Function and Focus of Material Elements in Vampire Narrative

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Abstract

This chapter unpacks a qualitative research agenda that explores how a group of 22 young adults, aged 18–30 years of age understand the representational aspects of the materiality often associated with vampire narratives. Through a series of semi-structured interviews and the use of co-operative schematic drawing, this cohort revealed that materiality could only be understood as one component of a web of elements that framed the vampire's representation and narrative metaphor. However, given the explicit starting point they explained materiality as it relates to the vampire character in terms of a hollowness and an exterior façade that conceals the vampire's identity crisis, inner fears, and a conduit that reveals the two foci of the vampire's aggression towards humanity. In essence they understood the vampire figure to represent an overall cathected presence that sought to understand the human condition.

Keywords

Qualitative research · Cathected presence · Identity crisis

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S. Bacon (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of the Vampire*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-82301-6_74-1

Introduction: Shifting Subjectivities and Methodological Appropriateness

This chapter initially commenced as a "text analyst" project, focusing on the nature of materiality and the "thought structures they represent" (Sandberg 2015, 4) in vampire texts across a spectrum of modalities. From this singularly personal and subjective perspective, this focus slotted neatly under the axiological umbrella that posits that the vampire, amongst other narrative monsters, reflects a society's greatest fears, traumas, and perceived threats. As Halberstam states, the vampire like all monsters is "a meaning machine" (1995, 21), and therefore across all generations, genders, and cultures it has become the full representation of "everything the human is not" (Halberstam 1995, 22).

I hadn't formally commenced this project before I was challenged to think in a different vein, which included the possibility that perhaps Halberstam was right and at the same time incorrect.

Further elements of my underpinning rationale were that, despite the differences, the vampire is also arguably the closest monster to the human being in key facets such as its physicality and connection to blood. Notwithstanding the supernatural aspects of the vampire and its related narratives also portray a creature that has somewhat similar needs to humanity, in that all the vampiric narratives reveals it relies on decision making related to and "within the confines of continually changing bounded contexts" (McKenzie and Fitzsimmons 2010, 55). Termed "enactment" these shifts in decisions within boundaries is a natural and integral component of human "sensemaking processes" (McKenzie and Fitzsimmons 2010). Linked to psycho-emotional reactions in real life, through the "sensemaking" process of enactment individuals and groups interact and engage with material elements in their environment in order to develop a sense of stasis. Within the bounded frames that humanity sets up in real life the material elements define not only the individual, but also their psychological state and the anxiety and fears of that individual. While it is not surprising that as vampire narratives have been written by humans, with all the inherent predispositions to "sensemaking" through enactment and emphasis on materiality, it appears that very little has been written about this facet in vampiric research.

However, as stated, while the aim of the initial research was to explore the sensemaking-materiality nexus, because of a serendipitous interaction with a young respondent in another horror related project I decided to take a different methodological tack. This transfer came with all the shifts in ideology, genre, register, and semiotic elements of writing that such a transfer entails and commenced with the comment:

> You know, the focus of any vampire movie, or horror, is not about the vampire specifically. You have to watch the page, the whole space with another eye. . . like spatially, the dialogue . . . and the screen. Like really noticing, really looking as well. Because everything is important and everything relates to the vampire and to you as well, absolutely everything. It's holistic. The narrative and the things in it, even the smallest things speak out, but they're

> connected, they should also talk to you as voices inside the book or movie, and sometimes outside what you are reading or watching. (Respondent 12, 23 years)

Through the voice of this young reader-viewer, I began to suspect that here was an inkling of the actual agency that the vampire representation brings to those engaged with this monstrous creation. Through working with young people for several decades I had always believed that those who were totally immersed in quality literature and quality cinema brought a vastly different psycho-dynamic force and ensuing understanding to those in previous generations, particularly older text analyst researchers such as myself possess. Previous lived experience projects had generated enough awareness for me to appreciate that, as Homi K. Bhabha emphasizes, for these reader-viewers they hear:

> voices calling from the cave - voices of instruction and encouragement, half inscripted and half intuited, half heard and half imagined. It is these voices, freighted with unresolved conversations and interrupted arguments, that finally help you to 'hold' the thought: and in the midst of that movement of ideas and intuitions you discover a momentary stillness. (2009, 8)

Here was an opportunity for me to listen to the "voices in the cave" as heard by a younger generation, and to dig deeper into the sense of that momentary stillness of an intuitive knowing beyond my own value laden perspectives. The following is the audit trail of the narrative turn that led into a fuller appreciation of the mind-text-space-place linkages of one group and their awareness of "thinginess" (Adler 2017, 179).

The Trigger Enacted: Caveats, Apologetics, and Process

Recognizing and responding to the "strategic and theoretical implications of a serendipitous finding" (Timmermans and Tavory 2022, 2), or a lightbulb moment of qualitative "methodological appropriateness" (Patton 1990:39), a "line of force" (Deleuze 1992, 160) had been triggered. The new research direction became the intersection of a group's memory, intertextual connectivity, and a deep-seated sense of appreciation.

Polyani believes that responding to this sensing process is a key factor in human understanding and terms it as

> tacit awareness . . . we now regard a means of making certain things function as the proximal terms of tacit knowing, so that instead of observing them in themselves, we may be aware of them in their bearing on the comprehensive entity which they constitute. (2009,18)

Stepping into this "critical act of perception and construction" (Lincoln and Guba 2013, 45) entailed recruiting and interacting with a group of 22 young adults, aged 18 to 30 years in a series of ongoing semi-structured interviews (Kiyimba et al. 2019, 140). This form of ethnography is embedded in the concept of "grounded theory"

Table 1 Data gathering methods and purposes

Phases	Data gathering methods	Purposes
1	1.1 Individual semi-structure interviews 1 1.2 Level 1 analysis of all transcripts – coding of transcripts	- Explore background experiences, explore emic understanding, construction of schematic understanding - Line by line coding, development of categories
2	2.1 Individual semi-structure interviews 2 2.2 level 2/3 – Analysis of all transcripts – coding of transcripts, constant comparison of emergent categories, collapsing of categories, develop codes	- Member check emerging categories, refine and expand emic-etic understanding - Joint construction of schematic understanding, explore connections through a connective metaphor
3	3.1 Open-ended focus group interviews	- Member check and jointly explore and explain each theme/code

(REF) and is not purely a descriptive account of "a focus on the social world" (Weaver-Hightower 2019, 15). I, the briefest of summaries it is a phenomenological unpacking of a "lived experience" project (Salter and McGuire 2020). The time spent together provided the opportunity for these avid readers of horror literature, graphic novel connoisseurs, and horror movie viewers to step into the research frame as a voice of critique, endorsement, and co-discovery. Essentially, the process of analysis and ensuing unpacking became a co-storying-phenomenological process.

Table 1 summarizes the project's approach the lead to an incorporation and exploration of conjoint understanding through a cascading series of qualitative data gathering and analysis approaches.

Clearly this phenomenological approach is not often equated with vampiric text critique, as it involves a "fusion of horizons whereby different interpretations of the phenomenon under investigation are brought together through dialogue to produce shared understanding" (Kutsyuruba and McWatters 2023, 219). Through the dialogic process in which interview involves "member checking" (Creswell and Creswell 2018, 273) and the accompanying use of co-operatively developing a schematic diagram the entire process was one of clarification developed though "wandering together with each participant" (Boden and Larkin 2021, 36). Over the course of this dialectic evolution in tandem with the creation of a detailed coding of the interviews, a set of themes emerged. As the respondents realized that this form of research is based on recognizing patterns in text, they continually recognized connections and provided further fine-grained details of understanding. As the interactions evolved this for the elimination of my thoughts as far as subjectively possible and I essentially became a curator of their developing awareness and thoughts. This process also simultaneously allowed for their language and understanding to be transliterated accurately into a sense of "everyday speak." Hence, there is very little reference to other research, other than that drawn from the methodology cache. To fully reveal this conjoint process of negotiation, and the emphasis on respondent explication, the written explanation and description

gradually shuffled down the tenor and mode continuum. Even where I added commentary this was discussed with the respondents and as such moved towards more of a relational and interactive generic structure.

It needs to be stated that I am not suggesting the emergent findings are indeed a final "grounded theory" (Charmaz 2016) as there was not the time to become longitudinally immersed in the "lived experiences" (Salter and McGuire 2020) of these young people. As the purpose of qualitative theory and grounded theory is not based on "transferability or generalizability" of the findings, the functions of qualitative research findings are instead the presentation of an array of possibilities that may enable further and richer ethnographic research.

Themes of Identity Crisis, Dissolution, and Impermanence

The Overarching Theme: Reasons and Rationale

With the concept of a focus on the materiality in vampire narratives firmly fixed within my mind's eye as a starting point, it should be noted that while the respondents accepted my research agenda throughout this study, as lies at the core of this process, they continually refined the concept of materiality. The first step in there taking responsibility in the investigation process was their emphasis on how they "read" vampire texts was related to how they "read" vampire cinema and literature. Making sense of the vampire and horror narrative

> is, like I've said to you before, more holistic than a focus on one thing. I think you have to have a broader focus, but with a wider inner sense turned on. It doesn't mean I can't talk about individual things and events but they're all related. (Respondent 23, aged 26 years)

In their everyday or natural interaction and engagement with the textual vampire, except for noticing aspects of the initial paratextual elements, no one aspect of any text took precedence over another for any length of time. While there was not a hierarchical approach to understanding or making sense of any vampiric version, if individual components appeared to be dominant or standout, an attempt would occur to reflexively weld this section into the textual metaphor of the movie as a thread of meaning. "The vampire and all its bits and pieces always stands for something or someone else. Something larger than what has caught your eye" (Respondent 1, aged 25 years). Admitting that they were acutely aware of the layers of meaning in all horror texts, and that they actively and reflexively searched for these. The respondents typically likened their approach to something akin to reflexive immersion: "I just like to sink into the whole thing. You have let it all wash over you first, otherwise you lose sense. My friends and I talk later and compare what we think" (Respondent 1, aged 25 years). They also acknowledged intent, meaning, and representations in graphic novels were slightly different, as "these forced you to really pay close attention, but you could come back to them, to peel back the layers" (Respondent 7, aged 19 years).

With respect to hard copy books, overall this group indicated that this was not their primary text type source of engagement with horror, although it had been in their young years. For those who did read the printed word when they did open a book they sensed that they generally didn't pay attention to every word after the first few pages, and the aspects they clearly noticed and paid attention to was rich language use.

> I think I kind of move down a notch when I get into the zone of reading, you see the words but you don't, if you know what I mean. But at times something jolts me a little, or an interesting set of phrases pops up, then I notice. (Respondent 8, aged 29 years)

As a component of their hard copy reading, most claimed that they actually visualized what they were reading. However, even then they were in this state and able to notice aspects of the internally manifested scene, the material elements were simply a component of the entire narrative and with the exception of the mirror in the first chapter of *Dracula*, not really focused on per se. As a collective this group believed that the most important element of reading was the notion of reflective and reflexive "sensing." This was both a personal and a group process, which allowed for a deep in situ and post experience review. Seemingly a semantic form of "wondering" it allowed for the deep emotional response to surface, especially in group discussions. Not surprisingly there were differences regarding what this each cohort member emotionally saw and responded to, but one of the clear points of consensus and foundational impression was the sense of ambiguity that each representation of the vampire "gave off, in small subtle ways" (Respondent 3, aged 20 years). Rarely did this group mention the sense of fear and terror emanating from the vampire as being the only engaging facet, rather it was how these creatures and their victims,

> reacted to emotional forces and to others, not so much the physical. Their fears and anxieties are in there as well. I think you never know what they're really thinking, or really doing. That's the main thing about horror movies, and the vampire. The one thing that comes to mind is when the Count attacks Mina Harker, in her bed. It's full of blood but in the text it reads like there is something else, a whole lot more going on. It looks like it's about sex and rape, but is it really? I've read the book a dozen times and I'm still not sure. (Respondent 5, aged 30 years)

Similarly, regarding the elements of materiality they claimed that while "there were some standout things in vampire narratives" (Respondent 7, aged 19 years), in the context of the narrative these were often seen as a representational reflection of the vampiric essence. Despite the plethora of vampire text forms, this cohort tended to believe that "while there were clearly changes in lots of aspects, shifts to gay vampires, ancient versus the new and hybrids" (Respondent 6, aged 26 years), the majority of vampiric films and literature text types had a similar subtextual foundations of uncertainty and ambiguity. Despite the animal instincts, dark force, power, and danger of the vampire, in any narrative mode this group would often return the discussion sessions to the notion that the darkness, control, and terror was a façade of

uncertainty. The material things were in the same vein, although seemingly a more stable and solid form.

> The things that stand for, or are revealing the vampire are mostly at a distance, like they're brooding. Or are driven by the vampire, everything is about force or silence. That's the vampire in its entirety, he forces his victims and, . . . and then there's a silence. Control and death are what he thinks he wants, but I think it's always left with a sense of failure, lack of satisfaction. (Respondent 8, aged 24 years)

Materiality was also attached to the vampire's male persona of domination as a solid counter element "to his own inner demons" (Respondent 3, aged 19 years). While otherworldly and deadly, like the darkness the creature bought with him it was nonetheless not the vampire's true identity or actual internal likeness.

> It doesn't matter what the text is, film, comic or even graphic novels, they all deal with the vampire's sense of loss, its mostly male, and their, ... It's a veil of darkness, and his uncertainty, his instability, his identity or rather lack of. . . and his desire to ensure he's not alone in this feeling of desperation. You know I think, that's the key, he can't feel, beyond a sense of touch. From my point of view, you can't zoom in on the things in vampire narratives too much, unless you begin with this sense of touching. It's the only way he, or any of them can find any sort of meaning I guess, and to pass on this feeling of loss. (Respondent 6, aged 30 years)

Distillation of the data through the "coding process" (Charmaz 2016) revealed the general acceptance of this group that there was a foundational meaning of duality in the vampire figure, could be primarily perceived as a "ying and yang" psycho-responsive representational formation. In their mind's eye the obvious physical associations reflect the inner essence and psychology. This described this understanding as on the hand is a clear sense of vampiric identity loss, and on the other a perceived sense of a self-realization of impermanence. Comments were made that they believed this psycho-social split defined the most deleterious issue of the human condition. Thus, this was the essence of the vampire narrative which was also revealed in the associated materiality. The inside of the physical items was representative of the vampire's constant inner search for some kind of meaning, which was also in competition with the dark interior drives. On the flip side, the exterior was always in contact elements of the real world, especially the celestial lights of the moon and the sun "Here's that double or opposite things again. One light kills, the other is tolerable and just enough to see in the dark" (Respondent 9, aged 27 years).

The vampiric double sided identity crisis was perceived to fueled by the desire of this dark narrative creature to gain a sense of what human attraction actually is and what the notion of love actually means. For this young group the vampire cannot,

> feel the meaning of the beat of a heart that is in love or a relationship. All he can do is draw blood, despite how many times he tastes the blood that comes from a real heart that is in love, or innocent. That's what he really wants, to understand. And when he can't, he is happy to make, . . . to create a human like he is. (Respondent 8, aged 29 years)

Hence, the overarching consensus of this respondent grouping was that the material elements in vampire movies were indicative of the vampire's understanding and self-awareness. As it appears that the taste of blood and the constant need to feed on a human life source is the only possible connection the vampire has to the most elemental of all human emotions. It is the proximity to his set of materiality that provide a stasis touch points, and which simultaneously also reflexively point out the elements he lacks regarding the human condition. As pointed out by one respondent, the "things" in vampire narratives,

> tend to focus on those things that touch the earth, are placed in the in the earth itself or will end up in the earth. Like the ship, the carriage that drove the vampire to another place at the ends of the earth. (Respondent 10, aged 23 years)

The discussions focusing on material connections also gave voice to the vampiric linkage to human death and burial. Comments were made that respondents could "see everything as a driving force, or at least sense of direction, towards darkness and death" (Respondent 11, aged 26 years).

Gradually the description of this ying-yang double became consolidated and couched in terms of a cathectic emotional flow of vampiric reciprocity and tension related to directiveness. As one respondent stated:

> While there's a clear flow of anger, attack and violence in all vampire stories, at least in most, there is also a sense of emotion, and gravitation towards the vampires. There's a flowback from those that are bitten as well. It looks like servitude, but that's them being trapped as well. There's repulsion and attraction everywhere, on both sides of every encounter. (Respondent 12, aged 22)

As clearly indicated in these descriptions, there was a sense in these related comments that the vampire is both a conduit for his aggression and an attempt at a two-way emotional flow. While on the one hand there is an emergent theme of vampiric anger directed towards humanity, on the other there appear in all the narrative attempts at seeking, or drawing in, an emotional alignment with what he wants in a genuinely like-minded being. This group often discussed how that for vampires, the first sense of anger appears to be the norm, while the latter was deemed a seeming impossibility. Comments related to this non-alignment were also related to the source of the vampire's strength and ongoing life were directly related to his intake of human blood. Many in this respondent cohort mentioned that this was similar to addiction, in that drugs such as cocaine provided the user with a sense of personal strength and euphoria, but ultimately these were never genuinely satisfying as an authentic life source.

While the inevitability of loss through human death, and the final breakdown of the body through putrefaction and descent into the grave were recognized as the most prominent metaphors in the overwhelming majority of vampire narratives, a notion surfaced in this group's debriefing sessions that perhaps the vampire, at least in Stoker's concept, was also representative of being "magnetically trapped in his own vampire imagery". It's like I read the other day "that top managers and CEO's

are all psychopaths in some way. They fight to get to the top and then the becomes that mind figure. They can't get out" (Respondent 5, aged 30 years). It was then discussed that in the same way the vampire had become trapped in his own narrative. "There a few back stories that suggest he became the killer he is portrayed as because of a lost love" (Respondent 14, aged 24 years). It was also put forward that these characteristics and reasons why the vampire narrative were also entwined through the vampire's general inability to connect emotionally and relationally. Therefore, the vampire figure is generally unable to understand humanity's need for personal happiness before death, connection with other before the final lowering into the grave, and the sense of happiness that arises from emotional engagement and with deep attachment with another at the end of life. In talking about this possible vampiric characteristic, it was dealt with as a possible affliction.

> I think he sees it, and kind of senses affection, . . . but is so deeply wounded, at least I thinks that's it, . . .that he can't actually love or even be close. He just can't find the means or ability to do it, to really connect with someone. It's his, . . . missing bit. I think that this is what drives him to infect others, he can't help but pass on the existential misery. And he just wants death himself. Perhaps for many people it's their missing part as well. (Respondent 13, aged 27)

An interesting perspective by the smaller group studying literature at tertiary level in this cohort is that they believed that this constant framing of the vampire as emotionally remote or disabled, and desiring death arose from the concept of the "absent father" motif. This, they suggested gave rise to the vampire's need to have a subservient cohort to follow the vampiric destruction and ultimately mourn the vampiric master's death. They further asserted this lack of a father figure was further reinforced as a prominent directional force and source of tension in the apparent relational dysfunction evident in most of the character's lives and relationships. There was a dominant feeling that this emotional tension was such a powerful tacit expression it became realized in the vast array of vampire movies and texts.

> Even in the *Twilight* books and movies that I read as young kid, no one in the family could really connect. Not at least until Bella became a vampire. Looking back, . . . it was all pretty lame, but the beyond all the stuff that happened the whole premise was that the vampire clan didn't have the ability to love or understand life really, or even death. They were loyal but there was also a clear sense of animosity or distance, but that's not the same thing as love or understanding. (Respondent 15, aged 18 years)

In the final third round of interviews where the overall themes were further discussed and unpacked in focus groups, one section of respondents who had undertaken background reading in Dracula concluded that many of the relational tensions, aspects of implied directionality, and connectivity to the materiality possibly reflect Stoker's early life. This group were of the opinion that Stoker was unable to walk in the earliest year of his life and as such had no real sense of being able to feel anything solid beneath his feet. Hence, as an intelligent and perceptive child all he could do was imagine what it was like to be upright and moving forward. Such

was this depth of imaginative influence, the sense of movement and flying is revealed in his most famous novel, which still carries forward in contemporary vampire narratives. It was also suggested that Stoker's inability to move also center on the notion of containment and materiality.

> I've read he was ill for years as a young boy and was confined to his bed and his room. He must have thought he was on the path to dying and was already in the box. Pathways to death, darkness man made containers make up most of the plot lines in Dracula. And most lead to destruction, you know for all. It's an admission from Stoker. In that house he lived in he must have been able to hear life going on all around him, every aspect and he couldn't participate. Even the thought of a lifelong encasement in a disability could only have been seen through the eyes of a boy, as a very young boy in particular, as already a living death, a living grave. He must have wanted out. (Focus Group A)

In the briefest of summaries, with Dracula and vampire characters in popular culture being represented partially as materiality, these things of dark confines were also viewed as a process of mirroring, "just like there's a single mirror in Dracula's castle, there's only one focus like this. It's an emphasis" (Respondent 16, aged 28 years). This single mirror was mentioned several times, as was the idea that mirrors did not a provide vampires with a reflection because they had no soul but rather they were false entities. Generally, the reason offered by this respondent collective was that these creatures were the epitome of dissolution and had no authentic substance to their existence.

While the respondents could clearly see the polyvalent layers of the vampire narrative, it was towards the end of the interactive "unpacking and explorations sessions" that the respondents began to return to an understand there were other related threads than the collapsed codes that had been collectively garnered and explored. The following is an outline of their conclusions.

The Internal Spiral of Supporting Themes

The flow of the respondent's data in this project revealed that the twin conjoined central core related to the sense of loss and dissolution was further extended and further amplified through two metonymic structures related to materiality. These further narratively supported what the respondents saw as a threaded and conjoined thematic web related to the

> physical and psychopathic nature of the vampire, and what, I guess for the most part this is a hidden inner part of their opposite self. The outside is hardened but the insides are nothingness. (Respondent 6, aged 26 years)

As unpacked in the ensuing sections, when telescopically viewed through this sense of the physicality of "nothingness" these interrelated themes became,

> a two-edged sword. The related inanimate stuff is like the vampire itself, that's what the whole vampire story is. Its what's on the inside, the outside is really only one aspect of the darkness and meaning behind the vampire. It's like, connected to the whole stuff related to the earth, doomed to breakdown but still, this stuff is a casing. It's only one aspect, but I've come to see how its critical, the outside is a shell really, you need to understand the inside. (Respondent 14, aged 23 years)

In the final interactive sessions, there was a clear suggestion that this double core meaning of meaning in the vampire narrative, was a plaited sense of the vampire's psychological reaction to the forces that embroiled this creature and sought to eliminate him. In a parallel representation, the material aspects in the vampire genre represent humanities acknowledgment of a natural reliance on inertia as an external protective or assurance mechanism.

> It's like you see and read people put up their hands to protect them from all kinds of attack, or even in the movies. It's useless but it's an instinct. Like the hands and the skin are supposed to protect us from all kinds of attack, it puts the brakes on fear. In the same way, it gives, . . . I mean this stopping sensation easily taps into the mind, blood and body. Anything human created to ignore what is really going on is really a front. Like the cross in vampire narratives. Humans rely on the outside stuff, that you rely on to save you. It's like religion, its fake. It's the inside that counts. (Respondent 10, aged 23 years)

Vampire Materiality Is the Embodied Container of Socio-cultural Inertia

For this group of respondents, the material elements associated with the vampire were related to socially seen or social located surfaces. While often cast as elements of strength such as coffins, ships, and castles, as stated previously these spaces were deemed to be hollow representations of human thought and its fear of impermanence. The rounds of review interviews established the group's belief that these "things" intimated a fear that leads to the development of a false façade of strength. However, this façade is one that ultimately leads to socio-emotional impotence. As such, for individuals as well as for collectives, the material elements were seen to reveal the shallowness of the rationale to remain stationary and allow darkness, such as that which emanated from the vampire creatures, to consume all the positive physical, social, and spiritual spaces of life. As such, the "things" of materiality and their apparent solidity were seen by these respondents to be representative markers of the broken thinking that can inhibit human flourishing. "As I see it, this sense is in the whole thinking of Harker's journey in the first place" (Respondent 13, aged 27 years). In the same way, it was seen by this group that typically vampires appeared to be in control of the elemental aspects of earthly existence and could thereby control the world of human beings. However, the whole notion of control was because "they were in the same boat as their victims, stuck in the dark. They were in effect single faced, or about as substantive as their lack of reflection" (Respondent 3, aged 20 years).

However, like the vampire body itself, the material things it was related to it could be destroyed by the right mechanisms, and each had a fatal flaw through which "they could be left in ruins. They were looking for light, but it killed them" (Respondent

14, aged 23 years). Viewed as an already destroyed being that had no formative space in the daylight world, the vampire was also seen by this cohort as a metonymic reflection of the coffins vampire narratives relied on to cement for themselves a false impression of transcendent and existential peace. However, more importantly with many vampire texts ending with the complete obliteration of the creature, the coffin was also seen as the only means by which the vampire could leave some semblance of having existed. While also a reminder that the vampire would possibly only ever return to surface encasement of the earth's dirt, and even then there was,

> nothing left of them, but also it was the only connection that vampires have to the human sense of ending. But it was a 'nowhere street'. Going no where. I wouldn't say these things were a reflection, or more like a refraction, more like a dark shadow. I'm thinking they're like the human shadows left after the Hiroshima bomb, just a dark mark on the ground. Left on solid ground but a dark flat imprint. (Respondent 11, aged 26 years)

Vampiric Materiality as the Embodied Marker of Gendered Inertia

Very similar to the previous point, it was proposed by the respondents that the majority of vampire narratives were focused on male vampires and male violence. It was further suggested that this sense of gendered focus still very much connected to Stoker's original Dracula, and in a broader sense seemed to indicate that this was a major issue in the western world in general. In several instances respondents stated they believed that this continuation of gender precipitated violence into ensuing vampiric text forms, and the ongoing reference to solid shapes in vampire cinema reflects the vampire's attempt "at forming sameness, his sense of sameness rebuilt over and over again over centuries" (Respondent 17, 21 years).

Following on from this discussion point, the material elements and the link to a "continuity of sameness" that continued on in most vampire modalities were also associated with the diary entries in Stoker's work, compass opposites, and the constant reference to the vampire's presence being inside and outside of specific areas and buildings. In a parallel set of discussions this notion of an outside-inside male gendered marker was seen to be realized in several ways. The first aspect was believed to be clearly revealed in the diary writing approach used by Bram Stoker, completed on a typewriter, a machine became a materiality of mind:

> I see lots of parallel in this to the movie *Ex Machina*. Yer, it's a girl and she's the machine telling the story, as the main protagonist in this movie. But it's the same thing, she's trapped in a room, in a house and she' trying to find out who is in her head. (Respondent 2, aged 26 years)

As also previously mentioned, just as Harker travelled west to east, and then back again in the confined space of a carriage, it was mentioned by these respondents that this travel was linked directionally to the path that numerous European colonial powers also moved. The hollowness of materiality was again mentioned in the previous section was also linked, and further to this in that it was noted that Harker returned to England psychologically and physically scarred. His diary entries linked to specific dates were the means through which he was able to organize the past

internal chaos and terror that his eastern encounters with Dracula naturally engendered. In a further connection, a majority of this respondent group also stated that this was further revealed in the marking of a paper page through Harker's writing. Amongst other points, it was bought out that once again this was a reference to the destruction of the natural world by patriarchal and colonial forces. Just as in the processing of paper, wood had to be cut down and then processed to form the majority of material structures in Stoker's novel. The writing about the vampire paralleled the actual areas were swathes of humanity were colonially processed by the patriarchal powers. In a related sense, comments were also made that the patriarchy was also revealed in the power of the male mind in conjunction with the male hands on a typewriter to reveal the power and subsequent demise of the vampire. Within this perception was the notion that the typewriter used by Harker had no mind of its own, and in the same way the English mindset to negatively counter and change the cognitive and psycho emotional space of the subjugated lesser human beings of the far east.

Conclusion

The links to vampiric materiality as seen by these young people reveals one slice of a holistic awareness of the elements that make up the vampire mythology, albeit a partial insight. While able to articulate how materiality fits within the vampire narrative, clearly their chapter opens a raft of possible research avenues that need to be explored that includes how do young people understand the figure of the vampire in its entirety, and what is the meaning and purpose of horror cinema in their lives. Understanding the subjective "lived experience" understandings of consumers' vampire and horror texts has the potential to expand the "text analysis" foci of this burgeoning research field.

While it is interesting in what these respondents had to say, it's what they didn't say that is equally as fascinating. Questions arise such as how the younger generations view or understand:

- The nature and metaphor of blood in the vampire mythic array of narratives?
- The nature of the vampire as an actual representation of societal fears, and how does this fit with their generational perceptions?
- If one can read a culture through its narrative representations of blood, how does blood fit into their generational understanding?

These questions are only a few that come to mind in having talked with this group, with the most pressing being, how do the understandings in chapter fit with those of academia?

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