The Vampiric and the Urban Space in Dalton Trevisan's *O vampiro de Curitiba*

Andrew M. Gordus
Arizona State University

Within contemporary Brazilian literature Dalton Trevisan is considered one of the preeminent modern short story writers. Although his first works appeared in the review *Joaquim* (1946-48), he first gained national attention with his collection of short stories entitled *Novelas nada exemplares* (1959). As many critics have noted, his collection and those works that followed share a common preoccupation with revealing to the reader the grotesque, horrific underside of daily existence within modern Brazilian society. *O vampiro de Curitiba* (1965), representative of this dominant preoccupation, has come to be considered the classic work of Dalton Trevisan.

At the time of its publication, Trevisan's work marks a significant departure from the better-known regional literatures of the time. Beginning in the '20s and '30s the rural or regional had begun to predominate Brazilian literary and cultural production. There was increased emphasis on the rural/regional space and the depiction of the people and society that existed there. Building on the Modernists, many authors began to explore the folklore, customs, and popular culture of Brazil's rural/regional societies. Predominantly dealing with the cultures of the Northeast, they tried to capture the distinctive oral language—*brasileirismos*—and the customs and heritage of the Northeast in their writings.

This increased interest in the rural/regional space suggests several motivating factors. First, for some the patriarchal rural society represented a return to a nostalgic past, a golden age, a simpler time. This was a reaction to the great changes that Brazil was undergoing during the years that followed World War I and, more importantly, with the Estado Novo of the '30s. With the coming to power of the Vargas dictatorship there was an effort to incorporate the cultural production and to use it for the government's own purposes. The cultural project of the Estado Novo was to appropriate the *national* as a vehicle of the *popular*. This creation of a Brazilian identity and its subsequent celebration became a means to negate difference and the plurality that existed within an increasingly complex Brazilian society, thus encouraging conformity and resignation to its inherent problems

(Regina de Mendoça 292). Such problems, deficiencies, and inequalities could thus be typically dismissed as natural, part of the national character, or in other words "o jeito brasileiro."

During the push towards modernization and in the midst of Brazil's rapidly changing social landscape the rural represented a means to return to the essence of the "real" Brazil. Brazil's "true" identity and culture could be found in its rural heritage. As Bosi points out, in the period after World War II the rural, which has been a tool for the right, becomes the focus of the left who begin to examine the rural/regional societies from a critical stance (386). There continues the interest in and celebration of the regional art and popular culture, but in contrast with those on the right the *realismo bruto* of many of the regional writers especially from the Northeast attempted to lay bare and protest against the many social injustices that they observed. They found endemic within the rural societies that they wrote about the oppression, corruption and authoritarianism that plagued Brazil as a whole. Echoing to some extent the project of the right, the left was to examine Brazil's rural heritage, but instead of seeking a nostalgic golden age it was there that they could find the roots of Brazil's present social problems. Social ills such as poverty, corruption, and authoritarianism were holdovers from the *coronelismo* of the past. These past/present ills were holding Brazil back and the literature of such authors as Jorge Amado, José Lins do Rego, and Érico Veríssimo called for a revolutionary transformation of Brazilian society.

At the same time as Brazilian cultural production turned its focus to the rural and regional space during the Post-War period, Brazil was undergoing a dramatic shift from a rural to an urban society. Brazil's further incorporation into the world economy and the government's continued push for economic development and modernization carried this process ever forward. As Lowe points out, this economic vision of the city was one that extended back to the modernists but which balanced that vision with a recognition of the misery it often brought (27). Coupled with this development was an ideology of nationalistic pride, optimism and hope in the future of Brazil. Out of the great resources of Brazil was to emerge a modern orderly nation. Brasília—the newly created capital in the midst of the Brazilian wilderness—symbolized more than anything the official ideology of *ordem e progresso*. A strong centralized government and planned growth would overcome the "backwardness" of the traditional rural societies that were restraining the people of Brazil. As a result, the growing cities of Brazil frequently came to be associated with opportunity, hope and the future. In part this image of the city combined with the decline in rural economies contributed to the migration of

large segments of the rural populace to the cities in search of a better life and employment opportunities.

It is within the context of these great social changes and the growth of the city within Brazil that the work of Dalton Trevisan first appears. However considerable the attention that has been given to the body of Dalton Trevisan's work, there exists a noticeable oversight in its analysis: the representation in and influence on Trevisan's work of the urban space has received little or no attention. Its choice of urban settings stands apart from the abundant rural and regional literatures being produced during the 1950s and the years preceding and markedly differs from the official vision of the city as the modern, optimistic, future of Brazil.

It should become apparent that the urban space is an important influence on the characters that populate his fiction, and yet attempts to make sense of what connects the various protagonists and their shared experiences remained trapped in shallow descriptions such as the "everyday" or the "common." Such descriptions fall short of adequately analyzing what shapes these protagonists and what we might be able to identify as this common or everyday experience or force. What is it "out there" that is common to us all, that creates this everyday modern urban experience that Trevisan details? What are the forces that shape and characterize the urban vampires that populate his writings?

There is no clearer marker of the importance of the urban space than the title of Trevisan's collection, *O vampiro de Curitiba*, his defining work and the starting point for so much of the criticism of his work. Berta Waldman, Nelson Vieira, Eva Paulino Bueno and others have written extensively about the vampire and the representations of the vampire within his various works, but the urban space, Curitiba, remains sorely neglected. This is all the more remarkable because the title signals a vital link between the urban space and the figure of the vampire. The title which connects *vampiro* with the urban space, Curitiba, and the preposition "de" allows for several possible understandings of this relationship. The vampire can been seen as having its origins in the urban space or coming from the urban space. It could also be a reference to the way in which the vampire in these texts belongs or relates to the urban space, differentiating it from other possible forms of vampires. An additional reading could interpret the title as emphasizing the material composition of the vampire. Such an interpretation implies that the vampire is a composite of the city. The vampire is in essence the city itself. These questions are especially important if we consider the fact that the vampire has its origins in the rural cultures of Europe. Any one of these multiple meanings reveals the paramount importance of the urban space in relation to the vampire and text as a whole. What is it, then, that is unique about the vampire originating in

the urban space, what is important about the connection, vampire and city, and how do they interrelate?

In any attempt to understand the figure of the vampire in relation to the city in Trevisan's work it becomes helpful to examine the vampire's possible uses and meanings in literature and its reception by the reader. What is it about the vampire that makes it appropriate to use in the description of the contemporary urban dweller or what might it show about such urban existence? How do the vampires of Trevisan's work differ from those that have come before? The vampire is an ancient and almost universal figure appearing in some form or another in most cultures but how we come to understand the vampire today in literature and popular culture has been principally shaped by those vampires that populated the European literature of the nineteenth century. Such literature can trace its vampire's origins back to the folkloric traditions of Eastern Europe.

Within those traditions the vampire normally took the form of a loved one or family member who, cursed in one manner or another, comes back from the grave to feed off one of his family, friends, or neighbors. Apart from her or his undead state, the vampire showed few extraordinary powers. This portrait of the vampire varies greatly from the literary vampire and how the vampire is typically conceived of today in several important aspects. Whereas in the folkloric traditions the vampire was known by his or her victims, as of the nineteenth century the vampire became a foreigner, a loner, an outsider, and hunted for victims outside of her or his own ethnic group (Senf 25). Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), perhaps the most popular and best-known vampire novel, synthesizes many of the characteristics of past and present vampires. In his work the mysterious Count Dracula who has come to London is described as "the stranger in a strange land." He stands apart from those around from those around him in that he wields enormous economic, physical and erotic power.

This shift in the characterization of the folkloric vampire to the literary vampire and the surge of interest in vampires in the nineteenth century coincided with and has been linked to the changes that overcame Western societies as they moved from being predominantly feudal, rural and agricultural to increasingly democratic, industrial and urban. In John Flynn's interpretation of popular models,

> Dracula is a constant reminder of the many Old World traditions that never quite made the transition to contemporary society. He is the romantic hero, like many of us, lost in an unfamiliar world. He also represents the symbol of eternal life. Like Peter Pan, the boy who refused to grow up, Dracula remains unchanged in a changing society with no conscience of remorse for his actions. He knows only what he wants and satisfies those desires without any consideration for the con-

> sequences. He is the embodiment of evil without guilt, power without restraint, and sexuality without conscience. (Flynn 4-5)

The emerging literary vampire is a melding of the folkloric traditions to a real historical figure, Vlad the Impaler. This 15th-century Romanian tyrant was renowned for his particular cruelty in dealing with enemies both foreign and domestic. He routinely impaled his enemies on wooden stakes as a means of torture and execution. This image of militarized sadism coupled with a feudal aristocracy clearly represented a challenge to the emerging capitalist democracy of Britain which based itself on reason and the rule of law. Eastern Europe had become important for Britain at this time due to its strategic location between the Orient and the West. Britain's empire, which was at its height at the end of the nineteenth century, included important and vast territories in the Orient that required that they insure secure connections between the West and the Orient. Eastern Europe as a historical point of contact between the West and the Orient becomes the embodiment of the fears that this contact produces in Britain. Dracula becomes the realization of what this contact will produce. From a European point of view, a modern, industrial, and democratic Europe is in danger of being contaminated by the backward, dictatorial and savage cultures of the Orient.

As we noted, the appearance of Trevisan's work coincides with social/cultural upheaval not unlike that of the Victorian age, and as such we can see the vampire as representing some of those same fears. But also as we would expect there are key differences. One of those key differences comes when we ask what is the vampire, where does he come from or where does he trace his origins? For the Victorians he was the stranger in a strange land, a foreigner, someone who didn't belong, a contaminant in an otherwise healthy body, a corrupting influence; he was the "other," culturally, politically and sexually. The vampire was feared, but there seems to be an optimism that it would be overcome and held at bay. In Trevisan's work it becomes evident that that is not the case. His vampires are very much at home in the urban environment that they inhabit. It is an acknowledgment that the monstrous "other" that exists has its origins not outside of society but more dangerously lies within. What is interesting is that the vampire of Trevisan's work seems to mesh qualities of both the folkloric and Victorian traditions mentioned earlier. Like the Victorian, the vampire operates within the urban context, the city, but like the folkloric he is a part of the community that he feeds on. In an approximation to the folkloric the vampire's victims are often family members, friends, lovers, wives, but just as readily strangers. Although the vampire shows no extraordinary or supernatural powers, the threat of the vampire is magnified by its massification and its ability to manifest itself in any of its inhabitants. This

ability makes it much more elusive and dangerous. This hybridity seems to be reflective of the nature of Brazilian society. As I mentioned previously, Brazil found itself in the midst of a move from rural, agricultural and feudal society to one that promised to be urban, industrial and democratic. Hence the commonality with the literary vampire as it was created during the nineteenth century. The vampire of Trevisan's work reflected the fear of Brazil's inability to escape the oppressions of its rural past. The push towards industrialization and modernization was leaving incomplete or untouched many of the social problems that had been pointed out by the regionalist writers. Such fears were fueled by the perception that the economic gains that were being made were benefiting the elite at the expense of the poor and that the state was becoming more authoritarian in the face of such inequities. Rather than relegating the abuses of the *coronelismo* and the feudalist tendencies of the rural societies to a distant past, the modernization of Brazil seemed to be aggravating them. An increase in Brazil's urban population and the massification of its communities required ever increasing measures of oppression to keep them under control. These fears finally manifested themselves in the military coup of 1964.

As a symbol of the project of the government for a modern Brazil, the city becomes especially important in its characterization, one that is at least as, if not more important, than the individual characters. As we surmised from the title of the work, the vampire can viewed actually to be the city. In one way it is the environment in which the inhabitants live that spawns the vampires. The vampiric city lives below the surface in the underside of Curitiba in the neighborhoods of the newly arrived working class and lies hidden beneath the façade of the middle and upper class. In Trevisan's world the vampiric "other" comes not from some distant source but is part of an integrated whole that surfaces from time to time to rear its ugly head only to submerge itself once again. It is this idea that he tries to communicate when he writes:

> Curitiba que não tem pinheiros, esta Curitiba eu viajo. Curitiba, onde o céu azul não é azul, Curitiba que viajo. Não a Curitiba para inglês ver … Curitiba das ruas de barro com mil e uma janeleiras e seus gatinhos brancos de fita encarnada no pescoço; da zona da Estação em que à noite um povo ergue a pedra do túmulo, bebe amor no prostíbulo e se envenena com dor-de-cotovelo. *(Misterios de Curitiba 85)*

In his short story "Mister Curitiba" the city assumes the form of one of its flesh-and-blood inhabitants (*A trompeta do anjo vingador* 9). It embodies the contradictory "undead" qualities of the vampire, it shows itself to be constant, living but dead, growing but not alive, static but at the same time incredibly dynamic. The

city feeds off the constant influx of new arrivals; it seduces them with the promise of a better future, only to entrap them in the numbing existence of its daily horror. The choice of Curitiba—perhaps in large part due to the accident the author lives there—has special significance for the reader. Curitiba is the capital of the Southeastern state of Paraná. The city's growth and character were determined in large part by the large waves of European immigrants (Polish, Italian, German, Ukrainian) that settled in the city and in the surrounding areas. The city's varied architecture and relatively cosmopolitan attitude are held out as a testament to the varied groups that have settled there. Curitiba has typically been held out as a community that has most easily made the transition to a modern workable city. It reveals the duality of Brazilian society of this time: that although promoted nationally and internationally alike as quickly moving towards becoming a modern urban industrialized society, yet the country holds on to its rural feudal past. Such changes that have taken place in Brazilian society have yet to address many of the problems of the past such as those that were expounded by the regionalists. Trevisan is a clear challenge to the official ideology of the government and ruling elite.

Examination of the various protagonists of Trevisan's work further reinforce this idea of the city as vampire and how the novel represents the massification of the vampire. The structuring of *O vampiro de Curitiba* reflects this urban identity and those that make up a part of it. All of these short stories are really a collection of episodes, moments in time revealing the lived experience of the urban space. This experience is characterized as one in which the urban dweller moves about on a daily basis through the various micro-spaces of the larger urban arena engaging and disengaging others in superficial transitory social encounters. Paulino Bueno echoes this point when she comments that Trevisan's works in general are repetitive, often building on, continuing, and reiterating those works that have come before (14). Similarly, Waldman states: "lo que define a la narrativa de Dalton Trevisan es justamente la ausencia de cambios, y el movimiento que ella traza es el de la repetición de lo siempre igual" (366). Deonisio Da Silva stresses the way in which Trevisan's various characters receive little if any description (40). This means that the attention of the reader is directed to the repetitive actions of the characters, giving an overall sense of anonymity and a melding of all of their identities into one.

This connection into an anomic mass finds its manifestation in the figure of Nelsinho, himself a protagonist who has no fixed identity. He represents not one person, but a multiplicity of identities that can be found in the urban space. His ages range from that of a young adolescent, a young university student, to that of

an older professional lawyer. As Vieira has commented, Trevisan's characters display such a consistency in their characteristics that they become archetypes. In such a way he loses a specific identity and comes to be no more than a conglomeration of identities like the anonymous masses that populate the city (45).

Trevisan's novel seems to show the fruition of the worst fears of the Victorians. In Brazil, the modern nation that the government is promoting is contaminated by the sins of the autocratic and savage rural past. The vampiric masses show themselves to have infiltrated all sectors of society living undetected:

> Los vampiros de Dalton Trevisan se constituyan en una multitud de funcionarios públicos, tenderos, prostitutas, amas de casa, domésticas, profesionales liberales, trabajadores del campo, que en la convivencia entre dos se contentan en chupar al otro transformándolo a su imagen y semejanza. (Waldman 368)

The vampiric other can no longer be held at bay because it is a part of society hiding in wait, ready to be released within the confines of the urban space: "No fondo de cada filho de família dorme um vampiro—não deixe que êle sinta gôsto de sangue" (4).

The city and its representation of the modern Brazil, rather than having reformed or grown out of the past and the oppression of the feudalist society, in many ways has continued or enabled their existence. Contrasting with Bram Stoker's novel, modernization fails to defeat the oppressions of the past; on the contrary, they thrive in their new urban environment. In the city there exist increased outlets for and more efficient means of exploitation and oppression.

One essential mitigating factor in the actions of the participants is anonymity. The characteristic of anonymity is an apparent extension of the traditional association of the vampire with the night, darkness and shadows. The vampire traditionally could operate only at night in the absence of light, and such associations conferred feelings of fear, evil and chaos. In Trevisan's world it is in the shadowy margins formed by the chaos of the city in which the vampires operate. The obscure concealed space shields their activities from others and provides the conditions necessary to enable them to release their repressed desires. These dark secluded spaces abound throughout Trevisan's stories. The vampires that populate the city move about attacking their victims in stores, under an eave, or in a movie theater. They and their victims inhabit decrepit rundown apartment buildings or old wooden houses characteristic of the European immigrants that came to the city. They are cold, lonely, and indifferent to the suffering of their inhabitants. Trevisan expresses this sentiment when he writes in "O rio":

> Se é de boa paz, ai de quem na lua cheia o enfureça: com as primeiras chuvas eis que sua força, o rio, inunda a cidade, arrasa a Ponte Preta, são tantos afogados que, debaixo de cada um, outro espera a vez de boiar.
>
> Um rio não guarda rancor, de novo o rio manso, o rio sem nome, e Curitiba será a cidade dos muitos rios. (*Mistérios de Curitiba* 18)

It is at the very same Ponte Preta that Trevisan gives us an example of this characteristic. As the girl who suffers a gang rape states at the beginning of the story, she had never seen any of the men before, and they insure their anonymity by placing a tunic over her head. Their lack of connection with their victim or any prior knowledge of the victim's personal history makes it possible to objectify the victim and facilitate their dehumanization of her. Whatever traditional moral restraints that may have existed before in Brazil's rural societies break down and disappear in the anonymity of the city, enabling one to liberate her or his violent desires with impunity. This anonymity represents not only the ability to move about unrecognized but, perhaps more important, the manner in which repeated exploitation at all levels has brought about an inability to recognize the suffering of others and an indifference towards them. The repressed "other" within each one of us is allowed back to the surface and comes out all too often. Without the restraining effect of any moral code, the vampire emerges naturally within the urban setting as formed by its daily struggle. The authoritarian past has infected and permeated all levels of society to the core and thus has become self-perpetuating.

Of the various characteristics of the vampire the one that is generally universal and among the most salient, especially in the case of Trevisan, is the vampire's overt eroticism. The inclusion of the erotic in the vampire has typically been analyzed in terms of several factors which are not exclusive in and of themselves, but perhaps more than not linked intimately. On one level, the vampire's powerful eroticism can be viewed as a natural extension of his/her power as a whole connected to its other manifestations such as the economic and the physical. As an embodiment of a given individual's or society's fears, the vampire embodies those sexual urges, practices that are considered dangerous or threatening and so naturally find their expression in a monstrous figure. Those behaviors and desires the vampire demonstrates or fulfills are those which are repressed and/or secretly desired. Lastly, the vampire's erotic power over others and the vampire's resultant relationship can be read as a metaphor for other types of relationships that exist within the societies that the vampire inhabits.

Fernández signals the latter in his assessment of sexual/gender relations. For him these relations as played out in the literary are drawn in terms of the sexual as

a metaphor or representation of all exploitative subordinate/dominate relations within society: "Sexual violence and socio-economic repression are metaphorically linked to women's plight, underscoring a context where graphic sex serves as an ironic and moral barometer for social criticism" (368). Not only are they indicative of the exploitative nature of sexual relations in Brazilian society but also wider experiences of exploitation at the political, economic, social level. As Jean Franco has observed, due to the particular socio-historical formation of Latin America, the grid of gender/sexual relations in terms of the dominant and subordinate has been transferred to the larger society:

> [T]he analogous position of the intelligentsia which was subordinated to metropolitan discourse at the same time it was constituting the discourse of nationalism is indivisible from the sexual division of labor. Domination has traditionally been associated with masculinity. Social, political and economic power are represented through a lexicon that is drawn from sexual relations. Hence the social and the sexual have become intimately connected. (506)

What this has meant for cultural discourse in particular for Brazil is a tradition of representing the broader social relations in terms of the sexual at either a conscious or unconscious level. This is exactly the point Roberto Reis makes in his observations about nineteenth-century Brazilian literature. As he sees it, those works typically underscored, on the level of literary representation, the hierarchical frontiers found in social reality. Amorous relationships such as those of José de Alencar were typically redrawn in terms of the broader socio-economic feudal relations "master" and "slave" (103). Romantic relations and control exerted within those relations paralleled racial and social hierarchies.

So then the question becomes: what does Trevisan's choice of the vampire say about social relations as they exist in the Brazilian urban context? Comparatively speaking, Trevisan's protagonists lack the erotic power of their nineteenth-century predecessors. Absent are the supernatural powers with which to render their victims helpless; instead, they must rely on more mundane means. Reducing the power of the vampire serves as an effective way to make the vampire more tangible and closer to the reader. Rather than empowered they seem to be at a disadvantage in their attempted conquests. Their often ugly or repugnant (at times even comical) appearance require that they use violent, coercive or deceptive means in order to dominate/seduce their victims.

"Incidente na loja" recounts the protagonist Nelsinho's pursuit of a store clerk back to the store where she works, where he subsequently sexually assaults her. The transformation of the store into what could be called a large bedroom is highly suggestive. Filled with pillows, quilts, and mattresses it seems to be drawing on

the cliché attack of the vampire who steals into a chaste young maiden's bedroom to feed upon her. What the reader witnesses instead is a grotesque reproduction that strips all vestiges of the romantic from the vampire. The removal of the scene from the bedroom to a store is an important detail. It removes such encounters from the intimate and isolated sphere of the family as is the folkloric tradition and relocates it into the public urban space indicating its wider economic, political, and social significance which we have noted.

In terms of its relations to others, the figure of the vampire is a paradoxical one. A predator, the vampire feeds on its victims in order to sustain itself and in so doing, it creates another vampire who in turn feeds upon others. What develops is a situation in which the vampire is both victim and victimizer. Although it is not always clear, this implies their actions are the result of a previous or simultaneous victimization. The victim/victimizer characteristic also points to connections with other forms of exploitative relationships not just metaphorically, as was indicated previously, but also directly. One is to understand that their sexual behavior is a result of or reaction to numerous types of oppression that exist within Brazilian society. Nelsinho expresses this when he exclaims: "Culpa minha não é, elas me fizeram o que sou—meu peito é ôco de pau podre, onde só floresce aranha, cobra e escorpião" (4). If Nelsinho is to be believed, the vampire then is not a creature created by some force outside of the realm of the common man but shaped by the society/community that she or he is part of. This clearly is a demarcation from that of the traditional vampire as the result of some aberration of nature or something beyond the world in which it is a part.

As the collection of the stories and Trevisan's work in general indicate, this process is played out repeatedly on a daily basis throughout the urban space. When Nelsinho asks in "Incidente na loja," "ai, Senhor, qual de nós dois é a vítima?" we can view this question in two possible ways. As Bueno has pointed out, we can interpret the comment in reference to the specific situation where the question becomes a self-serving justification of his actions which seeks to imply that his victim really consented willingly to the rape (16).

Looking at the larger urban context that the text provides, the question raises the possibility that they are both victims of the same system of exploitation. This is more the case in many of the other stories of the collection *O vampiro de Curitiba*. Many of the characters display facets of the lives that could qualify them as victims or victimizers. This is certainly the case in stories such as "A noite da paixão" or "Visita à professora." Here Nelsinho has the tables turned on him but his victimizer's position in a wider social context can be viewed as that of a victim. Thus all in turn are victimized and transformed into victimizers. Women's posi-

tioning by the capitalist patriarchy on the bottom-most rung of the socioeconomic ladder means they often suffer additional forms of exploitation.

Lastly, we can observe the reaction of the girl, or rather her apparent lack of a reaction, after the rape less as indicative of her consent, but rather as a signal of the manner in which she has been numbed to the violence she constantly lives through. Survival depends upon the ability to detach oneself from what is going on. Exploitation and victimization become routine, part of daily life, much like the opening of the store that the girl resumes after the assault and Nelsinho's return to work after his lunch hour.

The power of the protagonists and the eroticism of the work comes not through the individual protagonists but through the multiplication or massification of the acts in which they engage. It is not the supernatural nature of the protagonists and the situations that make them so horrifying but rather the exact opposite: it is the naturalness of their occurrence and the readiness by which each of the protagonists preys on those around him. The horrific is thus not what is repressed but what is shown to be not repressed at all, or rather as a part of everyday existence. The violence, coercion and deception are an integral part of this multitude of urban vampires that populate the city.

The story "Debaixo de Ponte Preta" exemplifies this aspect. Through the personal accounts of the people involved it reconstructs the gang rape of a sixteen-year-old black servant on her way home from work. It reports the actions of the various characters mimicking the style of language one might find in that of a police report (Da Silva 41). Its detached factual style projects the attitude of the participants who apparently show little if any emotion concerning what they have done. Their only remorse comes with the realization that they have been caught.

After beginning with a general account of the event, the narration goes about disentangling the events surrounding the brutal rape. Through the personal statements made to police, it becomes apparent that the rape took place as a chain reaction to an initial advance made by one of a group of three soldiers to the girl. Her acceptance of this initial advance immediately leads to her being raped by all three. The three seen by other passers-by are then joined by three other individuals, who also take part in the rape of the girl. Rather than help, they become willing participants who merely take advantage of what is offered at hand. The witnessing by the others of the initial rape by the three soldiers, instead of being used to restore the traditional order and bring the others to justice, becomes a leverage to be used to force the soldiers to assist them in holding the girl down while they also rape her. It becomes a matter of one's ability to be constantly alert for opportunities to gain an edge over one's fellow citizens. The story demonstrates clearly

that manner in which there exists a domino effect in relation to the vampiric behavior witnessed. One individual's act of victimization encourages others to do the same. In other words, the smell of "blood" in the sense of a weakness to be exploited on the part of someone sets off a "feeding frenzy" in which all of those within range cannot help but take part, stopping only after they have satisfied their desires. These vampires reveal themselves to be akin to the Amazonian piranha.

At the beginning of this essay we proposed a series of questions as to the presence of the vampiric in Trevisan's work. It is apparent that the vampire as conceived by the rural Eastern European folkloric and that of the later Victorian literary tradition has been transformed significantly. It has come to resemble the community and environment that it now inhabits. Massified, it devours the city, transforming that very city into one of its own. Rather than be conquered it has thrived in the modern Brazilian city and owing much of its survival to the city itself. But we should note that the vampiric existences of the characters that Trevisan details do not owe their formation solely to the conditions that are common to all cities. These vampires signal a common link to a shared past that each of these traditions shares. Each is a representation of a fear returned, one based in a feudalist authoritarian past. It is Brazil's inability to exorcise its past and its marriage to a capitalist economic system that has created the unique horrific world described by Trevisan. ❋

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