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From Demon to God: The Evolution of the Vampire in Literature

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

Vampires may be centuries-old mythological creatures, but depictions thereof abound in our modern society in literature, film, and television. The prevalence of the vampire is related to its enormous symbolic power to reflect socio-cultural conditions of society at the time of its creation, which not only determines how the vampire figure has changed within modern literary history, but also makes it possible to pinpoint certain social conditions influencing this change.

The aspects of religion and capitalism, and, directly associated with this, consumerism, emerge as particularly relevant when analysing the changes of the fictional vampire, as they are both effective measures of socio-cultural circumstances and have been associated with the vampire figure – in terms of its creation, nature, and specific characteristics – in the history of mythology and literature. It is through tracing the themes of religion and capitalism within primary vampire texts at key moments in history that a greater understanding of how and why the vampire figure has changed may be gained. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is possibly the most influential vampire novel and the eminent Victorian vampire text, where the vampire is still figured in its traditional guise as demonic, and is associated with sin, damnation, and the negative aspects of consumption in contrast to a traditionally religious Victorian society. In the twentieth century, the first text of Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*, *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), emerges as a landmark vampire text that reflects the changes of the vampire figure in light of changing socio-cultural conditions particularly well. The vampire here, more secularised and identified with the positive powers of consumption, reflects the largely desirable view of consumption held in a post-World War II Fordist society. The most recent vampire phenomenon, Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*, consisting of *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007), and *Breaking Dawn* (2008), presents the uncritical admiration and idolisation of the absolutely secularised vampire.

It is through investigating the themes of religion and capitalism within these three key vampire texts that it is possible to trace the gradual shift from a more demonic to a

more idolised vampire figure, illustrating not only the influence of changing socio-cultural conditions on the depiction of the vampire, but also the power of the symbol to reflect such changes.

INTRODUCTION

Fictional depictions of vampires abound in our modern society. Walking into a bookstore, potential readers are greeted by the adolescent-luring pages of Stephenie Meyer's enormously successful *Twilight* Saga, Lisa Jane Smith's series of *Vampire Diaries* novels, the more adult-orientated narratives of Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* and Charlaine Harris's *Sookie Stackhouse* novels, or the timeless pages of Bram Stoker's classic, *Dracula*. Likewise, flipping through television channels, viewers are likely to be greeted by the vampires of popular current television series, the handsome faces of the CW's teen-romance *The Vampire Diaries* (based on Smith's novels) or the slightly raunchier ones in the HBO's *True Blood* (based on the *Sookie Stackhouse* novels), or the brooding vampires of past television successes *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its spin-off series, *Angel*. The history of film, too, is rich in vampires, ranging, to name but a few, from the action narratives of *Blade* and *Underworld*, to the light-hearted *Dead and Loving It* and the original *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* film, to the contemplative story of *Interview with the Vampire*, and, last but not least, to the countless *Dracula* adaptations in German cinema, Classic Hollywood, or gory Hammer productions.

The abundance of the vampire figure in creative texts – be it literary, cinematic, or televised – suggests that there must be something about the vampire that is of particular relevance to our culture. In his book *Blood Obsession: Vampires, Serial Murder, and the Popular Imagination*, Jörg Waltje argues that vampires abound because they represent both our fears and our desires, our “fear of death and of the dead ... [and] the wish for immortality and never-fading beauty and strength” (2005:3). These factors certainly play a role in most vampire texts. However, no matter how tempting it may be to conjure up a universal definition of what the vampire is and what it represents, any frequent – or, for that matter, even occasional – reader and/or viewer of vampire texts will attest that not all vampires are alike. Even in mythology, there is no original, master vampire, and critics – Matthew Beresford (2008), Susannah Clements (2011), Basil Copper (1990), Christopher Frayling

(1991), Ken Gelder (1994), and David J. Skal (2009), to name a few – trace the vampire myth, in its numerous forms, to various ancient cultures, from Hebrew, Greek, and Roman, to Chinese, Indian, and Egyptian, and to the Balkan and Slavic cultures of Eastern Europe. While these ancient cultures produced vampiric creatures of immense diversity, ranging from the Greek lamia, a demon that drinks the blood of children, to the Roman strix, a bird that feeds on flesh and blood, to the Egyptian blood-consuming warrior goddess Sekhmet, they all involve some sort of belief in life after death intertwined with the consumption of blood.

In modern times, too, there are generally agreed-upon principles that define our understanding of the fictional vampire figure. These include, *inter alia*, the appearance of the undead creature at night to drink the blood of the living (and thereby ensuring its own immortal survival), the ability of the vampire to change into various animals and mist, and various ways of destroying and/or warding off the vampire, such as driving a stake through its heart, fire, silver bullets, garlic, wolfsbane, a rosary, the crucifix, and holy water. These features are drawn predominantly from the myth and folklore of Eastern Europe, the region from which the vampire myth first spread to the West in the early eighteenth century (Beresford 2008:13-14, Clements 2011:3, Noll 1992:9, Schweitzer 2002:11, Seligman 1968:457). Up until fairly recent times, the vampire was regarded as an “absolute truth by ignorant and semi-literate populations” (Copper 1990:34) of the peasant Eastern European regions¹. Such beliefs led to numerous detailed accounts of vampirism in the imperialistic West, the first of which was the 1727 report of Arnold Paole, a returning soldier who claimed to have been assaulted by a vampire during military service in Serbia. A 1732 translation of this account from the German first introduced the term ‘vampire’ to the English language, and, from thereon, Europe was in the grips of a vampire obsession, with debates on the vampire’s existence forming an integral part of academic and philosophical discussion, and reports of vampires being the subject of journalistic articles (Beresford 2008, Skal 2009:27, Summers 1928:273-

¹ In the early eighteenth century, for example, when, after some wars and a redrawing of borders, the “Austro-Hungarian empire [suddenly] found itself in possession of parts of Serbia and Wallachia” (Schweitzer 2002:11), imperial officers were stunned by peasants digging up corpses in order to re-kill them by driving a stake through their hearts.

274). This academic and journalistic interest was followed by an upsurge of vampire-related poems, plays, and novels throughout Europe, and particularly in England (Noll 1992:9). This Western understanding of the literary vampire was intrinsically linked to the image of the Eastern European vampire that first inspired the craze, though, as will be seen, this image has been significantly altered over the years, and particularly so in the more recent vampire narratives.

This period in British history, however, not only saw the rise of the literary vampire, but also the rise of the Gothic literary tradition, and the developments of the two, as will be seen, are intrinsically related. The Gothic novel, predominantly a horror novel involving the supernatural realm, arose largely as a revolt against its time, as a signifier of the medieval – that is, primitive, irrational, and imaginative – Gothic past in opposition to the scientific, rational, and reasoned principles of the Enlightenment. According to Terry Eagleton, all literary works are “forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world; and as such they have a relation to the dominant way of seeing the world which is the ‘social mentality’ or ideology of an age” (1976:5-6). This may certainly be true of the Gothic novel, but this understanding of literary works as being informed by the times in which they are produced is also vital to an understanding of the changing vampire figure. Susannah Clements suggests that literary vampires function predominantly as metaphors for society at the time of their creation, and, “like all traditional symbols or metaphors, the figure of the vampire has morphed as the culture that produces it has changed” (2011:162). Santiago Lucendo expands on this, explaining that the vampire is a

culturally ‘stitched’ body, reflecting the historical, political, and social framework surrounding it, and it has served ... as a space in which the fears and desires of a particular ... culture can be played out (2009:115).

This suggests not only that the literary vampire – like literary traditions more generally – reflects the society and culture in which it was produced and represents varying fears and desires depending on that society, but also that, as society is constantly changing, so, too, the vampire figure that the society produces is constantly changing.

Given the belief that literary vampires operate as metaphors for the society and culture at the time of their creation, it is little wonder that they have been interpreted from a wide range of social and cultural perspectives. Scholarly interest in vampires covers an immense spectrum, ranging from feminism, gender studies, and studies of the Other, to economics, biology, religion, and psychoanalysis. While such interpretations of the vampire may be tremendously interesting and insightful, they often tend to be either quite text- or theme-specific, as it is exceedingly challenging to hold the same argument over any length of time about a creature as volatile as the vampire. However, the field of psychoanalysis² provides invaluable insight into why the literary vampire may so successfully reflect socio-cultural circumstances. Rosemary Jackson argues that vampires belong to the realm of the fantastic, and that the “fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over, made ‘absent’” (1981:4). It traces, in Freudian terms, the return of the repressed – those (personal or cultural) memories, instincts, or beliefs that have been repressed to such an extent that they manifest in uncanny projections of unconscious fears and desires. It is precisely this that is deemed as a defining characteristic of the Gothic literary tradition more generally, and the Gothic novel itself is described as having the “ability to represent what is disavowed, to speak of anxieties and desires that are difficult to name” (Williamson 2005:187). The Gothic, then, like the fantastic, expresses that which prefers to remain hidden, and the vampire, a fantastic manifestation of uncanny fears and desires (which may be both conscious or unconscious on the author’s part, but always cloaked in the realm of fantasy), emerges as one of the symbols of the Gothic literary tradition. This creates a relationship in which changes in the vampire figure may not only be traced back to larger socio-cultural changes, but also, more specifically, to changes in the Gothic literary tradition (which are also influenced by socio-cultural circumstances).

Ultimately, no matter how compelling a certain argument, definition, or individual vampire text may be, it is the change within the vampire figure over various texts that

² Psychoanalysis in itself is an enormous field of study, and such interpretations of the vampire figure vary tremendously. Ernest Jones (1931), one of the leading Freudian interpreters of vampires, argues that the figure symbolises the simultaneous love and hatred of death and the dead, while other psychoanalysts have interpreted the vampire as a figure of repressed sexuality and erotic anxiety.

emerges as central to the literary vampire. As Tony Thorne (1999) suggests, this constant reinvention of the vampire figure is the key to its artistic survival. It is the ability of the vampire to change that allows it to be of relevance to various societies over time. That vampires change in response to various socio-cultural factors has already been established, but the question of how they change and in response to which social factors, and, by extension, which changing literary traditions, is something still to be explored. In attempting to chart and understand the changes in the literary vampire from a socio-cultural perspective, the aspects of religion and capitalism (and, directly dependent on this, consumerism) emerge as being of particular interest. Both have been linked with the vampire figure for a considerable length of time. Religion already played a dominant role in vampire folklore, and capitalism, while it may be understood as a more recent phenomenon, is nevertheless preoccupied with factors such as wealth and social class, which have been intertwined with the vampire figure since its introduction into English literature with John Polidori's aristocratic Lord Ruthven in *The Vampyre* (1819). Over time, religion and capitalism have established themselves as two dominant aspects that may be found operating in most, if not all, vampire texts, and thus prove useful in charting a progressive history of the vampire figure.

Furthermore, these two aspects are also particularly representative of socio-cultural changes as a whole and they seem to operate within some kind of oppositional or symbiotic relationship in which changes in the one affect changes in the other. They may, then, provide a good overview of society at a certain time in order to better understand changes within literary traditions more generally and the vampire figure more specifically. In the modern context, the changing history of religion and capitalism can be linked at key moments to specific vampire texts that represent new developments in the representation of the Gothic vampire figure.

In the late nineteenth century, religion was still the dominant belief system and framework of Victorian society, but the Industrial Revolution was already beginning to have profound effects on society, and capitalism was beginning to emerge as the dominant economic system. It is at this point that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897),

possibly the most influential of all vampire novels, is placed, and the way the vampire is depicted in this more traditionally Gothic text is particularly representative of Victorian beliefs about and fears of a changing culture. In the twentieth century, and particularly in the post-World War II era, society experienced gradual changes in terms of increased secularisation and the rise of consumerism. This resulted in significant changes within the Gothic horror novel more generally and the vampire figure more specifically, as illustrated by the remarkably changed vampire in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976). In more recent times, this process of secularisation and strengthening of consumerism, associated directly with the triumph of capitalism as the world economic system and continual technological innovations, has resulted in yet another figuration of the vampire, accompanied by a remarkable shift in vampire literature away from Gothic horror. This is exemplified by Stephenie Meyer's enormously successful Twilight Saga, consisting of *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007), and *Breaking Dawn* (2008). It is by looking at these key texts (and, given the importance of the cinematic image in modern society, their relevant film adaptations), in conjunction with the changing history of religion and capitalism, that some understanding of the shift in the Gothic literary tradition and the changes in the fictional vampire figure may be gained.

CHAPTER ONE:

BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA*

Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, first published in 1897, is arguably the most well-known and influential vampire story ever written, and it falls distinctly within the Gothic literary tradition (Beresford 2008:139, Copper 1990:74, McGinley 1996:81, Skal 1990:10, Waller 2010:29). Stoker was an ardent short story writer in the field of the macabre, but his masterpiece is remembered not for any particular literary narrative achievement, but for its lasting quality as a work of horror. Revelling in images of the unexplained supernatural, mysterious castles, and dark forests, the narrative of *Dracula* harks back to the eeriness of the traditional Gothic novel, as epitomised by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), and reflects traditional Gothic concerns of the past versus the present. Count Dracula – the epitomic Gothic symbol – virtually obliterates all the literary vampires that have appeared before him³, and though his status as the most famous vampire may have been tested in recent years through the emergence of *Twilight*'s Edward Cullen, he is still viewed as the prototype vampire figure. Any discussion of the changes in the depiction of the literary vampire, therefore, ought to begin with Stoker's portrayal of Count Dracula. The portrayal of this vampire as a Gothic figure reflects the socio-cultural concerns of the time of its creation in various ways, but with particular power in its enforcement of Christian religious ideology and its criticism of emerging capitalism.

Dracula was written and published in the last decade of the nineteenth century, a period that saw the culmination of changes – threatening the Victorian sense of stability – and unrest that had characterised the entire last quarter of the nineteenth century. Given the concern with the rise of science and technology over the more traditional past, these socio-cultural circumstances, in many ways, echo the period of

³ However, Stoker's debt to previous vampire fictions, including Polidori's *The Vampyre*, Thomas Preskett Prest's *Varney the Vampire, or the Feast of Blood* (also attributed to James Malcolm Rymer), and Sheridan le Fanu's 'Carmilla' cannot be ignored, and he draws from these in both structure and theme.

the Enlightenment in which the Gothic novel first arose, with the rise of scientific and rational thought over the more traditional past, and it is natural, therefore, for some of the themes of the traditional Gothic to be reflected in Stoker's novel. More specifically, it is the dispute between stability and change that Stoker, through the narrative of *Dracula*, engages in. The novel, roughly, tells the story of a group of British companions who are threatened by the Transylvanian Count Dracula, a centuries-old vampire who has come to modern London to spread his demonic curse. The actions are set in the midst of the changing economic and social systems of the eighteen-nineties, where the rise of industry had led to the development of new imperialism, improved methods of transportation and new technologies, new careers, new class distinctions, shifting religious attitudes, and changing gender relations and the emergence of the so-called New Woman⁴. The pages of Stoker's novel are riddled with references to such socio-economic changes, and the protagonists repeatedly rely on the improved train systems and new technologies, such as phonographs and typewriters, while they themselves become models of new social and gender classifications.

However, even though the actions of *Dracula* are firmly rooted within – and are celebratory of – this modernising society, it was also an incredibly unstable time, socially and economically. Capitalism, which had expanded almost without limit throughout the nineteenth century and eventually established itself as the dominant socio-economic system, depended, by necessity, on an insatiable market and an equal relationship between supply and demand. The capitalist system prospered in mid-Victorian Britain, but, with rising foreign competition, which offered cheaper goods, late Victorian society was plunged into depression, threatening the stability of Britain

⁴ The term 'New Woman' refers predominantly to the young middle-class women of the late eighteen-nineties who "reacted restlessly against the traditional system of overprotection" (Calder 1976:163). They sought greater freedom in all areas of life (travel, education, exercise, etcetera), but were recognised as specifically threatening to Victorian society in their more open approach to sex and sexual relationships. The New Woman was seen as a complete break from the conventional woman in Victorian society, which may be best described by Lyn Pykett's (1992) idea of the 'proper feminine', where women were only supposed to be defined by, and have power (though subordinate to the husbands' wishes) in, the realm of domesticity. In *Dracula*, Mina and Lucy embody both sides of the New Woman, with Mina signifying the industrious part of the definition, continually seeking greater education and employment opportunities (though these are still largely in service of her husband), while Lucy is the one with a more open approach to sexual intimacies.

as the dominant power, and inspiring a new imperialism and greater exports to underdeveloped nations to keep the country afloat (Black 1973:92). Though located firmly within these times, and making symbolic reference to it by situating Count Dracula as the foreign force disarmed within the fantastic realm, the narrative of *Dracula*, like the traditional Gothic novel, also seems to hark back towards the past, and, in this case, towards a more mid-Victorian socio-economic culture, where the sense of stability that identified Victorian society had not yet been uprooted and subjected to turmoil. In mid-Victorian England, industrialism was already taking its roots and effecting some changes, but the economic and social systems as a whole were still stable (Roebuck 1973:15) and the “sense of social order, stability, and ranking” (Roebuck 1973:18) was still strong.

One of the cores of this social stability that preserved the British identity was the Christian religion (Hoelzli 2003:27, Thomson 1950:231). Mid-Victorian Britain was an “extremely devout nation” (Roebuck 1973:3), at least publicly, and people studied their Bibles dutifully and focused on good moral conduct to demonstrate their status as good Christians (Thomson 1950:107). In *Dracula*, Stoker chooses to define the protagonists almost exclusively by their status as Christians, and they live steadfastly by the moral assumptions their religion provides. This is despite the fact that the stability of Christianity had, in the years before *Dracula*’s publication, been under considerable threat. Janet Roebuck explains that the Christian Church in the late nineteenth century was met with continual challenges, arguing that

intellectual developments either contradicted the teachings of the church, as did Darwin’s work, discounted it, as in the case of Marx, or simply ignored it, as did the work of the increasingly influential body of scientists (1973:61).

In this new world run by science and economic prosperity, there was, apparently, no space for conventional religious ideologies. New imperialism – a necessity for British economic survival – was seemingly justified by social Darwinism, and the theory of evolution itself, as articulated by Charles Darwin in his *The Origin of Species* (1859), undermined Christianity to a certain extent, threatening the stability and previously unchallenged acceptance of the genesis of mankind, with profound consequences on Victorian society. Hilary Fraser explains that “many individuals felt a profound sense

of spiritual dislocation in the face of the disappearance of God from their [increasingly scientific and secularised] world” (2002:105), only adding to the general atmosphere of dislocation and unrest in the period.

It is this sense of threat and anxiety that is reflected in the Gothic literature of the eighteen-nineties. Fred Botting argues that this period of Gothicism explored

anxieties about the stability of the social and domestic order and the effects of economic and scientific rationality ... [and that] the ambivalence towards scientific issues led ... to strange realignments of the relationship between science and religion (1996:136).

However, even though Stoker firmly exposes these anxieties through his particular depiction of the vampire, *Dracula*, as a whole, also largely undermines this climate of political, economic, and social instability. The changing structures of society are not absent, but Stoker grounds them within the framework of strong religious ideologies, and, as will be seen, positions religion as the weapon against both vampires and the anxieties they symbolise. Science, for example, is important, judging from the praises given to the work of Professor Abraham Van Helsing and Doctor John Seward, as is economic welfare, judging from the celebrations of Arthur Godalming’s and Quincey Morris’s characters, but these are figured within a religious framework. Science is only beneficial if religious knowledge is not discarded, while Arthur and Quincey are only good-natured because of their strong religious moral convictions. In a world haunted by chaotic changes and instabilities, the narrative of *Dracula* seems to uphold the one stability that could – or should – still be relied on. Ultimately, the novel represents the struggle between the forces of stability and the forces of change, and Stoker uses the rich Gothic symbol of the vampire to do so. The British companions represent stability – stability in terms of a return to Victorian society’s roots, a return to the morality and the power and goodness of the Christian religion – while Count Dracula, the vampire, represents the changes that threaten this morality and Christian ideology. Set in, and influenced by, a time of immense socio-economic change, Stoker, through the narrative of *Dracula*, attempts to deal with this in a fantastical, though seemingly simple, good versus evil binary.

Religion in *Dracula*

According to this binary, the Christian religion – and that which is associated with it – falls under the definition of good, while everything that threatens the stability of the Christian religion, and, by extension, the stability of Victorian society, falls under the definition of evil. In Stoker's *Dracula*, this may, in very simple terms, be summarised by the equation of religion versus the vampire – that is, the comfort of religion versus the anxieties represented by the Gothic vampire. The vampire myth more generally has always been tied up with Christianity, with the vampire as a figure of evil that can – and must – be destroyed by the power and goodness of religion. It is arguable whether the Church in fact played a role in the actual creation of the myth itself, as a “symbol of evil based on the betrayal of Judas” (Beresford 2008:44) – though Stoker certainly draws on this analogy when describing Count Dracula “with a red light of triumph in his eyes, and with a smile that Judas in hell might be proud of” (Stoker 2011:60) – but it may be commonly accepted that the Church played a role in the spread of the myth, primarily through its insistence that the Christian religion was paramount in protecting people against vampires (Bartlett & Idriceanu 2006:22, Beresford 2008:49, Copper 1990:36). Christopher Frayling, drawing on Rousseau's ‘Letter of Beaumont’, elaborates on this by explaining that sacred authority gained its power from superstitions such as the vampire, which “transform[ed] the divinity of God into the wretched practice of obedience to his temporal ministers” (1991:33). By furthering the belief that vampires were real and by promising protection, the Church could gain strength and increase its followers.

Furthermore, it was commonly believed that certain unchristian actions or events would result in vampirism, and, through invoking such fears, the Church could ensure that its beliefs and principles were followed. These unchristian actions or events – outlined quite extensively in Paul Barber's landmark book *Vampires, Burial, and Death* (1988) – ranged from wrongdoings such as murder and suicide to being born out of wedlock. All of these were seen as sinful by the Christian Church and, in preaching that they were reasons for becoming a vampire, the Church could, in some way, control the actions of its followers. As Matthew Beresford explains, the “Church

recognized in the vampire an opportunity that could be used as a tool in furthering its own strength” (2008:50), and used the vampire as a “(heretical) scapegoat of Christianity, in much the same way as witches were in the Middle Ages” (2008:44). While the Church as an institution does not play a role in Stoker’s novel, the historical association of vampirism as an evil to be defeated by religion does, and Stoker repeatedly figures Count Dracula, his master vampire, as an evil, godless creature.

Throughout the novel, careful attention is paid to consistently portray Dracula as a figure removed from God, highlighting the inherent anxieties of the changing and ever-more scientific society, and this is made most evident in terms of his godless immortality. Van Helsing explains to his group of vampire hunters that vampires suffer from “the curse of immortality” (Stoker 2011:258). It is a curse because it is an immortality removed from God, an immortality of the body and not of the spirit. The promise of immortality, of course, is one of the defining features of the Christian religion, and while the “belief in some sort of afterlife is characteristic to most world religions” (Murray & Rae 2008:258), none have emphasised it as much as Christianity (Feuerbach 1957:171, Lamont 1959:3, Murray & Rae 2008:280). Corliss Lamont even declares that, in today’s world, “little else remains for God to do but to function as the benevolent purveyor of man’s immortality” (1959:7). Christianity, then, has become synonymous with the promise of immortality.

In ancient cultures, the belief in an immortal life was accompanied by a belief in the survival of the human body, presumably based on the idea of the Christian resurrection when Jesus rose from the dead with “the same body with which he had formerly walked the earth, although it was also and at the same time different through having become incorruptible and glorified” (Lamont 1959:42). The belief in the resurrection of the physical body was widespread until the nineteenth century, when, undoubtedly through the influence of modern science, there was a “growing feeling that the resurrection of the flesh was, after all, a rather gross and unspiritual sort of thing” (Lamont 1959:51), and Christian immortality came to signify a purely spiritual immortality. The immortality of the physical body in *Dracula*, as will be seen, represents the triumph of the material sciences over the spirituality of religion, and

Stoker's specific portrayal of the vampiric body figures this as an extreme threat to society. In the Christian belief system, spiritual immortality is symbolised through the actions of Mass, where Christians symbolically eat Jesus' flesh (through the consumption of bread) and drink his blood (through the consumption of wine) in order to create a union with and so share in Jesus' eternal life (Clements 2011:25, Pippin 2006:94).

It is this communion of the Christian Mass that is inverted in the vampire myth. As Christ promises his followers a spiritual eternal life through the symbolic eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood, so the vampire, in a distorted reflection of this, selfishly gains bodily eternal life by literally feeding off others. Renfield, an inmate of Doctor Seward's lunatic asylum, explains this vampiric survival by drawing on the scriptural phrase 'for the blood is the life', where "life [becomes] a positive and perpetual entity, and [where] by consuming a multitude of live things, no matter how low in the scale of creation, one might indefinitely prolong life" (Stoker 2011:281). Renfield attempts to achieve his own immortality through consuming blood – eating flies and spiders and even going as far as attacking Doctor Seward and licking his blood off the floor – but he ultimately fails to achieve this. It is only in Dracula, who feeds off others and visibly grows younger as he does so, that the life-giving properties of blood that Renfield so believes in may be witnessed. As blood prolongs the vampire's immortality but does not grant immortality to humans, it may be concluded that it is not the blood itself that has immortality-giving properties, but the nature of the vampiric body, which then only needs to be sustained through the consumption of blood.

At the same time, however, it is the vampire's blood that may give immortality to others, as is illustrated in the *Dracula* narrative when Count Dracula grants eternal life by forcing humans to feed off him. The vampire's blood, then, functions in a similar way as Jesus' blood does in the Christian Mass. This is one of the ways in which Stoker blurs the distinction between the vampire and Jesus and/or God, and he repeatedly portrays Dracula as a Christ- or God-like figure. The crazed Renfield, for example, believes the Count, whom he calls his master, to be some kind of deity

promising immortality and salvation. In Renfield's eyes, Dracula is positioned as a God-like figure, one who promises that "all these lives will I give you, ay, and many more and greater, through countless ages, if you will fall down and worship me!" (Stoker 2011:337). This, as David J. Skal (2002) explains, is a reference to Chapter Four of Saint Matthew's Gospel, where Satan takes Christ into the wilderness and tempts him with visions of the material world, proclaiming that 'All these things I will give thee if thou will fall down and worship me'. Renfield, in that passage, only imagines Dracula speaking to him in biblical phrases, but, as Clements argues, Dracula's actual speech patterns do mirror biblical language. She explains:

In the first evening's conversation, Dracula uses Moses's language of being a 'stranger in a strange land.' Later, he says that if Harker could 'see with my eyes and know with my knowledge, you would perhaps better understand,' a phrase that seems to mirror Isaiah 6:10 – '...lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and covert, and be healed.' Dracula also says in the next paragraph, 'Our ways are not your ways' – a less obvious reference to another passage in Isaiah 55:8: 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD' (Clements 2011:18).

This likeness between Dracula's speech and biblical phrases further opens up the imagery of the immortal Dracula as a reflection of the immortal Christ. Given the greater prevalence of biblical knowledge in the Victorian era, such biblical allusions would not have been lost on Victorian readers as they might be on modern ones, and Victorian novelists frequently made reference to the Bible to give depth and meaning to their novels (Wheeler 2005:181, Fraser 2002:102).

Stoker's figure of the vampire, however, is not only figured as Christ- or God-like because of its immortality-giving blood, the way Dracula is positioned in his relationship to Renfield, or the way Dracula's speech patterns mirror biblical phrases, but also because of the similarities that may be drawn between the vampiric resurrection and Christ's resurrection. From Renfield's perspective, Dracula may be seen as the resurrected Christ, whose physical body has risen from the dead to continue a more powerful, glorified, and immortal life. In Christian theology, three days pass between Jesus' death and his resurrection. The circumstances of Dracula's initial death and transformation into a vampire are not specified in the novel, but Lucy's transition from human to vampire is, and it seems to suggest a similar

timeframe. According to Doctor Seward's diary, Lucy dies on the 20th of September and is laid in a death chamber in the house, where she rests peacefully until her funeral on the 22nd of September. This gives her approximately three days of rest for the vampiric transformation to take place. The Westminster Gazette reports on the 25th of September that attacks of the 'bloofer lady' have been recorded over the previous two or three days. Therefore, though an exact calculation of the timeframe of the transition period is impossible, it may be safely assumed that approximately three days pass between Lucy's human death and her resurrection as a vampire. Stoker's use of these similar periods of rest between death and resurrection further strengthens the imagery of the vampire as the resurrected Christ.

It is interesting that Stoker – who positions Dracula as a godless and evil vampiric figure – would also draw such frequent comparisons between Dracula and Christ and/or God. Contrary to what it might seem, this does not diminish Dracula's godless nature and suggest that he is more godlike than demonic, but it actually strengthens Dracula's position as a figure of evil against the Christian religion as it accentuates the Gothic threat the vampire presents. Stoker's vampire mocks and undermines Christianity and threatens to destroy the very core of religious beliefs, illustrating that it, too, can have what Christianity promises. It is a projected entity arising both from within and in opposition to the stability represented by Victorian religion, allowing it to reflect more distinctly the anxieties of the dissolution of such stability. The similarities that Stoker draws between Dracula and Christ not only strengthen the threat Dracula presents, but also emphasise the fact that the former is an inversion of the latter. The two figures may be similar with regard to transformation process and resurrection, immortality-giving power, and speech patterns, but these actions are informed by an intent or nature which is either good (that is, Christian and moral) or evil (that is, demonic and immoral). Count Dracula may be a resurrected, immortal figure with immortality-giving powers and speech patterns that resemble biblical phrases, but he is, ultimately, a creature of evil.

One of the primary ways in which this is illustrated is through his abhorrent appearance. Clements explains that Dracula's "physical appearance points towards the

vampire's significance as a representation of sin" (2011:16)⁵. Throughout the novel, Stoker portrays Dracula as a figure of horror and disgust with unnatural and animalistic characteristics. His paleness and coldness – his hand seeming “more like the hand of a dead than a living man” (Stoker 2011:19) – link him with death and unnatural survival. More often, however, Stoker describes him as possessing animal characteristics. His excessive hairiness (massive eyebrows, bushy hair, and hair growing in the centre of his palms), his “fixed and rather cruel-looking [mouth], with peculiarly sharp white teeth [that] protruded over the lips” (Stoker 2011:21), his pointed ears, and his gleaming red eyes all endow him with animalistic, predatory traits. Clements also suggests that his “arched nostrils” (Stoker 2011:21) imply a predatory “heightened sense of smell” (Clements 2011:16).

The female vampires, too, while described mostly in terms of their incredible beauty, are also associated with such predatory, animalistic traits. Consider, for example, the scene in which the fair vampire licks her lips in front of Jonathan Harker. This is reminiscent of an earlier scene where Harker encountered the wolves on his way to Castle Dracula. As Harker notices the vampire “lick[ing] her lips like an animal” (Stoker 2011:45) and “lapp[ing] [her red tongue over] the white sharp teeth” (Stoker 2011:45), so, too, he noticed “a ring of wolves, with white teeth and lolling red tongues” (Stoker 2011:15). The imagery of teeth and tongues links the predatory wolves with the predatory vampires. Strengthening the association between vampires and animals even further, Stoker's Dracula has the ability to literally transform into animals, predominantly wolves and bats. This feature of Dracula is often used for cinematic effect in the film adaptations of the novel. In Tod Browning's 1931 Hollywood production of *Dracula*, for example, which parallels the concerns of the novel in terms of the religious as good versus vampires as evil binary, the Count

⁵ The same is true of the female vampires in the novel, though here it is primarily in terms of their physical beauty. The female vampires are repeatedly described in terms of their beauty, but this beauty enters the realm of over-sexualised beauty, which is seen as distinctly sinful. In a description of Lucy, for example, Doctor Seward explains that “her eyes blazed with unholy light, and the face became wreathed with a voluptuous smile” (Stoker 2011:254). The unholy light that characterises the vampiric Lucy is directly associated with her newfound voluptuousness (a term that is frequently used to describe her vampiric appearance). This is of particular relevance to the eighteen-nineties society, where the overt sexuality of the New Woman was seen as threatening and challenged the “moral and social assumptions which Victorians considered essential to a stable society” (Reed 1975:36).

frequently appears in the form of a bat, most notably when he is driving the coach and before he enters his victims' rooms.

While the unnatural and animalistic appearance, in conjunction with the actual transformation into animals, may be interpreted as abhorrent by many different cultures of various historical periods, it seems of particular relevance to the Victorian society of the late nineteenth century. The conflation of human and animal traits seems to speak quite distinctly to a society coming to terms with Darwinism, in which human evolution from animals to the present state is emphasised. Stoker, in emphasising such animalistic links, specifically creates the vampire as a figure of the evolutionary past, placing it more directly into the realm of science and giving it greater dominance in terms of eighteenth-nineties Gothicism. Since the vampire in Stoker's novel symbolises that which is evil and threatening to the (Christian) stability of Victorian society, it is apt that his vampire figure draws on ideas of Darwinism, which, as mentioned, form a considerable challenge to Christianity in themselves.

It is interesting that the 1922 German Expressionist film adaptation of Stoker's *Dracula*, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (*Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror*) is one of few adaptations to remain faithful to Stoker's description of the master vampire. Like Count Dracula, Murnau's Count Orlok is an image of abhorrence – a tall, thin man with a bald head, bushy eyebrows, a large beaked nose, pointed ears, unusually long fingers, and very thin and pointed teeth. The physical horror of Orlok is emphasised through low-key lighting, which, in typical German Expressionist style, produces “hard edges and sharp features ... to underline the vampire's alien and terrifying physiognomy” (Waltje 2005:66). So, for example, Orlok is often seen as a shadow (abandoning Stoker's vampiric characteristic of not casting shadows in favour of the production of horror) – emphasising his pointed ears and long fingers – slowly creeping over his unsuspecting victims, and is also mostly shot from a low angle to make him, and his shadow, appear larger and more threatening. It is unlikely that his physical appearance harks back to issues of evolution and Darwinism, but the gruesomeness of Orlok serves a similar Gothic purpose and seems to comment quite distinctly on the horrors of the

First World War, as German Expressionism did, after all, emerge as a serious reflection of this. Just as Stoker's *Dracula* emerges as the physical horror reflecting the crisis of change in the late-Victorian era, so, too, Murnau's *Orlok* reflects the crisis of change and destruction of the First World War, both of which may be seen as contrasted starkly to a nation's anchoring belief, such as the stability of religion.

Stoker's *Dracula* emerges quite distinctly in opposition to Christianity in both his godless immortality and his troubling suggestion of irreligious Darwinism. Despite Renfield's vision of *Dracula* as godlike, the vampire's existence is, ultimately, defined as godless – as something that does not save but condemns – in the central and primary Christian sense that it is lacking a soul. Vampiric immortality comes at the expense of one's soul. Even Mina, who does not turn into a vampire and does not lose her soul, recognises that, after *Dracula*'s touch, she is no longer morally pure and remains as a being “outcast from God” (Stoker 2011:372). *Dracula* himself, however, is figured as a being entirely without a soul, and, early in the novel, Harker recognises that, although *Dracula* is with him in the castle, he himself is the “only living soul within the place” (Stoker 2011:30). Those *Dracula* contaminates with his curse, too, lose their souls, and the vampiric Lucy, for example, is described as a creature in “Lucy's shape [but] without her soul” (Stoker 2011:257).

The vampire's lack of soul is symbolically portrayed through his lack of a shadow and reflection. This vampire feature of not casting reflections, as Erik Butler (2010) comments, was Stoker's own invention, strengthening the symbolism of this characteristic, as Stoker's vampires were designed not to have a reflection or shadow in line with a specific purpose (to illustrate their soulless nature), and not just because Stoker followed the guidelines of mythology. It is immediately after the shaving incident when Harker first notices that *Dracula* casts no reflection that he concludes that he is the only living soul in the castle. According to Barber (1988:179-180), the belief that one's reflection – in water or a mirror – is linked with one's soul is widespread throughout the world. Butler explains the vampire's lack of reflection as following from the logic of Lavater's theory, in which, “like shadows, reflections ‘prove’ that something or someone is really there” (2010:56). By extension, he

explains, something without a shadow is not connected with the natural world and is therefore not entirely real – a man without a shadow, then, is not fully human. Butler concludes that “the vampire ... represents a kind of virulent shadow, seeking human life in the quest to fill its empty core ... A missing reflection is functionally identical to a missing shadow – that is, a missing soul” (2010:56).

As suggested, the vampire’s soulless and godless immortal existence is figured as something that is evil and in direct opposition to the Christian religion. Stoker explicitly illustrates this, together with an affirmation of the power and goodness of Christianity, throughout his novel by depicting vampires as weakened and ultimately destroyed by artefacts of Christian symbolism. Van Helsing explains that, in the face of sacred items, Dracula “is nothing ... in their presence he take [sic] his place far off and silent with respect” (Stoker 2011:289), suggesting that, even though the vampire is a creature removed from God, he is still under God’s power, thereby reaffirming the power of religion, and, through the use of Christian artefacts (and some items of myth and legend), may be released from the clutches of a demonic, soulless existence and finally rest in peace. Considering that Stoker’s vampire is explicitly constructed as an inversion of a religious figure, with evil and an empty core instead of goodness and a soul, then it may be assumed that anything that might inspire or restore such goodness and soul would destroy the demonic nature of the vampire. According to the Christian belief system, Christian symbols such as the crucifix are powerful not because they are mere material items that signify religion, but because they are religious artefacts imbued with God’s power. A crucifix, for example, has power because, in a sense, God lives within it. Therefore, if a vampire is touched by such an artefact, he is not touched by a mere material item, but by a religious force with the power to restore it with goodness. The vampire, then, shies, away from Christian symbolism as these objects have the power to destroy the vampiric demon and return the body/soul to a godly realm. Given that Stoker uses the figure of the vampire as a symbol of socio-cultural anxieties, this ability of religious artefacts to destroy the vampire is apt because, as mentioned, it allows Stoker, by extension, to depict Christianity as being the key in comforting the anxieties symbolised by the Gothic vampire.

The most prominent Christian symbol used against the vampire in *Dracula* (as in later film adaptations) is the crucifix. It is first introduced in the novel by the Transylvanian landlord's wife, who gives Harker a crucifix before his journey to Dracula's castle. In this episode, as in countless others in the novel, the crucifix appears as a symbol of comfort, hope, and safety, and as a dangerous weapon to keep the vampire at bay. Similarly, the Sacred Wafer functions to keep the vampire at a distance, but also to banish vampires from their places of rest. It is interesting to note that Dracula chooses to reside in old, ruined chapels – places where God has been forgotten – in both his Transylvanian castle and his Carfax home (Bartless & Idriceanu 2006:138). This strengthens Stoker's construction of Dracula as a mockery of Christianity. However, as mentioned, the vampire's power as an inversion of Christ only lasts as long as he is not faced with the still-existing power of God in the form of Christian symbols.

These Christian symbols do not operate by themselves, but in conjunction with the group of British companions who fight against Dracula. Just as the Christian symbols stand for the religion and goodness of it, the group of vampire hunters, too, represent that which is good and moral, as seen from a specifically Christian perspective:

The Professor stood up and, after laying his golden crucifix on the table, held out his hand on either side. I took his right hand, and Lord Godalming his left; Jonathan held my right with his left and stretched across to Mr. Morris. So as we all took hands our solemn compact was made (Stoker 2011:286).

In this scene, Van Helsing, Doctor Seward, Arthur (Lord Godalming), Quincey, Harker, and Mina make their pact to hunt Dracula. What stands out about this scene is that their pact is made around the crucifix, symbolising the central position of religion in their mission to hunt the vampire. Ultimately, the group of vampire hunters are on a religious and moral mission to defeat that which is sinful, immoral and threatening to their society, both literally in terms of the Gothic fantasy of the novel, and figuratively in terms of the concerns and anxieties that the vampire figure represents.

Capitalism/Consumerism in *Dracula*

According to the work of Franco Moretti, a leading Marxist literary scholar, one phenomenon that is seen as being of the utmost moral threat in *Dracula* is capitalism. This adds another level of anxiety that Stoker's vampire represents, in addition to the general focus on the threat of science in eighteen-nineties Gothicism. Moretti, in his articles 'The Dialectic of Fear' (1983) and 'A Capital Dracula' (1997), explains the links between vampirism as illustrated in *Dracula* and Marxist thoughts on capitalism. He draws on Marx's analogy – "capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour he sucks" (Marx 1970:233) – to unravel the vampire metaphor, explaining that the vampire is, ultimately, like the capitalist:

...he is an Un-Dead, a 'dead' person who yet manages to live thanks to the blood he sucks from the living. *Their* strength becomes *his* strength. The *stronger* the vampire becomes, the *weaker* the living become (Moretti 1997:432; original emphases).

Like the capitalist, who becomes richer the poorer others become, the vampire grows stronger as others become weaker. This growth in strength or riches is endless, as the vampire, like the capitalist, and specifically the late-Victorian capitalist in a growing world, is continually driven to expansion. Ken Gelder, who draws on Moretti's work, explains that "modern capitalism ... is by its very nature excessive, driven by 'irresistible forces' to consume and accumulate" (1994:20). Moretti interprets this continual drive to consume and accumulate – in the context of the novel – as the "victory of the desire for *possession* over that of *enjoyment*; and possession as such, indifferent to consumption, is by its very nature insatiable and unlimited" (1983:84; original emphases). What defines the capitalist, and the vampire, then, is excessive possession and the continual drive for even further expansion, accumulation, and consumption. Both of these capitalist tendencies are true of *Dracula*.

Stoker creates *Dracula* to represent both the literal and the capitalist vampire, and his desire for possession and the drive to consume takes place on both the vampiric and the capitalist levels. Most evidently, of course, *Dracula* is a vampire, a being who by its very nature is driven to consume blood and accumulate as many lives as possible.

This is very much in line with Renfield's own mission, which drives him to extremes in attempting to consume and accumulate lives. While Renfield kills flies and spiders, Dracula, during the course of the novel, hunts down numerous children – for his three brides to feed on – and kills, amongst others, most of the crew of the *Demeter*, Mr Swales, and Lucy. On a capitalist level, the excessive possessions of Dracula may be witnessed in his Transylvanian castle. Harker explains that the castle is filled with “extraordinary evidences of wealth” (Stoker 2011:22), such as a golden table service, costly curtains and upholstery, jewellery, and “gold of all kinds, Roman, and British, and Austrian, and Hungarian, and Greek, and Turkish money, covered with a film of dust ... [and] none of it ... less than three hundred years old” (Stoker 2011:56). Dracula certainly has no use of these riches – hence they lie there abandoned and covered in dust – but he possesses them nonetheless. He is driven to consume and possess excessively, wanting to expand his domain through his trip to London, and can, therefore, be identified as a vampire both in the literal and the capitalist senses.

It is interesting to note that Murnau's 1922 film adaptation also draws explicit links between the capitalist and the vampire, not by portraying the vampire as a capitalist *per se*, but by identifying the capitalist in the film with the vampire. In this adaptation, Knock, the real estate agent and Hutter's (the Harker character) boss, is most clearly identified with money. For example, one of the intertitles suggests that Knock is known for always paying his employees well, and he is also the one who persuades Hutter to travel to Transylvania, using the possibility of great financial remuneration as an incentive. Knock is the one character most closely associated with money, but he is also the one most closely associated with Orlok. He is physically similar (eerily so), and shares the same connection with Orlok that Renfield has with Dracula, calling the Count his master and displaying the same vampiric tendencies, eating flies and even attacking humans. In this sense, then, the capitalist tendencies are directly associated with vampiric tendencies by being grounded in the same person, and the link between capitalism and vampirism, related as much to the foreign imperialism of the late Victorian era as to the imperialism that largely offset the First World War, like in the novel, is made explicit.

Moretti explains that capitalism, as defined by excessive possession and the continual drive for money in and of itself, is not a positive thing. He suggests that money ought not to have “its end *in itself*, in its continuous accumulation. It must have, rather, a *moral*, anti-economic end to the point where colossal expenditures and losses can be calmly accepted” (1997:434; original emphases). While Dracula’s vampiric drive for continuous accumulation certainly manifests itself in the taking of more and more lives, there is no reason to believe that his approach to money is not similar. He is certainly not one who, in Moretti’s terms, can calmly accept expenditures and losses. When Harker slashes through Dracula’s coat and a stream of money falls out, for instance, Dracula becomes visibly angry, and Doctor Seward explains that “it would be impossible to describe the expression of hate and baffled malignity – of anger and hellish rage – which came over the Count’s face” (Stoker 2011:370). It is immediately afterwards that Dracula escapes from his Piccadilly home and plans to return to Transylvania. While certainly the vampire hunters’ persistence in attempting to destroy Dracula is of immense importance to his decision, it is also significant that the loss of money sparks Dracula’s fury and that he decides to leave so quickly after this loss.

What stands out in Moretti’s quote above is his belief that money ought to have a moral end, something that is certainly not the case with Dracula. Given that Dracula is portrayed as immoral and sinful – a godless creature – throughout the novel, and following through the equation that Dracula is akin to the capitalist, Stoker’s novel seems to provide some critique of capitalist tendencies, and, specifically, late-Victorian capitalist tendencies as related to a changing socio-economic system and the rise of new imperialism, adding yet another level of representative anxieties to his supernatural figure. Stoker’s capitalist critique is restricted quite severely to the capitalist use of money outside of a religiously grounding moral framework. Consider, for example, the juxtaposition of Dracula’s use of money with the vampire hunters’ use of money. Turning, again, to Moretti, he explains that two things are needed to destroy Dracula – money and religion. These, he explains, must be “considered as a single whole, which must not be separated: in other words, money at the service of religion and vice versa” (Moretti 1983:93). As has already been

established, the vampire hunters are on a Christian mission, fighting for that which is good and moral, and the wealth they possess is used in service of this mission. Mina, for example, comments that the way Arthur and Quincey so freely spend their money to aid their mission makes her “think of the wonderful power of money! What can it not do when it is properly applied” (Stoker 2011:428).

In the late-nineteenth-century society where capitalism had already been firmly established and the benefits of a capitalist system (such as overall improved living conditions and the opportunity to improve one’s lot) had become evident, it is not capitalism itself that had become the enemy, but the way it was applied in an increasingly unstable environment, and Stoker chooses to comment on this through the symbolic capabilities of the vampire figure. Given that *Dracula* repeatedly emphasises the Christian religion as a sound and stable framework for Victorian society, it is little wonder that it critiques capitalism that is divorced from the morals and goodness of religion, a capitalism that allows itself to become caught up in other factors (such as social Darwinism in the drive for new imperialism) that threaten the stability of religion and, therewith, the stability of the entire Victorian society. To recap, then, Bram Stoker figures the vampire as a symbol of evil against the power, morals, and goodness of religion, linking the vampire with all those factors that threaten the stability of the Christian-based identity of Victorian society, and all the while relying on the position of the vampire within the Gothic literary tradition to do so.

However, as socio-economic conditions began to alter and shape the culture – and Gothic tradition – of modern society, and with the centre of economic power moving from Europe to the United States of America, there appear distinct differences in the figuration of the vampire. The seemingly simple good (religious) versus evil (threatening the religious) binary that *Dracula* appears to rely on is discarded for more complex interactions between good and evil, religion and capitalism. Some of these changes can already be witnessed only three decades later in the 1931 Hollywood adaptation of Stoker’s classic, Browning’s *Dracula*. In the decades between the publication of Stoker’s novel and the appearance of Browning’s film, the

nature of industry and capitalism underwent significant changes – intrinsically linked to the rise of Fordism – that placed increasing emphasis on the commodity, which, as will be seen, significantly altered both the Gothic horror tradition and the depiction of the vampire. Fordism essentially denotes Henry Ford’s mode of production resulting in a “fully operational economy of scale, producing low cost, high volume standardised commodities” (Lee 1993:75), combined with a set wage for an eight-hour working day⁶.

David Harvey (1989:125-126) suggests that what was special about Ford’s vision was his recognition that mass production would simultaneously lead to mass consumption. Martyn J. Lee explains that Ford’s mass production

set in motion a train of events that were to have profound consequences throughout modern society and transform not only the economic sector itself, but also the entire way of social and cultural life over the following decades (1993:76).

While the ability of America’s market to expand in direct proportion to its productive capacity was somewhat restricted before World War II and these socio-economic changes only catapulted after the war (with profound consequences that further altered the Gothic literary tradition and the depiction of the vampire, as will be seen in *Interview with the Vampire*), the roots of these changes are nevertheless firmly grounded in the nineteen-twenties. Ford’s higher income and shorter working hours provided labourers with sufficient income and leisure time to buy and enjoy all the products that were continually released into the marketplace through the improved production methods. Combined with the economic boom of the Roaring Twenties, this decade first saw the rise of true mass consumption. The modern advertising industry was also born in this decade, and it may be seen as a direct response to the needs of capitalist society, trying to persuade potential consumers that they ought to

⁶ David Harvey (1989) traces the rise of Fordism back to 1914, when Henry Ford first introduced his wage of five dollars for an eight-hour day for workers in the automated car-assembly he had established the year before. Fordism, combining features of Taylorism (most succinctly defined as the separation of the mental and manual aspects of labour, such as the separation of the engineer and the person doing the actual construction work) with new forms of mechanisation, delineates a large force of semi-skilled or unskilled labourers operating product-specific machinery in a flowline assembly production, collectively creating the final product.

buy the products being advertised, thereby ensuring a steady market for the products of industry (Ewen 1976, Lee 1993).

Hollywood movies, like other outputs of industry, are intrinsically no more than consumer items, and they rely just as heavily on advertising and the associated concern with the image as other consumer items do. As a film with a vampire at its centre, the image of the vampire in Browning's *Dracula* (released, of course, at a time when a focus on consumerism was already inherent in culture) becomes more intertwined with the purposes of consumer culture than the mere production of horror. The film's success, to an extent, rests on the image of its central vampiric figure (an image that, as will be seen, had profound effects on the future of vampires) and it discards some of the vampire horror in favour of a more appealing figure, both in terms of physical appearance and in manners. Though the Dracula in the 1931 Hollywood production, portrayed by Hungarian-born Bela Lugosi, still has some measure of horror or eeriness about him – such as his intense eyes that the frequent close-up shots draw attention to, or the way Mina describes him in terms of his red eyes and white livid face – he is also physically attractive, appearing with slicked-back black hair and an elegant black cloak⁷. He speaks with a strong Hungarian accent and, though his voice is slightly creepy, it is simultaneously seductive (Clements 2011:128). This dual nature – unsettling, yet also incredibly enticing – ultimately comes to define Lugosi's Dracula, and Skal aptly describes him as a “Latin lover from beyond the grave, Valentino gone slightly rancid” (1990:85).

This Count, however, is not only more physically appealing, but he is also portrayed as an aristocratic gentleman with fine manners, harking back to the pre-*Dracula* vampires such as Polidori's Lord Ruthven or Sir Francis Varney in *Varney the Vampire, or the Feast of Blood* (1847), variously attributed to either Thomas Preskett Prest or James Malcolm Rymer. According to Skal (1999:70), this gentlemanly courtesy was carried over from the play on which the film was based, enabling

⁷ This is a now-defining feature of *Dracula* that originated from Hamilton Deane and John Balderston's stage adaptation of Stoker's novel, *Dracula: The Vampire Play*, on which Browning's film was based. In the theatre version, the black cloak was used for dramatic effect and to hide trapdoors enabling Dracula to disappear under the stage.

Dracula to interact with other characters instead of merely being an outside threat and emerging as a central figure. Count Dracula in the 1931 screen version thus appears as a friendly host who welcomes Renfield (who, in this version, plays the role of the real estate agent travelling to Transylvania) to his castle and makes light conversation, and as an aristocratic gentleman who walks down the streets of London in a top hat and bow-tie, set apart from the other gentlemen only by his extremely slow gait, goes to the opera and charms Lucy, and visits Doctor Seward as any neighbour would.

According to Nina Auerbach,

Bela Lugosi's Dracula is the first who bears no monstrous marks: he is fangless, solid, and elegantly human ... it created a new order of fear in the twentieth century: fear not only of otherness, but eventually, and more subtly, of kinship (1995:113).

This creates a new type of horror where appearances are incredibly deceiving, apt for a consumer society where commodities become the defining factors of social class, and where, with greater spending opportunities, anyone had the possibility of creating an image of themselves that might not accurately reflect their true natures and allow them access into circles they would not necessarily have access to otherwise. It is this, of course, that gives Dracula his strength, as he is skilled at appearing so normal that no one would take any notice of him.

It is this characteristic of Dracula as one of us, as someone who, in the words of Auerbach, "demands our love" (1995:115), that differentiates the 1931 Dracula from those that had come before him and gives him precedence over those that have come after. Indeed, this image of Dracula – the slicked-back black hair, characteristic black cloak, Hungarian accent, and sophisticated manner – has been so successful that it remains as *the* Dracula image (Dresser 1989:116, Gelder 1994:91, Skal 2009:54). Not only has this image been adapted to numerous forms – such as Count Chocula of the cereal world and the legendary Count von Count of *Sesame Street* – but it is also this image that has been used as a significant marketing tool. As Skal explains, "there was, apparently, almost no kind of consumer product or novelty that could not be enhanced by Lugosi's screen presence as the vampire" (1990:191), and he cites numerous examples, such as toys, card games and puzzles, clothing and costumes, greeting cards, model figures, candies and gum, comic books, and various fashion accessories.

The popularity of Lugosi's Dracula, so dependent on his likeability, created a consumer hype resulting in Lugosi's image being used to market consumer items beyond the film itself. This, in turn, strengthened Lugosi's image even further, resulting in him being seen as the 'original' Dracula. As Gelder states, it is with Lugosi's image "where vampire recognition begins, in the role and image (and voice) that Lugosi perfected" (1994:91). Through consumerism, then, and the fame it was based upon, Lugosi's Dracula has become commercially immortal. However, the issues of consumption, advertising, and the image, and the resultant impact of these on the Gothic horror novel and the literary vampire would only be strengthened in the decades to come, culminating in Anne Rice's landmark fiction, *Interview with the Vampire*.

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CHAPTER TWO:

ANNE RICE'S *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*

One of the most popular series of vampire fiction in the twentieth century is Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*, the first instalment of which, *Interview with the Vampire*, was published in 1976. The book earned a reputed US\$ 1 million within its first year of publication, giving financial proof to the popularity and relevance of the specific subject matter to the audience of the time, but also signalling the appeal of the novel to readers beyond the conventional horror genre (Ramsland 1996:20, Skal 1990:198). *Interview with the Vampire* tells the story of Louis, an aristocratic vampire unlike any other, who searches for the meaning of life along with his exuberant creator, Lestat, and his vampire daughter, Claudia. The narrative blurs the simple distinctions between good and evil of earlier vampire texts and presents, at times, a creature that is both evil, and yet emotional, and, more importantly, desirable. *Interview with the Vampire* is a product of the post-World War II Fordist society, and the desirability of the vampire in this narrative reflects the social circumstances of increased secularisation and greater focus on consumption and material matters.

However, this change to the vampire figure occurred not only through changing socio-cultural circumstances, but is also located within changes of the Gothic horror literary tradition itself. Gary Hoppenstand and Ray B. Browne (1996) explain that the horror genre had undergone significant changes in the years before Rice's publication of *Interview with the Vampire*, and while the novel may still be figured within the conventional Gothic, it is also influenced quite distinctly by the genre's changes. Hoppenstand and Browne argue that, ever since the publication of Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967), horror fiction had incorporated social issues as part of its narrative focus. Through depicting social issues directly and not only relying on the symbolism of the traditional Gothic fictions, the genre was able to appeal to more than the conventional horror audience, which, in turn, allowed greater profitability.

This change in the genre, however, also inspired a change in symbols of horror like the vampire, as it was no longer only their status as supernatural and symbolic creatures that enabled them to indirectly comment on and criticise wider socio-cultural issues, but their very individual characters and actions provided direct commentary on social circumstances as well. This, indeed, is Rice's aim with *Interview with the Vampire*, and she herself has argued that her "supernatural characters are intended to represent the human (rather than the inhuman) condition" (Hoppenstand & Browne 1996:3). For the vampire to emerge as a figure capable of such direct commentary, however, there had to be numerous changes to its depiction, and these, as well as the commentary the vampire provides, are directly related to the socio-economic changes – resulting in increased secularisation and a greater focus on material consumption – of the post-World War II era.

While a concern with consumption and commodities had already emerged in the nineteen-twenties and found its way into the vampire narrative of Browning's film version of *Dracula*, the emphasis of these is taken to an entirely different level in *Interview with the Vampire*. In the decades leading up to the publication of the novel, capitalism had begun evolving into the so-called "late" capitalism (or 'multinational' or 'commodity' capitalism)" (Grady 1996:225). This type of capitalism placed an increased emphasis on the commodity and was essential to the rising importance of materials and materialist values. It is intrinsically tied up to the developments of post-World War II Fordism, as it is only in the post-war society that mass production – and mass consumption – could reach their full potentials. The war itself created jobs and stimulated local markets, while the post-war environment enabled stable employment for large sections of the population and guaranteed markets for military and consumer goods (Ewen 1976, Lee 1993). In the period of the post-war boom, capitalism reached a strong and stable growth rate and, as living standards were continually rising, an unprecedented number of people were elevated to the middle class (Ewen 1999, Harvey 1989, Lee 1993). This had enormous effects on mass consumption, as more people now had more money to spend on a variety of consumer items. It is this consumerism that began to shape the post-war Fordist society and, with capitalism

“extend[ing] the commodity-form into previously uncommodified areas of social life” (Lee 1993:87), it led to an entire “commodification of culture” (Harvey 1989:135). *Interview with the Vampire*, as will be seen, reflects this commodification of culture in numerous ways, and Rice constructs this focus on material items to emerge with particular force in Lestat and Claudia, the vampires who fully believe that consumer items will fulfil them. They become the models of Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen’s arguments, who suggest that this commodified, consumption-based world has become one “where it increasingly *makes sense* that if there are solutions to be had, they can be bought ... Consumption is our way of life” (1992:24; original emphasis). The world has placed increasing emphasis on the material aspects of life, to such an extent that the classic American Dream itself has become largely synonymous with financial and material wellbeing (Gardarsdóttir, Janković & Dittmar 2008). As Judith Williamson (1978) argues, people in a consumption-driven material world believe they can rise or fall in social status depending on which material goods they purchase and, as Stuart Ewen elaborates, it is the “acquisition and display of stylish goods ... [that] has provided the predominant definition of class and aspiration in American society” (1999:68). This suggests that material goods have acquired a social value and purpose beyond the mere usefulness of the material purpose they were created for. However, as Lee comments, the “commodity, as it surfaces as a consumer good, is an object *without* any overt social meaning” (1993:16; original emphasis). Social meanings, then, are not intrinsic to consumer items, but are attached to certain commodities by institutions such as advertising and marketing.

As previously mentioned, the modern advertising industry was born in the nineteen-twenties and already, to some extent, influenced, and was influenced by, the image of the vampire in Browning’s 1931 film version of *Dracula*. It is only after the Second World War, however, that the industry reached its full potential (Ewen 1976). Persuading people to buy advertised products was initially done by highlighting the value of the product itself, but this product-orientated advertising was soon replaced by psychological advertising methods in which attention was turned directly to the consumer, promising that the product in question would have certain effects in terms

of self-worth, identity construction, social status, etcetera. Sharon Zukin and Jennifer Smith argue that in a post-war consumerist society, people began living more

rational, anonymous lives [and that] traditionally stable frameworks for group and individual identity – such as family, religion, class, and nationality – weaken and are modified or abandoned (2004:180).

Ewen expands on this by saying that “an ongoing lament has been that of aloneness, isolation, invisibility, and insignificance ... a crisis of the spirit; a condition of anomie and diminished meaning” (1999:79). Not only, then, has there been a crisis in the construction of identity, but also a crisis in the construction of the meaning of life. This is directly related to the increased secularisation and the diminished importance of religion in the modern world as, in the past, it was primarily religion that would provide such meaning for its believers.

It is at this point that the narrative of *Interview with the Vampire* and the figuration of the vampire itself conflate most directly with socio-cultural concerns, and the narrative reflects this in numerous ways. Louis is an individual who continually tries to find meaning in a world where there is no longer any proof of God’s existence. This comments quite distinctly on the increased secularisation of the modern world, which, in turn, allows for an interesting portrayal of the vampire as, in a world defined more by materiality than spirituality, the argument of the vampire as a spiritual figure of evil no longer holds. It also comments on the focus of individuality, where it is no longer the group that matters and identity is no longer group-constructed, but the experience of life is increasingly focused on the individual. The changes in horror fiction described above are likely to be related to such wider individualism, as, within these fictions, it is the specificity of the individual that seems to emerge as being of greater importance than more standardised symbolic meanings. Advertising feeds on these crises of meaning and identity, promising that the consumer goods it offers will help alleviate – or even solve – this insignificance and provide the consumer with a distinct identity and purpose and meaning in life. This is, again, reflected in *Interview with the Vampire* on more than one level, as not only do Lestat and Claudia believe that consumer items will help alleviate their concerns (though the mechanism of advertising itself is largely absent in the novel), but Rice also depicts the vampire

itself in such a way that it reflects the concerns of consumerism and modern advertising in a largely desirable way, functioning, ultimately, as an advert for the fulfilment of modern ideals.

Advertisements portray a certain way of life, based on a matter of image, a matter of appearance, which consumers feed into, believing that because the advertisement portrays such a life, the consumers ought to have such a life to gain meaning (or identity or social status, etcetera), and that such a life may be achieved by purchasing the product being advertised. Consumers are thus fooled into believing that they choose to buy a product in order to affirm their own values, when, in actual fact, they are subconsciously persuaded to feed into a certain lifestyle and buy certain products as set out by capitalist ideals. These ideals include material wealth, youth, and beauty⁸. They are reflected in the depiction of the vampire in *Interview with the Vampire*, signalling a concern with immortality that explicitly rejects the Christian notion thereof in favour of a broader cultural and consumerist one, and allow it to emerge as a viable figure for social commentary as set out by the changed Gothic horror literary tradition. Though this will be explored in greater detail in the analysis to follow, it is sufficient to say that Rice's vampire – a creature of eternal youth and beauty – upholds the ideals of society and emerges as the absolute advertisement for such ideals.

Youth, one of these ideals, is seen as of the utmost value in modern society. Rob Latham (2002:13) explains that this concern with youth originated during the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties, when it began to be seen as the industrial ideal, as skills associated with youth (such as strength, endurance, and adaptability) were valued above experience and maturity, which were no longer essential in a mechanized production line. In a post-World War II society, this emphasis on youth as a central qualification for employment remained (Ewen 1976:141). However, the allure of youth was not only limited to employment opportunities. Celia Lury (1996:195) argues that the post-war period saw the rise of a distinct youth culture,

⁸ Youth and beauty (that is, physical beauty) may be described as belonging to the realm of materialism themselves, as they focus on material entities. They may also be seen as forming a unit, as beauty is predominantly associated with youth and vice versa.

related specifically to the greater emphasis placed on education and the gradual lengthening of the period between childhood and adulthood. In addition to this, the post-war period also saw a significant rise in the number of people under the age of twenty-five (Latham 2002:42). These demographics played a significant role in the rising importance of the youth group, as, in making up such a large sector of the population, the youth group formed an entirely new market for capitalist industries. Youth culture, without the responsibility of adulthood, was seen as a culture of “*leisure* rather than work” (Lury 1996:196; original emphasis). They did not have the concerns of waste or the insistence on saving as adults did, and were therefore cast as ideal, carefree consumers (Ewen & Ewen 1992:165).

It was inevitable, then, that a large degree of advertising was aimed at the youth market. Latham explains that the

cultural valorization of youth ... found its voice in the expanding realm of advertising, which in this period not only began explicitly to target youth markets but also mobilized an ideology of youth as the organizing principle and ultimate goal of mass consumption (2002:13).

Advertising, then, not only upheld the values of youth as a necessary factor for employment, but, because youth became such a vital market for advertising, upheld the value of youth in and of itself. Youth became a primary concern for society. Ewen suggests that this “elevation of youth, and the reality of youthful endurance, made *youthfulness* a desirable and saleable commodity ... Youth could be bought, or so the ads claimed” (1976:149; original emphasis). Youth, then, was not only upheld as desirable, but the illusion thereof was up for sale – “corporations which demanded youth on the production line now offered that same youth through their products” (Ewen 1976:147). In *Interview with the Vampire*, vampires, as the ultimate advertisement for this ideal, also emerge as the answer to the fulfilment of such ideals – vampirism is the ultimate product that offers eternal youth and beauty.

As the vampire in *Interview with the Vampire* reflects the social conditions of increased secularisation and greater focus on and desire for consumer items, youth, and beauty, it is inevitable that the vampire becomes a creature that can no longer be distinctly portrayed as either good or evil, though, as will be seen, this point is also

strengthened in numerous other ways in Rice's novel. Stoker's distinct classification of the vampire as a figure of evil against the power and goodness of religion becomes blurred, and the vampire, a figure of a significantly altered Gothic horror tradition in a post-war Fordist society, emerges as a changed and conflicted (and, indeed, more human-like) creature grappling with the concepts of religion and consumerism as any mortal being would.

Religion in *Interview with the Vampire*

As alluded to, Anne Rice introduces numerous changes to the vampire figure that make it impossible to describe it purely as a horrific creature of evil, which is apt when considering that it provides more direct comment on society, in tune with the changes of the horror novel more generally. One of the most obvious changes that Rice introduces in *Interview with the Vampire* is in regard to physical appearance. While the vampire had already lost most of its physical horror and disgust in Browning's 1931 *Dracula*, and in filmic adaptations ever since, this is taken to a new level in Rice's novel. The vampires in *Interview with the Vampire* appear as almost completely human, and they can walk amongst humans in much the same way as Browning's *Dracula* can. However, Rice's vampires are not only seemingly human, but they are also incredibly beautiful, described throughout the novel in terms of their "sheer beauty" (Rice 2009:17) and "magnificent radiance" (Rice 2009:19). This immense beauty is "powerfully alluring" (Rice 2009:261) to humans, and speaks directly to the focus on beauty that the post-war Fordist society – in terms of material consumption and advertising – provided. The portrayal of beauty in *Interview with the Vampire* is strengthened in the 1994 cinematic adaptation by Neil Jordan, where the visual nature of the film allows for a more direct comment on the vampires' beauty. This is perhaps best illustrated in the scene where Claudia turns into a vampire. Claudia is dying and she looks haggard, with blotchy skin and limp hair. As soon as she turns into a vampire, however, her hair curls beautifully, her teeth whiten and elongate, and her skin lightens and becomes smoother. Vampirism, then, acts as an instant beautification treatment, and emerges more distinctly as an advertisement – and fulfilling product – for this social ideal.

In the novel, however, the vampires' beauty may also lead to their downfall as, in direct light, it breaks the vampires' illusion of normality. Indeed, it is by stepping into direct light (that is, lamp- or candlelight) that Rice's vampires choose to reveal themselves to humans. Louis, for example, explains that his skin "has a smooth, highly reflective surface, rather like that of polished marble" (Rice 2009:46), and he chooses to expose this when revealing his supernatural side to Babette. He also chooses to reveal himself in this way to the reporter, and Rice describes him as

utterly white and smooth, as if he were sculpted from bleached bone, and his face was as seemingly inanimate as a statue, except for two brilliant green eyes that looked down at the boy intently like flames in a skull (Rice 2009:4).

Rice's vampires, then, while seeming human enough to allow them to comment more directly on social conditions, are also characterised by an immense beauty with an unnatural and eerie (and, perhaps, almost chilling) quality to it.

Even this eeriness, however, does little to change the fact that Rice's vampires are less fear-evoking than the vampires that had come before. One of the primary ways in which Rice achieves this is by changing the voice of narration. Stoker's *Dracula* is told in epistolary style, with each of the primary protagonists narrating specific sections. Count Dracula, always seen from someone else's perspective (and very often from entirely distanced perspectives such as newspaper reports), is only ever presented as an outside force of terror acting on the protagonists. Wayne Bartlett and Flavia Idriceanu explain that the effect of this is that "as readers, we find out very little about vampires, and it is precisely the seal of secrecy that retains our curiosity" (2006:150) and our fears. In *Interview with the Vampire*, however, the vampire ceases to be a mere outside force acting on the protagonists of the novel, as he becomes the protagonist who narrates his own story. This first-person narration forces readers not only to sympathise with the vampire, but also to identify with and trust him (Carter 1997:27, Clements 2011:35, Gordon & Hollinger 1997:2, Kane 2006:108, Skal 1990:198, Williamson 2003:102, Wood 2009:67-69). Rice establishes this identification in the very first line of the novel "'I see ...' said the vampire" (Rice 2009:3).

Interview with the Vampire, then, begins with the vampiric ‘I’, and the vampire immediately becomes knowable as readers enter into his world and are not mere outside observers of his actions. This, as Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger comment, serves to “diminish the terror generated by what remains outside our frame of the familiar and the knowable” (1997:2). In becoming knowable, then, the vampire simultaneously loses some of his capacity to evoke fear. This occurs most evidently in regard to the narrating vampire. As Jules Zanger (1997:21) explains, first-person narration creates trust and identification with the narrating vampire, who is inevitably seen as ‘good’, so that readers are led to identify with and trust him, but also distinguishes this ‘good’ vampire from other ‘bad’ vampires. Louis is the well-liked, good vampire, while Lestat, so distinctly portrayed as his opposite, becomes the bad vampire, the figure of evil in the book. In the next instalment of Rice’s *The Vampire Chronicles*, *The Vampire Lestat* (1988), however, Lestat becomes the narrating vampire and the identification process is switched. Who is seen as good or bad, then, is dependent on the narrating voice itself. This switch in narration – from being described by others to being able to describe itself – allows readers entry into the vampires’ world and insists on identification and sympathy with the vampire, while, at the same time, allowing the vampire to emerge as a greater force of individualised social commentary and denying its simplistic Victorian characterisation as a figure of pure evil.

This switch in narration, in turn, allows Rice to go beyond the mere actions of the vampire to explore its feelings. It is this humanising process – commonly referred to as the vampires’ ‘domestication’ – that most clearly defines Rice’s vampires (Miller 2003, O’Donnell 2000:207, Skal 2009, Zanger 1997). While their humanisation in terms of appearance is certainly important as it allows readers to more readily identify with the vampire, it is by no means as important as the humanisation of their characters. Browning’s *Dracula* certainly appears human, but his character is still distinctly evil, still distinctly vampiric. Rice’s vampires are decidedly different.

Interview with the Vampire focuses frequently on Louis’s ability to feel. He feels love for Babette, different from a desire to possess or kill as might be experienced by Stoker’s or Browning’s *Dracula*, but real love for her “strength and honesty, the

greatness of her soul” (Rice 2009:64); he feels loneliness, seeking companionship in characters like Babette and Armand; and he feels a host of other human emotions, ranging from fear to hatred to anger to despair. This ability to feel, however, seems to be limited to Louis himself. When Armand lists the reasons why the other vampires in the Théâtre des Vampires might emerge as Louis’s enemies, he explains to Louis: “That you are flawed is obvious to them: you feel too much, you think too much” (Rice 2009:252). This suggests that Louis is the only vampire among them who exhibits such a capacity for feeling. Nonetheless, the very fact that he does feel highlights the possibility for vampires more generally to feel. Therefore, while vampire detachment does indeed seem to be prevalent amongst Rice’s vampires, they still theoretically have the capacity to feel but choose not to do so. Their feelings or lack thereof, then, are not as a result of their vampirism *per se*, but dependent on their individual characters. Like humans, they have the possibility of choice and free will and are not condemned to evil, but choose to follow either a path of good or evil. In Rice’s work, therefore, vampirism is not necessarily equated with that which is evil (cold-blooded killings, detachment, etcetera) as it is in *Dracula*, but operates within a much more complex process of good and evil.

This conflicting relation between that which is good and that which is evil – something that is so clearly defined in Stoker’s *Dracula* – is central to *Interview with the Vampire*. Throughout the novel, Louis attempts to come to terms with his nature (an apt direct – not merely symbolic – comment on humans’ constant searches for identity and meaning in a secularised society) and, as Beresford explains, becomes “a kind of desperate being that was continually struggling to understand its cursed existence” (2008:148). Like Stoker’s *Dracula*, Louis, and the other vampires in the novel, are primarily understood as being evil, children of the devil. The slaves of Pointe du Lac, for example, believe that Louis and Lestat are devils, and that they (the slaves) are acting together with God in destroying them. Babette, too, upon witnessing Louis’s supernatural side, exclaims: “You’re from the devil” (Rice 2009:65). In having no knowledge of the vampire itself – except, possibly, that of myth which has fed them with these evil, anti-Christian perspectives of the vampire – and only

witnessing its actions, these characters, like the protagonists of *Dracula*, believe the vampire to be essentially evil.

It is of little surprise, then, that Louis, brought up in the same culture of Christian ideology, believes this to be true. He explains to a priest that he “[is] not mortal, father, but immortal and damned, like angels put in hell by God” (Rice 2009:146), and later to Armand that he is “evil, evil as any vampire who ever lived” (Rice 2009:235). He admits that he “believed [he] was damned when [he] went over to [Lestat], just as Judas might have believed it when he put the noose around his neck” (Rice 2009:72). Fed by prejudices of what is good and what is evil, Louis believes that simply by being a vampire he must necessarily be evil. At the same time, however, he does admit that this belief in his evil nature is based on preconceived ideas and that he actually does not “know whether [he] come[s] from the devil or not” (Rice 2009:70), or, indeed, whether the devil actually even exists or not. Through such questioning, Rice not only challenges traditional ideas of vampirism, but, as may be expected in an increasingly secularised world, the roots of such ideas of good and evil as well. Throughout the novel, Louis searches for some kind of affirmation of his true nature, for some kind of affirmation not only that he belongs to the devil but also of the existence of God, echoing the searches of those existing in an increasingly secularised society.

His searches, however, are fruitless. As mentioned, in Stoker’s *Dracula*, as well as in Murnau’s *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens* and Browning’s *Dracula*, religion is one of the greatest weapons against the vampire, affirming the goodness and power of religion and the evil nature of vampirism. In *Interview with the Vampire*, the product of a world where the power of religion has waned and people increasingly find their purpose in terms of materialism and not spirituality, such confirmation is absent. While Stoker’s vampires are affected by the symbols of religion, shying away from crosses and hiding from mirrors that reveal their lack of a soul, Rice’s vampires are free from such limitations, and the symbols of religion have little effect on them. Louis, believing that he is essentially evil, is shocked by this, and explains that Lestat “laughed uproariously when [he] discovered that [he] could see [himself] in a mirror

and that crosses had no effect upon [him]" (Rice 2009:37). Babette is similarly shocked when attempting to ward off Louis with the sign of the cross and a Latin curse, and Louis explains that "her face blanched and her eyebrows rose when there was absolutely no change because of it" (Rice 2009:69). In Rice's novel, vampires and humans alike believe in the conventions of vampirism and trust in religion and the symbols of God to limit or destroy the vampire. Rice, then, does not simply disregard the conventions of vampire legend, but frequently draws on them to illustrate their lack of power in her fictional world, thus, in a sense, even undermining and mocking the belief in the power of religion. She does not simply change vampire conventions, but changes them purposefully and highlights this change frequently in order to comment on the increased secularisation and waning importance of religion in a post-World War II consumer society.

As Martin J. Wood states, the symbols of religion in *Interview with the Vampire* have little effect as they are "nearly empty" (1999:66). In the modern world, these symbols are less equated with religion and have come to mean less, and hence their power is diminished. In Stoker's Victorian world of *Dracula*, the power of God was still inherent within Christian symbols, and these symbols could thus be used to destroy the vampire. In the modern, secularised world, the belief in the power of God has diminished, and so his supposed presence in these Christian symbols, too, has diminished, and they no longer emerge as powerful weapons against the vampire, in parallel with the process by which the vampire itself is also no longer purely a creature of evil that could be destroyed by the forces of good. The Christian symbols' lack of power in *Interview with the Vampire*, then, comments distinctly on the secularisation of society. Rice herself, though raised Catholic, rejected the Christian faith (though has, meanwhile, returned to it, an apt real-world illustration of her vampires' search for meaning in the secularised world), and her novel echoes this lack of religious certainty. When Louis enters the church towards the end of Part I in the novel, he explains:

I had no fear. If anything, perhaps, I longed for something to happen, for the stones to tremble as I entered the shadowy foyer and saw the distinct tabernacle on the altar. I remembered now that I had passed here once when the windows were ablaze and the sound of singing poured out into Jackson Square. I had hesitated then, wondering if there were some

secret Lestat had never told me, something which might destroy me were I to enter (Rice 2009:142).

He finds, however, that nothing happens when he enters the church. While Dracula chooses to reside in dilapidated chapels, places God had abandoned, Louis may freely enter an active and alive church, a church where God is believed to reign, with no effect on him whatsoever. He concludes that “God did not live in this church ... *I was the supernatural in this cathedral. I was the only supermortal thing that stood conscious under this roof*” (Rice 2009:144; original emphasis). In this church, Louis is the supernatural being. God’s presence – or even existence – is unconfirmed.

According to Gelder, the events concerning Louis’s brother are particularly important in illustrating a link between vampirism and religion. He explains that, in contrast to his brother, Louis appears as a disillusioned Catholic who is unable to believe in his brother’s visions. He finds it easier to believe in the existence of vampires than in the possibility of his brother receiving visions, and Gelder comments that this “belief in vampires ... is a kind of modern, secular, replacement for his [Louis’s] lost Catholic faith” (1994:111). Vampirism, it is suggested, is not seen as the opposition of Christianity, but as the replacement thereof. This is also the suggestion in the church scene described above, where Louis emerges as the supernatural being in place of God. While Louis spends the length of the novel searching for some proof of the devil or God, “hop[ing] that somewhere [they] might find ... the answer to why under God this suffering was allowed to exist – why under God it was allowed to begin, and how under God it might be ended” (Rice 2000:168), he is left with the realisation that God may have nothing to do with it at all. At the end of his search, Louis finds that there is no knowledge of God’s existence whatsoever and that

if God doesn’t exist we [the vampires] are the creatures of highest consciousness in the universe. We alone understand the passage of time and the value of every minute of human life (Rice 2009:237).

If God does not exist, then the only supernaturals that remain are the vampires.

Indeed, not only may vampirism be seen as a replacement for the lost Catholic faith or Louis as the replacement for an absent God at specific instances in the novel, but vampires in general are portrayed as religious figures throughout the novel. Clements,

for example, explains that Rice's vampires "are spiritual beings. They are often ... connected to angels in their appearance (their glowing skin and eyes), in the response they provoke in others, and in their lofty spirituality" (2011:34). Rice herself is quoted as saying that Stoker's vampires are "presented as close to animals, but I always saw them as angels ... finely tuned imitations of human beings imbued with this evil spirit" (in Skal 1990:198). This image of vampires as angels (albeit, dark angels) runs throughout *Interview with the Vampire*. Louis, for example, explains that Lestat "was no more human to [him] than a biblical angel" (Rice 2009:17), while Louis himself, in his conversation with the reporter, is described as raising "his arm, first finger pointing heavenward as if he were an angel about to give the Word of the Lord" (Rice 2009:26). Babette, too, before Louis allows her to see him in the light, believes him to be an angel, while Claudia is described as a "Holy Innocent" (Rice 2009:115) or a "Botticelli angel" (Rice 2009:135).

In the secularised world of *Interview with the Vampire*, where religion has lost its power and the existence of God is questioned, the vampires emerge as the remaining supernaturals, as dark angels with powers equal to God's. Lestat explains to Louis that

evil is a point of view ... God kills, and so shall we ... for no creatures under God are as we are, none so like Him as ourselves, dark angels not confined to the stinking limits of hell but wandering His earth and all its kingdoms (Rice 2009:88-89).

However, even before Louis comes to understand the godly power of vampires and the lack of proof of God's existence, he understands that religion in his world has less importance than he had originally believed. Louis explains that when Lestat first spoke to him, he

saw [his] life as if [he] stood apart from it, the vanity, the self-serving, the constant fleeing from one petty annoyance after another, the lip service to God and the Virgin and a host of saints whose names filled my prayer books, none of whom made the slightest difference in a narrow, materialistic, and selfish existence. I saw my real gods ... the gods of most men. Food, drink, and security in conformity (Rice 2009:14).

In his world, as in the post-World War II world that the novel is a product of, religion is a façade. It is the material that truly reigns.

Capitalism/Consumerism in *Interview with the Vampire*

As mentioned, the post-war Fordist society was focused on consumption, material goods, and the endurance of youth, and it is little wonder, then, that these same values are upheld in Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, a product of this society. The drive for material riches is certainly one of the primary themes of the novel. Indeed, it is the starting point of the entire narrative. As Louis explains, "[he] was gifted with eternal life, with heightened perception, and with the need to kill ... because the vampire who made [him] wanted the house [he] owned and [his] money" (Rice 2009:285). Were it not for Lestat's blatant drive for material riches, for the plantation of Pointe du Lac and Louis's financial aptitude, then Louis would never have become a vampire and there would be no storyline to speak of. *Interview with the Vampire*, then, originates in Lestat's drive for material consumption. This drive is sustained throughout the novel. Lestat, like the consumers of a post-war Fordist society, is a vampire obsessed with appearances, always impeccably dressed, unrelenting in his insistence that his blind father "must be told constantly how fine and expensive were his bed jackets and robes" (Rice 2009:36), and unstoppable in his obsession with luxuries, importing "crystal chandeliers and Oriental carpets, silk screens ... and delicate marble Grecian gods and beautifully painted Chinese vases" (Rice 2009:99). There is nothing that Lestat does not wish to possess. His drive to consume, however, like Dracula's, is not limited to material goods, and he "killed humans all the time, sometimes two or three a night, sometimes more. He would drink from one just enough to satisfy a momentary thirst, and then go on to another" (Rice 2009:41). This, of course, is apt for a consumerist society, where a product aims to fulfil a momentary emptiness, but the effects are short-lived, and the consumer is forced to find another product for fulfilment. In Lestat, the definition of consumer is conflated. He consumes material goods and humans, wasting money and lives, in order to achieve some measure of satisfaction. This drive to consume reaches such proportions that even Louis, "who cared nothing for the money, was forced to wince" (Rice 2009:36).

This drive for insatiable consumption is echoed in Claudia. Louis explains that "there was a feverish purpose to her buying ... 'I must have it as I like,' she said, as if

speaking to herself. And so it was as she liked” (Rice 2009:205), with a multitude of material items – from furniture, silk trappings, and dressing room mirrors to rose bouquets and veritable gardens – flooding their apartment. Like Lestat (and Dracula), Claudia is driven to consume endlessly, wanting more and more. However, while she predominantly consumes simply for the sake of consuming, she also eventually comes to rely on her material items to construct her identity, and emerges as just another consumer fooled into believing that material items may hold the key to life’s challenges. Claudia is a woman, eternally stuck in a child’s body, and she falsely believes that adult consumer goods will break the illusion. She demands bracelets and perfumes and, after Madeleine joins their vampire party, she finds happiness in “black evening gloves for tiny fingers, a woman’s low-cut gown of midnight velvet, [and] a tiara from a child’s masked ball” (Rice 2009:274).

Louis himself is decidedly different. Unlike Claudia and Lestat, he does not like to waste his money and does not need endless luxury. Nonetheless, Rice still defines him by capitalist tendencies. Louis knows the value of money and invests it wisely. Claudia and Lestat may be obsessed with material items, but Louis is obsessed with money itself. When admitting that he could never be persuaded to sign over any property to Lestat, Louis comments: “How strange. [Lestat] could persuade me to kill a child, but not to part with my money” (Rice 2009:96). Additionally, while Louis does not insist on material luxuries, he still enjoys them and feeds into a materialistic lifestyle. Armand explains to him that, as a vampire, Louis “really [has] need of very little. But each of us must decide how much he wants” (Rice 2009:280). For Claudia and Lestat, material items are a necessity. Louis, in contrast, does not need them, but he still chooses them.

Ultimately, the vampires’ relationship with consumption in *Interview with the Vampire* is equal to the one provided in *Dracula*. Louis, Lestat, and Claudia are just like Dracula, driven to consume (both materials and blood) endlessly and hoarding both material items and money itself. Nonetheless, while in *Dracula* this is portrayed as a negative – considering Dracula’s association with that which is evil against the power and goodness of religion – in *Interview with the Vampire* it is not. In this novel,

the view of consumption that Rice provides is seductive, luring the reader in to identify with and to wish for the values – youth, beauty, materialism – that are upheld. Rice hails the vampires’ lifestyle as desirable, and the way she enables reader identification with the vampire itself and presents it as more humanlike enables readers to connect more directly with this lifestyle. Again, this is not a symbolic representation as might be found in the traditional Gothic literature, but a direct comment on social conditions. Despite her emphasis on the emptiness and torment of the vampires’ lives and the threat that they inherently present – an intrinsic criticism of the supposed positive effects of consumption – it is the focus on consumptive ideals that remains with readers. The reporter functions as an in-narrative representative of the reader, illustrating the seductive effect of the vampires’ lifestyles at the expense of the warnings Louis tries to give. At the end of Louis’s narrative, the reporter is so enthralled with the vampire’s life that he wishes for that same “power to see and feel and live forever” (Rice 2009:339) and demands that Louis turn him into a vampire as well.

It is, however, important to realise that it is not being a vampire itself that is seductive, but the particular vision of a vampire in a civilised society such as Paris or New Orleans that offers the possibility of the consumption-driven, materialistic lifestyle that Louis, Lestat, and Claudia so thoroughly enjoy. The vampires in Eastern Europe, those “mindless, animated corpse[s]” (Rice 2009:190) residing in ruins and not living the life of eternal aristocrats, are not upheld as alluring at all. Indeed, Louis describes them as weakened creatures with “wagging, bovine heads ... haggard shoulders ... [and] rotted, ragged clothing” (Rice 2009:195). These are the creatures of legend, more similar to the abhorrent Dracula in Stoker’s novel. Only the capitalistic, consumption-driven, and materialistic civilisation of Western Europe and the United States of America gives birth to the desirable vampire. This distinction is taken a step further in the cinematic adaptation of the novel. While the European vampires of the *Théâtre des Vampires* also have eternal youth and beauty, they are set apart from the vampire trio of Louis, Lestat, and Claudia in terms of material consumption. This division between the two groups certainly exists in the novel, but is heightened by the power of visual images in the film. Consider, for example, the

stark visual contrast in the sequence where Louis and Claudia visit the dungeons of the Théâtre des Vampires for the first time and their subsequent return to their own home. The dungeons are characterised by bare stone walls and a gloomy darkness that is only broken by an array of white candles gracing low-hung chandeliers and endless cubicles in the walls. With high ceilings, wide-open spaces, and partially hidden rooms and passages, suggesting untold mysteries and years of history, the dungeons of the Théâtre des Vampires seem akin to Count Dracula's Transylvanian castle in Stoker's novel.

This imagery of the dungeons immediately cuts to an image of an ornamented wooden door in an ornamented doorframe, through which Claudia appears, followed by Louis. Claudia's shiny coat and golden locks are in stark contrast to the black and dull clothing and long black hair of the vampires in the Théâtre des Vampires. As she storms into the room and the camera tracks back, it reveals two electric lights on either side of the door and a white, yellow, and purple bouquet of flowers on a fine table in front of an embellished fireplace. The entire chamber is revealed to be decorated by wallpaper, drapes, lace curtains, luxurious furniture, mirrors, statues, and electric lights. They do not have their coffins out in the open, disguising them, instead, as tables (as revealed in the New Orleans part of the narrative), and choose class and sophistication over all else. The image of luxury, glamour, and light of these chambers is heightened by the consecutiveness of the images of the two living quarters. By contrasting the material-rich lives of the leading and more likeable vampire trio to the sparse lives of the more 'evil' vampires of the Théâtre des Vampires, the film draws up a similar distinction to the novel by contrasting the civilised vampires of Western Europe to the primitive beasts of Eastern Europe. There are no Eastern European vampires in the film and the brute vampires of the Théâtre des Vampires seem to replace them, serving as the opposites of the glamorous Louis-Lestat-Claudia trio. These vampires, with their eternal youth and endless possibilities for consumption, are the ones that thrive and that the reporter wishes to be like. In such a way, the vampires of Rice's novel function as an advertisement for the values of the society in which they were created, upholding the seductiveness of eternal youth and material consumption in place of religion, and, at the same time, emerging

as the ultimate ‘product’ able to provide the ideals modern consumers desire. As Lestat in the *Interview with the Vampire* adaptation proclaims, it is vampirism that can give back meaning to life, and no matter how ambivalent vampirism – and consumerism – may ultimately be, situated as both appealing and yet hollow and threatening, it is the success of the advertisement thereof that emerges with particular force.

The strengthening of this consumerist imagery of *Interview with the Vampire* in its 1994 cinematic adaptation is no doubt enabled by the socio-economic changes that took place in the period between the publication of the novel and the release of the adaptation. In this period, Fordism crumbled – due to “‘stagflation’ (stagnant output of goods and high inflation of prices)” (Harvey 1989:145), increased globalisation (resulting in unstable exchange rates), a sharp recession, and the devastations of an oil crisis – and sent the Western economy into a depression from which it was unable to emerge until the mid-nineteen-eighties (Lee 1993). It is, however, only after the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall – and the end of communism – that capitalism could triumph as the dominant world economic system, which would change the decades to come in significant ways. This change is alluded to in the opening and closing sequences of Jordan’s adaptation. The opening sequence of the film begins with an image of the Golden Gate Bridge and then zooms in on San Francisco itself. The city is alive and constantly on the move, full of traffic and people, but the tracking shots and the slightly eerie score, with an undertone of choir chants, are slow, creating a disjointed sequence of images where an expression of pain and the past – as implied by the tone of the music – intrudes into modern life. This is the beginning of Louis’s story, set in the modern age, but still harking back to the past. The closing sequence, also focusing on a night-time image of the Golden Gate Bridge, is decidedly different. Lestat, who had just attacked the reporter, Malloy, takes charge of Malloy’s red convertible, ejects the interview tape Malloy was listening to (and thereby switches off Louis’s whining voice), and drives off over the bridge to the rock music of ‘Sympathy for the Devil’ by Guns N’ Roses. This symbolises the end of Louis’s story and the leaving behind of the pain and the past as represented by the music of the opening sequence (and Louis’s narrative as a whole) and signifies the beginning of Lestat’s story and the

consumerist promises of the future⁹, to be symbolised more forcefully in Stephenie Meyer's Twilight Saga.

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⁹ This final image also refers to *The Vampire Lestat*, where Lestat re-emerges from the ground after a long period of rest to become a rock star, signposting the importance of the celebrity image. Celebrities, primarily idolised images produced by the media, are used to sell films, newspapers, magazines, fashions, and almost anything else. In the *Interview with the Vampire* adaptation, the celebrity images of Brad Pitt (Louis) and Tom Cruise (Lestat) are instrumental not only in selling the film, but also in increasing the desirability of the vampire figure. Rice (who also wrote the screenplay) figures the vampire as desirable, and the characters of Louis and Lestat appear as seductive beings who lead seductive lifestyles. Through the adaptation, this image is projected on to the actors themselves, creating a cycle in which, for example, Louis is an attractive character and therefore Brad Pitt becomes attractive, while at the time, the celebrity image of Brad Pitt is attractive and therefore Louis becomes more attractive.

CHAPTER THREE:

STEPHENIE MEYER'S TWILIGHT SAGA

Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* Saga, comprised of four books, *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007), and *Breaking Dawn* (2008), is the most popular current series of vampire fiction. The books have been enormously successful, with over a hundred million copies sold, and *Breaking Dawn*, the last instalment, selling over 1.3 million copies on its first day of release alone (Anatol 2011:1). In 2008, when the final book was published, Meyer topped the bestsellers' list, occupying all four of the top spots, a first in the history of book sales (Gravett 2011:1). The *Twilight* Saga, however, has also been incredibly successful in other media forms. The first film adaptation – Catherine Hardwicke's *Twilight* (2008) earned US\$ 384 million worldwide in its cinematic run, while the rest of the adaptations – Chris Weitz's *New Moon* (2009), David Slade's *Eclipse* (2010), and Bill Condon's *Breaking Dawn Part I* (2011) – have been even more successful (Beahm 2009:144). The *Twilight* phenomenon has also moved beyond the realm of novels and films to include music (the films' soundtracks), *Twilight* merchandise, conferences and forums, academia, and an entire realm of online fan discussion sites. As Giselle Liza Anatol explains, it is “*exactly* because the *Twilight* saga has become so incredibly popular that it is intellectually and socially significant” (2011:4; original emphasis). This popularity is based, in part, on the extremely seductive image of the vampire – the complete opposite of Stoker's *Dracula* and more alluring than Rice's tormented Louis – that Meyer depicts, an image that, no doubt, is influenced by a significant literary genre shift, and that reflects the dominant socio-economic conditions and socio-cultural concerns of our time.

The *Twilight* Saga has emerged in a decade where consumption has become the norm of life, more so than it had ever been before. The collapse of communism allowed capitalism to triumph as the world economic system, and global capitalism was established for the first time. Global connectivity and continual advancements in

technology resulted in a spurt of growth in capitalism during the nineteen-nineties, to the extent that people, on average, are not only wealthier than they have ever been before, but also produce and consume in unprecedented numbers (Centeno & Cohen 2010:4). Miguel A. Centeno and Joseph N. Cohen explain that “global private consumption more than doubled from \$13 trillion in 1982 to almost \$29 trillion in 2007 [and that] these changes represent a transformation to much of humanity’s material lives” (2010:94). Though such figures may be largely located within first-world countries, it is in such a world of extreme consumption that the Twilight Saga was born, where consumerism, as will be seen, is not only accepted as the norm of life, but also upheld as an ideal way of life.

According to Centeno and Cohen, modern “societies [have] come to commodify, trade, and monetize practically every social institution or human product” (2010:15). This applies even to religion, signalling the ultimate secularisation. Christianity may still be a dominant religion, but, according to Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton (2005:171), the understanding of Christianity and Christian principles has changed. Traditional terms such as holiness, sin, grace, and justification have been rewritten into more secularised terms such as happiness and kindness. However, Smith and Lundquist Denton do not identify this change with a simple secularisation of Christianity, but with an actual transformation of the religion itself in light of modern capitalist mass consumption (2006:171+176). Modern capitalism, they explain, is no longer simply a system of production and consumption, but it also “incarnates and promotes a particular *moral order* ... it also powerfully defines for those who live in it in elemental terms both what is and what should be” (Smith & Lundquist Denton 2006:176; original emphasis). In a modern mass-consumer capitalist society, religion is no longer the defining factor of what is or what should be, but it falls into the consumer system and “becomes one product among many others existing to satisfy people’s subjectively defined needs, tastes, and wants” (Smith & Lundquist Denton 2006:176).

This changing nature of religion is particularly interesting in terms of the vampire figure. Religion is no longer the defining factor of what is good and what is not,

leading to some fascinating understandings of the modern vampire. These modern vampires, indeed, completely blur the distinction of good and evil, even more so than Rice's vampires ever had the opportunity to do. In the *Twilight Saga*, as will be seen, this conflation of religion and consumerism emerges with particular force. This is also of relevance when considering the novels in terms of Meyer's devout Mormonism. Even though Meyer has repeatedly denied claims that her novels emphasise Mormon themes, her worldview has undoubtedly had some influence on her work. While there may be many principles of Mormonism to be traced in her work, it is the Mormon concern with materialism that arises as being of particular importance. According to Natalie Wilson, the Mormon Church is one of the world's wealthiest, and it may be readily defined by its profit motive (2011:185). Fawn M. Brodie (1945) explains that this concern with wealth – both monetary and material – may be traced back to Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon religion. He explains that Smith had a “poor man's awe of gold, and it crept into his concept of heaven” (Brodie 1945:187) and that “perhaps the most vigorous tradition transmitted by ... Smith was the identification of God with material prosperity” (Brodie 1945:402). In this sense, Mormonism is a religion where material riches are not necessarily defined as a negative, but, indeed, as an essential feature of both this life and the next. This concern with materialism creeps in to the pages of Meyer's *Twilight Saga*.

While the conflation of religion with consumerism and the emphasis of materialism certainly change the depiction of the vampire in the *Twilight Saga*, one of the dominant differences between Meyer's novels (and modern vampire literature in general) and the novels that had come before is the narrative perspective, related largely to a shift in the genre of vampire stories. As Karen Backstein argues, modern “supernatural stories are driven largely by female desire and the female voice” (2009:38), and, in particular, the young female voice. While the youth group had already emerged as a dominant economic and social group after the Second World War, this has been strengthened in recent years. Lynn Schofield Clark explains that “today's teens represent the largest demographic group of young people ever – even surpassing their parents' generation, the baby boomers” (2003:14). As before, it is also this youth group that is most dominantly caught up in mass consumption. Smith

and Lundquist Denton explain that “industry experts estimate that American teens spend about \$170 billion of their own dollars annually and influence upward of \$500 billion of their parents’ spending” (2005:178). In this group, it is the highly susceptible emotional state of young girls that is frequently exploited, giving a capitalist incentive for the production of romance novels, television series and films aimed at this market. It is, therefore, not surprising that modern vampire fictions are narrated by young girls or women falling in love with the ultimate lover – the eternally strong, eternally beautiful, and eternally young male vampire.

The Twilight Saga essentially falls into the domain of young adult romance literature. Meyer is adamant that her novels are not related to any vampire novels that had come before, and she explains that she is

not a vampire person ... I’m really not into horror, so I don’t know the genre. I think it’s why [my books are] different. It’s not a genre where I know what the walls are. I break through them because I don’t know that they are there (in Beahm 2009:49).

According to Meyer’s own definition, then, her novels exist outside of the Gothic horror literary tradition. At the same time, however, they also seem to be firmly located within this tradition and Meyer, even though she may do so unknowingly, links her texts explicitly with previous vampire literatures, even using the same terms and phrases to describe her vampires that Stoker and Rice had employed before. Nonetheless, her novels are decidedly different and she introduces some remarkable changes to the vampire figure that seem to draw more on a history of romance novels than Gothic horror fiction.

Her novels are located within a changed tradition of the vampire story more generally, where, targeted predominantly at a young female audience, it is precisely the romantic that is emphasised over the horrific. Meyer’s Twilight Saga has emerged in a period that has seen the publication of over two hundred young adult vampire novels (Bodard 2012:28) and numerous romantic and/or youth-orientated vampire film and television productions. One of the earliest examples of these in the nineteen-nineties is Francis Ford Coppola’s re-telling of Stoker’s classic in *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992). This film is hailed as one of the most faithful adaptations, and yet it

introduces some of the most significant changes through the addition of a love story, where Dracula is the historical Vlad the Impaler, who has become a vampire in swearing vengeance over the death of his beloved, Elizabetha, reincarnated in Mina. The narrative traces the re-establishment of their lost love and Dracula, ultimately, is figured as a romantic hero. This emphasis on love and romance between a human girl and a male vampire is also emphasised in the hit television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The assumption in this series is that vampires are inherently evil creatures and need to be, in Suzanne Scott's terms, sufficiently "neutered" (2003:125) to become viable love interests, either on an emotional or physical level, exemplified in the show by Angel's restored soul and Spike's implanted government chip. Other popular vampire fictions, such as *The Vampire Diaries* or the Sookie Stackhouse novels (both in literature and television adaptations), also figure vampires as inherently evil or dangerous, but do not rely on external neutering for the vampires to become love interests, suggesting, instead, that they are able to control their natures sufficiently on their own to form relationships with humans.

Meyer's *Twilight Saga* emerges out of such a changing history of vampire genres and depictions, where it is possible for vampires to be viable love interests for humans. However, Meyer's novels take this to an entirely different level, as they discard the vampires' inherent evil nature in favour of a more complex relationship of good versus bad figured not in terms of religion but in terms of materialist concerns.

Religion in the *Twilight Saga*

As in *Dracula* and *Interview with the Vampire*, Meyer's *Twilight Saga* also engages with the theme of religion. However, as suggested, the way this saga does so is less straightforward than in the previous literatures. Religious iconography itself is rather scarce in the novels, with the sign of the cross only appearing twice, once in *Twilight* when Bella is surprised at a large wooden cross decorating a wall in the Cullen home, and next in *Breaking Dawn* when the Brazilian cleaning lady on Isle Esme crosses herself. These instances have little symbolic purpose and, fitting for a secularised world, are seen as entirely secularised occurrences – the one being nothing more than

an ornament (and family heirloom), and the other nothing but the primitive superstition of a Third World inhabitant. The symbolism of Christianity, then, is absent and no remarks on the lack of power of such symbolism (as is so frequent in *Interview with the Vampire*) are made, excepting Edward's slight chuckle at Bella's bewildered stare when she first spots the wooden cross, an apt remark on the (apparent) falsity of the widespread myths of vampirism and the secularised nature of once-religious symbols. Nonetheless, religion – and its accompanying factors of sin and damnation – is still figured as a dominant aspect of the novels.

This is made apparent, in the first instance, through the cover image and epigraph of *Twilight*. The now-popular cover image of the book depicts two pale, feminine hands holding out a dark red apple, presumably offering it to the reader. The image of the apple is of immense symbolic meaning to Christianity and, even though the modern world is secularised, the apple is still often identified with its biblical roots in American popular culture. In Christianity, the apple is an important icon of temptation and sin, harking back to the Book of Genesis in which Eve gives in to temptation and eats the apple from the forbidden tree, thereby causing her and Adam's subsequent expulsion from paradise. It is this biblical occurrence that is referenced in the book's epigraph: "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). The apple of the cover image of *Twilight* symbolises this Christian understanding of temptation and sin (with the feminine hands suggesting Eve), representing not only the temptation and sin to be found within the subject matter of *Twilight* (from a traditionally religious perspective), but also the more literal tempting of the reader to indulge in a vampire romance. While it may be generally understood that the temptation and sin symbolised refers specifically to vampirism in the novel, this suggestion is strengthened in Hardwicke's adaptation, where the cover image of *Twilight* is recreated in a cafeteria scene. In this scene, Edward surprises Bella at the salad bar, and she accidentally knocks a red apple off the counter. Edward skilfully catches it with his foot, kicks it up, and catches it in both hands, holding it out to her in a mirror image of the book's cover. It is but a fleeting moment in the film, lasting a mere two seconds, but it is vital in understanding the link between vampirism and sin. It is

Edward – the dominant vampire – holding out the apple, the icon of sin, to Bella. It is the vampire that symbolises temptation and sin in *Twilight*, and, in this respect, there seem to be certain initial parallels drawn between the vampire here and the vampire in Stoker’s *Dracula*, as, from a religious perspective, both may be seen as the icons of sin.

However, this configuration of sin is slightly altered in Meyer’s texts, providing a more *Interview with the Vampire*-like engagement with the themes of sin and damnation. This emerges primarily in terms of Edward’s reluctance in turning Bella into a vampire. From early on in *Twilight*, Edward repeatedly describes himself as being the “bad guy” (Meyer 2005:79) or the “monster” (Meyer 2005:161), and not the superhero character that Bella believes him to be. Like Louis in *Interview with the Vampire*, Edward seems to believe that vampires are inherently monstrous, that they have lost their souls and are thus destined to “eternal damnation” (Meyer 2006:482). He does not want to risk Bella’s soul and condemn her to damnation, and thus refuses to turn her into a vampire. Nonetheless, despite this constant questioning of the vampire’s lack of soul and intrinsic damnation, there is little actual evidence of such damnation. The Cullens are figured as determined to fight against whatever monstrosity may be inherent in their vampirism, not because of some external influence such as Angel experiences in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, but because of their own desires for goodness. Edward explains that

just because we’ve been ... dealt a certain hand ... it doesn’t mean that we can’t choose to rise above – to conquer the boundaries of a destiny that none of us wanted. To try to retain whatever essential humanity we can (Meyer 2005:268).

The *Twilight* vampires, then, want to be more human, and Meyer indeed configures them as such, allowing them to emerge as romantic interests within a young adult literary tradition.

According to the logic of the *Twilight* narrative, abstaining from human blood helps them to achieve this. Like Louis in *Interview with the Vampire* (though Louis ultimately fails), the Cullens choose to rise above their natures and abstain from human blood, choosing, instead, to hunt animals. Carlisle theorises that “abstaining

makes it easier for [them] to be civilised, to form bonds based on love rather than survival or convenience” (Meyer 2006:378). These bonds, which are of the utmost importance in figuring the vampire less as a creature of demonic evil and as more human- or, as will be seen, even god-like, appear both in the form of familial love and romantic love, fitting for a young adult romance fiction. Not only have the Cullens succeeded in forming a large family (an unusual phenomenon for vampires in the Twilight world), but this familial bond is also strengthened by bonds of romantic love between various members of the family, and Carlisle and Esme, Alice and Jasper, and Emmett and Rosalie are paired. The emerging relationship between Edward and Bella completes the Cullen pairings. Meyer repeatedly emphasises that Edward’s newfound feelings for Bella are “resurrecting the human in [him]” (Meyer 2005:265), suggesting, therefore, that love brings humanity. In the Twilight world, then, it is the abstinence from human blood that enables bonds of love to be formed, which, in turns, assists the return of an essential humanity to the vampiric creature. However, even though love and civilised humanity, then, depend on the abstinence from human blood, the abstinence itself is a choice that rests with the individual vampire, pinpointing to the fact that a desire to be and do good has to be present in the vampire even before his humanity is resurrected. There has to be an essential seed of goodness within the vampire. As in *Interview with the Vampire*, where Rice chooses to construct her vampires as having free will, so, too, Meyer chooses to construct her vampires as similar to humans in that they have individual choice and the free will to choose to be either good or bad. Meyer does not assume an evil nature to be inherent to her vampires’ vampiric origin, but dependent on individual personality and character traits, allowing her to construct her vampires as more akin to humans and, thereby, allowing them to emerge as more adequate commentators on socio-cultural conditions.

Meyer’s choice to depict the Cullens as good, however, extends beyond the mere abstinence from human blood, and they emerge as being of an entirely different nature than Rice’s tormented Louis. For instance, even in the period when Edward did drink human blood, he is only ever depicted as hunting thieves and murderers (suggesting, again, that the essential goodness has to be present in the individual before the choice

of abstinence is made), depending on his mind-reading ability to “pass over the innocent and pursue only the evil” (Meyer 2005:299). Edward uses his vampiric powers to protect the innocent, functioning, indeed, like a superhero. The hero of a romantic novel, after all, cannot be figured as someone who does evil, and all essentially bad deeds must be sufficiently justified or made acceptable. This is one of the primary ways in which the Twilight Saga’s genre influences its subject matter, and vice versa. Carlisle, too, is presented as choosing to use his powers for good by becoming a doctor, despite the constant temptation of human blood this exposes him to. Carlisle explains:

What I enjoy the very most is when my ... enhanced abilities let me save someone who would otherwise have been lost. It’s pleasant knowing that, thanks to what I can do, some people’s lives are better because I exist (Meyer 2006:31).

This suggests that Meyer’s vampires explicitly blur the distinction between good and evil. This is not only in terms of religion, which, as mentioned, is a theme that receives little direct attention in the novels, but also in terms of more secularised concerns. These secularised concerns tend to obscure the religious, and are reflected in the Saga’s concern with the romance elements and, as will be discussed shortly, its materialist emphasis. Meyer depicts the Cullen vampires as good, thereby transgressing from Stoker’s original binary of religion as good and vampires as evil. There may be a suggestion that vampires are inherently damned and evil, but this suggestion is never followed through. Instead, Meyer’s vampires emerge as creatures deliberately wanting to be good. Even Jacob, whose werewolf nature destines him to see vampires as evil, cannot deny the essential goodness of the Cullens. He explains, for instance, that “[Carlisle] was good. Good as any humans we [the werewolves] protected. Maybe better” (Meyer 2008:188).

The suggestion here is that not only are the Cullens presented as good as humans, but they are also better than humans. There is, indeed, a suggestion throughout the four novels that not only are the Cullens more human than they are vampiric, but that they are also *more* than mere humans, better than humans could ever be. While this is undoubtedly strengthened through the narrative of the love-struck Bella, who, as a typical adolescent-fiction romantic heroine, sees everything associated with Edward

as essentially marvellous, Meyer also depicts other characters in the Twilight Saga as sharing this view of the Cullens' superiority. The Cullens, ultimately, embody all that which is ideal, although this may be figured primarily in material terms. Meyer represents this, on a most basic level, in terms of their superior physical appearance. Like the vampires of Rice's creation, Meyer's vampires are supernaturally beautiful. From the moment Bella first sets eyes on the Cullens, it is their immense beauty that stands out, and, though she notices their pale skin and the dark shadows under their eyes (characteristics that, normally, would be unnerving), these are undermined by their perfect features. Bella explains that she "stared because their faces, so different, so similar, were all devastatingly, inhumanly beautiful" (Meyer 2005:16-17). This beauty makes them incredibly desirable, especially from the point of view of a female narrator in a young adult narrative, who is likely to want the beautiful boy and be like the beautiful girl. It is these secularised and romantic concerns that take a central position in Meyer's novel, at the expense of a focus on the traditional religious values and meanings that Stoker and Rice engage in. The cinematic adaptation of *Twilight* enhances this by drawing distinct attention to the uniqueness – and desirability – of the Cullens. Sitting inside the cafeteria, Bella notices Rosalie and Emmett for the first time through the blinds of the cafeteria window. The score begins as the camera pans to the right to reveal Alice and Jasper following Rosalie and Emmett, and then follows this second pair as they walk towards the cafeteria entrance. The camera lingers on each pair as they enter, and walk through, the cafeteria, while Jessica fills Bella in on vital information about the Cullens.

While the camera and score evidently place an emphasis on Rosalie, Emmett, Alice, and Jasper, it is Edward – Bella's love interest – who is treated with an even greater emphasis. It is undeniable that the way Bella views Edward as a potential, and actual, lover – both in the novels and the adaptations – enhances the desirability of the vampire figure. In the adaptation, Edward is seen for the first time when the camera focuses on him through the glass cafeteria door. Unlike the images of his vampiric family, broken through the presence of the blinds, this first image of Edward is absolutely clear, drawing greater attention to him than to his four siblings.

Furthermore, in this sequence, the camera focuses on Edward three times, once when

he enters the cafeteria, and twice when he is walking towards his table, though it only focuses twice on Rosalie and Emmett, and once on Alice and Jasper. The shots of Edward are also in medium close-up, while the ones of Rosalie, Emmett, Alice, and Jasper are in medium shot. Through such means, the narrative draws distinct attention to the presence of Edward. As these shots are often from Bella's perspective, the camera seems to linger on him and focuses on his beauty, and, perhaps more accurately, sex appeal. In *New Moon*, for example, the camera lingers on Edward as he walks towards Bella in the school parking lot, his shirt flapping seductively in the breeze, in a twelve-second shot, a rather long period for a shot that does little else but draw attention to the physical presence of Edward. This singling out of Edward is also apparent in the descriptions of the novels. While the beauty of all the Cullens is emphasised, it is particularly Edward's beauty that is drawn attention to, and Bella repeatedly describes his features – his “set of perfect, ultra-white teeth” (Meyer 2005:43), “perfect nose” (Meyer 2005:242), “flawless lips” (Meyer 2005:242), “perfect musculature” (Meyer 2005:224) of his chest, “quiet, musical voice” (Meyer 2005:37), “soft, enchanting laugh” (Meyer 2005:37), and his “exquisite scent” (Meyer 2005:168). Through such means, the reader/audience views and experiences Edward with the same intent and desirability that Bella views him with, thus enhancing the overall desirability of the vampire figure.

Interestingly, Bella finds Edward most beautiful when he reveals his true nature in the sunlight. Unlike Stoker's *Dracula* or Rice's vampires, Meyer's vampires are not limited or destroyed by the sun, but, instead, are revealed in their true sparkling nature. The sun makes them more beautiful. Bella describes that, in the sunlight, Edward's “skin ... literally sparkled, like thousands of tiny diamonds were embedded in the surface” (Meyer 2005:228). In previous vampire literatures, vampires were seen as creatures of darkness, in part because they were literally condemned to darkness. What is interesting about this is that Edward explains that he “refuse[s] to damn [Bella] to an eternity of night” (Meyer 2005:415), suggesting that Meyer is quite clearly drawing on the belief that vampires are creatures of the night, creatures of darkness, suggesting some return to vampirism in the Gothic tradition, but they are then revealed as not being creatures of the night at all, placing them, again, distinctly

into the realm of young adult romantic fiction. They cannot be creatures of darkness and cannot be damned to an eternity of night as they are perfectly capable of stepping out in to the sunlight. It may reveal them as being unnaturally beautiful and super-human creatures, but it does not destroy them. This removes yet another aspect of their previously undesirable natures, casting them not as frightening creatures of the night, but as beautiful, sun-lit creatures of the day.

However, it is not only in terms of physical appearance that the Cullen vampires are described as superior to humans. They are described as being perfect in all other ways as well. Bella repeatedly comments that Edward is “good at everything” (Meyer 2005:263), drawing attention to his elegant handwriting, intelligence and scholarly skills, language ability, musical skills, etcetera. There is nothing learned that the vampires cannot do, and it is precisely their vampiric nature that enables them to achieve such skills. In Meyer’s world, the vampires are not only immortal, but they also do not need to sleep, granting them an eternity of time for self-improvement. The Cullens, and Carlisle and Edward in particular, thrive on this and aim to be the best they could possibly be by learning as much as possible. Their vampire nature, however, does not only grant them with unlimited time to develop their mental capacity and skill set, but it also grants them supernatural powers such as mind-reading, clairvoyance, and mind control. In this sense, not only are Meyer’s vampires incredibly beautiful – more so than any human could ever be – but they are also skilled beyond the limits of human capacity. These vampires are neither mere animalistic creatures like Stoker’s *Dracula*, nor are they mere humans, but they are something greater than humans could ever be. As Bella explains, “Edward Cullen was not ... human. He was something more” (Meyer 2005:120).

Indeed, the Cullen vampires are presented as angels or gods, not as inverted figures of God as in *Dracula* or the dark angel figures of *Interview with the Vampire*, but as literal angels, quite fitting given the pedestal-placing power that Bella’s love for Edward has. Throughout the four novels, the Cullen vampires are repeatedly described as literal angels or gods – Edward as “an angel” (Meyer 2005:394), a “god of beauty” (Meyer 2006:7), or simply “a god” (Meyer 2006:58) – or in terms of their

angelic or godlike features, having “the face of an angel” (Meyer 2005:17), being figured as a “godlike creature” (Meyer 2005:255), or appearing as “a Botticelli angel” (Meyer 2006:402). In the adaptations, too, effort is made to present the Cullens as such. In the *Twilight* adaptation, for example, Edward is introduced more directly in Bella’s Biology class, where the set-up of the shot reveals a large stuffed owl behind Edward’s back. As the owl remains largely unseen in the scene, it appears as if its white wings were protruding from Edward’s back, and it seems as if Edward were an angel with wings. The vampires’ figuration as gods or angels is interesting when viewed in light of Mormon theology, and, indeed, given Meyer’s status as a Mormon, it may be assumed that this would have been a deliberate construction. Douglas J. Davies explains that the core of Mormon theology is that “humans can become divine” (2003:157). Brodie elaborates, explaining that “every Mormon ... believes himself to be on the road to godhood ... [and], according to Joseph [Smith], ‘a man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge’” (1945:402). According to Mormon logic, then, the vampires of Meyer’s world may be seen as having become gods because of their capacity for endless learning and self-advancement. In the *Twilight* Saga itself, however, the mere process of becoming a vampire ensures godhood, as is most distinctly seen in Bella’s vampiric transformation in *Breaking Dawn*, in the same three-day process that characterises Jesus’ resurrection and the vampiric transformation in *Dracula*.

What is instrumental about the vampiric transformation in the *Twilight* Saga – and what differentiates this transformation from the ones in the previous novels – is that Meyer introduces no significant change to Bella as a person when she becomes a vampire. In *Dracula*, there is a complete loss of self, as the demon comes to dominate and control the human form, while in *Interview with the Vampire* some individual character may remain, but the new vampire is absolutely controlled by its thirst for blood. In the *Twilight* Saga, Meyer presents both of these consequences as actual fears. Jacob, for instance, believes that the Bella he knows will disappear and a demon will literally possess her, while Bella herself believes that, “for several years, [her] biggest personality trait was going to be *thirsty* [and that] it would take some time before [she] could be [herself] again” (Meyer 2008:19; original emphasis). However,

neither of these fears materialises. In one of the most eminent philosophical texts on immortality, 'The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality', Bernard Williams (2004) explains that there are two conditions for worthwhile immortality. These are that

it should clearly be *me* who lives for ever ... [and] that the state in which I survive should be one which, to me looking forward, will be adequately related, in the life it presents, to those aims which I now have in wanting to survive at all (Williams 2004:339; original emphasis).

Both of these conditions are fulfilled in the Twilight Saga, as Bella is not represented as undergoing any significant character or personality changes, and she still has the same goals and desires. In this respect, Bella, in becoming a vampire, is shown to achieve worthwhile immortality. Vampirism in the Twilight Saga, then, is constructed in such a way that it is not only idealised as a godly form of existence, but is also described as a form of existence that carries no real negative consequences.

Quite on the contrary, becoming a vampire seems to be the ultimate achievement of ideals, and, specifically, ideals of a mass-consumer society. It is in this respect that religion and consumerism conflate in the Twilight Saga, as vampiric godhood is defined by materialist concerns. The religious sense of immortality that renders vampiric immortality in *Dracula* so sinful is lost and replaced by primarily materialist concerns in a secularised world, rendering the more materialistic sense of immortality in the Twilight Saga as the ideal. As in *Interview with the Vampire*, the ideas of youth, beauty, and power emerge as being of particular relevance. Age and aging are primary concerns within the Twilight Saga, and are constructed as being of particular importance in Bella's life. Bella defines herself in terms of Edward's age – eternally seventeen – and is obsessed with remaining in her teens. Meyer pays particular attention to Bella's fear of aging in *New Moon*, where she dreams that she is looking at her grandmother, but then, horrifyingly, realises that she is viewing an image of herself, "ancient, creased, and withered" (Meyer 2006:5). This is Bella's worst nightmare, reflecting the consumerist fetishisation of youth in modern society. However, in the Twilight Saga the fulfilment of the dream of eternal youth is made real, and Bella is saved from the fate of aging by being turned into a vampire at eighteen. Not only, however, is she granted eternal youth, but, in line with materialist

concerns, she also becomes unbelievably beautiful. In the novel, Bella witnesses her vampiric self for the first time in a mirror, and describes herself in the third person:

The alien creature in the glass was indisputably beautiful ... She was fluid even in stillness, and her flawless face was pale as the moon against the frame of her dark, heavy hair. Her limbs were smooth and strong, skin glistening subtly, luminous as pearl (Meyer 2008:371-372).

She views herself as a “carving of a goddess” (Meyer 2008:372), in stark contrast to her earlier view of being “absolutely ordinary” (Meyer 2005:184). This transition is emphasised visually in the film adaptation of *Breaking Dawn*, where Bella’s pregnancy and the damage it causes her body is physically accentuated and she appears hollow, starved, and weakened. She is the image of human horror, alive, yet a decaying corpse. The transition to vampirism is visually accentuated as her sunken flesh slowly fills out and heals, her grey and brittle hair becomes glossy and full of colour, her grey skin becomes lighter, fresh, and smooth, and her eyes become dark and beautiful. As in Claudia’s vampiric transformation in *Interview with the Vampire*, the visual nature of film accentuates this vampiric beauty. Bella’s transition is further emphasised by the silence of the scene – there is no dialogue, no score, forcing the audience to focus on nothing else but Bella’s transformation to utter beauty. As the camera focuses on her eyes in an extreme close-up, she opens them, and they are blood red – the vampire transformation is complete.

As mentioned, Bella adjusts to vampire life without difficulty, feeling neither change in character nor any uncontrollable urges. While the narrative does acknowledge how unusual this is – with the Cullens pondering whether this self-control is a special skill of Bella’s or whether it is as a result of Bella’s preparation in choosing to become a vampire (though the latter is ultimately suggested) – it still suggests that there are no negative consequences to becoming a vampire. Indeed, in addition to the attractiveness of eternal youth and unbelievable beauty, being a vampire is even described as an enjoyable experience, as Bella explains when she excitedly tests her new skills and powers, jumping over rivers and racing through the trees. When Bella turns into a vampire, she inevitably becomes better at everything – she is suddenly incredibly fast, strong, and even graceful, and is able to experience everything – emotions, sounds, sights, smells – more forcefully and accurately.

In the Twilight Saga, then, becoming a vampire is not seen as the “traditional fall from grace, as in classic vampire lore, but an ascent to a near-paradisiacal condition” (Veldman-Genz 2011:49), promising, in line with the purposes of romantic fiction, the romantic happy end, godly beauty, skills, powers, and eternal youth. As mentioned, however, these ideals – and the fulfilment thereof through vampirism – relate specifically to the ideals of a mass-consumer society at the expense of the religious.

Capitalism/Consumerism in the Twilight Saga

The text’s depiction of the Cullens defines them not only by their youth, beauty, and skills, but also by their immense capacity to consume. Everything about them hints at their economic wealth. They wear designer clothes, own expensive cars, and live in a massive house, timeless, old, and graceful in the novels, and ultra-modern in the films. Yet, their wealth extends beyond the conventional material items, and there is nothing that their money cannot buy, whether it be islands, falsified documents, as-yet-unreleased cars, or Bella’s “mysterious acceptance into an Ivy League college” (Meyer 2008:4). This wealth, also, appears to be inexhaustible, and the Cullens are explained as having “bloated accounts that existed all over the world ... [and that] there was enough cash stashed all over the house to keep a small country afloat for a decade” (Meyer 2008:600). Such wealth represents the fulfilment of the wishes of a mass-consumer society, as, with unlimited wealth, there may be unlimited consumption. Bella explains:

Edward had a *lot* of money ... Money meant next to nothing to Edward or the rest of the Cullens. It was just something that accumulated when you had unlimited time on your hands and a sister who had an uncanny ability to predict trends in the stock market (Meyer 2006:12; original emphasis).

Money does not mean nothing to the Cullens because they do not want it, but because they have so much of it. They need not concern themselves with something that is in such obvious abundance. Ironically, they are a type of creature that does not need it (they hunt their own food, do not feel temperatures, do not sleep, can run fast enough to not need cars, etcetera), but, as the quote above suggests, it is specifically their

vampire nature that enables it – it grants them unlimited time in which money can accumulate and special powers that may be used for their own successes in achieving wealth. Vampirism in the Twilight Saga, then, is not only constructed as granting the vampires eternal youth and beauty – in themselves materialistic concerns – but also with the skills and possibilities to create eternal wealth, the one factor that encompasses the absolute ideal of a capitalist society.

As in *Interview with the Vampire*, the Twilight Saga configures wealth and material items as something desirable. However, as the Twilight Saga increases the desirability of the vampire figure more than *Interview with the Vampire* does, the way it promotes wealth and material concerns is taken to an entirely new level, fitting for the extent of consumerism and consumerist concerns in modern society. This creates a cycle in which society upholds wealth and materials, which, in turn, figures the vampires who have these as desirable, but, because the vampires themselves are already figured as desirable (through their beauty, youth, and skills, as witnessed primarily from Bella's romantic perspective), the wealth and materials they have are also figured as more desirable. It is important that these vampires are not only associated with unlimited wealth, as Dracula and the Louis/Lestat/Claudia trio are, but, different to other narratives, the Twilight Saga identifies its leading vampires specifically with material items. Michael J. Goebel argues that

because these characters [the vampires] are so heavily mediated throughout the text by the cars they drive, the clothes they wear, and the lifestyle they can afford, the audience connects as much with these components as they do with the emotional elements of the characters (2011:177).

This is achieved predominantly in the novels through the association of Edward with his car. Even before Bella meets Edward, the narrative draws attention to his car, as his “shiny Volvo” (Meyer 2005:13) is the one car that stands out in the school parking lot. Conversation between Bella and Edward often revolves around his silver Volvo, and the car itself comes to be symbolic of Edward. Bella frequently draws attention to the Volvo when thinking of Edward, and she also associates the presence of the car with Edward's presence. When she is attacked in Port Angeles, for example, Edward's appearance is suggested only through the description of the “silver car”

(Meyer 2005:140). Edward, then, is identified with the material. The same occurs with the other Cullens – Rosalie’s red convertible, Carlisle’s black Mercedes, Emmett’s Jeep, and Alice’s Porsche – but these are drawn attention to less frequently. By creating the vampires as desirable figures and by then identifying these vampires with specific material items, the text explicitly sets out to enhance the desirability of such material items.

Throughout the novels, the desirability of material items is contrasted to the meagreness of lacking these. The texts frequently draw attention to Bella’s middle-class lifestyle – Bella drives an old truck, wears plain clothing, laments her lack of a dishwasher, suffers from the limitations of a slow dial-up internet service, and even openly admits that she “never had much money” (Meyer 2006:12). Even though she proclaims that such a normal lifestyle never bothered her, the way in which she draws attention to the Cullens’ wealth does suggest that monetary abundance is figured as ‘better’ and more desirable. This superiority of wealth is also established in numerous other ways. Goebel, for instance, argues that the economic and material abundance of the vampires allows them to develop individualised powers, in stark contrast to the “homogenized powers of the [poorer] Quileute werewolves” (2011:176). It is, however, not only the distinction between the animalistic werewolves and the Cullens that relies on economic standing, but also the distinctions between different kinds of vampires. The James/Laurent/Victoria trio, for example, are repeatedly identified as wild and savage. They are more animalistic, and “their walk was catlike” (Meyer 2005:328), while their “clothes were frayed ... with wear, and they were barefoot” (Meyer 2005:329). In the film adaptation, too, attention is drawn to their bare feet and predatory stance as they oppose the more aristocratic Cullens. Interestingly, it is the wild and savage vampire trio that is established as the enemy, while the rich and sophisticated Cullens are the good vampires. As in *Interview with the Vampire*, with the distinction between the leading vampires and the vampires of the Théâtre des Vampires, wealth and material consumption are identified with the more likeable and desirable vampires. Through such means, consumptive capacity is repeatedly established as desirable and superior, apt for a society focused on mass consumption.

The vampires in the Twilight Saga, then, are not only established as godly figures, but they are established as godly figures particularly in terms of the ideals of a mass-consumer society. They are repeatedly defined by their immense wealth, capacity to consume, absolute beauty, and eternal youth. Vampirism in Meyer's text emerges as an advertisement and fulfilling product of the ideals of consumer society in much the same way as vampirism in *Interview with the Vampire* does, with both texts being positioned as absolute opposites of Stoker's *Dracula*. However, by removing all negative consequences of becoming a vampire and omitting or undermining any form of torment the vampires may experience due to their vampiric nature (as Louis does) – no doubt related to the shift in literary genre from Gothic horror to young adult romance – this ideal of vampirism is accentuated in Meyer's text to a level that goes far beyond the achievement of *Interview with the Vampire*. The Twilight Saga becomes the ultimate advertisement for a consumption-driven lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

The literary vampire has changed drastically over the last hundred-and-twenty years. These changes are intrinsically related both to changes within the Gothic horror literary tradition and the development of the young adult romance-horror genre, and, more directly, to socio-economic changes, especially in terms of the waning of religious stronghold and the ever-rising dominance of consumerism.

Both religion and consumerism play, and have played, significant roles in human society, and both have been tied up with the figure of the vampire – in mythology and literature – for a considerable period of time. Like the fantastical vampire, which may emerge as particularly forceful in symbolising the conscious and unconscious fears and anxieties of society, religion and consumerism, too, emerge as particularly powerful indicators of socio-cultural circumstances. They exist in some kind of oppositional or symbiotic relationship, where changes in the one affect changes in the other. It is this changing relationship between religion and consumerism that may be traced within the symbolic qualities of the vampire figure in various key texts.

In the Victorian era, the Christian religion was a stronghold for society, providing firm moral guidelines and instilling a sense of identity and belonging. However, by the late Victorian era, socio-cultural developments – predominantly in terms of the steady rise of capitalism and the advancements of the sciences – thrust society into an ever-rising state of secularisation, resulting in extreme social unrest and a drive to come to terms with social change. It is at this point that vampire literature, with its supernatural and symbolic concerns, proved to be particularly effective symbolically, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the epitomic vampire text of this era, reflects the concerns of religion and consumerism accordingly. The novel as a whole engages in both the themes of religion, as that power of goodness that opposes the evil and sinful nature of the vampire, and consumerism, as related to capitalism. Count Dracula, the supernatural being, reflects the fears and anxieties threatening the stability of Victorian society, and he is depicted as an abhorrent, evil creature, removed from God

and associated with science and capitalism in opposition to the good and moral nature of Christianity. The heroes of the novel, in contrast, embody this good and moral nature, and they are associated with God and Christianity. Through creating such a binary between good and evil, the novel enforces Christian religious ideology and criticises all that stands against it.

As society became more and more secularised and consumerism steadily became more prominent, there appears a significant shift in the relation between religion and consumerism in vampire literature. The themes of consumption criticised in *Dracula* re-emerge in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, where they are not condemned, but celebrated, albeit not unequivocally, as particular ideals of a modern way of life. At the same time, the power of religion so celebrated in *Dracula* becomes more elusive in Rice's text, and her vampires do not emerge primarily as the opposition of religion, but as equal purveyors in the search for God and the meaning of life. They are not defined by their religious beliefs – or lack thereof – but by their capacity to consume. In the secularised world of the post-World War II era, Rice's vampires, though still creatures of darkness, are also beautiful and eternally young purveyors of a seductive, if sometimes unsatisfying, consumerist lifestyle. Changes in the Gothic horror tradition enabled the figures of horror to emerge as more direct commentators of society, and, combined with changes in narration and the depiction of the vampiric creature, Rice's vampires are able to emerge primarily as advertisements for the consumerist and materialist concerns of a secularised society, at the expense of any criticism of the dark side of consumerism and the emptiness of a consumerist life that Rice, through Louis's narrative, attempts to disclose.

As society became increasingly secularised and a concern with consumption continued to grow, these themes became intensified in later vampire literature. In Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*, the theme of religion in its traditional sense is almost entirely absent, though it is refigured in a consumerist sense through the figure of the vampire. With the triumph of capitalism as the world economic system and a focus on consumption being more pronounced than ever before – influencing not only what is seen as a status symbol but also influencing social output such as literary

styles and religion more generally – Meyer’s books uncritically celebrate such consumerist lifestyles in a way that Rice’s books do not. The vampires Meyer creates emerge as replacements of religious figures, being situated as gods and/or angels in their own right, and appear as extremely seductive creatures advertising all the ideals of such a lifestyle, both in terms of physical appearance and the capacity to consume. In a secularised and consumerist world, the creatures of ultimate consumerism triumph at the expense of the religious.

In a changing world where religion has lost much of its traditional power and the materialistic concerns of a consumption-driven society are constantly on the rise, then, the literary vampire – an embodiment of material concerns and material immortality – has undergone a dramatic change, no longer figured as a creature of evil and darkness, but as the advertisement for the ideals of an absolute consumerist lifestyle. The popularity of vampire texts throughout history, but especially with the phenomenal success of the Twilight Saga, illustrates not only how potent a symbol the vampire is to reflect society’s concerns, but also how enthralled consumers have become by texts and figures that inherently reflect their dominant worldview. No longer seen as a simple demon, it is now the eternally young and beautiful vampire – as a symbol, literary figure, romantic hero, and mass consumer – that emerges as triumphant.

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