that German infiltration threatened the vitality of France.

Blood and Soil

As established, Maurice Barrès' 1897 novel *Les Déracinés* lays the foundation for his nationalist ideology. According to Barrès, a strong and healthy nation is built on men who are deeply rooted in their native soil. This makes them able to withstand external foreign threats. Uprootedness weakened the unity and defence of the country, turning *Les Déracinés* into internal vampires who drained the strength of the homeland.[188] This theme evolves significantly in his political doctrine, 'La Terre et les Morts' (1899), in which Barrès intensifies his nationalist position by emphasising the unity of ancestry and soil. This doctrine emphasises the importance of bloodlines and ancestral ties as the basis of national identity, with cultural uprooting depicted not only as a loss of connection but also as a threat to racial and ancestral purity.[189]

In 'La Terre et les Morts', Barrès extends his ideological framework to include an almost sacred worship for cemeteries and memorials. These places represent fidelity to ancestors and the union of the living and the dead, linked by the continuity of blood. For Barrès, this bloodline is a bridge connecting the past, present and future, while the graveyard symbolises the shared territory claimed by one's people. Nationalism is also about the common territory claimed by 'our own' people. In this light, the vampire, who is buried in his native soil but leaves his coffin behind, becomes a powerful symbol of the outsider who disrupts the unity of blood and soil and threatens the sacred bond between ancestors and native soil.[190]

Barrès' rhetoric reveals his belief that French identity is defined not by legal status but by blood and ancestry. In his view, blood serves as a biological proof of belonging, rendering

[187] Édouard Drumont, *La France Juive: Essai d'histoire contemporaine* (Paris: Flammarion, 1886) 345; Like the subtle mercury which insinuates itself by its weight and fluidity through all the pores of the gangue to seize the smallest particles of precious metal that it contains; like the hideous tapeworm, whose parasitic rings follow in their convolutions all the viscera of the human body, so the vampire runs its suckers to the extreme ramifications of the French social organism to pump all the substance and extract all the juices.
[188] Barrès, *Les Déracinés,* 322, 504, 510; Soucy, 'Barres and Fascism', 75-76.
[189] Maud Hilaire Schenker, 'Le nationalisme de Barrès: Moi, la terre et les morts,' *Paroles gelées* 23, no. 1 (2007): 5–26, 9; This is in line with the voice from beyond the grave of Michelet, the historian who, according to Barrès, 'lived by drinking the blood of the dead.'
[190] Longinović, *Vampire Nation,* 6.

assimilation impossible for foreigners, even if they had sworn to live as French citizens. 'La Terre et les Morts' reflects these pseudoscientific notions of racial purity, suggesting that blood carries intrinsic qualities related to identity and heritage. Barrès' rhetoric emphasised the biological and racial foundations of national identity, suggesting that 'blood persists in following the order of nature against oaths against laws.'[191] Barrès lists the evils that he believes undermine society and rebels against 'the foreigners who, like parasites, poisons us.'[192] Barrès speaks of Germans as outsiders, feeding off the nation's resources without truly belonging:

> La vérité allemande et l'anglaise ne sont point la vérité française, et peuvent nous empoisonner. En vain, cet étranger, quand il se fit naturaliser, jura-t-il de penser et de vivre en Français; en vain a-t-il lié ses intérêts aux nôtres, le sang s'obstine à suivre l'ordre de la nature contre les serments, contre les lois. Il est notre hôte, ce fils d'outre-Rhin.[193]

Here, Barrès' invocation of the vampire metaphor extends to the naturalised foreigner. For Barrès, blood is not only a sign of racial integrity but also a vessel that carries the qualities of heritage and identity. The vampire's thirst for blood symbolises the foreigner's desire to appropriate these French qualities. The victim's contamination represents the perceived degeneration of the host race. This fear echoes the broader racial and immigration anxieties of fin-de-siècle France. Barrès' solution was to limit naturalisation and delay full integration across generations. He proposed:

> Nous ne lui devons pas une place dans les pouvoirs du pays. Laissons-le d'abord prendre notre température et par des racines qui naîtront, se nourrir de notre terre et de nos morts. Les petits-fils, eux, seront des Français autrement que par une fiction légale. […] Des Français trop récents ont, dans ces dernières années, beaucoup troublé la conscience nationale. On épurerait celle-ci par une loi prudente sur les naturalisations.[194]

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[191] Maurice Barrès, 'L'Enterrement de Dimanche,' *La Patrie*, October 3–4, 1902.
[192] Maurice Barrès, *La Terre et Les Morts*, ed. Ligue de la patrie française (Paris: Bureaux de 'La Patrie française,' 1899); l'étranger [qui], comme parasite, nous empoisonne.
[193] Maurice Barrès, *Scènes et Doctrines du Nationalisme*, 20th ed. (Paris: Félix Juven, 1902) 90–91; The German and English truths are not the French truth and can poison us. In vain did this foreigner, when he became naturalised, swear to think and live as a Frenchman; in vain did he link his interests to ours, blood persists in following the order of nature against oaths, against laws. He is our guest, this son from beyond the Rhine.
[194] Ibid., 91; We do not owe him a place in the country's powers. Let him first take our temperature and, through the roots that will be born, feed on our land and our dead. The grandsons, themselves, will be French in a way other than a legal fiction. […] Too recent French people have, in recent years, greatly troubled the national conscience. This would be purified by a prudent law on naturalisations.

Barrès begins an interesting discussion about the grandsons of immigrants and the idea of their acculturation. Barrès argues that immigrants should 'take our temperature' and develop roots that 'nourish themselves from our soil and our dead,' implying that the descendants of immigrants, the grandsons, can become French, and even then, only after a long period of cultural and generational integration. He thus suggests that foreigners, such as Germans, can become French after a few generations.[195] Barrès argues that recently naturalised citizens have 'disturbed the national conscience.' Strangely, these incarnations of evil are not the Germans but the Jews who, in Barres' hateful verve, were the true masters of an immense plot aimed at dominating society.[196] Like many other antisemites, Barrès considered the Jew to be the only true existential threat, a permanent vampire who could never integrate into French blood and soil.

[195] Maurice Barrès, *Scènes et Doctrines du Nationalisme*, 20th ed. (Paris: Félix Juven, 1902) 90.
[196] Ibid., 91.

Chapter Four: The Image of the Jew in Fin-de-Siècle France

Economic Antisemitism

The rise of virulent antisemitism in France at the end of the nineteenth century was accelerated by events such as the collapse of the major financial bank *Union Générale* in 1882, which led to accusations of Jewish financial manipulation. Widespread antisemitism became more visible with the failure of Boulangism and the exposure of other antisemitic circles in the early 1890s. French antisemitism in the late nineteenth century became increasingly prominent, with publications such as Édouard Drumont's *La France Juive* playing an important role in spreading these ideas.[197] In 1890, *La Croix*, an ultra-Catholic newspaper, declared itself the first anti-Jewish newspaper in France, reflecting the growing tide of antisemitism. In the years after, it increasingly permeated the French right, especially during scandals such as the Panama scandal (1892) and the Dreyfus Affair (1894-1906). Right-wing antisemitism mostly carried religious roots and was reinforced by modern racist theories that viewed Jews as inferior.[198] Left-winged politicians and writers, such as Zola, also came to harbour economic antisemitic sentiments, reflecting Wekker's notion of the 'collective consciousness' of the time.[199]

The association with Jews as economic parasites is explicit in Guy de Charnacé's novel *Le Baron Vampire* (1885; The Vampire Baron). This fiercely antisemitic novel follows the rise of the corrupt character Rebb Schmoul, a young Jew who grows from a poor ghetto to the richest and most powerful banker in Paris.[200] Schmoul is characterised by dishonesty and fraud as he is described as quickly learning the science 'which consists of ruining Christians and enriching the Jews.'[201] He seizes every opportunity to buy stocks at low prices, profiting while others face financial ruin. His explicitly vampiric nature helps him ascend to the economic top, as he is described as 'the bird of prey lured by the smell of corpses.'[202] This depiction underscores the common antisemitic image that associates Jews with predatory financial practices, suggesting that they exploit economic misfortunes to gain wealth and power.

[197] Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 140.
[198] Ibid., 141.
[199] Wekker, *White Innocence,* 19.
[200] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 94.
[201] Guy de Charnacé, *Le Baron Vampire*, 2nd ed. (Paris: E. Dentu, 1885) 31-32.
[202] Ibid., 66.

Zola, as a Republican, mostly tackles the issue of class impurity within France but unconsciously also reproduces economic antisemitic stereotypes in his works. The cycle *Les Rougon-Macquart* frequently addresses the theme of corruption and greed, including critiques that resonate with the antisemitic stereotype associating Jews with exploitative financial practices. In *Germinal*, Monsieur Kahn, a Lorrainian Jew whose 'big shapely nose betrayed his Jewish ancestry', uses devious schemes to achieve a railway concession. Through the most reckless speculations, M. Kahn 'sucks' his company into bankruptcy.[203] The situation with the Jewish-German financier Monsieur Steiner in *Nana* (1890) is even worse. M. Steiner is described by *Nana*'s narrator as a 'terrible German Jew' and a 'shady fat businessman whose hands built millions.'[204] Several characters in the book describe him as 'evil' and 'dirty', a 'Prussian' and a 'thief' who makes millions through shady setups and leaves his shareholders bleeding when he loses.[205] In addition, M. Steiner's appearance naturally appeals to the idea of the greedy capitalist, which is linked to the age-old accusation of the Jew who 'desires Christian blood'.[206]

Zola's M. Steiner corresponds even more to the stereotypical image of the Jew who, apart from money, is only interested in sex. Steiner is famous for spending fortunes on prostitutes, with whom he becomes obsessively infatuated. Zola's characterisation spirals into a vampiric form of sexual promiscuity: 'Though stupid and fat, no woman is safe from him, for he wanted them all, no woman could appear in the theatre without him buying her, no matter the cost.'[207] It is precisely in this 'insatiable sexual hunger' that M. Steiner's predilection for paid love confirms the existing prejudice about the Jew as *dégeneré*: as a parasitic germ that threatens the health of the nation as much as the prostitute's syphilis.[208] Where Jewish characters appear in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, Zola conforms to the same antisemitic stereotypes that the far right also denounces, which shows that antisemitism appears everywhere on the French fin-de-siècle political spectrum.

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[203] Zola, *Germinal*, 160, 314; Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 47.
[204] Zola, *Œuvres complètes*, *Nana* [1880], 1179–1180.
[205] Ibid., 1260, 1265, 1328, 1372, 1382; Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 47-48.
[206] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie,* 410.
[207] Zola, *Œuvres complètes*, *Nana* [1880], 1180.
[208] Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991) 76, 80, 112–113; Anxieties surrounding Jewish men, exacerbated by myths about menstruation and circumcision, were tied to fears that Jewish influence weakened traditional masculine vigour. The myth of Jewish male menstruation contributed to the idea of Jewish men as castrated or neutered figures, reinforcing the negative view of Jewish masculinity. This was linked to fears about circumcision, which many considered a barbaric and violent act. The ritual's cruelty to babies reinforced the stereotype of Jews as bloodthirsty and capable of unnecessary violence.

Racial Antisemitism

Racial antisemites often claimed that Jews had a separate and unassailable racial identity, which distinguished them from the French and emphasised their inferiority. Assimilation was seen as impossible; on the contrary, they embodied all that was foreign and alien within French society, which suffered from their corrupting presence.[209] Far-right journalist Édouard Drumont's notorious antisemitic treatise, *La France Juive*, casts Jews not only as economic exploiters but also as biological dangerous threats to the pure Catholic nation, emphasising the physical and hereditary dimension of antisemitism. Drumont's descriptions of Jews in *La France Juive* were littered with physical stereotypes, associating 'Jewishness' with features that he deemed 'unnatural' and 'degenerate':

> Ce fameux nez recourbé, les yeux clignotants, les dents serrées, les oreilles saillantes, les ongles carrés au lieu d'être arrondis en amande, le torse trop long, le pied plat, les genoux ronds, la cheville extraordi- nairement en dehors, la main moelleuse et fondante de l'hypocrite et du traître.[210]

'Physical degradation', Drumont stated, 'always follows moral degradation'; it is more strongly noted among the Hebrews that it is the result of complete depravity.[211] With modern racial antisemitism came the idea that Jews were not just a religion but a separate and unchangeable race. This further led to the development of a stereotypical image of the Jew, in which supposed flaws were exaggerated as signs of biological inferiority.[212] Such portrayals of deformities were meant to depict Jewish bodies as visibly marked by moral and biological degradation, reinforcing the perception that Jews were a distinct, unassimilable group with physical attributes that supposedly reflected their inner corruption. Drumont thus linked physical 'imperfections' with moral and cultural inferiority, painting Jews as biologically predisposed to threaten the health of the nation.[213] Unlike economic exploitation, this portrayal suggested

[209] Peter Dan, 'How Vampires Became Jewish,' *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 22, no. 2 (June 2011): 417-429, 434.
[210] Drumont, *La France Juive*, 34; This famous curved nose, the blinking eyes, the clenched teeth, the protruding ears, the square nails instead of being rounded into an almond shape, the torso too long, the flat foot, the round knees, the extraordinarily outward ankle, the soft and melting hand of the hypocrite and the traitor.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Dan, 'How Vampires Became Jewish,' 420.
[213] Ibid.

that Jews were inherently predisposed to harm the French at a biological level, symbolically and physically 'infecting' the host through a 'bloodsucking' parasitic relationship.[214]

In *La France Juive*, Jews are compared to blood-draining parasites such as leeches, lice, and bed bugs, creatures whose survival depends on draining the blood of others. This biological framing of antisemitism is explicit when Drumont claims that Jews sap the 'vital energy' from France, functioning as a literal and symbolic drain on the nation's health:

> Comme le mercure subtil qui s'insinue par sa pesanteur et sa fluidité à travers tous les pores de la gangue pour s'emparer des plus minimes parcelles de métal précieux qu'elle renferme ; comme le hideux ténia, dont les anneaux parasites suivent dans leurs circonvolutions tous les viscères du corps humain, ainsi le vampire fait courir ses suçoirs jusqu'aux ramifications extrêmes de l'organisme social français pour en pomper toute la substance et en soutirer tous les sucs.[215]

By positioning Jews as an invasive and devouring force within French society, Drumont framed the presence of Jews in France as a threat to the purity and integrity of the 'body,' as if Jewish 'impurity' could taint the collective French bloodline.

Drumont's widespread portrayal of Jews as biologically degrading was continued in the antisemitic rhetoric of the *Union Nationale*, led by activist Théodore Garnier. In the 1890s, this prominent political organisation of Social Catholicism played a key role in uniting Catholics with the growing nationalist coalition.[216] In the antisemitic newspaper founded by Drumont, *La Libre Parole*, Garnier constantly compared Jews to 'vermin', 'parasites', and 'syphilis-like ulcers' to convey the belief that Jews weakened the French nation. Garnier lamented that the old nobility, whose blood had historically strengthened France, was being undermined by Jewish greed and self-interest.[217] Based on the idea that races possess unchangeable characteristics, racial antisemitism associated Jewishness with the physical and mental degeneration that had weakened French national strength.

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[214] Drumont, *La France Juive*, 30–33.
[215] Ibid., 345; Like the subtle mercury which insinuates itself by its weight and fluidity through all the pores of the gangue to seize the smallest particles of precious metal that it contains; like the hideous tapeworm, whose parasitic rings follow in their convolutions all the viscera of the human body, so the vampire runs its suckers to the extreme ramifications of the French social organism to pump all the substance and extract all the juices.
[216] Vicki Caron, 'Catholic Political Mobilization and Antisemitic Violence in Fin-de-Siècle France: The Case of the Union Nationale,' *Journal of Modern History* 81, no. 2 (2009): 294-346, 294.
[217] Abbé Théodore Garnier, 'Le Traître Dreyfus,' *La Libre Parole* (PF) November 2, 1894, 2; Abbé Théodore Garnier, 'Jetez-les dehors!' *La Libre Parole* (PF) January 5, 1895, 1.

Germanophobic Antisemitism

Antisemitism was certainly not unique to fin-de-siècle France, as it was widespread throughout all of Western Europe at the time. Literary historians have associated antisemitic imagery with *Dracula*, for example, and identified Jews as potential colonisers threatening British society.[218] However, after the defeat of 1870, a typical French variant of antisemitism emerged. After Germany's annexation, a stream of migrants moved from Alsace-Lorraine to Paris, including, of course, many Jews.[219] In many circles, the Jews became equated with Alsatians and Lorrainians, those half-Germans who did not belong to France anymore. Jews became increasingly likened to Germans and therefore to traitors and spies, regardless of how long they had been French citizens.[220] He is not only the outsider but is also associated with the national Other. The Jew becomes doubly stigmatised as a German. He was an agent of the enemy, states Labrie: the Jew is regarded as a Prussian bloodsucker.[221] It is notable that the Jewish 'threat' began to intertwine with the perceived cultural and physical danger posed by Germany. Antisemitic rhetoric mingled with anti-German sentiment, with Jews being portrayed as potential collaborators or infiltrators working for the German Empire and against French interests.

Verne had already emphasised the connection with Germany and the Jews by depicting his stockbroker Isaac Hakkabut in the science fiction fantasy *Hector Servadac* (1877; *Off on a Comet*). The narrator's description of Hakkabut's character is straight out of contemporary racist polemic:

> [Hakkabut] présentait toutes les caractéristiques typiques du juif allemand, de l'usurier sans cœur et rusé, de l'avare endurci et du silex. De même que le fer est attiré par l'aimant, ce Shylock était attiré par la vue de l'or, et il n'aurait pas hésité à soutirer le sang de ses créanciers s'il pouvait ainsi garantir ses créances.[222]

[218] Zanger, 'A Sympathetic Vibration: Dracula and the Jews', 33; Jack Halberstam, 'Technologies of Monstrosity', 337.
[219] Benbassa, *The Jews of France,* 100-101, 103.
[220] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 152.
[221] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie,* 410.
[222] Jules Verne, *Off on a Comet*, in *The Works of Jules Verne: Volume Nine* (New York: Vincent Parke and Company, 1911) 107-108; [Hakkabut] exhibited all the typical characteristics of the German Jew, of the heartless and cunning usurer, of the hardened miser, and of the flint. As iron is attracted to the magnet, so this Shylock was attracted by the sight of gold, and he would not have hesitated to draw the blood of his creditors if he could thus secure his claims.

Hakkabut's portrayal ties directly to the common antisemitic trope of unchristian egocentrism. According to Garnier, the Jewish greed and self-interest could be explained by the fact that Jews had no country to remain loyal to. Speaking multiple languages and blending in anywhere may be impressive features, but they also carry the same potential threat that vampires pose. Without a specific country to tie them to, this 'vampire teleportation' becomes harder to predict and their allegiances harder to control.[223] Therefore, Garnier ties in with Barrès' notion of deracination. In *Les Déracinés*, Barrès argues that Jews, through their ability to adapt to diverse societies while remaining unchanged themselves, have a symbolic immortality, one that comes at the expense of other nations.[224]

Drumont's fear of Jewish uprootedness even extended to national defence, harking into the fear of military domination by the Jews over France. He warned that Jews, once admitted to the army, would try to influence it for their personal gain.[225] He imagined that Jewish financiers like the Rothschild families might one day control military plans, serving their interests rather than France's.[226] Drumont takes the Battle of Sedan as his example to showcase the 'complete triumph of the Jews' and insinuates that the Jews 'consciously worked for Prussia.'[227] According to Drumont's words in *La Libre Parole*, the 'Aryan peoples' of France and Germany had been deceived by influential Jewish bankers into going to war with each other. Instead of hostility, he argued, France and Germany should unite against the greater common enemy: the Jewish-Marxist threat.[228] The image is taken up from there by others, such as the ultra-Catholic Arsène Guérin, who described Jews as 'insatiable vampires.'[229] The bloodsucking metaphor had become a powerful way to express fears about Jewish political influence.

The fears Marx aroused were reinforced by the common misconception that he controlled the radical left movement. Right-wing politicians believed that Jews held over control the

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[223] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 149.
[224] Barrès, *Les Déracinés*, 307; *Des protestants et des juifs dont beaucoup possèdent encore des habitudes héréditaires opposées a la tradition nationale.*
[225] Édouard Drumont, '*La Libre Parole*,' November 5, 1894; To betray his country, he had to have one, and a country is not acquired by means of an act of naturalisation. One's country is the land of one's forefathers, the land of one's ancestors: Dreyfus' ancestors were not of our land; they were everywhere wanderers and nomads, and their sons had no notion of what a fatherland meant.
[226] Drumont, *La France Juive,* 34; They understand the opportunity there for the spread of power; already lords of finance and administration, already dictating judgments to the courts, they will be masters of France on the day they command the army. Rothschild will deliver the mobilisation plans—and one can imagine toward what end.
[227] Cited in Frederick Busi, *The Pope of Antisemitism: The Career and Legacy of Édouard-Adolphe Drumont* (Lanham, New York, and London: University Press of America, 1986) 69.
[228] Robert Stuart, 'Chapter 6: 'A Class of Madmen': Marxists Confront National Socialism,' in *Marxism and National Identity: Socialism, Nationalism, and National Socialism during the French Fin de Siècle* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006) 146; Édouard Drumont, '*La Libre Parole*,' November 5, 1894.
[229] Busi, *The Pope of Antisemitism,* 76; Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie,* 410.

communist and anarchist movements.[230] This contributed to the perception that German-Jewish interests were at the forefront of the radical left, intensifying concerns that these 'dangerous' ideologies, with their roots in German ideology, posed a significant threat to French liberal stability. In an 1894 article in *Révue des Deux Mondes*, publicist Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu referred to Marx as the 'Marx-Mordecai, the German Jew.'[231] Similarly, French politicians confused their fear of the radical left with their anxiety for both Jews and Germans.[232]

A key factor in Germanophobic antisemitic stereotyping was that many Jews in France carried German names, which further tied them to the existential enemy. This linguistic and cultural connection made Jews appear more alien and less loyal to France, reinforcing the idea that they might have divided loyalties. If iron represents Germany, then Verne's Hakkabut's attraction to gold metaphorically reflects his pull toward Germany, symbolising the antisemitic stereotype of German loyalty. The fear was that Jews, like the inhabitants of Alsace and Lorraine, were too easily adaptable, able to fit in wherever they went, but ultimately untrustworthy and prone to siding with German interests.[233] This sentiment is even more vividly portrayed in Émile Zola's *L'Argent*, where the French Saccard, a financier, views his Jewish arch-rival Gundermann as the embodiment of all that is corrupt and parasitic in the financial world. Saccard states:

> Ah ! ce Gundermann ! un Prussien à l'intérieur, bien qu'il fût né en France ! car il faisait évidemment des vœux pour la Prusse, il l'aurait volontiers soutenue de son argent, peut-être même la soutenait-il en secret ! […] En marche depuis des siècles à travers les peuples, dont il suce le sang, comme les parasites de la teigne et de la gale.[234]

In his rhetoric of Germanophobic antisemitism, Saccard lashes out to Gundermann, and therefore all Jews, as 'settling everywhere, like a spider at the centre of its web, waiting for its prey, sucking the blood of all and fattening itself on the lives of others.'[235] Moreover,

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[230] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 123.
[231] Cited in Ibid.; Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, 'Le Règne de l'Argent III: Le Capitalisme et la Féodalité Industrielle et Financière,' *Revue des Deux Mondes* 123 (June 1, 1894): 513–50, 515.
[232] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 123.
[233] Labrie, *Zuiverheid En Decadentie,* 410.
[234] Cited in Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 152; Zola, *L'Argent*, 194; Ah! this Gundermann! A Prussian, albeit born in France, for his sympathies were evidently with Prussia, he would willingly have supported her with his money, perhaps he was secretly supporting her even now! […] On the march for centuries through the peoples, whose blood he sucks, like the parasites of ringworm and scabies.
[235] Ibid., 91, 193; *S'établissant chez chaque peuple, comme l'araignée au centre de sa toile, pour guetter sa proie, sucer le sang de tous, s'engraisser de la vie des autres.*

Gundermann is deliberately depicted by Zola as the chief of the French branch of the Rothschild family. According to Niall Ferguson, members of the Rothschild banking dynasty remained fiercely loyal to their respective countries throughout the War, even placing national loyalty above family.[236] According to Robinson, it is therefore all the more ironic that the Dreyfus Affair (1894-1906) happened to take place in France.[237]

The Dreyfus Affair as the Peak of Vampire Nationalism

The Dreyfus Affair was a legal scandal with major implications for French fin-de-siècle politics. The case revolved around the wrongful conviction of the Jewish French officer Alfred Dreyfus, who was falsely accused of passing state secrets to the German Embassy. The Affair gripped French society for twelve years, from 1894 to 1906, and deeply divided the nation into two ideological camps: The 'anti-Dreyfusards', who opposed reopening the case, were opposed by the 'Dreyfusards', who demanded the officer's release. On the surface, it was a simple matter of gross injustice. But in a broader context, underlying forces such as revanchism and antisemitism, which had long been simmering in France, played a crucial role.[238]

When Dreyfus' alleged treason reached the headlines November 1894, the anti-Dreyfusard press was quick to brand him as a traitor to his own blood. Not only had he betrayed his fatherland, but he had hidden his treason behind patriotism, abusing his military position to undermine France from its heart.[239] This rhetoric played on the vampire imagery, portraying Dreyfus as a parasitic figure who had infiltrated the nation and sucked its life force. *La Libre Parole*, Drumont's antisemitic newspaper started a large national debate on Dreyfus' origins, proclaiming that:

> Il est entré dans l'armée avec l'intention de trahir. […] En tant que Juif et Allemand, il déteste les Français. […] Allemand par goût et par éducation, Juif par race, il a fait le travail d'un Juif et d'un Allemand – et rien d'autre.[240]

[236] Niall Ferguson, *The House of Rothschild: The World's Banker, 1849–1999* (New York: Viking, 1999) 189.
[237] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 147.
[238] Brown, *For the Soul of France*, 175.
[239] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 153.
[240] *La Libre Parole*, November 14, 1894; Cited in Bredin, *The Affair,* 79; He entered the army with the intention of treason. […] As a Jew and a German, he hates the French. […] German by taste and education, a Jew by race, he did the work of a Jew and a German – and nothing else.

The conviction of Dreyfus gave the antisemitic newspapers the opportunity to justify their political campaign against the infiltration of Jews. And they did so fervently. In another 1894 article of *La Libre Parole*, Drumont states that these 'frightful Jews' had vomited up into France from the ghettos of Germany.[241] The ultra-Catholic newspaper *La Croix* called for a purification, claiming that Jews were involved in every corrupt affair:

> Dans toute mauvaise affaire, il y a toujours des Juifs. Rien de plus simple que d'organiser un bon coup de balai. Un jour, un Juif vole des documents secrets ; le lendemain, le même Juif grimace en vendant des journaux à un Allemand. La patrie est là où l'argent est bon.[242]

A few days later, *La Croix* went even further, describing Jews as a malignant force in French society:

> Le judaïsme a tout pourri […] c'est un horrible cancer. […] Les Juifs sont des vampires qui conduisent la France à l'esclavage ; que l'ordre soit de voler, de corrompre ou de trahir notre pays, le Juif mène toujours la charge.[243]

Garnier demanded capital punishment for Dreyfus in January 1895 and referred to Jews as 'vampires and parasites' who had 'poisoned' the true Frenchmen and had 'sucked the iron out of the French body over the past fifteen years.'[244] In *La Croix*, Ernest Judet tried to soften the situation by arguing that Dreyfus' immoral actions could be explained by 'his hereditary stain, the curse weighing on his race', thus implying that his race inherently led to these moral failings.[245] For many anti-Dreyfusards, Dreyfus' conviction confirmed their belief that Jews had divided loyalties and were conspiring with the French enemy. For them, Dreyfus was proof that Jews could never be true, committed citizens willing to sacrifice their blood for the strength of the nation.[246]

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[241] Édouard Drumont, '*La Libre Parole*,' November 5, 1894; *Les effroyables Juifs, vomis en France par les ghettos d'Allemagne.*

[242] Cited in Pierre Sorlin, *La Croix et les Juifs* (Paris: A. Colin, 1966) 111; *La Croix*, November 7, 1894; In every nasty affair, there are always Jews. Nothing is simpler than to organise a good sweep. One day, a Jew steals secret documents; the next day, the same Jew grimaces while selling newspapers to a German. The fatherland is where the money is good.

[243] Cited in Bredin, *The Affair,* 79; *La Croix*, November 14, 1894; Judaism has rotted everything […] it is a horrible cancer. […] The Jews are vampires who lead France to slavery; whether the order is to steal, corrupt or betray our country, the Jew always leads the charge.

[244] Garnier, 'Le Traıtre Dreyfus,' PF, Nov. 2, 1894, 2; Garnier, 'Jetez-les dehors!' PF, Jan. 5, 1895, 1.

[245] *La Croix*, November 7, 1894, cited in Pierre Sorlin, *La Croix et les Juifs* (Paris: A. Colin, 1966) 111-112.

[246] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 154.

In a political climate particularly conducive to antisemitism and hostility towards Germany, the Affair reached its climax in 1898, after the pardon of the real perpetrator and the publication of Zola's Dreyfusard manifesto, '*J'accuse...!*' (1898; I Accuse...!). Barrès' views, which came to the fore particularly strongly during the Dreyfus affair, linked being Jewish to innate racial characteristics that were not only hereditary but also contagious. Just as the vampire's bite spreads contagion, contact with Jews was believed to contaminate the blood. Since blood was seen as the essence of race and inheritance, mixing the so-called inferior Jewish blood with the superior blood of the host nation was seen as something that would inevitably lead to national degeneration.[247] In *Leurs Figures* (1902; Their Figures), Barrès described Jews as 'swarming barbarians', 'microbes', 'fathers of the rot that invade decomposing societies', 'parasitic worms', 'lice', and 'swarms of vampires.'[248] Barrès sought to regenerate France after an era of decadent stagnation, using antisemitism as a unifying mass platform. He aimed to block a possible alliance between all the perceived 'evil forces': the Jews, foreigners, Marxists, Kantians and the bourgeoisie, 'vampires' who were all infecting the body of the nation.[249] This represents Barrès' battle against a 'too-cosmopolitan and too-German socialism,' which would weaken the Fatherland's defence against toxic external forces.[250]

The outcome of the Franco-Prussian War raised questions about the future of the nation. The defeat intensified deep insecurities within French society, leading many to search for culprits to explain the nation's struggles. Anti-Jewish rhetoric increasingly filled this role, as the Jewish population was blamed for France's perceived decline and vulnerability. Rather than viewing Jews as simply foreigners or outsiders, French nationalists increasingly portrayed them as dangerous external enemies undermining French society from within. This shift in blame marked a significant intensification of antisemitism in France, rooted not only in age-old prejudices but also in contemporary fears about modernity and national identity. Such extreme scapegoating rarely emerges in stable societies; it only wells to the surface when a society grapples with senses of uncertainty and instability.

In fin-de-siècle France, the convergence of internal and external fears contributed to the construction of Jews as the ultimate inadmissible 'vampiric' figures threatening the French national health and vitality. In political discourse, Jews were depicted as symbols of economic manipulation, moral decay, and biological distinctiveness. Jews were framed as inherently

[247] Dan, 'How Vampires Became Jewish,' 423.
[248] Barrès, *Leurs Figures*, 89, 101, 111.
[249] Zeev Sternhell, 'National Socialism and Antisemitism: The Case of Maurice Barrès,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 8, no. 4 (October 1, 1973): 47; Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 28.
[250] Ibid., 55.

unassimilable and as existential threats to the French body. The Dreyfus Affair became the moment where these anxieties crystallised and manifested in the form of virulent antisemitism. Dreyfus became the symbol onto which fears of betrayal, national decline, and societal change were projected. The Dreyfus Affair epitomised this toxic convergence of fears, serving as the peak of vampire nationalism.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated how the political discourse of blood purity and vampirism was employed to reflect and represent nationalist anxieties in fin-de-siècle France. Starting from a general history of the subject, Chapter One has gained insight into the fears and the fascination surrounding vampires as they have manifested themselves in modern Europe, where France already occupies a special place. As a figure of both physical and psychological degeneration, the vampire is a monster who emerges when civilisation is most fragile. The figure of the vampire encapsulates modern fears that are elusive and invisible and thus require certain language. Words make fears tangible. In this context, language is the medium through which elusive and invisible fears are made comprehensible. Using metaphors like the vampire figure, language translates anxieties into something concrete and recognisable. Ultimately, this chapter has shown that the vampire is not merely a manifestation of biological anxieties but can emerge as a potent political symbol for invisible threats that require imagery.

The analysis in Chapter Two has highlighted how vampire discourse functions differently in France than elsewhere in Western Europe. While England, Germany, and Italy internalised fears of social instability through class and gender, France's vampire metaphor reflected a more profound existential anxiety. Anxieties were not just about the breakdown of the familiar order but also about national survival. The nation's decline fostered a victim mentality that is not seen in neighbouring countries. In the context of the fin-de-siècle, Western Europe, England, Germany, and Italy serve as a backdrop, while France stands in stark contrast.

Chapter Three has analysed how this distinction in the approach to vampire nationalism largely stems from one crucial historical difference: the humiliating defeat of 1871, a turning point for France, which has never been able to fully come to terms with this trauma. France's deep-rooted fear of Germany and its inferiority complex as a result of the War left a profound and lasting impact on its national psyche. This shattered the sense of national identity that had developed at the fin-de-siècle into a unique victim mentality, giving the vampire metaphor a distinctly political and externalised quality directed at outsiders as responsible for infecting the French body. Other nations miss such a catastrophic event and the accompanying Germanophobia that led to the vampire metaphor being used in a distinctly externalised way. For France, the vampire was the ultimate figure who could explain France's pathology and project its fears outwards.

The most unexpected revelation of this study is revealed in Chapter Four's analysis, where it becomes clear that the resonance with vampires in fin-de-siècle France was deeply rooted in

antisemitic discourse. This discourse fed nationalist anxieties as France grappled with its sense of national decline and the need to restore its vitality. The fear of Germany was elusive, and antisemitism provided a clear outlet to deal with these senses of humiliation, frustration and anxiety. This explains why French antisemitism was so fierce. Vampire imagery, now intertwined with antisemitism, was a tool for nationalist ideologies that emphasised the purity and survival of the nation in the face of other perceived foreign threats. Nationalism emerges in this context as a by-product of these intertwined racial, national, and existential anxieties. By portraying Jews as the ultimate inadmissible vampires draining the nation of its lifeblood, this distinct character of French nationalism reinforced the idea that the nation's strength depended on the exclusion and purification of Jews. In this way, the vampire metaphor served in fin-de-siècle France not only to express contemporary anxieties but also to fuel the development of deeply racialised nationalist movements that would have far-reaching consequences in the following century. The National Socialist theory of *Blut und Boden* also emphasised the connections between bloodlines, racial purity, and national territory.

While all three kinds of primary sources expressed anxieties through vampire nationalism, literary novels offer a more contemplative exploration of national identity, with most words and rhetoric evoking secret and repressed desires to get rid of the vampire. Purity discourse is prevalent in many novels, while mentions of vampires are less frequent. When the vampire does appear, it naturally takes centre stage as a projection screen. But it always becomes a somewhat ambivalent and complex appearance. Political tracts and pamphlets are slightly more urgent and expressive, as they were designed for a specific audience sharing the writer's ideology. Pseudoscientific underpinnings and an obsessive concern with dirt and uncleanness are most frequently used. Newspaper articles were broader in scope and had much in common with political tracts. Still, they also revealed the vampire's broader application of how he is integrated into society's daily life. Regardless of their differences, what ultimately unites these three types of sources is the shared desire for a pure, transparent national order, cleansed from the perceived chaotic disorder of the present.

At the end of this study on vampire nationalism in fin-de-siècle France, some key questions arise: Why is it important to understand the symbolism of blood and vampires? What makes their study also meaningful for political historians? The vampire figure was not the only way people gave language to the intangible fears, nor the only symbol used to reflect and represent nationalist anxieties in the fin-de-siècle. The era's other popular horror creatures, such as the bogeyman, the spider, the cannibal, and the werewolf, also found their way into political tracts,

literature, and newspaper rhetoric.[251] However, what makes the vampire stand out in this case is its unique ability to encapsulate the era's many new anxieties. With its parasitism, contagion and infection, the vampire is the only figure that violates the boundaries between life and death, representing the impurity *par excellence*. Amid intangible fears of modern violated boundaries, the vampire emerged as a powerful symbol, far more frightening than its colleagues. He integrates all internal and external threats in one single, haunting image. It thereby serves as a unifying symbol for all the disparate fin-de-siècle fears related to orderly purity.

However, purity does not exist. Purity is an illusion, but an illusion of the kind that mobilises people and, in that sense, is no less accurate than the churches and nations, the crusades and battles that have arisen from such illusions. This illusion of purity reveals much about the struggle against the vampire, which symbolises a cleansing operation: a desperate attempt to restore order by confronting and exorcising the fascination with the impure. In this context, the vampire's death becomes the cure for a sick society, symbolising the nation's aspiration for regeneration. The vampire's intrinsic flexibility allows him to embody not only fears but also the nation's deepest aspirations. In fin-de-siècle France and later periods, the struggle against the vampire reflected the nation's search for a new identity, order, and rejuvenation amid times of crisis. This analysis of vampire discourse in France thus serves as a case within another bigger story. The vampire metaphor is not merely a symbol of external or internal dangers; it is part of the larger story of how countries strive for renewal. As a metaphor, the fight against the vampire symbolises the nation's ongoing struggle to renew itself amid chaos and shape its future.

Integrating vampire nationalism in political discourse as a case study has proven essential. Firstly, the fresh intersection of French nationalism and vampire imagery, mainly through the lens of blood purity discourse, had not yet been explored in one unified analysis. This research addresses this gap. Understanding how these themes are interconnected gives a new perspective on how the idea of national purity was conceptualised at a time of crisis and profound transformation.

Secondly, this study reveals how vampire imagery provides a new framework of language for articulating anxieties about French national identity, identifying distinct French characters to nationalism. The vampire metaphor, used to externalise threats to the nation, exemplifies France's particular political struggle with its perceived national decline. By tracing these

[251] Robinson, *Blood Will Tell,* 187.

responses, this study highlights the unique aspects of French nationalism that cannot be understood without acknowledging the role of the vampire.

Thirdly, the role of the vampire transcends literary, cultural and social dimensions. Comparative historians, such as Robinson, have already been interested in this topic, but political historians should also take this topic more seriously as it helps explain why French nationalism acquires its specific character. This study thus extends previous analyses of vampires by politically linking the vampire metaphor to the political ideology of nationalism.

The themes explored in this thesis extend far into the twentieth century. This underlines the continuing obsession with blood purity and its connections to modern fears of national decline. National tensions that had formed in the nineteenth century reached a boiling point and erupted fourteen years into the twentieth century. Initially, the First World War (1914-1918) was celebrated as a 'purifying catharsis', a means of regenerating and cleansing Europe by exterminating the vampires.[252] But it only dragged the European countries deeper into the coffin, into the bloody mud and soil of the trenches. Blood did not bring the expected national rebirth but only intensified the already existing sense of *malaise*.[253] The peace treaties that followed only offered temporary relief, like a bandage over a festering bite mark. As Labrie argues, the vampire's lingering presence kept on haunting the collective consciousness and could only truly be healed by other cataclysmic events such as World War Two (1939-1945).[254] Since then, virulent hostility towards nations and racial groups has significantly lessened, reflecting a global shift toward valuing diversity and universal human rights. Yet vampire nationalism can resurface in times of great political unrest and crisis, as we see nowadays.

These old cultural enemy images have not disappeared but have instead gone underground for some time, resurfacing in certain circumstances of crisis. It seems that right now, nationalist rhetoric is once again on the rise in France and all of Europe, with old metaphors reappearing during times of crisis. A notable example occurred in May 2014, when German Chancellor Angela Merkel gifted French President François Hollande a barrel of 'Bismarck herring' during a state visit. French journalists speculated whether Merkel deliberately recalled France's most humiliating history when the last Napoleon III lost for good to Otto von Bismarck in a battle for European dominance. Did she purposely highlight the French subordinate position that has existed since 1870?[255] Populist politician Jean-Luc Mélenchon capitalised on this moment in

[252] Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1920).
[253] Nieuwland, *'National Germophobia and Germanophobia',* 68.
[254] Labrie, *Zuiverheid en Decadentie,* 460-461.
[255] Marleen Rensen, 'Een Jager in Het Woud: Frankrijk, Duitsland, Europa,' *Nexus Instituut*, June 9, 2023, https://nexus-instituut.nl/review/een-jager-in-het-woud-frankrijk-duitsland-europa.

his political pamphlet *Le Hareng de Bismarck: Le Poison Allemand* (2015; Bismarck's Herring: The German Poison). In it, Germany is once again portrayed as the existential threat to French integrity, and Merkel is compared to a 'vampire who poisons French vitality.'[256] This is an intriguing example because it demonstrates how these stereotypes continue to persist within French culture. Just as the vampire feeds on blood, foreign influences are still portrayed as draining France's vital energy, threatening to corrupt its national essence.

Another recent example can be found in the rhetoric of far-right journalist Éric Zemmour. In his essay *Le Suicide Français* (2014; The French Suicide), Zemmour declares 'the demise of France' due to the dominance of Islam and Jews over France.[257] His language of parasitism and national decline has revived antisemitic conspiracy theories. In 2021, Zemmour even controversially questioned the acquittal of Dreyfus, claiming that Dreyfus' innocence was 'never obviously proven' and 'unclear.'[258] This nationalist rhetoric, rooted in biological determinism and similar to figures like Barrès and Drumont, from more than a century ago, is finding new relevance in contemporary movements that exploit fears of contagion and cultural decline. The echoes of the past reveal the persistence of exclusionary ideologies in shaping modern nationalist agendas.

This research inevitably still has some open spots. Future research could improve the quality of the argument made in this thesis by expanding its scope beyond the year 1900. By examining the contemporary revival of vampire nationalism in more depth, future research can demonstrate the continued relevance of this topic and why this particular kind of political rhetoric continues to resonate so well with the French. The contemporary biopolitics and invasion discourse of political figures like Mélenchon and Zemmour reflect the enduring concern with purity, vitality and identity in a world where a sense of crisis becomes increasingly prevalent again. The topic of this thesis is particularly relevant today as fears about protecting identity and rejecting migration are on the rise again. Blood, when visible, remains a potent reminder of national vulnerability and mortality, evoking danger and the desire for boundaries between the pure and the impure. In the context of contemporary France, it becomes clear that

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[256] Jean-Luc Mélenchon, *Le Hareng de Bismarck: Le Poison Allemand* (Paris, FR: J'ai lu, 2016) 2; '*Vampire qui empoisonne la vitalité française. […] Merkel s'en bat les couettes! L'Allemagne jouit d'une totale impurité. Qui oserait faire une remarque ? On vous pend en Europe pour un point de déficit structurel de trop mais vous pouvez librement y empoisonner tous vos voisins.'*

[257] Zemmour, Éric. *Le Suicide Français*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2014.

[258] Jon Henley, 'Rise of Far Right Puts Dreyfus Affair into Spotlight in French Election Race,' The Guardian, October 30, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/global/2021/oct/30/rise-of-far-right-puts-dreyfus-affair-into-spotlight-in-french-election-race.

the political discourse of blood purity anxieties again plays a central role in the formation of nationalism, or what we can now call ‘vampire nationalism’.

Fin.

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