

Horror, Terror and Fear in a “New Age”

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“Don’t you see? It’s a new age. It requires a new evil. And I am that new evil.”

(Rice 1985, 228)

It is undeniable that the so-called horror cinema has earned wider audiences and, in the twentieth-first century, has learned to reinvent itself thus becoming a more creative and eclectic genre. In order to understand and define horror we must address terror, an emotion which usually comes hand in hand with the former. Usually, both horror and terror appear intertwined in novels or films that slip into the label of the Gothic genre.

Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) and Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) are considered the first novels to have spread the imaginary seeds of what would be later deemed the Gothic genre. The Gothic encompasses a particular narrative in which fear appears hand in hand with horror and terror. Conceived as a destabilizing and subversive genre, it aimed to shake established convictions and challenge our imagination by taking us to the dark recesses of our minds, thus configuring, to a certain extent, a literature of the unconscious.

Framed by specific tropes and conventions, the Gothic genre embraces a narrative that features suspenseful atmospheres; dark and ominous settings; morally dubious characters; monsters (as an expression of otherness); mental instability (or madness); unreliable narrators; unspeakable or forbidden motifs; the emergence of the uncanny; the return of the repressed; the figure of the double. As Fred Botting stresses in *Gothic* (1996), “[n]ot tied to a natural order of things as defined by realism, gothic flights of imagination suggest supernatural possibility, mystery, magic, wonder and monstrosity” (2).

Despite sometimes dwelling upon the supernatural and monstrosity, the Gothic as a genre employs a clever strategy in addressing some of the problems and inconsistencies that haunt our society. Its narratives are cloaked in robes of criticism and subversion, its meaning (not always apparent) only deciphered when read between the lines or by deconstructing the metaphors it sets to shape. As Gina Wisker highlights in *Horror Fiction: An Introduction* (2005):

[...] [T]he literary Gothic explores contradictions and unease in social conventions. It enables readers to question what is taken for granted, such as families, identity, love, and inheritance. It works by using metaphors and imagery usually of extremes and opposites, gaps, losses, and things hidden, and so exposes contradictions in our lives and society. (43-44)

While Ann Radcliffe's novels prominently cling to terror and the sublime, conversely Mathew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) delves into a type of fiction more connoted with horror. On the other hand, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) is a Gothic novel in which horror appears interlaced with terror and the sublime.

Ann Radcliffe was the first author that tried to distinguish terror from horror. In her essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry" (1826), she argues that "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" (149). According to the author, terror is related to Edmund Burke's idea of the sublime and, as so, it is liable to instill astonishment and amazement, whereas horror leaves the individual frozen and locked in extreme fear and loathing.

Due to its mental impressive impact, terror can be said to be more connected to the psychological sphere whereas horror is primarily centred upon the body and its physical reactions confronting the fear of something. While terror stimulates the

imagination, horror is normally concerned with the impact caused by the vision of something that is out of the ordinary or bears too much graphic violence. In this regard, we can say that terror is anchored upon the fear of anticipation of something which is not clearly visible, while horror fundamentally relies on the vision of something (or someone) that triggers a physical reaction due to its abnormal condition: it can be a supernatural phenomenon; a wounded or mangled body or even a cadaver.

Illustrating this dichotomy, Devendra P. Varma makes the following distinction between terror and horror in *The Gothic Flame* (1957):

Terror creates an intangible atmosphere of spiritual psychic dread, a certain superstitious shudder at the other world. Horror resorts to a cruder presentation of the macabre: by an exact portrayal of the physical horrible and revolting, against a far more terrible background of spiritual gloom and despair. (130)

In turn, Jerrold E. Hogle distinguishes between ‘terror gothic’ and ‘horror gothic’, arguing that “terror gothic [...] holds characters and readers mostly in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety and sanity kept largely out of sight in shadows or suggestions from a hidden past”, while horror gothic “confronts the [...] characters with the gross violence of physical and psychological dissolution, explicitly chattering the assumed norms [...] of everyday life with wildly shocking, and even revolting consequences” (2002, 3).

Stephen King in *Danse Macabre* (1981), in his characterization of horror, complements its definition by using the expression “to gross out” which is intimately connected with the concept of Julia Kristeva’s abject.¹ King says that “the gross out serves as the means of a last-ditch sort of identification when the more conventional and noble

¹ According to Julia Kristeva, in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), the abject operates as a threat to the body’s integrity, thus and including everything that threatens to breach the frontier of the “I”, such as bodily fluids (blood, urine, or faeces). The author identifies the corpse as the ultimate *locus* of abjection (3).

means of characterization have failed” (1981, 202). When writing his narratives, the author claims that he resorts to terror, then steps on to horror and, in order to further provoke the readers, he will venture in the field of revulsion, by introducing scenes that are prone to disgust the reader. Terminology such as repulsion, loathing, disgust and revulsion are circumscribed by Julia Kristeva’s conceptualization of the abject.

When transposed to the cinematic narrative, the distinction remains valid. Brigid Cherry, in *Horror* (2009), emphasizes the physical impact of horror by listing a set of feelings that surface when the viewer is watching a horror film, stating that they are stricken by “fear, terror, fright, dread or anxiety; being scared, shocked or made to jump; to shiver, feel one’s skin is crawling or get the chills; to feel disgust, nausea or revulsion; to experience fascination, sexual or morbid curiosity, empathy, relief and even laughter” (52).

David Punter, in *The Literature of Terror* (1996), acknowledges that “the fundamentally formulaic model which is conventionally known as ‘the horror film’ has indeed many Gothic aspects” (96). In the same vein, Gina Wisker highlights this close affinity between the Gothic genre and the horror film, acknowledging the genre’s Gothic antecedents (2005, 227). Indeed, the horror genre adopts a wide range of Gothic conventions, namely subversion thus tapping into the anxieties and fears that threaten the stability of a given society. As Catherine Spooner highlights:

In contemporary Western culture, the Gothic lurks in all sorts of unexpected corners. Like a malevolent virus, Postmodern Gothic narratives have escaped the confines of literature and spread across disciplinary boundaries to infect all kinds of media, from fashion and advertising to the way contemporary events are constructed in mass culture. (2006, 8)

Fred Botting, in *Gothic* (1996), describes horror as an emotional experience connoted with claustrophobia and subterranean settings that reminds us of our human finitude. The author states that “[h]orror is most experienced in underground vaults or

burial chambers. It freezes human faculties, rendering the mind passive and immobilizing the body. The cause is generally a direct encounter with physical mortality, the touching of a cold corpse, the sight of a decaying body” (75).

Echoing the subterranean features intrinsic in Fred Botting’s conception of horror, Thomas Doherty observes:

Horror is the stuff nightmares are made of, the dreamscreen for subconscious desires and fears. [...] [H]orror lurks in the psychic underbrush: in jungles and swamps, cobwebbed catacombs and pitch-black basements, dark castles in the mountains and remote states in the forest, all stand-in locations for the subterranean landscapes of the mind. (1999, 296)

When addressing horror, one must bear in mind the fluidity (Geraghty and Jancovich 2008, 205) of its borders as it constitutes a genre that comprises many subgenres which oftentimes appear interconnected, therefore sharing some tropes, conventions and plot structures. Cynthia Freeland, in *The Naked and The Undead: Evil and the Appeal of Horror* (2018), classifies the genre as “slippery” (10) and underlines that “[i]t blends at the edges with many other genres such as science fiction and the thriller” (*ibid.*). This highly graphic genre, while in permanent dialogue with universal unconscious fears, teases the viewer by interspacing moments of terror, generating anxiety and suspense, with moments of horror.

Horror constitutes a profoundly self-reflexive genre, as it taps into the sensitive aspects, worries and wounds of a given decade. It expurgates the fears and anxieties that lay nested in the collective unconscious. Like a vampire, it feeds on the things we repress and turns them back at us, therefore haunting us – be it the excessive consumerism, the ghost of the war (or post-war), the side effects of capitalism, social upheaval, the emergence of new diseases, sexuality, racial motifs or the disintegration of the nuclear family. In this light, horror comes to cinema to exorcise our demons in its manifold subgenres.

The slasher subgenre formula, for instance, usually involves striking visual violent episodes; gory scenes; teenage or young victims; remote settings (a cabin or house in the woods or mountains, a campsite near a lake); a disfigured character as the villain; scenes involving sexuality; the virgin girl, who will survive in the end, versus the sexually active girl who is doomed to die from the onset. In some slasher films, the viewer knows from the start who the killer is, whereas in others the disclosing of their identity will only be given away at the end. Another interesting feature is that some slashers rely on killers who are 'evil' but human, such as the serial killer; while others display characters endowed with supernatural powers and, as so, they are constantly revived and brought back to the big screen like Jason Voorhees or Michael Meyers. The slasher film is sometimes referred to as a splatter film owing to the exceeding presence of blood and gore on screen.

Closely linked with the slasher subgenre are the 'body horror' and 'torture-porn'² categories. Like the former, both rely on what Linda Williams deems "the frenzy of the visible" (1999, 194) to the extent that these subgenres appropriate the body as a site of transformation, disfigurement and pain. In truth, the suffering body on display constitutes the signature of both visual registers. The concern with bodily integrity and preservation is at stake in this subgenre, given that it plays with the human fear of having one's body injured, defiled, or mutilated. This can occur as a consequence of violent acts, the surge of a disease, or as the outcome of a scientific experiment that has gone awfully wrong. As a striking example of body horror stands David Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986) which focuses on human transformation into an insect, while Eli Roth's *Hostel* (2005) illustrates

² The expression "torture porn" was coined by the film critic David Edelstein, in the article "Now Playing at your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn", published in the *New York* magazine, in 2006. It refers to an excessive visual display of violence, mostly physical but also psychological. In "torture porn" films, scenes of extreme physical brutality exerted upon the body are very explicit and lengthy, and do not leave much to the audience's imagination. In Edelstein's point of view, the aesthetics of this horror subgenre is reminiscent of hardcore films, to the degree that they rely on detailed graphic representation.

the variety of bodily sufferance and excessive violence that lay at the basis of ‘torture-porn’.

The ‘rape-revenge’ is another violent subgenre of horror. It features a female protagonist taking revenge on a group of masculine characters that have raped her and subdued her to a great degree of violence. Throughout the filmic narrative, the female protagonist (and victim) will devise and act out a revenge in which she indulges in the death of the perpetrators one by one. *I Spit on your Grave* (1978) by Meir Zarchi is one of the most flagrant examples of this type of revenge plot.

Precisely due to excessive amounts of violence, human suffering and gore on screen, critics and scholars recognize the existence of yet another subgenre designated by ‘extreme horror’. A film such as *Martyrs* (2008) by Pascal Laugier subscribes to these conventions, and confronts the audience with such a realistic depiction of physical violence that it can be described as being nearly insurmountable.

There is also the ‘found footage’ subgenre showcasing another side of the horror film lexicon. It presents itself as if it were a documentary, often reminding the viewer in its opening credits that the contents that they are about to watch are based on true facts or depict a sequence of events which have actually happened. This type of cinematic narrative and its expected emotional impact rely on the audience’s belief that the contents they are visualizing bear a faithful portrayal of an event or a set of events that may or may not have actually taken place. In fact, while some of the films that fall under this label are effectively based on real accounts, we must bear in mind that the authenticity of such stories might be biased since most of the sources from which the information is retrieved are not totally reliable. On the other hand, there are other ‘found footage’ films that rely on a scripted plot, and therefore, only pretend to be based on true events in order to gather a higher degree of credibility from the public. Basically, this is a strategy that aims to

increase the emotional engagement of the viewer; by presenting itself as a true and faithful account, it intends to forge a sense of the real, thus bewildering, conditioning and undermining the viewer's perception of the visual narrative.

Also integrating horror subgenres, 'paranormal horror' is centred upon a haunting: an evil spirit that has returned from the grave; a demon, poltergeist or other supernatural entity that wracks havoc in the domestic sphere. Due to being focused on supernatural phenomena, this type of subgenre manages to instill terror upon its viewers by feeding on the fear of the unexpected, thus provoking the so-called 'jump scares'. Highly anchored in classic Gothic conventions, such as the 'return of the repressed', family issues, the emergence of the double and the uncanny, its narratives concern the disruption of a domestic setting by virtue of a supernatural entity. William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) constitutes an example of a visual narrative in which the normal daily life of a young girl and her mother is disturbed when the former is possessed by a demon.

Another subgenre that also brings domestic matters into play is the so-called 'home invasion'. This is a type of film which essentially preys on the fear of having one's domestic sphere invaded by a hostile individual or a group of individuals whose main objective is to enact physical torture upon a family, a group of friends or an individual while taunting them and challenging them with twisted mind games, provocations and physical violence.³ A striking example of this type of film is *The Strangers* (2008) by Brian Bertino, a visual narrative that was inspired by the events that lead to the demise of Sharon Tate at the hands of Manson's family.

³ Essentially this type of films feeds on the white middle-class fear of being terrorized in their own home, believed to be a safe, comfortable and private place. This subgenre plays with the fear of the unfamiliar 'Other' – the outcast, the immigrant, the poor, the African American- to the extent that these categories are liable to be perceived as a threat, namely if they dare trespassing into a territory that is not traditionally theirs, as it is the case of the All-American suburban neighbourhood. In this light, the September terrorist attack can be interpreted as a home invasion on a national level, an aspect which explains why this trauma felt by the American people comes to surface in so many of the 2000s horror films.

Undoubtedly, there are also films that slip into the category of the horror subgenre, but whose focus reside on instilling ontological uncertainty. In reality these have more in common with the sphere of terror than with the rawness of horror. These are fundamentally anchored on psychological horror and intentionally aim at ‘deceiving’, disconcerting and bewildering the viewer who, only at the end, is confronted with the true nature of the events depicted in the narrative. M. Night Shyamalan’s *The Sixth Sense* (1999) and *The Others* (2001) by Alejandro Amenábar are two examples of an effective psychological manipulation that manages to divert the attention of the viewer from the evidence that is clearly displayed or insinuated on screen to other aspects of the visual narrative that are secondary but ambiguously presented as important. As a result, the *denouement* of these films is purposefully arranged in order to surprise the viewer.

Moving onto a different kind of antagonist, ‘monster horror’ can be deemed as another subgenre. Its emphasis is placed precisely upon the figure of the monster or creature whose main goal is to frighten the audience. It can be a ‘familiar monster’ such as the vampire, the zombie, the werewolf or the witch, or, conversely, the monster can embody the uncanny, meaning something that the viewer is not familiar with. However, the monster can also be human if the antagonist is either a serial killer or an ‘inhuman’, that is, it assumes the form of a supernatural monster like the aforementioned vampire or werewolf. Noël Carrol, in his paradigmatic work *Philosophy of Horror* (1990), contends:

Monsters are an un-natural relative to a culture’s conceptual scheme of nature. They do not fit the scheme, they violate it. Thus, monsters are not only physically threatening; they are threats to common knowledge [...] monsters are in a certain sense challenges to the foundation of a culture’s way of thinking. (34)

Apart from bearing an unconventional physical form, the monster’s role is one that defies social norms, accepted behavioral codes as well as the established cultural paradigms. It does not only subvert them but also discloses the flaws and fragilities that sustain them.

Emerging from the fog of the Gothic conventions and bringing about terror and horror, the vampire became a privileged monster of literary tradition that was later transposed to cinema. An iconic figure of the horror cinematic narrative, it has been a constant presence on the big screen, bringing to the limelight humanity's fears and anxieties, thus helping make sense of and cope with the dilemmas that haunt humankind within a certain historical, social, political, economic and cultural context.

Myths and legends that swirled around the topic of the vampire conceived it essentially as a bloodthirsty living-dead nightly predator, set to prey upon humans so as to feed themselves on their blood. According to Paul Meehan, in *The Vampire in Science Fiction Film and Literature* (2014), the vampire was depicted as a pale creature exhibiting sharp fangs. As it feared the sunlight, it slept inside coffins. Immune to the passage of time, the vampire retained the body that it had before being transformed into a monster. However, its image met no reflection in the mirror. According to the lore, the vampire was endowed with hypnotic powers, and was able to read minds. Some of them were capable of shapeshifting, therefore turning into wolves, bats or mist. The vampire was vulnerable to crucifixes, holy water, wolfbane and garlic. The safest way to annihilate a vampire was by means of a stake through its heart. If someone fell victim to the vampire and got bitten, then he would become one. (Meehan 1)

Sheridan Le Fanu provides us with this conventional portrayal of a vampire in his novella *Carmilla* (1872):

The features, though a hundred and fifty years had passed since her funeral, were tinted with the warmth of life. Her eyes were open; no cadaverous smell exhaled from the coffin. The two medical men [...] attested to the marvelous fact that there was a faint but appreciable respiration and a corresponding action of the heart. The limbs were perfectly flexible, the flesh elastic [...]. (2013, 268)

Roxana Stuart, in *Stage Blood: Vampires of the 19th Century Stage* (1994) notes that there were some diseases that by virtue of its symptoms could make the patient resemble the victim of a vampire. The author remarks:

[...] imperfectly understood diseases—cholera, rabies, tuberculosis, blood disorders such as pernicious anemia, and porphyria, whose symptoms resemble the marks of the vampire [...] helped to spread the superstition as did the discovery in the New World of the *Desdemonus rotundus*, the vampire bat, in the late 18th century. (21)

Peter Day, in *Vampire: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil* (2006) refers that “[t]he word ‘vampyre’ entered the English language in 1732, its first appearance (in a London periodical) occasioned by a rash of vampire sightings documented in several parts of central and eastern Europe” (3). Inspired by accounts, folklore and myth, the appeal of the vampire soon spread to poetry and literature. Striking examples of poems that address the vampire are Lord Byron’s “The Giaour” (1813) or Samuel Coleridge’s “Christabel” (1816). In 1819, John William Polidori wrote a short piece of fiction entitled “The Vampyre” which, according to Peter Day, paved the way for the vampire that would be later revisited (and revised) by Bram Stoker in *Dracula* (1897). As the author states:

[...] Polidori gives us in Lord Ruthven many of the features that would become fixtures of present-day popular culture: unlike the reanimated corpse of folklore, Polidori’s vampire is a tall, gaunt, and pale aristocrat dressed in black, whose distinguishing feature is his seductive power. (2006, 7)

In fact, Bram Stoker’s novel remained the referential *oeuvre* featuring the vampire with Count Dracula. As Sorcha Ní Fhlainn asserts in *Postmodern Vampires: Film, Fiction and Popular Culture* (2019): “Vampires have flourished in the popular imagination in particular since the early nineteenth century, but it was the publication of *Dracula* in 1897 that assured the vampire’s afterlife” (5). Particularly in Victorian literature, the vampire as legend is appropriated as a metaphor, and in *Dracula* it stands for fear of the ‘Other’,

miscegenation, disease, deviant sexual behaviour, or the emergence of the ‘New Woman’.⁴

Peter Day highlights the remarkable influence of Sheridan Le Fanu in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* when he notes that *Carmilla* (1872) shares most of the features that the readers have come to associate with Stoker’s Count: “the sharply pointed canines, as well as the gliding through the cracks, entering in the form of mist, producing a languor, maintaining its existence in sunlight, and appearing in the form of a beast” (2006, 7).

However, when the vampire fled from literature and migrated to the big screen by the hand of F. W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922), it embodied a genuinely monstrous figure associated with disease and pestilence (Abbot 2009, 45) as Brad Steiger’s physical description elucidates:

[...] [W]e see actor Max Schreck’s loathsome bloodsucker, Count Orlok, skittering about in the shadows with dark-ringed, hollowed eyes, pointed devil ears, and hideous fangs. With his long, blood-stained talons, his egg-shaped head and pasty white complexion, Schreck’s *Nosferatu* captures the classic appearance of the undead as seen in the collective nightmares of humankind. (2010, 9)

Distancing itself from the almost animalistic figure of Murnau’s *Nosferatu* and the unaesthetic Count Dracula imagined by Stoker⁵, the cinematic vampire then evolved

⁴ Emerging in the Victorian *fin de siècle*, the movement of the ‘New Woman’ proclaimed a new social, economic, politic, cultural and literary paradigm concerning role of women in society. Activists like Sarah Grand, that became an iconic representative of this movement, defended a more active role for women in society, arguing that women shouldn’t be subservient to patriarchy. The subscribers of the ‘New Woman’ model were reluctant to be defined by their maternal or domestic roles, thus straying away from the traditional dominant image of the Victorian “angel-in-the-house.” In Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, both Mina Murray and Lucy Westenra can be said to display some signs that align them with this feminine emancipatory role: the first young woman is a schoolmistress and a writer, while the second becomes openly sexual and a child murderess after being bitten by the Count.

⁵ Bram Stoker’s clearly emphasized the ugliness and the unfamiliarity of Count Dracula, by providing the reader with a scary physical description: His face was strong [...] aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofted doomed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose [...]. The mouth,

to become closer to the seducing aristocrat, wearing a cape as a trademark, like the vampires impersonated by Bela Lugosi in Todd Browing's *Dracula* (1931) or Christopher Lee in Terence Fisher's *Horror of Dracula* (1958) showed.

However, over the decades, the vampire has undergone a growing process of humanization, which was followed by an aesthetical revamping, as it is attested by Anne Rice's novels that date back to the late 1970s. These show that the narrative becomes essentially centred upon the character of the vampire, relegating the human to the secondary role of an anonymous victim whose blood is extracted to satisfy the predator's need. In truth, on a psychological, physical, emotional, cultural and geographical level, both the literary and the cinematic vampire have become closer to the human, thus prefiguring the "vampire next door" (Zanger 1997, 17). Against this background, the monstrous creature from the past can have been said to become divested of its otherness, thus losing its uncanny nature to be ultimately rendered familiar. In Veronica Hollinger and Joan Gordon's words, the twentieth century can be said to have been credited with the "domestication of the vampire" (1997, 2).

This upgrade of the vampire appears dissociated from the ideals inherent in Postmodernism. As Sorcha Ní Fhlainn argues:

Postmodernity presents a plural platform to foreground unheard voices, and apes other form of established power in its playful bricolage; it captures monstrosity as something recognizable and potentially sympathetic, allowing vampires and other creatures into our lives [...]. (2019, 5)

so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp with teeth; those protruded over the lips [...]" (1993, 16-17).

In Neil Jordan's *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), a film based on Anne Rice's novel (1976), Louis de Pointe du Lac comes across as the genteel, alluring and articulate postmodern vampire who narrates his story to an eager journalist. His account emphasizes the facts that differentiate him from his predecessors. Nonchalantly, he informs the young interviewer that all the old lore associated with vampires is nothing but fiction: "[...] superstitions about garlic, crosses, stakes in the heart, all that [...]. The vulgar fictions of a demented Irishman" (Neil Jordan, *Interview with the Vampire*). Narrated in the first person, it establishes the vampire's role as a storyteller as he conveys his vision of the world not merely as a creature of darkness but likewise as a citizen of the world – a cosmopolitan vampire who experiences the technological progress denoting insightfulness and upholding a critical view that contrasts with his atemporal nature. Louis's vampiric ruminations cling to a 'sick' existentialism and he feels afflicted by a sense of guilt while haunted by the belief that, by having become a vampire, he has been damned. There is a vivid contrast between Louis and Lestat, his maker, who appears perfectly satisfied with his *status quo* as a forever young vampire, indulging in a never ending *jouissance* from day to day. Becoming a vampire now involves a more complex interaction, because the vampire who sucks the blood of the victim must restore it back to life by using its own blood.

The postmodern vampire evolves by revising the previous vampire profile(s) and infusing it with small variations. For example, in Catherine Hardwicke's *Twilight* (2008), based on Stephenie Meyer's novel (2005), the vampire glitters when exposed to the sunlight, survives on the blood of animals and, despite its pale complexion, lives among humans undetected. Like Neil Jordan's vampires, they tend to form family ties. In the particular case of the Cullen family, they live in a sophisticated house nested in the woods. Edward, the male protagonist, in an attitude that echoes Louis's, does not understand his

vampiric status as something worth of pride, alleging that his physical beauty is nothing but a well-crafted trap that helps him lure his potential victims. Other variation introduced by *Twilight* has to do with the transformation process. In this case, if someone is bitten by a vampire, they get infected by poison and it's due to the effects of this substance that the metamorphosis occurs. As in Neil Jordan's film, the physical appearance of the victim is enhanced by the attack, their senses become sharper as they become stronger and faster creatures. As so, they become more akin to the super-hero than to the marginal vampire of Transylvania.

Nina Auerbach, in *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, observes that "every age embraces the vampire it needs" (1995, 145) and this sentence is more accurate than ever in this postmodern era, as vampires and the horror genre itself change and adjust to confront us with our human fears and anxieties. Vampires and other monsters will continue to return from their lairs, coffins, castles, suburban neighbourhoods or penthouses just to haunt us once more and showing us that they are ready to step into the next evolutionary step, turning the big screen into a mirror for ourselves.

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