

## LAWYERS AND VAMPIRES: CULTURAL HISTORIES OF LEGAL PROFESSION

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*“How does an attorney sleep? First he lies on one side, and then he lies on the other side?”*

*“How many lawyers does it take to screw a light bulb? Three. One to Climb the ladder. One to shake it. And one to sue the ladder company.”*

*What are lawyers good for? They make car salesmen look honest.”*

**L**awyers have always been the subject of satire and stereotyped by writers, artists and popular culture as self-serving pettifoggers, propagating litigation and concerned only with acquisition of wealth not with the upholding of the rule of law. There have been many negative notions regarding the law profession. And this book seeks to point out these issues and presents a balance between lawyers as role models and lawyers as vampires.

*Lawyers and Vampires* contains thirteen essays, authored by different history and legal authorities. The essays present a study of the cultural history of lawyers and their cultural significance in society. They describe and analyze the significant aspects of the cultural history of the legal profession in Canada, England, Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway and Finland. They present a simplified

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angle of the complex ways in which lawyers are imaginatively and institutionally constructed.

The first part of the book addresses the formation of lawyers by way of two contrasting papers. David Lemmings' essay "Ritual, Majesty, and Mystery: Collective Life and Culture among English Barristers, Serjeants and Judges, c.1500-c.1830" describes and dissects the decline of the traditional rituals of a legal elite—their dress, their customs, their dining requirements and the like. In tracing this decline, Lemmings illuminates decisive developments in the structure and culture of the legal profession and its connections with the state and the English people. Lemmings essentially argues that the changes in the ceremonial life of the profession are indicative of the way in which the collective life of the legal profession was being privatized by the middle classes. In Ann Fidler's essay "A Dry and Revolting Study: the Life and Labors of the Antebellum Law Students," she provides a fascinating account of the life and images of antebellum law students in the United States. She uses textual analysis to analyze the cultural constructs that shaped the law student's experience: the rules, myths, expectations and illusions generated from within and without the legal profession.

The second part of the book examines the relationship between lawyers and the liberal state in Continental Europe. The authors in this part of the book discuss the different legal systems of Europe and the role of the lawyer in these respective legal systems. From "legal profession" to "professionalisation"—this was the trend in Europe. The legal profession is both an institution as well as a profession in the continent.

The third part of the book contains essays which tackle the issue of lawyers' morality and their alleged avarice for wealth. It starts off with John Savage's study of the clash between the ideals of virtue and wealth in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Parisian Bar. Jean-Louis Halperin's essay undertakes the first detailed quantitative and qualitative study of French lawyer's fees in the nineteenth century. Like English Barristers, French lawyers treated their fees as honoraria rather than as salary. Halperin also points out that lawyers were allowed to charge their affluent clients high fees and their less well-off clients lower fees on the principle that lawyers should be put in the same social plane as their clients. This principle maintained the profession's claim to independence, honor and paternalism. Anne McGillivray's essay treats Bram Stoker's

Dracula (1897) as a legal novel and explores the text to reveal competing conceptions of lawyering and the legal professions amid a fear of modernity, moral degeneration and the growing disjunction between law and morality. David Applebaum's essay gives a study of the birth and development of major French labor union of judges and how this union contributed positively to different sectors of society.

The book parts with a series of essays on Lawyers and Colonialism. The essays chronicle different periods in history in which the legal profession was under significant stress.

In late-nineteenth century, a young man entering the Bar represented an honorable profession, and was highly regarded as social status tied with moral standards—quite similar to what lawyers should be until this day. As the integrity of lawyers is being doubted, the authors point out several flaws as well as ideal traits of lawyers in order to understand the nature and lifestyle of the legal profession. By dwelling on the historical significance of the legal profession, *Lawyers and Vampires* illustrates its diversity through a cultural approach.

The book is useful in understanding what the legal profession essentially is, given the fact that myriad of negative preconceptions have been attached to it. It is helpful in perceiving the profession for what it really is and not as it is superficially, if not ridiculously, depicted in the media and popular culture. It helps in making both those within and without the legal profession understand and see that the profession is not one in which moral values and the upholding of the rule of law are disregarded in favor of wealth, but a profession in which independence, honor, dignity and decency are attached, and that the maintaining of the majesty of the law is always a primary concern. Looking at the profession through that lens, lawyers—even law students—receive the respect that they duly deserve and thus they would be able to discharge their duties more effectively and responsibly, without being harassed with such negative notions, ridicule, and prejudices.