The following essay by Massimo Introvigne, founder of CESNUR, provides superb "deep background" on the historical context of vampire narratives. We include it here.

Massimo Introvigne

Brainwashing the Working Class: Vampire Comics and Criticism from Dr. Occult to *Buffy*

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"She [Buffy] spots a bunch of obscenely sexy Vampirella-type action figures, frowns at them."
(Script of "Seeing Red", *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Season 6)

(1) In the 1959 novel *The Manchurian Candidate* by Richard Thomas Condon (1915-1996), the sinister Dr. Yen Lo subjects an American patrol captured during the Korean War to brainwashing, and explains how it all works to an audience of Chinese and Soviet generals. Brainwashing is not so uncommon, Dr. Yen Lo explains: as a certain Dr. Wertham recently proved, even Americans routinely brainwash their working class children through horror comics featuring vampires and other monsters[1]. Condon's fictional character, by quoting the non-fictional Dr. Wertham within the context of the most famous literary depiction of brainwashing, reminds us of a connection between brainwashing and comics, particularly vampire comics, which has haunted popular culture studies for decades.

(2) The academic study of popular culture (including dime novels, pulps, comics, detective and Western novels, and later popular movies) was born under a cloud. The first question which led some left-wing scholars to seriously consider popular culture was why the masses, rather than enthusiastically embrace liberal political causes, largely supported conservative and reactionary movements. Around 1920, three members of the innermost circle of Sigmund Freud's students, all Socialist sympathizers, extended their teacher's critique of religious indoctrination methods to conservative politics and schools of thought hostile to Socialism. Paul Federn (1871-1950) was the first to define the concept of «authoritarianism» in 1919.[2] According to Federn (whose ideas on the subject were later explicitly accepted by Freud) authoritarianism is a personality trait whereby individuals who cannot make decisions case by case, typically prefer to rely on absolute-type ideologies, either political or religious. It was Federn who introduced his student Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957) to psychoanalytic theory. In the 1920s, Federn also collaborated with Erich Fromm (1900-1980) at the Psychoanalytic Institute in Frankfurt.

(3) With Freud's support and approval, Federn, Reich and Fromm further developed the concept of the authoritarian personality. They traced its origins primarily to sexual repression and an authoritarian childhood education that fixated the individual at the anal and oral stage of the Freudian model of development. Such a situation could give rise to masochism (towards people who are believed to be in authority) and sadism (with respect to people of a lower station). This situation prevents the individual from reaching a higher, mature stage, variously defined as «genital» but also as «revolutionary» (Federn and Fromm), «liberal» and even «democratic.» We see in these reflections the first sketch of a theory that belief in an authoritarian worldview is the product of a combination of a character predisposition or tendency that was formed in childhood and of a cunning ideological indoctrination that relies on the sado-masochistic results of a failed childhood development, manipulating them for its own purposes.

(4) Beginning in 1929, under the National-Socialist regime, Federn, Reich and Fromm applied the authoritarian personality model to explain why Germans embraced or «converted» to Hitler's ideology. Particularly, Fromm's wide-ranging interests—from psychology and psychoanalysis to the social sciences—led him to Frankfurt's Institute for Social Research. Founded in 1923, the Institute gave birth to the «Frankfurt School,» a fusion of psychoanalysis and Marxism. The concept of the authoritarian personality, and the description of how Fascist regimes exploit the tendency to authoritarianism of some individuals by indoctrinating them, played a major role in the development of the Frankfurt School's body of theory, under the leadership of Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) and Theodor Wiesegrund Adorno (1903-1969).

(5) In the years from 1929 to 1932, under the sponsorship of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, Fromm conducted a qualitative and quantitative study of authoritarian trends in Germany. At the time, Fromm still firmly believed in Freud's developmental stages of childhood theory (he would later reject it) and came to the conclusion that an authoritarian education was more prevalent in the middle-lower classes, including the proletariat, predicting that these social classes would not fundamentally oppose Nazism. From a historical point of view, Fromm was right. However, his mistrust about the revolutionary potential of the proletariat was not well received in the ideologically prejudiced climate that prevailed among his Frankfurt colleagues in the early 1930s. As a matter of fact, Fromm's empirical study of the German working class would be published only half a century later.[3]

(6) The «authoritarian personality» and indoctrination theory became a widely accepted explanation of the broad popularity of Fascist and Nazi ideologies. As noted, it held that unscrupulous ideologues and reactionary regimes could easily indoctrinate individuals who had been so predisposed by the education they had received in childhood. Indoctrination, the Frankfurt school argued, took advantage of three principal means: religion, popular culture (Western pulps and cheap novels, popular in Germany, were particularly singled out), and political ideology reduced to simple, black-and-white slogan.

(7) The Nazi regime persecuted the leaders of the Frankfurt School both because they were political antagonists and because they were Jews; most of them migrated to the United States. In 1934, Frankfurt's Institute for Social Research was reorganized under the aegis of Columbia University in New York and took the name of International Institute for Social Research. The Institute collaborated with the University of California at Berkeley in the « Berkeley Authoritarianism Project,»[4] an important study of the authoritarian personality and its indoctrination. The « Berkeley Authoritarianism Project», whose results were published in 1950, measured the level of intolerance (that predisposes the individual to manipulation by authoritarian ideologies) by using four psychological scales, indicated by the letters F (Fascism), PEC (political and economical conservatism), A-S (anti-Semitism) and E («ethnocentrism,» i.e. an intolerance for ethnic and religious minorities, a concept born specifically out of the Berkeley study)[5]. The research was successful among academics, but was also criticized for its political bias. While the authors measured «conservatisms» of various kinds, they were less concerned about the type of personality or totalitarian manipulation that brought so many to embrace Communism.

(8) As a matter of fact, the «Berkeley Authoritarianism Project» results were published only after the end of World War II, after the United States had replaced its anti-Nazi alliance with the Soviet Union with the Cold War. Culturally speaking, the research done by the Frankfurt School on right-wing authoritarianism was integrated into a more general theory of totalitarianism developed in Hannah Arendt's (1906-1975) work. Arendt collaborated with Carl Joachim Friedrich (1901-1984) in organizing the 1953 Boston Conference, sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.[6] Psychoanalist Erik Homburger Erikson (1902-1994), a member of the Vienna Institute of Psychoanalysis who had migrated to the United States in 1934, played an important role both at the conference and in the subsequent discussions on indoctrination. After the Boston conference, the group of post-Frankfurt theorists of totalitarian influence became divided between those who remained faithful to their left-wing politics, and others who accepted to focus their attention on indoctrination leading not to reactionary or conservative ideologies but to Communism. Most of the latter worked in projects sponsored by several U.S. government agencies.

(9) The Frankfurt theory, as re-elaborated in the United States, argued that vulnerable members of the society, including children in general and members of the working classes with limited education, are at first implicitly prepared and later subtly indoctrinated into totalitarian and authoritarian worldviews through the triple agency of authoritarian, "cultic" religion (that Fromm finally distinguished from the type of religion he called "humanistic"), popular culture, and black-and-white political slogans. To some extent in this criticism medium and message coincided: authoritarian (later called "cultic") religion, the simple ideology of popular culture, and Communism (or Fascism) were both the medium and the aim of totalitarian influence. It is also the case that, in traveling from continental Europe to the U.S., the Frankfurt theory of totalitarian influence was somewhat reduced in scope. Not all religion was believed to predispose to totalitarianism, only the "cultic" variety. Not all political black-and-white slogans were evidence of totalitarianism, only Communist (and Nazi, but the latter were no longer an actual danger). Not all popular culture was bad: the powerful American movie industry was largely left alone. The U.S. version of the Frankfurt theory became the theoretical support for a struggle against what one may call the three Cs: cults, Communism, and comics.

(10) To the oppositional counter-movements which opposed, for a variety of reasons, the allegedly damaging influence of "cultic" religion, popular culture, and Communism, the late-Frankfurt theory offered a secular explanation of how the weaker members of society were indoctrinated into totalitarian ideologies. As far as Communism was concerned, Cold War propaganda offered a simplified reduction of totalitarian influence theory under the name of "brainwashing", a word coined by Edward Hunter (1902-1978), an OSS and later CIA agent whose cover job was that of reporter, first with English-language publications in China and later at the *Miami Daily News*. Hunter expounded the theory of brainwashing in several books, starting from *Brain-Washing in Red China,*[7] first published in 1951. As used by CIA propaganda, the brainwashing theory was a caricature of the complex, Frankfurt-style scholarly analysis of totalitarian influence. In a 1953 speech Allen Welsh Dulles (1893-1969), then the CIA director, explained that Communists «wash the brain clean of the thoughts and mental processes of the past and, possibly through the use of some "lie serum," create new brain processes and new thoughts which the victim, parrotlike, repeats.»[8] In effect, «the brain under these circumstances becomes a phonograph playing a disc put on its spindle by an outside genius over which it has no control.»[9]

(11) Secular opposition to totalitarian indoctrination based on brainwashing both concurred and competed with religious opposition to the same groups perceived as totalitarian. Thus, the secular anti-cult movement which accused certain religious "cults" of brainwashing converts both co-operated and competed with a sectarian counter-cult movement which criticized "cults" because their "heretical" teachings were opposed to traditional Christianity. Whilst the distinction between "anti-cult" and "counter-cult" movements is common[10], a similar distinction can be established between a "secular" anti-Communism using the brainwashing argument and a religious counter-Communism opposing Communist atheism; and between a secular and a religious critic of popular culture.

(12) For a number of reasons, criticism of popular culture as a way of brainwashing both children and the working classes into a black-and-white totalitarian worldview focused on comics. Frankfurt theorists did notice comics at a quite early stage, and focused their criticism on the two most popular genres in the 1930s and 1940s: superhero and horror comics. After the early "platinum age" (a prehistory of sort for comics), modern comics were born in the

1930s with the predecessors of the companies still dominating the market today. Superheroes and vampire comics were born almost at the same time. Issue no. 6 of *New Fun Comics* (October 1935) by National Periodical Publications (the predecessor of contemporary DC) featured the first instalment of a story known as "Dr. Occult, the Ghost Detective". The story is famous for several reasons. It is the first story published in a comic book by Jerome "Jerry" Siegel (1914-1996) and Joseph Shuster (1914-1992) (disguised here under the pseudonyms of Leger and Reuths), the world-famous creators of Superman. As the reader will learn in subsequent instalments, Dr. Occult has special powers of his own, and he is in fact the first comic book superhero of the Siegel-Shuster duo. Last but not least, the first villain he meets is a vampire. From issue 7 (Jan. 1936) *New Fun Comics* will be renamed *More Fun Comics* and it will take two more issues, 8 (Feb. 1936) and 9 (Mar. 1936), for Dr. Occult to dispose of the vampire (and go on to deal with werewolves). Three years later, Batman himself in its fifth *Detective Comics* story (issues 31, Oct. 1939, and 32, Nov. 1939) had to deal with a vampire, The Monk, and his female assistant Darla in order to save his girlfriend Julie Madison. Batman did indeed have a girlfriend at that time, and as late as May 1997, in no. 94 of *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*, "Stories" by Michael Gilbert shows us the same Julie Madison, now an old lady, trapped in an elevator by terrorists and remembering the events of 1939, when Batman saved her from the vampire. In the end, she is rescued again by Batman, confirming that The Monk, long gone, had not been really forgotten in the Batman universe. For whatever reason, vampires were very successful in comics. A bibliography I, Gordon Melton and Robert Eighteen-Bisang plan to publish next year includes more than 8,000 English-language comic books with at least one appearance by a vampire, making the vampire the second most featured character in comics history, although a distant second to the superhero.

(13) Frankfurt-style comics critics disliked both superheroes and vampires. Superheroes were criticized as quintessential icons of an omnipotent father, playing the same role authoritarian religion, in Freud's and Fromm's view, attributed to God. Readers of superhero comics were indoctrinated into the ultimately totalitarian idea that a benevolent supreme power (symbolized by the superhero, but being in the real world the State, the ruling class, or organized religion) will ultimately take care of the job, if only the common folks would learn to leave it to him (more rarely, as in the case of Wonder Woman, to her). Horror comics, in the late Frankfurt theory combining class sociology and psychoanalysis, perpetuated the fixation of both children and child-like illiterate working classes into the anal and oral stage of development, with their attending (or at least alleged) masochism and sadism predisposing those thus indoctrinated both to obey unconditionally the powers that be and to put their potential for violence at the disposal of the same powers.

(14) Late Frankfurt theorists, thus, developed the core arguments of an anti-comics theory, based on secular arguments. At the same time, both Roman Catholic and Protestant morality watchdogs (including the Catholic Legion of Decency, originally created in 1933 to lobby against immorality in motion pictures)[11] also focused on comics as pernicious elements of popular culture, for different reasons, branding them as immoral, not respecting the traditional taboos about sexuality and marriage, and conductive to juvenile delinquency (the latter a point of serious concern for secular critics, too)[12]. Both forms of criticism of comics are found in the 1930s and in the 1940s both in the U.S. and in Europe. However, as in the case of oppositional coalitions against Communism and "cultic" religion, political success could be achieved only through some degree of co-operation between the secular anti-comic movement and the religious counter-comic movement. They made strange bedfellows, since their original aims were not the same. Religious crusaders against comics were normally politically conservative, focused on sex and violence and targeted primarily horror comics. The politics of those influenced by the Frankfurt-style criticism were more often of the left-wing s type; and the allegedly "fascist" superhero comic was seen as a vehicle for brainwashing the masses into totalitarianism at least as dangerous as the horror comic. Coalitions, however, were built in several countries. In France, conservative Catholic criticism of comics , whose pioneer before World War II had been Father Louis Bethléem (1869-1940)[13], was substantially translated in their own languages by secular humanists and communists after 1945, leading to one of the largest hostile campaigns in comics history[14]. The situation in Europe (and in some Canadian provinces) was, however, different from the United States. Critics of comics outside the U.S. denounced them as a vehicle of postwar American cultural imperialism, a criticism that conservative religious and political left-wing activists may share[15]. In the U.S., of course, anti-Americanism could not be a factor, but populist opposition to "immoral big business" plaid very much the same role in building coalitions between religious and secular opponents of popular culture.

(15) How this strange alliance worked is described in Amy Kiste Nyberg' revisionist interpretation of *Seduction of the Innocent*,[16] a well-known book published in 1954 by the American psychiatrist Fredric Wertham (1895-1981)[17]. By 1954, the superhero genre had somewhat declined, and horror titles were booming, most of them including a substantial proportion of stories featuring vampires. According to Wertham, most comic books induce a sort of «negative conditioning» in America's youth leading to juvenile delinquency, totalitarian politics, and sexual problems (including homosexuality). Wertham's book and his testimony before Congress led to the signing in 1954 of the *Comics Code* that included a ban on representing horror themes and characters in American comic books. Similar or more draconian results were achieved in the U.K. through the passage of the Children and Young persons [Harmful Publications] Act and in France by the strict enforcement of the law of July 16, 1949 (which had introduced a censorship on all juvenile publications)[18], whilst in Italy an earlier anti-comic offensive led by Catholic politicians generated a draft law which was defeated in Parliament after some prominent Catholic intellectuals, including conservative novelist Giovanni Guareschi [1908-1968, who happened to be a comic fan himself], came out in favor of comics[19]. Whilst Wertham has been normally depicted by scholars of comics as the ultimate champion of censorship and bigotry, Nyberg shows how the New York psychiatrist was a politically liberal doctor who based his anti-comic crusade on the Frankfurt-style criticism of popular culture. Both superheroes and horror characters, Wertham concluded, were brainwashing children into different forms of violence and totalitarianism. Nyberg, however, is no unconditional admirer of Wertham. In fact, she notes that in order to (partially) achieve his aims the liberal, left-wing Wertham deliberately presented his anti-comic criticism in a form divorced from its political premises, and allied itself with the religious critics of comics. When, with the *Comics Code*, his campaign led to an almost total ban on horror

comics, Wertham was not satisfied, since his criticism also included superhero comics, which returned to the dominant position they had enjoyed before World War II once the horror competition was eliminated. However, since in order to carry its campaign to a larger public, Wertham had to downplay its philosophical roots in the Frankfurt criticism of popular culture, he ended up focusing on horror comics more than he had originally intended (although he always maintained that superheroes were harmful, too).

(16) Contrary to earlier opinions, recent scholars of comics no longer think that Wertham and the *Comics Code* administered a fatal blow to the U.S. comic industry. Sales did decline immediately after the *Code* came into effect, but started growing again in the late 1950s, with the return of the superheroes and the beginning of what was called the Silver Age. While other genres not affected by the *Code* (primarily funny animals and teen comics such as *Archie*) remained in business as usual, the pendulum simply switched back from horror-vampires to superheroes as the dominant presence in the market. Vampires were entirely forbidden by the *Comics Code* and disappeared from mainstream comics, although they occasionally showed up in humorous forms as opponents of Jerry Lewis or Bob Hope and became a significant presence in comics sold in magazine format, ostensibly intended for adults and, unlike comic books, escaping the limitations of the *Comics Code*[20]. Publisher Jim Warren launched the horror comic magazine with *Creepy* in 1964 (the very first issue featuring two vampire stories) and followed with *Eerie* (1965) and *Vampirella* (1969). The stories of Vampirella, a female vampire from Planet Drakulon who tries not to harm the innocent and to fight evil as best as she can, continue to this date (through a new publisher, Harris). Gold Key, a company not subscribing to the comics code (and protected by its fame of publisher of educational, quality comics) also capitalized on the success of the TV series *Dark Shadows* by introducing the corresponding comic, whose first issue was published in March 1969.

(17) These developments eventually led to the revision of the *Comics Code*: as of 1971, vampires were permitted again in comic books guaranteed by the code seal. A company called Charlton Comics was the most prolific producer of vampire comics, but the main product of the *Code* revision was Marvel's *The Tomb of Dracula*, launched in April 1972 and continuing through August 1980, with a revival in 1991-1992 and further spin-offs focusing on one of its most popular character, the African American vampire hunter Blade, extending to the present day thanks to the two recent Blade movies. It has been argued that, although acclaimed by critics, *The Tomb of Dracula* failed to attract the youngest readers and for this reason never became a best seller able to compete with the superhero titles. The problem, however, was much broader. Starting with antitrust lawsuits launched in the 1950s against the largest U.S. newsstand distributors of comics, distribution problems continuously plagued the industry, until in the 1980s direct sales to specialty stores selling only comics and related articles and (unlike newsstand and supermarkets) buying on a non-return basis largely replaced newsstand distribution. By 1990 U.S. comic stores had raised from 25 in 1975 to around 5,000, and direct sales accounted for three quarters of the distribution[21]. Direct sales also helped independent companies to compete with the two giants DC and Marvel. The latter, however, maintained their predominance through the usual superheroes in the 1980s (although not without some financial problems, which became worse in the early 1990s), a decade where the vampire genre went into a state of crisis in the U.S., perhaps for lack of new ideas (whilst in the U.K. vampire characters such as Durham Red did maintain a significant following among the readers of *2000 A.D.* and parallel publications, and humorous vampires such as Dracula's daughter Draculass, who firstly appeared in *Monster Fun* on June 14, 1975, continued to figure prominently in the juvenile comics).

(18) Dr. Wertham did not kill the comics, nor was he the only responsible for decades of financial problems. Distribution problems and the competition of the TV for teen attention were at least as important as the *Comics Code* in creating difficulties, which were however not fatal. What Dr. Wertham did was to create (unwittingly) an unbalance, in favor of superheroes, in the competition between the two most popular comics character, the vampire and the superhero. After the *Comics Code* the vampire did manage to survive in comics, particularly after the 1971 revision, but its chance, perhaps real in the early 1950s, to compete with the superhero was lost forever. Also, the post-*Code* developments created a certain separation between comic books and the youngest teenagers (most affected by the parents' reactions to the anti-comics campaigns).

(19) Then, *Buffy* happened. The impact of the movie was immediately felt in comics. In January 1993 DC launched a comic featuring a female, Buffy-like vampire slayer, Scarlett, which however had but a limited success and was cancelled after issue no. 14. Although *Scarlett* was not a bad comic, as far as the average DC miniseries go, the impact of the real article was of a completely different scale of magnitude. Buffy the Vampire Slayer first appeared in comics in September 1998 in *Dark Horse Presents Annual 1988*. A comic called *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* followed suit in the same month, and reached issue 50 in October 2002. Stories from the U.S. comic are reprinted in the official U.K. magazine, and translated in French, German, and Spanish (whilst the Italian edition was short-lived and cancelled after four issues). There have also been three subsequent series of *Angel* comics, several miniseries, and some thirty trade paperbacks collecting story arcs featuring Buffy and/or Angel. Finally, in June 2001 Joss Whedon launched *Fray*, a comic book about a slayer in a remote future, although the enormous success of the first issue was not replicated by subsequent installments.

(20) In comic format, Buffy has not pleased all the critics, but his success has been phenomenal. Exact figures are difficult to come by, but Buffy is surpassed only by Dracula and Vampirella as the most published vampire-related character in comics (if one includes the trade paperbacks and the miniseries), and may well be the most well sold in vampire comics history. Publisher Dark Horse spokespersons have indicated that the Buffy and Angel comics have a significant following among young teens and even pre-teens. If confirmed, this is indeed very significant and may show that the Buffy comics play a significant role in winning back a younger sector for comics (particularly non-superhero comics, and more specifically vampire comics), not by competing with TV but by concluding a strategic alliance with a successful TV saga and its makers. In the TV show Buffy herself seems to mark the divide between her approach to

vampire entertainment and the old horror comics featuring scantily-clad female vampires. In the episode *Seeing Red* (Season 6) Buffy visits the evil trio's lair and, according the script, "spots a bunch of obscenely sexy Vampirella-type action figures, frowns at them". Given the trio's accomplishments, and the fact that what is shown is indeed a Vampirella action figure, Buffy seems paradoxically here to be in agreement with Dr. Wertham: memorabilia of characters from horror comics, particularly of curvaceous female characters in various states and grades of nudity, are indeed found in the rooms of juvenile delinquents. The (visual) statement can also be read as marking a border: we are not this, *Buffy* (and *Buffy* comics) offer a honest show about vampires suitable for all ages (almost), where good girls are attractive for their bravery rather than for their exposed curves. No matter how unfair to *Vampirella* (which always included more than curves), and even to Vampirella action figures (only a Taliban would call them today "obscenely sexy"), the message is easy to catch.

(21) Vituperations against comics in general are however, in the meantime, declining. In 1964, ten years after Dr. Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*, Umberto Eco published one of its most famous nonfiction work, *Apocalittici e Integrati*[22]. The book, largely devoted to comics, settled Eco's cultural accounts with the Frankfurt approach to popular culture. Eco criticized the "apocalyptic" approach to comics, and denied that they were capable of causing a left-wing apocalypse, brainwashing the working classes into reactionary ideologies. Eco's aesthetic taste (which influenced the academic study of comics in several European countries for decades) was not particularly attracted to either superheroes or vampires (he very much preferred *The Peanuts* or *Pogo*): but he was not persuaded that Superman or Dracula may cause a cultural disaster among the working classes. Eco also criticized the American scholars of comic art who were themselves comics fans (as such, too much "integrated" in the comics consumers community to keep the necessary critical distance) and focused only on aesthetics, dismissing early cultural studies as irrelevant. According to Eco, a genuinely social scientific approach to comics should be neither "apocalyptic" nor "integrated" and discuss the comics' very real aesthetic values within an appropriate sociological and political context.

(22) Just as he had insisted that comics did not brainwash working classes into slave-like allegiance to capitalism, in the late 1960s Eco led a campaign against the Italian statute regarding brainwashing (under the old Italian name of "plagio") as a criminal offense, when the statute was used against holders of minority or fringe opinions in matter religious, political, or sexual[23]. Eventually, efforts by Eco and other intellectuals (together with different arguments advanced from other quarters) influenced the decision by the Italian Constitutional Court of June 8, 1981 which declared the Italian statute against "plagio" as unconstitutional[24]. Although developments were partially different in the English-speaking world, by the early 1990s a majority of scholars maintained that brainwashing was a pseudo-scientific concept used as a political tool against unpopular groups or cultural forms, utterly incapable of explaining complicate social processes. Just as very few scholars would maintain today that new religious movements or radical political parties "brainwash" unwitting "victims" into conversion, the idea that comics, particularly horror comics, "brainwash" weaker members of our societies (including children and poorly literate blue collar workers) into compliance with authoritarian powers should also be largely regarded as a myth.

(23) In the last section of *Apocalittici e integrati*, Eco expressed his personal dislike of vampire comics, some of them he quoted as egregious examples of bad taste. In 1964, however, vampire comics known to Eco were mostly cheap magazines. He did know some of the pre-Code stories, however, but at that time their revival was far in the future – or perhaps the genre was simply remote from Eco's personal preferences. *De gustibus non est disputandum*. On the other hand, Eco's insights about both the importance of comics as indicators of broader social phenomena, and the necessity of a critical assessments of them, remain valid to this date. The scholarly study of comics has evolved into a recognized academic discipline, and the scholarly study of vampire comics is producing significant results. Once considered against this background, the contribution of *Buffy* the TV show to the world of comics, and the role of the comics featuring Buffy, may be re-assessed not only in terms of aesthetics but as part of the industry's answer to its crisis and of its attempts to reassert itself as a relevant part of the entertainment scene in a world dominated by TV and the Internet. Perhaps not all Buffy comics are aesthetically successful. But, in contributing to the comics industry's revival (which is currently overcoming what may have been its worst crisis) and in keeping alive the key role of the vampire genre, Buffy has left her mark in the world of comics, too. Buffy has clearly influenced several other characters, including Sarah Bloodstone, a new member of the Marvel universe introduced in December 2001. Although her father, monster hunter Ulysses Bloodstone was well-known to Marvel readers from many years, Sarah is a combination of Buffy and of *Tomb Raider*'s Lara Croft. In the very different world of Italian comics, whose readership is much younger and where Disney still largely dominates the market, the greatest success story of the last few years, *W.I.T.C.H.*, the story of five teenage witches attending an American high school, clearly combines features of the early seasons of *Buffy* and of the TV serial *Charmed* (which in Italy has been more successful than *Buffy* and, unlike *Buffy*, has been upgraded to prime time by the largest Italian TV network). *W.I.T.C.H.*, like other recent titles produced by the Italian subsidiary of Disney (including *PK*, where a superhero Donald Duck fights extra-terrestrial psychic vampires from planet Evron; and *X-Mickey*, where Mickey Mouse is led by a Goofy-like friendly werewolf into a parallel world where he explores the paranormal and the occult), is aimed at keeping within the Disney fold the older pre-teens and teenagers who regards themselves as too old for staying with a regular diet of Mickey Mouse and Uncle Scrooge. Both *PK* and *W.I.T.C.H.* (originally introduced as *PK*'s counterpart for young girls, with an obvious allusion to the "girlie power" popularized by both *Buffy* and *Charmed*) are now published by the respective branches of Disney in most European languages (not including English, mostly because they are typical newsstand publications and would not fare well in countries where direct market prevails). Buffy, thus, continues to influence the evolution of comics in several countries. It is also easy to predict that, as it happened for Dark Shadows, Buffy comics will remain in print for years even after the TV show will be gone.

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[1] RICHARD CONDON, *The Manchurian Candidate*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959, p. 40.
[2] See D. L. ANTHONY, *Brainwashing and Totalitarian Influence. An Exploration of Admissibility Criteria for Testimony in Brainwashing Trials*, Ph.D. thesis, Berkeley (California): Graduate Theological Union, 1996, p. 165.

[3] See MARTIN JAY, *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950*, Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1973.
[4] For the history of the Project, see M. JAY, *op. cit.*; and D. L. ANTHONY, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-190.
[5] See THEODOR ADORNO - ELSE FRENKEL-BRUNSWICK - DANIEL J. LEVINSON - NEVITT SANFORD, *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York: Norton & Co., 1950.
[6] See D. L. ANTHONY, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-159.
[7] See EDWARD HUNTER, *Brain-Washing in Red China. The Calculated Destruction of Men's Minds*, New York: The Vanguard Press, 1951; 2nd expanded ed.: New York: The Vanguard Press, 1953.
[8] Cit. in A. SCHEFLIN - E. OPTON, *The Mind Manipulators. A Non-Fiction Account*, New York – London: Paddington, 1978., p. 437.
[9] *Ibidem*.
[10] See my "The Secular Anti-Cult and the Religious Counter-Cult Movement: Strange Bedfellows or Future Enemies?", in ERIC TOWLER (ed.), *New Religions and the New Europe*, Aaarhus - Oxford - Oakville (Connecticut): Aarhus University Press, 1995, pp. 32-54.
[11] See PAUL W. FACEY, *The Legion of Decency: A Sociological Analysis of the Emergence and Development of a Social Pressure Group*, New York: Arno Press, 1974.
[12] See JAMES GILBERT, *Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
[13] See VIOLAINE PELLERIN, "L'Abbé Béthléem, 1869-1940. Un pionnier de la lecture catholique", M.A. Diss., Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines 1994.
[14] See THIERRY CREPIN, *"Haro sur le gangster!". La moralisation de la presse enfantine : 1934-1954*, Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 2001.
[15] For comparative perspectives, see JOHN A. LENT (ed.), *Pulp Demons: International Dimensions of the Postwar Anti-Comics Campaign*, Madison – Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, and London: Associated University Presses, 1999.
[16] FREDRIC WERTHAM, *Seduction of the Innocent*, New York – Toronto: Rinehart & Co., 1954.
[17] AMY KISTE NYBERG, *Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998.
[18] See THIERRY CREPIN – THIERRY GROENSTEEN (eds.), *"On tue à chaque page!": La loi de 1949 sur les publications destinées à la jeunesse*, Paris: Éditions du Temps, 1999.
[19] See JURI MEDA, "Vietato ai minori. Censura e fumetto nel secondo dopoguerra fra il 1949 e il 1953", *Schizzo Idee* 10 [*Schizzo* 72], June 2002, pp. 73-88.
[20] J. Gordon Melton's general introduction to the bibliography of vampire comics we plan to publish will include a comprehensive overview of English-language vampire comics. In the meantime, information about the history of vampire comics is available in MIKE BENTON, *Horror Comics: The Illustrated History*, Dallas: Taylor, 1992, while several monographic studies cover the main publishers and titles such as EC, Warren, and others.
[21] A. K. NYBERG, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
[22] UMBERTO ECO, *Apocalittici e integrati. Comunicazioni di massa e teorie della cultura di massa*, Milan: Bompiani, 1964.
[23] See ALBERTO MORAVIA - UMBERTO ECO - ADOLFO GATTI - MARIO GOZZANO - CESARE LUIGI MUSATTI - GINEVRA BOMPIANI, *Sotto il nome di plagio*, Milan: Bompiani, 1969.
[24] CORTE COSTITUZIONALE, *Grasso* judgment of June 8, 1981, No. 96, in *Giurisprudenza Costituzionale*, 1, 1981, pp. 806-834.