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**Catalunya (Catalonia)**

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## **Police: Assault suspect says he's a 'werewolf-vampire'**

ALLENTOWN, Pa. — A Pottsville, Pa., man convinced a 15-year-old girl he was part werewolf and part vampire before sexually assaulting her, police say.

Kristian Allen Carl, 19, also believed he was a supernatural mixed breed, police say.

"He convinced himself he was a hybrid — a combination werewolf and vampire," Pottsville police Sgt. James Joos said. "He had convinced the girl he was, too."

To prove to police he was indeed a genuine vampire/werewolf, Carl "showed me his canine teeth," Joos said. "I let him know that all mammals, including humans, have canine teeth."

Joos said Carl also told police he had a "guardian dragon that protected him from evildoers."

Carl was charged with statutory sexual assault after admitting he had sexual intercourse with the girl, who told police he was her boyfriend, on Nov. 14, 2007, according to an affidavit Joos filed.

Carl knew the girl's age and was aware he could "get in trouble" for having sex with a girl under age 16, Joos wrote. Carl told police he had met the girl the previous night and the two went to a friend's apartment to spend the night.

Carl remains free on \$25,000 unsecured bail, Joos said.

"He's being held culpable for his actions," Joos said.

Chris Parker  
The Morning Call, 9 Feb.

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## **Varney the Vampire' beats 'Dracula'**

While Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is given credit for shaping the vampire genre of horror fiction, a Bucks County professor believes Stoker was likely influenced by the penny dreadful *Varney the Vampire*, which debuted in England more than 50 years before Stoker's book. Its ghoulish star was a household name at the time.

Curt Herr, who lives in a Victorian house in Ferndale, Pa., teaches gothic fiction at Kutztown University. He has written the critical edition of what he said is considered the most notorious novel of the 19th century -- James Malcolm Rymer's, *Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood*. The book was originally published in weekly installments from 1845-1847. It littered the streets of London, sold at a penny a page, and kept England's working class readers enthralled. The story eventually became so popular, it was reprinted in 1847 and again in 1853. However, the last edition before Herr's was in 1972. Rymer also penned the better-known penny dreadful *Sweeney Todd*, also known as *The String of Pearls*, which found fame as the 1979 Pulitzer Prize-

winning Broadway musical by Stephen Sondheim and is now a Tim Burton film, starring Johnny Depp.

"I would put money down that Bram knew it," said Mr. Herr said of Varney. "There's no proof. He was born the year Varney ended. He would have been a child as reprints of Varney came out; it was reprinted two times. He was a sickly kid and spent a lot of time in bed (reading). Elements of Varney are so close to what Stoker created. Plot details are so similar..." Varney was a popular character back then, he said.

Mr. Herr, who had seen references to the novel in his gothic studies, researched the novel and related Victorian vampire lore for more than three years. "It's time Varney the Vampire gets the attention he deserves," said Mr. Herr. "Varney was close to literary extinction," he said, overshadowed by the more famous vampire creations of Bram Stoker, Stephen King and Anne Rice. Part of the reason Varney faded from public consciousness was because in turn-of-the-century British culture, the story was considered too gruesome.

"It's known as being the worst book written in the 19th century and that intrigued me right away," said Mr. Herr. He found that the book wasn't as bad as legend said it to be. "It's a hell of a lot richer and truly a much better book than Dracula," he said.

The story follows Sir Francis Varney, a horrifying vampire posing as an aristocrat. Sir Varney battles between his hunger for blood and his deep compassion for humankind. Varney falls in love. He even tries to kill himself many times, to no avail. "Varney is such a fascinating character," said Mr. Herr. "Dracula is very one-dimensional... Varney is really sophisticated. You root for him, want him to survive; at other times he's monstrous. This was intended to make you root for the villain."

Varney has the distinction of being the first vampire novel ever written in the English language. Historically, its importance in the world of gothic literature is astounding, said Mr. Herr. It withered, however, under the more commercialized and successful publications of the era. This left Varney the Vampire forgotten by readers and academics alike.

The rules of the vampire are a bit different in Varney compared to what was developed in later fiction. Bats are not part of the story, and Varney can be healed from fatal wounds by moonlight. He also doesn't leave two neat bite marks; he rips apart his meals. Mr. Herr's edition offers the complete tale in 237 unabridged chapters, with an introduction explaining the penny dreadful genre. Numerous appendices and contemporary essays of James Malcolm Rymer are also included, along with some newspaper articles written in the 1860s. They reflect a time when penny dreadfuls were considered immoral and dangerous to the populous. The critical edition is nearly 850 pages. Several other penny dreadfuls popular at the time are reprinted in this critical edition, along with examples of the gothic woodcut illustrations that lured readers to buy the dreadfuls in the depressed streets of Victorian London.

Varney can be a confusing read, and the tale appears to have had four authors, with Rymer writing the bulk of the tale. The quality of the writing varies, at times with laughably-bad dialog. There are also mistakes in the storyline, with characters whose

names and purposes change, dropped subplots, and even an unintentional shift in the setting to another century. Mr. Herr said, "Confusions in this tale are part of its notorious reputation. In Victorian England, penny publishing was not a respected business, and it's clear why. Chapters went from pen to printing with no time for editing or revisions." Mr. Herr's footnotes clarify such puzzle ments in the text.

"These were hack writers who needed to earn money. They would have to sit down and write 400 words in half an hour. There was no editing, no time to check galley proofs. They would run under another (author's name). These writers are so overlooked and made such incredible contributions to popular culture," said Mr. Herr.

Mr. Herr said that *Varney* is an exciting soap opera, although 300 pages can be skipped and the story will still make sense. "It's a great winter or summer read. It's a huge book that flops open on your lap like a huge pudding of words," he said. *Varney* isn't fluff, it's a monster tale that's a "profound metaphor" steeped in the politics of its era, said Mr. Herr.

*Varney the Vampire; or The Feast of Blood* is published by Zittaw Press, and is available at Amazon.com, as well as through other book retailers. More information on this publication can be found at [www.zittaw.com](http://www.zittaw.com). ISBN 0-9795871-5-8. The book costs \$34.99 and weighs four pounds.

Kevin J. Guhl  
Delaware Valle News, 14 Feb

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