

Vampirism as Apocalyptic Hypocrisy in *Midnight Mass*

Ildikó Limpár

HJEAS

ABSTRACT

Ever since the vampire figure appeared on the literary scene, it has been examined in the context of Christianity, as this form of the revenant monster calls for interpretations that address questions of the soul as well as the phenomenon of resurrection and eternal (after)life. Parallel with this approach, the vampire body has also become a focused topic in Vampire Studies in the past few decades, especially in relation to the vampire lover in supernatural romances. Netflix's *Midnight Mass* (2021) presents a new take on the vampire lore when it combines a special interest in the body in an extremely religious context. This paper argues that the newly interpreted revenant embodies the menace fundamentalism threatens people with, and it presents evil as a nearly unstoppable, spreading infection that roots in the inability of interpreting signs and phenomena correctly as a result of indoctrination. The show's treatment of the blasphemous vampire reveals a criticism of an engagement with the scripture and the sacred that focuses on literal meaning (the body of the text, that is) as opposed to the spirit of the Bible, which is also reflected in the focus on the physical metamorphoses as a prerequisite of blind faith and as a motive that will bring complete moral and physical annihilation to the community. (IL)

KEYWORDS: monster, vampire, religion, fanaticism, apocalypse



Introduction

The folkloric variants of what we may broadly label as the vampire, and consequently the literary vampire that draws on folklore and myth, have been frequently examined and discussed in the context of religion. This form of the revenant monster calls for interpretations that address questions of the soul and hence the demonic as well as the phenomenon of resurrection,¹ the possibility of an eternal (after)life, and the topic of irresistible temptation. While this latter motif is also a fundamental Christian theme, it has from the start of vampire literature been presented as a possibly sexual attraction, with the latent (and tabooed) homoerotic desire of the Byronic vampire that is finally acted upon in J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (Auerbach 42, Jönsson

34–35). The desirable, seducing vampire body has become a focused topic in Vampire Studies and has enjoyed a renaissance in the past few decades thanks to the success of the supernatural romances featuring attractive, demonic, undead lovers in print and on screen. Yet while Netflix's mini-series *Midnight Mass* (2021) reveals a desired romantic relationship at its foundation, it rather evokes the Hawthornean tabooed romance that explores faith and religion, sin, guilt, and atonement instead of the lust for the Other that interspecies romances tend to revolve around. The show does focus on the body in many respects; however, even though the importance of changing/healing the flesh is linked to the desired love relationship, it is mostly located outside the romantic framework. With an invigorated take on the vampire lore, show creator, writer, and director Mike Flanagan resurrects the interest in the vampiric body and its ties to the biblical tradition to accentuate the horror underneath the pronounced distortions of Christianity in the western world.

Considering the series as a systematic subversion of biblical narratives and motifs, which privileges the flesh over the soul, this article argues that the show's unique focus on the body is a fundamental tool to highlight the despiritualization that links to the monster's figure. This recent variant of the revenant embodies the menace fundamentalism and fanaticism threaten people with, and it presents evil as a nearly unstoppable, spreading infection that roots in the inability of interpreting signs and phenomena correctly as a result of indoctrination. The vampire embodies the monstrosity of hypocrisy, fanaticism, and the lack of knowledge that is capable of pushing mankind into an apocalypse—a claim that in the end opens up the narrative to an interpretation that uses the Christian context but looks beyond religious implications, comprehending apocalypse as a consequence of mankind's inability to read the signs that may prevent catastrophes.

Hypocrisy: keeping the literal, losing the spiritual

Midnight Mass starts out with a physical journey and a corporeal transformation that results in a spiritual one affecting a whole community. A very old and senile priest of a small village's Catholic congregation, Monsignor Pruitt (Hamish Linklater), is sent on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but due to his confused state of mind, he gets lost and finds himself alone in a desert area, where he needs to take refuge from a dust storm in a cave. In this isolated, dark place he is attacked by a terrifying, winged creature, who sucks the blood of the priest and then feeds him with his own blood. Next morning, when the priest wakes up restored, young and healthy, he interprets his rejuvenation as God's miracle carried out by his Angel.

Adamant to share this miracle with his community, he returns to his home village, taking the vampire with him in a locked, wooden case. All this, however, is revealed only in the third episode, in a flashback. The people of Crockett Island are not aware of these past events; the young-looking pastor, who gradually transforms into a bloodsucking, homicidal monster, claims to have come to stand in temporarily for Monsignor Pruitt, who allegedly is in the hospital on the mainland. The newly arrived pastor (played by Hamish Linklater) calls himself Father Paul—no doubt as a reference to his spiritual change and a foreshadowing of the “miracles” he means to perform. The chosen name is suggestive of the priest’s sinful past² as well as his unique, new interpretation of the resurrection.³

Father Paul’s decision to return to his home with the “angel” and bring new life to his flock starts a series of disastrous events, many of which look wonderful at first sight. This contrast between seeming and reality is gradually revealed to be indicative of the overall hypocrisy that the community suffers from and finds its symbolic root in their priest’s hidden hypocrisy. From retrospect we understand that Monsignor Pruitt’s confusion and going astray are suggestive of the life he led, as he diverted from the path his vocation compelled him to tread. While he worked as a spiritual leader of his community, he had a passionate affair with a woman called Mildred (Alex Essoe), breaking his sacred vow of celibacy and fathering a child. His strong desire for the life he could never have with his mistress is coupled with an equally strong sense of guilt and his unyielding will to stay true to his vocation shape his understanding of what happens to him on the Holy Land: he takes it not as a temptation to be resisted but as a chance to live the life he never could. Craving for a life that is not limited by celibacy but openly acknowledges romantic love and the desires of the flesh, Father Paul is driven by the idea of the restorable body to gain a second chance at life with his beloved woman, while seemingly working on the spiritualization of the island’s community.

The new pastor’s work is fully supported by Bev Keane (Samantha Sloan), the other main hypocrite of the village, who also sees a chance in the coming apocalypse: the solidification of her role as a judge with the privilege of deciding about other people’s fate based on their assumed moral qualities. Her attitude to Christianity allows no doubt because that would demand her to think and interpret and put effort into comprehending meaning(s). She uses the Bible as a manual to life; however, she follows the word instead of the spirit, privileging the body (the literal meaning arising from the specific order of the letters) over the spirit of the text (the complex meaning behind

the literal), that is, privileging the superficialities related to ritual (like what is the “right” chasuble for a specific occasion) over living according to what the ritual actually signifies.

Bev’s shallowness and her preoccupation with seeming are aptly demonstrated by her role in sealing a weak deal with the oil company whose carelessness jeopardized all the families who earned a living by fishing. As a payment for her role as a mediator between the fishermen and the company, she extracted church donations from the families to build a recreation center beside the church, ignoring the financial distress she left these people in as a result. This move accentuates the tension coming from privileging the material (the body) over the spiritual (the soul), which is at the core of the crisis that enfolds in the narrative. Observed from a biblical perspective, Bev is aligned with the often condemned, money-loving tax-collectors and the Pharisees, who rejected radical generosity in the form of offering alms for repentance (Giambrone 549), and is shown in opposition to those who gave from the little they had and practiced radical charity that “*has become an identification with the death of Christ*” (550; emphasis in the original) and thus the hope of resurrection. Bev’s hypocrisy, however, is manifest on many other levels, too: she lacks the Christian value of compassion and forgiveness and rejoices in the suffering and deaths of the “sinners,” and while she takes pride in increasing the Church’s material possessions, she has a devastating effect on the spirit of the island’s community by her unforgiving, exclusionist, toxic attitude towards “sinners,” that is, those who do not think the way she does.

Bev’s and her pastor’s actions aptly prove that a fish rots from the head down—a metaphorical summary of the spiritual crisis that the setting, Crockett Island, underlines. The small and impoverished fishing village Father Paul returns to and rebuilds a religious community in is an integral component of the Biblical allusion that presents the priest first as a Jesus-like character with a community of fishers who become his apostles. While these people will literally turn into “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19), they will “fish” or rather hunt for people in the end to kill and feed on them, bringing on an apocalypse instead of salvation.

Apocalypse: the triumph of the material over the spiritual

The crisis is presented on two levels due to the show’s special treatment of time. *Midnight Mass* proposes two types of temporalities: the diegetic time, that is, the time of the narrated events, which would be linear or historical time in K. A. Nuzum’s time taxonomy; and symbolic time, equivalent to Nuzum’s mythic or circular time (Nuzum 209). This is made

visible by how the series utilizes the Christian context in various manners, including the presentation of church rituals and other biblical allusions. Just as “[b]y eating the body and drinking the blood of the Christ, the faithful enter the mythic, repeatable time of the Last Supper” (Nuzum 209), the non-ritualistic Biblical allusions also connect what is experienced in the historic time to the symbolic via recalling the already well-known, making it appear as a repeated, circular experience. All the titles of the seven episodes name a book in the Bible, and each episode incorporates allusions to the eponymous books in their scenes, turning them into an integral part of the story. The first episode title, “Genesis,” alludes to the beginning of a new world brought to the village by its priest. That world reaches its apocalyptic climax in the last episode, which, appropriately, references the “Book of Revelation.” In between these endpoints, the story unfolds in the holiest period of the liturgical year, from Ash Wednesday to Easter, which suggests a curious parallel between the events related to the biggest miracle and celebration of Christianity, Christ’s death and resurrection, and the most feared events described in the Scripture, which is the apocalypse. And indeed, the whole narrative turns out to be a horrifying subversion of the Christian resurrection narrative, in which Christ’s blood is replaced by a vampire’s blood, which, if consumed, changes the person; and if the person dies, resurrects him as a hungry, bloodsucking monster. *Midnight Mass* thus fuses two types of mythical time: the Christian, ritualistic one and the monstrous one, which, at the same time, is also liminal (Nuzum 210), turning the sacred into monstrous and thereby criticizing the possible monstrosity that resides in the human use of the sacred.

The series establishes a connection between the Easter narrative and the apocalypse by the premise that the Eucharistic rite of Christianity emphasizes the transformative power of Christ’s blood. The Catholic interpretation of the Eucharist, which symbolically repeats the key event of the Last Supper, specifically holds that via transubstantiation the bread and the wine of the Holy Communion becomes the flesh and blood of Christ “substantially present for the nourishment of our souls” (Pohle). This interpretation, when looked at from a non-theological perspective, evokes the famous quote from *Dracula*, “[t]he blood is the life” (Stoker 142), which not only associates the holy communion with vampirism, the consummation of a supreme being’s blood to gain an eternal life, but also acknowledges the prerequisite of resurrection for gaining eternal life. But whereas the Scripture holds that Christ’s blood is to transform the spirit that will not need the body in the end, the demonic blood is to resurrect and then keep alive the soulless,

bloodthirsty body. The monstrous reading is based on superficial similarities with the Catholic one, but instead of presenting a narrative of hope and spiritual revival, it presents a story of damnation—the exact opposite of what the Gospel teaches. It is not a Christ-narrative but an Antichrist-narrative, which takes us right to the apocalyptic context.

While there is a surprising correlation between the biblical apocalypse and what happens on Crockett Island, not even the devout Catholic community notices the signs. The exception is Bev, who does see the omens as the manifestations of the Second Coming but is also mistaken about what the apocalypse brings, as the signs easily mislead anyone who does not want to see beyond one's own privileged narrative.

The Holy Land as the starting point for what happens on the island makes the associations with the grand New Testament narrative very clear. The priest's pilgrimage was meant to be a final gift from his congregation for his life-long service, yet it becomes the beginning of a new journey that starts with a descent into a cave which is followed by an ascension from it, leaving the cave as empty as Christ's tomb was found after his resurrection. The light imagery supports the suggested parallel, as the rejuvenated priest leaves the place of darkness to come to the inviting, heavenly light.

Father Paul seems to bring a spiritual revival to the village after he is seen to perform what appears to be a miracle. As he keeps mixing the vampire blood in the communion wine, people who take the Holy Sacrament experience wondrous revitalization and healing. Glasses become needless, a painful back will be no longer an impediment to moving freely or even dancing. The pastor's former, secret lover surprisingly de-ages as she receives the holy communion every day. Most spectacularly, Father Paul heals the teenage Leeza (Annarah Cymone), who became paralyzed after a shooting accident. While the immediate effect of these so-called miracles seems to be positive with the Catholic community experiencing a spiritual revival, the longer-lasting consequences are catastrophic (which in themselves question the nature of these wondrous phenomena). At first, the wondrous events "only" accentuate the already existing dividing lines within the community, further distancing believers and those who do not attend Church. The monstrous transformation then culminates in the deaths of Father Paul's followers and the resurrections of what remains of the human parishioners: vampires, whose thirst for human blood is insatiable. The catastrophic denouement confirms that what the churchgoers experienced falls into the category of false miracles, one of the omens of the apocalypse described in Revelation.

The Bible clearly differentiates between miracles and magic and warns against the latter, as it comes from demonic power, so magic performers are seen as “abominations to the Lord” (Deut. 18: 10–12). In the Scripture, magic is recurrently associated with the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Thessalonians 2:9 describes the Antichrist as a “lawless” one, whose coming “will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie.” According to Revelation (13:13), the False Prophet, who is associated with the Antichrist, will perform miracles that are very much like God’s, but his aim is to deceive people, thus he conceals his own nature. He is the second beast Revelation describes, saying “it had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon” (13:11). This portrayal suggests a meek and modest, humble disguise that hides a predator, an idea that recurs in Matthew, in which we are told to “beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (7:15). The mixture of hypocrisy and the underlying violence is reflected in Father Paul’s character: he builds his whole ecclesiastical performance on lies, which he confesses in advance—acknowledging thereby that he does understand the sinful nature of his desires, thoughts, and actions. His return to the island with the blood-sucking beast—identifiable as the Antichrist in this analogy—sets the apocalypse into motion, the very first sign of which is the countless dead bodies of wild cats on the seashore the night after they set foot on the land.⁴

The process of spiritual disintegration is made possible by the intense deceptive work that directs the believers’ attention to the body instead of the spirit: while everyone focuses on the improvements of people’s physical condition, the healing or revitalization of the body, they fail to question its source, arguing that “[i]t feels wrong . . . [t]o interrogate a miracle.” Afraid that they would appear to be ungrateful and unworthy of the benefits they have, they refuse to “[s]econd guess a gift from God” (Leeza’s father in “Book Three: Proverbs”). This mentality is completely foreign to those who believe in science, like the local doctor, Dr. Sarah Gunning (Annabeth Gish), those who have a different faith, like the Muslim Sheriff Hassan (Rahul Kohli), or are disillusioned with religions and have sought answers to their questions in alternative manners, like Riley Flynn (Zach Gilford). As the parishioners want to prove their worthiness and faith, they lose their analytical and hence critical faculties. This behavior is not a testimony of strong faith; on the contrary, it reveals fear and doubt that their chosen status would be challenged by a test. Such an attitude is not condoned by the Catholic Church; in fact, the Vatican itself lays emphasis on the importance

of doubt in the cases of alleged miracles, calling for investigations that start with scientific methods, employing external specialists and considering the possibility that dark forces or magic may have caused an inexplicable phenomenon (Ebdrup).

The widely witnessed false miracles function as spectacular magic tricks that divert attention from what is really happening and what is hence effectively kept in the dark—just as Erin Greene’s body hides the proof for the monstrosity of Father Paul’s invigorating activity. For Erin (Kate Siegel), her pregnancy and thus her baby-to-be-born symbolize hope and a new start in life and generate unlimited, unconditional love; however, the communion wine “heals” the pregnant body and makes the fetus miraculously disappear as if it were a tumor—an “alien presence,” as her doctor friend explains her (“Book VI: Acts of the Apostles”)—that needed treatment. What happens to Erin becomes thus symbolic in the context of faith and religion as well: the unfathomable loss offers a counter-narrative to the nativity chapters, with Erin having a role parallel to the Virgin Mary’s, whose pregnant body is the testimony to a miracle bringing humankind’s salvation. This analogue is supported by Erin’s circumstances, because even though the father of Erin’s baby is a flesh-and-blood man, he is left behind and is non-existent for the expectant woman, who finds a supportive friend in Riley. However, the peculiar regress of Erin’s pregnancy replaces the promise of salvation with the promise of damnation, subverting the biblical narrative. The after-effect of the miracle-inducing communion wine undoes a life-in-progress, the miracle of life, preventing the arrival of hope and leaving Erin’s womb empty, suggesting the spiritual vacuum that gradually devours the community despite the seeming religious revival.

This horrible omen, however, is concealed by Erin’s body, whose restoration to its former state is easily explicable with mundane causes and attracts no attention, while spectacular, incredible transformations, healings are witnessed on an everyday basis and steal the spotlight because they are reminiscent of the healing miracles that the Bible attributes to Jesus. Healing the weak-sighted—a result of old age—echoes the biblical act of healing the blind and is made very noticeable in the show, as those who struggle to see well wear remarkably big, emphatic glasses (and draw attention to them with acting nuances). But, of course, what really thrusts the congregation into the limelight is the staged spectacle of healing Leeza’s paralytic body, which to the parishioners suggests a very clear parallel with how Jesus healed the paralyzed man and instructed him to arise and walk (John 5:8). The incredible recovery takes center stage so much so that everything else that may appear

peculiar—like Erin’s tragedy or people going missing—becomes marginal and hardly noticeable. With Bev taking care of damage control, what fits her narrative is emphasized, while collateral damage is deemed necessary and part of the grand design, as only “unworthy” people need to die for the greater good, which is the salvation of the people that Bev sees as righteous.

This twisted logic contributes to the final tragedy of the flock: the new, staged miracle of raising the dead may seem to repeat Jesus’s act of resurrecting Lazarus, but again, these two events are related only on the surface and thus completely subvert the biblical miracle of resurrection, as those who are assisted to die and then resurrect due to the power of the vampire’s blood become in a way “children of the night”⁵ (Stoker 18) instead of “children of the light” (John 12:36) that true believers would turn into according to the Gospel. By considering John 11 and 12 as demonstrating not only textual but also conceptual unity that becomes complete and clear with the Prologue, Pauline theologian Troels Engberg-Pedersen explains the act of raising Lazarus as a necessary event to understand Jesus’s mission and the role of his resurrection—a commentary that also throws light on what lies at the core of the subversion in *Midnight Mass*. As Engberg-Pedersen contends, “The ‘I’ (ἐγώ) that is Jesus is also the light (φῶς) of the Prologue that has come into the world, sent by God in order that ‘everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness’ (NRSV), that is, in order that all who believe in Jesus as the full figure of the Prologue and the present passage may themselves move into the light” (170). In the examined passages, the “proper way of believing in [Jesus]” is emphasized as the token of the desired result, which is eternal life. Moving to the light expresses salvation and “the precondition for this is both ‘hearing’ Jesus’s ‘words’ (ῥήματα), ‘keeping’ them and ‘receiving’ them” (171). Cognition is thus an essential component for one’s own salvation and resurrection into eternal life.

In the series, Bev and Father Paul keep demonstrating how they try to bend the interpretation of the sacred text to suit their purposes and justify their actions, but of course the most fatal misinterpretation relates to the act of resurrection itself. For in the Bible

“Eternal life” is resurrected life, and it will be brought about when the πνεῦμα [spirit] and λόγος [reason/thought] that lie behind Jesus’s ῥήματα [words] operate in those who come to believe in Jesus as the φῶς [light] and the carrier of the λόγος and πνεῦμα. That happens when they do not merely “listen to” Jesus’s ῥήματα, but have themselves come into possession of the

λόγος and πνεῦμα that underlie those ῥήματα and so “hear” them properly (cf. 12:47). (Engberg-Pedersen 173)

Neither Father Paul nor Bev Keane can hear, keep, or receive the Lord’s words appropriately. In fact, the closer they come to their own resurrection, the further they move from the πνεῦμα (spirit) and thus their own salvation. They are so much anchored to the material reality that they fail to understand “the resurrection of human beings (Jesus included) into eternal life concretely as a radical transformation that will leave the present world of ‘flesh’ (σάρξ) completely behind,” which Engberg-Pedersen demonstrates to be the core idea in the fourth Gospel (175). Instead, the two characters accept the demon-granted physical transformation—the very transformation that deprives them of their souls according to most vampire lore—as a testimony of being chosen and worthy of the mystery that they never fully understood, similarly to those for whom, as Engberg-Pedersen argues, the act of raising Lazarus was performed and explained (166). They believe in the dogma of the Catholic Church about the resurrection of the dead on Judgment Day, but due to their selfishness and, in Bev’s case, vanity, they fail to understand that it must be the work of God and hence the resurrection is very different from the one they induce.

As at the creation all things are perfect from the hand of God, so at the resurrection all things must be perfectly restored by the same omnipotent hand. But there is a difference between the earthly and the risen body; for the risen bodies of both saints and sinners shall be invested with immortality. This admirable restoration of nature is the result of the glorious triumph of Christ over death as described in several texts of Sacred Scripture. . . . But while the just shall enjoy an endless felicity in the entirety of their restored members, the wicked “shall seek death, and shall not find it, shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them” (Revelation 9:6). (Maas, A.)

Stopping the Apocalypse: clipping wings to fly

Father Paul and Bev seem to mistake the concept of eternal life for the corporeal resurrection that grants them (possibly) an extended lifespan and promises an earthly—and hence corrupted—version of resurrection and a new beginning, possibly an Eden on earth. Their belief is tied to the renewal of the body and not the soul; not surprisingly, then, the body and its relation to the soul will be the focal point of the denouement.

A key metaphor in the subverted resurrection narrative is the community center that Bev considers an ark, an analogue to Noah's ark, which already draws in the theme of apocalypse since "[t]he narrative of the flood in Genesis 6–9 is the first biblical instance of an exclusionary apocalyptic pattern in which the righteous few are whisked out of harm's way while the rest of creation, regardless of relative guilt or innocence, is subjected to spectacular and complete destruction" (Greifenhagen 24). The harm, this time, is not water but the sun's light, as the vampires need shelter from sunlight not to perish. The biblical ark serves the purpose of providing refuge for Noah, the only man who is described as "a righteous man, blameless in his generation," "one who walks with God" (Gen 6:9), but Bev's ark is meant to save those who have walked away from God and do not possess a full understanding of the Gospels and now have only the body and not the soul. Saving these bodies would lead to the unfolding of a full apocalypse, not limited to the isle but spreading over the mainland, too—the ark, then, would serve a purpose that is downright opposite to that of Noah's ark. To further explore the subversive nature of the allusion, it is the water that helps contain the apocalypse after the destruction of the ships that could have been used by the vampires to leave the island.

However, instead of what Bev considers an ark, an actual rowboat recurrently appears in the narrative to transform from a strange dream-component into a symbolic ark that contributes to saving souls and stopping the apocalypse. The boat haunts Riley's dreams (or rather nightmares) and seems to emphasize his isolation in a sea of troubles that stands for his life, but it turns out to be a foreshadowing—or even a divine—sign that helps him realize what is the right thing for him to do to save others. After the ur-vampire drinks from him, he decides to row into the sea with Erin to make sure he burns in the early sunlight. His purpose is twofold: he does not want to turn into a bloodthirsty monster who would feed on other people, and he wants to warn Erin and make sure she understands the threat. The rowboat saves Riley's soul, as he willingly gives up his body and refuses to succumb to the demonic powers. Even though he combusts in the light, Riley is shown to have an out-of-body experience in which he is comforted by the apparition of the girl he hit with a car. This is not a haunting he used to suffer from; for a change, the girl appears in her restored form, suggesting that Riley has earned his redemption, and he may rest in peace.

A similar (if not the same) boat as an ark motif returns in the end, when Riley's brother, Warren (Igby Rigney), and Leeza find refuge in the last boat left intact. They are indeed saved from corruption and are given a second

chance at life. While saving the children is practically an archetypal motif in literature, with the young characters tending to stand for innocence, hope, and thus positive futurity, how *Midnight Mass* presents these adolescents makes this association much more specific and clearer due to the explicit Christian context. Leeza is shown to be capable of forgiving Joe (Robert Longstreet), the person who injured her and ruined her life. Warren is depicted as being devoid of hypocrisy: he is interested in Leeza even before her recovery, showing that what he cares about is the girl's personality and his care stems from more than physical attraction. He is his brother Riley's young version, who is not spotless but wants to avoid the mistake his sibling made.

The teenagers' survival appears as a confirmation of a return to (relative) normalcy due to the disappearance of the demonic. Father Paul's plan that envisions himself and his ex-lover Mildred as Adam and Eve given a second chance in an Edenic state is replaced by the reality of a naturally young couple surviving the expulsion of the evil from the world and having a chance of living in good faith. The restoration of the world is signaled by Leeza's body, which falls back into its prehealed, paraplegic state, substantiating the idea that life on earth is not about perfection and that the divine mission, ultimately, concerns the rebirth of the soul and not that of the body. The regained disability, therefore, is the token for paradise regained, a promise of acquirable salvation.

This change in Leeza's body comes as the result of Erin's mutilating the body of the ur-vampire in a scene that deepens the understanding between the corporeal and the spiritual. Erin's experience with what wings mean in life used to be very physical and painful: she had to hold pigeons while her mother clipped their wings. But this physical act, as it turns out, was a symbolic reminder of the mother's bitter life experience that "[e]veryone gets their wings clipped at some point" (E4, "Book IV: Lamentations"). The wings, for Erin's mother, stand for freedom and happiness. Since it is physically linked to clipping pigeon's wings, and we have a defining Christian framework to interpret motifs in, the pigeon creates associations with the Holy Spirit, which is often represented as a spread-winged dove, and with the story of Noah's ark, in which the saving of the souls in the ark is heralded by a dove who has returned with an olive branch from the mainland. This dove is a symbol of peace and a new start, providing "unambiguous evidence of the recession of the waters" (Moberly 347) and hence the end of the apocalypse. Symbolically, then, when Erin's mother clips the pigeons' wings, she rejects salvation by re-enacting her own assumed damnation. She

confirms her interpretation of predestination (a very uncatholic notion), and her toxic parenting equates Erin with damnation itself.

However, as the series suggests in various ways that interpretation is the key to living a satisfying, loving life, we can see that Erin is able to turn her mother's interpretation into an inspiration that she and her community may benefit from: she recognizes her baby's potential of saving her life and considers her pregnancy as the manifestation of grace and the possibility of a new start (as is symbolized by the dove in the Noah's Ark chapter). She transforms herself from a victim of an abusive parent and then an abusive husband into an active agent of saving the world. Stopping the spread of evil literally depends on slicing up the vampiric demon's wings until it becomes unable to fly away from the island—and no one knows this better than Erin, who learnt as a girl that the creature whose wings are clipped should be held firmly, and thus she offers her own blood to the vampire to keep it in one place. Her past abuse becomes her strength, which Kate Siegel, the actress playing Erin, explains in an interview by drawing an analogy between her character, who is being eaten alive, and victims of rape,⁶ highlighting that "women who have been assaulted are the strongest women [she] know[s]" (Collider Extras). Even though she dies while embracing her role as a sacrifice, Erin gains power over the evil and her monologue makes it clear that while her body is gone, her soul is uplifted to heaven—it may fly now that she disabled the demon's monstrous body. The strength and willingness of the spirit triumph over the weakness of the flesh just as it was confirmed by Riley's willing sacrifice.

Apocalypse now: the apocalyptic monster beyond the religious context

In order to avoid the trap of simplifying the issues that the series discusses and of suggesting that Catholicism or Christianity is monstrous, show creator, writer, and director Mike Flanagan aimed at presenting characters with diverse attitudes to religious beliefs and ethical behavior, rejecting a reductive binarism of the religious (Catholic/Christian) and the non-religious (non-Catholic/non-Christian). This way Flanagan opened the discussion to interpretations that may focus on the more general aspects of fanaticism that affect contemporary culture. I will first examine Flanagan's strategy of presenting a nuanced differentiation among believers and non-believers alike and then proceed to discuss its implications concerning a reading that reflects on cultural crises of our time, including the brokenness of democracy and, relatedly, the emergence of a "culture" of ignorance whose impact reaches well beyond the domestic sphere.

While horror narratives often lay emphasis on the importance of the Church either by focusing on the corrupt nature of the institution or by presenting the Church as “humanity’s last bulwark against evil” (Grafius 109), *Midnight Mass* is more interested in the personal than the institutional, relying on a strategy of presenting diversity in human nature independently of one’s belief. For instance, the focused conflict is not presented as a stark contrast between believers and non-believers, as the very faithful, Muslim Hassan is as clear an opponent to the Catholic villain character Bev as the non-religious town drunk, Joe, who proves capable of repentance and wishes to become a better person, or Riley, who rejects all kinds of religions yet protects his beloved ones even after his fate has been sealed. Riley and Erin are the kind of foil characters who are primarily differentiated by their attitudes to religious faith, yet they are linked with the very same biblical allusions: both may be considered as prodigal son characters, who have returned home and now fight for overcoming their troublesome pasts, and Christ characters with their willing sacrifice of their lives to deliver humanity from evil. It is not the rift between Christians/Catholics and non-Christians/non-Catholics that is emphasized by the show, either, as the Catholic Erin plays the role of the heroine, while the Catholic Bev is the most villainous character.

One should notice a significant difference between the two villain characters, Father Paul and Bev, in their motives and their sense of guilt (the former possesses it, while the latter does not). Father Paul and Bev Keane demonstrate how religion may be abused to justify personal needs. The priest wants to believe in the goodness and justice of his God, who would grant him his heart’s desire after dedicating his whole life to His service. This belief reveals a weak character, who deep in his heart knows the problems of his justifications, hence the confession of his deeds before committing the sins and the last-minute repentance when he realizes where his selfishness and wish-fulfilling misinterpretations lead. Bev, however, never doubts and never repents, because her pride (a cardinal sin) prevents her from admitting that she may have been mistaken. She also believes that God is good and just, and therefore He will grant her wish, but as she is not only weak, but is “not a good person,” either, as Annie Flynn (Kristin Lehman) describes her (“Book 7: Revelation”), her wish includes the suffering and the deaths of those who are, in her opinion, not worthy of God’s love. As she does not ever doubt her moral righteousness, she accepts every horrible consequence of the alleged miracles and always finds a verse from the Bible to make sense of them and justify the horror in the name of the greater good.

The behavior of vampire-turned Catholics in the show also supports the notion of diversity in human nature. Some succumb immediately to evil, while others, like Riley's parents, are able to resist the temptation of killing others. It works according to Catholic teachings on sin: Satan "exercises over sinners only a moral influence, which is moreover measured to the welcome which the individual gives to his inspiration" (The Sacred Congregation). Accordingly, the fact that there is a massive massacre in the end and only some of the newly turned vampires resist the urge to kill communicates the fallibility of human nature. It warns us that blind faith is not strong faith but a possibly monstrous one. People with blind faith are like newly turned vampires: they instinctively harm and respect no other lives—not even the lives of their once beloved friends or family members.

The treatment of the biblical heritage as a blasphemous vampire narrative criticizes an engagement with the sacred that focuses on the literal meaning (the body of the text, that is) as opposed to the spirit of the Bible, which is also reflected in the focus on the physical metamorphoses as generator of blind faith and as a motive that will bring complete moral and physical annihilation to the community. Vampirism suggests a new life after death and resurrection, but in fact it brings about an existence in which kindness, the emotional-spiritual aspect of human existence, is lost. Symptomatic of the age it emerged from—the years defined by Donald Trump's rise and fall and the threat of his second rise/re-election that has since come to pass—this vampire signals deception, manipulation, and embodies the apocalyptic dimension that epidemic-like hypocrisy has taken in our world, aptly supporting the notion that the figure of the undead embodies an ongoing existential anxiety that "become[s] connected to extremist or excessive states in popular culture" (Bacon 5).

As Sorchá Ní Fhlainn argues in her *Postmodern Vampires: Film, Fiction and Popular Culture*, there is a "symbiotic reflective relationship between the Postmodern vampire and the American presidency in popular culture" (184). Ní Fhlainn's discussion of how vampires relate to the political climate defined by the various presidential politics ends with an overview of the Obama-era, but it already makes the US's political tendency of radicalization that emerged with brutal force during the 2008 presidential campaign very clear (230). Voices of the radical right wing became amplified by and after the presidential campaign that led to the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and normalized his "fundamentalist populism" (Westermeyer 116), a style used by people "characterized by vilification of opponents, distrust of existing political and social institutions, ideological rigidity, and a rededication to individualism and

personal freedom” (116). Not surprisingly, this mindset was soon reflected in practically all fields of life in the US. Trump’s politics, which, according to its critics, “undermin[ed] the rights of women and sexual minorities,” has been linked to “privileging Judeo-Christian values” and “the injection of [such] values into foreign policy” (Haynes 15). This interrelatedness is embodied by the fundamentalist Bev Keane in *Midnight Mass*.

The first Trump presidency, in addition, gave way to “the enshrinement of individualism as a paramount value” (Westermeyer 126), which, as Rick Perlstein underlines in his 2000 article on the Trump administration’s failure to battle the Covid-19 pandemic, prevented making collective sacrifices (qtd in Westermeyer 126) that would be dictated by science. It is, perhaps, not by chance that one of the most emblematic opponents of Bev Keane’s fundamentalism is the only scientist on the island, the lesbian doctor, embodying in one character most of what may be seen as the consciously constructed enemy of right-wing, radical politics: women, non-heterosexuality, and science (while the “missing” aspect of foreignness is given to the Arab American sheriff).

Bev’s religious fundamentalism that clearly divides her environment into the righteous and the sinners is in perfect harmony with Trump’s right-wing demagoguery, which, as Walter Ötsch and Stephan Pühringer argue, “is reshaping US politics follow[ing] an inner logic of a dual world picture that has an immanent tendency to radicalization. Since a dual world cannot be proved by empirical facts (the classification of phenomena into only two possibilities is arbitrary), no event or fact can disprove it” (10). Trump’s fake-news/post-truth politics (especially combined with a strong belief in sacred individualism) is inherently in opposition with fact-based reasoning and accepting scientific data, which results not “only” in monsterizing various groups of people but, in the end, also in abusing our very ecosystem and inducing an apocalyptic crisis. Accordingly, *Midnight Mass*, despite its very clear Christian (Catholic) context, addresses the connection between ignorance and inhuman behavior on a more general level, too. As Mike Flanagan explains, “[t]he angel doesn’t represent vampirism or horror but corruption in *any* belief system. . . . It represents fundamentalism and fanaticism” (qtd. in Bojalad, emphasis mine). The corruption, as we could see, comes from a limited perspective. In the series, interpreting everything according to a memorized Bible verse points to a complete inability to apply any system that one is not allied with by way of faith. Ignorance seals these people’s fate, while knowing mythology or trusting science may have saved them from turning into vampires.

Fanaticism (often religious but not exclusively so) burns the world and makes it uninhabitable when it shapes societies built on ignorance and fake news, which inevitably denies scientific facts, such as climate change. The ending of the narrative is thus ambiguous, to say the least. Paralysis heralds a new beginning; a world burnt into ashes is the new, man-made (or, rather: man-ruined) Eden. What chances does this arrangement give to humanity? Are we to realize, as Monsignor Pruitt was, that it is too late to have a new beginning unless we secure a “miracle”?

“The monster always escapes” (Cohen 4), and Flanagan knows this. The “angel” with mutilated wings, therefore, falls into the sea and is prevented from reaching the mainland, but what it embodies does not die with this one body. “You might send it off to the sunrise and hope that that corrupting ideology will disappear. But it won’t. And the show could never show the angel die for that reason” (Flanagan qtd. in Bojalad). The world we are left with stays under constant threats even if the most imminent-looking one is averted. But the burnt-down world is suggestive of another very real threat linked to ignorance—or, more precisely, the denial of scientific facts. The unstoppable climate change calls for humanity’s repentance for hypocrisy and acting against nature (an analogue to inviting the unnatural vampirism to Crockett Island’s community) and demands heroism to fight against the impending apocalypse. For “[t]hat last moment of the next generation looking out at the ashes of what the grown-ups made—that’s what my kids are gonna get no matter what . . . That’s what all of our kids are gonna get. . . . We’re never going to be able to explain adequately to our children what happened to the planet they inherited,” concludes Flanagan (qtd. in Bojalad).

Looking at this religio-philosophical thriller from the burning inferno of the Anthropocene thus underlines the connection between a lost (or never acquired) ability of reading signs properly and an apocalypse that is hindered by ignorance coupled with a corrupted, blind faith. The vampire in this narrative, then, signals the overall despiritualization of humanity in twofold measure. It directly addresses how even religions may become deprived of their spiritual contents in the hands of people who lack proper understanding, compassion, and empathy; and it indirectly points to humanity’s distancing from the natural world. The Severing—the split between the anthropocentric, false reality that mankind acknowledges and the actual “ecological symbiosis of human and nonhuman parts of the biosphere” (Morton 2017) manifests the lack of a spiritual connectedness to one another as well as to the

biosphere, which mankind has treated as their subject, stinting their empathy and compassion from it and not recognizing their oneness with it.⁷

Erin's moving death-monologue expresses the longing for the perfect place that is characterized by this oneness. Coming "to her fullest realization of God and faith" (Siegel qtd. in Maas, J.) while dying, Erin comprehends the interconnectedness of beings and things in the world:

All things . . . a part. You, me and my little girl, and my mother and my father, everyone's who's ever been, every plant, every animal, every atom, every start, every galaxy, all of it . . . There is no time. There is no death. Life is a dream. It's a wish. Made again and again and again and again and again and again and on into eternity. And I am all of it. I am everything. I am all. I am that I am. ("Book VII: Revelation")

The way she renders her idea of God and heaven evokes various religions and philosophies beyond Christianity. It conjures up the spirit of "Song of Myself," written by Walt Whitman, who rejoiced in the Over-Soul "[f]or every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you" (line 3). It emphasizes the endlessness, circularity, and interconnectedness that constitute the basis of Hinduism and Buddhism, and it brings in the life as a dream motif we know primarily from the famous butterfly-dream teaching by Zhuangzi (or, alternately transcribed as Chuang Tzu) (Chuang Tzu). This inspired combination concludes with the statement "I am that I am," God's words from the Old Testament (Ex. 3:14) suggesting in this translation "the mystery of God, the impossibility of defining his nature, his 'Name'" (Schild 297).⁸ Erin's uttering the words by which God defined Himself confirms her dissolution in this spiritual universe that is Over-Soul and God and Nirvana at the same time—a state of enlightenment, in which one understands and feels her belongingness to every atom of the universe, her oneness with whatever and whoever there is.

Conclusion

After a few decades in which the vampire's most homely space has been the supernatural romance, *Midnight Mass* brings back the focus on the importance of spirituality, a dominant theme in *Dracula*. But while in Stoker's novel the need for re-spiritualization comes from the fear of secularization or materialism,⁹ and the consequent loosening of morals, what *Midnight Mass* denounces is religious fanaticism characterized by hypocrisy and/or the inability to think critically and understand and act according to the spirit of

religion—an attitude that appears as immoral and soulless as the Victorians saw the brave, new, materialist world that was emerging. The two different threats are defined by the cultural contexts they derive from; *Midnight Mass*, accordingly, uses a Catholic environment to address a more broadly understood fanaticism that defies logical thinking and deprives people of their humanity and implies that such a mindset is often rooted in religious fundamentalism.

The show's overall focus on the body is a reminder that what threatens the contemporary world is also inseparable from the influence of materialism. Presenting a diegesis about the status of the soul via documenting the status of the flesh proves to be an effective means of exposing a perverted spirituality and hypocrisy, which shows that even religiosity succumbs to the materialism of contemporary culture, privileging the body as the ultimate value in life. Such a religious fanaticism bitten by materialism also privileges “quick miracles,” reducing the timespan one thinks ahead. It celebrates the flesh as the locus of miracle and, therefore, does not care about long-term consequences as long as the human body gets what it demands—especially as the planetary body may hardly be the locus of quick miracles and is thus relegated to the category of the dispensable. *Midnight Mass* demonstrates that fundamentalist logic, which believes in binarism, oppresses what is categorized as “Other” and is satisfied with self-justification instead of facts, fast-forwards the process of otherizing and damaging the very place mankind lives in. While contemporary zombie narratives tend to emphasize the fragmentation of the fallen world via the decomposing monster (Limpár, “Able Zombies” 230), the vampires in *Midnight Mass* embody humanity's avarice coupled with ignorance, which is capable of destroying the world.

The small island setting points to the domestic nature of the crises presented, but the emphasis on how the island relates to the mainland, that is, how the domestic threatens the global, accentuates the idea that this narrative goes well beyond criticizing religious extremism. The insular setting, furthermore, emphasizes the importance of borders: the island is a world in itself, referencing the very reality of closed communities in small settlements, the narrow-mindedness that comes from a symbolic isolation from the rest of the world, the detachment of humanity from the planetary body, as well as the literary utopian/dystopian tradition that emphasizes the isolation of the space of imagination in which the story is set.¹⁰ And when the borders are crossed, the “mini apocalypse” generated by the dystopian space of fundamentalism may extend and grow global.

The isolation is reinforced by the final shots: the island is not suitable for habitation, the mainland is invisibly far, and in between the two spaces there is the very small space of the boat in the sea. The show, aptly, finishes on the multilayered display of the body: the body of the “angel,” injured and falling into the abyss; the bodies of the vampirized community, burning in the sunlight; the body of the island, burnt and burning, shedding its layers of civilization, dying (yet, ironically, in a way de-aging, as if it were a vampiric body); and Leeza’s body, which returns to its paralytic state.

The island in ashes is the reminder that we lost this Edenic state here on Earth but also that confronting the evil, the demonic carries precious knowledge. It makes us appreciate what we have: an imperfect, weak body that, nevertheless, hosts one’s willing spirit; ashes, from which one may rise, like a phoenix; the knowledge of evil that allows one to know good from evil and have doubts, questions, and critical thinking—a glimpse of hope in the near-apocalyptic present.

Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary

Ildikó Limpár, Associate Professor at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary, does research in the fantastic and the monstrous linked to YA fiction, posthumanism, and eco-narratives. She is author of *The Truths of Monsters: Coming of Age with Fantastic Media* (McFarland, 2021), associate editor of *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* and has edited anthologies on fantastic narratives and the monstrous in English and in Hungarian.

Notes

1. For a detailed overview on what kind of conceptions of soul are related to the vampire in folkloric imagination, see especially Chapter 18 (“The Soul after Death”) and 19 (“Keeping Body and Soul Apart”) of Paul Barber’s monograph *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality* (Barber 178–194).

2. Paul—who was called Saul then—was a prosecutor of Christianity, but his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus converted him and became the “most staunch, fearless, and tireless advocate and herald [of Christianity], unflagging in his zeal and devotion” (Lilly 180).

3. St. Paul developed “a theology of the Resurrection of Christ, arguing from this fundamental doctrine of the gospel to the doctrine of general resurrection, about which some of the Christians of Corinth had evidently expressed doubt. To a gentile people certainly the idea of a literal resurrection of the human body must have been one of the most revolutionary of teachings of the new faith which they had adopted” (Vawter 11).

4. Shaping the vampire to evoke associations with the Antichrist is one of several ideas and motifs that link *Midnight Mass* to *Dracula*, the literary predecessor of the vampire that reflects on an age’s spiritual crises, and was noted by, for instance, Edward Mordrake and Lucas Kwong (112).

5. The expression in Stoker's *Dracula* is used by the eponymous protagonist, referring to his own wolves howling in the night. In the novel the vampire is closely associated with the wolves and dogs, which appear in the narrative as "agents of Dracula, susceptible to his 'rabid' . . . control" (Chez 77) and are symbolically connected to darkness. Using the Victorian notion, documented in various encyclopedias, that a vampire may turn into a dog and other forms (Chez 78), Dracula himself is presented in Stoker's narrative as a supernatural creature who landed on the shores of England in the form of a dog and is claimed by Van Helsing to be able to transform into a wolf or a bat (Stoker 242).

6. This is very much in harmony with how the vampiric bite is often interpreted as standing for sexual perversion (Limpár, "Masculinity" 284, N4) and specifically for rape (Lorrah qtd. in Limpár, "Masculinity" 284, N4).

7. It is not by chance that the first ominous sign of the coming apocalypse on Crockett Island is something that looks like a natural catastrophe with all those wild cat bodies scattered on the seashore.

8. This best-known translation and many similar ones (see Schild 297) support the explanation for God's words that I quote in the essay. E. Schild proposes an alternate translation and exegesis, arguing that the statement is "a positive answer in which God defines himself as the One who Is, who exists, who is real" (301).

9. Victorian materialism triggered various counterreactions, such as spiritualism, occultism, but even a renewed interest in Roman Catholicism, and they were "in part motivated by attempts to reconcile science and spirit by finding empirical proofs for spiritual life or to refute materialism by expanding the boundaries of the real beyond the merely physical," claims Rosemary Jann (274).

10. Károly Pintér explains how the island provides a realistic and symbolic frame for early utopian narratives, and how the relationship between the island and the rest of the world changes in narratives written after the great geographical discoveries, which start to position the island in opposition to a bigger, better world (195).

11. The Vatican does not make the author's name available but reveals that "*The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has commissioned an expert to prepare the following study, which the Congregation strongly recommends as a sure foundation for the reaffirmation of the teaching of the Magisterium on the theme: Christian Faith and Demonology.*"

Works Cited

- Auerbach, Nina. *Our Vampires, Ourselves*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995. Print.
- Bacon, Simon. "Introduction." *The Undead in the 21st century: A Companion*. Ed. Simon Bacon. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2022. 1–16. Print.
- Barber, Paul. *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1988. Print.
- Bojalad, Alec. "Midnight Mass Ending Explained." *Den of Geek*, 25 Sept. 2021. Web. 24. Jan. 2024.
- "Book III: Proverbs." *Midnight Mass*. Netflix, episode 3, 24 September 2021.
- "Book IV: Lamentations." *Midnight Mass*. Netflix, episode 4, 24 September 2021.

- “Book VI: Acts of the Apostles.” *Midnight Mass*. Netflix, episode 6, 24 September 2021.
- “Book VII: Revelation.” *Midnight Mass*. Netflix, episode 7, 24 September 2021.
- Chez, Keridiana. “‘You Can’t Trust Wolves No More Nor Women’: Canines, Women, and Deceptive Docility in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*.” *Victorian Review* 38.1 (Spring 2012): 77–92. Print.
- Chuang Tzu, “Discussion on Making All Things Equal.” *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson, *Terebess Asia Online*. n.d. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. “Monster Culture. (Seven Theses).” *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Ed. J. J. Cohen. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996. 3–25. Print.
- Collider Extras. “*Midnight Mass* Ending: Why Kate Siegel ‘Freaked Out’ While Filming Erin’s Final Scene.” Interview with Kate Siegel. Collider Ladies Night After Hours. *YouTube*, 27 Sept. 2021. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.
- Ebdrup, Niels. “The Pope’s Scientists Study Miracles.” *ScienceNordic*, 25 Dec. 2012. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.
- Engberg-Pedersen, Troels. 2017. “The Cosmology of the Raising of Lazarus (John 11–12).” *Coming Back to Life: The Permeability of Past and Present, Mortality and Immortality, Death and Life in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Ed. Frederick S. Tappenden, and Carly Daniel-Hughes, with the assistance of Bradley N. Rice. Montreal, QC: McGill University Library. 153–79. Print.
- Grafius, Brandon R. “The Nun (Corin Hardy, 2018) – Religious Undead.” *The Undead in the 21st Century: A Companion*. Ed. Simon Bacon. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2022. 109–117. Print.
- Greifenhagen, F. V. “The Story of Noah: Violent Exclusionary Apocalyptic Is (Not) Good to Think.” *Consensus* 33.1 (2008): Article 3. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.
- Giambrone, Anthony. “‘Friends in Heavenly Habitations’ (Luke 16:9): Charity, Repentance, and Luke’s Resurrection Reversal.” *Revue Biblique* 120.4 (Oct. 2013): 529–52. Print.
- Haynes, Jeffrey. “Trump and the Politics of International Religious Freedom.” *Religions*, 27 July 2020. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.
- Jann, Rosemary. “Saved by Science? The Mixed Messages of Stoker’s *Dracula*.” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 31.2 (Summer 1989): 273–87. Print.

- Jönsson, Gabriella. "The Second Vampire: 'filles fatales' in J. Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Carmilla' and Anne Rice's 'Interview with the Vampire.'" *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 17.1 (Spring 2006): 33–48. Print.
- Kwong, Lucas. "Dracula's 'Apologetics of Progress'." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 44.1 (2016): 111–29. Print.
- Lilly, Joseph L. "The Conversion of Saint Paul: The Validity of His Testimony to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 6.2 (Apr. 1944): 180–204. Print.
- Limpár, Ildikó. "'Able Zombies': Enduring Bodies Subverting the Biblical Tradition in M. R. Carey's *The Girl with All the Gifts* and Daryl Gregory's *Raising Stony Mayball*." *Faith and the Zombie: Critical Essays on the End of the World and Beyond*. Ed. Simon Bacon. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2023. pp. 229–40.
- . "Masculinity, Visibility and the Vampire Literary Tradition in *What We Do in the Shadows*." *Journal for the Fantastic in the Arts* 29.2 (2018): 266–88. Print.
- Maas, A. "General Resurrection." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. *New Advent*. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.
- Maas, Jennifer. "'Midnight Mass' Star Kate Siegel on Erin's 'I Am That I Am' Speech and That 'Terrifying' Finale Battle." Interview. *The Wrap*. 27 Sept. 2021. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.
- Moberly, R. W. L. "Why Did Noah Send out a Raven?" *Vetus Testamentum* 50.3 (July 2000): 345–56.
- Mordrake, Edward. "Bram Stoker's *Dracula*." Opinion. *Crisis Magazine*, 24 Oct. 2013. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.
- Morton, Timothy. *Humankind: Solidarity with Non-Human People*. London: Verso, 2017. E-book.
- Ní Fhlainn, Sorchá. *Postmodern Vampires: Film, Fiction and Popular Culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. Print.
- Nuzum, K. A. "The Monster's Sacrifice—Historic Time: The Uses of Mythic and Liminal Time in Monster Literature." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 29.3 (Fall 2004): 207–27. Print.
- Ötsch, Walter, and Stephan Pühringer. "Right-Wing Populism and Market-Fundamentalism: Two Mutually Reinforcing Threats to Democracy in the 21st Century." *Working Paper Serie, Ök-26* (2017): 2–12. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.
- Perlstein, Rick. "Market Logic Is Literally Killing Us." *These Times*, 17 June 2020. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.

- Pintér, Károly. "A számkivetett Kalibán: Huxley *Szép új világa* Shakespeare *Viharának* fényében." [Caliban Exiled: Huxley's *Brave New World* in the Light of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*]. *Utópiák és ellenutópiák*. Eds. Kroó Katalin and Bényei Tamás. Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2010. 187–207.
- Pohle, J. "Eucharist." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. *New Advent*. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.
- Schild, E. "On Exodus III 14: 'I am That I am'." *Vetus Testamentum*, 4.3 (July 1954): 296–302. Print.
- Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. 1897. n.p.: Global Grey, 2013. Ebook.
- The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.¹¹ "Christian Faith and Demonology." *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition (10 July 1975.): 6–10. *Vatican*. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.
- Vawter, Bruce. "Resurrection and Redemption." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 15.1 (Jan. 1953): 11–23. Print.
- Westermeyer, William H. "Freedom over Fear: Fundamentalist Populism and the Challenge of COVID-19." *Open Anthropological Research* 1 (2021): 116–28. Web. 24 Jan. 2024.