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# DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

„The Beauty of Living Death. Analysing the  
Representations of Vampires, Their Style and Way  
of Life in Literature, Films and TV- Series“

Verfasserin

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, 2013

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 343

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

Diplomstudium Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Betreuerin :

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## **Acknowledgements**

I owe a great deal to a lot of people, friends and family who were of great help and support. Without you, this paper would never have been possible. Special gratitude belongs to the following:

First of all, I would like to thank Ao. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Eva Mueller-Zettelmann who inspired and encouraged my research. Her professional guidance and support have been of immense help and significance for me. I could not have wished for a better tutor and I am in great debt to her for her patience and contribution.

Lukas Rieser, my dearest friend and editor of my work. You cannot even imagine how grateful I am to you. Thank you for believing in me and especially for your advice and motivation. I will never forget some of your comments that made me laugh during the late night hours of writing.

My beloved Martin Aanestad, thank you for your patience! I know it was a rough time, and I might have been unbearable at the times, but you have always been by my side and gave me strength and faith in my abilities. I love you very much!

I am very grateful to my dearest little sister, Polina Morozova. Thank you for your love, understanding and long, sleepless hours of film-watching and discussion. You are absolutely wonderful and I am happy to have you here. I love you!

I am in great debt to my beloved parents: Alexander Morozov and Elizaveta Elizarova. You have been always there for me. I will never forget your support and encouragement. You have made it possible. I love you very much and I miss you a lot.

## Abstract

Diese Diplomarbeit ist ein Beitrag zur Frage nach den Ursachen der in den letzten zehn bis zwanzig Jahren gewachsenen Popularität von Vampiren als Thema der zeitgenössischen Kulturproduktion. Das Hauptaugenmerk liegt hierbei auf die Veränderungen des Vampirbildes der *Gothic Novels* hin zu modernen visuellen Darstellungen in der Populärkultur, insbesondere in Hinblick auf charakteristische Eigenschaften von Vampirfiguren wie deren Lebensstil und Kleidung.

In Kapitel 1 werden Kernthemen und konkrete kulturwissenschaftliche Ansätze zum Thema *Visual Culture* beziehend auf Kino, Film und TV-Serien zusammengefasst. Von besonderer Relevanz für diese Arbeit ist das Konzept des *Cinematic Mode of Production* nach Jonathan Beller und die von ihm postulierten Verbindungen zwischen industrieller Produktion, dem Kapital und der Aufmerksamkeit des Zuschauers. Weitere für die Analyse zentrale Punkte sind die „Lust am Schauen“, der basierend auf Laura Mulveys wegweisender Arbeit diskutiert wird, sowie eine die (Un)möglichkeit von Wahrheit im Medium Film.

Im darauf folgenden empirischen Teil wird eine Reihe kultureller Artefakte mit Vampirthematik anhand der vorgestellten Theorien im Kontext ihrer jeweiligen historischen und kulturellen Hintergründe analysiert. Kapitel 2 befasst sich mit dem Vampirbild in der *Gothic Novel* anhand von John Polidoris 1819 erschienener Kurzgeschichte *The Vampire*, der ersten in englischer Sprache veröffentlichten Vampirgeschichte. In Kapitel 3 werden, als Beispiele für die cinematische Umsetzung des Vampirthemas, die auf Ann Rices Romanen basierenden Filme *Interview with the Vampire* und *Queen of the Damned* analysiert; Kapitel 4 ist den TV-Serien *Blood Ties* und *Moonlight* gewidmet. Anhand dieser Werke wird die Entstehung des gegenwärtigen, im kulturellen *Mainstream* verankerten, Vampirbildes ausgehend von Literatur über Kino und Fernsehen nachgezeichnet, und gezeigt, welche Techniken zu seiner Realisierung und weiteren Popularisierung angewandt werden.

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## Introduction

The idea of conducting academic research into the vampire topic has been on my mind for quite a while. Indeed, my interest in the fictional undead dates back to my experiences of gothic subculture and to a period of belonging to the gothic scene. Whereas my initial idea was to focus on the vampire in literature, this expanded with a development in our society. During the last ten to twelve years I have observed the transformation and transition of the vampire image from an existence predominantly within the domain of gothic music, film and culture, to becoming one of the most popular and widespread themes in film, music, fashion, television, and of course, literature - even including children's books - in a much broader sense. This continuously growing popularity of an originally dark, monstrous, terrifying and even horrific figure led me to question the reasons behind such growth. Asking myself why vampires are so popular *nowadays* then led to the next, logical question: why *vampires*, as opposed to any other mythical, occult or supernatural creature that gradually became a symbol of fashion, style and desire in contemporary culture? What techniques are at work behind the popularity and further promotion of the undead? All these questions stimulated and motivated my research on the vampire topic, resulting in this thesis.

The title of this paper is: *The Beauty of Living Death. Analysing the Representations of Vampires, Their Style and Way of Life in Literature, Films and TV-Series*. As stated above, the paper is concerned with the investigation of the vampire image and its current popularity. It is impossible to include every work of vampire literature or film in one thesis; therefore I have constructed my analysis around some of the most prominent examples of the undead in cultural history. However, before I proceed to the details, I would like to explain that the title of my thesis should be understood on two levels. Firstly, 'the beauty of living death' applies to the visual aesthetics of the immortal figures, including descriptions in the works of literature as well as cinematic representations. In this context, the title is employed to show the transformations of the image through its popularisation and to investigate the possible reasons for that phenomenon. Secondly, the title is also linked to the growing popularity of vampires as expressed through modern mass culture. The image of the vampire has become an integral part of mainstream and popular culture. Along the way, it has lost its original meaning, while morphing and acquiring new

and, in parts, completely different symbolic connotations. In post-modernity, vampires have become an idealised image of life, therefore the phrase ‘the beauty of living death’ is also employed to illustrate this transformation of the vampire’s original meaning.

As the vampire image is interconnected with certain cultural and social connotations, I have employed cultural theory for my analysis. The first chapter of my paper is devoted to visual culture. In this chapter I define the term, and identify the field of study, subject matter and thesis (referred to as *counter thesis* in the following chapter) of visual culture. My investigation of the processes of meaning production draws on the work of Jonathan Beller and his notion of the cinematic mode of production. This is followed by a discussion of cinema in the context of visual culture. Vampire popularity is closely linked to the concept of pleasure, and in particular to the pleasure of looking and how these processes are set in motion and employed in cinema. The topic of cinematic pleasure leads us to the visual representations of men and women in film and their roles in the pleasure-producing machinery, as well as the processes of audience identification. The final topic of the cultural part of this thesis is the connection between cinema and reality, followed by a discussion of the possibility or impossibility of cinematic truth.

In my analysis of the concepts enumerated above I begin with the earliest example of a ‘beautiful vampire’, created by John Polidori in his 1819 story *The Vampyre*. I begin by investigating the cultural setting of Polidori’s story by defining its historical, ideological and literary contexts and its vampire image. For that purpose I have considered the main dates, events and ideas of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and their development in cultural history in terms of the Enlightenment and the Gothic as dominant movements of the period. The discussion then proceeds from a definition of the Gothic to the literary characteristics of the movement and their manifestation in *The Vampyre*. I close this section by considering the image of the vampire as a Gothic element.

The following chapters of my thesis are concerned with the vampire image in post-modernity, i.e. the visual representations of the undead in cinematic and television productions. As part of my analysis I consider one of the classics of vampire film, *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), based on the *Vampire Chronicles* created by Ann Rice. The focus will be centred on the vampire Lestat, one of the film’s main protagonists and the central figure in the next movie I investigate, *Queen*

of *the Damned* (2002). The image of the vampire in filmic adaptations will be explored in terms of the visual effects employed and the resulting semantisations. Furthermore, we will observe which characteristics of Polidori's vampire are still in use, and which are already extinct or have been transformed in both films.

The final part of my analysis is concerned with vampire TV-series, namely *Blood Ties* and *Moonlight*, as symbolic implementations of the image of the immortal in the mainstream. Although it goes without saying that filmic productions are also considered part of popular culture, it is TV-series which, in my opinion, represent the global acceptance and popularity of vampire protagonists. In terms of TV-series, the vampire undergoes a process of domestication and adaptation for the general viewing public. To identify the techniques and means of this phenomenon, I am going to focus my attention on the characteristics and plots, as well as the possible changes of the vampire meanings in TV-series featuring the undead.

## **1. Visual Culture as an Analytical Approach to Cinema, Film and Image<sup>1</sup>**

The first chapter of my paper is concerned with the tools cultural theory provides and which formed the basis for my analytical exploration of the image of the vampire in literature, film and television.

As a large part of this investigation focuses on the visual representation of the immortal, it is vital to have an understanding of the terms of visual culture. Given the multitude of books that deal with the subject of visual culture, I have chosen to concentrate on the work of Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, combined with the analysis of Irit Rogoff, as these provide a very clear and logically structured definition of the term 'visual culture' itself, while establishing the connection between 'visual' culture and cultural theory in a wider sense. As we proceed, I identify the subject matter of visual culture, which W.J.T. Mitchell explains and exemplifies in his article "Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture" (2002), and in which he refers to the eight counter theses of visual culture.

Another important topic discussed in this chapter is the cinematic mode of production and its implications for the meaning production process as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sturken and Cartwright "Introduction to Practices of Looking", 27-33.



relation between the viewer's attention and capital. This concept is introduced and elaborated by Jonathan L. Beller in his work "Kino-I, Kino-World" (2002) and further illustrated by his discussion on cinema and the cinematic industry.

The understanding of cinema and cinematic production is interconnected with the pleasure of looking, and consequently the concept of scopophilia. This idea is the main focus of Laura Mulvey's article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), which discusses the pleasure of looking and its representation in the contemporary film industry through the portrayal of men and women. One of the last subjects that will be observed in this chapter is the possibility of cinematic reality in the context of the contemporary digital cinema and film industry. Lev Manovich presents a profound and logical analysis of this issue in his work "What is Digital Cinema?" (1995).

It goes without saying that our contemporary world is filled with visual images. Moreover, images are essential for our processes of representation, meaning production and communication. It can also be claimed that, over the last two centuries, visual rather than textual or oral media have taken over the dominant role in the culture of the Western world and, as will be illustrated later, in global culture as a whole. Furthermore, in their article "Introduction to Practices of Looking", Sturken and Cartwright claim that even the stronghold of the printed press, namely the newspaper, has implemented images, and by the end of the twentieth century even colour images, to enhance the meaning of the printed material as well as to attract the reader's attention. Recently, images have acquired more important informational and symbolic content, although it would be erroneous to assume that previously images were mere illustrations. Thus, television, which is a form of media that incorporates image and sound, has replaced the once dominant aural media of radio and as a consequence established itself as an essential media component of contemporary daily life. Computers, which were initially designed for calculation as well as the production of texts, numbers, and symbols, have been modified to be compatible with the increase in production and exchange of complex visual data. It cannot be denied that hearing and touching are essential for our experience and communication. Yet, recently, "our values, opinions, and beliefs have increasingly come to be shaped in powerful ways by the many forms of visual culture that we encounter in our day-to-day lives" (Sturken and Cartwright 27). To illustrate this statement one must only

consider the current position of literature in relation to cinema, film, and increasingly television, and how literature has seen a large part of its potential audience attention drawn away by the latter three phenomena. This also implies that the leading role in the meaning producing process is now secured by synthesized media.

Sturken and Cartwright claim that the process described above has a contradictory effect. On the one hand, the increasing dominance of the visual stimulates fascination with the image. Yet, on the other hand, it also raises certain concerns over the importance of the visual, namely discussions relating to the potential power behind the image or employment of the image as a means of domination and control, discussions that date back as far as the time of Plato. Studies and theories of visual culture are primarily concerned with our understanding of the vast assortment of visual media, how we use images for self-expression, communication, learning and even experience pleasure. So what is visual culture? To proceed any further in the discussion of visual culture at this point it is essential to define the term.

### **1.1 Visual Culture: Definition and Meaning**

This chapter is concerned with the definition of visual culture. As the starting point of my analysis, I will define the term ‘culture’ and then proceed to the visual aspect of this field of study.

On the one hand one can define visual culture in terms of the various media forms extending from the works of fine art to popular film and television, advertising, to visual data applied in sciences, law, and medicine (see Sturken and Cartwright 27). Nevertheless, the term is not so clear-cut as it might seem at first glance. Visual culture is interconnected with the term culture in general, and therefore, according to Raymond Williams, to one of the most complex words in the English language (see Sturken and Cartwright 28).

The term culture in its anthropological definition means an entire way of life, referring to a variety of activities in society (see Sturken and Cartwright 29). In this context, culture would include popular music, print media, art, and literature; based on the fact that all these notions constitute the daily lives of people as do their relationships, cooking, sports, and kinships (see Sturken and Cartwright 29). Therefore, the term culture is linked primarily to the idea of popular and mass culture (see Sturken and Cartwright 29) as well as to the daily practices and activities of

people. However, this definition of the term provides very limited insight into the subject matter of contemporary cultural studies that define culture primarily as a meaning-producing process (see Sturken and Cartwright 29). In other words, the focus of cultural studies is centred on the practices of culture (see Sturken and Cartwright 29) and the meanings deriving from them.

Sturken and Cartwright define culture as “the shared practices of a group, community, or society, through which meaning is made out of the visual, aural, and textual world of representations” (see Sturken and Cartwright 29). This understanding of culture is based on the work of Stuart Hall, who determines culture as a “set of processes and practices through which individuals and groups come to make sense of those things” (see Sturken and Cartwright 29). Thus, culture is the process of production and exchange of meanings between the members of the group or the society as a whole (see Sturken and Cartwright 29). According to Hall, it is the process of participating in culture that gives meaning to people, objects, and events (see Sturken and Cartwright 29). To put it differently, we produce meanings, create representations based on the way we use things, how we talk, feel and think about them (see Sturken and Cartwright 29). At this point of the discussion it is important to observe that culture in its essence is a process, and its contributing practices and interpretations are by no means predetermined and fixed (see Sturken and Cartwright 29). Therefore, meanings are derived from both the cognitive activities of the viewers and from the process of negotiation and interaction between the individuals inside a particular culture, as well as between the individuals and the artefacts, images and texts created either by them or the others (see Sturken and Cartwright 29). Given this, it can be claimed that interpretations are as effectual in their impact on a group or culture’s mutual worldview as are the cultural artefacts, including of course the visual ones, which generate them (see Sturken and Cartwright 30). Thus culture can be determined as a fluid and interactive process derived from social practices and not exclusively from images, texts, or interpretations (see Sturken and Cartwright 30).

The understanding of culture as a process of meaning production, which incorporates cultural artefacts and forms of media, as well as daily activities, is a key concept for the further development of my paper. Hence in the course of my thesis I am going to consider various cultural artefacts, representing literature, cinema and TV-series, which are interconnected to different daily and even social practices. The focus of my paper is to observe which meanings have been produced in the cultural

processes involving those artefacts. However, based on the notion that visual media of various genres is especially significant in terms of contemporary culture, I am going to consider those artefacts through the prism of their connotations defined in terms of visual culture specifically. Therefore it is important to condense the general definition of culture to visual culture.

Based on the definition of culture discussed in the paragraphs above, it can be deduced that visual culture is also a meaning-producing process which accentuates its attention on a cross-disciplinary understanding of images, incorporating for example not solely picture orientated sciences but also audio, space and history. When we discuss visual culture we should, according to Irit Rogoff, consider it on several levels. At one level, visual culture is centred on vision and the visual world in terms of meaning production, establishment and continuance of aesthetic values, as well as culturally based gender stereotypes and power relations (see Rogoff 24). At another level, perceiving vision as an area where cultural meanings are constructed, leads to the entire range of analyses and interpretations dealing with audio, the spatial and psychic dynamics of spectatorship (see Rogoff 24). In other words, vision and visual culture incorporate both image as well as audio, space and the psychology of the spectators as meaning-producing aspects. And according to Rogoff, “visual culture opens up an entire world of intertextuality in which images, sounds and spatial delineations are read on to an through one another [sic], lending ever-accruing layers of meanings and of subjective responses to each encounter we might have with film, TV, advertising, art works, buildings or urban environments” (Rogoff 24).

For the purpose of further elucidating the notion of visual culture it is important to refer to the eight counter-theses on visual culture, derived by W.J.T. Mitchell in his article “Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture” (see Mitchell 90-91):

1        Visual Culture stimulates consideration of the differences between art and non-art, visual and verbal signs, and relation between various sensory and semiotic modes.

2        Visual Culture also involves “a meditation on blindness, the invisible, the unseen, the unseeable, and the overlooked; also on deafness and the visible language of gesture; it also compels attention to the tactile, the auditory, the haptic, and the phenomenon of synesthesia” (Mitchell 90).

3 Visual culture is not restricted to the revision of images or media, but also includes the everyday practices of seeing and showing, particularly those that we consider immediate or delayed.

4 “There are no visual media. All media are mixed media, with varying ratios of senses and sign-types” (Mitchell 91).

5 The incorporeal image and the materialised artefact are constant aspects in the field of research of visual culture. The relation between image, picture and a work of art in visual culture can be compared to the relation of species to specimens in biology.

6 Our visual era is not as unique in its nature as it might seem at first glance. Moreover, the visual or pictorial turn is an intermittent phenomenon that usually indicates moral or political panic displaced on images and visual media. “Images are convenient scapegoats, and the offensive eye is ritually plucked out by ruthless critique” (Mitchell 91). In terms of my further analysis this statement is illustrated by the image of the vampire that originated in the nineteenth century Gothic as an embodiment of the negative effects of capitalism and preoccupation with materialistic pleasures, and continues to represent some of those features even in the twenty first century.

7 “Visual culture is the visual construction of the social, not just the social construction of vision” (Mitchell 91). In this context the matter of visual nature is an obligatory and essential topic, together with the position of animals both as images and spectators.

8 As far as the political role of visual culture is concerned, it is primarily to criticise deprived of the inviting tendencies towards iconoclasm.

I would like to address a few of the thesis in detail. In his discussion Mitchell refers to the notion of the visual or pictorial turn, which is characteristic of contemporary culture. Mitchell describes the idea as the increasing relevance of visual media and spectacle compared to writing, reading and speech (see Mitchell 92). According to Mitchell, there are contradictory reactions to this development. Thus, some theorists consider the tendency towards the visual as a threat to literacy; whereas another group of scholars perceive the shift with delight as a new and higher form of consciousness predisposed by visual images and media (see Mitchell 92). However, Mitchell also claims that contemporary interest in the visual is not a unique

phenomenon and its examples can be traced though the whole history of mankind (see Mitchell 94). Given this, the pictorial turn can be considered a trope that has been repeated numerous times since antiquity:

When the Israelites ‘turn aside’ from the invisible god to a visible idol, they are engaged in a pictorial turn. When Plato warns against the domination of thoughts by images, semblances, and opinions in the allegory of the cave, he is urging a turn away from the pictures that hold humanity captive and toward the pure light of reason. When Lessing warns, in the *Laocoon*, about the tendency to imitate the effects of visual art in the literary arts, he is trying to combat a pictorial turn that he regards as a degradation of aesthetic and cultural properties. (Mitchell 94)

The appearance and use of the pictorial turn can be seen as a means to distinguish and evaluate specific moments in history when a medium of innovation, a technical invention, or even a new cultural practice “erupts in symptoms of panic or euphoria (usually both) about ‘the visual’” (see Mitchell 94). Among such historical turning points connected to visual images one can mention the invention of photography, of oil painting, of the Internet, of television, as well as of writing and of mimesis (see Mitchell 94).

Another postulate of visual culture which Mitchell considers a myth is the assumption that the domination of the visible is a characteristic trait of contemporary Western culture, initiated by modern inventions and technologies such as television, cinema and photography, which are the central and determining examples of visual culture (see Mitchell 92-93). However, this approach is limited and even outdated. Visual culture should be considered in terms of all the social practices of human visibility, and therefore cannot be restricted to the contemporary Western dominion (see Mitchell 94). It is of great importance to provide an overview of correlations between vision and other senses, namely hearing and touch, and their elaboration within various cultural practices (see Mitchell 94).

This myth leads us to the concept of visual media. From the article by W.J.T. Mitchell it can be derived that the concept of visual media can be applied to differentiate photographs and photograph records, paintings and novels; but simultaneously, it is erroneous to assert that there is a certain class of things that belongs exclusively to visual medium (see Mitchell 95). Mitchell claims it can be deduced that all media are mixed media (see Mitchell 95). This assumption provides a wider focus for research incorporating the analysis of codes, technologies, materials, and perception, as well as circumstances that predispose production and consumption,

constituting the medium (see Mitchell 95). Thus, if we take this approach to literature, instead of defining it as simply a non-visual medium, we can claim that literature possesses visual features, exemplified by various techniques “like ekphrasis and description, as well as in more subtle strategies of formal arrangement” (Mitchell 95), which produce “virtual or imaginative experiences of space and vision that are no less real for being indirectly conveyed through language” (Mitchell 95). This observation is central in terms of the vampire image. The description provided in the written cultural media by Polidori created equally strong effects, impressions, and connotations, as do the clearly visual representations of the immortals on the cinema and TV screen.

The final question to be discussed is that of visual culture and power relations “in which the spectator dominates the visual object and images and their producers exert power over the viewers” (see Mitchell 93). In this context image has been frequently considered as an instrument of domination, seduction, persuasion and deceit, threatening to control the masses and even corrode democratic ideas and institutions (see Mitchell 93, 95). Although Mitchell does not deny that visual culture can be used as an instrument of domination, the author also proposes a new method for its understanding which combines the notions of the image as a means of control and simultaneously the independent source of its own connotations and functions (see Mitchell 96). Based on this approach, visual culture and images will be perceived as mediators in social matters and as possible scenarios, derived from screen images, of our interactions with other humans (see Mitchell 96). In this context, images can be interpreted as tools that enable us to identify with or dissociate ourselves from other people (see Mitchell 96).

According to Mitchell, “the social construction of the visual field has to be continuously replayed as the visual construction of the social field, an invisible screen or lattice-work of apparently unmediated figures that makes the effects of mediated images possible” (Mitchell 96). Therefore, the subject of visual culture cannot be fully investigated based on the traditional disciplines of aesthetics, art history or media studies (see Mitchell 100). It has to be considered as a cross-discipline that employs the resources of the vision-orientated studies and designs its own, innovative and unique field and object of research (see Mitchell 100).

At this point of my discussion I would like to draw attention to the three approaches to visual culture derived by Martina Sturken and Lisa Cartwright in their

work “Introduction to Practices of Looking”. The first approach is based on the usage of various theories to investigate both images and their textual connotations (see Sturken and Cartwright 31). It is considered to be the foregrounding, yet not the only method to perceive the activities of looking (see Sturken and Cartwright 31). Moreover, it enables us to investigate the meaning of the images in terms of the cultural background where they have been constructed (see Sturken and Cartwright 31). The second method is centred on various responses to visual artefacts, and closely connected to the studies of spectators and audiences’ psychological and social modes of looking (see Sturken and Cartwright 31). As can be concluded, “in this approach, the emphasis shifts from images and their meanings to viewers’ practices of looking, and the various and specific ways people regard, use, and interpret images” (Sturken and Cartwright 31). And finally, the third approach deals with the topics of how various media images, texts and programs circulate in different social domains, their transition within and across cultures (see Sturken and Cartwright 31). This aspect is particularly important within the context of increasing globalization (see Sturken and Cartwright 31).

In this chapter I have provided an overview on the subject of visual culture, a subject that cannot be defined in clear-cut terms. However, we have established that visual culture combines both images as well as social practices and audiences’ response to the images themselves. Moreover, the domain of visual media is not delineated as precisely as one might first assume. We have seen that all media are primarily mixed media, and that while analysing cinema and television, one should also investigate the impact of audio aspects of those media genres. However, even literature can be explored as a mixed medium in terms of visual culture. In the Gothic, as will be discussed in the second chapter, the detailed, nearly cinematic, description of settings as well as protagonists is a frequently used technique to create certain meanings as well as effects and emotions. Furthermore, the interest in the visual and images, also referred to as the pictorial turn, is not a unique phenomenon that characterises contemporary Western culture; it has in fact been reoccurring throughout the history of mankind.

## **1.2 The Cinematic Mode of Production**



It is a well-known fact that in the contemporary world a great number of meanings are conveyed visually, in addition to and in combination with orally and textually transmitted meaning (see Rogoff 25). Images do not only contain information, they can also be the source of pleasure or displeasure, they can determine style and power relations, and motivate consumption (see Rogoff 25). Rogoff claims that based on such an influential role of the visual, it is of great importance to understand the techniques behind images, how we interact with them in order to reconstruct the world according to the patterns of our dreams and wishes, or to recite the stories which we carry within us (see Rogoff 26). There are numerous approaches to analysing images and visual culture. However, for the purpose of my research I would like to refer to the concept of the cinematic mode of production, because it draws parallels between the process of meaning construction and cinema, which will be discussed in the course of this work.

The term ‘cinematic mode of production’ was coined and applied to the subject matter of visual culture by Jonathan L. Beller in his famous work “Kino-I, Kino-World. Notes on the Cinematic Mode of Production” (2002). According to Beller, the term defines cinema and its ensuing, and also simultaneous, forms, especially television, video, computers and the Internet, as “deterritorialized factories in which spectators work, that is, in which they perform value-productive labor” (see Beller 60). Moreover, Beller claims that it is based on the cinematic image and its productions preconditioned by the social, psychological and material relations, that we construct our lives (see Beller 60). This statement implies that we are confronted by the image not only on screen, but our daily activities are also highly influenced by the image and, furthermore, imagination and its functions are implemented in our perception of the visual (see Beller 60). “Not only do the denizens of capital labor to [sic] maintain themselves as image, we labor in the image. The image, which pervades all appearing, is the mise-en-scene of the new work” (Beller 60).

The cinematic mode of production implies that cinema has transformed into a kind of social relation that characterises our whole contemporary society (see Beller 60). Cinematic spectatorship first emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as a response to a technological phenomenon, to a manifestation of the industrial revolution in the visual sphere (see Beller 60). Yet, in the course of time it gradually positioned itself as the structural and official model of social and global organisation (see Beller 61). Thus, in our contemporary world, a machine-based perception is

intertwined with our psychological, economical, intuitive, and ideological organisation (see Beller 61). In this context, spectatorship can be considered an expanded synthesis of cultural, economic and psychological aspects that rapidly gained control over human fortune, and which in contemporary society plays a decisive role (see Beller 61). As Beller puts it: “Now, visuality reigns and social theory needs to become film theory” (Beller 61).

Beller claims that in the time of late capitalism, to look is to labour, and our attention is the source and driving power for the value production of late capital (see Beller 61). The image today means the transformation of our attention into capital (see Beller 61).

The historical, universal transformation of the image as an example of a social relation has been exploited recently by large corporations (see Beller 61). Furthermore, Beller claims that even though the further expropriation of the image by capitalization might develop seemingly appealing and seductive characteristics, or possibly result in a devastating outcome for the population, this process as a whole has to be understood as business and is based on the logical development of capital (see Beller 61).

The connection between the visual and the production of capital is a gradual historical process (see Beller 63). Beller illustrates his assumption with his description of the historical development of the relationship between humanity and cinema. Thus he claims that cinema can be perceived as a form of industrialisation that entered the visual aspects of life (see Beller 63). Cinema combines human sensual activity and the production of commodities (see Beller 63). Therefore, according to Beller, cinema can be also viewed as a climax of commodity fetishism that gained its power from the accumulation of the strengthening feeling of repression (see Beller 64).

Given this, it can be claimed that the famous ‘cut’ can symbolise a parallel to assembly-line work, and thus a technique for the “organisation and production of the fetish character of the commodity and then part of a qualitatively new production regime long misnamed consumerism” (Beller 64). The spectators are producing their fetishes in the isolated manufacturing environment of the cinema; and, similar to the factory, in the movie theatre we construct and reconstruct the world along with ourselves (see Beller 64). Based on the assumption that the work process is executed visually through grasping our attention, one can infer that cinema is no longer a

reflection of the social, but is indeed the social, and denotes an image producing machinery in general (see Mirzoeff 19). Thus, cinema becomes a means to reinforce the impact and extend the range of the capital machine (see Beller 66). As a consequence, the cinematic mode of production is transformed into an essential tool to prolong the workday and transmit the production of commodities into the visual sphere, extracting our labour, and paying in enjoyment and entertainment (see Beller 66). What is also of great importance is the fact that, as a result of the process of the cinematic mode of production, even the cultural pathways of gender, race, sexuality, and nation fall under the influence of capitalism, which can be further exploited for its own purposes (see Beller 66).

The process of social adoption of cinematic traits is illustrated both through the cinematic forces in social productions, as well as by the growing number of capitalist institutions which give identity to the subject (see Beller 67). In this context Beller draws a parallel to the observation that during the last few decades people have become increasingly concerned with their image (see Beller 67). According to Beller, it is not a mere figure of speech, but a condensed metaphor, created and utilized by our contemporary consciousness that is, as Beller puts it: “neurotically and now even psychotically pursuing the conditions for its own perpetuation” (see Beller 67). This image-oriented consciousness intensifies the simulation of nearly every aspect of social life in the technological world (see Beller 68).

According to Beller, if we want to reconsider the original notion of cinema, we have to “inscribe the material basis of visibility in the unthought of the image and to disrupt its affect of immediacy, plenitude and truth” (Beller 69). Moreover, the material description of the visual has to include both, technology as well as social relations, psychology, migration, the masses; because even though not everything is an image, nearly everything is influenced by them (see Beller 69).

In the previous paragraphs it has already been mentioned that subjective labour is of great value for the production of images (see Beller 76). However, it is human subjectivity that is interconnected with the circulation of the image in two distinct ways (see Beller 76). Firstly, our gaze strengthens the image and contributes to its power and value (see Beller 76). This assumption can be exemplified by a work of Vincent Van Gogh, whose worth of 50 million dollars is an index of visual value (see Beller 77). The second significant notion in terms of image circulation implies that through our practice of viewing the image, we simultaneously, although minimally,

change ourselves (see Beller 77). Thus, as we express our relation to the image while consuming it, it in turn consumes us (see Beller 77). We can therefore claim that if the production of value and self can be derived from the process of looking, then visual culture must be considered in terms of the evolution and escalation of commodity fetishism produced by the image (see Beller 77).

At this point of the discussion it is important to draw a parallel between cinema and electronic media. Arjun Appadurai in his work "Here and Now" (2002) implies that electronic media create a new aura to the environment, where the modern and the global often appear as two sides of the same coin (see Appadurai 174). While preserving the distance between the audience and the event on the screen, the media simultaneously induce the transformation of daily discourse as they offer new resources and disciplines for the process of meaning construction and creation of imagined selfhoods and worlds (see Appadurai 173- 174). Electronic media provide a foundation for experiments of self-construction by both societies and persons (see Appadurai 174). At the same time they enable various scripts for possible lives, infused with the glamour of stars and fantastic plots, that remain interconnected with the plausibility of news shows, documentaries, etc. (see Appadurai 174). As Appadurai concludes: "Because of the sheer multiplicity of the forms in which they appear (cinema, television, computers, and telephones) and because of the rapid way in which they move through daily life routines, electronic media provide resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project" (Appadurai 174).

The global status of electronic media, and cinema being a part of them, enables the audience to experience the collective reading, criticism and pleasure leading to the phenomenon when a big group of people "begins to imagine and feel things together" (see Appadurai 177). Therefore such instances of shared experiences of mass media, especially film and cinema, can produce certain affiliations of common worship and charisma (see Appadurai 177). This process can be exemplified with the ever-growing worldwide popularisation of vampires. One can even speak of a vampire-culture, which derived from works of literature and was further intensified by vampire films and TV-series. At this point of my work, it is logical to turn to the cinema and film in terms of visual culture.

### 1.3 Cinema in Terms of Visual Culture

As determined in the previous chapter, cinema can be compared to a new order of socially productive labour – attention – and can thus be perceived as a sociological conglomerate that introduces a new form of production and social organisation as well as domination (see Beller 67). This process results in the consecutive chain when production enters the visual and consequently the visual or virtual enters reality (see Beller 67).

According to the cinematic mode of production, cinema cannot be defined as solely an image on screen, or the institutions involved in film production, but also as a union of relations that constitute the numerous projections of the world on the even larger number of screens of our consciousness (see Beller 67). In terms of visual culture cinema can be explained as the production of “instrumental images through the organisation of animated materials that include actors, landscapes, various widgets, and even electrons” (see Beller 67). Cinema is a material practice of global importance, which involves the movement of capital in, through and as image (see Beller 67). Cinema denotes a development towards production, where images organised according to a unified pattern construct the mapping principles for the manufacturing of reality (see Beller 67). What has to be recognised as part of the major principles of cinema is the idea of media’s capitalisation of the aesthetic faculties and imagination of the spectators, through the employment of various artistic techniques to capture viewer’s attention, which is used as capital (see Beller 67).

In his work “Kino- I, Kino - World”, Jonathan L. Beller draws our attention to the book by Christian Metz *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Christian Metz defines the three machines of cinema, namely the outer machine that represents the cinema industry as a whole, followed by the inner machine including the spectator and his psychology, and finally the third machine denoting the cinematic writer (see Beller 64). Moreover, Metz suggests that cinema as an institution is, in its character, a means to coordinate the three machines mentioned above with the simultaneous goal of attaining filmic pleasure (see Beller 64). Metz proceeds in his discussion and argues that cinema is a technique that employs imagination and consequently transforms its audiences by the means of financial response (see Beller 64). The claims expressed by Christian Metz are applicable to the psychoanalytical theories of the cinema, which are based on the assumption that cinema employs the

dynamics of an existing psyche (see Beller 64). Yet, Jonathan Beller contradicts this notion and claims that: “the scope of today’s (counter)revolution – a revolution which at first glance might appear merely as a technological shift – emerges from a reversal of these very terms [that cinema is the technique that employs imagination]: the imaginary is a technique of the cinema, or rather, of meditation generally” (Beller 64). According to Beller, such a turnaround in the cinema results in the further strengthening of deontological processes in the unconscious and therefore reinforces the assumption that the unconscious is in fact the product of the cinema itself (see Beller 64).

Jonathan Beller illustrates his claims with the example of film. Thus, he quotes a legendary Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein who defined a film as “a tractor ploughing over the audience’s psyche” (qtd. in Beller 71). According to Beller, Eisenstein, who was an engineer by training, was in fact one of the first to work with the industrial application of visual technologies to attain the desired meanings (see Beller 71). Eisenstein combined them with the behaviour theories of Pavlov and Taylor, and deployed image as a technique for the “organization of the audiences with the organized material”, thus using the cinema as an extremely productive machine for engineering society (see Beller 71).

### **Cinema and Pleasure (see Mulvey 381- 383)**

The assumption that cinema is closely connected to the organisation of society as well as to our unconscious and psyche, leads us to the role of pleasure in the production of cinema and films. Laura Mulvey examined this connection closely in her work “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”.

Mulvey postulates that cinema is the source of numerous pleasures, scopophilia (also known as pleasure of looking) being among them (see Mulvey 381). Thus, under certain circumstances, looking itself can be a source of pleasure whereas there is also a reverse phenomenon where pleasure is derived from the process of being looked at. The concept of scopophilia originates from *The Three Essays on Sexuality* by Sigmund Freud, where scopophilia has been singled out as one of the constituent instincts of sexuality. Nevertheless, scopophilia is also one of the component instincts of sexuality that exist independently and originates in the erotogenic zones. In Freud’s perception, scopophilia has been linked with perceiving other people as objects, exposed to our controlling and curious gaze. He exemplified his idea

referring to children and their voyeuristic activities, the desire to observe and make sure of the private and forbidden. The initial idea of the analysis was based on the notion that scopophilia was active. However, this idea evolved in the works that followed, and Freud linked his initial pre-genital auto-eroticism of scopophilia with the pleasure of the look transferred to others. This further development is based on the collaboration of the active instinct and its further advance to a more narcissistic form. Furthermore, instinct can be modified under the influence of other factors, for example by the formation of the ego; yet, it continues to exist as the erotic foundation where the pleasure of looking at another person as an object originates. This development might take an extreme turn and therefore transform into a perversion, resulting in obsessive voyeurism.

Based on the description of scopophilia given above, Mulvey claims that cinema is rather distant from the concept, and the world of the clandestine observation of another person. On the one hand, everything we see on the screen is openly manifested for the audience. At the same time, most of mainstream film and the conventions of its production portrays a hermetically isolated world which is magically unfolded in front of our eyes; yet, irrespectively of the presence of the viewing public. The combination of the factors listed contributes to the creation of a feeling of separation within the audience and appeals to their voyeuristic fantasies. Furthermore, the contrast between the darkness of the cinema hall, which also isolates the spectators from each other, and the shining of the screen and the images constructed of light and shade intensify the illusion of voyeuristic separation in the audience. Given this, it can be concluded that, even though a film is being presented and produced for it to be shown and seen, the environment of the broadcast combined with the general narrative conventions creates an illusion that a spectator is looking in on a private world. In her work, Laura Mulvey compares the “position of the spectators in the cinema” to a “repression of their exhibitionism and projection of the repressed desire onto the performer” (Mulvey 382).

Another pleasure stimulated by the cinema is the evolution of narcissistic features of scopophilia, which originate in the fact of cinema satisfying our primal desire for pleasurable looking. It is a well-known fact that the conventions of popular film use human form at the centre of their attention; therefore the notions of space, stories and scale can be treated as anthropomorphic. In cinema, curiosity and the desire to look are intertwined with an allure of likeness and recognition. Thus we can identify

ourselves easily with the human face, human body, the relationship between humans and surroundings, with the visible presence of the person in the world – all that we can see on the screen in the cinema. At this point, Mulvey draws parallels to Jacques Lacan's theory and his mirror phase in the development of personality, which describes the moment a child recognises his own image in the mirror as essential for the further construction of the ego. According to Lacan, the mirror phase occurs at the moment a child's physical aspirations exceed his or her motor ability. Therefore the moment of recognition in the mirror becomes a very pleasant experience, because children perceive their mirror image as more complete and perfect compared to the experience of their own body. Nonetheless, recognition is simultaneously eclipsed by misrecognition. The image in the mirror, even though recognised and apprehended as the reflected body of oneself, is misrecognised as a superior representation and thus placed outside the self as an ideal ego. Such an alienated subject perceived as an ideal ego predisposes future identification with others.

For the discussion of cinema, it is important to stress that it is the image that manufactures the basis of the imaginary, of recognition and misrecognition as well as identification. Therefore it is the image that predisposes the first articulation of the I and consequently of the subjectivity. In other words, it is an instant when a former pleasure of looking clashes with the first notions of self-awareness. This process can be defined as the initiation of a long-lasting love/hate relationship between image and self-image, which has been intensely and numerous expressed through the film and has found its blissful recognition within the cinema audience.

Cinema, however, along with its similarities with the mirror as a frame for the human body and its surroundings, also employs the techniques and structures of fascination that result in temporary loss of ego and at the same time its reinforcement. Mulvey describes the process thus: "The sense of forgetting the world as the ego has come to perceive it (I forgot who I am and where I was) is nostalgically reminiscent of that pre-subjective moment of image recognition" (Mulvey 382-383). Yet, simultaneously, the cinema has established itself as a crucial component in the process of production of ego ideals, especially through film stars. Film stars participate in centring attention on the screen and, at the same time, on a narrated story through which actors depict a complex process of likeness and difference, referring to the ordinary impersonated by the glamorous.



Therefore Mulvey concludes that cinema interconnects two very contradictorily aspects of pleasure derived from looking. The first concept of scopophilia implies the pleasure that arises from using another person as a visual object of sexual stimulation. The second notion evolves from identification with the image viewed and is based on the narcissism and ego construction. In relation to film and cinema, we can, on the one hand, discuss the detachment of the subject's erotic identity from the object on the screen, referring to active scopophilia. Yet, on the other hand, as Mulvey claims, the subject implies the identification of the ego with the object on the screen predisposed by the spectator's fascination with recognition. Thus the first is an effect of sexual instinct whereas the second is connected to the ego's libido. According to Mulvey, Freud perceived these contradictory aspects as interacting and overlaying each other, and the pressure between the drives and self-preservation is divided in relation to pleasure. Although both of these aspects are in fact determining structures, they do not produce any meaning by themselves, but only when attached to an idealisation. Moreover, both have their aims in the indifference to the reality perception, and stimulate eroticised illusions that influence subject worldview and mock the cognitive objectivity.

Throughout its historical evolution cinema achieved a certain kind of illusion of reality, where the antagonistic concepts of libido and ego have created a beautiful fantasy world. Nevertheless, as Mulvey indicates, in reality the cinematic fantasy world obeys the laws of its production. The sexual instincts combined with identification accumulate meanings within the symbolic order that expresses desire. As a consequence, desire created with language initiates the transformation of the instinctual and the imaginary, but its origin continuously comes back to the initial traumatic experience of its birth. Given this, Mulvey concludes that the look, and therefore the image, can be pleasurable in form, but threatening in its content. According to Mulvey, it is the woman and her representation and image that embodies and illustrates this paradox the best.

### **Representations of Woman and Man in the Cinema (see Mulvey 383- 389)**

In her work Laura Mulvey states that in a world dominated by sexual disproportion, the pleasure of looking has been divided between an active male and passive female gaze. The male gaze is decisive and projects its fantasies on the female figure, which is styled consequently. The traditional role of women was

predominantly of an exhibitionist character, meaning that women were meant to be looked at and simultaneously displayed. Therefore even female appearances have been coded in order to produce a strong visual and erotic effect. Thus woman as a sexual object is at the centre of the erotic performance, which extends from the pin-up to striptease.

Mainstream film traditionally combines the spectacle with narrative elements. In this case the presence of woman is a prerogative for a narrative film, however her visual presence usually works in opposition to the flow of the story line. Thus her presence has a tendency of freezing the action in favour of the moment of erotic meditation. Therefore female characters frequently seem alien, and have to be forcefully integrated into the cohesion of the narration. In this context it is important to quote Budd Boetticher:

What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not slightest importance. (Budd Boetticher qtd. in Mulvey 384)

This traditional image of the woman has functioned on two levels: first, as an object of eroticism for the character, usually male, within the screened narrative; and, simultaneously, as an erotic object for the spectators in the audience, employing the changing tension between the looks on both sides of the screen. The device of a show-girl enables the technical union of the two looks without any break in the cohesion of the plot. Thus, a woman performs within the narration (film) and the gazes of the male characters in the film as well as those of the spectators are combined without distortion of the narrative flow. And for a moment the sexual impact of a woman on the screen transfers the film beyond the borders of its time and space and into no-man's land. Thus endowing a female figure with the iconic characteristics.

The heterosexual division into passive and active has also influenced narrative structure. Thus based on the governing principles the male figure cannot bear the connotations of a sexual object; and it can be traced back to the fact that men are reluctant to look at him in an exhibitionist like manner. Nevertheless, the division between the spectacle and the narrative predisposes man's active role in the unfolding of the plot; it is the man who makes things happen.

Because the man is in control of the filmic fantasy, he also bears the representative power. Male characters frequently bear the look of the spectator, thus transmitting it beyond the confines of the screen and neutralising extra-narrative characteristics initiated by the woman as spectacle. This phenomenon has been set in motion and predisposed by the processes that assembled the structure of the film around a chief controlling figure with whom the spectators can identify. While the spectators usually identify with the male protagonist, they transfer their look onto that of their like, their cinematic substitute; therefore the power to control the events expressed by the male protagonist corresponds to the active power of the erotic look which results in the production of a pleasing feeling of authority. Given this, Laura Mulvey claims that male film stars' glamorous traits are not similar to the ones of the erotic object of the gaze, but refer to a more complete, powerful and perfect ideal ego, that derives from the moment of recognition in front of the mirror.

Opposed to women as icons, the active male characters, referred to as the ideal ego of identification, require a three dimensional space where the subject constructs representation of his imaginary being, thus corresponding to the mirror recognition. At this stage the main purpose of the film is to recreate the seemingly natural conditions of human perception as close to reality as possible. The cinema employs various techniques to attain the objective of making the borders of the screen less distinct: camera technology, connected to the focus, camera movements coordinated in accordance with the movements of the protagonist, and invisible editing. Those techniques enable the male protagonist to control the stage of spatial illusion in which he bears the look and initiates the action.

The tensions between the iconic representation of woman in film and conventional techniques employed in the narratives both refer to the look. On the one hand, we have a spectator who gets pleasure from the direct scopophilic activity of looking at the female form depicted on the screen. On the other hand, the spectator is enthralled by the recognised image of his like portrayed in the surroundings of the seemingly natural space. Given this it can be concluded that the scopophilic instinct of pleasure derived from looking at another person as an erotic object, combined with the contradictory processes of identification and ego libido formation, constitute the fundamental rules and mechanisms which form cinema's official features.

### **Cinema and Reality**

So what is contemporary cinema in terms of visual culture? The term combines a great variety of meanings and connotations ranging from sociology to psychology. Thus, according to Jonathan Beller, the cinema is primarily a new form of labour, based on our attention exploited by that capital. Moreover cinema is a meaning producing structure that influences our reality and social organisation. Therefore there is a strong link between the cinema and our unconscious. Furthermore, it has been established that cinema is a means to evoke pleasures such as the pleasure of looking, as well as a means to trigger and set in motion the processes of identification and ego formation, based on recognition.

But what is cinema in terms of its relation to reality? In his discussion “What is Digital Cinema?” Lev Manovich refers to the director Andrei Tarkovsky, who saw cinema’s original identity in its ability to record reality (see Manovich 406). Thus, from Tarkovsky’s point of view the most basic idea of the cinema is to open the shutter and let the film rolling, therefore recording whatever happens in front of the lens (see Manovich 406). However, Andrei Tarkovsky expressed his ideas in the 1970s and, since that point on, the impact of the computerized media and techniques of the cinema resulted in the evolution of the genre (see Manovich 406- 413). Because of the techniques of manual construction and digital manipulation of images commonly employed in cinema, it can hardly be distinguished from the genre of animation (see Manovich 406). Moreover, according to Manovich, cinema can even be considered a sub-genre of painting (see Manovich 406).

Furthermore, in his discussion, Lev Manovich defines several fundamental principles characteristic of digital film production (see Manovich 409):

1. Instead of filming physical reality, modern technologies make it possible to create film-like scenes directly on the computer. Thus, live action footage has lost its essential role as the material of film production (see Manovich 409).
2. The digitized character of live footage contributes to the loss of its relationship to reality, as the computer cannot distinguish between images produced by the camera lens and those created in a paint program (see Manovich 409).
3. Whereas live footage was traditionally left untouched in predigitized film-making, in contemporary cinema it is primarily used as a kind of raw material for further composition, animating and even morphing, thus bestowing film the characteristic of plasticity, formerly found in painting and animation only (see Manovich 410).

4. If, previously, editing and application of special effects were strictly distinctive activities, in contemporary cinema the computer demolishes this separation. As Manovich describes this process: “So, re-ordering sequences of images in time, composing them together in space, modifying parts of an individual image, and changing individual pixels become the same operation, conceptually and practically” (Manovich 410). Thus involving only ‘cut and paste’ (see Manovich 410).

Based on the principles above, Manovich defines digital film in terms of the diagram below (see Manovich 410):

digital film = live action material + painting + image processing + composing + 2D  
computer animation + 3D computer animation

Thus, the percentage relation of the actual live material in comparison to other components is minimal. This can illustrate the transformation from cinema and film as means of rearranging reality to a rearranging of its images (see Manovich 411).

Lev Manovich claims that in the twentieth century cinema played two roles at once (see Manovich 413). Thus, as a technological device, cinema’s role was indeed to capture and document visual reality. Connected to the former difficulty of image manipulation, it ensured cinema’s authenticity and reliability (see Manovich 413). Nevertheless the further development and contemporary implementation of digital data diminish cinema’s value as a recording of reality (see Manovich 413). However, glancing back, one can denote that twentieth century cinema’s role as an organisation of visual realism was an exception rather than a rule (see Manovich 413). And in the history of visual representation of reality one can identify the manual construction of images as a general tendency, as a rule (see Manovich 413). Therefore contemporary cinema can be defined as a particular field of painting – “painting in time” (see Manovich 413).

To conclude this discussion of visual culture, I would like to enumerate the most important concepts and notions. In their work, Irit Rogoff, Marita Sturjen and Lisa Cartwright demonstrate that the classification of the term ‘visual culture’ is not homogenous. The definition of visual culture based on its connection to the term ‘culture’ implies the production of meanings through cultural practices and cultural

artefacts that include images produced by visual and even printed media (literature) and correlated with music, spatial relations and history. Furthermore, it has been established that visual culture investigates both vision and the visual world in terms of meaning production, as well as vision itself as a sphere where meanings are constructed. To identify the subject of visual culture, we have referred to the eight counter-theses of visual culture provided by W.J.T. Mitchell combined with his detailed explanation. One of the significant concepts mentioned is that of the pictorial turn defined as a negative attitude towards images or visual artefacts. Mitchell describes it as a phenomenon that resurfaces in society at the historical periods marked by new media forms and cultural practices, hence implying that contemporary concern about visual and visual culture is not unique.

The discussion on the cinematic mode of production is based primarily on the work of Jonathan L. Beller. According to Beller, Cinematic Mode of Production refers to a machine-based (cinematic industry) construction of reality that is interconnected to our psychological, economic and ideological organisation. Beller claims that in the time of late capitalism, to look is to labour and our attention is the source and driving power for the value production of late capital. Beller's analysis predisposes the next step of the examination – cinema, which has been defined in terms of visual culture as a correlation between cinema and pleasure. The relation has been investigated by Laura Mulvey and includes the concepts of scopophilia as well as the analysis of the filmic representations of men and women in contemporary culture.

The final part of this chapter is concerned with the development of cinema into digital cinema. Lev Manovich investigates the process based on various techniques of cinema production. According to Manovich the emergence of digital cinema results in the fact that the former concept of cinematic truth no longer exists in contemporary culture. Thus, cinema should be considered in terms of a manual organisation of images, as a particular form of painting.

The outlined concepts of visual culture are essential for the analysis of the vampire image, precisely to define the connotations of its present popularity and promotion in various forms of media – from children's literature to films, television and even school supplies featuring vampire figures. There is a significant connection between the vampire image implementation and the cinematic mode of production. Cinema and the visual, in terms of manually organised images, are used to employ

our attention resulting in the production of certain virtual commodities and meanings. In this context it is essential to investigate what features of the vampire image are accentuated or masked from the spectator and, as a consequence, what social, psychological, economical and ideological meanings as well as cultural connotations are being produced.

## **2. The Vampire in John Polidori's *The Vampyre***

*The Vampyre* by John Polidori is essential for the purpose of this work as it firstly introduced the vampire image that is not only well- recognized, but also further promoted in the contemporary culture: a charming aristocrat, powerful, glamorous and seductive. This argument will be further illustrated and investigated by the chapter to follow. The story *The Vampyre* based on its stylistic and genre-defining features, is rightfully considered to be an example of the Gothic in literature. Therefore for the structural analysis of the story and precisely its innovative implementation of the vampire image, it is essential to provide a general definition of that literary genre and further proceed to the specific gothic features of the story in question.

### **2.1 Gothic Literature. An Overview**

This chapter is concerned with the gothic genre of literature and is designed to provide an overview of this movement. The most straightforward approach to an analysis of a literary genre seems to proceed from the general features and definitions towards the specific characteristics of the movement. From this perspective, firstly the historical background and cultural setting of the movement will be examined followed by the definition of the genre and examination of its particular features. Moreover, there will be also considered frequently used themes and topics as well as textual characteristics of gothic fiction. And finally, the character of a vampire as a gothic element will be discussed.

### **2.1.1 Historical Context**

The analysis of the historical context is of great importance for a more profound understanding of any literary genre or cultural movement. It provides an insight not only into the historical, but also cultural, social and political environment of that time, helps to understand the reasons behind the ideas, concerns, aesthetics and fears of the period, that frequently find their reflection in literature and works of art.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was the period when some of the most important and influential political, economical and social reforms in world history had been prepared and set to motion. During these hundred years the natural philosophy of Isaac Newton was implemented into social, economic, political and even individual spheres of life, thus making the European thought highly mechanical in character (see Hooker). Furthermore, one of the most important and influential transformational stimuli of human culture, the industrial revolution, also took place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see Hooker). This resulted in the fact that the world that entered the nineteenth century hardly even resembled that of one from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see Hooker). Moreover, the 18<sup>th</sup> century in European history is distinguished by the rise of two prominent, though somewhat contradictory, intellectual, philosophical and artistic movements namely, the Enlightenment that was followed by the Romantic Period and simultaneously by the Gothic.

#### **The Industrial Revolution (see Hooker )**

The after effect of the industrial revolution that originated in England had an immense impact on the spheres of human labour, consumption, family and social structures, and even on the domain of individual human emotions and ideas.

The industrial revolution did not include only technological innovations, though of course technology was at the core of the progress. Yet, the driving forces of the revolution originated from fundamental social changes that took place in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Former European economy that in 1750 was still primarily agricultural and rural, was rapidly moving towards capitalism and urbanisation and as a consequence, alternating its household and family centred character for the one of



industry based. Such rapid changes, according to Hooker, resulted in revaluation of both family structure and social obligations.

It has been stated above, that the Industrial Revolution traces its origins back to England and according to historians it is due to various technological as well as social reforms. Some of the most prominent innovations in technology included the inventions of the spinning jenny, patented in 1769 by James Hargreaves, and the steam engine, the simple version of which was built as early as 1712 by Thomas Newcomen and was further improved in 1763 and patented in 1769 by James Watt. As far as important changes in the social and economic spheres are concerned, Hooker defines the transformations in the following terms: “The exponential increase in food production following the enclosure laws of the eighteenth century; Parliament passed a series of laws that permitted lands that had been held in common by tenant farmers to be enclosed into large, private farms worked by a much smaller labour force.” (Hooker) This process resulted in the growth of agricultural production along with reinforcement of gradual migration of peasants to the cities thus increasing the urban population of England. Moreover, the English Parliament contrary to the majority of continental Europe, which still remained monarchical, was controlled by “the merchant and capitalistic classes” (Hooker); and in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century numerous laws favouring the interests of these classes had been passed. Gradually waning role of English aristocracy in political and social life also caused the transformation of values that became increasingly mercantile and capitalistic. The ultimate goal of every individual and every government was settled on the constant acquisition of personal and national wealth. This new norm of value was furthermore supported by Adam Smith in his famous work *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. Nevertheless, the fundamental changes of the 18<sup>th</sup> century described above would not had have been possible without the ideas of the Enlightenment that triggered and supported the industrial revolution.

### **Ideology: Enlightenment, Romanticism and Gothic**

The fundamental idea of the Enlightenment, also referred to as The Age of Reason, was based on the assumption that reason was the only stimulus that could lead the world towards further progress and out of a long period of irrationality, superstition and tyranny (see Frost). In the famous essay written by Emmanuel Kant in 1784 “What is Enlightenment?” he wrote: “Enlightenment is man’s leaving his

self-caused immaturity. Immaturity is the incapacity to use one's intelligence without the guidance of another. Such immaturity is self-caused if it is not caused by lack of intelligence, but by lack of determination and courage to use one's intelligence without being guided by another. Sapere Aude! [Dare to know!]" (qtd. in Frost). The final sentence could be interpreted as the motto of the Enlightenment movement (see Frost).

The central ideas of the Enlightenment were formed in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the group of French thinkers also known as the *philosophes* whose main goal was rational and intentional progress (see Hooker). Given this, there could be defined three core concepts of the *philosophes* namely, progress, deism and tolerance (see Hooker). The idea of deism was based on the assumption that law controlled both human and celestial affairs, resulting in the establishment of a new concept of law as a relationship between individuals rather than families (see Frost). This revolutionary definition led to the growing importance of individual liberty as the essential right of man (see Frost).

The ideals of liberty, property and rationality were of great value for the Enlightenment (see Frost) thus accentuating natural individual right of political freedom and justice (see Hackett). Furthermore, the movement prepared the basis for some great political changes in both Old and New Worlds such as the French Revolution of 1789 and the war for independence in America (see Hooker). Yet, on the other hand, the Enlightenment's philosophy also proved to be volatile and, as a matter of fact, resulted in various social disappointments, which can be illustrated by the period of Jacobean terror regime after the success of the French Revolution (see Frost). These negative consequences of the Enlightenment combined with the rapid social, economic and ethical changes caused by the industrial revolution led to the rise of reactionary movements of Romanticism and Gothic.

Harold Schechter comments on the relationship between the Gothic and Neoclassicism, which derived and embodied the main ideas of the Enlightenment, in the eighteenth century: „At certain periods, in societies which have been moving in a dangerously one-sided direction, in which certain values and attitudes are emphasized to the unhealthy exclusion of other important ones, a mystic symbol will arise which will dominate their dreams.“ (qtd. in Brennan 1) However, it has to be mentioned that even though Romanticism and Gothic emerged as a reaction against reason and materialism they did not demolish all the essential principals of the Enlightenment

(see Hackett). Hence, the new approaches to the doctrine of humanism derived from the novel Romantic and Gothic movements and combined both: the already established value of reason and importance of human freedom; with the innovative interest in sentimentality (see Hackett).

The Romantic and Gothic movements are, in fact, interconnected and share but a few common ideas, principals and concepts. Moreover, the movements in question emerged nearly parallel to each other and the time span of Romanticism and Gothic is usually defined from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, Romanticism was a Western European aesthetic characteristic of numerous works of literature, music, art, architecture, criticism and history, which rejected the doctrines of order, balance, obsessive rationality and physical materialism and accentuated “the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica) Among the key ideals of Romanticism there are: an increasing admiration for nature and its beauty, a great value of emotions and senses rather than intellect and reason, which consequently led to focusing on the examination of the inner self, individual human personality, moods and mental capabilities (see Encyclopaedia Britannica). The movement claimed imagination to be the access to “transcendent experience and spiritual truth” (Encyclopaedia Britannica) and simultaneously promoted “an obsessive interest in folk culture, national and ethnic cultural origins, and the medieval era; and a predilection for the exotic, the remote, the mysterious, the weird, the occult, the monstrous, the diseased, and even the satanic” (Encyclopaedia Britannica). The enumerated concerns of the Romanticism would be later developed and incorporated into the Gothic. Furthermore, the significance of the exotic, mysterious, weird, occult and satanic will be intensified and reinforced in the works of gothic artist and writers and will become not only the distinguishable features of the genre but will be preserved even in contemporary culture. Romanticism also emphasized the importance of individual artistic creativity in re-establishing the unity and harmony of a human soul disturbed and violated by the contemporary effects of modernisation, urbanisation and economic pragmatism (see The Literary Encyclopedia).

A remarkable consequence of the romantic fascination of feelings and emotions were the literary works focused on the supernatural, weird and horrible representations, also known as Gothic (see Encyclopaedia Britannica). In his book *The*

*Gothic Tradition* David Stevens states that at the time of its appearance in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Gothic had a sense of “recovering and renewing a tradition which valued feelings and sensibility, and which had been all but usurped by the developing dominance of reason as the key to all human problems” (Stevens 9). According to Stevens, simultaneously the progress which had lead to a society primarily based on rational political and social order as well as numerous innovations in science and technology, “had made it comparatively ‘safe’ to indulge in irrational fantasies.” (Stevens 10) Stevens elaborates even further:

Middle class readers, safely tucked into their stable and unthreatened social positions, could feel secure enough to cultivate imaginary fears and fantasies, in the same way that a child may do, reading horror stories and experiencing the delicious thrill while apparently immune from real danger. [...] [T]he general trend towards an aesthetic more fully in touch with feeling and emotion was profound and real. Widespread awareness that overreliance on reason could rob human experience of its essential flavour was increasingly characteristic of the age. (Stevens 10)

The term Gothic in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was commonly used with the reference to the medieval period in history (see Stevens 8-9), although this definition was not entirely clear-cut and homogenous. This will be further discussed in detail in the chapter to follow. The emerge of Romanticism and Gothic can be explained in terms of its historical symbolism: the medieval times preceded the Enlightenment, “just as in terms of the growth of each individual person the emotions come before and can therefore be seen as more profoundly human than the insistence on rationality.” (Stevens 10)

### **2.1.2 Gothic: Definition, Textual Characteristics**

#### **Definition**

Originally the Goths belonged to one of the Germanic tribes that contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (see Stevens 8). However, in the course of the centuries to follow, historians began to consider the Goths, and consequently use the term, almost as being applicable to all Germans, which included the Anglo-Saxons which had migrated to the British Isles (see Stevens 8). Based on this assumption various scholars and politicians derived “a ‘native’ freedom-loving gothic tradition within British culture” (Stevens 8) as opposed to the alien

imperialism embodied by the Norman conquest of 1066 (see Stevens 8). Moreover, this myth had been intensified by numerous legends, for example that of Robin Hood, where the Anglo-Saxons portrayed as morally justified freedom fighters were struggling against the tyranny of the Normans (see Stevens 8). It was this connotation of the desire for freedom that made the term Gothic rather popular in the political (characteristic of the reformist wing of the Whig Party) and later on in the cultural spheres of life in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see Stevens 8-9). At the same time, however, in the literary criticism of the early eighteenth century the term Gothic was also used to describe something as being barbaric, lawless and even cheap and gaudy (see Beers and Birkhead), frequently implying “the medieval rather than to the pre-Norman conquest epoch” (Stevens 9).

The Literary Encyclopedia provides the following definition of the Gothic:

A sub-genre of the novel which begins with Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764), becomes particularly dominant from 1790 to 1820, and then continues as a vital stream of imaginative fiction. The gothic is characterised by the representation of terrifying and horrific experiences which may or may not be supernatural in origin, and which may or may not stretch the reader's credulity, but which always indicate a world which is not subject to rational order. (The Literary Encyclopedia)

However, in his book *Contesting The Gothic* James Watt argues that the genre of Gothic fiction is a “relatively modern construct” and is, in fact, “the product of twentieth- century literary criticism, and specifically of the revival of interest in late-eighteenth-century romance in the 1920s and 1930s.” (Watt 1) Watt also refers to the fact that during the eighteenth century only a few literary creations that emerged after “The Castle of Otranto” defined themselves as Gothic works (see Watt 2). Another significant scholar in the area of Gothic studies, David Punter, in his work *The Literature of Terror* investigates the Gothic as a genre of literature focused on self-analysis and inner fears of the bourgeoisie, which appeared during the period of time when the middle class tried to comprehend and define “the conditions and history of their own ascent” (Punter 127). At the time of numerous rapid changes that have been already discussed in the chapter of my work devoted to the historical environment, according to Punter “it is hardly surprising to find the emergence of a literature whose key motifs are paranoia, manipulation and injustice, and whose central project is understanding the inexplicable, the taboo, the irrational.” (Punter 128)

At this point of the discussion it is but of great importance to mention that the first examples of what emerged as the Gothic in fact were not created in the domain of literature, but were firstly manifested in art, architecture and landscape design (see Stevens 10). However, the above mentioned art forms created the context for the literary works to follow (see Stevens 10). In this context it is important to refer to Horace Walpole's story "The Castle of Otranto", published on Christmas Eve of 1764, was the first literary work to introduce the Gothic fiction, also referred to as the Gothic romance, through its subtitle "A Gothic Story" (see Birkhead). Nonetheless, Walpole's literary creation which was revolutionary for his contemporaries; was, as a matter of fact, a further demonstration of author's passion for the Gothic, which had been manifested by the architecture of his castle at Strawberry Hill which had been built fourteen years prior to the publication (see Birkhead). Even though Walpole's subtitle "A Gothic Story" is traditionally considered to be the initiating event of Gothic literature, the author himself used it to indicate the time period of his story, namely the medieval (see Stevens 9). What can not be denied though, is that "The Castle of Otranto" established certain canons for the genre, traces of which can be found even in the contemporary literature of the twenty first century.

Based on the genre's definitions that have been discussed above it can be concluded that the definition of the term is neither clear-cut nor homogenous. Therefore, while analysing the Gothic movement one should take into consideration several essential aspects. First, the historical background of the genre and the traumatic experiences caused by the rapid changes in the world of the late eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century are of great importance for understanding the motivation and the stimulus for the emergence of the Gothic. Furthermore, people of the reformed world also acquired new fears, terrors and anxieties. And it was the Gothic, with its mysterious, medieval-orientated and frequently supernatural horrors, that provided people with the means of dealing with their newly acquired concerns, thus resulting, according to Elizabeth Napier, in "a standardized, absolutely formulaic system of creating a certain kind of atmosphere in which a reader's sensibility toward fear and horror is exercised in predictable ways" (qtd. in Watt 5).

### **Textual Characteristics**

The relationship between the artistic expression of ideas and emotions, and the form chosen by the author for that purpose is on the one hand determined by the idea

itself, yet on the other hand is influenced by the cultural and linguistic environment of the writer (see Stevens 22). The fact that the Gothic is primarily represented by the novel is of great importance (see Stevens 23). In the eighteenth century the novel still was a rather innovative genre that emerged from the popular romances, and was considered inferior to the higher literary genres of poetry and drama (see Stevens 23). This opinion, however, was not supported by the growing general reading public and specifically by its increasing female part (see Stevens 23). As a matter of fact several of the Gothic writers were women – Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley etc. - who used the new genre to express themselves outside of the male-dominated literature (see Stevens 23).

Nevertheless it would be incorrect to establish the novel as the only literary genre of the Gothic, on the contrary, poetry and drama were also significant in the development of the movement (see Stevens 24). Ballads, for example, were especially characteristic of the Gothic due to their medieval connotations, vast room for the artist's imagination and interpretation; as well as their thrilling tales of love, death and betrayal, frequently involving supernatural features (see Stevens 25). Moreover, Gothic authors often incorporated poetic pieces into their novels (see Stevens 24).

Drama was highly influential for the development of Gothic fiction which frequently included its “vividly dramatic sense of sensational action, often engineered by melodramatically evil characters who seem to play to an audience, at times almost in terms of a farce or even a pantomime.” (Stevens 25) Other characters of Gothic fiction also possess certain melodramatic characteristics: “the helpless, innocent female; the well meaning but imaginatively limited patriarchal figure; the scheming older woman; and the handsome – if not always effective – young male aristocrat.” (Stevens 26) Drama also influenced the form of Gothic novels that frequently incorporated multiple short plots each resulting in its climax that contributed to the culmination of the whole narration; along with skilfully arranged “scenes within scenes presented by different narrative voices” (Stevens 26). While the Gothic novel in regard to this particular feature has been criticised for the lack of cohesion and unity (see Stevens 56). Nonetheless, this specific structure helps to convey intensified emotions at critical points of the narration (see Stevens 56). Given this it can be concluded that Gothic fiction is characterised by the artistic combination of the spectacular narrative techniques of drama and the picturesque and emotionally charged poetic descriptions (see Stevens 26).

### 2.1.3 Gothic: Themes and Topics

According to Punter and Byron in their book *The Gothic*, the emergence of Gothic as a genre was a direct result of the shift in cultural emphases in the eighteenth century. (Punter and Byron 7) Moreover, according to Brennan: “It [the Gothic] not only has represented an attempt to balance the unhealthy reliance of neoclassicism on reason, restraint, and order; The Gothic also has provided the culture with cautionary tales, underscoring the need to bring back into conscious awareness such repressed and compensatory values as feeling, mystery, superstition, instinct, spontaneity, excess – even the unconscious self.” (Brennan 1) Opposed to the classical values of the Enlightenment and consequently neoclassicism, the Gothic was “ornate and convoluted”, representing “excess and exaggeration, the product of the wild and the uncivilized, a world that constantly tended to overflow cultural boundaries” (see Punter and Byron 7).

It has been illustrated in the historical overview of this work that the 18<sup>th</sup> century society has undergone various changes triggered by different factors: the forces of industrialization and their damaging effects, the discoveries in the sciences and most importantly the ever strengthening influence of capitalism; leading to an increasing sense of isolation and alienation (see Punter and Byron 20-21) and consequently new horrors and anxieties of the society, that found their reflection in the themes and topics of the Gothic. Fred Botting in his book *Gothic Romanced* states three main topics, namely death, sex and consumption and their combination as the essential characteristics of gothic literature (Botting 63).

According to Botting the first gothic story “The Castle of Otranto” by Walpole already incorporated the “illegitimate desires for bodies, property and power [...] circumscribed by the increasingly dominant commercial imperatives of the eighteenth century.” (Botting 63) Thus, even though set in the imaginary medieval past, the gothic novels were concerned with the fears and anxieties of the present, “with sexual excesses, terrors, horrors and death forming the screen on which economic and social tensions were projected and displaced.” (Botting 63)

As a new society of the eighteenth century was trying to define its new values, the excess was imposing danger for social order and was frequently associated with “unrestrained passions.” (Botting 63) Gothic heroines frequently fall victims to



passion, influenced by their curiosity, lack of reason or dutiful behaviour and rejection of paternal authority, which leads them into the domain of darkness, vicinity, horror and “villainy.”(see Botting 63) The Gothic villain also impersonates new fears of the time and is driven by his uncontrolled, egoistic, masculine zeal of covetousness (see Botting 63).

Consumption, though an essential part of economic reality endangered the basic principals of the bourgeoisie in remaining uncertain economic and moral environment of the eighteenth century, by threatening to escape the restrains of reason and morality (see Botting 64). In other words, consumption and its increasing role in the daily life of the nineteenth century society, created the fear of excess with both materialistic and spiritual commoditites that would result in demise, death and corruption of the morals as well as in the regress to the animalistic state of existence, deprived of reason and civilization (see Botting 64). This new anxiety contributes to the character of Gothic villain who disguises behind his attractive aristocratic appearance the darkest vices and terrifying desires (see Botting 64). Gothic heroines and heroes are forced to face the effects of irrational and improper behaviour, including the excesses of passions and consumption, which lead to horrors, terrors and threats of death and violation at the hands of “rapacious villains”, (see Botting 65) frequently expressed through the confrontation with the supernatural.

The topics that have been discussed above are reflected in various themes characteristic of Gothic literature. I would like to focus my attention on the most prominent ones.

The first Gothic theme I will consider is the ancestral curse expressed through evil misfortune or harm that befalls the main protagonist as a form of retribution for the misdeeds of his/her ancestors (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms). This theme lies in the centre of the first Gothic story “The Castle of Otranto” by Horace Walpole (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms). The variation of this canonical theme is the burden of the past which also results in evil misfortunes haunting the main protagonist or sometimes several characters of the story, as a consequence of his/her prior actions (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms). Interconnected with these notions is the motif of revenge which in Gothic literature can be enacted by or upon both human and supernatural beings as well as enemies, loved ones and even objects (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms).

Horace Walpole and his “The Castle of Otranto” also contributed to the establishment of several particular features characteristic of Gothic protagonists, which would reoccur in numerous literary works of the genre (see Watt 38). Walpole was one of the first authors who introduced the figures of the tyrant, impersonated by Manfred, “the prince disguised as a peasant”- Theodore, and “the consciously innocent heroine”, represented by Matilda, Isabella and Hippolita (see Watt 38).

The villain character of gothic fiction is depicted either by being described as a hero in the beginning of a story or he (hardly ever she) possesses certain remarkable traits of character that make the reader along with other characters perceive him as someone extraordinary, rather than a simple evil character or impostor (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms). There can be defined three types of Gothic villain heroes: satanic hero, promethean and Byronic (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms). The satanic hero is usually a villain character whose immoral and evil actions along with his own justifications of them, make him more appealing, interesting and alluring than the usually rather plain positive characters, also referred to as promethean heroes; Lord Ruthven in Polidori’s *The Vampyre* is an example of such a villain (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms). The promethean hero is characterised as a description of a protagonist who achieves good but only through some extraordinary, heroic and even rebellious deeds (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms). The last type of a characteristic Gothic protagonist is the Byronic hero. The term originates from the name of Lord Gordon Byron and derives from the characters of his literary works, although this type of protagonist has existed before and is usually a handsome and sexually alluring aristocrat, dark, mysterious and emotional, disguising a secret passion or pain (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms). Furthermore, this type of dark, yet sexually attractive and conflicted male persona continues to reappear in Gothic fiction throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms).

Several comments concerning Gothic heroines have been already made in the previous paragraphs. Gothic female characters are usually beautiful, virtuous and innocent figures, described in a highly poetic fashion and frequently acquiring the aura of a damsel in distress while being forced into an unjust, oppressive and dependant position where they have to confront the terrifying figure of the Gothic villain. The theme of a pursued heroine is characteristic of Gothic fiction and includes an idealistic, virtuous young woman haunted or stalked by a villain depicted as a

wicked, older yet still potent aristocrat (see *A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms*). The pursuit endangers the young heroine's life, ideals and morals, usually implying her virginity; and might take place across Mediterranean forests, through labyrinths (see *A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms*) and twisted corridors of a Gothic castle, its dungeons or secret vaults.

Gothic literature, as has been previously concluded, took its inspiration from gothic architecture and landscape design (see Stevens 10), which explains the importance of the setting in gothic fiction. The range of gothic settings varies greatly and implicates such themes as cemeteries, old abbeys or monasteries, ancient ruins, medieval castles, dark and sinister forests and exotic locations that take readers to Greece and even the Orient. What is but of great importance for Gothic settings is the presence of some "form of obscurity or mystery" (see Stevens 54). Gothic settings often implement themes of imprisonment or entrapment, placing the protagonist in situations with no means of escape, thus contributing to the general claustrophobic character of the Gothic (see *A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms*). Claustrophobia in Gothic fiction can be expressed both in terms of fear of being physically confined as well as in terms of protagonist's feeling of helplessness or terrifying "mental awareness of being enmeshed in some dark, inscrutable destiny." (see *A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms*)

Another central theme of Gothic literature is the supernatural which is a compulsory element of the Gothic (see Stevens 49). Some manifestations of the supernatural may include ghosts, spirits, witches, resurrected dead and of course vampires. Yet, within this Gothic tradition, there were authors who tended to explain the supernatural rationally opposed to those who preferred to keep the supernatural mystery unresolved (see Stevens 51). In addition, the supernatural theme of Gothic literature is closely connected with the concept of the sublime which is the next topic of this discussion (see Stevens 50).

### **2.1.4 The Sublime, Horror and Terror in Gothic Literature**

The discussion of theories of the sublime was perhaps one of the most important issues in British aesthetics of the eighteenth century (see Landow). Yet, the concept

itself had appeared much earlier namely, in the thesis *On the Sublime*, written in the third century by the Greek philosopher Cassius Longinus, which remained unnoticed until its revival in the late seventeenth- eighteenth century's criticism (see Encyclopaedia Britannica). Longinus' definition of the sublime implemented the power to evoke exaltation through language mastery in the expression of high feelings and emotions (see Encyclopaedia Britannica). Thus Longinus perceived emotional, artistic and moralistic strengths of the writer combined with author's genius, to be the fundamental stimuli for the sublime (see Encyclopaedia Britannica).

The prominent interest for the sublime in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century literature, art and natural scenery was also based on the opposition to the ideas and values of the Enlightenment and neoclassicism (see Brennan 2-3). It has been already discussed in the previous chapter that the Gothic has emerged as a reactionary movement to the Enlightenment and Neoclassicism. Thus the neoclassical virtues of order, reason and beauty have been substituted in the Gothic movement by the "neoclassical vices – obscurity, terror, confusion, transgressed and open boundaries, and excess of all kinds but especially of subjective feeling" (Brennan 2-3). All those features are especially prominent in Gothic novels (Brennan 2).

Edmund Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1757 centred his attention on the response of an individual to overpowering experiences that exceed the normality of ordinary life (see Stevens 50). Burke also draw a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, based on the assumption that our judgement of beauty originated in our social feelings, especially the ones for the opposite sex, whereas the judgment of the sublime was rooted in our perception of intimidating nature, our solitude and fragility in the world beyond our control:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. (Burke qtd. in Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Burke's observations had a great impact on the writers of Gothic literature as they manifested the very ideas of the gothic and especially the connection between strong emotions, overwhelming sensations and the experiences of horror and terror (see Stevens 50).

For the purpose of my further discussion it is of great importance to draw a distinction between the notions of horror and terror in the Gothic and correspondently the difference between the literary works of horror and terror. The three words 'gothic', 'horror' and 'terror' share a strong connection; moreover it seems that sometimes one presupposes the other. It goes without saying that gothic literature often executes themes and topics aimed to produce horrifying and terrifying effects. Nevertheless it would be erroneous to use the terms 'horror' and 'terror' interchangeably.

The first difference between the works of terror and horror was declared as early as in the year of 1816, by one of the most notable authors of Gothic fiction, Ann Radcliffe, in her essay "On the Super-natural in Poetry". She expresses her idea as follows:

They [objects of terror] strike, then, chiefly by the force of contrast, [...] but the effect though sudden and strong, is also transient; it is the thrill of horror and surprise, which they then communicate, rather than the deep and solemn feelings excited under more accordant circumstances, and left long upon the mind. [...] Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them. I apprehend, that neither Shakespeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source for the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one; and where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity [...] (Radcliffe 6).

Given this, it can be deduced that for Ann Radcliffe the works of horror appeal primarily to the explicit description of fear- causing events and matters, which, as observed by Watt, results in emotional chaos and disorientation. Works of horror operate on the level of readers' curiosity and voyeurism, and frequently include alarmingly concrete and even grotesque imagery, thus provoking shock; revulsion and even disgust (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms).

The works of terror are distinguished for their obscurity, "which excite the imagination to complete the rest" (Radcliffe 6). Radcliffe claims that it is terror that evokes the sublime and higher emotions in its readers. Terror stimulates a complex fear, based on obscure and appalling elements, which resolution "provides a means of escape." (see A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms)

Moreover, it is the creation of terror rather than horror in the works of literature that marks the further development of Gothic genre in the early nineteenth century. Thus Matthew C. Brennan in his book *The Gothic Psyche: Disintegration and*

*Growth in the Nineteenth century English Literature* refers to the statement by Marilyn Gaull in *English Romanticism: The Human Context*, who claims that by the 1820 the system both social and political had changed entirely and furthermore:

The terrors that once lurked in the ruins and the landscapes were now found lurking in the mind, just as mysterious, inescapable, and isolating. The countryside, the cottages, the factories, the urban chapels, slums, schools, poor-houses, orphanages, the kitchens, sitting rooms, and bedrooms of the working and middle classes held greater and more authentic terror than the monasteries and haunted palaces of the eighteenth century which they replaced on the stage of the novel (qtd. in Brennan 4).

Punter and Byron refer to a similar process in the development of the Gothic, naming it Victorian Gothic (see Punter and Byron 26). Thus they argue that in the beginning of the nineteenth century the genre undergoes a process of domestication, in which Gothic themes and topics are transferred to the world of the contemporary audience (see Punter and Byron 26). The former exotic and extravagant locations are being replaced “with something more disturbingly familiar: the bourgeois domestic world or the new urban landscape” (see Punter and Byron 26).

Based on the discussion above we can conclude, that whereas the works of horror operate on a more explicit level, employing grotesque and often repulsive images to impress their readers and create an immediate reaction that might be although strong but short-lived. Simultaneously, the works of terror, appealing to our inner fears and concerns, are designed to stimulate our imagination, which results in a more disturbing and unsettling effect that often is connected to our reality. The terrifying events are transferred to the daily routine and environment of the reader, which in terms of the nineteenth century Gothic can be defined as Victorian Gothic.

## **2.1 The Vampire as a Gothic Element and its Implementation in *The Vampyre* by John Polidory**

This chapter of my paper deals with the vampire image and its development from the mythological origins and to the implementation in literature by John Polidory. I am going to define the most prominent and characteristic features of the vampire figure as well as the themes and motives connected to the immortals. In my opinion it

is important to outline the original connotations of the vampire image to enable a more profound analysis of the changes.

Stories involving the supernatural are traditionally structured as an encounter of the protagonist with the unknown (see Wilson 6). In the course of the narration, usually written from the first person perspective, the main character breaks some social, moral or religious rules, thus releasing evil supernatural powers; and therefore must face dreadful consequences (see Wilson 6). Moreover, Wilson observes that once the punishment has been executed, and the balance restored, the supernatural forces return to their original domain beyond the borders of the ordinary world (Wilson 6). The Supernatural was an important theme for gothic literature and incorporated the notions of vengeful ghosts, haunting evil spirits, witches, resurrected dead and of course vampires.

### **2.2.1. Vampires in Myths and the Blood Theme**

The term vampire is, according to different scholars, of Slavic origin, and describes a person that returns from beyond the grave and prolongs his or her 'undead' existence by destroying the lives of people and drinking their blood (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 1). In this context the character of the vampire can be interpreted as a metaphor of death consuming life to prolong its unnatural existence. Furthermore the transformation into a vampire usually implies the notion of the innocent becoming corrupted and can result from an unfortunate accident or circumstances when social, religious or moral taboos are being violated (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 3).

The figure of the vampire originates in myths and folk legends and becomes a popular theme in literature in the course of the eighteenth century (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 9-13) as the result of gothic fascination for the past, the exotic and the supernatural.

There is no clear-cut definition of the vampire, as its character has adopted various shapes throughout different cultures, reflecting their beliefs and traditions (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 1). However one can distinguish at least two prominent features that generally characterise the vampire, namely a person who comes back from the dead and sustains his or her existence by preying on the living, consuming their blood (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 1).

One of the predecessors of gothic literary vampires is considered to be the Greek *lamia* an ancient myth which was borrowed by Keats and redefined in his poem “Lamia” in melodramatic, frightening and ‘gothic’ terms (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 30). In the myth *lamia* is a foreign, exceptionally beautiful and seducing woman, who lures a beautiful young man with an intention to feed on his blood that is pure and strong (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 5). *Lamia*, in fact, expresses features that become characteristic of the gothic vampires such as: an unknown stranger, seduction, a supernatural creature, corruption of innocence and the reviving powers of young blood (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 6).

The vampire in Gothic literature is a manifestation of the irrational, the unknown and is destined to evoke terror among the readers by invading their major fears: of death, pain and strangers (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 152, 165). Moreover, the character of the vampire can be analysed as an embodiment of the three, based on Botting, main topics of gothic fiction namely, death, sex and consumption.

The vampire story is traditionally constructed around the symbolic connection between blood and life (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 64). Nevertheless the vampire theme also represents the reversed idea of immortality of the soul (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 64). Opposed to the traditional notion of redemption through the Holy Communion “where Christ’s blood represents eternal life and salvation, Polidori’s *The Vampyre*, as well as Count Dracula and Carmilla, are our guides into a hellish, upside - down world, where virtues and values are twisted and reinterpreted in a dark and sinister key” (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 64).

Moreover, in the vampire tradition, blood is not only the means to attain the eternal life, youth and strength; it is also portrayed as evil that brings not only death, but also damnation (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 64). In this context blood is frequently identified with violence and sexuality, therefore attributing the vampire’s unsatisfied and ever growing hunger and desire for it a symbolic significance (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 64).

As a sinister mythological creature of vice and darkness, the vampire, according to Botting, manifests the dangers of decadence and regression threatening to consume civilisation. Moreover, the satanic powers of the vampire deprive his victims of any means to resist, making them powerless in the face of their approaching doom (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 143) thus evoking terror through which the protagonist of gothic fiction comes to a new understanding of “being-in-the-world.” (see McDonald



37) Given this, it can be concluded that the vampire is an essential element of gothic literature and its portrayal of terror; thus leading the reader to the sublime. The vampire image is a combination of animalistic urges and drives masked by the civilized and contemporary appearance. In other words the undead incorporates the notions of a terrifying events breaking into the daily life, which results in creating an unsettling and impressive effect. The vampire image appeals to our inner fears of powerlessness, regress to the animalistic state and of being consumed by the world.

### **2.2.2 Vampire Landscapes and Settings**

In the previous chapters it has been observed that Gothic literature is distinguished by its exotic and historical settings and landscapes which will be substituted by daily settings in the Victorian Gothic. Vampire stories frequently use remarkable locations as a background for their plot development. According to Bartlett and Idriceanu there are certain regions, such as Transylvania and Styria that are characterised by somewhat sinister and frightening aura, especially if the reader's knowledge of them derives only from the mental pictures produced by others (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 65). Such menacing landscapes stimulate and intensify the terrifying effect of the literary creation (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 65).

Even though the original setting for the folklore vampire stories was a village churchyard, where the walking dead could take refuge during the day and hunt the villagers during the night; it gradually expands and later includes primarily untamed places namely, mountains, moors, heath and of course forests (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 65). But why has the vampire moved from the close proximity to the community that he or she threatens into the wilderness? The untamed nature has always been fascinating and mysterious because of its association with the hidden dangers of monsters and beasts (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 65). In this context it is important to mention that nature traditionally has been distinguished by its duality: menacing and endangering power on the one hand, and the protective force on the other (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 66). The phenomenon is based on the fact that while humans started to drift further away from nature, the wilderness got to be perceived as evil, unknown and dangerous (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 66). Yet, at the same time

the untamed landscapes never ceased to excite the imaginations and fascination as a place where humans used to belong to (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 66). Given this, one cannot be surprised that untamed landscapes, especially forests, are frequently regarded as domains of the supernatural and magic, whereas the cultivated land represents the triumph of human reason and order, the forest remains beyond the influence of man and is often considered to be the cross- lands between the world of man and the supernatural (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 67-68).

In the vampire myths the forest is a place “where life and death escape human rules” (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 68). Moreover the forest often acquires the terrifying attributes of the labyrinth where its victims once lost will never find the means to escape (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 68-69). The fear of eternal entrapment is one of the central motives in numerous vampire stories (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 68-69). It is in the forests, that the vampire victims, usually urban and educated citizens, meet their doom, unaware of the dangers of the wild and paranormal world (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 69). In literature, vampires frequently chose the forest as their domain where they take refuge and strengthen before they appear in the civilized world (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 71). And it is in the forest where young Aubrey meets his vampire villain – Lord Ruthven, from the story *The Vampyre* by John Polidori.

### **2.2.3 The History Behind the Story of *The Vampyre***

This chapter is designed to provide an overview of the events preceding the publication of the story by Polidori as well as some cultural and social connotations of his literary work.

*The Vampyre* by John Polidori firstly appeared in 1819, however, the origins of the story date back a few years earlier to the summer of 1816 when a group of friends were travelling through Switzerland on their way to Italy (see Caliban). In fact the young people were Percy Shelley, Mary Godwin (who later became Mary Shelley), her stepsister Claire Claremont, George Gordon Byron and his physician John William Polidori (see Caliban). According to Mary Shelley, who reported this event, it was a rainy summer and the young people in the Villa Diodati on Lake Geneva, entertained themselves by telling one another gothic German ghost stories, however they grew bored of that and decided to hold a competition in which each of them was

to write a ghost story to terrify and entertain the listeners (see Caliban). Percy Shelley began writing something but was soon distracted and there are no records of his contribution, contrary to Mary Shelly's celebrated *Frankenstein* that originated from that challenge (see Caliban). Byron wrote a fragment about a dying nobleman Augustus Darvell who returns from the dead, which remained unfinished (see Caliban). Nevertheless, it was this piece of writing that inspired Polidori to create his famous story *The Vampyre* (see Caliban).

*The Vampyre* was published in 1819 in Henry Colburn's *The New Monthly Magazine* and became an instant and tremendous success (see Williamson 51). Within a year after its first publication the story had been translated into German and French, followed by an Italian version in 1824, a Swedish edition in 1827 along with a Spanish one in 1829 (see Williamson 51). *The Vampyre* also inspired several theatrical adaptations that ran successfully in Paris; and even an opera *Der Vampyre* in 1828 by Wilhelm August Wohlbruck and Heinrich August Marschner. Based on those facts, it can be deduced that the impact of Polidori's work on his contemporary public was genuinely great, highly influential and perhaps revolutionary. However, the author himself had been deprived of the opportunity to share the success of his creation. Henry Colburn published the first edition of *The Vampyre*, whether by mistake or intention is unclear, under Byron's name (see Williamson 51) and it required a significant effort on behalf of Polidori, as well as the intervention of Lord Byron himself, to restore the authentic authorship (see Caliban).

The connection to Lord Byron is of great importance for the understanding of the story. Polidori wrote his work when he and Byron had had a serious disagreement (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 31). During that fateful summer Byron began to grow tired of Polidori and eventually dismissed him after having subjected him to weeks of humiliation and ridicule (see Williamson 36). From Polidori's journal, published post-mortem, it can be concluded that his relationship with Byron was difficult and controversial, swinging between admiration and abhorrence (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 31). Thus it seems plausible that one of the main inspirations for Polidori was the contemporary image of his former friend Lord Byron along with author's dramatic relationship with him (Williamson 36). In this context the story can be interpreted as a dark, highly critical and even sensational satire on Lord Byron (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 31), which of course contributed to its success (see Williamson 51). However, based on the fact that the story also had been greatly admired abroad, it

can be inferred that the effect of the story is not limited to its sensationalism but is also due to its literary and artistic value. *The Vampyre* by John William Polidori is the first vampire story in literature written in English, even though the concept of the vampire was not an innovation in general. John Polidori encouraged the further promotion of the vampire image in Gothic fiction and also defined the character anew.

#### **2.2.4 Gothic Features of *The Vampyre***

John Polidori's story *The Vampyre* is traditionally considered to be an example of romantic and Gothic manifestation of a vampire myth in literature (Punter 118). On the other hand, though Polidori's work incorporates some of the characteristically gothic features, it also redefines and evolves them.

The most prominent gothic feature of *The Vampyre* is its supernatural subject matter. Vampires and their corresponding connotations of the unknown, the irrational, the exotic and mythology, were a familiar subject to Polidori's contemporary reading public. As a matter of fact the word *vampire* first entered the English language as early as 1732 (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 12). Thus, by incorporating *vampire* into the title of his story, Polidori is indicating at a very early stage the central theme of the narration to follow – the confrontation of a human protagonist with supernatural forces.

The traditional pattern of such a confrontation has been already identified in the discussion of the vampire as a Gothic element. Thus a narration is usually structures around an encooounter of a protagonist with the supernatural, which is traditionally set in motion by his or her actions, breaking rules, morals or taboos (see Wilson 6). Polidori's story precisely follows this pattern. The narration is about a young man named Aubrey, who encounters the supernatural in form of a vampire and as a result, has to face dreadful consequences. Aubrey loses his beloved Ianthe, his dear sister and in the end of the narration his own life.

The setting of the story also stimulates the fear and sinister feelings among its reading public. *The Vampyre* incorporates characteristic gothic locations of the mysterious, dark and dangerous forest and exotic Greece. However, the terrifying plot chiefly unfolds against the background of London society thus transferring the

supernatural into the real world, domesticating it. Moreover it is Polidori's contemporary setting where his vampire, Lord Ruthven makes his first appearance.

*The Vampyre* also incorporates the three main topics of death, sex and consumption, based on Botting, of Gothic literature. The topic of death is perhaps the most obvious one in the story as all the main positive characters demise in the course of the narration. Yet, only Ianthe and Aubrey's sister are the direct victims of the vampire whereas Aubrey's death is a consequence of his dramatic and terrifying experience. The topic of death is interconnected with the excess. The character of the vampire fuses those concepts as he represents death consuming life by feeding on human blood to prolong his existence. However, Aubrey also falls victim to his own excess. Young Aubrey's inability to resist his curiosity for the mysterious and sinister Lord Ruthven, his lack of rationality and unrestrained emotions and desires lead him to the world of madness and death. The excess of passions is linked with the notion of sex in *The Vampyre*. Even though the theme of blood drinking is evident in the story, according to David Punter it is "almost entirely about sex." (see Punter 118) The harm caused by the vampire is "largely effected by more conventional forms of seduction and dishonour." (Punter 118) At this point it is important to analyse the female characters of the story in terms of their gothic features.

In his book *The Literature of Terror* David Punter observes that "Polidori hints strongly that those who are ruined by his [Lord Ruthven's] attentions are really the victims of their internal weakness- either they are themselves criminals, gamblers, sharpers, or they are merely 'frail'." (Punter 118) This can be also applied to the female heroines of the story. On the one hand, Ianthe and Aubrey's sister are described as characteristic Gothic heroines. They are innocent, virtuous, fragile young women pursued by a gothic villain, the vampire. Yet, on the other hand, they are not portrayed as flawless, perfect and beautiful damsel in distress characters. Moreover, Polidori indicates that their doom is not entirely the fault of the evil fate in the form of a vampire, but is, to some extent, caused by them.

Ianthe, the beloved of Aubrey, in the beginning is described in highly poetic terms, which is characteristic of Gothic heroines:

Under the same roof as himself, existed a being, so beautiful and delicate, that she might have formed the model for a painter, wishing to portray on canvass the promised hope of the faithful in Mahomet's paradise, save that her eyes spoke too much mind for any one to think she could belong to those who had no souls. As she danced upon the

plain, or tripped along the mountain's side, one would have thought the gazelle a poor type of her beauties [...] (Polidori 8-9).

However, as the narration proceeds, we find:

The light step of Ianthe often accompanied Aubrey in his search after antiquities, and often would the unconscious girl, engaged in the pursuit of a Kashmere butterfly, show the whole beauty of her form, boating as it were upon the wind, to the eager gaze of him [...] Often would her tresses falling, as she flitted around, exhibit in the sun's ray such delicately brilliant and swiftly fading hues, as might well excuse the forgetfulness of the antiquary, who let escape from his mind the very object he had before thought of vital importance to the proper interpretation of a passage in Pausanias. (Polidori 9)

This quotation clearly expresses natural, though highly unconscious and unrestrained sexuality embodied in the character of Ianthe. She is innocent, pure, natural and yet irrational. Ianthe's lack of reason is further indicated in the text by the following description: "Ianthe was unconscious of his love, and was ever the same frank infantile being he had first known." (Polidori 10) The word *infantile* has clearly negative connotations thus implying the immaturity of her character. Moreover, Ianthe's lack of reason is also exemplified by her actions, when she appears at night in the dangerous, dark forest which she herself asks Aubrey to avoid. Therefore, she has to suffer the dreadful consequences of her character and actions and dies from the hands of the vampire.

Aubrey's sister whose name remains undisclosed, is on the one hand a traditional gothic heroine, an innocent young woman, a devoted and loving sister. On the other hand, her portrayal lacks gothic poetic of beautiful perfection:

Miss Aubrey had not that winning grace which gains the gaze and applause of the drawing-room assemblies. There was none of that light brilliancy which only exists in the heated atmosphere of a crowded apartment. [...] Her step was not that light footing, which strays where'er a butterfly or a colour may attract - it was sedate and pensive. (Polidori 17)

The description of Aubrey's sister also hints that even though she is not entirely irrational, she still lacks reason. Thus in her description we find: "Her blue eye was never lit up by the levity of the mind beneath. There was a melancholy charm about it which did not seem to arise from misfortune, but from some feeling within, that

appeared to indicate a soul conscious of a brighter realm.” (Polidori 17) Furthermore, Miss Aubrey is not virtuous and can not resist seduction. Lord Ruthven informs Aubrey about that in the following lines: “When on the staircase, Lord Ruthven whispered in his ear – ‘Remember your oath, and know, if not my bride to day, your sister is dishonoured. Women are frail!’” (Polidori 22) In this context it can be claimed that Miss Aubrey’s doom is predisposed by her lack of reason and morality.

The concept of consumption in the story is represented by the vampire himself as Lord Ruthven consumes the lives of his victims. Furthermore, the vampire also stimulates and promotes the material consumption, thus drawing a parallel between the menacing and dreadful image of the undead and the consumption of the luxuries of Polidori’s contemporary world. In the body of the text we find the following description of Lord Ruthven’s actions:

His companion was profuse in his liberality;- the idle, the vagabond, and the beggar, received from his hand more than enough to relieve their immediate wants. But Aubrey could not avoid remarking, that it was not upon the virtuous, reduced to indigence by the misfortunes attendant even upon virtue, that he bestowed him alms; - these were sent from the door with hardly suppressed sneers; but when the profligate came to ask something, not to relieve his wants, but to allow him to wallow in his lust, or to sink him still deeper in his iniquity, he was sent away with rich charity. [...] At Brussels and other towns through which they passed, Aubrey was surprised at the apparent eagerness with which his companion sought for the centres of all fashionable vice; there he entered into all the spirit of the faro table: he betted, and always gambled with success, except where the known sharper was his antagonist, and then he lost even more than he gained; but it was always with the same unchanging face, with which he generally watched the society around [...] (Polidori 5-6).

The vampire feels at ease in the world of fashionable vices and materialistic pleasures. He promotes the excessive consumption which leads the people around Lord Ruthven to regress, they lose their human feature and become slaves to their vices and desires. This theme represents one of the main fears of Polidori’s reading public and also one the main topics of the Gothic in general. However, the vampire image is a catalyst of the misfortunes but not the initiator, thus implying that his victims predispose their doom.

Based on this analysis of Polidori’s characters I conclude, that even though they possess certain typically gothic features, they primarily appeal to the contemporary concerns of Polidori’s readers. The fears of sexual seduction, public dishonour, madness and death are the realities of Polidori’s society; and thus their vivid

representation in the story combined with a sinister, vicious yet alluring vampire evoke terror and fear about the dangers of contemporary world.

### **2.2.5 The Character of Lord Ruthven and Vampire Demonic Beauty**

John Polidori entitles his story simply *The Vampyre* indicating from the very beginning the central figure of the narration. This artistic method results in triggering particular associations and expectations in the readers, which are essential in the creation of suspense. The most obvious is the connection to the supernatural domain, mythology and of course vampirism. As a matter of fact Polidori's contemporary public was familiar and well-informed on the matter of vampires.

While myths about blood drinking creatures can be found all around the world, the most well-known vampire traditions originate from Eastern European mythology and folk tales. The earliest records concerning vampires date back to the third millennium BC and belong to Assyrian and Babylonian mythology; furthermore in the first millennium BC their traces can be found in the Greek and later Roman pantheon of magic creatures (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 4-5). It can be also claimed that the Greek *lamia*, who embodied the notions of foreignness, beauty, sexual attraction, seduction and thirst for young blood, described by Philostratus in *Life of Apollonius*, was the predecessor of Western vampires in literature where they frequently acquired similar features (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 5-6).

However, the Western European notion of a vampire as well as the general popularisation of the myth in the eighteenth century was primarily based on numerous reports of "vampire epidemics" (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 11). The vampire epidemics were a series of cases, reported exclusively by the Westerners, that involved the return of a dead person in form of a vampire; and took place in Eastern Europe from the end of the seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 11-13). In this context it is important to mention that firstly, all the accounts concerning vampires originated from the areas that had recently joined European empires; secondly, cultures, legends and beliefs of those new areas were new, therefore exotic and strange for the Westerners, which stimulated enthusiasm among the reporters of the incidents and the curiosity of their reading public (see



Bartlett and Idriceanu 11-12). Finally, the common image of the vampire that had been established during that time in Western Europe was horrific, shocking and repulsive, depicting the vampire as a bloodthirsty, slowly decomposing walking corpse which was “bloated, its teeth prominent, its hair and nails long and still growing” (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 167- 168). Given this, it can be assumed that the word *vampire* in the title of Polidori’s story evoked readers’ expectations connected to various forms of horrific, bizarre and supernatural experiences. Moreover the title also predisposes certain characteristic attributes of the vampire of Polidori’s time. In the course of the narration, the author shatters some of those expectations, thus intensifying the suspense.

John Polidori is rightfully considered to be the creator of the vampire image that became traditional in European literature from the late eighteenth to early and throughout the twenty first century. In his story *The Vampyre* Polidori introduces a figure, later defined by literary scholars as a Byronic type of a vampire (see Williamson 36), which fuses traditional themes of death, blood and foreignness with novel motives of doom, sexual deviance, aristocracy (see Williamson 36) and alluring beauty. The revolutionary image of the vampire created by John Polidori is represented by the portrayal of Lord Ruthven in the beginning of the story:

It happened that in the midst of the dissipations attendant upon London winter, there appeared at the various parties of the leaders of the *ton* a nobleman more remarkable for his singularities, than his rank. He gazed upon the mirth around him, as if he could not participate therein. Apparently, the light laughter of the fair only attracted his attention, that he might by a look quell it and throw fear into those breasts where thoughtlessness reigned. Those who felt this sensation of awe, could not explain whence it arose: some attributed it to the dead grey eye, which, fixing upon the object's face, did not seem to penetrate, and at one glance to pierce through to the inward workings of the heart; but fell upon the cheek with a leaden ray that weighed upon the skin it could not pass.[...] In spite of the deadly hue of his face, which never gained a warmer tint, either from the blush of modesty, or from the strong emotion of passion, though its form and outline were beautiful [...] He had, however, the reputation of a winning tongue; and whether it was that it even overcame the dread of his singular character, or that they were moved by his apparent hatred of vice, he was as often among those females who form the boast of their sex from their domestic virtues, as among those who sully it by their vices. (Polidori 3-4)

At this point of the narration readers do not know who this person is or what is his role in the further development of the plot, however, the textual references in his appearance such as *fear, sensation of awe, dead grey eye, leaden ray, deadly hue,*

*beautiful and dread* indicate the mystery, intrigue, allure and danger of his character and settle the general mood of the narration, foreshadowing the tragedy.

Lord Ruthven does not resemble the circulating contemporary image of a walking corpse from Eastern European folk tales, which was shocking, repulsive, grotesque and therefore horrific. On the contrary, Polidori's vampire is a terrifying figure that embodies immorality, seduction, murder and potent sexuality. Moreover the vices of Lord Ruthven are hidden behind his handsome alluring disguise and he walks freely among Polidori's contemporaries. This new definition of the vampire contradicted the existing connotations and expectations and thus can be interpreted as a feature that stimulated the suspense and intensified the terrifying effect of the story.

As has been observed above, John Polidori is rightfully considered to be the creator of the alluring vampire. Furthermore, it can be also claimed that the author was one of the first ones to transfer and implement the theme of seduction by the vampire from Greek myths into literature. The tragic fortunes of Ianthe and Aubrey's sister are but the beginning of series of similar stories evolving around a magnetic vampire character and a young, innocent girl, which can be found in works of literature up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus according to Bartlett and Idriceanu: "The sexual attraction of the noble lord was the inspiration behind Polidori's *The Vampyre* and in time became a classic image, revolving around the exploitation of young, innocent women by the vampire" (Bartlett and Idriceanu 168-169). Moreover in the story there is a clear indication that Lord Ruthven is primarily interested in the young and innocent, who "form the boast of their sex from their domestic virtues" (Polidori 3-4); in other words virgins, rather than in the experienced seductresses or women who "sully it [their sex] by their vices" (Polidori 3-4).

To sum it up, John Polidori created the vampire stereotype marked by two prominent features, describe by Bartlett and Idriceanu as follows:

The first is the complete control he exercises by a combination of latent sexuality and the sheer force of his magnetism over his victims. The second is the 'noble blood' of the vampire. The combination of class and sex is just too much for would-be victims to resist. (Bartlett and Idriceanu 169)

Closely connected with the topics of seduction and temptation is the demonic theme of the vampire character, and consequently the theme of the pact with the dark forces, which can be also traced back to the old beliefs and traditions foregoing the vampire myths (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 137). Even though the pact may have

various forms, it can be essentially defined as a contract between a human and the supernatural (usually the Devil) where a human in return for giving up something of him/herself may obtain special powers or qualities (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 137). As a rule the greater is the reward, the higher is the supernatural price demanded from a human (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 137). In the vampire myth, the price for the eternal life is paradoxically one's immortal soul; thus trapping the "buyer" into a terrifying existence of the corpse that cannot find its rest and peace (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 137).

The occult stories of the Middle Ages frequently feature the theme of the pact and traditionally include the motif of the Devil in disguise, usually as someone attractive and enthralling; who is only interested in tricking and trapping the souls of the innocent ones who fail to see through the superficial appearance (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 138). This idea is revived in the vampire stories, where the victims frequently find it difficult to see the true nature of the walking dead and perceive the real danger they are in (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 138).

In the story by John Polidori, nobody can perceive the true identity of Lord Ruthven deluded by his thrilling appearance and status. And it is Lord Ruthven's alluring and mysterious aura that draws young Aubrey and his loved ones into the spider's web of horror, deceit, immorality and eventually death. Moreover, in Polidori's work we also find a direct parallel to the traditional pact with the Devil, namely the oath that Lord Ruthven demands from young Aubrey:

- 'Swear!' cried the dying man, raising himself with exultant violence, 'Swear by all your soul reveres, by all your nature fear, swear that for a year and a day you will not impart your knowledge of my crimes or death to any living being in any way, whatever may happen, or whatever you may see.' - His eyes seemed bursting from their sockets: 'I swear!' said Aubrey; he sunk laughing upon pillow and breathed no more.

Aubrey retired to rest, but did not sleep; the many circumstances attending his acquaintance with this man rose upon his mind, and he knew not why; when he remembered his oath a cold shivering came over him, as if from the presentiment of something horrible awaiting him. (Polidori 15)

As the narration proceeds we come to realise that it was indeed a grave mistake on Aubrey's behalf, and it is because of the oath that he fails to save his beloved sister from the vampire. The realisation that the result of his own wrong choice and erroneous companionship doomed his sister's fate drives Aubrey to the brink of insanity. In this context it is important to draw particular attention to the notion of choice and decision of the human in the pact. The idea of the pact already present in

*The Vampyre* by Polidori will be transformed in the vampire literature that followed into “the contract of immortality: the choice belongs to the individual, and they are offered an answer to their desires for eternal youth and sexuality at the cost of happiness and love” (Bartlett and Idriceanu 142).

The pact is usually a catalyst of further events in the narration and concurrently a result of the protagonist’s free-will, although only supposedly (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 142). The contract is either forced upon the victims of the vampire, or they are lured into his or her web because of their innocence and naivety or due to vampire’s hypnotic control over them (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 143).

But what can a human gain from the pact with the vampire? Those ideas, except for the cursed charity of the vampire that leads to excessive consumption, developed in the vampire works that came after Polidori’s story. One of the most prominent vampire attributes is eternal life which would be later in the literature enriched by the extraordinary, superhuman strength and, of course, eternal beauty (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 147-149). Once turned, a newly born vampire acquires not only eternal life, but also strength and beauty that is not only preserved but enhanced (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 148-150). The notion of the vampire beauty is interconnected with the ideas of love and sexuality, the breaking of taboos and social norms (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 148).

John Polidori in 1819 created one of the first images and literary examples of the Western vampire. According to Milly Williamson, the Western vampire is a creature of capitalism that emerged parallel to the newly formed culture of bourgeoisie reflecting its trepidations, contradictions and denials (see Williamson 183). Mirroring the constantly changing capitalist culture, the very image of the vampire has been evolving and adapting (see Williamson 183). The vampire is a vague character that embodies a “rebel and aristocrat, bohemian and nobility, it looks to the past and to the future” (Williamson 183). As a creation of capitalism, the Western vampire also reflects one of the most prominent of its features – the condition of alienation; the vampire “expresses our alienation from our very human-ness and it offers an imaginary transcendence to culturally-imposed limitations on the body and the self” (see Williamson 183).

Traditionally, the contract of immortality might seem as a key to a life of freedom, deprived of regulations and taboos, yet at the same time the vampire is trapped in his immortality with no way out and no alternative (see Bartlett and

Idriceanu 148-150). Their fate is sealed by the eternal hunger for the blood of the innocent, thus transforming life after death into everlasting damnation (see Bartlett and Idriceanu 150). Given this it can be concluded that the vampire story is in its heart a narration of temptation that leads to entrapment in the world of illusions, destruction and damnation (Bartlett and Idriceanu 150). Nevertheless, as it will be further illustrated in the chapters to follow, the initial idea behind the vampire fiction has evolved immensely in the last few decades; thus transforming the image of the vampire - from the embodiment of eternal damnation into the ideal of our contemporary society. The vampire is not an expression of terror, as he has been perceived in the story by Polidori, but an outcast, which explains the constantly growing vampire popularity and large vampire fan culture (see Williamson 183).

### **3 Lestat and the Contemporary Vampire Image in Films**

The following section of my work will be centred primarily around visual representations of the vampires in modern culture. As it has already been established in the previous chapter, the original appearance of the undead evolved throughout the nineteenth century. The vampire, formerly depicted as a living corpse, had undergone a few number of transformations, most of which can be traced back to the creator of the first handsome vampire, John Polidori and his story *The Vampyre*. The character of Lord Ruthven possesses not only an attractive appearance, but also a certain vampire allure, an ability to seduce and to deprive his victims of the free will and power to resist. Moreover, Lord Ruthven transferred the vampire from the outskirts of the empire and the village churchyards of Eastern Europe to the high society of the West and London's salons. As we proceed in our discussion, we will see examples for these characteristics innovative for the 19<sup>th</sup> century which not only prevailed and dominated the image of the vampire throughout the twentieth and twenty first centuries, but were further developed and intensified.

The most effective approach to analyse the evolution of the image is to consider it in terms of the dominant genres of visual culture. Therefore in the course of my work I would like to consider the image of the vampire based on the examples from cinema, analysing films and later TV-series. This chapter will focus on one of the most famous and glamorous vampires of the twentieth century - vampire Lestat, and

his filmic representations in the movies *Interview with the Vampire* and *Queen of the Damned*.

### 3.1 Ann Rice and the *Vampire Chronicles*<sup>2</sup>

Ann Rice was born and raised in the Irish Catholic district of New Orleans, the city which would later provide the background for many of her works. Even though Ann Rice has written numerous books, she is best known for her first novel *Interview with the Vampire*, published in 1976. The narration unfolds around the character of Louis de Pointe du Lac, a vampire from New Orleans and his ventures in the New and Old Worlds. The book is the beginning of *The Vampire Chronicles*, a series of novels that include *The Vampire Lestat* (1985), *The Queen of the Damned* (1988), *Tale of the Body Thief* (1992), *Memnoch the Devil* (1995), *The Vampire Armand* (1998), *Merrick* (2000), *Blood and Gold* (2001), *Blackwood Farm* (2002), and *Blood Canticle* (2003). Parallel to these works Ann Rice also created *New Tales of the Vampires* which include *Pandora* (1998) and *Vittorio* (1999). Her other books that also deal with the Gothic topics of the occult are *The Witching Hour* (1990) followed by other novels about the Mayfair Witches. In her later works, Ann Rice attempts to merge the two worlds: that of the vampires and that of the witches. However, according to a statement of Ann Rice published on her official webpage on July 10, 2009, she has completed both the *Vampire Chronicles* and the Mayfair saga:

I completed the Vampire Chronicles in 2002 with the writing of Blood Canticle. This novel marks the end of my journey with Lestat and his friends. It also marks the end of my journey with the Mayfair Witches and the Taltos. The novel does not attempt an artificial finale, or wrap up, but presents Lestat and others as moving on in time. The novel also reflects a profound moral change in Lestat.

In 2002, I experienced a new spiritual beginning, and my writing inevitably changed. New challenges presented themselves and new novels were the result.

“I remain proud of the Vampire Chronicles and the stories of the Mayfair Witches, and I remain close to the readers of these books. But I have no more stories to tell with the Vampires or the Mayfair Witches, and cannot write about these characters anymore. To attempt to do so would be dishonest. I think the eleven novels of the Vampire Chronicles are best enjoyed as a complete and finished work.

I am very hopeful that high quality films will be made in the future based on the Vampire Chronicles and books about the Mayfair Witches, and my agents are actively working on possible projects. (Rice)

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Punter and Byron, 162.

For some literary critics, Ann Rice is particularly remarkable for her reworkings of the Gothic combined with a postmodern concern with identity. While Rice's protagonists are usually isolated and deprived by society, the author skilfully employs them to create a subversive and fantastical representation of our daily reality. Other theorists claim that in her recent works Rice expresses more conservative points of view and her position on gender ideology seems to be less assured. In her early books, Ann Rice repeatedly challenged the clear-cut definitions of good and evil, whereas in her later novels, one can observe a tendency towards reaffirming those oppositions.

The novel *Interview with the Vampire* was published in 1976 and was a success with the reading public. Fred Botting defines the narrative form of the book as a confessional autobiographical narrative which tells the story of passions and adventures of a vampire protagonist (see Botting 75). Furthermore, Botting argues that a merging of the romantic tale with the vampire story makes the novel similar to the genres of literature popularised in the 1790s and 1890s and recently revived through their appeal and frequent implementation by contemporary cinema (see Botting 76). Botting also claims that even though the form of the novel does not excite our interest, *Interview with the Vampire* was of great success with the readers (see Botting 76).

The book's plot unfolds primarily in the past, set in New Orleans and later the Old World and France of the late eighteenth century (see Botting 76). Botting claims that the romance of the narration possesses distinct features of Romanticism (see Botting 76). One of the most prominent themes of the novel is the motif of isolation, loneliness and alienation in the world, which leads to the vampires' constant search for a perfect companion, who can help them to endure their immortality. Vampire Louis' personal story is also written from the first person perspective, and easily transfers the reader on the vampire's side, stimulating identification with the protagonist (see Botting 76-77). Botting argues that even though the first person narration seduces not only the reading public but also the reporter, who, by the end of the novel, is willing to become a vampire himself, the book and the way it is written, contributes little to the vampire's appeal (see Botting 76-77). The focus on the vampire's subjectivity endows its object, formerly horrific and repulsive by nature, with the qualities of extreme sensitivity and pathos (see Botting 77). This technique leads to the fact that the borders between a human subject and supernatural monsters

start to blur (see Botting 77). As the vampire acquires his own voice within the narration, he simultaneously attains feelings, motives and a strange kind humanity, because the vampires in Ann Rice's novel still prey on humans (see Botting 77).

Another characteristic feature of Rice's vampires is their similarity to the so-called 'flaneur' character, symbolically illustrated by taking the novel to the nineteenth-century Paris, the centre of consumption (see Botting 85). Botting on page 85 describes that a flaneur is alone in the crowd, the witness of the commodity culture, and at the same time a commodity himself. In his book *Romance consumed*, Botting refers to the characteristics of flaneur accompanied by death and commodities, provided by Benjamin:

The flaneur's last journey: death. Its goal: novelty. 'To the depths of the unknown to find something new'. Novelty is a quality which does not depend on the use-value of the commodity. It is the source of the illusion which belongs inalienably to the images which the collective unconscious engenders. It is the quintessence of false consciousness, of which fashion is the tireless agent. (Benjamin 1983:172 qtd. in Botting 87)

In these terms, death is the final consumption, yet, the vampires are deprived of that finality; they are beyond death (see Botting 87-88). Therefore, Rice's vampires are positioned as men or women, bored beyond death by the "consumption that is their wont, yet still wanting grander ideals by which to live" (Botting 89). Botting postulates that Rice's vampires for all their gifts, abilities and mastery of time, always remain unsatisfied with their status and position (see Botting 89). Their desire is animalistic in its destructiveness and empty in its deprivation of recognition (see Botting 89). What is left for the vampires in the chronicles is the fascination with human life and death, that derives from alienation and pleasures sacrificed to the allure of immortality (see Botting 91). Therefore it can be claimed that Rice attempts to arouse pity in her readers, pity not only for her vampire consumers, but also pity for ourselves in the contemporary world (see Botting 91). That is how Botting explains this: "Where vampires once filled the void in human life with the excesses of horror and enjoined the violent, disgusted expenditures that closed the gap, they have now assumed the burden of loss and wear it like an open wound of consumption" (Botting 91).



### 3.2 Representation of the Vampire in the Film *Interview with the Vampire*

Next, I would like to address the film adaptation of the novel by Ann Rice *Interview with the Vampire*. Based on the information from the Internet Movie Database website, the film was released on November 11<sup>th</sup> of 1994, more than fifteen years after the publication of the original novel. The film has been of a great success, nominated for two Academy Awards and winning numerous awards, among which best costumes (Saturn Awards), and best horror film (Saturn Awards) (see The Internet Movie Database). Another indicator of the film's success and popularity is the fact that with an estimated budget of approximately 60,000,000 dollars, already after the opening weekend the movie had collected around 36,389,705 dollars in the United States only, while the total profit worldwide came near 223,664,608 dollars (see The Internet Movie Database). As a consequence of the film's tremendous success, interest in the original novel by Ann Rice was revived, which resulted in its re-entering the best-seller lists of the time. *Interview with the Vampire* is considered to be one of the classic vampire films in the history of cinema. This film had a big impact on the further development of the vampire image not only in cinema, but also in modern culture as a whole.

The opening sequence of the movie shows the audience various shots of contemporary (1990's) San Francisco, which immediately sets the time of the plot, the present. However, what we see is not a pleasant image: filthy streets, filled with an expressionless crowd aimlessly moving along, drunks, drug-dealers, freaks and prostitutes, the sounds of police sirens in the background – that what constitutes our reality. The gaze of the camera floats through the crowd, remaining untouched and indifferent, as if simulating an invisible observer who is then slowly lifted above the people and their reality to the hotel window where we encounter Louis for the first time. The figure of the vampire stands still in the semi-darkness of the room, resembling a statue or a panting framed by the window cell. Although we catch but a glimpse of his face, this is enough to create the effect of importance and extraordinariness of Louis' character in comparison to the crowd underneath and a young reporter in the space behind his back. Yet, before the vampire can start his story, he has to present himself to the unbelieving public, to convince them not only of his supernatural being, but also of his superiority and uniqueness. Before the

interview can begin, Louis insists on turning on the light, thus presenting himself in all his terrifying and fascinating glory in front of the reporter's eyes.

As Louis' narration proceeds we are transferred into the past, to the year of 1791, when a young, 24 year-old Louis de Pointe du Lac has been given the 'dark gift' and turned into a vampire. In the description of Louis' former, pre-vampire life, the pictures of his reality are grey and even colourless, thus reflecting his loss of the will to live. The scenes from the tavern, shot in yellow- brownish tones, depict the reality of the mortals as somewhat dirty, dull and monotonous; such a technique intensifies the effect produced by the first glimpse of the vampire: a splash of bright blue colour. Lestat's blue luxurious velvet coat stands in clear contradiction to the brown surroundings of the dirty poor tavern, where he finds Louis. Lestat follows Louis to the harbour where he attacks him and flies up into the sky draining Louis from blood. This image can be interpreted on two levels: as a mockery of the idea of a human soul flying up to Heaven after death to meet the Creator; yet here it is the vampire who lifts Louis above his mortal reality. The second idea behind the image – is to accentuate Lestat's supernatural powers, his ability to rise above the daily existence, to bring death and life, another life.

The motif of seduction has always been one of the key elements in vampire fiction which remains very prominent in films, and also in *Interview with the Vampire*. One of Lestat's main arguments of seduction is, in fact, Louis' loss of the will to live: "Life has no meaning anymore, does it? The wine has no taste. The food sickens you. There seems no reason for any of it, does there? What if I could give it back to you?" (*Interview with the Vampire*) Lestat promises his victim not only another life, but also another meaning for life. He enumerates various commodities hence implying that only consumption and its forms can bring pleasure and meaning to human life. Lestat's promise to bring back the significance to Louis' life is ironic, as all he refers to is bringing back the meaning to consumption and commodities. It is symbolic that the promise of the eternal life and youth is mentioned only as a second gift. Here we can draw a parallel to the motif of the pact with the devil, common in the Gothic and crucial to the vampire theme. Louis is given a supposedly free choice to decide whether to accept Lestat's offer or not. Yet, the allure of the vampire and the promises of material goods and eternal youth are just too much of a temptation to resist. Moreover, Lestat himself is the epitome of those things. When Louis first sees him- he is powerful, handsome and dressed like a prince from a fairy tale: laces,

velvet and gold. Hence, the scene in Louis' bedroom evokes some associations with the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty.

The sequence following Louis' transformation brings us back to the hotel room where the interview takes place. Remarkable is the contrast in colour between the reality of the twentieth century and the vampire world of the past: the greyish tones of an empty hotel room in contemporary San Francisco compared to the luxurious and picturesque depictions of the past South and New Orleans. Even though both the vampire and the reporter are lacking colour and seem bleak in the present, Louis still expresses more contrast by his appearance, his black suit against the room's white walls. In this context it is important to note a remarkable detail. Louis' dressing style also changes after the transformation. In the preceding scenes his clothes were predominantly of earth tones: brown, green, beige; which presented a dramatic contrast to Lestat's laces, sky blue and lilac velvet, embroidered with gold and silver. After the transformation, we are presented with a new image of Louis, who is now dressed in a manner similar to Lestat. The former natural colour scheme has been replaced by dark pink velvet and gold, the brightness and vividness of the garments accentuating the unnaturalness of the beings wearing them; the vampires look more dramatic and expressive, yet not alive.

The masterful use of the colour scheme to distinguish the world of the living from the domain of the vampires is a reoccurring technique in the film. Whenever the audience is confronted by the world of the humans, the colours become bleak and monotonous. When Louis enters the plague-infected town quarters where he encounters Claudia, still as a mortal, the movie seems to become almost black and white. The same happens when he hides in the sewers feeding on rats, thus symbolically returning to his natural environment as a predator. The tavern scene that follows Louis turning into a vampire is also one of the examples of such a colour-driven differentiation. Two vampires dressed in cold bright colours contrastive against the warmer tones of the living around them: the tavern life, the tavern girl who brings them wine and a *Commedia dell'Arte* theatre performing its play. In this scene the camera's gaze is constantly shifting between the two vampires with the tavern girl, and a theatrical performance, hence creating an ironic juxtaposition between the actors of the theatre displaying a mocking picture of the reality and the undead pretending to be this reality. As a result, both seem artificial. Simultaneously, the theatrically grotesque mimicking of life is juxtaposed with Louis and Lestat

slowly killing the tavern girl, which seems more gracious, delicate and even beautiful. Another distinctive feature of the tavern scene, which reoccurs several times throughout *Interview with the Vampire* and will find its further reincarnation in numerous vampire films, is the effect of the vampire kiss, namely the connection between the vampire bite and sexual arousal, pleasure and even euphoria the victim experiences. It seems that the bite does not inflict any pain; moreover, the victim craves for more, failing to see the danger of her desires. The shift of the camera gaze from Louis delicately and seductively draining girl's blood through the kiss to the mocking imitation of a sexual intercourse on the stage; reveals a striking parallel between the apparently different acts. What seems beautiful and delicate at a first glance, in its true nature does not differ from primal and primitive human desires and pleasures, thus both of them being further examples of consumption. The tavern girl dies, drained from her blood and thus fulfilling the final consumption. In this context it is symbolic that Lestat throws two coins on the table as a payment for her life, implying that for every pleasure there is a price to pay.

Throughout the film the audience is frequently reminded of Louis' and especially Lestat's aristocratic origins. As the narration unfolds, Louis mentions that: "The snob in him [Lestat] loved to hunt in society. And the blood of the aristocrat thrilled him best of all" (*Interview with the Vampire*). Remarkably, it is in high society or among the privileged that the vampires in the film seem and act most naturally. The high class with its vices corresponds to the vampire nature the most. An environment, where immorality, crime, sin and corruption can be camouflaged behind the mask of manners, beautiful clothes, luxury and material wealth becomes a perfect hunting and playground where the vampire can dwell unnoticed with ease. The slaves from Louis' plantation quickly foresee the demonic nature of their owner and his companion behind their handsome appearance, whereas the society of New Orleans remains oblivious of the predators and presents a perfect masquerade for the monsters.

It is in New Orleans where Lestat, accompanied by Louis and Claudia, is presented in all his glory and beauty. The vampire villa is masterfully decorated with red and gold, triggering associations with blood and money. The vampires are immaculately dressed in velvet and silks of wonderful colours, especially Claudia, who resembles a doll. Her vampire is one of the most controversial images in the vampire films. At the moment of her turning, she is an innocent sick child, who transforms into a perfectly beautiful vampire girl. Claudia embodies eternal beauty in

its perfection, yet it does not bring her happiness. Whereas her human past is symbolically depicted as the ruins of her family house, abandoned for thirty years, her present and future are to remain a child forever. Her spirit and soul are locked in the cage of her artificial, doll-like appearance. Claudia's paradox initially drives her mad and forces her to kill Lestat; but eventually, she is drained of all her will-power and doomed to demise as the only way out of her imprisonment. Claudia is an allegorical image of eternal beauty as a blessing that in fact is a curse. Life and joy can exist only in connection with progress and change. Where there is no change, there is only regression and decay. Claudia also symbolises the motif of corruption of the innocent, found in the traditional vampire myths. Her angelic appearance masks the heart of a merciless killer. The source of corruption in the film is of course Lestat.

The character of Lestat in many ways is similar to the traditional, classical image of the vampire, found in the story by John Polidory. He incorporates Lord Ruthven's characteristics of power, beauty, allure and evil. As the narration is told from Louis' perspective, the image of Lestat in many aspects corresponds to an image of a monster. I have already discussed the importance of colour in the film to produce certain emotions. In accordance, Lestat is frequently wearing cold tones of blue, triggering the associations with ice and him as an ice-cold killer. His character possesses the dark gift of mind reading, which again brings back the old myths and occult story of the devil, who knows our deepest and darkest desires and sins. Although evil, Lestat is depicted as one of the strongest characters in the film, who is confronted by the lesser evil, Louis. Even though Louis strains to resist Lestat, his charms, his seduction and his interpretation of good and evil, he fails. In comparison with Lestat, Louis seems to be a weaker character, who is constantly plagued by his inner demons and not able to find the strength to embrace his new nature and thereby deal with the consequences of his choice. In this context it is ironic that Claudia, Lestat's child and best student, confronts him and attempts to bring about his demise. As if reconstructing the scene of her creation she cuts his throat and drains him of his strength, leaving him bleeding on the carpet of their luxurious villa. Claudia does not hesitate a moment to send her maker to the swamp, thus bringing Lestat back to his animalistic state. Later he returns, but there is not a trace left from the former glamorous vampire of New Orleans. In the scene of Claudia's and Louis' escape, their maker represents but a living corpse which he will remain until the end of the film. Furthermore, based on the fact that Lestat falls a victim to his own 'children'

and pupils, it can be deduced, that he, being the epitome of consumption, becomes his own victim, being consumed by himself, his ideas and his creations.

Still, Lestat returns and survives his seeming demise. Louis recites his recent encounter with the Lestat in the year 1988. Ironically to find his former glorious companion, he only has to follow the smell of death and decay. When he sees Lestat in the twentieth century, he is still in their old villa, although deprived of all its glamour and luxury. The formerly handsome vampire is sitting in an old leather chair, covered by an old, dusty blanket. Lestat seems fragile, weak and powerless. He is still wearing his century old clothes, although all his laces, silk and velvet lost their alluring sexual appeal. They are as bleak and colourless as Lestat himself. Moreover, dressed in his old-fashioned garments, threatening to fall into pieces with every move, Lestat represents a grotesque and ridiculous figure. He is archaic and deprived of all the qualities he symbolised throughout the film. He lost his beauty, power, style and wealth. When the police lights enter the scene and scare the old vampire it illustrates his conflict with the modern world, his inability to adapt. Lestat is depicted as an artefact from the past, covered in dust, in his old grey house made of cinder.

In this respect the final sequence of the film is of great importance. At the end of his interview Louis declares himself to be “the spirit of supernatural flesh. Detached, unchangeable, empty” (*Interview with the Vampire*). The audience might think that to be the end of the vampires yet their allure is still strong and the young reporter is begging Louis for the dark gift, but he is denied. As the young reporter leaves the, now empty, hotel room and starts driving his car, he turns on the tape with the interview which starts from the beginning. The narration metaphorically makes a complete circle and brings us back to the beginning of the film. And it is at that very moment Lestat re-enters the narration with the words: “I assume I need no introduction” (*Interview with the Vampire*). Although he is still dressed in his old laces, the final image of him driving the car implies that things are about to change. It is the synthesis of Lestat’s old, glamorous self with the new age and its technology. The music that starts playing for the final credits is symbolic- it is the song “Sympathy for the Devil”, originally written by Rolling Stones, here covered by Guns ‘N’ Roses. The song illustrates not only the sympathy for the devil Lestat, but is the prelude for the new vampire about to emerge - the Rock and Roll vampire of the *Queen of the Damned*.

### 3.3 The Vampire Lestat in the Film *Queen of the Damned*

The film *Queen of the Damned* has been released in the United States on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2002. It had been long anticipated and awaited by the numerous vampire fan community, especially because it was promoted as a sequel to the famous *Interview with the Vampire* adaptation. However in the end, it caused mainly disappointment and frustration within the audience. While the estimated budget of the production was approximately 35,000,000 dollars, after the first weekend of its running in USA, the film grossed only 14,757,535 dollars, and consequently only 45,479,110 dollars of profit worldwide (see The Internet Movie Database). Those numbers can not be compared to the financial and audience's success of *Interview with the Vampire*.

There were several reasons for such an evident failure of the film. The title of the movie refers to the third novel by Ann Rice from the *Vampire Chronicles*, however it attempts to combine the story lines of both *The Vampire Lestat* and *The Queen of the Damned*. I would like to direct our attention to the story lines precisely because the film represents but a very free interpretation of the novels and as a result has practically nothing in common with the original sources except for a few story lines and characters. On her official Youtube channel, Ann Rice published an excerpt of an interview by Mona Schnell, where the author expresses her attitude towards the film as follows:

I did not care for the movie *Queen of the Damned* at all. I begged the studio not to make that movie. I told them that the readers don't really want that movie. What they wanted was the movie based on *The Vampire Lestat*, the second book in the series. And the studio went on and made the movie. And the movie was not really based on my work. They used the names of the characters but they replaced the original material with the material written for them by a script writer. And the movie was great disappointment to most of my readers. I still get letters to this day asking me why I let it happen. And of course I could not control it. There was nothing I could do. They had the right as a studio to make that movie and there was nothing I could do to prevent it. (Ann Rice interviewed by Mona Schnell, uploaded 23 December 2009)

Given this it is not a coincidence that on her official web page, Ann Rice does not mention the film *Queen of the Damned* among her books' filmic adaptations.

The main themes of the movie *Queen of the Damned*, namely sex, blood and rock and roll, are best described by one of the characters from the film: Maudy (a keyboard player in Lestat's band). Therefore, my analysis of the vampires will be based on a detailed examination of those topics.

### **Music**

I would like to start my discussion with the music in *Queen of the Damned* (that is rock and roll) and the symbolic meanings it brings to the movie and the vampire theme in general. Music and the vampire films have always been interconnected. In his article devoted to vampire music, Tony Fonseca refers to the first movies with Bela Lugosi of 1931, followed by Tony Scott's *The Hunger* (1983), as some of the first successful examples of such a symbiosis (see Fonseca 59). Furthermore, the latter film has influenced an entire generation with the vampire music flair consequently contributing to the development and promotion of the gothic scene (see Fonseca 59). In his article Fonseca claims that gothic and vampire music originated in the United Kingdom and by the 1990's their popularity had crossed the Atlantic and found an ever-growing community of followers in the United States (Fonseca 59-61). The terms gothic and vampire music can not be used interchangeably: whereas gothic refers to a wider range of music groups and bands, vampire music can be identified by either music featuring a famous vampire (usually in songs' lyrics or band's name), or involving a vampire theme literally or symbolically, or music from soundtracks to vampire films (see Fonseca 61). The last category brings us back to *Queen of the Damned* where music plays not only an essential role but the whole film resembles a prolonged music video.

The film opens with a camera gaze floating through an old cemetery with the narrative voice of Lestat, as we will find out later, in the background commenting on the loneliness of immortality which caused his character to fall asleep. The Vampire claims that what awoke him was the change in the world around him, which he felt through its sound. As Lestat describes it: "But as I lay there, the world did not sound like the place I had left...but something different. Better..." (*Queen of the Damned*) Right after this statement we hear the first guitar riffs of a music band playing. We do not see the whole picture, but just some fragments accentuating instruments, eyes, body piercings – thus triggering associations with the rock scene. And at this very moment Lestat refers to the main reason of his awakening: "It became worthwhile to



rise again, as new gods were born and worshiped. Night and day they were never alone. I would become one of them” (*Queen of the Damned*). The described arrangement of images and audio creates a symbolic reference to the world of rock stars, who are never alone, always at the centre of attention of fans and camera lenses; perceived and worshiped by their public as new gods of their age.

As mentioned above the movie *Queen of the Damned* has numerous features that make it resemble a film-length music video. This fact is intensified not only by Lestat’s video clips that are implemented in the body of the film, but the whole flow of the narration is less filmic and more music video like. Whereas *Interview with the Vampire* is a cohesively narrated story with a few intermissions that take the audience to the present, *Queen if the Damned* is more fragmented. The plot is divided into several story lines, and the narration is constantly shifting between them. Moreover, the portrayal of the characters is more static, there is but little action created throughout the film. Hence, scene after scene, the audience is presented with the images which, although shot from various angles, are hardly moving within the scenic space accompanied by the tunes of Lestat’s band, the music of which, except for a few moments, does not cease to play throughout the narration.

Lestat decides to employ the music band that he discovers rehearsing in his old house as his support act to become a rock star of the twenty first century; and in return he is promising to give them everything they ever dreamed of, that is fame, luxury and wealth. Lestat’s promise brings back the similar consumption-oriented offer made to Louis in *Interview with the Vampire*. The vampire keeps his promise and the main plot of the movie is unfolding around his world-wide success as a music star, travelling between the continents and being worshiped all over the world. In the film we find constant references to music industry of our age: the producer who is taking care of Lestat’s bloody needs and regularly brings the girls to the vampire, numerous press conferences and journalists, hordes of fans following their god everywhere, and of course the reappearing images from contemporary MTV programs and even advertisements of Warner Brothers Music. Moreover, the soundtrack to *Queen of the Damned* features some of the most popular alternative bands of the time including Papa Roach, Marilyn Manson, Chester Bennington from Linkin Park and especially Jonathan Davis from Korn, who in cooperation with Richard Gibbs composed most of the songs for the movie. In this context it is essential to observe that even though the music is popular and the vampire-rock star is

desirable, the fascination with the vampire is still limited to a, although numerous, but specific group of people, namely fans of the alternative and gothic (music) genres. The references to gothic subculture and consequently Goths as Lestat's predominant fans are reoccurring frequently in *Queen of the Damned*. All of the musical components discussed above contribute to the creation of a truthful and realistic background for the central figure of the whole film – Lestat, who is positioning himself as a rock star, glamorous, decadent, desirable and sexual.

### **Sex and Sexuality**

The next topic that would be considered is the representations of sex and sexuality in *Queen of the Damned*. As it has been already discussed in the previous chapters, the notions of sex and sexuality have always been part of the vampire character. Originated in myths and legends, the concepts were usually connected to breaking taboos and illicit relations, also represented by the sexual connotations of Lord Ruthven, the first handsome vampire in literature. The allure of the vampire is correlated to his powers of seduction and corruption of the innocent, depriving his victims of the will to resist, their voice of reason and morality, and intensifying their animalistic primal urges and desires. These components of the vampire image initially had been considered repulsive and terrifying by the reading public of the nineteenth century, and they are still contributing to the danger of the predator from *Interview with the Vampire*, which depicted Lestat, Louis, Claudia and others primarily as monsters. In *Queen of the Damned*, sex and sexuality are essential for the image of Lestat. Yet, opposed to the original negative meanings, sex and sexuality are celebrated and positioned as a goal, an example to follow. Moreover, in *Queen of the Damned* there is a clear-cut distinction between the sexuality of the new vampire Lestat and the ancient vampires, who are not distinguished by that feature. The distinction is primarily expressed through fashion and style.

Fashion is one of the key attributes of the image of Lestat as a rock star. The first time we encounter Lestat in the film, he is still concealed by his old-fashioned cloak which is quickly replaced by the leather outfit the vampire steals from his first victim – the drug dealer from the docks. And it is in leather trousers and a leather jacket over his naked torso Lestat presents himself to his future band and to the audience in all his eternal beauty for the first time. Remarkable is the pose Lestat adopts: half lying on

top of the sound boxes, as if displaying himself, which triggers certain associations with ancient Roman feasts (or even orgies), decadence, and eroticism.

In the course of the film, Lestat's appearance remains dramatic and theatrical; his character wears leather, velvet, silk and glittering see-through shirts. At the same time, compared to *Interview with the Vampire*, where the immortals were distinguished by the style and colour of their clothes to accentuate their artificiality, the image of Lestat in the twenty first century seems harmonious, even natural in terms of contemporary culture. It is symbolic that when Lestat and Marius meet, one of the first comments made is indeed about fashion and style: "Still wearing the old fashions, I see. [...]How did you manage to slip through the 50's in red velvet?"(*Queen of the Damned*). Hence, Lestat addresses the importance of appearance and fashion for the vampire.

The notions of sex and sexuality in the film are also expressed through other characters, primarily the vampires of London. Most of the vampires in the film, besides Lestat and the ancient ones, are shown predominantly in an underground club. Their domain is secluded and the sphere of their influence is limited to the club scene. The images of the London vampires are created through a distinct fashion style: leather, latex, corsets and remarkable hair. The grotesque representation of the living dead contradicts the mortal visitors of the club, who are portrayed as men in suits, clerks and businessmen seemingly enjoying the company of vampire ladies. Such pictures vividly resemble a swinger club, or even a sadomasochistic scene, where vampire victims take pleasure in serving their blood to the immortals. Moreover, it seems that London vampires are occupied only by themselves; their characters are static, self-absorbed, self- admiring, interested only in blood and sex which is their only past-time. The sexual and sadomasochistic connotations of those vampire images are further reaffirmed by the relation where a vampire is the host, or 'domina', and a human is the subordinate, the slave. Jessie (a mortal female protagonist in the film), while being in the club, claims to be "taken" and that her "host" is somewhere around. The general impression created by the club and its vampires is that of grotesque and decadence where pleasure and consumption are at the centre of the existence. It is symbolic that Lestat is also among the visitors of the club, thus implying on the one hand his similarity to London vampires in his desire for pleasure and sex combined with his grotesque, star-like image. And on the other hand, he is different as he evolved in his ideas and also style which enabled his freedom and

instead of being restricted to an underground scene, the whole world is his playground.

In addition, whereas the vampires in *Interview with the Vampire* were marked by their style and dignified appearance of the upper class, Lestat's style is extravagant, on the border to vulgar, mirrored not only in his fashion but also in the design of the houses he dwells in. Hence, the first vampire villa that we see in England is a bizarre combination of various architectural styles: traces of medieval castle mixed with modern sculptures and two massive gothic couches in the centre of the room, decorated with leopard print. The image of Lestat half lying on one of those couches, displaying himself to the girls, is linked primarily to the concept of exhibitionism and furthermore is analogous to a stereotypical representation of a brothel, which intensifies the sexual appeal of the vampire but also implies his lack of taste and nobility. In this context Marius' explanation of how he found his creation by simply admitting that: "I just had to look for the most gauche house on the block" (*Queen of the Damned*), refers not solely to the gauche style of Lestat, but the whole world of stars and Hollywood where the vampire feels so at ease. Given this, we can draw a parallel between the world of the higher class of New Orleans and Paris, depicted in *Interview with the Vampire* and the world of Hollywood glamour: both focus the attention on looks, style and wealth, disregarding inner vices or virtues alike, thus both enabling the vampire freedom to freely on the living unpunished and unnoticed.

Based on the discussion so far, we can conclude that Lestat incorporates the notions of sex and sexuality in the film *Queen of the Damned*. His flawless appearance with a touch of decadence and rock and roll drama, combined with fame and success, establish him as an authority figure of the narration. Lestat's character is alluring, seductive and appealing to the audience, based on his dark sexuality and power of a traditional romantic protagonist, yet simultaneously he also possesses the attributes of a prince. Jessie, positioned as a damsel in distress, is being rescued by Lestat, which triggers her fascination and obsession with the vampire to the point of being ready to offer Lestat everything she has for a taste of the vampire kiss. This also applies to all mortal female characters of the film. The image of the vampire Lestat in *Queen of the Damned* is deprived of all the negative and repulsive connotations that can be found in the original character of Lord Ruthven as well as Lestat, Louis and Claudia in *Interview with the Vampire*. Furthermore, the notions of sex and sexuality intensified by the vampire characters lessen their illicit and

dangerous meanings and seem solely as means to attain pleasure. The only negative characteristic remaining in the film, is their hunger for blood, although the representation of this concept also evolved. Opposed to the world of Polidory, where sex was a social taboo and blood was a final touch of death, in the contemporary world sex is a normality and it is blood that is considered to be the ultimate intercourse.

### **Blood**

In *Queen of the Damned* blood is still present and thirst for blood remains among the central vampire attributes. At the same time the attitude towards blood and blood hunger has changed. Whereas in *Interview with the Vampire* Louis' inner conflict between his humanity and his predatory vampire nature lies at the heart of the film; there is no such moral struggle in the movie of 2002. Moreover, the vampire does not seem to differ from the entertainment industries in his hunger for the young and innocent. As Lestat describes it in the film: "The city of Lost Angels already fed on the blood of youth. My presence here barely stirred a ripple" (*Queen of the Damned*).

It has been stated in the previous chapter that "Interview with the Vampire" portrays the immortals primarily as monsters, as merciless hunters. Lestat and Louis have to lure their victims, seduce and eventually kill them which results in the inner conflict of the protagonists. Simultaneously the murder theme, although present in *Queen of the Damned*, is by no means as explicit as it is in the previous movie. Furthermore there are no regrets or conflicts connected to it. The vampire victims willingly come to the predator and freely offer themselves to satisfy his hunger. Given this the relationship between Lestat (as well as the London vampires) and his victims does not resemble one of a predator and its prey but rather that of a consumer and a commodity. Whereas the mortal visitors of the vampire club are gaining sexual pleasure in exchange for their blood, the music fans of Lestat's band are enjoying their moment in the limelight.

This symbolic relation is vividly illustrated by a scene in Lestat's English vampire villa. His producer Roger delivers two girls to entertain the rock star. The dialogue between the two ladies as they are approaching is essential:

- I've heard that Lestat keeps all these girls in his cellar. And it's really nice. They give you food and cable and weed.
- Oh please.

- That's what I've heard. But you have to let him suck you on your neck whenever he wants.
- Doesn't sound too bad.
- Done worse.

(*Queen of the Damned*)

Although unaware of Lestat's true nature (they perceive his vampire image as part of his stage act), both of the girls are not in the least hesitant to exchange their personal freedom as well as their blood for food, cable TV, drugs and, most importantly, being in close proximity of their idol. In the next sequence the girls are shown smoking marihuana and drinking what looks like Champaign – the decadent attributes of not only rock and roll but success in the music scene in general. Once the ladies fully enjoyed the commodities they are willing to pay, hence offering themselves, apparently in a sexual way, to the vampire. The next scene shows the vampire and the two girls crawling on the floor. Thus symbolically, sedated by the drugs and with the voice of reason silenced by their desire for pleasure, the two humans are degraded to an animalistic state which seems natural for the vampire (the predator), but unnatural and disgraceful for the humans. Fascinated by Lestat's extraordinary powers, the girls realise his supernatural character too late, which seals their doom. What this episode illustrates is the transformation of the concept of hunting for blood –

In our contemporary world of the twenty first century a vampire does not need to pursue his victims; on the contrary, humans will be searching for the vampire if he has something to offer in exchange for their lives. And as illustrated above the price is not high. The humans in *Queen of the Damned* trade their life for commodities and fame. Furthermore, in *Queen of the Damned* we encounter theme of being consumed by a vampire as an ultimate goal, best illustrated by the relationship between Lestat and Jessie.

Jessie is another character that seeks vampire's attention. It has been mentioned in the course of this chapter that she is fascinated and even obsessed with Lestat, which makes her similar to the 'groupies' discussed in the previous paragraph. However, there is one essential distinction between them; whereas the two girls are still unaware of Lestat's true nature and perceive his vampire features as part of the scenic image, Jessie is well informed about who he truly is. Therefore her infatuation with the vampire implies either her weakness against his lure, or her lack of reason. Jessie's curiosity about what it is like to be a vampire and her asking Lestat to show it

clearly convey her wish to become one of them. Such an idea has not even been insinuated in the original story by Polidory. Moreover, the traditional motif of turning into a vampire has always been connected to the breaking of taboos and corruption of the innocent; the pact with the devil that results in eternal damnation. Yet in *Queen of the Damned* Jessie's turning into a vampire is an ultimate goal and a prerequisite for a happy ending of the film.

In the course of the narration Lestat meets and later becomes the lover of the vampire queen – Akasha. She is the oldest and strongest vampire and also the mother of all the immortals. At her side Lestat loses his role of a dominant male figure. Thus, although Akasha refers to Lestat as her king, he still remains Akasha's subordinate, following her orders to kill Jessie. He re-establishes and reaffirms his dominant role only through Jessie's transformation. Lestat's becoming Jessie's maker, and his contribution to Akasha's demise, reinstall his power and status. Furthermore, Jessie assuming her subsidiary role as a female companion of the older vampire also resolves the motif of eternal loneliness that has been present in both films. In this context the final scene of the movie showing Lestat and a transformed Jessie, walking hand in hand through the symbolic representation of time and space, represents the triumph of romance and eternal love. Both protagonists embody classical heterosexual relationship and gender roles. In terms of men and women images in the cinema, *Queen of the Damned* is a characteristic examples of an iconic female, very static and undeveloped, being merely a catalyst for the active male protagonist and his actions, which reaffirms traditional gender roles.

The audience derives pleasure from looking at a successful and attractive vampire Lestat, intensified by his sexuality and allure. Moreover, we identify ourselves with his protagonist in terms of contemporary accentuated value placed on wealth, career and glamorous appearance. Even though Lestat in *Queen of the Damned* is more theatrical, static and grotesque, he seems harmonious and more realistic for the viewer of the twenty first century, than the more dramatic and more human vampires of *Interview with the Vampire*. The key notion in this context is the transition of the vampires throughout the time.

### **3.4 Transition of the Vampire Images in *Interview with the Vampire* and *Queen of the Damned***

One of the key motifs found in the films based on Ann Rice novels is that of the transition and adaptation of the vampires through time. This concept is illustrated by the juxtaposition between the groups of the immortals that are able to adjust and the ones that are lacking this ability.

In the course of their search for other vampires, Claudia and Louis travel to Paris, depicted as the centre of luxury and consumption of the age, represented by magnificent balls, fashion and wealth. It seems that both vampires can assimilate perfectly into this capital of the Old World. Paris is also the place where they encounter other vampires existing within the walls of the theatre of the vampires. The representation of Parisian immortals and especially their evoking horror and terror among the audience of the theatre, bring them close to the traditional gothic concept of the undead. They are depicted as monsters hungry for blood, whose only human feature is their appearance. All the Parisian vampires are dressed in black and it is impossible to distinguish one from the other, which symbolises their loss of humanity and individuality.

The idea of vampires pretending to be humans acting like vampires on stage is the paradox of the theatre. Yet, simultaneously this image signifies their inability to progress and adapt. Thus Parisian immortals are frozen in time, stuck in their roles of medieval horror that they re-enact night after night on the stage for public entertainment. They are assuming the roles of public buffoons, a commodity being consumed by the audience, while the vampires consume a human girl on the stage. Although even that iconic representation evokes fascination among the mortals, and a lady who is offering herself to Santiago, one of the Parisian vampires in *Interview with the Vampire*, is perhaps a predecessor of the music groupies that will follow Lestat in 2002. Furthermore, the catacombs where the vampires of the Old World dwell, especially compared to the fashionably decorated vampire villa in New Orleans and Louis' and Claudia's luxurious hotel rooms in Paris, symbolise the archaic and static flair of their existence.

The only vampire distinguishing himself from the Parisian undead is Armand. In the beginning he seems to act as an authority figure among the buffoons, a tutor and a source of knowledge. Yet as the narration unfolds, we come to realise that in fact Armand is also a relic from the past. His character is grotesque but he also is lacking life and progress, he needs Louis to assist his transition to the modern age, because the curse of the vampire is inability to change. As Armand puts it: "The World



changes; we do not” (*Interview with the Vampire*). In Armand’s eyes, Louis reflects “the broken heart of his age”, thus implying the notion of a vampire as a reflection of the world they live in. Louis looking at the painting “Head of Demon” by Mikhail Vrubel at the end of the film is an allegory of the vampire looking at his own mirror image created in the culture of his time.

After Claudia’s demise and Louis’ escape, the theatre of the vampires is destroyed and so is the traditional grotesque image of the immortal. The world begins to open up to the new vampire, who according to Armand, “must be powerful, beautiful and without regret” (*Interview with the Vampire*). Those attributes will be the main characteristics of the vampire Lestat in *Queen of the Damned*, thus combining the tradition of the past with new connotations. Given this it can be inferred that if an immortal is unable to adjust to the new age and its ideas he is bound to demise as a relic from the past, an artefact.

The motif of transition in *Queen of the Damned* is illustrated by various vampires. On the one hand, the ancient vampires together with Akasha, as well as the undead from the London club scene, and on the other hand their counterparts Lestat, Marius and Maharet. The distinction is marked primarily by their power or its lack thereof.

The essential constituent of the powerful vampire is his beauty and sexuality, best exemplified by Lestat himself. As has been mentioned in the previous discussion, the ancient vampires are lacking sexual appeal. The characters of Pandora, Armand, Mael and Khayman resemble the archaic and even theatrical images of their epochs. Their dresses look like carnival costumes, thus depriving them of their allure and positioning them more like grotesque figures, which seem out of place in the contemporary world. The fight against Akasha is won only because it has been initiated by a stronger and younger vampire, Lestat.

We have already addressed the images of the vampires of the London club scene and their theatrical and iconic depictions. The immortals absorbed only by their self-admiration and limited to the world of clubbing, have no alternative for progress. Similar to the Parisian vampires, their existence has turned into a grotesque farce. Hence, their only possible outcome is to perish in the flames – the London undead are burned by their ‘mother’ Akasha.

The central figure in the transition theme is Akasha herself. Being the mother of all the vampires, she is their source of power. When her character is introduced for the first time, compared to Lestat she seems equally if not more powerful. Similar to

him, she has been awoken by the sounds of the new age. She is beautiful and sexually appealing, seducing even the strongest male vampire protagonist with her allure and promises of power and companionship. Although she resembles Lestat in her desire to live in the open among the humans, she wants to rule them based on her ideas out of the past. Accordingly Maharet tells Akasha that the world has changed and that vampires have found a new way to coexist, but the queen is unable to adjust and instead she wants to “change it back” – return the world to its former order. In the end we come to realise that her character has failed to accomplish the transition into the contemporary world, and that her fate is doomed. Akasha becomes the victim of her own ideas, her own children – they consume her, draining the queen of her blood. Similar to other static and archaic characters such as Claudia, the Parisian vampires and the vampires of London, she turns to ashes.

Lestat is the best example of the further transition of the vampire image through time and culture. As we learn from the films, in his time he has been chosen by Marius to help him understand the new world. Lestat embodies the notions of power, sexuality and ability to adjust and use the world and its new ideals for his own purposes. He realises that in our contemporary culture and world order, there is no need to hunt the humans. That is, when you are rich and famous, they will come on their own accord and will beg you to drain them. This notion of adaptation and assimilation of the vampires also influenced the development of the genre of vampire films. The cinematic representations of the undead evolved and transferred to the next level of their implementation in our mass culture. As we have observed, the horrifying and terrifying effects of the supernatural creatures have been if not eliminated then at least limited to some stereotypical attributes. The vampire Lestat and his derivatives moved from the intimate and fantastic atmosphere of the cinema halls into the cosy and familiar domain of our homes by entering the realm of TV-series.

#### **4 Vampires in Television Series**

The development of television has seen numerous examples of supernatural motifs used in a variety of productions in genres as different as horror, romance, detective story, comedy, and even children’s TV. Therefore, shows, cartoons and

miniseries in which vampires are the main protagonists are rather frequent on TV. Among the first TV shows featuring vampires was *Dark Shadows*, which first appeared on screen as early as 1966. The show was truly revolutionary, as it featured various supernatural characters including warlocks, zombies, werewolves, ghosts and vampires, and transmitted them to the format of a day-time soap opera, thus symbolically introducing traditionally horrific and terrifying concepts into the audience's daily routine.

Among the most successful modern vampire series one can mention *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*, and most recently *True Blood* and *Vampire Diaries*. Vampire TV-series represent the symbolic transition of the vampire image from the secluded domain of the cinema to mass production, and its implementation in mass culture. In this chapter, I will examine this transition and discuss the innovations of the vampire image originating in this development.

In the following analysis I will focus my attention on two Vampire shows: *Blood Ties* and *Moonlight*. Although these productions were not as successful as their successors, *True Blood* and *Vampire Diaries*, they still mirror the ever-growing popularity of the vampire image and introduce the relations between immortals and humans, as well as characteristics of the vampire image that would find their further development in contemporary culture and influence their more successful ensuing TV productions. In other words, *Blood Ties* and *Moonlight* represented and created the vampire image that became common and even traditional in our daily lives. In my opinion, *Blood Ties* and *Moonlight* cultivated the current popularity and obsession with vampires. Below, I will now discuss these two TV-series in chronological order, starting with *Blood Ties*.

#### **4.1 The Vampire Image in *Blood Ties***

The show *Blood Ties* originated in Canada and is based on the *Blood Series* novels by Tanya Huff. The first book of the series was published in 1991 with the title *Blood Price* (see Harrell). According to the author of the books, the show is based primarily on the events from the first novel (see Harrell). The first episode aired on March 11, 2007, and the series' finale in December 2007 (see Internet Movie Database). Although according to Internet Movie Database *Blood Ties* consists of two

seasons, the second season of the series is seemingly incomplete, ending with a cliffhanger.

In the course of this chapter, the first three episodes from season one will be analysed, as they set the ground rules of the entire seasons' narrative and define the main character traits of the protagonists involved. The show is set in Toronto and is centred on the adventures of Vicki Nelson, detective Mike Celluci, and the vampire Henry Fitzroy. Moreover, placing the supernatural events into a city enables explanations for how certain extraordinary occurrences might go unnoticed by the public. This feature is evident in both Polidori's original work and Ann Rice's filmic adaptations. However, the desired effects are different – whereas Polidori's vampire in London is designed to evoke terror and show the vices of contemporary society, Ann Rice's vampires, especially Lestat in *Interview with the Vampire*, prefer big cities as they provide better hunting grounds, and as it is easier to hide among the crowds of New Orleans and Los Angeles. Furthermore, a famous well-known city, as opposed to an exotic distant location, as a setting for a vampire narrative heightens the plausibility of the events by creating a 'close to reality' effect with the audience.

The main female protagonist of the series is Vicki Nelson, a private investigator. As we find out through the unfolding events, she formerly worked for the police but resigned after being diagnosed with Retinopathia Pigmentosa (gradual loss of eyesight), unwilling to change to a desk job. The first time we meet Vicki, she is on the phone with her mother discussing an apparently unsuccessful date she had just had, thus implying that Vicki is single and not fortunate in her love life. Nonetheless, Vicki is a grown-up and experienced woman who has not lost her sex appeal and athletic, youthful looks. She is active and is not afraid to take the initiative.

Vicki's mortal male counterpart – Mike Celluci, is a typical hard-boiled detective. He used to be her partner in the police force, and apparently Mike and Vicki also share a common romantic past. Moreover, Mike still cares for Vicki and, one is led to assume, she cares for him, although Vicki's fear of becoming weak by being subordinate to a strong male figure forces her to reject his feelings. She is a strong-willed woman who will only enter a relationship with an equal. And because Mike knows about her eye sickness, in other words her weakness, she denies him.

The second male protagonist of the show is Henry Fitzroy, a 470 year-old vampire. According to the story line, he is the First Duke of Richmond, a bastard son of king Henry VIII of England, who had been turned into a vampire at the age of 17

by his lover. When the audience is first introduced to Henry's character, we see him together with his mortal lover having sexual intercourse while drinking her blood. Hence from the very beginning his character is distinguished by his sexuality and seductive powers, which remain his dominant attributes throughout the series. Frequently he is referred to as a "pretty boy", accentuating his appearance and young looks. The mortal girl is infatuated with the vampire and lets him drink her blood. Moreover, Henry also possesses hypnotic powers that enable him to influence people's minds and will, and make them follow his orders. The correlation of hypnotism and seduction has always been part of the vampire myth and the image of the undead.

As already discussed, in *The Vampyre*, *Interview with the Vampire*, and *Queen of the Damned*, vampires are frequently portrayed as eccentric, mysterious and artistic. Lord Ruthven was a dark aristocrat, Lestat a rock star, Marius an artist. Henry Fitzroy of *Blood Ties* also shows these characteristics and develops them. He is a graphic novel artist, rich and secretive, living on one of the top floors of a skyscraper. His protagonist represents the connection between the vampires and art, as well as his aristocratic origins. Furthermore, similar to Lestat, he is also rich, famous and successful. Although Henry has his fans, they are not as numerous as Lestat's. At the same time, Henry's and Lestat's audience is limited to the subculture: in *Blood Ties* as well as in *Queen of the Damned* we find frequent references to the gothic scene, where the vampires feel especially at ease.

The gothic connotations of *Blood Ties* are represented primarily through Vicki's assistant Coreen Fennel. And it is in the gothic scene where the supernatural surfaces for the first time in the show. Coreen is the first character to appear who even suggests the existence of vampires among the living. She later becomes Vicki's expert in the world of the occult and magical beings. It can be claimed that Coreen represents the group of people who not only believe in the supernatural, but who are also fascinated and enchanted by it. In several ways, Coreen resembles Jessie from *Queen of the Damned* - she is educated in the dark arts, and she is infatuated with Henry and his hidden knowledge. Yet, in the show, her character often seems comic and detached from reality compared to Vicki, her extravagant appearance not appealing to the vampire, as opposed to the relation between Jessie and Lestat.

The vampire in the series *Blood Ties* is attracted to Vicki Nelson. In comparison to other mortals, she is not affected by the vampire's charms and hypnotism. Her

strong will prevails even over the supernatural, which is what makes her special for Henry. The motif of a mortal woman being special and thus chosen by the vampire as his lover and companion was already present in the film *Queen of the Damned*. However, in the series the theme evolves: whereas in the film it was Jessie who was obsessed with Lestat and offered herself to him, in *Blood Ties* it is predominantly Henry who is infatuated with Vicki, following her and trying to protect and to help her. Vicki is special and precious to the vampire because she is not affected by him: she is not scared when Henry reveals himself, and at the same time she is not enchanted by him like Coreen. As a matter of fact, Vicki reacts to Henry's confession very calmly and seems perhaps just slightly surprised. This might be an indication of Vicki's fear to show weakness through emotions, or another proof of her uniqueness and strength. As Henry says to Vicki, he has not met anyone like her for over a lifetime. Moreover, there are a few moments in the series where it seems that it is Vicki who seduces Henry and not the other way around. In one scene, for example, to avoid arousing the suspicion of the concierge in the apartment building where Henry lives, Vicki undresses to imply that sexual intercourse will take place between them, all the time apparently thinking that Henry is still in a state of his day sleep. However, he apparently has been watching her the whole time.

The vampire of Henry Fitzroy in its essence, although still distinguished by his supernatural powers of strength and hypnotism, seems weaker and more human than Lestat, Claudia and even Louis. The viewer and consequently the mortal female protagonist see him wounded and weakened, and in confrontations with other supernatural beings he is frequently the less powerful. The notion of a vampire not being the perfect powerful creature compared to others is also new. Moreover, the images of Vicki helping Henry to get back to his apartment and also saving him by giving her blood, make her mortal character as strong as, if not stronger, than the vampire's. This is reinforced by her being free to move during the day, whereas he is limited to the confines of his apartment. Remarkable in this context is the scene where Vicki is letting Henry drink her blood after their fight with the demon. She does not hesitate to share her blood with the vampire, even resembling a mother feeding her child. Vicki looking after Henry in his apartment also represents a mother taking care of a sick child. Compared to Jessie, Vicki is more emancipated and does not want to limit herself to traditional gender roles. Another important detail about the

scene described above is the fact that the vampire is asking a mortal for blood instead of taking it as it has been traditionally portrayed.

Furthermore, the predatory nature of the vampire image is rarely explicit in *Blood Ties*. There are a few instances where we are informed about, or directly shown, Henry feeding on humans, but most of the time such acts are implied rather than demonstrated. Compared to *Queen of the Damned* and *Interview with the Vampire*, where this theme was especially important for the development of the protagonists as well as their inner conflicts and dramas, in the series the theme of hunting for blood is positioned as an attribute of the vampire, but not a curse or a terrifying aspect. Whenever we witness Henry drinking human blood, it is either infatuated young women or 'bad guys'. Hence, Henry seems less of a monster but more of a fighter against crime or an eccentric lover.

The love theme is essential if not central in *Blood Ties*. The search for a perfect companion is a characteristic of all three main characters of the series, yet they remain lonely until the end of the show. Mike Celluci is in love with Vicki and therefore does not want another woman at his side. However, Vicki cannot be together with the detective because of her fear of his dominant power, and of her assuming a subordinate role in the relationship. Throughout the series she is challenging his male authority, thus making their union more improbable. Simultaneously, it might seem that Henry is the perfect partner for her, but a happy romance story is impossible for the vampire.

The curse of eternal loneliness is reaffirmed in *Blood Ties*. Henry Fitzroy was transformed into a vampire by his former lover, Christine. He was in love with her and wanted to be like her and, most of all, with her. Henry dreamed of a union of eternal love and romance between them. However, this is impossible for vampires because of their territorial instinct. Even though they might love the other vampire, they become viciously aggressive towards them once encountered on their own territory. Therefore the vampire in *Blood Ties* is doomed to be alone for eternity, eventually losing his mortal and immortal beloved. The concept of territorial instinct can be interpreted on two levels, one being the indication of the immortal's solitude as a price to pay for eternal life, the other being a clear manifestation of the vampire's animalistic nature and instinctive drives.

As we have previously observed, the characters remain single until the end of the series, the love triangle between Mike, Vicki and Henry being one of the most

prominent themes of the show. In the final episode, Vicki's inability to choose between her former lover Mike and possible new lover Henry costs her the loss of both of them. However, the motif of such a triangle between a mortal woman and a mortal and immortal man becomes frequent in later TV-series involving vampires, this plot line also being present in *Moonlight*. Although in *Blood Ties* this plot is important, the main focus of the series remains the supernatural.

In *Queen of the Damned*, the vampires destroyed their mother Akasha to save the world of humans from destruction and chaos caused by her. The central theme of *Blood Ties* is the fight against the supernatural to save the citizens of Toronto. The series is constructed like a crime show, including the hard-boiled detective, symbolising the traditional approach, a medical examiner who triggers associations with CSI series, a non-conformist investigator who offers an alternative (and usually correct) version of events, and her two expert informants who provide additional information about the subject matters involved. The only difference between *Blood Ties* and other crime/detective shows is the fact that all the crimes are committed by supernatural beings or occur under supernatural circumstances.

Although in the first episode Vicki is very sceptical about all magical implications and disregards Coreen's claims of a vampire having killed her boyfriend, in the episodes to follow the private investigator reevaluates her attitude and embraces the world of occult. It takes but a vampire to alter her mind. Thus, after Henry confesses about his true nature, Vicki perceives it as a trick, and only after the vampire convinces her of his immortal character can she solve the case she is currently investigating. In the first episode, Henry resembles a lonely protector of humans from supernatural evil, triggering associations with the lonely, mysterious super-hero character. Whereas the super-hero protects people because of his altruistic nature, the vampire has other motivations: Henry has to eliminate a demon in the first two episodes to protect his own secrecy and keep his true identity concealed. Consequently, the vampire employs a mortal investigator to help him achieve his objective. As a result, Henry introduces Vicki to a world of witches, zombies, demons and vampires previously unknown to her. The vampire becomes her tutor and navigator in that world, which excites and simultaneously puzzles and confuses Vicki. Vicki claims that he has to help her in her investigations because he brought her into the world of occult.



The supernatural world of Henry and Vicki is full of magic and evil compared to the environment of *Interview with the Vampire* and *Queen of the Damned*. In the universe of Ann Rice's immortals, a vampire, according to Armand, might be the only true evil left, whereas in *Blood Ties*, a vampire seems the lesser evil compared to other supernatural manifestations. Hence in the third episode, the domain of magic (voodoo) is more cruel and deceiving than the vampire world. Furthermore, magic happens to be more powerful than Henry, which indicates the imperfection of the undead.

The supernatural setting of the further investigations defined in the first episode of the series can be considered a catalyst of the occult in Vicki's life. The plot unfolds around an underdog student who summons a demon to satisfy his needs. This plot draws parallels to the pact theme in the occult myths, where a demon promises his master worldly riches but for a certain price, in this case blood. The plot is a symbolic representation of human dark wishes and unsatisfied hunger for commodities, which make the vampire seem a lesser evil compared to mortal people. References to the past made in the series imply that throughout the centuries, human wishes have remained the same, as have their indifference and cruelty when it comes to the means to attain what they desire. Henry explains that a demon corrupts the brain, thus creating the illusion that a human is still in control whereas he is just following a demonic plan. It can be interpreted as an allegoric image of people desiring and acquiring commodities without realising that the consumption comes to rule their life and souls.

To conclude the discussion of *Blood Ties*, we can say that the image of the vampire in the series, although evolved in many aspects, still resembles the vampires in the films based on Ann Rice novels. Henry Fitzroy is an aristocrat of royal blood. He is rich and enjoys a luxurious life. In the third episode he is shown driving a Jaguar, he has a spacious apartment on top of a skyscraper, demonstrating his high social status. Although as a graphic novel artist, he can still be considered an eccentric, his style has evolved from Lestat's bizarre velvet, leather and silks. The vampire in *Blood Ties* is dressed in stylish clothes without the extravagant flair of a rock star. Nevertheless, Henry has not lost the vampire's sexual appeal. On the contrary, he seems even more alluring and seductive for his more human characteristics. Henry Fitzroy is not a god, like Lestat, but his closeness to mortals and his weaknesses make him even more desirable.

The theme of vampire love is also redefined in the series through a love triangle between Vicki, Mike and Henry. This motif will be further employed in various shows to follow, including *Moonlight*. Although Vicki is not a typical damsel in distress character, her investigations would not have been successful without the vampire at her side. Henry is her expert, tutor in the world of the supernatural and also the voice of reason. The female protagonist often follows her irrational and instinctive impulses disregarding the rules of the occult world, as well as common sense, resulting in complications and even life threatening circumstances out of which the vampire finally saves her. In this context we can again draw parallels with our discussion of the pleasures of cinema. The series *Blood Ties* presents us with two strong male characters, both active and attractive, one alluring by his youth, mystery and sexuality; the other based on his more mature qualities as the authority figure of a hard-boiled detective. The catalyst of their actions and emotions is the sexually attractive and independent female character of Vicki Nelson. Although she is emancipated and strong-willed, which makes her special in the eyes of the vampire, her inability to listen to the voice of reason and her impulsiveness result in life threatening events, that require the vampire's or the detective's intervention. However, weaknesses in her character make her appear more alive and consequently enable identification with the protagonist, especially on behalf of the female audience, and thus intensify the pleasure gained from looking at her relationships with both Mike and Henry.

Another innovative aspect of the vampire image is expressed through the depiction of blood hunger. The predatory nature of the vampire is rarely made explicit. The scenes depicting Henry draining the blood out of humans are seldom and usually involve either beautiful girls letting him do this on their free will and enjoying his company and sexuality in return, or criminals of various kinds who threaten the vampire or do not deserve to live at all. Thus, the vampire's blood lust acquires the connotations of skilful yet eccentric love making, and a novel approach to fighting crime. Both of those meanings contribute to intensify the sexuality of the vampire image, also assigning it certain super-hero features and attributes.

The notion of a vampire as a mediator between the world of humans and the supernatural introduced in the series is also novel. Henry is Vicki's expert and tutor in the world of the occult, which is more deceiving and complicated than even the domain of the vampire. Given this, the process of adaptation that has been discussed

in the third chapter with reference to the films *Interview with the Vampire* and *Queen of the Damned* has been evidently completed in *Blood Ties*. Henry Fitzroy is a 470 year-old vampire who has no problems adapting to our contemporary world, and is able to move between myth and reality. Another example of such a successful adaptation is the TV-series *Moonlight*, which will be discussed in the following section.

## 4.2 The Vampire Image in the TV-Series *Moonlight*

In his commentary to *Interview with the Vampire*, Antonio Banderas, who played Armand, expresses the following idea:

Hollywood as a perfect place for vampires. Because vampires are buying immortality. Hollywood is a perfect place where people want to buy immortality. Where everybody has so much to lose that they would like to live forever. And they would love to live forever young.

(Antonio Banderas *Interview with the Vampire* DVD)

Those words are truly symbolic for the development of the image of the vampire, a being who seems to find his place among the rich and the beautiful of this world. It is not a coincidence that Lestat from *Queen of the Damned* leaves New Orleans behind and moves to Hollywood, where he can go unnoticed and his blood hunger does not differ from the music and cinema corporations feeding on the virtual blood of youth. I have already drawn the parallels between high society and the privileged, and the vampire masquerade in my discussion of *Interview with the Vampire*. In contemporary culture, high society consists of Hollywood stars, music idols and business magnates. Similar to the vampire domain, their life consists of consumption of the living, their money, attention and appreciation. In this context it is metaphorical that numerous vampire series that came to life chose Los Angeles or California as their setting, among which we can mention *Angel*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Kindred: The Embraced*. Los Angeles is also the location for the TV-series *Moonlight*.

*Moonlight* aired for the first time on CBS channel in September 2007 (see Internet Movie Database). The show ran till the season finale on May 16<sup>th</sup> 2008 and has not been renewed since (see Internet Movie Database). Although there were a few

attempts to resurrect the production they all were unsuccessful and the show has been permanently cancelled (see Internet Movie Database). The critical reviews of the series were not at all pleasant, and often accused the show of relying too much on clichés, and even of borrowing from *Angel*. Furthermore, there were a few comments made regarding its similarity to *Blood Ties*. Given this, it can be concluded that *Moonlight* was not a successful project although it might have had some potential. However, my decision to take *Moonlight* as one of the examples of the vampire image in television is not based on the qualitative features of the production, but on its vampire representations, which will turn out to be frequent and common in the vampire shows that followed *Moonlight*. In this context *Moonlight* is a vivid example of attributes and connotations of the vampire character that are stereotypical not only for contemporary cinema and television, but for our cultural understanding of the undead in general.

Similar to *Blood Ties*, I will now analyse the first three episodes of the series as they set and influence the further development of the events and characters as well as the basic rules of the show.

The first scenes of the series introduce us to the main character of the show, Mick St. John, a relatively young vampire (he is only turning 85) living in Los Angeles. The vampire is presented to the audience through an interview, which creates strong associations to the opening sequences of *Interview with the Vampire*. Although we do not know the identity of the reporter and the purpose of the interview, similar to Louis, Mick from the very beginning defines the vampire attributes employed in the series. Thus we come to realise that the vampire existence is no longer limited to nighttime only, though during the day the undead are weaker as the sun still drains their power. As a matter of fact, the only two things that are lethal for a vampire are fire and beheading. The old fashioned coffins are replaced with giant freezers in which Mick and his kin sleep during the day, crosses and garlic are considered merely as superstitions. Blood, on the other hand, is the reality:

- So you drink blood?
- Why? You offer?...I'm just kidding. Yeah I have a guy.
- You mean like a dealer?
- Yeah like a dealer.
- So you never bite anybody?
- No, no. Unless they really ask for it.

(*Moonlight*)

The blood drinking and therefore hunting theme is reduced to a metaphorical drug abuse. And the fresh blood is acquired through a dealer. Furthermore, the last comment concerning biting people, Mick utters even with a hint of disgust and repulsion, thus creating a feeling that vampires hunting humans might also be a myth or at least an archaic concept. There is nothing predatory about Mick's character; he seems to be a "nice guy". Yet he does suggest that there are other vampires who do not have boundaries and rules, and who are therefore more dangerous than his protagonist. The idea of blood drinking compared to drug use or even sickness, is one of the prominent themes in the series. Thus in the next scenes we witness Mick giving himself an injection of blood, and in the course of the season his character will be determined to find a cure against immortality.

Mick St. John is a private eye, and considers his job as a possible redemption for his sins and his unnatural being. In the series the vampire perceives himself to be a monster that does not deserve any 'happily ever after'. Furthermore, as Mick proceeds in the description of his life, the audience realises that the only disadvantage of the vampire existence is loneliness; he has to conceal his true identity and therefore cannot have a lover or a companion. As a matter of fact, the main theme of *Moonlight* is the romance between the vampire and a mortal female protagonist. Although the series are designed as a crime show, the cases that the protagonists are trying to solve seem more like a background to the romantic relations, or even a reason for the characters to meet. In this context the show differs from *Blood Ties*, where the fight against the supernatural evil is still at the centre of the production. Mick St. John tries to resemble the traditional hard-boiled detective, yet his main concerns are always with the girl.

Beth Turner is a reporter for an Internet website called Buzz Wire, and the main female character of the series. Although there are a few parallels to Vicki Nelson's protagonist – Beth is also blond and attractive, seems emancipated, active and determined to find the truth – in essence, Beth Turner is a damsel in distress who requires frequent assistance and rescue by Mick St. John. Beth Turner is also special for the vampire because they share a common past. Mick saved Beth when she was a little girl, kidnapped by a vicious vampire woman who happened to be Mick's former wife and maker.

Beth seems to be a perfect romantic companion for the vampire, but their union is not possible primarily because of Mick's immortality and Beth's mortal boyfriend.

Thus *Moonlight* also employs the motif of a love triangle involving a mortal woman and a vampire and a mortal man. Yet whereas in *Blood Ties* both male protagonists were strong and equally attractive for the woman, in *Moonlight* there is a clear qualitative distinction between the two men. While Mick is a private eye actively fighting evil on the streets of Los Angeles, Beth's boyfriend Josh Lindsey is an attorney. He looks like a regular guy-next-door, and there is nothing romantic or intriguing about him compared to the dramatic image of Mick. Therefore the audience sympathy and expectations are sided with the vampire opposed to a boring mortal man.

Another feature that is important for the vampire image is the vampire past of the protagonist. As a matter of fact there are constant references in the series to Mick's past that still torments him in the present. We have already referred to Beth Turner and their connection. Furthermore, Mick St. John frequently mentions his former lover, Coraline, who turned him into a vampire on their wedding night. Mick's transformation was supposed to be her wedding gift and a prerequisite for their eternal love and romance. However, as it was done without his consent, the turning resulted in Mick leaving Coraline and later even attempting to kill her. Hence *Moonlight* is another example of the unhappy ending of the vampire romance, similar to Henry Fitzroy's fate. Mick St. John also remembers his own cruelty and blood lust, and the scenes showing his former self drinking from humans frequently resurface in the series. This technique creates a strong opposition to the contemporary character of the vampire: he has changed immensely. The symbolic transformation of Mick from a bloodthirsty monster of the 1980's to the near superhero of 2007 resembles the evolution of the vampire image in general: from its traditional, sinister, predatory connotations, to a lonely hero of the night fighting the villains of Los Angeles. Consequently in *Moonlight* there is a distinct implication that a vampire is in fact a lesser evil than some of the humans that Mick is fighting. Furthermore, the image of Mick is again more human than his predecessors; he also feels pain and can even be harmed by mortals. The latter can be illustrated by the second episode, where Mick confronts a criminal Lee Jay, which turns nearly lethal for the vampire.

Given this it can be concluded that the vampire image of Mick St. John is in many aspects similar to Henry Fitzroy. Thus Mick is vulnerable and can be defeated by human opponents. He is tormented by his past, and in particular by a romantic past that involves the theme of an unsuccessful vampire romance. Simultaneously, both

protagonists are portrayed as lonely superheroes fighting the evil of a contemporary world that seems more appalling than the vampires themselves. Moreover, the audience's attention is drawn to the positive and romantic connotations of the vampire image, whereas the negative and repulsive attributes of blood drinking are reduced to either drug use or sickness and therefore the vampire character does not resemble a predator, especially in *Moonlight*. Both Henry and Mick enjoy the commodities of the contemporary world. The vampire in *Moonlight* lives in a spacious and luxurious penthouse apartment overlooking L.A., and Mick's accommodation is tastefully and fashionably designed, although it seems a bit too arty and so corresponds to Mick's unnatural being. Both vampires are employed, compared to the vampires of the past. In the previous chapter we have already discussed the connection between vampires and art, and the transformation of this theme in Henry's character. At the same time Mick St. John has nothing to do with art, he is a private investigator. Moreover, his best friend Josef Konstantin is a businessman. Thus the vampire image as a lonely and mysterious artist or aristocrat has evolved and rid itself of its former eccentricity. Vampires in *Moonlight* work at normal jobs, thus also implying the idea of a masquerade and the necessity to assimilate with the crowd. Nevertheless, the vampire of Mick St. John is more distinguished compared to his mortal counterpart, Beth Turner's boyfriend. Given this, it can be claimed that the immortal protagonist of the series is on the one hand more human and approachable, and on the other hand still above the routine, and his figure is more romantic and intriguing than a mortal man. The difference between mortals and vampires is still marked by their style and dress code. Although we do not find many grotesque images in *Moonlight* and most of the vampires are dressed in ordinary clothes, their distinction from humans is expressed through the obvious expensiveness of their garments. Compared to Beth's boyfriend, Josh, Mick looks more stylish and sexually appealing. In many aspects Mick St. John also reminds us of Louis from *Interview with the Vampire*. He is tormented by his vampire nature and despises blood drinking although admitting it is a necessity. Just like Louis, Mick is plagued by his loneliness. Furthermore, Mick also has his own and evolved figure of Lestat, his best friend Josef Konstantin.

According to critics, the character of Josef Konstantin is one of the most prominent and interesting in the series. Josef is the oldest vampire in Los Angeles, he is 400 years old and one of Mick's friends and simultaneously his opposite. The

image of Konstantin embodies Armand's traditional definition of a vampire, as powerful, beautiful and without regret. In the series he is a successful businessman, the head of a big corporation. He is frequently represented talking to his business partners, thus resembling the traditional image of a magnate. The first time we witness Josef Konstantin in his luxurious penthouse overlooking Los Angeles, which symbolically implies his high status and positions him above the ordinary people. Josef's attitude towards mortals is very controversial. On the one hand he despises them and sees them predominantly as food. As he comments: "Now we got the food mouthing off about the farmer" (*Moonlight*). Yet, at the same time, the old vampire is terrified of humans and especially of them discovering the vampires. Mick describes Josef in terms of a "living, unliving proof that paranoia never goes out of style" (*Moonlight*). In the series, Josef is obsessed with the vampire secrecy and masquerade and frequently employs Mick to settle matters. The image of Josef Konstantin and his fear of discovery can be interpreted as an allegory of any contemporary businessman willing to pay any price to hide the truth about his business, which frequently involves unconditional and even criminal means to acquire wealth. Furthermore Josef is also lonely, and in one of the episodes Mick says: "Don't forget. I'm your only friend that does not like you just for your money" (*Moonlight*). This indicates the solitude of the older vampire despite his financial success and vampire strength.

Another notion that has been changed in *Moonlight* is the concept of blood. As a matter of fact, blood and sex, or sexual connotations, are interconnected in *Moonlight*. Whereas Mick St. John is not a blood drinker in the sense that he is not biting humans, his friend Josef Konstantin does not deny himself fresh human blood. In the first scenes in which his character is introduced, the older vampire is offering Mick "liquid refreshment", meaning blood. Josef masterfully asks for food and we see a beautiful girl hurrying over to him. Josef comments on her: "She is delicious. 82 was a good year" (*Moonlight*). Josef compares a human girl to liquid refreshment, more precisely to a bottle of wine, judging its quality by its year. The portrayal of blood like wine will resurface throughout the series, especially in connection to the images of vampires drinking blood out of crystal glasses and Josef bringing a nice bottle of blood for Mick as a present for dinner.

Although the younger vampire has been previously compared to Louis, his reaction to the events does not resemble Louis' in the slightest. Whereas Ann Rice's vampire is repulsed, disgusted and terrified when Lestat acts in a similar manner in



front of him, Mick answers by just enumerating some of the events that he and Josef experienced together in 1982, and seems utterly undisturbed by the whole scene. At the same time it appears that the girl is not repulsed by the events either. On the contrary: her image, head thrown back as Josef bites her, would seem to signify pleasure and sexual arousal.

Furthermore, there is no explicit seduction or hypnosis on Josef's behalf, thus we can conclude that the lady on the screen enjoys it and willingly allows a vampire to drink her blood, and she is not the only one. At the beginning of the sequence the viewer is presented not with one but with several beautiful and scantily dressed girls who float around Josef's penthouse, implying that the vampire need not go hunting for his victims as they are already in his house. The women around Josef let him use them as "freshies" in exchange for his beautiful and luxurious life, penthouse, money and position.

*Moonlight* also distances itself from the common gothic connotations of the genre still very prominent in *Blood Ties* and of course *Queen of the Damned*. The plot of the first episode unfolds around a vampire imitator in Los Angeles who is murdering young girls. In the process of investigation Mick and Beth come across a University Professor who considers himself a vampire, and his study group, which consists of young gothic students, practicing blood cult and blood exchange and/or drinking. The study group can be interpreted as a mockery of the old vampire fans, involving dominantly subculture, and correspondingly the gothic fans of the vampire Lestat and his band. The vampire images in *Moonlight* represent the evolution of the genre and the representation of the immortal as a whole. In this context the old professor pretending to be a vampire illustrates an archaic undead figure, whose only power is to seduce young naive student girls based on sexual drive and dark romanticism. Yet, as the series illustrates, the vampire image has evolved and adapted to contemporary culture and time.

The vampires of *Moonlight* are alluring, but not so based on their sexuality. Wealth, success and social status are much more powerful for seducing their victims than the former physical strength (though it is still present) and hypnotism. Mick and especially Josef, as well as other vampires in the series, live in luxurious houses, drive expensive cars, wear expensive clothes and are successful in their careers. The vampire lifestyle seems identical with the one of the privileged class of Los Angeles. Furthermore there is hardly anything extravagant about the main vampire protagonists

of the series; they are more human, in contrast to Lestat and his kin. This characteristic makes the vampires more desirable and appealing to a larger group of people. Moreover, the vampire in the show is not a predator, similarly to *Blood Ties* the predatory connotations of the characters are reduced to traditional attributes of the image. The undead does not need to hunt his victims, seduce and hypnotise them, on the contrary: humans are craving for the vampire touch, and offer themselves willingly to satisfy his hunger.

To conclude our discussion of the vampire image in the *Moonlight* series, we can infer that the vampire in the show embodies the ideal of contemporary life. Mick, Josef and others incorporate success, power, wealth and beauty – all the dominant drives of our modern society. Furthermore, vampires in the series are circulating in Los Angeles high society and to a certain degree constituting its top. They become the ideal image for all the mortal characters of the series as well as the audience on the other side of the screen. In this context there derives a strong parallel to Polidori's story *The Vampyre*, where Lord Ruthven also manoeuvres in the high society of his contemporary London. Yet Polidori employed such a technique to intensify the suspense of his story as well as the terrifying features of Lord Ruthven's character. The vampire in Polidori's story illustrates the dangers of nineteenth century society, namely consumption, excess, sex and death. In opposition, the vampires of the twenty-first century have lost all their sinister and threatening features. And what is of vital importance is that although the modern immortals still incorporate consumption, sex and death, there seems to be nothing dangerous about these notions, they constitute our daily lives and have been transferred from the domain of fears into the sphere of our dreams, wishes and goals; and the vampires promote them.

The undead in the series do have humans as their partners and beloveds, yet the mortal protagonists are rather bleak compared to Mick and Josef. Beth Turner, active and initiative, still acts like a damsel in distress and employs the vampire's help, strength and experience to solve cases and get information for her news. The central theme of the show is the romantic relationship between Beth and Mick St John, and the happy ending implies the successful union of these characters. Mick, although undead, seems more vital and exciting than Beth's boyfriend Josh, and there is no doubt with whom the viewer should side in that love triangle. Perhaps this is the reason why Josh dies as the series progress. The season ends with Mick and Beth admitting their feelings to each other and thus implying the possibility of their

romance. It is also symbolic that nearly every episode of the series ends with some famous romantic song.

To finalise our discussion of the vampire images in TV-series, based on the examples drawn upon in the course of this chapter we can conclude that there are some essential changes in vampire representations. Our analysis has been based on the TV-series *Blood Ties* and *Moonlight*, which were broadcast on television from 2007 to 2008. Although both shows are not the most successful examples of the vampire and supernatural productions, they define some of the dominant features and attributes that would be further employed in vampire series and films. Thus it has been concluded that the vampire became more human and vulnerable in TV productions. The God-like status of Lestat has been substituted by the more subtle and realistic figures of a graphic novel artist and a private investigator. Furthermore, the protagonists are often portrayed as lonely supernatural fighters against crime and evil in the cities they live in. The recurring and traditional theme of loneliness is especially prominent in the series, often involving the plot line of a romantic relationship between the vampire and a mortal woman. However, this topic evolved and is represented in these shows through a love triangle between an immortal, a female figure and a mortal man. In this context it is essential to mention that in *Blood Ties* both possible male partners of the heroine are strong and attractive men, and both seem equally worthy of her love. Therefore, until the final episode of the show, Vicki Nelson cannot decide which of the two men she should choose. In *Moonlight* the audience affiliations side with the vampire character from the very beginning. Moreover, the mortal boyfriend of the female protagonist comes across as weak, dull and inexpressive, illustrated by his appearance, blandly coloured clothes and unspectacular job, resulting in the elimination of his character from the series. Furthermore, although both shows are designed as crime series, the main theme in *Blood Ties* is the fight against supernatural crimes. *Moonlight*, on the other hand, centres the accent of its narration on the romantic side of the plot, employing the criminal cases as a background.

The appearance of the vampires in the series also illustrates the change of the vampire image. Both Henry and Mick are portrayed as attractive, sexually appealing and strong male figures, but these vampires have lost their eccentricity and extravagance, especially Mick, and can easily assimilate into the societies in which

they live. However, what is accentuated in the shows is the focus on lifestyle. Both vampires live in spacious luxurious apartments, drive expensive cars (Jaguar and Mercedes), wear expensive clothes and are successful in their careers. In other words, the life of an immortal incorporates the ideal life of any human in contemporary society, where consumption, excess, sex and death are merely daily routines. Furthermore, the world of people is frequently depicted as more evil and deceiving than the world of the undead. Even the vampire himself does not appear as dangerous as his filmic predecessors. We have discussed how predatory characteristics have lost their importance in the TV-series. The victims usually offer themselves willingly to the vampires, craving their lifestyle and/or the sexual and material pleasures the immortal can offer. The meaning of human blood has been reduced to an association with wine or drugs, which can be bought, sold, exchanged and given as a present.

TV productions and their survival are predisposed and dependant solely on their viewing public and the ratings the show receives. Given this, we can conclude that the image of the vampire as a romantic and tormented superhero fighting with evil and his own nature is predisposed to trigger associations and identification with the audience. Therefore the image of the undead is no longer designed to frighten, repulse, horrify or even impress, but primarily to attract our attention to the series and increase viewing ratings. This ultimate goal is achieved by softening and domesticating the monster, and illustrating his life as an epitome of luxury and success, which is so essential in our contemporary culture.

## **Conclusion**

In her article “A Trend With Teeth” published on July 1 2009 in The New York Times, Ruth la Ferla marks the Twilight Saga by Stephenie Meyer, followed by the consecutive movie, as the initial points in the development and spread of the vampire thematic’s ‘pandemic’ in literature, films, TV-series and fashion (see la Ferla). However, I would like to counter this idea. Although it goes without saying that the Twilight Saga contributed immensely to the promotion and popularisation of the vampire image in contemporary culture, this phenomenon has not happened over night. Hence, the vast implementation of the vampire image that we observe today has been predisposed and set in motion by changes in the connotations of the

immortal figure as well as by numerous films and TV-series preceding Stephenie Meyer's era. This claim can be illustrated by the examples employed in my thesis.

The main topic of my thesis was to investigate the vampire image and its evolution within the last ten – twelve years. As mentioned in the introduction, the popularity of the vampire image can be explained within a cultural-theoretic framework. For the purpose of my analysis I have investigated various cultural artefacts including literature, films and TV-series in the context of visual culture. We have defined visual culture as a meaning producing process on the basis of visual cultural artefacts and forms of media. However our discussion of visual culture has shown that the majority of media forms today are mixed media. Therefore, each cultural artefact of visual culture has to be investigated based on a cross- disciplinary approach- analysing visual and auditory as well as spatial relations and spectator's perception.

The process of meaning production has been shown to be linked to the concept of cinematic mode of production, developed by Jonathan Beller. Beller claims that in cinema, our attention is the source for the virtual production of commodities and meanings. He further elaborates that within capitalism, the viewer's attention is also the driving force for value production. We have concluded that cinema represents a machine- based perception of constructed reality, and influences the viewer's psychological, economical and ideological organisation. Given this, we have claimed that the circulation of certain images as well as the accentuation of particular visual aspects of the image, by means of our attention, influences our perception of reality and consequently changes our reality as a whole. Hence, it has been indicated that every image circulates on two levels. First, our gaze strengthens the image and its value. And second, as we consume the image, we are in return consumed by the image - our attention is drawn to certain features, which alters our perception.

The current popularity of the vampire image can be explained in terms of cinematic mode of production. In the course of this thesis we have investigated the original example of a 'beautiful vampire' created by John Polidori in 1819. The second chapter of my work has illustrated the historical and cultural connotations of the original vampire image. We have concluded that the character of Lord Ruthven was designed to embody the fears of consumption, excess and death, also identified as the central topics of Gothic literature and common concerns of Polidori's society. However, these days the initial negative connotations and attributes of the vampire

image have been replaced and transformed by the beauty of the immortal image in terms of appearance and style. This process has been gradual.

The first example discussed was the film *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). The representations of the immortals are still similar in many aspects to Lord Ruthven. Film presents a distinct artificiality and unnaturalness expressed through colour and garments. Together with the predatory characteristics of the vampires, this contributes to the then still predominant image of the vampire as a monster. However, as we have shown in chapter three, there are also certain changes in the vampire protagonists – they are tormented by their animalistic nature, they can love and suffer (opposed to Lord Ruthven's blood thirst and stimulation of vices), they are beautiful, glamorous and sexually desirable, even to their victims. Yet, because *Interview with the Vampire* is set primarily in the past (18th century), the vampires are still perceived as distant, archaic, and occult figures. Symbolic in this context is the final sequence that implies the evolution of the vampire image and predisposes the emergence of the Rock and Roll vampire. We have illustrated the image of the Rock and Roll vampire by the film *Queen of the Damned* and especially by its contemporary setting, representation of the music industry, and the glamorous world of the stars embodied by Lestat. In the analysis of the film we have analysed that Lestat's character becomes more human in the course of the narrative, and thus even more glamorous and sexually desirable. His protagonist, although more grotesque and theatrical, is portrayed as less predatory and artificial compared to his former representation from 1994. We have also observed that the theme of a romance between a mortal girl and a vampire is introduced with the figure of Lestat. Moreover, the happy ending is possible only through the transformation of the girl into a vampire. *Queen of the Damned* reinforced the accent on commodities and luxury as attributes to the vampire image.

In terms of increasing popularisation of the vampire images, We have also considered the TV-series *Blood Ties* and *Moonlight*. We have observed that the series have a common story line – a romance/ love triangle involving a vampire and a mortal girl chosen because of her uniqueness. Both vampires of the series, Henry Fitzroy and Mick St John, have lost their predatory characteristics. On the contrary, as I have argued, they represent lonely, romantic super heroes fighting the supernatural or crime on the side of the humans. Furthermore, both protagonists are portrayed as attractive, sexually appealing strong male figures that are deprived of the eccentricity of former filmic immortals. The vampires are assimilated into the human society and

are employed at normal jobs. As a matter of fact, there is nothing dangerous or repulsive about them. Furthermore, as it has been illustrated in the analysis, the world of people is frequently depicted as more evil and violent than the one of the vampires. In this context I would like to emphasise my observation that in TV series, the undead are usually represented as successful in their careers, wealthy, influential, living in stylish apartments, and dressed in expensive clothes. Thus the vampires embody capitalistic ideals of contemporary society and mask the predatory vices of their predecessors in film and literature.

The discussed films and TV-series also illustrate the emergence of a new vampire character – the moralistic vampire, represented by Louis and Mick St John. A moralistic vampire is plagued by his past and tormented by his vampire nature. He is lonely and craves a companion. Whereas in *Interview with the Vampire*, Louis remains in solitude, the TV-series discussed give the vampire protagonist a hope for a happy ending. It can be claimed that the binary opposition of success, wealth and beauty on the one hand, and solitude on the other, represents the main concerns of our age – the choice between material success and private happiness.

We have argued above that the popularity of the vampire image is connected with the reduction of its negative features of predatoriness, artificiality and the grotesque. This process has been defined as domestication of the monster. But does it make him less dangerous? Although immortals do seem more attractive and less cruel, the original connotations of death, corruption and blood thirst still remain within the vampire image, if masked behind the glamorous appearance and life style, and moralistic dilemmas. Thus, in the context of the cinematic mode of production the emergence of a tamed romantic vampire image is predisposed by cinema, films and TV series that avert our attention from the repulsive side of the undead and accentuate beauty and consumption as the ideals. Given this, we can claim that the original fears of capitalism namely, consumption, excess and death are still incorporated in the vampire image. Yet our perception of those vices has been influenced and morphed by displacing our focus towards other, more desirable, attributes. I assume that an important factor contributing to the present-day popularity of vampire-related works is precisely this tension between a desirable surface and the inherent danger it masks.

As a concluding remark, I would like to refer to a statement by Jonathan Beller, who claimed that even though the further expropriation of the image by the capital might develop seemingly appealing and seductive characteristics, or possibly result in

a devastating outcome for the population; this process as a whole has to be understood as business and is based on the logical development of the capital (see Beller 61). The vampire image in its connotations of pleasure from looking, emphasising the beauty and glamour, combined with the process of identification with strong and active figures, has evolved to a new level. The undead is deprived of its original meanings, which might seem dangerous and deceiving. Yet, simultaneously, the immortals always incorporate the alternatives and the consequences of the temptations they represent



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