



# The Vampire Lectures

*Laurence A. Rickels*

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Bela Lugosi may -- as the eighties gothic rock band Bauhaus sang -- be dead, but the vampire lives on. A nightmarish figure dwelling somewhere between genuine terror and high camp, a morbid repository for the psychic projections of diverse cultures, an endlessly recyclable mass-media icon, the vampire is an enduring object of fascination, fear, ridicule, and reverence. In *The Vampire Lectures*, Laurence A. Rickels sifts through the rich mythology of vampirism, from medieval folklore to Marilyn Manson, to explore the profound and unconscious appeal of the undead.

Based on the course Rickels has taught at the University of California, Santa Barbara, for several years (a course that is itself a cult phenomenon on campus), *The Vampire Lectures* reflects Rickels's unique lecture style and provides a lively history of vampirism in legend, literature, and film. Rickels unearths a trove that includes eyewitness accounts of vampire attacks; burial rituals and sexual taboos devised to keep vampirism at bay; Hungarian countess Elisabeth Bathory's use of girls' blood in her sadistic beauty regimen; Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, with its turn-of-the-century media technologies; F. W. Murnau's haunting *Nosferatu*; and crude, though intense, straight-to-video horror films such as *Subspecies*. He makes intuitive, often unexpected connections among these sometimes wildly disparate sources.

More than simply a compilation of vampire lore, however, *The Vampire Lectures* makes an original and intellectually rigorous contribution to literary and psychoanalytic theory, identifying the subconscious meanings, complex symbolism, and philosophical arguments -- particularly those of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche -- embedded in vampirism and gothic literature.

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