

Kim Newman - Andy Warhol's Dracula

As Nancy snuffed, her blood curdled. The taste of vile scabs flooded his mouth. He pushed her away, detaching fangs from her worn wounds. Ropes of bloody spittle hung from her neck to his maw. He wiped his mouth on his wrist, breaking their liquid link. A last electric thrill shuddered, arcing between them. Her heart stopped.

He had pulled her backward onto the bed, holding her down to him as he worked at her throat, her hands feebly scrabbling his sides. Empty, she was dead weight on top of him. He was uncomfortably aware of the other garbage in the bed: magazines, bent spoons, hypodermic needles, used Kleenex, ripped and safety-pinned clothes, banknotes, congealed sandwiches, weeks of uneaten complimentary mints. A package of singles — Sid's "My Way" — had broken under them, turning the much-stained mattress into a fakir's bed of nails. Vinyl shards stabbed his unbroken skin.

Johnny Pop was naked but for leopard-pattern briefs and socks, and the jewelry. Prizing his new clothes too much to get them gory, he had neatly folded and placed the suit and shirt on a chair well away from the bed.

His face and chest were sticky with blood and other discharges.

As the red rush burst in his eyes and ears, his senses flared, more acute by a dozenfold. Outside, in iced velvet October night, police sirens sounded like the wailings of the bereaved mothers of Europe. Distant shots burst as if they were fired in the room, stabs of noise inside his skull.

Blobby TV light painted neon a cityscape across ugly wallpaper, populated by psychedelic cockroaches.

He tasted the ghosts of the Chelsea Hotel: drag queens and vampire killers, junkies and pornographers, artists and freaks, visionaries and wasters. Pressing into his mind, they tried to make of his undead body a channel through which they could claw their way back to this plane of existence. Their voices shrieked, clamoring for attention. Cast out of Manhattan, they lusted for restoration to their paved paradise.

Though his throat protested, Johnny forced himself to swallow. Nancy's living blood had scarcely been of better quality than this dead filth.

Americans fouled their bodies. Her habits would have killed her soon, even if she hadn't invited a vampire into Room 100. He didn't trouble himself with guilt. Some people were looking for their vampires, begging all their lives for death. His nosferatu hold upon the world was tenuous. He could only remain on sufferance. Without the willing warm, he would starve and die. They fed him. They were to blame for him.

Dead blood, heavy with Tuinol and Dilaudid, smote his brain, washing away the ghosts. He had to be careful; this city was thronged with the truly dead, loitering beyond the ken of the warm, desperate for attention from those who could perceive them. When he was feeding, they crowded around. Having been dead, however briefly, he was a beacon for them.

He yowled and threw the meat-sack off him. He sat up in the bed, nerves drawn taut, and looked at the dead girl. She was ghost-white flesh in black underwear. The flowering neck wound was the least of the marks on her. Scarifications crisscrossed her concave tummy. Pulsing slits opened like gills in her sides, leaking the last of her. The marks of his talons, they were dead mouths, beseeching more kisses from him.

Since arriving in America, he'd been careful to take only those who asked for it, who were already living like ghosts. They had few vampires here. Drained corpses attracted attention. Already, he knew, he'd been noticed.

To prosper, he must practice the skills of his father-in-darkness. First, to hide; then, to master.

The Father was always with him, first among the ghosts. He watched over Johnny and kept him from real harm.

Sid, Belsen-thin but for his Biafra-bloat belly, was slumped in a ratty chair in front of blurry early early television. He looked at Johnny and at Nancy, incapable of focusing. Earlier, he'd shot up through his eyeball. Colors slid and flashed across his bare, scarred-and-scabbed chest and arms. His head was a skull in a spiky fright wig, huge eyes swarming as Josie and the Pussycats reflected on the screen of his face. The boy tried to laugh but could only shake. A silly little knife, not even silver, was loosely held in his left hand.

Johnny pressed the heels of his fists to his forehead, and jammed his eyes shut. Blood-red light shone through the skin curtains of his eyelids. He had felt this before. It wouldn't last more than a few seconds. Hell raged in his brain. Then, as if a black fist had struck him in the gullet, peristaltic movement forced fluid up through his throat. He opened his mouth, and a thin squirt of black liquid splattered across the carpet and against the wall.

"Magic spew," said Sid, in amazement.

The impurities were gone. Johnny was on a pure blood-high now. He contained all of Nancy's short life. She had been an all-American girl. She had given him everything.

He considered the boy in the chair and the girl on the bed, the punks. Their tribes were at war, his and theirs. Clothes were their colors, Italian suits versus safety-pinned PVC pants. This session at the Chelsea had been a truce that turned into a betrayal, a rout, a massacre. The Father was proud of Johnny's strategy.

Sid looked at Nancy's face. Her eyes were open, showing only veined white. He gestured with his knife, realizing something had happened. At some point in the evening, Sid had stuck his knife into himself a few times. The tang of his rotten blood filled the room. Johnny's fangs slid from their gum-sheaths, but he had no more hunger yet. He was too full. He thought of the punks as Americans, but Sid was English. A musician, though he couldn't really play his guitar. A singer, though he could only shout.

America was a strange new land. Stranger than Johnny had imagined in the Old Country, stranger than he could have imagined. If he drank more blood, he would soon be an American. Then he would be beyond fear, untouchable. It was what the Father wanted for him.

He rolled the corpse off his shins, and cleaned himself like a cat, contorting his supple back and neck, extending his foot-long tongue to lick off the last of the bloodstains. He unglued triangles of vinyl from his body and threw them away. Satisfied, he got off the bed and pulled on crusader white pants, immodestly tight around crotch and rump, loose as a sailor's below the knee. The dark purple shirt settled on his back and chest, sticking to him where his saliva was still wet. He rattled the cluster of gold chains and medallions — Transylvanian charms, badges of honor and conquest — that hung in the gap between his hand-sized collar-points.

With the white jacket, lined in blood-red silk, Johnny was a blinding apparition. He didn't need a strobe to shine in the dark. Sid raised his knife hand, to cover his eyes. The boy's reaction was better than any

mirror.

"Punk sucks," said Johnny, inviting a response.

"Disco's stupid," Sid sneered back.

Sid was going to get in trouble. Johnny had to make a slave of the boy, to keep himself out of the story.

He found an unused needle on the bed. Pinching the nipple-like bulb, he stuck the needle into his wrist, spearing the vein perfectly. He let the bulb go and a measure of his blood — of Nancy's? — filled the glass phial. He unstuck himself. The tiny wound was invisibly healed by the time he'd smeared away the bead of blood and licked his thumbprint. He tossed the syrette to Sid, who knew exactly what to do with it, jabbing it into an old arm-track and squirting. Vampire blood slid into Sid's system, something between a virus and a drug. Johnny felt the hook going into Sid's brain, and fed him some line.

Sid stood, momentarily invincible, teeth sharpening, eyes reddened, ears bat-flared, movements swifter. Johnny shared his sense of power, almost paternally. The vampire buzz wouldn't last long, but Sid would be a slave as long as he lived, which was unlikely to be forever. To become nosferatu, you had to give and receive blood; for centuries, most mortals had merely been giving; here, a fresh compact between the warm and the undead was being invented.

Johnny nodded towards the empty thing on the bed. Nobody's blood was any good to her now. He willed the command through the line, through the hook, into Sid's brain. The boy, briefly possessed, leaped across the room, landing on his knees on the bed, and stuck his knife into the already dead girl, messing up the wounds on her throat, tearing open her skin in dozens of places. As he slashed, Sid snarled, black fangs splitting his gums. Johnny let himself out of the room.

They were calling him a vampire long before he turned.

At the Silver Dream Factory, the Mole People, amphetamine-swift dusk-til-dawners eternally out for blood, nicknamed him "Drella": half-Dracula, half-Cinderella. The coven often talked of Andy's "victims": first, castoffs whose lives were appropriated for Art, rarely given money to go with their limited fame (a great number of them now truly dead); later, wealthy portrait subjects or Inter/VIEW advertisers, courted as assiduously as any Renaissance art patron (a great number of them ought to be truly dead). Andy leeches off them all, left them drained or transformed, using them without letting them touch him, never distinguishing between the commodities he could only coax from other people: money, love, blood, inspiration, devotion, death. Those who rated him a genius and those who ranked him a fraud reached eagerly, too eagerly, for the metaphor. It was so persistent, it must eventually become truth.

In *Swimming Underground: My Years in the Warhol Factory* (1995), supervamp Mary Woronov (Hedy/The Shoplifter, 1965; *The Chelsea Girls*, 1966) writes: "People were calling us the undead, vampires, me and my little brothers of the night, with our lips pressed against the neck of the city, sucking the energy out of scene after scene. We left each party behind like a wasted corpse, raped and carelessly tossed aside. . . . Andy was the worst, taking on five and six parties a night. He even looked like a vampire: white, empty, waiting to be filled, incapable of satisfaction. He was the

white worm — always hungry, always cold, never still, always twisting." When told that the artist had actually turned vampire, Lou Reed arched a ragged eyebrow and quizzed, "Andy was alive?" In the multitude of memoirs and word or song portraits that try to define Andy Warhol, there is no instance of anyone ever using the adjective "warm" about him.

Valerie Solanas, who prompted Andy's actual turning, took superstitious care to shoot him with homemade silver bullets. She tried wrapping .32 ammunition in foil, which clogged the chambers, before resorting to spray-paint in the style of Billy Name (Linich), the silver-happy decorator of the Factory who confined himself in a tiny back room for two years, coming out only at dead of night to forage. The names are just consonants short of anagrams: Andy Warhola, Wlad Draculya; Valerie Solanas, Van Helsing. Valerie's statement, the slogan of a fearless vampire killer: "He had too much control over my life." On the operating table — 4:51 pm, Monday, June 3, 1968 — Andy Warhol's heart stopped. He was declared clinically dead but came back and lived on, his vision of death and disaster fulfilled and survived. The stringmeat ghost of the latter years was sometimes a parody of his living self, a walking Diane Arbus exhibit, belly scars like zippers, Ray-Ban eyes and dead skin.

Warhola the Vampyre sloped nosferatu-taloned through the seventies, a fashion-setter as always, as — after nearly a century in the open in Europe — vampirism (of a sort) at last established itself in America. He had no get, but was the fountainhead of a bloodline. You can still see them, in galleries or People, on the streets after dark, in the clubs and cellars. Andy's kids: cloned creatures, like the endless replications of his silkscreen celebrity portraits, faces repeated until they become meaningless patterns of color dots. When alive, Andy had said he wanted to become a machine and that everybody should be alike. How did he feel when his wishes were coming true? How did he feel about anything? Did he feel? Ever? If you spend any amount of time trying to understand the man and his work, you can't help but worry that he's reaching from beyond the grave and forcing you to become Valerie.

Consider the signs, the symptoms, the symbols: that pale, almost-albino face, simultaneously babyish and ancient, shrinking like a bucket of salted slugs when exposed to the sun; the sharp or battered black clothes, stiff from the grave; the goggle-like dark glasses, hypnotic black holes where eyes should be; the slavish monotone of the whispery voice and the pared-down, kindergarten vocabulary; the covert religiosity, the prizing of sacred or silver objects; the squirrelling-away of money and possessions in a centuried lair; even the artificial shocks of grey-white-silver hair. Are these not the attributes of a classical vampire, Dracula himself? Look at photographs taken before or after June 1968, and you can't tell whether he is or isn't. Like the Murgatroyds of the 1890s, Andy was a disciple before he became a vampire. For him, turning was dropping the seventh veil, the last chitinous scrap of chrysalis, a final stage in becoming what he had always meant to be, an admittal that this was indeed what was inside him. His whole life had revolved around the dead.

— Kathleen Conklin, "Destroying Drella"

Paper delivered at "Warhol's Worlds," inaugural conference of The Andy Warhol Museum (April 21-23, 1995); revised for publication as "Warhola the Vampyre" in *Who is Andy Warhol?*, edited by Colin MacCabe with Mark Francis and Peter Wollen (The British Film Institute and The Andy Warhol Museum, 1997)

He stepped out of the Chelsea Hotel onto the sidewalk of West 23rd Street, and tasted New York. It was the dead time, the thick hours before dawn, when all but the most committed night owls were home abed, or at least crashed out on a floor, blood sluggish with coffee, cigarettes or drugs. This was the vampire afternoon, and Johnny understood how alone he was. There were other vampires in this city, and he was almost ready to seek them out, but none like him, of his line.

America was vast, bloated with rich, fatty blood. The fresh country supported only a few ticks that tentatively poked proboscises through thick hide, sampling without gorging. By comparison, Johnny was a hungry monster. Minutes after taking Nancy, he could have fed again, and again. He had to take more than he needed. He could handle dozens of warm bodies a night without bursting, without choking on the ghosts. Eventually, he would make children-in-darkness, slaves to serve him, to shield him. He must pass on the bloodline of the Father. But not yet.

He hadn't intended to come to this city of towers, with its moat of running water. His plan was to stick to the film people he had hooked up with in the Old Country, and go to fabled Hollywood on the Pacific. But there was a mix-up at JFK and he was detained in Immigration while the rest of the company, American passports brandished like protective banners, were waved on to catch connecting flights to Los Angeles or San Francisco. He was stuck at the airport in a crowd of overeager petitioners, dark-skinned and warm, as dawn edged threateningly closer. The Father was with him then, as he slipped into a men's room and bled a Canadian flight attendant who gave him a come-on, invigorating himself with something new and wild. Buzzing with fresh blood, first catch of this new land, he concentrated his powers of fascination to face down the officials who barred his way. It was beneath him to bribe those who could be overpowered by force of will.

America was disorienting. To survive, he must adapt swiftly. The pace of change in this century was far more rapid than the glacial shifts of the long years the Father had in his Carpathian fastness. Johnny would have to surpass the Father to keep ahead, but bloodline would tell. Though of an ancient line, he was a twentieth-century creature, turned only thirty-five years earlier, taken into the dark before he was formed as a living man. In Europe, he had been a boy, hiding in the shadows, waiting. Here, in this bright America, he could fulfil his potential. People took him for a young man, not a child.

Johnny Pop had arrived.

He knew he had been noticed. He was working hard to fit in, but recognized how gauche he had been a few short weeks ago. On his first nights in New York, he had made mistakes. Blood in the water excited the sharks. Someone stood on the corner, watching him. Two black men, in long leather coats. One wore dark glasses despite the hour, the other had a slim-brimmed hat with a tiny feather in the band. Not vampires, there was

something of the predator about them. They were well-armed. Silver shoe-buckles and buttons, coats loose over guns. And their bodies were weapons, a finished blade, an arrow shaft. From inside his coat, the black man in sunglasses produced a dark knife. Not silver, but polished hardwood.

Johnny tensed, ready to fight and kill. He had just fed. He was at his strongest.

The knifeman smiled. He balanced his weapon by its point, and tapped his forehead with its hilt, a warrior salute. He would not attack yet. His presence was an announcement, a warning. He was showing himself. This man had seen Johnny before he was seen. His night-skills were sharp.

Then, the knifeman and his partner were gone. They had seemed to disappear, to step into a shadow even Johnny's night eyes could not penetrate.

He suppressed a shudder. This city was not yet his jungle, and he was exposed here — out on the street in a white suit that shone like a beacon — as he had not been in the Old Country.

The black men should have destroyed him now. When they had a chance. Johnny would do his best to see they did not get another.

It was time to move on, to join the crowd.

A mustard-yellow taxi cruised along the street, emerging like a dragon from an orange-pink groundswell of steam. Johnny hailed the cab, and slid into its cage-like interior. The seat was crisscrossed with duct tape, battlefield dressings on a fatal wound. The driver, a gaunt white man with a baggy military jacket, looked instinctively at the rearview mirror, expecting to lock eyes with his fare. Johnny saw surprise in the young man's face as he took in the reflection of an empty hack. He twisted to look into the dark behind him and saw Johnny there, understanding at once what he had picked up.

"You have a problem?" Johnny asked.

After a moment, the taxi driver shrugged.

"Hell, no. A lot of guys won't even take spooks, but I'll take anyone.

They all come out at night."

Behind the driver's gunsight eyes, Johnny saw jungle twilight, purpled by napalm blossoms. He heard the reports of shots fired years ago. His nostrils stung with dead cordite.

Uncomfortable, he broke the connection.

Johnny told the driver to take him to Studio 54.

Even now, this late in the night, a desperate line lingered outside the club. Their breaths frosted in a cloud, and they stamped unfashionably-shoed feet against the cold. Losers with no chance, they would cajole and plead with Burns and Stu, the hard-faced bouncers, but never see the velvet rope lifted. An invisible sign was on their foreheads. Worse than dead, they were boring.

Johnny paid off the cab with sticky bills lifted from Nancy's purse, and stood on the sidewalk, listening to the throb of the music from inside.

"Pretty Baby," Blondie. Debbie Harry's living-dead voice called to him.

The taxi did not move off. Was the driver hoping for another fare from among these damned? No, he was fixing Johnny in his mind. A man without a reflection should be remembered.

"See you again soon, Jack," said the white man.

Like the black men outside the Chelsea, the taxi driver was a danger.

Johnny had marked him. It was good to know who would come for you, to be prepared. The white man's name was written on his license just as his purpose was stamped on his face. It was Travis. In Vietnam, he had learned to look monsters in the face, even in the mirror.

The cab snarled to life and prowled off.

Moving with the music, Johnny crossed the sidewalk towards the infernal doorway, reaching out with his mind to reconnect with the bouncers, muscular guys with Tom of Finland leather caps and jackets. Burns was a moonlighting cop with sad eyes and bruises, Stu a trust-fund kid with his own monster father in his head; Johnny's hooks were in both of them, played out on the thinnest of threads. They were not, would never be, his get, but they were his. First, he would have warm chattels; get would come later.

He enjoyed the wails and complaints from losers as he breezed past the line, radiating an "open sesame" they could never manage. Stu clicked the studded heels of his motorcycle boots and saluted, fingers aligned with the peak of his black leather forage cap with Austro-Hungarian precision. Burns smartly lifted the rope, the little sound of the hook being detached from the eye exciting envious sighs, and stood aside. To savor the moment, Johnny paused in the doorway, knowing the spill of light from inside made his suit shine like an angelic raiment, and surveyed those who would never get in. Their eyes showed such desperation that he almost pitied them. Two weeks ago, he had been among them, drawn to the light but kept away from the flame. Like some older creatures of his kind, he could not force his way into a place until he had been invited across the threshold. Then, his clothes — found in a suitcase chosen at random from the carousel at the airport — had not been good. Being nosferatu was unusual enough to get him attention. Steve Rubell was passing the door, and took note of Johnny's sharp, beautiful face. Possessed of the knack of seeing himself as others saw him, Johnny understood the owner-manager was intrigued by the vampire boy on his doorstep. But Shining Lucifer himself couldn't get into 54 with a Bicentennial shirt, cowboy boots and black hair flattened like wet sealskin to his skull.

When he came back, the next night, he wore clothes that fit: a Halston suit — black outside in the dark, with a violet weave that showed under the lights — and a Ralph Lauren shirt with fresh bloodstains across the polo player. They still smelled faintly of their previous owner, Tony from Brooklyn. The bouncers didn't even need to check with Steve to let Johnny in, and he took the opportunity, later that night in the back rooms, to lay a tiny smear of his blood on them both, apparently a token of gratitude, actually a sigil of ownership. Johnny was saving them for later, knowing they would be needed.

As he ducked past the curtains and slid into 54, Johnny felt Tony's ghost in his limbs. He had taken much from Tony Manero, whom he had exsanguinated on the Brooklyn Bridge. From the boy, he had caught the blood rhythms that matched the music of the month. Tony had been a dancer; Johnny had inherited that from him, along with his fluffed-up but flared-back hairstyle and clothes that were not just a protective cover but a style, a display.

Tony was with him most nights now, a ghost. The kid had never made it to 54, but he'd been better than Brooklyn, good enough for Manhattan. Johnny thought Tony, whose empty carcass he had weighted and tossed off the Bridge, would be happy that some of him at least had made it in the real

city. When the blood was still fresh in him, Johnny had followed its track, back to Tony's apartment, and slipped in — unnoticed by the kid's family, even the fallen priest — to take away his wardrobe, the night-clothes that were now his armor.

He let the music take him, responding to it with all his blood. Nancy's ghost protested, making puking motions at the sound of the disco despised by all true punks. By taking her, Johnny had won a great victory in the style wars. He liked killing punks. No one noticed when they were gone. They were all committing slow suicide anyway; that was the point, for there was no future. To love disco was to want to live forever, to aspire to an immortality of consumption. Punks didn't believe in anything beyond death, and loved nothing, not even themselves.

He wondered what would happen to Sid.

A man-in-the-moon puppet, spooning coke up his nose, beamed down from the wall, blessing the throng with a 1978 benediction. As Johnny stepped onto the illuminated floor and strutted through the dancers, his suit shone like white flame. He had the beat with his every movement. Even his heart pulsed in time to the music. He smiled as he recognized the song, fangs bright as neons under the strobe, eyes red glitterballs. This was the music he had made his own, the song that meant the most of all the songs.

"Staying Alive," The Bee Gees.

In its chorus, he heard the wail of the warm as they died under his kisses, ah-ah-ah-ah, staying alive. In its lyric, he recognized himself, a woman's man with no time to talk.

His dancing cleared a circle.

It was like feeding. Without even taking blood, he drew in the blood of the crowd to himself, loosening the ghosts of those who danced with him from their bodies. Tulpa spirits stretched out through mouths and noses and attached to him like ectoplasmic straws. As he danced, he sucked with his whole body, tasting minds and hearts, outshining them all. No one came near, to challenge him. The Father was proud of him.

For the length of the song, he was alive.

Andrew Warhola was an American — born in Pittsburgh on August 6th, 1928 — but his family were not. In *The Life and Death of Andy Warhol* (1989), Victor Bockris quotes his statement "I am from nowhere," but gives it the lie: "The Warholas were Rusyns who had emigrated to America from the Ruthenian village of Mikova in the Carpathian Mountains near the borders of Russia and Poland in territory that was, at the turn of the century, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire." Bockris takes care, introducing early the theme that comes to dominate his biography, to note "The Carpathian Mountains are popularly known as the home of Dracula, and the peasants in Jonathan Harker's description kneeling before roadside shrines, crossing themselves at the mention of Dracula's name, resemble Andy Warhol's distant relatives."

The third son of Ondrej and Julia Warhola grew up in Soho, an ethnic enclave that was almost a ghetto. From an early age, he seemed a changeling, paler and slighter than his family, laughably unfit for a future in the steel mills, displaying talent as soon as his hand could properly hold a pencil. Others in his situation might fantasize that they were orphaned princes, raised by peasant wood-cutters, but the Warholas had emigrated — escaped? — from the

land of the vampires. Not fifty years before, Count Dracula had come out of Carpathia and established his short-lived empire in London. Dracula was still a powerful figure then, the most famous vampire in the world, and his name was spoken often in the Warhola household. Years later, in a film, Andy had an actress playing his mother claim to have been a victim, in childhood, of the Count, that Dracula's bloodline remained in her veins, passing in the womb to her last son. Like much else in Andy's evolving autobiography, there is no literal truth in this story but its hero spent years trying to wish it into reality and may even, at the last, have managed to pull off the trick. Before settling on "Andy Warhol" as his eventual professional name, he experimented with the signature "Andrew Alucard."

Julia was horrified by her little Andrew's inclinations. For her, vampires were objects not of fascination but dread. A devout Byzantine Catholic, she would drag her children six miles to the wooden church of St. John Chrystostom's on Saline Street and subject them to endless rituals of purification. Yet, among Andy's first drawings are bats and coffins. In the 1930s, as Dracula held court in one of his many exiles, the American illustrated press were as obsessed with vampires as with movie stars. There were several successful periodicals — *Weird Tales*, *Spicy Vampire Stories* — devoted almost entirely to their social activities. To look through these magazines, as the child Andy did, is to understand what it is to learn that a party is going on after your bedtime, to which you cannot possibly secure an invitation. Literally, you had to die to get in. In Vienna, Budapest, Constantinople, Monte Carlo and private estates and castles scattered in a crescent across Europe, vampire kings and queens held court.

Young Andrew clipped photographs and portraits from the magazines and hoarded them for the rest of his life. He preferred photographs, especially the blurred or distorted traces of those who barely registered on cameras or in mirrors. He understood at once that creatures denied the sight of their own faces must prize portrait painters. He wrote what might be called "fan letters" to the leaders of vampire fashion: de Lioncourt of Paris, Andrew Bennett of London, the White Russian Rozokov. His especial favorites among the undead, understandably, were the child-vampires, those frozen infant immortals Noel Coward sings about in "Poor Little Dead Girl." His prize possession as a boy was an autographed portrait of the martyred Claudia, ward of the stylish de Lioncourt, considered a paragon and an archetype among her kind. He would later use this image — a subscription gift sent out by *Night Life* — in his silkscreen, *Vampire Doll* (1963).

In his fascination with the undead, Andy was in the avant-garde. There were still very few vampires in America, and those American-born or -made tended to flee to a more congenial Europe. There was a vampire panic in the wake of the First World War, as returning veterans brought back the tainted bloodline that burned out in the epidemic of 1919. The lost generation new-borns, who all incubated within their bodies a burning disease that ate them up from the inside within months, were ghastly proof that vampires would never "take" in the New World. Congress passed acts against

the spread of vampirism save under impossibly regulated circumstances. J. Edgar Hoover ranked vampires just below communists and well above organized crime as a threat to the American way of life. In the 1930s, New York District Attorney Thomas Dewey led a crusade against an influx of Italian vampires, successfully deporting coven-leader Niccolo Cavalanti and his acolytes. In the South, a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan viciously curbed a potential renaissance of interlocked vampire hounforts in New Orleans and throughout the bayou country.

America, like Julia Warhola, considered all vampires loathsome monsters. Yet, as Andy understood, there was a dreadful glamour. During the Depression, glimpses of the high life lived in another continent and by another species seemed enticing. The Hungarian Paul Lukas was the first Hollywood actor to specialize in undead roles, from Scarface (1932) to The House of Ruthven (1937). A few real vampires, even, made it in the movies: Garbo, Malakai, Chevalier, Futaine. With the rise of fascism and the Second World War came a trickle of vampire refugees from the Old World. Laws were revised and certain practices tolerated "for the duration," while Hoover's FBI — constantly nagged by America's witch-hunters Cardinal Spellman and Father Coughlin — compiled foot-thick dossiers on elders and new-borns alike. As Nazi eugenicists strived to cleanse his bloodline from the Reich, Dracula himself aligned with the Allies, and a vampire underground in occupied Europe cooperated with the liberating forces.

When the War was over, the climate changed again and a round of blacklistings, arrests and show-trials — notably the prosecution for treason of American-born and -made vampire Benjamin Lathem by Robert F. Kennedy — drove all but those who could "pass for warm" back to Europe. That was the era of the scare movies, with homburg-hatted government men taking crucifix and stake to swarthy, foreign infiltrators: I Married a Vampire (1950), I Was a Vampire for the FBI (1951), Blood of Dracula (1958). Warhol was in New York by now, sketching shoes for ad layouts or arranging window displays for Bonwit Teller's, making a hundred thousand dollars a year but fretting that he wasn't taken seriously. Money wasn't enough for him; he needed to be famous too, as if under the curse described by Fritz Leiber in "The Casket Demon" (1963) — unless known of and talked about, he would fade to nothingness. Like America, he had not outgrown his vampire craze, just learned to keep quiet about it. In 1956, the year Around the World in 80 Days took the Best Picture Oscar, Andy took an extended trip with the frustratingly unforthcoming Charles Lisanby — Hawaii, Japan, India, Egypt, Rome, Paris, London. Throughout that itinerary, he saw vampires living openly, mingling with the warm, as adored as they were feared. Is it too much to suppose that, in a maharajah's palace or on a Nile paddle-wheeler, spurned by Charles and driven to abase himself before some exotic personage, he was bitten?

— Conklin, *ibid.*

"Gee, who is that boy?" asked Andy, evenly. "He is fantastic."
Penelope was used to the expression. It was one of Andy's few adjectives.

Everyone and everything was either "fantastic" or "a bore" or something similar, always with an elongated vowel early on. All television was "fa-antastic"; World War II was "a bo-ore." Vintage cookie tins were "si-imply wonderful"; income taxes were "ra-ather old." Famous people were "ve-ery interesting"; living daylight was "pra-actically forgotten."

She turned to look down on the dance floor. They were sitting up on the balcony, above the churning masses, glasses of chilled blood on the table between them, at once shadowed enough to be mysterious and visible enough to be recognizable. There was no point in coming to Studio 54 unless it was to be seen, to be noticed. At tomorrow's sunset, when they both rose from their day's sleep, it would be Penny's duty to go through the columns, reading out any mentions of their appearances, so Andy could cluck and crow over what was said about him, and lament that so much was left out.

It took her a moment to spot the object of Andy's attention.

For once, he was right. The dancer in the white suit was fantastic.

Fa-antastic, even. She knew at once that the boy was like her, nosferatu. His look, his style, was American, but she scented a whiff of European grave-mould. This was no new-born, no nouveau, but an experienced creature, practiced in his dark-skills. Only a vampire with many nights behind him could seem so young.

It had to happen. She was not the first to come here. She had known an invasion was inevitable. America could not hold out forever. She had not come here to be unique, but to be away from her kind, from her former lives. Though she had inevitably hooked up with Andy, she did not want to be sucked back into the world of the undead. But what she wanted meant very little any more, which was as it should be. Whatever came, she would accept. It was her duty, her burden.

She looked back at Andy. It took sharp senses indeed to distinguish his real enthusiasms from his feigned ones. He had worked hard — and it did not do to underestimate this languid scarecrow's capacity for hard work — to become as inexpressive as he was, to cultivate what passed in America for a lack of accent. His chalk-dusted cheeks and cold mouth gave nothing away. His wig was silver tonight, thick and stiff as a knot of fox-tails.

His suit was quiet, dark and Italian, worn with a plain tie.

They both wore goggle-like black glasses to shield their eyes from the club's frequent strobes. But, unlike some of his earlier familiars, Penny made no real attempt to look like him.

She watched the dancer spin, hip-cocked, arm raised in a disco heil, white jacket flaring to show scarlet lining, a snarl of concentration on his cold lovely face.

How could Andy not be interested in another of the undead? Especially one like this.

At least, the dancing boy meant the night wasn't a complete wash-out. It had been pretty standard, so far: two openings, three parties and a reception. One big disappointment: Andy had hoped to bring Miz Lillian, the President's mama, to the reception for Princess Ashraf, twin sister of the Shah of Iran, but the White House got wind and scuttled the plan.

Andy's fall-back date, Lucie Arnaz, was hardly a substitute, and Penny was forced to make long conversation with the poor girl — whom she had never heard of — while Andy did the silent act most people thought of as deliberate mystification but which was actually simple sulking. The Princess, sharp ornament of one of the few surviving vampire ruling

houses, was not exactly on her finest fettle, either — preoccupied by the troubles of her absolutist brother, who was currently back home surrounded by Mohammedan fanatics screaming for his impalement.

In the car between Bianca Jagger's party at the Tea Rooms and L.B.

Jeffries's opening at the Photographers' Gallery, Paloma Picasso rather boringly went on about the tonic properties of human blood as face cream.

Penny would have told the warm twit how stupid she was being about matters of which she plainly knew nothing, but Andy was frozen enough already without his faithful vampire companion teeing off someone so famous — Penny wasn't sure what exactly the painter's daughter was famous for — she was sure to get his name in Vanity Fair. At Bianca's, Andy thought he'd spotted David Bowie with Catherine Deneuve, but it turned out to be a far less interesting couple. Another disappointment.

Bob Colacello, editor of *Inter/VIEW* and Andy's connection with the Pahlavis, wittered on about how well the Princess was bearing up, and was trying to sell him on committing to an exhibition in the new museum of modern art the Shah had endowed in Teheran. Penny could tell Andy was chilling on the idea, sensing — quite rightly — that it would not do well to throw in with someone on the point of losing everything. Andy elaborately ignored Bob, and that meant everyone else did too. He had been delighted to learn from her what "being sent to Coventry" meant and redoubled his use of that ancient schoolboy torture. There was a hurt desperation in Bob's chatter, but it was all his own fault and she didn't feel a bit sorry for him.

At the Photographers', surrounded by huge blow-ups of war orphans and devastated Asian villages, Andy got on one of his curiosity jags and started quizzing her, Penny, about Oscar Wilde. What had he been like, had he really been amusing all the time, had he been frightened when the wolves gathered, how much had he earned, how famous had he really been, would he have been recognized everywhere he went? After nearly a hundred years, she remembered Wilde less well than many others she had known in the '80s. Like her, the poet was one of the first modern generation of new-born vampires. He was one of those who turned but didn't last more than a decade, eaten up by disease carried over from warm life. She didn't like to think of contemporaries she had outlived. But Andy insisted, nagging, and she dutifully coughed up anecdotes and aphorisms to keep him contented. She told Andy that he reminded her of Oscar, which was certainly true in some ways. Penny dreaded being recategorized from "fascinating" to "a bore," with the consequent casting into the outer darkness.

All her life, all her afterlife, had been spent by her own choice in the shadows cast by a succession of tyrants. She supposed she was punishing herself for her sins. Even Andy had noticed; in the Factory, she was called "Penny Penance" or "Penny Penitent." However, besotted with titles and honors, he usually introduced her to outsiders as "Penelope Churchward, Lady Godalming." She had never been married to Lord Godalming (or, indeed, anyone), but Arthur Holmwood had been her father-in-darkness, and some vampire aristos did indeed pass on titles to their get.

She was not the first English rose in Andy's entourage. She had been told she looked like the model Jane Forth, who had been in Andy's movies. Penny knew she had only become Andy's Girl of the Year after Catherine Guinness left the Factory to become Lady Neidpath. She had an advantage Andy's over earlier debs, though: she was never going to get old. As Girl of the Year,

it was her duty to be Andy's companion of the night and to handle much of the organizational and social business of the Factory, of Andy Warhol Enterprises, Incorporated. It was something she was used to, from her Victorian years as an "Angel in the Home" to her nights as last governess of the House of Dracula. She could even keep track of the money.

She sipped her blood, decanted from some bar worker who was "really" an actor or a model. Andy left his drink untouched, as usual. He didn't trust blood that showed up in a glass, and nobody ever saw him feeding. Penny wondered if he were an abstainer. Just now, the red pinpoint in his dark glasses were fixed. He was still watching the dancer.

The vampire in the white suit hooked her attention too.

For a moment, she was sure it was him, come back yet again, young and lethal, intent on murderous revenge.

She breathed the name, "Dracula."

Andy's sharp ears picked it up, even through the dreadful guff that passed for music these days. It was one of the few names guaranteed to provoke his interest.

Andy prized her for her connection to the late King Vampire. Penny had been at the Palazzo Otranto at the end. She was one of the few who knew the truth about the last hours of il principe, though she jealously kept that anecdote to herself. It was bad enough that the memories lingered.

"The boy looks like him," she said. "He might be the Count's get, or of his bloodline. Most vampires Dracula made came to look like him. He spread his doppelgangers throughout the world."

Andy nodded, liking the idea.

The dancer had Dracula's red eyes, his aquiline nose, his full mouth. But he was clean-shaven and had a bouffant of teased black hair, like a Broadway actor or a teenage idol. His look was as much Roman as Romanian. Penny had understood on their first meeting that Andy Warhol didn't want to be just a vampire. He wanted to be the vampire, Dracula. Even before his death and resurrection, his coven had called him "Drella." It was meant to be cruel: he was the Count of the night hours, but at dawn he changed back into the girl who cleared away the ashes.

"Find out who he is, Penny," Andy said. "We should meet him. He's going to be famous."

She had no doubt of that.

Flushed from dancing and still buzzed with Nancy's blood, Johnny moved on to the commerce of the night. The first few times, he had set up his shop in men's rooms, like the dealers he was rapidly putting out of business. Spooked by all the mirrors, he shifted from striplight johns to the curtained back rooms where the other action was. All the clubs had such places.

In the dark room, he felt the heat of the busy bodies and tasted ghosts, expelled on yo-yo strings of ectoplasm during orgasm. He threaded his way through writhing limbs to take up his habitual spot in a leather armchair.

He slipped off his jacket, draping it carefully over the back of the chair, and popped his cuff-links, rolling his sleeves up to his elbows.

His white lower arms and hands shone in the dark.

Burns, on a break, came to him first. The hook throbbed in his brain, jones throbbing in his bones like a slow drumbeat. The first shot of drac had been free, but now it was a hundred dollars a pop. The bouncer handed Johnny a crisp C-note. With the nail of his little finger, Johnny jabbed a

centimeter-long cut in the skin of his left arm. Burns knelt down in front of the chair and licked away the welling blood. He began to suckle the wound, and Johnny pushed him away.

There was a plea in the man's eyes. The drac jolt was in him, but it wasn't enough. He had the strength and the senses, but also the hunger.

"Go bite someone," Johnny said, laughing.

The bouncer's hook was in deep. He loved Johnny and hated him, but he'd do what he said. For Burns, hell would be to be expelled, to be denied forever the taste.

A girl, in a shimmering fringed dress, replaced the bouncer. She had violent orange hair.

"Is it true?" she asked.

"Is what true?"

"That you can make people like you?"

He smiled, sharply. He could make people love him.

"A hundred dollars and you can find out," he said.

"I'm game."

She was very young, a child. She had to scrape together the notes, in singles and twenties. Usually, he had no patience for that, and pushed such small-timers out of the way to find someone with the right money, as curt as a bus driver. But he needed small bills too, for cab fare and tips.

As her mouth fixed on his fresh wound, he felt his barb sink into her. She was a virgin, in everything. Within seconds, she was his slave. Her eyes widened as she found she was able to see in the dark. She touched fingertips to her suddenly sharp teeth.

It would last such a pathetically short time, but for now she was a princess of the shadows. He named her Nocturna, and made her his daughter until dawn. She floated out of the room, to hunt.

He drew more cuts across his arm, accepted more money, gave more drac. A procession of strangers, all his slaves, passed through. Every night there were more.

After an hour, he had \$8,500 in bills. Nancy's ghost was gone, stripped away from him in dribs and drabs, distributed among his children of the night. His veins were sunken and tingling. His mind was crowded with impressions that faded to nothing as fast as the scars on his milky skin. All around, in the dark, his temporary get bit each other. He relished the musical yelps of pain and pleasure.

Now, he thirsted again.

Vampires show up in the 1950s fashion drawings, if only through coded symbols: ragged-edged batwing cloaks, draped over angular figures; red lipstick mouths on sharp-cheeked, black and white faces; tiny, almost unnoticeable, fangs peeping from stretched smiles. These in-jokes are self-criticism, a nervous admission of what had to happen next. To become "Andy Warhol," the illustrator and window-dresser must die and be reborn as an Artist. Those who accuse him of being concerned only with his earnings — which, to be fair, is what he told anyone who would listen — forget that he abandoned a considerable income to devote all his energies to work which initially lost a lot of money.

Shortly before the Coca-Cola Bottle and Campbell's Soup Can series made him famous, and in a period when he feared he had recovered

from one "nervous breakdown" only to be slipping into another, Warhol did a painting — synthetic polymer and crayon on canvas — of Batman (1960), the only vampire ever really to be embraced by America. Though justifiably eclipsed by Lichtenstein's appropriations from comic strip panels, Batman is an important work in its own right, an idea seized but abandoned half-finished, the first flash of what would soon come to be called Pop Art. Like much from the period before Warhol hit upon repetition and manufacture as modes of expression, it seems incomplete, childish crayon scribbles across the cowed Bob Kane outline of the classic vampire vigilante. Exhibited at the Castelli Gallery, the work was the first Warhol piece to command a serious price from a private collector — an anonymous buyer on behalf of the Wayne Foundation — which may have encouraged the artist to continue with his personal work.

During an explosion of creativity that began in 1962 and lasted at least until he was shot, Warhol took a lease on a former hat works at 231 East 47th Street and turned the loft space into the Factory, with the intention of producing Art on a production line. At the suggestion of assistant Nathan Gluck, Warhol seized upon the silkscreen process and ("like a forger") turned out series of dollar bills, soup cans and Marilyn Monroes. It seemed that he didn't care what his subjects were, so long as they were famous. When Henry Geldzahler, Assistant Curator for Twentieth Century American Art at the Metropolitan Museum, told him he should apply himself to more "serious" subjects, Warhol began his "death and disaster" series, images of car crashes, suicides and the electric chair. Straddling the trivial and the serious are his vampire portraits: Carmilla Karnstein (1962), Vampire Doll (1963), Lucy Westenra (1963).

Red-eyed and jagged-mouthed undead faces, reproduced in sheets like unperforated stamps, vivid greens and oranges for skin-tones, the series reinvents the nineteenth-century genre of vampire portraiture. The vampire subjects Andy chose shared one thing: all had been famously destroyed. He produced parallel silkscreens of their true deaths: impalements, decapitations, disintegrations. These are perhaps the first great works, ruined corpses swimming in scarlet blood, untenanted bodies torn apart by grim puritans.

In 1964, Andy delivered a twenty by twenty black and white mural called Thirteen Vampires to the American pavilion at the New York World's Fair, where it was to be exhibited beside work by Robert Rauschenberg and Roy Lichtenstein. Among the thirteen, naturally, was Warhol's first Dracula portrait, though all the other undead notables represented were women. The architect Philip Johnson, who had commissioned the piece, informed Warhol that word had come from the Governor that it was to be removed because there was concern that it was offensive to the god-fearing. When Warhol's suggestion that the portraits all be defaced with burning crosses to symbolise the triumph of the godly was vetoed, he went out to the fair with Geldzahler and another of his assistants, Gerard Malanga, and painted the mural over with a thick layer of undead-banishing silver paint, declaring "and that'll be my art." We can only speculate about that lost Dracula portrait, which none of the few who saw it can describe in detail. Which of the many, many images of the King of the Vampires — then, truly dead for only five years — did Warhol

reproduce? The most tantalizing suggestion, based on Malanga's later-retracted version, is that for the only time in his entire career as an Artist, Warhol drew on his own imagination rather than copied or reproduced from life. Andy lied constantly, but this is the only occasion when anyone has ever accused him of making something up.

Warhol's first experiments with film, conducted in real-time with the co-opted collaboration of whoever happened to be hanging about in the Factory, are steeped in the atmosphere of vampirism. The camera hovers over the exposed throat of John Giorno in *Sleep* (1963) as if ready to pounce. The projection of film shot at twenty-four frames per second at the silent speed of sixteen frames per second gives Giorno's six-hour night a suggestion of vampire lassitude. The flashes of white leader that mark the change of shots turn dirty sheets into white coffin plush, and the death rattle of the projector is the only soundtrack (aside from the comical yawns and angry ticket-money-back demands of any audience members happening upon the film in a real theater). That same year, Warhol shot more explicit studies of vampirism: in *Kiss*, a succession of couples osculate like insects unable to uncouple their complex mouth-parts; in *Eat*, Robert Indiana crams his mouth with unidentifiable meats; and *Suck-Job* is an extended (thirty minutes) close-up of the face of a young man who is being nibbled by beings who never intrude into the frame or register on film. For *Suck-Job*, Warhol had arranged with Alex Ford, a real vampire, to "appear" but Ford didn't take him seriously and failed to show up at the Factory for the shoot, forcing the artist to substitute pasty-faced but warm hustlers dragged off the street.

When Warhol turned his camera on the Empire State Building in *Empire* (1964), it saw the edifice first as the largest coffin in the world, jutting out of the ground as if dislodged by some seismic activity. As night slowly falls and the floodlights come on, the building becomes a cloaked predator standing colossal over New York City, shoulders sloped by the years, head sprouting a dirigible-mast horn. After that, Warhol had fellow underground filmmaker Jack Smith swish a cape over Baby Jane Hudson in the now-lost *Batman Dracula* (1964). Only tantalising stills, of Smith with a mouthful of plastic teeth and staring Lon Chaney eyes, remain of this film, which — as with the silver-coated *Thirteen Vampires* — is perhaps as Andy wanted it. As with *Sleep* and *Empire*, the idea is more important than the artifact. It is enough that the films exist; they are not meant actually to be seen all the way through. When Jonas Mekas scheduled *Empire* at the Filmmakers' Co-Op in 1965, he lured Warhol into the screening room and tied him securely to one of the seats with stout rope, intent on forcing the creator to sit through his creation. When he came back two hours later to check up, he found Warhol had chewed through his bonds — briefly, an incarnation of *Batman Dracula* — and escaped into the night. In the early sixties, Warhol had begun to file his teeth, sharpening them to piranha-like needle-points.

— Conklin, *ibid.*

A redheaded vampire girl bumped into her and hissed, displaying pearly

fangs. Penelope lowered her dark glasses and gave the chit a neon glare. Cowed, the creature backed away. Intrigued, Penny took the girl by the bare upper arm, and looked into her mouth, like a dentist. Her fangs were real, but shrank as she quivered in Penny's nosferatu grip. Red swirls dwindled in her eyes, and she was warm again, a frail thing.

Penny understood what the vampire boy was doing in the back room. At once, she was aghast and struck with admiration. She had heard of the warm temporarily taking on vampire attributes by drinking vampire blood without themselves being bitten. There was a story about Katie Reed and a flier in the First World War. But it was rare, and dangerous.

Well, it used to be rare.

All around her, mayfly vampires darted. A youth blundered into her arms and tried to bite her. She firmly pushed him away, breaking the fingers of his right hand to make a point. They would heal instantly, but ache like the Devil when he turned back into a real boy.

A worm of terror curled in her heart. To do such a thing meant having a vision. Vampires, made conservative by centuries, were rarely innovators. She was reminded, again, of Dracula, who had risen among the nosferatu by virtue of his willingness to venture into new, large-scale fields of conquest. Such vampires were always frightening.

Would it really be a good thing for Andy to meet this boy?

She saw the white jacket shining in the darkness. The vampire stood at the bar, with Steve Rubell, ringmaster of 54, and the movie actress Isabelle Adjani. Steve, as usual, was flying, hairstyle falling apart above his bald spot. His pockets bulged with petty cash, taken from the overstuffed tills.

Steve spotted her, understood her nod of interest, and signalled her to come over.

"Penny darling," he said, "look at me. I'm like you."

He had fangs too. And red-smeared lips.

"I . . . am . . . a vampiah!"

For Steve, it was just a joke. There was a bitemark on Adjani's neck, which she dabbed with a bar napkin.

"This is just the biggest thing evah," Steve said.

"Fabulous," she agreed.

Her eyes fixed the vampire newcomer. He withstood her gaze. She judged him no longer a new-born but not yet an elder. He was definitely of the Dracula line.

"Introduce me," she demanded, delicately.

Steve's red eyes focused.

"Andy is interested?"

Penny nodded. Whatever was swarming in his brain, Steve was sharp.

"Penelope, this is Johnny Pop. He's from Transylvania."

"I am an American, now," he said, with just a hint of accent.

"Johnny, my boy, this is the witch Penny Churchward."

Penny extended her knuckles to be kissed. Johnny Pop took her fingers and bowed slightly, an old world habit.

"You cut quite a figure," she said.

"You are an elder?"

"Good grief, no. I'm from the class of '88. One of the few survivors."

"My compliments."

He let her hand go. He had a tall drink on the bar, blood concentrate. He would need to get his blood count up, to judge by all his fluttering get.

Some fellow rose off the dance floor on ungainly, short-lived leather wings. He made it a few feet into the air, flapping furiously. Then, there was a ripping and he collapsed onto the rest of the crowd, yelling and bleeding.

Johnny smiled and raised his glass to her.

She would have to think about this development.

"My friend Andy would like to meet you, Johnny."

Steve was delighted, and slapped Johnny on the arm.

"Andy Warhol is the Vampire Queen of New York City," he said. "You have arrived, my deah!"

Johnny wasn't impressed. Or was trying hard not to be.

Politely, he said "Miss Churchward, I should like to meet your friend Mr. Warhol."

So, this ash-faced creature was coven master of New York. Johnny had seen Andy Warhol before, here and at the Mudd Club, and knew who he was, the man who painted soup cans and made the dirty movies. He hadn't known Warhol was a vampire, but now it was pointed out, it seemed obvious. What else could such a person be?

Warhol was not an elder but he was unreadable, beyond Johnny's experience. He would have to be careful, to pay proper homage to this master. It would not do to excite the enmity of the city's few other vampires; at least, not yet. Warhol's woman — consort? mistress? slave? — was intriguing, too. She danced on the edge of hostility, radiating prickly suspicion, but he had a hook of a kind in her too. Born to follow, she would trot after him as faithfully as she followed her artist master. He had met her kind before, stranded out of their time, trying to make a way in the world rather than reshape it to suit themselves. It would not do to underestimate her.

"Gee," Warhol said, "you must come to the Factory. There are things you could do."

Johnny didn't doubt it.

Steve made a sign and a photographer appeared. Johnny noticed Penelope edging out of shot just before the flash went off. Andy, Steve and Johnny were caught in the bleached corner. Steve, grinning with his fresh teeth.

"Say, Johnny," Steve said, "we will show up, won't we? I mean, I've still got my image."

Johnny shrugged. He had no idea whether the drac suck Steve had taken earlier would affect his reflection. That had as much to do with Nancy as him.

"Wait and see what develops," Johnny said.

"If that's the way it has to be, that's the way it is."

It didn't do to think too hard about what Americans said.

"Gee," mused Andy, "that's, uh, fa-antastic, that's a thought."

Within months, Johnny would rule this city.

From 1964 to 1968, Andy abandoned painting — if silkscreen can be called that — in favor of film. Some have suggested that works like *Couch* (1964) or *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys* (1965) are just portraits that move; certainly, more people caught them as an ambient backdrop to the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* than endured them reverentially at the Co-Op. Movies, not films, they were supposed to play to audiences too busy dancing or speeding or

covering their bleeding ears to pay the sort of attention required by Hollywood narrative.

By now, "Andy's vampire movies" had gone beyond standing joke — eight hours of the Empire State Building!! — and were taken seriously by genuine underground filmmakers like Stan Brakhage (who considered silent speed the stroke of genius). The Filmmakers' Co-Op regularly scheduled "Warhol Festivals" and word got out that the films were, well, dirty, which — of course — pulled in audiences. Suck-Job was about as close to vampirism as even the most extreme New York audiences had seen, even if it was silent, black-and-white, and slightly out of focus. Isabelle Dufresne, later the supervamp Ultra Violet, saw Suck-Job projected on a sheet at the Factory, and understood at once the strategy of incompleteness, whereby the meat of the matter was beyond the frame. In *Dead for Fifteen Minutes: My Years With Andy Warhol* (1988), Ultra Violet writes: "Although my eyes remain focused on the face of the young man receiving the suck job, my attention is constantly drawn to the empty space on the sheet below the screen. I am being visually assaulted and insulted at the same time. It is unnerving: I want to get up and seize the camera and focus it downward to capture the action. But I can't, and that's where the frustration comes in."

Ultra Violet also reports that, during that screening, some Factory hangers-on present relieved the frustration by nibbling each other, drawing squeals of pain and streaks of quick-drying blood. Such tentative pretend-vampirism was common among the Mole People, the nighttime characters Andy gathered to help make "his" movies and turned into his private coven in the back room of Max's Kansas City. With no genuine undead available, Andy made do with self-made supervamps, who showed up on film if not at rehearsals: Pope Ondine (who drew real blood), Brigid (Berlin) Polk, Baby Jane Hudson (who had once been a real-live movie star), Malanga's muse Mary Woronov, Carmillo Karnstein, Ingrid Supervamp. Brian Stableford would later coin the term "lifestyle fantasists" for these people and their modern avatars, the goth murgatroyds. Like Andy, the Mole People already lived like vampires: shunning daylight, speeding all night, filing their teeth, developing pasty complexions, sampling each other's drug-laced blood.

The butcher's bill came in early. The dancer Freddie Herko, who appears in *Kiss* (1963) and *Dance Movie/Roller Skates* (1963), read in Montague Summers' *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin* (1928) that those who committed suicide spectacularly enough "without fear" were reborn as "powerful vampires." Just before Halloween 1964, Herko danced across a friend's Greenwich Village apartment, trailing a ten-foot Batman/Dracula cloak, and sailed elegantly out of a fifth-floor window. Having skim-read the Summers and not bothered to form a Pact with the Devil, an essential part of the immortality-through-self-slaughter gambit, Herko did not rise from the dead. When he heard of Herko's defenestration, Warhol was almost irritated. "Gee," he sighed, "why didn't he tell me he was going to do it? We could have gone down there and filmed it." Herko was just the first of the Warhol death cluster, his personal disaster series: Edie Sedgwick (1971), Tiger Morse (1972), Andrea Feldman (1972), Candy Darling (1974), Eric Emerson (1975), Gregory Battcock (1980),

Tom Baker (1982), Jackie Curtis (1985), Valerie Solanas (1989), Ondine (1989). And Warhol himself (1968?). Only Andy made it back, of course. He had to be the vampire they all would have been, even Valerie.

In 1965, the term "vampire movies" took on another layer of meaning at the Factory, with the arrivals of Ronald Tavel, a playwright hired to contribute situations (if not scripts) for the films, and Edie Sedgwick, a blueblood blonde who was, in many ways, Andy's ultimate supervamp. Movies like *The Death of Radu the Handsome* (1965), with Ondine as Vlad the Impaler's gay brother, and *Poor Little Dead Girl* (1965), with Edie as the Vampire Claudia, run seventy minutes (two uninterrupted thirty-five minute takes, the length of a film magazine, stuck together), have intermittently audible soundtracks and mimic Hollywood to the extent of having something approaching narrative. Were it not for the incandescent personalities of the supervamps, the beautiful and the damned, these efforts would be more like "zombie movies," shambling gestures of mimesis, constantly tripping up as the immobile image (Andy had the most stoned Mole Person handle the camera) goes in and out of focus or the walk-on "victims" run out of things to do and say. Ondine, Edie and a few others understand that the films are their own shot at vampire immortality. With dimestore plastic fangs and shrouds from the dress-up chest, these living beings cavort, preserved on film while their bodies are long in the grave, flickering in undeath. For Andy, the film camera, like the silkscreen or the Polaroid, was a vampire machine, a process for turning life into frozen death, perfect and reproducible. Hurting people was always so interesting, and left the most fabulous Rorschach stain patterns on the sheets.

Edie cut her hair to match Andy's wigs and took to wearing imitations of his outfits, especially for photographs and openings. They looked like asexual twins or clones, but were really trying to model themselves on that most terrifying denizen of the world of darkness, the old vampire couple. R. D. Laing's study *Helga and Heinrich* suggests that, after centuries together, vampire couples mingle identities, sharing a consciousness between two frail-seeming bodies, finishing each other's sentences as the mind flickers between two skulls, moving in on their victims in an instinctive pincer movement. If one partner is destroyed, the other rots in sympathy. Edie would probably have gone that far — she did eventually commit suicide — but Andy was too self-contained to commit anything or commit to anything. He saw her as the mirror he didn't like to look in — his reflection reminded him that he was alive, after all — and would often play the mimic game, patterned after Harpo Marx, with her, triumphantly squirting milk from his mouth or producing a walnut from a fist to show he was the original and she the copy. When he said he wanted everyone to be alike, he was expressing a solipsist not an egalitarian ideal: everyone was to be like him, but he was still to be the mold.

— Conklin, *ibid.*

He fed often now, less for sustenance than for business. This one, seized just before sunrise, was the last of three taken throughout a single April night. He had waylaid the Greek girl, a seamstress in the garment district, on her way to a long day's work. She was too terrified to make a sound as Johnny ripped into her throat. Blood poured into his gaping mouth, and he swallowed. He fed his lust, his need. It wasn't just blood, it was money.

The girl, dragged off the street into an alley, had huge, startled eyes. Her ghost was in him as he bled her. She was called Thana, Death. The name stuck in his craw, clogging the lizard stem of his brain that always came alive as he fed. She should have been called Zoë, Life. Was something wrong with her blood? She had no drugs, no disease, no madness. She started to fight him, mentally. The girl knew about her ghost, could struggle with him on a plane beyond the physical. Her unexpected skill shocked him.

He broke the bloody communion and dropped her onto some cardboard boxes. He was exhilarated and terrified. Thana's ghost snapped out of his mind and fell back into her. She sobbed soundlessly, mouth agape.

"Death," he said, exorcising her.

Her blood made him full to the point of bursting. The swollen veins around his mouth and neck throbbed like painful erections. Just after a big feed, he was unattractively jowly, turgid sacs under his jawline, purplish flush to his cheeks and chest. He couldn't completely close his mouth, crowded as it was with blocky, jagged fangs.

He thought about wasting Thana, fulfilling the prophecy of her name.

No. He must not kill while feeding. Johnny was taking more victims but drinking less from each, holding back from killing. If people had to be killed, he'd do it without taking blood, much as it went against the Father's warrior instinct that subjugation of the vanquished should be commemorated at least by a mouthful of hot blood. This was America and things were different.

Who'd have thought there'd be such a fuss about Nancy and Sid? He was surprised by the extensive news coverage of another drab death at the Chelsea. Sid, a slave who could never finger Johnny without burning out his brain completely, was charged with murder. Out on bail, he was remanded back to jail for bottling Patti Smith's brother. On Riker's Island, he found out "punk" had another meaning in prison. Kicked loose again, he had turned up dead of an overdose, with a suntan that struck witnesses as being unusual for February. It was either down to the political situation in Iran or Johnny's own enterprise: in the weeks Sid was locked up and kicking, heroin had become infinitely purer, perhaps thanks to Persians getting their money out in drugs, perhaps dealers competing with drac. Because Sid was well-known, the ragged end of his life was picked apart by a continuing police investigation. Loose ends could turn up; someone like Rockets Redglare, who had dealt in Room 100, might remember seeing Sid and Nancy with a vampire on the night of the killing. Johnny had no idea a singer who couldn't sing would be so famous. Even Andy was impressed by the headlines, and wondered whether he should do a Sid picture to catch the moment.

He knelt by Thana, holding her scarf to her throat wound. He took her hand and put it up to the makeshift dressing, indicating where she should press. In her hating eyes, he had no reflection. To her, he was nothing. Fine.

Johnny left the girl and looked for a cab.

He had a penthouse apartment now, rent paid in cash every month, at the Bramford, a Victorian brownstone of some reputation. A good address was important. He needed somewhere to keep his clothes, and a coffin lined with Transylvanian dirt. At heart, Johnny was a traditionalist. Andy was the same, prizing American antique furniture — American antique, hah! — and art deco bric-a-brac, filling his town house with the prizes of the past while throwing out the art of the future in his Factory.

Johnny had over \$11,500,000 in several accounts, and cash stashes in safe deposit boxes all over the city. He intended to pay income taxes on some of it, quite soon. In a moment of candor, he had discussed his business with the Churchward woman. She was the only vampire of real experience in the city, besides Andy — who clammed up shut when asked about feeding, though Johnny knew he took nips from all his assistants. Johnny and Penelope couldn't decide whether what he did was against the law or not, but judged it best to keep quiet. Selling his own blood was a legal gray area, but assault and murder weren't. He was reluctant to relinquish those tools entirely, but accepted that standards of behavior in America were ostensibly different from those of his European backwater homeland. It wasn't that assault and murder were less common here than in Romania, but the authorities made more noise about it.

Those like Thana, left alive after his caresses, might argue that his powers of fascination constituted coercion, that he had perpetrated upon them a form of rape or robbery. Statutes against organ-snatching might even be applicable. Penelope said that soon it wouldn't be safe to pick up a Mr. Goodbar and suck him silly without getting a signature on a consent form.

The first real attempt to destroy him had come not from the church or the law, but from criminals. He was cutting into their smack and coke action. A couple of oddly-dressed black men came for him with silver razors. The iron of the Father rose up within him and he killed them both, shredding their clothes and faces to make a point. He found out their names from the Daily Bugle, Youngblood Priest and Tommy Gibbs. He wondered if the black men he had seen outside the Chelsea on the night he met Andy were in with that Harlem crowd. He had glimpsed them again, several times, singly and as a pair. They were virtual twins, though one was further into the dark than the other. The knifeman's partner packed a crossbow under his coat. They would not be so easy to face down.

The Mott Street Triads had found a vampire of their own — one of those hopping Mandarins, bound by prayers pasted to his forehead — and tried feeding and milking him, cooking their own drac. Markedly inferior, their product was exhausted within a month, an entire body gone to dust and sold on the street. Soon, such nosferatu slaves, captured and used up fast, would be common. Other vampires would sell their own drac, in America or their homelands. If the craze could take off in New York, then it would eventually trickle down to everywhere.

Johnny had repeatedly turned down offers of "partnership" from the established suppliers of drugs. A cash payment of \$6,000,000 to the Prizzi Family eliminated most of the hassle his people had been getting on the street. The Harlem rogues were off his case. He could pass for Italian, which meant he was to be respected for the moment. Mafia elders like Corrado Prizzi and Michael Corleone were men of rough honor; younger

wiseguys like John Gotti and Frank White, on the rise even as the dons were fading, were of a different stripe. Gotti, or someone like him, would eventually move into drac. By then, Johnny intended to be retired and in another city.

The cops were interested. He had spotted them at once, casually loitering around crime scenes, chatting with dazed witnesses, giving penetrating stares. He had them marked down: the bogus hippie with the woolly vest, the completely bald man with the good suit, the maniac driver in the battered porkpie hat. Like the Father, he knew when to be careful, when to be daring. The police meant nothing in this land. They didn't even have silver bullets, like Securitate in the Old Country.

His own children — the dhampires — were busy. With his blood in them, they changed for a while. The first few times, they just relished the new senses, the feel of fangs in their mouths, the quickening of reflexes. Then, red thirst pricked. They needed to assuage it, before the suck wore off.

Apparently, the biting had started in the semi-underground gay clubs, among the leather-and-chains community. Johnny guessed one of the Studio 54 bouncers was the fountainhead. Both Burns and Stu were denizens of those cruising places. Within a few months, the biting had got out of hand. Every week, there were deaths, as dhampires lost control during the red rush, took too much from their lovers of the moment. The money, however, kept coming in.

In the lobby, already brightening with dawnlight, an unnerving twelve-year-old clacked together two pink perspex eggs on a string. Johnny understood he was trying to get into the Guinness Book of Records. The child was a holy terror, allowed to run loose by his indulgent parents and their adoring circle. More than one resident of the Bramford had expressed a desire to be around when little Adrian Woodhouse "got his come-uppance," but Johnny knew it would not do to cross the boy. If you intend to live forever, do not make enemies of children.

He hurried towards the cage elevator, intent on getting out of ear-range of the aural water torture.

"Johnny, Johnny . . ."

As he spun around, excess blood dizzied him. He felt it sloshing around inside. Everything was full: his stomach, his heart, his veins, his bladder, his lungs. It was practically backing up to his eyeballs.

The dhampire was cringing in a shrinking shadow.

"Johnny," she said, stepping into the light.

Her skin darkened and creased, but she ignored it. She had crumpled bills in her hand, dirty money. He could imagine what she had done to get it.

It was the girl he had once called Nocturna. The Virgin of 54. She wasn't fresh any more, in any way.

"Please," she begged, mouth open and raw.

"Things have changed," he said, stepping into the elevator, drawing the mesh across between them. He saw her red-rimmed eyes.

"Take it," she said, rolling the bills into tubes and shoving them through the grille. They fell at his feet.

"Talk to Rudy or Elvira," he said. "They'll fix you up with a suck."

She shook her head, desperately. Her hair was a mess, singed white in patches. She grabbed the grille, fingers sticking through like worms.

"I don't want a suck, I want you."

"You don't want me, darling. You can't afford me. Now, pull in your claws or you'll lose them."

She was crying rusty tears.

He wrenched the lever and the elevator began to rise. The girl pulled her hands free. Her face sank and disappeared. She had pestered him before. He would have to do something about her.

It wasn't that he didn't do business that way any more, but that he had to be more selective about the clientele. For the briefest of suckles from the vein, the price was now \$10,000. He was choosy about the mouths he spurted into.

Everyone else could just buy a suck.

Rudy and Elvira were waiting in the foyer of the apartment, red-eyed from the night, coming down slowly. They were dhampires themselves, of course. The Father had known the worth of warm slaves, his gypsies and madmen, and Johnny had taken some care in selecting the vassals he needed. As Johnny entered the apartment, peeling off his floor-length turquoise suede coat and tossing away his black-feathered white stetson hat, Rudy leaped up from the couch, almost to attention. Elvira, constricted inside a black sheath dress low-necked enough to show her navel, raised a welcoming eyebrow and tossed aside *The Sensuous Woman*. Rudy took his coat and hat and hung them up. Elvira rose like a snake from a basket and air-kissed his cheeks. She touched black nails to his face, feeling the bloat of the blood.

They proceeded to the dining room.

Rudy Pasko, a hustler Johnny had picked up on the A-train, dreamed of turning, becoming like his master. Jittery, nakedly ambitious, American, he would be a real monster, paying everybody back for ignoring him in life. Johnny wasn't comfortable with Rudy's focused needs, but, for the moment, he had his uses.

Elvira, this year's compleat Drac Hag, was a better bet for immortality. She knew when to run cool or hot, and took care to keep a part of herself back, even while snuffing mountains of drac and chewing on any youth who happened to be passing. She liked to snack on gay men, claiming — with her usual dreadful wordplay — that they had better taste than straights. Andy had passed her on, from the Factory.

The money was on the polished oak dining table, in attaché cases. It had already been counted, but Johnny sat down and did it again. Rudy called him "the Count," almost mockingly. The boy didn't understand; the money wasn't Johnny's until it was counted. The obsessive-compulsive thing was a trick of the Dracula bloodline. Some degenerate, mountain-dwelling distant cousins could be distracted from their prey by a handful of pumpkin seeds, unable to pass by without counting every one. That was absurd, this was important. Andy understood about money, why it was essential not for what it could buy but in itself. Numbers were beautiful.

Johnny's fingers were so sensitive that he could make the count just by riffling the bundles, by caressing the cash. He picked out the dirty bills, the torn or taped or stained notes, and tossed them to Rudy.

There was \$158,591 on the table, a fair night's takings. His personal rake would be an even \$100,000.

"Where does the ninety-one dollars come from, Rudy?"

The boy shrugged. The non-negotiable price of a suck was \$500. There shouldn't be looser change floating around.

"Boys and girls have expenses," Rudy said.

"They are not to dip into the till," Johnny said, using an expression he had recently learned. "They are to hand over the takings. If they have expenses, they must ask you to cover them. You have enough for all eventualities, have you not?"

Rudy looked at the heap of messy bills and nodded. He had to be reminded of his hook sometimes.

"Now, things must be taken care of."

Rudy followed him into the reception room. The heart of the penthouse, the reception room was windowless but with an expanse of glass ceiling. Just now, with the sun rising, the skylight was curtained by a rolling metal blind drawn by a hand-cranked winch.

There was no furniture, and the hardwood floor was protected by a plastic sheet. It was Rudy's duty to get the room ready for Johnny by dawn. He had laid out shallow metal trays in rows, like seed-beds in a nursery.

Johnny undid his fly and carefully pissed blood onto the first tray. The pool spread, until it lapped against the sides. He paused his flow, and proceeded to the next tray, and the next. In all, he filled thirty-seven trays to a depth of about a quarter of an inch. He lost his bloat, face smoothing and tightening, clothes hanging properly again.

Johnny watched from the doorway as Rudy worked the winch, rolling the blind. Rays of light speared down through the glass ceiling, falling heavily on the trays. Morning sun was the best, the purest. The trays smoked slightly, like vats of tomato soup on griddles. There was a smell he found offensive, but which the warm — even dhampires — could not distinguish. Like an elder exposed to merciless daylight, the blood was turning to granulated material. Within a few hours, it would all be red dust, like the sands of Mars. Drac.

In the afternoon, as he slept in his white satin-lined coffin, a troop of good Catholic boys whose fear of Johnny was stronger than the bloodhooks in their brains came to the apartment and, under Elvira's supervision, worked on the trays, scooping up and measuring out the powdered blood into foil twists ("sucks" or "jabs") that retailed for \$500 each. After sunset, the boys (and a few girls) took care of the distribution, spreading out to the clubs and parties and street corners and park nooks where the dhampires hung out.

Known on the street as drac or bat's blood, the powder could be snuffed, swallowed, smoked or heated to liquid and injected. With a fresh user, the effect lasted the hours of the night and was burned out of the system at sunrise. After a few weeks, the customer was properly hooked, a dhampire, and needed three or four sucks a night to keep sharp. No one knew about long-term effects yet, though serious dhampires like Nocturna were prone to severe sunburn and even showed signs of being susceptible to spontaneous combustion. Besides a red thirst for a gulp or two of blood, the dhampire also had a need, of course, to raise cash to feed the habit. Johnny didn't care much about that side of the business, but the Daily Bugle had run editorials about the rise in mugging, small burglary, car crime and other petty fund-raising activities.

Thus far, Johnny was sole supplier of the quality stuff. During their short-lived venture, the Triads had cut their dwindling drac with cayenne pepper, tomato paste and powdered catshit. The Good Catholics were all dhampires themselves, though he kicked them out and cut them off if they

exceeded their prescribed dosage — which kept them scrupulously honest about cash. His major expenses were kickbacks to the Families, club owners, bouncers, street cops and other mildly interested parties. Johnny Pop would be out of the business soon. He was greedy for more than money. Andy had impressed on him the importance of being famous.

Warhol and Tavel made *Veneer* (1965), the first film version of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). In *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films* (1973), Stephen Koch reports: "Warhol handed Tavel a copy of the novel with the remark that it might be easier to compose a scenario based on fiction than one spun out of pure fantasy. He had acquired the rights to the Stoker book for \$3,000, he said; it ought to make a good movie. And so it did. It's not hard to guess why Warhol was impressed by *Dracula*. (I should mention in passing that, contrary to the myth he propagates, Warhol is quite widely read.) The book is filled with the sexuality of violence; it features a tough, erotic vampire dandy joyously dominating a gang of freaks; its theme is humiliation within a world that is simultaneously sordid and unreal; it is a history which at once did and did not happen, a purposeful lie. Finally, there is the question of class . . . I think Warhol participates very deeply in America's best-kept secret — the painful, deeply-denied intensity with which we experience our class structure. We should not forget that we are speaking of the son of semiliterate immigrants, whose father was a steelworker in Pittsburgh. Within the terms of his own intensely specialized mentality, Warhol has lived through American class humiliation and American poverty. And *Dracula*, although British, is very much about the sexuality of social class as it merges with spiritual domination."

Casting Edie as an ephobic silver-haired *Dracula* (Drella, indeed), Gerard Malanga as a whip-wielding but humiliated Harker and Ondine as a sly Van Helsing, Warhol populated the Factory's Transylvania and Carfax Abbey (the same "set," black sheets hung with silver cobwebs) with lost souls. Well before Francis Ford Coppola, Warhol saw that the problems in filming the novel could be sidestepped by force of will. Indeed, he approached the enterprise with a deliberate diffidence that all but ensured this would not be a "proper" film. Ronnie Tavel at least read half the book before getting bored and typing out a script in his usual three days. Since shooting consisted of a complete run-through of the script as a performance, with breaks only when the magazine ran out, Tavel considered that there ought to be actual rehearsals and that the actors should stoop to learning their lines. Too fearful of confrontation to disagree, Warhol simply sabotaged the rehearsals Tavel organised and even the shooting of the film by inviting the press and various parasites to the Factory to observe and interfere, and sending Malanga off on trivial errands or keeping him up until dawn at parties to prevent him from even reading the script (as in the book, Harker has the most to say). Koch, again: "The sense that making a film was work — that it should involve the concentrated attention of work — was utterly banished, and on shooting day the Factory merely played host to another 'Scene,' another party." Stoker's intricate plot is reduced to situations. Harker, in black

leather pants and Victorian deerstalker, visits Castle Dracula, carrying a crucifix loaned to the production by Andy's mother, and is entertained, seduced and assaulted by the Count (Edie's enormous fangs keep slipping out of her mouth) and his three gesticulating vampire brides (Marie Mencken, Carmillo Karnstein, International Velvet). Later, in Carfax Abbey, Harker — roped to the Factory Couch — watches as Dracula fascinates and vampirizes Mina (Mary Woronov) in a tango that climaxes with Mina drinking Campbell's tomato soup from a can Dracula has opened with a thumb-talon and which he declares is his vampire blood. Van Helsing appears, with his fearless vampire hunters — Lord Godalming (Chuck Wein), Quincey Morris (Joe Dallesandro), Dr. Seward (Paul America) — dragged by Renfield (a young, ravaged Lou Reed), who is leashed like a bloodhound.

Crucifixes, stakes, whips and communion wafers are tossed back and forth in a bit of knockabout that makes some of the cast giggle uncontrollably and drives others — notably, the still-tethered Malanga — to furious distraction. In Tavel's script, as in Stoker's novel, Van Helsing's band corner and destroy Dracula, who was to be spray-painted silver and suffocate, but Ondine is distracted when a girl who happens to be on the couch for no real reason — she seems to be a set-visitor straying into frame — calls him a "phony," and Ondine ignores the King Vampire to lash out at this impertinent chit, going for her face with his false fingernails. Ondine's methadrine rant rises in a crescendo, peaks and fades: "May God forgive you, you're a phony, Little Miss Phony, you're a disgusting phony, get off this set, you're a disgrace to humanity, you're a disgrace to yourself, you're a loathsome fool, your husband's a loathsome fool . . . I'm sorry, I just can't go on, this is just too much, I don't want to go on." The camera, handled this time by Bud Wirschafter, tries to follow the unexpected action, and for a few brief frames caught the ghost-white face of Andy himself hanging shocked in the gloom; the removal of this slip is perhaps the only proper edit in any Warhol film made before the arrival of Paul Morrissey. Van Helsing, inconsolable, stands alone and the film runs on and on, as he reassembles himself.

Edie, fangs spat out but still regally and perfectly Dracula, gets Wirschafter's attention by tossing the soup can at him, splattering the lens, and commands the frame, hands on hips, for a few seconds before the film runs out. "I am Dracula," she insists, the only line of dialogue taken directly (if unintentionally) from the book. "I am Dracula," she repeats, sure of herself for the last time in her life. Stoker had intended to inflict upon Dracula the defeat he eluded in reality, but Edie has dragged Warhol's Dracula movie back to the truth. In the Factory, Drella bests the squabbling Vampire Slayers and reigns forever.

— Conklin, *ibid.*

Johnny Pop was certainly the social success of the summer. He had just showed up at Trader Vic's with Margaret Trudeau on his elegant arm. Penelope was not surprised, and Andy was silently ecstatic. An inveterate

collector of people, he delighted in the idea of the Transylvanian hustler and the Prime Minister's ex getting together. Margaux Hemingway would be furious; she had confided in Andy and Penny that she thought it was serious with Johnny. Penny could have told her what was serious with Johnny, but she didn't think any warm woman would understand.

From across the room, as everyone turned to look at the couple, Penny observed Johnny, realizing again why no one else saw him as she did. He had Olde Worlde charm by the bucketful, and that thirsty edge that had made him seem a rough beast was gone. His hair was an improbable construction, teased and puffed every which way, and his lips were a girl's. But his eyes were Dracula's. It had taken her a while to notice, for she had really known il principe only after his fire had dwindled.

This was what the young Dracula, freshly nosferatu, must have been like. This was the bat-cloaked creature of velvet night who with sheer smoking magnetism had overwhelmed flighty Lucy, virtuous Mina and stately Victoria, who had bested Van Helsing and stolen an empire. He didn't dance so often now that he had the city's attention, but all his moves were like dancing, his gestures so considered, his looks so perfect.

He had told several versions of the story, but always insisted he was Dracula's get, perhaps the last to be turned personally by the King Vampire in his five-hundred-year reign. Johnny didn't like to give dates, but Penny put his conversion at somewhere before the Last War. Who he had been when warm was another matter. He claimed to be a lineal descendant as well as get, the last modern son of some by-blow of the Impaler, which was why the dying bloodline had fired in him, making him the true Son of Dracula. She could almost believe it. Though he was proud to name his father-in-darkness, he didn't like to talk about the Old Country and what had brought him to America. There were stories there, she would wager. Eventually, it would all come out. He had probably drained a commissar's daughter and got out one step ahead of red vampire killers.

There was trouble in the Carpathians now. The Transylvania Movement, wanting to claim Dracula's ancient fiefdom as a homeland for all the displaced vampires of the world, were in open conflict with Ceausescu's army. The only thing Johnny had said about that mess was that he would prefer to be in America than Romania. After all, the modern history of vampirism — so despised by the Transylvanians — had begun when Dracula left his homelands for what was in 1885 the most exciting, modern city in the world. She conceded the point: Johnny Pop was displaying the real Dracula spirit, not TM reactionaries like Baron Meinster and Anton Crainic who wanted to retreat to their castles and pretend it was still the middle ages.

Andy got fidgety as Johnny worked the room, greeting poor Truman Capote or venerable Paulette Goddard, sharp Ivan Boesky or needy Liza Minnelli. He was deliberately delaying his inevitable path to Andy's table. It was like a Renaissance court, Penny realized. Eternal shifts of power and privilege, of favor and slight. Three months ago, Johnny had needed to be in with Andy; now, Johnny had risen to such a position that he could afford to hold himself apart, to declare independence. She had never seen Andy on the hook this badly, and was willing to admit she took some delight in it. At last, the master was mastered.

Eventually, Johnny arrived and displayed his prize.

Penny shook Mrs. Trudeau's hand and felt the chill coming from her. Her scarlet choker didn't quite match her crimson evening dress. Penny could

smell the musk of her scabs.

Johnny was drinking well, these nights.

Andy and Johnny sat together, close. Neither had anything interesting to say, which was perhaps why they needed so many people around them. Mrs. Trudeau frowned, showing her own streak of jealousy. Penny wouldn't be able to explain to her what Andy and Johnny had, why everyone else was superfluous when they were together. Despite the fluctuations in their relationship, they were one being with two bodies. Without saying much, Johnny made Andy choke with laughter he could never let out. There was a reddish flush to Andy's albino face.

"Don't mind them," Penny told Mrs. Trudeau. "They're bats."

"I don't suppose this'd do anything for you," said the girl from Star Wars whose real name Penny had forgotten, cutting a line of red powder on the coffee table with a silver razor blade.

Penny shrugged.

Vampires did bite each other. If one were wounded almost to death, an infusion of another's nosferatu blood could have restorative powers. Blood would be offered by an inferior undead to a coven master to demonstrate loyalty. Penny had no idea what, if any, effect drac would have on her and wasn't especially keen on finding out. The scene was pretty much a bore. Princess Leia was evidently a practiced dhampire. She snorted through a tubed \$100 bill and held her head back. Her eyes reddened and her teeth grew points.

"Arm wrestle?" she asked.

Penny wasn't interested. Dhampires all had this rush of vampire power but no real idea of what to do with it. Except nibble. They didn't even feed properly.

Most of the people at this party were drac addicts. They went for the whole bit, black capes and fingerless black widow web gloves, Victorian cameos at the throat, lots of velvet and leather, puffy minidresses over thigh-boots.

Half this lot had draced themselves up completely for a midnight screening of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* at the Waverly, and were just coming down, which meant they were going around the room, pestering anyone they thought might be holding out on a stash, desperate to get back up there. There was a miasma of free-floating paranoia, which Penny couldn't keep out of her head.

"Wait till this gets to the Coast," said Princess Leia. "It'll be monstrous."

Penny had to agree.

She had lost Andy and Johnny at CBGB's, and fallen in with this crowd. The penthouse apartment apparently belonged to some political bigwig she had never heard of, Hal Philip Walker, but he was out of town and Brooke Hayward was staying here with Dennis Hopper. Penny had the idea that Johnny knew Hopper from some foreign debauch, and wanted to avoid him — which, if true, was unusual.

She was welcome here, she realized, because she was a vampire.

It hit her that if the drac ran out, there was a direct source in the room. She was stronger than any warm person, but it was a long time since she had fought anyone. The sheer press of dhampires would tell. They could hold her down and cut her open, then suck her dry, leaving her like crushed orange pulp. For the first time since turning, she understood the

fear the warm had of her kind. Johnny had changed things permanently. Princess Leia, fanged and clawed, eyed her neck slyly, and reached out to touch her.

"Excuse me," said Penny, slipping away.

Voices burbled in her mind. She was on a wavelength with all these dhampires, who didn't know how to communicate. It was just background chatter, amplified to skull-cracking levels.

In the bedroom where she had left her coat, a Playmate of the Month and some rock 'n' roll guy were messily performing dhampire 69, gulping from wounds in each other's wrists. She had fed earlier, and the blood did nothing for her.

A Broadway director tried to talk to her.

Yes, she had seen Pacific Overtures. No, she didn't want to invest in Sweeney Todd.

Where had anybody got the idea that she was rich?

That fat Albanian from Animal House, fangs like sharpened cashew nuts, claimed newfound vampire skills had helped him solve Rubik's cube. He wore a black Inverness cape over baggy Y-fronts. His eyes flashed red and gold like a cat's in headlights.

Penny had a headache.

She took the elevator down to the street.

While looking for a cab, she was accosted by some dreadful drac hag. It was the girl Johnny called Nocturna, now a snowy-haired fright with yellow eyes and rotten teeth.

The creature pressed money on her, a crumpled mess of notes.

"Just a suck, precious," she begged.

Penny was sickened.

The money fell from the dhampire's hands, and was swept into the gutter.

"I think you'd better go home, dear," advised Penny.

"Just a suck."

Nocturna laid a hand on her shoulder, surprisingly strong. She retained some nosferatu attributes.

"Johnny still loves me," she said, "but he has business to take care of.

He can't fit me in, you see. But I need a suck, just a little kiss, nothing serious."

Penny took Nocturna's wrist but couldn't break the hold.

The dhampire's eyes were yolk yellow, with shots of blood. Her breath was foul. Her clothes, once fashionable, were ragged and gamey.

Penny glanced up and down the street. She could use a cop, or Spider-Man.

People were passing, but in the distance. No one noticed this little scene.

Nocturna brought out something from her reticule. A stanley knife. Penny felt a cold chill as the blade touched her cheek, then a venomous sting.

The tool was silvered. She gasped in pain, and the dhampire stuck her mouth over the cut.

Penny struggled, but the dhampire was suddenly strong, juiced up by pure drac. She would make more cuts and take more sucks.

"You're his friend," Nocturna said, lips red. "He won't mind. I'm not being unfaithful."

Penny supposed she deserved this.

But, as the red rush dazed Nocturna, Penny broke free of the dhampire. She dabbed her cheek. Because of the silver, the cut would stay open, perhaps

even leave a scar. Penny had too many of those, but this one would be where it showed.

There were people nearby, watching. Penny saw their red eyes. More dhampires, out for drac, out for her blood. She backed towards the lobby, cursing Johnny Pop.

Nocturna staggered after her.

A taxi cab stormed down the street, scattering dhampires. Penny stuck out her hand and flagged it down. Nocturna howled, and flew at her. Penny wrenched open the cab door and threw herself in. She told the driver to drive off, anywhere, fast.

Nocturna and the others hissed at the window, nails scratching the glass. The cab sped up and left them behind.

Penny was resolved. Penance was one thing, but enough was enough. She would get out of this city. The Factory could run itself. She would leave Andy to Johnny, and hope they were satisfied with each other.

"Someday a rain's gonna come," said the taxi driver. "And wash the scum off the streets."

She wished she could agree with him.

It is easy to overstate the importance of Nico to Warhol's late '60s work. She was, after all, his first "real" vampire. Croaking, German and blonde, she was the dead image of Edie, and thus of Andy. Nico Otzak, turned some time in the '50s, arrived in New York in 1965, with her doll-like get Ari, and presented her card at the Factory. She trailed the very faintest of associations with Dracula himself, having been a fringe member of that last party, in Rome 1959, which climaxed in the true death of the Vampire King. "She was mysterious and European," Andy said, abstaining from any mention of the v-word, "a real moon goddess type." Like Dracula, she gave the impression of having used up the Old World and moved on, searching for "a young country, full of blood."

In *Edie: An American Biography* (1982), Jean Stein definitively refutes the popular version, in which the naïve, warm American is supplanted by the cold, dead European. Edie Sedgwick was on the point of turning from vampire to victim before Nico's arrival; she had made the cardinal error of thinking herself indispensable, a real star, and Andy was silently irked by her increasing need for publicity as herself rather than as his mirror. She had already strayed from the Factory and towards the circle of Bob Dylan, tempted by more serious drug habits and heterosexuality. Edie was justifiably miffed that the limited financial success of the films benefited only Andy; his position was that she was rich anyway — "an heiress," one of his favorite words — and didn't need the money, though far less well-off folk did as much or more work on the films and silkscreens for similarly derisory pay. Edie's self-destruction cannot be laid entirely on Andy and Nico — the Dylan crowd hardly helped, moving her up from amphetamines to heroin — but it is undeniably true that without Warhol, Edie would never have become, in the English expression, "dead famous."

With Nico, Andy finally had his vampire. At the back of their association must have been the possibility — the promise? — that she would turn him, but for the moment, Andy held back. To become someone's get would have displaced him from the center of his life,

and that was insupportable. When he turned, a circumstance that remains mysterious, he would do so through anonymous blood donation, making himself — as usual — his own get, his own creature. Besides, no one could seriously want Nico for a mother-in-darkness; for the rest of her nights, she drew blood from Ari, her own get, and this vampire incest contributed to the rot that would destroy them both. Andy was especially fascinated by Nico's relationship with mirrors and film. She was one of those vampires who have no reflection, though he did his best to turn her into a creature who was all reflection with no self. He had her sing "I'll Be Your Mirror," for instance. "High Ashbury," the oddest segment of *Twenty-Four Hour Movie* (1966), places Ondine and Ultra Violet either side of an absence, engaged in conversation with what seems to be a disembodied voice. There are signs of Nico's physical presence during the shoot: the displacement of cushions, a cigarette that darts like a hovering dragonfly, a puff of smoke outlining an esophagus. But the vampire woman just isn't there. That may be the point. Andy took photographs of silver-foiled walls and untenanted chairs and passed them off as portraits of Nico. He even silkscreened an empty coffin for an album cover.

Having found his vampire muse, Andy had to do something with her, so he stuck her together with the Velvet Underground — a band who certainly weren't that interested in having a girl singer who drank human blood — as part of the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, the club events he staged at the Dom on St. Mark's Place in 1966. Amid so much black leather, he dressed Nico in bone-white and put an angelic spotlight on her, especially when she wasn't singing. Lou Reed bought a crucifix, and started looking for a way out. The success of the EPI may well have been partially down to a wide cross-section of New Yorkers who were intrigued by Nico; most Americans in 1966 had never been in a room with a vampire, a real vampire. Andy knew that and made sure that, no matter how conveniently dark the rest of the packed club was, Nico was always visible, always the red-eyed wraith murmuring her way through "Femme Fatale" without taking a breath. That song, of course, is a promise and a threat: "think of her at nights, feel the way she bites . . ."

As the Velvets performed, Warhol hid in the rafters like the Phantom of the Opera, working the lights and the projectors, cranking up the sound. Like Ulysses, he filled his ears with wax to get through the night. Behind the band, he screened his films. Often, as his real vampire paraded herself, he would show *Veneer*, trying to project Edie onto Nico as he projected himself upon them both.

Everybody agrees: between 1966 and 1968, Andy Warhol was a monster.

— Conklin, *ibid.*

Johnny was one of the privileged few allowed into Andy's town house to witness the artist's levée. At high summer, it was impractical to wait for sundown before venturing out — so Johnny had to be ferried the short distance from the Bramford to East 66th Street in a sleek limo with Polaroid windows and hustle under a parasol up to the door of Number 57. With the Churchward woman's desertion, there was a blip in the smooth

running of Andy's social life and he was casting around for a replacement Girl of the Year. Johnny was wary of being impressed into taking on too many of Penny Penitent's duties. There were already so many demands on his time, especially with that mad Bella Abzug whipping the NYPD into a frenzy about "the drac problem." It wasn't even illegal yet, but his dealers were roused every night, and his payoffs to the Families and the cops ratcheted up every week, which pushed him to raise the price of a suck, which meant the dhamps had to peddle more ass or bust more head to scrape together the cash they needed. The papers were full of vampire murders, and real vampires weren't even suspects.

The two-story lobby of Number 57 was dominated by imperial busts — Napoleon, Caesar, Dracula — and still-packed crates of sculptures and paintings. Things were everywhere, collected but uncatalogued, most still in the original wrapping.

Johnny sat on an upholstered chaise longue and leafed through a male pornographic magazine that was on top of a pile of periodicals that stretched from The New York Review of Books to The Fantastic Four. He heard Andy moving about upstairs, and glanced at the top of the wide staircase. Andy made an entrance, a skull-faced spook-mask atop a floor-length red velvet dressing gown which dragged behind him as he descended, like Scarlett O'Hara's train.

In this small, private moment — with no one else around to see — Andy allowed himself to smile, a terminally-ill little boy indulging his love of dressing-up. It wasn't just that Andy was a poseur, but that he let everyone know it and still found the reality in the fakery, making the posing the point. When Andy pretended, he just showed up the half-hearted way everyone else did the same thing. In the months he had been in New York, Johnny had learned that being an American was just like being a vampire, to feed off the dead and to go on and on and on, making a virtue of unoriginality, waxing a corpse-face to beauty. In a country of surfaces, no one cared about the rot that lay beneath the smile, the shine and the dollar. After the persecutions of Europe, it was an enormous relief.

Andy extended a long-nailed hand at an occasional table by the chaise longue. It was heaped with the night's invitations, more parties and openings and galas than even Andy could hit before dawn.

"Choose," he said.

Johnny took a handful of cards, and summarized them for Andy's approval or rejection. Shakespeare in the Park, Paul Toombs in Timon of Athens ("gee, misa-anthropy"). A charity ball for some new wasting disease ("gee, sa-ad"). An Anders Wolleck exhibit of metal sculptures ("gee, fa-abulous"). A premiere for the latest Steven Spielberg film, 1941 ("gee, wo-onderful"). A screening at Max's Kansas City of a work in progress by Scott and Beth B, starring Lydia Lunch and Teenage Jesus ("gee, u-underground"). A night-club act by Divine ("gee, na-aughty"). Parties by and for John Lennon, Tony Perkins ("ugh, Psycho"), Richard Hell and Tom Verlaine, Jonathan and Jennifer Hart ("ick!"), Blondie ("the cartoon character or the band?"), Malcolm McLaren ("be-est not"), David JoHansen, Edgar Allan Poe ("ne-evermore"), Frank Sinatra ("Old Hat Rat Pack Hack!").

The night had some possibilities.

Andy was in a sulk. Truman Capote, lisping through silly fangs, had

spitefully told him about an Alexander Cockburn parody, modelled on the lunch chatter of Warhol and Colacello with Imelda Marcos as transcribed in Inter/VIEW. Andy, of course, had to sit down in the middle of the party and pore through the piece. In Cockburn's version, Bob and Andy took Count Dracula to supper at Mortimer's Restaurant on the Upper East Side and prodded him with questions like "Don't you wish you'd been able to spend Christmas in Transylvania?" and "Is there still pressure on you to think of your image and act a certain way?"

Johnny understood the real reason that the supposedly unflappable artist was upset was that he had been scooped. After this, Andy wouldn't be able to run an interview with Dracula. He'd been hoping Johnny would channel the Father's ghost, as others had channelled such Inter/VIEW subjects as the Assyrian wind demon Pazuzu and Houdini. Andy didn't prize Johnny just because he was a vampire; it was important that he was of the direct Dracula line.

He didn't feel the Father with him so much, though he knew he was always there. It was as if he had absorbed the great ghost almost completely, learning the lessons of the Count, carrying on his mission on Earth. The past was fog, now. His European life and death were faint, and he told varying stories because he remembered differently each time. But in the fog stood the red-eyed, black-caped figure of Dracula, reaching out to him, reaching out through him.

Sometimes, Johnny Pop thought he was Dracula. The Churchward woman had almost believed it, once. And Andy would be so delighted if it were true. But Johnny wasn't just Dracula.

He was no longer unique. There were other vampires in the country, the city, at this party. They weren't the Olde Worlde seigneurs of the Transylvania Movement, at once arrogant and pitiful, but Americans, if not by birth then inclination. Their extravagant names had a copy-of-a-copy paleness, suggesting hissy impermanence: Sonja Blue, Satanico Pandemonium, Skeeter, Scumbalina. Metaphorical (or actual?) children-in-darkness of Andy Warhol, the first thing they did upon rising from the dead was — like an actor landing a first audition — change their names. Then, with golden drac running in their veins, they sold themselves to the dhamps, flooding to New York where the most suckheads were. In cash, they were richer than most castle-bound TM elders, but they confined in camper vans or at the Y, and wore stinking rags.

Andy snapped out of his sulk. A vampire youth who called himself Nothing paid homage to him as the Master, offering him a crisscrossed arm. Andy stroked the kid's wounds, but held back from sampling the blood.

Johnny wondered if the hook he felt was jealousy.

Johnny and Andy lolled on the backseat of the limo with the sun-roof open, playing chicken with the dawn.

The chatter of the night's parties still ran around Johnny's head, as did the semi-ghosts he had swallowed with his victims' blood. He willed a calm cloud to descend upon the clamor of voices and stilled his brain. For once, the city was quiet.

He was bloated with multiple feedings — at every party, boys and girls offered their necks to him — and Andy seemed flushed enough to suggest he had accepted a few discreet nips somewhere along the course of the night. Johnny felt lassitude growing in him, and knew that after relieving himself and letting the Good Catholics go to work, he would need to hide

in the refrigerated coffin unit that was his New York summer luxury for a full day.

The rectangle of sky above was starless pre-dawn blue-grey. Red tendrils were filtering through, reflected off the glass frontages of Madison Avenue. The almost-chill haze of four A.M. had been burned away in an instant, like an ancient elder, and it would be another murderously hot day, confining them both to their lairs for a full twelve hours. They said nothing, needed to say nothing.

Valerie Solanas was the founder and sole member of the Society for Killing All Vampires, authoress of the self-published SKAV Manifesto. In bite-sized quotes, the Manifesto is quite amusing — "enlightened vampires who wish to demonstrate solidarity with the Movement may do so by killing themselves" — but it remains a wearisome read, not least because Valerie never quite sorted out what she meant by the term "vampire." Of course, as an academic, I understand entirely the impatience she must have felt with what she considered irrelevances like agenda-setting and precise definitions of abstruse language. In the end, Valerie was a paranoid sociopath, and the vampires were her enemies, all who were out to get her, to stand in her way. At first, she didn't even mean nosferatu when she referred to vampires, but a certain type of patriarchal oppressor. At the end, she meant everyone else in the world.

She is in one of the little-known films, *I, Vampire* (1967) — mingling briefly with Tom Baker as the vampire Lord Andrew Bennett, and Ultra Violet, the wonderfully-named Bettina Coffin and a Nico-shaped patch of empty screen. She had various grudges against Andy Warhol — he had lost a playscript she sent him, he wouldn't publish her book, he didn't make her famous — but no more than any one of a dozen other Mole People. Billy Name has said that he was never sure whether he should kill himself or Andy, and kept putting off the decision. Oliver Stone's *Who Shot Andy Warhol?* is merely the culmination of thirty years of myth and fantasy. It bears repeating that the conspiracy theories Stone and others have espoused have little or no basis in fact, and Valerie Solanas acted entirely on her own, conspiring or colluding with no one. Stone's point, which is well-taken, is that in June 1968, someone had to shoot Andy Warhol; if Valerie hadn't stepped up to the firing line, anyone of a dozen others could as easily have melted down the family silver for bullets. But it was Valerie.

By 1968, the Factory had changed. It was at a new location, and Warhol had new associates — Fred Hughes, Paul Morrissey, Bob Colacello — who tried to impose a more businesslike atmosphere. The Mole People were discouraged from hanging about, and poured out their bile on Andy's intermediaries, unable to accept that they had been banished on the passive dictate of Warhol himself. Valerie turned up while Andy was in a meeting with art critic Mario Amaya and on the phone with yet another supervamp Viva, and put two bullets into him, and one incidentally into Amaya. Fred Hughes, born negotiator, apparently talked her out of killing him and she left by the freight elevator.

It was a big story for fifteen minutes, but just as Andy was declared clinically dead at Columbus Hospital news came in from

Chicago that Robert Kennedy had been assassinated. Every newspaper in America remade their front pages, bumping the artist to "and in other news . . ."
Kennedy stayed dead. Andy didn't.

— Conklin, *ibid.*

The Halloween party at 54 was desperately lavish, and Steve made him Guest of Honor, naming him the Official Specter at the Feast.

In a brief year, Johnny had become this town's favorite monster. Andy was Vampire Master of New York, but Johnny Pop was Prince of Darkness, father and furtherer of a generation of dhamps, scamps and vamps. There were songs about him ("Fame (I'm Gonna Live Forever)"), he had been in a movie (at least his smudge had) with Andy (Ulli Lommel's *Drac Queens*), he got more neck than a giraffe, and there was a great deal of interest in him from the Coast.

Cakes shaped like coffins and castles were wheeled into 54, and the Man in the Moon sign was red-eyed and fang-toothed in homage. Liberace and Elton John played duelling pianos, while the monster-disguised Village People — the Indian as the Wolf Man, the Cowboy as the Creature from the Black Lagoon, the Construction Worker as the Frankenstein Monster, the Biker as Dracula, the Cop as the Thing from Another World, the Soldier as the Hunchback of Notre Dame — belted out a cover of Bobby "Boris" Pickett's "The Monster Mash."

The day drac became a proscribed drug by act of Congress, Johnny stopped manufacturing it personally and impressed a series of down-on-their-luck nosferatu to be undead factories. The price of the product shot up again, as did the expense of paying off the cops and the mob, but his personal profits towered almost beyond his mind's capacity to count. He knew the bubble would burst soon, but was ready to diversify, to survive into another era. It would be the eighties soon. That was going to be a different time. The important thing was going to be not drac or fame or party invites, but money. Numbers would be his shield and his castle, his spells of protection, invisibility and fascination.

He didn't dance so much, now. He had made his point. But he was called onto the floor. Steve set up a chant of "Johnny Pop, Johnny Pop" that went around the crowd. Valerie Perrine and Steve Guttenberg gave him a push. Nastassja Kinski and George Burns slapped his back. Peter Bogdanovich and Dorothy Stratten kissed his cheeks. He slipped his half-caped Versace jacket off and tossed it away, cleared a space, and performed, not to impress or awe others as before, but for himself, perhaps for the last time. He had never had such a sense of his own power. He no longer heard the Father's voice, for he was the Father. All the ghosts of this city, of this virgin continent, were his to command and consume.

Here ended the American Century. Here began, again, the Anni Draculae.

Huge, lovely eyes fixed him from the crowd. A nun in full penguin suit. Red, red heart-shaped lips and ice-white polished cheeks. Her pectoral cross, stark silver against a white collar, smote him with a force that made him stagger. She wasn't a real nun, of course, just as the Village People weren't real monsters. This was a party girl, dressed up in a costume, trying to probe the outer reaches of bad taste.

She touched his mind, and an electricity sparked.

He remembered her. The girl whose name was Death, whom he had bitten and left holding a scarf to a leaking neck-wound. He had taken from her but now, he realized, she had taken from him. She was not a vampire, but he had turned her, changed her, made her a huntress.

She daintily lifted her crucifix and held it up. Her face was a gorgeous blank.

Her belief gave the symbol power and he was smitten, driven back across the flashing dance floor, between stumbling dancers. Death glided after him like a ballet dancer, instinctively avoiding people, face red and green and purple and yellow with the changing light. At the dead center of the dance floor, she held her cross up high above her head. It was reflected in the glitterball, a million shining cruciforms dancing over the crowds and the walls.

Johnny felt each reflected cross as a whiplash. He looked about for help. All his friends were here. Andy was up there on a balcony, somewhere, looking down with pride. And Steve had planned this whole evening for him. This was where his rise had truly begun, where he had sold his first suck, made his first dollars. But he was not safe here. Death had consecrated Studio 54 against him.

Other vampires in the crowd writhed in pain. Johnny saw the shredded-lace punk princess who called herself Scumbalina holding her face, smoking crosses etched on her cheeks and chin. Even the dhampires were uncomfortable, hemorrhaging from noses and mouths, spattering the floor and everyone around with their tainted blood.

Death was here for him, not the others.

He barged through the throng, and made it to the street. Dawn was not far off. Death was at his heels.

A taxi was waiting for him.

Inside the hack, he told the driver to take him to the Bramford.

He saw the nun step out of 54 as the vehicle moved off. He searched inside himself for the Father, willing the panic he had felt to subside. His flight from the party would be remembered. It did not do to show such weakness.

Something was still wrong. What was it?

The nun had shaken him. Had the girl become a real nun? Was she despatched by some Vatican bureau, to put an end to him? The church had always had its vampire killers. Or was she working with the mafia? To evict him from the business he had created, so the established crime families could claim drac fortunes for their own. Perhaps she was a minion of one of his own kind, a catspaw of the Transylvania Movement. At the moment, Baron Meinster was petitioning the U.N. for support, and TM elders considered Johnny an upstart who was bringing vampirism into disrepute by sharing it so widely.

Throughout the centuries, Dracula had faced and bested enemies almost without number. To be a visionary was always to excite the enmity of inferiors. Johnny felt the Father in him, and sat back in the cab, planning.

He needed soldiers. Vampires. Dhampires. Get. An army, to protect him.

Intelligence, to foresee new threats. He would start with Rudy and Elvira.

It was time he gave them what they wanted, and turn them. Patrick Bateman, his young investment advisor, was another strong prospect. Men like

Bateman, made vampires, would be perfect for the coming era. The Age of Money.

The taxi parked, outside the Bramford. It was full night, and a thin frost of snow lay on the sidewalks, slushing in the gutters.

Johnny got out and paid off the taxi driver.

Familiar mad eyes. This was someone else he had encountered in the past year. Travis. The man had changed: the sides of his head were shaved and a Huron ridge stood up like a thicket on top of his skull.

The cabbie got out of the taxi.

Johnny could tear this warm fool apart if he tried anything. He could not be surprised.

Travis extended his arm, as if to shake hands. Johnny looked down at Travis's hand, and suddenly there was a pistol — shot out on a spring device — in it.

"Suck on this," said Travis, jamming the gun into Johnny's stomach and pulling the trigger.

The first slug passed painlessly through him as if he were made of water. There was an icy shock, but no hurt, no damage. An old-fashioned lead bullet. Johnny laughed out loud. Travis pulled the trigger again.

This time, it was silver.

The bullet punched into his side, under his ribs, and burst through his back, tearing meat and liver. A hurricane of fire raged in the tunnel carved through him. The worst pain of his nosferatu life brought him to his knees, and he could feel the cold suddenly — his jacket was back at 54 — as the wet chill of the snow bit through his pants and at the palm of his outstretched hand.

Another silver bullet, through the head or the heart, and he would be finished.

The taxi driver stood over him. There were others, in a circle. A crowd of Fearless Vampire Killers. The silent nun. The black man with wooden knives. The black man with the crossbow. The cop who'd sworn to break the Transylvania Connection. An architect, on his own crusade to avenge a family bled dead by dhamps. The aging beatnik from the psychedelic van, with his smelly tracking dog. A red-skinned turncoat devil boy with the tail and sawn-off horns. The exterminator with the skull on his chest and a flame-thrower in his hands.

This company of stone loners was brought together by a single mission, to put an end to Johnny Pop. He had known about them all, but never guessed they might connect with each other. This city was so complicated.

The cop, Doyle, took Johnny's head and made him look at the Bramford.

Elvira was dead on the front steps, stake jutting from her cleavage, strewn limbs like the arms of a swastika. Rudy scuttled out of the shadows, avoiding Johnny's eyes. He hopped from one foot to another, a heavy briefcase in his hands. The arrow man made a dismissive gesture, and Rudy darted off, hauling what cash he could take. The Vampire Killers hadn't even needed to bribe him with their own money.

There was a huge crump, a rush of hot air, and the top floor windows all exploded in a burst of flame. Glass and burning fragments rained all around. His lair, his lieutenants, his factory, a significant amount of money, his coffin of earth. All gone in a moment.

The Vampire Killers were grimly satisfied.

Johnny saw people filling the lobby, rushing out onto the streets.

Again, he would have an audience.

The Father was strong in him, his ghost swollen, stiffening his spine, deadening his pain. His fang-teeth were three inches long, distending his jaw. All his other teeth were razor-edged lumps. Fresh rows of piranha-like fangs sprouted from buds he had never before suspected. His nails were poison daggers. His shirt tore at the back as his shoulders swelled, loosing the beginnings of black wings. His shoes burst and rips ran up the sides of his pants.

He stood up, slowly. The hole in his side was healed over, scabbed with dragon scales. A wooden knife lanced at him, and he batted it out of the air. Flame washed against his legs, melting the snow on the sidewalk, burning away his ragged clothes, hurting him not a bit.

Even the resolute Killers were given pause.

He fixed all their faces in his mind.

"Let's dance," Johnny hissed.

Now Andy was really a vampire, we would all see finally, doubters and admirers, what he had meant all along.

It has been a tenet of Western culture that a vampire cannot be an artist. For a hundred years, there has been fierce debate on the question. The general consensus on many careers is that many a poet or a painter was never the same man after death, that posthumous work was always derivative self-parody, never a true reaction to the wondrous new nightlife opened up by the turning. It is even suggested that this symptom is not a drawback of vampirism but proof of its superiority over life; vampires are too busy being to pass comment, too concerned with their interior voyages to bother issuing travel reports for the rest of the world to pore over.

The tragedies are too well known to recap in detail. Poe reborn, struggling with verses that refuse to soar; Dali, growing ever richer by forging his own work (or paying others to); Garbo, beautiful forever in the body but showing up on film as a rotting corpse; Dylan, born-again and boring as hell; de Lioncourt, embarrassing all nosferatu with his MOR goth rocker act. But Andy was the Ultimate Vampire before turning. Surely, for him, things would be different.

Alas, no.

Between his deaths, Andy worked continuously. Portraits of Queens and inverted Tijuana crucifixes. Numberless commissioned silkscreens of anyone rich enough to hire him, at \$25,000 a throw. Portraits of world-famous boxers (Muhammad Ali, Apollo Creed) and football players (O. J. Simpson, Roy Race) he had never heard of. Those embarrassingly flattering likenesses, impossible to read as irony, of the Shah, Ferdinand and Imelda, Countess Elisabeth Bathory, Victor Von Doom, Ronnie and Nancy. And he went to a lot of parties, at the White House or in the darkest dhampire clubs.

There's nothing there.

Believe me, I've looked. As an academic, I understand exactly Andy's dilemma. I too was considered a vampire long before I turned. My entire discipline is reputed to be nothing more than a canny way of feeding off the dead, prolonging a useless existence from one grant application to the next. And no one has ever criticized elder vampires for their lack of learning. To pass the centuries, one has to pick up dozens of languages and, in all probability, read every

book in your national library. We may rarely have been artists, but we have always been patrons of the arts.

Among ourselves, the search has always been on for a real vampire artist, preferably a creature turned in infancy, before any warm sensibility could be formed. I was tempted in my reassessment of Andy's lifelong dance with Dracula to put forward a thesis that he was such a discovery, that he turned not in 1968 but, say, 1938, and exposed himself by degrees to sunlight, to let him age. That would explain the skin problems. And no one has ever stepped forth to say that they turned Andy. He went into hospital a living man and came out a vampire, having been declared dead. Most commentators have suggested he was transfused with vampire blood, deliberately or by accident, but the hospital authorities strenuously insist this is not so. Sadly, it won't wash. We have to admit it; Andy's best work was done when he was alive; the rest is just the black blood of the dead.

— Conklin, *ibid.*

Johnny lay broken on the sidewalk, a snow angel with cloak-like wings of pooled, scarlet-satin blood. He was shot through with silver and wood, and smoking from a dousing in flame. He was a ghost, locked in useless, fast-spoiling meat. The Father was loosed from him, standing over his ruin, eyes dark with sorrow and shame, a pre-dawn penumbra around his shoulders.

The Vampire Killers were dead or wounded or gone. They had not bought his true death easily. They were like him in one way; they had learned the lesson of Dracula, that only a family could take him down. He had known there were hunters on his track; he should have foreseen they would band together, and taken steps to break them apart as the Father would have done, had done with his own persecutors.

With the New York sunrise, he would crumble to nothing, to a scatter of drac on the snow.

Bodies moved nearby, on hands and knees, faces to the wet stone, tongues lapping. Dhampires. Johnny would have laughed. As he died, he was being sucked up, his ghost snorted by addicts.

The Father told him to reach out, to take a hold.

He could not. He was surrendering to the cold. He was leaving the Father, and letting himself be taken by Death. She was a huge-eyed fake nun.

The Father insisted.

It wasn't just Johnny dying. He was the last link with the Father. When Johnny was gone, it would be the end of Dracula too.

Johnny's right hand twitched, fingers clacking like crab-claws. It had almost been cut through at the wrist, and even his rapid healing couldn't undo the damage.

The Father instructed.

Johnny reached out, fingers brushing a collar, sliding around a throat, thumbnail resting against a pumping jugular. He turned his head, and focused his unburst eye.

Rudy Pasko, the betrayer, the dhampire.

He would kill him and leave the world with an act of vengeance.

No, the Father told him.

Rudy's red eyes were balls of fear. He was swollen with Johnny's blood, overdosing on drac, face shifting as muscles under the skin writhed like snakes.

"Help me," Johnny said, "and I'll kill you."

Rudy had boosted a car, and gathered Johnny together to pour him into the passenger seat. The dhampire was on a major drac trip, and saw the light at the end of his tunnel. If he were to be bitten by Johnny in his current state, he would die, would turn, would be a dhampire no longer. Like all the dhamps, his dearest wish was to be more, to be a full vampire. It wasn't as easy as some thought. They had to be bitten by the vampire whose blood they had ingested. Most street drac was cut so severely that the process was scrambled. Dhampires had died. But Rudy knew where the blood in him had come from. Johnny realized that his Judas has betrayed him not just for silver, but because Rudy thought that if he spilled enough of Johnny's blood, he could work the magic on his own. In the British idiom he had learned from Sid, Rudy was a wanker.

They arrived at Andy's town house just before dawn.

If Johnny could get inside, he could survive. It wasn't easy, even with Rudy's help. During the fight, he had shape-shifted too many times, sustained too many terrible wounds, even lost body parts. He had grown wings, and they'd been shredded by silver bullets, then ripped out by the roots. Important bones were gone from his back. One of his feet was lopped off and lost in the street. He hoped it was hopping after one of his enemies.

He had tasted some of them, the Vampire Killers. In Doyle's blood, he found a surprise: the drac-busting cop was a secret dhampire, and had dosed himself up to face Johnny. The knifeman, who had vampire blood in him from a strange birth, had stuffed himself with garlic, to make his blood repulsive.

The blood was something. He was fighting now.

Rudy hammered on Andy's door, shouting. Johnny had last seen Andy at 54, at the party he had left. He should be home by now, or would be home soon. As dawn approached, Johnny felt himself smoking. It was a frosty All Hallows' morn, but the heat building up like a fever inside him was monsoon-oppressive and threatened to explode in flames.

Johnny's continued life depended on Andy having made it home.

The door was opened. It was Andy himself, not yet out of his party clothes, dazzled by the pinking end of night. Johnny felt waves of horror pouring off the artist, and understood exactly how he must look.

"It's just red, Andy. You use a lot of red."

Rudy helped him into Andy's hallway. The gloom was like a welcoming cool in midsummer. Johnny collapsed on the chaise longue, and looked at Andy, begging.

Only one thing could cure him. Vampire blood.

His first choice would have been the Churchward woman, who was almost an elder. She had survived a century and was of a fresh bloodline. But Penny was gone, fleeing the city and leaving them all in the bloody lurch.

It would have to be Andy. He understood, and backed away, eyes wide.

Johnny realized he didn't even know what Andy's bloodline was. Who had made him?

Andy was horrified. He hated to be touched. He hated to give anything, much less himself.

Johnny had no choice. He reached out with what was left of his mind and took a hold of the willing Rudy. He made the dhamp, still hopped up on prime drac, grab Andy by the arms and force him across the lobby, bringing him to the chaise longue as an offering for his Master.

"I'm sorry, Andy," said Johnny.

He didn't prolong the moment. Rudy exposed Andy's neck, stringy and chalky, and Johnny pounced like a cobra, sinking his teeth into the vein, opening his throat for the expected gush of life-giving, mind-blasting vampire blood. He didn't just need to take blood, he needed a whole ghost, to replace the tatters he had lost.

Johnny nearly choked.

He couldn't keep Andy's blood down. His stomach heaved, and gouts poured from his mouth and nose.

How had Andy done it? For all these years?

Rudy looked down on them both, wondering why Johnny was trying to laugh, why Andy was squealing and holding his neck, what the frig was going down in the big city?

Andy wasn't, had never been, a vampire.

He was still alive.

Johnny at last understood just how much Andy Warhol was his own invention.

Andy was dying now, and so was Johnny.

Andy's blood did Johnny some good. He could stand up. He could take hold of Rudy, lifting him off his feet. He could rip open Rudy's throat with his teeth and gulp down pints of the dhamp's drac-laced blood. He could toss Rudy's corpse across the lobby.

That taken care of, he cradled Andy, trying to get the dying man's attention. His eyes were still moving, barely. His neck-wound was a gouting hole, glistening with Johnny's vampire spittle. The light was going out.

Johnny stuck a thumbnail into his own wrist and poured his blood into Andy's mouth, giving back what he had taken. Andy's lips were as red as Rita Hayworth's. Johnny coaxed him and finally, after minutes, Andy swallowed, then relaxed and let go, taking his first and final drac trip.

In an instant, as it happens sometimes, Andy Warhol died and came back. It was too late, though. Valerie Solanas had hurt him very badly, and there were other problems. The turning would not take.

Johnny was too weak to do anything more.

Andy, Warhola the Vampyre at last, floated around his hallway, relishing the new sensations. Did he miss being a magnificent fake?

Then, the seizures took him and he began to crumble. Shafts of light from the glass around the door pierced him, and he melted away like the Wicked Witch of the West.

Andy Warhol was a vampire for only fifteen minutes.

Johnny would miss him. He had taken some of the man's ghost, but it was a quiet spirit. It would never compete with the Father for mastery.

Johnny waited. In a far corner, something stirred.

He had written his own epitaph, of course. "In the future, everyone will live forever, for fifteen minutes."

Goodbye, Drella. At the end, he gave up Dracula and was left with only Cinderella, the girl of ashes.

The rest, his legacy, is up to us.

— Conklin, *ibid.*

Rudy could have been a powerful vampire. He rose, turned, full of nosferatu vigor, eager for his first feeding, brain a-buzz with plans of establishing a coven, a drac empire, a place in the night.

Johnny was waiting for him.

With the last of his strength, he took Rudy down and ripped him open in a dozen places, drinking his vampire blood. Finally, he ate the American boy's heart. Rudy hadn't thought it through. Johnny spat out his used-up ghost. Sad little man.

He exposed Rudy's twice-dead corpse to sunlight, and it powdered. The remains of two vampires would be found in Andy's house, the artist and the drac dealer. Johnny Pop would be officially dead. He had been just another stage in his constant turning.

It was time to quit this city. Hollywood beckoned. Andy would have liked that.

At nightfall, bones knit and face reforming, he left the house. He went to Grand Central Station. There was a cash stash in a locker there, enough to get him out of the city and set him up on the Coast.

The Father was proud of him. Now, he could acknowledge his bloodline in his name. He was no longer Ion Popescu, no longer Johnny Pop; he was Johnny Alucard.

And he had an empire to inherit.