

The Taste of Innistrad's Vampire

Welcome back to the final episode of my little series that covers color philosophy and alignments for the tribes on Innistrad, and how Magic the Gathering and it's various designers utilize them in order to subtly weave a narratives and tell us, as the audience, more about the values, stories and potentially even the cultures and workings of the various tribes. Last time I covered Zombies, which you can view [here\(https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/664566115054256128/the-taste-of-innistrads-zombies\)](https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/664566115054256128/the-taste-of-innistrads-zombies). Under normal circumstances I would have taken this chance to make an undead joke but technically speaking vampires on Innistrad are not truly undead. Even though they have a decent number undead traits, such as agelessness and skin that feels cold to the touch, but enough about that. Let's get into the color philosophy.

The vampires on Innistrad are a Black and Red aligned tribe. Now, in my opinion we some pretty interesting display of the Black and Red color pair's philosophy in the vampires but before we cover what the colors mean when combined we must look at why vampires are Black and/or Red aligned on Innistrad.

Lucky for me, vampires have basically always been associated with the Black alignment in Magic the Gathering. In fact they're one of Black's characteristic creature types, along with zombies. Based on how a majority of vampires work, I believe that the reason that vampires ended up so strongly intertwined with Black is because of their themes of parasitism and power. First off, Black is a color that has a parasitic streak both mechanically and philosophically. Mechanically this can be seen in the fact that Black is the color that gets life drain effects through cards like Ill-Gotten Inheritance that reduce your opponent's life while increasing yours or even keyword like Lifelink(Lifelink is an interesting case in the fact that White also gets Lifelink but in White's case it represents healing magic or some other means of helping you or its other allies).



Now on the philosophical hand, the reason that Black gets so much life drain and parasitic effects is because Black as a color believes in “Power through Opportunity.” That is to say Black believes in doing whatever it takes to achieve power. This is a bit hard for me to explain in a quick and timely manner but I’ll try my best. Unlike say White, Black does not believe in any objective morality and it also kind of realizes that the world can suck and is unfair. At the end of the day it realizes that power is what talks. If you want to get something you have the power or willingness to take it. Look, what I’m trying to say is that Black understands life is both unfair and hard. So it asks why limit yourself with a bunch laws or moral codes that either you or, even worse, some random person or leader made up in order to hold you back in some way. I mean who are THEY to say what’s right and wrong. At the end of the day some of them are simply using these laws to prop themselves up while keeping everyone in their place anyway. Due to all these beliefs Black is a color in which no tactic is too underhanded or off the table when it comes to winning. If it needs to kick dirt in your eyes or poison you to win a fight it’ll do it, because at the end of the day whoever wins the fight gets the final say(whether it was fair or not). This extends to parasitism in the sense that most people consider parasitism and similar forms of manipulation to be really underhanded, lazy and pretty fucked up to put it bluntly. However, Black goes “If someone else wants/has to do most of the work for me then I can take advantage of it.” In a way Black is an efficient or pragmatic color. Black tries to make sure its using every resource available to it, and sometimes this can be a really good thing. There are times when people do not utilize something that’s potentially really useful because of arbitrary rules or customs that Black is not beholden by. There are also times where it can be bad too such as when

Black is messing with something that hurts a lot of people or ends up blowing up in its face. Now vampires are also linked parasitism via their blood sucking. Vampires are ultimately predators, yes, but they are also parasites. They basically NEED to drain the blood of humans in order to survive. I would say that comparing vampires to something like say a leech is a pretty apt comparison(oh and leeches also tend to be Black-aligned in Magic too due to their parasitic nature).



Another aspect that I think aligns vampires with the Black is the fact that while vampires are something that people can be born as they are also something that people can become. See, Blue and Black are both enemies of Green on the color wheel and part of the reason is that don't they hold themselves to any natural order. Blue will often look to improve and perfect things and is unafraid to rely on technology to do so. If it feels that it can help people see better by giving them glasses it'll do it and if it feels that the best way to help creatures that aren't biologically capable of flight is to give them the ability to fly with jetpacks or airplanes it'll do it. Due to this in Blue's eyes Green is often the antithesis of progress. A color that is trapped in tradition, natural order and the old ways for no reason. It is unwilling to improve itself or the lives of others unless it conforms to whatever the it thinks the natural order is supposed to be. Black is a color that seeks power and will do so via basically any means necessary. Due to Black's power hungry and amoral philosophy it doesn't care about what role it's "supposed to be" in the ecosystem or society. Black is constantly aiming for the top and it doesn't resign itself to being prey if it knows it has the chance to be a predator. There's also the fact that Green is a color that often believes in things like destiny and a predetermined order while Blue and Black have a more free will and life is what you make of it attribute to them. This is all to say that Black as a color

does whatever it can to gain more power and strength. So by proxy it makes sense that it would be the color most likely to turn to things like vampirisms. Becoming a vampire allows all kinds of superpowers and abilities and while it has its downsides, like needing to feed on people, that's a price that a lot of Black-aligned characters would be will to pay. Vampires can also be seen as unnatural or monstrous, and in that sense it shows how Black is willing to ignore things like holiness or the natural order to get what it needs.

This sort of logic also applies to some of the other creatures associated with Black, such as zombies. Ultimately, Black is a color that is totally willing to become something like an unholy demon, lich, spirit or even a vampire if they can insure it will grant them more power.



In a “Planeswalker’s Guide to Innistrad” we learn that vampires’ attitudes towards humans is very skewed and self-centered. They also see themselves as both saviors and keepers of humanity who had to make “sacrifices” such as surrendering their mortality and relationship with their human brethren. We are told that their demeanor towards humans is “similar to that of a rich philanthropist toward a pauper (except they occasionally drain the pauper of blood).” So while thinking of yourself as some sort of savior or keeper of humanity would often make someone have some sort of White-alignment in the color identity we can see that in the case of the vampires that they see themselves as basically better than, or above, humans for various reasons. We also know that a lot of the vampires have a very hedonistic lifestyle and will drink the blood of, and kill, way more humans than necessary (in fact they straight up hunt down humans for sport, among other things). So ultimately the vampires are definitely more concerned with being the ones in control or being at the top of the food chain rather than actually helping

humans. We are also told that “The social lives of vampires are every bit as treacherous and debauched as those of royal courts.” This sort of constant vying for power and use of underhanded tactics is basically what you are almost always going to get if you have a faction that has so many characters of the Black-alignment. All of them are by default going to be power hungry and will do anything to obtain the power they want. The vampires are also described as tending to want “...only the finest clothing, the finest weapons and armor, the finest furnishings and transport” which once again ties into Black’s power hungry nature and want to be number one.

On Innistrad we see something interesting with the vampires. That being that the faction actually has a lot of Mono-Red-aligned vampires within it.



As always, I think the best way to find out how a normally Black-aligned tribe could end up Mono-Red on any given plane is to look at the philosophical agreements that the color the tribe normally falls under has with the color we are trying to put them under along with putting those agreements in a physiological or psychological trait the tribe has. In the case of vampires I believe the trait that makes them Red is their hunger and their want to feed and the philosophical agreement comes from both Black and Red colors believing that you should do what you want. You see, Red as a color is relatively straight forward. It basically believes that you should follow and act on whatever you it is you feel. If you feel like crying then cry, if you feel like fighting some then fight, if you feel like running away then run, if you feel laughing then laugh and if you feel like eating something then eat.

Which brings me to my next point. If Red is all about following your emotions and doing what you want then what part of vampires does this connect to? Why it's their hunger.



A hunger and craving for human blood is something that almost all vampires have linked to their being. So it makes sense that if you were to have Mono-Red aligned vampires that this theme of hunger would become more pronounced. Since Red is all about doing what you want, when the color's philosophy is combined with the hunger vampires often feel on Innistrad you get a group of vampires who will feed whenever they want to. The key thing to remember is that they usually feed when they FEEL like eating not when they NEED to eat. This means that many of them may end up drinking the blood of humans even when they don't have, and we do know that there is a problem with vampires killing too many humans.

Now let's look at how Innistrad's vampires manifest the colors in a combined manner. Black-Red is a combination that can often manifest as an extremely hedonistic color combination. The reason for this is because you are basically combining Black's selfish put yourself first attitude with Red's willingness to just do what it feels like. So you can end up with someone who is willing to do whatever they want even at the cost of or to the detriment of others, and any rules or morals that tell them otherwise be damned. Black and Red are also both enemies of White and the reason for this is because they are all about putting your own interests first. Red says to do what YOU feel like doing and Black says that YOU should put yourself first. Red also doesn't like making self sacrifices for people it has no emotional connection with and Black tries to avoid making sacrifices for anyone else it unless it has to. Which runs counter

to White believing that sometimes people need to give something up for the benefit of society or the world as a whole.



I believe this aspect plays into the Innistradian vampires in two main ways. First is their aristocratic nature/culture and second is their hunger(as mentioned before in their Red alignment). On Innistrad a bit of the culture we know about the vampires is described in “A Planeswalker’s Guide to Innistrad” in which it says “Vampires visit each other to conduct parties, feasts, romances, entertainments, and so on. Grudges and betrayals are as much a source of amusement to them as they are a serious matter, and keeping track of vampiric trysts and enmities would be a full-time job.” We know that Black-Red is philosophy that often leans very heavily into enjoying yourself and in the culture of the vampires we are seeing this manifesting in the form of their many parties, feasts, romances entertainment and excessive lavish expenses. All these lavish events and events are heavily tied to strong emotions like excitement, hunger, love, etc., and a Black-Red aligned character being some sort of party animal is nothing new.



The fact that, for the most part, they find grudges and betrayals to be a source of entertainment probably also ties into their lavishly hedonistic life style and values.



One of Black-Red's biggest weaknesses is that it usually has a lack of self-control. This can be seen in the vampire's previously mentioned hunger, excess killings and their conflict with Sorin Markov.



Most of the vampires refuse to restrain themselves or their feeding and will constantly feed on, and kill way more people than they need to. This was leading to a problem where humans were being driven to extinction, which is a big problem for vampires because if there are no humans left to feed on they would be forced to feed on each other in order to survive (which does not sound like an ideal situation). However, a majority of them still refused to slow down on their feeding and slaughtering. This forced Sorin Markov to take drastic measures and create the archangel Avacyn as a defender of humanity in order to maintain the balance between the humans and vampires, and by extension the balance between humans and other monsters on Innistrad too.



Unsurprisingly, a lot of vampires were pretty pissed that not only had a fellow vampire made it so they could not feed on humans whenever they want but now an uber-powerful angel running around that would kill them if they made a wrong move. Thus, they considered him a traitor to their race. This conflict between Sorin and his fellow vampires can also be seen in their color identities, the vampires tend to be Black and/or Red while Sorin is White-Black. As we know White is an enemy color of both Black and Red because White is a philosophy that focuses on the bigger picture and greater good. White believes that in the world there isn't enough resources for everyone to get what they WANT but there is enough for everyone to get what they NEED. This also ties into White's themes of self-sacrifice since not getting everything you want means you are making some sort of sacrifice so that everyone else has a chance to prosper. This ties into Sorin because he realizes that there are enough humans to feed all the vampires on Innistrad IF all the vampires keep the feeding closer down to that of a minimum and don't needlessly slaughter or kill humans. The vampires want to drink blood to their hearts content but they NEED to restrain themselves. White is also a color that believes in working together and helping others. It knows that there are some people who can't do things on their own and thus need laws, rules, help or guidelines to help guide them in the right direction. This can sort of be seen with Avacyn being made to help prevent vampires from feeding on all the humans. Sorin does also

have Black in his color identity which could represent two things. First of all, while Sorin is technically helping humans and using White-aligned means to get the job done he is still ultimately doing it for selfish reasons. The Black in his alignment could also represent him using any means necessary to get the job done. One of the ways White-Black philosophy can manifest is via a character who is trying to achieve White's goal of peace through Black's method of using any method necessary. Which can also be seen with how Avacyn is a creation that kills monsters such as vampires in order to protect humans and by extension to protect the vampires from themselves. A bit of White's self-sacrifice theme can also be seen in Sorin's story since he ended up making himself an outcast for the greater good of Innistrad. This could also be tied to the Black-aligned part of Sorin's philosophy since Black is a color that is willing to sacrifice things in order to get what it wants/needs to happen.



Mechanically speaking, the vampires on Innistrad don't have any keywords specific to them. However, at least in Midnight Hunt, they do have a clear mechanical idea. That being that many vampires care about your opponent losing life and often have Spectacle-esque affects. In case you don't know, Spectacle is the keyword of the Cult of Rakdos in Return to Ravnica and it makes spells cheaper if an opponent lost life that turn. Now when I mean Spectacle-esque I don't mean that the vampires reduce their casting cost after an opponent has

been hurt but rather that they come with a triggered effect, buff or enter the battlefield trigger if you have managed to damage your opponent.



Flavorwise their damaged based mechanics probably ties into both the feeding nature of the vampires and their over the top and extravagant aristocratic demeanor. The vampires on Innistrad tend to love to feed and they also love to sort of make a show/theatric out of things. They find

Falkenrath Marauders 3  



Creature — Vampire Warrior 

Flying, haste
Whenever Falkenrath Marauders deals combat damage to a player, put two +1/+1 counters on it.

No slinking in the dark for them, no luring whispers. They claim their prey in the speed and glory of the hunt.

— James Ryman 2/2

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Mounted Dreadknight 4 



Creature — Vampire Knight 

Trample
Mounted Dreadknight enters the battlefield with a +1/+1 counter on it if an opponent lost life this turn.

Markov vampires cultivate an image of such decadent elegance that it can be easy to forget they can field a deadly fighting force.

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A lot of vampires also tend to dress in clothes that are mostly Black and/or Red which is helps act as a visual indicator to the us(the audience) of their connection to the Black and Red alignments.

Well, that's all for now. I hope this article didn't suck as much as a vampire and in honor of our new vampiric overlords I ask who is your favorite vampire from a mechanical, flavor and/or character perspective.

Oh, and one last thing. As you may have noticed we have officially done a brief covering of every major tribe on Innistrad. Here's a list of the previous articles if you want to see them.

Werewolves-

<https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/662623213059276800/the-taste-of-innistrads-werewolves>

Humans-

<https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/662755543203643392/the-taste-of-humans-on-innistrad>

Angels- <https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/663299115099308033/the-taste-of-innistrads-angels>

Spirits- <https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/664030257036361728/the-taste-of-innistrads-spirits>

Zombies-

<https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/664566115054256128/the-taste-of-innistrads-zombies>

Now, I do plan to write some more stuff about Magic the Gathering in the future and because I really enjoy writing these I've decided to go back to the basics. That's right, I'm going to cover the color philosophies of Magic the Gathering and once I cover the colors and their various combinations I will go back to covering how these philosophies manifest within, various

tribes, groups and factions throughout the multiverse and how the color alignments can be used to weave a narrative/story. I do plan for these writings to be longer, and have more sources, in order to be more indepth but that also means that it will take longer to write. Not to mention I'm cooking up some Fate related articles that will also slow the process down a tad, and on top of that I also have schools and clubs to attend to. If I had to give an estimation I would say to probably start expecting a Magic the Gathering writing every two weeks at the fastest but I should be able to guarantee that I can have at least something Magic related each month, and with that I bid you fair well.

The Taste of Innistrad's Vampires Addendum

So a while back I wrote about the different tribes on Innistrad and their color identities, and that was before Crimson Vow. As you guys probably know, Crimson Vow added a color to the color alignment of the vampir faction. That color being White and I figured I'd talk about it a little, also i just wanted to say called it:

<https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/666905519030747136/douglysium-valvadis-thats-a-great-question#notes>. But anyway lets get to the analysis, and if you haven't read the previous article you should do so of course(<https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/664656723908362240/the-taste-of-innistrads-vampires>).

Honestly, there isn't really that much to say since I already covered like 2/3rds of the faction's color identity previously. The presence of White in their color identity could be attributed to a point I previously mentioned about how the vampires see themselves as some sort of savior of humanity.



However, it is probably more likely that the introduction represents the vampires utilizing a philosophy with White-aligned means as a way of achieving their hedonistic and power hungry goals, kind of like if you took the Orzhov Syndicates emphasis on tradition, rules and laws along with their White-Black color alignment and then threw in some Red to add a bit of hedonistic desires.

Tithe Taker 1



Creature — Human Soldier

During your turn, spells your opponents cast cost 1 more to cast and abilities your opponents activate cost 1 more to activate unless they're mana abilities.

Afterlife 1 (When this creature dies, create a 1/1 white and black Spirit creature token with flying.)

2/1

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RNA • EN AARON MILLER

Orzhov Enforcer 1



Creature — Human Rogue

Deathtouch

Afterlife 1 (When this creature dies, create a 1/1 white and black Spirit creature token with flying.)

"You'll pay what you owe, with your money or your life."

1/2

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RNA • EN MATT STEWART

Havoc Festival 4



Enchantment

Players can't gain life.

At the beginning of each player's upkeep, that player loses half his or her life, rounded up.

"We can't control enemies who have no regard for their own survival."
—Arrester Lavinia, Tenth Precinct

Johannes Voss

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This can be seen best in the story of Crimson Vow itself. The story revolves around Olivia Voldaren attempting to marry Edgar Markov. Now she's not doing this out of love, morality or for the sake of tradition or anything but rather to form a pact with the Markovs that would allow her to take control over Innistrad and its vampire families.



So basically her goals of power and hedonism have not changed which still keeps her firmly in Black-Red for the same reason the many vampires from this faction are. However, her goal of using structure and tradition seems to be attracting vampires that wish to use White-aligned means and structure to potentially secure power or their hedonistic ways.



There are of course vampires that are actually trying to do what they view as the morally right thing, with characters like Odric battling between the more Red-aligned hedonism created by their vampiric instinct to indulge in and consume blood and White-aligned restraint and ideals of morality.



But there are other vampires just have a really twisted sense of what is morally right and wrong.

